

*Thesis*  
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**THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN SCOTTISH SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS 1940 - 1990**

**A STUDY OF CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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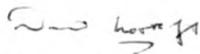
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May 1991.



8/94

**SIGNED DECLARATION**

The Thesis, **English Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools, 1940-1990**, has been composed entirely by myself; likewise, the work it embodies has been done entirely by myself and it has not been included in any other thesis.



Signed  
David J Northcroft

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This study follows the progress of a key school subject towards its slow, partial fulfilment of the 1940s' aspiration for equality of educational opportunity within the post war reconstruction of Scottish society. Its focus is on 'English' at both the level of public pronouncement and of day-to-day classroom experience - and on the intricate interactions between these two worlds. Therefore, in addition to analysis of official documentation and school materials, the personal testimony of twenty long-serving participants, practitioners as well as policy makers, is woven into the account.

Two factors have helped to elucidate this history: the centralised, uniform nature of the Scottish system; the post-war inheritance of two articulated but competing models of English - the initially dominant Scottish Education Department supported academic syllabus built on knowledge inculcation, national examination and institutional division into 'junior' and 'senior' secondary curricula as against the progressivist alternative of 'the full and harmonious development of the individual' to be sought in 'omnibus' schools.

Superficially, 1940-1990 may be viewed as the gradual, orderly movement towards Standard Grade English as a consensual acceptance of the progressivist version, a process facilitated by an opening up of decision-making into a partnership between SED and the profession through such bodies as the Consultative Council and a devolved Examination Board. A detailed investigation of actual practice shows a more ambiguous curricular reality in which pragmatic management and deeply embedded assumptions sustain a contradictory adherence to didactic methodology and rigid assessment procedure.

The Scottish experience suggests that curricular change is a necessarily problematic process whose promotion depends upon a sensitive appreciation of its complex rhythms. In Scotland this

means using the traditional authority of the centre to establish clear frameworks and appropriate assessment targets within and against which the individual teacher is freed to work out a matching pedagogy and to take control of in-course evaluations. Above all, the educational innovator must be alert to the power of historical inheritance in the construction of classroom practice.

## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Author's Biographical Outline

Since the author has, himself, been part of the scene that he has attempted to reconstruct, it may be helpful to furnish these details - if not to establish credentials, then to forewarn the reader of likely sources of influence and allegiance.

- Secondary Schooling:** Lewes County Grammar School, Sussex, 1953-56  
Aberlour High School, Banffshire, 1956-60.
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Peterhouse, Cambridge University - Postgraduate research in English 1964-66  
Aberdeen College of Education - Teacher's Certificate 1966.
- Professional Career:** English teacher, Aberdeen Grammar School, Aberdeen 1967-71  
Lecturer, Department of English, Aberdeen College of Education 1971-78  
Head of English Department, Aberdeen College of Education 1978-87  
Head of Language Department, Northern College, (Aberdeen), 1987-90  
Assistant Principal, Northern College (Aberdeen) 1990 to date.
- Related activity:** Member of Fourth and Fifth Central Committees on English 1981-86.  
Member of Central Support Group, Consultative Council on the Curriculum 1986-88.

### Gender

The pronominal conventions by which to express a proper recognition of the freedom and universality of human experience do not appear to me to have, as yet, settled down: the imperatives of sense and style mean that it is not always possible to use the neutral plural, while repetitions of 'he/she' clutter the movement of the prose. Yet to follow the common practice of adopting 'she' for the teacher and 'he' for 'her' pupil appears to me to help construct assumptions as regards social roleplay that are just as deterministic as any reliance upon the male gender. I have therefore used the masculine and the feminine pronoun throughout the text in a freely interchangeable manner: unless obviously not the case, 'he' and 'she' are to be read as referring to individuals of either sex.

### Gratitude

I have incurred many debts of gratitude in bringing this dissertation to completion. I must, first, thank a number of individuals and institutions who have freely supported my endeavours, by kindly granting access to material, by offering advice and interested comment or in more tangible, personal ways.

Among these, I would wish to recognise the assistance given to me by my employer The Northern College of Education under Principal David Adams, in terms of finance and general encouragement; thanks are also due to Colin Peacock and John Lloyd of the Education Department of Stirling University whose tutelage included a number of stimulating professional exchanges as well as valued practical advice, to the Northern College Library Staff for giving me the key to their entire stock and for waiving the usual borrowing rules, and to the Education Department of Glasgow University for their permission to consult unpublished

MEd theses. I am also grateful both to the Scottish Education Department and Senior Chief Inspector John Ferguson for permission to consult and to refer to certain restricted files and to the staff of the Scottish Record Office, West Register House, Edinburgh who handled all requests with unfailing efficiency and courtesy.

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Finally, my special and personal thanks are reserved for my family, Kathleen, Jonathan and Matt - whose unstinting support and forbearance have made the whole enterprise possible.

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## PREFACE

### **English: a Study in Decision-Making**

It was in 1936 that the Scottish Education Department (SED) first announced that all schooling after the age of twelve was to be designated 'secondary'.<sup>(1)</sup> Eleven years later, in a celebrated report, its Advisory Council gave the country's teachers and administrators their post-war goal: 'secondary education', it agreed, must be dedicated to 'the full and harmonious development of the individual.'<sup>(2)</sup> And now, in 1990, with the conclusive establishment of the Standard Grade course, it may be said that - at last - all pupils between the ages of twelve and sixteen are, by working towards a common national certificate, able to enjoy the same essential experience of English.

The purpose of this study is to explore the drawn out processes of development and resistance that join these events together. In this way 'English' may act as a means of exploring the themes of change and continuity in one nation's educational service. The focus of my interest is, however, that of a trained specialist in the subject, my enquiry an expression of a professional concern with the continuing progress of English at secondary school level. But to say even this is to open up complex issues. The specific mix of interpretation, composition, oral work and literary appreciation that makes up the present-day Standard Grade course can only represent a small selection of all the personal, social and cultural activity in which the native tongue engages us. The English of today's classroom is, in fact, the product of an intricacy of decision-making to which many agents and numerous forces have contributed and have done so over a necessarily long period of time.

This is the consideration which has dictated both the density and the length of this study. To serve as an investigation into the forces which have driven today's English teaching, it has had to be sufficiently detailed to account for the wide range of people and functions which have made up the policy-forming community within modern Scottish education. It has also had to follow their activity over the 50 year span which it has taken the country to work through the

perplexities of power, of participation and of practical realisation with which the task of fashioning a secondary English education that could, truly, be for all has confronted its educationists.

#### **The Search for Evidence: Department, Profession, Teachers**

The first step was to examine the intentions and the actions of those who have been placed at the centre of Scottish decision-making. These included the continuing work of the officers of the SED, especially that of its Inspectors of Schools (HMIs) as well as the Reports of ad hoc bodies such as the influential Munn and Dunning Committees which enquired into curricular and assessment structures in the mid 1970s. Then there were the detailed means by which Departmental programmes are implemented - the syllabus guidelines, the regular HMI visits, national certificate papers, research projects and in-service schedules.

The measures taken by the Scottish Education Department could, however, only be the starting point. Ever since the institution of universal schooling in the late 19th Century, Scotland has had the reputation of maintaining a tightly organized, centrally directed educational provision. Even here, however, the system has never been run by government fiat alone. Ultimately change - and the resistance to it - is in the hands of individual teachers, English teachers. As university graduates they will bring to their careers a commitment to language and to literature that is in large part derived from their own personal and academic experiences. Their sense of English as a distinctive secondary school subject is represented and sustained through a range of specialised activity - subscribing to **Teaching English**, preparing their best pupils for the Higher examination, attending local in-service courses, working in departmental teams under a designated Principal Teacher.

Nor is the line of communication between Field and Centre a simple one. At national level the distinctive identity of English has been maintained by such agencies as the English Panels within both the Inspectorate and the Scottish Examination Board (SEB), by subject committees of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC), College of Education departments and

their training courses, by the Association of English Advisers and a range of subject-specific papers and guidelines. SED proposals are therefore filtered through a succession of intermediary stages which offer a range of opportunities for common gatherings - joint planning procedures, in-service courses, national research projects. Indeed the two spheres of Government Department and English profession overlap in subtle and diverse ways as the personnel concerned play out their dual and shifting roles: the HMI who has joined the service after a substantial classroom career, the Principal Teacher who has completed a four year spell on an English Panel of the Central Committee, the practitioner who is sponsored by his Local Authority to take an MLitt in Scottish Literature or who suddenly finds herself being recruited to contribute to regional in-service conferences as a result of some eye-catching innovative work.

A full historical account must therefore look at the negotiations, both formal and interpersonal, that have occurred between these two worlds of national expert and local practitioner as well as compare their separate activities and publications. Such a scrutiny would follow the semi-invisible interminglings and compromise that have come about as individuals have attempted to resolve the complex range of their own personal, academic and professional interests, one with the other. The public records of joint and multi-representational bodies have supplied essential evidence but it is the minutes, the correspondence and the internal memoranda that survive which reveal the intricate processes of accommodation and negotiated understandings upon which such decisions must depend.

Even if every such particle of primary source could be tracked down, the resulting account would, however, still be far from complete. The public apologists - the teachers who are selected to serve on national committees or who contribute to educational journals, those who are seconded to a funded research project or who take up a College of Education lectureship - make up a numerically small group of spokespersons. Somewhere behind their front stage performances is the continuous, almost inaudible murmur of the many who will daily have to

play out their version of the subject within the mysteriously ordinary settings of a 1000 various classrooms.

The gap in consciousness which exists between these two sets of actors is demonstrated by Sydney Smyth, long time Director of the Scottish Curriculum Development Services and past editor of **Teaching English**, whose article in the 1988 autumn copy of that periodical, 'Aux Armes',<sup>(3)</sup> speculates on the failure of English teachers in Scotland to sustain a National Association after the first abortive attempt was made fourteen years previously. What their priorities have been during this time is suggested by a wider scrutiny of the magazine. Beyond the scholarly pieces on ethnic poetry and contemporary fiction there are inclusions which deal with such literary applications as the best way to help the less able pupil complete his Standard Grade 100 word piece on his personal reading or to tackle the novel question in the Higher Certificate paper. Then there are the pages of book reviews - Hutchinson's **Shakespeare Made Easy**, anthologies with titles like **School's Out** (Bell and Hyman) or **Touchstones 2** from Hodder and Stoughton, course books designed to meet the new demands of talk assessment such as Macmillan's **Listen, Talk, Evaluate** or older concerns like **A Speller's Companion** produced by Brown and Brown.

These are works which are concerned not with literature and language in any purist sense but in supplying the stuff that will make the syllabus work. The contents of 'their' journal thus remind us that English teachers inhabit a world of pragmatic fragments rather than of epistemological essence. Here fiction, debate and discussion, transactional communication, linguistic analysis are refashioned into the Class Reader, the 350 word Composition, the Business Letter, Parsing and Figures of Speech. 'English' emerges as a specially constructed school experience in which the official directive and the professional formulation alike are assimilated into a practice so self-evidently real as to require no more documentation than the quickly buried syllabus notes, the individual record of work, the home-made test paper or the HMI report. Fugitive and piecemeal though they are, such pieces have also had to be hunted out and worked into the whole.

The desire to catch something of the complex experiences that constitute the practice of English in the Scottish secondary school also led me to add the personal testimony to the evidence of written sources. In particular I wished to seek out those who were in a position to tell the story of lengthy careers spent in the making of English during the last 50 years. Accordingly, an integral part of this study is the personal witness gathered together from some 20 interviews of practitioners who have been sufficiently long-serving to have enjoyed careers that cover a substantial portion of the period 1940-1990.

The measures that have been taken to ensure these interviews have held sufficient consistency and structure to act as firm evidence are explained in Appendix 1. Here it is sufficient to say that a further criterion behind the choice of subjects has been to build up a balanced range of roles and perspectives. This has meant the seeking out not only of those who have been responsible for policy-making at the centre - HMI, CCC member, SEB panel - but also those who have taught out their careers in schools in various parts of the country as well as others who, as local authority advisers, College of Education lecturers and short term members of national projects and developmental projects, have shuttled between these spheres. To put matters this way is, however, to posit two separate worlds of English making whereas, in truth, the subject only becomes finally realised within the classroom as a personalized product of a complex chain of interactions both institutional and biographical, immediate and historical. It can also be said that all educational practitioners are the inhabitants of communities which overlap not so much successively as concurrently - of secondary teachers, of university graduates, former pupils, the generations of the 1940s, 50s, 60s, various national and local groupings, political and cultural structures, of 'English' students and teachers. These are complex professional experiences which have to be captured through personal witness.

In making this claim, it must be acknowledged that the evaluation of what are essentially post-hoc accounts does pose certain problems. While, in addition to the imposition of a consistent interview procedure, a sufficient range and number of subjects were selected so as to create a

network of cross-checking and confirmation, their recollections must be susceptible to the simplifications and distractions of time.

To some extent, the memories of my interviewees can be treated as a supplementation of the more 'reliable' contemporary documentation. To excuse them in this way would, however, be to deny - I believe - both the centrality of the subjective interpretation to the construction of the school curriculum and of the way in which its influences work on the collective consciousness of its teachers. Through this study, therefore, I have sought to test the hypothesis that 'English', and its development over a long period of time, is not simply the perfecting of a disciplined craft or the formulation of an objective technology. It is also a series of biographical experiences in which the definitive practices are inherited as much as studied, its models of professional behaviour not so much a precise formulation as the summation of deeply worked memories.

**The Post-War Theme: 'Secondary Education for all' and 'the Harmonious Development of the Individual'**

For these reasons my interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and at length, though within the controlled format of a checklist of issues that were forwarded in advance, about their own involvement in English as a developing career history, as a fully lived through, Scottish experience. That they have also been able to give witness, collectively at least, to the whole span of my study, has also helped to give it narrative unity. The continuity they have provided has enriched a stock of written evidence that has proved to be uneven and inconsistent. To track the last 50 years in education is to move from a relatively settled past into the complex blur of current experience; it is to pass from source material which has become consolidated through time into a definitive shape to the fugitive immediacy of the recent past.

This is a contrast which is reinforced by the changing nature of curricular direction during this time. The sections which deal with the years from 1940 to 1965 cover a school English which, because it was treated as an unproblematic uniformity, may be represented by a small cluster of fixed text-books and unchanging work-schemes. Any debate that sought to question

this state of affairs would be expressed as an easily identified set of counter proposals. It was, moreover, an era of straightforward controls, when relations between a small number of policy-makers and their teacher agents were direct and mutually accepted. Consequently, decisions could be made through the well documented processes of Education Department meetings, of official curriculars and internal memoranda, that have been deposited in central files that are, under the 30 year closure rule, now available to retrospective examination.

It is not only the statutory inaccessibility of key official sources which makes it more difficult to account for the later half of my period. From the mid 1960s onwards English has been caught up in the rapidly expanding demands, both physical and qualitative, which have been made upon the country's education service. The corresponding loosening of structure and the greater freedom given to innovative thinking have made curricular decision-making more interactive, more diffuse. The supplementation of Departmental pronouncement by Examination Board and Consultative Committee deliberation, the multiplication of working parties, of in-service activity, of school-centred proposals and individual initiatives have yielded source material that is at once more prolific and less conclusive. Whereas it has been possible to depict the first post-war decades through a rounded still life portrait in which centre stage activity, background influence and the lines of command which join them can be clearly discerned, the last 25 years have become an increasingly rapid and eclectic sketch.

The spoken testimony gives stability and definition to this shifting scene. It would, however, be naive to suppose that a full documentation is a goal that is either attainable or especially useful. To record all the considerable evidence that has come to hand would be to submerge the pattern of events completely.

'The pattern of events'- to establish this I have had to use a blend of chronological and thematic structuring. In this respect, '1940' offers more than a neat half century of subsequent adventure to look back on. September 1, 1939 was the date on which the new Code which designated all post-primary education as 'secondary' was to be introduced, and although the

hostilities meant a delay in implementation, 'secondary education for all' was firmly established as the major issue for the coming generations to resolve. And because that goal has proved to be so problematic, so expensive of resources and professional commitment, it is not surprising that the whole of those 50 years have been necessary to make even the incomplete progress we see around us in the Standard Grade and the Revised Higher Certificate of Education of today.

The delay in implementing the 1939 Code - it was 1947 before it was finally enacted - did offer the country the opportunity to work out the implications of a universal secondary education. That such thinking had initially to be done during war-time meant that the questions surrounding the kind of life chances which Scotland's schooling should be offering to young people became all the more pressing since they became caught up in the wider national drive towards post-war reconstruction, an impetus which demanded of education that it should make a full contribution to the aspirations of social welfare and equality of opportunity. The consciousness that such needs must be attended to, led, in the early years of the War, to the reinstatement of the Advisory Council to counsel the SED in a reshaping of the curriculum. Its report, *Secondary Education*, finally published in 1947, stands, by common consent, as the most important of the many significant documents which this committee produced. In it Scotland's hopes that the secondary school could provide a freshly vitalised, progressive education for all of its young citizens appeared to have found a national expression. And in this mission, English, it was recognized, had a key part.

The *Secondary Education's* theme of 'the full and harmonious development of the individual' gave the country its educational ideal for the new post-war age. In arguing for it the Advisory Council was conscious - as was its enthusiastic readership - of challenging the existing concentration of effort on the advancement of a smallish 'academic' elite. Part 1 of this study is therefore taken up with not only a reading of the Council's Report in the light of its minuted preparations but also with the curricular system it was forcefully rebutting. Chapter 1 is devoted to an examination of pre-war English, its content and its method, and the selection

purposes its assessment mechanisms served within the wider socio-educational community. And because school, personal experience and political structure do impinge upon each other, an attempt, in Chapter 2, is also made to evoke both the conscious and the assumptive worlds of those who came to be involved in the teaching of English.

In the event the Advisory Council's words were an eloquent but unrequited plea partly because the prevailing system proved to be not yet ready for them, but also because its argument was pitched at an insubstantially rhetorical level. Indeed the whole of our subsequent post-war story can be regarded as the unending attempt both to find the will and the practical means to implement its recommendation and to work out the meaning of an English that is thus to be dedicated to a fully 'personal' development as opposed to a mere 'academic' training.

It is this struggle which supplies the theme; the impact and timing of **Secondary Education** indicate where the focal points ought to occur. After 1947, almost 20 years of relative but revealing inaction passed by, years which enable us to analyse the mainsprings of action and inertia within the Scottish curriculum (Part 2). The introduction of O'Grade in 1962 heralded a dramatic change in that it was the forerunner to a train of rapidly launched measures which opened up the whole curricular system to much greater professional participation. Within the SED both personnel and attitude were changing and the Inspectorate in English were able to work with teachers to overturn the old academic rigidities in favour of a syllabus which was to be based on a philosophy of language and literature for personal growth and enrichment.

Part 3 is devoted to a tracking of these events that may be said to have begun in the mid 1960s. Gradually the impetus to reform exhausted itself. A further major initiative became necessary and this was launched fifteen years later through the publication of the **Munn and Dunning Reports** which advocated far-reaching structural and assessment reforms to the secondary school curriculum.<sup>(4)</sup> For English, the years from 1977 to the present day have been largely taken up with the working out of the subject's response to their suggested measures,

especially with regard to the proposition that secondary education for all means certification for all. The progress made towards this end forms the material of Part 4.

The final section is one of conclusion and evaluation - of the advance that has been made towards the structures, the methods and understanding necessary to realise the long-standing post-war ambition to give each one of Scotland's young people an experience of English that would be truly formative, truly personal. And of how much the record of these strivings can tell us in 1990 about the sources of development and inaction within the nation's educational community.

#### **Models of Post war English: Academic Study against Personal Development**

The repeated references within this account to the 'academic' and the 'personal' point to a further organizational feature: the plotting of the subject's postwar history as a 50 year long dialogue between two distinct models of English teaching. These are the two terms that Scottish educationists and teachers themselves have used consistently, have argued over and felt obliged to choose between. It would be helpful, therefore, to explain their usage at the outset. Of the two, 'academic' is the more easily substantiated since its values were already embodied in the content, methodology and examination system that were universal in 1940. From them it can be seen that the English of 'academic study' starts from an analysis of that distinctive corpus of knowledge and scholarly discipline that, at school level, was given its definitive enunciation in the Higher Leaving Certificate of the last century and which, subsequently, had been refined and updated by 100 years of continuous presentation. It is necessarily conservative in orientation, prizing clarity, correctness and decorum. In methodology it favours analysis, drill, imitation and works towards that consummative form of expression, the essay, while literature is to be approached as an object of study that will bestow wisdom and a tasteful delight in the classics. Knowledge is a possession to be earned; throughout, the distinction between teacher and taught is absolutely firm, the professed curriculum being secured by its continuing adherence to the absolute goal of established truth.

The 'academic' ideal has lent itself to a relatively straightforward implementation since it rests upon a simplistic, external view of the relationship between the pupil and his school experience. Those progressivists who have urged a child-centred philosophy have been less easily able to explain themselves in terms of clearly drawn programmes since for them education is by its very nature a complex and infinitely variable interaction. The authors of the 1947 *Secondary Education* report appear to have been moved by a mixture of predispositions and reactions that lent themselves to ringing prose rather than precise formulation. What might, in the given conditions of the Scottish secondary school, be meant by 'the full and harmonious development of the individual' has only gradually emerged as successive generations have struggled to arrive at a satisfactory actualisation of the Advisory Council's inspirational terminology.

We may, however, say that the principles which have guided teachers towards this end appear to have been founded upon a more characteristically modern appreciation of the child's own individual and social needs, as a learner and as a fully active participant in her community's practical and cultural life. For those who value English as a chief means of nurturing personal development the subject is doing rather than knowledge; it is an experience in which the imagination and the feelings will play their full, rich part. Thus Literature becomes a vital engagement with life, a human voice that can speak to us in modern as well as dated accents. Because she cherishes the experiences the child brings to school and seeks to develop a creative flexibility, the teacher's role is to offer empathic stimuli and encouragement. Because truth is relative, the subject's content emerges from an individual immersion in relevant issues; English is born out of a series of language encounters, both individual and shared.

#### **A Critical Study**

This is a critical investigation. If English in Scotland since the war has been played out as a dialectical development, then its student must be engaged with its arguments. If, moreover, its final classroom expression has proved to be the outcome of a complex chain of reactions in

which the ethnographic is as influential as the educational, its record will depict motive, both conscious and inbred, personal as well as sectarian. Inescapably, judgment must be used in order to enquire into the force of these traditional values which bear down on present behaviour, to analyze ambiguities and to discriminate between the rhetoric and the practice.

The writer is himself, of course, subject to the same pressures of time and of place. For those who wish to infer the extent to which my own involvement in the subject, first as a pupil then as a professional since the mid 1950s, might have influenced this account, a brief biographical outline is appended. Certainly for anyone writing at the present day end of the story there must be a danger that its events will be shaped by a desire to seek out the victories of contemporary enlightenment over pedagogical primitiveness. Again the defence must be that the decision to work a critical commentary into the record of events has been dictated by the history itself. When, in 1947 to wide acclaim, the Advisory Council published its advocacy of a universal secondary education that was to be directed towards personal development and away from academic training, its authors and its readers were giving Scottish education its post-war goal. At the same time they were ensuring that, in 1990, its chronicler would be obliged to review the intervening years for evidence of understandings successfully negotiated, and practical problems overcome, for evidence of progress made.

One final clarification is necessary for what purports to be a 'Scottish' history, a work that is, moreover, devoted to an aspect of national life which has always been separated from the rest of the United Kingdom and which is widely regarded as a definitive characteristic of Scottishness. Yet in it will be found only incidental references to such matters as the Scots tongue, the role of Lallans or the advisability of teaching Henryson and MacDiarmid instead of Chaucer and Ted Hughes. This is because, for better or for worse, the country's secondary curriculum has never preoccupied itself with inculcating an ethnic content. For both SED and teacher alike 'Scottishness' has not referred to a field of study or to a sense of linguistic or literary heritage. Rather the designation has pointed to structures, to examination systems, certain academic traditions, to a particular educational culture. Indeed the very emphasis on

breadth, on a general grounding in basic knowledge, on an individual getting-on within a British, even Imperial context, have worked to preclude such introspectiveness.

Latterly the atmosphere has become more encouraging towards the promotion of native materials and the usage of dialect, but even now it is possible for a national report to deplore the neglect of Scots resources<sup>(5)</sup> - and for the pupil to get her Higher without having encountered one word of Scottish drama, poetry or fiction or to have listened to a syllable uttered in Lallans or the Doric.

That this has been so is, quite properly, for some a matter of profound regret - as indeed so for others is the general postwar direction that the nation's secondary schools have taken towards a more personalised education and therefore away from a solid academic grounding. But these have not been the goals that the teaching of English in Scotland has set itself during that time, nor should they be the dominant criteria by which to judge its progress. Yet in the end these are the issues that really do matter, encompassing as they do the very concerns by which we Scots wish our children to learn to live. The verdicts of the past must be recognised, must be understood, but not allowed to dictate the future course. However, what that past shows is that what is to happen next will always be as much a matter of place, character and time as of rational planning. The decision to push the country's schooling in this or that direction is not a free one. What we are to teach the young or how we are to prepare them for a fuller participation in the life of their community is either a development of or a challenge to the past. In education, in Scotland, our choices are historical ones.

The historian's contribution to this decision-making is to offer his story so that it will promote a more securely shared appreciation among those who manage and those who teach within Scotland's educational traditions. This work is dedicated, therefore, to the hope that further explanations will lead to better decisions, that they will create a clearer understanding of what the secondary school subject English has been in the past - and can mean in the future.

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SED (1977b) **The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School**, HMSO, Edinburgh. (the Munn Report).
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The importance of Scottish literature in the school curriculum has not however been reflected in the school experience of most Scottish children. Certainly in the past, and to a considerable extent in the present, there has been too little awareness on the part of teachers, and too little experience on the part of their pupils, of the range of Scottish poetry and story'. Chapter 3.

## PART I - 1940 - 1947

### INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL

#### **The Scottish Education Department and the Forces for Change - Events Leading up to the Establishment of the Sixth Advisory Council**

On the 29th of April 1942, the Rector of Dollar Academy, Clackmannanshire, Harry Bell, sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland. Although he held the position of Secretary of the Association of Headmasters of Secondary Schools, Bell was, he stressed, writing as an individual who had been moved to express disquiet that the country was no longer providing 'a flexible and progressive system of education suited to modern needs.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Bell underlined his case by appealing to Scotland's history of leadership in European education which now, however, stood in need of renewal. Indeed it was, perhaps, the weight of past worth that was producing the current inertia. He pointed to, 'the conservatism of teachers and especially of headmasters. Feeling secure in the virtues of the Scottish tradition, they have not always been willing to experiment or to accept new methods'. Bell readily characterised this 'tradition' as a concern for sound book-learning and unremitting scholarship, estimable qualities that were, however, now yielding their own excesses. 'In their desire to be thorough they have become... merely academic or even arid'.

What was needed to break down these rigidities, the letter went on, was a strong 'lead from the top, a new and special machinery which will produce a flexible and progressive policy adapted to changing conditions'. And by 'the top' Bell did not simply mean the established agency of the Scottish Education Department since 'its officers are too busy with day to day administration' to provide the boldly expansive lead that was now required. He envisaged an independent commission of distinguished public and educational figures that could proceed with a radical enquiry into the whole structure and governance of the nation's education from nursery up to post-school provision.

The SED responded to these suggestions with the mixture of vulnerability and conviction, of threatened proprietorship and tactical vigilance playing round a genuine concern for the continuing good stewardship of the Scottish school curriculum, that was to characterise all its dealings with calls for reform, both now and in the first post war decade. In the small and tightly-knit Department, the day to day formulation of policy was very much in the hands of its Secretary, J. Mackay Thomson, backed by his Second Secretary John Parker who was based in its London office. Their correspondence over the weeks, after Bell's letter had been passed on for their comment, records a complex of attitude in the SED as it edged its way towards the acceptance of some kind of 'independent' educational body while at the same time strove to retain control over its likely conduct.

An initial adoption of a comfortably patronising stance - the initial correspondence between Thomson and Parker includes the comment, 'This is perhaps more than they deserve; but Mr Bell is well-meaning and is friendly to the Department, so we need not grudge him this compliment' - was coupled with an anxious dismissal of the notion of any rival 'permanent Commission or Committee whose business it would be to sit in more or less constant session with its own staff'.<sup>(2)</sup> On the other hand, there was a shrewd awareness that this might be the opportunity to use a third-party as a way of tidying up long standing difficulties the Department had been experiencing in the implementation of its policies at school level. Here the critical area was proving to be the secondary schools where the drop out rate of pupils from the full academic 'senior' secondary course that led to the Scottish Leaving Certificate at the age of 17 was so alarmingly high as to undermine the vaunted Scottish tradition of equality of educational opportunity. During the 1930s the SED had relaxed the formal regulations surrounding the conduct and award of its Leaving Certificate so as to make the secondary course more attractively flexible for the pupil. However, it found that these intentions were constantly frustrated by the adherence of the schools to the traditional curricular pattern in all its harshly academic rigour.<sup>(3)</sup> Perhaps now, as Parker hopefully put it, an externally conducted inquiry if directed at the classroom level, 'might even be more successful than

departmental circulars or the efforts of His Majesty's Inspectors in persuading teachers to think out their problems anew'.<sup>(4)</sup>

Nor, above all, did Thomson and Parker wish to appear negative at a time when plans for post-war reconstruction were being laid in the English Board of Education and were likewise being demanded of its Scottish counterpart by the Government. This was especially so as the recipient of Harry Bell's letter was the newly appointed and vigorous Secretary of State, Tom Johnston, who had already made his general expectations clear by his own establishment of the 'Advisory Council on Post-War Problems', composed of ex-Secretaries of State, to consider how best to prepare for the necessary peace-time regeneration of Scotland across the whole range of social, economic and cultural concerns.<sup>(5)</sup>

Mackay Thomson's formal reply to the Secretary of State was a blend of cautious acceptance and Department-protective comment.<sup>(6)</sup> Opening up with the general remark that, 'I hardly think that you are likely to feel that his [Bell's] suggestions would lead to anything that we cannot serve through existing machinery', Thomson then went on to argue that while there had been 'a slowness to make adaptations', this was 'due to the conservatism of teachers and especially headmasters' and that the answer therefore lay 'not so much in the educational framework as in the school and the classroom, in the curriculum and in the aims and methods of teaching. The remedy is in the hands of the Headmasters themselves...' Thomson now pointed to the existence, albeit in wartime suspension, of a body that could indeed undertake 'the specific enquiries' into the curriculum that ought to satisfy the essence of Harry Bell's demand - the Advisory Council on Education.

If this suggestion represented more of a concession than Mackay Thomson ideally wished to make, it was still less of a one than it might have appeared to be. The 'Advisory Council' referred to had been established in the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act in order to attach to the Department a consultative body made up of university, local authority and school representatives.<sup>(7)</sup> However, the generality of the Act's wording had left the Scottish body in

the ambiguous position of having the exact definition of its powers established by practice. What made its position especially vulnerable was the determination of the SED to maintain the country's post-primary system as a strictly bipartite division between the truly secondary courses for an examination-taking, scholarly minority and a merely elementary schooling for the rest. This was in the face of a growing surge of opinion in favour of a more open, personalised education for all 12 to 17 year olds. After the First Advisory Council decided to test its own strength by making proposals for a secondary education-for-all policy<sup>(8)</sup> that ran counter to this long established bipartism the Department had effectively tied down succeeding councils so that by the late 1930s they had become no more than a useful adjunct and were confined to the specific remits that the SED carefully fed it.<sup>(9)</sup> Given that some movement was undoubtedly expected on the argument for educational reconstruction that Bell's letter represented, the re-activation of an Advisory Council with which it could continue its orderly pre war working arrangement was the SED's best hope for a manageable way forward.

These proposals quickly gained Secretary of State approval and there now followed a series of consultations with the SED as to the functions and composition of the putative council. In the autumn the required Order of Council was laid before Parliament and on the 27th November 1942 the new Advisory Council, the sixth such one since 1918, held its inaugural meeting. If Thomson and his colleagues had imagined that this event was to be no more than an orderly induction into the routine business of assisting the SED in its maintenance and gradual updating of the nation's education services, then the tone of Tom Johnston's opening address declared otherwise. He had freely amended the draft that the Department had as a matter of course supplied to him and had done so in order to include, 'the hope that they would regard themselves not as a mere committee of inquiry... (but) would regard themselves as a Parliament of Education, would select their own subjects for inquiry and would discuss among themselves the priority questions in education'.<sup>(10)</sup> Thus enthused, the Council set to and quickly drew up an extensive array of enquiry topics including one into the very control and administration of Scottish education.

By December 1942 the SED was thus faced with the prospect that 'their' Council, their canny answer to the pleas for progressive structural reform being made by estimable figures such as Harry Bell, was going to threaten rather than help sustain its own policy-making pre-eminence. Thomson had to work quickly to retrieve the position and did so by persuading Johnston that an overambitious programme would strain Departmental resources run down by wartime exigencies and that any investigation into fundamental issues of polity might arouse controversies that would best be deferred till the more settled circumstances of peacetime.

The result was that Johnston decided on a prudent modification of his earlier grandiloquence and now wrote to the Advisory Council with the requirement that its members restrict their choice of remits both in number and in specificity. The Council was sufficiently stung by this to strike a note of rebellion at their January 1943 meeting when it passed the resolution: 'That this Council deplore the fact that the Secretary of State had not invited them to submit a priority report on what modifications, if any, are required in the arrangements for administering the public educational services in Scotland and resolve to ask the Secretary of State to reconsider his decision'.<sup>(11)</sup> Only after further behind the scenes negotiations were the Council members persuaded that such an inquiry during wartime would prove exhaustingly contentious and thus reluctantly to drop the idea.

The Sixth Advisory Council continued to act, however, with considerable energy and freedom. Over the four years of its existence it was to produce a whole stream of widely praised, progressive reports on a full range of educational topics. Chief among them would be the much acclaimed **Secondary Education**, finally published in early 1947, <sup>(12)</sup> a document which more than 40 years after Harry Bell had written his letter to Secretary of State Tom Johnston was still being spoken of in touchstone terms: 'Scotland had a glorious opportunity after the war to seize the lead in educational advance when the Advisory Council in Education produced its 1947 report... it was by far the finest report on its subject and much more imaginative and far-reaching than the Munn and Dunning reports which it anticipated by 30 years' - (Raymond Thomasson, *Educational Institute for Scotland in 1982*), <sup>(13)</sup>

The **Secondary Education's** 884 paragraphs constitute an incisive criticism of the pre-war Scottish secondary curriculum and, in glowing, inspirational prose, a set of progressive alternatives that were to take over four post war decades to realise, and even then only in part. One of its longest sections is devoted to the school subject which it considered to occupy 'the cardinal place... in the whole scheme of education' - and to present the greatest pedagogical problems - English.<sup>(14)</sup>

#### **Secondary Education for All: The New Progressivism and the Academic Tradition**

It is possible to trace a clear causal path between a letter written in 1942 by a Clackmannanshire headmaster to the Scottish Office and the eventual issuing five years later of a report which has done so much to define the nature of Scottish secondary education and to set the agenda for its post-war development. It would, however, be naive to treat these incidents as constituting a self-generating narrative, impelled simply by the contingency of timing, place, individuals.

Bell's letter and the events consequent upon it were the visible elements in a movement of change that was already well advanced by the spring of 1942. His argument for structural reform was essentially a restatement of concerns that had been intensifying during the inter-war years of Depression and social deprivation as a range of bodies, individuals and periodicals campaigned for the introduction of democratic justice into the school system and a far more sensitively personal curriculum into the classroom.<sup>(15)</sup> Some legislative recognition to the progressivist urgings had been accorded by the 1936 Education Acts which had proposed a raising of the school leaving age from 14 to 15 by the end of 1939 (in the event deferred because of the outbreak of war) and an eventual lifting of it to 16.

Nor had the SED been inactive. While, in keeping with its habitual favouring of reform as a development of existing procedures that could be carefully monitored by itself, the Department

had proclaimed in its 1939 **Day Schools Code** that all post primary education was henceforth to be thought of as 'secondary', that is as a stage of education open to all rather than as a kind of schooling available only to those who had achieved the required primary school standard. Although couched in routine administrative terms this amounted to a significant conceptual redefinition: as the Advisory Council's Report put it, 'At last secondary education was officially recognised for what it is - a stage in the schooling of every child, not a particular kind of education to be provided for some but not for all'.<sup>(16)</sup>

The social convulsion of War was, in any case, leading to a heightened awareness of the inescapability of change. By the middle of 1941 the British government was beginning to look ahead to the needs of a new post-war society by calling for a range of reconstruction proposals. In March of that year, for example, the Cabinet through Arthur Greenwood, Minister Without Portfolio, demanded statements from the Education Departments on both sides of the border regarding their plans for 'securing equality of educational opportunity and for the general reform and expansion of the educational system',<sup>(17)</sup> while, as has been noted, a few months later, the Scottish Secretary Tom Johnston mooted his high profile 'Advisory Council on Post War Problems'.

Set against this background, the establishment of the fateful Sixth Advisory Council emerges as the almost inevitable strategic outcome of the SED's need to meet an irresistible demand for educational reform and to do so by demonstrating, at not too great a cost, an open-spirited capacity for accountable investigation into the conduct and quality of the services it was charged with administering. A letter written by the man who, after all, was Secretary of the Association of Headmasters of Secondary Schools,<sup>(18)</sup> thus fitted into rather than originated an historical process of change - or rather was made to fit into it by the opportunism of the SED.

This episode does, however, illustrate the issues implicated in that change and the terms in which they were addressed by those concerned with the conduct of Scottish education, not only in 1941 but for the years to come. Bell's call for 'a flexible and progressive system of education

suited to modern needs', which would be taken up by the Sixth Advisory Council's Report **Secondary Education**, was rooted in the progressivist movement of the inter-war years, a movement that had been working out a vision of a child-centred curriculum that would operate within an open structure. The seriousness of the SED's response to this individual letter demonstrates their awareness of it as a representative challenge to their own governorship of a service that it wished to husband through a gradual adaptation of its own preferred policy for a more strictly demarcated academicism. But as the Department's cautious manoeuvrings show, in practice the dichotomy was not so stark as retrospect might stereotype it: not only was there a need to observe the diplomatic requirements of co-existence and mutual accommodation, but the SED was guided by its administrators' awareness of what, in the given circumstances, was likely to make for effective action. As their concern for the wastage from its Leaving Certificate courses and their relaxation of the Code governing the entry requirements into secondary education indicate, they too were conscious of the need to change even if, inevitably, their emphasis was not to fall on a self-denying radicalism but on making their own structuring work better within the resources then available and as a demonstration of the efficiency of their own Scottish Education Department Service.

The necessary explanation of post-war change as a negotiation between two distinct ways of looking at the secondary school curriculum must, then, be made with regard for the ambiguities and adjustments that entered into the actions of those who had to mediate between them. In large measure, the differences were as much to do with the needs of practical government as of purist ideology. And if the SED's academic view was necessarily complicated by organisational self-interest and a concern for its role both in managing and in ensuring manageability, it remained to the 'progressivist' alternative to translate its enthusiasm into credible action. Before this could happen its adherents would have to achieve conceptual clarity. Here Bell's words show that the situation in 1942 was not a simple one of clearcut choices for we find his argument sprawling on the back of generalities. Terms like - on the one hand - 'progressive', 'flexible', 'modern', and, on the other, 'academic', 'conservative', 'Scottish Tradition' would have to be taken up and worked at by succeeding

would-be reformists; over the coming years they were to do so with varying degrees of interpretative security. One issue running through the history of post war Scottish education, and within it the subject of English, is that of definition, of the struggle to give substance to aspirations, of seeking the best means to restate and to carry forward an inheritance that Bell, significantly, identifies in national terms. What in the 'modern' world that he invokes does, or can, a secondary education for all within the 'Scottish Tradition' mean?

An over-riding concern for the post war educationist would be how to utilise his inherited stock of guiding terms as a basis for effective classroom action - and how to do so within the particular cultural, political and institutional context of 'Scotland'. If 'what?' is one leading question that Bell's lobbying is to set the next forty years, then another is that of method, of how to bring about change. At one level there is the question of the central authority, of how it should be composed, of what its powers should be. Bell argued for the SED to be supplemented and balanced by a body less tied to 'day to day administration', a Commission that could thus look out towards the larger matters of radical reform. The Department felt bound to resist this implied threat to its hegemony. The power, the accountability and detachment of a permanent administrative body made up of dedicated professionals and operating at the centre of a small country that occupies an ambiguous position within the United Kingdom as a whole, was to be another abiding post-war concern.

But as both Bell's and Parker's comments also indicate, the curriculum is not only a matter of decision making by those acting at the centre of affairs, it is also the outcome of thousands of day to day decisions made by the individual school-teachers who respond to the complex of institutional, practical and common-sense circumstances as they locally and personally encounter them. The expressions of frustration towards 'the teachers' and their headmasters show the contentious problem of relationships between the centre and the situation out there, of how to involve - or simply get at - the classroom practitioner in the concerns of educational change.

These are difficult but relatively precise questions. In 1942 Bell's response to 'the modern world', the British government's expectation that Scottish education would make its contribution to society's 'reconstruction', and the Secretary of State's ambitions for an economically and culturally regenerated nation impressed upon the SED that educational decision-making could not be a self-sufficient matter of epistemological validity and bureaucratic efficiency. Complex socio-economic and cultural pressures would continue to impinge themselves upon the schools and the SED throughout the post war period and perhaps the most insistent of all would be those gripping the Department here in 1942 - the expansion of the secondary education provision not simply in physical terms, though that was to become crucial during the years of the birth bulge, but as a product of growing 'democratic' aspiration.

#### **Individuals and Officials: the Agents of Change**

'Reconstruction', 'Equality of Opportunity', 'Progressivism' -these, then, are the kind of historical forces that bore down upon the individual actors on the Scottish educational stage in 1942. But although a macro setting established the general direction for events, their exact pace and shape were still the product of what certain people were doing - or understood themselves to be doing - at particular times. The incidence of Harry Bell's approach to the Secretary of State, his then tenure of the Secretaryship of the Association of Headmasters of Scottish Secondary Schools, the occupation of the Scottish Secretaryship by the radically socialist Tom Johnston<sup>(19)</sup> and the highly conservative, Department-defensive outlook of Mackay Thomson interacted in the specific way that led to the demand for reform becoming the negotiated outcome of the institution of the Sixth Advisory Council. And in its turn this led to the publication of the Advisory Council's report that was to make such a distinctive contribution to the progress and frustrations of post war Scottish education

The people on display in this story show that the subsequent development of the secondary curriculum would be an interplay between the larger imperatives and particular personalities, a matter of incidents and timings. They are also a vivid illustration of the way things could

and could not happen. As an individual headmaster sought to activate the SED, as within that office the assessments were made concerning the relative significance of people like Harry Bell and as the threat implied by his words was weighed against the opportunity they represented, as the political balances were nicely calculated, the memoranda exchanged and the negotiations entered into, what we can see emerging is the importance in a tightly organized education service of access to the centre, of personal contact and individual persuasiveness. Scottish education in the 1940s, as later, was showing itself to function through an intimate network of career officials, of school Inspectors, ad hoc and standing committees, of local authority directorate and certain influential teachers who might temporarily penetrate or even be co-opted into this system. The assurance and quality of post war reform would to a large extent depend upon the effectiveness of the interactions that this network could generate at any one critical time.

The future progress of what began in April 1942 would be dependent upon the cohering of a complex configuration of pressures, political awareness, personal inter-relationships, perceptions and happenings all intermingling within the wider setting of socio-cultural concern. But although the plot would be an intricate one, it would still have its leading theme, one that can be read in the minute sent by Mackay Thomson to his second in command John Parker the previous year - 'The main battle' he stressed, looking ahead to the post war world, 'will be joined on the vexed question of the curriculum from 12 to 15'.<sup>(20)</sup> In an earlier phrase he referred to the Department's 1939 Code that had instituted the concept of secondary education as a universal stage in schooling as 'the beginning of a new era'. The sense of conflict and of promise that those remarks together carry is echoed in the reactions to Bell's letter: Tom Johnston and the Sixth Advisory Council looked forward to the potential that the new Code offered the post war age for an expansive secondary education; Parker and Mackay Thomson only hoped that it would work and be manageable. But together they - and the events described in this Introduction - pose the crucial question for the post war curriculum and for its leading subject English: what in a new era of secondary education for all should be its form and its purpose?

## **REFERENCES**

- (1) Scottish Record Office (SRO) ED8/22 'The Sixth Advisory Council on Education in Scotland: Record of meetings, memoranda, draft reports 1942-46'.
- (2) SRO ED8/22: Parker to Thomson, 18th May 1942 with Thomson's appended notes, 20th May 1942.
- (3) See SRO ED7/1/47 and ED7/1/48, 'Post War Planning: Education after the War, 1940-42'.
- (4) SRO ED8/22: Parker to Thomson, May 15, 1942
- (5) See Johnston T (1952) *Memories*, Collins, London;
- (6) SRO ED8/22, dated 27th May 1941.
- (7) For a full and detailed account of the history and work of the Advisory Council, including some of the events dealt with in this chapter, see Young J (1986), *The Advisory Council on Education in Scotland 1920-61*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh.
- (8) SED (1923), *The General Organisation of Day Schools and of Continuation Schools and Classes*, (Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland), HMSO, Edinburgh.
- (9) SRO ED8/22: 'We could, of course, ask the Committee to begin by reviewing the educational system and to decide themselves what questions to consider,... but it would be better, I think, to follow our old procedure and to feed them with remits'. Mackay Thomson to Parker, 11th October 1942.
- (10) See Lloyd J M (1984) 'Tom Johnston's parliament on education: the birth of the Sixth Advisory Council on Education in Scotland, 1941-43', *Scottish Educational Review*, Vol 16, No 2, 1984.
- (11) SRO ED/8/22 The resolution is conveyed in a letter to the Secretary of the Scottish Education Department, dated February 2, 1943
- (12) **SED (1947)**
- (13) Thomasson R (1984) 'The Tarnished Image', *Times Educational Supplement Scotland (TESS)*, September 3, 1982.
- (14) **SED (1947)**,: 'English: Its Prime Importance', paras 269-278.
- (15) See Young J (1986), 'Progressivism, Consensus and Educational Reconstruction' (chapter 4).
- (16) **SED (1947)**, para 12.
- (17) SRO ED7/1/48: re Mackay Thomson's internal memorandum to the SED, March 26, 1941.
- (18) SRO ED8/22: 'Coming from the Secretary of the Association of Headmasters of Secondary Schools, this criticism of the present state of affairs can scarcely be ignored' Parker to Thomson, 18th May 1942.
- (19) Indeed, Johnston had only accepted office in Churchill's wartime coalition government on the assurance he would be given a free hand to develop plans for the revival of Scottish socio-economic life.  
Harvie C (1981), 'Socialist and Patriot', *TESS* 30 October 1981.
- (20) SRO ED7/1/48: Mackay Thomson to Parker, February 2, 1941.

**PART 1 : 1940 - 1947**

**CHAPTER 1 - THE ACADEMIC INHERITANCE : PRE WAR ENGLISH**

**Examples of the pre-war Syllabus: its Comprehensively Academic Character**

The Sixth Advisory Council's **Secondary Education** had forthright things to say about the current state of English teaching:

'No problem within the whole range of the secondary curriculum is comparable in urgency and importance with that of securing a good standard in the understanding and use of English. To fail in Mathematics or Latin is to leave boys and girls deficient in these subjects, but to fail in English is to leave them fundamentally uneducated. And the truth is that, despite the efforts and the improvements of a generation,, we are still short of full success in this primary task. Every recent committee on the curriculum has admitted as much, and the volume of criticism does not diminish'. (Paragraph 269)

At no level did it appear to the Council that school-leavers' preparation was such as to enable them to cope with the language demands of later life, for commerce and university alike constantly complained of a crippling lack of effectiveness in their recruits, whether it be in everyday communication or the clear-headed thinking demanded by advanced study. (270)

In its section on English, the Report works critically through the accepted divisions of 'the spoken word', 'written composition', 'reading' and 'literature', to find in each case a preoccupation with generalised knowledge and the merely schematic that muffles the development of the individual voice. The oral is neglected in favour of the written (280), in which mode teachers busy themselves with the variety of illustrative exercises that will furnish the rhetorical flourishes and the grammatical purity required by the weekly setpiece essay (288 - 292). There is all too little work on 'communication writing' and creative expression for real audiences (290-92), while class space is still given to the 'barren exercise' of 'the isolated study of grammar'. (299)

Reading matter is, the Report goes on, frequently drawn from passages of a classical, abstract nature to the neglect of those more contemporary authors who write about 'real seizable content' (293; 302-305). And in literature work there is a favouring of those 'indirect' writers who display the mannerisms of a self-conscious stylistician and a consequent demand that the pupil reader assumes a critical expertness that, at this stage, can only be apprehended by the laborious cramming of facts and the memorisation of other men's appreciations. All in all, boys and girls are given little encouragement to find their own way into books as worlds of feeling, imagination and compelling wisdom. (315-318).

In sum, the English syllabus of the pre war secondary school is seen by the Advisory Council to be in urgent need of rebuilding. It is remote, rigid, and insensitive to individual needs; it is expressive of a view of English as an academic subject to be construed through passive study rather than as a personal force or a useful preparation for life.

The Report attached these strictures to a wider indictment of secondary school 'failure' which, in its view, emanated from the importing into all levels of the curriculum the aims and methods that belong more properly to the 'bookish' minority. (105) It is certainly not difficult to find confirmation of these accusations in school workschemes, in examination papers, and in working party proposals for reform. The inculcation started early: a typical primary school 'scheme of work' of the 1930s prepared for the mandatory HMI approval shows that at the age of transfer (12), the pupil was expected to lug into the secondary course a formidable baggage of reading, recitation, literary knowledge, linguistic data and facility in various verbal routines.

The scheme submitted by the Edinburgh school, North Merchiston, in 1930<sup>(1)</sup> for instance, describes the weekly language regime for the final 'senior 3' year (11 to 12 year olds) as consisting of 5 hours on 'Reading, Speech and Word building, Intelligence [literary appreciation] and Grammar' while a further daily session is to be spent on 'Composition'

activity, whether writing or oral. The impression left by the language inventory drawn up for these young girls' and boys' weekly round is that of sheer bulk. There is to be a repeated loading on of content that is bundled up into numerous small articles of linguistic and literary knowledge. Pupils of this age group are expected in Writing to handle parsing, the analysis of complex sentences of up to three clauses, the full range of adverbial subordination and to make 'a special study of the verb to be'. For Reading there will be a close scrutiny of various rhetorical effects such as rhythm, form, word selection and intonation..

Statements as to teaching method suggest that the intention is to train pupils as scholarly tally clerks and to do this through a round of drill and recognition exercises. In their work on both their own and others' writing they will get into the routine of counting off stylistic effects, of sorting syntax into categories both general and particular. The "Oral Composition" lesson turns out to be a parts-naming session by which common errors and infelicities are identified and branded, these being such features as the hanging participle, the improper use of the pronoun, the phrase masquerading as a sentence. Throughout, the key terms are 'practice and training, training and practice'. Essay writing is to be approached through 'copious practice in phrases, similes, metaphors and the easier proverbs', literary appreciation consists of 'training in the recognition of form, thought, expressive rhythm, the manner in which the poet catches his effects', the reading of short texts is a 'training in interpretation', the library book an opportunity for 'continuous reading practice'.

At the age of 12, the pupil would, as a result of locally administered selection, be allocated to a post primary course. This could be under a range of headings - Two-year Advanced Divisions, Three-year Advanced Divisions, Higher Grade Schools, Intermediate Schools, Secondary Schools - but behind the apparent multiplicity of choice lay a straightforward bipartism that crucially directed pupils into either a short two or three year non-academic stream (the school-leaving age was 14) or invited them into the five year Scottish Leaving Certificate course, regarded as the prestigious gateway to the professions and to higher education.

The kind of work that was expected of the latter can be seen by reference to the SED's annual 'Circular 30' which laid down for each subject the required syllabus on which candidates were to be examined at the age of 17. Year after year throughout the inter war period their instructions were precisely the same: they were to be ready to demonstrate mastery of writing through a formal essay-style piece, to interpret a set prose passage 'of ordinary difficulty' by answering a battery of specific questions on it, then to give evidence of 'some knowledge of the history of the English Language', to proffer 'some acquaintance with the authorship and period of the leading masterpieces of our literature', to demonstrate a capacity for 'intelligent criticism' - and 'show a comprehension of the principles of English grammar (including etymology and prosody)' throughout. (2)

It was recognised that this degree of rigour was not altogether suitable for the less academic child. For the majority of pupils who did not gain places in the Leaving Certificate course, the 1939 Day Schools Code placed its emphasis more on the practical matter of communicative mastery, and the personal enrichment to be derived from fostering 'a love of reading' and 'recitation, dramatic work, oral discussion and debate'. (3)

But the two or three year 'junior secondary' (4) course lacked the firm shape and established status that the Scottish Leaving Certificate imparted to its five year 'senior' and in the 1930s concern was shown that usually it turned out to be no more than a truncated academic syllabus or an aimless topping up of the primary school experience. The newly formed Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE)<sup>(5)</sup> set itself the task of investigating ways among existing good practice of serving the needs of those pupils, placed in the post primary Advanced Divisions (i.e. non Leaving Certificate) courses, as a 'problem of importance and urgency'. In the event, however, its substantial 1931 publication, *Curriculum for Pupils of Twelve to Fifteen Years* (6) made no real departure from the knowledge-centred pattern we have already seen as being established at primary and culminating in the Leaving Certificate. Its 65 page section on English is packed with the same array of categorical data, the same basic division

of the subject into 'composition and reading' with sub divisions into constituent elements such as grammar, etymology, speech training and punctuation, the same racks of illustrative exercises in analysis and construction, the same sets of recommended texts drawn from the shelves on which sat the approved classics.

From its antecedents in the primary school to its culmination in certification at 17, and throughout both the academic and so-called non academic branches, we find that the prevailing model for pre war English secondary courses in Scotland was that of factual training. Everywhere pupils between the ages of 12 and 18 encountered a syllabus that justifies the Advisory Council's accusations of a content that is impersonal and undifferentiated, of a methodology that is dependant on precept, rule inculcation and drill. There is no ready evidence, even in the non certificate course, of more than the odd pedagogical gesture towards the experiential or the circumstances of the child's own culture any more than there is any interest in the possibility that the child could play a constructive part in his or her own learning. Apparently, the academic approach reached out everywhere, only modified by the intensiveness and level of its particular application.

Even when there was an attempt to devise a 'different' course to meet particularly difficult needs, the result tended to be a dilution rather than radical reformulation. A clear example of the irresistible ubiquity of the academic model is provided by some of the evidence that the Advisory Council heard in its search for progressive practice. In November 1945 it invited John Baird of Darroch Secondary School, Edinburgh, and the Depute City Education Officer of Edinburgh, George Reith, to present the findings of a special committee that had been set up by the city to devise courses for the less able, courses that would not simply 'take existing schemes and take the difficult bits out...' but really would 'prepare them for life'.<sup>(7)</sup>

The pupils concerned were the especially challenging 'C' category, that is pupils measured as having an IQ of between 70 and 85. The result<sup>(8)</sup>, however, is not much less than the familiar academic course tied up into packages sufficiently small as to make them manageable. The

familiar classic texts are there but in selected and abridged form - "Treasure Island", "Quentin Durward", "Oliver Twist" - writing is to be built up through a series of exercises weighed considerably light so that the pupil may move through word expansion into sentence work and paragraphing out towards the short statement or simple letter. Such modifications as there are lie in the presentational - an attempt to relate poetry and its concomitant work on rhyme and descriptive effect to choral and dramatic work, a grammar regimen restricted to the homely demands of error identification.

#### **The Academic Tradition: Rationale and Professional Appeal**

It would be easy to decry the English represented by these samples as being locked into some pre-era of epistemological innocence, during which teachers knew no better than to do what was most ready at hand, that is to treat the syllabus as the sum of all available knowledge which would then by a common sense pedagogy be handed over to the pupil bit by bit. To see it, in fact, as a curricular case waiting for its inevitable if somewhat delayed historical development.

In this connection, indeed, the Advisory Council approvingly quotes Sir Percy Nunn's reference to 'the barbarous simplicity' of contemporary teaching.<sup>(9)</sup> Elsewhere, however, its Report describes the secondary curriculum of which English is the central example, in terms that suggest it is the product of a more complex and persuasive force:

'It is significant how readily any consideration of secondary school methods tends to occupy itself with the question of teaching techniques...For it is neither contradiction nor quibble to assert that our secondary schools are full of good teaching and poor learning. The teaching of the subject specialists is good in the quite real sense that it is marked by accurate and ample scholarship, by clarity and balance, and very generally by vigour and liveliness of presentation'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The outlook criticised here may have been impersonal in its academic self-absorption but it had its own pedagogical satisfactions. If what it produced was very much a teacher's

curriculum then it was one that was all the more firmly embedded in the values that he would find professionally compelling, that is those of a mature 'scholarship' and the opportunity its necessary transmission offered for forceful exposition and self-projection.

Indeed the term 'scholarship' and its associated values point to one leading reason for the persistence of the teacher-centred model. 'All the traditional subjects should be continually thought of and presented not so much as bodies of ordered knowledge but rather as great fields of human endeavour and achievement'<sup>(11)</sup> - again it is an Advisory Council stricture that - conversely - provides a justification. The Council might have been campaigning for a more personalised approach but was doing so against the view of 'English' as 'a body of ordered knowledge' that aligned its current practice with a strong and continuing epistemological tradition. Through it, the atomistic approaches of North Merchiston, SCRE and the Leaving Certificate could be justified as the dutiful unpacking of the subject's extensive content, and the classwork drill and analysis as the essential means of inculcating the qualities of orderliness that gave it distinctive shape and purpose.

That even the innovator of the 1930s found the 'ordered knowledge' description of English a compelling pedagogical analysis is apparent if we return to the most basic of the syllabus examples so far considered - the Edinburgh City proposals for the teaching of those 12 year old pupils that its selection procedures had identified as most definitely non academic: the 'C' stream, IQ 70 to 85. It is, perhaps, its handling of writing that clearly reveals the apparent productiveness of the academic approach. The process of writing is to be thought of as the subject 'composition' which may then by a straightforward taxonomy be analytically arranged into a clear working schedule. Thus Term 1, Year 1 commences with the 'word' and engages the pupil in an elementary lesson in construction that requires her to add various phrasal formulae to a given verbal core. Then comes the filling in of blanks within complex sentences so that she may become accustomed to a larger expressive scale, and be made ready for the next step of formulating fully rounded statements by the addition of easy 'which' and 'who' clauses to simple sentences. By such means, knowledge and practice accumulate so that

Term 2 can permit 'simple attempts at paragraphing', then 'very simple' one sentence long formal letters until the Term 3 culmination of the letter to a friend and the '6-10 sentence narrative in some subject or incident on which a lesson has been taught, eg. story, poem (ballad), biography, familiar incident'.

Examples such as this one show the essential functionalism of the pre-war 'academic' curriculum. Its intellectualism was really an exercise in deductive logic by which its initiates could quickly reduce any topic to its most basic elements and then articulate them into a series of manageable verbal steps. For the teacher a satisfying degree of pedagogical skill could be demonstrated by the opportunities for lucid exposition and for the dextrous manipulation of rules and routines that were afforded by the inherent rationalism of this regime. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is the given model that pervaded all inter war syllabi: it was there in the North Merchiston Scheme where 'grammar' and 'writing' are put into close working relationship and it was there in the SCRE's composition proposals which ran to a classified listing of some 30 topics that are graduated to progress from 'material supplied ready-made so that the pupil's mind may be left free to arrange and express it' up to 'material invented by the pupil... Argumentative topics of the type "What I think about..." (12)

Ultimately, for those who stayed the course, it could be considered a versatile, even liberating system. Although at the most elementary levels there was much subjugation by set drill this was, even here, accompanied by an introduction into the knowledge and procedures that make up reading, writing and talk when thought of as 'English'. Even the less able of the Edinburgh 'C' programme, were, in their first Term, not merely required to make up sentences by adding 'words' together but were invited to select 'adjectives' and 'adverbs' to accompany the given 'subject, verb and object'. Later it was to be the joining on of subordinate 'clauses' that converted the simple sentence into a 'complex' statement. Action was processed into the knowledge by which verbal problems were first defined, then resolved: the pupil was being given the chance to manipulate a strategy that rested on an attainable body of facts and concepts, which were organized into a demonstrably logical procedure.

It was didactically conducted classwork of this type that would, at the higher reaches of the secondary curriculum lead to the capacity, as the Scottish Leaving Certificate requirement has it, to provide proof of 'an adequate training in composition' by 'the power of writing lucid, connected grammatical English', 'power of interpretation' and of 'proficiency' in comprehension 'by his power of applying grammatical knowledge to the interpretation of words and constructions'.<sup>(13)</sup>

Five years of satisfactory secondary English training and knowledge gathering were thus seen as conferring 'power' on the individual; they were also, as the words indicate, an induction into a set of linguistic and cultural values. In the SED stipulations for the Higher Leaving Certificate, the phrase, 'lucid, connected and grammatical English' chimes sonorously with other prescriptions such as 'to read with care and thought', 'the careful study of a few well-chosen masterpieces', 'careful and methodical instruction', 'intelligent criticism'. These are preferences that go beyond the merely functional; they are a promotion of those expressive and interpretative qualities that pledge themselves to the decorous and the moderate, that is to the products of discipline and mind rather than the outpourings of creative individualism. And this inculcation was a universal one: in the section of the 1939 Code that is devoted to the non-Leaving Certificate course, English was defined as 'the main instrument of culture'<sup>(14)</sup> and while - for example - 'a love of reading' was certainly to be aimed at, the purpose was not immediate pleasure but rather, that 'in after life leisure may be enriched by the resources of literature'. The 1931 SCRE curriculum carried a similar insistence that while reading offered 'some degree of pleasure', its satisfactions were to be described in terms of discipline rather than simple affectiveness: it was a 'discipline in comprehending', an engagement with works that 'enlarge the discipline of life by supplementing, refining, and correcting it', and an arousal of an emotive response that in 'the undistracted reader is always worthy'.<sup>(15)</sup>

It is in the earnest conviction of these formulations that we can fully appreciate the persistence with which the academic tradition possessed the teaching imagination of the pre-war subject specialist. The English curriculum was no mere stockpiling of content but, much, much more largely, the means of hardening the mind and of establishing intellectual self-sufficiency. At one end of the secondary course we find pupils being introduced to the reading of poems and stories under the lesson title of 'Intelligence'<sup>(16)</sup>, a designation which corresponds to the strenuously analytical scheme, by which enjoyment was to be won through an appreciation of rhetorical effect. At its Leaving Certificate culmination, the requirements were couched in terms which establish the examination as a test of general capacity and mental possession: in reading 'the candidate will... exercise his mental faculties in endeavouring to discover the meaning', in writing 'his command of English should appear in his faculty for writing a set composition on a prescribed theme', in literature 'he may be expected to have some acquaintance with the authorship and period of the leading masterpieces of our literature'.<sup>(17)</sup>

What the SED regulations were really declaiming here was the secondary course as an initiation into a higher form of cultural experience, a worthiness to share in a community of inherited values and refined practice. Its senior English syllabus was intended to stand as a whole way of looking at education, one that was avowedly humanist and as such reached back into and took on authority from the deeply rooted classicism of the Arts degree studies at the universities through which all Scottish secondary teachers had to pass.<sup>(18)</sup> The methods that we have noted could be seen as an extension to the vernacular of those that had always marked Degree work in the older languages, that is construing, grammatical categorising, a respect for style as the product of rhetorical effect, an absorption with the written text and a corresponding relegation of the oral, the study of literature as heritage. And, beneath it all, the insistence that practice must be preceded and justified by reference to first principles.

Because the English of the 1930s was anxious to take on the civilising intentions with the scholarly methods of the prevailing academic humanism, it could purport to offer a complete education, both in terms of a pupil's development and ultimate wholeness. The SED Code

represents these ambitions at their most magisterial but when a Primary school scheme of work can conclude its statement on literature with the assurance that 'by thus arousing the pupil's aesthetic sense through the appreciation of Poetry and the Noble Prose passage his moral sense is always stimulated and brought into play'<sup>(19)</sup>, we can see how thoroughly the classicists' relating of trained analytical method to an assured ethical outcome has infused the spirit of interwar English teaching and given its subject-centred practices both a philosophy and a history.

### **The Academic Tradition: a Critique**

Although the criticisms made by the Advisory Council were strongly expressed they were directed at a way of curricular being that was thoroughly established and not just in a practical but also a fully professional sense. Impersonal, unlovely and fact-centred the 1930 secondary curriculum might have been, it was far from being a mere lumber room of assorted content to be shifted by some kind of unconsidered pedagogical portorage into the spaces between the ears of vacant minded pupils. Indeed, the **Secondary Education Report** found itself arguing against a code of practice that was much more firmly established than any progressive alternative it might be pointing towards. By the War the academic tradition had become institutionalized to such an extent that it made an almost automatic enlistment of teachers of all age and ability levels and formed an inescapable pattern for any new developments.

Its easy dominance gave a monolithic character to Scottish schooling. In the histories of other countries' English teaching it is usual to trace the working in of at least two other strands which offer relief and enrichment to the central academic theme - the child-centred 'progressive' and the useful skills or 'elementary utility' movements.<sup>(20)</sup> In Scotland, as elsewhere, the "progressive" argument existed at classroom level only as a patchy and idiosyncratic minority venture; its chief role, was, as we shall detail in later chapters, to act as a persistent body of critical opinion by which to question the rigidities and shortcomings of mainstream practice.<sup>(21)</sup> The utility tradition could, however, have been expected to carry a greater influence, being associated as it was with the elementary school conditions of the early

days of mass education. In the 1904 Day Schools Code, the SED had, indeed, laid down for the primary/elementary school majority the ideal of 'usefulness' - but it had done so in these terms: 'School work should aim at producing the useful citizen, imbued with a sense of responsibility and of obligation towards the society in which he lives. It should render him - so far as the school can do so - fit in body and mind and should prepare him for the rational enjoyment of his leisure'.<sup>(22)</sup> Utility for the young Scot is thus defined as a civic state of being, rather than as a vocational capacity, and its attainment the product of a kind of all purpose rational humanism that attaches the requirements of the university-bound minority to the emergent mass curriculum. The result is that in the early 1940s, the Principal Teacher of English at an Edinburgh junior secondary school could remark, 'Now the Junior Secondary School has inherited the syllabus of the Senior Secondary School, a syllabus which claims (hitherto unchallenged) to be what the university wants; and so the first three secondary years of every pupil's schooling is the same...'<sup>(23)</sup>

This comment points to both the strength and the weakness of the academic tradition as it had developed in Scotland. Its massive certainties gave the individual teacher a strongly supportive framework but one that produced a rigidity that made it quite incapable of responding to the developing circumstances of an expanding and various secondary school constituency. As the Advisory Council summed up its case 'Why Present Methods Often Fail'; 'Yet a great part of this teaching fails of its purpose, and it fails very largely because it is wedded to methods designed originally for a bookish minority and still not ill-suited to them, but lacking in appeal to the many others who now fill the secondary classrooms'.<sup>(24)</sup>

The consequence by 1940 was a curriculum that could only seek the answers to contemporary needs by attempting to repeat its past successes, successes that had been won at other times and with a different audience. The kind of blank stasis that this could produce is to be read in the detail as well as the broad outline of the Edinburgh City scheme examined by the Advisory Council, newly devised, remember, to meet the needs of the city's definitely non-academic 'C'

hordes. For the first year of 'composition' it offers a series of busy prescriptions, but 'Year 2' reads simply, 'As in First Year - with gradual elaboration and extension on same lines'.<sup>(25)</sup>

There is something constitutionally negative about a curriculum that can only offer those pupils who will be entering what is, after all, their final year before leaving to go off into the wider worlds of employment and adult experience such bleak repetitiveness. 'Year 2 the same' is an implied admission that the pupil will, despite the lucidity of the syllabus and any didactic virtuosity in its presentation, never achieve true linguistic redemption but must instead be forced to rejourney through a school-long purgatory of more and more parsing, of more and more preliminary exercises and dummy runs.

This assessment is confirmed by the research carried out into the language diet of Scottish schoolchildren by William Macauley.<sup>(26)</sup> His findings relate to classroom practice of the early 1940s, but these he discovered to be based still on schemes formulated up to 20 years previously, schemes in which grammar featured extensively. Year after year, for an average of 30 minutes daily, from the early reaches of junior primary - 'formal grammar teaching has to begin at 7½ years of age' - pupils are subjected to the same rounds of particular analysis, a cycle of verb conjugation, pronoun relating, clause and phrase interchanging - and have to be because of their patent failure to master even the most basic of grammatical terminology. For this was the real weakness of the academic curriculum, that it sealed itself from the intrusion of any source of renewal and this is so because there is built into its subject-centred creed an interpretation of failure that would only confirm its beliefs and thus perpetuate their futility. As Macauley reports, if pupils after 4 years of solid grounding showed a complete inability to see even the common pronoun or to distinguish between the adverb and the adjective, then the teachers' natural' reaction was to assume that they had not done their work properly and therefore must have a fifth, sixth and seventh year of intensified effort.

Teachers who were enclosed by the assumptions of the academic tradition were simply not open to the explanation that Macauley established by his research, that analytical grammar was

beyond the intellectual capacity of the average prepubescent child and in any case, presented, as it was, in terms remote from her own language usage, could make no real engagement with her expressive needs. Because its attention is so resolutely fixed on what the young person is to become, it must ignore, indeed distrust, what she presently is - and with it any resources or experience that she might have to contribute to her own development.

This dismissal of the personal is clearly pronounced in many of the pre-war workschemes, among them one we have already considered, the SCRE syllabus for 12 - 15 Advanced Division pupils. In its section on 'Reading' (27) the routine avowal of 'pleasure' as an aim is moderated to become 'some degree of pleasure', and this is because literature must be selected according to 'its power to induce the desired experience in adolescents'; accordingly 'it is not the business of the teacher to find out and prescribe for reading what his public wants; he may be more concerned to check and destroy certain appetites'.

Phrases such as these demonstrate how fatally easy it was for classical assurance to move into patrician superciliousness. They also reveal a hardness of attitude that is quite incapable of bending towards new demands. During the inter-war years there was a growing realisation that effective participation in the life and work of modern society required oral as well as literate skills. The essential irrelevance of the academic response to this new demand is shown by the 'new' proposals enunciated in the North Merchiston 'Scheme of Work': 'Pupils should be taught to breathe properly; to assume an easy, upright pose, whether sitting or standing, with the correct position of the lips, tongue and teeth in the production of the vowels and various combinations and consonants; they should aim at the qualities of sweetness and correct intonation. Slurring and slovenly pronunciation require constant correction'.

The requirement that talk should meet some ideal linguistic form through the painstaking observation of the correct movements was all too likely to inhibit the living voice and to reduce what could have been the chance to open up the 1930 classroom to the personally reported experience into simply another subject of knowledge and drill called 'Speech Training'.

It is artificialities of this kind that remind us that the English which the Advisory Council had to consider in 1943 was not so much a natural and inevitable form of human knowledge as a product of an evolutionary process which had made a selection from the possible variety of language experiences within society and had pressed its own institutional shape upon it. The particular amalgam of skills, heritage, transmission and character moulding that we encounter in the primary school of North Merchiston, SCRE's junior secondary programme and the senior school's Leaving Certificate were held together by a harsh humanist procedure that excluded much that could, with equal logic, have been adduced from the proposition of an education in one's native language: the vocational, the individually creative, the lore and intercourse of the local community, allegiance with the expressive disciplines of drama, music and art were all valid but ignored alternatives. Indeed so wide was its potential scope that the Advisory Council's Report wondered whether it was useful to think of English as a subject at all and instead asked whether it should not be thought of as a curricular force, the responsibility of the school as a whole to tend and to nourish.<sup>(28)</sup>

#### **The Academic Tradition: its Popular Hold**

In the event the Sixth Advisory Council settled for working within the given subject curriculum and for directing towards it the series of pupil-centred recommendations with which I began this chapter. It was, however, indicative of its perplexity over the matter of 'English' that it felt obliged to preface its comments with a call for an inquiry into the whole business of its teaching in Scottish schools.<sup>(29)</sup> In this the Council was acknowledging the problems that awaited any post-war reformer. Despite its dour narrowness, its pathological inertia and its overextended scholasticism, the academic curriculum was at least there. And formidably so, since for many English teachers it represented the one cogent explanation of the knowledge that constituted their specialist subject and the one from which it was possible to deduce a complete set of teaching specifications.

Given in addition to all this, the complexities of definition and the absence of any sustained alternative school experience, it is not surprising that although the Advisory Council's views were widely shared they were by no means universally so, even at the level of public protestation, let alone in the day to day classroom where the grim practicality of the academic approach and its power of drawing on the teacher's ingrained allegiances would always make it difficult to translate criticism into action. For example, while an Educational Reconstruction Committee of the Educational Institute of Scotland (the EIS)<sup>(30)</sup> reported in 1943 in favour of a less subject-orientated curriculum, one that should be based more on 'activity' and on a degree of timetable integration, correspondence to its *Scottish Education Journal* (SEJ) during that year expressed divided opinions.

It was in the autumn of 1943 that writers to the SEJ debated the matter. The former Headmaster of Broughton Senior Secondary School, Edinburgh, A L Pearson, led by making a fierce attack on the failure of the Scottish Secondary School to produce literate pupils at any level up to and including the university entrant. Here he cited Professor Dover Wilson<sup>(31)</sup>: 'No problem of instruction is today more serious than the teaching of English and Scottish boys and girls how to use their own tongue in speech and writing. That the problem is being mishandled is proved by the fact that while there are thousands of specialist teachers of English in the country, the majority of students entering the Arts Faculties of the universities can neither read nor write in any comely or effective fashion'. Pearson concurred: at the age of 15 most pupils 'cannot be trusted to write a simple composition or letter without major errors. Their spelling, except in the higher classes, is poor, their reading halting, their speech atrocious'.

Mr Pearson's solution was as blunt as his verdict -it was simply to increase the time available to English, presumably so that pupils may have more of the same. This was a viewpoint that M. Morley, an English teacher at Saughton Junior Secondary School, Edinburgh, rebutted with a satirical attack on the contemporary academic habits: 'what will an English teacher do with the extra time?... Is more emphasis to be placed on the "scientific method" in parsing, analysis, etymology, prosody, figures of speech, spelling and handwriting? Are the extra

periods to allow for additional notes on the masters for use in the Leaving Certificate Examination? Is the number of blue pencil marks on written exercises to be increased?

On the other side, however, the former Rector of Kirkcaldy High School, John Rose, was quite certain that the extra time was needed and was so because teachers and pupils had to redouble their efforts and to tighten up their existing practice: 'In my opinion, its chief fault is that English as a subject is unorganised, and offers so many Bypath Meadows to the unwary teacher to linger in.... the chief improvement would be a sensible reorganisation of the teaching of grammar..... It should be logical always, with three steps: 1) Observation of work done by word or clause; 2) inference as to kind or class; 3) quotation of definition as authority for inference'.

It is, of course, as easy as it is entertaining to quote the colourful period pieces to be picked up in the letters columns of any old periodical. The individual origin of the views expressed cannot securely be held to stand for those 'thousands of specialists' that Dover Wilson<sup>(32)</sup> invoked. Perhaps one answer as to how they felt - and a measure of the challenge that confronted any who wished to establish new thinking in English at the beginning of the post war period may be found in this news report of an address by Colm Brogan in November 1944 to the Western Secondary Division English Section of the EIS on 'A New System of Examination in English':

'... Mr Brogan saw no reasonable excuse for the fact that so many as 70% of twelve year old children in the West of Scotland failed to express themselves satisfactorily in speech and writing.... The remedy, he suggested, and at the risk of being called a reactionary was the restoration of the Qualifying Examination and, in the Secondary school, Intermediate Examination. Preparation for these examinations entailed some admittedly dull and mechanical work; but development of the mechanical aptitude is the prime requisite towards acquiring facility in speech and writing.... It was apparent from the keen discussion which followed that the majority supported Mr Brogan in his strictures and approved of his remedies.'<sup>(33)</sup>

## REFERENCES

- (1) This scheme is lodged in the 'History of Education Centre', London Street School, Edinburgh.  
It bears the signature of the approving Inspector, dated October 3, 1930.
- (2) SED (1939a); Circular 30 (1939) issued by the SED, June 19, 1939. See 'Appendix 1, 1 English'.
- (3) SED (1939b) Memorandum Explanatory of the Day Schools (Scotland), Code 1939, para 35.
- (4) 'These names senior and junior Secondary Schools have no official sanction but they are commonly used and understood to mean schools offering five-or six year courses and three-year courses respectively'.  
SED (1947), p 32
- (5) Established in 1928 as a result of joint initiatives by the Educational Institute for Scotland and the Association of Directors of Education. During the interwar years its funding derived entirely from these two bodies though later - from 1946-47 - the SED began to contribute support which steadily grew in significance until the present situation was reached, namely the absorption of the SCRE into the network of committees and councils under the hegemony of the Scottish Office.
- (6) SCRE (1931) Curriculum for Pupils of Twelve to Fifteen Years (Advanced Division), University of London Press, London.  
The comment that this was 'a problem of importance and urgency' appears in the Preface to this work.
- (7) SRO ED8/50 'The Sixth Advisory Council's Special Committee on Secondary Education, 1943-46', evidence taken October 2, 1945.
- (8) Edinburgh Corporation Education Committee, (1943), Schemes of Work for 'C' Pupils in Secondary Schools. This document is paper SRO ED8/50, SE11
- (9) SED (1947) para 127.
- (10) SED (1947) para 105.
- (11) SED (1947) para 128(3).
- (12) SCRE (1931) p 29-32.
- (13) SED (1939a).
- (14) SED (1939b) para 35.
- (15) SCRE (1931) p 50-54.
- (16) 'Scheme of Work', North Merchiston School, 1930.
- (17) SED (1939a) - 1.
- (18) The possession of an appropriate university degree had long been mandatory for teachers of secondary subjects in Scotland.
- (19) 'Scheme of Work', North Merchiston School, 1930.
- (20) See, for example, (Australia), Reynolds, C (1986) Towards a Social History of Curriculum: the Case of English or How the English Curriculum Works, paper presented to Fourth Conference of The International Federation of Teachers of English, Ottawa, May 1986; (England and Wales) Shayer D (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-70. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- (21) See also Young J (1986), Chapter 4.
- (22) Cited by MacGillivray D, 'Fifty Years of Scottish Education', in Clarke J, ed (1919) Problems of National Education, Macmillan, London, p 17.
- (23) Morley M, Principal Teacher of English, Saughton Junior Secondary School, Edinburgh: SEJ September 10, 1943 (correspondence page).
- (24) SED (1947) para 105.
- (25) SRO ED8/50, Paper SE11.
- (26) Macauley W J (1947), 'The Difficulty of Grammar', British Journal of Psychology, Vol 18 (November).
- (27) SCRE (1931) p 50-54.
- (28) SED (1947) paras 272-274.
- (29) SED (1947) para 275.

- (30) **Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) (1942), Report of the Committee on Educational Reconstruction, Edinburgh.** Founded in 1847, the EIS had become the largest and most powerful teacher organization in Scotland; its role has been not only to negotiate pay and conditions but to enquire into and to monitor educational issues through its own panels and working parties.
- (31) The correspondence cited here is contained in **SEJ** between September 3 and October 8, 1943.
- (32) Then Regius Professor of English at Edinburgh University.
- (33) **SEJ** November 3, 1944.

The 'Intermediate Certificate', instituted by the SED to act as a Secondary 3 examination, to be taken en route to the fifth year Leaving Certificate, had been discontinued in 1924. The function of the Qualifying Examination was to select pupils for their respective junior or senior secondary courses at the age of 12. Brogan is referring to a local modification of the Scheme so as to place greater reliance on intelligence testing and school estimates rather than the actual removal of this examination.

## PART I - 1940 - 1947

### CHAPTER 2 : HISTORY AND CIRCUMSTANCE - THE MEANING OF A SCOTTISH EDUCATION

#### Control and Selection: Codes and Certification

Despite individual objectors such as Harry Bell, despite the SED's own anxieties concerning drop out rates, the subject-centred curriculum was proving to be a remarkably durable model. While orderliness of content and rationality of method gave it an undeniable substantiality, there were even more compelling reasons for its hold over the pre-war secondary teacher. Built as they were into the national examination system and rooted in his upbringing as an educated Scot, academic structures and academic values were, for him, part of the very nature of things.

In its critical account of the prewar curriculum the Sixth Advisory Council made its relationship to the Scottish system of certification very clear. Its members saw these two aspects of current schooling as not so much a matter of partnership as of subjugation:

'The teacher's own tests are innocuous, but we find the case proved against the external examination. It involves defined syllabuses and uniformity of treatment, and thus dominates the curriculum..... It exalts memory, depresses the non-examinable and becomes an end in itself, so that even where it spurs to harder work, it destroys the finer educational values'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Behind this verdict lay the whole history of secondary education in Scotland. On only one occasion did the SED consider it proper to give evidence to the Advisory Council - that was June 22 1944 when a visitation led by the Secretary himself, Mackay Thomson, came down to instruct it in the national governance of the secondary school curriculum. This it elected to do by expounding on the role played by the Scottish Leaving Certificate.<sup>(2)</sup>

Significantly its account was cast in the form of an historical explanation. The examination had been inaugurated during the 1880s, at the time when the Department had been striving to articulate the standards that might be required of any school that wished to be designated sufficiently 'high class' to mount properly creditable secondary courses. The purpose of the examination was to discover what the secondary schools were capable of - a 'Leaving Certificate' set, run and marked under the auspices of the central Department was a purpose-designed instrument, by which to monitor the efficiency of the individual school and to impose uniform standards throughout the land. It was also the means of giving the products of the Scottish system a nationally guaranteed currency value and for this reason the highest pass level had been aligned with that required for entrance into the Indian Civil Service.

As their account shows, the Scottish Leaving Certificate was wielded by a Department that had been intent on establishing a firm, clear control over the rapidly evolving secondary system of the late nineteenth century. It was also the opportunity to carve out its favoured pattern for its future development. After its inception in 1872, the 'Scotch' Education Department had assumed responsibility for an educational system that was proving to be an overgrown and variously tended mix of institutions. In the rural areas the well rooted small elementary parish school continued to offer the chance of an all through education right up to university entrance for the individual who showed himself to be sufficiently brainstrong and self-willed to travel that journey. In the rapidly developing cities, however, the expansion of the country's commercial life was implanting an alternative variety of schooling. There, the establishment of a well-to-do, suburbanised middle class was pushing up a more exclusive strain of school, one that would be devoted to high grade education, in both a social and a scholarly sense, and also act as a securely institutionalised gateway into the universities. The traditional parish School Board system retained a considerable hold on local affections and indeed had enjoyed notable individual successes through its devoted nurture of sturdy, homegrown talent. Nevertheless the provision it was able to make for a more advanced schoolwork was subject to the vagaries of small community resourcing and parochial

judgment. Clearly, it was quite incapable of achieving the efficient manufacture of a distinct university and professional pupil class.<sup>(3)</sup>

This was a situation that the new Department felt it had to master as speedily as possible. Acting out 'the duty of the custodian of the public interest'<sup>(4)</sup>, the SED sought to impose the pattern that would most clearly establish its own hegemony and enable it to make the most demonstrably efficient use of the country's growing investment in education - and here it was also prompted by the disastrous showing of Scottish candidates in the recently instituted Civil Service examinations.<sup>(5)</sup> In the cause of establishing a coherent national system within a United Kingdom framework, the Department had opted for the version that favoured the building up of centres of academic excellence and for a centrally controlled examination.

The result was to be more like the emergent city than the old rural pattern: instead of the intimate all-age, all-ability school, there would be a bipartite policy of clearly designated courses - if not always of actual buildings, since local demography might not permit that. Entrance and exit were to be guarded by a national examination system. Efficiency, for the SED, thus meant examination and curriculum drawing together towards the manufacture of national academic elitism - an argument now recapitulated by Thomson and sufficiently impressively for the Advisory Council's Secondary Committee (then) convener, R C T Mair<sup>(6)</sup>, to proclaim that 'he felt the Department almost required to have a leaving certificate... to satisfy the Department that the general educational level was up to a certain standard.' To which, not surprisingly, its Secretary replied that 'he thought that was essential'.<sup>(7)</sup>

This little exchange reveals just how politically productive the SED found its examination system to be. In practice the Leaving Certificate proved to be the vantage point from which it could control the whole curriculum and thus impose its own favoured model for the development of a national educational system. The SLC's credentialising function generated a supporting infrastructure of Departmentally manufactured circulars, codes, Inspectorate

visits and model papers; the rigour of its questioning demanded an intensiveness of course preparation that could only be accomplished by an unwavering concentration on its academic requirements and be undertaken by pupils who had been carefully identified for the task by entrance examination at the age of 12 - which thus assumed a crucial selectorial role that came to dominate the character of primary schooling. In this way the SED was able to make the whole curriculum work towards the academic outcome that was ostensibly intended to be the attainment of an able minority.

So commanding did the Leaving Certificate become that its influence spread into the outposts of the elementary sector. The prestige that the SLC bestowed upon the senior secondary school's academic courses almost compelled imitation while its junior counterpart's implied inferiority led to a demoralisation and to a consequent failure in pupil course completion that could only be redressed by the granting to it of its own examinable 'Day' certificates.<sup>(8)</sup>

Besides, there were forceful social and economic reasons for a uniform examination-driven academic strategy throughout the system as a whole. In the years following its inception it was felt that an orderly, didactic course would help erect the kind of solidly structured schooling that would enable the Department effectively to respond to that late Victorian preoccupation, the working-class masses. In this respect, the purposes of the new universal education established in 1872 were complex: they were to produce basic literacy, to impart the institutionalised habits required for an economy that was becoming increasingly based on corporate planning and clear chains of command and, above all, perhaps, to fashion a binding common culture which could attract assent and provide a personal model for acceptable social and work-place conduct.<sup>(9)</sup>

The themes that run through the SED's repeated definitions of the elementary syllabus are those of tangible knowledge and unquestioning discipline. Skills certainly feature but they are to be considered as an aspect of acceptable behaviour and as an induction into the improving heritage of British (rather than an individualistically local or even Scottish)

culture. There is much weight given in the early 1878 Scotch Code<sup>(10)</sup> for 10 to 13 year olds on the memorising of touchstone literature so that they would ever afterwards be able to offer a portable demonstration of their training in the English classics:

'English Literature and Language: Stage 1 - 200 lines of poetry, got by heart, with knowledge of meaning and allusions.

Stage 2 - 300 lines of poetry... with knowledge of meaning and allusions, and of derivations of words. Writing a paraphrase of a passage of poetry from the lines repeated.

Stage 3 - 300 lines of poetry... with knowledge of meaning and allusions, and of some general knowledge of the history, construction and etymology of the English language. Literature, codified here as ingestion rather than personal experience, set a standard for rote learning and minor imitative scholarship that was to depersonalise the elementary/junior secondary English curriculum for the next half century and more. Although, for example, the 1903 Code did set out to insert a measure of vocational training, the concept of 'usefulness' was made to refer to the dominant interests of civic discipline: 'But School work has for its end and aim objects more important than preparation in the narrow sense for any particular occupation. It should aim at producing the useful citizen.'<sup>(11)</sup> And twenty years and a World War later, the 1923 Code insisted that the 'Advanced Divisions' of the elementary school must submit schemes of work that gave 'instruction of the scholars in... the study of English prose and verse suited to the age of the scholars, and the committing to memory of passages of literary merit.'<sup>(12)</sup> Even, as noted in the preceding Chapter, the relatively innovative 1936 Code tempered its invitation to 'pleasure' in reading with the stipulation that all such work must be consistent with teaching the pupil towards 'the rational enjoyment of his leisure'. And in the year before the Sixth Advisory Council first met, it was still possible for a leading Inspector - who was 'indeed to become the Senior Chief in the post war years - to exhale the very breath of classical rationalism in an internal memorandum on the topic of junior secondary education:

'We fight in vain if behind us there is not kept burning a flame of learning and culture, for literature, music and art are the vehicles that carry the secret of the ultimate indestructibility of the human spirit and the graciousness of civilised life. If teachers could somehow make ordinary pupils realize that, though the world may offer them little wealth, any one of them can have an enviable life; that the delight of a fertile, well-stocked mind is greater than that of many material possessions'...(13)

#### **Control and Selection - The Role of English**

HMI Pringle's rhetoric idealised a state of educational selection and control in which the 'ordinary' pupil was called upon to accept its judgments as to what should be his particular curricular path to the good life. In this process of SED-given refinement English was to play the leading part. For the junior secondary majority it was to be their 'main instrument of culture',<sup>(14)</sup> while for the senior secondary elite, an attested command over the native language was viewed as a vital form of quality control. In explaining the status of English as the one compulsory 'Higher' in all the permitted subject groupings that qualified for a Leaving Certificate award, Mackay Thomson told the Advisory Council that 'it would be dangerous to let people loose with a leaving certificate if they could not spell and could not punctuate and could not string two or three sentences together.'<sup>(15)</sup>

The Departmental Secretary's assertion neatly illustrates the inter-relationship of English, credentialisation and social propriety, a relationship consummated by the binding force of the national examination system. By the late 1930s this had been refined into an orderly series of rites of passage: on entering the primary school the young infant could already see ahead the Qualifying examination that would determine entry into a secondary course, each of which would, however, culminate in its own SED run certificate - the Day School, Higher or Lower, and the Leaving Certificate, Higher or Lower,<sup>(16)</sup> respectively.

Together, these examinations enclosed the school career within a curricular compound that was demarked by factual inculcation and analytical procedure, so that wherever they went pupils would encounter the same essentially academic features, varied only in levels of difficulty. Take as evidence, the Qualifying examination sat by pupils in Dundee in 1935<sup>(17)</sup>, the Day School (Higher), and the Leaving Certificate Higher English which they would sit several years later at the end of their secondary careers in 1939. In all three tests, pupils are asked to write 'Compositions', answer 'Interpretation' passages and deal with questions on 'Language and Grammar'.

Within these subdivisions pupils confront a ritualistic range of demands. For Composition they may choose between an essay on a topic drawn from their literary and historical heritage (Qualifying: Bonnie Prince Charlie, Mary Queen of Scots; Day School: 'Tam O'Shanter', 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'; Higher: Bannockburn, Flodden, Culloden), or describe a familiar experience (your new house; a farmyard, classroom, mother's kitchen; a favourite hobby), or express an opinion (the shops at Christmas time; road safety, the wireless lesson you like best; modern advertising, the place of art in the home), or write a letter to a friend (after a week's holiday; recounting a sea or hill adventure).

Reading capability is in all three cases tested through the setting of a short prose extract followed by a battery of one or two mark questions that ask the candidate to extract specific information from the text, explain phrases, identify parts and figures of speech. Knowledge of the language is also directly elicited and here a considerable body of information is required that builds up from punctuation correction, parsing, subordinate clause identification and synthesis of short sentences at Qualifying, through the Day Certificate's irregular pluralisation, Biblical allusions, complex sentence analysis up to derivations, figures of speech, prosody at Higher. These examples represent a progression in knowledge but there are some activities that repeat themselves at each of the three stages - at Higher level, as before, pupils are still being asked to identify parts of speech, pick up Biblical references, write out

sentences illustrative of lexical meanings, combine short sentences into complex sentences, correctly punctuate given passages.

This series of tests combined to impress upon the pre war pupil an English that was a fixed regimen, success in which depended upon the trained manipulation of a limited set of routines. Pupils are required to 'identify', 'give', 'summarize', 'combine', 'name' but never - outside the 9.30 to 10.30am confines of the Composition paper - to debate, discuss, question, create or relate to their own experience. Although the Interpretation passages carry statements of opinion and argue a case, they are petrified into verbal quarries for the extraction of fixed blocks of information or the deep level mining of grammatical and lexical specima. These examinations helped to establish the subject as a received experience, a disciplining of the spirit of inquiry into the picking over of linguistic fragments.

The material used to carry these demands confined the pupil to the position of recipient of other people's valuations: the essays are on several domesticated topics (hobbies, descriptions of familiar homely scenes), on the semi-mythologized past as represented by battles, queens and late 19th Century poetic classics, on the comforts of philosophical resignation - 'Sweet are the uses of adversity' - or on safe contemporary controversies such as 'road safety' and 'modern advertising'. Some of the set topics do refer to the pupils' own experience, but do so through the evocation of a smoothly bourgeois life-style in which young people go away to spend a week with schoolfriends, take day trips to visit the city, move into residences with gardens, express opinions concerning the place of art in the modern home, listen to the wireless and live in houses where the kitchen belongs to mother. Similarly, the Interpretation texts present a picture of the world as one which is helpfully filled with useful creations like the dromedary camel (Qualifying), where public occasions such as the annual country fair afford the opportunity to pen gently patronising personal observation (Day Certificate) or in which we may celebrate the inevitable rise of a British parliamentary system run on progressively scientific lines (Macaulay in the Higher).

### **National Certification as the Dominant Curricular Model: Evidence given to the Sixth Advisory Council**

Serving the cause of social modelling, the national examination system continued into the 1940's to act as the dominant curricular model. This meant that any who wished to propose its effective postwar reform could not confine their arguments to debates on the nature of learning or on the individual child but would also have to grapple with the wider political and societal forces that were mediated through the Qualifying, the Day Certificate and the Highers.

A particularly serious consequence was that although the system operated a strict bipartism little had been done to develop a corresponding diversity of educational experience. The senior secondary model ranged everywhere, reaching into those junior areas that felt less and less at ease in its presence, selecting and laying waste, as it grimly served the needs of an academic elitism. Those parts of the system that were most in need of a humanising flexibility and that could have most easily been freed from the examiner's grip, often seemed to be the ones to be held most rigidly by his mechanisms. Debating the issue of 'educational opportunity' with his Inspector colleagues, J Gilbert Frewin HMCi bitterly wrote in 1941:

"The vicious principle by which secy HMs [sic] are content to produce "men in their own image" must be broken before we can speak of equality of opportunity.... Post-war Education will provide equality of inducement by becoming broad enough to recognize that the educational values placed upon school subjects today - a survival of mediaevilism - is unwarranted. I am frequently amazed at the patience of [junior secondary] pupils who remain with sullen indifference and without rebellion... Schemes of work and methods are designed to fit pupils of [senior] secondary schools. Shakespeare and Scott figure as introductions(!) to English literature.....The "leaving date" is a happy release'.<sup>(18)</sup>

That this radicalism within the SED was regarded as somewhat idiosyncratic is evidenced by Mackay Thomson's appended comment, 'Mr Frewin approaches the subject from an angle of his own'.<sup>(19)</sup> Indeed at this period, the Department was doing much to perpetuate the very situation that one of its Inspectors was here criticising. Its Leaving Certificate had helped to

establish it as a strong central agency, its directive powers greatly strengthened by the monitorial obligations any school wishing to offer entrants to its national examinations had to submit to. Mackay Thomson explained to the Advisory Council that each presenting school had to fill up forms, giving the types of course on offer, the number of weekly periods devoted to it and for each subject a detailed 'Scheme of work' that had to gain the local Chief Inspector's approval. Teachers also had to submit estimates of their pupils' performances and the final results could not be issued until an Inspector had personally come into the classroom to conduct oral examination of selected candidates.<sup>(20)</sup>

Such a vigilant administration and the thoroughgoing bureaucracy that attended it, gave the SED a compelling authority and, in the schools, a continuous sense of presence. The post war educational reformer would have to recognise that change would only come about if the SED could be persuaded to adopt its cause or to devolve its powers. In 1940, however, the Department seemed more intent on continuing to subdue schools into obedience to the uniform academic standards its examinations had been designed to establish - and this meant working towards loftily external standards. As Mackay Thomson divulged, the Leaving Certificate was the outcome of university consultation, from which teachers were rigidly excluded. Its supervision was at 'the highest level', its setters coming from the university where often it is the Professor himself who was responsible; even the printing was carried out at a secret location south of the border. Lastly he hoped that his audience would be sensible of the supreme confidence in which they were now sharing: 'The Department had always made that a complete mystery and these were matters which he hoped very much would remain a mystery despite the fact that he was unburdening himself to them'.

These words vividly express the potent emotional hold that the 'Highers' had over the whole educational community in Scotland. Its processes were wrapped in a teacher-excluding secrecy; every aspect of its operation was calculated to add to its mystique. Aptly, the Leaving Certificate was, by a later Chief Inspector, to be termed 'the holy of holies',<sup>(21)</sup> since it was an iconic presence that was to go on presiding over the post war scene, its genesis enveloped in the

powerful social forces that the educational system was expected to serve, its reputation for academic probity a symbol of the enduring verities of the Scottish tradition.

To many other Scots educationalists, quite apart from those who sat on the Sixth Advisory Council, an assessment system that was so dedicated to the production of an academic minority would be unable to meet the challenges of the new post war world. In 1946, the repressively static character of a regime so entrapped in the socio-cultural assumptions of its historical origins was passionately criticised by the Director of Education of that part of the country where the problems of secondary school expansion would, perhaps, be felt most acutely, Glasgow:(22)

'We have been trained and educated as if our sole function was to groom boys and girls for the Scottish Leaving Certificate. From secondary school to university, from university to training college, from training college to secondary school again, so the vicious circle grows... The whole secondary course is designed with the Leaving Certificate requirements in view, despite the fact that only a matter of 4% gain the certificate. To my mind the provision of courses for these children [the 'non-academic' majority] suited to their age, ability and aptitude is the most important single educational problem confronting us at the present time. If the raising of the school leaving age is to mean nothing more than the taking on of an extra year and giving young people something more of what they are getting at the moment then we are courting disaster'.

#### **Two Models of National Education? SED - Teacher Relationships between the Wars.**

By the time of the institution of the Sixth Advisory Council, opposition to the exam-ridden character of Scottish secondary education and its related power structure had become something of a national campaign. The EIS, in particular, had long urged an alternative system based on the concept of 'a full secondary education for all pupils'. Similar views had been expressed by the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) which had, indeed, petitioned the SED to remove 'the gulf that the country's official educational policy was

creating between able and less able children.<sup>(22)</sup> And throughout the succeeding interwar period, influential individuals such as William McClelland and William Boyd <sup>(23)</sup> as well as these organizations ensured that the vision of the open school, moved by an active pedagogy based on principles of child psychology, was established as a 'progressive', alternative version of Scottish secondary education.

It is the ever-presence of this national debate concerning the values and organization of the country's post-primary education, that has led to the writing up of its history under strictly adversarial colours. At the centre is pictured the grey eminence of the small body of men that make up the SED, who were grimly determined to impose an 'efficient' regime of elite-producing separatism; out in the country there were scattered the opposing forces of local, teacher and progressive educationists, the people who, conscious of its rural and small town origin, strove to sustain a view of the good, the truly Scottish, society as one in which there should be flexible, local control and secondary education for all.<sup>(24)</sup>

While that is a depiction that does give the story of Scotland's education a persuasive historical dialectic, it fails to reveal the complex series of inter and intra-actions that were to undermine the capacity of the the post war reformer to act decisively.

Certainly by the 1930s the SED had long since erected for itself the dominant position in Scottish education. Much of this supremacy had been derived from the powers assumed by it in the late nineteenth century when, on its inception, the Department had been confronted by a conglomeration of many hundreds of localised School Boards that quite clearly required to be ordered into a larger coherence. What thus rapidly developed into a position of necessary strength was reinforced by a combination of individual and structural circumstances; the SED was established as a tightly knit group of career administrators who acted within a Scottish Office that was overseen by a small group of Government ministers who were, however, responsible under the Secretary of State for Scotland for the whole sweep of domestic affairs; with no minister to be given an exclusively educational brief, the Department's

officers were relatively free to decide on their own priorities and practice. This was an opportunity that had been thoroughly exploited by the lengthy commands of the first two Secretaries, Sir Henry Craik and Sir John Struthers, men of strong conviction, both, who had dedicated their office to what they saw as the modernisation of Scottish education within a British framework and who had consequently implanted an expectation of autocratic central rule over the scattered countries and towns that comprised the 35 Local Authorities. The result was that by the 1920s it was possible to speak of the Secretary to the Scottish Education Department as possessing a level of power somewhere between that of the deposed Czar and the newly instituted Mussolini.<sup>(25)</sup> The argument can then conclude that when the Sixth Advisory Council first met in 1942 it had behind and before it two clearcut models for the development of secondary schooling, attached to their respective modes of educational management.

In its network of Divisional and District Inspectors of Schools, the SED carried, moreover, the eyes and the ears with which to probe into every school in the land, so making each one of them immediately answerable to the range of Codes and Examination regulations that emanated from Edinburgh. What assisted this omnipresence was the size and the intimacy of Scotland - a country too small to warrant any more than the uniform SED run examination system or to possess more than the small dispersal of local authority officials with whom it was always possible for the Department to treat on a pressingly informal, one-by-one basis.

The SED suzerainty was, however, far from absolute for the line of decision making was complicated by the fact that the education of Scotland has been constitutionally founded on the principle, not of central domination, but of partnership. It might be a national service but it has been the local county and city (and now Regional) authorities who have been responsible for its actual delivery. The academic structures so deplored by Glasgow's Director of Education in 1946 prevailed because of the extent to which his own and every other authority were prepared to conspire with them. Their commitment to a secure senior secondary course was demonstrated by the way in which the locally operated selection procedures were exploited

so as to permit a high degree of access - it thus became the norm to allow as many as one third of 12 year olds into the elitist senior secondaries. Moreover, the ingrained parochialism and sheer amateurishness of the average education committee, that since 1929 had been directly answerable to their larger and rates-conscious Local Authorities, had produced conservative bodies which tended to weigh the hazards of innovation against the housekeeping and familiar manageability of received practice. And, the public position of their EIS notwithstanding, accounts of the time indicate that the ordinary headteacher and his staff constituted an inward-looking force that found that their occupational satisfactions lay in the efficient operation of an examination system where professional worth could be measured by the proportion of pupils they could get through their Highers. This predilection was at one with that of their local communities where parents desired nothing better than that their offspring should get their share of a proper academic education.<sup>(26)</sup>

Indeed, the evidence shows that the forces on the ground were rather less willing to move forward than an SED generalship which was, by 1940, aware of the heavy casualties that were being caused by a rigid meritocratic strategy. As the 1920s gave way to the 1930s the Department became increasingly concerned at the very high level of pupil wastage from its secondary syllabuses, an expenditure caused not merely by pressure on family budgets but also by the over-rigorous interpretation by the schools of what constituted a proper SLC course; the SED was also becoming conscious of the generally low esteem in which the junior secondaries were held and their slavish desire to win a reputation by adopting the unsuitably academic methods of their senior neighbours.<sup>(27)</sup>

In response the SED offered a series of modifications to its requirements for the recognition of Leaving Certificate courses<sup>(28)</sup> and - for the junior secondaries - attempted to promote a policy of 'different but equal'.<sup>(29)</sup> If these palliative measures did little to cure the prevailing academicism it was largely because the teachers were reluctant to take them; increasingly the Department documentation of the time records frustration at the schools' failure to adapt themselves to the needs of the less studious majority.<sup>(30)</sup> Towards the end of the thirties, it

accepted that a strict secondary/elementary divisiveness was not really working, and that with the impending raising of the leaving age to 15, a determined effort would have to be made to devise reputable courses that would acknowledge the full range of pupil capacity. It was for this reason that its 1936 Code had proposed the dropping of the nominal 'non-secondary' designation for those who had failed their Qualifying, had finally declared a policy of 'secondary' education for all, and while maintaining a strict distinction between its senior and junior syllabuses, had invited schools to respond wholeheartedly to the challenge of the three year non-academic course.<sup>(31)</sup>

Evidence for a modestly progressive standpoint within the SED that was in many respects in advance of classroofs feelings may be seen in its memoranda and HMI reports. In 1927-28 the Report of the Western Division stated: 'there is a large proportion of pupils who find employment in industry and commerce for whom the traditional academic type of education may not be the most suitable.... as yet, however, there are few signs of breaking away from tradition and securing greater flexibility and variety of curricula';<sup>(32)</sup> W F Arbuckle HMI in 1936: 'They must throw out the lumber. In history, children commenced by learning about the early periods and by the time they had left school at the age of 14, had not arrived at the modern historical period....'<sup>(33)</sup>; The Inspectors to the Secretary of State, a year earlier, 'There is a great deal to do, so much that there is a danger of not seeing the wood for the trees, not seeing the general spirit of the school for the multiplicity of special subjects';<sup>(34)</sup> in 1942 the SED complained, 'The Department have endeavoured to impress Education Authorities with the necessity of framing special and self-contained schemes of work for pupils taking only three years of secondary education, and have strongly deprecated any tendency to provide such pupils with a truncated five year course....'<sup>(35)</sup> but with such little success that Mackay Thomson bitterly commented, in a letter to the Secretary of State, 'the years from 1930 onwards make up one of the most barren and depressing periods in the history of educational progress in Scotland.'<sup>(36)</sup> The Department at this time was especially anxious to use its Inspectorate as a curricular advance guard, to ensure that they must 'keep before them the need to be looking out on life', encourage the nurture of 'the school beautiful' and - in a final access of combative

zeal if not of historical good taste - the 1935 imprecation that 'the Inspectorate are the storm troops in the advance that must be made'.<sup>(37)</sup>

On the EIS side there was a similar pragmatic desire to adapt attitude to the characteristics of the given system. In particular, the Institute and its teacher members recognised the possibilities for individual betterment in a regime that was geared towards the effecting of advancement by contest. If dualist schooling denied the majority a 'real' secondary education, it could at least ensure that a substantial and deserving minority received the opportunity to get on through a coherent system of examination backed by the dedicated monitorship of the SED; its practical support for a policy that it ideologically decried was enlisted by the directness with which the very rigour and exclusiveness of the senior secondary school constructed a ladder of opportunity which the able and diligent young could ascend by merit towards the university and the professions. Much of the energy and commitment of the interwar EIS was appropriated by its efforts to make this system work even more efficiently. Here the developing technology of intelligence testing began to attract the Institute which, through its sponsorship of SCORE, was able to encourage the researches of William McClelland and Godfrey Thomson into the refinements of allocating life-chances by examination.<sup>(38)</sup>

The result was that by 1940, the bipartite pattern was in the eyes of many more than the SED established as an educationally competent arrangement, its selection procedures legitimated by the apparent provision of a psychometric procedure that was capable of yielding precise prognostic calibrations. So, in 1943 Edinburgh Corporation's Education Committee could declare, 'Perhaps the most important discovery of modern education and psychology has been the ascertainment, by means of intelligence tests, of the extent of individual differences of ability',<sup>(39)</sup> and a year later the EIS submit to the SED a proposal for an all-in 'omnibus' school - but one which should be strictly divided into categories according to IQ, that would run from the top 5%; called the 'A' stream, (IQ 122 plus) down to the bottom 5% (78 minus).<sup>(40)</sup> It would seem that by the War, the categorical assumptions of a divisive secondary schooling based on academic measurement had entered the thinking of SED, EIS and teacher alike.

**Metaphor and Experience: the Meaning of a Scottish Education**

What made the equivocal thinking of these protagonists even more ingenerate was their cohabitation of a landscape that possessed, and indeed continues to, an all-enclosing and rugged educational sub-culture. Those who have been concerned to discuss the quality of its schools, have rarely been content to focus only on the immediate problem but have also related their observations to the larger meaning and uniqueness of Scottish education.

In such an ecology, every observation of the prevalent classroom survival pattern is liable to expand into an invocation of the national destiny. However, arguments which thus address the collective consciousness derive their impact from the directness and the passion with which they make their appeal, the result being a selective universalisation of what was and is truly 'Scottish'. The strong partisanship and emotive energies thus engaged can create instinctual allegiances and dichotomies not clearly open to balanced, rational self-evaluation.

The very first appendix to the Sixth Advisory Council's **Secondary Education Report** enumerates seven 'Scottish Traditions',<sup>(41)</sup> thus taking on a quasi-factual standing from their positioning among the succeeding data concerning procedures for pupil transfer and itemisation of teacher duties. In this, the Report is simply participating in a familiar authorial practice, for educational document after document reifies Scottishness by tabulating its inherited features in much the same manner as they might then go on to list SED Codes or detail Departmental subdivisions. Cruickshank prepares her account of teacher training with a chapter on 'The Scottish Tradition', Mackintosh's general survey, Neave's analysis of the 1960s, Bell's and Grant's comparative study of the British system all contain explicit sections on the topic while James Scotland's magisterial two-volume history concludes with a thirty page definition.<sup>(42)</sup>

A collation of these various sources does in fact produce a remarkably consistent depiction of quintessential educational Scottishness. The synthesised version tells us that Scotland

possesses a system of greater antiquity than almost any other European country (certainly England's), that it is marked by a rich, distinctive mixture of democratic and repressive qualities that owe their formation to its origins in the 18th and 19th Centuries when, in the countryside and the provinces especially, thousands of little communities were proud to set up their own parochial school that was open to all classes and conditions and was able to drive into each the schooling that would take them as far as nature - and God - had intended. For the majority this meant a healthy fear of Divine Providence and a strong grasp of the basics, while for the able the fact that their teacher would be a university trained master assured them of the classical grounding that would give them access to the nearest university. There the student would study for his MA in an institution that was characterised by the inclusiveness of its intake and the breadth of its general humanist course. And so elementary and varsity were joined together to form an articulate system through which the brightest and the most diligent could progress to the very top. Although it was staunchly local, the desire to emulate, to hand pupils on to the next stage in the system generated a binding achievement ethic that was defined in academic terms, and which made for a strikingly homogenous pattern. The result was that when the 'Scotch' Education Department was set up in 1872, it was quickly able to establish a strongly centralised government which effectively reproduced the same habits of obedience in the nation's teachers that they were accustomed to exact from their pupils. In sum a harsh, hierarchical regime, grimly efficient in its dedication to the principle of individual betterment, unlovely perhaps but commanding the respect of the foreign visitor and worthy of a grudging pride in those who had survived its stoney rigours.

One of those interviewed for this study whose own teaching career dates back to the prewar period is Archibald ('Archie') Watt, for many years Head of Department at Mackie Academy, Stonehaven.<sup>(43)</sup> Asked what he considers to be the distinctive quality of Scottish education, he replies in archetypal terms:

'It used to mean excellence! It meant that the ploughman's loon could sit on the same bench as the minister's son... unique, something that expressed the indomitable character of the Scot... back to the rigours of the land - the case of Lewis Grassie Gibbon and his dominie Alexander

Gray helping him to become a great writer, lending him books, working with him after school, taking a personal interest, helping him to get on.'

Although the current school of socio-historians have now produced a convincing revisionist account that insists that the complicating influence of the later urban divisive school system receives its recognition as an alternative 'Scottish' model,<sup>(44)</sup> it is Watt's evocation that has been the abiding one. For many others have seen the Scottish tradition's most honoured aim to be that of upholding the principle of equality of opportunity for all and have sought to dramatise it through the image of the 'lad o'pairts', the humble village boy who from whatever so lowly a station and however remote a croft could, given native wit and determination, rise up to gain the schooling that would enable him to graduate in a University system that prided itself on being open to all duly qualified entrants - after which he could prosper in the legal system, found a shipping line, invent the steam engine, serve his country as Governor of a Canadian province or - even - return to his native heath as the next village dominie. A biographical incantation that establishes in iconographic form the means of summing up that distinctive mix of democratic openness, of earnest endeavour and individual push to get on that might best be termed 'egalitarian competitiveness.'

It is also, as that phrase suggests, a profoundly ambiguous picture for if it depicts democracy it does so by interpreting its fulfilment as the equalisation of the chance to succeed - and to fail. The ideal of academic virtue rewarded carries its own grim Calvinist converse: the devotion of the Education Service's energies to the most robustly gifted would enable it to point to individual success stories, but it would also lead to the distorting of the needs of his less able fellows, to a tendency to attribute school failure to the inherent stupidity and sloth of the average pupil and to a consequent neglect of curriculum development and pedagogical innovation. It forged a magistracy that could be variously liberating and damningly graceless; its preoccupation with scholastic values as the means to personal betterment built an environment in which advancement and derogation would work together. A darksuited regime, policed by the tawse and neurotically obsessed with exactitude. Another of my witnesses, younger than

Archie Watt but one whose own schooldays were completed in 1939, was James Beedie<sup>(45)</sup> and he tells the story of the time when as a 12 year old the class were studying Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village'; they were asked by their female teacher the meanings of 'vice' and 'merit' and the young Beedie, who was one of her most diligent pupils, put up his hand to answer. Unfortunately in his eagerness he rushed his response, so completely confusing his definitions that he got the pair the wrong way round. The result was a sound beating and an imperishable memory that was however to be lightened by the knowledge of later academic success and a career in the teaching profession that had treated him with such harshness.

The command to stick in, to get on and so be able to get out has fashioned many biographies whose recounting is complicated by personal ambivalence. The Aberdeenshire farmer and writer John R Allan described his early century schooling as 'a machine..... concerned mostly with inessentials, with the three R's instead of the eternal verities. It produces wage earners instead of intelligent and happy men and women'. Yet within a page he is telling us that 'I was a laid o'pairs myself and I offer my own experience as a tribute to the system'.<sup>(46)</sup> If the prewar Scottish curriculum was an education for life rather than for living, if it was, although provided for all, narrowly shaped to the destiny of the lad o'pairs, then there were beneficiaries as well as victims and within the same individual an intricate twisting together of resentment and pride, of gratitude for the personal outcome and guilt over the fate of the less well endowed.

The 1979 volume **As I Remember: Ten Scottish Authors Recall How For Them Writing Began**<sup>(47)</sup> contains individual descriptions of a range of inter-war schoolings which testify to the striking uniformity of a countrywide system that can thus produce the shared memories of the same round of parsing, Sir Walter Scott and the belt, the same abrupt severance of the young Scot from his native environment, whether it be George Mackay Brown's Orcadian fishing settlement, the rich Gaelic culture of Iain Crichton Smith's Lewis or the studious ignoring of Robert Garioch's interest in the writers and the tongue of his Edinburgh in preference to the standard works of Chaucer, Milton, Lamb and Addison. Brown calls it 'the huge grey

unimaginative machine', Smith and George Bruce an entry into 'another world', alien and severe; for Sydney Tremayne, Ayr Academy is simply and curtly 'the usual authoritarian Scottish school'. But from the constancy of criticism emerges a not altogether grudging acknowledgment that the local school could yet guarantee a solid start in life and behave with a committed authoritarianism that could throw up individual teachers whose own bookish dedication was able to inspire a memorable, enduring love of literature and high thinking - figures like Maurice Lindsay's 'Baggy' or Derek Thomson's James Barber, classroom performers who produced Crichton Smith's 'secret world which I treasured and didn't want tampered with at any cost'.

Such memories running through a thousand individual careers, and now patterned and retrospectively evaluated within the framework of received explanation, have contributed to and been confirmed by the collective consciousness of what being 'an educated Scot' means. What we are dealing with here, in fact, is the creation and application of myth, a way of defining and being defined by the individual but shared experience of schooling, an enlargement of the personal into a powerful source of national identity. Selective and ambiguous though its content may be, the myth has proved to be an insistent one, capable of possessing the loyalties and complicating the thinking of those who set out to change their own country's way of going about the education of the latest generation of Scots.

That the results can be complex, contradictory but quite possessive may be illustrated by an interview Alexander Scott, Head of Department of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, gave to a teachers' magazine in 1982.<sup>(48)</sup> Having mockingly criticised the educational system as repressive and fact-dominated - 'You sit there and I'll tell you what it's all about' - and having roundly declared his own socialism, Scott then feels compelled to deplore what he perceives to be the results of a liberalised curriculum within a comprehensive setting: 'The pupils have got no Classics, they've got no philosophy, they've got no theology, they've got no history...then there's grammar; they've got no knowledge of the basic structures of poetry, scansion, all these basic skills...' He then declares, 'I stand for elitism.

Without elitism all societies are doomed. I am a socialist', an apparent paradox that Scott manages to resolve by referring it to his understanding of the Scottish tradition as being one of 'democratic combativeness'.

It is not altogether surprising, then, that the members of the Sixth Advisory Council, a body which contained many who were themselves products of the country town education where the lad o'pairts tradition had been at its purest,<sup>(49)</sup> were susceptible to similar impulses. When the Scottish Education Department rendered account to it of its conduct of the Leaving Certificate, it chose to do so through chronicling its history, a history that was, conclusively, to be seen in terms of continuity and bequest: 'Mr Thomson said he was carrying on with complete conviction the system bequeathed to him by his predecessors'. The response was not wanting: 'Mr Robertson said he would like to say that heads of schools recognised that there was no more careful and faithfully conducted examination in the Kingdom... Mr Crampton Smith added that they could not have a better examination'.<sup>(50)</sup>

These were acclamations from a committee that in its earlier meetings had damned the tyranny of the examination system and which was later to attempt to change it in favour of internal school-run assessment. Sixteen members, reformers though they undoubtedly wanted to be, were, however, themselves caught up in the intricacies and the compulsions of the very target for their efforts, the Scottish educational tradition. As they debated the curricular and examination schemes that would change existing practice they would encounter the resistance of an established national system. As this incident shows, they would also encounter their own very Scottish selves.

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- (1) SED (1947) para 765
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- (3) See McPherson A (1972), **The Generally Educated Scot: an Old Ideal in a Changing University Structure**, Unit 15, Open University Course E282.
- (4) Ibid
- (5) See Anderson R D (1983), **Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland**, Clarendon Press, Oxford;  
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- (6) Also Director of Education, Lanarkshire. Mair resigned from this position March 23 1945 to be succeeded by James J Robertson (later Sir James), Rector, Aberdeen Grammar School.
- (7) SRO ED8/50, SE44 Minute of Meeting, June 22, 1944.
- (8) In 1924 the SED instituted the Day School Certificate (Higher) and the Day School Certificate (Lower) to mark the satisfactory completion of three years' and two years' courses in the 'Advanced Divisions' ('junior secondary') of the post-primary school.
- (9) See Gordon P and Lawton D (1978), **Curriculum Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**, Hodder and Stoughton, London.
- (10) Reproduced in Hutchison H, (1973), **Scottish Public Educational Documents, 1560-1960** SCRE Series 3, Number 1.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid
- (13) SRO, ED7/1/48 'Post-War Planning' File.  
These words belong to George Pringle, who became HMSCI, 1948-55, and were written in May 1941 [undated].
- (14) SED (1939b), para 35
- (15) SRO ED8/50, SE44.
- (16) In fact so important was English regarded, that at this time it was only possible to take it at Higher level in the SLC - unlike other subjects which had their Lower. A Lower English was not introduced till 1951.
- (17) Reproduced in McClelland W M (1942) **Selection for Secondary Education**, SCRE, University of London Press, London.
- (18) SRO ED7/1/48, words dated April 4, 1941.
- (19) Ibid, dated April 7, 1941.
- (20) SRO ED8/50, SE44.
- (21) J S Brunton: see McPherson A and Raab C D, (1988), **Governing Education, A Sociology of Policy Since 1945**, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Chapter 15.
- (22) Mackintosh H S, (1946) 'Content of the Secondary School Curriculum', address to teachers reported by SEJ March 15, 1946.
- (23) Boyd was Head of the Department of Education at Glasgow University and author of the massive and well known **The History of Western Education**, Black, London, 1921.  
McClelland was, variously, Professor of Education, St Andrews University, Executive Officer, National Committee for the Training of Teachers. He was active on SCRE, indeed pioneering the use of intelligence tests - see his **Selection for Secondary Education**, University of London, 1942. He was also a member of the Sixth Advisory Council.
- (24) This view - of which this is admittedly a very bald summary - is most thoroughly documented in McPherson A and Raab C D (1988), See also Paterson H M (1983).
- (25) **Dundee Advertiser**, 27 September 1923: 'After the Tzar disappeared and before Mussolini emerged, no person in the world is so absolute as the Secretary of the Scottish Education Department'....  
re Findlay Ian R (1979) **Sir John Struthers KCB, Secretary of the Scotch/Scottish Education Department, 1904-22**, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee.

- (26) The general account of the Scottish Education system contained in these pages is my distillation of readings from a number of histories, details of which will be found in the Bibliography: eg. Belford A J (1946); Bone T R (1968); Cruickshank M (1970); Kellas J S G (1968); Kerr A C (1962); Osborne G S (1966, 1968); Scotland J (1969).
- (27) The anxieties culminated in the internal debates concerning the Department's planning for post-war reconstruction are reported in SRO ED8/22 'Advisory Council General and Policy 1942-44'; ED7/1/47 'Post-war Planning'. See also my Chapter 1.
- (28) See above.
- (29) See SED Circulars 99, 31 July 1936; - **Education (Scotland) Act 1936** and 103, 10 December 1936 - **Schemes for the Provision of Education**.
- (30) See SRO ED8/22 and ED7/1/47. Also my Chapter 1.
- (31) SED Circulars 99, 31 July 1936 and 103 10 December 1936.
- (32) See **Hutchison H (1973)**.
- (33) SRO ED7/4/100/1, dated 1 May 1936.
- (34) SRO ED7/4/100/3, dated 8 January 1935.
- (35) SRO ED7/1/47, Committee on Curriculum and Examinations of Secondary Schools: Memorandum - Scottish Education Department', dated 20 April 1942.
- (36) SRO ED8/22, dated 12 June 1942.
- (37) These quotations are taken from the files that contain records of 'The Annual Conferences between the Secretary and the Chief Inspectors': specifically here SRO ED7/4/100/3 (22 January 1935).
- (38) See Belford A J (1946) **Centenary Handbook of the Educational Institute of Scotland**, EIS, Edinburgh.
- (39) **Edinburgh Corporation Education Committee (1943)**
- (40) SRO ED8/27 Paper 308, October 1944.
- (41) **SED (1947)** p.178-180.
- (42) Cruickshank M (1970) **A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland**, SCRE, Edinburgh.  
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- (44) See **MacPherson and Raab (1988)**.
- (45) Beedie James (1988) Interview, Aberdeen, 5 July 1988.
- (46) Allan J R (1938), **Summer in Scotland**, Methuen, London, p.96-98.
- (47) Editor Lindsay M (1979), Robert Hale, London.
- (48) Lamont M (1982) 'An Interview with Alexander Scott', **GEM (Glasgow English teachers Magazine)**, Vol.4, No. 3.
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**PART I - 1940-1947**

**CHAPTER 3 : 'SECONDARY EDUCATION' AND THE RHETORIC OF CHANGE**

**The Report's Reception: Acclaim and Delay**

'To apply to every educational claim the twofold test - (1) what relevance has this to childhood and adolescence, and (2) what significance has this for the citizen of a free but ordered state - is to be involved in a radical reconsideration of the secondary curriculum'. (Paragraph 738).<sup>(1)</sup>

More than forty years after its publication the **Report of the Sixth Advisory Council on Secondary Education** still makes stirring reading. The humanity of its concerns and the largeness of its intentions find expression in prose of classical balance and sonorous clarity. Through paragraph after paragraph there moves a sweeping syntax that drives each proposition towards an assured conclusion, an engagement with general principles and a bold acknowledgment of radical consequence. It is a document that stands as a fitting herald to the coming era of postwar reconstruction.

The Report's leading recommendations are at one with its generous eloquence. There is to be a flexible timetable in which the interests of the pupils would be consulted and a greater emphasis on activity, on choice and on centres of interest (124-129). The old repressive assessment structures will be replaced: at 16 a certificate will be offered but its examination will be internal, though externally scaled; not till the final sixth year should there be a nationally set 'Higher School Certificate' and even then it must be seen as a record of school attainment rather than be a qualifying test for the University. Although the SED would continue to administer the latter, this work should be steered by an Advisory Council that would include heavy teacher representation (191-257). This spirit of teacher-Department partnership is to be furthered through a re-orientation of the Inspection services - HMIs are to be redesignated 'Education Officers', a title that will reflect their role as consultants rather than the compilers of stereotyped, inquisitorial school reports (651-666).

What gives the Report its unifying energy is its dedication to a vision of the Scottish people as being engaged in the common purpose, through education, of creating the good society.(17-19) In this, the school is to be both instrument and embodiment. It should therefore be a small 'omnibus' institution to which all the children of the area go to live and to learn in a spirit of democratic togetherness. Here can flourish the rounded education in which matters of the body, heart and spirit will join with those of the intellect in full harmonious development. And so the divisions of Junior and of Senior will be healed and the concept of a universal secondary education be truly realised (164-169).

English was to occupy a special place in this new scheme of things; it was declared to be not only the most important subject in the curriculum but the very force whose humanising power could infuse the pupil's secondary school career with a sense of meaningful experience and so ensure his development into the articulate citizenship required of the post war world (92). It was recognized, however, that to carry this effect, the subject would have to be reformed away from a practice that had hitherto been preoccupied with a narrowly academic concern for stylized essay writing, Latinate grammar exercises and a note-derived scholasticism in literature. There must be a regenerated English in which pupils could write about their own experiences, read within its rich literature about matters of modern, individual concern and - above all else - develop their own powers of speech and of listening (279-318).

Its publication in the early months of 1947 was met by a trumpeting editorial in the **Scottish Educational Journal**:

'... the necessary radical reconsideration of the secondary part of the curriculum has been boldly faced and has been carried out comprehensively, with courage... The interest and value of the report can hardly be exaggerated... we confidently hope and expect that much of the report will presently be accepted as the official policy for secondary education in Scotland'.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Advisory Council's work was greeted with acclaim in the press and received strong endorsement among the members of the profession. Yet it also had, despite the SEJ's

'presently', no discernible effect on the curriculum for years to come. For the best part of the next two decades, the nation's schools continued to be organized on divided lines, its examinations to be run by the SED through the mechanisms of external testing, the curriculum to be made up out of rigidly separated subjects - and English to remain the old inward looking mix of classics, grammar, comprehension passages, composition and stilled tongues.

When twenty years later, Gerald Osborne documented the history of this time he was quite clear as to where the responsibility for this educational abortion lay: 'So far as the SED is concerned there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the job of a government department is to govern...[the Advisory Committee] proved such an embarrassment because their conception of education was so much ahead of their time, that the Council has never since been asked to produce a general report'.<sup>(3)</sup> Osborne's accusations have since been corroborated in McPherson's and Raab's definitive socio-history in which key contemporary interviewees have testified to the Department's distaste for the works of the Sixth Advisory Council.<sup>(4)</sup> There is no doubt that the SED of the time demonstrated a less than urgent commitment to the implementation of the Council's proposals: while it briskly disposed of items relating to certification by the end of the following year, the Council's wider vision of an education pledged to 'the full and harmonious development of the individual';<sup>(5)</sup> rooted in common earth of the local omnibus school, was allowed to fade away through the four years of blank silence that elapsed before the belated appearance of the SED's Circular **The Report of the Advisory Council** in 1951.<sup>(6)</sup> Although in it the Council's efforts received warm Departmental commendation, the clear reforming light had by then been softened into a comfortable afterglow that was by no means refired by the very generalised and merely exhortatory fashion in which the SED now brought itself to pay its courtesies.

#### **The SED Response: Power and Progress**

The lengthy delay did not, however, mean that the Report was being ignored all this while, for behind the scenes, the SED was giving it very active consideration indeed - and doing so in a way that suggests its delayed public support was no straight-forward act of repressive

procrastination. The Department's behaviour was never one of simple rejection, nor was the response of other parties a matter of true open-hearted acceptance. During the years following its publication, the Advisory Council's **Report on Secondary Education** showed itself to be a many-sided document, capable of arousing a series of convoluted reactions in which partial interpretation, vested interests, institutional inadequacies and rooted traditionalism were all to play as large a part in determining the outcome as liberal-minded assent or autocratic rigidity. Indeed the conclusion must be that it was the complex, ultimately ambiguous nature of the Report itself that, combined with its temporal setting and the imperfect control that its authors had over its arguments, did as much to ensure its ineffectuality as did any SED negativism.

As soon as **Secondary Education** was in its hands, the Department set up a special internal committee to prepare the official response which by law it was obliged to make. Its reaction to the Report's essential humanity was, in principle, a welcoming one - but consideration of the generalities had to be set aside in the urgency to deal with the certification proposals which, because they proposed a large measure of internal testing and a newly appointed Examination Board, challenged the Department's proprietorship over this powerful engine of curricular control - 'The risk ... that the Department, as a result of no longer controlling the examination which the great majority of pupils would take, would largely lose effective control of the curriculum of most pupils under 16 ...'(7) In its manoeuvrings to undermine the Report's advocacy in this respect, the Department demonstrated a survival reflex that could indeed achieve a quite cynical expression as a desire to 'keep our critics at bay' and, especially, 'to fob off the EIS',<sup>(8)</sup> and to do so by putting up as little in the way of change as it could decently get away with. It could, however, also demonstrate a genuine concern for educational standards and sound policies.

In its behaviour the SED was motivated by a mixture of organisational self-protection and educational conviction. The introduction of a new certificate to be taken at 16 in addition to the end of course 'Higher' had to be resisted primarily because its administration would

overstretch the SED's capacities to a degree that would necessitate the setting up of that 'grim and formidable prospect' a special Examination Board.<sup>(9)</sup> There were, however, other considerations at work: a real distrust of the teachers' competence to maintain the age-old worth of the Scottish certificate, coupled with the Department's own sense of conviction in its inherited role as the authentic custodian of the country's academic standards.<sup>(10)</sup> On the principle of teacher-run assessment it could point to its wartime experience when an emergency scheme of teacher participation in the administering of the Leaving Certificate had resulted, it felt, in unreliable awards and a palpable drop in standards; it would be safer to rely upon the independent expertise of the Inspectorate:

'We should become parties to a principle we do not believe in. We could not limit acceptance of it [internal assessment] to the School Certificate stage. We should have to accept it throughout infant, primary, secondary divisions, and thereby fetter the freedom and judgment of our inspectors'.<sup>(11)</sup>

The SED acted crisply in order to stay this threat of usurpation by examination reform. Its committee quickly moved towards a package of substitute proposals which were, however, little more than a relaxation in its Leaving Certificate requirements, including the introduction of a Lower Grade English 'for the weaklings of practical or technical bent';<sup>(12)</sup> it then canvassed support among the relevant bodies, including the EIS, for their acceptance, which having been gained, was formalised as a set of official regulations.<sup>(13)</sup> The more radical certification recommendations such as internal assessment were thus not so much countered as simply circumnavigated, the SED all the while showing its willingness to use its position as the effective policy making agency in the land to reduce others' 'advice' to selective, manageable proportions.

Once the examination threat had been neutralised, the SED Committee was able to adopt a more expansive attitude to the Report - here it revealed a not unappreciative regard for its progressive thinking, although one that was always qualified by the need to observe the priority

requirements of the able pupil. The balance of the Department's estimation of the Advisory Council's work was clearly expressed in its internal 'Interim Report':

'Nevertheless, when all deductions have been made, the Report represents a courageous effort to reformulate the aims of secondary education in the light of present day conditions, and, taken as a whole, it is a stimulating document which commands respect and deserves sympathetic study'.<sup>(14)</sup>

The result of the committee's deliberations was the endorsement that eventually appeared as **Circular 206** of 1951 and was then followed by a series of subject memoranda that came out during the early 1950s.<sup>(15)</sup> The SED's action in sorting out its response into a brisk reply to the Report's certificate proposals, followed by a lengthier consideration of the larger curricular issues which could then prepare the way for the various subject applications, constituted a coherent and positive strategy. Its final draft of what was to become **Circular 206** of March 1951 - and only then issued after queries in the House of Commons<sup>(16)</sup> - was, however, ready by April 1949, so that the really questionable aspect of the Department's conduct lies in these two years of withering silence. In seeking an explanation for this, it is important to realise that in the intimately centralised Scottish system of the time, there was considerable scope for the opportunely placed individual to play an influential role. This was especially so in the case of the Secretary to the Department, and here, there is strong evidence in the testimony of those interviewed by **McPherson A F and Raab C D (1988)** to indict **Mackay Thomson** as being the obstructive force. Two members of the SED sub-committee on the Report, for example - **John Brunton** and **Allan Rodger** - later compared their own desire to act positively with Thomson's 'ultra-conservative' antipathy to a Report that so asserted the priority claims of the less able and devalued the work of the traditional subjects, in particular his own Latin.<sup>(17)</sup>

#### **The Profession's Response: the Practical Test**

Nevertheless it is a simplification to speak of the SED as a bureaucratic chieftom in which innovation must wait upon the retirement, death in office or blinding conversion of one

individual. The Department of 1947 had, within its collective thinking, sympathies for reform that could have been more promptly activated.<sup>(18)</sup> The real puzzle is that, following the well-received publication of the **Secondary Education Report**, so little external pressure was put upon the SED to act towards its implementation. For answer, we shall have to look at the other agencies that were involved in the **Report's** reception and also more closely at the context and manner in which the Advisory Committee carried out its remit 'to review the educational provision in Scotland for young people who have completed their primary education and have not....discontinued full-time attendance at school.'<sup>(19)</sup>

It is here that an internal comment made by Thomson to his Under Secretary, William Arbuckle, on the recommendations of the SED's Report sub-committee becomes especially relevant:

'But I feel that we must not only be as "unrestrictive" as we decently can when vetting courses submitted for approval, but should do our utmost to encourage schools to submit new types of courses of their own devising. But they won't: they prefer to blame the Department for tying them to the traditional academic course, despite the fact that we cut the strings years ago.'<sup>(20)</sup>

The enthusiastic leader with which the **SEJ** had greeted the **Report's** publication was not that journal's only editorial comment on it during that year. By the autumn of 1947, its tone was already changing from one of celebration to a somewhat tense proselytizing. What had motivated this shift in mood was made clear in its editorial of October 3:

'Differing types of teachers see differing problems in the **Report**. One side reads in it a lessening of examination pressure, a lowering of specific demands for ponderable results, an opportunity even, for an easier teaching life! The opposite school is angered. Trained themselves in the strenuous old methods and curricula, they are incredulous and irate over the wider aims and hopes of the "new" education. They cannot believe "all this talk" about shorter time for the old basic subjects and more and more for indefinite studies will give us anything like the hard, concrete results which, they say, are the prime need of the time...'<sup>(21)</sup>

The truth is that if the SED was having its difficulties in adjusting its thinking to the progressive idealism of the Report, the teachers were experiencing many more. In the years following its 1947 appearance it was to encounter a range of criticism, some of it an expression of sectional interest. While the EIS's official view was one of advocacy, its rival professional organisation, the Secondary Schoolteachers' Association (SSTA) saw fit to issue a pamphlet entitled **Criticism of the Report of the Advisory Council's Report on Secondary Education** (22). To some extent its 'criticism' was the pleading of a vested interest - in the Report's enthusiasm for more 'general' teachers, and a less academic syllabus, it saw a threat to the position of its subject specialist membership. But there was also an invocation of traditional Scottish values, a satisfaction that hitherto there had been little 'experiment' in the nation's secondary schools since they ought to remain dedicated to the earnest business of preparing pupils for adult tasks rather than meeting transitory adolescent needs. Above all, the SSTA argued, the academic pupils must continue to be allowed to run ahead and not be detained by the more basic wants of their duller fellows: its most bitter retorts were directed at those proposals which appeared to belittle the desirability of 'bookishness' among pupils and which chopped away at the position of 'the lads and lassies o' pairts, who are to be squeezed into a Procrustean bed made to the measure of the many'.(23) Sir James Robertson - one of the leading members of the Advisory Council and indeed the actual author of its Report(24) - describes feelings among the Secondary teachers as 'very cool, very sore';(25) indeed by the end of its year of publication it was being derided in such circles as hopelessly 'Utopian', 'A Charter for the Mentally Deficient'.(26)

The SED, then, was certainly not the only nor even the most conservative force in the Scottish education of the period. Nor was it the only body to be worried over the problem of matching new ideas against existing post-war resources. Very many teachers - and beyond the senior secondary confines of the SSTA - felt that the welcome they gave the Report had to be verbal rather than enactive. For them the crippling realities of classroom existence amidst the austerities of the late 1940s were quite enough to be going on with - romantic new ideas would

have to wait till the stationery supplies improved, the class sizes got smaller, the new classrooms, rather than hastily thrown up huts, were erected and - above all - the acute teacher shortage was alleviated. The demoralising privations of thin resources and bulging classrooms sapped the reforming energies of all teachers, not simply the entrenched member of the SSTA. By 1950 the SEJ's editorial comments on the Report had dwindled to the lamentation how, 'anxious and eager Scottish teachers are to implement the recommendations of the Report, to experiment with new techniques, to blaze new trails. But alas! They are prevented from doing so in any real sense because of the handicapping conditions arising out of the serious staffing situations'.<sup>(27)</sup>

When Circular 206 finally announced its official adoption of the Report's progressivism in 1951, the SEJ's welcome for its 'idealism' was muted, even fatigued: 'The ambition of some of our secondary schools since 1947 has amounted to little more than an anxious desire to keep going as best possible. The Heads of many of them have been wallowing in a morass of day to day difficulties instead of exploring with their staffs the uplands of educational experiment as recommended in this Circular'.<sup>(28)</sup> These 1951 comments point to one of the abiding truths of the post-war or any other era: that faced with the choice of laying down plans for a future age of educational emancipation or of simply getting through the next day's round as best they can, then teachers tend to opt for the latter course. The SSTA had rebutted the Advisory Council: 'But it is not enough for educationists to make admirable statements of general principle: they must show how these principles can be translated into practice'.<sup>(29)</sup> Without the infusion of dedicated resources, without the sequel of inservice training or working party follow up, the Report was bound to become nothing more than a famous non-influence. As Alex Russell, a prominent secondary headmaster scathingly put it: 'Tell us what are the best methods of teaching two score youngsters of varied ages, intelligences, aptitudes and social backgrounds as a group, in conditions of unsatisfactory rooms, furniture, equipment and time allocation, limited professional training and nervous, physical and financial strain... What have been the chief influences in the last decade or two on such teachers? School milk and school meals, larger classes and fewer teachers!'<sup>(30)</sup>

### **The Report's Composition: Idealism and Compromise**

The indeterminate postwar gloom that the **Secondary Education Report** was to lose itself in would certainly have disappointed its authors when they first met on November 11, 1943, for they began their work in a blaze of reformist ambition. Their convener was R C T Mair, the Director of Education for Lanarkshire, and he opened the proceedings with the keynote declaration: 'It appears to me that the outstanding concern in Scottish minds generally is about the desirability of achieving a real and visible measure of equality of opportunity for all post-primary children'. Against this end he offered the meeting two approaches: to be content with 'minor adjustment' or 'to recommend a radical re-orientation or a re-something of the whole system'.<sup>(31)</sup>

As Mair spelt out the issues it quickly became clear that he was asking his committee to work for the creation of a completely new spirit in Scottish secondary education: they would, he urged, have to engage with the divisiveness of a schooling that sprang from its being carried out in two separate institutional blocks; they would also have to answer for the oppressively didactic style of teaching and a body of academic practice that was devoid of artistic, emotional or creative tissue.

Put this way, the question scarcely needed to be asked - the committee would go boldly for the radical way. On the face of it, we can therefore trace a clear line between the initial resolve of the Advisory Council to be vigorously incisive and the ringing, humane prospectus that was published just three years later. In its preparation, this committee of headmasters, ex - EIS presidents, local authority directors and university representatives proved to be a remarkably homogeneous group for as John Young's detailed account has shown<sup>(32)</sup> there was only one significant issue that gave rise to any prolonged dissension and that was the selection of the omnibus school as its preferred institutional model. It was, however, a revealing one for the arguments and the choices that confronted the committee brought its members hard up against

the actual consequences of its principled enthusiasm for a more open schooling dedicated to 'the full and harmonious development of the individual'.<sup>(33)</sup>

The Committee's initial desire to promote the kind of intimate neighbourhood school that had evolved in small country towns such as Montrose and Inverurie as mandatory foundered on the counter evidence of the Directors and the EIS who pointed out the costly impracticality of providing all secondary establishments with their own all age, all range facilities.

The resulting compromise may be read in the published document - a warmly expressed but heavily qualified recommendation for the omnibus as prototype: while paragraph 143 argues strongly for its organic unity and succeeding sections go on to establish a strong case against the junior secondary concept on account of its low esteem and divisive function, the climax of its gathering argument is resisted, the commitment is hedged and the whole matter is 'nevertheless' left in paragraph 161 to the judgment of the individual local authority.

The committee had discovered that the radical way must be made to bend to economic exigency. It is, however, more than mere prudence that was at work here, for its ability to compromise was assisted by an underlying motive that surfaced in paragraph 182's comment, 'It will be seen that an advocacy of the omnibus school has to admit to some qualification in regard to the top of the school'. The Sixth Advisory Council may have been anxious to broaden the curriculum, to redistribute the concentration of favours at the upper end of secondary education, but in the end it was more concerned to preserve the position of the top pupils than it was to introduce institutional reforms that might endanger the academic priorities of the Scottish system. At bottom, the thinking of this committee was still dominated by the assumption that the school population had to be apart-herded into two sharply separated races, the academic and the non-academic whom not only the SED but - as Robertson was later to explain in commenting on the Report - God had intended to be different: 'They needed to recognise... that the secondary modern boy or girl was the ordinary boy or girl - as God had

made three out of four of them. They knew how to handle the fourth boy. He stayed put and was easy to handle...<sup>(34)</sup>

That the committee did not really see the omnibus school as the opportunity to do much more than camouflage barriers is starkly shown up in the Report's brisk dismissal of any confusion of the common school with a common course.

'For anyone who realises how wide must be the intelligence range in a normal, unselected group of, say, 150 secondary entrants, it is impossible to justify such a policy.... Equality of educational opportunity can never mean forcing markedly unequal abilities to do the same or equal things even for one year, nor can we atone for a past in which the weak had to pant after the strong by a future in which the strong are made to crawl along beside the weak'.(para 189)

Such were the public affirmations; it is the Minutes that expose the hold on the Advisory Council of the psychometric assumption that nature had arranged post 12 year old intelligence quotients to match the bipartite arrangements of the Scottish secondary school. As, for instance, the committee worried over the merits of the omnibus model, Robertson brusquely reminded them of the congenital realities: '...at the root of it [the arguments for educational equality] was a great unwillingness to recognize how markedly unequal was natural endowment. To succumb to that feeling would lead to an educational system which would be enormously wasteful'.<sup>(35)</sup> When his colleagues decided to establish their shared beliefs in a meeting minuted as 'Discussion of the basic principles of the Report'<sup>(36)</sup>, Robertson led with his account of 'democracy': 'He felt strongly that it should not be regarded as any part of true democracy to gloss over the profound inequalities of natural endowment'. Robertson proved to be a representative spokesman for during this same session he elicited widespread assent, Ernest Greenhill of the Glasgow Corporation Education Committee summing up the committee's sense of proportion with, 'he thought there was a danger that the pendulum would swing too far and that the claims of the 90% would be overemphasised to the danger of the precious 10%. It would be important not to overlook the value of the upper 10% nor to exaggerate

the Lower C's to whom society on sentimental grounds was perhaps devoting too much attention' - an assertion that was so deeply embedded in his fellow members' thinking that on another occasion, W Ritchie, the Direction of Education for Selkirkshire, could pass, without arousing any particular reaction, the judgment 'that there was a danger of the Committee forgetting how stupid 80% of school children really were'.<sup>(37)</sup>

It is statements like these which reveal that the Advisory Council's Secondary Committee were founding their public advocacy of the omnibus school on a very selective if attractive reading of the Scottish tradition: their Report's account of the evolution of the Scottish secondary roots it in the rural parish school,<sup>(38)</sup> thus giving historical substance to its claim that it was in such institutions that a continuation of the cherished 'Scottish' values of democratic opportunity and of communal unity could be assured. In truth, the curricular organisation of such schools as the cited Elgin and Montrose Academies had always been such as to enable the attention to be focussed on the academic minority, so that an internal wall was thrown up which, as these schools expanded, led to the settlement of two entirely separate sectors - in effect a binary system under the one roof. While such establishments might well command a depth of local pride, both pupils and parents were acutely aware of just which side of the school corridor such and such had received his education - as the Rector of a typical omnibus, Dr Norman Dixon of Inverurie Academy, Aberdeenshire, was to make quite clear in his account of 'Comprehensive Education and the Small Burgh School'.<sup>(39)</sup>

In their promotion of this form of schooling as the national pattern, the Advisory Council were both able to advance open-door principles and to signal the limits to be placed upon their own radicalism - and it was the potent Scottish educational myth in all its rich ambiguity that gave their argument the conservatively academic protection that, at heart, they desired for it. Their real, worthy but distinctly moderate aim was to maintain the pre-eminence of the lad o' pairts while at the same time to contrive a better deal for his lesser junior secondary neighbour - a position that was indeed not so very far away from the SED's view of the world.... This affinity was quickly seized upon by the SED's internal committee on the Report: 'The Council's

statement that they regarded the intellectually abler minority as not too ill-served by the traditional forms of secondary education should be borne in mind in considering the Report as a whole'.<sup>(40)</sup>

A similar pattern is to be described in the committee's handling of teaching methods: the same display of general criticism, the less than forthright counsel as to specifics. While prevailing classroom didacticism was roundly condemned the alternatives never really came forth. A pair of 'activity' approaches - 'Projects' and the Dalton Plan - was considered, only to be drawn to the attention of the reader under the label 'experimental' and with a list of objections attached (paragraphs 115,126). In part this lack of wholehearted support corresponded to the dearth of proven student-centred approaches on the contemporary Scottish scene. But the committee were, once more, anxious to play safe with the nation's academic bequest. Thus in their hearing of the headteacher, Dr Thomas Wright's exposition of how he had introduced the 'Activity Curriculum' into Coatbridge Secondary School, they were readily impressed by his admission that he had indeed been forced to drop the innovation because of parental pressure.<sup>(41)</sup> Similarly, the committee's own headteachers were always prompt to remind their fellow members of the immense problem they would have in persuading their staffs to become as progressive as they themselves would like to be.<sup>(42)</sup>

It was not that the committee were insensible of the very grave defects of the existing curriculum. Ronald Munro, the headteacher of Aberhill Junior Secondary School, Fife, spoke for them here: 'there were three things for the 90% of the pupils that required to be emphasised. The first was the lack of sense of purpose in the average school curriculum; the second was the integration of the school curriculum; the third less passive teaching'.<sup>(43)</sup> The trouble was, as this exchange shows yet again, in their deliberations the committee habitually limited its reforming ministrations to the teeming junior multitudes and was prepared to express itself well satisfied with the treatment of 'the intellectually able minority' who were indeed 'not too ill-served by those traditional forms of secondary education which were in the first instance designed for such as they'.<sup>(44)</sup>

This was a policy of selective charity that exposed in the Advisory Council a fine disregard for the realities of educational change in a strictly demarcated system where the natural effect was to produce in the junior partner the desire to emulate its senior. Those schools which were struggling to gain public acceptance to the degree, that the Report's section 'Status of the Junior Secondary School' described,<sup>(45)</sup> were scarcely likely to respond to the argument that they needed to move in a 'progressively' non-academic direction that would only confirm their inferior standing. But the real misfortune in Munro's diagnosis is that what it describes is a pedagogical barrenness that is surely inimical to the nurture of any vital educational experience, however 'academic' its pupil recipient may be labelled.

The truth was that the senior secondary curriculum was also in need of reform too. The evidence lay in the profligate wastage rates of its pupils, those adolescents who according to the evidence of the Directors of Education, 'disillusioned and disappointed, had left school in disgust'.<sup>(46)</sup> So heavy was this rejection that in a city like Dundee, as its committee member Lord Provost, Garnet Wilson, told his colleagues, only one quarter of those who had entered the senior secondary course actually remained to complete it.<sup>(47)</sup> The committee, however, preferred to listen to the age-old story of success for the top few rather than the actual discomforture of the very many.

#### **The Report's Values: Ordered Freedom and Rational Citizenship**

The committee's desire to meet the impending challenge of universal secondary education, through a re-interpretation of their stock of half mythologised national experience, was heightened by the particular circumstance of their meeting during a world war in which the greater share of their society's energies, especially those of its young, was being expended in a fearful struggle to preserve their very way of life. The mixture of motives that this situation elicited may be scanned in the section 'Factors that have influenced Deliberations'. On the one side there was the wish to acknowledge the part played by the people in the war - 'Real wealth of nation in character and skill of people'; 'Secondary education a right and necessity'

- but there was also a sense of the frailty of the new found spirit - 'Value and precariousness of our liberal way of life'; 'Desire to preserve unity realised in war.' And underlying all there was the awareness that what they were now having to deal with was not the academic elite but the many, the 'ordinary children'.<sup>(48)</sup>

The blend of gratitude and apprehension towards a lumpen population which, come the peace, might well return to a shifting, demotic existence in their urban homelands underscores much of the document's recommendations for the proper education of their sons and daughters. There is the homage to a Scottish youth in whom 'neither nature nor nurture was ill-matched with the hour [of war]'; there is also, and more lengthily, the grim list of factors that contribute to the creation of a ' "detribalised youth in Scotland" ' - 'a chaotic environment', 'the unregulated experience of adolescence', the passing away of a closely unified family life', 'the immense scale of industry... the ceaseless movement of population'. The net result was the degeneration of 'the relatively simple and stable community life of earlier times into a vast incoherent complex in which the adolescent is lost'.<sup>(49)</sup>

In order to appreciate the depth to which this tense mixture of professed faith and inherent distrust worked its way into the committee's thinking, it is necessary to attend to the pressures that were at work on it from both without and within. J J Robertson, the eventual convenor and author, was later to evoke the charged atmosphere in which its members first gathered: 'in 1942 defeat was no longer a dread: victory was coming. There was intense national unity and pride, and a deep sense of indebtedness to ordinary folk'.<sup>(50)</sup>

There was, however, a darker side to these hopes and it lay in the fear that the plebian energies and social aspirations released in the war might not be contained by the peace. Here the initial impulse came from the Secretary of State himself. Tom Johnston, a Labour Party member of the wartime coalition cabinet, let it be known to the SED and the Advisory Council that he wished their efforts to be directed towards the making of a better society in which there would be no place for the hooliganism and corruption that were to be seen in the contemporary

upsurge in juvenile delinquency and in the example of graft in Glasgow local government.<sup>(51)</sup> For Johnston the issue was an educational one: people, he judged, were presently alienated by a schooling in which teachers were busy 'disembowelling and contorting passages from Chaucer and Shakespeare and passing the resultant boneless wonders on to their pupils.... compelling their hapless victims to memorize great chunks of meaningless gibberish'.<sup>(52)</sup> He urged that 'citizenship' should be at the heart of the curriculum which would thus inculcate a sense of pride in community, a respect for its democratic structures and varied culture. Accordingly he had made this topic the priority for the Advisory Council whose first published report thus became **Training for Citizenship**, 1944.<sup>(53)</sup>

In this, Johnston was giving a Scottish expression to the British government's interest in using the school as a key contributor to the social reconstruction that must take place after the war. Among the papers studied by the **Secondary Education** committee was a transcript of Winston Churchill's prime ministerial broadcast to the nation in which he proclaimed 'The future of the world is to the highly educated races.... I hope our education will become broader and more liberal... the people have been rendered conscious that they are coming into their inheritance... the nation must be fitted for its responsibilities and high duty'.<sup>(54)</sup> A wide range of bodies and individuals also submitted similar pleas to the Council, in which the same linking of citizenship, social salvation and the education system was made. The Chairman of the plenary Advisory Council, Sir William Hamilton Fyfe, told them that he was 'convinced that the spread of political apathy and shoulder-shrugging cynicism is due not only to bad social conditions and unemployment but also to the fact that "schooling" has become almost a passive process'.<sup>(55)</sup> The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) saw the school as 'part of the apprenticeship for adult citizenship', a place where a move towards more 'individual methods' would 'develop self-reliance, 'independence of outlook and action, and respect and consideration for others'.<sup>(56)</sup> The section 'Young People's Shallow Lives' in the Scottish Youth Advisory Council's submission claimed it was the schools that had, as much as any agency, so neglected the young's 'emotional, imaginative and spiritual lives' that they

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would 'drift into a condition of mind in which many have little interest... except the pursuit of forms of pleasure which demand nothing from them and have little to give them'.<sup>(57)</sup>

The way in which the committee attempted to reconcile its desire to give due recognition to the masses' needs with the priority of social control was to take as its guiding precept the notion of 'Christian democracy'. This, it explained, was the development of the individual but within established communal values, a kind of 'ordered freedom'.<sup>(58)</sup> Given this degree of oxymoronic subtlety is not surprising that the committee did not feel able to plunge into a radical re-ordering of the system; its preference was to utilise education as a civilising instrument, an exercise of welfaring paternalism rather than an open invitation towards personal development. The consequence for the content and conduct of the new curriculum that would now bring the benefits of secondary education to all, including the less able, may be described in paragraph 314:

'What can be done for these children may seem a poor thing compared with the service of awakening a gifted boy to the wonder of Keats or Shakespeare, but that is a superficial view. For in almost every case the able boy will enter into his inheritance unaided, whereas the D or E pupil is pathetically dependent on what his school can do for him; and so, if due account be taken of the difference it makes to the dignity and sufficiency of a human life, it may well prove the nobler achievement after all to have led even a few dull children into the humblest forecourt of the palace of mind and imagination'.

The mixture that we find here of missionary zeal, humane enlightenment and strained grandiloquence is characteristic of the Report's attempts to give substance to its liberal ideals. It is a document that is happier to reach up towards the level of inspirational invocation than to commit itself to the precise programme - or at least to one that could be so substantially radical as to encourage these future 'machine-minders and routine labourers', who are incapable of 'the absorbing interests of the professional man'<sup>(59)</sup> to question their stratified lot.

While the committee was consistent in its criticism of the obsessive Scottish academicism, the qualities that it promoted as substitute were essentially classical, its attitude in so doing patrician. For **Secondary Education** the ideal secondary pupil is one, who has been fashioned into a finely-set balance in which artistic enrichment and the cultivation of the body join the satisfactions of the mind. It offers a junior curriculum whose reforms work through an extension and adaptation of the more enlightened senior secondary practice. In practice, at those points that the committee tries to achieve substantiation, its aims begin to take on the character of content by inculcation and formalised training that have much in common with the academic curriculum whose excesses it so eloquently deplures.

#### **The Contribution of English - the Civilising Effect of Letters**

The degree to which the committee sought its curricular models in existing senior practice can be seen in its discussion in September 1944 of the role of literature.<sup>(60)</sup> The junior secondary headmaster, Munro, might argue that he 'did not think that the pupils ever reached the stage where the appreciation of English literature meant very much to them', but Robertson was there to counter that 'while he was all for the doctrine of joy, there was a place for a firm reminder that in the literature of our own country was the source of wisdom **par excellence** for most men... it was there that the judgment of life expressed in a beautiful way would be found'. Hamilton Fyfe propounded 'the aim of the secondary school should be to try to make the pupil write as beautifully as possible' while McClelland added that 'it was through the content side of English literature that the individual got his philosophic idea of life and the limitations of human life'. And as Munro finally conceded, for the junior secondaries there was always 'a lot of literature in the "Treasure Island" class'.

In the end the published Report has to fall back on a series of suggestions that merely liberalise at the edges: its hope is that by dropping abstract grammar, by modernising texts and by breaking the classroom silence with debates and lecturesses, all pupils rather than the 'bookish' minority will be able to enjoy their English as a personal satisfaction - the source of which is still seen to lie within the subject itself rather than anything the pupil can bring to it.

Any possibility of interaction between the two is effectively denied by the committee's treatment of the issue of speech. Oral language was to be at the centre of the Report's attempts to make English a more relevant experience for the ordinary child. When the English Association gave its evidence, members of the committee were hot in deriding its concentration on composition as the essential formative discipline.<sup>(61)</sup> The discussion that followed, however, revealed a thoroughly prescriptive, even repressive outlook of the kind that always tended to emerge whenever this committee was confronted by a specific teaching issue. Fyfe saw speech as an art, a civilised accomplishment: 'the aim of the English lesson in school was to help the child to express himself clearly and, if possible, beautifully'. It was Ritchie who elaborated the teaching approach that would accomplish this desired end: the development of good speech was a function of training during which the teacher must act as a model of standard English expression; despite the regrettable fact that most teachers 'did not get nearly enough experience of mixing with cultured people in other walks of life... the only way to teach good oral English was to have a teacher with a fluent command of the language making pupils imitate and repeat what he said over and over again until they were perfectly fluent'. Most importantly the home speech of the child must in '80% to 90% of cases' be obliterated because it was impure - 'if in a particular district bad vowels or consonants were heard, the teacher would have to go on and on at those sounds until they were correctly done'.

These opinions echo the submission to it by ADES that 'the cultivation of good speech and manners in all classes of the country is fundamental in a democratic state'.<sup>(62)</sup> The English Association's opinions might have met with criticism but its claim that 'most pupils' speech had now become a bastardised English drawn from 'the cinema, penny dreadfuls of the baser sort, coloured strip weeklies, the sporting press and cheaper papers catering for girls and young women', is echoed in the Report's outright rejection of the child's own language, which it invites teachers to declare war on as an 'oppressive mass of merely debased and incorrect speech', and expressive of a contemporary culture that is 'debased by vulgarisms and corrupted by Hollywood'.<sup>(63)</sup> Significantly, 'that rare thing', a genuine patois was to be excepted from these strictures, the Report once more revealing a selective evaluation of Scottish

experience - and a tendency to evoke an idealised pastoral past instead of embracing contemporary actualities.

It is words such as these that reveal the 1947 Report to be ultimately a somewhat dated and gentlemanly document whose adherence to a tradition of populace-improvement cuts itself off from any possibility of working out the effectively pupil-directed methodology, informed by an understanding of the relevance of the child's experience and the vitality of her language, that its ostensibly progressive intentions require. If 'progressive' is indeed what they truly were, for in the end it is difficult to see the Report as anything but civic in its orientation, not so much concerned with the individual as with the befitting of him for citizenship of the 'free and well-ordered State'. Certainly a document that exhorts its teacher readers to improve their practice by correcting the inevitably coarse speech of the pupil in 'a gracious and kindly' manner, which can talk quite so unselfconsciously of a need to conduct even the lowliest of their charges into 'the forecourts of the palace of literature' must be, despite the intrinsic decency of its desire to update the old traditions, bemused by the problem of how to engage the raw energies of the masses in the enterprise of acquiring Standard English and of benefiting from the great 'store-house of human experience'<sup>(64)</sup> that is deposited in its literary classics.

#### **A Final Reading of the Report: the Distractions of Rhetoric**

Despite its failure to make any practical impact on the immediate post-war classroom, the Report was to achieve a lasting reputation. *The Times Educational Supplement (Scotland)* marked its 20th anniversary with the verdict that it 'remains the outstanding document produced in Scotland this century',<sup>(65)</sup> ten years later a Glasgow assistant head-teacher was reminding us that it 'was one of the most important and certainly one of the most forward-looking educational documents ever produced in Scotland'<sup>(66)</sup> while in the 1980s Raymond Thomasson of the EIS delivered the accolade already quoted in the Introduction.<sup>(67)</sup>

**The Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland on Secondary Education** is a long and complex text, the product of some 50 meetings that stretched over 3 years; involved 155

witnesses, 14 permanent committee members and ran to some 884 clauses. 'Report' it may be, but it can be read in a number of different ways - historically, politically, as a piece of educational investigation, the product of a range of sociological forces, or as the expression of a classical sensibility. We can interpret it as a profession of epistemological philosophy or as the revelation of a class-based ideology, as the voicing of a wartime idealism, a latter-day example of a mythologised national tradition or simply as the outcome of committee negotiation and compromise.

The real issue is, how did its immediate post-war readership respond to it? The clue lies in the texture of its writing, an expressiveness that could compose statements such as this:

'It follows that, while the teaching of English to such pupils will always be elementary, it will never be easy. It may not demand the best scholar on the staff, but it will tax the best teacher to the utmost, calling for exceptional patience, resourcefulness and understanding... The able teacher must, therefore, recognise that this is a largely uncharted field and approach it in a spirit of inquiry and experiment. He may safely assume that the treatment must not be literary but homely and practical, and the less he talks and the more the pupils act, the greater is the likelihood that he is on the right road'.<sup>(68)</sup>

The paragraph is characteristic of the way in which the document spoke to its 1947 readers: the grand rolling syntax, the assured epithetical balancing and clausal opposition, the management of its sentences in a display of deductive logic - all these features combine to achieve a magisterial conclusiveness that both comforts and distracts. For beneath this grandeur there is often little more than a series of unexceptional observations that restate known generalities, rather than detail actions and tackle procedures: it is this kind of sublime vacuity that led the internal SED committee that reviewed the document to sum up, 'The fact that the Report is exceptionally well written produces on a first reading a favourable impression which is perhaps not wholly confirmed by a closer examination...'<sup>(69)</sup> Although the SED had its own particular interests to defend, this was a warning that pointed to both the

felicity of the prose and the success with which it smoothed over a number of ambiguities and imprecisions. The final way in which to read it, the one that first struck its post-war audience and remained with it, is as a finely wrought declaration of educational rights, as a piece of rhetoric.

This is not, I hope, to diminish what does indeed still ring out as a humane and compelling testament. Rather it is to conclude that it is a product of a particular group of people and of their time, and thus subject to limited perspectives as well as energised by personal idealism. There is something undeniably heroic about the prolonged endeavours of a small group of individuals who, from their various parts of the country and over a long three year period, regularly endured the privations of war time travel and fuel economies to journey to Edinburgh for the fashioning out of their vision of a better Scotland as one in which education would act as a vital regenerative force. Yet if the Report was born of a spirit of wartime reconstructionalism it was also effectively framed within it. Less than two years after its publication its chief author was lamenting that the age that had produced it had now given way to 'the "couldn't care less" spirit of 1949'.<sup>(70)</sup> This was a judgment that Robertson was to repeat at regular intervals as he was called upon at meetings and in journals to explain the document's less than tangible impact. By the 1960s his account had hardened into a stylised accusation of precipitous national degeneration in a land whose 'blatant materialism' and 'Costa Brava' aspirations were incapable of listening to an educational gospel that dwelt on a more elevated plane: 'The discredit was not in our being starry-eyed but that a general vision died so soon, leaving us with the kind of Britain we have known these 15 or 16 years past'.<sup>(71)</sup>

The Advisory Council's **Secondary Education Report** has been described as being before its time. In some respects it is very much, too much perhaps, of its age for Robertson's evaluation firmly locates the Report in a very extraordinary and necessarily transient period. It belongs to that brief era when the laying down of plans was quickened by a mood of national unity and when a sense of immediate peril gave urgency to thoughts of the future. Under such circumstances, it was not to be expected that there would emerge a body of analysed technique

or set of detailed implementations so much as an inspirational tract, a touchstone by which to mobilise the country's educational energies into a concern to preserve the best of its inheritance at a moment of national danger and opportunity.

It is not surprising that that 'best' was translated into the mythologized version of a Scotland of small country places in which divisions melted away on the common heath of a shared institutional experience and where everyone could make an effortless switch from pure Doric or melodious Lallans to BBC English (Scottish Home Service version). To an extent the Council's enthusiasms for reconstruction weakened its grip on the actualities, in that its advocacy of the omnibus school represented an idealisation of a system in which academic competitiveness had often forged a dualism every bit as hard as any proposed by the SED and which had, in any case, applied to rural Scotland rather than to the urbanised Lowlands or cities where the large majority of schoolchildren actually lived. This election of the blurred part to represent the clear whole points to fact that the Secondary Committee was made up of older men, and one token woman, who were themselves, for the most part, the product of a provincial small town Scotland, steeped in the lore of its educational traditions, living proof to themselves of the enduring effectiveness of its apparently democratic ways and now anxious to recreate those patterns in the nation that would be reborn come the peace. Of its 16 members, only four had their professional lives in the industrialised West, while the Borders and the East supplied 11 members; of the half dozen who still worked in the schools all but two were East coast.(72)

The fact that the 1947 Report is rhetoric, not blueprint, helps to explain its lasting power and also its failure to be enacted. Subscription to its tenets, set in such flowing prose, carried its own dispensations. Profession of belief in its liberal vision enabled both teachers and official alike to continue their existing mundane practice with a comfortable fatalism that could now be sustained by a confidence that their acknowledgement of a document which was couched in such obviously idealistic terms absolved the individual practitioner from actually doing anything about it - at least not until the SED, the Government, the Economy, the 'They' had

created the conditions that were clearly necessary for its pure implementation. Not least among the problems that were to confront the post war reformer of the secondary curriculum and of its English was the gap that existed between a rhetoric in which some believed and the reality that everyone lived - and taught - in.

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- (17) *re* **McPherson A and Raab C D (1988)** Chapter 4.
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- (31) SRO ED8/50, SE2.
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- (33) **SED (1947)** para 741.
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- (35) SRO ED8/50, SE53, October 6, 1944.
- (36) SRO ED8/50, SE45, June 23, 1944.
- (37) SRO ED8/50, SE48, August 17, 1944.
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- (40) SRO ED8/51, Committee Meeting June 9, 1947.

- (41) SRO ED8/50, SE44, June 22, 1944.
- (42) SRO ED8/50, SE67, March 2, 1945: discussion minuted as 'Attitude of Teachers'.
- (43) SRO ED8/50, SE45, June 23, 1944.
- (44) SED (1947), Para 20.
- (45) SED (1947), paras 146-150.
- (46) SRO ED8/50, SE15, January 21, 1944.
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- (52) See Johnston T (1952), *Memories*, Collins, London, p.153-56.
- (53) SED (1944) *Training for Citizenship: Report of the Sixth Advisory Council for Education in Scotland*, HMSO, Edinburgh, Cmnd 6495.
- (54) SRO ED/23: Paper 21, broadcast on March 21, 1943 under title of 'A Four Year Plan for Britain'.
- (55) SRO ED8/22, letter to Tom Johnston, May 25, 1943.
- (56) SRO ED8/25, Paper 160, August 2, 1943.
- (57) SRO ED8/27, Paper 311, 'The Needs of Youth in these Times'.
- (58) SED (1947), Paras 28, 29.
- (59) SED (1947), para 313.
- (60) SRO ED8/50, SE50, September 7, 1944.
- (61) SRO ED8/50, SE47, July 6, 1944.
- (62) SRO ED8/25, August 2, 1943.
- (63) SED (1947), paras, 277, 282, 283.
- (64) SED (1947), para 318.
- (65) March 10, 1967.
- (66) Pignatelli F (1978), then AHT (Curriculum) St Margaret Mary's Secondary School (now Director of Education, Strathclyde Region): 'Prophets of the 1940s', TESS, April 7, 1978.
- (67) See Introduction Part 1, footnote 14.
- (68) SED (1947), para 310.
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- (70) Robertson addressing the Ayrshire Local Association of the EIS, February 1949, under the title 'Secondary Education in a Democracy'. Reported SEJ February 25, 1949.
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- (72) The membership and designated areas of interest were:  
 Agnes Allison, Senior Woman Assistant, South Junior Secondary School, Paisley; President of the Educational Institute of Scotland (Teachers).  
 William Barry, Headteacher St Ninian's Roman Catholic School, Kirkintilloch (Teachers).  
 Professor E P Cathcart, Professor of Physiology, Glasgow University (Domestic Science and School Health).  
 John Clark, former Headmaster, George Heriots School, Edinburgh; member of the Edinburgh University Court of Scottish Universities Entrance Board, and of the Edinburgh Education Committee.  
 Sir William Hamilton Fyfe, Principal, Aberdeen University (Chairman).  
 Ernest Greenhill, Glasgow Corporation Education Committee (Adult Education).  
 William McClelland, late Professor Education, St Andrew's University; Executive Officer to the National Committee for the Training of Teachers (Other Interests).  
 R C T Mair, Director of Education, Lanarkshire (Directors of Education).  
 Robert Munro, Headmaster, Aberhill Junior Secondary School, Methil, Fife (Teachers).  
 J E S Nisbet, Chairman, Roxburghshire Education Committee; member of the Interdepartmental Committee on Road Safety of School Children in Scotland (Other Interests).

**W D Ritchie, Director of Education Selkirkshire (Directors of Education)**  
**J J Robertson, Rector, Aberdeen Grammar School (Teachers)**  
**J Cameron Smail, Principal, Heriot Watt College, Edinburgh (Continuing member)**  
**W Crampton Smith, Rector, Inverness Royal Academy (Teachers)**  
**J Henderson Stewart, MP for East Fife (National Liberal) (Member of Parliament).**  
**Garnet Wilson, Lord Provost of Dundee ('Specially interested in problems of vocational training'); (Vice-Chairman).**

**Note that the list of signatories which appears in para 884 is that of the full membership of the Sixth Advisory Council, not that of its Secondary Report sub-committee.**

**re SRO ED8/22, October 6, 1942.**

## PART 2 : 1947-1965

### INTRODUCTION - ACADEMICISM AND INERTIA

The first post Advisory Report publication devoted to English which had any national circulation was the **Memorandum on English Teaching in the Secondary School** that was prepared by the Central English Committee of the EIS and released in October 1947.<sup>(1)</sup> Although it might have been the opportunity for an admiring profession to give practical expression to the Council's reformist ideas, there was little in the Memorandum that was radically new. Indeed, its English was still set in pre-war concrete. It outlined a structure for the subject that continued to rest upon the three pillars of Composition, Comprehension and Literature and within which only adult standards of linguistic and cultural behaviour were to be housed. Oral activity meant the clear articulation, correct pronunciation, the control of pace and emphasis that led to 'good public speaking'; writing accrued from a 'training in composition' that gave neatness, correctness, 'clarity and orderliness of thought and expression'; comprehension was the product of 'study', 'linguistic discipline, precision of thinking' and 'systematically pursued questions and exercises'; literature inbred the 'cultivation of the capacity to appreciate and enjoy the great heritage of English literature in prose, poetry and drama'.

During the meetings of the SED's internal committee set up to review the **Secondary Education Report** one of its younger and more progressive members, John Brunton, had asked for a Departmental definition of what constituted 'traditional methods' and was told that this meant the ' "logical approach" to a subject in class teaching as opposed to the less formal approach advocated by the [Advisory] Council'.<sup>(2)</sup> The EIS version was certainly providing a solid example of traditional curricular values. Its programme stood four square as an expression of the rationalist assumption that what the teacher must start with is an academic whole that must then be reduced into its categorical parts for the pupil to construe, logical part by logical particle.

It is as if the springtime publication of **Secondary Education** had never been. The EIS had, however, been putting together a working document and, as the previous chapter argued, the problem in making an effective response to the Report's ideals was in the translation of rhetoric into hard classroom action. An example of the practical difficulties that could be created by the language of the 1940s reformer is to be met in this 'message' from the Advisory Committee's initial Convenor, RCT Mair to his colleagues:

'Axioms of Education in words of one syllable: Education means by derivation nourishment. It is wholly ineffective without the pupils' active process of digestion. The object of secondary education is to provide for all pupils throughout the period of adolescence the "nourishment" best suited to stimulate the full development of their moral, mental and physical qualities, i.e. to help each to grow into the best kind of human being which he/she is capable of becoming. The other name for this kind of growth is happiness.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Mair's phrasing suggests the difficulties of conceptualisation that the emergent child-centred philosophy experienced in proffering itself as a credible course of teaching action at this period. Romantically, his analogy invited his fellows to see education in terms of the very processes of life, but did so in terms that could deter as well as attract. 'Growth' and 'happiness' lacked the readymade poise of 'a logical approach' which possessed clear decompositional procedure and well focused fields of study. Not surprisingly then, in the EIS Memorandum the invitation to the feast quickly reverted to the homely dispensation of recipe knowledge of which those who sat at the top senior secondary table would continue to receive a disproportionate share.

The 1947 Report acts as an informative trailer for what was to come as the Scottish teacher over the coming years would struggle to make progress towards the institution of a child-centred version of English teaching. She would be haunted by an abiding professional uncertainty as to how to go about such a task. To find root in a hard educational climate, proposals for an English teaching founded on individual development and guided by sensitive internal

assessment had to be able to furnish convincing demonstration of the means by which its practitioners could turn away from the secure comforts of the prevailing subject-transmission.

Nevertheless, it was more than limited understanding or the persistence of half-observed academic allegiances that finally frustrated the radicalism of the Sixth Advisory Council's Secondary Committee. Their Report had its first stirrings in the days between Alamein and the Normandy landings but it had to seek its fulfilment amidst post-war austerities in a way that cruelly demonstrated the dependence of educational innovation on its physical context. In the late 1940s, indeed for many years after, it was a lack of even the most basic resources, the shortage of qualified teachers and a preoccupation with school roofs over heads that as much as a dearth of ideas were to defer reform. These privations also showed up the inherited shortcomings of a Scottish system in which there was no inservice or research infrastructure by which new approaches could be disseminated, field tested or teachers receive the necessary material support towards their effective adoption. In the early postwar years such underdevelopment was to leave the country's schools overdependent upon the one central authority of the SED and if it chose not to implement, then there were no professional journals, no teacher centres, advisers or provision for inpost training that could act as an alternative source of educational energy.

Any attempt to introduce educational change is also to invite a political consequence. The Council had recognised that the command centre of the Scottish system lay in its examinations. Its proposals for internal assessment were certainly designed to redistribute curricular power out into the schools but its chosen strategies were naively premature. The suggestion that certification be separated from university entrance was simply impracticable while its desire to set up a joint Board for its administration was bound to bring the whole Report into direct conflict with a central Department whose proprietorship over the 'Highers' ensured that its jurisdiction spread over every single secondary school work scheme from Unst to Lockerbie. Over the succeeding years the problem for the reformer, however close he might be to St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, was how best to tap into the considerable power

vested in the centre. The political lesson of 1947 was that in a small country the enactment of liberal reform was likely to come about through the enlightened use, not the usurption, of the authority that was maintained by the well established and universally acknowledged national Department.

The Scottish framework within which the Advisory Council did its work and thought its thoughts bound it with cultural as well as constitutional ties. The inherited regard for academic standards, for getting on, for a rational life within the well ordered society were not simply presented to the Committee's members as a set of bequeathed goods from which they could select and adapt in order to accommodate new philosophies; they were the half-hidden manifestations of an inbred communal experience that was not open to simple stocktaking. Within the membership of the Council there was the inculcated habit of viewing the educational world and the pupil nature that inhabited it as inherently 'Junior' and 'Senior'. Their almost instinctive decision to focus reform on the former was well intended but poorly judged for it betrayed a less than complete commitment to the values that they were proclaiming. It was a preference that was inevitably disabling in a dualist system whose subjects would naturally seek to model their practice on the level that they all aspired to - the senior secondary school.

The obstruction to progressive innovation was partly a creation of parents, who would continue to worry about getting on or the relevance of that newfangled project method to passing the exam, and also of their offsprings' teachers who obstinately persisted in defining their professional selves in terms of their university trained academic specialism. But further than that, there was a deep Scottish ambivalence within the reformers' own thinking. The interest in the individual child was sincere but was complicated by the indigenous regard for academic standards, however disguised this might be by their attachment of it to that half remembered, half imagined emblem of democracy, the parish school.

Ultimately, what the story of the Advisory Council's Secondary Report shows us is that to reform the system means to change the people who work within it. A coming together in the early 1940s of James Robertson, a charismatic grammar school rector with a national standing, and men who, to use his own valuation, were truly 'remarkable' individuals such as 'that great' Scottish Secretary Tom Johnston, Hamilton Fyfe and W D Ritchie <sup>(4)</sup> created an upsurge of reforming energy that was partly quelled by the political will and ingrained conservatism of a dominant SED Secretary, Mackay Thomson. But change could not really be a simple matter of waiting for the opportune retirement or the happy conjunction of like spirits. As the various reactions of the EIS, the SSTA and their many anonymous members showed, the challenge lay in changing the practice and outlook of many thousands of highly educated and solidly trained 'ordinary' classroom teachers. The issuing of the HMSO document could only be one factor in a lengthy train in which sustained forward movement would depend upon the degree to which individual teachers could be enabled to contribute their understandings towards the decisions that governed the progress and the direction of the curriculum that they daily served.

The years from 1940 to 1947 represent an instance in Scottish education of how the variables of officials, teachers, resources, and of subject syllabus, of shared assumptions and fractured understandings could jostle together within the inherited national environment to be experienced by those who worked within it as a series of complex and finally indecisive events. Other times would throw these elements into fresh configurations, each one of which would carry its own difficulties and offer its own possibilities. It is to the continuing history of this interplay of people, ideas, materials, structures and circumstances that we must now turn.

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**PART 2 : 1947 - 1965**

**CHAPTER 4 : TEACHERS AND INSPECTORS**

**The Bipartite System: Sound Scholarship, Real Life and Universal Wastage**

During the first three decades after the War, the Scottish Education Department published substantial annual Reports in which it rendered account of its year by year stewardship of the nation's education. Amidst all the data of school rolls and Leaving Certificate presentations, and the necessary information relating to milk, wireless sets and the supply of boots and clothing, there would also appear a review of the secondary school in Scotland. Based upon the intelligence of the Department's army of school inspectors, the section 'The Schools General Survey' was used not only to evaluate the conduct of the secondary curriculum but also to sound out a policy for its betterment.

The SED's aims were, in this respect, clearly announced in its 1947 Circular 100, **The Raising of the School Leaving Age**. The extra year (gained by the minimum leaving age now moving up to 15), it stressed, placed upon schools the responsibility for the establishment of a properly integrated and purposeful curriculum, one that would make a reality of the concept of secondary education for all:

'The Secretary of State regards it as essential that the additional period of schooling should not be for the pupils concerned merely a period of marking time... but should be used to provide a real culmination of the pupils' school education, by which the acquirements of earlier years are extended and integrated and at the same time, through the adoption of a realistic approach, are related to the needs of the everyday world, where the pupils must in due course play their parts alike as workers, as citizens and as individuals'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The definition of the secondary experience in terms of 'needs' and 'realism', of citizenship and vocational imperatives, was to provide the SED with the bearings by which it could keep watch over the efforts of schools and teachers during the ensuing years. Worthy though these

qualities were, they did, however, refer only to the pupils who were now going to enjoy the 'extra year'; they were not thought necessary for those who would continue to work their scholarly way through the senior secondary school. The extent to which the imparting of a distinctively non-academic character to the junior secondary was to be utilised as the means of reinforcing the Department's longstanding bipartite policy may be measured in the year by year comments that followed. Whereas in 1949, for example, the junior secondaries are warned that they must wrestle with 'the formidable problems in devising curricula to suit the varied aptitudes and interests of their pupils' and to do so by avoiding 'schemes that tend to be too academic', their senior counterparts are driven ever onwards with the instruction that 'there is need at all stages for pupils to be constantly practised in varied exercises in sentence construction and, in older classes at least, in the logical building up of their own compositions'; they are also castigated that 'the disciplined study of good English prose, accompanied by the use of a dictionary, requires to be much more assiduously pursued'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Three years on, the prescription is repeated: 'the organisation of the senior secondary school remains satisfactory' but to maintain this standard it must always be on guard: 'bad sentence construction, bad punctuation, bad spelling often have their source in insufficient practice, lack of revision and lack of attractive, skilful instruction...' In contrast, the difficulties within the junior schools are seen as radical ones for in many cases curricula are 'ill-fitted for the secondary schools for which they were intended,' and 'the presentation of subjects suffers from the influence of traditional methods current in the senior secondary schools'<sup>(3)</sup>...

If sound scholarship for the top 30% and real life for the remainder set the Department's basic post war strategy, there was by this time one important factor that was noticeably beginning to militate against it - 'wastage'. For the senior secondary the requirement was the maintenance of academic standards in order to produce an adequate flow of well qualified entrants into the professions and the universities, but the demand upon the junior secondary teachers was to engage in a considerable curricular innovation that was to take them in the

opposite, nonacademic direction. As the Annual Reports move through the 1950s it was becoming clear that neither end was being achieved. The junior teachers were finding it difficult to depart from a professional practice that not only represented the traditional fare that they had been brought up on but was still being advocated for their senior - and more highly esteemed - colleagues. Evidence of their failure to reform was to be found in the fact that the majority of pupils were failing to complete even the three years offered to them by the junior secondary course, and were taking advantage of the fact that their earliest legal leaving age usually fell sometime during the final year. The problem of wastage, and the rejection of school that it implied, was certainly not confined to this sector however; indeed the haemorrhaging of young talent was markedly worse in the senior school. In 1952, for instance, while only 40% completed their full three year term, the SED was 'disconcerted' to note that as many as 74% had walked out on the Leaving Certificate courses for which they had been selected at the age of 12, before their fifth senior secondary year.<sup>(4)</sup> Even by 1962, 15 whole years after the hopes of Circular 100, the Department was still noting a premature leaving rate that, despite the intervening years of gathering economic prosperity, remained distressingly high, especially in the senior sector where only 40% actually chose to complete their certificate course.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### **The Teachers' Experience: an Ordered Inheritance**

If scholarly standards for one branch of secondary education, nonacademic innovation for the other, and a greivous wastage rate that undermined both, continued to be the major SED preoccupations, what, during all this time, did the world look like to the individual teacher of English? In the gathering together of material for this work twenty educationists were interviewed, all of whom began their working lives as classroom teachers of English. Together, their careers have covered most parts of Scotland, from Wigtownshire in the deep south-west up to the western and northern extremities of Lewis and Shetland. In between lie memories of positions in a range of junior, senior and omnibus establishments, both Catholic and nondenominational, that were situated in the four major cities but also in small town

Elgin, Montrose and Fraserburgh, in industrial Airdrie, Kirkcaldy and Motherwell and in the more rural settings of Huntly, Aberlour and Dufftown.

Over three decades span the earliest to the most recent year of commencement, starting with Trevor Johns at Whithorn Higher Grade School, Wigtownshire in 1935, some 33 years before James Duffin entered St Patrick's, Coatbridge as a young probationer. Despite this rich variety of experience, the curriculum that they each entered was strikingly similar. It was quite expressly 'academic' which meant a fragmentation into a number of clearcut topics, each with its own forty minute period, its own designated textbook. At its centre lay the notion of 'study', of language in all its manifestations and operations, of literature through its various genres, schools and acknowledged masterpieces. These would be sorted into a system of components that years later can still be passed over in the memory like the solid, familiar landmarks of a weekly journey: 'The English syllabus in those days was broken up into the usual round of composition, grammar (correction of sentences, work on agreements, on punctuation, parts of speech and so on), interpretation, poetry, Shakespeare, the class reader.' The destination was equally clear: 'Everyone was dominated by the Leaving Certificate so that everything they did was conditioned by the examination'. (R I Scott)<sup>(6)</sup>

This curriculum was absolute and it was uniform. Although the bipartite system had erected firm organisational boundaries, the currency of hard knowledge spread everywhere, creating out of the different senior and the noncertificated regions the one common academic market. In Kirkcaldy in the 1950s, for instance, Sydney Smyth was made aware that the non-certificate classes in the same school were to be thought of as a separate race: 'We were led to think of them as a different kind of person; there was this subtle culture thing - the teachers believed they were different and the kids themselves thought the same.' The difference was not, however, one of experience, only of achievement: 'Even though they were separate, there were no special junior secondary courses, only the academic course watered down - a case of less and easier, I think'.<sup>(7)</sup>

The one clear model was the academic course, its definitive expression the Leaving Certificate. As Ian Scott avers, there were the Highers, the senior secondary course that served them and everything else was vain emulation: 'The senior secondaries had a clearly defined path, theirs was the path marked out by the certificate but as for the junior secondaries.... no-one had really thought about them and their special needs - the whole of teaching and its tradition was based on senior secondary pupils'.

This was, to use Alex Thomson's definition, 'simply the system, the inherited system that we young teachers entered and were expected to carry on'.<sup>(8)</sup> This repeated term aptly describes the way in which the English curriculum would have struck the new entrant to any Scottish secondary school at any time between 1935 and the mid 1960s. 'What to teach' was simply handed on to the probationer by his Principal Teacher, not as a description of a particular set of local circumstances or of pupil experiences but as a timeless covenant with which each fresh generation was expected to keep professional faith. As such it was enshrined in assumptions concerning the organisation of knowledge, the nature of individual maturation and the values of citizenship that corresponded to the academic training, which he himself would have received in one of Scotland's four universities - for it is important to note that ever since the beginning of the century all secondary teachers of English had had to be graduates.<sup>(9)</sup>

A range of routines and schedules was built into the working year that further conditioned the individual teacher: the scheme of work with which the Principal Teacher would have presented him on his first morning was laid down as a series of term by term targets, there was a personal record of work to be kept daily, thrice yearly examinations and pupil reports to be prepared for and duly processed and, at the end of the session, a prize giving to attend and a dux of the school to applaud. 'English' was not a matter for personal negotiation, still less for creative interpretation, but was a tradition that came to claim you. There was no induction or discussion; you were simply given your timetable, your jotters and your sets of books and expected to work your way steadily through them without any more ado' (Moira Jolly)<sup>(10)</sup>; 'There was the line of books, there was the syllabus and there was you - you just had to get on

with it' (William Ettles).<sup>(11)</sup> Even as late as the mid 1960s it was the ingredients of the departmental bookstore that gave you your syllabus for the year and this could be a transaction that could leave the innocent beginner at something of a disadvantage. As Jim Duffin recalls: 'You had to use the sets of books that were there in the bookstore and nothing else. The beginner could be slow off the mark - and find he was consigned to a year of 'Barnaby Rudge', 'Prester John' and the 'Collected Essays of William Hazlitt!'<sup>(12)</sup>

The vulnerability of the raw recruit in this respect was only one aspect of a strictly hierarchical organisation. The school's English curriculum might be 'inherited' but the terms of the bequest were detailed by the Principal Teacher's Scheme of Work, a testament that was not open to discussion nor to third party review. The situation was accepted: 'There was no discussion over the Scheme of Work, I can't remember anyone questioning it. The Principal Teacher produced it and we accepted it - that was what he was paid for and that's what we were paid for!' (James Beedie).<sup>(13)</sup> Proof of acceptance was to hand in the Record of Work that each teacher had to uphold, so that it was ready, perhaps, for its weekly initialling by the Rector, or to be viewed on demand by the visiting HMI. These Principal Teachers were superiors who by the time they attained their positions were likely to be thoroughly institutionalized, for promotion was slow and careers within the one school could be very long: several of my interviewees, able professionals all of them, had to serve twelve years or more as assistants before gaining any significant promotion.

Above all there was that very public test of competence, the Leaving Certificate results. Success here made up for everything, failure a consignment to years of servitude in the non-academic galleys of 2F and 3FG. As Trevor Johns remembers:

'My first headmaster obviously had some doubts about a relatively adventurous young teacher but my first exam results were good; he came up to me and greeted me: "Now I can see the fruits of your work coming through!" That was all he cared about, the exam results'.<sup>(14)</sup>

The good academic character of the school was in fact strictly watched over by the Headteacher and sometimes more than that. Sydney Smyth tells how his Rector at Kirkcaldy would make a ceremony of personally handing out the term report cards while at Tom Brown's Inverurie Academy, Dr Dixon, locally celebrated for knowing the name of every single boy and girl who had ever passed through the school, would impose regular tests in English on each class to ensure that standards were kept up - and ultimately that the school could maintain its position in the unofficial Leaving Certificate league table over, say, Fraserburgh or Mackie Academy, Stonehaven.<sup>(15)</sup>

From below, these endeavours were supported by the trust and admiration of the local community. There was no significant parental pressure for any reform, certainly not for the type of nonacademic course that the SED might be advocating for the noncertificateable. Trevor Johns explains:

'Schools had real status in the community in these days; they were expected to be conservative and on their dignity, even aloof. I can remember more than one parent, especially if they were working-class, who waited overlong before coming up to the school with even serious problems their children might be experiencing - because, as they would explain, they didn't want to be a nuisance, even that they were frightened of us!'

As Alex Thomson sums up, 'People entrusted you with their offspring; the assumption was that whatever happened was bound to be all right, that the school knew best.'

The general ethos was of industrious conformity, of buckling down to it. For Joe O'Neill this meant having to remember to give out homework, especially at the weekends 'in case they would waste their time'.<sup>(17)</sup> At Glasgow High School in Jim Alison's time,

'A lot was expected of the pupils. We had to keep them working well. In class they were expected to be able to get up on their hind legs and expound articulately and accurately. There

was no group discussion or anything like that - it was all about individual effort, achievement<sup>(16)</sup>

Naturally this work ethic was also embraced by the staff - it had to be since the emphasis on production and on correctness generated a mass of painstakingly vigilant marking that could only be handled by the utmost industry: 'Every so-called free period, every lunch hour even we would sit at the tables in the staff room, heads down, working through the piles of jotters; nobody was allowed to speak, the marking had to be done'.(Jim Beedie)<sup>(18)</sup>

Everywhere high seriousness was the order of the age: Roy Stark remembers how as a young assistant teacher he decided to lighten the Higher English class by some irreverent treatment of the more banal examples of Wordsworth's verse. When the Principal Teacher came to hear of this, his reprimand was the conclusive: 'Mr Stark what have you been doing! Please remember that all the poets studied in our courses are good poets.'<sup>(19)</sup>

In the classroom both teacher and pupil were yoked together in the endeavour of hauling the freight of grammar, interpretation texts, literary works and composition exercises through the days and terms of the academic course. Teaching methods were designed to effect a remorseless trudge over the glutinous detail of a curriculum in which everything was reduced to the common clay of factual knowledge. Nowhere was this more clearly shown than in the treatment of the class novel where length, weight and discontinuity made for a cognitive challenge that only the strictest routines could meet. John Graham detailed the standard approach to 'doing' a novel, such as 'Ivanhoe'. The work would be covered on a chapter by chapter pattern in which pupils would be required to prepare a lengthy instalment at home for discussion in class on the appointed day of the week. This discussion would be pursued by a brisk round of questioning in order to check that the pupils had indeed carried this out, followed by a more thorough-going coverage of character, of events and their developments, of style, description and linguistic niceties; then a key extract might be selected for an intensive interpretation style treatment and lastly pupils would be invited to consider some formal

summative issue such as 'appreciation' or 'character contrast', questions being based on the pattern of the Higher examination paper - and here a model answer might be offered, even dictated, in order to provide a permanent and highly usable minute of the whole proceedings.<sup>(20)</sup>

As his reference to the 'Highers' indicates, John Graham's account is of the senior secondary course, but matters were not necessarily different in nature among the juniors. As a study sheet used by James Beedie at Ruthrieston fully demonstrates, novel work could be just as intensive there. The novel is *Silas Marner* and the study topics ran to 53 in number. Some of the questions selected for attention with regard to Chapter 3, give a representative sample of the whole:

'What is the artistic purpose of the first three paragraphs of Chapter III?'

'Very briefly explain the personal circumstances of Godfrey Cass which led him to consent to the sale of *Wildfire*.'

'Why is Snuff, the spaniel, introduced at the end of Chapter III?'<sup>(21)</sup>

#### **Inspectors and Teachers: Visits, Standards and the Status Quo**

The main link between these teachers, and the outside educational world was the local HMI. During the years preceding the War, the SED had developed its network of Inspectors into a powerful, smooth-running mechanism. In 1936 subject panels had been established within the Department; ten years later there were six members of the English group, each charged to go out into their respective areas, there to operate on teachers in a variety of regulative ways.<sup>(22)</sup>

In addition to the full scale internal report on an institution - which might take place every five to ten years - each school was required under the Code to submit detailed, subject-based schemes of work through its Education Authority areas for inspectorial approval. Entry into the profession itself was guarded by the Inspector on whose personal report the recommendation for the final award of the 'Parchment' to the probationer depended. The chief form of Department control was, however, through the workings of a national certification system that was, until the mid 1960s, exclusively administered by its subject

Inspectors. They drew up the syllabuses, set and marked the papers; they also required that each school submit advance estimate marks for all of its candidates and entertain follow up visits, even to the extent of allowing the local HMI to come into the classroom to conduct such supplementary oral and practical tests as he saw fit.

These various procedures established a regime of authoritarian vigilance. Not only did the Leaving Certificate give the HMI several points of entry into the school, but his handling of the candidate's work gave him a close knowledge of what was being done and of the standards being achieved. Any adverse results could be formally taken up at local authority level but usually he would prefer to establish a paternalistic relationship with 'his' schools so that he could enjoy the power of being able to influence events through more intimate means - some informal discussion, a word in the right ear, a monitorial glance at the teacher's Record of Work, the prospect of the unannounced visit. The local HMI would make it his business to know the qualities of the English teachers on his beat, to act as 'the eyes and the ears' of the Department, able to influence the progress of the individual career. It was a distinct advantage to gain the eye-catching 'VG+' at Training College that would enable the Inspector to pick you out as someone to watch for; to merit from him the favourable class reports that would lead your Principal Teacher to allocate the good Certificate classes to you; to prove that you were the kind of sound high pass list-producing teacher that was worthy of the well placed commendatory comment that could hasten promotion.<sup>(23)</sup>

In the years after the war the HMIs were therefore in a strong position to bind the individual school to national policies and to exert pressure on it to change in the required ways. It is illuminating, therefore, to examine the use that they appeared to make of these opportunities both by listening to what the twenty interviewees have to say regarding their relationships with the Inspectorate and by taking a look at the kind of school reports they actually produced. During my researches I was generously given special permission by the SED to read through their closed file material for 1920 to 1970 the evaluations of some thirty secondary schools in what is now the Grampian Region.<sup>(24)</sup>

A pair of typical reports are reproduced below:

**School A:** 'The oral answers of classes IH2 and IE2 were creditable; in the former class the recitation of verse had received careful attention. The written work of the classes was generally neat and satisfactory; grammatical terms should however be used with more precision. A test in written composition was set to class 2 - this yielded very promising results; the pupils made satisfactory progress in language study and they deserve special commendation for the neatness of their jotters and exercise books. Class 2 was less ready in answering than the others inspected but showed sound knowledge of the texts professed. In classes 3 and 4, composition and interpretation had been well taught; the Principal Teacher's careful and helpful revision exercises were especially noted. The oral and written answers to the questions on the books read were accurate in manner and sensible in opinion. There were a number of able pupils in class 5 with a real feeling for literature and considerable powers of expression; it is to be hoped that some of them will carry on this study at a more advanced level'.

**School B:** 'Inspection of the three classes in English gave clear evidence of interested and zealous teaching and considerable effort on the pupils' part. Class 1 answered creditably questions on the novel which had been the subject of study and recitation, both of prose and verse, was satisfactory. In grammar and word study oral answering was fairly good but the written test in composition showed some weakness in sentence structure and punctuation. Pupils of classes 2 and 3 were less responsive under oral examination and in recitation they did not show to advantage, yet in written exercises on the whole they reached a satisfactory standard, more than half of them passing a test in letter-writing. A play of Shakespeare had been studied with a measure of

success. At all stages there was evidence of training in neatness and in the orderly arrangement of exercises'.

The reports both date from 1952 and were on two schools situated within ten miles of each other. B was a small three year rural school for noncertificate pupils situated in a community whose most able children travelled daily to attend. A which was a middle-sized omnibus establishment with a strong interest in its Leaving Certificate candidates. The two schools were, then, very different in size, pupil population and social purpose, being respective representatives of the Department's bipartite policies. What is nevertheless most striking is the similarity of the reports, both in the features noted and the valuations attached to them. In each case it is a fragmented knowledge-centred curriculum that is reported on - and condoned. The familiar round of composition, grammar, interpretation, class reader, Shakespeare is verbally ticked off in a way that assumes its suitability for the junior secondary school and the noncertificate streams within the omnibus establishment. The Inspector's evaluations are confined to an appraisal of the efficiency with which these items are placed on display, of whether there is 'clear evidence' of their presence, of whether the pupils are attaining a 'satisfactory standard', of 'the results' achieved. What really counts is, in fact, presentation, that is the capacity of the pupils 'to show to advantage' on the day, to be 'ready in answering' and 'to acquit themselves creditably' upon the inspectorial stage. The HMI's visit appears to be the witnessing of a carefully marshalled series of performances, of recitations, tests in composition and letter-writing, of neatly inscribed jotters and word perfect oral responses.

While these judgements were perfectly in accordance with the academic values that the SED had always promoted for the senior secondary, they did little to advance its declared preference for a distinctive junior alternative. Far from condemning the unsuitability of an atomistic curriculum based on language study, these HMI reports show a willing entertainment of the exercises, studies, tests and memorisations that made up the curricular status quo. Conversely there was no reference to any of the new developments advocated in the 1947

Advisory Council's Report such as differentiation, projects, activity work, inter-subject integration or personally-directed content.

The SED's representative in each of the very typical examples cited here appeared to concur with the schools in viewing the English of the new Elizabethan age as a set of timeless pedagogical procedures. The implicit learning model was that of scholarly submission, not personal engagement: praise was meted out to those who 'study', make 'an effort', attend to their 'zealous' teachers, hand in 'neat' jotters and give 'sensible' answers. So universal were these values, so comfortably were they in accord with the prevailing school practice, that severe criticism did not feature heavily in any of these reports. And when the Inspector did find cause for an adverse remark, his prescription invariably took the form of 'more' rather than 'different'. The weaker the pupils the greater was to be the ingestion of the traditional academic remedies:

'The less able pupils in all these classes would benefit from more oral and written exercises in vocabulary and word-building';

'In classes 1 and 2 neater and more careful written work should be demanded, exercises should be regularly set and specific training given to overcome prevailing weakness';

'In class 1B2 a still further modification of the course with an added attention to simple exercises in sentence structure and word-building would be beneficial. Regular and systematic drill should be given'.<sup>(25)</sup>

Because of the 50 year closure rule that applies to school reports I am not permitted here to identify individual schools. This has proved to be less of a disadvantage than originally feared, so stereotyped were these HMI comments. Over the period under examination, they demonstrated a perpetual concern for the minor verities of the scholarly existence. The phrases employed became so patterned as to constitute a recognisable reportese: teachers give

'evidence of devoted and earnest teaching', join pupils in 'creating an impression of unremitting application', classes 'acquit themselves with credit', work 'briskly and diligently' and everywhere throughout the region, there is, most happily, a 'clear indication' of 'faithful work and steady progress'. These decorous encomiums are themselves prefaced by ritualistic references to the welcome provision of hot dinners, the tidy appearance of the school grounds, the scholarly qualities of the headmaster.

It is difficult to see these pre 1960 reports as serving any purpose other than that of a courteous stocktaking carried out to ascertain that everything is in its allotted place and in the correct quantities. This is an impression that is confirmed by the recollections of my interviewees. For the teacher who was doing her duty the HMI's visit was far from constituting the forbidding event that the powers vested in him might have suggested. Jim Beedie working in Aberdeen in the 1950s summed up, 'They were pleasant social visits - "How are you getting on?", that kind of thing - certainly not an occasion for learning anything new!' The HMI did not appear during this period to be responsible for the introduction of new ideas or the upsetting of old ones. Teacher-Inspector debate would rather take the form of a gentle jousting between two scholarly colleagues, of an argument, Roy Stark remembers, over who actually was the author of the original 'de Coverley' essay or what a particular allusion in 'The Rape of the Lock' signified. Indeed the visit could take on the reiterative appeal of a familiar personal act. For Moira Jolly and Archie Watt, successively at Mackie Academy, the arrival of their local HMI might well mean a rendition of "Get up and Bar the Door" and a discussion on mystitis in cows. Certainly it would be a highly idiosyncratic performance:

'He would follow the letter of the law for five minutes - "Where is your record of work, the textbooks?" - but then it would be "I think I'll take the class now Mr Watt" and off he would go. He was a pawky Scot, with a lot of stories; we might be doing Charles Lamb and he would question them on "Old China" for a few minutes but then he would somehow get on to mealie puddings or Robert Burns and that would be that'.<sup>(26)</sup>

The Inspector of this period was settled into the comfortable minutiae of the age-old curriculum. He acted the role of the guardian of its standards and as the embodiment of the qualities with which it could imbue its more distinguished adherents, rather than as an educational consultant or the bringer of change. Whatever developments might be declaimed in the Annual Reports, on the ground the specific recommendations were strictly in accordance with the existing proprieties. Inspectors might be men (scarcely ever women) of genuine authority but if so, then it was rank and personal cultivation that gave them this quality, not pedagogical insight.

Consequently they functioned not by offering close participation or joint exploration but through the upholding of a position. Typically HMI recruits were people of academic, often classical, distinction who were prepared to work in the service where promotion depended on the slow processes of seniority. When HMC Dr Robertson was asked by the Sixth Advisory Council's Primary Education Committee to consider the advantages of an exchange scheme by which Inspectors and teachers might interchange roles occasionally, his answer was in the traditions of a hierarchical organisation that was too preoccupied with the fineness of its own procedures and the mystique of its professionalism to view the suggestion as anything but an affront to bureaucratic nature:

'The Inspector was not a teacher. On the contrary what the Department expects the inspector to be was a person who has studied carefully departmental policy, and was able to read regulations correctly and to develop a technique of inspection that would give him accurate evidence on which to base his judgments and his reports to the Department... An Inspector who was really of value to the Department needed a long specialised training, and it could scarcely be done in five years....'(27)

Dr Robertson's words come to us from 1945, in the midst of the period when, according to one of its later members, the Inspectorate was known as 'Sleepy Hollow'.<sup>(28)</sup> The nickname implies, perhaps, a *ménage* of unadventurous outlook and somnambulistic routine rather than

a simple lack of industriousness. To the interviewees the Inspectorate appeared to be too much encumbered by the weight of their own scholarly training and inquisitional duty to be anything but suspicious of change. Ian Scott offered the instance of the Inspector who would enter his fifth year class at the Nicolson Institute, Stornoway, at any time in the late 1950s, pick up a copy of 'Hamlet' and without any reference at all to its dramatic or human properties demand that the class subject a soliloquy to intensive grammatical analysis.

The HMI of the 1950s appeared to be happiest when he was dealing with the safely familiar, not when called upon to be the forensic innovator. To Bill Ettles, then teaching in Banffshire, it appeared that even the large scale five year review was all about the tidiness of the front lawn rather than any indepth spadework: 'Their report would be like a beautifully raked over garden; there might be boulders beneath the topsoil but they wanted to find small things that could be put right through their suggestions - they preferred not to discover too much'.

According to memories such as these, the visiting Inspector was not so much an interrogator as the producer whose predictable questions and benignly imposing presence worked to elicit the requisite performance by both teacher and pupil and perhaps provide the cue for a bravura display of his own. As John Graham of Lerwick defined it,

'On their visits to the school the Inspectors behaved as if they were participating in some kind of traditional drama in which their role was to be that of a superteacher both leading and producing the Inspectorial event. Teachers and pupils would be judged according to how word perfect they were in their parts'.

#### **The Higher English Paper: the Continuity of Standards**

Ultimately it is difficult not to see English teacher and Inspector as tacitly conspiring to uphold an academic system that enabled each to play their roles in such a mutually sustaining fashion - and to enjoy such longrunning performances. In this partnership the strongest hoop that bound them together was the Leaving Certificate that the pupil was expected to jump through

at the end of the fifth year. The Higher English paper was an obstacle of enduring shape and power. Throughout the whole period from 1947 to 1962, the Department's Circular 30, in which it set out the examination syllabus for the following year, was issued unchanged in even the smallest detail. Although as it entered the 1960s it was becoming possible to discern some development in its question-setting tone and in the sophistication of its demands, content was held tight within the age-old composition - interpretation passage - two language tasks - three literature questions mould.

In 1962, for example, while the text chosen for interpretation featured an historian reflecting upon the processes of her craft (C V Wedgwood) in contrast to 1947's straightforward extract from Lord Macaulay, the attached questions are almost interchangeable: 'explain carefully (1947)/clearly (1962) the following phrases'; 'what part of speech is but/round'; 'make a general analysis/substitute noun clauses for these phrases'; 'suggest a suitable title'; 'make a summary not exceeding 150/110 words'. In both the Literature papers there were compulsory Shakespeare questions; 2a on Chaucer's 'Prologue', 2b on the 'Canterbury Tales'; the same mounds of poets, give or take a Betjeman or a Spender, of essayists and of novelists. In 1962 as in 1947 Jeannie Deans, Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs Proudie were still offering themselves for verbal portraits, 'L'Allegro', 'Tam o' Shanter' and 'The Ancient Mariner' as objects of 'appeal to the young reader' and examples of 'characteristics of their authors', Hazlett was there yet, demonstrating 'vigour and enjoyment of life' in contrast to Lamb's timeless 'revelation of personality'.

The Inspectorate used this examination as the means of impressing continuity of standards as well as content. Just what these were and just what kind of linguistic values attended them were sharply revealed by their own 1955 Memorandum that was issued 'for the guidance of teachers on the setting and marking of school tests and examinations.'<sup>(29)</sup> In this booklet were reprinted specima of candidates' work, with marks and explanatory comment. It was an enlightening exercise, for these examples demonstrated the clear preference of the examiners for factual accuracy, for stylistic decorum over individuality and lively

expressiveness. An essay writer may be marked down because she uses idioms such as 'quite a number' and 'other friends' or produces punctuation that 'is sometimes too light'; the literature candidate will be rewarded if he can reproduce his notes on four of Lamb's essays - 'well informed ... extensively read' - but will be penalised if he perpetrates a temporal grossness in his handling of Burns - 'Half a mark was deducted for giving 18th Century instead of second half of 18th Century'.<sup>(30)</sup>

The most vivid demonstration of the degree to which the Department favoured the stiffly competent came, however, in its response to a pair of 'Arctic Convoy' essays. Candidate A writes a lifeless if tidy account of 'that fateful second of November' when German U-Boats and 'equally dreaded Stuka bombers' left 'the battered convey limping into port to discharge its much-needed supplies'. He is rewarded with the high 26 out of 35 because he has achieved 'good, firm narrative... good paragraphing and diction... good spelling ... and very good handwriting and spacing'. In contrast, B is energetic, occasionally erratic in his depiction of 'only a handful of miserable, half dead survivors' left after the torpedo-bombers 'had swept in' to fire 'their hail of death into the sluggish, helpless merchantmen'. Although it is conceded that these are 'vivid passages' he must be adjudged to fall below the 17<sup>0</sup> out of 35 pass mark because, in addition to three spelling errors, 'in half-a-dozen instances, sentence structure is marred by gross errors' - which turn out to be the use of a comma instead of a semi-colon.<sup>(31)</sup>

John Graham then teaching in Lerwick, wrote to the SED in polite protest: 'I am very conscious that my approach may be wrong-headed, that I am looking for "literary" compositions which say something well rather than functional prose that is colourless and correct... I am always having pupils who seem to have natural, forceful style in their bones and others who produce good journeyman prose with no individuality or force'. In his reply Mr Charles Forbes HMI used the full weight of his office to express agreement with the first of John Graham's comments, but little else: '..the Department are of the opinion that the marking of the two compositions represents the consensus of opinion of its officers charged with the Inspection of English'. He concedes that B 'has many merits' but that its 'serious weaknesses far outweigh

its positive qualities' - and here he merely repeats the strictures concerning the comma splice.<sup>(32)</sup>

The Higher Leaving Certificate examination in English acted as a conservative force that pushed back attempts to express any definition of the subject that might be more personally developmental than the academicism on which it based its annual returns. The business of the examination was itself a vast preoccupation: more than four months of Inspectorial time was taken up each year on its marking and administration, while the system of estimates meant that teachers' involvement in its procedures spread over an equivalent span.<sup>(33)</sup> These were simply the formal aspects of a presence within the secondary school that, in the absence of any clearly worked out alternative, served as the one clear and consummative model for the subject. Right down into S1 and across into the junior streams, its papers defined English as an immutable aggregation of composition-interpretation-language exercises-literary appreciation.

Roy Stark has preserved the internal examination papers he and his colleagues within the omnibus Kilsyth Secondary School used in the early 1950s.<sup>(34)</sup> Thrice yearly, in different rooms under various teachers, each class from the academic As to the commercial and technical Es and Fs, would spend 3 to 4 hours writing their essays, tackling their 15 comprehension questions on 30 lines of unseen prose, then go on to work through a couple of language exercises before concluding with a literature answer or two. This was as true of the lowly and nominally nonacademic 1F who were asked to collect together 40 marks worth of understanding on a fictional description of a seafaring man's cottage, to hack away at questions on 'Coral Island' and the term's poetry diet, as it was of the SLC estimate-sitting 5A. Even two years later on the brink of leaving to be employed in factories, shops and mines, 3F were given a valedictory interpretation exercise on an extract from 'Last of the Mohicans', an exercise in synthesis and questions on 'The Pied Piper'.

The Leaving Certificate provided for both Inspector and English teacher rationale and validation. Although the confident enterprising individual could treat its demands as a framework within which it was possible to take liberties, he always knew that the inescapable test of his professionalism would be the pass lists. It was at this point that he was conscious of the HMI as an enforcement officer for the system, entitled to visit the classroom with his OHMS notebook that contained the results of the most recent Leaving Certificate and conduct an earnest Inspectorial post mortem. For most this was no more than a proper exercise in public accountability - for some like Archie Watt it was indeed the sought after accolade, 'the final test of excellence, the standard which the whole secondary school, teacher and pupil had to aim at'. For others it was simply the system, to be respected, obeyed or manipulated according to the dictates of personal sensibility or careerist ambition. Perhaps a final tribute to the power of the SED's Highers lies in the effective cynicism of a fellow competitor for a promoted post that Ian Scott encountered in the interview waiting room. The putative principal teacher, who later rose to some prominence in the profession, expressed his philosophy thus:

'You choose one play for S5 and drill, drill, drill until the pupils really know it; the only way to success in English teaching is through excellent Leaving Certificate results. You work them at Chaucer's 'Prologue' because that's always going to be the second question, you take three or four long poems like 'Lycidas' and 'Sohrab and Rostum' that are always coming up and you drill, drill the class in those... this is the way to get great results and make yourself brilliant in the eyes of the Inspectorate and the rest of the staff.'

#### **The Academic Curriculum: Professional Satisfaction**

This comment represents a particularly coarse example of the degree to which those who were professionally engaged in it might perceive the English of the 1950s in Scotland to be a clearly institutionalised scheme of evaluations that could be exploited for personal advancement. No doubt, too, there were pupils and parents who felt equally comfortable within a system in which public success went to those who were sufficiently industrious and well directed as to be able to travel the well signposted Highway of the SLC. There were, however, many English

teachers who sought their career satisfactions in a continuing renewal of those experiences in language and literature that had impelled them towards the subject in the first place. We would fail to appreciate the staying power of the academic curriculum if we were not to realise that many of its graduate entrants practised it as an opportunity to enjoy a genuine self-fulfilment. For them the carefully structured secondary course was a template on to which they were able to print their personal patterns, complete with colouring that was all their own. The Leaving Certificate had to be attended to, of course, but its requirements were sufficiently predictable to permit many incidental freedoms. As Sydney Smyth remembers it:

'Literature for us was our heritage; we had been trained in it as a body of historical knowledge on the Beowulf to Virginia Woolf pattern. Our subject was a kind of intellectual baggage that we carried around in our heads - we wanted our pupils to understand it developmentally, to mature in it, as we ourselves had learned to appreciate it... As for the Highers, we learned to live with this system; there was no doubt that we had to get as many passes at the end of the day as we could but for most of the time we could do what we conceived to be the job and then turn to short ferocious bouts of exam technique to get them through'.

This is an explanation which does more than describe a simple state of co-existence: while the examination could be separated out from its essential flow, the current of day to day teaching yet moved in an academic direction. As the words imply, 'English' existed still as a received body of experience that the teacher had taken into his own possession and which could now be shared out among pupils who had to be initiated into its uses and appreciation. For practitioners like Sydney Smyth their chosen subject meant much more than the duties of clausal analysis or punctuation exercises. These had to be carried out because they were part of that attention to expression and to meaning that achieved their consummation in the prose and poetry of our great writers. For the twenty teachers that I interviewed the leading impulse lay here: English was that part of the secondary school curriculum in which were deposited the riches of the national literature. Given this sense of being entrusted with what Sidney Smyth terms 'our heritage', the teaching task became that of faithful transmission - but a

transmission that was to be performed with sufficient power to achieve a personally felt enlightenment.

Two testimonials must serve for what, given the unanimity of the interviewees on this point, appears to have been a leading ambition among a whole generation of post war English teachers. Moira Jolly (Copland) who was brought up and taught in a small northeast agricultural community claimed:

'My great enthusiasm was always literature. If I felt that I could bring my pupils to the point where they wanted to read poetry then I felt I had succeeded. I remember one girl, a bright girl at school but who left school to marry early. It was a rotten marriage - she was left alone with two young kids to bring up. I met her in the street years later and do you know what she said to me?; she said, "I'll always remember our poetry with you Miss Copland. In fact just about the only thing that kept me going was that poetry. I can see myself standing at the sink, looking through the window over the fields, the kids bawling in the background and reciting Keats to myself"....'

Gordon Liddell grew up in the contrasting setting of a mining village in Lanarkshire:

'My motivation was this... my father left school at 14... he would walk the 10 miles to Glasgow and come back with a Shakespeare he'd bought from the street barrows; I knew miners who could run off reams of Burns - it was a miner who'd been injured in a pit accident, a man who hobbled around in callipers who gave me my first copy of Burns when I was just 10... Another who left school at 12 taught himself to paint; he was living in Burnbank, and he found the Impressionists - Van Gogh among the minefields! Our working class community was full of people like this... we saw English as something that was tied to a person, a chance to explore the world and yourself through literature; I suppose we were evangelists but it was nothing explicit, didn't have to be, just the general Zeitgeist'.<sup>(35)</sup>

These individual compulsions were sustained by a tradition of inculcatory teaching that was reaching a stylistic maturity during this period. If preparation for the examination and the weight of a knowledge-based curriculum imposed a broadly didactic approach on classwork, they nevertheless established a strong platform on which the teacher could perform. The prescribed nature of the content was simply a challenge to the individual teachers to enact it with sufficient virtuosity to move her pupil audience as it had moved her. A syllabus that was directed towards the highest standards of language usage and the acknowledged masterpieces of English literature invited her to see herself as a teacher artist whose masterly interpretations of the given word enabled her to achieve dramatic enlightenment in her classroom utterances.

In the 1950s this dramaturgical pedagogy was being refined in ways that allowed the pupils to assume a more active role. The age-old teacher-led drilling was being crafted into compelling sequences of question and answer by which the pupil was to be deftly conducted towards the required conclusion that was predicated on a logical process of deduction and definition. The teacher could thus experience a gratifying sense of having led her pupils to participate in the essential disciplines of the subject for themselves. James Duffin, who did his training at Jordanhill in the mid 1960s, well remembers the key advice, 'Always elicit; it was engraved on our foreheads. The assumption was that the well-focused question would allow the whole class to join in the essential conceptual processes. But it all became something of a commandment that you had to go to heroic lengths to uphold - I can remember sweating over 30 minutes during a teaching practice lesson on 'My Last Duchess', trying to get a class to produce the term 'dramatic monologue' for themselves...'

This was the time when English departments at the Colleges of Education were placed in the charge of seasoned veterans like James Inglis at Jordanhill, Tom Brown, Moray House and Andrew McCluckie, Aberdeen, men who were appointed to their headships direct from the classroom so that they could offer the next generation the authoritative example of their own

extensive experience. Teacher training was modelled on the setpiece 'crit' lesson, an occasion for the spellbinding performance of one principal and a cast of thirty.

At Aberdeen, some of the model lesson schemes that were then handed out to students still survive. They consist of treatments of infallible texts such as 'Flannen Isle', descriptions of teachers and uncles in 'Cider with Rosie', or Pip's encounter with the escaped convict in 'Great Expectations'. Typical is the 'Notes for a Reading Lesson for Secondary 2' based on a cyclostyled extract from 'Tom Sawyer', in which Mark Twain's hero persuades assorted passers-by to carry out his punishment of whitewashing the fence. The 'Aim' is 'to enjoy the humour of the passage and to see whence it springs, viz. from the author's lively presentation of boyish feelings and attitudes and his suggestion that these are a reflection of the adult world'. After a 'first reading by teacher to give the material a colourful and exciting aural presentation', the lesson plan progresses through six stages of denouement from 'Ben's approach' through 'Tom plays and lands the fish' to 'The incident is generalised'. Within each episode the action is finely cast as a series of 'elicitations'. Thus 'Stage 6, the Conclusion' is achieved as -

'Elicit that the story illustrates a characteristic of all human nature.

Get the class to quote from the last paragraph to show

- a) that the incident has been generalised;
- b) what the characteristic actually is.

Elicit that Tom's discovery of the 'great law of human nature' relates back to the inspiration mentioned earlier.

Elicit that the structure of the extract is therefore determined: inspiration - inspiration at work - generalisation'.(36)

To revisit these early 1960s examples is to glimpse something of the attractions and the self-deceptions of the 'progressive' revisions to the traditional methods. Although the attempt was being made to relieve chalk and talk dustiness, its essentially didactic character was still

being maintained through its delivery of knowledge as a series of teacher-dependent transactions. The discursive role that was now offered to the pupil was, in fact, no more than a permission to collaborate in the production of understandings that were conceived, defined and distributed through the device of the teacher's carefully manufactured questions. In a specimen lesson that was so thoroughly orchestrated into a stylised set of Socratic manoeuvres, the 'enjoyment of the humour' of Tom Sawyer could only come to the class as a received rather than an experienced quality.

The individualist style of classroom teaching, that is so clearly evinced here, was at one with the organisational values that prevailed within the secondary school of the day. When asked to comment on any feature of their professional lives in the 1950s that was strikingly different from today's practice, a majority of interviewees readily nominated 'the absence of teamwork and of departmental planning'. The department's Scheme of Work was simply handed out by the Head of Department; it was neither open to review nor discussion. From that point onwards the teacher was simply left to get on with its implementation. The subject could safely be assumed to be self-evident; the credentials of the mandatory university degree meant that the individual could be entrusted with its continuing welfare. As Jim Alison puts it: 'The Principal Teacher did not see it as his business to interfere with the professionalism of his colleagues'.

The result was that the individual teacher could develop his own classroom persona to a self-fulfilling degree; so long as the Record of Work was kept, the HMIs satisfied and the examination results up to the mark, he need expect no close intrusion on his right to perform as he saw fit - and the result could be memorable teaching that many an academically inclined pupil found inspirational. But if there was no intervention there was little interest either. Teachers could find their own way towards making the subject more meaningful - W A Gatherer describes how during his Leith Academy days he tried to brighten up composition sessions by using real-life situations, once even going to the extent of taking his class out on to the streets to search for copy - at which event a colleague 'nearly fainted'<sup>(37)</sup> - and Joe O'Neill

recalls that his enthusiasm for Gerard Manley Hopkins led him to introduce direct observation into his essay teaching. These remained however, essentially personal ventures which the system as it existed then was not geared to take up in a way that would enable the individual insight to be adopted and further developed by fellow teachers. Professional freedom there might be to a beguiling extent, but ultimately it was to prove to be a vacuous, unproductive affair. In the words of Roy Stark:

'Perhaps we were guilty of not exploiting the freedom that was there, of being too content to do what we had always been doing. But this freedom was not a deliberately created space for us to use. Real freedom is when you are given support, encouragement, the means to try things out... Teachers had space and time and emptiness rather than any real professional freedom'.

The mixture of deference and liberty, which English teachers enjoyed by working within a hierarchical setting that gave them their own protected position, offered little opportunity to indulge in the kind of collaborative reflection or collective action that could generate fresh initiatives. John Graham, looking back over a long career in the same Shetland town, found himself 'startled' to realise the extent to which the English teaching of a quarter of a century ago was left as an individual enterprise. He himself worked in a department of four, in many ways a close-knit team that would 'chat all the time' about their jobs and their enthusiasm for specific books. Little came of it, however, for there were no organized departmental meetings in which people could come together to work out new schemes or to attack issues in a systematic way.

It is also John Graham who offers the most vivid image to describe what it was like for a young English teacher in the immediate postwar era. To take up English teaching in 1950, as he did, was 'to enter a broad river of tradition that had been flowing through the ages and to launch one's own craft on to the waters and then attempt to follow the current'. It is not an altogether unattractive picture. It reminds us that in trying to penetrate the curriculum of the 1950s so as to uncover the reasons within it for the persistence of pre-war practice, what we are dealing

with was more than a system: it was a whole culture of inbred loyalties and shared experience. To become an 'English teacher' was to seek entry into a way of professional life that identified itself by means that were experiential rather than conceptual. Deep-rooted within each practitioner had grown a cluster of potent schemata for defining and doing 'English': the subject was constructed out of a set of key classroom activities such as the fortnightly composition, the twenty question comprehension passage, the class reader; and each of these topics would automatically suggest a range of associated practice - the paragraph by paragraph plan, interpretation as an analysis of text through a pattern of elicited deduction, chapters, character sketches and the dictated appreciation.

When asked to nominate the key influences on their early formulation of 'English', only one of my interviewees pointed to a body of theory or an educational authority (Ian Scott on A N Whitehead). For the others it was the personal enjoyment of literature, an inspiring English teacher from their own schooldays, an idealistic desire to enhance the lives of their pupils as encountered within a specific social setting, the example of an older, much respected colleague. To change all that would mean the painful abandonment of both an inheritance and a personal investment. To argue for that change merely as a rational proposition would be to miss the real sources of a teacher's professional knowledge for these lay in an intermingling of autobiography, of institutional custom and of everyday craft knowledge. Such experiences would always be much more insistent than any abstract talk of an English sufficiently revitalised so as to stem the grievous wastage from the senior school, still less of an alternative junior version to be based on personal 'needs' and 'modern' life.

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## PART 2 : 1947 - 1965

### CHAPTER 5 : RECORDS AND SCHEMES OF WORK

#### **Fresh Faces at the SED: J S Brunton and the Drive towards Reform**

One of the questions asked those interviewees who began their teaching careers in the 1940s and 50s was, 'What were the most significant influences in shaping your practice of the subject?' While they might variously go on to cite Whitehead, or point to a strongly felt experience such as the armed services or growing up in a Fife mining village, the immediate response was not ideological or experiential but practical and institutional. It was, as Jim Beedie said, speaking for many of them, 'from the Scheme of Work handed to me by the Principal Teacher of English on my first day of teaching'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Although each of these programmes was made up by the school concerned, this operation was carried out within a firmly-drawn national framework, one that stretched out beyond the individual departmental scheme along a whole chain of submission to successively higher authority: teacher to departmental head to school head to local authority to district and then divisional Inspector - and he to the requirements of the current School Code as promulgated from Edinburgh under the seal of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Its supervision over such a hierarchy gave the SED command of a range of pressure points that it could manipulate to assist any push towards curricular reform that it might decide to make. And as the 1940s drew to a close it was becoming apparent to the Department that it would have to do more than simply rely upon the largely unread exhortation of its annual Report if it was to persuade its several hundred secondary and omnibus schools to undertake the changes that would stem the wastage of the able from the academies and high schools and also create the vibrant innovative junior sector that would establish the genuinely alternative version of secondary education that its bipartite policies demanded.

An essential first step was taken in 1950 by the rewriting of the School Code, to be followed by the issuing of **Circular Number 188**, in December of that year, that laid down the progressively differentiated basis on which syllabus submissions were henceforth to be made: 'In the preparation of schemes of work regard shall be had to the age, ability and aptitude of the pupils for whom the courses are designed and to the length of time for which the pupils are likely to remain at school'.<sup>(2)</sup>

The wording was memorable, the principles were boldly child-centred but, as the story told by successive annual Reports reveals, the new Code by itself did nothing to work the change. To construe the new requirement, to demonstrate what such sensitively protean workschemes were and could be, was not easy; over the following decade the SED found itself having to use a full range of promotional and structural ploys in order to engage schools with this problem. In the early 1950s it turned to the device of a working party investigation when the new Assistant Secretary John S Brunton headed a Departmental group that was charged with the preparation of an official statement on the issue of wastage. Following the revelation in the 1952 Report that in the previous year as many as 74% of senior secondary pupils had quit their certificate course before its completion,<sup>(3)</sup> Brunton's committee sent out a questionnaire to some 100 secondary headteachers in order to collect evidence as to the perceived cause. The result was the 1955 Circular **'Early Leaving from Senior Secondary Courses'**, a document that refused to allow the schools to remain under the cover of the usual socio-economic and attitudinal explanations - while these were given their due, there was also forthright criticism of an obsessive academicism: 'Many of the pupils who enter senior secondary courses have no desire to proceed to a university... the schools should take even more account of this fact... and provide a suitable alternative course of a less academic type for those for whom an academic curriculum is not appropriate'.<sup>(4)</sup>

The direct tone of **Circular 312** was the first manifestation of a fresh individual force at work, one that was to become the dominant influence over the SED after the retirement of Mackay Thomson in 1952 - John S Brunton. First as Assistant Secretary and then as the Senior Chief

Inspector from 1955 to 1966, he showed himself to be an astute manager as well as an ambitious reformer. Brunton had deplored the stodgy reaction of the Department to the Advisory Council's work in 1947: 'The influence, the authority, of the Department at that time were very strong and teachers looked to the Department for leadership and I'm afraid strong leadership was not forthcoming'.<sup>(5)</sup> Brunton was determined to supply that leadership and under his direction, the SED's campaign for change began to take on a new and dextrously applied vigour.

Brunton considered the prevailing academicism to be a condition that ailed the whole body of Scottish education, and reached into its very heart, the senior secondary. In his chairmanship of the wastage enquiry he had been anxious to impose this diagnosis on his colleagues and ultimately upon the public statement itself, even to the extent of over-interpreting his questionnaire evidence. The privately gathered returns showed that while a fair minority of headteachers did consider that the intellectualist nature of the curriculum was a major contributor in persuading pupils to leave prematurely, the majority were more inclined to blame congenital or social factors. It was the former view to which Brunton wished to give public prominence and, as his digest of the questionnaire evidence to the internal committee showed, he wanted to reorientate traditional Scottish attitudes by giving credence to affective and non-academic values:

'...We must make a real effort to adapt the curriculum and the Scottish Leaving Certificate to the requirements of those who are looking only for a good general education as well as of those who are seeking to go ahead to higher education. If we can get more flexibility into our school arrangements and can reduce the pressure which seems at present to take a great deal of the enjoyment of school days from a not inconsiderable proportion of the pupils, then I think we shall be well on the way to reducing wastage'.<sup>(6)</sup>

In 1955 Brunton also turned his attention to the complementary problem of the noncertificate pupil by setting up a carefully selected group of younger, progressive HMIs to prepare what was

issued as **Junior Secondary Education**,<sup>(7)</sup> a substantial 186 page exposition of the aims, content and character of a distinctively 'junior' curriculum. For the first time a sustained authoritative attempt was being made to define the guiding principles of an alternative non-academic course and to establish the methods on which it should be based. It was, says James Beedie, at that time a teacher of English at Ruthrieston Junior Secondary School in Aberdeen, 'A benchmark; for the first time we were being told "Forget the senior secondary - formulate your own scheme of work"'. The curriculum, the Report argued, should be set in the context of the community and aim at offering the individual youngster a balanced experience. Above all it was prepared to make the forthright pronouncement that, 'the pupil is more important than the subject', that a doctrine of 'interest' should be adopted and that 'the subject', a typical statement ran, 'must be regarded from the point of the pupil's needs, his capabilities and ' - in a show of real post Calvinist warmth - 'his natural impulses'.<sup>(8)</sup>

The traditional format of the HMSO imprint was only one of a repertoire of propagandist devices that Brunton's SED were now prepared to exploit on both the wastage and the junior secondary issues. In 1955 he held a big residential HMI conference at Dunblane Hydro to ensure that his Inspectors knew exactly what was expected of them and that 'the gospel is preached at district level'.<sup>(9)</sup> Posters were issued to canvass parental support under the slogan, 'Your Child's Future Depends on You', a film on the attractions of the new life-giving junior secondary, 'Learning from Living', was sent touring the country<sup>(10)</sup> and Brunton himself was always ready to address teacher conferences. At one such, the 1959 EIS Congress, 'Education in a Democratic Society', Brunton preached, 'The true teacher is never merely a purveyor of facts; his teaching is always influenced by his own personality and humanity; and it is through the expression of his personality that he leads his pupils to develop their personalities'.<sup>(11)</sup>

Finally in 1962 came the publication of the attractively illustrated brochure-style **New Ways in Junior Secondary Education**.<sup>(12)</sup> However, despite the heartening 'learning-by-activity', examples of bulb-growing projects in Lewis, French weeks in Lothian, of chess clubs, farm

adoption schemes and Duke of Edinburgh awards, the final 'conclusion' had to be the sombre verdict that, 'These advances are greatly to be welcomed; yet a feeling of disappointment must remain that after five years progress is still so slow and so uneven'.<sup>(13)</sup> And in the same year, the Department felt obliged to issue its pamphlet, 'Give them their Chance' to encourage parents to prevail upon their offspring to stay out the certificate course.

#### **The Scheme of Work: or Unreformed Academicism for All**

During the period 1950-1962, then, the SED saw its curricular priority as persuading schools to produce 'schemes of work' that would be so individualised and flexible as to encourage the post-war youngster to perceive real purpose in his schooling, whether it be at senior or junior level, and to embrace it with enthusiasm - or at least with sufficient interest to stay on beyond the earliest legal jumping off age. To Brunton and his SED colleagues the 'scheme of work' ought to become a statement of reforming intent, an opening up of new possibilities - but how was it perceived by the several hundred Principal Teachers of English scattered throughout Scotland whose efforts by the beginning of the 1960s were considered to have been so disappointingly unprogressive?

Thirty years on, it is impossible to recapture more than a handful of all those hundreds of schemes of work that were kept so assiduously, during the first two decades after the War. There is, however, little reason to think that they differed markedly one from the other or that the individual school department saw itself as doing anything else but attest to its worthiness to participate in the national scheme of things. The evidence offered by my interviewees describes how the schemes that they encountered in their early careers appeared to be designed to testify to an efficient and complete coverage of 'English' right down to its most precise component. Far from essaying a distinctively local or pupil-orientated programme, they were intended to be read as a test of the individual Principal Teacher's ability to reproduce his own version of the nationally approved curriculum however physically remote his school might be from the centres of large town scholarship. The workscheme was, in this respect, a perpetuation of the traditional Scottish regard for the parish school as an authentic centre of

academic excellence through which the youngster could achieve access to any one of Scotland's ancient universities. As Roy Stark, a man whose 1950 career spanned Jordanhill, Glasgow, Kilsyth in Stirlingshire and the Banffshire school of Mortlach, Dufftown, put it, the nation's English teaching was so stereotyped, so controlled by the model of the Scottish Leaving Certificate that 'at that time you could have told what every teacher in the land was teaching at the latter stages of the senior secondary course'.<sup>(14)</sup>

On the other side of the country at this time, R Ian Scott was establishing himself as the Principal Teacher of English at the Nicolson Institute, Stornoway. As such he was responsible for the subject in a large omnibus school that acted as the centre of secondary school excellence for the whole of the Western Isles. The scheme that he produced comprised some 18 closely packed folio-sized pages, each one of which was so loaded with content that it was able to function with the precision of a railway timetable<sup>(15)</sup>; at the Week 1 Term 2 time that 3A would be covering the Sonnets on pages 89, 117 and 180 of 'Fresh Fields', 1D were working through selected pieces in Stone's 'Book of Verse'; while for grammar the older class were to examine Ridout's explication on p104 of the noun clause in apposition along with p140's examples of loose, mixed and periodic sentences, the first years would be using Ridout to become acquainted with the active and passive voice (p116) and the complement (p129).

The scheme commences with the drawing up of five essential Aims and these are to enable the pupil to write ('clearly and correctly'), to understand ('a given passage thoroughly'), to enjoy ('and express appreciation of good literature'), to speak ('correctly') and to discuss ('fairly, subjects of topical and literary interest'). The working week itself followed these divisions by proposing six separate periods of poetry, drama, prose, grammar, composition, interpretation and vocabulary. Although these latter language items might be best treated as overlapping, there was a separate book for each day of the week - in Year 1, Ridout for grammar, Robertson for interpretation, Smyth for prose, Stone's 'Book of Verse' and 'Modern One Act Plays'.

The proposed methodology is the consequence of this conceptualisation of English as an encyclopaedic aggregation of text and topic. The heavy weight of the curriculum worked to impose its own procedures since simply to get through it all in an orderly and prompt fashion was to commit the pupil to a continuous stock-taking exercise. In class the painstaking concern for detail imposed a bit by bit linearity that had to be underpinned by repetitiveness of activity, the steady march through the textbook pages accompanied by the regular week about alternation of essay and interpretation. Here homework must be brought into play since it could be the useful means of shifting a little more of the load every night: 'regular small quantities must be set... this should take the form of short revision exercises in punctuation, grammar, prosody etc'. Although 'quality' is demanded, not mere quantity, this is explained as an intensification of procedure rather than the realisation of any inner impulse - there must be 'respect for facts, a planned sequence of facts, accurate vocabulary, correct spelling and punctuation, neatness'.

Knowledge is vast, its acquisition necessarily incremental. The subject and its learning are non-problematic, being a self-evident matter of information gathering and application. To take 'English' is to serve time as an apprentice, observing, imitating, practising, training and being trained. How appropriate then that a popular Scottish textbook of the time, one prepared by the Principal Lecturer in English at Jordanhill Training College, James Lochrie, should be entitled just that. **Apprentice English, Book 1** informs the pupil reader that 'this book should help you to become a master of the craft of speaking and writing well. It will show you the tools you need, teach you how to handle them and give you practice in their use'.<sup>(16)</sup> Doing it right is the key: as the Nicolson Scheme has it in its listing of aims, you show understanding by 'explaining it', you write 'clearly and correctly', develop 'correct' speech, enjoy literature by 'expressing appreciation' of it.

The analogy is that of the craftsman's workshop but really the more persistent image is of the pre-computerised office, with its files and its ledgers, its hierarchy of tasks and its etiquettes, its daily routines to be carried out with neatness and with deference. And just as it is

important to memorise the leading items, the pupil is instructed to learn up leading pieces of linguistic or literary business - figures and parts of speech, suffixes and sentence types and, over the first three years of the course, some twenty poems ranging from 'Young Lochinver' and 'Sea Fever' in S1 to 'Ozymandias' and 'Sohrab Meets Rustum (including an epic simile)' in year three.

Within this bureaucracy there are intricate series of headings and items to master: parts of speech, figures of speech, prosody, syntactical shapes and sizes, analysis particular and general, a movement from the indefinite article to the compound-complex sentence, from the iambic foot to the Italian sonnet form. This accumulative progression can be followed in the example of the figure of speech: the pupil commences her secondary career with metaphor and alliteration, goes on in term 2 to personification and hyperbole, then in termly sequence passes through euphemism, bathos, the pun, litotes, meiosis, antithesis by the end of year two and so on till by the time of the Highers she will have picked her way through some thirty-five rhetorical devices (antonomasia to zeugma).

The most startling feature is that while the Nicolson is situated in a distinctive part of the country with its own Hebridean culture and Gaelic bilingualism and although its scheme of work was drawn together for young people who were growing up in the rapidly changing, increasingly youth-aware 1950s, it could be for anywhere, any time. 'English' comes from a book; for the young Lewisian of 1959 the subject is as likely to mean Robertson and Ridout, the 'Kings Highway' and 'Books for us All' as it is 'Hamlet', 'Ode to a Nightingale', Wordsworth and Dickens. There is a text for each day of the week, often arranged in a series to be worked through year by year; by S3 the pupil will have got through some 762 pages of Ridout, over 50 interpretation passages from Robertson, will have graduated from 'Little Plays from Shakespeare' and the 'Book of Verse for Young People' (battles, ballads and butterflies) up through the 'Magic of Literature' and the 'Thirteen Short Stories' to Addison, Steele, Macbeth, the 'Poets' Quaire' and 'Four Long Short Stories'.

What these titles have in common is more than content, it is the ordering of the world into brief, self-contained extracts. In Robertson's preface to his **Thinking and Writing** there is the uninspired comment that 'the methods used here have, in the author's case at least, proved successful and rewording'<sup>(17)</sup> - a minor but not inappropriate misprint since it is one that sums up this and countless other textbook's atomistic wording and rewording of life-in-literature into graded exercises, lexical items and micro verbalism. **Ridout**, for instance, contains its notable writers, but they appear only as models of how to 'write sensationally' ('Cloister and the Hearth'), to pen a word portrait ('Julius Caesar'), the paraphrase (Sir Thomas Elyot, Sir Thomas Malory and John Bunyan).<sup>(18)</sup> Books like **Thinking and Writing** take experience and constantly squeeze, process and stereotype it into 35 lines of extracted description each accompanied by its own vocabulary, phrases into paraphrase, commands to 'state clearly', to 'draw distinctions' 'supply evidence', 'identify' the topic sentence, spot the figure of speech.<sup>(19)</sup>

The real purpose in these extracts is, however, not to stir the mind or to move the spirit, it is to construct the school subject of 'English'. Here the consummative text is Barclay, Knox, and Ballantyne's **A Study of Standard English**,<sup>(20)</sup> the title that during this decade won for itself the premier position among Scottish textbooks, running through twenty-two reprintings from 1938 to 1952.<sup>(21)</sup> Its appeal lay in the fact that it approached more nearly than any of its rivals the publisher's ambition of the definitive English Course within the covers of the one book. Its exhaustive encyclopaedic treatment lays out the language on to an extensive table of categories, examples and exercises. In its beginning is the word and the word is a common noun - the first seven pages of its Grammar section are occupied with this part of speech in a way that takes us from the nominative case ('the bird of dawning singeth all night long') through 'Get thee to bed Francisco' (the vocative) and 'he plucked me open his doublet' (the ethic dative) to the possessive and the three lexical genders.<sup>(22)</sup> The remaining 414 pages pursue every minute linguistic fact that man or SLC examiner could possibly invoke: 'Precis', 'Errors in Composition', 'Synthesis', 'The Dictionary and its Uses', 'Common Literary Terms and Phrases'....

### **The Junior Secondary Course: Initiative and Aspirations**

The Nicolson Institute was one of those omnibus schools so praised as a model for the regenerated secondary school in the Advisory Council's Report. It was also archetypically Scottish in that it sustained its high standing by its unflagging capacity to embody not so much a local culture as to express the local aspirations for achievement on the national stage: its academic standards were of the very highest and for many years it had the reputation of producing the country's best SLC pass rates: 'English', for its dedicated teachers in such circumstances, meant a deliverance from ignorance - and from a life on the croft or mending the roads. Nor were such opportunities to be the preserve of the top 30% for the Nicolson Scheme of Work was carefully compiled in order to extend the values of rational enlightenment to the whole school. It shows that the English work of the junior C/E/G Sections is to match that of the As and Bs, if not in pace and intensiveness, at least in its general academic character. Their coursebooks might have different titles - 'Kingsway English' and 'Adventures into English' rather than Ridout and 'English through Adventure' - but they were only the simplified and more considerably paced versions of the same grammatical thing. There is even a junior version of 'A Study of Standard English' prepared by the same authors under the title 'Approach to Standard English'. The general character - and teaching utility - of such publications is explained in these comments by John Sim, at this period of Fraserburgh Academy, Aberdeenshire, on a representative example used in both his school and the Nicolson - and countless other Scottish secondary schools throughout the 1950s:

'While the A R Robertson book supplied the needs of the Language classes, the so-called Technical classes at this time had a series called Clear English published by Nelson, which had the advantage of having (a) a wide variety of subjects (b) long lists of questions (c) set answers, often a single word (d) a simple marking system... In an age of "creativity" it has become fashionable to underrate and even to sneer at such books without analysing their real practical value'.

Similarly in literature there might be a more gentle pacing but the ground is still there to be covered: the junior course meant taking the narrative route through poetry, Shakespeare in abridged form, 'Silas Marner' rather than 'Adam Bede'. (23)

The Nicolson Institute Scheme of Work referred to above was in use a full ten years after Circular 188 in 1951 had urged that the extension of the school leaving age to 15 should be exploited so as to create a fully integrated and distinctive junior secondary experience and not merely result in a one year appendage. It was five years after the **Junior Secondary Education Report**'s advocacy of a curriculum in which internal subject barriers should be loosened in order to develop a non-academic course that could reflect community interests, the imminence of work and the urgency of practical social needs. For English, 'the most practical subject in the curriculum'(24) this ought to mean an infusion of oral activity, of role play, of realistic language situations and project activity.

It is interesting to compare this ideal with the 1960 actuality of Nicolson's 3C/E classes. Certainly there is a working in of form filling, newspaper discussion, and business letters and oral discussion but there is also, in this climactic year, much academic consolidation: in poetry of 'rhyme, rhythm, verse composition, dramatization as before', of grammar 'exercises in text books plus revision and practice of all previous work', of 'revise and practice as before' in punctuation, of 'types as 2nd year' in composition, and there is also the opportunity to tackle a couple more Shakespeare's - 'Julius Caesar' and 'Macbeth'.

This workscheme appears to offer confirmation of the summing up that the junior secondary experience in English was but a 'slightly mutilated senior secondary course' (William Ettles, then at Aberlour Orphanage School, Banffshire)(25) that was based on the straightforward pragmatism of 'less and easier' (Sydney Smyth, Kirkcaldy High School)(26). It also seems to confirm the claim that the syllabus was the product of principal teachers who were constitutionally out of touch with or personally uninterested in the junior secondary concept.(27) Again the comments of John Sim are instructive:

'... in the 40s/50s the principal teacher was traditionally given the "privilege" of the top-streamed classes... In our school the departmental head taught 3A, 4,5, and 6 and therefore had little or no direct contact with the lower school or with the less able pupils. As a result, in 1949 (my first official year) the second year classes were rotating 'Ivanhoe', 'Westward Ho' and 'Old Mortality'.

John Sim's remarks refer to a country town omnibus; in the cities many teachers, especially the policy-making principals, frankly regarded their spell in the juniors as a short term tour of duty done in order to earn the desired senior secondary posting.<sup>(28)</sup> Other interviewees confirm his implication that academic schemes were imposed out of careerist negligence, a mechanical academicism or even as a kind of unthinking blankness - 'I doubt whether any of us had ever thought of anything else', is how Bill Ettles summed up the almost universal failure to devise special junior secondary courses.

Undoubtedly such criticism fitted many cases but to assume that they were everywhere deserved is to underestimate both the efforts made by many dedicated staff and also to misunderstand the real motivations at work within Scottish teachers of English at all levels of the secondary school in the first twenty years after the war. The Nicolson Institute's English department was headed by a vigorous, very able, thoroughly professional and enlightened man in Ian Scott who had moved into the post from a varied and successful Glasgow background.<sup>(29)</sup> In devising his Scheme of Work he was simply doing what, within the perspectives of this period, he judged best for all his pupils.

In this connection it is edifying to listen to one teacher whose career was dedicated exclusively to the junior secondary during this time, James Beedie, teacher of English at Ruthrieston Secondary School, Aberdeen from 1946 to 1958. His observations of those days remind us that in some parts of the country, the junior secondary could be seen as a solid, decent alternative. Its curricular aims and organisational standards were uncompromisingly high and staff

could take emulative pride in the Education Committee Chairman's (Frank Scargill) remark that 'Ruthrieston is the best run local authority school in Aberdeen after the Grammar' (where J J Robertson was still Rector).<sup>(30)</sup> Ruthrieston won this reputation by its devotion to helping its pupils to get on as far as they could, both as prospective employees and as future citizens. As Beedie put it:

'The senior secondary furnished the university and the professions; we in the junior secondary would try to achieve a commensurate level with pupils of less ability. We wouldn't even water down the course too much because there would be the able boy and girl who could go on to join the fourth year at the Aberdeen Grammar School or at the High School for Girls'.

The aim was to raise pupils up rather than settle for a different type of course which, given the implicit evaluations of the bipartite system, would be seen as an admission of inferiority and thus a betrayal of the pupils' interests. Besides which there were qualifications to be won, for the junior secondary still had its own top pupils in the pre Nursing, the Technical and the Commercial classes. These could take the 'Junior Leaving Certificate' which would be set by the local authority and was clearly modelled on the pattern of the Higher. The 'General Paper' (English work) of the 1961 Aberdeen Secondary Certificate, for example, contains an interpretation passage - a piece of quality journalism on 'Berlin Today' - that supports extensive comprehension work including the identification of similes and metaphors, work on 'nouns, prepositions, verbs and adjectives', punctuation correction and a precis.

Given such targets the curricular strategies used could become even more severely teacher-centred since their attainment, owing to the lower ability of the pupils, would be all the harder. As Jim Beedie explains: 'The teachers did their best for the youngsters; we implanted facts, we certainly recognized each pupil as an individual but we had to implant skills - the community would be looking for literate people who could express themselves clearly and it was our business to supply them'. In such circumstances, what was 'practical' was liable to be interpreted as indeed the academic, to be attained through redoubled effort and served up in

manageable proportions. Alastair Shanks, for many years English teacher at Strichen in Aberdeenshire, has written<sup>(31)</sup> that his starting point with his 'nonacademic' pupils was indeed to examine the traditional syllabus and then to define it as a series of precise objectives with the result that it is the grammar, the figures of speech, the rules of composition that are salvaged rather than the creative literature elements which, in his judgment, would evoke a sure response only from the more able. Similarly Tom Brown<sup>(32)</sup> can remember how a colleague greeted his attempts to introduce his young '2E' class, at Inverurie Academy in the 1950s, to the enjoyment of poetry: 'It's a waste of time, Mr Brown, giving them ballads - give them some more grammar instead - much more useful!' As Jim Beedie summed up his composition teaching: 'What we were looking for was for them to express themselves accurately in words. All the rest like imagination was a bonus'.

It is important too to realise that the insistence on academic standards rested on a strong communal assent. This sprang from a grateful recognition that the school was doing its dedicated best to extend the prestige and the benefits of a 'real' secondary schooling to all; as continuation of the Scottish tradition of raising all in the academic faith and an insistence that that particular congregation could have its junior as well as its senior members. 'The parents were supportive, they accepted what we were doing and backed us up... their children were ordinary decent lads and girls who were grateful for own efforts - and that was the real reward of the job, the feeling left by a class after they had passed through your hands, the small presentations they might make to you at the end of the year'.(Beedie once more)

#### **Highland Schools and Lowland Schools: the Junior Secondary Ghetto**

These experiences display an interpretation of pupil interests and personal satisfactions that implies a forthright rejection of the more pastoral roles sketched out for the junior secondary teacher in the SED's reports and memoranda. Entrenched attitudes such as these were not, however, the only obstacles that stood in the way of reform, for the teachers so far cited were at work in one part of Scotland only. There is evidence to suggest that, in this period, the Aberdeen area was especially well favoured in the resources that were invested in its

education at all levels and that in any case the city and its hinterland possessed a socio-economic stability that helped it to avoid the harsher problems that were affecting other areas, especially the industrial conurbations to the south and west.<sup>(33)</sup> Indeed several of my interviewees passed the observation that the school-respectful, lad o'pairts tradition was really rooted in the North-East and grew but feebly elsewhere.<sup>(34)</sup> Consequently, the city had built up a coherent junior school system that was capable of commanding widespread communal support as to its purpose and its relationship to the overall educational scheme. Its solid achievements were gained through the ability of its schools to take a place alongside the senior secondaries and to produce, if not university entrants, at least a steady flow of soundly schooled nurses, engineers, tradesmen and secretaries as well as the trickle of second chance transfers to the neighbouring grammar and high schools. When, in 1953, Stanley Nisbet of Glasgow University lamented the failure of the junior secondary to embrace a personal education, there was no nonsense about the reply they were making to the two questions he posed them -

'Parents, employers, administrators and even teachers tend to concentrate on one question: "What position or job or college is the school preparing the pupil for?" It is a very important question, of course, but something is wrong when it totally eclipses the other question: "What sort of a person is the school helping the pupil to become?"'<sup>(35)</sup> The Ruthriestons, the Hiltons and the Rosemounts of Aberdeen in the 1950s would have denied the distinction that Nisbet from his University department position is assuming to be fundamental - for them the second question can only be answered by attending to the first. Professor Nisbet was however, referring only to the motivations that drove what the community considered to be the best of its junior secondaries. Elsewhere the attitude towards pupil achievement could be much more relaxed, and in an era of full employment, the perceived value of any type of junior secondary education less clear to all concerned. Thus at a Stirlingshire omnibus like Kilsyth Academy in the 1950s, Roy Stark remembers the local county leaving certificate that could be treated so seriously 100 miles to the north in Aberdeen appeared to become no more than a seasonal event; it was even the tradition that the invigilator should assist any candidate who was looking

unduly vexed with the odd word that might fill in a blank so as to save the perplexed from a completely abject failure as they wrestled with the niceties of interpretation or parsing, or simply to make the afternoon go less painfully by.

Although the pupils wanted to take the examination, many of them did so in the spirit of demanding their rights rather than in the expectation of gaining anything of life-changing significance:

'The junior secondary attendance was very poor till the exam week when they would all turn up to demand "their paper". But then a couple of months later when they handed in their atlases before leaving, you would like as not salvage a crop of Certificates that had been conveniently slipped in between the pages and forgotten about. So much for the pupils' perception of their market value!'

In Lowland towns big enough to carry separate junior and secondary establishments, a definite stigma was attached to the former. Sydney Smyth tells how in Kirkcaldy, the headteacher R M Adam reacted to one 1950s county plan to comprehensivise with the oath that 'Kirkcaldy High School will go comprehensive over my dead body'. This point of view was widely shared within the school: when Smyth talked over the idea with his S5 he was 'much taken aback by their brutal conservatism. We don't want all those Templehall jobs trampling over our high school'. (Templehall was the neighbouring junior school). The social realities that were determined by the bipartite system, however, made these attitudes understandable: 'There was an honourable side to all this. Many working-class parents saw the High School as the escape route for their kids, a chance for them to fulfil their academic potential. They didn't want anything that might interfere with what they feared might be dilution'.

If these shared evaluations produced a self-sustaining conservatism in the senior secondaries, then the consciousness of lower status could work in two contrary ways on the

juniors, neither of which favoured reform: there was, as has been seen in the Aberdeen examples, the desire to emulate the senior secondaries or, especially in an area that was afflicted by disproportionately low resources and rapid staff turnover, the experience of demoralisation, low expectations and a time-serving cynicism which aimed at nothing higher than getting through till 4 o'clock, till Friday afternoon, till the end of June. In his article Nisbet described many of Scotland's urban junior secondaries as 'grim uncouth concentration camps - unspeakable'. Before he was promoted to Stornoway, Ian Scott had had experience of several Glasgow schools. There he found priorities that could be somewhat more pressing than the chess clubs, class magazines, and Outward Bound courses suggested by **Junior Secondary Education**: at one multilateral establishment he could remember how out of one class of thirty-six S3 boys, thirty were on probation; that class included one character who was quite prepared to pull a knife on any who annoyed him and another who would wear knuckle dusters in the playground.

James Inglis, then a principal teacher of English in Airdrie, addressed the EIS A.G.M. in 1953 thus:

'I have the greatest admiration for those colleagues who continually year after year fight for the soul of the junior secondary pupil. But I have now reached the conclusion that they are fighting a losing battle. The job is too big for human endurance and the better the teacher the more he puts into it and the more exhausted he becomes... These schools have no prestige among parents and they have generated no affection among their pupils whose one ambition is to leave it and get to work. Discipline is a constant, almost unbearable problem'.<sup>(36)</sup>

It is no wonder then that a young HMI like W A Gatherer who had been brought up in Aberdeenshire and was now working in the Edinburgh area felt a 'bitter' sense of disillusionment with what he found in its junior secondary English departments and a burning desire to rescue them that was to impel his crucial role in the reforms of the next decade:

There were exceptions like Ainslie Park, but in the early 1950s most of them were abandoned hellish places and a poor environment, neglected institutions, disillusioned teachers and disaffected children - ghettos!(37)

#### **Reforms and Reality: a Question of Resources**

Gatherer's picture of the mid 1950s junior secondary as a benighted wilderness puts the situation at its most desperate but his diagnosis of under-resourcing points to what was then a national crisis. Even in the more favoured regions and even in the senior secondary establishments conditions were not conducive to reform. Several witnesses were anxious to open the eyes of the present day observer to the absence of the amenities that may now be taken for granted. In a curriculum run on textbooks, the long term investment that the purchase of each set had to be, meant that the cycle of change was necessarily slow. And there was little else but the book - film was expensive and cumbersome, tape recordings only in their reel to reel infancy and, above all, duplication was messy and uncertain, a lack of facility that impeded not only the production of fresh material but also the articulation and circulation of curricular thinking. Constraining everything that could happen within it, was the classroom, its size, its design, its dense populations. John Sim sums up:

'The numbers in all junior classes were consistently near the maximum a classroom could hold... the large numbers crowded into relatively small spaces were not conducive to movement or rearrangement of desks even if such notions had been given any consideration at the time... Large numbers always pose greater problems - in supply of books and materials, in classroom, organisation, in the time spent on correction and checking of work, and not least, the stresses and strains imposed on the teacher'.

It could be argued that the absence of the photocopier, the audio cassette and the video recorder, of the lightweight mobile desk and of a contract to protect teachers against large class sizes, did as much to produce the state of suspended curricular animation at that time as any simple lack

of professional enlightenment or progressive staff development policies. James Inglis has, in looking back at this era, accused himself and his colleagues of a lack of courage: the principles of a more creative, personal English were known and on occasion individually practised but the collective will to change the curriculum in their favour was lacking.<sup>(38)</sup> It is difficult not to feel that Inglis's self-castigation simplifies the matter to an unjust degree. The position was that the 1950s teacher functioned within a four-square institutionalisation that crowded in upon him from all sides: fixed desks, squat rooms, strictly boundaried, 40 minute segmented timetables, rigid staff hierarchies, hardback course books, banging blackboards and 40 plus to a room - these were the daily actualities that pressed down upon his work more insistently than any SED publication that might waft its way towards him from far off St Andrew's House. These were also the physical manifestations that gave confirmatory substance to the teacher's inheritance of academic assumptions and to the seasonal cycle of prelims, estimates, examinations, Leaving Certificate returns and HMI visitations that wheeled their way through the session as proof of the need to practise only the tried and age-old husbandry of the traditional academic curriculum.

As a shared teacher experience this was the conditioning that was liable to be gathered up into a national hostility towards reform. The 1955 Circular 312 on wastage had put forward a relaxation in the requirements for approved Leaving Certificate courses in order to give schools the freedom to devise more flexible pupil-orientated courses. It was a move that the Education Committee of the SSTA deplored as a betrayal: 'We feel that a basic curriculum should be insisted on and that the Department should not leave headteachers unsupported in this matter.' They then went on to invoke an authentic Scottish 'liberal' education with a Calvinist distrust of all things immature that vividly reveals the inbred nature of the forces that reform had to encounter: 'It is necessary to repeat that the most important duty of our educationists is to provide each child with as balanced and liberal an education as that child is capable of receiving and that such an ideal should not be lightly whittled away at the whim of young people who in the fluctuating circumstances of adolescent growth do not know what is best for them'.<sup>(39)</sup>

The SSTA could, perhaps, be relied upon to represent an essentially senior secondary viewpoint but a rural headmaster could also say this in the **EIS Scottish Education Journal**: 'Would we not agree that the memorandum tends to make a fetish of the doctrine of interest? Are there not many occasions when basic skills must be acquired even although there may be, at the time, little interest in so doing?... "a proper gardener's work must be done on his knees." The spirit of that applies to all good work.'<sup>(40)</sup> Indeed the confrontation with a tangible as opposed to the generalised expression of change could provoke reflex conservatism in even the most distinguished of reformers: Sir James Robertson himself, when asked to consider a proposal that might push the general argument for a personalised non-examination orientated system towards an actual change in the given Scottish scheme of things, could reply with a rasping denunciation of 'pseudo-egalitarian twaddle about undifferentiated courses'.<sup>(41)</sup>

#### **A Structured Existence: Texts and Records of Work**

At classroom level this sense of being enclosed both emotionally and physically within the given situation - whether it manifested itself as scarce resources, as a scheme of work, an institutional environment or a culture inheritance - found a lesson by lesson confirmation in the intimate classroom structures and professional expectations that the individual teacher daily inhabited. James Alison has argued that the English teacher then and since saw her work as primarily to do with 'the text', that is the search for the right book, the most effective means of inducting the pupil into its meanings.<sup>(42)</sup> Her own absorption in the texts of English literature had provided the initial impulse to see 'books' as a subject, to study it at university and now to seek to teach others to receive a similar initiation. If in the world of the 1950s, the search for the most effective means of conveying the faith and its disciplines to the young led her into the studious ways of the academic school curriculum, of grammar, of composition, of paraphrase, rhetorical effects and literary genres we should not be surprised, for what else was there? The 1950 life of the English teacher in Scotland was enclosed within the hard covers of a professional existence that was run on course books and timetables, examination returns and

schemes of work, on Codes and memoranda - publications that were so generically alike in their logical categorisations and tabulated prescriptiveness that they combined to establish a teacherly synthesis which constituted the one authoritative curricular text that must be interpreted and followed by each individual practitioner.

The professional culture the probationer entered would thus interact with the personal academic enthusiasm to create a way of teaching that became a matter of enunciating his own response to the national English archetext that was given local meaning by his own school's Scheme of Work. Although it was the departmental principal that supplied it, each teacher had to affirm the Scheme, not simply through faithful classroom action, but also in the daily inscriptions on to the Record of Work that he must keep. This was a document in which had to be entered the topic and amount of work covered each period, an exercise in accountability that could be called in at any time by the principal teacher, the school's rector or the visiting HMI. His personal conduct was thus structured into the grids and the headed columns of a log book that forced him to recreate the Scheme in terms of Monday (grammar), Tuesday (poetry), Wednesday (interpretation), Thursday (composition), Friday (Shakespeare), Homework (the class reader).

A publication like the SED's *New Ways in Junior Secondary Education* was difficult for the 1950s teacher to act upon not because of any intrinsic demerit in its ideas but because they could not be meaningfully translated into the textual structure by which he daily lived. The conversion of the now maligned 'the innumerable language exercises which many pupils are still asked to work through', and the study of 'of topics beyond their experience or understanding' into the suggested magazines, projects and personal investigations to be built around not one subject but an integrative theme, would demand of the teacher a submission to fluid, unpredictable patterns of pupil experience.<sup>(43)</sup> Such personalized diversity certainly could not be contained within the English of the Scheme of Work nor answer to the daily self-description that the teacher was used to entering into the linear sequence of the Record of Work.

How could the uncircumscribed ideals of the **New Ways** compare to the substantiality of the teaching text that these made? Take for instance one **Record of Work** week at random and see how its particular events achieved their legitimacy by entry into the standardised format of columns, headings, categories.<sup>(44)</sup> In the first school week of 1958, Ian Scott took a full range of S2 to S5 classes (in addition to some Bible Study and Sixth Form work). During that time he covered in 'Prose', extracts from 'The Magic of Literature' p.97-110(2B) and Glover's 'English through Adventure' p.73-77(3A), he dealt with 'Sir Roger's character from Addison's *de Coverley Papers*' (4) and concluded a three week study of Charles Lamb's 'Christ's Hospital'(5). In 'Verse' he moved from G K Chesterton's 'The Donkey' to Keats's 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' to Dryden's 'Alexander's Feast' to 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (the start of a 5 week study). 'Drama; consisted of Act 1, Scene 1 respectively of 'The Merchant of Venice', 'Henry IV, Part 1', 'Twelfth Night' and a revision of the 'use of the supernatural' in 'Hamlet'. For 'Interpretation' and 'Grammar' or 'Formal' work, there was, for 2B, Robertson Book 2 p.11-15 and 'reported speech' in Ridout Book 3; for 3A, Robertson Book 3 p.16-17, figures of speech, while 4 did sentence correction work in Finn's 'English Language Exercises' (p.86, D106, D107) and some general analysis examples during which time 5 practised an SLC Higher interpretation passage from a past paper. In addition each of these classes also had its 'Home Exercise' noted - Ridout p.91, A and B; synthesis exercises (Ridout, p.93,A1,1,2,3); punctuation work in Finn (p.71,D27) and revision of general analysis and figures of speech. In the seventh and final column is recorded the 'Repetition' items: Masfield's 'Cargoes'; 'Henry IV, Part 1' Act 1, Scene 1 lines 47-85; a passage from Milton's 'Il Penseroso' and some 'Lycidas'.

The teaching week is both recorded and created by these twenty-eight separate entries, each itemised as a contribution to the construction of the year's vast curricular edifice. The **Record of Work** is, however, not simply a series of gaps to be bricked in before each Friday comes, nor a reminder of the daily need to hew and cut a few more blocks of verse and prose, to inscribe another line or two of grammar onto tablets of linguistic stone. The whole operation of entry

and crosscheck, of placing language and literary experience into a series of tightly drawn frames was itself a means of structuring the individual teacher's awareness of English as a precise academic discipline. It was also a daily act of allegiance to a shared professional culture that the occasional exhortation from the SED, or the generalised memoranda out of St Andrew's House, could do little to rival or to reform.

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### **PART 3 : 1965 - 1977**

#### **INTRODUCTION : NEW SYSTEMS FOR OLD**

##### **The Conditions for Change: New Structures, New Attitudes**

When Gordon Liddell began his teaching in Airdrie Academy at the beginning of the 1960s, he found an English that was essentially unaltered from the subject that older colleagues, such as James Beedie, John Sim and William Ettles, described as governing the start of their careers in the late 1940s. Indeed it appeared to be little changed from the curriculum that Trevor Johns and Archie Watt had encountered when they entered the profession at their different ends of the country in the years before the War. As W A Gatherer, whose school teaching career covered almost the whole of the period treated in the preceding section, remarks:

'Between 1948 when I began at Leith Academy and 1961 when I entered the Inspectorate nothing really changed. Indeed it was still essentially the English of the 1930s - the same old weekly business of six periods of 40 minutes each with a separate topic to each one - composition, Shakespeare, language work from course books, poetry, the novel, that sort of thing'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Certainly, as English teaching moved into the 1960s, little progress had been made to realise the 'harmonious' personal education that in 1947 the Sixth Advisory Council had held to be the fitting aspiration for the new postwar age of universal secondary education. When in 1964 the editor of the **Scottish Educational Journal** looked back over the progress made since that time, he nominated 'resources and the Junior Secondary curriculum' as the two outstanding problems - a selection which exactly matched the tasks that his predecessor had sketched out sixteen years previously as constituting 'The Road Before Us'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nearly twenty years after VE Day there was still a grievous shortage of teachers, one that fell disproportionately on the junior secondaries, but the passage of time was only serving to show that materials were not the real answer to the problems that retarded the development of secondary education in Scotland. Indeed by this time some progress had been made in that

direction but with it was coming the realisation that gleaming new green site buildings could only supply the outer fabric, not provide a real educational home for the many hundreds of thousands of individual pupils who passed restlessly through their corridors each year. A commentator such as Gavin Maxwell saw the stark new schools as an up-to-date symbol for a traditional repressiveness: they constituted he wrote, 'a ferro-concrete prison... the whole sick structure... responsible for fact-cramming and dyspeptic regurgitation in exams'.<sup>(3)</sup>

It was not so much the institutions as the perceptions of those who ran them and worked in them that needed to change. Ever since the war it was, as the 1964 SEJ editorial indicated, the junior secondary that had been seen as the problem - but this was a judgment that simply accepted the dehumanising quality of experience that the 'senior' part of the system similarly continued to offer its selected entrants. It was also one that ignored the emulatory relationship between the two types of institution that was an inevitable product of a strictly bipartite regime. At its heart the problem of providing a meaningful secondary education for all of Scotland's bairns resolved itself into the one simple question: how do you change people?

At the 73rd EIS Congress in 1959, James Inglis, then Principal Teacher of English at Airdrie Academy, self-flagellated:

'We have become beasts of burden and lost our independence and initiative. Worst of all, many of us do not seem to regret it. We like to be told what to do by Heads of Department, Directors of Education, Headmasters, Inspectors and the Secretary of State - the nameless "them" we can blame when everything goes wrong.'<sup>(4)</sup>

Inglis was however, indicting a set of individuals who were strung out along a far-flung line of management that gave them no access to any working structure that could turn their personal aspirations into collective reforming action. If the recollections of the interviewees cited in the preceding section reveal a system that in practice proved to be less restrictive than its hierarchical configuration might suggest, their freedoms were the by-products of an

administration that did not give sufficient recognition to the personal initiative as a significant source of change even to repress it. As long as the Records of Work were filled in and the Highers results held up, then no further questions were asked, nor needed to be since the respect for professional non-interference could rest easy on the assumption that all rightly trained English teachers were bound to think alike.

The way in which restrictive but predictable routines co-existed with actual liberties, - that were, however, merely incidental to the regime's essential functionalism, - showed the Scottish secondary education of the 1950s to be like some monolithic Eastern-block economy. There was the same dependence on centralised planning, the same detailed bureaucratic procedures and habits of deference, the same assembly-line torpor that could only reproduce vast quantities of the one outdated academic commodity. It was a system that was designed for delivery, not for effecting change. Within it the issue of reform could only be raised by a central praesidium that was associated with a self-obsessive style of detailed authoritarianism.

The SED transmitted its ideas through edict and memoranda which were suited to the periodic updating of the familiar but which were completely inadequate for the engagement of teachers in change. When its 1952 **English Report** came out, teachers were left to purchase it for themselves from their nearest HMSO supplier; as James Inglis observed 'There was no promotion, no follow up of any kind. I doubt whether more than a minority of English teachers were even aware of its existence!'<sup>(6)</sup> Even by 1960, Scottish education lacked the sensitive infrastructure, the network of departmental planning, of school consortia and district working groups, of national research and advisory bodies, either to convert suggestion into hard practical programmes or to involve individual teachers in the ways of reform.

It was this organisational inadequacy that points to the inertia that allowed Scottish secondary education to drift through the first two decades that followed the War. But teachers and Inspectors did not simply operate a particular system; they lived in it and sustained their

professional identities through it. The processes of planning and of self-evaluation that were the necessary mainspring of reform were alien to a sub-culture that was so thoroughly conditioned by the ceaseless husbandry required of them in their cultivation of scholarly young minds and examination yields.

Amidst so much dense substantiality, and with such a securely didactic position anchored to it, it was difficult for the individual teacher to conceive of alternative possibilities or, in a world arranged into such fixed hierarchies, of the kind of concerted action that could bring them into being. Whenever a fresh issue arose, it tended to be treated in the old doctrinal ways. A clear example was the profession's response to the urgent need to equip the pupil with oral as well as literary skills. Identified in the Advisory Council's Report as a priority it had become a continuing national preoccupation. There were repeatedly anxious references to 'the inarticulate Scot' who was unable to voice a confident response to the demands of a modern democratic society and, even more tellingly, to compete with his more fluent Sassenach neighbour. An *SEJ* 1956 editorial voiced the concern that because they had been led to: concentrate 'solely on passing examinations.... and learning what teacher told them.... boys and girls from Scottish schools are relatively backward. They are inarticulate, they often have no notion they are entitled to an opinion of their own...'<sup>(6)</sup>

Neither teacher nor Inspectorate was, however, able to translate this connection between inarticulateness and the overall character of Scottish secondary schooling into any kind of action that would actually change the situation. What was proposed, and repeatedly, was simply an extension of the existing curriculum so as to incorporate 'speech' as a further item of study on the pupil's timetable. As they entered the 1960s the system was throwing up several determined examples of local attempts to give pupils the opportunity to develop a confident public voice. In 1960 a Glasgow Corporation working party published a *Syllabus for Spoken English*<sup>(7)</sup>, in Aberdeen the city appointed a 'Superintendent of Speech Therapy and Speech Training', Catherine Hollingworth, and she, assisted by Elizabeth Henry at the College of Education, started to run examinations in the topic<sup>(8)</sup>. But that was the problem: talk was seen

as yet another examinable topic to be given its own separate hour on the syllabus stage. As the pioneering syllabuses of the time, such as that prepared by Brandon High School in 1961, show, the effort to help the Scottish youngster to develop her own voice was prosecuted through designated 'Speeches Periods' in which there was training in diction, strict recitation and prepared lecturottes, the imitation of sophisticated media models such as the Brains Trust or the television panel game<sup>(9)</sup>.

With this stubborn didacticism went an abiding distrust of the pupil's own experience: attacks on the oral 'slovenliness' of the average youngster, on the ungrammatical glottal sloppiness of the urban Scot in particular, continued.<sup>(10)</sup> Oral 'training' became simply another lesson in the set disciplines, indeed an especially inhibiting one since it expressly rejected the personal speech of home and playground and sought to replace them with the carefully tinted tones of Received Pronunciation.

The secondary schools' response to the oral challenge only demonstrated the power of the academic curriculum to absorb rather than to be changed by such new demands. Despite the SEJ's indictment of the 'inarticulate Scot' as a peculiar national phenomenon, in practice such failings were not seen as the product of the prevailing system so much as another example of ignorance that had to be dealt with by the specific application of its most characteristic teaching strategies.

Such constitutional negativism was the natural expression of an education that was based on assumptions of individual inadequacy rather than the development of existing capacities. The rigidity with which it functioned suggests that what was now required was not a gradual evolution but a complete change in the structuring of secondary education, in the professionalism of its teachers and the learning theories which guided their daily practice. In the end 'the harmonious development of the individual' was essentially a matter of personal perceptions, of how the people who were involved at each level of schooling would be enabled to see their own individual role in relation to the whole educational drama. At its most

fundamental, this meant helping pupils to make a connection between classroom knowledge, the circumstances of their own lives and their own sense of developing selfhood. For their teachers there had to be the encouragement to see themselves as makers not mere deliverers of the curriculum, that is as members of a system which would no longer treat them as pedagogical instruments but would wish instead to make full positive use of their own humanity. And for those at the SED centre of things, it meant the working out of ways of running Scottish education that would force such changes of consciousness into being. In short, not so much gentle reform as a full-scale revolution.

#### **Brunton and O'Grades: Part 1**

These were requirements that the Department itself was becoming increasingly aware of. The move towards reform that had become a steady feature of its work under (now) Senior Chief Inspector John Brunton had culminated in the complementary **Report of the Working Party on the Curriculum of the Senior Secondary School**<sup>(11)</sup> in 1959 and **From School to Further Education**,<sup>(12)</sup> 1963. As their titles indicate, these reports were intended to settle the longstanding problems that had afflicted secondary education's two distinct sectors, that is the widespread early leaving from the certificate course and the continued failure of its 'junior' counterpart to establish a clear alternative role.

The 1959 document confronted the wastage problem with a new fourth year examination - the **Ordinary Grade** - that was to act as the encouragement to the less academically inclined senior pupils to stay on for at least one year beyond the school leaving age. **From School to Further Education** - which rapidly became known as 'The Brunton Report' - made a more wide-ranging attempt to relate pupil alienation to social causes. The country's young, it argued, were bound to find a curriculum that continued, even in the junior secondaries, to conform to the given academic pattern personally meaningless especially as they reached the point in their lives when they would 'begin to look outwards from the school to the excitements soon to be met in the adult world of work'.<sup>(13)</sup> The solution, it urged, was to anticipate the direction of that gaze and to give schoolwork an explicitly vocational orientation.

In making their proposals the two documents were also offering alternative models for the necessary developments that lay ahead. **The Curriculum of the Senior Secondary School** was an extension of the well established policy of syllabus direction through national certification targets, while **Brunton** was inviting schools to develop a flexible range of individualised practical activity. The former would continue to be under central control; the second would depend upon the capacity of local initiatives to establish courses of sufficient relevance and vitality as to compel the willing co-operation of all participants, whether teacher or taught.

The twin reports were intended to take Scottish education into the 1960s and beyond. That period was to include new pressures. In 1965 the newly returned Labour government announced that the school system throughout Britain was to become comprehensive, that selection into separate establishments at the age of 11 or 12 was to cease and that all pupils were now to proceed to the same neighbourhood secondary. Indeed, the 1960s and early 70s were to represent a period of turbulence in Scottish Schools as the move towards comprehensivisation coincided with a raising of the leaving age and the maturation of the post-war birth bulge so as to produce a rapid growth in school populations. It was also an era in which a much increased investment in education was seen as a national priority and with it the expectation that the secondary school would do more for more pupils.<sup>(14)</sup>

Against these challenges the SED was proposing a strategy that was, in truth, no more than a continuation of its well established bipartism. **The Curriculum of the Senior Secondary School** was simply the latest in a series of postwar attempts to simplify certificate requirements sufficiently to induce staying on while **Brunton** was to be the conclusive attempt to define the junior secondary as the practical, non-academic alternative. For the years that lay ahead the issues, then, were the familiar ones, though now to be given a more intensive application in the rapidly expanding circumstances of the 1960s and 70s. In the newly unified system, what kinds of experience could the secondary school offer its young people? Would they be varied or monolithic? Under the stimulus of **Brunton** could the schools be at last able to generate

individual courses based on their own estimation of practical and personal needs? Could such provisions co-exist under the one roof with the traditional academic syllabus, even spread a new enriching influence into it? Or would the nationally set certificate course, now strengthened by a new fourth year award, continue to dominate all?

Already by 1965 answers were beginning to emerge. The 1963 Report had advocated relevant non-examinable activity that echoed the Sixth Advisory Council's concern for individual development but had done so in terms which did little to recommend them to a country in which the certificate course had always commanded the greatest respect. Its arguments were underpinned by a distinctly dated psychometric determinism that typified 'Brunton' youngsters as beings who 'are not interested in academic learning and prefer physical activity to thinking.'<sup>(15)</sup> In its specification of a new English it pointed to the unattractively workaday requirements of 'simple oral reports and instructions, of reading and understanding simple written statements of a general or technical nature, of speaking clearly and making simple, understandable oral reports, and of writing simple intelligible statements.'<sup>(16)</sup>

This amounted to no more than a paternalistic vocationalism which was directed towards routine employment in a way that could only reinforce the 'simple' status of the junior secondary. The first O'Grade English papers, launched in 1962, were, in contrast, an evident adaptation of the existing Higher model, its demands set out in the reassuringly derivative format of essay - interpretation passage - language - literature questions. The difference this time was that here was a Leaving Certificate that had been lowered both in age and rigour to a point that was tantalisingly close to the upper reaches of the junior secondary school.

The consequences were not long in showing themselves. At the very start the take up of the new O'Grade threatened to exceed the SED's plans for it. In its **Certificate Courses in Scottish Secondary: Recent Developments, 1964**<sup>(17)</sup>, the Department was warily observing that only two years after its inception, it was 40% of 16 year olds who were attempting the certificate rather

than the projected 30% - and that significantly it was the junior secondaries which were eagerly supplying the extra numbers. Indeed these schools were rapidly converting into four year establishments so as to make themselves capable of accommodating real academic courses complete with their own examination-taking certificate-gaining courses. Against this momentum, the SED's warnings that this incursion into the areas, which its bipartite policy had designated as non-academic might now 'oust the more liberal..... practical and active methods'<sup>(18)</sup> that the **Brunton Report** was attempting to locate there, were sounding futile.

There was, however one further development that might yet point to an opening up of Scotland's curriculum system. In 1965, as the administrative task of coping with the greatly increased candidature became too onerous, the SED finally relinquished its hold over the national examination. The Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board was established and this was a body that gave teachers themselves a leading part in the setting and marking of both the Higher and the O'Grade. The period 1965-1977 would indeed witness a whole wave of innovation, much of it an attempt to work out the implications of a personal, developmental education that had been eloquently promised by the Advisory Council's 1947 Report. In a period where a now extended Leaving Certificate was strengthening its grip over teacher, parent and pupil alike but where the first of that trio was now able to influence the policies that underlay it, new possibilities for curriculum development were coming into play.

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**PART 3 : 1965 - 1977**

**CHAPTER 6 : CENTRAL COMMITTEES AND LOCAL WORKING GROUPS**

**The 1960s: an Outburst of Expansion and Reform**

Among the post-war decades in Scottish education, it is the 1960s that stand out as the period of energy, expansion and teeming innovation. A simple list of the leading changes of the time demonstrates the extent to which this was so.

- 1959 : The SED begins the practice of inviting teachers to join its official working parties (for the **Report of the Working Party on the Curriculum of the Senior Secondary School**)
- 1962 : The O'Grade examination introduced for fourth year pupils.
- 1963 : **Committee on Higher Education Report** (the Robbins Report) urges extensive programme of expansion in Higher Education provision.
- 1964 : Labour government formed after 13 years of Conservative rule.
- 1964 : Government announce that schools should prepare for a raising of the school leaving age from 15 to 16 in 1970/71 (in the event postponed till 1972/73).
- 1965 : Publication of SED's **Primary Education in Scotland** which breaks away from all previous Departmental memoranda by recommending the adoption of child-centred, active classroom approaches.
- 1965 : **Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board** takes over the administration of national certificate examinations from the SED.
- 1965 : **Central Committee on English** mooted (first meeting in 1966).

- 1965 : Consultative Committee on the Curriculum set up to advise Secretary of State on all curricular matters. Provides an umbrella organisation for the CCE (above).
- 1965 : An end to teacher training distinctions between Ordinary and Honours graduates, thus giving the former a more secure position as secondary school teachers.
- 1965 : Circular 600 declares the government's intention of moving from the bipartite secondary school system to one of comprehensive schooling throughout the UK.
- 1966 : Colleges of Education begin teaching towards the BEd degree - an alternative route into Secondary teaching to the traditional University plus one year training course.
- 1966 : Circular 614 asks local authorities to abandon divisive selection procedures in the transfer of pupils from primary to the secondary school.
- 1966 : The General Teaching Council established - designed to offer teachers a large degree of self government over their profession.
- 1967 : CCE produce the first of its 'Bulletins' that establish new 'progressive' principles for Secondary English teachers.
- 1967 : Colleges of Education become largely self-governing, under their own bodies of governors.
- 1967 : Centre for Information on the Teaching of English (CITE) set up in Edinburgh to provide advice and resources to teachers throughout Scotland for the development of the English syllabus.
- 1968 : CITE produces its first 'Newsletter' to be published thrice yearly - soon to become **Teaching English**, definitive professional journal for the country's English teachers.

- 1970 : A new 'Higher' Certificate in English introduced - more emphasis on contemporary, practical language usage and a completely open Literature paper (no named texts).
- 1971 : CCE completes its reformist remit with the publication of its fifth 'Bulletin'.

Such prolific radicalism could only be sustained by a peculiar combination of forces, that made of curricular reform both an imperative and an adventure. In this respect the 1960s can now be seen as one of those special periods of expansive energy that participants look back on as a time of almost boundless opportunity. It was an era of which Gillian Campbell - then a new member of the Inspectorate - can say:

'It was exciting to be young and alive in English teaching in those days. It was something to do with the whole social phenomenon of the 60s. There was a breaking down of barriers generally, a liberation from post-war restriction. We shared a sense of optimism - we hadn't yet seen enough to be disillusioned....'(1)

Such confident vigour was the result not simply of expansive social forces but of a faith in the capacity of education to make the fitting response. If everything was getting bigger then, it was still felt, it must also be getting better. The national economy was growing apace, standards of living were rising and in the schools more and more pupils were staying on beyond the statutory leaving age to gain more and more qualifications. Such a sharp rise in the individual demand for education reflected a shared commitment to it as a worthwhile investment. With this went an interest in seeking out new ways of nurturing what was now seen as the nation's valued human resources and this was to be done through the development of new curricula designed to generate the skills and the outlook appropriate to an age of technical advance and cultural flux.(2)

Indeed the inadequacy of the old curriculum was being pressed upon teachers everywhere who were now having to cope with the full range of ability and type within the same comprehensive institution. The spread of affluence within the framework of a secure postwar society interacted with earlier physical maturation and a general loosening of restrictions on personal behaviour to produce 'the teenagers', a self-aware group with its own subculture and spending power. When the EIS produced its 1966 document **Towards 1970**, it was obliged to spend a whole section on 'the new teenage society' which was now 'presenting such a formidable challenge to education'.<sup>(3)</sup>

For the EIS and for many others the conclusion was inescapable : the school must take on more of a social and less of a narrowly academic responsibility. In English this was to come through more oral work and less insistence on the formal composition as a test of achievement, through the replacement of grammar with the more practical 'applied linguistics' and a training in discriminatory reading to enable the young to pick their way through the enticements of the commercially motivated advertisement or mass produced magazine. The argument was becoming painfully clear to teachers like Trevor Johns:

'The kind of child we were now having to deal with was different, shockingly so. Less well educated formally but they were better kids, more independent, ready to have a go. The question was how to deal with these kids in the formal situation of the secondary school where they were just bored to tears!'<sup>(4)</sup>

The pressures that were pushing English teachers towards a recognition of the need to change were doing so with the force of historical necessity. For some the effect could be that of a celebratory rejection of the old as the prelude to an exhilaratingly complete renewal. When Andrew Chirnside, the Inspectorate English specialist, came to review this period he saw it as an outburst of positive radicalism:

'To them, nourished in the barren thirties and hardened in the spartan staffrooms of the forties and fifties, the challenge of the sixties to which they responded proposed to them nothing less than the review, reappraisal and, if necessary the dismantlement, and refurbishing of the subject by which they had lived and the methodology by which they had plied their craft'.<sup>(5)</sup>

This was written by someone, however, who was deeply committed to reform. As the terms in which he describes 'the challenge of the sixties' indicate, the period only created the conditions in which change should take place. The exact form that the new English should assume would initially depend upon the energies and decisions of individuals like HMCI Chirnside who were able to act at the centre of events. It would also depend on the extent to which those many thousands who were allotted the smaller parts of departmental heads, subject advisers and classroom teachers could share a common understanding of what was needed to be done and what could be done. And behind the efforts and the interactions of each of these parties lay the possibilities and the restrictions that were inherent in the Scottish system: could its traditional structures and habits of thinking generate the kind of universal, incisive reform that the new age of the 1960s so evidently demanded?

#### **Central Committee English: a New Structure for a Reformed Subject**

When in 1971 the chairman of the first Central Committee on English (CCE), W A Gatherer HMI, came to justify its achievements at the completion of its first term he was able to point to an impressive array of achievement.<sup>(6)</sup> The CCE had been commissioned in June 1966 'to promote research and development in the teaching of English'. This remit had been delegated to it by the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) that had been established the previous year to offer advice to the Secretary of State, and with a defined duty to maintain a general oversight over the whole school curriculum and to draw attention to any areas in need of development. Like this parent body, the CCE was made up of representatives from the schools, from Colleges of Education, from the universities and - in this case - a chairman that was supplied by the Department.

W A Gatherer could indeed claim that the list of what had been achieved during its first five years was 'formidable'. Principally, it had managed to set up a whole network of agencies that had been designed to promulgate a fresh approach to the teaching of English throughout the land. The key here was its encouragement of rank and file teachers to enlist in Local Development Centres, a recruitment that was so successful that each Local Authority had formed its own English group, which in most cases, provided the umbrella for what might be half a dozen study groups on such topics as 'project work', 'language programmes for the early years' and 'fiction in the upper school'.<sup>(7)</sup>

The CCE had also founded the Centre for Information on the Teaching of English (CITE) which from its library and offices in Edinburgh was to furnish supporting materials to the LDCs as well as distribute their efforts. Even more significantly, CITE started to issue a thrice-yearly 'Newsletter' - soon to be renamed **Teaching English** - that rapidly grew into a thoroughly professional organ for the publication of views and practical examples as well as local and national information and extensive book reviews. In addition to its monthly plenary sessions the CCE had also run a range of subgroups that met to enquire into important current concerns, such as the 'Language Project Study Group' and the 'Primary Schools Research Group'. The result was the publication of such handbooks as **Projects in Practice**, **The Plays We Teach** and **Experiments with Themes**. Lastly, the CCE had sponsored a number of high profile conferences, most notably the series of 'Summer Institutes' at which over 100 delegates from all over Scotland would engage in tutorial and workshop activity for a fortnight's intensive professional development.

These various functions formed a developmental system with the CCE acting as the nerve centre at which the guiding principles for the 'New English' were to be generated. Essential to this process was the publication of its 'Bulletins'. By 1971 a complete set of five had been issued; together they were to establish a thoroughgoing review of English as a secondary school subject - 1: **The Early Stages**; 2: **The Teaching of Literature**; 3: **The Young School Leaver**; 4: **The Later Stages** and 5: **The Teaching of English Language**.<sup>(8)</sup> Taken as one,

they were intended to 'describe in detail the principles of approach and methodology inherent in the best and most advanced teaching of English in our time throughout the English-speaking world'.

Their ambition to establish an unshakeable rationale for the subject leads the *Bulletins* to argue constantly from first principles. 'English' it initially asserts to be 'the development of the communication skills, the skills involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing'.<sup>(9)</sup> This is, however, no simple proposition since these 'skills' are not a mere set of externals but are emanations of the central force that sustains both our personal and our social being: 'Language is an aspect of personal behaviour, and each individual develops his competence in deeply personal ways'.<sup>(10)</sup>

This recognition of 'communication' as a complex, dynamic power has profound practical consequences that should take the teacher well beyond the naive assumptions of a traditional academic syllabus. In the past, the argument continues, English teaching has been culpably content to treat the subject as a collection of impersonal externalities that could be acquired through precept, imitation, rules and drill: 'we must abandon the traditional, outmoded notions that underlay efforts to teach English by a sequence of separate, arbitrarily selected procedures'.<sup>(11)</sup> While the school might describe its scheme of work in terms of its various attributes such as 'interpretation', 'composition', 'poetry' and 'drama' these are but derivations from the dynamic, meaning-making power of language.

In 'language' work this means that the old tradgram approach is to be abandoned as a sterile and discredited irrelevance; its replacement should be a formative strategy that will deal with structure and correctness as aspects of the child's developing expressiveness. While there is still a place for linguistic study, this should now become an investigative awareness of language as a human phenomenon which will lead to an appreciation of its various social usages as defined by such concepts as 'register' and 'purpose'. Moving through the *Bulletins'* formulation of secondary school English is a vision of 'language' as a richly varied,

generative medium in which appropriateness rather than correctness, and creative adaptability and not prescription, stand as the informing values.

Similarly 'literature' is to be thought of as a form of linguistic organisation with a distinctive human function. If 'literature demonstrates language at work'<sup>(12)</sup> then it does so in a peculiarly valuable and compelling way that should make its presence on the school timetable much more than an introduction to a repository of bequeathed artefacts: 'literature is not merely what is read; it is something experienced'.<sup>(13)</sup> To the individual, it gives pleasure, promotes intellectual and moral development and refines the sensibility. It is also a shared concern, a vast reservoir of human experience from which it is possible to draw insight into the meanings of human behaviour - 'it increases their awareness of the world and its people: it confronts them with human problems and adds to their ability to deal with their own.'<sup>(14)</sup>

The **Bulletins** recognise that these are principles that should lead to profound changes in classroom practice:

The organising principles we advocate here represent a major change from one methodology to another in the teaching of English... Firstly, we see English teaching as having changed from instruction in certain linguistic procedures which are to be tested in examinations to the provision of experiences in which the pupil's linguistic competence can develop... Secondly, but no less importantly, we see English not only as a discipline concerned with language... but also as a humane study in which the pupils are concerned with the human condition and its problems, in which they are confronted, through literature and the consideration of the nature of language, with questions which involve and contribute to their own development as human beings'.<sup>(15)</sup>

In practical terms, these are inter-related aims that may best be served by transforming classroom English into a series of encounters in which language expresses an individual need or makes a social statement. This means that the traditional fragmented syllabus must

give way to the integration of language activities around some theme or topic so that pupils may be engaged in purposeful work within a meaningful experiential context. The key method that is recommended throughout all five **Bulletins** is therefore 'the project', that is 'an enquiry, or a series of connected activities leading to a collective presentation of some kind, which will give form and meaning to a major proportion of the pupils' work.'<sup>(16)</sup> In the younger classes this might most appropriately take the shape of elaborating a scenario or of realising events and situations in an imaginary community - the 'Street Accident', the 'Highland Village', the 'Department Store Fire'. The gathering together of an anthology - the 'Class Magazine', '2B's Radio Show' - or the extended book study will also play their part while, at the later stages of the secondary school, productive linguistic involvement will come from a textual consideration of a theme such as 'Law and Order', 'Education Then and Now' or 'The Nuclear Age'.

The scope and terms of their argument leave us in no doubt that the **Bulletins** were intended to set forth a complete programme of 'radical reforms' for the secondary teacher. Its CCE authors saw themselves as addressing an historical need: the very first page of 'Bulletin No. 1' claimed, 'More than any other subject in the curriculum, English has suffered from a lack of consensus as to the subject's aims and proper content.... The sections which follow contain a philosophy of English teaching which, it is hoped, most teachers will be willing to accept as their own'.<sup>(17)</sup>

Such an act of self-realisation could only be achieved by a willingness to move the basis of teaching towards the child's own experiences. The ideal must no longer be that of the maturing scholar bent in industrious study but of a young person developing through the gradual unfolding of the creative and the responsive powers within. As these words show, the defining image is no longer 'transmission' but 'growth':

'Fundamentally English teaching is not only dispensing knowledge or demonstrating techniques.... it is devising and shaping situations that will induce growth. And it is not only

growth in skills that we must nourish, but also growth in sensitivity, in awareness of the nature, feelings and purposes of oneself and of others.'<sup>(18)</sup>

These are words which proclaim that a quarter of a century after the publication of the 1947 *Secondary Education*, the people entrusted with the leadership of English in Scotland saw, as a matter of urgency, the need to make a public commitment to the fashioning of a curriculum that would indeed realise the 'harmonious development of the individual'.

#### **A Rigorous Growth: Projects and Applied Linguistics**

Despite their liberalism, the *Bulletins'* proselytizing was prosecuted through a series of forceful pronouncements that showed no obligation to account for the sources of their thinking. In them key propositions were expressed with a consensus-assuming impersonality that established a lofty vantage point from which their authors felt able to impose discredit on the old and to award an authoritative blessing on the new. Nevertheless, much of the content of the CCE's reforming programme can be explained as an official adoption of the 'progressive' ideas which till then had been present in Scotland's classrooms as a scattering of idiosyncratic intuitions. There had always been, in fact, a certain amount of individual interest in the argument that English should be thought of as an opportunity for self-discovery through creative writing or by an engagement with the intensities of personalised language that poetry and fiction offered. Now in the 1960s there appeared to be a number of excitingly fresh voices, albeit from the south, who were speaking to all those who felt that there must be more to their subject than a dictated literary past and the coercions of Latinate grammar. James Alison, for example, has told how as a newly appointed lecturer at Jordanhill he was deeply impressed by Alec Clegg's collection of pupils' writing and by the works of David Holbrook which made such an impassioned plea that the English teacher 'should cherish that which all his pupils could give';<sup>(19)</sup> about the same time in Paisley Joseph O'Neill was encountering the same author's *English for the Rejected* - 'I remember walking round Kelvin Park being quite gripped by its ideas'.<sup>(20)</sup>

With a designated Central Committee established and inviting the profession to seek out new directions, what had been a personal discovery could now be seen as leading into the very heartland of the nation's English teaching. When **The Teaching of Literature** came out, it was greeted by its reviewer as 'A Charter of Liberties', the culmination to a line of subject freedom fighters that stretched back to the First World War:

'Long before the war it was being made by George Sampson and F C Happold; the Advisory Council made it in 1947; in more recent times Holbrook.....But up to the present such writers have been lone voices crying in the wilderness, the suppressed conscience of the teaching profession. Now, with the appearance of **Bulletin No. 2**, things will never be the same again....(21)

When these words appeared in 1968, the cause of a pupil-centred English was being proclaimed with an inescapable force on both sides of the Atlantic. Although Scotland had not been represented at the seminal Anglo-American Dartmouth Conference of 1965, the CCE had established interpersonal links with the subject's most progressive forces in England, most notably James Britton's team at the London University Institute of Education and the Nuffield 'Language in Use' project. Committee members such as Tom Brown, Professor Angus McIntosh and, above all, W A Gatherer were thus well placed to feed into it leading tenets of the 'Growth' model that had been widely publicised as a result of Dartmouth, most notably in John Dixon's definitive report **Growth Through English**.<sup>(22)</sup> Chief among these was the proposition that, for the individual child, language is an essential means of exploring the meaning of experience, of constructing one's own developing reality. This thinking was very close to the **Bulletins'** fundamental argument that language is 'an aspect of personal behaviour and each individual develops his competence in deeply personal ways' and its consequential assertion that the English teacher should organize his subject into a continuing engagement with personal and social issues.<sup>(23)</sup>

Amidst these general influences, there were, however, two specific forces at work on the CCE which helped to impart a particular character to the new English as it developed in Scotland: a respect for what was already being achieved in the more progressive primary schools and an interest in the kind of applied linguistics that were being developed at Edinburgh University.

The **Bulletins'** repudiation of prescriptive grammar had created a void in the English syllabus that the CCE attempted to fill by turning to the redefinitions of linguistics that were emerging from the universities. During the 1950s scholars such as Robert A Hall (**Linguistics and Your Language**) and Randolph Quirk (**The Use of English**)<sup>(24)</sup> had begun to publicise a fresh approach to the study of language in which the primacy of speech and the importance of contemporary structures were argued for. Within the CCE Tom Brown and W A Gatherer - both of whom developed strong reputations as linguists in their own right - have testified to the impact that these accounts made on them and their colleagues. Prominent among this group of modern linguists was the University department at Edinburgh which included such internationally established figures as Michael Halliday and Angus McIntosh. In the late 1960s the University and the CCE moved to establish a regular working contact that saw McIntosh appointed to the first CCE, Halliday making a significant contribution to in-service gatherings and the regular secondment of College of Education staff to take the University's Diploma in Applied Linguistics.

The linguistics philosophy that was promoted in **Bulletin No. 5, The Teaching of English Language**, was a committed adaptation of the analysis being led at Edinburgh University.<sup>(25)</sup> The thesis that the English teacher should be concerned with functions rather than mechanics, that she should look to the purposes which language serves, and not some generalised grammar, in order to discern the rules that underlie communicative effectiveness was readily taken up both by the **Bulletins** and a host of accompanying articles in the **CITE Newsletter**.<sup>(26)</sup>

These were the propositions out of which was fashioned a new and formidable syllabus discipline. The idea that expression was the product of situation and interpersonal

relationships was utilised as the matrix within which could be generated substantial courses of classwork. These required the pupil to deal with a variety of simulated circumstances and their accompanying verbal usages. Exemplars in the **CITE Newsletter** advocated the structured study of letter writing as a set of communicative conventions, of the style evinced by advertisers, news broadcasts and local dialect systems, and demonstrated the analytical re-enactment of such representative situations as a housewife ordering coal from a coalman, complaining to the coalman that he is late with his order, chatting to the coalman over a reconciliatory cup of tea.<sup>(27)</sup>

If it was university linguistics which gave the new English its intellectual core, it was the primary school that suggest the methods by which it might be translated into the classroom. The CCE had actually been preceded in its reformism by the appearance of the SED's 1965 **Primary Education in Scotland**,<sup>(28)</sup> a publication that quickly came to be seen as leading the way in official advocacy of progressive structures for the Scottish curriculum. The product of a working party that was equally shared by Departmental and teacher members, it squarely proclaimed a belief in 'an education based on the needs and interests of the child and the nature of the world in which he is growing up'. To be given classroom form this meant the breaking down of rigid subject disciplines and the creation of 'opportunities to participate actively in his own learning'.<sup>(29)</sup>

The particular recommendation was for a methodology based on the project which could supply an appropriately 'realistic and meaningful context' and it was this strategy which gave the reformers of secondary English the means of bending the old content into a more flexible, personally absorbing yet still firmly structured line of classwork. As both Tom Brown and James Alison in an identical phrase testify, 'Projects came from the primary schools'<sup>(30)</sup> and were eagerly adopted by a CCE anxious to offer secondary teachers a tangible syllabus framework within which skills and literary experience could be pursued without collapsing into the vacuous study of the former academic syllabus.

The extent to which the combination of language content and project methodology was made to supply the programmes of classwork that the CCE recommended can be seen in the examples outlined in its publications. Even a course for the decidedly nonacademic 'early leaver' was to be organised into a series of controlled encounters with pre-selected centres of interest. In Bulletin No. 4's 'Life With Katie' scheme, pupils are required to participate in the linguistic events of the last few weeks of the 15 year old Katie's schooldays as she, among 25 other incidents, writes out an 'aide-memoire list' of ingredients for the family dinner she has volunteered to prepare, pens 'letters of invitation to friends' for her birthday party, requests her parents to vacate the living room in which it is to take place thereby using 'language of tact and persuasion', enters a pupils' competition for 'a composition' describing her ideal home, attends 'an interview' for her first job.<sup>(31)</sup>

Out of all the possible shapes which the English of 'Growth' - to be based, after all, upon faith in each child's ability to develop its own unique individuality - could have taken, it was this one particular selection that was given national prominence. 'Varieties of language', 'projects' and 'thematic studies' became the appointed methodology not as the realisation of some inescapable epistemological truth but because their adoption met the Scottish need to maintain a curricular tradition of substantial items of language work that could be organised into a thoroughgoing sequence of logically connected study. 'Rhetoric' and 'grammar' had not disappeared so much as been translated into 'register', 'conventions' and 'genre'; nor had personal English come to mean free pupil choice or a self-generating development but rather the ordered progression through a precast chain of activity that was not altogether out of character with the disciplines of the old academic curriculum.

#### **Time, Place, People: the New English as a Series of Happenings**

It is, therefore, an oversimplification to present the CCE's version of the new English as a generalised account of 'influences' that spread smoothly through the co-operation of designated agencies or as the automatic application of some 1960s zeitgeist to Scotland. Not only was the 'language through projects' syllabus one that was shaped to accommodate the

country's own academic traditions, it was a formulation which had been made on behalf of all English teachers by a relatively small group of select individuals placed at the Edinburgh centre of curricular affairs. And these were people, who in their turn, were working out their reforming ideas within a specifically national network of institutional and interpersonal relationships that were subject to the vagaries of events, timings and strategies for action. These were the factors which, as much as the cogency of argument or the imperatives of the age, determined the exact shape that English teaching in Scotland would take during the reforms of the 1960s and governed the chances of its proving to be acceptable to its wider teacher constituency. It is important, therefore, to substantiate the story of the changes to the country's English teaching at this time in terms of events, individuals and tactics, and not remain content with the broad picture that has already been sketched out.

Here the chief witness must be W A Gatherer who became the HMI National Specialist for English in 1965 and was Chairman of the inaugural CCE that met from 1966 to 1971. As such he was the author of *Bulletin No. 1* and the leading collaborator for the rest of that series. The account that follows is based on his authoritative record of events, supplemented by observations from three other central participants, HMIs Alistair Davidson and Gillian Campbell and also Tom Brown who at that time was Principal Lecturer in English at Moray House College of Education, Edinburgh.<sup>(32)</sup>

It was the CCE that provided the mainspring for the reforms to the subject in the late 1960s. As has already been noted, in the years following its first meeting in 1966, the Committee issued a series of definitive Bulletins and sponsored a national Centre for Information on the Teaching of English, organized a range of in-service gatherings and encouraged the setting up of teachers' Local Development Committees throughout the country. Yet all this vital work was not, in reality, simply the step by step outcome of one clearcut SED decision to set up a designated committee for the orderly reform of English teaching. Rather it was the culmination of a number of evolutionary changes that had been gathering momentum

throughout the preceding half dozen years or so, changes that involved an interplay of individuals and events which were to shape the later CCE decisions.

The sense that English teaching should be the subject of sustained professional reflection began to take root in the late 1950s. At this time Charles Forbes was the responsible HMI and he was joined by two young energetic colleagues, Andrew Chirnside and W A Gatherer, men whose own experiences and temperament had led them to believe fervently in the necessity for change in the school practice of English. This new Inspectorate team, operating within the liberal Brunton regime, first sought to open up its work to the participation of the teachers on the ground and to project themselves as the promoters of new ideas. R I Scott, then teaching in Aberdeen, remembers Andrew Chirnside assuring him that, 'The old way of inspection had been to see if anything was wrong and to pull people up; but the new way now is to try and find out what is good, if necessary to close one's eyes to what is bad and to disseminate what is good.'<sup>(33)</sup>

Because of this the Inspectorate became concerned to promote close relationships with a trusted fraternity of principal teachers that their own Inspections had identified. From 1960 onwards these contacts were brought together at a regular series of residential meetings at Chesters, a country house near Bearsden, Strathclyde. Here teacher and Inspector were able to discuss urgent matters of modernisation such as the updating of textual material and the role of grammar in a contemporary English syllabus.

A vital topic was linguistics. At one of these early conferences Michael Halliday was invited to address teachers on 'Teaching English Language in Schools'. As W A Gatherer remembers, it proved to be a 'sensational' happening, with members of the audience 'falling off their chairs, amazed and incredulous'. The message was nothing less than that 'grammar was out of date', a verdict which produced considerable hostility among many who were present. However, some were "inspired" including both Chirnside and Gatherer who immediately felt that a revitalised linguistics with a strong social and personal interest

would prove to be a key answer to their 'burning question - How are we going to change English teaching in Scotland?' It was certainly one that appeared to correspond not only to the nature of the subject itself, but to suit the enthusiasms and the outlook of those involved in a reform that had nevertheless to take place within the native framework of scholastic values. 'Many of us were grammarians at heart without knowing it' and here was a grammar fit for a new teaching age, a way of looking at the subject which was innovatory and capable of linking pupils, English and experiences but without losing anything in terms of structure and of intellectual challenge.

At about this time informal contact was also being made with Tom Brown who had been appointed Head of the English Department at Moray House College of Education in 1957 and who shared a conviction in the importance of functional, rather than classical, linguistics to the improvement of pupil performance, especially in writing and interpretation. Brown was able to develop Moray House as a useful base for language study and for the introduction of the new linguistics into teacher training courses.

From this kind of providential encounter of teachers, Inspectors, College of Education personnel and university linguists, study groups could be set up to examine the whole topic of language and English teaching in depth. W A Gatherer found himself working through a combination of formal meeting, personal research and individual visits to schools, all the while attempting to plant the new English in as many localities as possible. The notion of local development committees as the means of gathering together relevant information was a strategy that sprang from Gatherer's own experience of how change was beginning to work both for himself and for others at this time.

Other factors also assisted in the launching of reform at this period, among them the presence of Brunton as Chief Inspector. Brunton's own training had been in languages and he proved to be keenly interested in the ideas in which his young English inspectors were now involved. In his general determination to enact change he was quite prepared to back interesting

innovation even if it meant going against traditional protocol. Typical of the way in which Brunton was prepared to back change was his robust handling of those within the Departmental hierarchy who objected to the breach of protocol implied by Gatherer's taking on such a prominent role in English when Charles Forbes was still officially in charge. Brunton recognised that he could use the energies of his younger Inspectors and he finally resolved this whole issue by appointing first Chirnside and then Gatherer as the 'national specialist' in the subject in 1965.<sup>(34)</sup>

Steadily as the bonds loosened, the whole field of operation began to widen. Michael Halliday left Edinburgh to take up a Chair at London University and while he was there he became involved in the proposal to the Nuffield Foundation for the establishment of a schools linguistics programme. He contacted the SED through Gatherer and asked if 'Scotland' would be interested in joining. Brunton 'immediately' encouraged him to go to London to follow the idea up and this enabled Gatherer to make contact with the language interests south of the border. The result was an SED participation in the programmes that were later to be published as 'Breakthrough to Literacy' and 'Language in Use' - and also the opening up of a channel of communication between Scottish teachers and the Schools Council innovations in the south.

It was from the gradual cohering of activities of this kind that the proposal for a national English panel began to emerge. In fact the CCE actually preceded the formal organisation of the parent body, springing as it did from the realisation by Gatherer and Chirnside that they ought to set up an English 'panel' so as to co-ordinate and to spearhead all the developments which were now beginning to take off in the country's English teaching. Only later did the procedure of the CCE reporting to the CCC begin to become regularized - originally, for example, **Bulletin No. 1** was an independent production that Gatherer was simply 'invited' to discuss with the larger body.

The CCE thus developed in its early years as a means of enacting the enthusiasms of what originally was a small band associated with the Edinburgh centre of things - indeed the very name 'Central Committee of English' had been coined by Gatherer himself. The intimate sense of identification with the whole project felt by Gatherer and Chirnside had a clear effect on its conduct and composition. The pair of Inspectors were able to persuade Brunton to pump resources into their schemes with the result that Gatherer himself was seconded full time on to it, later to be assisted by Alastair Davidson on a half-time basis. The committee were also given the freedom to invite hand-picked progressive teachers to join them and to have substantial figures such as Professors Andrew Rutherford, Aberdeen, and Angus McIntosh, Edinburgh, to give it literary and linguistic depth. Nearly all of its membership could, in fact, be traced back to those early Chesters meetings which were thus proving to be a 'powerhouse' for the whole decade's development.

#### **The Ethnography of Change: the Role of the Individual**

From the retrospective afar the progress of the 1960s may appear to be a matter of self-evident cause and effect; as a recounted experience it looks more like an episodic whirl of happenings in which individual energies, the coincidence of people and of structures, of opportunities and opportunism all intermingle to create a very specific resolution. Not so much a machine driven by historical inevitability, as an improvised expedition undertaken by those who happened to be around at the time. The broad concerns of the period were implicated - the role of literature in a personal education, the desire to give a developmental base to language work, the meaning of English in a comprehensive school setting - but these entered the scene as a selection made by individuals and were mediated through a number of institutional strategies, as a matching of the general explanation to a specific Scottish circumstance.

That the reform of the nation's English teaching travelled as far as it did at that time is largely due to the quality of the relatively small number who were entrusted with its course. Each of the relevant interviewees agree, for instance, that the role of W A Gatherer was crucial. That this was so was because he had the strengths that fitted the given situation. In the assessment

of Alastair Davidson, who as HMI joined the first CCE as its Secretary, 'He had the fervour and the ability to sell his ideas without arousing antagonism. He could get away with it. He was also widely read and could claim authority over the new ideas about language. Without Bill Gatherer it wouldn't have worked.'<sup>(35)</sup>

Perhaps the significant factor here is the way that practical energy matched political position. W A Gatherer was - and is - not just a man of considerable intellectual gifts who was - unusually within the academic tradition - prepared to devote these not to the embellishment of the subject but to the question of its classroom delivery, he had considerable persuasiveness and a robust willingness to exploit his office. The Departmental powers that in the past had been used to contain were also available for use in a forceful encouragement of reform. W A Gatherer himself recognizes that the tighter structure, the more centrist tradition of Scottish education carries 'the advantage' that when change is proposed it can be effected quite rapidly:

Scotland can move rapidly as a matter of national policy which however can be generally representative simply because contacts are so much more sure and regular - for example it is relatively easy to recruit all the local authorities into any new movement. There's a long tradition of centralism in the Scottish set-up with the SED quite happily being given responsibility for curriculum development by the LAs. There certainly hasn't been any of the somewhat fractious and strong LAs that you might get south of the border; the result is the SED can propose and dispose much more rapidly. I must say I found this a great convenient strength from my own point of view!

As these remarks reveal, the government of the subject could be decisively redirected by a small number of well placed personnel. Here Gatherer was fortunate in those immediately around him. Alastair Davidson points to the seminal influence of Andrew Chirnside who, in fact, was Gatherer's immediate predecessor as national English specialist: 'a man of great character, of fantastic energy and abundant ideas'. And behind them both were the supportive figures of their superiors: J S Brunton was, in Gatherer's judgement, 'a necessary presence,

able to rise above the petty protocol of the Civil Service... He would simply ask the question, "Is the stuff good - that's all that matters!" Then there was the succeeding Senior Chief Inspector, David Dickson, "an expansive, humorous man, much more outgoing than Brunton and a necessary complement to him'.

Given such warm backing, Gatherer and Chirnside were able to convert their English incumbency into a ministry for the furtherance of the progressive cause, - to establish, in the words of Davidson, 'a strong evangelical wing within the Inspectorate'. The tightly drawn SED structure enabled its administration to be prosecuted as a series of highly personalized contacts. The English Inspectorate of the late 1960s could thus rapidly develop a network of alliances and agencies. An individual instance of this was the recruitment of Alastair Davidson, after a favourable inspection while he was Principal Teacher at Annan, to the Inspectorate in 1966. - 'Andrew Chirnside cultivated me'; on a larger scale there was the enlistment of Tom Brown's Moray House English department as a centre for language study and teaching. Indeed there was something of a patronage system at work with important placements being procured by recommendation rather than election, whether on to the CCE or the newly instituted Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board: 'When it was set up I made quite sure that the Chief Examiners and his team were disciples' (Gatherer).

#### **From the Centre Out: the Ownership of Reform**

The setting up of the Centre for Information on the Teaching of English in 1968 was a prime example of how an official like W A Gatherer could employ a mixture of commitment and opportunism to utilise the power of the system. In his desire to tap the potential of the new linguistics as a base for a reformed curriculum Gatherer became convinced that a resource centre for English teachers would be vital to his developmental strategy. To establish such a centre as a simple SED or CCC office would, however, create issues of funding and of precedence. The problem was met by an imaginative arrangement negotiated with Moray House whereby 'CITE' would be located on the College campus and be largely funded by it yet make its work available to the whole profession as an in-service activity. Again it was

Gatherer's determined vision and enterprise that were central: in the words of Gillian Campbell: 'Bill could see what needed to be done and manoeuvre and manipulate until it was done... he pushed through the CITE idea almost single-handed'.

Indeed, like Alistair Davidson, Gillian Campbell is in no doubt that W A Gatherer was indispensable throughout the 1960s developments:

'He was the person who was really knowledgeable about the linguistics breakthrough in school circles... he was the real persuader on the CCE, the kingpin in getting it set up... but he wasn't just an intellectual force, he was charismatic beyond belief. Bill attracted around him a whole lot of people -his personal influence put them on the road, to act as disciples who preached the word. He was enormously persuasive. He could persuade St Andrew's House to let him do things.'

This assessment is an interesting one not only for what it tells us about the dynamics of change but also because of the issues it raises concerning the conditions under which such change may best be sustained. If Gillian Campbell's comments represent a great tribute to one man's impact, they also beg the question of overdependency and of ownership. Gatherer's reforming impulse appears to have been rooted in his own biography, in his experiences as a young teacher anxious to experiment with ways of engaging his pupils in the satisfactions of personal reading and writing, in his discovery as a newly appointed HMI of 'the desperate' state of English teaching in the nation's junior secondary schools. When the readings in linguistics came later, they could do so as an articulation of themes that had already been half-formulated in his mind. To what extent could the pattern of personal encounter that gave significance to his introduction to the new ideas, be made available to others - and not as a thesis but as a necessary experience? In his own account of listening to Michael Halliday, at a time when he himself was searching for ways of remedying a teaching situation that his Inspectorship had found to be so deficient, Gatherer tells us that 'he was inspired, became extremely excited and avid to read up more on this topic.' The result was an intensity of

attachment that coloured the whole reformist movement: 'My obsessive interest in linguistics was, I imagine, influential... I used to harangue my fellow HMIs in order to convert them to the cause'.

How could the circumstances of such a conversion be reproduced in the ordinary classroom teacher? For as Gatherer's words remind us, his perception of what was necessary depended on the kind of vantage point that his position as HMI gave him. From it he was able to oversee the general state of English teaching and to become aware of it as a 'state' that he professionally had to deal with - unlike those many thousands who occupied one particular spot within the system and whose horizons were bounded by the fate of their own pupils within its given values.

To an extent the residential courses held at Chesters were intended to initiate those who were selected for them into a reforming fraternity. Unlike the somewhat platform-bound one-day conferences which had been the norm till then, these gatherings were felt to be real in-service engagements, a privileged opening up of Departmental policy to a group who were led to feel all the more charmed for having been invited to join such a circle. While there is no doubt that these events made an impact on those who were finally able to gain a place - a quarter of a century afterwards several of the interviewees freely volunteered their presence there as one of the most formative experiences of their careers - the national effect was limited by the small numbers involved and by a star system of selection that tended to concentrate on the already motivated and the meritorious few.

This was a need that the Inspectorate tried to meet initially through their own itinerant proselytizing. W A Gatherer describes himself as 'charging enthusiastically round the country among members of the profession trying to spread the notion of English as a personal discipline by my own contact and enthusiasm - a Johnny Appleseed approach'. Soon these personal efforts were succeeded by the more structured Local Development Centre which gave almost every secondary school English department in the land a working membership of the

new movement. The intention behind their creation was 'to give teachers a sense of ownership, an opportunity to mingle among kindred spirits, a forum in which alliances could burgeon'.

It remained to be seen how effective would be an invitation to be conscripted into one of the many outposts that were thus established, there to work as the recipient of ideas at some distance from their headquarters formulation.

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**PART 3 : 1965 - 1977**

**CHAPTER 7 : LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRES AND CENTRAL COMMITTEES**

**Central Models and Local Production: the Example of the Project**

"These LDCs are the mainspring of the revolution occurring in English classrooms. The CCE bases its work on the principle in Bulletin No. 2 that "teachers must be free to construct their own syllabuses to suit their own circumstances and purposes and to meet the needs of their own pupils." The radical nature of this proposition still escapes too many educationists'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The mixture of high aspiration and practical anxiety in this, W A Gatherer's, comment suggests something of the nervous hopes that were held out for the contribution the Local Development Centres would make to the furtherance of the new English. In the 1969 article from which these words are extracted, Gatherer was setting out the national plan for the subject's development. As he envisaged it, the Central Committee would lay down the foundation of agreed principle but it would be individual teachers working within their own LDCs that would translate it into classroom material. Nor was this transaction to be thought of as a mere discharge of orders for what emerged from the CCE was necessarily hypothetical and generalised: its intentions for a more child-centred English would only be realised through the intensive process of discussion and active trial. In their own local centres classroom practitioners could come together to share their growing understandings of the nature of the learning process and the findings of the latest educational research.

The LDC, then was going to be an implantation into the local soil of the kind of committed high level thinking that was flourishing at the centre. To accomplish this end, the LDC must grow into something more than a monthly committee meeting; it had to act as a professional home in which teachers could share their enthusiasm, study, plan and live out the excitements of 'the revolution' for themselves.

Measured in terms of raw productivity, the output of the early LDCs gave every encouragement to these aims. As the regular reports in *Teaching English* show, within a couple of years of the CCE's inception there had been set into position a national grid in which some 80 study groups, strung out along 18 district centres, were generating quantities of information sheets and teaching programmes. Gillian Campbell observes, 'In the winter of 1967/68, I could have been attending meetings every single night of the week, there were so many groups at work - there were over 30 in my Lothian area alone'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Topics included the purely local - Galloway Literature anthologies and the use of Shetland dialect in schools - as well as the occasional exotica such as Renfrew's 'Investigation of the French method of Explication de Textes and its application to English Literature', but for the most part the LDCs were solidly busy working up the *Bulletins*' briefing into a series of local editions: 'Thematic Studies for S3 and S4', 'The Anthological Project', 'Projects for S3 and S4 Less Able Pupils'.<sup>(3)</sup>

In doing this, they were doggedly following not only the *Bulletins* but also the patterns laid out in an accompanying CCE publication, *Projects in Practice*.<sup>(4)</sup> This is a thoroughgoing document which, from its basic proposition that the project is 'an integrated programme of work built around a central situation or idea', offers elaborate guidelines as to how this may be engineered. A whole fleet of models is wheeled out: there is the minor project (a 10 period drive through a simple incident, such as the 'Street Accident'); the Imaginary Community (the inventive peopling of a village, a school, a football team); the Anthological (the magazine or radio programme), the Radical (consideration of a human situation such as the factory strike, the coup d'état); the Bridge (a study of love and marriage, law and order or some other generalised theme).

Full specifications are then set out. One instance is the 'Department Store' which demonstrates how the Imaginary Community can act as a prolific scenario. Here plot, setting and the accompanying assortment of character types jostle together - spinster department

manageress, loyal to the firm but conservatively resistant to modernisation plans, clashes with brash whizz kid manager and so on. From drama such as this an inexhaustible range of language situations is generated as the cast read posters, queue for the New Year sale in argumentative fashion, listen to salesmen's patter, attend staff planning meetings, compile campaign reports and cope with an emergency fire and its attendant press and TV coverage. Similarly the more 'thematic' Bridge becomes the opportunity to insinuate a range of literary uplift into the progressive classroom: 'Courage' in its various categorical guises yields 'Hornblower' (physical and military courage), 'White Fang' (animal), 'Reach for the Sky' (endurance), 'Inn of the Sixth Happiness' (moral).

For the most part, the local Development Centres simply followed. Just how diligently may be seen by sampling the specima that can still be found in various local authority files. With regard to the community project, the real counties and cities of the land appear to have obediently produced and peopled their own imaginary localities and then set them in dramatic motion through a sequence of episodic happenings that left a trail of linguistic activity on which pupils were to practice their mastery of register and style. Thus there was - to take a typical 1970 product - the County of Banff's 'Hydro Dam' where an alarming crack appears about which menaced locals read engineer reports, are interviewed by local radio, converse at the street corner, attend heated village hall meetings (calm-appealing Provost soothes passionately worried postmistress) and write letters to the press, to their MP and to their metropolitan cousins. This pattern of colourful location into which intrudes some external visitation that provokes an outburst of linguistics conventions-illustrating communication was in the same year also followed by a Pop Festival in Angus, Dundee's Highland Avalanche, the Flooded Caravan Site of Aberdeen, the dispatch of Glasgow youngsters to an Argyllshire Outward Bound centre and planning wrangles over the erection of a New Croft in the Hebrides.<sup>(5)</sup>

### **A Revolution without Change?: the Academic Regime of the Project**

Gradually, however, the feeling began to grow that all this busyness was amounting to something less than the revolution. In 1971 at the end of its life, the first CCE considered the questionnaire returns from the HMIs on the impact of its reforms on the country's schools and could only conclude: 'what had happened in the last five years was only a beginning and much remained to be done'.<sup>(6)</sup> As **Teaching English** moved into the mid 1970s its reports of LDC work became thinner and thinner as local committees were either disbanded or absorbed out of sight into official bureaucratic structures. To the retrospective eye the LDC movement can indeed appear to be a mere transience: 'many quickly collapsed as quickly as they had sprung up' (Gillian Campbell); 'we struggled with the **Bulletins** for a while but I couldn't quote one now... they didn't make much difference in the classroom in the end' (W. Ettles); 'They simply died the death' (J Beedie). And most authoritatively of all, W Gatherer's 'Classrooms were turned round for a while but it is difficult to say how far the change became a permanent one'.<sup>(7)</sup>

The reasons for this dissipation are conceptual and political, a matter both of the will and of the ability of the classroom teacher to work out an effective realisation of the Central Committee's proposals for her subject's reformed practice. To explore these issues it is necessary to have regard not only for the teaching and learning potential of the chosen project methodology but also for the uses made of it by those who had to work within the received cultural and institutional framework of the Scottish secondary curriculum.

As the potted summaries of the 'Department Store' and the 'Hydro Dam' indicate the project is essentially a pedagogical contrivance by which to continue with an uncompromising schedule of language teaching. If this is so then their LDC authors are doing no more than enact the **Bulletins'** argument that 'the competence of pupils in the communication skills' must remain the over-riding aim in any such work. The project existed in order to make the business of language come alive for the pupils through their assumed 'involvement' in the drama of representative humankind. The very limited nature of this engagement is, however,

indicated by this introductory note to an 'Outdoor Centre' programme, devised by Glasgow teachers: 'while the main features of both the situation and central characters have been determined by the pre-planned assignments, the teacher should be prepared to allow MINOR modifications which might arise during class discussions... A useful way of involving the class is to allow the pupils to choose appropriate names for the characters'.<sup>(8)</sup>

The *Bulletins'* approach to motivation, then, is to plunge the child into a series of purposeful reading and writing activities which simulate those of 'real life'. But whose experience of 'real life' exactly? 'Relevance' in cases such as the 'Outdoor Centre' from Glasgow, Aberdeen's 'New Caravan Site', Dundee's 'Highland Adventure' is assumed to lie in a topic that a committee of teachers perceives to be part of the pupils' contemporary situation and in the undertaking of those associated reading and writing tasks which they deem to be characteristic of social language behaviour, that is penning angry letters to local newspapers, compiling reports, inventing classified advertisements and composing descriptive pieces for imagined magazine publication.

It is questionable, however, whether such a high degree of linguistic role-playing within the confines of a pre-determined pseudo-situation really could engage the child's experience - did it not rather reflect an adult's way, and a fully literate, sophisticated adult at that - of looking at life - and - society. The new English was anxious to satisfy the child's imagination but was it really practicable to ask her to imagine - this week - that she be Roman Centurions' daughters living in the Shadow of Hadrian's Wall or - the week after - Scott of the Antarctic's dog chasing Amundsen across the snowy wastes?<sup>(9)</sup> Such 'imagination' constituted what could be called the empathetic fallacy in that it assumed a capacity in the young pupils to take a sustained leave of themselves in order to enter a precise role-play that could only derive from a range of social experience that they had not yet had time to acquire.

Nor was the distance created by the teacherly choice of subject overcome by the kind of language work that the project demanded for its classroom development. After the initial

disclosure of topic to the class, pupils' active involvement in it was imposed by obedience to a daily teacher-made programme that required the orderly fulfilling of objectives visited upon them from without. Similarly, many of the specific writing tasks to be undertaken by the pupil, while certainly based on a variety of language registers to be encountered in everyday life such as advertisements, reports, and book reviews, demanded that he mimic from his classroom desk what are really refined sets of stylistic conventions that are operated through an organised, impersonal and often professionally trained approach.

The *Bulletins'* methodology made a sustained attempt to involve the pupil in his English classwork but in doing so was unable to shake off the habits of control and inculcation that were part of the very pedagogic tradition that it purported to overthrow. The project mode was rapidly elaborated into an end in itself complete with its own academic rituals and impersonal classroom procedures. The various LDC schemes each had it in common that they demanded that the child turn aside from her own dreams and imaginings to what could only be a simulated concern with discussing how Nurse Bootle and Sister Ironside were getting on with their awkward patients in 'Hospital Ward' or the prospects for political revolution growing out of the labour situation in Ruritanian factories.<sup>(10)</sup>

'During the running of the programme the class becomes a composition workshop'.<sup>(11)</sup> A standard image seemed to haunt the *Bulletins'* pursuit of motivation and it was of the classroom as 'workshop' - a term that had the right connotations of activity and productiveness, but one that also indicated the extent to which their thinking about the 1960s school pupil was still dominated by a wished for adult model of behaviour. In the previous age that it so desired to supplant, teachers had assumed that the child must be a scholar, a natural grammarian busy at work on solecisms and syntactical niceties. Now the *Bulletins* were turning, as replacement, to another stereotype, that of the pupil as natural journeyman, happily fulfilled in the preparation of copy for magazines and local newspapers, in the scripting of one-act plays and the crafting of posters, letters and pamphlets to order. A model of the child

which was still too adult, too remorselessly organised to enable his mentors to touch the real springs of his motivation or to assist either party to flee the bounds of the old academic ways.

#### **Perceptions of Change: from Centre-out to Top-down**

Given such a misapprehension it is little wonder, perhaps, that after the initial enthusiasms, teachers and LDCs began to question the value of an effort that yielded no more in the way of pupil motivation than the old days of comfortably fragmented timetables and conveniently all-purpose textbooks. They were also beginning to question their own allotted position within a campaign for curriculum development that appeared to leave them to do all the marching. In 1968, W A Gatherer had assured a gathering of LDC delegates that,

'Looking further into the years ahead I envisage a stage at which the local development movement will have its own impetus and it will no longer be necessary for anyone centrally to concern himself with encouraging its growth. Thus the power of the state will wither away...'(12)

Over the next decade it was to become more and more clear that no such transference was going to take place, that, indeed, the spread of the new teaching strategies from committee - however local - into classroom practice was very limited. Kenneth Cunningham's 1976 research into the school reception of the new curriculum developments could only conclude that, 'it is clearly shown that in practice, certainly in Lanark, possibly elsewhere, little implementation has taken place'.(13) In a set of interviews with principal teachers and then with HMIs, the directorate and a subject adviser, he was able to demonstrate that a leading cause was the breakdown in curricular relationships that existed between the 'average' school department, which was immersed in the old ways, and the by now extensive retinue of advisers, Inspectors, College of Education staff and directors who were professionally dedicated to the new.

The degree to which the CCE's carefully drawn development plan was succeeding in giving teachers a sense of participation in the fulfilment of its aims may be inferred from the comment by an Aberdeen teacher:

'For **most** teachers this kind of model is utopian; it demands degrees of organisation, dedication, imagination, time, patience, fitness and sheer competence that we just don't have... Few Head Teachers, college lecturers, advisers, HMIs and such have had much personal experience of teaching [such] classes... small wonder that their advice on the subject often seems unrealistic.'<sup>(14)</sup>

The criticism is particularly revealing because it was written in response to the CCE's 1977 **English for Slower Learning Children** - in many respects an admirably thoughtful, carefully researched publication, but rather pointedly rebuffed here as part of a remote Report industry that was busy issuing ivory tower directives which the toiler teachers down below were then expected to carry out.

For the ordinary foot-teacher the advice that was now being relayed to him from the Edinburgh H.Q. often appeared to be a series of orders which took little account of the prevailing conditions, showed little interest in the poor muster of resources. The majority preferred to keep to the trenches and wait for reinforcements or a rightful supply of ammunition. What was significant in this attitude was the resentment with which their criticism of the CCE call to advance was invested. Even so dedicated a principal teacher as James Alison, soon to become an HMI, was moved publicly to resist 'a counsel of perfection and absurdity', that was too glibly delivered by those 'unlovable documents' the **Bulletins**.<sup>(15)</sup> Ironically the very command structure of Information Centre, advisers, College lecturers and local groups which had been established to offer them support was increasingly seen among the ranks as largely the means by which the joint SED/CCE generalship were able to penetrate its own pet strategies into every corner of the field. After a year or two of respectful silence the columns of **TES**, **SEJ** and even **Teaching English** began to post accusations that the neighbourhood LDC was turning

out to be nothing more than a smooth exercise in conscription. One such account by 'a teacher with over twenty years classroom experience' has it that his local group leader (an outsider official) simply dismissed what he and his long serving colleagues had to offer in the rush to enforce the **Bulletins'** view: 'Our masters have spoken. There is nothing for us to discuss except how to implement their ideas!'<sup>(16)</sup>

The suspicion that St Andrew's House was busy enlisting local resources in order to secure its territorial control over the nation's English syllabus was inflamed by the way in which the brightest talents were recruited into centrally directed operations. The clearest indication of the SED's intent in this matter appeared to be the system of hidden nomination on to the CCE, the SCEEB and official working parties. Selection to these bodies was effected by a small HMI-controlled group and was made according to the individual's record, not on the basis of delegative responsibility. The procedure was designed to ensure that progressive forces, unrestrained by any sectarian considerations, could freely work together towards the furtherance of the subject; but to the colleagues left behind it could appear that such individuals had been singled out for apostatic manipulation by a secretive patronage system.

For those on whose shoulders the SED hand alighted, the sense of recognition and professional extension made for an exhilarating experience. Trevor Johns and Moira Jolly have described how what amounted to an HMI-run talent spotting system picked them out of their Montrose and Stonehaven classrooms to involve them in a range of developmental activities which led ultimately to membership of the CCE.<sup>(17)</sup> Trevor Johns recalls how his experiments with the tape recorder to produce a pupils' 'radio' play were greeted by Alastair Davidson HMI with 'that's exactly what needs to be done!' - after which followed immediate support and later invitations to serve on working parties; Moira Jolly's efforts to modernise literature teaching by a lively treatment of War poetry were similarly awarded the pioneering status which opened the door to national recognition after an Inspector's visit to her classroom.

In return they were expected to give themselves to a round of promotional activities which included Sunday meetings, hotel conferences, and travelling round the country to provide demonstrations of enlightened practice. Both would agree that the leadership provided by the SED was essential in that it offered first sustenance and then public exposure to initiatives that would otherwise have remained a private, underfunded venture. It was exciting, and it was hard work: 'There was an enormous amount of work involved - my wife never saw me - but there was the thrill of mixing with fellow spirits, of being able to talk about what was what. It was liberation; I got a kick out of it', (T Johns). It also meant individual entry into another way of life that increasingly set them apart and, collectively, the formation of an English teaching Establishment. They were conscious of being joined up to a very select band of travelling players whose exemplary performances not uncommonly met with audience resistance.

For the many on the outside such career movements merely confirmed the professional distance that had opened up between their ordinary artisan selves and a development industry which they judged was made up either of inimitably exceptional individuals or of bandwaggoning careerists. Neither category, it was felt, had much to offer on the vitally prosaic business of ensuring literacy, of inculcating a smattering of culture and of getting their customers through their exams. In their different ways Archie Watt - whose career actually overlapped with Moira Jolly at Mackie Academy - and Jim Beedie confirm the remoteness of such goings on from what they saw as their daily concerns and they do so in a tone of exasperation at the presumptions of those outsiders who would wish them to do otherwise.

'We all lost our sense of direction when the reports and the talk of projects came out. Many teachers felt they had to keep to their own classrooms because they were reluctant to divulge what in fact they'd been doing for years and were continuing to do... The ordinary teacher has a lot of commonsense and can sense a bandwagon when people are pushing through things for their own reasons'.(J Beedie)(18)

'People from the College used to come round and waste my time and make jobs for themselves... Some of the changes were good things if not overdone - projects for instance could be an easy way out for the poor teacher to avoid teaching while the pupils copied things off worksheets and out of books'.(A Watt)<sup>(19)</sup>

For many such practitioners, intrusions at the hands of the various curriculum do-gooders now let loose by the expansions of the 1960s only confirmed their sense of inhabiting a separate professional world. The object of the CCE had been to generate a curricular movement in which theory and practice would become intimately sensitive to each other through a continuing and shared process of discussion, innovation, consolidation, renewal. The only way to have achieved this ideal during a period of centre-led revitalisation would have been to have broken down the institutional divisions that kept teacher and reformer apart. The new structures, however, appeared to reinforce a system in which the country's educational establishments and the personnel who worked for them could all too clearly be identified as belonging to one side or the other so that while the 'ordinary' teacher was stuck with 'practice', he could not help but be conscious of the reinforced strength of all those HMIs, University and College of Education lecturers, of exemplary *Bulletins*-waving conference speakers and local authority advisers who dwelt in the antipodean region of 'theory'.

This was a barrier which the CCE movement had failed to overturn. It is perhaps too cynically neat to see its structure of Central Committee (theory) - Local Development Centre (practice) as a mere reproduction of the very divisions it was meant to close but the place given to these bodies in the reforming scheme of things did support such a view. The LDCs were a well intended innovation but they were invited to take up their work only after the official doctrinal line had been proclaimed in the *Bulletins*; it then became very difficult for them not to spend their time working out practical syllabuses which merely confirmed the views of others rather than contributed their own. What thus became a classic top-down operation was further weighted by the failure to develop any reciprocal momentum by which the responses of those on

the teaching ground could have been carried back up into the centre there to question, to modify and to enrich.

#### **Development against Imitation: the Failure of the Bulletin Movement**

It is for these reasons that the SED's apparent willingness to share power in the 1960s by opening up a chain of curricular agencies came to be seen by many as an exercise in covert colonisation, as a subtle attempt to carry the Department's Reformation into all the teaching outposts of the land.<sup>(20)</sup> That the relationship between the centre and periphery was, however, rather more ambiguous than this scepticism assumes is shown by the complaints of those who felt themselves to be the most discomforted by the new devolutionary ways. Protests over the CCE's 'undemocratic' formation and of LDC subordination were mingled with pleas for the SED's continuation of its role as the managing director, for it to get on with its true job of telling teachers how to discharge their orders and not to abandon them to the unaccustomed freedoms of a free curricular market. So in 1970 a meeting of Aberdeen Principal Teachers could record that 'there was a fundamental resistance from teachers' to the **Bulletins'** message, not on grounds of principle but because materials and methods were underspecified; 'members would welcome detailed practical examples - "tramlines" - as purposeful as a course book'.<sup>(21)</sup> And this a year after James Campbell, 'A Principal Teacher of English', had used the columns of the **SEJ** to offer a plaintive portrait of the average practitioner 'waiting for the consensus, as he tries to keep his head above the swirling waters of bulletins, themes, projects and linguistic studies. He finds little bliss in being alive in the dawn of the new age in English'.<sup>(22)</sup>

The CCE-LDC strategy can be indicted as an extension of Departmental hegemony; equally it can be judged as being naive in its assumption that Scottish teachers were ready to slip into their new role of curriculum decision-makers after generations of centre dependency and bondage to national examination. Gordon Liddell records how disorientating the members of the Lanarkshire LDC on which he served found the openness of their remit.<sup>(23)</sup> In their 'slow tortuous' attempts to make teaching sense of the new enthusiasm for oracy, his colleagues' inexperience in definitive planning, in working together as a team, even, meant a frustrating

lack of direction and productivity. It was as if the academic tradition in which these and other teachers were steeped had bred in them the habit of deferring to the higher authority, whether it be in scholarship or in institution.

The real disappointment of the whole **Bulletin's** movement was that **SED** and teachers were unable to join together in a common structure which would change the accustomed perception of curriculum reform as a once and for all implementation of the official pronouncement. Ultimately the **CCE** did not establish either the means or the climate in which a new English could be developed. The point was not that the **Bulletins'** original project methodology was proving to be inadequate but that the **CSE-LDC** strategy was unable to deal with that inadequacy. During the early 1970s there was a scattering of significant individual discussions and modifications of the **Bulletin** ideas by - for example - William Jackson of Hamilton College of Education and Brian Boyd of St Cuthberts High School, Johnstone,<sup>(24)</sup> but these were left on the outside as idiosyncratic ventures while the **CCE** publications and **LDC** reports turned out to be simply straightforward unfoldings of the original project idea. The 'generic principles' proclaimed in **Bulletin No. 1** were left to stand unrevised, their validity unquestioned by research into their cognitive assumptions or by any sustained self-evaluation of work in progress.

In short, the **Bulletin** initiative failed to become a fully sustained curricular movement. Its initial radical energy expended itself on an obsessively detailed working out of its original hunch that 'relevance' plus 'project work' would add up to the motivation that would automatically transform the pupils' learning experience. Both **CCE** and **LDC** were prolific in their production of project exemplars but curriculum mass production was not the same as curriculum development. As a newly appointed **HMI**, Alistair Davidson was heavily involved at this time in the promotion of the new English and was thus able to observe - with mounting disquiet - the general tendency to respond to the **CCE's** exemplars as a ready made content rather than as a set of propositions concerning the nature of language development. As he saw it, of the two fundamental principles on which **Bulletin English** was built - that the

syllabus should no longer be fragmented but instead organized into project-style contexts and that the subject's work had to deal with concepts and issues which helped foster the personal development of pupils - it was the former only that evoked the response. His diary shows that in his first year as HMI he went round a wide range of schools to see what each was making of **Bulletin No. 1** and found that while there was a widespread adoption of the project as a format, there was also a failure to see it as more than a busy programme of class work. 'The important idea was to think of language as a behavioural response and to realise that the new project method was an attempt to provide meaningful contexts in order to stimulate that response. But this was just not happening. Their work might no longer be fragmented but it had no rigour of concept. In many cases it was mere copying of lists of non demanding facts out of gazetteers and, in the worst cases, it degenerated into mere scissors and paste activities...' (25)

What did seem to be happening, in fact, was that the Scottish teacher of English was exercising his professional instincts not through debate or experiment but by the diligent construction of highly detailed syllabuses along officially approved lines. Projects and themes were absorbed into rather than changed a tradition of epistemology which saw submission to fixed content and set procedure as constituting the secondary school subject.

#### **The Example of the Banffshire Report: a Facelift to Old Practices**

Of the multitude of schemes that Scotland's Local Department Central turned out, probably the one which achieved the greatest prominence was that of the Banffshire English Committee. Between 1976 and 1978 it brought out detailed classroom programmes under the collective title of **The Banffshire Report**<sup>(26)</sup>, these were publications that were not only widely adopted throughout the county but achieved some national attention, even to the extent of a favourable review in the England based **English in Education**.

The Report was the outcome of a sustained planning exercise in which some twelve English teachers from every secondary school in Banffshire were involved. More than that, the project was given something of an exemplary lustre since both the local College of Education and the

SED, in the person of Alistair Davidson HMI, were committed to its work. Its procedure was to review national reports with a view to converting them into the form of classroom action which seemed to this committee of working practitioners to be the most practicable. Argument and materials were produced, classroom tested and then offered to the wider audience of English teachers everywhere. In all this the aim was avowedly pragmatic: it was to look at the new but always against the background of existing practice and not to jettison the old in any doctrinal burst of progressivism - a 'policy of change where necessary and retention where valuable'.(27)

The work of this local group may therefore be taken as an officially endorsed attempt by a team of classroom teachers to show how the CCE's version of a reformed English could be effectively adopted so as to generate 'Suggestions for the Designing of Programmes and for the Structuring of a Session's Work'. These were prefaced by a set of 'General Principles' which willingly accepted that teachers had to change and change profoundly, that underlying all of the CCE's innovation was the desire 'to adjust the principles of English teaching in line with the central thinking of contemporary child psychology - through a move from a purely subject-centred approach to one which concentrates on the needs of the individual'.(28)

The Banffshire response to this centrally supplied nostrum was to argue for a liberal teaching programme based on 'active participation' and an abandonment of any 'tablets from the Mount' tradition. In this, the committee was happy to reiterate the cardinal **Bulletin's** proposals: oracy was to be awarded a prime position; literature should no longer be an historical study but rather 'a means to an end', that end being personal interest; language work was to be given an incidental nongrammatical treatment; all classwork had to be set in a meaningful context and, throughout; the guiding star was to be that of motivation and individual development.

It cannot be said that the documents really go on to fulfil these introductory aims. Their implementation priorities are clearly established by a division of topics which treats the

expressive aspects such as drama, group discussion and personal writing as 'minor' concerns compared to the 'major programmes' of close reading, project work and literature. The resulting syllabus continues to view English as a subject to be categorised into 'components' and 'programmes', each to be taken in measured turns rather than as the expressions of a unified experience. Even though the project does receive a substantial placing, it is to be slotted into the session as a discrete annual event, not become the means to achieve a continuing integration. The authors' attitude towards their professed commitment to motivation is revealed by the way in which creative writing is marginalised, assessment is confined to its traditional summative role and oral activity is left to take its incidental chance within the mass of reading and writing work.

Where the **Reports'** real English-teaching heart still lay is revealed by the importance accorded to 'close reading' and by what their classroom realisations of that activity reveals. To the familiar definition of it as an 'in-depth reading' is added the progressive stipulation that it must be within 'a meaningful context' and contain 'an element of Enrichment'. The given examples show, however, just how didactic it all still is. 'Enrichment' turns out to be an exercise in appreciative understanding towards an end which remains in the possession of the teacher. It is he who selects the text, identifies its meaning and orders its treatment. The immediate subject-matter may now be taken from what is judged to be the world of the young person's experience but the aim is to demonstrate expressive cogency and exemplary rhetoric - the old Classical aims applied to the new Romantic themes.

Just how thoroughly the teacher remained in control may be seen from the way in which childhood - the 'meaningful context' - is treated as a literary construct. The **Banffshire Reports** expost it as the product of the mature sensibility at play upon some youthful encounter so that meaning lies not so much in the described events themselves as in the 'awareness' that such describing may be made to generate. So we are invited to reconstruct Tom Sawyer's insights into the ironies of human nature while white-washing the fence, the infant Laurie Lee's encounter with the concepts of crime and punishment in that mythopoeic pulsating

Cotswold classroom of his, Timothy Winters helving his way into our well-shod sympathies to become an object for our comfortably distanced pity. For the **Banffshire Report** 'Life' and 'Enrichment' are a series of verbalised epiphanies whether gained at the poetically visited Adlestrop railway station or in the company of the Mongol Boy whose innocent delight in the world around him puts the rest of us to clumsy shame.

The **Reports** assume that it is the teacher's lone responsibility to conduct his pupils in whole class formation into the mysterious interior of the text. This she will do by playing the part of the master reader, who alone is able to guide the novice through the lexical undergrowth. The methodology is that of progressive questioning, a series of staged manoeuvres which lead towards the one true meaning. Thus William Golding's memories in 'Billy the Kid' of himself as a belligerent seven year old, whose belief in fighting as a form of rightful self-expression is not shared by those he picks upon, becomes a salutary lesson in self-realisation. The interpretative route is firmly marked out: 'Establish the context - Establish the narrative line - Establish the substance of the passage is Relationships and Self Knowledge': ('what does "Break" mean to him? - close examination of this'; when do things make him aware of opposition? - trace this right through; what is his final realisation?')(29)

The **Banffshire Reports** were put together out of a resolve to move the country's teachers towards a more individualised English, as advised by the CCE. In making this effort its authors had not looked far beyond the familiar academic boundaries. They had settled for a series of internal adjustments. They had allowed the **Bulletins** to lead them towards a new subject-matter and a different form of organization - personal experience in project packaging - but the teaching method was essentially unchanged, and with it the kind of learning possibilities that could be permitted. It is language and communication skills that 'the Committee yield to no-one in their belief' in placing 'first of the basic principles'. 'Personal growth', on the other hand must be earnestly trained rather than flourish free; this is a cultivation in which it is the good old-fashioned ways of teacher provided input which furnish the proper nutrients:

The Committee felt that, in some of the approaches put forward by advocates of individual and group methods, there was too much emphasis on personal creative production and "output" and too little on the vital and formative "input" of listening and reading.<sup>(30)</sup>

These are not the words of revolution. Indeed what this LDC has done is not to build anew but to assist the serving practitioner to find his way around a redecorated room. The result is a weighted compromise between **Bulletins** and textbooks, between input and output, skills and enrichment, between the major reading and literature programmes and the more peripheral dramatic, creative writing and group discussion embellishments. The new has become at the best a component or two in an English programme whose parts are kept in place by a curriculum that is ultimately shaped towards a more serious destiny: 'The Committee wishes to state at the outset what this document does not set out to do. It does not suggest courses for the academic pupils in S3/4 since, as most SCE teachers will agree, reasonably adequate provision has been made for them'.<sup>(31)</sup>

#### **A Refurbished Traditionalism?: The Achievement of the Bulletin Movement**

What then did the CCE and all its **Bulletins** achieve? There is no doubt that by 1977 - ten years after **Number 1** had hit the classroom - the typical English syllabus did look different. Work on social language forms had replaced Latinate grammar, literature texts had been thoroughly updated in favour of the relevance of contemporaneity and a measure of project activity was now affording some relief to the old fragmentary round of lit., lang. and interpretation. But these were modifications in content and presentation, not a transformation of the learning experience of the young people who continued to be submitted to that weekly teacher-given six period of English throughout their secondary school careers. W A Gatherer has stated that the real message of the **Bulletins** had been that 'pupils ought to be the source of their own personal development'.<sup>(32)</sup> It was a call to which teachers had responded with a dutiful but uncomprehending revisionism.

Most crucially there had been a failure to develop the potential that lay within the chosen project strategy for achieving a truly child-centred methodology. If it had been promoted by the CCE in order to give the pupils a stake in their own learning, then a practice which insisted on a squared off layout of yard by yard assignments, interspersed with a contrived emplacement of language practice, represented a denial, not a fulfilment of that claim. A didactically-motivated profession had shown itself to be unready to open up its curricular preserves to the flexible structures and negotiable treatments necessary to turn the project into a centre for true enquiry with genuine problems to investigate and with real language-making decisions to be shared. In a classroom filled up with pseudo-issues, thematic abstractions and communities which were all too imaginary, pedagogy had become more not less visible.

There had been something of a facelift but after a decade of *Bulletins* and LDCs, English teaching was still awaiting its true renewal. At heart the Scottish secondary school practitioner still found his faith in the academic creed in which he had been raised and established his own professional being. Belief in the subject as knowledge, in the teacher as sole authority and arbiter, in pedagogy as precept and practice continued to be a universal growth, strongly rooted, systemic. In retrospect W A Gatherer was forced to admit that a constructivist view of learning 'did not go very deep even in those of us who were leading it - at least not sufficiently so to make a reality of change'. The reformers' sincerity was not in doubt but the traditional procedures were proving to be difficult not simply to forsake but even to identify for what they were, so deep-seated were they. Gatherer himself can now, but only now, see that 'my preoccupation with linguistics simply substituted one orthodoxy for another', leading to a 'change in pedagogical practice rather than one of real substance'.<sup>(33)</sup>

These observations are confirmed by Alistair Davidson who also served as an HMI member of the first CCE.<sup>(34)</sup> Even among such a handpicked group, beyond Gatherer and one or two others such as W F O'Carroll with his driving enthusiasm, the reforming commitment was uncertain and easily distracted. Undeniably dedicated though they were to the welfare of their subject, most of Davidson's fellow members were, in his judgment, too busy anticipating the

later **Bulletins** to dwell on a working out of the implications contained within the pioneering insights of **English in the Early Stages**. Instinctively they were drawn to the preparation of those issues that were to deal with language study and with the upper school. They were not really interested in applying their intellectual energies to an articulation of the rationale for a new English and to exploring the cognitive processes on which its classroom realisation would depend. It was lit., lang., and the Highers which still commanded their deeper fidelity.

Overall, it is difficult to see the **Bulletin** movement as leading to anything more than a refurbished traditionalism, to the attainment in methodology of, at the best, an enlightened didacticism. Decades of bipartite organisation in the service of minority scholastic success had inculcated a rigid sense of precedence which still directed perceptions of the right ordering of things throughout the Scottish system, whether in the class or the committee room. It had engendered in both CCE and LDC an expectation of role which led the centre to act as director of teacher effort, to its handing out of proposals like so many assignments for the classroom teacher to work through. Sustained curricular development, and the openness to evaluative debate, to experience sharing and to experimentation on which it depended, was proving difficult to manage in an educational community that was so hierarchical in structure and paternalist in outlook.

In the end there is W A Gatherer's comment: 'The whole thrust was to change practice - but the whole movement was disappointingly short-lived, something that flared up only to die away'.<sup>(35)</sup> This sounds like a final verdict and for 1977 it probably was. But for the historian to accept it as permanent would be to show the same kind of naivety as to the subtle nature of curricular change, and to our uncertain capacity to manage it on a straight cause and effect basis within a short-term timetable, as the CCE reformers had done. By the late 1970s the new English seemed to have become simply another ingredient in the old academic mix. But within the apparently unyielding terrain sufficient forces had been released to lay down a bridgehead of reform. At work in schools scattered throughout Scotland a number of innovative teachers were now quickly pushing ahead with their own response to the **Bulletins'**

call for a personally experiential English. And, more generally, notions such as the 'child-centred' subject, 'growth', 'relevance' and 'thematic unity', though imperfectly grasped, had been introduced to Scottish teachers and were infiltrating their thinking ready to be mobilised in any future campaign. After the 1970s would come the 1980s.

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**PART 4 : 1977 - 1990**

**INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A COMMON PURPOSE**

**Central Certainties and Classroom Confusions**

In the spring of 1976 some forty Principal Teachers of English in the newly constituted Grampian Region came together in Aberdeen for the first of what was to be a series of annual in-service gatherings. In order to establish a strong foundation for their future work the inaugural conference theme was "A Grampian English Policy?"<sup>(1)</sup>

The plan was to listen to four representative Principal Teachers explain their own philosophies and then for the meeting to debate the consensus view which would carry the region's English teaching forward. The first two speakers were David Carter of Forres Academy and Bill Ettles from Buckie High School. Both showed an appropriate desire to locate the middle ground with Ettles holding up the **Banffshire Report** as a model example of how a group of working teachers could co-operate to blend the old and the new into a judiciously well balanced programme.

The case for a sensible pragmatism was, however, blown apart by the other two speakers, Jack Robertson of Cults Academy and John Roberts of Summerhill Academy. The former took up an unrepentantly backward-looking stance. For him all secondary English ought to take its character from the academic elite it was surely destined to serve: the discipline of linguistic exercises, the arduous mental training to be derived from grammatical analysis and the edification that could only be acquired from the classics were all necessary first to sift out and then to harden off the latter day lad o'pairs. Progressivist appeals to personal interest were a betrayal of the Scottish tradition.

In a contrast that proved to be dramatically bold, John Roberts stated his desire to speak 'for the ordinary council estate kid' because his was the plight which reminded us that the context in which 'English' had to be placed was social and political, not the gratuitously scholastic.

Against this reality both traditionalist and the so-called reformer were guilty of repressive authoritarianism - the first by a clear imposition of an alien culture, the latter through the more insidious usurpation of the child's own true voice in favour of the ventriloquism of creative writing, project reportage and guided thematic discoveries. A genuinely personal education should mean a liberationist English in which the classroom was opened up, to the point of dismantlement if necessary, so as to welcome in those experiences the pupils themselves were ready to bring to it and with which they should be permitted to negotiate their own curriculum. The argument was accompanied by tape recordings of free pupil discussion which demonstrated a vitality and a native wit that owed nothing to any teacher's tutelage - and everything to his absence from the scene.

The following discussion did nothing to remove the question mark from the Conference title. In a debate which one outside observer described as 'wild and whirling', the meeting displayed a 'market-fair variety'<sup>(2)</sup> of viewpoint and incomprehensions which exposed the hopes of those who had been seeking to invite colleagues to fashion a regional English through an orderly adaptation of the *Bulletins* as hopelessly naive. The professional splits which the Grampian Conference had ripped open went painfully deep. Beyond the dispute between those who favoured the new orthodoxies and those who felt resentfully uncomfortable within them, there had emerged a wider loss of faith in 'English' as a coherent, authoritative school subject: 'The subject, it was suggested, is requiring to be redefined and reaffirmed'.<sup>(3)</sup>

After ten years of *Bulletins*, a decade of CCE and CITE and LDCs, secondary school English seemed to have become in the retrospective comments of two Conference participants, 'an abject mess'; 'much mist and vapours... all a bit of a muddle'.<sup>(4)</sup> The response of another Conference delegate was that, 'Every English teacher in the Grampian Region has a moral and professional obligation to come off the fence and take up arms for or against Roberts ...'<sup>(5)</sup> However, it was not simply a matter of selecting which flag to follow. The divisions were running vertically as well as horizontally, between those who simply 'got on with the job'

and those who had sufficient will and awareness to look beneath the surface features of content, exams and classroom presentation to the deeper cognitive and social forces at work.

And here there was a real geological shift in motion. Within the subject itself, there was a growing realisation that the first reform age had not succeeded in revitalizing the subject or the processes of learning within it. Beyond, there were potentially explosive tremors emanating from the deschooling sociologists who were indicting schools as inherently coercive because they were agents of institutionalized power and vested corporate interests. These issues bore down especially hard on English since much of this case focused on language. The 1975 'Bullock Report', *A Language for Life*,<sup>(6)</sup> though commissioned by the Department of Education south of the border, was making an impact in the north, and had indeed been on the Grampian Conference agenda. For those who were prepared to read it and to think about it, there were arguments concerning the relationship between the pupil's own language and the learning process which asked disturbing questions of an English curriculum whose traditional aim had been to school the unruly personal tongue. All this at the time when in the latter 1970s, the post-war consensus, which had united British society and politicians in a belief that investment in education would naturally lead to national prosperity and the good life, was visibly breaking apart. With the Prime Minister James Callaghan inciting a 'Great Debate' on the efficacy of 'progressive' methodology over more traditional basic skills teaching, English teachers were becoming further exposed. Even more ominously, perhaps, the Government was announcing that education must expect to make its contribution to the public expenditure cuts that the ailing state of the British economy now demanded. In a warning that would become dispiritingly familiar over the next decade, teachers were told that the expected improvements in their performance would have to come from existing resources.<sup>(7)</sup>

For those who were striving to keep their balance on this shifting ground, the problem was not just one of mending fences or of marking out a course but of confronting, then comprehending, the sources of their instability. In 1976, at the Grampian Conference, there had been few

confident or even willing explorers: for some what had been opened up was a fearful abyss down which the subject itself might disappear. In these circumstances it was not surprising that many preferred to keep their heads well above ground level in order to get on with the sensible task of cultivating tidy young minds in plots of well laid out syllabus.

#### **Staff Development and Staff Involvement**

To a large extent this mixture of perplexity and defensive stagnation pointed up the failure of the Local Development Centre movement, either to work out curricular solutions, or to act as a unifying centre for study, research and information. A few years previously an HMI report on the progress of local centres in one area had made this appraisal:

'Over the period since its inception, the LDC has shown an increasing inability to promote the desired development. It has become a debating group covering the same ground over and over again, while attendance figures have fallen and interest flagged. The fatal weakness had been the unwillingness of the participants in this unbending debate to try out the new approaches in their own schools... It would be true to say that with a few notable exceptions the majority of teachers in the region remain unconvinced of the need for change and follow strictly traditional lines, laying considerable emphasis on formal preparation for national certificates. Where efforts have been made within the schools themselves to introduce the practices of the **Bulletins** these have tended to fail because of lack of detailed guidance by Principal Teachers, because teachers have not had the advantage of prior workshop experience or because key members of staff have been too closely thirled to outmoded methods.<sup>(8)</sup>

Within this condemnation there was a useful diagnosis. If the malaise underlying the curricular paralysis was an inability to perceive new ideas as having any personal applicability, the cause was not wholly pathological. Aversion to 'the new approaches' could not be dismissed as an unreasonable deviance while the national certificates remained in their unconstituted academic state. As long as Higher and Ordinary Grade English remained outside the **Bulletins** movement then so would a majority of the subject's teachers.

Indeed, what these teachers were interested in were results and they would always apply the methods that they saw as being appropriate to that challenge. If, by the 1970s, teachers remained unconvinced of the need for change it was because the reformers' ideas had not yet demonstrated their efficacy over the old secure, didactic ways. The CCE recommendations stood for a child-centred philosophy which in practical terms was as yet ill-defined: the associated project methods called for much shifting around of curricular furniture but had offered little extra comfort either in pupil motivation or in language mastery to compensate for the extra industry involved or the loss of teacher control which was threatened. What was now needed as an accompaniment to examination reform was the development of a demonstrably effective theory of individual pupil learning which would both explain the shortcomings of the old formal approach and yield a hard edged, workable methodology by which to improve on it.

The problem was that such an advance could only be made by way of detailed classroom experimentation and refinement - a matter that would require proprietorial involvement by the teachers themselves. Curriculum development meant staff development and the key here, given the hierarchical character of educational organisation in Scotland, was to enlist the support of the Principal Teachers as leaders of departmental teams that would be prepared to work together in the cause of self improvement. The necessary preliminary would be the institution of a more active and properly co-ordinated style of school-focused in-service, one that would be based on 'workshop experience' rather than the lecture, debating, paper producing format followed by Conferences and LDCs hitherto.

What could be done in this respect was being demonstrated, albeit on a necessarily small scale, by the developmental strategy that had been worked out by CITE. By 1973 it had become apparent to its outgoing Director Robert Millar that the LDC movement had 'run out of ideas and enthusiasm' and that CITE would therefore have to act as more than a mere entrepot for their efforts.<sup>(9)</sup> He proposed a directly interventionist policy based on workshops in which the CITE officers could carry their ideas and research out to various local groups. At this time

Millar was succeeded by Sydney Smyth, who was joined by Gordon Liddell as his Assistant. They describe the strategy they worked out as one which followed a coherent pattern of co-operation and support.<sup>(10)</sup> Typically ten or so Principal Teachers would be gathered together in order to work at a current issue such as the raising of the school leaving age or the slower learner. A day would be spent in talking over priorities and in articulating a programme of development; the PTs would then return to their own schools to lead their departments in devising materials according to the agreed principles; several weeks later there would be further meetings, experiences would be exchanged and evaluation sessions held. Eventually programmes would become sufficiently refined for them to be handed into CITE for a final editing. These were the procedures that produced much useful ROSLA material as well as the **Slower Learners Report**<sup>(11)</sup> in which general principles and practical examples were combined to a degree that was much more thoroughgoing than anything that had been achieved by the **Bulletins**. More significantly still, CITE had established a model for future curriculum development, one in which central theory and local practice were fused in a process of action research and mutual ownership. Above all it was now recognising that to change the practice you had to change the practitioner:

'The main idea was that you change people by thinking with them about their problems in their own situation. That way you alter their perceptions of the job and enable them to carry out their own evaluations and make their own alterations.... It was a system which trusted people to develop an insight into what was wanted and which gave them the ability to achieve change!<sup>(12)</sup>

What two individuals had been able to do from their small base in Edinburgh was however limited. For the development strategies which they had piloted to enter the mainstream of professional life, there would have to be a massive inflow of resources so that school-focused in-service could be provided in every locality. The problems were not, however, simply logistical. As Millar had acknowledged in his argument for a workshop approach, the national examination system would always act as a major counter-influence: the syllabus

content which the SCEEB demanded was a much more tangible force than the niceties of learning theory. And, in the larger sense, Higher and O'Grade English were part of an academic pattern of being which inculcated a psychology of authority and dependence that would now have to be broken. The SED had considerably loosened its hold here - as both Sydney Smyth and Gordon Liddell averred, CITE and the second CCE were entrusted to look after the subject's best interests: "We were left to make up our own remits, to establish our own priorities, work according to the philosophy we thought best.... We enjoyed freedom to a quite remarkable degree'.<sup>(13)</sup>

The profession at large, however, found such liberties hard to believe in and difficult to enjoy. To forsake a career-long habit of deference to a hardgoing, strictly litanised curriculum discipline went very much against the academic grain. Alistair Davidson<sup>(14)</sup> quite simply diagnoses 'guilt' as one of the major obstacles to reform for the Scottish teacher of this period - guilt at abandoning the rigours of scholarship for the indulgences of personal growth, guilt at emptying the syllabus of all that mind-stiffening rules-book content. For a professional conscience which had been brought up to see English as a body of knowledge which had to be imparted before pupil writing could begin, the basic Bulletin 1 thesis of experiential learning posed acute psychological difficulties.

When in 1974 Gordon Liddell travelled to Manchester to act as the CITE representative at a conference on 'Language in the Middle Years of Secondary Education'<sup>(15)</sup> he was stunned at what he heard from speakers like James Britton and Harold Rosen on the centrality of the child's own language to the learning process, a message radical enough 'to explode the smug cosiness most of us had felt from having numerous years of experience to our names'. But what was even more dramatic was the sense he had of entering a southern world in which such challenging minds could influence an apparently routine teacher's conference. Cause to reflect on the limitations of the Scottish system.

'How often do the central committees of our subject disciplines, having identified an important area requiring investigation, hive it off to a committee instead of exposing it to the critical experience of the practising teacher? We have the most highly qualified teachers in the world and we never let them cheep far less devise the means of harnessing their talent and energy for national policy'.

The major task in carrying forward the **Bulletins'** reforms during the next decade would be to make each one of the country's 3,000 secondary English teachers feel that he or she was at their formative centre. Before the 'revolution' which the CCE had promised could take place within the classroom wall, it would first have to enter the minds and spirit of a disinherited profession.

#### **Brunton and O'Grades: Part 2**

If, between 1965 and 1977, the Central Committee had become the most visible influence over English teaching, it was far from being the only, or even the most important one. Throughout that period schools were also working through the implications of the introduction of the O'Grade in 1962 and the recommendations of the **Brunton Report** that had come out the following year. The widely differing fates of these two measures further illuminates the problems that stood in the way of reform as the thirtieth anniversary of the Advisory Council's Secondary Report was reached.

The early hopes of the SED that a curriculum directed towards vocational and personal relevance could establish the long sought for bipartite alternative to the dominant academic course was reinforced by the 1964 government announcement that schools must start preparing for a raising of the school leaving age (ROSLA) to 16 in 1970. In 1966 the Department brought out its **Raising the School Leaving Age - Suggestions for Courses**.<sup>(16)</sup> In it the Department turned to the Brunton version of schooling as the secure basis not only for the extra year but as the means of giving a definitive experience to the whole non-certificate curriculum. At the same time the opportunity was taken to broaden the concept of a curriculum devoted to current

socio-economic needs: in addition to vocational matter, provision should be made, the document agreed, for the development of fruitful leisure interests, of the capacity to discuss moral issues and to make discriminating choices both as a consumer and as the citizen of a democratic community.

Meanwhile, however, the new O'Grade courses were growing apace. By 1974 over 70% of the entire fourth year cohort were engaged in a certificate course.<sup>(17)</sup> Inevitably such a greatly inflated figure included many for whom the examination and its syllabus were unsuitable. Rather than countenance vast numbers of 16 year olds leaving school with nothing to show for their commitment to the courses into which their teachers were hopefully and hopelessly thrusting them, the Examination Board in 1972 replaced the strict pass/fail system with descriptive bandings so that even those who were incapable of gaining more than a mere 30% mark could now receive their certificate, albeit with a lowly 'E' category stamped on it. If this expansion in the certificate supply debased the currency, in a market in which the O'Grade had now become the common tender employers were showing a willingness to accept any amount as preferable to none at all - or indeed to the professed experience of a Brunton type course, however relevant or practical that might be.

In the contest between Brunton and the O'Grade, the new comprehensives were voting with their examination papers. The Brunton Report's reliance on practical, vocational activity as a safeguard against the lure of certification only served to show up the continued inability of Scottish education to produce a credible alternative to the deep rooted academic model. This failure to tap the true sources of public motivation was bluntly captured at the very outset in an SEJ editorial of 1965: 'Have you a son or daughter who is a Brunton-type pupil? Of course not; no one has; it is always someone else's child who needs a Brunton-type course from a Brunton-type teacher'.<sup>(18)</sup>

This was a failure that was to shape the whole character of secondary education. For many, the curriculum became the certificate, the teachers to be judged as authorities in the

examination syllabus, their pupils as sets of attainments. The Centre for Educational Sociology's scrutiny of upper school pedagogy<sup>(19)</sup> showed that it was the didactic approaches that dominated - the exercises, dictated notes and practice in past papers - and that while pupils reckoned 'discussion' and 'creative activity' to be more enjoyable it was these impersonal rigours that they pronounced to be more helpful, to be the stuff of real secondary teaching.

It was, then, the format of national certification and its accompanying methods rather than Central Committee policy that had constructed the dominant version of secondary education during this period. By the early 1970s the comprehensive system was everywhere in place and the SED was able to carry out a study of its organisational effects on S1 and S2 provision, now that the selective entry requirements into secondary courses had been dropped.<sup>(20)</sup> In these years, the Department's Report found that the universal practice was for all pupils to take the same 'common course' and to do so for the most part in unstreamed classes. But behind this apparent liberalisation lay the final domination of the old conservative model. With entry into O'Grade courses seen as the target for S3, the first two years were treated not as an experience in themselves but as a period of curricular orientation. For the pupil this meant both a time of trial and a laying down of the academic basics without which the many weaker pupils would not be able later to undertake that all-important, all-defining O'Grade.

A speaker at the 1970 Examination Board conference was able to claim: 'The fact is that the O'Grade examination is the biggest single influence in Scottish education, more so even than the strap.'<sup>(21)</sup> It was not, after all, the noble vision of the Advisory Council's 1947 Report that had formed the direction and character of post war Scottish education but the expedient introduction of yet another examination. The O'Grade had, in fact, resolved the twin problems that had confronted the SED as it entered the post war era. Its popularity quickly reversed the trend towards premature leaving from the upper school but its universal acceptance was also deciding that all post primary education should be defined in the academic terms which had hitherto been reserved for the senior school. The ideal of equality of opportunity which the introduction of universal secondary schooling had represented had

come to be treated as the chance to compete in the traditional Scottish academic contest, not the right to be provided with an individual formative experience.

By the mid 1970s it had to be recognised that the Brunton initiative had failed and that the emergent victor over bipartism was a traditional examination directed course rather than any vision of secondary education as individualised development. In 1976 the SED produced a report that soberly examined the reasons. The inquest was focused on the fate of all those 'ROSLA' courses that had been developed at local level after its directive of ten years previously.<sup>(22)</sup> The Department conceded that up to a point their failure to take root could be explained in material and strategic terms: the pace had been too demanding, the resourcing inadequate, and, although exemplar courses had been developed, there had been an absence of in-service follow through. The real conclusion which it was forced to make was, however, that it had been the O'Grade's invocation of the familiar power of a set examination syllabus which had enabled it, first to invade, and then to occupy the entire secondary field. Against the opportunity to continue to operate within secure subject boundaries along clearly articulated intellectual lines, the concrete, open-ended, project-style ROSLA courses had offered teachers neither professional satisfaction nor public recognition. The conclusion might be bleak, but these were lessons that were to be carried into the next wave of development, a period that was to begin in 1977 with the publication of another pair of reports on the vexed issue of the secondary school curriculum.

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#### **PART 4 : 1977 - 1990**

### **CHAPTER 8 : FROM THE FOUNDATION UPWARDS - ENGLISH AND THE MUNN AND DUNNING REPORTS**

#### **National Certification for All: the Pressures for Reform**

By the mid 1970s the surge of innovation which the **Bulletins** had released was exhausting itself. The policy of encouragement by promulgation and exemplar, while the essential secondary school structures remained firmly in position, had achieved some useful advances but ultimately had been unable to do more than alleviate existing practice. Something much more radical would be required to move a profession which was conditioned to interpret its role as a continuing enactment of the academic values that were embodied in a timetable of separate academic subjects and shaped by the fixed pattern of Ordinary and Higher Grade.

Now, however, the necessity for reform was bearing down upon the very foundations of the curriculum as it was becoming clear that the mere liberalisation of traditional courses was not going to be sufficient to satisfy the new demands now being made upon secondary schools. The establishment of comprehensive education and the complementary raising of the school leaving age to 16 were subjecting the existing national assessment system to intolerable stress. Many thousands of late adolescent pupils were discovering that they had been forced to stay on at school to take courses which, in what they and their teachers considered to be a meaningful sense, did not actually exist since public recognition - and in the Scottish tradition that had always meant national certification - was still only being given to the narrowly academic examination syllabuses. These were proving to be totally unsuitable for the many who were now being herded into them willy-nilly.

If the existing certificate could no longer serve, then the Scottish answer had to be to seek out one that would. Indeed this native instinct was already leading some schools, most notably from Grampian and Lothian, to venture south to the Northern Region Examinations' Board in Newcastle in order to enter candidates into England's Certificate of Secondary Education, an

examination which had been introduced there in the 1960s for the large middle range of pupils considered not sufficiently academic for that country's long standing General Certificate. By the end of the decade over 70 Scottish schools were offering the CSE syllabus as an alternative to the O'Grade,<sup>(1)</sup> thus adding their practical testimony to a campaign for a reformed national certificate, which, indeed, the EIS had been leading since as far back as 1967.<sup>(2)</sup>

Accordingly, it was the Scottish Examination Board that in 1973 took the initiative by asking the Secretary of State to open up an enquiry into the assessment provision for senior pupils, with the result that he set up three very high level working parties to cover the whole area of secondary education in the 14 to 16 year group. In 1974 a committee under James Pack was invited to review matters relating to truancy and indiscipline while in the previous year the Secretary had appointed, first the 'Munn Committee' (under James Munn, headteacher of Cathkin High School) to enquire into matters of curriculum design and organization in co-operation with the Central Committee and then, the 'Dunning Committee' (led by Joseph Dunning of Napier College of Commerce and Technology, Edinburgh) to report with the Examination Board on assessment and certificate arrangements for the final two compulsory years of the secondary school. A complementary distribution of responsibility which ensured that any proposal for syllabus reform had to be tied to the nationally controlled examination system, which would thus continue to have the decisive influence.

The concerted publications came out in the late summer of 1977, thirty years after the Advisory Council's **Secondary Report** had made its much lauded but ultimately futile appearance. Of the three, it was **Pack**<sup>(3)</sup> which sounded out the most audible echoes in that it consistently argued for a curriculum that would be less oppressed by the culture of examination success and for a secondary schooling that would be a 'rounded activity' rather than a 'mere aggregation of subjects'. Although some of the causes of pupil disaffection might be social, the Committee 'were in no doubt that a clear relationship exists between the provision for a pupil and his attitude to school'. The profession must now bend its efforts towards the creation of a new,

humane school ethos, one that could be willingly participated in by all pupils, confident that there was a home within it for all talents and every need, however emotional or personal.

But because it argued for attitudinal rather than structural change it was also the fate of the **Pack Report** to be commended and then politely shelved. Its two brother reports fared quite differently. When they came out they read in such an interdependent fashion that they automatically became 'Munn-and-Dunning',<sup>(4)</sup> a curriculum and assessment double act that clearly expressed the centrist predilection for a firm national framework by which to articulate - and keep under control - any developing academic-social concerns. Thus, they proposed that courses be constructed along firm subject lines to be offered on a core plus options basis and be so aggregated as to achieve a balanced coverage of all of the essential 'forms' of knowledge. There were to be three syllabus levels - 'Credit', 'General', and 'Foundation' - to provide for the differentiation of ability across the whole cohort, and each one was to be nationally tested and officially certificated. In addition to external examination there would be a measure - minority - of internal assessment as framed by the national guidelines that a joint CCC/SEB working party would now draw up for each subject.

#### **The Munn and Dunning Compromise: Educational Ideals against Cultural Realities**

The bald outline read decisively enough but did in fact rest upon a number of ambiguities and tensions which complicated the text of the Reports in a way that would later serve to confuse those who attempted to consult them for detailed guidance as to the fulfilment of their broad aims. There was, in particular, a brittle interplay between the radicalism of the two committees' ambitions and their desire to achieve a practical programme that would be acceptable to a profession already at work within a received Scottish context of curricular values and institutionalised formats.

Dunning sounds a number of practical retreats from its generally forward looking argument that assessment should be made into a positive force able to contribute to the individual learning process of all pupils. Although it was proposed that it should cover the full range of

school experience including the affective, practical and informal as well as cognitive aspects, only the latter, it decided, could be used to supply the evidence to be entered on the certificate; the other more personal qualities should be confined to an in-house profile. There should be an element of internal assessment but, it was recommended, only up to 25% of the total, the larger proportion to be serviced through the external examination. And while the benefits of National Certification should now be extended to all pupils they were to be segregated into the three quite distinct levels of Credit/General/Foundation, thus leaving the last category with an 'award' that, in the comment of one critic, would be about as useful as a leper bell around the neck.<sup>(5)</sup> Thus liberal argument merged into practical arrangements which left the way open to a recidivist interpretation of the system as a divisive arrangement, bi- only becoming a more sophisticated tri-partitism. Assessment, real assessment, certificate assessment, could remain as a national sorting and labelling facility.

Munn also accomplished a text that could be read from left or from right. Its opening paragraph announced - in the terms of 30 years previously - that it was to address the longstanding post war problem of providing a meaningful secondary education for all, and that such a concept must be founded on the whole person. In its survey of the current school scene, the Committee saw a static curriculum, criss-crossed by fixed subject boundaries and dominated by the flags of national certification.

Its answer was to redraw the map in accordance with the more natural boundaries that could be plotted by exploring the fundamental issue of what made up a proper educational environment. This was to be arrived at by first examining the most elemental 'claims' which could be made upon the curriculum and by recognising that these would be as much psychological and social as cognitive. From this threefold approach emerge the four 'essential aims' - the pursuit of knowledge, the practice of skills, affective development, the meeting of social demands. These are to be cultivated by being implanted in the eight 'modes of study', which are the epistemological forces that will underlie any particular arrangement of topic that may appear on the timetable. In this way English is to be thought of as 'linguistic and literary study',

drama, music and art as 'the creative arts' and so on. Although constituting 'distinctive ways of knowing' the modes are not separate but are aspects of a whole education: thus the development of linguistic skills is not to be the preserve of English teachers alone but 'must remain a responsibility of the whole school'. Similarly 'social studies' is a matter of 'understanding key aspects of life 'in contemporary society', not of pursuing discrete history, geography or modern studies syllabuses.

The thrust of this argument is towards an experiential, multi-disciplinary curriculum. However, at the very point at which the Report turns rationale into programme, it decided to step aside from its own unfolding logic. Its proposal was for a timetable which does contain a number of elective areas for each pupil ('options') but which are quite dominated by the compulsory 'core' that is to consist of representatives of the modes that now surface under the familiar names of 'history', 'geography', 'art', 'biology', 'English'. No clear justification is offered for this equation which thus happily repatriates the secondary teacher into his own subject state. After all, if the mode really does have the generic power Munn claims for it then several such 'ways of knowing' could be experienced through one subject or, conversely, subjects could come together in order to contribute their resources to the pursuit of one mode. Thus English could include 'social' and 'aesthetic' as well as the 'linguistic' or join with history and modern studies in an exploration of contemporary social issues. The Report, however, drew back from dissolving the old structures and opted instead for a timetable drawn in the solid familiar colours.

The explanation for this circuitousness was to be found in the authors' own recognition that the basic unit of timetable currency was the subject, that teachers found it a 'congenial and familiar' coinage. One leading member of the Munn Committee, Gordon Kirk, in his documentary account of its work, conceded the strategic importance of transacting its arguments in terms that Scotland's teachers, who inhabited a country given to 'academic tradition rather than radical solutions, would trust. The Munn Report had after all been

charged with the task of devising a workable solution; its members had had to undertake 'a protracted exercise in consensus-seeking'.<sup>(6)</sup>

To some extent the adherence, by the authors of these twin Reports, to the academic subject was, indeed, the consequence of a realistic appraisal of the possibilities for action available to them in the situation of the Scottish secondary school. Such conservatism was also evidence of the power of that situation over their own thinking. The educationists who served on the Committee were fully aware of current indictments against existing schooling as a rigidly constructed incarceration of personal experience. They declared themselves to be anxious to break 'the tyranny of subjects' that had been configurated in the previous century and which by now had become so institutionalized as to be self-perpetuating. However, in their election of a curricular theory by which to direct their rebuilding, this body of Scottish teachers and lecturers made a choice which was as much cultural as educational. They turned to the epistemology closest to the rationalist temper, not that of Dewey or Rousseau but of Professors Hirst and Peters of Cambridge and London Universities who argued that knowledge should be viewed as a set of distinctive disciplines that had acquired their current identities through a process of historical refinement.<sup>(7)</sup> So as 'rationale', Munn was able to argue for schooling as a series of intellectual challenges in which even aesthetic and social experiences are founded in the cognitive 'understanding' that is embodied in discrete subjects.

An instinct for academic reification runs through the Reports' thinking: thus 'education for life' becomes 'ways of knowing' becomes 'forms of knowledge' becomes 'geography', 'history', English and the rest. Similarly the ideal of the rounded education is equated with 'balance', which is then used as a metaphorical device by which wholeness of curricular experience is to be arrived at through a judicious redistribution of the existing entities. Indeed the thinking of Munn displays a family likeness to the academic mentality of the traditional curriculum. There is the same scholastic preference for step by step formulation: as 'claims' are analyzed successively into 'aims', 'modes', 'forms' and 'subjects', the whole is neatly atomised into a modernised grammar of learning.

Such self-fulfilling rationalisation meant that by itself **The Munn Report** was unlikely to revitalise the traditional curriculum. Its policy was to take the existing subject forms on trust and to assume that dispersal by timetable adjustment would create sufficient curricular variety as to constitute 'balance for all'. What Munn did not do was to look within to the underlying factors that determine motivation and learning. The eight modes became, instead, an elaborately distracting superstructure whose effective construction would depend upon a great deal of attention being given to the way in which they could be refounded in the individual learning experience. If, for instance, it had shown an interest in the recent research on the relationship between language and learning across the whole curriculum then Munn might have encouraged English teachers to explore the sources of power within their own inherited subject and thus to tackle the longstanding problem of the working out of a methodology which would make its familiar ingredients of composition, interpretation, language work and literature a meaningful experience for all secondary age pupils. Instead it was content to use the word 'Study' as an upper-case way of describing classroom activity as in 'Linguistic and Literary Study' - a term which implies that there is a content to be objectively mastered and examined, that English is still a body of information rather than a flow of experience.

#### **A Subject in Need of Redefinition: Rich Complexities, Classroom Practicalities**

Because of the categorical level at which Munn defined the curriculum, the Report did little to assist the English specialist to clarify his own thinking concerning the nature and teaching of his subject. Just how necessary it was to do this may be seen from the CCE's submission to the Munn Committee.<sup>(8)</sup> In some respects it reads as a model summing up of where the subject stood in the mid 1970s. Its authors are knowledgeable about the latest psycholinguistic developments, are alert to the range of activity implied by the notion of language development and sensitive to the delicate inter-relationships of pupil and subject necessary for its learning. All this makes for a thrillingly committed statement: English is 'unique', it has 'special significance', is of 'central importance', 'transcends the limitations of categories'. To the

fellow enthusiast this reads as the invocation of a shared faith - but to the many others there is little in the way of workable specification. Its grand claims are supported by a number of assertions only: the subject represents a fusion of the intellectual and the emotional; it carries both social and personal power; English is all inclusive in that it facilitates powers of communication; it cultivates personal growth, offers socialisation.

The CCE's pleading for English becomes a journey into obscurantism, a celebration of epistemological mysteries sustained by an incantation of terms such as 'experience', 'individuality' and 'growth' that are unaccompanied by any precise definition. Indeed the document quite clearly distrusts precise formulations: Bloom's aims and objectives schemes, the domains of Phenix, the attempt by Hirst to give explicit placings within the curriculum, are each of them dismissed as ways of talking about English because they are too gross to account for the richness and subtlety of either the individual pupil or her native language. Although it is conceded that other subjects might share these aspirations, and that to some extent linguistic issues pervade the whole curriculum, the CCE argues that its subject treats them in a 'specially alert' fashion. Its consequent warning that over-hasty co-operation with other areas of the curriculum might lead to restrictions upon the English teachers' 'special understanding of the nature of language' reads as a preciously elevated form of territorial self-preservation.

The Central Committee's submission is a manifesto not a programme. Between its rhetoric and its implementation there would have to be built a whole series of clarifications. What can the role of the teacher specialist be in a subject devoted to personal experience? How can any coherent sequence of activity be established when it has to remain so open to the variety of individual need? Where should the balance lie between independent choice and disciplined activity in order to achieve socialisation? What is the relationship of communication skills to imaginative expressiveness? Can teacher direction continue to play a role in a syllabus that aspires to yield 'growth'? And is all 'growth' of value, is each and every pupil 'experience' to be cherished?

Munn and Dunning had done little to illuminate the questions of conceptualisation and practice which must necessarily succeed the CCE's appeal to rich complexity. In many ways, however, their lack of interest in the matter of pupil motivation and learning processes represented an opportunity for the subject's reforming practitioners. The EIS in its response<sup>(9)</sup> was quite clear that these were incomplete reports, that the real work would only be done when the aims and objectives, the guidelines and the assessment criteria which they had proposed would be articulated into classroom programmes.

#### **The Feasibility Programme: Classroom Trials under Departmental Monitorship**

To a vigilant EIS there was no doubt as to who would now have to carry out these tasks: 'Teachers are left to do this for themselves.... The success or failure of the Munn Committee's efforts will depend entirely on the quality of the courses and syllabuses which teachers must now organise and write'.<sup>(10)</sup> But this represented a profound misreading of the situation for this time the SED had no intention of either leaving or allowing 'teachers to do this for themselves'. Unlike the CCC inspired reforms of the 1960s the two Reports were the verdicts of a national court of enquiry, not the unilateral proposals of a self-motivated quango. As such the whole Munn and Dunning machinery belonged to the older paternalistic traditions in that its functioning was an expression of central power: the establishment of the twin national commissions, the making of representations and the accumulation of evidence, the procedure of Enquiry, Report and Pronouncement, had shaped itself into a characteristically Scottish ritual choreographed so as to culminate in the climactic declaration by the Secretary of State as advised by his Education Department.

On this occasion that advice was founded on the disappointing experiences of the Raising of the School Leaving Age ventures of the early part of the decade. Then the loosening of control in favour of local authority development had yielded fitful, almost invisible results, the new courses spluttering out as they were smothered by the all-enveloping blanket of existing academic practice. The Department would not be making that particular misjudgment again.

The Secretary of State delayed public utterance on Munn and Dunning till the spring of 1980,<sup>(11)</sup> a full thirty months after their original publication. Even at this stage what he announced was not a straight acceptance but a 'development programme' which was designed both to translate the generalities of the Reports into firm practice and to test their feasibility in the classroom. Initially, the experiment was to be confined to three central subjects - English, mathematics and science - focused on Dunning's 'Foundation' level only. As this represented, roughly speaking, the 30% of the year group who were not sitting the O'Grade, this was a selection which sustained the Departments' postwar preoccupation with the establishment of a clearly structured alternative course for the nonacademic. Further evidence of the SED's desire to proceed by a careful empiricism was demonstrated by its accompanying announcement of an extensive research programme into those new teaching and assessment ideas implicated by the Reports, such as criterion-referencing, formative assessment and oracy. For English there were to be set up three such projects - in reading strategies (through Aberdeen College of Education), basic literacy skills (Stirling University) and competence in spoken English (Edinburgh University).

Behind the staged pronouncement, the Department had already been at work. Its management of the Munn and Dunning programme had already been secured by the deployment of its Inspectors as leaders of a small and carefully selected number of schools - identified as suitable examples of good practice through successful Inspections - in related action research. The SED's privileged anticipation of the Government's decision of 1980 had enabled its officers to grasp a tight control over the course of Munn and Dunning events. Their conduct during the two preceding and invisible school years had set a pattern of canny directorship in which the circle of participants was only gradually widened and information regarding progress only released in periodic measures.

The SED was showing that on this crucial occasion of two national reports it was not ready to share the ownership of their implementation with the CCC or the Colleges of Education. Still

less was it willing to throw open the matter of curriculum development to the vagaries of local working groups or the frailties of regional staff development policies. Nor was it now prepared to regard the drawing up of exemplars by select committees as a satisfactory means of realising curricular proposals. Its hard won experience of the previous decade had led it to favour classroom investigation which the Department itself would carefully monitor.

Initiated in 1978/79, the English programme under HMIs Quentin Cramb and James Alison quickly settled into a school-based exercise that was designed to build up empirically an appropriate Foundation level curriculum and a matching system of assessment for national certification - this became known as 'The Extended Feasibility Study' (EFS). Alison has subsequently explained the SED's tactical reasoning:

'It was SED policy, drawn from hard won experience, that the development process should be deliberate and gradual: it was to be conducted so as to foster participation; it was to proceed gradually so that teachers would not feel overwhelmed; the proposals were to be based on observation of good practice - but not to go beyond what might reasonably be expected of the majority of teachers'.<sup>(12)</sup>

#### **The Subject Guidelines: Structure and Experience**

The first task was to observe the work of the twelve 'pilot' schools for English (later expanded to 21) in order to articulate the principles and practices on which the Guidelines should be based. A first draft of this document was ready for circulation in the summer of 1979 so that 1979/80 could be used as a trial period during which time the schools could judge the feasibility of syllabus construction based on these emergent Guidelines. Over the next two sessions, work on assessment was added in, the whole of what came to be termed the 'First Line' development not being wound up till the Spring of 1982 by which time a whole cohort of fourteen into sixteen year olds had passed through the two years of the prototype Foundation course years, including a terminal examination. During all this time the two HMIs had maintained a close working contact with the pilot schools and also hosted periodic seminar gatherings at which the

principal teachers could discuss issues, exchange experiences and address specific problems such as internal assessment or syllabus construction, often being assisted in these activities by a visiting specialist speaker.

These were the processes which, after five draftings, resulted in the definitive **English Guidelines of February 1981.**<sup>(13)</sup> This document fulfilled the Munn and Dunning requirement that each subject should have its own national syllabus and that this should be framed in sufficient detail to give teachers authoritative advice on the design, delivery and assessment of their Foundation level courses. The English that its HMI authors postulate, after due consultation with the twenty-one pilot school departments, emerges as a complex of skills, processes and concepts, not as a fixed body of content. These comprise a network of activities that cover a balanced range of language experiences which, though personal in nature, are best developed through a structured approach both with regard to syllabus and the interactive functioning of its methodology. A paragraph on each of these characteristics now follows.

**Range and balance:** the effective course is that which treats a representative sample of the many various purposes for which we use language. This inclusiveness can be described as a trinity of aims - 'communication', 'social growth', 'personal enrichment'. Or it can be accounted for in terms of the four essential modes of usage - talking, listening, writing, reading. It is important, however, to maintain a proper balance: this means that oral activity now has to be given an amount of attention equal to that traditionally accorded to literacy. Amidst this equitability, a special case must be made out for literature since the rich creativity of its language and the humane concerns of its subject matter should always ensure that it occupies a central place in any secondary English course.

**Personal:** the pupils will bring to the course a level of language functioning that has been acquired through the circumstances of their own living. They will also be at various stages of development and in engagement with a number of individual interests. Linguistic

competence will continue to grow in the context of personal experiences. The course should therefore be sequenced into 'units' in which its work is organized round some relevant theme or topic such as 'Growing Up', 'Our Community', 'Winter'.

**Structure:** nevertheless it must be recognized that language skills are not auto-generative but require conscious cultivation for their sure development. The **Guidelines** demand that teachers arrange their syllabuses into a series of tasks each one of which carries a real communicative or expressive outcome. Thus, although there is to be no prescribed content, course design will be controlled by being matched against checklists of language purposes: we write in order 'to record facts, ideas, thoughts for someone else's use', we talk 'to explain and demonstrate', listen 'to pick up clues, hints, straws in the wind' and so on through some forty suggested usages. These are the activities which will ensure that pupils will provide a controlled output of evidence of performance so that certification can be made to depend upon a specified 'folio' sample of course work as well as a terminal examination. In both instances assessment will be by criterion-referencing. Lastly, a system of individual school syllabus moderation is to be introduced, with teams of moderators paying an annual visit to ensure that the **Guidelines'** specifications are indeed being met both in terms of the 'Syllabus Notes' and the practice within the units of work.

**Interactive Methodology:** it is the tension between personal interest and structured situation which defines the methodology of Foundation English. In their efforts to meet the expressive challenge implied by such 'language encounters' an opportunity for the formative assessment of pupils' work is set up. Teacher and charge can therefore join together in a self-aware, progressive attempt to match words to remit, to refine comprehension, to achieve the final satisfactory draft.

#### **The New English: Language Purposes, Linguistic Categories**

The culmination of the Feasibility Study was a three day gathering at North Berwick in March 1982 at which representatives from the twenty-one trial schools met to review the effectiveness

of the Foundation programme. The internal report which they produced for the SED was a positive one.<sup>(14)</sup> The Guidelines they agreed, had proved to be a usable document, valuable as a means of setting learning targets and of establishing varied, purposeful programmes. Nor had the attempt to set up a nationally common course proved to be unduly prescriptive: within the framework of linguistic usages and assessment outcomes, individual teachers had been able to generate an impressive wealth of materials and unit topics. Indeed their testimony was that the Guidelines were acting as a formative influence on their own thinking, not an imposition: their report refers to an 'inductive' method of course design in which school departments felt free to seek out activity to suit their own pupils but could turn to the checklists and the criteria in order to shape their ideas and to assist in their more precise formulation. Above all, the EFS had passed the crucial test of raising pupil motivation and of engaging their productive interest: 'One matter can be reported without equivocation - the pupils' work produced for the assessment trial was of a quality few people associated with the EFS had anticipated, even in optimistic moments.'

These benefits were felt to outweigh the difficulties which were also listed in the report. There had to be a proper training programme for the moderators; school management must see the urgency of granting time for departmental planning; local authorities ought to supply the necessary resources, especially audio machines and photocopying. Appropriate techniques had yet to be worked out for the evaluation of talk and listening, while there was a need to refine the criterion-referencing system as well as to develop formative assessment approaches across all four language modes, perhaps on the drafting model that was already available in writing.

This tidy list of logistical and methodological problems, however, disguised the fact that what English teachers were being asked to come to terms with was not a fresh set of procedures but a completely new way of thinking about their subject. This becomes clear if we examine the discussion papers which were produced during the EFS as its members confronted, one by one, the key decisions concerning design, pedagogy, assessment. In November 1979, for example,

the pilot schools came to address the issue of internal assessment. The deliberations which led to the decision to opt for folio collections evaluated through criterion-referencing were informed by a working paper that had been produced by HMI Alison.<sup>(15)</sup>

It is a document which is not content to set out a range of possible mechanisms but instead strenuously argues from first principles. Its intention is to grapple with the essential problem that is announced in the opening paragraph: 'Assessment in English is fundamentally a subjective process: at its best it means judging quality of performance of learning tasks in the light of understood criteria.' There then follows a review of a range of applications - diagnostic, monitorial, summative - before an attempt is made to outline a scheme based on formative assessment. Various implications are then pursued: the need to establish agreed statements of learning objectives, the use of observation schedules, the derivation of summative grades from course work evidence, methods of standardisation and so on.

The paper runs to some 26 pages as a large number of possible models are considered and then made to apply to each of reading, writing, listening, talk. It is impressively thoroughgoing in its attention both to the detail of its own argument and in its search for well defined assessment procedures. What holds it together is its concern for language, but not as an object of study so much as a set of vital functions. Alison is inviting his teacher readership to view the four modes as a web matrix of cognitive purposes, as an individual's means of shaping understanding with his fellow humans. This tracing out of the various verbal operations which articulate our communal existences produces a long descriptive list of activity, but what is being defined here is beyond mere content. What really matters are the connections among the many parts and the kind of purposeful engagements the teacher can help the pupil to achieve within them. If 'English' really is to help pupils make sense of their lives in this way, there will therefore have to be a shared recognition of assessment as a dynamically formative experience, of syllabus activity as a number of progressive interactions.

Such rigorously detailed argument does, however, present its temptations. For the teacher of Foundation English it would be easy to perceive the lists of subcategories by which Alison traces out the linguistic inter-relationships as a basket of academic produce rather than as the nodal points by which to regulate a continuous current of formative process. It might be all too easy to work through its sets of purposes as items to be accumulated, to think of 'the talk' and not talking, of reading as the incrementation of 'comprehension' skills, of writing 'as the report', 'the letter' and 'the personal account' - objects of training and adjudication all of them. Even those pilot school teachers who had been involved in the *Guidelines*' thinking for upward of three years had to admit at North Berwick: 'The movement... from summative, norm-referenced thinking... is for many teachers the greatest shift the guidelines are attempting to engineer'.

As Alison's 1979 paper acknowledged, he and his HMI colleague Quentin Cramb were attempting to introduce the thinking of authorities such as Andrew Wilkinson, Andrew Stibbs, Mike Torbe and Eric Lunzer into the Scottish consciousness, a breed of university educationists who were researching into linguistic and cognitive operations, not *Paradise Lost* and Middle English syntax. They represented a markedly different professional background to the one that the secondary teacher possessed of his degree in English Literature and Language was accustomed to set himself against. If the new syllabus map with its taxonomies and its tabular outcomes did bear a surface resemblance to that older categorically segmented terrain, the differences were nevertheless profound. The traditional academic curriculum stood as a piece of classical architecture, its timetable a set of blocks to be methodically placed into their allotted position. Foundation English, in contrast, was to be more a matter of systems analysis, a technocratic diagram rather than a scholars' tome. Its listings were really specifications from which could be designed the curricular circuit board by which to operate an infinite number of learning programs.

### **The Example of 'Growing Up': Innovation and the Academic Habit**

The extent to which the English teacher of the early 1980s could and could not break free from old academic habits in order to respond to the dynamic properties of the new model may be seen in the work of the early pilot schools. Chief among them was Our Lady's High School, Motherwell, which produced exemplar units and Syllabus Notes of a quality that led to its Head of Department, Jim Duffin, being frequently invited to address wider audiences as a leading pioneer of Foundation English.

One of the specimen units produced by this school at this time is 'Growing Up' for Secondary 3.<sup>(16)</sup> The theme of the cover title is treated through a medley of media and verbal experience - there are short stories such as Frank O'Connor's 'My Oedipus Complex', a radio play, newspaper articles, a pop song (the Beatles), the poetry of Liz Lochhead and Seamus Heaney. Their presentation is in an illustrated booklet embellished with cartoons and action drawings. Each of the texts is placed at the head of a sequence of interconnected activity which, typically, conducts the class through each of the four language modes towards some clearcut assignment. After working through this unit, the pupils will have produced an interview on tape, have argued a case in writing ('should mothers stay at home and look after the family?'), have acted out a courtship scene, recounted personal anecdotes, compiled a newspaper report on a football match, made dummy telephone calls to the police, debated their own proper bedtime and composed a poem about leaving home.

All this bustle is evidence of both what the early days of Foundation English had achieved by way of change and the limits that the schools' interpretation of the Guidelines was imposing upon that progress. Variety and balance have indeed been displayed and the linguistic purposes been well frequented (writing to do a bit of this, talk a bit of that), but running through it all is the familiar pre-occupation with covering the syllabus rather than creating experience. The unit as a whole reads as a co-ordinated assemblage of text-book extracts, updated with supplementary media pieces; which the class work through. Within its covers there is no invitation to the pupil to negotiate a personal interpretation or to define an

individual approach. Nor is there any opportunity to open up the topic to address the specific circumstances of their own Motherwell lives.

The checklists and the criteria sets have become content, not the sketching out of a network of linguistic and experiential relationships. The various texts on *Growing Up* are but the golden hooks upon which to hang still life pictures composed by numbers drawn from Appendix 2 of the **Guidelines**. Thus the freshness and contemporaneity of the Beatles' 'She's Leaving Home' introduces nine interpretation exercise questions ('reading to select information', 'to gain an overall impression', 'to evaluate a writer's assumptions') that lead into a medley of usefully categorical writing tasks (a letter, a short play, a conversation and a poem) before, finally, the designated outcome of a telephone call to report on a missing person is reached - more an opportunistic piece of practice in an everyday skill than a natural conclusion.

In making this critique it is important to understand that Our Lady's High School syllabus was an early attempt to move the curriculum on towards a more active and personally meaningful experience and was a journey that was being made from a solidly academic starting point. If the final character of its exemplar unit is such as to betray these origins, the advances were still considerable. The central role allowed to discussion, the scope given for collaborative work, the regular inclusion of talking points, of authentic materials and of thematically interesting material all make 'Growing Up' a marked improvement upon the batteries of stimulated reading and writing tasks that had marked the **Bulletin** style projects, still more the decontextualised labours of **Standard English**. Its mixture of the enterprisingly personal and the scholastic were very much the product of a pilot scheme, an example of development in progress. It was also an attempt to make teaching sense of **Guidelines** which were themselves much more forthcomingly detailed as to course activities than they were on methodological advice.

Their favoured interactional pedagogy is adopted by the OLHS 'English Syllabus Notes'<sup>(17)</sup> but this is as yet held at a level of understanding which perceives it to be a series of teacher

controlled movements between the two fixed points of the teacher chosen text and the teacher selected outcome. The Notes define 'Interaction' as 'the process by which the teacher offers an experience, literary or otherwise, to his class, observes the reaction of the class and responds to it sensitively by adjusting his approach, or his aims, or both, to suit the needs of the pupils in front of him'. The subsequent gloss reveals this to be a liberalisation of the didactic status quo, a matter of presentation, editing and of marking out the fixed route into pupil-sized paces: 'At the discussion stage, we observe, that they are finding it more difficult to grasp the salient points of the theme than we had anticipated. We decide, therefore, to adjust our questioning technique, adopting a more gradual approach and allowing more time for anecdote and illustration.'

The Guidelines had promised a course which would achieve its version of 'personal and social growth' through a teaching that could offer the pupil a meaningful, enlivening but structured learning experience. It was to be a matter of teacher and taught coming together in a process of 'conscious cultivation'. What 'Growing Up' and its accompanying Syllabus Notes revealed was that neither the range of strategies nor the underlying understanding of the 'interactive' approach was sufficiently advanced to prevent the school from falling back on an academic model. Whole-hearted though its attempt was to modify inherited practice it was not yet able to offer more than a personalised didacticism, guided by a paternalistic desire to direct and to shape.

On the whole, however, the pilot schools like Our Lady's High had responded positively and resourcefully to the Guidelines' requirement that they submit their English work to a more systematic design. The result was a more sensitive attention to materials and their thematic import, a more carefully balanced and inclusive range of treatments that were enlivened by the search for interesting activity, especially in the hitherto neglected area of talk and discussion. If an effectively formative pedagogy yet remained to be erected, at least the Foundations were now in place.

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## PART 4 : 1977 - 1980

### CHAPTER 9 : THE SED AND THE LIBERAL USES OF POWER

#### **The HMIs' 1978 Starter Paper: Reform through the Civilised lever of Assessment**

Between 1977 and 1982 the Extended Feasibility Study produced a range of promising ideas and materials upon which to base the expanding reform of the secondary English syllabus. These five years also offered a demonstration of how the historically established power of the SED could prompt change at school level. The kind of Foundation English materials that Our Lady's High School, Motherwell was producing by the early 1980s were the issue of a union between teacher and Department that was robustly patriarchal. It was the right of its Inspectors to enter the classroom and to monitor the progress therein which was crucial to the delivery of the new English. Supporting agencies such as the SED, the CCE, the Advisory services, the Colleges of Education, were only allotted a deferred and restricted part within the SED scheme of curricular things.

Described in such abrupt terms, the centrally directed EFS may appear to have been a starkly authoritarian exercise. A fuller scrutiny of the origins of the Foundation course, and in particular, an awareness of the aspirations for it held by those officials within the SED charged with its husbandry does, however, reveal a much more complex and salutary story. 'Salutary' because what is thus demonstrated is how, in a tightly centrist system, possessed by a tradition of hierarchical deference and a deeply embedded professional conservatism, the adoption of progressive teaching would best be secured by insisting upon it as a required policy, made so by the will of the state department to use its authority in its favour.

From the very outset, the SED acted decisively. Within months of Munn and Dunning, it had elicited from its specialist subject Inspectors a set of outline proposals which effectively laid down the guiding principles for the whole of the subsequent Foundation development. In a thoroughgoing submission,<sup>(1)</sup> HMIs Alison, Cramb and Steele investigated the implications

for English; their starter paper articulated the central goals of the subject, proposed an aims and objectives model for the national guidelines, sketched out a scheme of internal assessment and evaluated the readiness of the profession for such developments. The comprehensiveness of its grasp of the essential questions and the strenuousness of its argument imparted to this document an authoritative character which made it an almost irresistible presence within all future discussion of the subject's **Munn and Dunning** destiny. Certainly almost all of the most crucial decisions may be traced back to this January 1978 starter paper: the categorisation of aims into 'competence, growth and enrichment', the division of the syllabus into the four language modes, the checklisting of objectives, the employment of grade related criteria for assessment, a teaching strategy that proceeds through individualistic, formative means, the mix of internal and external elements, a syllabus structured through units and contexts - all of them are to be met in its succinct pages.

The English Inspectorship were, in fact, writing with a pre-emptive definitiveness which would ensure that it would be their interpretations which would inform the impending feasibility study. For them the **Munn and Dunning** proposals for universal certification and the accompanying curricular structures offered the opportunity to realise the kind of personally developmental English which had been merely foreshadowed by the preceding **Bulletins** era of Central Committee exhortation and voluntary working parties. Through the national guidelines they could give specification to what previously had been left to inspirational thinking and exemplar teaching scheme, while the assessment mechanisms would ensure that liberal practice become a professional obligation.

The initial crucial step was, the Inspectors' paper argued, to resist any gross interpretation of **Dunning's** three certificate levels into separatist courses which would perpetuate the divisiveness of the secondary school curriculum and thus consign the Foundation third to a lowly upbringing in the unadorned basics. English, they argued, is not a fixed content subject; it is a personal experience. It is constantly being created and recreated as the individual pupil interacts with the learning material in which the syllabus invites her to

participate. The 'level' at which this occurs will be defined by the quality of her response and the perceptiveness of the teacher's anticipation, diagnosis and development of that response. The experiences which English offers cannot be stratified for they are as complex as the functioning of language itself; within them the three dimensions of 'growth', 'competence' and 'enrichment' combine and recombine to figure forth an infinite variety of formulations. Given such an interpenetration between language and living, progress in the subject can be neither uniform nor linear; it must be contingent, cyclical, individualistic.

These are the characteristics which the **Munn and Dunning** introduction of aims and objectives planning into the Scottish curriculum could be used to secure. 'Growth, competence and enrichment' could be laid down as the essential aims which must be universally followed; they are 'unitary' and would ensure for all pupils that 'linkage of cognitive and affective aims [which] is crucial in English'. The behavioural objectives which may now be derived would constitute an authoritative description of the rich and various purposes for which we use English in our own lives, adherence to which would yield a syllabus in which, for example, 'talk' and 'discussion' at last receive their proper due and where all pupils might enjoy the power of good literature.

What strengthened the determination to use the disciplines of a revised national assessment system as a positive force for reform was the Inspectors' awareness of the way in which previous attempts to expand and to personalise the English syllabus had withered on the classroom floor. The preceding decade had tried to work its changes through bulletin posting and the encouragement of local cells of activity. Concurrently a network of supporting agencies had been set up but the real point of syllabus decision remained, as it always did within the Scottish tradition of a devolved curriculum, with the individual teacher.

The risk such a system ran was the gap left between rhetorical aims and unspecified school syllabuses. The Inspectors' submission was alert to the problem: in particular, 'the profound message of the Bulletins.... that the nature of the subject is experiential' might be left

undelivered. This was more likely to be so because in the absence of any contrary imperative, the school was all too likely to turn to the SCE examinations for their practical model of the subject, one which readily supplied 'a confirming framework for the limited experience they offer' of English as a content-based activity. 'In this way the SCE syllabus... has intruded as the real "de facto" syllabus at S3 and S4 with inevitable backwash to S1 and S2. The "gap" has been filled and, in its filling, much good practice falls into decay'. And, HMIs Alison, Cramb and Steele affirmed, the number of English teachers who limited their teaching to these ends remained in 'the majority'.

**Munn and Dunning** now represented a more insistent opportunity to fill that gap. While there was no wish to remove the freedoms the individual school department enjoyed - which were a recognition of the variously personal nature of the subject - the introduction into its calculations of a set of national guidelines would act as a checklist on its intentions. In this way, 'Guidelines in the form of behavioural objectives... conceivably re-direct and enrich the thinking of [those teachers] to whom "growth" and "enrichment" seem minor considerations.' Similarly, a universal, extended assessment system would act as a further and decisive means of quality control, an intention which was proposed through an image of forceful elevation which provides a nice instance of the SED's determination to use national mechanisms as the means of asking teachers to improve their own practice:

'We are therefore talking about one syllabus, devised at school level but supported at national level by guidelines. The civilised leverage which might be exerted could be the schools' understanding that external assessment would also be an interpretation of the same national syllabus guidelines'.

#### **The Inspector's Testimony: Personal Conviction and Professional Responsibility**

One of the three HMI authors of the 1978 paper, and the National specialist who, with James Alison, was in charge of the Feasibility Study throughout its five years, was Quentin Cramb. His account of the thinking behind the Foundation campaign confirms the impression which

the documentation<sup>(2)</sup> gives of a cogent plan of action founded on a firm view of the kind of English the modern world required of its secondary schools. What was equally important, it emerges, was to have an opportunistic sense of where the logistical possibilities lay. This meant a consciousness of **Munn and Dunning** not so much as a philosophical statement but as a set of instrumental briefings, and also of the precisely powerful position which the Scottish Inspector of Schools occupies within the educational system.

Viewed simply as authorship, the way in which the 1978 document and the ensuing Feasibility Study described English as a system of pupil behaviours may be explained in terms of personal conviction interacting with professional function. Asked to sum up the main thrust of his own work, Cramb's<sup>(3)</sup> response is that as a teacher he had 'always wanted to see how English teaching actually is and to work outwards from there'. From this initial determination came his interpretation of the HMI role that he took up in the early 1970s. The method of inspecting that he and his colleagues favoured was to go into a school but not simply in order to talk about 'this or that method as a generalised approach but rather to poke into jotters, to have a look at what the children were actually writing, to talk to the pupils about where they were in "Macbeth" and how they were responding to this or that speech in the play'.

It was first-hand observation of the problems and the satisfactions of pupils at their classroom tasks which sustained an interest in "English" as a series of personal encounters with Language:

'English teaching is really about meaning; if you can help the child to look at the meaning of what he has attempted to say or what somebody else has written then we are getting him to think about his own uses of language and what he needs to do to communicate clearly'.

It is by examples of effective classwork that we can establish our understanding of what English ought to be. For Cramb it was the formative teaching that he saw Richard Binns<sup>(4)</sup> doing with his remedial pupils at St Mungo's Academy, Glasgow, rather than the polemics of

such as Holbrook and Inglis, which gave definition to his views, so much so that he can still claim that the single most important idea that he was able to recommend to other teachers was the notion of redrafting in writing, not simply for what it could do in that field but as a model for all English development.

These were the professional experiences which led to an insistence that the Foundation curriculum should make the clearest possible statement of what classroom English consisted of. In the search for guidance it was those writers such as Andrew Wilkinson and Andrew Stibbs<sup>(6)</sup> with their analytical accounts of children's developing linguistic practice who proved to be most useful. By drawing upon their categorisations and exemplars and matching them against what they had themselves witnessed in the classroom, Cramb and Alison were able to establish clear guidelines and a checklist specification for the subject. The result might have been 'the possibly over-simplified scheme' of the four modes broken down into a range of typical usages, but its articulation was intended to offer a basis for common action, not to sound out a blast of inspirational rhetoric.

It was this sense of practicality which gave to the Feasibility Study a character so different from the *Bulletins* movement of the previous decade. It would, however, be a simplification to explain that contrast as the consequence of an individual impulse entering a professional role which then strengthened it and directed it outwards into a series of national recommendations. It is important to realise that in 1977 Quentin Cramb was being placed in a very different position from the one that his National Specialist predecessor W A Gatherer had taken up twelve years previously. Gatherer then had been given leadership over a newly instituted committee which was exclusively identified with the cause of secondary school English and was free to propose its own philosophy of the subject. Reforming action could therefore proceed as an untrammelled implementation of ideas which possessed their own initial validity.

Cramb and his colleague Alison could enjoy no such deliberative freedoms. From the very outset they were confronted by a pair of official reports which stood ready to put to the test with a whole battery of instruments, such as aims and objectives planning, differentiated performance levels and criterion-referencing, any vision of English as personal education which they had inherited from the **Bulletins** era. What was demanded of them was not so much a creed as a rationale for action. In such circumstances it is impossible to disentangle the personal motive and the duties of office from the demands of the moment. What, the EFS demonstrates, appears to be necessary for effective progress is for those placed in charge of curriculum development to base their work on an awareness of the necessary inter-relationships among these three forces.

In this respect it helped that HMI Cramb was himself very much an inhabitant of the whole period from the early 1960s through to the **Munn and Dunning** age. As a young teacher he had lived through the attractions and disappointment of the **Bulletins** period as aspects of his own professional development. The drive towards practical clarity with which he infused the Foundation study had already been fuelled by his own experiences as a young teacher in the early 1960s who had had to attempt to work out a coherent model of teaching from inadequate resources. His training at Aberdeen College of Education had failed to offer 'a construct, a way of going about teaching - we dabbled but really it was a rather strange course, it lacked rigour; it seemed to be a little bit of literature, a little bit of grammar, a little bit of this but not much of that'. When he became a probationary teacher at the Gordon Schools, Huntly in 1964, he found that he had had to work it all out for himself - 'You went out to teach, you got the pupils in front of you, you were given the books and then you had to find your own way'.

Perhaps the most decisive influence had simply been the challenge of being a young Principal Teacher at the end of the 1960s at Madras College, St Andrews and finding that for the first time he was forced 'to set all my ideas down on paper, to explain what courses were actually going to be like, having to think in a way that was clear enough to convince others'. Because of the dearth of any generally available systematic analysis of teaching, the quality of the

individuals he worked with was of vital formative importance and here he had been fortunate in being able to learn from such people as Alex Tait, during his intervening spell at Aberdeen Grammar School, and 'the remarkable' Ann Bridges at Madras. However, 'learning by osmosis from people rather than by studying structures' was a chancy affair and what he had been lucky enough to encounter might not be available to others. These early days had convinced Cramb that there was a strong need:

'to get something down for the ordinary teacher, something that would help give shape to what he was doing as a whole. I thought English teaching in those days lacked shape - we might remember something from the example of a superb teacher we had had as a pupil or enjoyed working with as a colleague but very little was being said about the job as a whole, very little was being done to establish clear boundaries'.

Increasingly, as he began to see how representative his own predicament was, Cramb became aware of being caught up in a particular historical process, one that needed to be seized hold of and redirected. The autobiographical experience could be set in that context. The *Bulletins* had appeared during his early teaching years and at that time had 'seemed to confirm and comfort me in what I was doing'. Later he was to become aware of the possibilities for misinterpretation and half formulated action that lay in their generalised enthusiasms. A leading example was the advocacy of the project, an approach that had been born of Inspectors seeing something in the primary school that was good - 'you've got to remember at this time that they had a good thought of primary education and were somewhat critical of secondary education' - and then imported wholesale into the senior English curriculum. But it was the surface rather than the substance that was adopted so that by the mid 1970s project work had busied itself into 'something that was pretty dull, pretty dreich and above all lacking in rigour'.

Indeed much of the justification for Cramb's focus in his Inspectorship is to be sought in his consciousness of himself as redressing previous excesses. He was concerned to look at the

subject through the experience of pupils rather than peer at it with the eye of 'the developer' who might be tempted to structure his observations accordingly. This, in his judgment, is what had happened in the 1960s and early 70s when the various enthusiasms released by the CCE had played upon the subject so as to blur its character as a classroom activity. The partisan enthusiasms for linguistics, for the project, or for literature as growth jangled together to create a situation in which the teacher could approach his work in an elective, even evasive fashion;

'People were not really thinking about the basis of the subject but chasing good ideas and expressing their enthusiasm for the parts of it that appealed to them. What was being missed out was language.... teachers needed to get hold of a poem as a thing to be studied, to look at its language - all this had drifted rather badly by the late 1970s. We saw some teaching that was downright sloppy - often in a lesson a teacher would throw out the book after the first two minutes and simply chat. I spent much of my time going to the front and asking, "Could I have the book back please?"'

The 1960s and early 70s had been a necessary phase in the development of post war English, a very rich period in ideas and in people but by 1977 had, Cramb felt, become dissipated into a mixture of partial enthusiasms, mechanical derivations and pedagogical half-truths. It was time to take a 'hard analytical look' at what was actually happening in the classroom and to develop clearcut methods based on the observed linguistic needs of the pupils. As the scenario cited above indicates, he was acutely conscious of the very special contribution the Inspector should play in redirecting the progress of the subject. In his view the position of the HMI in curriculum development is absolutely vital since it is his statutory right to enter the nation's classrooms in order to appraise the quality of the teachers' work. This means that HMI recommendations are informed by a sharp concern for what will advance the education of all children. Similarly, their mandatory access to all syllabuses meant that during the Foundation piloting Cramb and Alison could attack the issues that it raised by summoning teachers to work at them in a spirit of collaborative investigation: 'The HMI is the person in the position in the field to be able to say "this is where English teaching is now"... we could get

hold of what was best in our experience of practice, take it up, offer it to other teachers to try out, talk over the issues with them and thrash out the problems'.

For Quentin Cramb it was this panoramic view of the field as a whole, coupled with their intimate knowledge of the various forces deployed within it, that justified the HMIs being given the generalship over the whole Foundation campaign. If the precedents of the recent past had been followed then the task would have been handed over to an ad hoc working party or to the CCE. To have done this would, however, have been to continue the meanderings of the previous decade when, for instance, the CCE had spent several years debating the role of talk: 'The matter had been discussed, it was agreed to be imperative but the committee found it difficult to come up with precise suggestions because of the subtleties and uncertainties associated with talk as a proposition'. As Cramb comments, 'It really needed somebody to get hold of the problem and to investigate it as a possibility in the classroom'. This, with their wide command of the situation and of teachers, the HMIs were able to do:

'A whole lot of good stuff had been said about English teaching; what we needed now was for some kind of cogent model that didn't have to be debated through long drawn out committee procedures but could be put down in front of teachers as clearcut advice for them to try out. For example, we would produce a paragraph of statements for the Guidelines, put it to a seminar group of teachers and by lunchtime we would be able to ask them, "Is this the way we are going to do it?" and we would get an answer from them. As HMIs we could then pursue the idea - we could, for example, simply demand that we go into the classroom to see this being done, or that teachers should bring in examples of pupils' work'.

#### **Ownership and Action: the Role of the HMI in Curriculum Development**

The quality and acceptability of the decisions achieved by such task force methods will always depend upon the degree to which the troops can be led to see themselves as having a genuinely contributory part to play not only in the capture of the targets but also in the strategies to be employed in this exercise. Cramb's account is a somewhat bald summary of what was, in fact,

a detailed process. From the start the two HMIs worked to disarm any accusations of development by top-down decree. The EFS was carefully planned to be a shared enquiry into the feasibility of converting nationally drawn Guidelines into local courses. The project was spread over four sessions so as to allow for a real exploration of the issues, for problems to be located and evaluations and modifications to be made. It was also time enough for individuals among the 21 pilot schools to come together as members of a united team, a process that was assisted by the regular two day gatherings which were held in various congenial hotel centres.

From 1978 to 1982 the major aspects of a Foundation course were systematically worked on as session by session the pilots steadily moved from open observation to exact and tried solutions.<sup>(6)</sup> Thus the first year, 1978/79, was taken up with 250 HMI days spent in simply watching classroom practice and discussing possibilities. From this starting point the Foundation team selected issues for successive focusings: 1979/80 was spent in devising course units, collating pupil work and making up a starter draft of the Guidelines; the following year saw the testing of assessment schemes, the preparation of examination and internal models, the taping of pupils' talk and the adapting of school courses to the developing Guidelines. In the final session of 1981/82 the syllabus moderation and the trialling of the assessment package prepared the way for a concluding evaluation of the whole EFS.

In the end, however, the sensitivity with which this programme was planned raised the very issue of ownership that it was designed to allay. Under such carefully organized circumstances what begins as open investigation can evolve into a jealously guarded enterprise. As each Feasibility stage was attained, the desire to see the project as a scheme which was working grew and management merged into proprietorship. An account given by one participant teacher, at least - Margaret Eleftheriou of Bankhead Academy, Aberdeen<sup>(7)</sup> - contrasts the early leisurely days of experimentation with the later rush towards decision at which school-based activity gave way to rounds of weekend meetings, task delegation and working party subgroups; by this stage the HMI leaders found themselves having to set the

agenda, limit the options and hasten individuals towards collective acceptance - an executive routine that quite restored the assumption of SED decision-making from the centre.

Any criticism of executive manipulation must, however, take into account the context in which the Feasibility Study was conducted. In particular, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the Inspectorate's decision-hastening procedures are quite properly part of what was, after all, a large-scale developmental exercise, not a disinterested epistemological debate. Quentin Cramb's account would suggest that it was the combination of schedules, remits and firm management which supplied the essential discipline to ensure that there would at last be some securement of the personal English which had been advocated ever since the Second World War. Cramb indeed would argue that it was historically necessary for the HMIs to assume control over the subject's proposals for the implementation of **Munn and Dunning** so as to ensure that they would not only be pedagogically effective but would also be politically convincing. After so many years of committee discussion which had addressed the conceptual difficulties only in order to celebrate their rich complexity, it was time for delivery.

For the previous ten years those who had led the debates on Scotland's English teaching had been united in a progressivist consensus: the subject should attend to personal and social needs, should reflect actual language usage and give a central place to the child's own expressiveness. Yet the syllabus as operated in the large majority of schools had maintained its silent academic ways. Indeed the issue of 'talk' was a prime example of what had not been happening: the matter had been discussed in *Bulletin* and in *CCE*, there was general agreement that it was essential but the profession had found it difficult to make precise suggestions because of the various uncertainties and subtleties associated with talk as a teaching proposition. 'It really needed someone to get hold of the problem and to investigate it as a possibility in the classroom... we couldn't go on simply holding up a hand and saying "This is difficult, it's impossible to assess like this in English, talk's too ephemeral for us to teach in that kind of way"....'

These observations are made with an insistent awareness of the nature of decision-making as the pivot of a national system where viewpoints are necessarily instrumental and outcomes have to be negotiated. Within the SED's structures the partisan claims of the subject specialist will be entertained but must compete with the professional scepticism of those officials who see themselves as being charged with the maintenance of publicly credible action. By 1977 the progressivist cause in English teaching was falling into disrepute in St Andrew's House simply because of an apparent preoccupation with the niceties of sensitive reflection and the upholding of internal good relations among its adherents: 'English teaching was beginning to be regarded by some quarters of the Department as limp wristed, as run by a lot of people who talked about what they were going to do but delivered very little.'

Cramb's analysis of the realpolitick of Scottish curriculum development is one that strongly emphasises the strategically crucial role of the HMI as an intermediary between those who are devoted to 'good English teaching' and those who must serve the broad constituency of national standards, cost-effectiveness and public accountability. Into this forum, HMIs can carry with them the discipline of being government servants, forced to work to strict remits, accustomed to squeezing action out of hard propositions. Inevitably there are tensions - 'we have at times to be sheer bloody-minded and determined to get things done, even at the price of our own popularity' - but these are the very constraints which give the Inspector the necessary credibility by which to work for the best possible deal:

'We are certainly enthusiastic about the subject and can sit down and get excited about our ideas but then the SED will say, "Hold on! What about all those people who say that standards aren't high enough, that basic skills are not what they were?" Certainly this kind of corrective can draw you back to look at where you are going and prevent you from being too entranced by your vision of English as a pure pursuit'.

Perhaps the essential force behind the HMI's contribution, as Quentin Cramb explains it, is described by a term that he uses several times in his account of his work between 1977-1982,

'rigour'. For him rigour is politically necessary if the subject is to progress in the form that 'we' should want it to: unless its teachers can define their aspirations with tangible clarity, then 'the Government will simply quote the exam results and base its notion of good teaching on that'. To insist upon 'rigour', Cramb would argue, is to help protect liberal thinking, against the sort of doctrinal hard headedness that is always liable to prevail in circles where executive necessity has continually to be invoked; more than that, it can help substantiate liberalism and turn it into effective action. 'You have to use the very forces that some English teachers might distrust as illiberal in order to make liberalism work' - and here, the EFS could point to its strict exposition of assessment and course planning as the propositions which underwrote the introduction of talk, of graded course work and teaching by thematic units.

#### **HMI and CCE - A Necessary Partnership**

Viewed from the inside, the story of Foundation English between 1977 and 1982 becomes a clear illustration of how the Scottish curricular system which had now evolved could best be utilised to generate effective change. The preceding decade had seen the institution of a chain of committees and advisers, both central and local, which comprised a fund of consultative advice as to the essential principles of modern teaching. Left to themselves - and this perhaps was the lesson of the *Bulletins* era - they could become immersed in their own English deliberations. In Cramb's experience 'they tended to be civilised affairs where people of like minds got on well together, thought alike but because of this were perhaps too conscious of the theoretical issues'. There was a studious detachment which could not be shared by the Inspector up at the front:

'Our responsibility as HMIs and the discipline of being government servants put us into a significantly different position that no committee could rival. They might have suffered from various crises of conscience but we couldn't afford to. Others might have said "But this assessment system is unreasonable. English isn't like that, I resign." Well, we couldn't resign, we had to take this assessment system seriously; we had to try and make it work'.

The HMI by serving the system so closely can, however, become caught up in the recurring problems of its efficient maintenance: 'Our work is to inspect schools and to apprise the nation of the standards of its children's attainment. This is our first duty - curriculum development is a by-product of that.' It is the CCE and its allied agencies which still have to act as the necessary second chamber, able to look at this work from the more detached perspective of broad educational thinking. During the whole EFS project the two HMIs concerned were ex-officio members of the CCE and therefore in contact with the submissions and monitorial advice which it offered on the whole operation. Indeed, the deliberative papers produced by that Committee acted to complement the working documents issued by Cramb and Alison for the Pilot schools.

The fact that the two Inspectors were able to mediate between the representatives of the subject and the SED's interpretation of the national interest did much to ensure a filling in of the Munn and Dunning framework which was broadly satisfactory to both parties. In so doing they were offering a cogent model for curriculum development in which the thinking of subject committees, anxious to uphold the best traditions of their own disciplines, can vitalise and inform the disciplined professionalism which the Inspector ought to bring to bear on the project.

Just how well the interdisciplinary process worked may be judged by contrasting the recommendations, which HMIs Alison and Cramb were able to pass on to the Department through the medium of their final Guidelines, to the fears which the CCE had expressed at the very outset. Quickly after Munn and Dunning appeared the CCE sent out a letter 'to all teachers of English in Scotland' (8) and then followed with an autumn conference on the Reports' implications. In the tensely argued submission which accompanied this gathering (9), the Committee expressed concern that the proposal for a three level certificate controlled by national guidelines might lead to the imposition of a 'narrowly prescriptive' syllabus, quite alien to the personally experiential nature of the subject. This, the ideal to which postwar English had been working, was now, apparently, to be endangered by an assessment system that threatened to deprive teachers of their freedom to make up their own courses in accordance

with their intimate knowledge of the needs of their pupils. In particular, the CCE urged that grades differentiation should emerge through the pupils' response to the course rather than be predetermined by a strict division of content - even the putative Foundationer should still be able to enjoy the full range of the subject's essential aims and not be sealed off into some curricular ghetto of basic skills. What the CCE was doing here in 1978, in fact, was to make a plea which was to become so close to the actual outcome of the Pilot Study as to constitute a prediction of it.

#### **The Teachers' Role - Team members and Outsiders**

The compatibility of the two parties is testimony to the close sympathy which the Inspectorate held for the progressivist elements in English teaching as represented by the CCE. Nor was this respect reserved for this official voice of the profession since it was a fundamental working principle of the EFS that it should involve the Pilot teachers as fellow researchers into the practical means by which a more child-centred curriculum could be delivered. Quentin Cramb is certainly most anxious to pay tribute to 'the very committed and talented teachers we worked with.... one of the most thrilling aspects was the way in which you could sit down with teachers and help them to contribute and watch them develop professionally into decision-makers.'

That this HMI perception that the EFS developed into 'a real teacher's enterprise' was a shared one is indicated by Jim Duffin's comment from Our Lady's High School, Motherwell: 'I was delighted to be involved - the Feasibility Study helped to get things moving in my Department; it gave focus and validity to what we were already trying to do... It was a tremendous exercise in curriculum development, a genuine exercise in consultation'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The very enthusiasm with which this account is offered does, however, point to a further difficulty. While the strategy of gradual advancement through close team work contributed greatly to the productiveness of the EFS in terms of Guidelines and exemplar syllabuses, the study was thus energised by a sense of proprietorial allegiance among its small band of

members that would be difficult to reproduce on a national scale. To the twenty-one schools and the two Inspectors 'Foundation English' was a living experience created out of an intimate history of residential gatherings and professional companionship, of shared discoveries and a sense of problems being worked at and overcome. To the country's remaining 450 secondary establishments to whom it would now have to be extended, it was a set of skeletal guidelines.

One measure of the extent to which the EFS had been as much a matter of personal contact as a national study may be seen from this observation of Quentin Cramb on the way in which he and his HMI colleague functioned together during it:

'Perhaps it was a fortunate accident of history that Jim Alison and I were set to work together; we seemed to complement each other so well. I would describe myself as determined with a capacity for getting really excited about what was happening but Jim on the other hand was patient and reflective, just what I needed. The two of us worked so well together that the name "Cralison" was coined to express the symbiosis'.

However, what had been nurtured over five formative years among a small group of handpicked and able teachers would not be easily conveyed to the thousands of teacher outsiders who would now be required to implement the abstracted results of their experiences. The report of their final meeting at North Berwick in 1982 showed a clear awareness of the problem: 'All these generalisations have to be set in a context, however, and that is - that in the EFS we were largely working with teachers of special commitment who have given more to the study than could reasonably be expected of colleagues in other schools'.<sup>(11)</sup>

The world which that study would now have to move out into was not an altogether receptive or comprehending one. In 1979 Ernest Spencer of SCRE had reported on a project which had been investigating the uses of folio marking in English as an alternative to the traditional examination. His discovery was, that among the 523 teachers he worked with, over 75% expressed satisfaction with the existing O'Grade format - 'These figures confirm the common

experience that most English teachers do not want or do not see the need for radical change'.<sup>(12)</sup> And chief among their reasons, was their unwillingness to incorporate either the heavy labour or the judicial responsibilities of such a school-based assessment scheme into their normal routines - despite the evident educational and professional benefits.

Other contemporary studies were also producing evidence to suggest that the majority were not accustomed to placing their work in a context of professional innovation - Kenneth Cunningham's study of 'Management of Curriculum Development'<sup>(13)</sup> in Glasgow English departments revealed that the development structures that were now in place for the benefit of teachers had failed to penetrate the general consciousness, that the CCE and all its works went largely unread. And in the year that the EFS was concluded, Grainne Quinn's survey of the introduction of mixed ability teaching in Strathclyde<sup>(14)</sup> demonstrated that even in the face of this most challenging innovation, pedagogy remained obstinately, didactically, whole class directed and that this was so because most school departments could not see themselves as agents of change. While, for example, their Principal Teachers would readily concede that new methods were necessary, they were fatalistic as to their non-emergence, saw their departments as loose collections of fellow subject specialists rather than a productive team and were generally reluctant to interfere in their several autonomies or to define their own role in managerial terms.

The policy of using the authority of the Scottish HMI to empower a small task force of dedicated English teachers had by 1982 produced encouraging results and a self-confident, enterprising spirit among its team members. In so doing it had shown how vital it was for teachers to experience change as a professional and as a personal process. Now that it was time for the 21 pilots to be joined by the other 450 schools it would not be sufficient for the former merely to pass on their work as so many charted results; the rest could only catch up if the development strategies could be found to enable them to work through for themselves the ways and the understandings which would give personal meaning to the national undertaking that was **Munn and Dunning English**.

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## PART 4 : 1977 - 1990

### CHAPTER 10 - THE STANDARDISATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH.

#### **From Piloting to Adoption: Strategies and Field Officers**

In the June of 1982, at the time when the Feasibility Study was drawing to its close, a Glasgow English teacher, Pat Chalmers, gave the leading address to the city's Principal Teachers' Conference. The speech presented an account of 'Curriculum Development in English' and as such turned out to be a review of failed hopes and current disillusionment. The bemused, insecure position the country's English teachers now found themselves in, Chalmers asserted, stood in poignant contrast to the time of the *Bulletins* when there had appeared to be a real prospect of achieving strong unity of purpose based on the 'pedagogical linguistics' which were then promising to regenerate the subject's teaching. How futile those wishes had been could now be shown by the subsequent collapse of the LDCs, the disappearance of Language across the Curriculum initiatives and the continued grip of the examination system. The *Bulletins* had quite failed to bridge the gap between theory and practice; they had left English as they had found it, an academic practice remote from the social and cultural experience of today's young people. 'Elysium', the conclusion came, 'is not ours'.<sup>(1)</sup>

This was the kind of professional reception party which the Munn and Dunning development programme had to meet as it now moved into its wider phase. When the Secretary of State came to announce his response to the EFS he did so in appropriately considered terms. His *Framework for Decision*<sup>(2)</sup> which came out in the same summer of 1982 took care to lay down a detailed strategy for the extension of the Foundation experiment to the whole secondary school system. While he was now assured that the feasibility of relevant, well constructed courses at that level had been amply demonstrated, further development work would be necessary in order to work out how best to apply their principles to the more academic Credit and General level pupils. Consequently full implementation in English was - for example - to be delayed till 1984, and the intervening two years were to be used as the opportunity to assist the great majority of schools which lay outside the pilot study to familiarise themselves with its teaching

and assessment procedures. At the same time a Joint Working Party of Examination Board officers and serving English teachers was to prepare national guidelines for the management of what would now become the Standard Grade certificate,<sup>(3)</sup> to be taken by all fourteen to sixteen year olds.

The development programme that was worked out for English was designed to accomplish what Pat Chalmers had accused the CCE of failing to do fifteen years previously. The **Guidelines'** conceptualisations were to be converted into practical substance through a gradualist strategy which would induct and then engage all teachers into a programme of steadily expanding recruitment.

Already during 1981/82 some 90 'Second Line' (for English) Pilot schools had been nominated to join the original 21 EFS establishments in working with the **Guidelines** and they were to be succeeded during the following two sessions by a 'Third Line' operation which would give all schools the opportunity to practise implementation before the first 14 year old cohort was to enter the Standard Grade lists in 1984. Considerable support was to be made available to the teaching force: 'Field Officers' were appointed to the SEB in order to devise workable assessment procedures for the new certificate while the second group of Pilot Schools were to be given the sustained front line assistance of three mobile curriculum 'Development Officers'. Through the experience thus gained it was intended to form a cadre of teacher trainers able to offer their colleagues tactical advice during a series of in-service closure days that each region would now set aside for this exercise.

The second phase was planned with the same precision as had marked the EFS. The three Munn and Dunning Development Officers (MDDOs) drew up an operational programme that replicated the careful build up of the First Line: their 1981/82 schedule, for example, marked out the session into a number of incremental stages that were to conduct the schools from two months of initial familiarisation - 'examine guidelines and model units as supplied by MDDO' - through a further series of bi-monthly assignments that entailed the design of units,

syllabus moderation exercises, in-service briefings on the four modes and the trying out of assessment techniques. By June 1982 such cumulative construction would result in each school having designed its own MDDO approved S3 course complete with units, syllabus notes, folio and assessment provision.<sup>(4)</sup>

It all amounted to a course of controlled progression which, it was hoped, would allow the second line teachers the opportunity to go through the same kind of formative experiences as their predecessors had done in the original pilot schools. With **Guidelines** and criteria already in place, however, it was impossible to soften the impression that this was essentially a training programme in which the aim was to impart technical skills rather than to create a new course or to explore fundamental issues. The Development Officers were really working their charges through a series of production targets; their calendar might reproduce the shape of the First Line development but they would not be able so easily to generate the sense of shared discovery nor command the pioneering commitment which had energised the Foundation development in those earlier days.

#### **An Abrupt Expansion: Strains and Boycotts**

Nevertheless the considerable skills shown by the three MDDOs, (Philip Banks, John Fyfe and William Stevenson), and the relative intimacy of the operation combined with the efforts of the schools themselves to ensure that the Foundation principle effectively extended its hold over what, by 1984, amounted to one fifth of all Scottish secondary schools. By itself, however, such carefully protected innovation could not provide the basis for the rapid, large-scale extension that would now have to take place. The real weakness within the developmental scheme as set out in the Government's **Framework for Decision** was always going to be exposed at the point where the new Munn and Dunning courses would be asked to secure their position as the one national certificate to be taught by all teachers to all pupils. This was to be accomplished by the setting up of a Joint SEB-CCE Working Party which would quickly prepare the necessary **Guidelines and assessment proposals**, but now for all levels of pupil ability and achievement. There was to be no further piloting: from 1984 the schools would both construct and deliver the

syllabus moderation exercises, in-service briefings on the four modes and the trying out of assessment techniques. By June 1982 such cumulative construction would result in each school having designed its own MDDO approved S3 course complete with units, syllabus notes, folio and assessment provision.<sup>(4)</sup>

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new 'Standard Grade' courses with little more than a small number of locally organised in-service gatherings to sustain them, the assumption being that the example of First and Second Line Foundation work and their own experience of O'Grade preparation would carry them through.

It was a supremely optimistic plan. Expansion was to be abrupt and it was to be in two different directions at once, both outwards and upwards. Not only would the rank and file of English teachers be exposed to all the, as yet, untravelled complexities of differentiation, school-based course construction and methodological regeneration that would now be necessary as they sought to accommodate all their 14 to 16 year olds within the one new course, but they would be required to suffer this convulsion at the very point when the carefully steered operation was moving out of its First and Second Line refuge into the open expanses of universal secondary education. As the CCE had warned in its internal response to **Framework for Decision**, many of these so-called 3rd Line Schools were, unlike the schools involved in the earlier piloting, characterised by conservative practice, were often isolated from continuing in-service provision, and had had little involvement in, or experience of, group methods.<sup>(5)</sup>

The situation was further exacerbated by the determination of the current Government to enclose even this critical educational enterprise within its campaign to cut public spending. At the press conference which launched **Framework for Decision**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary Alex Fletcher was notably unsympathetic to arguments that the more practical methodology and internal assessment techniques of Standard Grade required smaller class sizes, an investment in extra staff, new technology and an extensive programme of staff development. All these desirables had to be met out of existing resources chief among which, the Minister added, was 'the enthusiasm' of the teachers themselves.<sup>(6)</sup>

As the profession at large became aware of what 1984 would have in store for them, a sense of Orwellian oppression began to spread. This was an analogy which Rose Galt, EIS official as well as English teacher, was moved to publicise through TESS:

'... what is it that makes teachers like me, those in the first-phase subjects, worried, anxious, troubled or just scared stiff? Quite simply it is the enormity of the task in front of us. When one considers the demands to be met in terms of syllabus preparation and course construction; when one calculates the strains which will be placed on already curtailed budgets; .....when one examines the difficulties involved in changing from norm to criterion-referenced assessment - no wonder that already English... teachers can be instantly recognised by their nervous twitches and haggard faces...<sup>(7)</sup>

The wider political events which now intervened to shake the whole course of Munn and Dunning were not, therefore, altogether unconnected with the easy calculations and hard attitudes that had characterised the later stages of the programme. In 1985 Scottish teachers, as represented by the EIS, entered into a lengthy campaign for improved salaries and enhanced working conditions. Although the grievances were longstanding, their case was sharpened by the extent to which Standard Grade appeared to offer such a prominent example of inconsiderate central direction and wilful underfunding. Conversely, it was this very reliance on teachers to carry the development which gave the EIS a potent bargaining counter. Consequently the union ordered - and successfully so - its secondary teacher members to maintain a strict boycott on all curriculum development which, above all, included the new materials and treatments integral to the school-based nature of Standard Grade English.

The 'Industrial Action' was to endure for more than two years and was only lifted in early 1987 when the Secretary of State's committee of enquiry - the Main Committee - was able to report on teachers' pay and conditions in such a way as to lead to an eventual settlement.<sup>(8)</sup> In the intervening period the original implementation timetable had been withdrawn, the O'Grade retained as the national examination and the much needed development work on the new English courses had been suspended. The consequences reached well beyond the mere fact of a two year delay. The terms of the settlement and the professional practices which the teachers had effectively defined as their curricular responsibilities during the Action were to change the character of Standard Grade English.

In 1985 at the onset of the EIS embargo, Scottish Office Minister Allan Stewart had been forced to concede that the pace and complexity of current curriculum developments had been too taxing<sup>(9)</sup> and now, two years later, on the resumption of peace the decision was reached that the SED should both slow down the introduction of Standard Grade and devise means of supporting its teachers. Above all, the structure of the new courses and the extent of the teacher's responsibility towards their implementation were to be made more manageable for the ordinary school department. In English a review group was charged with the rationalising of assessment procedures, new and much simplified Guidelines - now termed the **Arrangements**<sup>(10)</sup> - were issued in 1987 while the CCE was replaced by a task-related 'Central Support Group' (CSG) of teachers, advisers, HMI and College of Education staff whose remit it was to supply the schools with Standard Grade advice, materials and syllabus units which could be used, if desired, on an off-the-shelf basis. Finally, the implementation schedule was reined in so that no school need be asked to introduce Standard Grade before they felt themselves to be quite ready to do so. The result is that the new English, if that is what it can still be termed, did not to become a nationally certificated reality for the majority of schools till 1990.

#### **An Evaluation of Standard Grade English: the Triumph of Personal Development?**

The tortuous progress that Standard Grade has been forced to make since its early days means that any evaluation of the extent to which its implementation really will fulfil the longstanding postwar hope for a school English that is capable of nurturing the whole person, can only be a provisional one. Moreover, any estimation of this prospect must take into account the way in which recent events have shaped its progress. Syllabus growth in the Pilot days was carefully rooted in each individual school environment; now school-based husbandry has been supplanted by a streamlined, centrally serviced operation which has left English departments able, if they so wish, to construct franchised courses whose parts are assembled either from those distributed by the CSG or from the productions of the specially

appointed Curriculum Development Officers which most local authorities have now established to provide further support.

While, despite these facilities, many schools have continued to work out their own responses to the **Arrangements**, the fear must be that there will be others, among whom are 'the conservative many' referred to in the CCE's warning, who will simply replace their O'Grade course books with course units that have been borrowed in from elsewhere. In such instances 'Standard Grade' is likely to be interpreted as a certain set of materials and assessment procedures, not as a personal experience whose formative processes their teachers have come to understand by working through problems of design and methodology for themselves. And, significantly, the whole relationship of teacher to curriculum would then fail to be one in which she could come to see herself as a creator of learning opportunities; instead she might continue to operate as an agent for the delivery of secondary English courses. If that is indeed the case then the impetus for seeking out ways of developing a Standard Grade pedagogy able to realise the potential within its materials will be lost. Not only that, because such teachers would never come to see themselves as centres of innovation and action research, the fundamental issues consequent upon the attempt to construct an individually formative and richly varied English within a uniform aims and objective framework might remain forever unexplored.

These are however fears, not actualities. Clearly, in an operation now so dependent on a central lead, the quality of the materials it provides and the assumptions they convey as to the creativity - or otherwise - of the teacher's role will be crucial. To a large extent we can anticipate the answer to the doubt that the 'new' English might again become little more than an adaptation of the old by examining the official Standard Grade publications and centrally deployed exemplar units which are currently available for the guidance of Scotland's secondary teachers.

The first question to raise here concerns the degree to which the processes of recent Standard Grade development have succeeded in fashioning a coherently experiential English course.

The current course **Arrangements** have emerged as the products of the several years of refinement and negotiation which began with the conclusion of the EFS in 1982. In the Government's response to the Pilot Studies, **Framework for Decision**, the assumption had been made that the now to be developed General and Credit courses should be distinct from Foundation, that they could rest upon the more established patterns of assessment and SEB control: performance at these levels would be tied to typical O'Grade achievement and would largely depend upon summative examination, with internal assessment being confined to the Foundation pupil.

In that same year the SED also sampled English teaching opinion by receiving the report of a 'Professional Group' - a small party of HMI Alison, teachers, an adviser, SCDS and SEB officials which had been specially convened to write a starter paper on the provision of a Munn and Dunning curriculum for the whole 14 to 16 cohort.<sup>(11)</sup> Its proposals urged a distinctly more liberal reading of the possibilities. The group saw the new Foundation Guidelines, not O'Grade, as the basis for the impending Standard Grade at whatever level it was to be taken. All pupils, it argued, should participate in the same full range of subject aims so that even the less 'academic' might receive the opportunity to experience Shakespeare, for example. Exact adjustments of content must be left to the teacher and not be constrained by any presumption as to difficulty or suitability. Indeed differentiation was to be viewed as a function of the relationship between pupil and syllabus so that the complexity of task set and the extent of penetration achieved would establish the level of work done. Definitive assessment should therefore be made by reference to sets of task criteria, described as scales of performance - 'Grade Related Criteria' (GRC).

Of these two models for the development of Munn and Dunning English, it has been the one presented by the Professional Group which has prevailed. The conclusive 1987 'Revised' **Arrangements** are intended to act as a regulative framework not an imposed content: within its broadly drawn outlines teachers are to be left free to create their own subject-matter in accordance with their interpretation of the needs of their own pupils. The essential

requirement is the recognition that the subject exists for the individual: 'An English course should take as its starting points the needs of young people and the needs of the individual pupil'.<sup>(12)</sup> And if the sentiments recall the 1947 **Secondary Report's** enthusiasm for the 'harmonious development of the individual', the detailed argument which follows this opening statement avoids any repetition of that document's distinction between academic and non-certificate individuals. Every pupil, however 'Foundation' or 'Credit', is to be offered the same range of experiences, the same opportunity to practise competence, to grow into personal and social maturity and to have her imaginative life enriched. The required differentiation into the Dunning levels is to be expressed as an achievement point along a continuous six point scale and to be measured by actual performance within a unitary course, not be fixed as the consequence of some predetermined separatism.

In order to support this vision of an integrated, multi-pupil Standard Grade, the working parties responsible for its formulation have managed to win for the subject an assessment system that represents a considerable movement from the position laid down in **Framework for Decision** and, indeed, from all previous Examination Board practice. The stipulation that internal assessment should be confined to the lower Foundation classes has been argued down in favour of a recognition that English for all levels of pupil is a practical subject whose various experiences cannot be represented by one summative external test. Throughout the cohort, attainment is to be evaluated by a mixture of examination and internal procedures in which, most notably, the teacher is to be given the responsibility for supplying a grading for oral activity that should be based on course work and must include collaborative 'discussion' as well as any separable solo talk.

#### **A Question of Grading: Assessment Mechanisms and Personal Experience**

However skilfully the course has been set in position, there remain doubts as to its practical effectiveness, especially with regard to the crucial assessment proposals. Standard Grade English as it has now (1990) evolved is a product of the Scottish system of curricular decision-making which has developed since the institution of the CCE in 1965. The SED through its

Inspectors has continued to play a dominant part, firstly by establishing the original Foundation pattern and then by HMI membership as 'assessors' of the key committees which applied that pattern to a General and Credit setting. What they were participating in was, however, a process of negotiation and refinement which, through a series of 'joint working parties', has allowed the CCE and the SEB to make a full contribution. Nevertheless what each of these bodies has been co-operating in is the articulation of a national English curriculum which must express the Secretary of State's demand that, post Munn and Dunning, every secondary school pupil must be assessed by a course which is controlled by National Guidelines. **The Arrangements**, unlike the urgings of the 1947 **Secondary Report**, unlike the **Bulletins'** promptings, are precisely that - 'arrangements', which lay down official procedures for the learning outcomes and the required levels of performance by which the nation's sixteen year olds are to be allocated their certificated gradings. The result is not a philosophical statement of intent; it is a scheme for the national certification of all 16 year olds in English. Any evaluation of the effectiveness of Standard Grade English as a fulfilment of all the postwar aspirations that have been held for the subject must consider how its mechanisms for public grading will interact with its declared belief in personal development.

Here the essential question must be: to what extent is it proving possible to promote a commitment to secondary school education as personal growth within a regimen of syllabus accountability as enacted through standardised assessment control? Viewed against the background of its origins and later development, the answer ought to be a positive one. An examination of the decisions taken during that history has revealed a consistent and shared desire by HMI, CCE member and Pilot teacher alike to seize the opportunity of an emergent national assessment system to introduce progressivist policies of English and to regenerate the practice of the many subject teachers who, it was judged, were conservatively tied to the narrowly academic model of the O'Grade.

To effect this ambition, however, assessment has been the key strategy; in a situation where the required Guidelines have been drawn up as a generalised account of universal learning

goals in order to give the teacher the freedom to interpret her own pupils' interests, it has been left to the mandatory assessment procedure to carry the burden of course accountability. Here, the problem has been to devise a scheme that will satisfy the need for rich learning experience at the same time that it meets the requirements for comparative measures of achievement. The hope has been that a categorisation of activity by outcomes and a carefully devised 'Grade Related Criteria' scheme can act as the central intelligence by which teachers will inform their chosen material and thus ensure its acceptability in both professional and national terms, terms which have been articulated so as to include the creative and the personally expressive as well as the academically rigorous and the societally useful.

This has meant, that assessment has to run through the whole curriculum as an ever-presence which can act as an assurance of proper quality control. Thus every activity within the course must tend towards a state of assessment and the generous aims of 'growth' and 'enrichment', as well as 'competence', have quickly to yield place in the **Arrangements** to detailed lists of tasks that are based on the dividing up of linguistic behaviour into the four modes of listening, talk, reading and writing - which can be further broken down into sets of specific purposes such as 'stating a point of view' or 'communicating a personal experience'. In this way the destination of precise specifications for teaching objectives is reached since these 'purposes', once identified, may now be categorised into tables of component skills - so that, for example, 'talk' competence can be converted into 'conveying information to an audience', mastery of which can be shown to depend upon a demonstration of that 'organisation' of content and manner of 'delivery' sufficiently 'intelligible' and 'clear' to achieve the overall informative purpose. Assessment may then be calculated by setting the individual evidence of effectiveness in these tasks against lists of criteria derived from the required skills; differentiation into the grades necessary to cover the whole attainment range is worked by arranging such criteria along a 6 point scale of comparative achievement as illustrated by the Examination Board item bank of exemplars for 'typical' performances at each level.

All this makes for a logical if intricate flowline account of an English syllabus now fashioned into the credibly rigorous framework within which teachers may still enjoy the freedom of content choice necessary to cultivate the classroom experiences that will be sensitively responsive to the needs of individual children. More than that, the hope of its HMI, CCE and SEB authors has been that by giving assessment an integral presence within the Standard Grade course, its verdicts would be seen as a natural outcome of work, freely, purposefully, done in course. In this way the forces of assessment could be placed in the hands of the individual teacher who could thus free her pupils from arbitrary Exam Board marking schemes.

This is the grand strategy: its realisation will depend upon the interpretations made of it by the thousands of individual teachers working within their own various contexts of time, place, resources. Their efforts will also test out the integrity of the **Arrangements'** conceptualisation of English as an assessment driven vehicle which will make possible the pupil's journey towards personal fulfilment as well as facilitate the carriage of more mundane curricular goods. And here there must be anxiety for the model appears to possess a capacity for self-propulsion which threatens to over-run the liberal intention in at least three fundamental respects: the insistent pressure on the teacher for coursework evidence could overwhelm rather than enlighten his conduct of the syllabus; the demand that that evidence be analyzed into the number of specific language categories deemed essential to account for the full range of human usage threatens to lead to an academic fragmentation so that the pupil will, after all, experience the course as a series of grade gathering exercises; the attempt to evaluate that evidence by the employment of criteria, which must perform the dual function of measuring individual success on the task and assigning the pupil to a level of award, might only reintroduce an oppressive element of normative comparison into the evaluative scheme of things.

### **Assessment as Repression: the Example of Close Reading**

The course represents a bold attempt to organize personal development in English into a synthesis in which language and literature, skills and individual response may be shown to be joined together in the one powerful syllabus enterprise. But is it really possible to convert individual experience into an aims-and-objectives format leading to criteria and by so doing not dehumanise the whole operation? What, in making such an attempt, will be the teaching result? Will personal Growth become diminished into a set of predictable externalities or, instead, receive a new sharpness of purpose that will enable teacher and pupil to participate more comprehendingly in their pursuit?

At this early stage it is impossible to predict which of these two readings of the interaction of the assessment system with declared aims is the likelier to become Standard Grade English. However, the promulgation of exemplar examination papers by the SEB as an addition to the **Arrangements** does offer sufficient evidence for some prognosis to be essayed. In order to estimate the impact the mandatory course structures will have upon the language experiences offered within it, it will be illuminating to consider the treatments given therein to two different areas of language activity, first the well established close reading and second the innovatory oral discussion.

For those who desire a personal relationship between subject and pupil, the evaluation of the pupils' reading performance has always provided a particularly sharp illustration of the deadening effect that may result when English teaching, under the pressures of assessment requirements, is thought of as a technical deconstruction into measurable skills and subskills. 'Reading', an integral part of national examinations in Scotland since their late nineteenth century inception, has traditionally been assessed according to the pupil's ability to answer a battery of close comprehension questions on some unseen prose extract - a procedure which proclaims 'interpretation' to be a matter of accumulating a number of specific items under the direction of the examiner's questioning.

The new Standard Grade examination therefore offers the chance to use the authority vested in the national certificate to promote a fresh assessment strategy that would be derived from a vision of what the individual pupil-as-reader, operating within the context of her own experience and drawing upon a personal capacity to enquire into meaning, could be encouraged to do with the text. To what extent does this opportunity appear to have been used? The 'Specimen Question Papers'<sup>(13)</sup> which were issued with the Revised Arrangements demonstrate one passage at each of the three levels of Foundation (Grades 5 and 6), General (3 and 4), Credit (1 and 2). The middle 'General' paper of this trio would therefore appear to offer a convenient example of the Examination Board's fulfilment of the course's aims for reading. Here it consists of an article lifted from the **Daily Express** on the spontaneous rehabilitation of wild life in urban Britain - foxes in Surbiton, golf course badgers, kestrel nests in the Scott Monument, Edinburgh, and so forth.

It is not difficult to see why this piece was chosen in that it is an unexceptional specimen of middle-brow, green-tinged journalism - the kind of everyday writing on a significant contemporary issue with which the 'average' school leaver citizen ought to be able to engage. It is appropriate, therefore, to speculate as to the kind of task which would best assess that response. In a course that - according to its own self-definition - is dedicated to purposeful, interactive activity, an appropriate form of assessment might have been to place this single newspaper item within a range of other topic-related materials and thus prompt the young reader to investigate its particular representation as part of a running discussion on the quality of life in our environment, one which is presented to us through a variety of focuses of which the **Daily Express** treatment is but one. This enquiry approach could then lead on to a set of related tasks in which pupils would be asked to make use of their reading, to show judgment and to allow a free play to their responsiveness by setting the author's message in the context of their own experience: to match it for themselves against a perception of their own 'reader' needs and to work out their own strategies for handling written material - in short to demonstrate their capacity to be independent interpreters able to ask their own questions of their own reading. Appropriate 'assessable outcomes' might be a scripted interview with the

author, the compilation of a report or the drawing of an ecological map, plans for a television news story, a follow up letter to the Daily Express, and so on.

But, and here is the behaviourist catch, if the candidates were to be permitted to do any of that, then how would the SEB know that they had been 'reading'? For its part the Examination Board has decided to pursue this judgment in solidly traditional style. Its paper takes the examinee through some 45 whole and part questions, which follow the sequence of the text by busily Hoovering up a point here on argument, a point there on choice of subject matter and everywhere a trail of assorted lexical bits and pieces. A look at the Markers' Instructions<sup>(14)</sup> will reveal why, for each of the questions is attached to one of the set of reading purposes tabulated in the Arrangements. Thus the candidate is required to list 'three different aspects of the city's landscape which are cruel and hostile to any wild animal' to show that he can 'obtain particular information from a text' (Reading Purpose 2), is asked to 'explain really why it might be "cruel and hostile"' as evidence of his ability 'to grasp ideas or feelings implied in a text' (Reading Purpose 3), made to identify 'the relationship between the first sentence in Paragraph 2 and the first paragraph' in order to prove he can 'evaluate the writer's attitudes, assumptions and argument' (Reading Purpose 4) - and so forth. In the Standard Grade event, reading has remained an unadventurously passive comprehension test in which pupil reads set printed extract, obligingly packed with the kind of factual and intensely rhetorical stuff that yields the time-honoured - what evidence is there?; how does the author?; what is the meaning?; right/wrong, full marks/half marks/no marks questions so handy for computational purposes.

If we were to judge the course by its treatment of close reading, it might, then, be possible to build up a damning critique of the way in which an academic testing mechanism is wrenching it away from any pupil-centred intention. The Standard Grade examiner has, like his O'Grade, Higher Grade and Day Certificate predecessors, chosen to fragment the holistic reading response down into a multitude of separate items, in order to attain assessment access to the so-called 'skills' that the Arrangements describe as making up the

act of reading. This, the fear must be, is an inescapable consequence of the obligation to treat a language process as a precisely definable set of objectives: that can only be accomplished by breaking the matter down into an accumulation of cognitive procedures, to be arranged as a respectably scientific comprehension taxonomy of - in the **Arrangements**, Section 3, Paragraph 21 - the six main behaviours such as those cited above - and then to ask questions on each.

To appreciate how difficult it is to sustain genuine personal involvement within the necessarily linear programming of the aims-and-objectives syllabus, we need only to consider what has happened here to the **Arrangements'** notion of 'purposes', now utilised as a means of fabricating examination questions. The concept of 'purpose' in language is a dynamic idea potentially capable of investing linguistic categorisation with a sense of individual engagement. Here, however, what is offered is the tight listing of six criteria-yielding 'purposes', in a way that makes for a mechanistic description of what actually happens when we do try to make our own response to what somebody else is trying to tell us by words on the page. Then it is very much to be doubted whether we ever do read in order to attend to this or that one particular aspect of 'the text' either singly or as a contribution to some hierarchical sequence of comprehensions.

What the **Arrangements** in this instance do is to substitute for real acts of interpretation a set of what might more justly be counted as subskills or objectives - a reduction of a complex cognitive interaction into a system of measurable behaviours which will allow the criteria-referencing evaluation to proceed as a grading exercise. 'Purposes', it would appear are not, after all the same thing as purpose. If the young reader is to be encouraged to work out a personal purpose in reading about 'The New Squatters' then it would rather be through inviting him to consider what he really needs to get out of it both as an individual and as a member of his community. The result might then be a set of flexible interpretative focuses to be defined as broad functions such as 'deciding whether I agree that wild life in a city is a good thing', 'matching my local experience against that of this London based author', 'relating this

account to other conservationist stories I have encountered' - but then these activities would take us into those areas of open enquiry and individuality of response that standardised 'objectives' find so hard to chart.

#### **Assessment as Liberation: the Example of Talk**

To those who advocate a developmental philosophy for the subject there are grounds for fear: judged by its suppression of close reading, the reformed English would appear to be in danger of trapping itself in a curriculum model which, because of its inherent character as an objectives-seeking mechanism, will impose upon those obliged to work it an analytical imperative that has more in common with the exercises and categories of the ancient academic regime than with the individual liberties of a supposedly radical new age. If this is the way it all turns out then the blame really will lie with the tool rather than workman: quite against the ambitions of its SEB and CCE authors the 'civilised leverage'<sup>(15)</sup> of Standard Grade assessment will have proved to be a cosh that is systematically beating both teacher and taught into academic submission.

There are, however, areas of the course and its assessment conditions which are pointing in another direction altogether. In addition to the summative examination in reading and writing, candidates will be asked to submit folios of course work to the SEB. Thus, the evidence of the close reading paper will be supplemented by three essay length 'extended reading' responses to literary texts. Nor can the criteria, by which such whole pieces be judged, ever be so precisely calibrated as to squeeze out the qualitative, affective judgment. In their strivings to plot six distinct grading points along a scale of achievement for the same task, the GRC have to seek recourse to verbalistic differentiation so that, for example, the 'some evidence of understanding whole works and extracted passages' of Grade 6 in reading moves up to Grade 4's 'fair understanding' to Grade 2's 'good understanding'.<sup>(16)</sup> Such rough comparison-spinning reveals the GRC to be a technically insecure mix of the referential and the impressionistic. Nevertheless this very looseness leaves real scope for the subjective and holistic evaluations which are really more appropriate to an expressive subject where

'objectives' cannot be fixed targets but are rather a broad set of never completely achieved aspirations.

That this may be so is to be seen in Standard Grade's sections on talk which provide a much more positive example of how those who have developed the course have sought out further ways of using assessment as a means of promoting a personalised practice.. Potentially the most important contribution that Standard Grade's assessment system will make to the subject's development lies in its decision to commit the course to talk as an equal partner with reading and writing and yet to leave its assessment completely in the hands of the classroom teacher. Indeed, the reforming significance of this decision goes far beyond the mere inclusion - at last - of oral activity in the national curriculum; the **Arrangements'** proposals for its exclusively internal assessment and the accompanying SEB exemplars put the emphasis on talk as a dynamic contributor to the syllabus, the assessment of which may be based on products which emerge from and help drive everyday classwork.

There is no doubt that the introduction of oral activity into the assessment scheme of things raises several conceptual and logistical problems: what exactly counts as evidence?; how can we capture what is essentially fugitive and interpersonal?; indeed what is 'talk' - performance, delivery, oral product or a shifting, searching self-expressive process? One way of cutting through these problems was that attempted by the original Foundation pilot study where a straightforward scheme, that consisted of pupil preparation of a self chosen topic in readiness for a brief teacher interview, was employed.<sup>(17)</sup> This was recorded and the tape then sent away for a strictly controlled SEB assessment based on a set of criteria which stressed those qualities of clarity, organization and fluency that could be reliably inferred by the retrospective listener. As a system it was both economical and reliable. It was also a very limited response to the challenge of working out appropriate assessment procedures that would not only listen into the whole range and sociability of the speech act but could also serve as a model for its nurture in the young Scot whose alleged taciturnity had become something of a minor national obsession. Certainly the tense preparation of a three minute interrogation on

a worthy individual pursuit, such as ice-skating, matchbox collecting or the care and maintenance of pigeons to gain the approving ear of some distant examiner figure, could, for all the personal achievement it might represent, do little to convince the pupil that 'talk' was not some further test to be prepared for by rehearsal under his teacher producer.

The more expansive view of talk as a personal, heuristic and interactive power that was debated within succeeding CCEs in the 1980s, and then argued for in the Joint Working group which considered revisions to the Standard Grade course, has resulted in a considerably enriched revision of this assessment scheme.<sup>(18)</sup> Not only is 'talk' to be evaluated by the teacher on the spot as one composite impressionistic grading, but equal weighting must be given to both solo talk and group discussion. The implications for the classroom of this boldly course-centred innovation are potentially far-reaching for in order to gather in the required evidence, the teacher will have to make considerable adjustments to his daily practice. What he is now being asked to do is to try to catch the pulse of classroom activity as it circulates around him and to take readings as best he can. The SEB criteria must be internalised into an impressionistic working knowledge and employed as a rough on-the-spot grading. Moreover such judgments can only achieve reliability if they are made with a degree of opportunistic frequency; thus the teacher will be forced to build considerable variety of oral activity into the normal syllabus.

Most significant of all, group discussion will have to be allowed to break the teacher-controlled silences of even the most conservatively academic classroom. Just how profound the effect may be can be seen on the SEB's videotape of exemplars.<sup>(19)</sup> Designed to illustrate grading levels, this three hour compilation of actual classwork extracts also demonstrates the range and possibilities of using talk, especially in collaboration, as a means of helping the pupils to engage with the curriculum. On this tape there are no orderly certainties, for the accompanying commentary booklet has to pick a very tentative gradings route through an uneven, babbling mix of groups, pairs and triads, each attacking a range of activity, whether it be a group exploration of the characters in 'Lord of the Flies', an exchange of views as to what

makes a good teacher, a joint composition of stories based on pop records or a heated argument as to the existence of the Loch Ness monster. What all of it does demonstrate is a commitment to the cause of getting the pupils to talk together as people who need to do so in order to respond and to understand, to get things done, to take possession of new knowledge. The assessment is left to catch up as best it can with what emerges.

The Examination Board's release of this videotape and its implementation of a supporting annual exercise, in which each school will be visited for training and agreement trials by one of its specially appointed moderators,<sup>(20)</sup> represents a bold attempt to fulfil the original SED desire to use assessment as the means of promoting pupil-centred teaching. For its compilation the decision was taken to use those English departments where group talk already flourished. The material gathered there has avoided any temptation to use conveniently manufactured oral end products; instead the Board has been happy to demonstrate the work of teachers who are concerned less with shape than with energy, with advertising talk as a means of generating opportunities for pupils to engage with discussion as the natural expression of real purposes, as a way of getting things done.

#### **Standard Grade English: Promise and Uncertainty**

Even in this instance, however, the future direction is still uncertain. The existence of such a videotape, even with the SEB stamp upon it, cannot, guarantee the ready adoption of a pupil-centred approach. If the official exemplars encourage teachers to search for reliability by offering their pupils such plentiful day-by-day opportunity that necessarily impressionistic evaluation can be substantiated through constant repetition, then the liberality of the system also permits them to achieve their grade through the application of a much more teacher controlled mechanism. It would be quite possible, for instance, to satisfy the simple SEB demand to furnish one oral grade to cover the two years of the course by very occasionally setting up a designated discussion session where pupils are made to operate according to some pre-established choreography that is entirely susceptible to direct coaching. The very looseness of the Arrangements in this respect enables group discussion to be treated as an

infrequent and formal visitor to a classroom which is free to remain predominately, silently didactic in tone.

And if teachers were to continue to behave in such a conservative fashion then it would not be in defiance of any absolutely consistent Standard Grade message. Indeed the **Arrangements** read as a mixture of imperfectly fulfilled intentions and imprecise technicalities that send contradictory signals as to what the Standard Grade teacher is really meant to do. Within the tables and the advice by which the document attempts to establish clarity of guideline while at the same time promote a more individualised English, there lies ambiguity and the scope for partial interpretation. On the one page there are the ringing statements which emphasise 'growth', pupil 'resourcefulness', 'enrichment' and assessment as a 'continuing process which is very much a part of teaching'; on the other there stand the much more detailed checklists of specific folio and examination requirements, of the Grade Related Criteria and learning outcomes by which, ultimately, the curriculum experiences are to be measured.<sup>(21)</sup>

The mixture of uncertainty and potential that is currently demonstrated by its Standard Grade course, piquantly illustrates the double-edged power of the country's system for curriculum development as its current agents try to find ways of using its traditional reliance on central direction and national certification to promote a progressivist practice. Sometimes, as in the case of close reading, the assessment system works against the liberal intentions of the **Arrangements** while its provision for talk shows that, at others, it can appear to insist upon their implementation. Even here, however, the attempt to use evaluation, both to guide formative learning and to grade its outcome in terms of set criteria, may produce a discordant effect. 'Talk' is a complex process, so much a coming together of elusive forces to do with self-perception, with group dynamics and a cultural acquaintanceship with the required range of verbal strategies, that it is doubtful in what sense it can be directly taught. What the individual teacher can do, rather, is to stimulate and to develop it, to involve her pupils in the authentic contexts and significant decisions that will encourage them to appreciate how best discussion can work for them in their own lives.

This highly personal, contingent nature is acknowledged by the freedoms of an internal assessment provision which allows the teacher to make her gradings as a measure of individual achievement over a period of time and within a variety of contexts. However, in so doing she will still be required to use a set of GRC which confidently talks of 'skills' and 'signs' of awareness in a way that will encourage the didactically inclined teacher to continue to think of language as a simple tool to be picked up and be used with the visible, predictable adroitness of the articulated tradesman. The fear must remain, therefore, that even here, Standard Grade will invite the teaching of talk as a series of text performances which are to be prepared for by an instructional style that fusses around the symptoms and the superficialities of 'eye-contact', of 'ease of delivery' and control of gesticulation. If this is so, then even the innovative discussion made may turn out to be a kind of abstracted oracy, an institutionalized verbal genre which, like close comprehension passages, corresponds to nothing that the pupils will really have to do with language in their personal and social lives.

But this is to follow the uncertainties through to their most reactionary conclusion. As it stands in 1989-90, the first year of its universal introduction, Standard Grade English constitutes an uneven and incomplete attempt to direct teachers towards the adoption of an experiential version of the subject through an aims and objectives model that, with its behaviourist externalities, is all too liable to pull them in the opposite direction. There is little doubt, however, of the continued commitment by those at the SED and CCC centre to the use of Standard Grade as a means of revitalising the secondary school curriculum. While the assessment system might point towards a reductionist view of the subject which simply gives an air of technocratic modernism to the traditional academic ways, the publications of the Central Support Group set up in 1986 to distribute supporting counsel and teaching materials to the schools have consistently advocated the teaching of a course that will be rich in personal experiences and challengingly active in its pedagogy. It is revealing, for example, to compare the archaic limitations of the close reading examination with the sections on this topic in the CSG 1987 'Starter Pack' or in the 'Continuation Pack'<sup>(22)</sup> of the following year: there

reading is described as an investigative process in which the reader actually searches for meaning; its development best nurtured by setting meaningful tasks that will help build up a repertoire of text handling strategies.<sup>(23)</sup> These two packs contain a range of similarly outward looking advice whose intention it is to exploit Standard Grade as a vantage point from which it is possible to contemplate a whole landscape of varied and innovative features such as media studies, micro computing, extended responses to reading, educational broadcasting, discussion and creative writing.

With the packs also comes a set of exemplar units and, through videotape and detailed written commentary, a full length case study of a school, Gairloch Academy in Wester Ross, which under its Head of Department Liz Gibson has had an outstanding record of innovative work, both as a second line pilot and subsequently.<sup>(24)</sup> The basis of its Standard Grade course is a well balanced run of units which involve the pupils in a substantial local study, 'Fishing', followed by a speculative look at the 'Future'; they can investigate an issue - 'War' - in depth, provide a seasonal diversion at 'Christmas' and study a novel - Hemingway's 'The Old Man and the Sea'. The effectiveness of the course, however, really comes from the organizational enterprise with which the bare Arrangements requirements are seized upon as an invitation to introduce a full range of learning experience. Thus the camera plays over a classroom which acts as a centre for a variety of activity: the 'Fishing' unit, for example, is presented to the pupils as a menu from which it is possible to listen to Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony as a stimulus to creative writing, to find out how the Meteorology Office compiles its shipping forecasts, to watch and discuss the film 'The Silent Waters', to demonstrate to each other the apparatus needed for lobster fishing, to debate herring quotas. Throughout, pupil choice and initiative are expected: pupils handle all the letter writing and telephoning required to set up a visit to a local museum, evaluate each others' talks on maritime topics and their own group discussions, draft and review their own writing, and keep a personal diary of their English syllabus.

Gairloch and the accompanying Pack examples show what it is possible to achieve if the response to the **Arrangements** is a positive one. Here school English does indeed promise to become a creative, flexible medium where the formal assessment demands can be left to emerge as a sampling of a richly variegated course. The CSG materials are, however, presented quite explicitly as 'the best available materials' which embody innovative thinking; they are to be seen as stimuli towards 'Staff development' rather than as typical pieces of syllabus.<sup>(25)</sup>

How the generality of teachers to whom the **Starter and Continuation Packs** are addressed and who were excluded from either First or Second Line Piloting will respond depends upon their own readings of what Standard Grade demands of them in their own schools, readings which will be made in the context of their existing professional habits and institutional constraints. It still remains possible to interpret Standard Grade as a straight successor to O'Grade, a course whose priorities are established by the assessment requirements that pupils must be trained to satisfy, the four modes and their elaborated purposes as language exercises to be worked through.

To some the developments of the last years will appear to be the introduction of a radically new methodology that at last will realise the aspirations voiced in 1947 for English dedicated to the 'harmonious development of the individual'. The fear must be that to many other teachers Standard Grade, in the ambiguous, underdeveloped state in which its **Arrangements** present it, will simply be another assessment scheme to be laid on top of the old ways. Nor is there anything in the Scottish tradition of secondary school English that guarantees that it will not be the latter view which will prevail. What the post war history of the subject shows is only how slow, tortuous and uncertain the introduction of change always is, how liable reforms are to be corrupted by the grossness of assessment schemes or weighed down by the inertia of institutionalised practice. The old, settled educational environment into which first the **Secondary Report** of the Sixth Advisory Council, the 1955 **Junior Secondary Report**, the **Brunton Report**, the **Bulletins** of the 1960s and, now, Standard Grade have tried to flourish has

demonstrated a capacity to absorb rather than to be changed. If the efforts of at least some of today's schools in the provinces and the continuing support from the centre point to something rather better this time, than the record of the past shows just how difficult the fulfilment of such a promise will be.

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- (3) While the title 'Standard Grade' was not introduced till the following year - at this stage 'Scottish Certificate of Education' was being used - it seems convenient to employ the new term from the outset in order to distinguish between the initial 'Foundation' and the later Foundation/General/Credit (ie. 'Standard Grade') stages of development.
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## PART 5 - AN ENGLISH TEACHING FOR THE 1990s

### CHAPTER 11 : PAST HOPES; FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

#### **Towards the New English: Dialectical Campaign or Pragmatic Development?**

As the pupils of Nairn Academy enter their third year, they are given an Induction Unit that will initiate them into the ways of their Standard Grade course.<sup>(1)</sup> One task is to prepare a parental letter which will introduce the working principles of the course, using as source material a departmental booklet entitled 'English Is Not What It Was!' 'What it was', the school explains, is a room arranged in fixed rows of desks before which the teacher orders the silent class to do compositions on 'what I did during the summer holidays' in their best handwriting and with due regard to the dictates of spelling and of punctuation. The results would be marked out of 20 with all errors underlined in punitive red and underscored with a curt judgemental phrase. In contrast 'today's English' places the pupil at the centre of his own learning process, a venture which is pursued through units on topics like 'Myself' and in working groups among which the teacher is to be found peripatetically encouraging, advising, assisting the individual to draft his own ideas into a personally satisfying expression. The school's verdict is slogan-clear: 'English is different now; It's not what it was; At home and in school; It's a whole lot better'.<sup>(2)</sup>

The historical stereotypes are confidently offered - but how useful is it to explain the development of Scotland's English in such categorical terms? For Nairn Academy's English department, recent history has culminated in a self-evident choice between an exhausted didacticism and a bright new Standard Grade course which represents a truly up to date view of the subject's best practice. At the same time its adoption of such a self-consciously advertising stance suggests that the contest is not yet played out, an impression that is reinforced by the ideological controversies that have followed on from the publication in 1986 of *Education 10-14 in Scotland*.<sup>(3)</sup> Originally prepared by the CCC as a 'Discussion Paper' concerning the continuity of the pupil's educational experience as she moves from the primary to the secondary school, the *Report* became a sustained reflection on the young learner's needs in relation to the curriculum structures available across the two types of institution. Throughout, its argument is

that learning is a constructivist process, that its many formulations cannot be represented by a fixed content but are the function of a neverending interaction between the individual and her experiences. The conclusion is clear: the secondary as well as the primary school should embrace a child-centred curriculum.

In this way the **10-14 Report** provides a general epistemological justification for the progressive party in English teaching. Indeed, one of its authors was Sydney Smyth, who as Director of CITE (later SCDS) and a longstanding CCE member has been closely involved in the development of the subject since the early **Bulletins'** days. He has explicitly matched what he entitles the New English to the Report, both as a matter of principles and of historical significance, since, he claims,<sup>(4)</sup> what began in 1967 with the CCE's promulgation of the subject's concern for personal experience and the dynamic inter-relationship of language to learning are the very principles that inform the **10-14 Report's** attack on the 'pre-Copernican' view of knowledge as being centred in subject-matter rather than in people.

By the same token the new English is also implicated in the rigorous counter-attack that has been made on the **10-14 Report's** position. This has been led by David Carr, Secretary in Scotland of the Philosophy of Education Society; It is important, he has written,<sup>(5)</sup> for the school pupil to study 'History', 'Mathematics', 'English' in order to gain access to the best of human thinking over the ages: only through such discipline will he reach beyond the blurred excitements of his own necessarily immature intellectual processes. Like Smyth, Carr is very much aware of the historical context. The **10-14 Report**, he tells us, is the muddled outcome of a very contemporary partiality for the child over the established disciplines of the past. It is a modern heresy and should be dealt with as such: 'Commit it then to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion'.<sup>(6)</sup>

It is difficult not to feel that this kind of fundamentalist zeal - and with it the idealistic history-making of Smyth - are out of scale with the detailed choices which face the English teacher as she strives to gain control over an immediate teaching situation which is the meeting point of

complex pressures. And as the detailed history of her subject's post-war development shows these are to be explained not as a clash of simple paradigms but as the more subtle interplay of system, of institution, of the pragmatic traditions of day to day classroom practice, of the individual's own experience of being first a pupil and now a teacher within the complex world of the Scottish secondary school. Similarly, Nairn Academy's display of promotional enthusiasm for its Standard Grade course simplifies the department's own position as a group of English teachers striving to draw upon the stock of understandings and strategies, which have accumulated over those years, in order to arrive at the most effective contemporary version of English it can offer its own particular pupils and their parents.

Within such pressing boundaries the 'new' English must be more a matter of evolution than of simple election. Carr argues for the subject-centred approach by using the example of Shakespeare. His plays should be studied in the classroom, he states, in order to appreciate a considerable human achievement, not just 'to develop the imagination'.<sup>(7)</sup> Among the units developed by Nairn Academy is one on *Macbeth*, explicitly aimed at Foundation level pupils.<sup>(8)</sup> Within it pupils have to predict outcomes, discuss their own responses to characters and their dilemmas, reconstruct projected situations such as a trial of *Macbeth* and immerse themselves in a video version. All these are tasks that would fit into the *10-14 Report's* advocacy of investigative, problem-solving, activity - but their purpose is not to be a self-justifying exercise of the imagination: as the unit goes on to demonstrate, it is to arrive at an understanding of Shakespeare's drama as an interplay of language, stagecraft and human motive, of which account must be given in a summative critical appreciation. To this end, the predictions must be matched against the substantiality of the play's events, character assessments against an examination of soliloquies, the video be regarded as a means of introducing and illuminating the all important text.

In short, the child-centred model's emphasis on the primacy of personal experience has been taken up as a source of practical teaching approaches but in order to vitalise the thoroughly academic aim of bringing great literature to the Foundation masses. As the unit's

introduction makes clear, *Macbeth* has been chosen for classroom work because it has the power to evoke a response but also because it is a definitive part of English school work.

Similarly a further examination of the same school's Induction Unit shows that clear operational limits are placed on the pupil's freedoms. The letter to parents is demanded as practice in the appropriate register as much as to promote the new cause.; 'reading' and 'writing' are introduced through grading exercises, evaluation sheets and supplied criteria which announce that these are 'modes' that categorise Standard English. The 'discussion' which they are invited to undertake in respect of the merits of the new course implies that this is an ordered procedure in which its participants will arrive at cogent - and, indeed, 'right' - conclusions.

The Nairn Academy unit shows what the actual effect of four decades of debate and reform has been. There has occurred noticeable updating in content, a more open view as to what constitutes legitimate materials and activity, a greater pedagogical flexibility. Throughout this time there has been a constant interest in using child-centred methodology - but for heuristic rather than purely philosophical purposes. The result is that 'English' has not become a freely personal enterprise but still remains intact as a school subject. Nairn's self-conscious introduction of its Standard Grade course as the 'new English' is also a demonstration that the classroom work within it will be pursued not simply because it will yield psychological experiences but because it is part of the typical procedures that constitute the continuing discipline of English.

**'The Full and Harmonious Development of the Individual': Self Fulfilment and Civic Responsibility.**

The school's presentation of its current English as a dramatic usurpation of the past is essentially rhetorical. It would be more accurate to regard the story of English in Scotland since the war as a gradual if uneven modifying of the rigid academic structure which was its inheritance. Liberalizing changes there have been but these have occurred within, or even

through, a framework that has always been drawn tight by the familiar, hard edged devices of national examination, guidelines, syllabus notes and as an agreed analysis of the subject into its linguistic component parts whether they be parts and figures of speech (1940-1965), social register (1965-1977) or modes and purposes (1977 to date). Throughout these years pupils have been required to submit to the disciplines of composition, interpretation, language tasks and literary appreciation as the condition of their certification in the subject.

Over the years the country's English teachers have been content to follow a solid, four-square representation of their subject. Those changes which have entered the practice of Scottish teachers have done so through the official channel of Report, Committee, and Examination Board regulation. This has ensured that 'new' child-centred values have been adopted as part of a controlled programme of liberalisation and renewal, that they have been made to serve the continuing vitality of the old academic curriculum. While, for example, the declared thrust behind the apparently fraught reforming activity of the 1960s was to liberate the child, the end result has been to broaden the existing curriculum and to give it greater credibility: in the *Bulletin* and LDC schemes 'childhood' was reified into thematic studies, the project became a frame for language work and classic literature was supplemented in order to supply more accessible objects for analytical appreciation, while the claims of the 'New Linguistics'; which seemed so disturbing at that time, were briskly converted into an updated grammar of social language usage.

In this regard the Scottish development of English has reflected the national disposition to treat school life not as a self-sufficient experience but as a preparation for adulthood, and the established academic subject as an indispensable discipline towards that end. If the focus has shifted from the 'Christian-democratic' ideal of the immediate post-war years, the search has always been for ways of helping the school to maintain its improving function in a changing world. The 'individual' has to be considered as an inhabitant of the community of which he must become an effective, responsible member, rather than as a unique spirit to be cherished.

Overseeing each of the successive recommendations that have been made for the development of English, has been the rooted belief that the education of the child must look ahead towards some perfectible future adult state, that such a state is to be defined in rational, civic terms and that it is the obligation of the subject to make its own contribution to such a mature outcome. This was the intention that directed the Advisory Council's call on English to ensure that the pupil becomes a 'fully articulate and literate' being; this was motive behind the **Bulletins'** insistence that English was 'a personal discipline concerned with personal behaviour', in which 'growth' was to be measured as 'sensitivity, awareness of the nature, feelings and purposes of oneself and of others'.<sup>(9)</sup> And this is the responsibility that has led the **Standard Grade Arrangements** to list as the very first of its aims that 'young people need to develop a competence in language which will allow them to cope with the requirements of adult life'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The postwar search for ways of developing English into a secondary school subject able to benefit all pupils has not implied any softening of academic identity. 'Personal' development and 'subject' development in the Scottish sense have been part of the same drive towards cognitive fulfilment, towards the schooling of the right feelings through the right methods and the right content. This is a professional quest to which Standard Grade has been designed to act as the conclusive answer. Throughout its rationale and description the needs of the child and the demands of the subject are syntactically arranged into a series of mutually supportive definitions. While the interests of the former are consulted so as to ensure a presentation which is effective in terms of pupil motivation, learning power and relevant activity, it is the sense of English as a set of coherent linguistic behaviours that gives the course its structure and stability. Throughout, the emphasis is upon the tutelage of capacities rather than the enjoyment of experiences. 'Growth' is treated as a form of competence; it is an essentially social, not a private matter, its successful cultivation dependent upon the perfecting of specific skills: 'The importance of structure in the course has to be recognised. Language skills do not simply mature in the fullness of time; their development requires conscious cultivation'.<sup>(11)</sup>

**An Historical Strength: Pragmatic Inclusiveness within an Academic Framework.**

Now, as we enter the last decade of the century, it would appear that the balanced approach of Standard Grade is to act as the pattern for the whole of secondary school English. Its shaping of the course into a series of representative functions derived from an analysis of language usage is now heavily influencing classwork in the first two years,<sup>(12)</sup> as a recent HMI report demonstrates, while the revised Higher Certificate English has adopted the same design principles of modes and GRC, the same assessment mix of folio submission and external examination.<sup>(13)</sup>

Various strains of curricular thinking have each contributed to this definitive result. It is possible to read Standard Grade English as an eclectic sifting of the major contemporary educational movements: to ascribe its aims and objectives design to Bloom and Gagné, its methodology of purposeful tasks within meaningful contexts to Ausabel. From the field of postwar English studies, it is easy to discern the impress of romantics such as David Holbrook and Peter Abbs in the advocacy of personal, creative writing, the influence of F R Leavis and the Cambridge School in its adoption of closely critical reading techniques, the impact of the **Bullock Report's** enthusiasm for language as mental exploration in its promotion of talk and of drafting.

The Standard Grade course is, however, more than a careful assemblage put together by well read HMI authors. It is a version of the postwar subject that has descended to us, a process of natural evolution in which the received assumption and the challengingly fresh enthusiasms have continually interacted within the everyday setting of the Scottish secondary school classroom. In this respect, today's English is very much a native progeny: the teaching objectives set out in its checklists and categorisations are the offspring of the rhetorical grammatical classifications that characterised the curriculum of the 1940s and the 1950s, its deployment of thematic units is an updating of the project methodology that was embraced by the **Bulletins** in the following decade, its listing of language into a set of social functions a product of the New Linguistics that were introduced by W A Gatherer, Tom Brown and Michael

Halliday at that time. Later, it was the HMIs' observation of effective remedial work in certain Glasgow schools which gave the course the formative assessment approach that has become its key teaching strategy;<sup>(14)</sup> similarly it could be argued that the central position accorded to talk owes as much to the deep set national concern for the 'inarticulate Scot' as to the theories of James Britton's London University research team.

The history of Standard Grade demonstrates what is the great strength of present day English teaching in Scotland: its pragmatic inclusiveness within a firm academic framework. Half a century of debate and reform have sustained a curriculum that is still founded on rationalist principles and bound by adult patterns of linguistic behaviour but one which increasingly has become more adaptive, more pluralistic, a product of the past steadily evolving into the future.

It is this flexibility, secured by a shared regard for a broad and ordered syllabus, which will help Scotland's English to maintain its integrity as a school subject despite the competing pressures that will question its purposes during the coming years. Against the historically proven capacity for orderly absorption, the more apocalyptic predictions that have sometimes been made for its fate appear to be somewhat overdramatic. Take, for example, the occasion on which the visiting speaker from Cambridge, Anthony Adams, at a National Course in 1983, tried to make the professional flesh creep with his warning that the explosive development in Information Technology and its consequent impact upon the traditional organisations of knowledge would render his audience of English teachers into 'quaint survivals in a world that has passed them by'.<sup>(15)</sup> Since then, the Scottish response to the challenge of the micro has been not unlike that which met the New Linguistics twenty years earlier: an initial outburst of proselytizing articles in *Teaching English*, a watching brief by the CCE, various national and regional courses followed by the cultivation of areas of innovative practice in individual schools which in their turn have yielded detailed reviews which demonstrate how the computer may assist the achievement of existing language course aims.<sup>(16)</sup>

If all this gradualism has amounted to something less than the revolution for which Adams' futurology clamoured, it has followed a considered progress which has allowed the profession to search out the most useful ways by which to utilise the computer's potential to strengthen the existing curriculum. The result is that while the more mechanistic instructional programs have failed to win approval, those applications which positively support Standard Grade course needs are being steadily taken up - the drafting processes in composition, the use of the adventure game as a stimulus for talk and for writing, desktop publishing to give the pupil a sense of purposeful outcome.

The firm structuring of the Scottish syllabus has enabled English teachers to respond to other contemporary forces as a source of academic or methodological enrichment. They have been able to exploit the recent interest in media 'studies' as a source of unit themes or of new literary pieces whose representational processes may be treated through the familiar precedent of practical criticism. Even the fashionable iconoclasm of structuralist text interpretation is finding accommodation within a course whose unit style of treatment demands that its pupils practise a range of textual responses and where the provision for folio assessment offers the chance to make the imaginatively alternative response.

#### **Action Plan, TVEI and Modules: the Challenge to English**

The micro, media and structuralism may each of them be regarded as extensions to our understanding of the nature of language process and of literary criticism and as such they belong to the continuing development of the subject. But as the 1980s draw to their close, it is becoming increasingly clear that English teachers in Scotland will have to answer the questions posed of their traditional practice by urgent socio-economic forces and that, moreover, these are going to intrude upon them in the shape of government initiatives which will not permit the gradual assimilation. As the decade's efforts to push the British economy into the post heavy industrial age gather, the curriculum has been required to become more instrumentally outward looking, less free to build upon its own epistemological traditions.

In 1983 the SED brought out its **Action Plan** for post compulsory education.<sup>(17)</sup> Originally directed at Colleges of Further Education, this Report set out the curricular structures, by which to give the 16 to 18 year olds the training to improve their prospects of employment on a changing job market, in a way that has recommended itself to an increasing number of secondary schools. The **Plan's** proposal was to create a National Certificate to be administered by the new Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) to which any institution which followed its syllabus guidelines and approved learning outcomes could apply for course approval. In the seven years of its life a vast range of flexible 40 hour modular courses have been produced under the direction of its 'descriptors'.<sup>(18)</sup> While the initial examples were severely utilitarian, these modules have broadened out to include a number of generic language interests such as 'Communication 1 to 4' and 'Language Structure 1 to 3'. Indeed their ever growing range and flexibility are such as to give the secondary school department the opportunity to offer its senior pupils a menu of practically orientated courses by which to replace or to supplement the existing academic Scottish Certificates of Education.

In the same year as the publication of the **Action Plan**, the Manpower Services Commission launched its Technical and Vocational and Education Initiative (TVEI), a scheme through which educational institutions could bid for grants to finance any project that was deemed suitable for the injection of a social or vocational relevance into the curriculum. So rapid has been the take up that it is projected that by 1992 all secondary schools will be involved. The combined impact of SCOTVEC courses and TVEI inspired methodology is proving such that for many Secondary 5 pupils, English is as likely to mean 'Public Speaking' or 'Introduction to Popular Literature' as it is Shakespeare, interpretation passages and essay writing.

At the same time their capacity to revolutionise, as opposed to simply enrich, the curriculum has so far been limited by English teachers' ability to utilise their resources as the means for giving a more practical structure to existing course themes such as 'planning a holiday' or 'studying a collection of short stories'. The Morayshire TVEI project has, for example, produced a technologically updated 'Poetry' unit in which active learning strategies are

applied to such old concerns as alliteration, scansion and the ballad of 'Sir Patrick Spens'.<sup>(19)</sup> Likewise in Highland, National Certificate structures and TVEI money have combined to produce extensive 'Communication' modules in which, at Nairn, pupils collaborate on a pamphlet that will act as a tourist guide to the resort and, at Dingwall, report on a class investigation into that town's social services provision.<sup>(20)</sup>

These current adaptations are consistent with past experience in that they suggest that English in Scotland in 1990 is but the extension of a line of development by which the subject will always be able to absorb new practices into ever more contemporary versions of its own academic self. It would be naive, however, to assume that English will continue to be left free to pursue its own self-defining destiny since the various political and social forces which have always challenged it are now doing so with unprecedented insistence and authority. At the time of writing a whole army of proposals and agencies is massing on the borders of the Scottish secondary school ready to invade in the name of social accountability and consumer interests. Moreover, current Government legislation and Scottish Office directives are putting into position a number of checks upon school staff that will have the power to question their efficiency, monitor their curriculum and control their resourcing policies.

For some years now the 'Parents' Charter' has allowed parents to negotiate their children's entry into the school of their choice and now elected School Boards are to be attached to each institution which will give them the right, not only to steer administration, but to call for an opting out of Local Authority control altogether.<sup>(21)</sup> All this at a time when the Secretary of State has set up a Development Programme for pupils aged 5 to 14 that will cover all aspects of curriculum and assessment at these stages. As a consequence, Research and Development Groups, including one for 'Language', have been set up with the aim of producing content guidelines and identifying pupil attainment targets.<sup>(22)</sup> Schemes for Teacher appraisal and for the deregulation of in-service activity will complete the encirclement of the curriculum.<sup>(23)</sup>

One fear must be that this search for quality control and a marketable product will produce a demand for a schooling that is insensitive to the complex and subtle aims of an education which is striving to offer a broader personal development. The result could be a reductionist curriculum driven by periodic mastery tests and didactic teaching, a school experience that is confined to a training in 'basic' literacy and the given facts of an official Eng. Lit. culture. That is one possible direction; what is equally portentous is the way in which these mechanisms are entering a scene which is already occupied by a number of vocationally-orientated educational initiatives and with which they can now join forces. The peculiar combination of central direction, consumerist power and schemes designed to bring a fresh practical relevance to the old curriculum may be such as to produce a whole new educational culture that will quite overwhelm the traditions of education as a shared humane experience.

TVEI and the Action Plan in themselves have so far proved to be a manageable, even welcome, addition to the secondary school. They are, however, but the advance party of a whole task force of allied training schemes which hope to take possession of large areas of staff development, pupil learning styles and curricular content. TVEI, for example, has given rise to CAST (Curriculum Advice and Support Team), to TRIST (TVEI Related In Service Training) and these have been succeeded by a host of other buzzing acronyms - SWAP, APECS, LINK, EHE, APSD and BAMPOTS - front organisations financed by grants from external bodies such as the Manpower Services Commission or the Training Agency and devoted to the penetration of the curriculum by vocational interests and market values.<sup>(24)</sup> Chief among these is the Enterprise and Education Initiative (EEI),<sup>(25)</sup> a title that indicates it is a member of a series of Government propelled movements whose combined intention is to produce a restless, thrusting atmosphere of innovation and a critical questioning of traditional school practice. 'Enterprise' here means 'personal effectiveness', not scholarly excellence, and is seen as a capacity for productive action rather than a state of educated being.

These are developments that mark a profound departure from the character of the curriculum that has been gradually growing out of the form in which it was received in 1940. Taken

together they have the force of asking whether it is any longer tenable to maintain public education as a collective induction into the values of an academic community that is devoted to humane study and reflective understanding. And in the **Action Plan** there certainly lies the means to reshape the curriculum accordingly. If its patternings were to be widely adopted then the old universal curriculum could be fragmented into a thousand modules from which the student may negotiate his own programme. Their proliferation, and the accompanying advance of open learning systems, can mean that the student becomes self-reliant, setting his own targets, combining skills and topics from one subject with those of another, but always in so doing consulting only his own immediate, known interests. The teacher for her part would then be reduced to the role of facilitator, a para-pedagogic who, to a distanced clientele, dispenses packages of learning material, that have been made up in accordance with checklists and exemplars produced by centralised planning bodies. Under such pressures 'English' might then disappear under an infinite series of menu choices itemised as 'Media', 'Communication 4', 'Public Speaking', 'Interviewing Skills' or 'Language Structure 3'.

The vision is one in which the secondary school course breaks up into a junior course of basic literacy training to be followed in its upper reaches by a designer education, that is serviced by open learning technologies, driven by consumerist rights and accountable to the dictates of the free market. Instead of a continuing core of established disciplines and shared themes there would evolve an educational supermarket in which the student becomes a free wheeling customer picking and choosing his own off-the-shelf convenience courses.

#### **The Defence of English: Content and Method**

As the extravagance of the image suggests, this is, however, only a projection. Much will depend upon the enduring strength of the content and the methodology of the established subject's curriculum as to whether the infusion of practical relevance and free choice enriches or destroys. In the past, the Scottish version of English has added the virtues of inclusiveness and adaptability to the sound academic base that it inherited after the War. What has now to be recognised is that these are qualities which indicate vulnerability as well as strength.

Any record of the subject's progression since 1940 must recognise what can, in some respects, be judged to be a thinning of the story that it has to tell its pupils. Since that time - and increasingly from the 1960s onwards - English has been the object of a series of revisions which have had the effect of editing out of its syllabus whole chapters of detailed material. Although this has cleared the space for a greater variety of experience such as oral work, media investigations, computing, the video, social registers, project and thematic interests, these have been not so much solid subject matter as individual activities which have been sketched in under broad generic headings and set out in no particular order or combination. As the subject has relinquished its right to any prescriptive diet of literary or linguistic knowledge and as Schemes of Work have softened into 'guidelines' and syllabus 'notes', so English may appear to become less and less a systematic course of study and more and more a picaresque indulgence.

The clearest evidence of the extent to which the English landscape has been denuded of academic feature is to be witnessed in recent 'Higher' examinations. Compared to those in history or chemistry - for instance - where formal accounts must be rendered of key events, of specialised operations and structures and where extensive terminology must be mastered, the English paper assumes only the most elementary of terms such as 'tragedy', 'plot', 'character', words that easily merge with the everyday discourse by which it will be quite sufficient to answer its topic-free questions. Almost no knowledge of language as an intricate human system beyond 'sentence' and 'phrase' is demanded and even in the Literature Section, the generalised questions enable the candidate to avoid contact with any classic writers or the historical and social contexts in which they worked.

Increasingly since the 1940s English has taken flight from content, as teachers have been invited to concern themselves with 'process' rather than the set products of rhetoric, grammatical analysis, literary history and generic categorisation. With their disappearance there has, perhaps, been lost from view those evidently rigorous procedures and

definitive concepts that 50 years ago gave English such an assured identity as a substantial secondary school discipline. The shrinkage in prescribed content has been accompanied by an increasing abandonment since the 1960s of the traditionally didactic style of teaching. While the invitation into the classroom of group activity, of free discussion and personal project work represents a richer variety of learning experience, it has also opened up something of a pedagogical void that has yet to be filled by any assured cognitive strategy. The contemporary unwillingness to specify any one authoritative method, the desire to sample a menu of activity and to observe a romantic respect for the child's own powers have created a situation in which one noted Principal Teacher can claim that pupils 'learn English by doing it'.<sup>(26)</sup> The consequence may be a collective self-development - but it may also be a hopeful exposure of the class to a rotation of stimuli in the search for any means of sparking off a formative reaction that is left to function by an assumed autogeneration.

Surveys in the early 1980s by both Stirling University and SCRE join HMI observations in revealing in secondary English classrooms the fitful presence of any coherent theory of language learning at work.<sup>(27)</sup> The desire to adopt a child-minded approach might now be widespread but often it appears to be satisfied by the provision of interesting materials and a measure of expressive freedom rather than the utilisation of an instructional programme based on the child's own learning processes or diagnosis of cognitive need. Colin Peacock of Stirling has described the prevailing approach to writing as following 'the flotation' method since pupils are free to make an untutored approach to their remit, leaving the sought after expressive qualities to float to the surface of their composition as an upsurge of natural ability or as a manifestation of rapport with the given task.<sup>(28)</sup> In reading there has appeared to be a similar reliance on the open response interspersed by regular reversions to oldfashioned comprehension testing, with neither approach able to help pupils to develop their own interpretative strategies.<sup>(29)</sup>

At times it would appear that twentyfive years of revisionary attenuation have resulted in an English which is no longer wholly secure in its own academic identity. The longstanding

Scottish tenet that the subject exists to induct the pupil into rational adult ways is still in evidence among the aims and structures of Standard Grade but the burden of its fulfilment has shifted from content and procedure to generalised activity. The vacuum left by the expulsion of content has come to be occupied by a round of mode by mode 'purposes'. At its most notional, 'Doing English' can come to mean just that, something the pupil does in the space in the timetable between geography and P.E., a ritualistic round of pretend angry letters to the press, of mock enquiries into vivisection or growing up, of intense evocations of childhood fears and seasonal joys, of interpretation tests, Animal Farms and practice job applications.

A subject which is so shy of giving the substantiality of a required content to its essential concerns is cutting at the roots of its own historical authority. The old Higher paper, for instance, not only implied a detailed syllabus but acted as a confident public statement - that certain texts mattered, that the essay and the interpretation passage stood as a consummative test of rational thinking and expression, that to be educated in 'English' meant the assured profession of a known range of grammatical and rhetorical matter and that such knowledge would add lustre to the individual's own utterance. In contrast, the present Higher and Standard Grade requirements can only seem anaemic: the opening paragraphs of the Arrangements offer the child's needs as their aim but these are simply sketched in to act as a reference point for the lists of generalised modes and assumed purposes that make up the bulk of the document.

#### **The Way Ahead: the Search for an Effective Methodology**

The essential requirement now is for Scottish teachers to establish a full bodied set of practices and experience that will transform the diagrammatic Growth of the Arrangements into a curricular statement of real power, as a demonstration of the belief that English is not a mere list of notional functions but is the indispensable means by which the individual may be enabled to articulate a response to the most significant circumstances of his life and to participate in the leading social and cultural experience of the community. The planning emphasis must shift from the sketching out of types of tasks to the full depiction of the qualities

of experience that make up a secondary school education in English and to the concepts, structures and knowledge that will give them into the possession of the pupil.

Such a transference is as dependent upon effective methodology as it is upon decisiveness of content. In this respect the Arrangements have been more forthright in that they have elected to make 'formative assessment' the omnipotent teaching strategy which will indeed create a learning relationship between the desired academic outcome and the pupils' own attempts to achieve it. Its operation was neatly summed up at the very outset of the Standard Grade movement by the seminal CCE document of 1978: 'The teacher seeks a response to what he offers his pupils. He, in turn, responds to their responses, moving them along a direction heading towards his general aims....'(30)

At its earliest and simplest this was exemplified by the drafting approach to writing that enthused HMI Quentin Cramb when he encountered it during the 1970s in the best remedial work of that time. These early efforts have not, however, been followed by similar work of such widespread acceptability in other areas of the syllabus, and even in the writing classroom, formative assessment has not yet been completely mastered - there have been the logistical difficulties in trying to offer constructive, personal, in-progress guidance to a whole class and conceptual uncertainties as to the distinction between teacher intervention which is genuinely advisory and that which is judgemental. Indeed 'Formative assessment' is proving to be an almost elusively subtle inter-relationship, one that presumes an essentially one to one partnership between teacher and taught, a matter for the patient, empathetic response rather than the directive anticipation. The CCE image is that of a delicately individualist dialogue which quite ignores the actuality of 30 strong classes and remorseless examination curricula.

Consequently, there has been a continued failure to convert this ideal pattern into the clear procedural terms that take the teacher beyond the simple notion of person to person responsiveness. Although the intentions of the post war syllabus have been to give its English

pupils a personally developmental experience, the inability to give a teaching substance to this aspiration has resulted in, all too frequently, a reversion to the old didactic certainties or a naive reliance upon the capacity of the stimulating material to arouse a natural creativity within the child. What has become more and more urgent in the years since the 6th Advisory Council appointed the interests of the individual child to be the central purpose of secondary education, has been the working out of a teaching technique that would make a convincing enactment of an individualist ambition that must seek its fulfilment within the crowded arena of the daily classroom.

To achieve this, would mean the final resolution of the two interests that have been intertwined around the postwar history of secondary school English. It is the determined creation of a syllabus that is neither child nor subject-bound but is centred on a concern for the pupil-as-learner. As a survey of the most recent advisory materials that have been issued as part of the continuing Standard Grade developments demonstrate, a beginning has been made. Helen Matthews' booklet on the teaching of *Sailmaker*, for example,<sup>(31)</sup> is evidence of how a satisfying author like Alan Spence may be made accessible when his work is explored through a number of successively related investigative tasks that are designed to lead into an active understanding of concepts such as plot, characterisation, point of view.

Her work is the yield from action research carried out as a seconded curriculum development officer and is informed by an interest in how cognitive theory may be utilised to answer the challenge of effectively approaching traditional academic goals even among the less able. Indeed it might well be that it is the research energies released by the Munn and Dunning programme rather than the ingredients of the formal Arrangements that represent the real step forward. What has distinguished this work has been their adoption of the interactional interest in structuring the learning experience of school children so as to offer them the chance to build up a repertoire of strategies that will give them control over their own work. Funded projects such as the Stirling University enquiry into methods of writing instruction for 14 to 16 year olds, the work in Moray House and Aberdeen Colleges of Education on the application of

formative assessment principles<sup>(32)</sup> in both discussion skills and reading capacities in the same age groups, show how an educational psychologist's interest in learning processes may be allied to a regard for natural language development and inventive pedagogy that promises to produce a methodology in which the achievement of academic criteria can become a series of creative challenges for both pupil and teacher.

#### **The Scottish Way: Tradition and Progress**

The hope now must be that these authoritative researches will expand so as to give the subject's teachers a methodology that will be as effective as its aims are persuasive. If so then they will at last have given power to what in the past has been a somewhat abstract, even mechanical invocation of English as the secondary school's response to the child's 'needs'.

They will also have helped bring a cogent control to what has appeared to some to be a mob of disparate verbal practices flung together by a merely historical circumstance. The subject in Scotland has been criticised as being an epistemological ragbag, a jumbling together of a number of separate and socially determined practices.<sup>(33)</sup> To the traditional pursuit of scholarship, cultural induction and utilitarian skills the postwar concern for child-centred interest has added other ingredients. In the newly comprehensive schools of the 1960s there was an insistence on socially relevant material and investigative activity; these have now been succeeded by the more recent drive towards universal certification and wider consumer choice which have led to oracy, mixed ability teaching and modular flexibility. The consequence is a Standard Grade course for all in which can be found representations from each of these movements: to literary appreciation and grammar work, basic competence teaching and rhetorical study, the essay, the interpretation passage and the critical piece, add in thematically directed novels and poems, group discussion and creative writing, followed by Scottish resources, media studies, communication training, community projects, vocational and technical preparation. An assemblage of skills, experiences and artefacts now tenuously held together by the notion of linguistic purposes.

To take exception to such a rich assortment would, however, be to misunderstand the leading impulse of an educational tradition that has always striven for breadth within a lucid ordering of experience. It would also be to undervalue its continuing faith in what is essentially a humane interpretation of the nature of educated citizenship, one that holds it to subsist in completeness of knowledge, in a combination of the useful and the edifying, in an understanding of the uses to which the native tongue can be put.

As the century draws towards its close, the hope must be that the intellectual vigour which was used to construct the thorough academic curriculum that held sway before the war and then, afterwards, to pursue its satisfactory replacement will now be used to develop the methods that will enable the old ideal of a broadly based, responsible and thoroughly literate education to be achieved within the contemporary setting of a universal secondary schooling. If so, then this would be a characteristically Scottish way of fulfilling the aims set out in the country's most celebrated educational document, that of 'the full and harmonious development' of all the nation's young people.

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## **PART 5 - AN ENGLISH TEACHING FOR THE 1990s**

### **CHAPTER 12: ENGLISH THE SCOTTISH WAY**

#### **A Slow Progress: Central Action and Teacher Inertia**

Viewed in retrospect, the record of Scotland's secondary education since 1940 may appear to be one of orderly progress in which events have been held together by a strong centre and enriched by a steadily expanding professional involvement.

In sociological terms its postwar development may be described as an exercise in co-ordinated pluralism. An era of universal secondary schooling, of rising pupil numbers and of growing curricular complexity has prompted the Scottish Education Department to seek ways of sharing the burden of management without, however, surrendering its well-established hegemony over the country's educational system.

During that time the Department's solution has been to devolve powers to a range of new bodies; these were to act as agencies for firmly agreed central policies rather than to become rival centres of influence. When in the 1960s new standing organisations such as an Examination Board and an advisory Central Committee were set up they were so on the basis of an invited membership who had been handpicked according to the reliability of their work in the field; all advice and administration were to be kept within a well patrolled Edinburgh enclosure. Later when, following the Munn and Dunning Reports, new course structures had to be drawn up to serve the expanding aspirations of the secondary school population, a strategy of careful piloting under Inspectorial monitorship enabled the Department to operate what was, effectively, a system of recruitment, to its policies, of exemplary subject teachers. In recent years this co-ordination has been further refined by the streamlining of the whole CCC structure into fewer bodies and a series of clearly remitted 'Central Support Groups' that could perform a task force role in the service of an ever more extensive range of certificate courses.

In these ways the SED has been able to bring its traditional constraints of HMI supervision and national assessment procedures to bear upon all the reforming energies that have been released by the postwar drive towards a more complete and equitable educational service. The result is that although the administration of the Scottish secondary curriculum has necessarily been opened up, this has been accomplished in a carefully orchestrated way, the proliferation of parts a recognition of the complexity of the score rather than any willingness to permit a range of free playing activity.

'Co-ordinated pluralism' is, however, more an analytical model than it is a precise description. The search for an explanation of the multifarious events that have propelled the secondary school from its divisive, academic narrowness in 1940 to the comprehensive Standard courses of today might just as reasonably take us into another metaphorical field. Given the degree of stage management that has been involved and the pattern of conflicts and resolutions that has been created, we could, for example, view the whole story as a form of drama. The analogy can be drawn in some detail: the movement through a series of well defined acts of the Advisory Council Report, the CCC and its Bulletins, the Munn and Dunning programme; the old 'System' of the SED and the new 'Curriculum' of the Advisory Council as protagonists; the cueing in of later actors such as the SEB, the CCC, the Feasibility Study and SCOTVEC modules.

Indeed the comparison may be extended still further. These players might have been divided in their views at the outset on how the nation's young should be brought up - academic discipline or child-centred indulgence? - but the binding motive has always been to work towards a shared way of educational life. Throughout, the inherited values have proved to be thicker than the water of new ideologies: national citizenship, the balanced syllabus, the importance of placing the pupil within a clearly set framework of studies, the final examination destiny - these are the ties that have drawn Department, Committee and School within the one Scottish family of educational customs and belief. Inside this intimate circle, the SED and its HMIs have maintained a position that has been essentially patriarchal, one

that has been informed by a sense of anxious guardianship over the past and an abiding concern for proper curricular behaviour.

In short, the progress since the war of the nation's secondary school curriculum can be viewed as a domestic drama, that has been played out by a repertory company of shared experiences and upbringing, the various positions which have been taken up being no more than a contribution towards the common purpose of adapting the old ways to the needs of the latest generation, their dissensions merely the episodes of an orderly family saga.

It is a scenario that appears to confirm the sociological pattern. The facility with which such extrapolations may be made is, however, one that betrays the limitation of analogies and of sociological modelling alike. Essentially, they are rationalisations of experience which, in their drive to organize history into a manageable shape, will oversimplify to an extent that may mislead any who wish to further its onward motion. 'Co-ordinated pluralism' would indicate that the way the Scottish policy-maker should ensure yet more effective development of the secondary curriculum would be to work towards the achievement of a state of dynamic equilibrium among the various agencies that have been established to share in that task. That success will be gained by simply fashioning SED, CCC, SEB, EIS, SCOTVEC and TVEI into a matrix of mutually supporting roles and cross references. Likewise, to cast the histories of these agencies as a drama is to impose upon them an overinsistent narrative logic, one that carries with it a sense of movement towards a dénouement in which all complexities will be harmonised into some final curtain solution. By these comparative devices 'change' is thus transmuted into an artefact which appears to offer a working, not merely a descriptive, model.

However, if we turn away from the centre stage that has been occupied by Departmental initiatives, reports, committee schemes, then we will catch a much less clear account of the last fifty years. From the correspondence columns of the SEJ and the TESS, in the routine stories of local meetings as well as among the memories of my interviewees, there has emerged little assured sense among the teachers themselves of having participated in a steady onward

march. Far from receiving their resolution, the major concerns, moreover, have remained much the same: the current themes under treatment by Standard Grade, TVEI, the 10-14 Report, the 5-14 Research and Development Group, the latest Departmental proposals for staff appraisal, national testing and curricular guidelines are contemporary echoes of the anxious voices that were being raised in the 1940s. At the time when the Sixth Advisory Council were holding their first meetings, the dominant professional and public anxieties were then, as now, standards of literacy, the relationship of the school to a fastchanging modern world, oracy, the influence of examinations over the curriculum, the personal relevance of the pupils' experience and the nature of teachers' classroom expertise.

Nor, during this time, has change been worked according to any clear administrative or narrative schedule. Only now, some 17 years after the original teacher campaign for the Examination Board and the Department to re-examine what it argued was an outdated senior school syllabus, is the new Standard Grade in English about to be fully and finally implemented. To an outsider, such as Bill Hughes of the Confederation of British Industries' Education and Training Committee the rate of progress is 'absurd' - 'If schools were a commercial enterprise they would be out of business!'<sup>(1)</sup> Asked how much progress he estimated English teaching in Scotland to have made during his time, the man who is generally agreed to have been its most influential figure over the last 40 years, W A Gatherer, can only conclude that it is 'astonishing and saddening' just how little actual classroom practice had altered.<sup>(2)</sup> The bleakness of the conclusion corresponds to the findings of the range of investigative projects that were carried out in the early 1980s, by SCRE, Moray House and Aberdeen Colleges of Education and the University of Stirling and by the SED itself in its reports on 'Educational Technology' and School 'Management'<sup>(3)</sup>. that whatever the central policymakers might be advocating, most teaching pursued the even tenor of its academic ways, that writing proceeded with little drafting or peer evaluation being attempted, that reading remained a matter of close comprehension testing while group discussion was silenced in favour of the more comfortably didactic master's voice.<sup>(4)</sup>

### **A Proliferation of Agents: Engaging the Teacher in Curriculum Change**

Given such obduracy it is tempting to re-time the metaphor and to think of curriculum development in Scotland not in dramatic but in geological terms, that is as a process by which the new will only gradually erode the familiar landmarks of whole class lectures and factual categorisation. The implication then for the would be reformer operating from his Edinburgh base is that little can be done except to keep the surface of such an unyielding landscape neat and tidy while the forces of change slowly sweep over it in their own natural time. Such a patient fatalism would, however, be misjudged. Measured over the three to five year span that the average curriculum project sets itself very little new growth may be observed but over the 50 years since 1940 significant changes have managed to take root. The contrast, for example, between the new and the old Higher English paper is indeed striking: whereas in 1940 candidates were confined to an entirely teacher-given round of essays, interpretation, grammar exercises and prepared questions on the great works of literature, their current descendents are released into an open terrain of varied activity that includes a personal review of a self-chosen piece of reading, engagement with journalism and topical argument, practical criticism, media issues, the carrying out of an individual investigation into a current issue, and the drafting of a piece of personal imaginative writing to submit to the Board in folio form.

Occasionally, moreover, change has been relatively swift and unpredictably far-reaching in its consequences. While, for example, it took 7 years from Circular 312 to the setting of the first O'Grade paper in 1962, the uptake of the new examination was so rapid that within a few years it had come so to dominate the fourth year syllabus that the old bipartite system was quite swept away, and with it the Brunton Report's 'official' advocacy of a junior secondary practical course. This, in its turn, brought about the pressures on the curriculum that set in train the events that led to Munn and Dunning and on to Standard Grade. Similarly, while the teaching unions' Industrial Action between 1985 and 1987 arrested all new curriculum development, it was settled in a way that led to the simplification of Standard Grade assessment procedures and the setting up of a system of 'Central Support Group' assistance.

The conversion of an elaborate procedure for the evaluation of talk and listening into one in which teachers themselves will offer an overall grading for talk and discussion promises to do more to implant group activity into the classroom than all the previous CCE urgings combined. In the same way the distribution of exemplar units by the CSG will ensure that progressive teaching material goes direct into every English department in the land.

Amidst such ambiguities, two dominant impressions emerge: change has usually been slower to come about than those who planned it anticipated and, when it does occur, it is liable to do so as an incalculable response by the profession at large to some quite specific proposal from the centre. And, arising from these, there follows this conclusion: the final power to impede, to hasten or to shape the character of events rests with those who frequently are the least conscious of their original formulation - the teachers.

If the old pre-war academic tradition has shown itself to be remarkably durable in its capacity to absorb new ideas and to make them its didactic own then this is because curriculum development emerges not as a series of dramatic progressions but as a slowly evolving way of life, one that is shared by the thousands of 'ordinary' English teachers who follow it in the powerful obscurity of their classrooms. If, however, the reforms that emanate from the distant centre can be so formulated as to engage with these teachers' day to day concerns, that is with the logical detail of their subject syllabus, the successful preparation of their pupils for national examination and the satisfaction of their anxiety to feel in control of their own practice, then a decisive change can be achieved. What 50 years of English have shown is that the official report, however confidently illuminating it may be, will not of itself light up any classroom. Change is not to be located in the deliberations of public committees working to well defined remits but lies within the habits and the expectations of the unknown teacher.

That this truth has been accorded some recognition at official level since 1940 may be seen from the way in which an increasingly sophisticated set of mechanisms has been engineered to engage the profession in the development of the curriculum. The present result is that the

SED now sits at the centre of a wide range of functional and advisory bodies: the Consultative Council on the Curriculum<sup>(5)</sup> and its offshoots such as the Central Support Group, the Scottish Council for Research in Education, the Scottish Curriculum Development Services, the Scottish Examination Board, the Scottish Council for Staff Development in Education (SCoSDE), Committee of Principals of Colleges of Education. From this matrix, various combinations can be readily assembled to carry out specific activities, such as the Research and Development Group which is currently considering the 5 to 14 guidelines, the Joint Working Parties that worked on the revised Higher and Standard Grade courses or the 27 projects in the Colleges of Education and Universities which were commissioned to investigate the implementation of aspects of the Munn and Dunning proposals.

This makes for a neatly dovetailed structure that increasingly is being replicated at local level. In a region such as Grampian, for example, the subject Adviser is at the centre of a concatenation of support groups, working parties, seconded teachers who act as curriculum development officers, of TVEI organizers and inservice planning groups.

In many respects this is a system that has served the country well. The steady proliferation of agencies has enabled the centre to broaden its consultative base in step with the increasing complexity of its curricular operations. The result has been an orderly development which has maintained continuity with the strongest traditions of Scottish education. Indeed so assured, so widely understood, has this progress been, that when recently the CCC came to review the multitude of documentation which has been produced over the last decade, it felt that it was easily able to sum it all up in one straightforward scheme that could - characteristically - be issued as a 'guideline' to all headteachers. **Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages<sup>(6)</sup>** argues that the familiar academic curriculum can achieve sufficient renewal to accommodate the new complex demands of the 1990s by treating its subjects as clear frameworks into which can be fitted the 'modes', 'skills', 'key elements' and 'processes' that define a fully modern schooling. In 35 crisp pages it confidently delineates a universal timetable which derives authority from the fact that it is but the latest embodiment of the old

national ideal of the mature citizen as the product of a rational, broad and well balanced education.

The rapid production, and ready acceptance, of such a document testify to the capacity of the Scottish system to negotiate clearcut, acceptably progressive curricular proposals. Standard Grade English, for instance, could be said to represent a national consensus in that it is the outcome of a thorough process of debate, field testing and joint working party during which HMI, CCC and the specially commissioned research projects co-operated in a formative process that enabled them to work out the design and assessment schemes which won acceptance for a more liberal English syllabus than had initially been envisaged by the terms of the Munn and Dunning Reports.

#### **Dissemination versus Engagement: Change as a Professional Way of Life**

Yet, as this self-same example illustrates, this breadth and clarity of decision-making has not yet been sufficient to ensure a correspondingly thoroughgoing regeneration of classroom practice. It is worth, therefore, seeking out the sources of power that drive curriculum development in order to discover the extent to which the average teacher can tap into them.

The constant point in this firmament of advisory bodies has been the HMI. Although his is a position which now ensures that he moves in partnership with the profession, rather than merely directs and appraises it, the scope for individual influence by a small number of officials remains considerable - as the Inspectorate's leading role in Standard Grade demonstrates. It is no coincidence that on the whole, the most prominent figures in English in post-war Scotland have been not writers, university educationists, researchers or outstanding teachers but Inspectors - Andrew Chirnside, Quentin Cramb, James Alison, above all W A Gatherer. Within a largely corporate setting they have enjoyed a freedom that has been secured by their commanding overview of a small country's schools. Not only have teachers been ready to concede to them as their all-seeing advisers in the formulation of its English teaching policy. To the query as to whether the individual Inspector is ever put under pressure

by superiors within the Department to accommodate a political line or to meet an economic expediency in his recommendations, Jim Alison offers the firm rebuttal: 'We are the point of reference, the experts that others consult ... we are trusted to be the English experts and our advice is valued as such'.<sup>(7)</sup>

No doubt in this the Department is able to act upon a deeply engrained assumption that a system of carefully vetted appointments into a 'Service', which is organized as a command hierarchy operating through highly detailed reporting procedures, will envelop the individual member in a web of powerful loyalties - 'A delicate system dependent on the integrity of its members and on half-formulated assumptions'.<sup>(8)</sup> It is also evident that in the educational world at large the Inspector carries an authority which derives from a personal standing that cannot be wholly explained in terms of ability, record or office. Certainly in Alison's description of his immediate colleagues he wishes to pay tribute to their acumen and high achievement as teachers, but he does so in terms which indicate the extent to which they share the same values, practise similar habits of judgment. Although diverse as personalities and from a range of backgrounds, they all share the same enthusiasm for the centrality of literature, have a similar faith in their subject as a discipline that is dedicated to the training of the sensibility and the achievement of a humane understanding. As he puts it 'We have all grown up within the subject.'

For this reason the HMI English Panel has been content to stand as an occasional gathering of like-minded devotees rather than act as an organized command force - indeed it is only in the last few years that it has felt a need to articulate the criteria which it has hitherto been happy to regard as an implicitly shared possession.<sup>(9)</sup> Similarly, English Inspectors have been comfortably integrated into the work of the various curriculum committees on which they have invariably served as ex-officio members. Within the CCE they have been able to co-operate with the other members as fellow professionals dedicated to furthering the cause of English within the Scottish curriculum. As the recollection of Sydney Smyth <sup>(10)</sup> of his 20 year involvement with the CCC has it on only one occasion has there been a significant clash with

the Department and that came over a proposed section of the Committee's 1975 'The English Department' which was judged to carry difficult resource implications.<sup>(11)</sup> The matter was not one of philosophy but finance and was in any case smoothly resolved through the adoption of a compromise wording. More typically, the HMI has been content to extend to others the habits of responsible freedom and mutual respect that he enjoys within the Department. Thus Smyth can commend the work of Quentin Cramb and Jim Alison as 'models of sensitive leadership' and point to the 'amazing amount of autonomy' he and Gordon Liddell were permitted to enjoy in all their CITE, and later SCDS, operations.<sup>(12)</sup>

If these forces have been collegiate rather than autocratic, they have not proved to be comprehensively so. HMIs, CCE, and SEB members have come together as participants in an English subject culture, a professional way of life that is as much a matter of behaviour and self-perception as it is of explicit belief. While they appear to hold to the common Scottish respect for the academic virtues their original position as teachers noted for innovation, and their present habitation of a world in which viewpoints are mediated through papers, reports and working group meetings, have led them to view the curriculum as an object for modestly progressive development and continual updating. The very experiences which can unite a minority can, however, project an image of Curriculum Development as an exclusive enterprise, a detached practice that can render teachers into the resentful and uncomprehending objects of another's reforming enthusiasms.

The abiding problem for those in charge of the post war Scottish system has been to devise ways of enabling - or persuading - the schools to participate in their progressivist concerns. Throughout that period a number of strategies have been attempted. The most prominent has been the use of an enlightened patronage through which outstanding talents have been enlisted onto consultative bodies and working parties and - most ambitiously during the Munn and Dunning Feasibility studies - pilot schemes. To complement their work, a number of dissemination procedures have been employed and these have ranged from the use of HMIs to act as roving agents - what W A Gatherer has termed a Johnny Appleseed role<sup>(13)</sup> - to the

establishment of a Centre of Information in Edinburgh, complete with its own journal, and to the commissioning of Development Officers for new courses such as the Revised Higher and TVEI. From the Chesters days of the 1950s, what has come to be termed 'the cascade model' has been increasingly deployed; strategically placed personnel such as advisers, College of Education Staff and Principal teachers are invited to attend residential courses from which, suitably informed and energised, they can carry the good news back to their own localities. In the 1960s the SED experimented with the setting up of magnet centres such as the promotion of Moray House/Edinburgh University as a centre for the new linguistics - many College of Education lecturers and school staff were sponsored to take the Diploma in Applied Linguistics at that time. Most recently central units such as the Central Support Groups have been set up to produce and to distribute examples of good syllabus work. Perhaps the most extensive scheme of all has been the establishment of local development centres to give practical implementation to the new ideas emanating from the centre. At their most prolific in the *Bulletins*' days, they mostly petered out within a few years; however, more recently, Local Authorities have adopted the practice of seconding teachers for task-specific work such as the production of Standard Grade units or the development of computing in local English classrooms.

Although these developmental strategies have been sufficiently extensive and varied to achieve a significant broadening of the decision making base their nett effect has been to recruit new strength to the centre. And those who do enter its committees and sit on its working parties enjoy a self-sustaining culture of change that is nourished by personal contact and shared experience. A further feature of its structuring has been the high degree of cross membership and role rotation, a phenomenon that has reinforced the impression of a self-perpetuating curriculum Establishment, of a Board Room Top talking Down to the country's thousands of classroom floor teachers. Criticisms of the perceived gap between an Edinburgh Them and the Scottish teacher Us have persisted. Despite the care with which the Standard Grade project marshalled all available forces to assist in its development, despite the gradualism of its introduction, its outcome has frequently been viewed as an imposition. In 1987 the EIS reported a survey it had carried out into the state of readiness of the country's

English departments to undertake the new course<sup>(14)</sup>; while the vast majority professed to welcome its philosophy, they were resentfully apprehensive concerning its implementation: 'Cynicism was widespread: it was felt that the authorities simply followed whatever trend became fashionable and gave little recognition to the efforts of ordinary teachers to put these ideas into practice. There was a general feeling of demoralisation and confusion...'

The Scottish system of curriculum development that has evolved since the war has had its successes. Without the partnership that it has forged between advisory body and executive action, English could not have been guided towards a state where, now, it has become considerably richer in content and activity than was the case when it was criticised by the 1947 Advisory Council for its academic narrowness. The fact that it has not yet developed a pedagogy to convert the ambitious scope of its current teaching aims into a genuine learning experience for all of its pupils is, however, significant. Such a transformation will only occur if the teachers employ, indeed develop, the necessary classroom practices to make it so. And this is a degree of professional growth that can only be brought about by their being offered a sense of valued participation in the very process of decision-making, research and evaluation upon which the realisation of good subject intentions depends. For them equally curriculum development, not simple implementation, must become a way of life.

#### **Post-War Complexities and Pre War Consensus: the Demands upon the Teacher.**

It must be confessed that the wider social and educational developments which have taken place since the war, while making the need for unity of reforming purpose all the more urgent, have also ensured that its attainment will become increasingly difficult. In this respect, the present dissonances make an instructive contrast to the homogeneous system of 40 years ago. Until the innovations of the 1960s the curriculum was very much under the control of the HMIs, an arrangement whose economy of command reflected a singlemindedness of teaching and assessment attitude that was shared by both Inspector and inspected. Essentially, it was designed for the maintenance of existing procedures, there to guarantee that the inherited situation would remain as it was. That simple consensus first questioned by the Advisory

Council in 1947, began to break up a quarter of a century ago. The reforming energies that were then released did not, however, establish a lasting replacement. The authors of the SED publication in 1984 *Educational Disadvantage Ten Years On*<sup>(15)</sup>, for instance, were forced to preface their report with a chapter entitled 'Disenchantment' because the story they had to tell was of a national loss of faith in the possibility of achieving social stability through the reconstruction of the education services. That was an optimism which had risen to its peak during the 1960s when an era of well financed social and educational expansion had been driven by the hope that the widening of access to senior secondary schooling would open up unlimited life opportunities - and that an English modernised so as to make it thematically and linguistically relevant would play a central part in that process.

Fifteen years of financial cutback and persistent communal problems during which Britain has become a markedly more complex, pluralistic society have impelled the search for more flexible curricular structures which are yet capable of bearing an ever greater load of educational aspiration. The 1989 paper *Curriculum Design* has suggested that a traditional subject-based programme should be able to meet these obligations but only if it is used as a series of interlocking units into which must - somehow - be introduced the broad set of generic, personal, social and cognitive 'skills' that are now deemed essential to a balanced education. This is an argument which, despite a surface familiarity, makes it quite clear that the old and widely understood academic simplicities are no longer available to a profession that must search for new ways of creating a meaningful secondary experience for all its pupils.

These are pressures that bear especially heavily upon the English teacher. Because the pre-war syllabus aimed at a straightforward transmission of fixed knowledge and a simple acculturation, the principle of conformity could guide both content and method - the essay, rhetoric, Latinate grammar, the literary classics through imitation, drill, testing. Even the Advisory Council's alternative was essentially a generously humane version of educated citizenship, a fulfilment that confidently rested upon an orthodox concept of Christian democracy. Though 20 years of subsequent social mobility and rising living standards gave

an ever more urgent emphasis to individual needs, the assumption could still be made that English could be updated so as to offer a relevant experience - language study now devoted to an analysis of social registers, literary applications of contemporary fiction and war poetry, interpretation and composition work organized into edifying projects. And teaching could still be held within a comfortable range of didactic procedures - literature was a codification of salutary behaviour that had to be analyzed and appreciated, language a set of socially decorous usages that ought to be practised, the project a logically thematic programme through which the pupil had to be guided.

In the last decade, however, the explosion of knowledge and the pace of communal and vocational change have been such as to extend dramatically the varieties of understanding and the resourcefulness in usage required of the individual if she is to function effectively in contemporary life. English must therefore forsake both the academic transmission and the personal moulding of past methodologies and aim instead at assisting the pupil towards her own personal autonomy. The goal must now be to give her the insight into language processes, the powers of judgment and the command of communicative strategy that will enable her to deal effectively with any circumstance, including the seeking out of fresh understandings for herself.

During all this time the teacher's position has become increasingly complex. Although the old academic methodology that was a projection of his own status as an M.A. could not simply be transported into the era of comprehensivisation, his role could initially still be one of guidance and selection; he could still act as an agent of a confident tradition of art-texts and critical procedures that had become enlivened but not supplanted by the new regard for the child's interests. Twenty years of mixed ability teaching and of intensive course development have now shown that he must struggle to make sense of the new demand that he help each of his charges to become an independent user of language through a range of formative assessment methodologies. This is a task that asks that he possess a resourceful understanding of cognitive psychology, have a command of classroom strategies, maintain an analytical grasp

of current language usages and their media and have sufficient insight into diagnostic problems to devise individualised programmes.

What has made the English teacher's situation even more tentative has been the absence of any obvious parent discipline which would carry clear instructional imperatives. The early version of the subject was an adaptation of 19th Century scholarship; in the 1960s a training in practical criticism and in Leavisite valuations appeared to enable the university to continue to offer a satisfactory epistemological model. Now in its openness to individual need and to the range of all possible language experience, contemporary 'English' has become very much a school invention, a construct that is quite unlike the university course through which each of its teachers will have qualified. A typical Standard Grade programme will be a mix of literature study, grammar, and socio linguistics, of media studies, ethics, speech and drama skills, rhetoric, study skills, research methodology and communication work. Out of all this montage an authoritative matching pedagogy has yet to emerge. Current approaches tend to be an eclectic piecing together of traditional English procedures - composition, interpretation, literary appreciation - and current educational psychology: Bloom for aims and objective planning, mastery learning from Gagné, information processing, Ausabel's formative assessment strategies, transatlantic drafting techniques in writing and a topic sequence that justifies its blend of repetition and freedom by invoking Piaget's developmental theory and Bruner's spiral curriculum.

More than ever does the English teacher have to work out her own version of a subject that must be constantly made and remade in accordance with the shifting demands of modern social and individual need. It is no longer enough to continue to treat the new simply as a subject matter that can be absorbed into the old academic procedures of exposition and imitative practice. There must instead be an acceptance of the constancy of change and a willingness to enquire into the processes of language and its learning. Yet the present SCRE research into *The Qualities of Teachers*<sup>(16)</sup> shows that they do not talk about their work in this way at all, that they do not propound 'aims' and set about planning 'learning outcomes' to be 'delivered'

and 'managed'. Nor do they think of themselves as 'curriculum developers'. Rather they see themselves as being caught up in an unbending sequence of pragmatic actions that are intended to keep the pupils going and to achieve that amalgam of lesson content, pupil interest and social control that will bring about the conditions for productive work. Their strategies are designed to cope with the immediacy of their situation and they emanate from a fund of professional lore and internalized experiences that have been picked up rather than reasoned out.

It is a finding that matches the University of Stirling's earlier investigation into the classroom styles of the average comprehensive school.<sup>(17)</sup> There it was revealed that teacher-centred work persisted because teachers were too busy holding the ring among the competing claims of national exams, institutional constraints, resources scarcity and disciplinary routines, too busy, in other words, simply managing the classroom events of the day to think of the problem-solving, enactive or discursive learning alternatives, to what they were didactically doing, as anything but remote idealism. For the teacher, it would seem, the classroom is a sphere of action upon which converge a multitude of highly palpable considerations; theirs is a world of operational priorities, not of long-term theory.

Suggestions that they change can at best appear an irrelevance, at worst an overwhelming intrusion. Trevor Johns<sup>(18)</sup> has described how, when after 30 years of faithful classroom stint he was elevated to become Angus's first Adviser in Secondary Education, he had 'the not happy job of convincing' his erstwhile colleagues: 'The only thing that saved me from mutilation was that I was old and had newly been a practitioner!' Any innovation must fit into existing structures and, ultimately, only teachers themselves can do this; curriculum development must engage with their sense of professional reality. One of the enduring strengths of the academic tradition was that its theoretical principles found tangible expression in the examination calendar, the categorisations of the Scheme of Work, the four square classrooms and the rigorous discipline. There was no cultural gap between these solid localisations and the centre. There were no advisers, no CCC bulletins, no Examination Board edicts, only the

Inspector and his annual visits, which with their ritualistic cross-examinations and displays of erudition, were a manifestation of the unity of purpose that held together both director and directed.

**The Education of the Teacher: from Pragmatism to an Extended Professionalism.**

It is evident that real teaching change will only come about if the practitioner can enter into the processes of professional realisation that those who now advise him have passed through. If their experience of enquiry, debate and experimentation are to become as intimate a circumstance in his daily life as that of scholarship and academic conservation were for his predecessor, then each of the forces that shape his working life must conspire to create this effect: personal education, professional training and retraining, the national assessment system, his professional freedoms. The paradox that was noted by Gordon Liddell in 1975, that Scotland has some of the most highly educated secondary yet professionally insecure school teachers in the world, still stands.<sup>(19)</sup> What their own successful ascendancy through school examinations, Highers and university degree has ensured is that they have become immersed in the values of their subject, not in the learning needs of the 99% who will never follow them over that route.

In the immediate post war decades, its critics saw the syllabus as aspiring to that of the university, since that was the point of destination for the lad o' pairts and the model for a truly secondary education. Since the expansion in numbers that took place in the 1960s and the setting up of working parties to carry out the necessary revaluations, the universities have come to recognise the wider obligations that the school owes its pupils. Yet while their representatives have played a co-operative role in these revisions, the Scottish universities have continued to exercise a suspicious vigilance over the secondary course. Operating through the Scottish Universities Committee on Examinations (SUCE) their English Panel has maintained a firm advocacy of external assessment combined with an enthusiasm for 'formal interpretation exercises', the inculcation of an 'adequate critical vocabulary' and an historically located study of literature.<sup>(20)</sup>

These are values that the university English departments continue to instil into their own undergraduate students, not simply as a matter of content but as a rigorously academic teaching and assessment procedure. During their own university course, students will rarely be required to be an imaginative practitioner as a writer or presenter, rarely study a work of literature in a personally responsive way. While degree courses insist upon the submission to apparently objective criteria and offer language work which is preoccupied with historical and abstract systems, the future English teacher is denied the opportunity to develop an insight into the creative processes or to lay down the basis for assisting the young pupil's own linguistic development. While their function lies beyond the purely vocational, it is at least arguable that the Scottish university English department is not accountable only to itself and should be encouraged to act upon an appreciation of its role within the total learning community. If their courses could become experiences through which a genuine involvement in knowledge-making is nurtured, could act as a time for personal experimentation and the making of new connections then the effects upon the developing professional awareness of the prospective teachers would be profound.

It would also provide a more appropriate base on which the one year postgraduate training course could build. The Colleges of Education have had their own difficulties in adjusting to the demands for ever higher levels of professional expertise in their products. Given the freedom and the resources to become a more explicit part of the country's Higher Education system after the Robbins Report in 1963, they then became caught up in the mass production of instant new teachers that the rapid expansion of that period required. Their courses were, moreover, taught by lecturers whose best energies were taken up by demonstrating that their new BEd courses could take their place as real university-worthy degrees. Since then they have endured cutbacks occasioned by the teacher surpluses of the last 10 years. In their consequent search for new roles they have, however, begun to build up a whole range of inservice and research projects, much of which is now delivered on location through workshop

treatments. The growing practice of seeking external - usually CNAA - validation for their courses has also brought a greater sharpness of professional focus to their work.

Despite these advances, it remains true to say that the current provision falls far short of what would be necessary to serve the full range of teacher need. The circumstances of teaching have changed dramatically over the last 40 years, - yet that is but the length of an individual service. It is clear that professional training must now be treated as a career-long commitment. That is a concept which has but a shallow rooting - the very term 'inservice' is itself a relatively new term, going back only a quarter of a century.<sup>(21)</sup> Moreover, a majority of activities during that time have been procedural not generic, being directed towards an induction into the specific requirements of national curricula. What must now be ventured upon is a comprehensive programme of refreshment opportunities that is built into the teacher's own developing career. Such structuring would include regular in-school and residential seminars during which teachers could reflect upon the assumptions that underlie their daily practice or simply exchange experience; it would also assure a sabbatical or secondment opportunity every five years or so and provide support for the taking of new qualifications that might range from a 20 hour distance-taught module in, say, the application of micro-technology to pupil writing to a two year MEd. To this end the Scottish Council for Staff Development in Education (SCoSDE) has been established to oversee the setting up of an extensive 3 tier system of certificates, diplomas and masters degrees but its work is as yet in its very early stages, its ability to attract funding and to devise pathways through its prepared levels, in a way that would satisfy both the desire for individual credentialism and the needs of the teacher's daily practice, unproven.

In any case, as the recent Moray House project *Becoming a Better Teacher* has shown,<sup>(22)</sup> the real issue is not the simple provision of inservice courses but their ability to engage teachers in a process of active self-evaluation and exploration. The traditional talking head meeting is, it demonstrated, a counterproductive lesson in passivity; during interviews teachers claimed that they learn on the job, that they have little explicit sense of where their professional skills

might lie. The need therefore is to focus inservice on the classroom itself, so that it can become a centre of investigation during which the practitioner can work on issues, conceptualise them for himself, evaluate his own treatment of them.

What we are really talking about is research. While the work of SCRE and the University Education departments stretch back over 60 years, their activities have, as Brian Dockerell, a past Director of SCRE, has conceded, been too pure to answer the immediate questions that their daily tasks impose upon teachers.<sup>(23)</sup> While there will always be a place for the long-term generalised enquiry or for the meticulously controlled piece of empirical work, the external agencies of University, College of Education and SCRE must also make their services available to schools on a consultative or commission basis so as to enable the teacher herself to interact with the insights that they can offer and to do so by incorporating them into her own classroom routines. After all, as the SED's own recently published conclusions as to what makes for 'Effective Secondary Schools',<sup>(24)</sup> aver, the definitive characteristic of the healthy, creative institution is the capacity to involve the whole staff in a continuing evaluation of their own individual and collective practices.

#### **Assessment Systems and Professional Independence: towards an English for All**

In Scotland, however, an improved career training will not by itself be enough. Against a national history which has dictated that academic success must stand as the final arbiter of a school's soundness, a truly professional self-regeneration will only come about if the teachers themselves are given a large measure of responsibility for the assessment of their own pupils. Throughout the postwar era the greatest source of curricular authority has remained the national examination system; the one sure spur that the teacher has always responded to has been that of the certificate pass-rate. In the 1960s it was the introduction of the O'Grade that did more in a couple of years to stem the longstanding problem of wastage than two decades of Departmental inducements and circulars. And it was the accessibility of this fourth year examination that finally killed bipartism despite all the SED's hopes for a junior secondary alternative. Not surprisingly then, certification was the shaping power that a later generation

of HMIs determined to harness during the Munn and Dunning developments, with the result that the 1980s have witnessed a greater change in visible methodology and syllabus design than did the previous forty years put together.

If the national syllabus that has now emerged through universal certification is to act as a genuine guideline which will involve school staffs in the realisation of its underlying purposes, then an ever more flexible and teacher-trusting use will have to be made of the possibilities of internal assessment. At present the proportion of assessment allowed to this source in Standard Grade amounts to no more than 50% and even this is to be managed through a system of grade related criteria which demands that teachers become the producers of performance criteria that will act, not so much as an indication of the pupils' progress, as evidence for the aggregating of a score by which they may be labelled in respect of their fellows. If the Examination Board grip could be sufficiently relaxed so as to give schools the freedom to produce - and as a greater proportion of the nett result - internal evidence in the form of broad descriptions of actual outcomes, the value of which would be assured by the quality of the teaching syllabus from which it was derived, then assessment could indeed come to have more of a formative than a blunt testing effect. The SEB's lists of criteria could thus be offered not as fixed targets but rather as the descriptive means by which sensitive analysis of individual learning needs and a reconsideration of instructional strategy might be made.

Professional responsibility, and its related self-development, would be greatly enhanced if the Standard Grade certificate were to become a profile of achievement which records the effectiveness with which the pupil has responded to genuine problems of expression and response. The ideal here would be a form of holistic assessment that would be based upon the pupil's ability to deal effectively with some multi-faceted assignment drawn from the world she actually inhabits; she could, for example, be given a situation to investigate, or an issue to explore, whose presentation would be through a variety of genres: articles, press cuttings, factual data, poems, videotaped scenes, photographs, radio interviews and autobiographical memory - the pupils' responses to which could be correspondingly diverse. Assessment, in

fact, based upon the degree to which the English syllabus has proven itself able to encourage its charges to engage with their own experience, to assimilate the lessons of language usage into a personal meaning-making resource. This would also constitute a redistribution of the formidable power that lies within the Scottish assessment system to enable the teachers themselves to take greater possession of their own professional lives.

In the end arguments about the curriculum and its assessment become ones about power, its distribution and its partnerships. It would, however, be facile to interpret argument for a greater school-based control over the examination system as a plea for liberation from some authoritarian Scottish regime. The detailed scrutiny of the progress of English teaching over the last half century does reveal a marked capacity within the SED for reformist action and, moreover, an exercise of power by individual officials within it that has been genuinely anxious to reconcile governmental demand with the welfare of the subject; indeed one of the features of the Scottish situation has been the way in which - as both the *Bulletins* and the recent Standard programmes demonstrate - central authority has acted as the force to lead reform.

Curriculum development has worked best in Scotland at those times when, as during the setting up of local groups in the 1960s or the early days of Standard course piloting, the teacher has been able to play an active part, has been given time and opportunity to inform himself of new ideas, to define and to work out his own problems in partnership both with the consultant 'expert' and the shared experience of colleagues. The post war Scottish system has, potentially at least, become flexible enough to accommodate the desired process of centre-out dialogue, has now, with its Advisory Services, Colleges of Education, Regional development officers and in-service days, with its Central Committee groupings and the great expansion of school-focussed in-service, established a potentially powerful network of collaborative resources that is ready to assist in the individual staff development that must act as the real centre of English curriculum change.

One thing more, however, remains to be done. The persistent Scottish tradition of centralised, uniform administration, though it has served well enough, does create a vulnerability. Perhaps in a small tightly organized country, progress will always depend upon the centre's willingness to use its executive power to promote the values that teachers themselves are ready to work for. In a land whose 45 years of post war experience have shown it to be inexorably moving towards a system of syllabus and certification to cover all pupils but where - unlike the USA, Canada, Australia, England and the Republic of Ireland - English teachers have so far shown little interest in forming themselves into an independent body capable of promoting its own research and publications or of establishing a leading voice in the defining of their own subject, Scotland can never be completely secure about the continued welfare of its English. And this is so because ultimately, wherever its guidelines and its assessments originate, the subject is the day by day, period by period creation of its thousands of various teachers who can only act out of their own practical understandings of 'English'.

The Curriculum Development Service in Edinburgh that has developed out of the original 1960s Centre of Information for Teachers of English, its periodical **Teaching English** and the Central Committee English Panel have each of them proved to be invaluable teacher-supporting institutions but they have also been dependant upon Government patronage and subject to its priorities and economic rationalizations. For this reason they have not been able to substitute for the 'Scottish Association of Teachers of English' that alone would give Scotland's teachers a sense of united identity and an assurance of leadership in the development of their own subject's school curriculum - as well as a guaranteed membership of the International Federation of Teachers of English and participation in the international exchange of ideas and experiences so necessary to the sustenance of a strong professionalism.

Just how vulnerable this omission has left the English teacher has been cruelly demonstrated by most recent events. In 1974 an attempt was made to set up such a national association - 'SATE' - but this quickly petered out, because the existing network of official bodies appeared already to give the Scottish teacher a voice in national policy making.<sup>(25)</sup> Seven years later

CITE disappeared, a victim of the Government's Rayner Review, and was absorbed into the more 'rationally' general Scottish Curriculum Development Service.<sup>(26)</sup> And now 6 years further on a second such auditing exercise - the Crawley Review - has put in train efficiency measures that have led to the dismantlement of CITE's extensive library and the privatisation of the journal that since the dawning of change in 1965 has, perhaps, done most to give Scotland's English teachers their own distinctively professional identity.<sup>(27)</sup> In the event it has rapidly succumbed to the rising costs of publication and the limitations of a small national market so that the year 1989 has marked the final issue of **Teaching English**.

An event which more than ever shows that it is true to say that the state of English teaching in Scotland is as much a matter of unrealised possibilities as it is of problems that have been effectively surmounted. But if Scottish teachers can now be encouraged, within the clear framework of a national policy that their Education Department can, as always, be relied upon to supply, to develop a truly independent professionalism, so as to make their own informed demands upon the network of inservice and support agencies that now exist; if the Scottish Office can find the revenue for the resources and if the Examination Board can be persuaded further to devolve its powers in order to give school departments the freedom to research their own teaching needs, to devise and to assess their own syllabuses..... then the Scottish system might at last succeed in fully mobilising the capacities of its teachers and so establish the individual English for all pupils that has been the professed goal of the nation's subject teachers since the Second World War.

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### POSTSCRIPT: A SENSE OF HISTORY

'Now is a good time, in my opinion, for a complete "redd up" in Scottish education from the basement to the attics. Windows should be opened and the removal of antiquated lumber would make way for modern equipment and modern ideas....'(1)

Once more it is Harry Bell, but the date is now 1980. To close this account of post war education with the words of the figure with which it was begun, words which are so similar in import to his original campaigning letter to the Secretary of State, would make for a satisfyingly neat finale. Too neat because that is a repetition which suggests that little has really changed since 1940, that four decades of imperfect, but still considerable expansion and reform, ultimately count for little. Even more misleadingly such conclusiveness would refute the complex, and slow spun nature of educational change itself.

What Bell's 40 year long comment does serve to show is how those who live within the Scottish school system have tended to shape their judgments of its progress into an historical case. Neither then nor now does Harry Bell base his verdict on any absolute view of the curriculum but instead points to the failure of Scotland to keep pace with the 'modern'. Change there must be because it is 'time' for it.

The clearest way in which this historical constructivism works is to implant a recurring sense of crisis within the development of postwar Scottish secondary education. The mood of wartime social reconstruction created a sufficient will to set up the Sixth Advisory Council and so to establish the ideal of the personal curriculum; twenty years of ensuing inaction led, amidst the expansive 1960s, to the extensive organisational innovations of that period; the much extended curricular and examination system that then resulted led on to the further demand pressures which forced an upsurge of change in the late 1970s and again - it would now appear - the late 1980s.

This study has been preoccupied with the social, political and epistemological forces that work towards change and conservatism in the English curriculum. In giving such a jagged edge to the rhythm of post war change, these pressures have, of course, played their part, but so too has a collective awareness of the passage of time and of the comparisons which that brings. Periodically over our 50 year span, events and pressures appear to be gathered up to a point where a critical mass of people became conscious of their historical position, are aware of a future confronting their present, and of that present as being weighed down by the inherited burdens of the past. And it is at such points that 'history' must be invoked in order to create the sense of onward movement out of which the necessary developments will emerge.

Since 1940, at least, the story of English teaching in Scotland has proved to be not so much sequential as a complex cyclical process, an intermeshing of action and reaction, a neverending search for synthesis, for the balancing, of both consolidation and renewal. In these respects Harry Bell's reiteration is a salutary reminder that educational history is not likely to be either uniform or conclusive, that it is located within a multitude of viewpoints, a range of stories that are themselves formed according to the imprint of past tradition and a dawning awareness of future needs. The Sixth Advisory Council's 1947 declaration in favour of a child-centred secondary school as the essential expression of a truly postwar curriculum was also a self-conscious rejection of its educational inheritance. The explicit historicism of its **Secondary Report** impelled a continuing debate in which the participants have since been able to identify their positions in terms of stability and reform, defence and attack, 'tradition' and 'progress'.

Within a system that was commended by the SED's concern to preserve its stewardship over a service that was dedicated to selection for academic success, the Advisory Council was itself impotent. What it did, however, was to lay down a rhetoric, its eloquence offering a compelling construction of educational destiny. The necessary gap between its idealism and the actualities of a system, that continued to be underpinned by notions of credentialism, didactic pedagogy and the career subject teacher, drew up the terms in which the ensuing

historical drama would be enacted. That the action has proved to be so tortuous and so long drawn out can be explained as the inevitable consequence of the attempt to work out a practical acceptance of the Advisory's Council's original manifesto with all its attendant difficulties of assessment, institutional structures, subject definition and methodology.

Yet this battle between 'academic' and 'personal', 'tradition' and 'progress' has never been a straightforward conflict. As the example of the 1947 **Secondary Education Report** further demonstrates, people within the world of Scottish education have oscillated between the two levels of rhetoric and actuality in a way that has greatly complicated the issue. The Council's use of a forceful eloquence was as much to resolve internal ambiguities as to express a public conviction. A study of the preparation and reception of its document shows how the power of the received situation is always there ready to interact with professed belief within the same Scottish mind, whether collective or individual. The consequence has been 40 years of advancement certainly, but a slow and unsure movement that has been marked by frustration and repetition, by the inertia, confusion and unrequited idealism that have resulted from the extent to which the progressive voice has had to seek out a response from within the established realities of syllabus content, exams, institutional routine, the Scottish secondary school way of life.

What gradually emerges as 'English' does so out of a subtle series of accommodations among institutional imperatives, collective practices, individual perceptions, traditional assumptions. In this delicate generation it is individuals who become the final creators of English. And, as a study of their actualities and of the exchanges that have occurred among them reveals, new ideas do not work on old practices as a direct national transmission. Instead, change occurs as a gradual, personal assimilation in which the new mingles with the existing. It is a process that takes place in time and through time, as an act of personal storytelling which in its turn is framed by the larger history of Scottish secondary education.

It is notable that whenever my interviewees attempted to define secondary school English the language that came most easily to them was that of time. Implicitly, they used words which assume the subject to be a product of the Past, not some ideological or epistemological construction. For them the academic English which they entered at the outset of their careers was 'the old way', 'traditional', a system which was 'handed down'. It came into conflict with other approaches through processes that were perceived to be temporal rather than dialectic; the child-centred alternative became the 'modern', the 'progressive' way - for some a reaction against the old rigidities, for others an erosion of an historically attested standard.

This was a perspective which proved to be sufficiently compelling to transform the whole shape of the interviews. Instead of proceeding as intended in an orderly way through the schedule of analytical topics which had been forwarded in advance,<sup>(2)</sup> typically, well over half the time - anything up to an hour - was spent on satisfying my 'preliminary' request for career details. What had been envisaged as no more than a straightforward elicitation of background information would become a lengthy and richly constructed narrative. My witnesses were taking hold of an opportunity to account for their own professional practice in the manner which, evidently, was most meaningful for them - as a year by year progression in which any general observation had to emerge from their experience of time and place. Jim Beedie's<sup>(3)</sup> declared adherence to a solidly traditional junior secondary curriculum is set in a city where, in the 1950s, local aspiration and a generous provision of resources could support such a commitment. Trevor Johns<sup>(4)</sup> contrary determination that things had to change sprang from his 30 years experience of a regimen that for him was so unchanging as to be self-evidently incapable of meeting the needs of comprehensive school children that had been brought up in a television age.

For the teacher, it would appear, motivation is as much circumstantial as it is rationalist. Even in the case of W A Gatherer<sup>(5)</sup> a powerful epistemological philosophy was preceded by the reactions of a young Inspector, who had himself been brought up in the country town, omnibus school setting of Aberdeenshire, to 'the desperate' state of the junior secondaries

which littered the urban Central Belt wastelands of the earlier post war years. Similarly, Gordon Liddell's<sup>(6)</sup> enthusiasm for literature as a universally transformational force is modelled on the role that he saw it playing in the lives of the people that he grew up among in his Lanarkshire mining village. Equally, the more conservative convictions of Archie Watt<sup>(7)</sup> can be seen as grounded in a pre-war North-East upbringing in which the lad o'pairts found its perfect expression in the example of the local dominie who had helped to develop young James Mitchell of the Mearns into Lewis Grassie Gibbon, world famous author. And somewhere between these last two came Ian Scott<sup>(8)</sup> and Tom Brown,<sup>(9)</sup> First Class Honours graduates of Glasgow University who had gone out to teach among the unruly and unlettered junior secondaries and evacuation centres of that city, experiences which had given them each the conviction that the enlightenedly personal syllabus which had to come should nevertheless be contained within a firm structure of reading and writing goals.

These are life stories which are at once highly individual and thoroughly representative. Diverse though their accounts are, each of these teachers is aware of their careers as being played out within the larger Scottish history. Their formative memories have been of upbringings in which school and community have acted together to establish deeply felt models of educational experience. It is the local secondary which for both teacher and taught, in the earlier postwar decades, stood as an embodiment of such values as discipline, vocational selection, the well stocked mind, democratic opportunity, getting on - and, perhaps too, for impersonalisation, repression, social divisiveness and a harsh materialism.

Asked where the English that was universal among the secondary schools of the immediate post war years came from, John Graham<sup>(10)</sup> replied simply that it was 'the Tradition'. While he then explains this term through the image of the probationer having to set out on a great flow of continuing academic practice, there was nothing intangible or remote about such a notion. It was made manifest through the intricacy of individual behaviours and institutional routines that surrounded the young teacher at every turn. The Tradition was as much a matter of detail as of explicit conceptualisation; it represented a total way of professional life that

found substance in the period by period Record of Work, the orderly layout of text-book and departmental scheme, the occasional scholarly exchange with the district Inspector and the steady accumulation of exercises in composition, grammar, interpretation and the classics that would find their fulfilment in the Higher English paper to be taken at the end of the fifth year.

In the end it was this very immovability which built up the irresistible pressure towards change that burst out in the 1960s. Yet the intimate architecture of the old was such that the reforms of that time were less far-reaching than had been hoped. The lesson is that to be effective new initiatives must be introduced as a properly realised set of procedures that will compel the individual teacher's daily assent. And for that to come about the new must be seen to be a development from out of the old, to be the latest contribution to the continuing story of Scottish education. Only in this way can the progressively individualised curriculum become part of the intimate biographies of those who are entrusted as teachers to continue in the Scottish tradition of English.

That 'History' is a decisive shaping force has been widely acknowledged in the debates by which the nation has attempted to work out a shared understanding of what, in the post war age, a Scottish secondary education should mean. In 1947 the Sixth Advisory Council concluded its reforming message by setting forth the characteristics of the 'Scottish Tradition'.<sup>(11)</sup> In doing this they were acting with a self-conscious historicism that has since been repeated again and again. Once more, in the discussion concerning the true curriculum for the 1990s, 'history' is at the centre of the attempt to negotiate between the competing national themes.

Recently the Scottish Office has set out the terms on which it proposes to manage the immediate future. In its consultative paper 'Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: a Policy for the 1990s'<sup>(12)</sup> it indicates that central bodies such as the CCC and SEB should join the SED in establishing a clear set of guidelines and curricular targets for each school subject. The key element is to be a programme of periodic testing against established national standards which

are to be defined by joint working parties, a strategy that is to be underpinned by teacher appraisal and the voting in of school boards on which the consumer - the parent - will have the leading voice.

While these may appear to be radical measures, the authors are at pains to justify them by summoning the past as their chief witness - in its introductory paragraph they make the claims that theirs are the plans that will enable the public to continue to have pride in an educational system that has served generations of young people so soundly. And in terms that are reminiscent of the days of Mackay Thomson, the SED affirms that its role is to maintain a careful 'stewardship' over the national curriculum.<sup>(13)</sup>

There is no doubt that this is a document which summons up many of the characteristics of the Scottish past; its proposals do indeed renew the established pattern of firm central direction over a local implementation that is to be monitored through the mechanisms of explicit schemes and tested by a system of national assessment. Moreover its emphasis on rigour and study, its assumption that to be well educated is to have enjoyed examination success over a balanced range of school subjects, repeats a theme that stretches in an unbroken line from the original Leaving Certificate regulations to Munn and Dunning. The Department will not, however, be allowed to call the past with such a proprietorial voice. Some of the leading responses to the paper have indicated that, on the contrary, it is to be seen as an attempt to revise the liberalising reforms of the last three decades. No less a body than the General Teaching Council has attacked it as 'retrograde', as an 'excessively narrow' focus on the so-called basics at the expense of child-centred processes. And it too offers an historical verdict: 'The paper does not take account of the 'distinctive' character and traditions of the Scottish education system as it claims.'<sup>(14)</sup>

The contemporary dispute suggests the differences which marked the dealings of the Advisory Council and the SED in the 1940s are still unresolved, that there are, as always, two sides competing for possession of the Scottish tradition. Michael Forsyth, the then (and now once

again) Minister in charge of Education, has roundly defined the Scottish traditions in the Commons as, 'Those which command the support of parents such as breadth of study, competence in literacy and numeracy, acceptance of the need for discipline and hard work, equality of opportunity, and the pursuit of excellence.'<sup>(15)</sup> A group of notable educationists has now issued as counterclaim a 'Declaration of Principle' in which it denounces the Forsyth proposals as the aberrant product of an alien enterprise culture that is wrenching the nation's schooling away from its true European tradition of education as a shared, public good.<sup>(16)</sup>

What fifty years of evolutionary pragmatism have demonstrated is that no one party is likely to succeed in imposing its version of Scottish inheritance, that the 'tradition' is neither a static entity nor a selective mythology that may be commandeered for the service of the future. What is missing from the current debate is any sense of history as a process. The story of the teaching of the nation's language has been slow and shifting; any attempt to work a further development into it will have to be made with a patient sensitivity to the fact that new patterns can only gradually emerge out of a subtle, longspun interweaving of people, events, settings, interpretations.

While terms such as 'academic' and 'child-centred' - as invoked in the Preface - have their heuristic uses, the past has been more than a simple alternation between such abstractions. A growing awareness of this complexity has determined the character of this study. To have confined it to the evidence of such public acts as reports, legislation, conferences and prescribed syllabuses would doubtless have made for a more economical piece of tale-telling. But fifty years of English teaching have presented the evidence of people living their subject out within an environment that has been created only partly through the tangibilities of resources, set programmes, pedagogical and institutional systems. Ideas of 'English', of the 'curriculum', and of a 'Scottish' education have been filtered through layers of practical assumptions and cultural habit. To search within the official records for the experiences of those who have practised the subject, whether as promulgators, planners or day-to-day classroom practitioners, is to become aware of the degree to which 'policy' is the result of a

series of complex inter-relationships shared by groupings upon groupings of individuals who have experienced a professional upbringing that is at once intensely personal and collectively Scottish.

If we are truly to account for the progression of the curriculum's key subject over the last half century, then it would be necessary to give our narrative something of the movement and the density of the novel, of a long and leisurely work in which there may be developed the essential intricacy of plot and sub-plot, the network of characters and perspectives held together and worked on by the details of time, place, culture and sub-culture. **The Teaching of English in Scottish Secondary Schools 1940-1990** has done no more than attempt to reach out towards that necessary substantiality.

But if the final impression is of the sheer, elusive complexity of it all, the conclusion to be drawn need not be a fatalistic one. The English of 1990 is overlaid by the assumptions of the past. In our situation where that past is readily argued over like a disputed testament, where terms like 'grammar', 'standards', 'testing', 'creative writing', 'progress', 'personal reading' clash so emotively, the explanations of history may offer a conciliatory service. The final hope of this study is that a detailed examination of the origins and determinants of present practices - and the beliefs that accompany them - will help all those who have an interest in the subject to become more alert to the sensitivities which underlie present dilemmas, more able to harmonise the various forces that work on the teaching of English when, as it must be, it is experienced in a real place at a real time.

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- (8) Scott R Ian, Interview (1988).
- (9) Brown Tom, Interview (1988).
- (10) Graham John, Interview (1988).
- (11) SED (1947), p 178-183.
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- (13) Ibid para 1: 'We in Scotland are justly proud of our school system. Its traditions and the professionalism of its teachers have produced generations of young people equipped, as their aptitudes and abilities allow, to play a full part in society. The Government is fully aware of its responsibility for stewardship of that system'.
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Principal author is Professor Nigel Grant, Glasgow University: contributors include, Sir Kenneth Alexander, Paul Scott, Professor David Daiches, Dr George Davie, Brian Boyd, Fred Forrester, Anne Lorne Gillies, Joy Hendry, Lilian MacDonald, Andrew McPherson, Willis Pickard, John Blackburn, A C Davis.

## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

In all 21 subjects were interviewed, 19 of them during a formally structured, face to face session using one of the two schedules that are reproduced in this Appendix. Typically these interviews lasted from 60 to 120 minutes - or in the case of James Inglis and W A Gatherer some 4 hours - and were conducted either at the Northern College, the subject's workplace or, most often of all, home. In several cases proceedings were tape-recorded and in all thorough notes were speedwritten at the time which were later typewritten up to provide a complete record, including exclusive quotations. This was then sent to the interviewee for amendment and return. Biographical notes are given in Appendix 2.

James Inglis was interviewed at the very start of my researches in February 1986, and without the employment of a formal schedule, the rest some time between May 1988 and January 1989. In each of these cases the procedure was to send the subject one or both of the proformas below at least a fortnight before an appointment. This formed the basis for the ensuing interview which always began with a biographical history but was then free to move through the questions in an eclectic manner, according to the emphasis placed upon them by the subject him or herself. A not unusual pattern was for the interviewee to spend some 30 minutes on the biography, then a similar period on two or three of the suggested questions, the proceedings being concluded by a relatively quick run through those which remained. Apart from James Inglis the only other variations to the procedure described here was provided by John Sim who responded, at length, in writing. Trevor Johns and Alex Thomson were interviewed together.

Subjects were selected on account of the length of their careers and the distinction with which they had served English teaching in Scotland - in each case, apart from that of James Duffin, their service extended back into the earliest of my 3 periods, 1945 - 1965. James Duffin, whose career began a little later was selected because of his significant position as a pioneering Feasibility Study participant.

The interviewees were divided into two groups: those who had served out their careers in the schools - the 'School Interviews' - and those who had moved into influential positions in the SED, the CCC, the Advisory, the Directorate or the Colleges of Education - the 'Centre Interviews'. The former were sent copies of Schedule 1 only, the latter both Schedules 1 and 2. Copies of these now follow.

**Schedule 1: School Interviews**

Sent to: James Beedie, William Ettles, John Graham, Trevor Johns, Moira Jolly, John Sim, R. Ian Scott, Archibald Watt.

**ENGLISH TEACHING SINCE 1940 : SCHOOL INTERVIEWS**

**BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

Own School Education

University

Teacher Training

Teaching Career

**ENGLISH TEACHING SINCE THE WAR**

**NOTE:** I am especially interested in the differences between the 'rhetoric' and the reality - the official picture of English teaching as presented or at least promoted by SED, HMI, CCC, College of Education reports and recommendations compared to the day to day practice of the representative classroom.

I propose dividing my period into 3 eras:

1940-65 - the dual system of senior secondary/junior secondary courses and of pure HMI control.

1965-78 - comprehensivisation, the O'Grade and the SEB, the CCC, the Bulletins, ROSLA

1978 to date - Munn and Dunning into Standard Grade English for all.

**QUESTIONS;**

- 1) What was the situation in schools at the start of your teaching career?  
(conditions; attitudes; differences between junior and senior secondaries; omnibus schools; discipline).
  
- 2) And for English?  
(methods; resources; text books; exams; HMI influences; junior/senior curricula)
  
- 3) Could we have an example or two here?  
eg. how did you go about teaching writing? literature? what role did 'talk' play?
  
- 4) What were the most significant influences in shaping your view of the subject?  
(own schooling; inherited school system; HMIs; exam system; T.C.; writers on subject)
  
- 5) What were your priorities as a young English teacher? What did you want/expect of your pupils by the time they left school?  
(academic aims; exam success; personal development; skills; vocational relevance; personal refinement).
  
- 6) And your problems? Successes/failures?
  
- 7) How did you find your pupils?  
(outlook and maturation; teacher-pupil relationship; youth 'culture'; diversity/uniformity; their language and speech).
  
- 8) How 'different' do you think Scottish traditions system and outlook in education were/are?

9) Overall, how much has changed during your career - and how much has remained essentially the same?

(what would the time traveller find different; surprising; familiar? profit/loss?)

10) What in your view still remains to be done?

11) Any other points that the historian of your period ought to consider?

Having built up a picture of conditions and practices during the first part of your career, I should like to extend our consideration of these questions longitudinally into the 1965-78 and 1978-88 periods.

I realise all this must appear to be forbiddingly intensive but I hope we can be fairly informal about things and not be too agenda-bound. And please feel free to make the points you are interested in!

**Schedule 2 : Centre Interviews**

Sent to: James Alison, Thomas Brown, Gillian Campbell, Alistair Davidson, James Duffin, William Gatherer, Gordon Liddell, Joseph O'Neill, Quentin Cramb, Sydney Smyth, Roy Stark, Alexander Thomson.

**ENGLISH TEACHING SINCE 1940 : CENTRE INTERVIEWS**

**BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

Own School Education

University

Teacher Training

Teaching Career

Subsequent Career

**ENGLISH TEACHING SINCE THE WAR**

**NOTE:** My hypothesis is that 'English' is a problematic subject which has assumed its postwar school character not simply as an expression of some self-evident epistemological or generic force at work. I wish to treat it, in the first place, as a product of decisions made by those in positions of national influence, acting in response not only to their own or a consensus view of what English naturally is but also to the surrounding historical, sociological and administrative imperatives.

However, the curriculum can never simply remain a matter of transmitting centrally defined models since once thus formulated its general prescriptions must engage with the day to day definitions of thousands of different teachers at work within their various institutional, practical and 'common-sense' circumstances. What is actually experienced in the classroom thus becomes a product of a complex interplay between these two perspectives. It then becomes necessary to evaluate the actual school outcome in terms of the differences between what might be termed the 'rhetoric' and the reality - that is the official practice of

English teaching as promoted by SED, HMI, CCC, College of Education reports and recommendations compared to the day to day practice of the representative classroom.

You can see from the accompanying 'School Interviews' pro forma that I wish in my corresponding 'practitioner' interviews to build up a portrait of the subject as a pragmatic encounter between the individual teacher and the actual institutional and practical situation he/she found himself entering. For those working from the influential centre I should like to adapt these questions by referring them to the historical setting in which decisions had to be made in terms of general policy considerations and national needs.

For organisational convenience, I propose dividing my period into 3 eras:

1940-65 - the Advisory Council's 1947 Report, the dual system of junior/senior secondary courses and of exclusive HMI control.

1965-78 - comprehensivisation, the O'Grade, the SEB, the CCC, the Bulletins, ROSLA.

1978 to date - Munn and Dunning into Standard Grade English for all

- 1) What was the situation in schools when you took up your position?
- 2) And for English?
- 3) What were the most important influences in shaping the 'average' teacher's view of the subject?
- 4) What were your priorities on arriving in your position of influence?

- 5) What kind of 'English' did you wish to promote in the nation's schools? In terms of values, aims, methods, assessment patterns?
- 6) What development strategies did you want to employ?
- 7) What were your main problems?
- 8) How did things turn out?

**And 4 general questions -**

- 9) How 'different' do you think Scottish traditions, system and outlook in education were/are?
- 10) Overall, how much has changed during your career - and how much has remained essentially the same?
- 11) What in your view still remains to be done?
- 12) Any other points that the historian of your period ought to consider?

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEWEES

James Alison	at Glasgow	October 10, 1988
James Beedie	at Aberdeen	July 5, 1988
Thomas Brown	at Edinburgh	June 28, 1988
Gillian Campbell	at Edinburgh	December 20, 1988
Quentin Cramb	at Dundee	June 22, 1988
Alistair Davidson	at Edinburgh	January 23, 1989
James Duffin	at Glasgow	October 10, 1988
William Ettles	at Aberdeen	October 24, 1988
William A Gatherer	at Edinburgh	June 15, 1988
James Graham	at Lerwick	May 18, 1988
Trevor Johns	at Montrose	November 2, 1988
Moira Jolly (Copland)	at Stonehaven	November 3, 1988
Gordon Liddell	at Edinburgh	September 14, 1988
James Inglis	at Glasgow	October 18, 1987
Joseph O'Neill	at Glasgow	November 7, 1988
John Sim	by correspondence	October 1988
Sydney Smyth	at Edinburgh	June 29, 1988
Robert Ian Scott	at Banff	June 16, 1988
Roy Stark	at Aberdeen	July, 28, 1988
Alexander Thomson	at Montrose	November 2, 1988
Archibald Watt	at Stonehaven	June 14, 1988

### INTERVIEWEES: BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINES

#### James Alison

Educated at John Neilson Institute, Paisley  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education (including concurrent EdB)

Career: Glasgow High School 1957-63  
Jordanhill College of Education, English Department, 1963-68  
PT English, Aberdeen (Hazlehead) Academy 1968-75  
HMI 1975-82  
HMI, National Specialist for English 1982 to date

#### James Beedie

Educated at Aberdeen Central Secondary School  
Aberdeen University (incl. War Service)  
Aberdeen College of Education

Career: Ruthrieston Secondary School, Aberdeen 1946-58  
PT English, Laluthan High School, Dundee 1958  
Old Aberdeen Secondary School 1959-62  
PT English, Arbroath Academy 1962-66  
Aberdeen Grammar School 1966-68  
PT English, Powis Academy, Aberdeen 1968-73  
Assistant Head Teacher Powis Academy 1973-81

#### Thomas Brown

Educated at Allan Glen, Glasgow  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education

Career: Various Primary Schools, Glasgow 1938-39  
Aberfoyle Evaluation School 1940-43  
Caley House (for Hillhead High School evacuees) 1943

Glasgow High School 1943-51  
PT English, Inverurie Academy, Aberdeenshire,  
1951-53  
PT English, Aberdeen Grammar School, 1953-57  
Head of English Dept., Moray House College of Education, 1957-79  
Now retired.

**Gillian Campbell**

Educated at

Hamilton Academy  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education

Career:

Uddingston Grammar School 1957-60  
Hamilton Academy 1960-64  
HMI 1964 to date  
HMI National Specialist for English 1972-75

**Quentin Cramb**

Educated at

Aberdeen Grammar School  
Aberdeen University  
Aberdeen College of Education

Career:

Gordon Schools, Huntly 1963-64  
Aberdeen Grammar School 1964-69  
PT English Madras College, St Andrews 1969-72  
HMI 1972-75  
National Specialist for English 1975-82  
District Inspector 1982 to date

**Alistair Davidson**

Educated at

Hillhead High School, Glasgow  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education

Career:

Primary school teaching, National Service (Education Branch, RAF)  
1954-57  
Albert Secondary School, Glasgow 1957-59  
Hutchinson's Grammar School 1959-63  
PT English, Annan, Dumfries-shire 1963-66  
HMI 1966-90  
Now retired

**James Duffin**

Educated at

St Patrick's High School, Coatbridge and  
St Mungo's Academy, Glasgow  
Glasgow University

Career:

Jordanhill College of Education  
St Patrick's High School, Coatbridge, 1968-76  
PT English, Our Lady's High School, Motherwell, 1976-83 (incl. one  
year acting AHT)  
English Dept, Jordanhill College of Education 1983-84  
Adviser in English, Glasgow, 1984 -90  
Senior Adviser, Glasgow, 1990 to date.

- William Ettles**  
 Educated at Keith Grammar School, Banffshire  
 Aberdeen University  
 War service in navy  
 Career: Aberdeen College of Education  
 Culter Higher Grade School, Aberdeenshire, 1947-49  
 Aberlour Orphanage School, Banffshire 1949-57  
 (into family business 1957-62)  
 Keith Grammar School 1962-69  
 PT English, Buckie High School, Banffshire 1969-83  
 Now retired.
- William Gatherer**  
 Educated at Gordon Schools, Huntly, Aberdeenshire  
 Aberdeen University (incl. War Service)  
 Moray House College of Education  
 Career: Leith Academy, Edinburgh }  
 Royal High School, Edinburgh } 1949-59  
 English Dept., Jordanhill College of Education, 1959-61  
 HMI (incl. National Specialist for English) 1961-74  
 Chief Adviser, Lothian Region Education Dept. 1974-86  
 Now retired (though still active in educational circles)
- James Graham**  
 Educated at Central Secondary School, Lerwick, Shetland  
 Edinburgh University  
 Moray House College of Education  
 Career: Anderson's Educational Institute, Lerwick 1950-66  
 Headteacher, Central Secondary School, Lerwick 1966-70  
 Headteacher, Anderson's Educational Institute, Lerwick 1970-82  
 Now retired
- Trevor Johns**  
 Educated at Ayr Academy  
 Glasgow University  
 Career: Whithorn Higher Grade School, Wigtownshire 1935-48 (interrupted by  
 War Service)  
 Stirling High School 1948-53  
 PT English, Montrose Academy, Angus 1953-71  
 Adviser in Secondary Education, Angus, 1971-74  
 Now retired.
- Moirra Jolly**  
 Educated at Banchory Academy, Kincardineshire  
 Aberdeen University  
 Aberdeen College of Education  
 Career: Mackie Academy, Stonehaven, Kincardineshire 1957-65  
 Banchory Academy 1965-72  
 PT English Mackie Academy 1972-83  
 PT English, Cults Academy, Aberdeen, 1983-84  
 Asst Rector, Cults Academy, 1984 to date
- Gordon Liddell**  
 Educated at Calder Street Junior Secondary School, Blantyre  
 St Johns Grammar School, Hamilton  
 Jordanhill College of Education

**Career:** Airdrie Academy 1960-69  
PT English Dalkeith High School, Midlothian 1969-73  
Asst. Director, Centre of Information for Teaching English (CITE)  
1973-82  
Head English (now Language) Dept., Moray House College of  
Education, 1982 to date.

**Joseph O'Neill**  
Educated at

Schools in Ireland (Waterford district)  
Monastery: studying for priesthood  
Clerical jobs, London area  
St Andrew's University/Aberdeen University  
Aberdeen College of Education  
**Career** St Mirren's Academy, Paisley, 1961-65  
Langside Further Education College, 1965-69  
Jordanhill College of Education 1969-90 incl. Head of  
English/Language Dept. 1979-90.  
Now retired.

**Robert I Scott**  
Educated at

Inverness Academy  
Queen's Park Senior Secondary, Glasgow  
Glasgow University (Engineering course)  
Education Corps/Bureau for Current Affairs  
Glasgow University (Arts course)  
**Career:** Jordanhill College of Education  
Glasgow City Schools 1955-57  
PT English, Nicolson Institute, Stornoway 1957-61  
Depute Rector Aberdeen Academy 1961-62  
Rector Banff Academy 1962-90  
Now retired

**John Sim**  
Educated at

Fraserburgh Academy  
Aberdeen University  
Aberdeen Training College  
**Career:** Fraserburgh Academy 1949-84 incl. PT English 1964-84.  
Now retired.

**Sydney Smyth**  
Educated at

Linlithgow Academy  
Edinburgh University  
RAF  
**Career:** Moray House Training College  
Kirkcaldy High School 1953-66  
Jordanhill College of Education 1966-73  
(English Department; Staff Tutor, Department of Training)  
Director of Centre for Information into the Teaching of English  
(CITE) 1973-78  
Director of Scottish Curriculum Development Service 1978-89  
(Edinburgh Centre)  
Now retired (but still active in educational circles).

**Roy Stark**  
Educated at

Lenzie Academy  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education

**Career:** Kilsyth Academy, 1950-55  
PT English, Mortlach Senior Secondary School, Dufftown 1955-61  
Aberdeen College of Education 1961-85  
(English Department, Assistant Principal, Vice Principal)  
Now retired

**Alexander Thomson**

**Educated at** Kilmarnock Academy  
Glasgow University  
Jordanhill College of Education

**Career:** Kilmarnock Academy 1957-66  
PT English, St Joseph's High School, Kilmarnock, 1966-75  
Assistant Director/Depute Director of Education, Tayside Region 1975 to  
date.

**Archibald Watt**

**Educated at** Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen  
Aberdeen University  
Aberdeen College of Education

**Career:** Elgin Academy 1939-41  
RAF 1941-46  
Elgin Academy 1946-49  
Mackie Academy, Stonehaven 1949-77  
(PT English, Depute Rector)

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