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THE TRIALS OF W. L. NEALE

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ABSTRACT

W. L. Neale, the Chief Inspector of the Education Department of South Australia, was invited to accept appointment as Director of Education in Tasmania in 1905. His attempts to centralise control of the Department antagonised the local Boards of Advice and his curricular innovations confused the many incompetent teachers, whom he rebuked and criticised publicly. The opposition of these two groups to Neale was so bitter that three Royal Commissions were held to investigate allegations made against him. The few competent teachers supported Neale, but his own lack of tact alienated public opinion and Parliament accepted the recommendation of the third Commission to terminate his services.

His ability was outstanding and his dismissal a sad setback to education in Tasmania.

THE APPOINTMENT OF NEALE AS DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

In 1904 Tasmania's financial position was critical. Every available penny had to be used to the best advantage. Retrenchment and economy were the aims of Parliament and both the efficiency and the expenditure of all government departments were examined carefully to ascertain whether the expenditure was justified by the value of their activities.

The Premier, W. B. Propsting, sought permission from the South Australian Premier for W. L. Neale, the Chief Inspector of the South Australian Education Department, to visit Tasmania and to report on all aspects of the work of the Education Department[1]. Neale was regarded as one of the ablest administrators in the Department, with a high reputation throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Neale was given leave from his position in South Australia. He first visited Victoria and New South Wales to observe the work of their Departments of Education. Then he spent two months in Tasmania. He visited thirty-seven schools and submitted a report[2] of 50,000 words in which he examined every aspect of education in the State.

Neale was a visionary, a crusader, and an idealist, who had accepted many aspects of the 'new education' which Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Dewey[3] had advocated. He was critical, impatient and intolerant, and had little sympathy for those who were unwilling to keep themselves abreast of modern developments. It is not surprising that his report was blunt and scathing. He asserted:—

> 'Hardly an echo of the educational renaissance of the last quarter of a century seems to have reached Tasmania. The method is an uninteresting drill; and the form of the method . . . is condemned by all authorities. Even the Model School is an exponent of methods that lead to ineffectiveness'[4].

Neale was not solely critical; he also propounded an ideal system of education, set out in detail the improvements that were necessary in order to achieve such perfection, and specified the means of implementing them. He concluded that education in Tasmania was 'very far from being even moderately efficient'[5].

In July 1904, J. W. Evans succeeded Propsting as Premier[6]. When Neale was invited to Tasmania Propsting had assured the South Australian Premier that there was no intention of asking Neale to remain permanently, but Evans offered him appointment as Director. The previous Director, Joseph Masters, was appointed Secretary for Education and therefore in theory became Neale's second-in-command[7].

The announcement of Neale's appointment was accepted with little opposition in the House of Assembly. Few members were interested in education but all were interested in efficiency and economy, and Evans convinced his colleagues that Neale would bring both qualities to the Department.

The Legislative Council applauded even more loudly than the Assembly the aim of economy, but members objected strongly to the decision that it should be Neale who was to effect the economies. Many of the Councillors were chairmen of local Boards of Advice[8] and had been incensed by Neale's criticism of the Boards, and his recommendation that the central authority of the Department should be strengthened and the powers of the Boards decreased. The Legislative Councillors feared the loss of their prestige and patronage, feared an increase in government expenditure that would increase the land taxes, and resented a stranger criticising the results of the administration of a State department.

Their resentment was so strong[9] that they appointed a Select Committee of the Council to

investigate and report on the Report which Neale had submitted, but Select Committees were able to meet only while Parliament was in session, and the adjournment of Parliament meant that Neale commenced duties before the Committee could meet.

The criticism of Neale's appointment by the Legislative Council was so severe that Evans was not willing to risk further trouble by allowing Neale to arrive in the middle of January 1905, which he had requested, instead of the beginning of the month. In addition, Neale's removal expenses which had been promised to him by the Premier were at first refused by the Council, and only after two further submissions by the Premier did Council authorise payment of half the cost of removal.

In South Australia, where Neale and his work were well known, there were no reservations about the wisdom of his appointment. The Assistant Inspector-General of the Education Department told a public meeting of farewell that 'Tasmania was gaining an educational statesman', and that South Australia 'was losing an inspector who . . . had a vision of the highest levels of education'. The Senior Inspector stated that Neale 'had done excellent work in every department' and described him as 'one of the greatest and most statesmanlike inspectors in Australia'[10].

In Tasmania, however, the outlook was not favourable. Neale inherited a teaching service which lacked ability, and which had been antagonised by the stinging public condemnation which his report had administered six months before. His report had paid little heed to Tasmanian customs or to the difficulties under which the teachers worked, and this caused them to believe that he was unaware of the difficulties and not interested in their welfare. The resentment of the teachers was accentuated by the realisation that Neale was to remain in Tasmania to put into effect the improvements and economies he had recommended. They found their greatest support came from the Legislative Council.

'The forces of blind conservatism and vested interest are arrayed against him.'[11]. Encouraged 'by legislators and less responsible persons, the school teachers [in Hobart] have practically revolted'[12]. It was the 'Legislative Council, with their usual penchant for mischief', from whom 'the incompetent teacher [was seeking] sympathy and political influence'[13]. The unusual alliance of poor, incompetent teachers and wealthy landowners was joined by the infant Labour Party which, supporting the miners and small farmers in the backblocks, resented criticism of the poor teachers in these areas.

This combination of forces was particularly strong in rural areas, where education was weakest, reform was most necessary and conservatism was strongest. It was obvious that Neale's task would be difficult.

Neale's Innovations and Improvements

Neale assumed office in January 1905. He gave first attention to innovations and improvements that were clearly necessary, not controversial and unlikely to increase the State's expenditure. His early decisions aroused almost no criticism and in September 1905, the House of Assembly accepted the Education Department estimates for the following year without reservation. Nine members from both sides of the House praised his work, with none dissenting, and the Premier, speaking as Minister for Education, expressed the desire to 'place on record [his] high appreciation of Mr Neale's ability'[14].

One of Neale's first acts was to establish a monthly journal, *The Educational Record*, which he used to convey his instructions to teachers. In this way he not only asserted the authority of a central administration but also advised his teachers of new ideas and encouraged them to greater efforts.

In particular, he used *The Educational Record* to introduce to Tasmania many aspects of the 'new education' which were becoming accepted in other countries and other States[15]. He retained some of the formal drill of his predecessors but added music, drawing, nature study and physical culture to enliven the studies of the children. 'It is not sufficient that children should be well behaved. They should also be mentally alert, anxious to work, and constantly making effort'[16]. He also advocated craft work—simple plasticine modelling for the very young children and elementary woodwork for older boys. He urged his teachers to encourage the children to brighten the classrooms by bringing flowers to school, or by providing plants in pots. He also urged his teachers to establish drum and fife bands, to organise concerts and part-singing, and displays of art work and classroom decorations.

In order to introduce these new topics and new methods Neale sought opportunities to provide experience and training for teachers in the Department.

Neale sent six of his teachers to the Teachers College in Melbourne to acquaint them with modern teaching methods and philosophy, and sent a woodwork and cookery teacher to work in such schools in Victoria. On their return he persuaded the Government to convert an old fives court at the Army Barracks into a woodwork room and classes of twenty boys from Hobart and from nearby areas served by a railway spent half a day there each week. In this way 200 boys received regular instruction. He also had a room in the Central School in Hobart equipped as a cookery classroom, and 200 girls received instruction each week.

He submitted plans, provided by the Victorian Education Department, for the construction of woodwork and cookery 'schools'[17] in Launceston, hoping to have them ready when his teachers returned, but lack of finance prevented their construction.

In Hobart he introduced schemes for the education of deaf, dumb and blind children who had previously been neglected.

He sent one of his teachers to Froebel House Kindergarten Training College in Sydney to learn the elements of teaching very young children, for whom there was no provision in Tasmania.

Neale persuaded the Chief Health Officer of the Department of Public Health, Dr J. S. C. Elkington, to join him in requesting provision for medical examination of school children[18]. Later in the year Neale arranged with C. B. Peterson[19] to prepare detailed instructions for physical training courses[20] for publication in *The Educational Record* in order that teachers in all parts of Tasmania could benefit.

In 1906 Neale sought the appointment of a Schools Medical Officer under the control of the Education Department (despite the protests of the Department of Public Health, which believed that the officer should be responsible to that Department), and in 1907 Dr Gertrude Halley of Melbourne was appointed. In the following year two part-time officers were appointed—one in Hobart and one in Launceston[21].

Neale also used *The Educational Record* to advise the teachers that principles of hygiene were an essential aspect of education. They were instructed to open windows to allow proper ventilation (not only to introduce fresh air but also to disperse offensive body odours) and to instruct children in the need for regular bathing and washing[22].

Elkington and Neale campaigned vigorously and in 1908 more than 11,000 children were medically inspected. Elkington then reported to Parliament that 36% of them were unhealthy to such an extent that their educational progress was being hindered[23].

Neale sought to gain the interest of all citizens, especially parents, in the work that was being carried out in the schools and he arranged for an exhibition to be held in Launceston at the end of 1907. Not only the children resident in Launceston but more than 2,000 children from all parts of the State gave displays of their work, attracting very favourable publicity. Nevertheless, public unconcern was difficult to overcome and Neale sadly reported to his Minister that 'the parents as a whole are indifferent about education.'[24].

From 1904 to 1909 the average daily attendance in the State schools increased by more than 21%, even though the State's population increased by only 4.3%, but it was the effort of Neale's truant officers rather than any change of attitude by the parents that caused such an improvement.

Another significant factor in increasing attendance was Neale's insistence that the teachers were responsible for maintaining a satisfactory standard of enrolment. Neale warned his teachers that it was the Department's policy 'to pay according to success in teaching, success in managing subordinate teachers and success in attracting a good attendance'[25]. This policy caused considerable friction in many unforeseen ways. In 1907 the Teachers Union expressed strong opposition to the publication of a report by the Deparment of Public Health condemning the condition of many school buildings. The Union, worried that parents would be discouraged from sending their children to these schools, and would instead send them to one of the non-State schools, did not deny that the report was justified, but contended that it was 'naturally against our interests'[26] that the true situation should be made known.

On several occasions Neale sought to persuade Parliament to abolish fees. At first he was unsuccessful, but in 1908 he eventually achieved his goal[27], and thus removed one great obstacle that had prevented parents from seeking an education for their children.

Neale established a Training College in 1906, in which prospective teachers were able to continue their education beyond Grade VI. He arranged that suitable candidates at the age of about 14 were appointed monitors in schools for six months. After this probationary period they studied at the College for two years, were then appointed to the staff of a school for two more years, and then returned to the College for another year's study[28]. A few very capable students were permitted to remain at the College for an extra year, and in this time they studied some subjects at the University.

For the first five years the places in the fifth or senior year were made available to teachers already in the service of the Department, in an effort to lift teaching standards immediately, and to avoid the need that would otherwise exist to wait five years for the first benefits of the College to be transmitted to the schools.

J. A. Johnson, M.A., of New Zealand, was appointed Principal of the College. Johnson's staff consisted of two female assistants, with special teachers giving instruction in subjects such as woodwork, cookery, drill, etc. In the first year there were forty-four students. The work was at first carried out in the Technical College and then for four years in the buildings of the University until the Training College was built and ready for occupation at the beginning of 1911[29].

Neale at first sought to buy an area of the public Domain on which to erect the College, but the trustees, while expressing 'sympathy with you in your endeavour', felt that they could not allow any 'alineation' [*sic*] of the Domain. Neale then persuaded the University to sell him one acre of its site for £1,500, and found such an amount by using loan money voted for the erection of schools[30].

By 1910 the enrolment had grown to seventy-one, and forty students had qualified for matriculation at the University of Tasmania. Ten of these students had completed the first year of the B.A. course of the University. Without the lectures given at the College these teachers would almost certainly have ended their studies after completing their primary education.

Neale persuaded the Government to pass the Scholarship Act[31] as a necessary corollary to the establishment of the Training College. It provided financial assistance[32] for children who had completed their primary studies to enable them to undertake secondary education, either at a non-State school or at the Training College.

Neale also established a Practising School, where the Training College students could observe the best teachers of the Education Department and where these teachers could supervise practical training by the students. At first the existing school at Battery Point was used, mainly because of the teaching skill of G. V. Brooks, a young South Australian whom Neale had appointed First

Assistant at Battery Point. Two years later the new Trinity Hill School, known at Elizabeth Street School for many years, was used for training purposes, with Brooks as head teacher responsible for organising and supervising the teaching of the children and the training of the student-teachers.

In 1908 the East Launceston School became a Practising School for men and women older than 18 years who wished to become teachers. They were posted to the school for not more than six months and during this time were instructed and supervised by the head teacher before being accepted for permanent employment.

Neale also played a significant, though perhaps unwitting, role in strengthening the best of the non-State schools in Tasmania. He was not directly concerned with the welfare of these schools, but he was concerned with the welfare of the children who attended them, and with the welfare of children who were enrolled in them, but did not attend[33]. He therefore proposed that Parliament should set up a Registration Board, which would examine applications for registration by the proprietors of non-State schools. In 1906 Parliament created a Registration Board[34], with four representatives of the non-State schools, two of the Education Department, one of the University and one of the State-assisted technical schools.

Non-State schools were now forced to comply with minimum standards concerning accommodation and hygiene, and their teachers with standards of proficiency which, although extremely low, forced many practitioners to seek other avenues of remuneration. Neale was encouraged in his efforts by the principals of the better non-State schools. The Rev. C. G. Wilkinson, one of the co-principals of Launceston Church Grammar School and probably the most respected educator in Tasmania at the time, wrote to Neale of 'the great value and pressing need' of the proposed legislation[35]. The Act was supported by all except the unqualified proprietors whose livelihood was endangered.

The Registration Act forced many 'schools' to close because they could not meet the minimum standard that was prescribed, and forced many of their scholars into either the State schools or those non-State schools that survived. Thus the surviving non-State schools gained more pupils and, free of the handicap of ill-reputation that some of the proprietorial schools had created, gained also in public esteem.

Neale introduced a scheme for the bulk buying of text-books at a much lower cost than previously and he was unchallenged when he commented on several occasions that he had saved the State more by this single scheme than he had received in salary in the whole period of his appointment.

In the four years from Neale's appointment to the end of 1908 twenty-seven new schools were built but previous neglect had made the shortage of suitable buildings so acute that this was only a very small proportion of the number required. Even in Hobart, generally considered to be treated very favourably, there was an average daily attendance of 1,599 children in 1908 in four schools, which had been built to accommodate a maximum of 1,275 children. In rural areas the situation was worse.

Neale persuaded the Government to pass the Public Service Super-Annuation Fund Act 1905[36], whereby teachers and other government employees earning more than £50 per year could, if they wished, set aside 8% of their salary towards an annuity when they retired[37]. The Government did not contribute to the fund and the contributions were so hedged by regulations that many teachers did not join, but sufficient were interested to allow the scheme to be established.

Neale constantly advocated a wider provision of education by the State but Parliament's reluctance to increase expenditure frustrated all his efforts to do so. The erection of a kindergarten at Battery Point was approved in 1906 but the Public Works Department had insufficient funds to start the building, and it was not until 1911 that the room was erected. Neale urged the establishment of 'continuation schools' in which Grade VII classes would provide instruction beyond primary level for those children who required it. He frequently advocated agricultural education in rural areas and vocational education in the towns. Evans accepted Neale's proposals but made little effort to persuade Parliament to endorse them.

In July 1906, Evans asked Propsting to resume office as Minister for Education. There was growing resentment of Neale by the teachers and criticism of him in Parliament and Evans, affable and easy-going, with no knowledge of education and little interest in the Department, was glad to leave the troubles to Propsting and Neale[38].

The Opposition of the Teachers

Neale's innovations were welcomed by a few teachers but criticised by many as fads that had no relevance to the preparation of children for their future employment. In addition, Neale's brusque tactless manner offended and alienated many who would otherwise have supported him. However, it was a far more personal matter—salaries—which created an unbridgeable chasm between Neale and his teachers.

Neale had drawn up a scheme for the examination of teachers, based mainly on the ability of their pupils. This examination, which was designed to ensure that teachers who deserved promotion gained their due reward as well as to prevent the incompetent from progressing, was often conducted by Neale himself. In addition, the regulations concerning salaries were interpreted by Neale in a manner that appeared to show partiality towards a few at the expense of the majority. Some regulations related the teacher's salary to his ability and qualifications and others to the number of children enrolled in the school. Thus it was possible to justify, by quoting certain regulations, the reduction of a teacher's salary if his incompetence led him to be transferred to a smaller school, but it was also possible, by reference to other regulations, to claim that such an alteration was illegal.

> 'There are many very serious problems for the administration of the Department to solve before the state can be prevented from incurring ruinous expenditure for salaries, and before the extraordinary anomalies in salaries can be removed',

Neale had warned in 1904.

> 'Every day the solution of those questions is postponed the greater will be the difficulties, the stronger the opposition and the bitterer the heart-burning'[39].

The solution of Evans and Propsting was to 'suspend' the regulations in 1905[40]. However, the 'suspension' was never referred to Parliament or advised to the teachers. Propsting explained in 1909 that this was because the regulations had not really been suspended. It was simply, he said that 'they had not been strictly adhered to.'[41]. After the regulations were suspended Neale acted (and was forced to act) as he wished. The teachers, unaware that the regulations were no longer effective, were confused and suspicious and Neale's apparently preferential treatment of some teachers added to their distress.

In September 1905, the Premier's Budget Speech contained a brief reference to the need for the introduction of 'a few trained teachers for the lower grades'. Neale had advised the Teachers Union of his intention to invite eight South Australian teachers to accept positions in the Department and although the Union expressed regret that 'their own young teachers would be beaten in the competition for promotion' they eventually expressed themselves as 'fully satisfied'[42].

The Union accepted Neale's proposal for two reasons. One was that no qualified Tasmanian teachers were willing to apply for certain vacancies. Some vacancies were in rural districts, away from the amenities of the cities. Others offered bright prospects for future advancement but, because of the tangled salaries regulations, required acceptance of a lower initial salary than the teachers were already receiving. The other reason was simply that Neale advised the Union that only eight teachers would be recruited, and thus the 'competition for promotion' was unlikely to be strong.

During 1905 Neale had taken pains to keep the Teachers Union[43] informed of his plans and the Conference of the Union in November 1905, was not critical of his actions in any sphere of his work. It was generally agreed that Neale was 'gaining the confidence of the teachers and establishing that esprit de corps which is essential to success'[44]. However, the Union's attitude changed drastically when Neale, between January 1906, and May 1907, appointed twenty-six South Australians[45] and appeared to give them higher salaries than Tasmanian teachers with similar responsibilities.

Seven of the South Australians were appointed head teachers, but only two of them to large schools and one of these two was offered his position only when it was found that no local teachers had applied for the position. Eight were appointed to the newly-created position of First Assistant and eleven as assistants.

There is no doubt that the South Australians were good teachers. A. L. Brockett[46] praised their teaching skill, their 'spirit of discipline and capacity for hard work, and willingness to assist those who have less advantages than themselves'[47]. He stated in his 1906 report that two of the South Australians had been appointed head teachers and added:

> 'One has produced work of a quality I have not seen before in the State schools in Tasmania[48] . . . and the other has made his the third school in the State in numbers'[49],

when his excellent teaching increased the attendance from 270 to more than 500.

Nearly all the competent and qualified teachers, with nothing to fear from the competition of the 'imports', welcomed their arrival as a means of improving Tasmania's educational standards. The incompetent and unqualified teachers, with their future promotion obviously restricted and mindful of Neale's scathing criticism of their ability in his Report, began to fear that their employment, or at least their salary, was threatened. The Executive of the Teachers Union met in Launceston on 2 April 1907, and resolved:

> 'The teachers of Tasmania . . . most respectfully but most emphatically protest against the appointment of teachers from the other States to the charge of important schools seeing that there are Tasmanian teachers who . . . are entitled to such positions'[50].

Union officers advised Neale that teachers would never have accepted a position with a starting salary of £10 or £20 per year if they had been aware that 'the plums of the service would have been put out of their reach'[51].

Neale himself caused his relationship with his teachers to deteriorate by the manner in which he addressed them. He spoke or wrote to them without any apparent consideration for their feelings, and without due regard for the fact that the vague generalities, lax administration and almost complete absence of guidance and direction by his three predecessors had accustomed the teachers to believe that the control of each school was the responsibility of the teacher, not the Director. The teachers were supported in this view by the Boards of Advice which had assumed responsibilities far beyond those laid down in the 1885 Act. Thus any attempt by the Director to impose active direction on his schools was likely to confuse or offend the teachers and Boards, and any lack of tact would accentuate their discontent.

It was the sudden change from the tolerance of low standards and neglect of regulations by the previous Director to a rigid, intolerant insistence by Neale that the letter of the law must be obeyed, that upset his teachers and the Boards of Advice. Neale ignored past circumstances and insisted on immediate obedience to inflexible instructions and he imposed fines, which he euphemistically termed penalties[52], on teachers who broke the regulations.

It is not surprising that Neale often felt compelled to introduce inflexible regulations and to impose strong direction that allowed no error. Most of his teachers were incompetent[53], and many regarded teaching merely as a temporary vocation[54]. On the other hand it is no less surprising that teachers were offended by Neale's manner. When the teacher of the School at Mt Nicholas advised the Director that there was 'danger of total collapse' of the school because of earth

movement caused by mining activity, the Director replied that the Department accepted no responsibility for this inconvenient state of affairs. Neale advised the teacher to 'apply to the owners of the building immediately. If not safe, the school must be closed and you transferred'. Risking such a fate the teacher begged 'to again draw your attention to the necessity of something being done', and this time was advised that such matters as the total collapse of the school were not his responsibility. 'It is not [your] business to interfere or to express official opinions unless requested by superior officers'[55].

Neale's manner also offended the public and the Boards of Advice. In March 1907, an article appeared in the Burnie *Advocate*, alleging that country schools were overcrowded and understaffed, and that they suffered these disadvantages to a far greater extent than city schools[56]. Neale threatened legal action against the newspaper unless it revealed the name of the author of the article, not because the facts were incorrect but because he believed that he was being unfairly accused of bias against country children. Subsequently he threatened legal action against the author. The only way 'to stop the malicious misrepresentation by anonymous writers', Neale claimed, 'is to make an example of one or two of them'[57].

Neale strongly castigated several Boards for neglecting to enforce the Act concerning school attendance[58]. The Department paid the secretary of each Board for his duties, which were supposed to include 'prompt and regular enquiry into cases of non attendance . . .' Neale reported that there were 'only two or three who feel any responsibility about this matter or consider it their duty . . . The experiment of entirely entrusting to local authorities the enforcement of school attendance has hopelessly failed'[59].

Neale had refused requests from several Boards that the schools in their district should be closed at the time of the local harvest[60] for longer than the law permitted. With complete honesty he advised the Boards of the extent to which they could excuse children from regular attendance, but just as candidly and with considerable lack of tact reminded them that they could not exceed the prescribed limit[61].

The Support of the Teachers Union by Parliament

By the middle of 1907 the Boards of Advice were beginning to voice their criticism of Neale through Parliament. One Legislative Councillor spoke of Neale's 'brutality' to young women; another described the 'terror' of a teacher when he received a letter from Neale. Several confirmed the reports of serious discontent among the teachers.

Public opinion, influenced by the criticism of Neale by the teachers, the Boards and the parliamentarians, swung against Neale. It was alleged that he regarded teachers as 'mere puppets at the end of a string, to be manipulated by one of those little tin gods who are . . . dressed in a little brief authority'[62], and was advised that 'our own people should make quite as good teachers as those imported, especially from a little State like South Australia'. Emotions were so strong that facts were ignored. One correspondent to the *Mercury* alleged that thirty-four head teachers had resigned in the first thirty months of Neale's term of office because of his ill deeds, whereas in fact only five had resigned in this time and two of them because of pregnancy, which was presumably not the fault of Neale! Several correspondents alleged that there was an increasing number of retirements from the Department but in fact the total had fallen from 86 in 1905 to 74 in 1906, 49 in 1907 and 31 in the first ten months of 1908.

Some Tasmanians even began to see sinister motives in the most innocent acts. Because the food prepared by the cooking classes which had been established in Hobart was sold to the public at a cost of 6d. per meal Neale was accused of seeking to drive Hobart caterers out of business. 'Why are all these Adelaide fads thrust upon us?' asked a correspondent[63].

Most Tasmanians were not interested in education but Neale's opponents represented a considerable proportion of the remainder. They included many parents, whose income had been affected when Neale's truant inspectors prevented their children from accepting employment. They included the lazy and incompetent teachers whose ambition and energy were jeopardised by the importation of the South Australians. They included members of the Boards of Advice whose status and self-esteem had been decreased. They included also the patriots who felt that Tasmanians were quite competent to control their own affairs.

A minority defended Neale and referred both to the improvements he had wrought and the cause of the criticism. 'The whole of the trouble is . . . a wresting from (the Boards of Advice) of a power they once wielded not at all wisely nor well and their chagrin at losing a little tin throne is great. Not one district having an imported teacher will exchange for the old condition of things'[64]. 'The Tasmanians do not want to work [but] object to being left behind'[65]. A member of the House of Assembly alleged in debate that most complaints 'originated from dissatisfied teachers . . . who were unsuitable' and the Premier interjected to support the comment.

Evans and Propsting expressed admiration for Neale but neither gave him the protection he needed. Neither accepted the principle of ministerial responsibility for the activities of the Education Department. Neither contradicted the opinion that Neale was acting arbitrarily and contrary to regulations approved by Parliament when in fact the regulations had been 'suspended'. Neither confirmed that the Boards of Advice had been exceeding their authority and that Neale's advice, although regrettably blunt, was legally correct.

It was the lack of political support by Evans and Propsting that allowed discontent to grow, until Parliament felt compelled to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the allegations. E. D. Dobbie, the Solicitor-General, was appointed chairman. Ernest Whitfield, a Launceston magistrate, and F. M. Young, of Hobart, were the other members.

There was considerable criticism that the Solicitor-General and a magistrate, both involved in activities under the authority of the Attorney-General's Department, should have been asked to report on the activities of the Education Department, as the Attorney-General, their superior officer, was also the Minister for Education. To ensure that justice could be seen to be done, William Hamilton, Assistant Chief Inspector of the Victorian Education Department, was added to the Commission as an expert judge who was not likely to be influenced by local feelings. The request of the teachers to be allowed to appoint a commissioner was refused but they were permitted to be represented by J. R. Rule, and Rule was permitted to have with him a teacher in the Department, D. M. Davis, to advise him.

The Commission first sat on 13 August 1907, without Hamilton, who was unable to arrive in Tasmania until 24 August, and heard evidence in camera on matters concerning administration. On 24 August in Launceston Rule introduced the first of seventy-six witnesses who wished to give evidence of unfair treatment of them by Neale. Neale had taken with him to Launceston more than 8 cwt of documents to illustrate his defence and he had no difficulty in convincing the Commission that the complaints were trivial and unjustified[66].

After several days Dobbie, in considerable indignation, asked Rule to refrain from wasting the Commission's time with trivial matters. Rule alleged that only by hearing all the complaints could the Commission judge the widespread nature of the discontent. When the Chairman persisted with his request that Rule should present only significant cases Rule advised his witnesses neither to withdraw their complaints nor to elaborate on them, withdrew his representation of the teachers, and requested Herbert Nicholls, M.H.A., to appear on their behalf. Nicholls took the train to Launceston and Rule informed him of the way Dobbie was insisting that the enquiry be conducted. Nicholls then refused to appear, returned to Hobart and moved a motion of no-confidence in the Government in the House of Assembly, alleging that the choice of the three commissioners demonstrated the unfitness of the Ministers to remain in office. The motion was defeated 17-11 but Whitfield immediately resigned his commission because of Nicholls attack on his fitness and on the following day Dobbie and Young did the same.

Young publicly alleged[67] that many of the teachers had been persuaded to prefer charges against Neale by a few malcontents. However Young admitted that Neale occasionally 'said straight-out' what he meant, and Whitfield added that Neale had 'shown a great want of tact in some of his letters'[68]. Hamilton spoke with great praise of Neale's work, stating that standards in Tasmania were very low, and that reform was essential. 'Everything has yet to be done. You are scarcely yet beginning . . . It is a national calamity to find teachers so backward'[69].

It was clear that the discontent could not be allowed to rest there. Despite the trivia that had been presented it was presented with conviction and vehemence. It may have seemed that the teachers were using petty excuses to discredit their Director but there was no doubt that they felt strongly that he had no sympathy for them. Three weeks later the Government appointed Sir John Dodds, the Chief Justice of Tasmania, a Royal Commissioner. He discussed the matter with several teachers from 7 October to 12 October, and on the latter date he persuaded both the teachers and the Director to discuss the problems with him in Launceston.

Neale travelled to Launceston by train with N. K. Ewing[70], who had been asked by Rule to represent the teachers. Ewing told Neale[71] that none of Neale's proposals would be accepted by the teachers 'unless I sacrificed Inspector Brockett', who had loyally supported Neale, and unless 'Assistant-Inspector Crawford was sent back to a school'. Neale replied that he 'could not nor would for a moment consider any proposal to injure' Brockett or Crawford. Neale then suggested that he was willing to set up a Committee or Board of 'Classifiers', and agree to 'refer all appointments and promotions over £75 to the proposed committee', in the hope that this would dispel the fears of some teachers concerning their future. Ewing asserted that the teachers would not accept Brockett as a member, and that the Board should not only examine appointments but also regulations.

> 'I told Mr Ewing that I had been brought over to establish a system of Education and that I would not allow even the Inspectors to have a right of veto on any portion of the curriculum; that on this point my Australian reputation was at stake'[72].

The proposed Board was to have no executive authority but was able to submit to the Minister its recommendations on all matters concerning the classification, transfer or dismissal of teachers, and on all regulations relating to the duties of the teachers. Members of this Board were to be the four inspectors, four head teachers nominated by the Teachers Union, and the Director, as Chairman, with a casting vote as well as a deliberative vote.

The Chief Justice reported to Parliament on 12 November[73] that agreement to accept such a Board had been reached and that those at the conference had shaken hands all round. He recommended that the agreement should be submitted for parliamentary approval. Two weeks later Neale advised Ewing that he had obtained ministerial approval of a draft of the regulations concerning the duties of the Board of Classifiers, and claimed that he had contributed 'towards a full and amicable settlement'. Ewing replied: 'Indeed you have done your part and right loyally too. It is now all satisfactorily settled'.

The proposal that a Board should be established had been accepted by Evans and Propsting, but the draft of the regulations was neither submitted to Parliament nor considered by Cabinet. Evans and Propsting had reconsidered the proposal and had decided that it was improper and unreasonable that membership of the Board should be limited to men nominated by the executive of the Teachers Union, and improper that the Board or the Union[74] should have the sweeping influence that had been suggested. However, Evans and Propsting made

no effort to advise Parliament or the public of their new decision, and thus the teachers (and Ewing) believed that the Board had the authority that had been proposed and accepted at the meeting in Launceston.

Ewing, unaware of Evans's and Propsting's change of intention, wrote to Neale six weeks later, after several new regulations had been gazetted without any reference to the Board. 'It seems to me that the effect and intention of the establishers of the Board is that in all matters within its jurisdiction the Board is the real power and you have ceased to be such'[75].

Propsting admitted in Parliament in 1909 that the decision was 'entirely Ministerial action' and had not been prompted in any way by Neale, but because he and Evans allowed the impression to be given that the Board had certain authority, Neale's actions in directing the Department without reference to the Board was regarded as yet another arbitrary act by him, and the hostility created by this misunderstanding was considerable.

At the conference of the Teachers Union which began on 30 June 1908, the public became aware that the opposition to Neale, far from being soothed by the agreement made under the conciliation of Sir John Dodds, was stronger and more vehement than ever.

At first it was Neale's 'new education' that was attacked. The conference strongly criticised the introduction of drawing, singing and nature study to the curriculum by Neale, referring to the uselessness of these 'fads', and claimed that 'the work of a school was to teach boys the elements of a trade and girls how to cook'.

The president, J. J. Low, spoke bitterly against the innovations and against Neale's proposal that the child's individual needs should be studied. Low condemned such a notion. 'Individual teaching in a school or class of any size had long been obsolete'[76], he proclaimed, and the assembled teachers greeted this observation with loud applause.

Low also informed his members that the Board of Classifiers was 'the governing body' of the Department, possessing, 'subject to the Minister, the real administrative control of the Department'[77]. On the following day Low[78] claimed again that the Board was 'the real administrative control of the Department' and that it 'was to possess . . . the sole authority for the settlement of the question of making and rescinding old regulations', and criticised the 'distinct breach of faith' by which the Board's authority had been flouted by the gazettal of about '250 new regulations' in the previous six months[79].

Ewing, who had been invited to address the conference, with a flourish of rhetoric asked:

> 'What shall it profit a man, even if his wife does sing and play divinely, if the apple dumpling that she cooketh for his dinner sticketh in the middle of his anatomy? . . . If the State had any money to spare after teaching the three R's, then it should be devoted to giving the children still more practical education. Let them . . . guarantee to the children of the State that they will be able to spend the few years they can devote to school profitably, and not be sent away from school with a fancy education'.

Ewing 'engaged vigorously in condemning the cramming of school children with fancy education, to the neglect of what was essential and practical'[80]. His speech was punctuated by applause and when he finished he was cheered by all present.

The *Mercury* alleged that Ewing's speech was 'not unconnected with his political ambitions', deplored his attempt to secure votes by fomenting 'outright mutiny', and added:

> 'It must be a matter of regret that the Conference of State school teachers is being used as an opportunity for the emission of only half-stifled murmurs of rebellion . . . The President of the Association . . . practically invited the teachers to join in a movement of revolt'[81].

Neale had been consistently supported in his efforts to improve education by most of the newspapers of Tasmania and again they came to his defence.

> 'If we are to take the moss-covered utterances of the President as indicative of the Board's sentiments the new method of education is bosh, and the ancient calf-track method is just what is required. The Board, ambitious to dominate the department, has come to the conclusion that teachers must not be worried by new-fangled notions, so objects to everything which takes them out of the well-worn rut'[82].

The inspectors and the better-qualified teachers, many of whom were not members of the Union, were so disturbed by the attack on Neale that they met a fortnight later and expressed their

> 'fullest confidence in the Director of Education and his staff . . . We beg respectfully to submit that the re-arrangement of the curriculum within the last two or three years has made our schools bright both to the teachers and those taught, and has increased the mental activity and efficiency of the scholars'[83].

The twenty-five teachers who were present were unanimous in this opinion, and correspondence had been received from forty other teachers who supported Neale but who had been unable to attend the meeting. Commenting on the preference to members of the Union which had been demanded at the annual conference they added: 'Let there be preference, and let merit be the key to that preference'[84].

A few days after the conference of the Union had concluded Low led a deputation to the Minister, complaining that the Director was replying to complaints which had been sent to the Board of Classifiers, and not allowing the Board to settle the issues which were raised.

The Minister replied to the criticisms by the delegation three months later, in October. He characterised the complaints as either 'quite incorrect or sad misrepresentations' of the true

situation, and advised Parliament that the cause of the dissension in the Department was 'misapprehension and misunderstanding'. He expressed confidence in Neale and warned that 'a small group of discontented [teachers] without responsibility must not be allowed to control either policy or administration'[85].

To avoid such a situation, he announced that Dodds's recommendation a year previously that the Board of Classifiers shou'd include four teachers elected from nominations submitted by the Executive of the Teachers Union wou'd not be accepted, but that the teachers' representatives on the Board would be elected from those who were classified 1, 2 or 3. These were the teachers who were the most successful and best qualified; they were the men who had withdrawn from the Union, and who had met a fortnight after the conference to express support for Neale and his aims. It was clear that the Union could expect no support from the Minister. Even more resented by the Union than Propsting's decision to alter the method of electing the Board was the omission of any reference to the Union's chief complaint, that 'some teachers were much better treated than others . . . in the matters of remuneration particularly'[86]. This complaint was not answered and the inevitable assumption was that it was unanswerable.

Evans also supported Neale, claiming that the initial trouble would have been quickly forgotten 'if it had not been for the disloyalty of a few teachers'[87]. However, not even at this stage did the Premier or the Minister make it clear that they accepted the principle of ministerial responsibility for the administration of the Department. They gave no explanation of the authority that had been given Neale, and did not convince Parliament that it was not Neale who had been responsible for changing the method of election of the Board of Classifiers.

Ewing, resenting the repudiation of the agreement he had helped to formulate, wrote a long letter to Arthur Morrisby, M.L.C., which Morrisby read in the Council. The letter attacked every aspect of Neale's administration and alleged that the gulf between him and his teachers was unbridgeable. The Council demanded another Commission to resolve the issue and the Assembly, worried that the work of the Department was being affected by the dispute, supported the Council's proposal.

There was considerable disagreement concerning the membership of the Commission. The Premier at first suggested one member from each House, with a third member nominated by these two but, as usual, the members took little heed of him. Propsting strongly urged the inclusion of an educational 'expert', but this was opposed by many. 'Plain, practical men' but not 'theorists who will lose themselves in abstract ideas' were required, Propsting was advised, because it was not education but the administration of a government department that was to be examined. Therefore members of Parliament were said to be the logical commissioners, even though they 'may be biassed, as many of them have already expressed opinions'[88]. It would have been difficult to find members of either House who had not pre-conceived opinions on the questions which they were to judge. Most of them had reviewed in Parliament the reports of the two previous Commissions and some had spoken very strongly on various matters. Others were personally involved in the administration of education as members of Boards of Advice.

The final decision was to appoint five members of Parliament and, with Propsting remaining insistent, one educational expert, Peter Goyen, Chief Inspector of Schools in Otago, New Zealand.

Dr John McCall, M.H.A., was appointed Chairman of the Commission. He was Chairman of the Leven Municipality on the North-West Coast of Tasmania. He was not committed to a particular opinion concerning Neale and his selection as chairman was commended by all. However, McCall had been appointed Agent-General in London and was hoping for an early departure. As time passed McCall gave less attention to the affairs of the Commission than to the preparations for his voyage. The other members of the Commission were G. T. Collins, M.L.C., Ellis Dean, M.L.C., J. J. Long, M.H.A. and R. J. McKenzie, M.H.A. All four had been active in opposition to Neale ever since he was appointed[89]. Neale's fate was determined before the Commission met.

The teachers in the Department had again briefed Ewing to appear for them. Neale had no counsel when the Commission first sat, but sought representation when the gravity of his position was realised three weeks after evidence was first taken. Neale's counsel immediately criticised the latitude which had been allowed Ewing, who had called Neale as his own witness and then cross-examined him as a hostile witness, and sought to have many of the political and personal questions[90] by Ewing disallowed, but to no avail.

There was no reference in the terms of the Commission[91] to questions of curriculum, or to the skill and ability of the teachers. No reference to Neale's achievements or the difficulties that faced him was permitted.

Ewing's attack was concentrated solely and remorselessly on the propriety of the preference Neale gave to the South Australians and to his treatment of the Tasmanians. Ewing opened the proceedings by alleging:

> 'that the Department had been unfairly and improperly administered; that the public funds of the country have been given to persons in the employ of the Department almost exclusively South Australians in amounts that were not voted to them by Parliament; Tasmanian teachers have not received the money that Parliament voted for them . . .'[92].

Neale's defence at first was that he had appointed to the various positions the only teachers who were qualified to carry out the duties. All the South Australians were qualified, he claimed, and therefore entitled to appointment. On the other hand, only two Tasmanians were qualified, and these men were head teachers of country schools who were not willing to lose their status to become first assistants of larger city schools, even though this would eventually have led to a higher salary.

However, every South Australian who had been appointed was offered a salary higher than the maximum stipulated by Parliament and not one Tasmanian was being paid above the stipulated salary. Neale believed the appointment of trained teachers was essential, and he could only attract the South Australians by offering salaries that exceeded the approved scale. Some of them commenced as first assistants, a status which Neale created at this time, and others as assistants. These appointments and the allegedly preferential salaries which Neale gave to them were the basis of the charges made by Ewing. There were other allegations, e.g., that the South Australians were granted first-class train tickets when departmental business required them to travel to another town while Tasmanians had to travel second-class, but the salary questions dominated the Commission, and Neale was unable to deny the partiality of the salaries paid to the newcomers.

Neale claimed that he had discretionary authority because some regulations were ambiguous, and because other regulations had been 'suspended'. Later he admitted that the over-award payments were illegal but contended that many Tasmanians were also being paid more than they deserved. Nevertheless, he could not deny that the only teachers in his Department who were paid more than the stipulated salary for their classification were those who had been recruited by him from South Australia.

This point was the basis of Ewing's skilful and remorseless attack on Neale. Ewing claimed:

> 'that the foundation of the whole of this trouble has been caused by South Australians being placed over the heads of Tasmanian teachers with 10, 15 or more years service, at salaries up to £250, with increases[93]. . . . There is very bitter opposition to the importation of trained teachers[94], . . . the sole cause of complaint is that the South Australians are getting all the plums in the Department, that they are being advanced at a rate that the Tasmanians are not being advanced at'[95].

G. V. Brooks was the first of Neale's 'imports', and Ewing used Brooks's appointment and remuneration to illustrate his claims. Brooks had begun his service in the Education Department of Tasmania at the Battery Point School in Hobart as First Assistant in 1906 at a salary of £200 per annum. In the following year he received an increase in salary of £40. Neale justified this increase as a payment 'for special services in the capacity of headmaster for drawing at the Training College'[96]. Thus Brooks in 1907 was receiving £240 compared with £170 in Adelaide in 1905. Ewing attacked the initial salary of £200, which was £80 above the award, and the increase of £40 the following year, and Neale could only reply: 'I will admit that all these salaries are technically illegal . . . but what was considered the best course under the circumstances was pursued'[97].

In his final address Ewing stated:

> 'The position of the teachers [is that] in the interests of the children of this State we must have peace, and peace can only be achieved by getting rid of Mr Neale as head of this Department'[98].

The commissioners found[99] that Neale had acted improperly by paying higher salaries than permitted by the regulations, and that the former South Australians had been given privileges denied to Tasmanians in the Department. They also found that the tone and language of his correspondence with his teachers was 'provocative of irritation and entirely without justification' and that he had made deductions from the teachers due salaries and allowances by way of fine or penalty contrary to the regulations. However, their report mentioned their unanimous opinion that education in Tasmania had improved under Neale's direction, substantiated his contention that it had been essential to import good teachers to lift standards, and recommended: 'Something should be done, and done quickly, to staff the schools from top to bottom with competent teachers'[100].

The Commission recommended that compensation should be paid to those teachers who had been penalised by Neale, either by fines or by withholding allowances, and that the Boards of Advice should be granted greater authority than Neale had permitted them. The five commissioners who were members of the Tasmanian Parliament concluded their report:

> 'It is only just to Mr Neale that your commissioners should place on record their appreciation of his high ideals, his zeal, and his untiring industry; but they are of the opinion that, owing to the widespread discontent caused by faults in administration and treatment of teachers, as disclosed by the evidence taken, the retention of Mr Neale's services as Director would be distinctly detrimental to the best interests of the education system of the State'[101].

Peter Goyen submitted a minority recommendation:

> 'I agree with my colleagues in the findings and recommendations of the report but do not endorse the opinion expressed in the last part of the concluding paragraph'.

Goyen did not disagree with his fellow-commissioners' recommendation. He took the view that he had been appointed to the Commission to advise on matters beyond the experience of his colleagues and that he should not presume to submit any recommendation on the question of whether Neale should be retained or dismissed. His opinion of Neale's future usefulness to the State, however, was made known to Long, who published it. 'The enquiry destroyed his influence', and as a result Neale 'could do little to advance education'[102], Goyen wrote.

When Cabinet received the report of the commissioners, the Ministers could not agree on the action to be taken, and Neale was offered three months leave on full salary to allow them to discuss the matter without haste.

Evans and Propsting at first declined to accept the recommendation that Neale should be dismissed. Evans then agreed to do so, but Propsting did not. Evans and the other two Ministers then sought to avoid responsibility for coming to a decision by referring the matter to the Public Service Board. They were advised, however, that the Board could only act if Neale was formally

charged with an offence contrary to the Public Service Act. The three then enquired if Neale would accept payment of £1,200 to offer his resignation, rather than accept the legal difficulties which dismissal could incur[103].

Neale sought a greater amount, pointing out that he was too old at the age of 55 to gain another responsible position and that he had had to forfeit his superannuation rights when he left South Australia five years earlier. 'The task I was invited to undertake was too difficult to attempt without assurance of Parliament's support and protection', he claimed. As he had received no support from Parliament he felt that it was reasonable to expect a more generous recompense than £1,200.

The 1909 Assembly elections were held before Cabinet submitted any recommendations and before Parliament could consider the matter, but it was obvious from campaign statements that Neale could expect little consideration. Some candidates campaigned on a platform of 'dealing with Neale' and none was prepared publicly to support him. In fact, the growing strength of the Labour Party forced the non-Labour candidates to seek a common platform and Ewing, one of the candidates in Denison, with strong support from a few others, insisted on an anti-Neale policy as the price of unity.

The elections for the first time returned two parties, with twelve Labour members in a House of thirty forcing the other eighteen to unite as an 'anti-socialist party' in order to hold office. Evans had been strongly criticised by his colleagues for his weak and ineffectual control of the Education Department when he was Minister, and he did not seek re-election as Premier. Neil Elliott Lewis replaced him and Lewis appointed A. E. Solomon, newly elected to Parliament, as Minister for Education[104] in place of Propsting.

When Parliament met, Ewing, now a member for Denison, attacked Neale and urged that no compensation should be paid to him. J. A. Lyons, a former teacher in the Education Department, had been elected as one of the Labour representatives of Wilmot, and claimed that he was in Parliament 'as the representative of the teachers'[105]. He took the same view as Ewing. Solomon, with no parliamentary experience and no detailed knowledge of the Department, was forced to lead the debate. He sought to bring it to a conclusion without embarrassing the former Ministers or the officers of the Department, and without unfairness to Neale. Solomon's wisdom, fairness and integrity impressed everyone. Some members supported Ewing and Lyons, but most believed that it was better to pay Neale compensation. As Lewis said: 'The Government wanted to devise the cheapest way to get rid of Mr Neale'[106]. Most members condemned him bitterly and those who did not do so agreed that the teachers would not work under his direction, and that he must leave to ensure that peace and harmony were restored. The proposal to pay him £1,200 was passed 15-10 in the House of Assembly, with the Labour members opposing the motion and demanding a smaller amount or none at all. The proposal was passed 8-3 in the Council.

Neale accepted the offer of £1,200, resigned his position and returned to South Australia. He sought re-appointment as an Inspector in the Education Department of South Australia and although the Director supported his application, Cabinet refused it. Neale subsequently accepted a clerical position in the Federal Land Tax Department in Adelaide. In December 1913, he suffered a stroke and died at the age of 60. His obituary notice in the *Mercury* summarised his career in Tasmania: 'He made the mistake of becoming somewhat over-zealous'[107]. It was almost a repetition of earlier criticism that he 'appeared to be in haste to jump from the extreme of laxity . . . to the other extreme of severity'[108].

Neale had greatly reduced the chaos he found in the Department in 1904, had increased the number of teachers by about 8%, and the number of inspectors, had increased teachers' salaries[109], had increased attendance by more than 20%, had established a Training College, had built nearly thirty more schools, had broadened and modernised the curriculum, and had increased expenditure only from £62,442 in 1904 to £65,064 in 1908 while doing so.[110].

Neale had been invited by the Government to accept the position of Director and Evans had promised him 'as free a hand in administration as can be granted'. In addition, when Neale warned Evans even before he arrived that his innovations would lead to demands for a Royal Commission, Evans promised that 'three experts from the mainland States' would be appointed 'when the inevitable Commission came'[111]. Neither promise was kept. Evans gave Neale freedom, responsibility and authority, but never guidance, protection or support. Evans may have assumed that these factors were synonymous, and Neale may have welcomed unfettered control of the Department, but later events proved that he was unwise to exercise it. It was in Parliament that Neale needed support. Too few Tasmanians desired a better system of education or were aware of the deficiencies of their own system. There was no strong public opinion to force Parliament to support the Director. It was therefore essential that the Premier and Minister should not only defend Neale, but also seek to convince Parliament and public of the advantages to the State that Neale's innovations would bring. When they failed to do so Neale was left at the mercy of his opponents.

His strongest opponents were the members of the Boards of Advice in rural areas. These were the landowners, the employers of labour accustomed to order the affairs of their district without interference. But these men were also the representatives of their district in Parliament where their grievances against Neale were fanned by constituents who feared the loss of cheap child-labour if Neale's truancy laws were enforced. Neale was also opposed by the unqualified teachers, particularly those who had been humiliated by his unfortunate manner. The older feared to lose their employment or income and did not understand the new curriculum; the younger imagined that promotion opportunities would be lost to the 'imports' from South Australia.

Underneath the discontent was an uneasiness that the 'imports' were likely to overturn the Tasmanian conservatism. There was suspicion of the vigorous enthusiasm of the South Australians, recruited to newly-created positions of influence in the Education Department by a Director from the same State who was not concerned with local traditions and who had been appointed by a Premier who had been educated in the same State.

An entrenched conservatism, suspicion of 'foreigners' and a lack of vital interest in education would have made Neale's task extremely difficult, whatever other circumstances applied. His own peremptory manner and the failure of Evans and Propsting to accept ministerial responsibility for his actions left him at the mercy of his enemies. His ability was outstanding and his resignation a tragic blow to Tasmania. Education was forgotten as personality and prejudice occupied the attention of Parliament, and without any public demand for education the lack of political attention ensured that progress was limited.

References and Notes

1 Propsting was a Tasmanian who went to South Australia in 1879 to gain a better training in the teaching profession than was available in his own State. During his career in South Australia he taught in two schools where W. L. Neale was Head Teacher, and he formed a very high regard for Neale's ability. Propsting returned to Tasmania in 1886, foresook teaching for law and was elected to the House of Assembly in 1899.

2 W. L. Neale, *Report on the System of Primary Education in Tasmania*, J PP, Vol L1, 1904, No. 49.

3 These nineteenth century educational philosophers differed from each other in emphasis, but all stressed the importance of the personality of the child and the environment in which he learns, and all opposed the rigid, formal drill that was common in most educational systems.

4 W. L. Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

5 W. L. Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

6 Propsting had been able to command the support of a majority of the House of Assembly but was rebuffed on several occasions in the Legislative Council. In July 1904, after an Assembly Bill was rejected by the Council he sought to force the issue by resigning, expecting the Governor to recall him. However, the Governor asked Captain J. W. Evans, a retired merchant navy skipper, to form a government. Evans did so, assuming office as Minister for Education as well as Premier.

7 Masters's appointment was simply one of expediency. 'Between the years 1905 and 1910 he had no duties'. (W. T. McCoy, Neale's successor, T.S.A., File 0269, 1919.)

8 The Education Act of 1885 had created forty-four Boards of Advice, replacing the Public School Boards which had been first appointed in 1868. The Boards had no power to interfere with the operation of the schools, but had authority to effect petty repairs and to control the use of buildings after school hours. They were required to persuade parents to send their children to school regularly, to institute legal proceeding against those who failed to do so and to reduce or abolish fees in the case of needy parents. The Hobart Board of Advice was elected but the other Boards were the municipal councils, sitting as education authorities.

9 The Council felt so strongly that Neale should not have been appointed that provision in the budget for his salary was deleted by the Council. Provision for a salary of £450, instead of £600 that had been offered to Neale, was subsequently approved by the Council, and after further delay approval to pay £600 was granted, but only by a 9-3 vote of the Council with six members not voting at all.

10 T.S.A., Education Department files, 1904.

11 *Examiner*, 27 September 1904.

12 *Examiner*, 1 November 1904.

13 *Examiner*, 11 November 1904.

14 *Examiner*, 21 August 1905.

15 It was not until after Neale's arrival in Tasmania that there is any reference in the files of the Education Department to questions of curriculum or text books. The first evidence of interest in the curriculum by parents or civic organisations was a request in 1905 by the Council of Agriculture that the teaching of decimals should be introduced, and this was not prompted by anything more than a desire for children to be proficient 'in the use of the Babcock Milk Tester'. (T.S.A., File 749, 1905.)

16 W. L. Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

17 Each 'school' was one room.

18 Elkington had offered to have the cost borne by his own department if ministerial consent for the scheme could be obtained, but Neale advised his Minister that 'the proposed work was of the highest importance' and finally persuaded the Minister to grant £70 for this purpose. The grant was charged against the vote for 'Maintenance of Schools', because it was felt that Parliament would not sanction additional expenditure for such a purpose.

19 Peterson had conducted physical culture courses in Hobart since 1902, capitalising on public concern that volunteers for the South Afrian War were not physically fit. He had also organised and conducted Saturday morning classes for teachers who were cadet instructors.

20 Neale's efforts in this field were stimulated by the Prime Minister, who convened a conference of representatives of all State Education Departments in 1905 to urge the introduction of compulsory physical and military training in the schools. The training began in May 1906, but was greatly hindered by the shortage of competent instructors.

21 These officers were supposed to visit each school in their town once each week, but this was often not possible, and no other towns were ever visited. They conducted an examination of children submitted for inspection by the head teacher when they visited the school, and were responsible for the hygiene of the schools as well as the health of the children. Despite the limited nature of the scheme it paved the way for future expansion, and was the first such scheme in Australia, following closely on the establishment of a similar scheme in England.

22 During 1908, when the correpondence columns of the newspapers were enlivened by a controversy as to whether a majority, or only a few, of the children attending State schools were infected with lice, *The Educational Record* redoubled the attention it gave to questions of cleanliness and hygiene.

23 *Mercury*, 12 December 1908.

24 *Rep. Dir.*, 1907.

25 T.S.A., File 314, 1906.

26 *Mercury*, 29 April 1907.

27 The Legislative Council in 1907 had disallowed an Assembly Bill to abolish fees. The Government by regulation then reduced fees to such a low level from the beginning of 1908 that the State's revenue from this source fell from £12,000 p.a. to £5,000 p.a. The Council accepted a similar Bill in November 1908.

28 The students who entered the College were required to sign an undertaking that they would remain in the service of the Department for four years after completing their College training, or to pay £1 10 0 for each month of the unexpired period if they left before four years had passed.

29 The establishment of a Training College was possible only because of a bequest by the late Philip Smith in 1876. The bequest had not been used and the principle had grown to £2,050. To this was added a gift of £500 by Miss Marion Smith, Philip Smith's sister, and the Government contributed £4,575 from General Revenue. This left the total £600 short of the actual cost of £7,725 but Neale persuaded the Minister to allocate £600 of the 1906-07 vote of the Education Department to provide the full amount needed to build the College.

30 When several tennis courts were erected at the College the money to pay the contractor was taken from the School Bank Account, because the Minister was not prepared to ask Parliament to authorise the expenditure.

31 26 Ed. VII, 22 November 1907.

32 The Scholarship Act provided an allowance of £15 per annum for three years and £25 per annum in addition if the pupil had to live away from home in order to continue his education. The awards were made on the results of examinations open to children under the age of thirteen years. In addition, exhibitions were awarded on the results of the Junior Public examinations to children under the age of 15 years. They were valued at £20 per annum for three years and thus assisted children to the stage where they were eligible to enter University. The cost to the State was £855 per annum. Because the Act was drawn up at a time when State secondary schools had not been contemplated the awards were tenable only at non-State schools or at the Training College.

33 Many of these schools were merely havens of refuge from the truant officers, enrolling children whose parents paid the prescribed fees, but not caring whether the children attended classes. Non-State schools had been required to submit returns from 1897, but the State could not enforce the requirement because proprietors were not required to register their schools. Therefore Neale was unable to prevent or punish the virtual truancy of pupils who were enrolled in the non-State schools but who did not attend classes.

34 Registration of Teachers and Schools Act, No. 15, 6 Ed. VII, 25 October 1906.

35 Wilkinson's only complaint was that Neale had used the phrase 'private schools' to refer to all those schools that were not State schools, whereas there were five schools in Tasmania—Launceston Church Grammar School, The Hutchins School, The Friends School, The Collegiate School and the Launceston Ladies College—which Wilkinson claimed should be given the status and title of Public Schools and not classified as 'private'.

36 No. 26, 5 Ed. VII, 20 November 1905.

37 The benefits were so modest that a teacher who retired in 1936 after forty-four years service received an annuity of only £116, but the scheme's significance at the time lay in Neale's desire to establish it for his teachers.

38 Evans had gone to sea as a cabin-boy at 14 years of age when many of his contemporaries were at primary school, and after his retirement he became manager of a Hobart shipping company. He had preferred not to become too concerned with the affairs of the Education Department. Neale was his first mate and was left to control the ship's course.

39 Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

40 The Premier, Evans, claimed in 1909 that this was a Cabinet decision reached with the knowledge and approval of Crosby Gilmour, who had been Solicitor-General at that time. Gilmour vehemently denied any knowledge of such a proposal, and another Cabinet Minister of the time said he did not remember any discussion on the subject. Propsting stated in 1909 that the regulations had been 'suspended' in order to protect the teachers from reductions in salary that would have resulted if the regulations had been applied. Until 1900 it was the responsibility of the teachers to collect the fees, which were retained by them and regarded by the Department as part of their salaries. New regulations which took effect from the beginning of 1901 provided that fees would be collected by teachers but paid into the Treasury, and that the salaries of the teachers would be increased by the amount of fees they surrendered in 1900. This led the teachers to strive vigorously to collect not only the 1900 fees but also considerable arrears. The fees collected in 1899 were £10,948, in 1900 they were £12,156 and in 1901 £10,735. The incorporation of the magnified 1900 collections into a permanent salary reduced to chaos the salary regulations of the Department.

41 *Mercury*, 15 July 1909.

42 *Examiner*, 6 December 1905.

43 The Teachers Union had been formed in 1905, although there had been occasional meetings of teachers as long as twenty years earlier. These early meetings were remarkable for the very small attendances at meetings and the very great enthusiasm of the few who did attend.

44 *Examiner*, 3 October 1905.

45 Most of these teachers were aged about 30, with considerable experience and yet still active. Three of them were graduates, and all had received some teacher-training. Only two of the twenty-six were women.

46 Brockett was an Inspector when they arrived and later Senior Inspector.

47 *Educational Record*, 15 April 1907, p. 1.

48 This was the Beaconsfield School, where the Head Teacher and the First Assistant were both South Australians.

49 *Rep. Dir.*, 1906, p. 3.

50 *Mercury*, 19 April 1907.

51 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1907.

52 These penalties varied from 5d. to £6. They were bitterly resented by the teachers.

53 Neale's inspection of the Newnham School in 1907 revealed that only two of the forty-four children were able to get a single sum right in their annual examination, and this was not an unusual situation.

54 Neale reported to his Minister in 1906 that 'since the weather has improved there is an increase of teachers'. (T.S.A., File 832, 1906.)

55 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1908.

56 The article alleged that the local school had only one room, 25 feet x 15 feet, in which one teacher attempted to cope with forty-nine children in seven different grades.

57 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1907.

58 There is no doubt that Neale's criticism was justified. The report of the Head Teacher of the Northdown School in 1908, defending the poor record of achievement of his pupils, explained: 'The children are engaged in picking up potatoes. Mr Bray's boy will be 9 years old in October, and has had less than sixty-four days at school altogether'. (T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1908.)

59 *Rep. Dir.*, 1906.

60 The hop fields in the Derwent Valley and the mutton bird rookeries in Bass Strait depended heavily on child labour, but other areas were also affected.

61 His communications to the Boards often gave offence, even when he was trying to assist them. On one occasion he queried the authorised purchase of 25 tons of firewood for a school with one fireplace, pointing out bluntly that the average consumption was 4 tons per year. The Board replied that it was 'not in the habit of making mistakes'. (*Mercury*, 13 April 1907.)

62 *Mercury*, 20 April 1907.

63 *Mercury*, 9 July 1907.

64 *Mercury*, 26 July 1907.

65 *Mercury*, 27 April 1907.

66 One teacher alleged that he and an assistant had to teach 127 children but admitted Neale's comment that the teacher shared this responsibility by teaching nineteen children while his assistant taught 108. Another alleged that Neale altered his [the teacher's] classification of students but admitted Neale's comment that the teacher had kept children aged 15 years in Grade I to improve his examination results. Another alleged that Neale refused to pay her for duties she had carried out beyond a certain date but agreed with Neale's comment that he had given her clear and adequate notice that her employment would cease on that date because of her approaching confinement. Another complained that Neale, through personal vindictiveness, had refused to appoint his son as a cadet instructor but agreed with Neale's comment that the son was aged 13. A lady complained that she had not been paid for her work as secretary of the local Board of Advice but agreed with Neale's comment that the Board had ceased to meet by its own decision.

67 *Mercury*, 9 September 1907.

68 *Mercury*, 11 September 1907.

69 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1907.

70 Ewing had been elected to the first Commonwealth Senate in 1901 when he was living in Western Australia. He was then aged only 31. He resigned from the Senate in 1903, and soon afterwards set up legal practice in Tasmania. By 1907 he was seeking an opportunity to re-enter politics, and had actively supported the criticism of Neale by the discontented teachers. His vigorous rhetoric ensured publicity for the cause he had espoused.

71 On reaching Launceston Neale wrote an account of his conversation with Ewing in the train. There is no supporting evidence to prove that Neale's version is correct, but not even during his least popular moments was Neale ever accused of dishonesty, or of refusing to face an issue, and there is no reason to believe that the account is incorrect.

72 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1907.

73 J PP., 7 Ed. VII, No. 49.

74 Most of the better-qualified teachers had withdrawn from the Union by this time because of disagreement with its aims and its attack on Neale. Thus the head teachers on the Board would be agents of a Union which was representative only of the less qualified teachers.

75 T.S.A., Education Department Files, 1908.

76 *Mercury*, 1 July 1908.

77 *Ibid.*

78 There was some opposition to Low. R. E. Smith, who had not been permitted to have his name placed on the ballot paper when the election of the Union's representatives to the Board of Classifiers was held, attacked the President forcefully. He referred to the injustice of the action of the Union's Executive, which had vetoed the nomination of candidates opposed to their point of view, and moved disagreement with their policy. Low, however, refused to put the motion to the meeting.

79 *Mercury*, 2 July 1908.

80 *Mercury*, 1 July 1908.

81 *Mercury*, 2 July 1908.

82 *The Weekly Courier*, 9 July 1908.

83 *Mercury*, 20 July 1908.

84 *Mercury*, 20 July 1908.

85 *Mercury*, 14 October 1908.

86 *Mercury*, 10 August 1908.

87 *Mercury*, 29 October 1908.

88 *Mercury*, 28 October 1908.

89 Collins had opposed Neale's proposal that fees should be abolished by claiming that the only people who wanted free education were those who could not afford to pay for it (*Mercury*, 31 October 1907). Dean was a very conservative Chairman of a Board of Advice. Both of them had expressed opposition to Neale's appointment in 1904, they had led a move to delete provision for his salary from the estimates for 1904-05, they had obtained the appointment of a Select Committee to examine the validity of his original report on the affairs of the Department, and they had criticised him on subsequent occasions. Long had voted against the Government on several censure motions concerning its education policies and had expressed 'the greatest contempt' for the Solicitor-General and his actions when he was Chairman of the first Commission. McKenzie had voted against the Government in 1907, when censure of its appointment of the first Commission was proposed. Both had been active in opposition to Neale throughout his career.

90 Ewing sought every opportunity to discredit Neale, even to allegations of improper motive in introducing a first-grade primer in which an illustration showed a lady not completely dressed.

91 Royal Commission on the Education Department of Tasmania, J PP, Vol. LXI, 1909, No. 1.

92 Evidence presented to the Royal Commission, *loc. cit.*, p. 1.

93 Evidence presented to the Royal Commission, *loc. cit.*, p. 5.

94 *Loc. cit.*, p. 29.

95 *Loc. cit.*, p. 624.

96 *Loc. cit.*, p. 3.

97 Evidence presented to the Royal Commission, *loc. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

98 *Loc. cit.*, p. 697.

99 The Premier had expected the Commission's enquiries to last only for a few days but in fact the members sat on forty-three days between 11 January and 2 March 1909. It heard more than 800,000 words of evidence and presented its report and recommendations on 12 March.

100 Report of the Royal Commission *loc. cit.*, p. viii.

101 Report of the Royal Commission, *loc. cit.*, p. x.

102 *Mercury*, 25 July 1909.

103 No charge had yet been brought against him under the terms of the Public Service Act and it was doubtful if any charge could be sustained.

104 Solomon was the first Minister for Education who had attended a State school.

105 *Mercury*, 9 July 1909.

106 *Mercury*, 9 July 1909.

107 *Mercury*, 17 December 1913.

108 *Mercury*, 15 November 1907.

109 Between Neale's appointment at the beginning of 1905 and the latter half of 1907 the average salary of male head teachers had increased from £155 to £166, of female head teachers from £91 to £98, of male assistants from £130 to £144 and of female assistants from £52 to £63.

110 The increased attendance had actually caused the expenditure for each child to fall from £4 7 2 per year in 1904 to £4 1 7 per year in 1908.

111 South Australian Archives. Education Department, 2390 of 1909.