

Meeting the Crisis

Federal Aid for Education

by Race Mathews



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Victorian Fabian Society Pamphlet 15

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Responsibility for the theme and for the proposals set out in this pamphlet is my own, but they have been developed in co-operation with D. M. Bennett, a member of the Society and a senior research officer with the Australian Council for Educational Research, for whose help I am greatly indebted.

R.M.

Published by the Victorian Fabian Society,
G.P.O. Box 2707X, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001,
Australia.

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ISBN 978-0-6489526-2-6

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Race Mathews has a wide variety of interests and experience in fields relevant to the theme of education and the development of children and young people. Practice of his profession as a speech therapist has brought him a specialised involvement in the problem of stammering; his earlier experience as a teacher stimulated a concern with education of which the current pamphlet is only the latest expression. As secretary of the Standing Policy Committee of the Victorian Branch of the A.L.P., he planned and supervised the establishment of the Branch's network of specialist committees; as secretary of the Victorian Fabian Society since 1960, he has administered the Society's affairs throughout its period of rapid expansion. He is secretary of the A.L.P.'s Joint Victorian Central Executive — State Parliamentary Labor Party Education Committee and an advisor on education to the Leader of the Opposition in the Victorian parliament, Mr. Clyde Holding, M.L.A. As a municipal councillor, he initiated the appointment of Victoria's first municipal Youth Service Officer, and in the suburb where he lives he is currently secretary of one committee developing an Albemarle-style youth club and president of another building a children's adventure playground.

This pamphlet, like all other publications of the Fabian Society, expresses not the collective view of the Society but simply the view of the individual member who prepared it. The Society limits its responsibility to endorsing the publications which it issues as worthwhile contributions both to the development of democratic socialist thought and to public discussion.

August, 1967.

THE CRISIS IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

“An educated person is one who has learnt to use to the full whatever gifts of mind, body or spirit he possesses, and who uses them for the service of his fellows, for his own delight and the increase of his dignity as a human being.” *Learning to Live* (British Labor Party Policy Statement on Education).

* * *

It is difficult to imagine a set of standards by which Australian education could be considered a success. By and large, the young people emerging from our schools are equipped to meet neither their own needs nor those of society.

Things do not have to be this way. We are not so poor that we cannot afford the sort of education our predicament demands, nor are our human resources so scanty that we would be unable to staff an adequate school system if one were established. Both these problems are a matter of seeing things in perspective, of realising that education *must* take a higher place among our priorities than, say, advertising. If a sum equivalent to the current annual expenditure on packaging alone were diverted to education we would soon own one of the finest school systems in the world, while the bright young men at present passing their days creating product images would serve the nation better if their undoubted energy and ability were channelled into classrooms.

Of course neither money nor people in themselves are enough to make an education system sound. For this something more is required — a vision of man which takes account of the diversity of potential in each individual, and the primacy of providing an appropriate setting for its development. In a word, a socialist vision of man.

Unfortunately no such vision informs those responsible for the structure of Australian education. State by state, our secondary schools conform to a pattern which interposes a barrier between the majority of children passing through their classrooms and the humanist and democratic values which the schools are supposed to impart. For every “success” produced by the schools, an indeterminate number of “failures” are cast out on to the scrap heaps of education. The child unable or unwilling to adapt himself to the requirements of an assembly line of instruction designed for university preparation becomes by definition the education machine’s reject.

Our education systems suffer from failure to recognise the sociologically obvious. We concentrate on recognising and rewarding those special qualities of individuals which ensure success in the schools as they are, and neglect to ask ourselves whether conditions might be developed under which *all* children could achieve some degree of success, and, if so, what these conditions might be. We carry on as if the life goals of adolescents were set by teachers, oblivious of the fact that a self-contained sub-culture has sprung up under our noses with goals of its own choosing. We respond with indignation to any suggestion that the rituals we carry out in classrooms may be irrelevant to all but a minority of our congregations.

At a time when material and economic distinctions are becoming less and less important, Australian education systems are fostering new social barriers along lines of culture, taste and academic qualification. On the one hand, we have more and more young people taking an interest in serious music, borrowing from the non-fiction shelves of public libraries and participating to an unprecedented extent in the cultural, political and sporting life of the community; on the other hand, more and more who have withdrawn or are thrill hunting on the edge of the law, and, increasingly, foraging outside it to swell the statistics of violence and social irresponsibility.

These are the rejects. Squeezed out of school by the steam roller of academic standards and teaching which ignores individual differences, they in their turn reject not only the steam roller itself but the values, tastes and institutions which they have come to associate with it. For them henceforth the world is polarised; on one hand, “us”, on the other, “them” — the whole intuitively-sensed conspiracy of teachers, policemen, social workers and certificate winners, with all its attendant prerogatives of “high” culture, democracy and the law.

Up to a point, the outline of this new reject sub-culture resembles that of the traditional working class. Children from homes where parental concern for achievement is not high, where vocabularies — perhaps the most important single tool in academic success — are stunted, and where the physical environment is not conducive to study — such children encounter greater difficulties in education than do their counterparts from middle and upper class homes, and their rate of failure is correspondingly higher. For the economically privileged, moreover, there is always the alternative of withdrawal into one of the privileged bastions of the private school system, where educational assumptions may be no different but a measure of individual attention

lifts the prospects of success and even the reject goes out into the world cushioned by an old school tie. Yet even at the very pinnacles of privilege the steam roller operates and the ravages of indiscriminating university quotas must be faced, while the statistics of middle and upper class delinquency multiply and the retreat from noblesse oblige to la dolce vita proceeds.

And rejects in revolt constitute only the visible tip of an iceberg which has come to incorporate the greater part of Australian society, chilling the currents of co-operation and locking up invaluable creative potential in frozen, lifelong alienation. The average boy or girl manages to avoid overt failure by the simple expedient of renouncing his potential in favour of the most limited goals, behaves in a manner which causes his parents no more than a passing moment's concern — and develops into a suburban householder whose ill-integrated ego and feelings of inadequacy stifle the urge to express through participation in the life of a community the gregariousness and generosity also present in his make-up. This is the authentic Australian tragedy for history shows that we have it in us to be something more than lonely, shrinking specimens of Suburban Man. Historically, gregariousness and generosity interacted with independence of spirit and a ready awareness of “the other bloke's” problems to create a tradition called mateship and a society which led the world both as a participating democracy and as the trailblazer of the modern welfare states.

The child in school, then, needs something more from education than the technique of multiplication, memorising dates, or, for that matter, working a lathe or selling soap powder. He needs the opportunity to experience success and to develop to the fullest extent his own unique combination of capacities. He needs to be equipped to deal with sex, love, marriage, being a parent, setting up home, finding satisfaction (if it is to be found) in work and service and enduring the assaults of circumstances (pain, loss by death, poverty or the torments of aimless affluence). He needs to be trained to use his leisure to the fullest satisfaction, and to contribute to the community and to social and political life.

And the state, too, has its legitimate demands. Australians are a small nation, enjoying a standard of living equal to any in the world, and occupying a continent whose great resources we have barely begun to exploit. If we are to retain these things in the teeth of the revolution of expectations to our north, it will be through the development of those reserves of intellect, ingenuity and humanity which education as

at present organised and oriented leaves in the main untapped. Only by such development can we hope to become for our less fortunate neighbours a source of skills, capital and inspiration, whose continued existence is justified in practical terms to their satisfaction and in moral ones to our own.

THE ROLE OF FEDERAL AID

Whether viewed in the close focus of individual wellbeing or against the grand perspectives of national survival and destiny, the reject in his various manifestations represents a diversion of resources which we can ill afford.

Thinking about the sorts of fundamental educational reform which might put an end to this diversion, and agitating for their implementation, are activities which Australians must learn to regard not simply as permissible but as obligatory.

First and foremost, such reform will involve creating a much wider awareness of the important differences which exist between children, not only in their talents and capacities, but in the ways in which they actually learn. So long as the existence of these vital differences is a commonplace only among psychologists and educators, and their educational implications are appreciated dimly, if at all, among the community at large, so long will schools be tolerated in which not simply a minority but vast numbers of our children have to meet unnecessary barriers and avoidable handicaps. These barriers and handicaps exist as a direct result of failure to identify the particular educational needs of individual children and failure to see that these needs are taken into account in the staffing, equipment, curricula and learning procedures of schools.

Second, the electorate must be brought to realise that, genetic endowment apart, individual differences are due primarily to economic and social factors. These factors include the ratio between parental income and the size and commitments of the family unit, the physical and social environment in which children are raised, and their parents' own level of education, attitudes to education and awareness of the educational opportunities which the community has to offer. They do not include the question of whether the child receives his education within the public sector or the private one. While it is true that in the latter case, economic privilege can purchase a measure of educational advantage, differences between schools within each sector are of far greater significance than those between the sectors themselves. To suggest otherwise simply obscures the real nature of the problem with prejudices of a highly emotional character, and, in so doing, inevitably postpones agreement on a solution.

Finally, having recognised the nature of the problem, the electorate must be shown that education can in fact provide the solution, and

that if the resources of the nation are mobilised behind its schools, the barriers which confront so many children can be broken down and a system offering genuine equality of opportunity established.

It is clear that in this context national resources can mean nothing short of the resources of the federal government. These resources are already being applied in a manner which affects the education system at every level: scholarships for secondary pupils inevitably leave their mark on secondary schools, while grants for teacher training colleges must ultimately produce changes inside primary schools. But the application is piecemeal, and an overall design is lacking. Adequate resources are required, but also planning which takes into account of the fact that the education system is a unity, that it does not consist of isolated compartments which can be dealt with separately. Failing such planning, federal aid conceived as a means of placating particular pressure groups at election time, or at a function of ministerial intuition, must ultimately produce educational chaos.

The extent to which the disabilities of Australian education spring from antipathy towards planning and from a lack of both enterprise and imagination on the part of successive Liberal administrations at the Federal level is a matter of common consent even among state parliamentarians who are themselves members of the Liberal party. To appreciate the magnitude of the opportunities lost in education over the past decade, it is only necessary to compare the performance of the Commonwealth Office of Education with that of its American equivalent, the education division of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

At the same time, there is some reason to suppose that the dead hand on Commonwealth activity in education has been that of Sir Robert Menzies, and some tactical advantage in assuming that Harold Holt is a horse of a different color, with at least a few of the attributes of his political patron, Lyndon Johnson. Yet even if this assumption proves correct, and there is a radical loosening of Federal purse-strings, the results must fall short of expectations unless the new Commonwealth Ministry is prepared to play an activist role in determining the shape of systems developed with its funds, in identifying causes of educational breakdown, and in initiating appropriate remedial action.

In order to assume such a role, the new Ministry will need to recruit professional and administrative staff of the highest quality. Some of those who will be required are already working in the Commonwealth Office of Education, others are in state departments of education,

universities, private schools and the higher reaches of the business world. By and large, they will be bought not for money but for the chance of having a hand in meeting the major challenge of our time.

Basically, this is the challenge consequent upon a realistic appraisal of the quality of the men who make the key decisions about education at the state level, and upon the inevitable conclusion that, in the words of U.S. Education Commissioner Francis Keppel, "Education is too important to be left solely to the educators". The traditional block grant to the states which parcels up funds for education with funds for a variety of other activities has outlived its usefulness, degenerating as it does all too readily into a subsidy for mediocrity. Real leverage in shaping schools and in raising national standards of education is required at a Federal level, and can be achieved through the use of aid programmes which are stringently conditional in character. It should be fundamental to the concept of Federal aid that it be given in conjunction with measures designed to monitor educational deficiencies in the various school systems, and that payments, whether in cash or kind, should be directed specifically to the elimination of these deficiencies. This means that the annual aid package should consist of a variety of programmes, each for a minutely defined purpose, and not a lump sum to be disbursed at the discretion of the receiving authorities. To take a very minor example, supposing it is established that inadequate library facilities are common both in state and in parochial schools, a federal decision to remedy this state of affairs might take the form of a grant or subsidy specifically tied to this purpose.

Then, too, there is a matter of priorities to be considered. On the one hand this will involve ranking needs according to their urgency and to their role in an overall design for the advancement of education; on the other it will mean rejecting the notion that aid must be given equally to every individual or school. In any foreseeable set of circumstances, a system which operates on the principle that for every dollar spent on the education of a child in need, a dollar must be provided for everyone else, including privileged children, would be both morally and politically indefensible. In terms of libraries, a decision to subsidise an inadequate library in a particular school would not entail accepting an obligation to expend the same amount — or any amount at all — in other schools where existing facilities were already of an acceptable standard, or where resources were available to bring them to such a standard. To ensure that aid is applied in accord with the agreed priorities, that it suffers a minimum of loss in transit and that

it takes effect as quickly as possible, there would be a strong case for by-passing controlling authorities and supplying the aid directly to the schools themselves. The balance of this pamphlet is taken up with a discussion of specific aid programmes, each involving an area of clear educational need and each a matter for high priority in any realistic attempt to achieve radical improvement in the quality of Australian education.

COMPENSATING FOR DEPRIVATION

“Schools in deprived areas should be given priority in many respects. The first step must be to raise the schools with low standards to the national average; the second, quite deliberately to make them better. The justification is that the homes and neighbourhoods from which many of their children come provide little support and stimulus for learning. The schools must provide a compensating environment.”
— Plowden Report.¹

* * *

The sort of social, economic and occupational opportunities open to particular individuals is increasingly a function of the measure of success which they attain within the education system. While the categories of “self-educated” and “self-made” men are not as yet extinct, they are much reduced in size, and will inevitably shrink still further. In practice, the individual who fails to complete a secondary education finds it impossible to enter a range of occupations which is already very extensive and which widens year by year. In these circumstances, education has supplanted those qualities traditionally emphasized by the Protestant Ethic as regulators of social mobility, and becomes the key factor in any honest concept of equality of opportunity.

Again, the rapid rate of change imposed upon our society by its technological and scientific prowess is rapidly eliminating the employment opportunities open to those not only on the bottom rung of the educational ladder but on successively ascending rungs. How far this process will proceed, and to what extent it will affect even those occupational groups presently confident of their immunity, cannot be foreseen with any measure of certainty. However, it does seem realistic to suppose that we are on the threshold of a time when the majority of the work force must expect either to completely re-learn their chosen occupational skills or else to switch to skills of a totally different character at least two or three times in the course of a working lifetime. The key to being able to cope with changes of such an order, and thus to being able to avert the danger of redundancy,

1 *Children and Their Primary Schools*. A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). H.M.S.O., 1966.

is again participation in an education system whose design rejects the traditional model of a single ladder in favour of a multiplicity of ladders by which children variously endowed in their capacities can achieve a maximum measure of development and fulfilment, together with the flexibility which would accompany that development.

From this, it can be seen that, as far as maintaining the minimal requirements for economic security, social identity and personal esteem are concerned, the individual who fails to cope with the requirements of the education system is in a blind alley. At the same time, from the point of view of the community, failure to make it possible for the maximum number of future citizens so to cope must lead to a proliferation of individuals for whom fewer and fewer employment opportunities exist, who resist assimilation into the structure of society and — in part as a consequence of these last two factors — whose ego integration is of a character so unstable as to make its ultimate break down a probability. It is clear, therefore, that expenditure incurred in meeting the needs of children who exhibit special educational needs can be justified even in purely actuarial terms.

It is against this background that the concept of “cultural deprivation” and the “deprived” or “disadvantaged” child must be viewed. Psychological investigation has established that children of three to five years of age who come from lower socio-economic groups are retarded or below average in every intellectual ability, and that the discrepancy between their performance and that of their middle-class peers is greatest in language skills and in ability to reason — that is, in the development of the skills of symbol manipulation which are identifiable as the major factor in school success.² However, language and reasoning power are also identifiable as abilities which are themselves learned. Moreover, in the innate traits of immediate memory span and specific rote learning, the discrepancy between children from lower socio-economic groups and those from middle-class homes is minimal, suggesting that what the former have lacked is not the capacity to “learn to learn” but the opportunity to do so.

In a seminal article, the research worker Bernstein put forward the idea that the language code in use among lower socio-economic groups is one adapted to the maintenance of social relationships and to the sharing of familiar experiences and opinions, but ill-suited

2 Bereiter, C. and Engelmann, S. *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Pre-School*. Prentice Hall, 1966.

to speculative thought, analysis, opinion or involved explanation.³ Bernstein saw this code as serving a useful purpose within the lower socio-economic setting, but debarring its users from logical and conceptual thinking of the sort basic to formal education. Other investigators have noted the absence of clear explanations or directions in the way mothers from lower socio-economic groups deal with their children, and have observed that contact between adults and children at this level of society is, by middle-class standards, sparse. A third school of thought has advanced the view that the culture of lower socio-economic groups centres around elements of so informal a character that they can be transmitted without the use of detailed explanation, so that the skills and language of teaching are not needed. What is certain is that the child from a lower socio-economic background spends his early years in a setting from which both teaching in the sense applicable to middle-class modes of child-rearing, and also the language of such teaching, are absent. In these circumstances, the experience of being taught is one he finds foreign, and one which he is linguistically and by habit of mind ill-equipped to meet.

In addition to being at a disadvantage in expressing himself and in the manipulation of symbols, the child from a lower socio-economic home may suffer other handicaps which have a direct bearing on his school performance. For a start, poorly balanced diets, dental neglect, parasitic infestations and defects of vision and hearing are all more common among children from such backgrounds than among their middle-class peers. As a result, the amounts of energy, concentration and endurance available for learning are reduced, while attitudes of passivity, defeatism, and the resigned anticipation of failure and frustration are inculcated.

Again, the extent to which such children share in the cultural heritage upon which so much of the school's work is based may be restricted. The fund of stories, nursery rhymes, and general knowledge incidental to the more frequent contact between adult and child which characterizes middle-class child-rearing practices may be absent, as may familiarity with the wide range of household equipment and cultural objects found in the average middle-class home. In addition, relatively restricted mobility, together with an absence of books and

3 Bernstein, B. "Social Class and Linguistic Development" in *Education, Economy and Society* ed. Halsey, A. H., Floud, J. and Anderson, C. A. Free Press of Glencoe Inc., 1961.

pictures, may reduce awareness of environments other than that of the immediate neighbourhood.

Such are some of the possibilities of deprivation, even within a modern affluent community. Clearly, not all children from poor families suffer from them, and the number of the deprived is swollen by those whose deprivation springs from causes other than economic stringency, but the environment of poverty, with its shortages in almost everything except people, noise and squalor, is the most significant source. Thanks to John Stubbs and to the Institute of Applied Economic Research at Melbourne University, we know that it is in just such an environment that one in every sixteen Australians lives.⁴ And, conventional wisdom of the affluent society to the contrary, we know that this group is not made up exclusively of old age pensioners, but includes big families on low incomes, widows, invalid pensioners, deserted wives, and the chronically unemployed. It thus includes many people with children of school age.

Simply admitting the deprived child to today's ordinary primary school is not enough. What he knows and the way in which he is accustomed to learn are both so different from the normal school's expectation as to make successful learning an improbability. While the deprived child may seem to enjoy educational opportunities identical with those of his more fortunate classmates, the reality is otherwise. Unless his special requirements are recognised, his chances of emerging under-educated from the primary school are a good deal better than average, and his chances of catching up thereafter a good deal worse.

Yet admission of deprived children to ordinary schools is precisely the procedure followed by all Australian education systems. Moreover, in many instances the schools in which deprived children are most likely to be found are actually inferior to average standards. In the case of Victoria, the highest concentrations of lower socio-economic groups occur among Melbourne's innermost suburbs — in great expanses of nineteenth century working-class housing, in two and three storey terraces abandoned by a middle-class long since departed for Kew or Camberwell, and in the "high rise" flats currently being erected by the Housing Commission. Within these areas indigenous

4 Stubbs, J. *The Hidden People*. Lansdowne, 1966. Harper, R. J. A. "Living Conditions in Melbourne — 1966". Paper presented to the ANZAAS Congress, January, 1967.

groups of the underprivileged rub shoulders with the new comers from abroad who are often concentrated in the ethnic enclaves of “Little Italys” and “Little Greeces”. The children of these enclaves have their special forms of deprivation, at once complicating and intensifying the problems of schools already failing to meet the extreme pressures imposed upon them by the native variety.

Determined to save, the migrant families crowd three, four, and even five to a house, while the parents all go out to work. From the point of view of the school, their way of life manifests itself in the rush to buy a “breakfast” of bread rolls and soft drinks at the morning recess; in children whose acquisition of English is delayed by the fact that Greek or Italian is spoken not only in the home but throughout the immediate neighbourhood; in parents who cannot be drawn into the business of School Committees and Mothers’ Clubs because of sheer physical exhaustion or the language barrier; and in cultural assumptions which see in education simply a barrier to early employment or marriage.

Under a subsidy system of school finance such as that used in Victoria, areas of this character will always have school facilities inferior in quality and variety to those of high-income, education-conscious areas. To pay for facilities over and above the inadequate basic minimum of classroom accommodation, desks and teaching equipment, the subsidy system awards finance in strict proportion to cash raised locally by parents through School Committees, Mothers’ Clubs and similar organisations. It is therefore a system of which schools which secure a high level of parent participation and draw on relatively well-off communities can take advantage, but simply a cruel hoax as far as schools of the opposite character are concerned. The extent to which this is so can be gauged from the fact that over the past ten years subsidies for extra buildings, furniture, equipment and books paid by the Education Department to the Beaumaris State School — situated in one of Melbourne’s more highly privileged areas — have amounted to \$16,818, while over the same period the George Street State School in inner-suburban Fitzroy has had \$632.⁵ Even if the two figures had been identical the situation would have been less than satisfactory. What was needed was not simply equality of treatment, but a strong dose of preference calculated to allow the Fitzroy School to give a fair start to the many deprived children on its rolls.

5 Melbourne *Herald*, 20 April, 1967.

If the problems of deprived children are to be overcome, it will not be on any haphazard or piecemeal basis. For a start, characteristics such as occupations, size of families, housing conditions, truancy, incomplete families and numbers of children unable to speak English, should be used to identify areas in which there are likely to be substantial concentrations of deprived children. These areas should be provided with pre-school centres of a special kind, oriented not to the traditional pre-school programme of enriched experience but to redressing disabilities in language and the manipulation of symbols. Admission to these centres should be selective, with normally privileged children being steered to centres of the orthodox type.

Next, the schools which deprived children are likely to attend should be made deliberately and discriminately better than other schools. Beaumaris School occupies as close an approximation to a modern building as the Victorian system provides, set in green and spacious surroundings; more than 90% of the children who attend there are drawn from upper-middle-class homes, where conditions are conducive to study and where a high value is placed on education. By contrast, schools such as George Street are old, and their bare, unshaded asphalt playgrounds and bleak, institutional architecture mirror the life which many a deprived child knows at home. Within the families of many of the throng swarming over the tiny yards and crowding the antiquated classrooms, education occupies a low priority, social and economic problems sap the energy and initiative essential for successful learning, and the whole spectrum of deprivation discussed above exercises its retarding influence.⁶ The case for unequal treatment is overwhelming — as overwhelming as it is indefensible that such inequality should favour the already fortunate Beaumaris children more than twenty-six times over.

Staffing should be to a special schedule. The teacher who is expected to introduce an ordinary child to the satisfactions of learning and to guide him through the experiences of school life under the conditions prevailing in grades of between forty and fifty pupils should not be expected to cope with the special needs of deprived children under similar conditions. Given current teacher shortages, an upper limit of twenty-five pupils per class might be regarded as tolerable, provided

6 “One High School last year found that more than a quarter of its first form students from Commission flats had only one parent at home”. (*Melbourne Age*, 20 April, 1967.)

that it were recognised that this would come under review as soon as the shortage eased. In addition, special English language teachers would need to be provided in schools with substantial migrant populations, and the appointment of teachers' assistants to lessen the amount of unskilled work at present carried out by professional staff might be given serious consideration.

Measures would be needed also to reduce the turnover of staff in schools within deprived areas. To some extent, this could be achieved simply by improving the staffing ratio, since the conscientious teacher's heart is broken less often by the difficulty of his task than by the conditions under which he is expected to undertake it. In addition, it is a common practice for special responsibilities to be recognised with special allowances, and this should be done in the case of deprived school staff. Again, it is nonsensical to compel the dedicated teacher of deprived children to accept a position elsewhere for the purpose of gaining promotion, and such teachers should be allowed to elect to take their promotion under the "normal competition" formula.

Finally, the settings in which deprived children receive their education must undergo drastic improvement. School may be their only opportunity to experience open space and beauty, and this factor should be paramount in determining which designs are adopted. It will not be enough simply to tear down — say — the old Albert Street School, bulldoze its asphalt and put up in its place the equivalent of — say — Blackburn East.⁷ The new schools should be seen as oases, compensating with the richness and variety of their buildings, landscaping, and equipment for homes and neighbourhoods deficient in these qualities. Where existing facilities are judged amenable to improvement, funds and professional skills should be made available to secure results not inferior to those which would have been achieved by starting from scratch.

The finance and initiative required to see that deprived children receive a fair start in their school lives and that equality of opportunity within the field of education becomes something more than an empty phrase, should be provided through a Federal aid programme, and, in as much as deprived children are at least as common in parochial schools as in state ones, the programme should extend to the private sector.

7 The Albert Street school was built in 1887 to take up to 400 pupils; its current enrolment is just on 1000. (Melbourne *Herald*, 20 April, 1967.)

It should include provision of a salaries grant which would enable schools within deprived areas to employ the extra staff required for an appropriate pupil/teacher ratio and to pay a special allowance. It should also include grants payable for the improvement of existing school buildings, grounds and equipment or as a contribution to the cost of new schools over and above the amount which would normally be expended on them. Needless to say, the extension of the programme to particular schools would be conditional upon their entering into an undertaking to apply all funds for the purposes specified, and measures would be necessary to ensure compliance with these undertakings.

While all but a handful of Australian schools profess the goal of equal opportunity for all children, a combination of circumstances and unenlightened policies has conspired to make the schools which are the most likely to be entrusted with the task of educating deprived children the least likely to be in a position to carry out that task successfully. The need for Commonwealth intervention is urgent.

PREPARING TO LEARN

The measure of security which a very young child enjoys and the opportunities which he is given to explore his environment through play, to develop his imaginative, cognitive and linguistic faculties, to meet other children in circumstances free of threat and conducive to the establishment of healthy social relationships, and to learn to reconcile his own demands with those of society — these are the major arbiters of his future success both as a pupil and as a citizen.

In an earlier section, attention has been given to the results of extreme deprivation in one or more of these areas, but the difference between “deprived” and “normal” children is simply one of degree, and can be expressed graphically as points on a normal curve of distribution. It is implicit in this situation that, while a minority of children are able to seize their opportunities at the outset and forge steadily ahead, the majority are unnecessarily slow off the mark, and acquire a precocious familiarity with failure and self-doubt which colours the entire course of their subsequent development.

Traditionally, provision of the pre-conditions for successful development set out above has been regarded as the responsibility of the family. Yet recent advances in educational psychology have established that, in a great many more cases than was previously suspected, the family alone is no longer equal to this responsibility. Accelerating social change and the educational requirements which are its corollary have opened a gulf above all between the level of linguistic development which a child requires in order to be able to take advantage of his educational opportunities from the outset, and the level actually achieved within most families.

The point of time at which a given child reaches the point of educational “take-off”, or whether he reaches it at all, is a function of inter-action between his genetic endowment and the size of this gulf. And the extent of the spread between extreme products of these two factors defines the challenge of catering for individual differences — a challenge which is central to education in a democratic society. In moving to meet this challenge, it is proper that such a society, professing as it does the goal of equal opportunity and investing as it must an ever increasing proportion of its wealth in education, should question whether the extent of the spread is not greater than it need be, whether there are means by which it might be reduced, and whether the cost of securing a reduction might not be significantly lower

than that involved in meeting the educational, social and economic consequences of the present unsatisfactory situation.

Within the Australian context, such questions have yet to be asked, much less answered. As a result, the systems of education operating in the various states respond in a characteristically aberrant fashion to the needs of the pre-school child. As far as Victoria is concerned, a committee of enquiry established under the auspices of the A.L.P.'s Joint State Parliamentary Labor Party-Victorian Central Executive Education Committee had to report "At present, barely a third of Victoria's children receive the advantage of a pre-school education. And, since the provision of pre-school education is largely dependent upon the initiative and financial means of parents themselves, the fortunate third is not necessarily those whose need is greatest. It is at least highly probable that, as a group, parents capable of recognising the need for pre-school education and sufficiently enterprising to do something about providing it for their children will also be better equipped to meet the demands of parenthood than others less perceptive or less endowed with drive. Moreover, present arrangements take no account of the fact that it is the financially pressed mother, and the mother with several young children, who are least likely to have the time and energy left over for the round of committee meetings and fund-raising activities involved in pre-school education, or that domestic tensions and cultural deprivations frequently associated with financial stringency and large families may constitute the environments in which pre-school education is most urgently required."⁸

The Committee went on to say of the beginners' grades in State primary schools: "Even the most capable and dedicated teacher will find it difficult to meet the challenge of the four and a half year old in these conditions [i.e. large classes, wide readiness spread] using the skills with which her professional training for a quite different group has equipped her, within a setting designed and equipped in a fashion long discredited for children of much more advanced maturity. The size of most beginners' rooms, their external surroundings and their equipment all combine to rule out the possibility of educational activity appropriate to the children concerned ever taking place within their walls.

8 *Looking to the Future. A Plan for Education in Victoria.* Victorian Branch, A.L.P., 1967.

The only teachers within the Education Department really appropriately trained for teaching beginners are a handful who hold, in addition to the Trained Infant Teacher's Certificate, a Kindergarten Teacher's Certificate. While many of those actually entrusted with the work are at least T.I.T.C.'s, even this is far from universal, and the promotion system within the teaching service is such that women who have not taught below grade five in twenty years may have to take up work in the Infant Room in order to move up through the system".

The Committee concluded: "It is clear that the Department has opted for fitting the immature child into the pattern of primary school organisation and teaching rather than adapting organisation and teaching to the needs of the child".

The alternative to this nonsense is properly organized, generally available pre-school education. As far as quality is concerned, Australia already has one of the finest systems of pre-school education in the world⁹ but, as has already been noted, in a state such as Victoria only a third of the children eligible for pre-school places are actually able to find them, and this third does not necessarily include those children most in need.

However, for the children fortunate enough to find places within them, the existing pre-school centres make a contribution to balanced development over and above that which the average family can hope to provide. In addition, they are able to furnish guidance and counselling services designed to allow parents to secure a maximum return from their own efforts within the home. The Victorian A.L.P. Committee quoted a distinguished authority on pre-school education, Miss J. Helen Hill, as saying "The nursery school helps to lay foundations and pave the way for positive attitudes so that parents and child both acquire the habit of thinking of school as something pleasant and interesting. The nursery school also fosters a healthy degree of independence, both physical and emotional, so that the child goes to the infants' school not only able to put on his own coat, but able to part from his mother with confidence, sure of her affection. Books are cherished possessions in many homes, but not in all. In the nursery schools, books are a vital part of the equipment. Their constant use, day in day out, by teachers and children alike, makes them part of the fabric of living and makes the child realise

9 Cf. Professor L. Lindberg, "Pre-School Centres in Australia" in *Australian Pre-School Magazine*, March, 1965.

that they are a source of pleasure, a means of communication and a tool of reference.

This is the purely educational case for the nursery school, but there are, besides, social and psychological arguments — very much interwoven. The purely social reason for having nursery schools is likely to remain until every family is well-housed and has the space in which children can play as noisily and creatively and uninhibitedly as they need to. The environment of the nursery school is planned to give the child every kind of play experience, for with little children play is the gateway to knowledge. For nursery school children, learning implies so much more than is generally understood in the early stages of education. It means discovery and using all kinds of physical skills and mental abilities, finding satisfactory outlets for abounding energy and for creative self-expression, learning to live together with other children of a similar age, experiencing the value and delight of co-operation, while at the same time having the satisfaction of being independent and self-reliant in an environment planned to make this possible. The nursery school is a secure environment which will prepare him for the larger environment of the infant school”.

The assumptions underlying a system which restricts the advantages of this sort of preparation to a fortunate few have been challenged by the education writer of “The Australian”, Mr. Henry Schoenheimer, in the following terms: “If it is a Bad Thing for the threes and fours to be attending pre-school educational institutions — known variously as kindergartens, day nurseries and pre-school centres — then it is almost scandalous that state and local government funds should be used to help build, staff and equip them.

“If it is a Good Thing for little children to be able to attend such places, then it is utterly wrong and foolish for government assistance to be so paltry that pre-school places are rationed; that some children wait a year or eighteen months for admittance, and that, even after teams of hardworking mums have sold countless gallons of jam and raffled acres of crocheted tablecloths, a working-class parent still has to pay all or most of the child endowment money as a ‘contribution’ to keep the local centre solvent”.

The justification for Federal action to establish systems of generally available pre-school education is two-fold. On the one hand, the establishment of such a system, while amply justified in educational terms, is wholly beyond the present resources of the states. On the other, in the absence of such a system the educational achievement of

countless students falls short of their potential, and the return which the nation rightly expects from its expanding investment in education is minimised.

Nothing short of the creation of a Commonwealth pre-school authority functioning within a frame-work of overall national planning for education seems likely to bridge a gap which is wholly subversive to the achievement of our educational goals.

TRANSFORMING THE CLASSROOM SITUATION*

A basic obstacle to educational efficiency in Australian schools is a continuing reliance upon a traditional classroom approach to learning which was never very satisfactory and which changing circumstances and technological innovation have long since rendered inadequate to the point of irrelevance.

There should be no need to describe this approach in detail. Most native-born Australians, wherever they were schooled, as well as most migrants, have experienced it at first-hand. In essence, it is the situation in which a teacher is in charge of from thirty to fifty individuals sitting in a room; in which the teacher's pre-determined task is to teach a pre-determined syllabus to all the individuals in that class, and to "get" those individuals to a single standard; in which the resources the teacher has available are himself, a blackboard, a piece of chalk and — sometimes — a text book. The pupils acquire knowledge or skills primarily from the teacher — from what he says or writes or demonstrates — and, under his direction, from the text book.

The effectiveness of this approach can be gauged by quoting an example — a typical Grade 5 of forty-five children having a class reading lesson. All have a reader, issued by the Education Department. All are reading — or apparently reading — from the same page of the same story. What is actually happening? If the book is carefully chosen, the difficulty of the reading material will be at the level of the average Grade 5 child. Translated into numbers, this means that it will be of a suitable level for perhaps ten or twelve pupils in the class — that is, for only one in four or five will it be neither too easy nor too hard. Another ten pupils functioning at Grade 4 level will be able to read the material only with some difficulty, six at Grade 3 level will find great difficulty understanding what it is all about and reading fast enough to keep up, while four or five below this level again will not be able to read the material at all. At the other end of the scale there will be children of superior reading ability — eight or ten at Grade 6 level and four or five above this level and up to Form III or beyond — who are bored stiff because they have read the thing while the others were

* This section is based on a paper entitled "The Schools — What Sort of Teaching and What Sort of Learning?" delivered by D. M. Bennett to the Fabian Society Conference on Education, March, 1966.

getting their books out, and simply fill in time reading a comic under the desk or perhaps looking out the window. In fact, for perhaps half the class, no useful activity or learning is taking place at all, and for most of the remainder very little.

These differences will apply in all subjects and in all types of activity, although for any particular group they will vary from subject to subject. They will change also with time, as growth and development bring changes of many sorts in the relative positions of the individuals who make up the group. And it is not only the general abilities of individuals in particular subjects which vary, but their rates of work and the rate at which they make progress — for instance, Johnny may be more advanced than Billy at a given stage, yet work more slowly, or progress more slowly — or both.

The situation outlined for a reading lesson applies for most school activities. In a subject in which knowledge and understanding has to be conveyed to the class by the teacher — for example, in science or geography — the majority of pupils at any one time probably either cannot fully understand what he is saying — or do not need to understand because they know it already. The former group are sitting there experiencing failure; the latter, frustration. The teacher has been given the impossible task of communicating with a large group of individuals as though they were a single individual.

In many primary schools this model would be modified by the division of the class into sub-groups based on ability, with one group being taught by the teacher while the remainder work at set tasks. While this is an improvement, it comes up against the fact that the minimum group size which is normally practicable will still include too wide a range of ability for really efficient teaching, while the quality of materials available for individual learning within the average classroom is often such as to render the work of groups not actually undergoing tuition of little benefit.

The proposition that the traditional classroom situation is hopelessly inefficient is one which will be accepted only with reluctance by many people — particularly by those whose education was a success. But schools today face new tasks and a new situation.

In the primary schools, the system of mass education developed in the nineteenth century has succeeded in teaching the majority to read, write and add up. But it has taught them little more than that, and it has left a sizeable minority illiterate or semi-literate. As has been established in earlier sections, the character of Australian society as

we know it today and as we foresee its future development imposes more rigorous demands.

In the secondary schools, on the other hand, the system has until recently worked with reasonable efficiency, simply because the pupils being taught there were a highly select group, picked out in state schools by academic ability and in private ones according to economic criteria. Today, when all children spend some years in secondary schools and an increasingly large proportion stay on for a higher secondary education, a completely different teaching situation exists and the traditional methods are hopelessly inappropriate.

Returning to the Grade 5 reading lesson, suppose that, instead of a single grade reader, the teacher provides a number of readers of different levels of difficulty, and thus takes the first stride towards providing for the range of individual differences within the grade. Suppose again that this material is accompanied by carefully prepared sets of comprehension questions or exercises aimed at improving the pupils' level of reading; that, instead of trotting out to the teacher for correction, the pupils are given the answers themselves so that they can immediately correct their own work; and that, finally, each child records the results of these tests, and, as he performs successfully at a particular level, moves automatically to the next more difficult level.

This constitutes an educational setting in which each child can work to his own individual level of ability and at his own rate; can immediately discover whether he was right or wrong and can get either the satisfaction which comes from knowing you are right or, alternatively, information which leads him to look for the right answer, try again and find out why he was wrong; can achieve a reasonable degree of success and can work quite independently of the teacher. Basically, the situation described is that created by the S.R.A. Reading Laboratory, introduced into Australia in 1958 and now used by over half the nation's schools.

The Reading Laboratory is merely one successful example of a whole range of new materials generically grouped as forms of programmed instruction. Whether in the form of a text book or of an elaborate electronic machine, these devices embody several basic principles. They break down the learning required into steps which are small enough to ensure that there is a high probability that the learner reaching a given step will successfully solve the problem associated with it. They present these steps in learning in a carefully planned

and tested sequence and they reinforce the learning with an immediate reward in the shape of the satisfaction of being right.

However, all the varied forms of “programmed instruction” so far developed appear to represent only the forerunners of an infinite series of planned educational materials which hold out the possibility of completely transforming the traditional classroom situation and lifting the effectiveness of education to a new level. The key features of these materials will probably prove to be that they are carefully planned and tested before publication, that they allow individuals, working independently, to learn directly from using the materials themselves, and that they make provision for the great range of individual differences in the classroom.

All such devices and materials will require for their development the pooled resources of full-time experts drawn from the schools. They will also require considerable capital outlay. Given these prerequisites, modern technology may for the first time play a role in the field of education.

Some of the old rigid repressive discipline has gone from Australian schools, but it is not true that classes have become places where children have reasonable freedom to develop as self-reliant, independent individuals, where they can learn to function as members of a social group or to become effective participants in the affairs of a democratic community. But if the classroom situation is changed so that the teacher does not need to be both the traditional figure of authority and the source of all knowledge, and so that he can function instead as a general supervisor and helpmate to individuals, a different and more healthy classroom relationship may become possible.

Again, a system geared to individual differences should produce far fewer failures and avoid the situation in which children sit in their desks year after year while their classroom experiences convince them that they are inferior — and getting more inferior every day. At the same time, such a system should allow fuller development of the potential of the more talented children, who will no longer be held back to the theoretical average at which the teacher tries to operate.

Despite this promise, the process of harnessing technological innovation to Australian education has barely begun. The Reading Laboratory had to be introduced by an independent authority, and nine years later, despite widespread recognition of its worth, has still to reach nearly half our schools, while the adequacy of equipment in many of those theoretically serviced is open to serious doubt.

Cuisenaire — the method of using coloured rods to teach arithmetical concepts — has been introduced after a preparation so inadequate that the mathematical education of successive years of children in primary schools has become a shambles and the concept itself has been made a focus of doubt, confusion and hostility in the minds of countless parents. Moreover, as far as most state systems are concerned, the provision of equipment for both changes has been to a substantial degree a charge on parents, with the result that whether or not particular schools have begun to benefit has depended largely upon the economic character of the neighbourhoods in which they are situated.

However, the main obstacle to progress lies in the fact that in most cases the necessary materials have not yet been produced and the amount of development at present going on is minute. Under existing conditions, there is no reason to suppose that things will get better. The Australian Council for Educational Research lacks resources for a programme of the magnitude required, while the research establishments maintained by the various state education departments are weaker still and the contribution of the private sector insignificant.

To remedy this situation a national effort is required. This effort, which can be organised and subsidised only at the Federal level, should be directed at meeting three needs. First, new materials must be developed to meet the various needs of Australian schools. Second, useful materials, both old and new, must be made available at the lowest possible price. Third, schools must be assisted, where necessary, to obtain these materials.

It is essential that such an undertaking should begin with the right principles. In particular, any suggestion of an increased degree of centralised control or uniformity must be avoided. The notion of “uniform textbooks” being produced for all pupils in Australia by a benevolent Federal government represents a monstrous distortion of what is required. In the first place, text-books of the traditional type, while useful for some purposes, will not be the most desirable form of materials required, nor the type for which government action is most urgently required. Secondly, uniformity of materials would be educationally harmful, contrary to the whole spirit of a serious effort to seek ways of improving and modernising educational methods, and quite unnecessary. Finally, in the words of Mr. Henry Schoenheimer, “From the uniform English curriculum to the uniform history and social studies curriculum peddling a line acceptable to the government of the day is a step as short as that from the brink to the abyss. In

these areas, uniform curriculum linked to uniform texts means thought control, whatever may be the motives of the unifiers".¹⁰

A Curriculum and Materials Development Division should be established within the structure of the Commonwealth Ministry of Education and Science. This division should be required to conduct research programmes with the aim of improving educational practices, including curricula, teaching methods, facilities and administration, and to develop materials, books, aids, equipment and devices for these areas of activity. It should also commission and subsidise independent research and development on the part of agencies and individuals outside its own organisation.

Apart from its activities in research and development, the division should actually produce, commission and purchase items which it judges capable of making a contribution to Australian education, with a view to ensuring that a variety of materials of high quality are readily available to schools and that they can be purchased at the advantageous prices consequent on bulk buying and long production runs. The division could also have the responsibility of recommending subject areas in which the purchase of materials should be subsidised. These subsidies, which would be paid either to all schools or to special categories of school, should allow the school to exercise the right of choice of materials within the specified area. It should therefore be possible for the school to use the subsidy to purchase from private suppliers as well as from the government. Just as schools might be assisted to bring deficient library facilities up to standard, so might either all schools, or deprived schools, be helped to purchase improved materials for, say, science, reading or written expression.

Again, the division should provide in-service training and advice with the aim of improving methods and increasing efficiency in general, and of training teachers to use new methods and materials.

Finally, the division should monitor educational needs, and make recommendations to the Minister on the forms of aid appropriate for meeting these needs and on the distribution of aid to particular authorities and schools, taking into account their existing facilities and the economic, cultural and social character of pupils and communities.

In general, the division should function in cognisance of the fact that hitherto education has been the only multi-million dollar undertaking in Australia which has failed to accept its responsibilities in terms

¹⁰ *The Australian*, 23 May, 1967.

of research, development and, to a lesser degree, in-service training. However, its aim should be, not to discourage the embryonic state establishments currently responsible for these activities, but actually to involve these establishments in the business of creating programmes to bridge the widening gaps which arise from their inadequacy, and in bringing the advantages of technological advance to bear on the education of every child.

THE TEACHERS: HOW MANY AND WHAT SORT?

Appraising the Plowden Report on primary education in Britain, the London *Economist* observed: “The task of subject teaching for older children can be aided by machines. But primary teaching will always be labour intensive.”

The Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia noted that by 1975 it would be necessary to find 75 per cent more teachers for government schools than had been in service in 1963. Moreover, while statistics for schools within the private sector were not available, the Committee assumed that their needs would be similar. The Committee’s estimates are shown in the following table¹¹:

Estimated (1) Numbers of New Teachers Required Each Year in Government Schools, Australia, 1965-75

Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
1965	4,400	3,900	8,300
1966	5,000	3,100	8,100
1967	5,100	3,600	8,700
1968	5,200	3,900	9,100
1969	5,500	4,300	9,800
1970	5,700	4,600	10,300
1971	6,000	4,800	10,800
1972	6,400	5,200	11,600
1973	6,800	4,800	11,600
1974	7,100	5,300	12,400
1975	8,900	5,400	14,300

(1) In calculating the number of additional teachers required each year an allowance of 7 per cent of the total strength has been made to account for losses due to retirement, resignation, death and other causes.

Assessing these requirements against the resources likely to be available to meet them, the Committee concluded that “The increasing secondary school population, the consistent tendency of a large proportion of pupils to complete a full secondary school course, and the evidence of the proportion of a total age-group able to benefit from some form of tertiary education show that there will be sufficient young people capable of preparing themselves for teaching without threatening the supply of recruits to other professions”. However, the

11 *Tertiary Education in Australia*. Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission, 1964.

Committee held that in order to allow these young people to make their contribution, it would be necessary to provide an additional 10,000 places in teachers' colleges by 1975. To achieve this end, very great increases would be required throughout the preceding period. These figures referred only to government schools. If the needs of the private sector were taken into account, an upward revision of about one third would be necessary, while a further increase might be required for secondary teachers training within teachers' colleges.

The Committee also drew attention to the need for improvement in the quality of preparation for teaching. Noting that the aims of training courses were "to continue the student's general education in breadth and in depth, to assist in the development of the student's personal maturity, and to provide training in the theory and practice of teaching", the Committee went on to observe that, under existing conditions, "Two years after leaving secondary school these young people will find themselves responsible, and sometimes solely responsible, for the education of a group of children to whom they must appear as mature and well-balanced adults. They must also be able to take their place as teachers in the community". The Committee questioned whether success in these terms could be achieved within the limitations of current admission policies and staffing procedures, and a two-year course.

Answering this question in the negative, the Committee recommended that "additional resources, both state and Commonwealth, should be devoted to the urgent task of increasing the supply of teachers in Australia, that teachers in all types of schools should be professionally trained, that the minimum standard for entrance to a course of preparation for teaching should be university entrance level, that within six or seven years the length of the minimum course of preparation for teaching should be increased to three years, and that the staff of all teachers' colleges should be recruited through open advertisement".

Recognising that "there are dangers latent in the close relationship between state departments of education and teachers' colleges preparing teachers for government schools", that there would be difficulties in grafting open advertisement for staff on to seniority-based promotion systems within state departments, and that the élan, variety and eagerness to experiment so desirable within institutions responsible for moulding educators might not necessarily be fostered within bureaucracies, the Committee went on to recommend that "there should be established in each state a Board of Teacher Education as a statutory body responsible for the supervision of standards of teacher

preparation, the granting of certificates and professional degrees and the distribution of such funds as may be made available for the most effective preparation of teachers”, while ‘teachers’ colleges which come within the ambit of the Boards of Teacher Education should be developed to the point at which they can be granted autonomy”. The Committee stated also: “Because the teachers’ certificate granted by the Board will be evidence of adequate teacher preparation for schools of all types, teachers’ colleges in all states should be developed so as to provide for the preparation of all eligible students, irrespective of the type of school in which they may later teach” and “The Committee considers that an autonomous college could develop courses at the tertiary level which might attract students who do not intend to become teachers, with the consequence that the institution might develop into a college of arts and science. Without assuming such development, the Committee considers that a wider source of student enrolment would benefit the college and the students intending to be teachers”.

The recommendations of the Committee, together with the facts and argument set out in its report, constitute a blueprint for the relief of the nation-wide teacher shortage and for a transformation in the quality of teacher training. But this blueprint pre-supposes effective action within a reasonable period of time, and with each year’s delay its implementation must become more difficult. Failure to recruit the required number of additional teachers in a given year inevitably reduces the chances of achieving the specified target the following year; failure to introduce the three-year training course during the period of relatively moderate pressure prior to 1972 may result in its introduction being postponed indefinitely, since, in the Committee’s own words, “The possibility of effecting the change without great disruption to the output of new teachers exists until 1972 and such an opportunity may not occur again for a very long time.”

Unfortunately, nothing about the current tempo of discussion in official circles suggests that a sense of urgency has been communicated, or that action on anything like an adequate scale is imminent. The Committee’s report was sent to the Minister in Charge of Commonwealth Activities in Education and Research, Senator Gorton, on August 27th, 1964, but for all practical purposes the section dealing with teacher training was shelved until the Federal election campaign of November, 1966, when the Prime Minister, Mr. Holt, announced: “We will provide eight million dollars a year over the next three financial years for the construction and equipment of

new colleges for teacher training throughout Australia. This money will require no matching grants from the states. It will be used by us to build colleges on sites selected by the states, on condition that the state does not reduce its expenditure on teacher training, and on condition that at least ten per cent of the places at the new colleges are reserved for teachers not bonded to state education departments”.

This is a pitiful response to problems of the scope and importance documented and spelled-out in the Report. The Prime Minister’s proposal concedes a measure of Federal responsibility for teacher training, and holds out a promise that pressure may be applied to the states for partial implementation of the recommendation on “open door” college admissions, but it is vitiated by a lingering acceptance of the proposition that decisions on education should be left to the states while Boards of Teacher Education, minimum admission standards, lengthening of courses, autonomy of colleges and provision for recruiting college staff over the widest possible area receive no mention. Ultimately experience will show that this belief is a fallacy, but by then it will be too late for hundreds of thousands of young Australians.

Teacher training does not occupy a separate compartment, discrete from the wider field of tertiary education. As the Committee wisely pointed out, it is an integral part of that field, with a contribution to make to association with the colleges of advanced education. The scope of the present pamphlet has been deliberately restricted to fields in which at present there is little or no Commonwealth involvement, and therefore excludes the broad questions of tertiary education, but it does seem clear that at this level planning which divorces the teachers’ colleges from their natural associates inflicts harm on all concerned.

Moreover, the level of capital expenditure proposed by the Prime Minister is well below that required to enable the states to keep abreast of the Martin projections. Even if the programme were getting away to a fair start and the grants were to be used exclusively for the creation of new teacher training places, it is unlikely that the projections would be met; in fact, the lapse of time since the Committee reported imposes a back-log exceeding \$10,000,000, and projects announced to date indicate that much of the initial outlay will be absorbed by the replacement of existing inadequate premises, not by the provision of places for additional students.

Again, although the Holt proposals do not require matching grants from the states, they will inevitably involve the states in substantially greater out-goings on teacher training for recurrent items. Salaries

for lecturers, living allowances for students and a variety of other unavoidable expenses will have to be met from appropriations already intolerably over-loaded. For the harsh fact is that there is no slack to be taken up to meet these demands. The proportion of state budgets allocated to education has reached in most cases its limit; the only way in which more money can be found for teacher training is by cutting outlays in other fields of educational endeavor.

As an interim solution, the Commonwealth should make grants for the establishment of the Boards of Teacher Education recommended by Martin and for the building of new teacher training institutions on a scale necessary both to meet projected requirements, and to change over to the three-year course. These grants should be conditional upon the states implementing the remainder of the Martin proposals on improving the quality of training. Simultaneously, and in addition, the Commonwealth should make a contribution to recurrent expenditure on teacher training by introducing a scheme of teacher training scholarships to replace stipends currently paid by the states under bonding arrangements. Such a scheme would ensure that the extra year's training and augmented number of trainees did not become an unsupportable burden on the states, while at the same time liberating substantial amounts of state money for expenditure in other areas of educational activity, increasing teacher mobility between states and sectors, and, above all, freeing the training system as a whole by eliminating the direct dependence of its students upon the education departments.

If the Federal Government wants its interest in teacher training to be taken seriously, and intends the present capital grants to be taken simply as an earnest of more relevant measures yet to come, it should signify that this is the case by proclaiming to the public what is already well known to those professionally concerned with education — that in Sir Leslie Martin and his Committee Australia had as able and experienced a team of advisors as could be assembled within our national borders, that the recommendations on teacher training set out in the Martin Report are the right recommendations, and that the Commonwealth must recognise its obligation to underwrite the activities of any state prepared to set about implementing those recommendations in a responsible manner. In the absence of such a proclamation, and of proposals for action less trivial than those so far produced, Australians must face up to the fact that the all too modest requirements laid down by the Martin Committee will be met neither quantitatively nor qualitatively, and that predictable results for the whole education system will follow.

CONCLUSION

The proposals which have been discussed in previous pages are not intended to exhaust the possibilities for Federal involvement in education, but rather to indicate the type of Federal aid appropriate to a situation in which the primary responsibility for education rests with six state education departments and a plethora of employing authorities within the private sector. That is to say, they are clear, definite, positive measures, designed to make specific contributions to the solution of the current crisis in Australian education and to progress in the direction of national goals — in particular, the goals of equality of opportunity and educational excellence as a pre-requisite to national development.

The alternative to giving aid along these lines sometimes presented is further expansion of the Commonwealth scholarship system or the establishment of schemes for an educational endowment to parents such as Labor's 1966 "dollar a week" proposals. Such proposals may or may not be desirable in themselves, but they have no connection whatsoever with resolving the education crisis, and bear no relation to established educational needs and priorities. Even in the best foreseeable circumstances, money for education will be limited and therefore will need to be utilised in the most efficient way. If schools and other educational facilities are to be the means of achieving equality of opportunity for Australia's children, their needs must take priority over the distribution of cash to parents. This does not mean that assistance should be denied to parents who need it in order to keep their children at school. Such assistance must be given. But as long as second-rate, inefficient schools exist and children are faced with barriers and handicaps which are educationally avoidable, there can be no justification for using scholarships or endowment schemes to pass funds ear-marked for education to wealthy parents who are perfectly capable of providing for their children's support from their own pockets.

Again, it is sometimes suggested that the expenditure of Federal funds, like that of the states; should be restricted to schools within the state sector. This suggestion fails to take account of the very real difference between state and Federal goals in education. The educational objective proper to a state government should be simply to provide the best system of state schools its resources will permit, free and open to all children, irrespective of social class, parental

income or beliefs. By contrast, in pursuing its goals of equality of opportunity and educational excellence in the interests of national development, the Federal government must recognize that obstacles to the achievement of these goals are as common within the private sector as within the state one, and as long as the dual system exists, must be tackled where they occur.

Such an approach concedes no “right” to public assistance on the part of private schools, but takes account of the fact that, to an increasing extent, education involves interests both national and individual in character which have an importance transcending that of the division between the sectors. Even complete success in preserving the principle of “no state aid for private schools” may seem poor consolation to its proponents if its price turns out to be the maintenance of an expanding segment of the electorate in a condition so under-educated as to make them a prey to every demagogue capable of couching his appeal in the catch-calls of their faith, or if the difference between national survival and destruction some day turns on the capacities left undeveloped in the educational slum at the bottom of the private sector.

Moreover, programmes of Federal aid for meeting the needs of deprived children, for the provision of adequate and appropriately designed pre-schools, for the implementation of the Martin Committee’s proposals on teacher training and for introducing new educational materials and methods extend assistance to children in under-privileged private schools in a manner which makes it very difficult for advantage to be taken of them to increase the power and wealth of a church, to propagate a particular set of beliefs or to further the interests of a particular group. In addition, they avoid assistance of the sort likely to add to the advantages of groups and individuals already economically privileged. Providing that measures are taken to see that such abuses in fact not do occur, they are proposals which should be acceptable to every fair-minded Australian.

APPENDIX

The Problem of the Private Sector

Unfortunately, the emergence of a national consensus on the needs of education has been set back by the long debate over financial relationships between the State and schools conducted by private — and mainly Catholic — authorities. If anything, Catholic arguments based on the Declaration of Human Rights and theories of “distributive justice”, together with the rejoinders of committed adherents of secular education, and — occasionally — the considered judgements of impartial bodies such as the New Zealand Commission on Education, have had a greater public airing than the short-comings of the education system as a whole.

For many years, the suggestion that financial aid should be given to schools operating outside the state systems met bi-partisan opposition; the majority of the electorate were not in favour of aid and the major political parties were against it. Moreover, the opposition of the parties seemed to be established on firm foundations: power in the Liberal Party was wielded by Protestants determined to yield Rome no advantage, while the A.L.P. could maintain a principled position in the reasonable certainty that its numerous Catholic supporters had nowhere else to turn.

In these circumstances, there was little incentive to argue the case against aid with fervour or thoroughness. As a result, many non-Catholics familiar at first hand with crisis and stringency within state schools developed sympathetic attitudes towards the problems of those they felt to be in worse straits still, and modified their opposition. At the same time, sociological changes within the community and the trauma attendant on the birth of the D.L.P. were transforming the political allegiances of many Catholics who had previously been Labor supporters, so that they either did not vote Labor automatically or did not vote for it at all. When in 1963 the Liberal Party abandoned its opposition to aid and set out to buy up Catholic votes on a grand scale, the Labor Party’s determination to remain anti-aid came under heavy pressure.

Even at this stage, it might have been possible for the Party to have reverted to the sort of stance summarised in the following *Nation* editorial: “There is a case to be made in principle against state aid. It can be expressed with a sympathy for the Catholic children

in crowded schools that is not necessarily less than that of their spiritual leaders, and with feelings of concern at the disadvantages these conditions bring the nation. It must acknowledge the serious arguments for the modification of the monolithic state educational system and consider ways of introducing more freedom of choice in the system. The case stands on the principle that a state does not accept any necessary identity between a child's schooling and the inculcation of a child's religious beliefs, and cannot accept responsibility for sustaining that identity. In the end this case would deserve to be upheld. It might gain more in general public respect than it lost as a result of denominational attacks."¹²

However, the pre-conditions for this stance would have been a fairly rigidly enforced ban on aid measures applying to all sections of the Party, and willingness on the part of all leaders to campaign openly and consistently for this ban and the principles on which it was based. The fact that many sections of the Party would not have accepted such a ban, and that many leading members who would privately have accepted it would not have been prepared to argue it in public, interacted with a general feeling that the anti-aid position was dangerously open to misrepresentation. The result was the reversal of policy adopted at the Surfers' Paradise Conference in July, 1966. Among other factors which played their part in the decision were demographic projections of the increasing significance of the Catholic vote (see table below), and a dawning appreciation of the economic consequences of allowing the education of a significant section¹³ of the community's children to lag further and further behind standards regarded as appropriate for the majority. Again, the decision was reached in some sort of consciousness that in an electorate no longer primarily divided along religious lines, a model admitting only pro- or anti-aid positions could no longer provide an adequate guide for electoral strategy.

¹² *Nation*, 7 March, 1964.

¹³ Schools outside the state system cater for roughly a quarter of the Australian school population. Within this segment, eighty-six per cent of primary school children and sixty-two per cent of secondary school pupils attend Catholic schools.

Religious Affiliations — as Shown in Census Returns, 1947-61

Religion	Census June, 1947	Census June, 1954	Census June, 1961	Increase 1947-1961
Baptist	113,527	124,444	149,819	36,292
Catholic	1,586,738	2,020,986	2,620,011	1,033,273
Church of England	2,957,032	3,408,850	3,668,931	711,899
Presbyterian	871,425	977,933	1,076,395	204,970
	743,540	870,242	976,518	232,978

Viewed from this standpoint, the electorate could be seen as falling into four groups — those involved in educational debate mainly or exclusively as advocates of aid; those involved as opponents of aid; a group — mainly non-Catholic — not strongly in favour of aid but sympathetic to it as a means of alleviating a situation felt to be unjust to Catholic children (i.e. those accepting the “educational slum” argument); and those who did not care about the aid issue — or, in many cases, any other educational question — one way or another. The first and second of these groups had become smaller than either the third or the fourth, with the main change consisting of extensive migration from the second group to the third.

By such pragmatic paths, Labour found its way to a stance equivalent to that reached by the Liberals some three years earlier and entertaining as yet incompletely defined measures of aid to schools within the private sector. The great philosophical issues around which debate had centred might be unresolved, but *Nation* could editorialise with what was to prove a measure of prescience: “Time may show that the Australian Labor Party managed all unwittingly to take the momentum out of the State Aid issue when the Federal conference of the party stumbled incoherently into acceptance of State Aid at Surfers’ Paradise last weekend”.

The third group of the four mentioned above represents an important development on the Australian political scene — the emergence of a significant body of public opinion on educational questions, perhaps imperfectly informed, perhaps insufficiently articulate, but clearly increasing in size at a rapid rate. As far as the aid issue was concerned, this group accepted the proposition that a measure of assistance should be given to private schools, but by no means agreed with the principles on which — at least as far as the Catholic Church was concerned — the campaign for it had been fought. Many people in this same group

would very rapidly change their attitude if certain conditions were not observed. In the first place, they would be opposed to aid being used to strengthen a particular church or to promote particular religious views; second, they would not wish to see its provision undermine the state education systems; third, they would require that it be used primarily to solve a particular problem — namely, the inequalities of educational opportunity suffered by some Catholic children — and thus make its contribution to the solution of the general “educational crisis”. The fact that some of these conditions may with reason be held to be quite inconsistent with the whole notion of aid — for instance, aid of any kind could be claimed to strengthen the Church and to undermine the state system — only makes it the more important that the parties should consider them carefully when framing policies which involve aid, and emphasizes that policies adopted without such consideration may lose their sponsors more votes than they gain.

It is important also to realise that both the anti-aid group and those whose sympathy for the Catholic predicament is qualified include a significant number of people — many of them opinion leaders in the community — who are sufficiently knowledgeable about education not to be fooled by some proposal which purports to solve a problem but which is not relevant to educational needs. Teachers, those active in parents’ organisations, and many others, know quite well what the major problems of the education system are — even if they do not have the solutions. They will ridicule any proposal which avoids the basic issues or diverts attention from them, as they did Labor’s abortive “dollar a week” proposals. Allied with their opposite numbers among Catholics — those who no longer feel it necessary to apply their entire resources to obtaining “justice” for their own schools — these people are rapidly becoming an education public which no government can afford to ignore.

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