

## Full Length Paper

# Change in the Education System in England and Wales since the Second World War Part 2: The Developing Pattern 1950s and 1960s

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*Change in the Education System in England and Wales Part 2: The Developing Pattern - 1950s and 1960s* focuses on issues of decentralisation of systems and levels of provision arising around, from, and subsequent to the 1944 Education Act. The crystallisation of issues surrounding *Political and Professional Attitudes; the Eleven Plus; Secondary Modern Schools (with a concentration on the West Riding County Council) and the Persistence of Inequality of Opportunity* are described and assessed. This is a reflective evaluation of the 1950s and 1960s based on an understanding of the difficulties experienced by both professionals and politicians involved in fashioning the reorganisation of secondary education. The context is the basis for the thrust of the article's argument that what was being negotiated was the relationship between central and local government and between local government and localities.

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## The 1950s

The themes which developed around and subsequent to the 1944 Act were largely the result of the decentralisation of systems and levels of provision. What was negotiated was the relationship between central and local government and between local government and localities. The dual system of governing bodies and the existence of excepted districts ensured that the distribution of power within the system was uneven and that relationships had different values in terms of the ability to make decisions. The effect on systems of negotiations about Development Plans was to produce a patchwork of different types of provision. This tended to exacerbate the problem of the hesitant ideology and produced unresolved problems which the service found it difficult to solve.

With the benefit of hindsight, a significant omission in the West Riding and the country as a whole was the lack of a coherent strategy for training youngsters for employment and the lack of links between education and training and education and commerce and industry. The lack of clarity about the underlying purpose of education was an important cause of the hesitant ideology. Because LEAs were reluctant, or perhaps very short of the necessary money, to develop the secondary technical schools, the system became effectively bipartite with the

grammar schools taking a varying and varied top percentage of the ability range and the secondary modern schools taking the remainder of the population. It was generally perceived that, at the age of eleven, children either 'passed the scholarship'; went to the grammar school, or they 'failed' and went to the secondary modern school. The division into grammar school sheep and secondary modern goats was made worse by a strange decision by the Atlee government that secondary modern schools were not allowed to run examination courses.

The lack of clarity about purpose allowed negotiations with a wide range of interest groups, not least the teacher associations, to become determining factors in the development of the system as a whole. For many years this was an important element in maintaining the decentralisation of the curriculum. Union concern was not just with pay and working conditions, but also with the position of the teacher as a professional, an expert on the curriculum and a controller of the education process in the classroom.

Throughout the fifties, the system of selection at eleven plus, the secondary modern schools and evidence of persisting inequality of opportunity were to emerge as points of considerable weakness and concern. The raising of the educational temperature caused by these worries and the persistence of those who favoured comprehensive reorganisation kept the issue of non-selective secondary on the political and educational agenda.

Worries about the efficiency and the fairness of the tripartite system helped to increase interest in comprehensive schools and, indeed, provided the basis for the arguments in favour of the introduction of comprehensive schools. They, also, encouraged the processes of adaptation which occurred in the tripartite system, and were significant in producing changes in the process of selection to try to make it less stressful for children. There were also significant changes in the secondary modern schools.

The introduction of the single subject GCE O level examination in 1951 allowed the gradual development of O level teaching in the secondary modern schools with areas of overlap in measured attainment between the bottom end of the grammar schools and the top end of the secondary modern schools. The much greater freedom produced by the decentralisation of knowledge in the form of the introduction of O level, as opposed to the School Certificate, was added to by examinations developed by the RSA and the College of Preceptors and was confirmed in 1964 by the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Examination (CSE) and the possibility of Mode 3 examining effectively controlled by the teaching profession. The decentralisation of knowledge and examination systems at the age of sixteen was used as a mechanism to reduce the impact of some of the unresolved problems inherent in the tripartite system.

The introduction of the GCE examination in 1951 was not entirely smooth. Problems occurred in three main areas. First, there was a widespread perception that the new examinations were harder than those they replaced. Certainly, the pass mark was set higher. Secondly, a rigid lower age-limit of sixteen was imposed for entry to the exam. Thirdly, there was a lack of grading. Candidates either passed or failed. I did not ever know what marks I gained in any of the O level examinations. The introduction of the single subject GCE O level examinations seemed to catch some grammar schools by surprise. In my own case, at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,

Wakefield, I was part of a group that was supposed to be pushed to take school leaving examinations early and, therefore, arrive in the sixth form before sixteen. We went into the sixth form and began our A level studies and took a limited number of subjects (six) at the end of the first year sixth, in order to be able to matriculate at university level.

### **1950s – Political and Professional Attitudes**

By the time of the Conservative victory in the general election of 1951, support for comprehensive schools within Labour had been strengthened and both the National Association of Labour Teachers (NALT) and the Fabian Society were active in producing documents about the form of secondary education. The common point of agreement between the left and the right of the Party was that selection at eleven plus was inappropriate, unjust and harmful both for the individual child and society generally. The party nationally sensed that there was electoral support for the abolition of selection at eleven-plus, but little support for the abolition of the grammar schools (Fenwick, 1976 op cit). In 1957, Labour commissioned a public opinion poll on attitudes to the reform of the education system and a summary of the poll suggests that the majority of parents were basically satisfied with the existing system and whilst there was a strong desire for traditional changes like the reduction of class sizes there was practically none for radical reorganisation (Parkinson, 1970).

The Labour Party was, however, becoming much more wedded to the notion of comprehensive education and in “A Policy for Secondary Education” (Labour Party, 1950) the need for tripartism was queried and plans were outlined for its replacement by a comprehensive system (NEC Report, 1951). In “Challenge to Britain” complete reorganisation was envisaged and independent schools were attacked (Labour Party, 1953).

The teachers’ organisations were not very supportive of comprehensive reorganisation at the beginning of the 1950s. Within the NUT, support was not widespread and reorganisation tended to become discredited when the Communists, who had been its strongest advocates, lost support. The NAS was similarly cautious and the Association of Headmistresses (Incorporated) (AHMI), the Incorporated Association of Assistant Mistresses (IAAM), the Assistant Masters’ Association (AMA) which had supported multilaterals before the war, and the Incorporated Association of Headmasters (IAHM) which had consistently opposed reorganisation, were not in favour of reorganisation.

The Conservative Teachers’ Association was an influence on the Conservatives nationally. This organisation was opposed to comprehensive schools and its members’ role in preventing the election of communists to positions of power in various teachers’ associations was a matter for congratulation at parliamentary level. There was consistent criticism of comprehensive projects by this group on the grounds of size. It was felt that comprehensive schools would have to be large in order to sustain viable sixth forms, but there was little empirical evidence on which the profession could draw to make judgements on the effects of size of school or even size of class on educational performance. In any case, the Conservative party envisaged that there might be considerable value in the establishment of comprehensive schools in rural areas (Fenwick, 1976 op cit). Many local authorities were still involved in crisis developments and locally generated concerns were about inadequate provision rather than about forms of organisation. In the strong

Labour area of the south of the West Riding the great concern was not about comprehensive schooling but, as previously mentioned, the lack of grammar school places. Up to its demise in 1974, it was the practice for the West Riding to have to buy in both grammar school and technical places in neighbouring LEAs like Barnsley and into direct grant schools.

The seeds of dissension had been sown in many localities by the promise of, and the legitimating of, negotiations. The promise by the West Riding, for instance, that local opinion would be canvassed before plans were finalised presaged many future battles, but there still seemed to be a good measure of consensus at parliamentary level. In the context of secondary reorganisation and the implementation of the 1944 Act, the 1950s have been described as a time for experiment. This was particularly true of the Conservative party and the teachers' associations. Most groups seemed to be in favour of not committing themselves either way and there was general acceptance of the view that decisions about schools were best left at local level.

The survival of the comprehensive movement through the 1950s seems to have depended upon the will of the CEOs (Chief Education Officers) and some elected members, such as Hyman in the West Riding; upon the decision to leave the issue with localities; and, an increasing awareness of the deficiencies of the tripartite system. Not all CEOs advanced the cause of comprehensive education as much as Clegg in the West Riding and Mason in Leicestershire. Some CEOs, in Liverpool for instance, were successful in blocking reorganisation (Weeks, 1986 op cit). In some LEAs the Conservative commitment to the preservation of the grammar schools was to prove the strongest influence. In Manchester, the Minister intervened to preserve the status quo of tripartism when asked to do so by a vocal pressure group (Fenwick, 1976 op cit).

### **The Eleven Plus**

An area of common concern to teachers, administrators and politicians was the method of selection at eleven-plus. Many area of the country were involved in experiments to refine and develop this process. The West Riding developed its own system of selection at eleven-plus and refined it carefully and considerably over the years. Clegg was particularly aware of the inadequacies of the system and it underwent considerable modification in the West Riding. In the years 1947 to 1953 the Authority, with the help of Moray House undertook an experiment whereby children sat the usual eleven-plus examination (tests in Maths, English and Intelligence) and also sat three standardised tests during their final year in the primary school. Moray House had to decide on the most effective method based on the children's performance; three years later. The conclusion was that there was no difference in the efficiency of the tests. The first development was, therefore, the ending of the County Minor and its replacement by internally administered and marked standardised tests.

At the same time (1953), Clegg discussed a formal exam-free scheme with his brother-in-law, Gilbert Peaker HMI, and eventually the Thorne Scheme was devised. Under this scheme, children were allocated in their final year in primary school by their teachers to that type of school deemed most appropriate, with borderline children seen by a panel of teachers who took

the final decision. The scheme was introduced in the Thorne area in the south of the County in 1955 as an experiment. When Labour lost control in the County Council elections in 1955, Clegg felt that the Conservatives, with Fuller Smith in the chair might not allow the experiment to continue but he was helped by the expressed interest of Sir David Eccles (the Minister) on a visit to Ripon. Clegg felt that Fuller Smith was never entirely happy because the Thorne scheme was perceived as a comprehensive philosophy being introduced by the back door. When Labour regained control in 1958, the scheme was extended to other Divisions but it was not forced on any areas and some Labour areas refused to accept it because it was felt that it might delay comprehensive reorganisation (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

### **Secondary Modern Schools – West Riding County Council**

The other aspect of the tripartite system which caused concern in the West Riding was the secondary modern schools. The consensus among professionals of the West Riding was that the modern schools lacked aims and drive and that, whilst the pupils were friendly and confident, they were not being stretched academically and experienced difficulties when they entered Further Education. As early as 1951, a number of secondary modern heads made requests to be allowed to enter pupils for the GCE examination and, despite attempts by HMI to discourage such a tendency, Clegg said that he was not against modern schools entering some pupils for the GCE. He justified this view on three grounds: his lack of confidence in selection processes; the overlap of intellectual abilities in the bottom of the grammar school and the top of the secondary modern school; and, the shortage of grammar school places in the south of the Riding.

The pressure for the development of GCE courses in the secondary modern schools was, at least in part, increased because the post-war population bulge entered secondary schools in 1957 with a consequent increase in the demand for scarce grammar school places. Nationally, the number of secondary modern schools offering GCE O level courses increased from 357 schools in 1954 to 1350 schools in 1959 (Weeks, 1986 op cit). I will refer to the development of courses in Secondary modern schools in later articles when I deal with my own experiences of teaching in secondary modern schools.

The search for meaning in the secondary modern schools took another form in Keighley (Excepted District) when in 1958 it informed the WRCC that it intended to establish a leaving certificate for secondary modern children below the level of GCE but which, it hoped, would have local credibility with employers. Shortly afterwards a similar proposal was received from Harrogate and the Education Committee had to make up its mind whether to stick to its regulation that “no scheme of examinations in secondary schools, other than normal internal examinations, shall be held without the express approval of the Authority” or to change the regulations. In the event, it was decided not to change the regulations. The Harrogate proposals were vetoed and the Silsden secondary school was prevented from entering pupils for the Keighley examination (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

### **The West Riding – Schemes for Reorganisation**

At an early stage (1958), Clegg produced a scheme similar to that which was implemented in Leicestershire. This scheme was based upon the length of courses available in secondary



schools. Some children, it was claimed, were suited to courses which lasted until the age of sixteen, and some were suited to courses which lasted until the age of fifteen. The dividing line was to be decided by consultation with parents in the final year at primary school and by consultation with their head teacher. The scheme was said to be flexible and neither prevented the development of comprehensive education nor made comprehensive schools essential to the removal of some of the most telling shortcomings which had been encountered in operating bipartite schemes. The scheme was liked neither by the Conservatives, led by Fuller Smith, who were then in power nor by Hyman (Labour) who argued heatedly with Clegg that he did not see the scheme as a substitute for comprehensive education. However, when Hyman saw the extent of the Conservative opposition, he became prepared to push the scheme through as a Labour measure. The Conservative opposition was very fierce, though several weeks later the councillors were embarrassed when Geoffrey Lloyd (the Conservative Minister) visited Wakefield and publicly commended the experiment in the spirit of the Conservative government's white paper "Secondary for All. A New Drive".

The scheme was overtaken by comprehensive proposals in the West Riding but it did have the effect of increasing the tendency for modern schools to institute GCE courses and made the Committee aware of the need to avoid very small modern schools as they were not likely to be able to mount GCE courses which had viable numbers. Between 1955 and 1958 The West Riding opened three comprehensive schools whilst the Conservatives were in power and with local agreement. These were at Colne Valley (fully comprehensive) and Penistone and Tadcaster which took all children in the secondary age range in their own area plus selected children from the surrounding area. This was a common pattern in the West Riding in the early days of comprehensive reorganisation. Of fourteen comprehensive schools established up to 1966, nine followed this pattern (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

### **The Persistence of Inequality of Opportunity**

The controversy within education became increasingly acute as the evidence of inequality of opportunity accumulated during the 1950s and the 1960s. Analysis by some academics and notions found in Reports commissioned by the Conservative government suggested that the education system had not been successful in extending opportunity to all sections of the community. It was argued that this was not only a failure of a moral duty but that the extension of opportunity was also an economic imperative (Floud, Halsey, Martin, 1956; Crowther, 1959; Newsom, 1963; Robbins, 1963; Douglas, 1964).

The Crowther Report, for instance, noted that "if we are to build a higher standard of living..... and.....if we are to have higher standards in life, we shall need a firmer educational base than we have today". Much of what was written was in the same vein and suffered from the same problem of imprecision both in the way it was expressed and the basis on which possible remedies were formulated.

The combination of the controversy about inequality of opportunity and the comprehensivisation of secondary education in the absence of any empirical control raised the educational temperature. Mistrust of selection at eleven-plus, movements within the profession and the opinion of researchers began to promote the "ideal" of the comprehensive school. The next stage was to be the adoption of the ideal by the labour party. Personally, under the care of

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Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield, a direct grant school, my education was relatively untroubled.

There were two great difficulties. The first was the amount of time spent travelling. It took me two hours on buses to get to school in the morning and two hours in the late afternoon. The other problem was that there was no connection between the school and the village of Grimethorpe which was geographically distant and culturally very different. For some time, I was the only Grimethorpe boy who attended the school. It was like living in two very different worlds.

The school was prestigious, academically well-connected, with well-qualified and academically capable teachers. It cared for its pupils and always did its best to ensure general welfare, self-belief and pride and success. There were many inspirational teachers and well-motivated pupils and friends. It is perhaps invidious to mention any of the teachers but I feel that I owed most to two of them. In my early years at the school I was greatly influenced by a languages teacher, Mr Blackshaw. I remember that he, and his wife, were enormously kind to me and encouraged my interest in music, which was one of their own interests. I was extremely sorry when he left the school. In later years, I was kindly and thrillingly guided by the geography teacher, Mr Baggaley. He allowed me access to his wisdom as well as much of his own original research which gave me a fascination with physical geography and encouraged me to apply to Oxford University. Having obtained my place at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, I did my National Service as a teleprinter operator and spent approximately eighteen months in Hong Kong.

Oxford University was a good experience. I enjoyed the academic work and met up with old school friends as well as making many others. I did not do quite as well as I could have done but gained a good degree and was ready for work. In many ways, I was ill-prepared for making a career choice. One thing was certain, however, and that was that my father was ill with a heart condition and I decided that I would have to return to South Yorkshire and, by doing so, I turned away from many opportunities. I have always been glad that I did because my father died a year later.

I became a teacher, in June 1960, when a near-neighbour invited me to meet the Headmaster of the school where he taught about the possibility of joining the staff of a secondary modern school, Owston Park Secondary School, at Skellow near Doncaster. The post was offered and I took it. The school was in the West Riding County Council. It was a 4 Form Entry school, which had a delightful position with large playing fields and a familiar type of building, which reminded me of the elementary school at Grimethorpe. My parents did not approve of my decision. They thought that I should have gone for something 'better'.

In many ways, the school was very interesting. It had been a very settled school with a long-established headmaster, Mr. Sharpe, who ran the school on very traditional lines. On entry pupils were put in a rank order pre-determined by the eleven-plus results and allocated to a stream, A, B, C, or D. End-of-year examinations and a new rank order determined movements up or down within the streams. The structure of the school was strong and there was a House system superimposed on the year group system to encourage sports and some aspects of pastoral care. Mr. Sharpe's successor, Mr. Guy, had not changed the structure of the school, which was probably very wise. Mr. Sharpe had died not long after leaving the school and had achieved near-sainthood by doing so. The other big difference for me was that, for the first time

since leaving Grimethorpe Infants School, I encountered girls within the school system. Mr. Guy was very anxious to develop external examination work for the more able pupils. This seemed to take a long time and he finally managed it several years after I left in 1963. The other big difference was the prominence of corporal punishment, which I had not encountered since I left Grimethorpe Elementary School. This is another aspect of secondary modern education that is rarely the subject of much comment. In my experience, it was regarded as an essential tool by most secondary modern teachers and, if the teacher was not capable of administering the cane, himself or herself, it was thought that the Head must be able to give six of the best when asked to back up a member of staff. I always thought it demeaning and believed it should not be necessary.

There was another interesting aspect of the school. In 1948, the Children's Act had extended the responsibility of the Local Authorities and made them responsible for ensuring the welfare of children in their boundaries. Children could be removed from their parents and brought up in institutions if they suffered neglect or were not under proper control. The West Riding had bought a large building, Skellow Hall, and used it as a Children's Home shortly after the Act. The boys from the Home attended local schools and were an interesting addition to Owston Park Secondary School. So far as I have been able to determine, the boys from the Hall came to the school without any professional co-operation between the school and the Hall and without any real planning either at local level or County level. It was interesting to see another aspect of the Welfare State in operation.

Mr. Guy was anxious to develop the curriculum and to modernise the modern school. He did not want me to teach Geography and the lessons I taught were called Social Studies. I had to develop a new syllabus with a combined History/Geography content as well as encouraging Outdoor Pursuits and dealing with Careers. I am not sure that I did very well. I think that the lessons were interesting enough and I did not have trouble with discipline. I am not sure, at this distance in time, whether there was an overall coherence in what I taught. If I had the opportunity to re-live that part of my life, I would organise my teaching very differently and base it substantially on local History and Geography. I also ran a rugby team and took many trips into the Pennines on Saturdays.

Despite my parents' reservations, I learned a great deal and probably contributed a fair amount. I learned how to teach and quickly had to modify the simple didactic methods that I had experienced at QEGS Wakefield to try to involve the pupils more in their own education. I was not included in Mr. Guy's plans for the further development of the curriculum and the development of GCE O level courses, probably because he suspected that I would not be around long enough. I do not know because he never discussed either my career or my contribution with me. In the School Log I receive only two mentions. First, that I was appointed; and, secondly, that I was ill on one day and was absent from school. He did give me a reference and I was appointed to teach both History and Geography at Wath-upon-Dearne Comprehensive School and started there in September 1963.



## **The 1960s**

### **Themes at the outset of this period**

The 1960s were marked initially by growing impatience with the perceived problems of the tripartite system and a growing demand for reorganisation on comprehensive lines from some localities. There was, indeed, an international movement towards the replacement of selective systems with comprehensive. Scandinavian countries, Japan, Israel and eastern European countries adopted non-selective processes.

The difficulty everywhere was for both politicians and officers to decide how reorganisation was to be achieved before they were in a position to respond to local initiatives. A persistent problem was the constraint of having to use existing buildings and staffs. In the West Riding, for instance, the process of building to rationalise pre-war provision was only just being completed. The school I joined at Skellow was typical of much of the West Riding and struggled to make sense of changing atmospheres and demands within an earlier building and educational structure. The grammar schools assumed that knew exactly what their task was and how best to achieve common goals. They were places of prestige and certainty. The secondary modern schools were places of some uncertainty. Because of the tradition of responding to localities and the need to use existing provision, LEAs were often compelled to adopt a unifying and centralising stance because they had to control development. Phasing, for instance, was often made necessary by financial stringency and many of the schemes adopted were more a response to existing provision than being justified educationally.

There was a tendency for LEAs, where reorganisation was being actively pursued, to develop a preferred type of scheme. The West Riding, for instance, had many examples of three tier organisation (5-9, 9-13, and 13-18 schools) This increased the tendency to centralisation within Authorities and made Chief Education Officers very important figures, locally and nationally. The professional structures of the West Riding LEA reflected both the desire to impose a universal and high quality service and the need to respect the wishes of the localities in the West Riding. It was a very large LEA with great geographical diversity.

As Chief Officer, Alec Clegg was in charge of a large staff of officers and advisers. He always had at least one deputy and each branch of the service (Primary, Secondary, Further, Youth, Buildings) had its own lead officer with an adequate staff to administer the professional and political business of the section. Within the Divisions (prescribed geographical areas within the County) there was at least one administrative office with a Divisional Officer in charge, who was responsible for a professional staff which had a responsibility for and towards units (schools) in the Division. Occasionally, Clegg or one of his immediate staff would need to make an appearance in the Divisions and occasionally the Divisional Officers would have to attend County Hall. The main eyes and ears of the LEA, however, were the Advisers/Inspectors who each had a subject responsibility as well as a responsibility for particular schools. They had great responsibilities and also great opportunities. There were undoubtedly professional and personal tensions on occasions in this structure but the overall effect was that of strengthening and uniting the professional work of the LEA.

At the same time, the introduction of Mode 3 examinations and teacher controlled CSE was important in confirming decentralisation of knowledge and skills. This development was encouraged by the newly formed Schools Council and was the culmination of decentralisation of knowledge and skills. In examination terms, it had been encouraged informally by examinations set by the RSA and the College of Preceptors and formally by the replacement of the School Certificate by the single subject GCE O Level. It was characteristic of this period that when Clegg was advocating the widespread adoption of one type of reorganisation scheme, he was very influential (after initial reluctance) in promoting the development of Mode 3 CSE where the syllabus and the form of assessment were determined (following negotiations with the Board) by the teachers. The West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examining Board, ably set up and run by Ray Capes, was very much a creature of the West Riding Council.

The demand from localities had its effect, not only on LEAs, but also on the Labour Party which adopted comprehensive education as part of its political programme in the run up to the 1964 election. Education was, thus, politicised and consensus lost, in two ways.

Firstly, comprehensive education was sold as part of a particular political package. In this context, what mattered was the generation of the belief that comprehensive schools would deliver all that the grammar schools had delivered whilst offering everyone else a lot more. Harold Wilson openly pushed comprehensive schools as grammar schools for all. Pragmatically this reduced the chances of, and opportunities for, empirical investigation of comprehensive proposals. The coherence of educational arguments and investigations about comprehensive education was made a secondary consideration. The obfuscation of the curriculum issue made the comprehensive prospectus inadequate. It was assumed that children would necessarily perform better in a system where (a) there was no differentiation by examination at age eleven and (b) the method employed to develop the curriculum was to encourage schools and individual teachers to take the initiative and control the teaching process. This, aided by the Schools Council, ensured the decentralisation of the knowledge and skills base.

Secondly, the Conservatives were placed in a difficult position. A number of Conservative controlled LEAs had adopted comprehensive schooling as being the best means of organising education in their areas and during the 1960s the party asserted that it was not opposed to experiments with comprehensive schools per se. The attitude adopted was that they opposed the central imposition of a particular form of schooling and supported those localities which wished to preserve their grammar schools.

The two major political parties were being pushed in different directions, but not very quickly. Clegg was always proud of the fact that three of the early West Riding comprehensive schools were established whilst the Conservatives were in power (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit). His pleasure is an indication of the political polarisation which had occurred later within education before the West Riding disappeared.

Any hint of prescription was met with opposition from the Conservatives. There was a furious row in the West Riding when, just before the local elections of 1955 a Conservative Councillor, F Morton, alleged that the local Labour group had plans for large-scale reorganisation along comprehensive lines involving the wiping out of a grammar school. Morton demanded from

Hyman (the Labour Chairman of the education Committee) first an assurance of full consultation before the closing or building of a school took place; and, secondly, a full revision of the development plans. He was given the assurance but did not have the full backing of his party for a revision of the development plan. Prominent Conservatives on the Education Committee made it quite clear that, though they were prepared to experiment with such schools in exceptional circumstances, the Conservatives were opposed to a general policy of comprehensivisation. When the Conservatives were returned with a majority of 8 in the 1955 local elections, Clegg thought it would make little difference and might save the West Riding from the difficulties associated with ill-planned schemes (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit). Clegg was always conscious of the need to manage change and he was particularly anxious not to lose good staff from sixth forms in the West Riding which he felt might happen if ideology was not modified by practical considerations.

In any case, in 1955 Labour had a somewhat ambivalent attitude at national level. There was a great deal of pressure for the abolition of the private and public schools but there were still many who saw the grammar schools as an important means by which working class children could make academic and social progress (Fenwick, 1976 op cit). The ambivalence was clearly shown in the 1958 policy document "Learning to Live" which was published following wide consultations. It stated that the government must seek to organise education so that the sum total of talent in the community is fully developed", and described the comprehensive system as any which succeeds in providing real choice to children" (Labour Party, 1958). The document avoided a statement about how reform was to be achieved under a Labour government.

The reaction of the teachers' associations to this document was muted and this wait and see attitude persisted into the early 1960s. The associations themselves were being influenced by the changing circumstances of their members. Opposition or reluctant neutrality had only slowed down comprehensive reorganisation not stopped it and, thus, there was an increasing number of teachers who earned their living in comprehensive schools. The main plank of the unions during this period was that teachers must be properly consulted before changes were implemented (Fenwick, 1976 op cit). Schemes for reorganisation and associated consultation made professional associations more important than previously had been the case.

### **Clegg and the West Riding County Council at this time**

Within LEAs there was, at the end of the 1950s, an increased demand from the Labour controlled areas for schemes of reorganisation. This was certainly true of the West Riding where Labour was returned to power in 1958. Clegg felt the need to keep the demand under control and initially said that he needed time for his staff at Wakefield to examine the schemes. In July 1958, he warned the Education Committee that "it is idle to believe that a pattern of comprehensive schools will evolve within the next 25 years" (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit). Clegg seems to have needed time, at this stage, to formalise relationships between himself and his officers and the politicians and had to exert will and professional judgement as controlling agents.

This was made obvious when both Hyman and C T Broughton, who succeeded Hyman as chairman, accused Clegg of deliberately making slow progress on comprehensive education.

Clegg denied this but he did have reservations which were discussed with Hyman in August 1958. The result was an agreed procedure to be followed following the receipt of a request for comprehensivisation from a Division. The request was to be taken to the Education Committee which was to pass a resolution to the effect that the Education Officer be instructed to set out alternative ways of implementing comprehensive in the area. Details were to be worked out by the Divisional Education Officer and the staff at Wakefield and eventually submitted to the Education Committee for discussion. Clegg made it clear to Hyman that he would feel bound to oppose any schemes involving any one of the following: the union of buildings which were several miles apart; the union of buildings which were in bad physical condition; and, the combination of two or more schools under a mediocre head (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

### **Schemes in the West riding**

In the West Riding, Clegg and his staff as well as the politicians spent a great deal of time and effort in pursuit of the best means of organising comprehensive schools. Partly because of the problem of buildings and the need to maximise resources Clegg pointed out to the Committee that it should consider the establishment of junior and senior high schools providing both were non-selective and clearly made the point that the age of transfer would, to some extent, depend on the accommodation available. The big problem he saw with 11-18 schools was the amount of building which would be necessary. He also saw other advantages in the junior/senior high school situation. He felt that they would avoid the problems of size associated with the 11-18 organisation. He hoped that the best current junior school practices would be transferred into the junior high schools and that whilst children would be stretched academically they would also be able to benefit from a secure base until they had achieved greater maturity (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

In the early 1960s, Clegg seemed wedded to the idea of transfer at the age of fourteen into the senior high school and by 1963 a number of divisions had accepted junior/senior high schools schemes with transfer at the age of fourteen. However, by the beginning of May 1963, Clegg had developed a new idea. He seems to have, for a number of years, been turning over in his mind that there might be advantages in effectively changing the age at which secondary education would begin. His new proposal was for a 5-9 primary, 9-13 middle and 13-18 secondary format. There was not great initial support from HMI for this notion and it was clear that there would have to be new legislation to allow such a scheme to proceed.

The scheme was formally presented in a lengthy memorandum to the October 1963 meeting of the Policy and Finance Sub-Committee. The advantages expressed were threefold. Firstly, it would be made possible to reorganise in areas where the buildings were unsuitable for adaptation into conventional 11-18 schools. Secondly, it would allow the best primary school methods to be continued into the eleven-plus range so helping the less able whilst protecting the more able child against premature specialisation and examination pressures. Thirdly, it would remove pressure from primary school accommodation and would, therefore, reduce class sizes and allow the introduction of nursery provision. Clegg's general conclusion was that the West Riding could delay no longer and, if the Ministry refused to allow reorganisation on these lines, the LEA would be forced to adopt a modified Leicestershire (junior/senior high school system with transfer ages at 11 and 14) scheme in certain areas against its better judgement. The memorandum was adopted by the Committee and caused little controversy at County level.

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Clegg ensured very wide publicity for the memorandum within the educational establishment throughout the country and his idea was well received and when Sir Edward Boyle (the Minister) visited Don Valley in 1964 he told Broughton, Chairman of the Education Committee, that he hoped that an Act enabling LEAs to try experiments of this kind would be passed. The Act was passed before the Conservatives left office in 1964 (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

Unfortunately, the emergence of the three-tier system as the preferred methodology of the West Riding created confusion in some of those Divisions which had previously adopted a modified Leicestershire scheme. There was, thus, a tension between some localities and the County. The County had taken a centralising stance and whilst local wishes would not be ignored, the County was prepared to be more assertive. Reorganisations made necessary by the 1944 Act were still taking up much of the thinking and actions of LEAs into the 1960s and the format of secondary education was perhaps the most pressing concern. There were, however, other pressing concerns beginning to develop. Some parts of the country were receiving growing number of immigrant families and several LEAs had to develop policies for dealing with the influx of children into schools who spoke little or no English. There was a proposition made by the Crowther Report to increase the school-leaving age to 16, which was not followed up for many years. Attention was paid to the training of teachers and Teacher Training Courses were extended from two years to three.

There were other changes made to Higher Education. Very importantly for many students, the 1962 Education Act required LEAs to provide grants for living costs and tuition fees to students resident in their area for full-time degree courses, for teacher training and for courses leading to the Diploma in Higher Education (Dip HE) and the Higher National Diploma (HND). This followed the action, in 1956, of upgrading selected Technical and Further Colleges to Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs). Throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, there was still a general sense of optimism and a determination to open up opportunities to the whole community. There was also an increase in funding, which was very important. When the Conservatives were first re-elected to government in 1951, Churchill reduced the amount to be spent on the education system. He was, however, persuaded that the economic future of the country would be best served by improved education and the policy was reversed.

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