‘Twenty hearts beating as none’: Primary education in Ireland, 1899–1922

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Declaration

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List of Abbreviations

CCSMA	Catholic Clerical School Managers' Association
CNEI	Commissioners of National Education Ireland
CS	*An Claidheamh Soluis*
CSO	Chief Secretary's Office
CSO RP	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers
DATI	Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archive
ed./eds	editor/editors
FJ	*Freeman's Journal*
H.C	House of Commons
H.L.	House of Lords
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IrI	*Irish Independent*
ISM	*Irish School Monthly*
ISW	*Irish School Weekly*
IT	*Irish Times*
MP	Member of Parliament
n.d.	no date
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NS	National school
NT	National teacher
RC	Roman Catholic
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Explanatory Note

The Commissioners of National Education of Ireland, then seven in number, held their first Board meeting in December 1831. In time, the number of commissioners increased to twenty. The commissioners did not receive an income but were allowed travel expenses. In 1835, due to the expansion of the system, James Carlile was appointed as the first Resident Commissioner. This position carried with it a salary and the post was the modern day equivalent of Minister for Education. With the passage of time, this grouping which had oversight of the national school system were variously styled as follows – the Board, the National Board, the Board of National Education, or when acting together in a collective official capacity simply as 'the commissioners'.

The phrase 'Twenty hearts beating as none', which is utilised in the title to describe the Commissioners, is D.H. Akenson's. It is employed here in a metaphorical sense to signal the increasing passivity and marginalisation of the Board in the face of the increasingly powerful forces of the state, the Catholic and other churches, Irish nationalism and teachers as represented by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation during the final decades of its administration of primary education in Ireland.

Abstract

‘Twenty hearts beating as none’: Primary education in Ireland, 1899–1922

Michael Duggan

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Irish national school system catered for the educational needs of almost 800,000 children in 8,500 schools. Despite its manifest numerical success and its agency in the near elimination of illiteracy, issues such as clerical management, the payment by results system, inferior school conditions, the proliferation of small schools, the restricted curriculum, the teaching of Irish and the reorganisation of the inspectorate generated a confluence of challenging circumstances for all participants. This was the scenario presented to Dr William Starkie, academic and classical scholar, who was appointed Resident Commissioner of Education in 1899. This study charts the fortunes of the national school system from 1899 to 1922, a period roughly coinciding with the tenure of Dr W.J.M. Starkie as Resident Commissioner of National Education. This commenced with an active programme of curricular and administrative reform that served to modernise primary education in Ireland, which had lagged behind systems elsewhere.

Parallel with this programme of change, there were strong intimations that the British government harboured plans to reform Irish education and its administration along the lines recently pursued in England. As the primary education system in Ireland had evolved *de facto* into a denominational one, financed by government but clerically managed, the various Churches were in the main generally satisfied. As a result, every suggestion that schools be financed by rates and under local control was stoutly resisted. Successive chief secretaries failed to progress this policy. Furthermore, Starkie’s energetic approach to administrative reform not only encountered opposition, it generated additional problems. The new system of pay, increments and promotion for teachers, introduced in tandem with the Revised Curriculum, and combined with a changed inspectoral remit proved problematic, with the result that although curricular reform was successfully introduced, progress was disrupted by financial and organisational issues. Two vice-regal inquiries, in 1913 and 1918, delved minutely into primary education provision under the National Board. These highlighted the scale of the deficiencies of the existing system and provided the impetus, had it been fully grasped, for further organisational and administrative change. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 ensured the matter was put on the back burner for the duration, and when it was taken up again, in its immediate aftermath, it was too late. A final attempt was made in 1918–20 to address the structural deficiencies of the Irish educational system. Had this been achieved, it would have resulted in the replacement of the National Board, which was no longer fit for purpose, by a state Department of Education in the manner of that already in place in Great Britain. This was not possible in Ireland because of political and ideological developments that heralded the break-up of the Union.

The rise of cultural nationalism, and with it the Gaelic League, had brought increasingly exigent calls for the introduction of a bilingual programme of education. These were addressed at first by curricular accommodation, but the 1916 Rising raised nationalist aspirations. When it came to education provision, nationalists and the Catholic Church increasingly found common cause in the late 1910s and, as a new political disposition beckoned, the alliance forged was a hallmark for the future in which the churches – and the Catholic Church in particular – were permitted to retain their ascendant position in the provision of education and the state acceded to an essentially subordinate, administrative position.

Introduction

The establishment of a state-funded system of primary education for Ireland in 1831 predated, by some forty years, its introduction in England. The circumstances which brought this situation about are worthy of consideration. Historically educational provision in Ireland had been problematic. From Henrician times onwards, educational measures passed into law for Ireland were underpinned by a desire to promote the adoption of English language and culture, and to support the Established Church. The majority of the population consisting of Catholics and Dissenters were inhibited by penal legislation from maintaining their own schools.

For those in the Established Church, parish, diocesan and royal schools were created and endowed by grants of land and financial supports. The early eighteenth century saw the introduction of 'charity' schools funded by voluntary societies. One such body, the 'Society in Dublin for Promoting Christian Doctrine', was formed in 1717 and at its peak supported 163 schools, catering for 3,000 pupils.[1]

This was insufficient to meet the need to promote Protestantism, and the higher clergy and gentry petitioned the English government for a royal charter, which was duly granted in 1733. Thus 'The Incorporated Society in Dublin for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland' came into being. The resultant charter schools, after some early success soon developed into 'a remorselessly proselytising agency' and by the year 1830, enrolment numbers had dwindled to 834.[2]

For those whose religious persuasion excluded them from the means of education, a clandestine solution was found – the 'hedge schools'. Given Ireland's climate, it is unlikely that schooling was normally conducted outdoors but the penal restrictions on Catholic education militated against permanency of location. Here the Catholic hedge schoolmaster, for almost all were Catholic, taught his pupils in return for a small fee.

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[1] D.H. Akenson, 'Pre-university education, 1782–1870' in W.E. Vaughan (ed), *A new history of Ireland, vol. V: Ireland under the Union, I, 1801-70* (Oxford, 2010), p. 526. Henceforth Akenson, *Pre-university ed.*

[2] D.H. Akenson, *The Irish education experiment* (London, 1970) p. 36. Henceforth Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*; also Kenneth Milne, 'Irish Charter Schools', *The Irish Journal of Education*, 8:1 (1974), pp 3–29.

With the amelioration of the Penal Laws, the teaching was carried out in more appropriate surroundings.[3] Akenson states that 'the best available estimates indicate that in the mid-1820s three to four hundred thousand Catholic children were being educated at parental expense' and further concludes that 'despite the British stereotypes of the troglodytic Irishmen, the Irish peasant of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries evinced a striking avidity for education.'[4] Irrespective of the efficacy or the content of the education imparted by the hedge schoolmasters, the most important factor to note was the eagerness of the Irish masses to pursue schooling.

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the provision of elementary education was advanced by voluntary agencies of both Protestant and Catholic persuasion. Firstly, with regard to its Catholic provision, the Church emerged from the penal era financially disadvantaged but with the allegiance of its flock largely undiminished. The work of the hedge schools, now more appropriately referred to as 'pay schools', was augmented by the establishment of primary schools by religious orders such as the Christian Brothers, the Presentation Sisters, the Loreto Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy. These provided schooling for all, poor or otherwise, in urban locations.

In the case of the Established Church, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of voluntary societies such as the Association for Discountenancing Vice and the London Hibernian Society. These were avowedly and openly proselytising in purpose. In their schools, established with an evangelical missionary goal, great emphasis was placed on scriptural studies. Despite the robust denominational nature of these societies, they received substantial parliamentary funding.[5] However, the main beneficiary of public money was the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland. More commonly referred to as the Kildare Place Society, it was founded in 1811 by individuals 'of various religious communions' with the object of 'diffusing the blessing of well-ordered Education amongst the labouring classes'.[6] Indicative of a more nuanced and sensitive approach to its venture, its guiding principal was 'to afford the same facilities for Education to every denomination of Christians, without interfering

[3] James Kelly, '"I kept my design a profound secret": the nature and impact of the educational provisions of the Penal Laws', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 72 (2019), pp 346–73.
[4] Akenson, *Pre-university ed.*, p. 523–4.
[5] John Coolahan, *Irish Education: its history and structure* (Dublin, 1981), p. 11.
[6] *Eighth Report of the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland* 1820. Appendix vi, p. 60, cited in B. Fleming and J. Harford, 'Irish education and the legacy of O'Connell' in *History of Education*, 45:2 (2016), p. 170.

with the particular religious opinions of any'.[7] The setting up of Kildare Place Society schools proved to be of signal importance to Irish education. Under the Society's auspices, a series of relevant text and library books were introduced, as well as teaching aids and guides. The Lancastrian monitorial method was adopted, which facilitated the teaching of literacy and numeracy to large numbers of children by using competent older pupils to augment the work of teachers.[8] The establishment of Model Schools as examples of good teaching practice and the introduction of a corps of inspectors were all indicators of the Society's foresight and would in time, prove central to the evolving elementary school system.

At its height, the Society was in receipt of funding of £30,000 annually and supported 1,490 schools where almost 100,000 children were taught.[9] Initially, the Society's schools had the support of the Catholic poor. Daniel O'Connell was a member of the Society's board of governors and notable Catholic gentry became school patrons. Clerical opinion seemed assuaged that religious neutrality could be maintained in the classroom. Apart from secular instruction, extracts from the Bible were read 'without note or comment' of a doctrinal nature. However, in the 1820s it was observed that the Society deviated from its non-denominational remit by allocating some of its funds to schools run by missionary societies whose aim was the religious conversion of the Catholic poor. This proved a step too far for the Catholic hierarchy, who had never been totally at ease regarding scripture reading in the classroom.

Reflecting their new confidence arising from the amelioration of penal imposition, the hierarchy and influential Catholics petitioned the Government and 1824 saw the setting up of yet another inquiry into education for the poor of Ireland.[10] The haphazard and fragmented nature of educational provision clearly impacted the findings of this commission when in their report they strongly recommended the discontinuance of public funding to voluntary agencies for educational purposes. Furthermore, they

[7] Ibid.
[8] The Lancastrian method derives its name from Joseph Lancaster, a young Quaker, who opened his first school in London in 1797. In response to huge numbers attending and being financially restrained from employing assistants, he devised a system of tuition by 'monitors'. By this method, capable pupils who knew a little would teach pupils who knew less. As well as being suited to the purpose of basic literacy and numeracy, the system brought structure and orderliness to the pupils, perceived as necessary virtues for the poor of the time.
[9] Susan M. Parkes, *Kildare Place: the history of the Church of Ireland Training College and College of Education 1811–2010* (Dublin, 2011), p. 18.
[10] In early 1800s alone, a plethora of reports on the education of the poor were published: 1812, 1824, 1825 and 1828. Another in 1830 reported on the condition of the poor in Ireland generally.

recommended that 'a distinct Board should be appointed by Government, of persons … invested with sufficient authority to control the application and expenditure of the public money appropriated to the purposes of general education.'[11]

The most significant recommendation was that, given the marked divisions

> between different classes of people, as are to be found in Ireland, it appears to us that schools should be established for the purpose of giving to children of all religious persuasions such useful instruction as they may severally be capable and desirous of receiving, without having any grounds to apprehend an interference with their respective religious principles.[12]

In March 1828, the commission's reports were referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons which adopted most of the recommendations, but it took until 1831 for them to come to fruition. On 9 September, Chief Secretary Edward G. Stanley, responding to a financial motion of Thomas Spring-Rice, the Treasury secretary, announced to Parliament that the sum of £30,000 be voted to enable the lord lieutenant to assist in the education of the people. Outlining the reasons why the Kildare Place Society was no longer the best agency for the public funding of education, the grant was taken from them and paid instead to the newly founded board of education. This board, when constituted, would have representatives of both Catholic and Protestant persuasion.

The following month saw Stanley, in the form of a letter to the Duke of Leinster, outline his plan for a new system of national education. Drawing on recommendations of recent reports, the new system was marked by two overarching principles. Firstly, all denominations could attend these schools 'from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism'.[13] Secondly, secular instruction in numeracy and literacy would be provided on a combined basis while religious education would be carried out separately. It was considered essential to gain the confidence of a broad spectrum of public opinion and the composition of the new board was reflective of this. The leading liberal Protestant, Augustus Frederick Fitzgerald, 2nd Duke of Leinster who was popular and well-regarded on all sides, was asked to preside. The Protestant and Catholic

[11] *Royal Commission on Irish Education 1825. First report with appendix,* (400), H.C. 1825, xii, p. 99.
[12] Ibid., p. 89.; Gillian O'Brien, 'The 1825–6 Commissioners of Irish Education report: background and context' in Garret Fitzgerald, *Irish primary education in the early nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2013), pp 1-43.
[13] Text of Stanley's letter to Duke of Leinster, *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland),* [C 6], H.C. 1870, xxviii, vol. iii, part i, p. 23.

archbishops of Dublin, Richard Whately and Daniel Murray respectively, agreed to serve on the new board. The addition of another Catholic and Protestant and two Presbyterians was intended to give an overall denominational balance.[14] These seven, all nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, and with the official designation of the Commissioners of National Education, met for the first time on 1 December 1831 at their headquarters on Merrion Street, Dublin.[15]

The commissioners were not paid a salary but were allowed expenses. The strategy of appointing unpaid commissioners was regular nineteenth century practice. The thinking was that a board of unpaid but well-regarded members, representative of various sections of the community, might command a higher measure of public confidence than paid officials directly responsible to a government department.[16] The duties of the commissioners were many – they grant-aided the building costs of national schools, giving favourable attention to joint applications from two or more denominations; they formulated rules and regulations and arranged for the provision of school texts; almost the total cost of teachers' salaries was funded and a system of school inspection was initiated. Each school was placed under the aegis of a local manager. For Catholics this was generally the parish priest whilst for the other faiths it was the local minister, rector or landlord. The school manager was entrusted with the day to day oversight of his school with regard to its building and upkeep, the hiring and dismissal of teachers and also with ensuring that the Board's rules and regulations were fulfilled. Thus, the national school system as devised was marked by a high level of central control, while at a local level, managers were vested with considerable authority over their schools and teachers.

The commissioners met weekly and it soon became apparent that the creation of a full-time post was needed to handle matters that arose between meetings. Accordingly, one of the commissioners, Rev. James Carlile, was appointed with the title of Resident Commissioner. This full-time post attracted a salary of £300 and accommodation in the body's head office in Marlborough Street. McDowell states that the position of the

[14] The first Commissioners of National Education, and their confessional affiliation were: Established Church, the Duke of Leinster, Archbishop Whately, Dr Franc Sadlier; Roman Catholics, Archbishop Murray and Anthony Richard Blake; Presbyterians, Rev. J. Carlile, a Scottish clergyman and Robert Holmes, a barrister.

[15] In order to promote a more equitable denominational balance on the National Board, in 1860 a supplemental charter decreed that the number of commissioners be increased to 20, half to be Roman Catholic.

[16] R.B. McDowell, *The Irish administration 1801–1914* (London, 1961), p. 245.

resident commissioner corresponded 'to that of permanent head of a department and he exercised considerable power.'[17] The work of the commissioners was allocated to three sub-committees, with the resident commissioner sitting on all three. All correspondence passed through his hands and with regard to rules and policy matters, he led the way, 'for he was the lone professional among the band of amateurs.'[18]

The advent of the national school system evoked a mixed response from the various denominations. Generally, the Roman Catholic hierarchy responded positively but cautiously towards the system. James Doyle, Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, stated in a letter to his clergy in 1831:

> These terms had long been sought for, by repeated applications to government, and by petitions to parliament, and have at length, with much difficulty, been obtained. They are not perhaps the very best which could be devised, but they are well suited to the especial circumstances of this distracted country.[19]

Given the Catholic Church's weak financial position compared with that of the Established Church, the provision of state-aided education was considered a boon. Accordingly, great numbers of Catholic clergy made application to the new National Board of Education for grants to set up national schools which were, in the main, attended by Catholic pupils.

In time, disagreement arose among a minority of the hierarchy regarding the suitability of national schools for Catholics. The most vociferous objector was Archbishop John MacHale of Tuam who forbade the setting up of such schools in his archdiocese. The ensuing controversy was such that the matter was referred to Rome. The papal response in January 1841 was non-prescriptive, counselling that the matter should be left to the discretion of each individual bishop. The appointment of Dr Paul Cullen as Archbishop of Armagh in 1849 marked a turning point in the attitude of Catholics to the national school system. At the Synod of Thurles in 1850, presided over by Cullen, the non-denominational character of the system was openly condemned and it was decreed that the separate education of Catholic youth was the most desirable option. This was a watershed moment and henceforth, this aim would supersede all other educational concerns.

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[17] Ibid., p. 248.
[18] Akenson, *Ir ed experiment*, p. 141.
[19] CNEI, *Sixth Report for…1839*, [246], H.C. 1840, xxviii, p. 47.

Of all the denominations, Presbyterians were most opposed to the national school system. Their main point of objection was a principle enshrined in one of the commissioners' basic rules which gave clergymen of all faiths the right to enter any given school to impart religious instruction to children of their own faith. In practice this allowed Catholic priests access to schools built with Presbyterian funds. This ran totally contrary to the fundamental beliefs of their members and provoked a vitriolic and sometimes violent response.[20] However, calmer heads engaged with the commissioners and by the 1840s they had negotiated a position which was acceptable to Presbyterians. This involved a modification of the rules with a distinction made between schools that were vested and those which were non-vested.[21] The latter category were schools built at local expense although teacher salaries and book requisites were funded by the commissioners. In short, the managers of such schools, in return for less financial aid, were ceded the right to exclude clergy of any other denomination from their schools. With this obstacle removed, the Presbyterians entered wholeheartedly into the system. Catholics in turn, availed in numbers in the setting up of non-vested schools of their own.

Despite the prominence of Archbishop Whately of Dublin in the establishment and roll-out of the new national system of education, the vast majority of members of the Established Church opposed it on the very grounds that underpinned it – the separation of religion from secular and moral instruction. As the leading agency in the provision of education of long-standing, they believed that religious instruction should not and could not be separated in the daily lives of pupils. Reflecting this disquiet, the Church Education Society came into being in 1839 with the aim of supporting schools where the Bible was central in the curriculum and pupils were provided with a scriptural education. From the outset the Society had the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh and eleven other bishops, as well as influential Protestant gentry. Of more significance, it attracted considerable financial support, reflective of a determination 'never to avail of any system in which the Scriptural instruction of every pupil is not recognised as the fundamental principle of a Christian Education'.[22]

[20] Akenson, *Pre-university ed.*, p. 534.
[21] Vested schools were those whose building costs had been grant aided by the commissioners and vested in trustees. Non-vested schools were built without the aid of the commissioners.
[22] *11th Report of the Church Education Society 1850*, cited in Parkes, *Kildare Place 1811–2010* , p. 38.

In the 1860s the funds of the Church Education Society were diminishing year on year, so much so that even the president of the society, Archbishop Beresford of Armagh, advised his clergy in the diocese of Clogher that, in the event of a parish becoming unable to support its school, it should apply to join the national system. This evoked a bitter response from the Society's members in defence of scriptural education. However, the harsh reality was that the Church of Ireland could no longer sustain running its own voluntary school system without state aid. What sweetened the pill somewhat was that by the 1860s the national system, due to the machinations of the Catholic and Presbyterian interests from within, had evolved into a *de facto* denominational one.

The question of teacher training was another area of much contention and controversy. From the outset it was the aim of the National Board that all teachers should be trained. It was a bold objective which was to prove extremely challenging to fulfil. Initially the commissioners followed the methods practised by the Kildare Place Society in the 1820s which saw the roll-out of District Model Schools. These, it was proposed would be 'under the direction of teachers chosen for superior attainments, and receiving superior remuneration to those charged with the general…schools'.[23] Their aim was to exhibit the best teaching practice to surrounding schools and to train young teachers. It was intended that a model school would be established in every county, but only twenty-six were built. All model schools were under the direct management of the commissioners and administered on a strict non-denominational basis. Religious teaching was entirely omitted from the curriculum and its provision was left to the voluntary efforts of the various denominations.[24] From the outset, however, these model schools evoked the displeasure of the Catholic hierarchy, amounting in time to an outright ban on children attending them. In tandem with the model schools, the commissioners set up a central training establishment for teachers in Merrion Street, which some years later relocated to Marlborough Street. However the Board, relying solely on this one training college and the model schools, was never able to provide a

[23] CNEI, *Second report for…1835*, H.C. 1835 [300] xxxv, p. 6.
[24] Joseph Doyle, 'Model Schools – Model Teachers? The Model Schools and teacher training in nineteenth-century Ireland' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, St. Patrick's College DCU, 2003), p. 92.

sufficient number of trained teachers. In the 1870s only 34 per cent of all teachers had been formally trained, while the number for Catholic schools was lower at 27 per cent.[25]

The 1860s saw political moves to bring fiscal accountability to the increased cost of educational provision as part of demands for efficiency and economy in the public service. Mirroring events in England and Scotland, a royal commission of inquiry into primary education in Ireland was set up in January 1868.[26] Under the chairmanship of Lord Powis, the commission of fourteen members consisted of seven Catholics, five members of the Established Church and two Presbyterians. Their report, which ran to eight volumes, provided a thorough analysis of the national school system since 1831. It produced 129 conclusions and resolutions, many of which, on their later adoption effected considerable changes to the system. Overall dissatisfaction was expressed with the lack of progress in all types of schools. Other areas which attracted criticism were low rates of attendance, unsatisfactory school management, lack of local funding and inadequate teacher training provision.

To remedy the poor levels of attainment and attendance, the report recommended a payment by results system, similar to that introduced in England in 1862. The proposed scheme laid emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy with pupils having at least 100 days attendance, examined annually by an inspector. This system was adopted in 1871 and while it served its utilitarian remit, in time the narrow curriculum rendered sterile the whole education process. To deal with lack of local funding for education, the government introduced the National School (Ireland) Teachers Act in 1875.[27] Under this act, any Board of Poor Law Guardians was allowed to contribute one-third of the results fees payable to teachers in its Union, with the Treasury paying the balance of two-thirds. Unions who did not contribute would only get one-third from the Treasury. Not surprisingly, given the general resistance towards local funding for education, the scheme was unsuccessful. No more than 73 Unions out of a total of 163 contributed at any time and gradually this arrangement ceased completely.

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[25] William Walsh, *Statement of the chief grievances of Irish Catholics in the matter of education. primary, intermediate and university* (Dublin, 1890) p. 99. The author was Archbishop William Walsh of Dublin.
[26] *Royal commission of inquiry into primary education (Ireland)*, [C 6], H.L. 1870, xxviii, vol. 1, part 1, pp 1-2. This inquiry is usually termed the Powis Commission. In England the Newcastle Commission was set up in 1859, reporting in 1861; while the Argyll Commission into Scottish education was instituted in 1864.
[27] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*, p. 318.

The Powis Commission highlighted in particular the unsatisfactory situation regarding teacher training, noting that by 1870 only one-third of national schoolteachers were formally trained. The phasing out of the model schools was recommended and it was advised that denominational teacher training colleges be established to replace them. However, this recommendation was not implemented for some time, resulting in the Catholic hierarchy forging ahead with the establishment of two training colleges – one for males under the Vincentians in Drumcondra in 1875 and another for females under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy in Baggot Street in 1877. Archbishop William Walsh of Dublin was the driving force in this initiative. By 1883, the then Chief Secretary Trevelyan, realising that teacher training provision needed to be regularised, wrote to the Board declaring that the matter was 'no longer one of speculation or expediency, but one of absolute urgency.'[28] Financial provision was made for the newly founded denominational colleges and the following year saw the Church of Ireland bring its teacher training facility in Kildare Place under the auspices of the new scheme. By 1900, there were six denominational training colleges, in addition to the mixed-denominational central training college in Marlborough Street, in receipt of state funding.[29]

The most comprehensive text on the development of the national system remains Donald Akenson's *The Irish Education Experiment: the national system of education in the nineteenth century*, which was published in 1971. Whilst some of this author's conclusions are not beyond criticism, his research and scholarship are undisputed. However, it ends precipitously at the end of the nineteenth century. The appointment of Dr Starkie as Resident Commissioner in 1899 provides the *terminus ad quem* of Akenson's study, with the result that, while he provides the context for the Belmore report, he neither engages with its findings at length nor the curricular or administrative implications of its implementation. There has not been a focused comprehensive research and analysis of primary education in Ireland for the formative period spanning the final years of the Union prior to transitioning to independent statehood. There are, to be sure, numerous articles and theses on such issues as curriculum development, the Gaelic League and the Irish language, the evolution of the Irish National Teachers Organisation, teachers' training, pay and conditions, etc. Yet none properly highlights

[28] Graham Balfour, *The educational systems of Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1903), p. 102.
[29] Judith Harford, 'The emergence of a national policy on teacher education in Ireland' , *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 41:1 (2009), p. 55.

the strength of the reformist impulse that shaped primary education during these formative decades. This thesis seeks to address an extant gap in the historiographical landscape of Irish education based on a full engagement with the evidential record of the Chief Secretary's Office papers, the reports and minutes of the Commissioners of National Education, Starkie's correspondence and diaries, parliamentary debates, teachers' journals and contemporary newspaper accounts.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the national school system catered for the educational needs of almost 800,000 children in 8,500 schools within a *de facto* denominational system. Moreover, despite its manifest numerical success and its agency in the successful increase in literacy rates, issues such as clerical management, the payment by results system, inferior school conditions, the proliferation of small schools, the narrow curriculum, the teaching of Irish and the reorganisation of the inspectorate generated a confluence of challenging circumstances for all stakeholders. This was the scenario presented to Dr William Starkie, academic and classical scholar, who was appointed Resident Commissioner of Education in 1899. This study sets out to chart the fortunes of the national school system from 1899 to 1922, a period which roughly coincides with the tenure of Starkie as the new Resident Commissioner, and the efforts that were made during this time both to modernise and to reform the provision of primary education. It is divided into four parts.

Part One outlines the genesis and push for reform in Irish primary education that accelerated in the 1890s. Initially it was the Belmore Commission, established in 1897, which concluded that the system of national education was in need of fundamental reorganisation. Central to its thrust was that the narrow payment by results didactic method of instruction be replaced with a more child-centred heuristic approach and a new programme of instruction. The appointment of Starkie as Resident Commissioner coincided with this work in progress and he assumed responsibility for its development. A close analysis of the resulting programme will highlight the challenges and tensions which marked its introduction as the various stakeholders, inspectors, managers and especially the teachers came face to face with its implications.

Contemporaneously, there were strong intimations that the British government harboured plans to restructure the administration of Irish education along the lines appertaining in England. As the primary education system in Ireland had evolved *de*

facto into a denominational one, financed by government but clerically managed, the various Churches were in the main generally satisfied with the system as it existed. Others such as Starkie perceived the necessity for structural as well as curricular reforms. He proposed that primary and secondary education be coordinated, while adding significantly that schools be financed by rates and be brought under local control. This agenda was given impetus by the inquiry pursued in 1903 by Frank Dale, an English school inspector tasked with comparing the Irish primary system with that of England. Dale's subsequent report highlighted many shortcomings, which he concluded could be best addressed by the establishment of an education department and local education authorities with the power of striking a local rate to finance them. These developments convinced the Churches, especially the Catholic hierarchy, that an attack on their position of control of management of primary schools was in prospect. This struggle to maintain Church control of education will be outlined, with special reference to the foundation of the Catholic Clerical School Managers Association and the strategic alliance of the Catholic hierarchy with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in furtherance of this aim.

Part Two considers the political influences on Irish primary education during the period. From the National Board's inception to its demise in 1922, it could be said that practically every element of its composition, remit and decision was imbued with a political dimension. The titular head of the Irish administration was the viceroy or lord lieutenant. However, by 1900, the responsibility for Irish affairs rested largely with the chief secretary, who was answerable in parliament for some twenty-nine departments including the Board of National Education. The political influences of the chief secretaries regarding primary education for the period 1900 to 1916 are profiled and evaluated. This era was marked by the concerted efforts of the Irish administration, stoutly supported by Treasury, to reform the Irish education system in a manner that would bring it into line with the administration of education in England; namely an overall education department and local funding for schools. The fortunes of the Irish education system are delineated against the political backdrop of land tenure, the Irish Council Bill and the education provisions of the ill-fated Third Home Rule Bill.

In this section the question of the use of the Irish language in schools is also examined. From its inception the National Board never gave consideration to the inclusion of the ancestral language of the Irish people. In time, the ill-judged policy of teaching Irish

speaking children through the medium of English was modified. The advent of cultural nationalism brought with it a vigorous call for the revival of Irish. The Gaelic League was to the forefront in advocating the use of Irish in all strands of education but particularly in national schools. The role of Resident Commissioner Starkie, the agitation of language revivalists, the relevant parliamentary debates and the ensuing roll-out of a bilingual programme are addressed in Chapter Four.

The 'lean years' referred to in **Part Three** embrace the period 1903–14 when the national education system was starved of funding at a time when the successful implementation of the Revised Programme necessitated substantial investment in school building and equipment. A scandalous situation arose where school building and renovations were starved of funding. In this section, financial provision is examined, particularly the role of the Treasury in using the provision of funding as a bargaining chip to bring Irish education into line with the English system through the payment of local rates. Also included in this section is an examination of the Dill Inquiry of 1913. With the introduction of the Revised Programme in 1900, a new system of pay, increments and promotions for teachers was put in place. A revision of the mode of inspection was also announced. In time, doubts arose about the uniformity of marking by inspectors in school reports, which was crucial to teachers in securing their increments and promotion prospects. This chapter examines teachers' grievances and the inability of the National Board of Education to deal with them. The subsequent inquiry under Sir Samuel Dill turned out in essence to be an examination of Starkie's and his commissioners' stewardship of the national education system.

Part Four, under the heading 'Another inquiry, insurrection and the final days of the National Board', deals with the period from the outbreak of the World War to the foundation of the Free State in February 1922. The first chapter outlines events in Britain and Ireland which provided an opportunity for educational change. In Britain the general movement towards collectivism and post-war reconstruction impelled the government towards a recalibration of and a substantial investment in the educational system there. This resulted in the 1918 Education Act. In Ireland teacher agitation resulted in the setting up of two government inquiries into pay and conditions of primary and secondary teachers – the Killanin and Molony Committees respectively. Arising from the reports, Chief Secretary Macpherson formulated a new education bill for Ireland. An analysis and assessment of the bill gives testimony to the opportunity of

a most transformative nature being presented to Irish education. Once again, there was stout clerical resistance.

The second chapter in this section explores the aftermath of the 1916 Rising, which gravely impacted on the work of the National Board. There was the perception in some influential quarters that teachers and schools were partly to blame for the rebellion and the spirit of rising nationalism. An intensive investigation by the Board, including an evaluation of school history books which might engender disaffection, is detailed. In due course, hostilities broke out against British rule and the consequent societal dislocation impinged greatly on the Board's administration. Relevant extracts from the minutes illustrate the gravity of the deteriorating situation. The very survival of the National Board of Education was threatened, and its abolition followed immediately on the assumption by nationalists of political control in 1922.

At the close of the nineteenth century, the national school system can be regarded as having gained widespread acceptance throughout Ireland, consistent with its utilitarian remit of literacy and numeracy. However, the lofty and radical aspiration, expressed by Stanley in 1831 to provide combined literary and moral, but separate religious instruction, was not realised. The various denominational interests had *ab initio* made clear their misgivings and in time each moulded the system to suit their purpose. Still there was cause for optimism. The winds of change were blowing. Cultural national revivalism brought vibrancy and vigour to everyday life. Conservative ameliorative policies on land tenure and local government were bearing fruit. In education, the head of the National Board was an erudite and decisive appointee, while a new programme of instruction was promoted by one of the foremost Catholic bishops working in tandem with a Trinity College professor. As the new century beckoned, the indications were that the national school system was on the cusp of modernity. Only time would tell if pedagogical considerations would gain pre-eminence over those of religion and politics.

Part One

Forging a plan for the future 1899–1903

Chapter One

A New Departure, 1897–1902

1.1 Introduction

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the system of state-aided primary education in Ireland, established in 1831, seemed in a thriving condition. The payment by results system introduced in 1872–73 had in the main achieved its utilitarian object of raising literacy and numeracy levels. Despite this, there was a general awareness that shortcomings existed in the system and the major area of concern was the school programme. International and national awareness among educational stakeholders now focussed on the qualitative content of the curriculum and the holistic development of the child. In Ireland, it was considered this could best be achieved by the addition of manual and practical instruction to the school curriculum. On the prompting of the National Education Board, the lord lieutenant sanctioned the establishment of the Belmore Commission of 1897–8 to determine how this could best be facilitated in an Irish context. This commission's findings pointed to a fundamental reorientation of the school curriculum giving primacy to a broader, more flexible child-centred programme accompanied by new teaching methodologies.

The implementation of Belmore's report fell to the newly appointed Resident Commissioner William Starkie. His appointment brought a new dynamism to the Education Board. Despite his relative inexperience, in a two-year period Starkie oversaw widespread and fundamental changes with the able assistance of experienced commissioners like Archbishop William Walsh and Professor George Fitzgerald. The publication of the Revised Programme, the recruitment of organisers to train teachers in new subject areas, the reorganisation of the inspectorate and head office staff, as well as a new scheme of salary consolidation for teachers was set in train. Not surprisingly, given the extent of change presented to all the stakeholders in Irish primary education, such a transition proved challenging.

1.2 The Belmore Commission of Inquiry, 1897–99

The census returns of 1901 highlighted the fact that the literacy levels in Ireland of males aged 15 to 24 years had increased from 48.9 to 93.2 per cent in the half century since 1851. The corresponding improvement for females, from 34.8 to 95.2 per cent was

even more impressive.[1] Despite this laudable achievement, and the proven efficacy of the National School system in the provision of basic literacy and numeracy, there were significant misgivings about the suitability of the school programme. The Powis Commission in 1870, with a view to stimulating improved school attendance had recommended a system of payment by results for teachers. This policy was adopted in 1872 and accordingly, pupils with at least 100 days' attendance were examined annually by the Board's inspectors if teachers were to qualify to receive the payment. The obligatory subjects for examination were reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, grammar and geography. Needlework was included for all girls and agriculture for boys attending rural schools. Although a range of additional optional subjects could be offered for examination, the school programme overall was considered no longer fit for purpose 'because it implied that the educational process, the children receiving education, and the teaching providing that education, could all be measured by examinations and governed in terms of money.'[2] A more damning assessment of the payment by results system is provided by Hyland and Milne who concluded that '[it] fostered a narrow approach to the curriculum, both in terms of content and methodology. It encouraged rote-learning and made no allowance for differences between pupils or between schools.'[3]

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, educational thought in Europe and North America was changing. The New Education Movement, inspired by Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Dewey, deprecated the overemphasis on literacy and numeracy and advocated a radical reorientation of school curricula to focus on the child's nature and needs.[4] In tandem, there was a growing awareness that industrial and national advancement could and should be linked with educational reform.

As Ireland was part of the expansive British Empire these external international forces resonated in the Irish educational landscape. Significant figures in Irish education such as P.W. Joyce, Archbishop William Walsh and Arnold Graves were encouraged and

[1] David Fitzpatrick, 'Knowledge, belief and the Irish Revolution: the impact of schooling' in James Kelly and Susan Hegarty (eds), *Schools and Schooling, 1650–2000: new perspectives on the history of education* (Dublin, 2017), p. 115.
[2] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment,* p. 324.
[3] Áine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, *Irish educational documents: volume 1. Selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922* (Dublin, 1987), p. 128.
[4] Thomas Walsh, *Primary education in Ireland, 1897-1990: curriculum and context* (Bern, 2012), p. 29. Henceforth Walsh, *Curriculum and context.*

influenced in their thinking by this new departure.[5] They expressed concern at the defects in the national school programme and its lack of provision for practical and manual instruction. In March 1896, the Board of National Education, at the instigation of Archbishop Walsh, petitioned Lord Lieutenant Earl of Cadogan to receive a deputation on the subject of revising the national school programme.[6] The reply from the lord lieutenant intimated that the education commissioners could incorporate themselves into a committee to perform such a task if they so wished. The political reality for the commissioners was that without vice-regal support their aspirations for educational reform held little prospect for success. Money, as ever, was a key consideration as Lord Chief Baron Palles, himself a commissioner, made clear in a letter to Cadogan in which he stated that owing to 'the stronghold the Treasury held upon the throat of Irish national education' it would be well-nigh impossible for the Board to pursue a programme of educational reform without official and political backing. He explained:

> it should not be imagined that the National Board had control of education in Ireland. No doubt, the public believed they had…but when they came to examine that power they found they had not got it. They were curtailed by a higher power.[7]

This 'higher power' was the Treasury of course.[8] The misgivings of the Board notwithstanding, the lord lieutenant agreed on 27 January 1897 to the setting up of a commission to

> Inquire and Report with a view to determining how far, and in what form, Manual and Practical Instruction should be included in the Education System of Primary Schools under the Board of National Education in Ireland.[9]

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[5] Patrick Weston Joyce, (1872–1914) educationalist, historian and antiquarian; William J. Walsh, (1841–1921) RC Archbishop of Dublin, educationalist, administrator, canon lawyer, nationalist; Arnold Graves (1847–1940) poet, novelist, promoter of technical education and key contributor to Belmore Commission.

[6] *Vice-regal committee of inquiry into primary education (Ireland) 1913: Final report,* [Cd 7235], H.C. 1914, xxviii, p. 5.

[7] Palles to Cadogan cited in Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment,* p. 333.

[8] Ibid. In the same letter, Palles refers to correspondence on seven occasions from the commissioners to the Treasury requesting approval for the introduction of a kindergarten system for Irish schools. All were rejected.

[9] *Commission on manual and practical instruction in primary schools under the board of national education in Ireland: First report of the commissioners*. [C 8383], H.C. 1897, xliii, p. 12. Henceforth Belmore Commission or the Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction (CMPI).

Somerset Richard, Earl Belmore, was appointed as chairman and fourteen members, ten of whom were Commissioners for National Education, were nominated by the lord lieutenant to join him on the commission of inquiry.[10] The work of the commission was notable for its scope, thoroughness and efficiency. It held ninety-three meetings in all. Over the course of fifty-three of these, evidence was taken from 186 persons with an interest in education. These included not only the educational stakeholders – teachers, managers, inspectors and training colleges' representatives – but also those involved in agriculture, industry and commerce. A total of 119 schools were visited in Ireland and in England. Deputations were also sent to observe educational practice in England, Scotland, Germany, Holland, Denmark and Switzerland.[11]

It is generally accepted that the efficiency in bringing to fruition the work of the commission was due, in the main, to the diligence and oversight of Archbishop Walsh, which caused some commentators to dub the undertaking the 'Walsh Commission'.[12] Four interim reports, which contained transcripts of the oral evidence and expert opinion, were quickly followed by a final report published on 25 June 1898. The final report, synthesising the evidence and appendices of the earlier reports, proposed a fundamental departure from a system that heretofore focused mainly on literacy and numeracy.

Sweeping changes both in content and methods of instruction were outlined. The kindergarten system, already in limited use, was to be extended to all schools attended by infants. A wide range of practical subjects was proposed: educational handwork, elementary science, drawing, cookery, domestic science and laundry work, singing, drill and physical exercise. Overall, emphasis was placed on a broader flexible child-centred curriculum. Advisors to assist schools and teachers implement the new subject areas were recommended. The curriculum of the teacher training colleges required alteration to give effect to this new departure. Of particular relevance was the recommendation that the system of payment by results, based on the individual annual examination of

[10] The ten commissioners appointed were Archbishop Plunket, Archbishop Walsh, Chief Baron Palles, C.T. Redington, Judge Shaw, Rev. Henry Evans, Rev. Hamilton Wilson, Professor George Fitzgerald, Stanley Harrington and William Molloy.
[11] Walsh, *Curriculum and context*, p. 33.
[12] Patrick F. O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter: the National School System and inspectors in Ireland 1831–1922* (Galway, 2017) p. 231. Henceforth O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter.*

pupils, should not be applied in the inspection of the new subjects.[13] The Belmore Commission advocated that in the future a teacher's remuneration 'should largely depend on the general evidence of his own zeal and industry, and on the efficacy of his method of teaching, and on his power to arrest and hold the attention of his class.'[14] Herein lay the genesis of the demise of the payment by results system which had been in use since 1872.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Belmore Commission was a formidable task for the National Board, but they set to it without delay. A committee of the 'Whole Board' met over the three days from 17–19 November 1898 'with a view to giving effect as speedily as possible to its [Belmore's] recommendations.'[15] They drew up an *Ad Interim* Report for the lord lieutenant which included a draft of the proposed programme and twenty-two proposals to give effect to its implementation. These included the appointment of organisers and instructors for the new subjects and an estimated costing of the overall project. The lord lieutenant sought additional clarification and a further *Ad Interim* Report was prepared for him by the commissioners. On receipt of his approval, the Board formally adopted the report and findings of the Belmore Commission on 9 February 1899.[16] However, before the National Board could proceed with their plans, the death occurred of the sitting Resident Commissioner Charles T. Redington.

1.3 A new Resident Commissioner, curricular and organisational reform, 1899–1903

Charles T. Redington was Resident Commissioner from 1894 to 1899. He had been a member of the National Board since 1886 and was deemed to be a courteous and affable, if not dynamic, official. A feeling persisted that during his tenure he was content to let matters take their own course and was too heavily reliant on his officials. There were also intimations that in the final years of his stewardship, matters were not running as smoothly as might be expected at head office. One such indication was provided in 1895 when an internal inquiry was pursued by the commissioners into the

[13] Payment by results system: one of the recommendations of the Powis Commission was that a portion of every teacher's salary should derive from an annual examination of their pupils. All children in Irish national schools should be tested annually by the inspector in reading, writing and arithmetic and a fixed sum paid for each pupil who passed in each subject. To be eligible for examination the child needed to have 100 attendances in the year preceding examination. It was expected that this system would help ensure more regular attendance and advance basic literacy and numeracy. The term payment by result is a misnomer as it is generally estimated that it amounted to only a third of a teacher's annual salary.
[14] Belmore Commission, *Final report of the commissioners*, H.C. 1898 [C. 8923] xliv, p. 4.
[15] *Mins. CNEI*, 25 October 1898.
[16] Ibid., 9 February 1899.

conduct and marking of the July examinations for training college students. For the head office staff but particularly the Chiefs of Inspection, 'it was a most damaging encounter, entailing a humiliating revision of [the] marking in a number of papers, and the promotion of a considerable number of candidates who had been unsuccessful.'[17] The whole episode was symptomatic of the general laxity that was seen to prevail in the administration of Tyrone House and suggested a more forceful hand was needed at the tiller of Irish education.[18]

The responsibility of identifying a successor to Redington fell to Lord Lieutenant George Cadogan. The post of resident commissioner was the most prestigious post in Irish education and attracted an emolument of £1,500 per annum.[19] The appointment was the sole prerogative of the lord lieutenant but overtures by prospective candidates could be and were made to Dublin Castle. These ranged from the ridiculous to the inspired. One such communication, in the former category, was received from Robert John Handcock, BA, who was of the opinion that his ancestral lineage and its fealty to the Crown should trump all other considerations in the choice of who filled the most important post in education in the land. He stated:

> I come of a family that have always shewn loyalty to Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, my first cousin being Lord Castlemaine, one of the representative Peers for Ireland in the House of Lords and my uncle (by marriage) being Viscount Charlemont formerly Comptroller to the Vice-Regal Household, and I intend to maintain the reputation of my family and connection, in the matter of loyalty.[20]

The submission of Arnold Graves who was a founder, secretary and organiser of the National Board of the Technical Association of Ireland was more creditable.[21] His evidence to the Belmore Commission supporting the introduction of practical and manual instruction into national schools, citing developments in England, Europe and America, was crucial in shaping its resulting report.[22] The son of a Church of Ireland bishop, Graves appeared to be eminently qualified for the position.

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[17] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, p. 225.
[18] Tyrone House in Marlborough Street was the administrative head office and meeting place for board meetings of the CNEI.
[19] The Resident Commissioner of National Education would equate in today's terms to that of Minister for Education.
[20] NAI, CSO RP 1899/3180, 15 February1899, Robert John Handcock to chief secretary.
[21] Ibid. 1899/3115, 13 February 1899, Arnold Graves to chief secretary.
[22] Belmore Commission, *Third report*, [C 8618], H.C. 1897, xliii, pp. 10–21.

As events transpired, the lord lieutenant cast his net wider and on 15 February 1899, Dr William Joseph Myles Starkie was appointed. Starkie, a Catholic, who came from a well-to-do family, was President of Queen's College, Galway. He had attended Clongowes Wood College and Shrewsbury School in England where he was head-boy. His university studies took him to Cambridge and then, in 1890, to Trinity College Dublin where he was a Fellow and Tutor. Starkie was an eminent and erudite classical scholar who maintained a life-long interest in Greek drama, especially the works of Aristophanes.

Starkie's translation from academia in Galway to the primacy of the Education Office was subsequently portrayed by him as an unexpected happenstance which he accepted reluctantly. In his evidence in 1913 to the Dill Committee he maintained: 'I was informed by the Government that I had been specially selected to undertake a very critical task, although I was not a candidate for the vacant position.'[23] A decade earlier, he informed the Chief Secretary William Wyndham: 'I would ask you to remember that Lord Cadogan removed me, almost against my will from a position as valuable as my present one [in Galway] – a position of literary ease which I valued.'[24]

This is misleading, as Starkie was well aware of the behind-the-scenes manoeuvres that brought him the appointment. This, certainly, is the import of a letter in Starkie's surviving papers dated 12 February 1898 from J.H. Bernard,[25] a member of the National Board and a former academic colleague, who wrote in reply to a letter from Starkie:

> The Commissioner (Res) has £1,500 a year…we can't yet hear whether the appointment is to be given to a R.C. or not. It certainly *ought* in fairness go to one of our church, e.g. George Fitzgerald,[26] who is my 'favourite' for the post. But failing him, as someone as good as him from our side of the house I wd. welcome you.[27]

Another supporter was W.E.H. Lecky, MP for Trinity, who wrote to Starkie a week prior his appointment stating: 'I have every great pleasure in writing to Lord Cadogan

[23] *Appendix second report of Vice-Regal committee of Inquiry into primary education (Ireland) 1913,* [Cd7229], H.C. 1914, xxviii, p. 281. Henceforth *Appendix second report Dill.*
[24] TCD, MS 9209C, 10 March 1903, Starkie to Wyndham.
[25] Rev. John H. Bernard (1860–1927), elected Fellow TCD 1884, appointed Commissioner of National Education in 1897, later Provost TCD and Archbishop of Dublin.
[26] George Fitzgerald (1851–1901) was a scientist and professor at TCD. He was also a National Education Commissioner and prominent advocate for curriculum change at the Belmore Commission.
[27] TCD, MS 9209, no.19, 12 February 1899, Bernard to Starkie.

ab[ou]t your candidature. I shall be very glad if it proves to be successful.'[28] Clearly if Starkie did not openly canvass for the post, he had influential advocates. Whatever his motivation later in disclaiming his interest in the position, he had no hesitancy in admitting he had scant knowledge of the primary education system prior to his appointment. In his evidence to the Dill Committee in 1913 he observed: 'I had not hitherto been concerned with primary education…The fact was I knew little about the Education Office until I entered it as its head.'[29] Such a perceived deficit did not dent the confidence Lord Cadogan placed in him, as he made clear in his letter to Starkie:

> I need hardly say that I have not been unmindful of the inconvenience which will be entailed upon you, and upon the Queen's College, Galway…so soon after your assumption to its presidency. I am, however, obliged in the selection of gentlemen to fill these very important posts, to be guided in my opinions on other grounds than those of inconvenience. And in this case I have much confidence that your acceptance of the offer now made to you will be in the highest degree advantageous to the public service. It may interest you to know that I am not taking this course at the suggestion of *anyone*. Having made up my mind to offer the post to you, I have spoken to 2 or 3 friends, in whose judgement & knowledge I have the utmost confidence, and I am glad to find that in their opinion your appointment would receive the concurrence of those generally whose authority in these matters cannot be questioned. I feel therefore justified in my selection.[30]

It is helpful to consider why Starkie was selected by Cadogan and why he professed such confidence in him. *The Irish Times* reflected the general surprise at his appointment:

> It will be seen from the announcement which we make here today that the conjecture of many as to the vacant place of Resident Commissioner…were much astray. None of the names freely mentioned indicated by anticipation the choice that had been made.[31]

Starkie, by his own admission, had no experience of the primary education system. All his schooling in Ireland and in England had been private and latterly each of his

[28] Ibid., no.349, 13 February 1899, Lecky to Starkie.
[29] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 281.
[30] TCD, Denis Johnson Papers, MS 10066/289/15, cited in Christine O'Doherty 'William Joseph Myles Starkie (1860–1920) – the last resident commissioner of national education in Ireland' (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Limerick, 1997), p. 69.
[31] *IT*, 18 February 1899.

children received home tuition. Of central importance was Starkie's background. He was the son of William Robert Starkie, a resident magistrate. Starkie's brother Robert also progressed to the post of resident magistrate. Thus, by class, association and education, he was one of those identified as a 'Castle Catholic', generally sympathetically disposed to the remit of the Crown. It was not unusual for men of the background and academic ability of Starkie to attain high office. McDowell in his seminal study of the Irish administration of that period identifies no less than forty-eight elite officials in the civil service who had not followed the conventional path of rising through the ranks, but rather had been shown preference due to academic, technical or professional potential.[32] Another factor in Starkie's favour was his age and fitness – just 39 years, a daily swimmer and a sailing enthusiast. Such a man would surely bring energy, vision and intellectual acumen to the role. The fact that Rev. J.H. Bernard, a former academic colleague of Starkie's at TCD, was chaplain to the lord lieutenant may also have helped. Bernard was on record as stating his choice in the event of the position going to a Protestant would be Professor George Fitzgerald. Failing that, his Catholic of choice was Starkie, the successful aspirant.

On entering office in Tyrone House in February 1899, Starkie soon realised the magnitude of the task that lay ahead. Apart from the challenge of formulating and implementing a new school programme, other legacy issues had built up in the Education Office and in the school inspectorate. At his first meeting with Government officials he recalled:

> I was informed that I had been specially selected to undertake a very critical task…I was warned that they had heard on the highest authority that the Education Office was an Augean Stable;[33] the system of education was antiquated; some of the higher officials were incompetent and in the absence of a strong supervising hand things were in a very bad way…The Government told me they could not conceal from me that they were asking me to fill what was perhaps the most difficult position in their gift.[34]

Within a month of Starkie taking office, Archbishop Walsh proposed at a meeting of the Board on 28 March that a sub-committee consisting of the Resident Commissioner and

[32] R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Administration 1801–1914* (London,1964), pp 47–51.
[33] According to Greek legend, Augeas the King of Elis, possessed a herd of 3,000 oxen, whose stalls remained uncleansed for 30 years. Heracles undertook the task and completed it in one day by diverting a river.
[34] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 281.

George Fitzgerald be set up 'to prepare and submit a working scheme for the consideration of the Committee of the Whole Board on Manual and Practical Instruction.'[35] Accordingly in July 1899, Starkie and Fitzgerald submitted their report to the Board, which duly approved it, and a copy was sent to the lord lieutenant. In essence it was a distillation of the preliminary Belmore report of November 1898. What was different was that it identified difficulties in the roll-out of the programme to diverse types of schools, the organisation of centres for the training of teachers and the recommendation that 'for the first year or so it will be necessary to proceed tentatively.'[36] Of special note was the intimation that a change to the system of payments to teachers was also envisaged:

> The change in the system of payments to Teachers…is at present under consideration, and detailed plans are being worked out by officials of the Board. The matter is necessarily one of great complexity, and will require prolonged as well as careful consideration, before any definite scheme is finally decided upon.[37]

Despite this, the report concluded, rather optimistically, that 'as contemplated by the Board, it [the new payments structure] is not a matter that will involve any increase in expenditure.' In October the Board received a letter from Dublin Castle requesting that when submitting their estimates for the next year, the commissioners should supply any further information or particulars they might be in a position to give. Normally these estimates would be submitted in January for the new financial year in April. This letter suggested that the Government was anxious for early clarity on the financial implications of implementing the new programme.

At the Board meeting on 14 November 1899, Starkie tabled what he termed the 'Resident Commissioner's Memorandum'. This document he described rather innocuously as a scheme 'for the better carrying out of the work of the Dept.'[38] The background to this document can be traced to a proposal by Archbishop Walsh on 28 March that a sub-committee consisting of the Resident Commissioner and Professor Fitzgerald be formed 'to submit a working scheme…on Manual and Practical

[35] *Mins. CNEI*, 28 March 1899.
[36] Ibid., 18 July 1899.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 14 November 1899.

Instruction'.[39] Wittingly or unwittingly, the commissioners as an incorporated board had placed the future direction of primary education in the hands of two talented but relatively inexperienced men.

The resulting memorandum heralded more far-reaching and fundamental changes than were ever proposed or envisaged by the Belmore Commission. Not alone was a new school programme and organisation outlined but also included was a new system of payments for teachers, a radical reorganisation of the inspectorate and the system of inspection as well as administrative changes in the Education Office in Tyrone House. The most far-reaching aspect was that the payment by results system 'be discontinued and that no further examination of schools for 'Results' be held after 31 March, 1900.'[40] The new scheme outlined revised guidelines for the grading and promotion of teachers. Teachers would now be allocated a fixed salary according to the grade they were placed in: first, second or third grade; the first grade being further split into two divisions. To add further complexity, promotion to a higher grade depended on a number of variables such as size of school, training, seniority, good service and efficiency as evidenced in inspectors' reports.

Another innovation was the introduction of what came to be known as 'Standard Numbers' which placed great restrictions on teacher promotion. Basically, the number of teachers in Second Grade and the two divisions in First Grade was fixed. In essence this meant that once the allotted number of teachers in a grade was reached, no further promotion to that grade could occur until there was a death, resignation or retirement. The implications of this measure were in time to prove very contentious. However, what may have been a source of comfort for teachers was the reassurance that overall no teacher would be financially worse off by the introduction of the Revised Programme and the new payment structure:

> No Teacher in any Grade on the 1st April, 1900 will receive a fixed salary of less amount than his or her average income from the State during the three years ending on 31st December 1899, on the 31st March 1900 … or less than such Teacher's actual salary for the year ending on either of the dates mentioned.[41]

[39] Ibid., 28 March 1899.
[40] Ibid., 14 November 1899.
[41] Ibid.

All of the above decisions were arrived at within the confidential confines of the board room at Tyrone House. Little by way of detail was divulged as negotiations with government and Treasury were set in train.

The proposals contained in the memorandum were duly approved by the Board on 14 November 1899 and it was further ordered that application be made to the Treasury 'for sanction to the adoption of same, as constituting an improved system of regulation for the work of the department'.[42] Interestingly, Professor Fitzgerald wrote to Starkie on 23 of the same month:

> I saw A.J. Balfour in London, and told him of your *coup d'état*. He was very much pleased, and evidently wished he could work the House of Commons as well. He approved highly of what I told him of the changes proposed, and was surprised that the Treasury consented, [un]til I told him the *quid pro quo*.[43]

This *quid pro quo* was the claim by Starkie that by the reorganisation of head office administration and the inspectorate, taken together with the abolition of the results system, savings could be made. Hyland asserts:

> Dr Starkie believed at this point that any increases resulting from his proposals would be offset by the savings effected in administration. However, the savings effected…were not as great as Dr Starkie anticipated and…in subsequent years the Treasury put pressure on the Board to reduce these costs.[44]

Having prevailed at the Board, Starkie was eager to explain to teachers and public what was envisaged in the Revised Programme. The annual report of the Commissioners for National Education was the official conduit through which detailed information on all aspects of the primary system was provided, from year to year. However, these reports needed prior vice-regal approval, which frequently delayed publication by months and sometimes years. It was also a moot point about the extent of their readership outside the realm of officialdom. In any event, it was without precedent that the Resident Commissioner, as titular head of the Education Board, should give a speech relating to his department's policy and plans. This did not deter Starkie. An invitation to speak at

[42] Ibid.
[43] TCD, MS 9209, no.175, 23 November1899, George Fitzgerald to Starkie.
[44] Áine Hyland, 'Educational innovation – a case history: an analysis of events leading up to and following the introduction of the Revised Programme of 1900 for national schools in Ireland' (Unpublished MEd thesis, TCD, 1975), p. 33.

the prize giving ceremony at the Albert Model Farm in Glasnevin on 20 February 1900 provided him with a platform from which to air his views:

> I seized the only opportunity I had at Glasnevin, in February, to put my views before the country, and I tried to show, in my short address that the whole National Board, as well as myself sympathised with the legitimate demands of the country.[45]

Such school farms as the one at Glasnevin, were soon to be transferred to the recently formed Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.[46] This department, he noted in his speech, was closely linked to local organisation and representation. The national school system by contrast suffered from over centralisation:

> From the centre in Dublin, the National Board, disregarding all differences of race and creed and local prejudices, had imposed on all parts of the country a rigid programme, perhaps ideally unsatisfactory, but in many cases ludicrously ill-adapted to the needs of the backward districts of Ireland and to the capabilities of the pupils.[47]

He was highly critical of the payment by results system which he felt had outlived its usefulness. The rigidity of the programme and the mechanical repetition rendered 'a half a million children in each year the drudges of the teachers, the teachers the drudges of the inspectors, and the inspectors the drudges of the office'.[48] There was another way, he suggested. Managers and teachers could adopt a programme suitable to local circumstances and needs. What was taught could match the capacities of the pupils. The teachers in their methodology of instruction would be 'absolutely unfettered'. He elaborated:

> Freedom and elasticity are vital to good teaching and it is worthwhile sacrificing a great deal of the accuracy exacted by an examination test in exchange for the alertness of intellect, the spirit of initiative and independence, the slow but continuous

[45] TCD, MS ll 1, no. 19, W.J.M. Starkie, *Confidential evidence to the Dill Commission.* Unpublished, p. 10. Henceforth Starkie *Confidential evidence to Dill.*
[46] The Recess Committee was an ad-hoc cross-party grouping of parliamentarians and prominent individuals who met between January and August 1896. Under the chairmanship of Sir Horace Plunkett, its function was to consider ways in which Ireland's social and economic future might be best secured. As a result, the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act 1899 was passed which brought into being the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction. Under its remit the ownership of existing model farms schools and school farms under the aegis of the Board of Education was transferred to the new department now dubbed DATI.
[47] TCD, MS 9210 a/5: *Address by W.J.M. Starkie, Esq, M.A., Litt.D., Resident Commissioner of National Education, delivered on the occasion of the distribution of prizes at the Albert Model Farm, Glasnevin on 19th February,1900.*
[48] Ibid.

> development which a less rigid training fosters. As is well known, the results system has no defenders today, and I am glad to say that among the Commissioners it has not one. It is an open secret its days are numbered…Another open secret is the fact that the Government have sanctioned a large scheme for carrying out the proposals contained in the report of the Commission on Manual Instruction. It will be our aim to make provision for the introduction in some measure of Manual Training into all Irish Schools and we enter a sanguine hope that at no distant epoch the new and less bookish methods of instruction will remove the existing obstacles to the spread of industrial enterprise.[49]

The overall reaction in the public press to Starkie's speech was enthusiastic, with the *Freeman's Journal* remarking:

> That there should be a true educationalist discovered at the head of Tyrone House will surprise the Irish public; that he should boldly avow his opinion there will surprise the more; that he may have the courage and the opportunity to give effect to them will be their hope…Dr. Starkie has made an excellent beginning. Let us trust that he will retain his conviction.[50]

The *Church of Ireland Gazette* was more measured in its response. It welcomed the proposed new system as 'honestly and carefully thought out by the commissioners themselves and adapted to the needs of Ireland…[and] a forward step in primary education.'[51] However, the editor drew attention to a defect not alluded to by Starkie in his address. This, he stated, was the complete failure of primary schools to create a spirit of loyalty to the Queen and Empire among their pupils. He continued:

> This, we believe, to be largely due to the fact that history is untaught in our primary schools, and that thus the Irish peasant grows up without the remotest idea of the past life of his own country, and consequently without any due appreciation of the blessings which flow from English rule and constitutional Government. That this is due to the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland goes without saying. But are they always to be allowed to lead England by the nose? If our primary schools are supported by Imperial funds, should they not be made to serve Imperial purposes?[52]

[49] Ibid.
[50] *FJ*, 20 February 1900.
[51] *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 23 February 1900.
[52] Ibid.

Starkie's fellow commissioners were also positive in their approach, particularly Archbishop Walsh. In March 1900, in the course of a lengthy interview with the *Freeman's Journal*, he concurred with 'Dr. Starkie's condemnation of the cast-iron programme and extreme centralisation that kills all local initiative and distinction.'[53] He was also critical of the payment by results system in schools, which, he described as a 'deadly incubus' which was 'simply trampling out whatever vestige of educational life is still to be found in them.' He anticipated a new and liberating role for the inspectorate, removing them from mechanical drudgery, to focus on their real task – 'that of inspecting methods, directing the improvements, and generally helping the work of the school, instead of merely making up inventories of answers after the fashion of a score at a cricket match.'[54] Mirroring the sentiments of Starkie, Walsh expressed the necessity for flexibility in the curriculum taking into account local circumstances and requirements.

Within days of Walsh's interview, the INTO issued its first public statement on the Revised Programme. This took the form of a resolution passed by its Central Executive Committee (CEC) approving 'the able speech of Dr. Starkie outlining the principles of the proposed new Educational Scheme' which they declared would be warmly welcomed by all Irish national teachers. However, they were at pains to point out the importance of consultation with them prior to the introduction of the new programme. They stressed:

> We earnestly hope that the new system shall be one suitable to the particular requirements of our country, and we also hold that the views of experienced and representative teachers should be duly taken and considered before the new system is finally adopted.[55]

Individual school managers also voiced concern in the press. Typical of such was a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* from Canon McCartan of Donaghmore, Co. Tyrone, who suggested:

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[53] *FJ*, 1 March 1900.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 15 March 1900. In 1897, representatives from the INTO made significant contributions in evidence to the Belmore Commission and it was not unreasonable to anticipate consultation with them in the formulation of a programme to bring its conclusions into effect. Belmore Commission, *Third Report*, p. iv – Terence Clarke, John Coffey, Jeremiah Golden, Denis Holland and John Nealon, all former or serving teachers gave evidence between 29 April and 31 July 1897.

> It would be conducive to the success of the recommendations of the Manual and Practical Instruction Commission if the intended *modus operandi* would be submitted, in the first instance, for the consideration of the school managers, who could then confer with skilful and experienced teachers…[Managers] have a right to be consulted as to the feasibility of carrying out some of the details of a system of which, up to the present, they know nothing.[56]

Significant also was the observation in early April, by the President of the INTO James Hegarty at its Annual Congress in Derry, that

> a request for the presence of six managers of schools and as many teachers to aid the deliberations of the Board before their promulgation of an entirely new system has not been acceded [to] so far. If the alterations are not in the direction of absence of mistrust and considerable liberty to the teacher the latest change may be worse than the 'deadly incubus' which it is intended to supplant.[57]

It was eminently clear that both teachers and managers anticipated their inclusion in a process of consultation in the formulation of the new scheme. It must be borne in mind that despite the public discourse on aspects of the proposed programme, the details and specifics were never revealed by Starkie or Walsh. Speculation was rife, which caused Starkie to write to the chief secretary on 1 May to inform him of progress:

> The new scheme of National Education has already been promulgated in a preliminary circular (March 1900) addressed to all Managers of National Schools. Managers have been informed that the details of the new scheme will be communicated when the Rules in connexion [sic] with the new system of payments have been finally approved by the Irish Government and the Lords of His majesty's Treasury.[58]

In fact, this circular marked 'Immediate and Important' was in no way specific; it merely confirmed matters already in the public domain, such as the discontinuance of results fees and described the revised scales of pay as 'not yet finally settled'. With regard to the revised curriculum, it blandly promised that 'the Programme of instruction in the schools will be simplified and a detailed Syllabus of its provisions will be issued as soon as possible'.[59] This lack of clarity led to a spate of parliamentary questions

[56] *FJ*, 21 March 1900.
[57] Ibid., 18 April 1900.
[58] NAI, CSO RP 1900/7961, 1 May 1900, Starkie to Chief Secretary.
[59] Ibid; *Preliminary circular to managers*, March 1900, Office of National Education.

centred mainly on the issue of teachers' pay. By now it was clear that the delay was due to ongoing negotiations between the commissioners, government and Treasury. In late May, the Board briefed the chief secretary in preparation for parliamentary questions as follows:

> The matter is one of great complexity. The commissioners are considering how the payments are to be made and will shortly make an announcement on the subject.[60]

Meanwhile, Starkie took strong measures to deal with the malaise he believed had taken a grip in Tyrone House, the headquarters of the National Board. The inspectorate and its role were drastically overhauled. The two chiefs of inspection were given a new title; their new designation was 'chief inspectors'. By custom, the chiefs of inspection were promoted, by dint of seniority, to head office, to oversee the system of teachers' payments, reports and sanctions, with negative consequences. Starkie scathingly observed:

> The chiefs never visited the schools and soon lost touch with them, so that the Board had no confidence that their views corresponded with the actual circumstances of the schools. They exercised no immediate supervision over the inspectors, who worked in complete isolation.[61]

The newly renamed chief inspectors were tasked instead with the detailed supervision of schools and training colleges. The inspectorial districts, which numbered sixty, were restructured into twenty-two circuits, in each of which was based one senior and two junior inspectors. The entire inspectorate was reduced in number from eighty-six to sixty-four as a result. According to Starkie's writ, inspectors would inspect and the office staff would administer. Inevitably tensions arose in the office. According to O'Donovan, the Board's *modus operandi* of introducing change to the inspectorate was 'to sketch out a plan independently and secretly, obtain Treasury approval, and present it as an imperative backed by the government.'[62] Not surprisingly, the chief inspectors, who perceived their revised remit as demotion, were incensed. Both of them, Alfred Purser and Edmund Downing, were foremost in Starkie's thinking when in his evidence before the Dill Committee in 1913, he recalled:

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[60] Ibid., CSO RP 1900/9562, 21 May 1900, Statement from Office of National Education to Chief Secretary.
[61] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 2.
[62] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, p. 252.

> In 1900, when 'the Resident Commissioner's Memorandum' was handed by me to the chief inspectors, they showed such open hostility to the Board's proposals and such an insubordinate spirit to myself that they were suspended from their function by the Board. Having subsequently apologised they were restored.[63]

The six head inspectors, now known as senior inspectors, were joined by sixteen new recruits bringing their number up to the required twenty-two. The six aforementioned inspectors had their salaries reduced and their status diminished. In vain, the head inspectors wrote to the Board setting out their objections in cogent fashion and requesting permission to state their case in person before the lord lieutenant. Their request was denied. Resolute in pursuit of their objectives, Starkie and the Board won the day but it did not bode well with so much change envisaged in the future.

Similarly, despite the overtures by teachers and managers for consultation, no response was forthcoming from the Board. Most commentators suggest that Starkie felt no need to confer with those tasked with the implementation of his plans, as he had informed himself of their views from the evidence they had given to the Belmore Commission some years before. In any event, the New Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education (Ireland) were readied without any formal consultation and published as a Parliamentary Paper on 13 July 1900 and reported in the press the following day.[64]

Finally, the speculation came to an end and full details were given on teachers' pay, grades and promotion. Also addressed were the issues of school inspection, responsibilities of managers and a brief outline provided of the proposed revised curriculum.[65] Initially the code received a broad welcome, but the devil was in the detail and for teachers, the changes to salary were not to their liking. Teachers were paid on a quarterly basis and the new pay scales were retroactive from 1 April. Accordingly, the first money orders under the new salary scheme, for the period April to June, were dispensed by managers to teachers in early July. That this happened to coincide with the publication of the New Rules and Regulations was unfortunate. Widespread dissatisfaction ensued among the teachers on receipt of their pay. T.J. O'Connell of the INTO recollected:

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[63] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 4.
[64] *FJ*, 14 July 1900.
[65] *Irish Daily Independent*, 14 July 1900.

> When the teachers saw among other things, that grading of schools was to take the place of classification of teachers, that the rules were to be retrospective and that at one fell stroke the classification of almost half of the teachers of Ireland, won by study and efficiency, was to be swept away, their consternation may be imagined.[66]

The educational journals, in particular, roundly rejected the new scheme of payments and grades. Requests from the INTO to meet with the Resident Commissioner on the matter were rebuffed. Undaunted, the organisation sought a meeting with the chief secretary to air their grievances. On 18 July, an INTO deputation accompanied by MPs John Redmond and Patrick O'Brien of the IPP, met with Balfour in the House of Commons. They urged the chief secretary to seek 'the modification of several of the rules, particularly those which would abolish the classification of teachers and would have the effect of degrading a very large number of teachers.' Balfour indicated he would communicate with the commissioners 'with a view to ensuring that the public recognition of existing classes [of teachers] would be conceded.'[67] The meeting was hardly a game-changer but it highlighted to the public the level of discontent among teachers with regard to the new salary scheme.

From the outset, Starkie intimated to the Treasury that the new programme could be introduced without a significant increase in government funding. Many years later he confessed: 'We had to gild the pill in order to make it attractive to the Treasury.'[68] It was well-nigh impossible to envisage the successful introduction of a new curriculum without added expenditure on teacher in-service training, equipment and the upgrading of school buildings. Some minor economies were secured by the reduction in the number of inspectors and over an extended period the abolition of the payment by results system brought savings in time and labour at head office.

Although the Revised Programme was not yet published formally, in-service courses to prepare teachers for the implementation of the new programme commenced. On 31 August, on a visit to one of these courses, organised by A.W. Bevis, Starkie used the occasion to deliver a speech.[69] Ostensibly disappointed by criticism from some teachers

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[66] T.J. O'Connell, *100 years of progress – the story of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation 1868–1968* (Dublin, 1968), p. 153. Henceforth O'Connell, *100 years.*
[67] *Irish Daily Independent*, 14 July 1900.
[68] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 420.
[69] Bevis was the head organiser appointed to oversee the introduction of 'hand and eye training' and drawing in the revised school programme. In-service courses for teachers commenced in July 1900.

and journalists of the proposed Revised Programme and also the revised rules and regulations, he explained that it was originally the intention of the Board to implement gradually their plans over a period of a year. However, they 'were compelled by the force of events to give to the public certain portions of our scheme before the whole was ready.'[70] He defended his position and that of his fellow commissioners, by claiming:

> This distinguished body of men, who devote, without remuneration, their valuable time to raising the standard of education in this country, seem to be a fair mark at which every ignoramus who is pleased to dub himself an educationalist might bear the blunt shaft of his satire or of his malice.

Starkie then proceeded to list a series of newspaper quotes which exemplified such unfair bias; these included the following:

> 'An attempt has been made to drag Irish education into a position of degradation and uselessness.'
> 'The results system was bad; what is about to be substituted for it is worse.'
> 'The more we examine the latest fad of the Education Office the more we dislike it.'
> 'This aristocratic body would not stoop to accept the advice of either managers or teachers, and the result is the production of an education scheme some of whose provisions are most absurdly nonsensical while others are directed towards the degradation and humiliation of the teachers.'[71]

Starkie did not take kindly to these criticisms which, he stated, 'were mainly directed against the extracts' of the new rules and regulations published in July, namely the pay and promotion of teachers. The main focus of his address concentrated on these latter issues, which by force of argument he sought to explain and justify. In its editorial the following day, the *Freeman's Journal* remarked on the Resident Commissioner's stance:

> We question, however, whether he [Starkie] does not exaggerate the importance and the representative character of the criticisms, and in doing so reflect unjustly upon the public interested in educational progress in Ireland. The extravagant denunciations that he quotes are in no sense typical of any considerable body of public opinion.[72]

[70] *FJ,* 1 September 1920.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

The writer had a point. Starkie did appear to 'protest too much'. The exercise had the semblance of a warm-up preparatory speech for the formal launch of the Revised Programme, while also addressing existing and potential criticism. As matters transpired, within a few days of Starkie's speech, the Revised Programme of instruction for national schools was revealed.

1.4 The publication of the Revised Programme

A circular entitled 'Notes, Hints and Observations for the Information of Managers and Teachers', which provided details of the Revised Programme, was issued by the Board on 6 September 1900. It is generally agreed that Starkie was the primary authorial voice of the programme, with Walsh and Fitzgerald collaborating in an advisory capacity. Board Secretary Peter E. Lemass recalled:

> It was Dr. Starkie who had charge of the programme…It was revised by experts…I think [the teaching of] Cookery was based on the English and Scotch programmes, modified to suit our schools. Mr. Goodman was our Inspector of Music and Most Rev. Dr. Walsh is a great musician, and he went all through the music programme himself, and Mr. Goodman prepared the Tonic Solfa portion. Then the elementary science…was revised by Mr. Heller, and he reconstructed it, and Mr. Bevis revised the hand and eye portion. Professor FitzGerald went over it, and some of the changes in the Elementary Science were [his]…It was really a programme of experts.[73]

He further stated that a draft copy was widely circulated. Copies were sent to the heads of the training colleges, the chief inspectors, the twenty-two senior inspectors, as well as prominent educationalists such as P.W. Joyce and Sir Joshua Fitch who declared it 'the best programme he had ever seen.'[74]

From the outset, the commissioners stressed that the Revised Programme was issued

> not as an exposition of their precise requirements as regards each subject and each Class or Standard, but rather as an

[73] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 278. P.E. Lemass was one of the most experienced and competent officials in head office. He had been a member of staff since 1870 and progressed through the ranks to become private secretary to successive resident commissioners, Keenan, Redington and Starkie. He was appointed board secretary in December 1900. Tonic solfa is a way of teaching and learning music. This method uses note names for a scale which are Do, Re. Mi, Fa…

[74] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 278. Alfred Purser, one of the chief inspectors, claimed he was never consulted on the programme. Sir Joshua Fitch was a retired English schools inspector and respected author on educational issues.

> indication of their general view as to how the curriculum should be pursued in National Schools.[75]

It was also indicated that in the initial stages it was not expected of managers and teachers to adopt the programme in its entirety. The watchword of the new system was flexibility, both in planning, class organisation and teaching. Of special note, and an important one in view of the fact that the majority of schools had less than 60 pupils on their rolls, was that class groups (or standards) could now be combined for collective instruction in one subject. School organisation was rationalised by the arrangement of the pupils into six standards after infants and approximate ages were defined for each standard. A sample syllabus was provided outlining a full year's work for each of the standards in every subject. Managers and teachers could take account of local circumstances and tailor the programme according to the needs of their schools.

Under the new rules, English and arithmetic were compulsory. The Revised Programme listed five additional subject areas: kindergarten methods and manual instruction; drawing; object lessons and elementary science; singing; school discipline and physical drill. These subjects were also deemed compulsory in schools where teachers held certificates of competency. Cookery and laundry work was compulsory in girls' schools if there were competent teachers and suitable equipment, as was needlework in all schools having female teachers or work mistresses. Surprisingly, geography and history were not identified as specific or compulsory subject areas, but teachers were expected to convey a sufficient knowledge of these branches, by the alternative use of literary, geographical and historical reading books.

The Revised Programme of Instruction of 1900 was an ambitious and transformative document. It adopted not only all of the changes envisaged by the Belmore Commission but significantly others were added. The combining of classes had not been suggested and neither had the concept of flexibility and local considerations in curricular planning. The replacement of the didactic mode of instruction by a more heuristic one had not been recommended either.

The programme was generally well received. The *Cork Constitution* declared

> The Revised Programme … has our warm approval, and while it is not entirely free from faults, it bears the imprint of having

[75] CNEI, *Appendix to the sixty-seventh report…1900, section II*, [Cd 954], H.C. 1902, Revised Programme of Instruction in National schools, p. 66.

> been drawn up with great care and wisdom, and an earnest and conscientious desire to meet the new conditions set up by the great changes, we might almost say revolution.[76]

Edmund Downing, one of the chief inspectors, observed:

> That the great majority of managers and teachers…welcome both the Revised Programme and the new system of inspection heartily, and believe that they will render the instruction given in our schools more healthy and less wanting in intelligence, utility and attractiveness.[77]

In practice and not unsurprisingly, it was found that older teachers experienced greater difficulty in coping with the change from the old system to the new. One inspector, Dr J.B. Skeffington based in Waterford, noted:

> Some of the older teachers, however, find it hard to keep pace with the new learning; and it is easy to see that their information is superficial, and that they are only capable of following in a fixed groove, from want of that mastery of principles and grasp of methods, which can only accrue from sound study, long training, or bright talents.[78]

Significantly, William Mayhowe Heller, who was the Organiser of Elementary Science, observed that:

> An attitude of mind seems to have been created in the pupils that makes them almost resent being asked to think out the answer to a question themselves. They are so used to receiving all their information from the teacher that it is very difficult indeed to get them to acquire for themselves the most ordinary and obvious information.[79]

The reaction of the teachers to the introduction and roll-out of the new programme was also generally positive and energetic. In their submissions to the Annual Reports of the CNEI, the inspectors invariably concluded that 'the teachers are discharging their duties on the whole with fair efficiency and have shown a praiseworthy desire to carry out the provisions of the New Programme.'[80] Inspector Samuel E. Stronge in Dublin reported:

> The teachers have not hesitated as to their duty. They have exerted themselves loyally in introducing the New

[76] *Cork Constitution,* 7 September 1900.
[77] CNEI, *Appendix to sixty-seventh report…1900, section I*, p. 14.
[78] Ibid., *Appendix to sixty-ninth report…1902, section I*, [Cd 1890], H.C. 1904, xx, p. 31.
[79] Ibid., *Appendix to sixty-eighth report…1901, section I*, [Cd 997], H.C. 1902, xxx, p. 158.
[80] Ibid., *Appendix to sixty-seventh report…1900, section I*, p. 38.

> Programme…Indeed, the anxiety of some of them with regard [to it] is almost feverish. It is this anxiety that is the best guarantee of the success of the New Programme, and the teachers deserve every credit for their courage and promptness in entering at once upon the new path.[81]

E.P. Dewar, an inspector in Sligo, concurred: 'The teachers are earnest, energetic, and painstaking, and attend to their schools with commendable fidelity'; while another, a Mr Smith, observed that 'the teachers on the whole discharge their duties with conscientious care and satisfactory application.'[82]

As described earlier, the INTO welcomed 'with extreme satisfaction' Starkie's Glasnevin speech in February 1900, while at the same time cautioning that 'the views of experienced and representative teachers should be duly taken and considered before the new system is finally adopted.'[83] These calls for consultation went unheeded. Despite this rebuff, in its annual report to the INTO Congress in April 1901, the executive, while listing some flaws and failings, conceded that 'the system was drawn on the right and proper educational lines…and also encouraged and fostered self-reliance.'[84]

With a view to facilitating the introduction of the Revised Programme, the Board decided to appoint a group of experts who would train teachers in the new subject areas to be taught and, in the case of singing, drawing and needlework, to improve existing practice. These instructors, now termed organisers, many of whom were recruited from England, were initially appointed for a five-year term. The organisers set about their task arranging hundreds of short courses nationwide. These were held during holiday periods, evenings and at weekends and 'teachers responded extremely well to the opportunities offered and were enthusiastic in their attendance and participation in the new courses.'[85]

The large attendance of teachers at the various in-service training courses was indicative of their interest in and commitment to the new programme. The course organisers frequently visited schools to provide practical demonstrations in teaching methods. Inspectors also availed themselves of the expertise of these organisers and were released

[81] Ibid., p. 8.
[82] Ibid., pp 9, 12.
[83] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 968.
[84] Ibid.
[85] John Coolahan and Patrick F. O'Donovan, *A history of Ireland's School Inspectorate, 1831–2008* (Dublin, 2009), p. 65.

Table 1

Number of teachers who attended training courses 1900–4

Subject Area	Teachers
Singing	6,400
Needlework	4,500
Cookery & Laundry	3,548
Manual Instruction Part I	5,260
Manual Instruction Part II	2,200
Elementary Science Part I	4,100
Elementary Science Part II	550

Source: Walsh, *Curriculum and Context,* p.67.

in tranches of twelve at a time to attend science and manual instruction tuition.[86] Overall the commissioners were gratified 'to observe that in nearly 90% of our schools some attempt has been made by the teachers to co-operate with us in introducing this great educational reform.'[87] Considering the revised programme had only been in place for part of the school year, its future seemed secure.

1.5 The Resignation of Archbishop Walsh

While the revised programme of instruction was well-received by the vast majority of teachers, the changes to their salaries and classification were not and this was to prove contentious. Starkie was on record as describing the system of payment by results, which was in use since 1872, as 'an elaborate mosaic of sixpences and shillings.'[88] He now found that the system devised to replace it, gave rise to multiple complaints from teachers and managers. Many believed the teachers were being short-changed. The old system was indeed complex. It consisted of a fixed amount, a variable per capita payment and a results payment which also varied. Accordingly it was derived from several sources; it was also paid at different times – quarterly or yearly – and on different dates for each teacher. The new scheme proposed to parcel all these into one payment termed the 'consolidated salary' – to be paid quarterly. All teachers who entered the service on or after 1 April 1900 were placed in Grade III. For existing

[86] Ibid., p. 66.
[87] Ibid., p. 40.
[88] TCD, MS 9210 a/5, Starkie's Glasnevin speech.

teachers it was *terra incognita*. Some 12,000 teachers had to be placed on the new scales at the point equivalent to their average annual income for the previous three years. In theory, this was a simple formula but in practice it proved problematic in the extreme. T.J. O'Connell, later secretary of the INTO, recalled:

> Each teacher made a return of his average income for the three material years, and each return had to be checked and verified in the Education Office. There were many cases where the annual results fees formed a substantial proportion of the teacher's income – often as much as 50 per cent. But this was the most variable of the many factors which went to make up his total emoluments. Results fees could be seriously affected by the attendance or the answering by the pupils; weather or an epidemic could lessen the number who had put in their necessary 100 days' attendance. Soon the Office was swamped with pleas from teachers who claimed that their income for one or more of these three material years was affected by certain special circumstances of one kind or another.[89]

Cognisant that anomalies were arising in the introduction of the new salary arrangements, the commissioners, in January 1901, accepted a motion from Archbishop Walsh that 'cases in which, in the judgement of the Commissioners, any of the new rules [which] would operate inequitably, will be specially considered.'[90] The very mention of 'special consideration' resulted in an inundation of correspondence to head office. The minutes of the Board give testimony to this, when they recorded: 'The Department was deluged with upwards of 40,000 letters from managers during the year and special consideration was claimed in 2,735 cases.'[91] The task of dealing with these cases was undertaken by the Financial Assistant Secretary Peter Young and his office staff.[92] Initially many of these appeals were rejected, resulting in managers and teachers making further overtures to individual commissioners on what they considered to be decisions made by office staff and not by the Board. Archbishop Walsh was in receipt of many such appeals because 'his well-known interest in the affairs of teachers and his

[89] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 153. O'Connell here suggests that the payment by results system might constitute up to 50% of a teacher's annual salary. O'Donovan in *Stanley's Letter*, p. 181, states 'about one third'.
[90] *Mins. CNEI*, 22 January 1901.
[91] Ibid., 26 July 1901.
[92] Financial Assistant Secretary Peter Young was a man of considerable office experience, having been in the employment of the Board for over 40 years.

earnest desire for impartial justice, made him, in an especial manner, the court of appeal against official decisions.'[93]

Walsh, a member of the Board for more than ten years, was noted for his assiduous attention to detail and procedure. He and other long-serving commissioners such as Professor Fitzgerald and Chief Baron Palles had been irked for some time by what they perceived as short-comings in the efficiency of the head office staff. In fact, the previous year Walsh had tendered his resignation to the lord lieutenant stating that his duties as an education commissioner were impinging on the important responsibilities of his ecclesiastical office. Cadogan responded with alarm describing Walsh's proposed resignation as 'little short of a national calamity'. He continued:

> I note the [decision is final]. I feel sure however that on re-consideration Your Grace will admit that in my position it would be impossible for me to accept your resignation without making any attempt to induce Your Grace to pause before taking a step which I sincerely believe to be fraught with danger to the cause which we both have at heart.[94]

Under-Secretary Sir Peter Harrell reinforced the point when he wrote pleadingly to Walsh that the lord lieutenant could not 'withhold the expression of his earnest hope that at a time like the present…the advantage of your great experience and influence may not be lost to the cause of Ed[ucation] in Ir[eland].[95] On this occasion, the soothing words of Cadogan and Harrell caused a change of heart and Walsh withdrew his resignation.

Starkie trusted Walsh and was very open with him regarding his own difficulties in the day to day administration of the Education Office. On 13 May 1901, Starkie wrote to Walsh:

> The present state of affairs is intolerable. I have no control even over the staff of my office, for which I am directly responsible. I could put my finger on the men who are, and have been, the cause of the dislocation both here and in the inspection work…[and] hampered in carrying out…policy by the incompetence or disloyalty of 4 or 5 higher officials.[96]

He further wrote to Walsh later that month:

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[93] *Mins. CNEI*, 26 July 1901.
[94] DDA, Walsh Papers, 26 August 1900, Cadogan to Walsh.
[95] Ibid., 26 August 1900, Harrell to Walsh.
[96] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 5.

> It is very difficult for a man in my position to deal with the class of men we have here among the higher officials. Young and Hamilton are perfectly hopeless … I have to initial 300 notings a week and cannot be expected to study each of them. If I did I sh[oul]d be dead in three months. I have to take a great deal on trust, wh[ich] is a bad security in this office.[97]

Walsh was an inveterate letter writer, and that included writing to the press on a wide range of matters ranging from bimetallism to classical music to land law. One such item of correspondence, this time on matters educational, was to have far reaching consequences. This occurred when Walsh, instead of raising his concerns with his fellow commissioners on the Board, wrote to the *Irish Daily Independent* on Monday, 3 June 1901, on the matter of 'the very grievous hardship, not say injustice' caused to teachers by official letters 'written by persons wholly unacquainted with the rules of the Board.'[98] This was presented to the public with multi-line banner headlines:

TEACHERS SALARIES

NATIONAL BOARD RULES

MISLEADING OFFICIAL LETTERS

PROTEST BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN

SCANDALOUS DISORGANISATION

The Archbishop promised to forward a statement, 'as compact as I can make it', for publication the following day.

In his statement the next day, Walsh outlined the bones of the problem. The application of the new scheme of consolidated salaries had resulted in many complaints to head office. The Board had committed itself to giving 'special consideration' to these cases. He declared:

> Managers, on sending up to the Education Office carefully prepared statements, showing by facts and figures that the case of some teacher is inequitable … receive, in reply, official letters to the effect that no other arrangement is possible; that the Commissioners are bound by Treasury rules; that the salaries must remain as they are…We [the Commissioners] have not refused, and we have not the faintest idea of refusing, to

[97] DDA, Walsh Papers, 17 May 1901, Starkie to Walsh.
[98] *Irish Daily Independent*, 3 June 1901.

> consider on their merits the cases equitably requiring such consideration.[99]

Given the fact that he had been a commissioner on the National Education Board since 1895, and the pre-eminent position he held in ecclesiastical, cultural and political circles, Walsh's letter was injudicious and untimely. His personal correspondence shows that he had the ear of Lord Lieutenant Cadogan, Chief Baron Palles, Resident Commissioner Starkie and many other notables including his fellow commissioners; yet he chose the forum of the public press to set out his argument. As one of the most influential thinkers in Irish education and a prime instigator of curricular reform, he was now at this very critical juncture in its roll-out, sniping at the administration.

Archbishop Walsh was present at the regular Tuesday Board meeting on 4 June, the very day his statement was published. Surprisingly, according to the minutes, the matter did not arise; nor at the next Board meeting on 11 June. However, at the meeting of 18 June, with Walsh present, his correspondence with the press, as well as a memorandum from Financial Assistant Secretary Peter Young, were read and considered. Young's memorandum, addressed to the Resident Commissioner, outlined his (Young's) rationale in dealing with the vast volume and complexity of the correspondence and ended by stoutly defending his actions:

> Permit me in conclusion to say, that having worked so hard to carry through the troublesome details of the New System of payments, I could not but feel pained on finding myself publicly accused of wrong-doing and untruthfulness, without having been afforded an opportunity of defence or explanation.[100]

This cut little ice with Walsh who countered with a motion requiring any official who had issued correspondence incorrectly stating a rule of the Board, should now write and admit 'that the letter is to be regarded as withdrawn on the score of its inaccuracy, and substituting for it a letter written strictly in accordance with the Rules of the Board.'[101] The minutes of the meeting indicate that it was agreed that Dr Starkie 'should convey to Mr. Young the views of the Commissioners in regard to his functions as Financial Assistant Secretary'. It was further agreed that measures be taken to make managers aware 'that the Commissioners have the power to consider specially cases in which …

[99] Ibid., 4 June 1901.
[100] Parliamentary Papers H.C. 1901(261) lvii. This document entitled *Memorandum for the Resident Commissioner* was dated 14 June 1901 and signed by Financial Assistant Secretary Peter Young.
[101] *Mins. CNEI*, 18 July 1901.

any of the new Rules…would operate inequitably.' With the comfort of these assurances, the minutes record that Archbishop Walsh withdrew his motion.[102]

The next Board meeting took place on 25 June. As was customary, the minutes of the previous meeting were issued in printed form and posted to the Board members some days beforehand. Archbishop Walsh on receipt of these, disagreed that they provided a true account of that meeting's proceedings and wrote accordingly to the Board. Unfortunately, Walsh found cause to absent himself from this crucial meeting due to a prior commitment. The minutes were read and it was proposed that they be accepted. However, Lord Chief Baron Palles, in support of Walsh's position, took exception and tabled an amendment which was defeated by 8 votes to 5. The minutes as printed were accepted and signed accordingly.[103] This proved a step too far for Walsh, who viewed the lack of support from his fellow commissioners as unacceptable, and he tendered his resignation to the lord lieutenant.

News of Walsh's resignation was carried in the public press on 29 June accompanied by the contents of a lengthy interview he had given to a reporter from the *Evening Telegraph.* He explained that he found it impossible to continue any longer as part of the Board of National Education in any meaningful fashion. He continued:

> I am at length forced to decline to bear any share of the responsibility involved in it, and I have taken the only course open to me – resignation. The Commissioners indeed know nothing or next to nothing of what is going on in the office, although of course, nothing that is said there can be valid or ought to be done at all, except I was of the opinion that I might be able, by dint of hard work, to succeed in getting things set right from within. But several things occurred yesterday, that convinced me I was mistaken. One of these, in one sense the most important, I am debarred from disclosing. I have it under the official heading 'Private and Confidential'…I am convinced now that any effort of mine to work out a reform from within would be fruitless.[104]

Once again, Walsh wrote to the commissioners concerning the accuracy of the minutes of the 18 June meeting with regard to his motion. At their next meeting on 2 July his letter was read and by agreement, was entered in the minutes. However, Rev. J.H.

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 25 June 1901.
[104] *Evening Telegraph*, 29 June 1901. The 'Private and Confidential' designation more than likely refers to the confidentiality regarding matters discussed at Board meetings; in this instance the contested minutes voted on 25 June.

Bernard then proposed a motion that in effect flatly rejected Walsh's position. He moved that

> no such Resolution as to the conduct of the Financial Secretary, as is indicated by His Grace, was passed by the Commissioners; nor was any such censure on that Officer approved formally or informally by the Board of June 18.[105]

This motion was passed with one dissenting voice, that of William Molloy. If the Board considered that the matter was now closed, they were mistaken. The Resident Commissioner was summoned to London by Chief Secretary Wyndham who requested a briefing as 'there was going to be a debate on the subject in Parliament.'[106] The brief, which took the form of a memorandum, was drawn up by senior officials while Starkie was preoccupied in London. On his return to Dublin the document was incomplete and the final version only handed to him on the day of the Board meeting. Subsequently Starkie seemed to rue the tone of the document:

> Looking back, I see clearly that we erred through trying to make our defence too complete; that, in our anxiety to exculpate our staff, which as a whole was above praise, we appeared to gloss over the serious delinquencies of some of our members.[107]

Be that as it may, the eleven-page memorandum detailing the events surrounding the resignation of Archbishop Walsh, as well as the procedural aspects of the case, was presented before the Board and having been 'considered, paragraph by paragraph, and emendations made' passed unanimously.[108] The memorandum offered a stout defence of the Board and its officials. Starkie returned to London to brief Wyndham. Having read the document, the chief secretary asked Starkie to honestly state whether the Archbishop's case was without foundation. The Resident Commissioner replied that:

> there was neither "chaos" nor even serious "confusion" in the office; but I pointed out our admissions touching certain high officials, against whom, I said, the Archbishop's case was very strong.[109]

The chief secretary, with some neat political sidestepping, decided that the memorandum, the disputed minutes of the contentious meetings as well as all the

[105] *Mins. CNEI*, 2 July 1901.
[106] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 12.
[107] Ibid., p. 13.
[108] Ibid., p. 12.
[109] Ibid., p. 13.

relevant press statements on the matter should be published as a Parliamentary Paper. This was laid before the House of Commons on 16 August 1901 and the ship of Irish primary education, it was hoped, set sail for calmer waters. [110]

The resignation of Archbishop Walsh had serious repercussions for all concerned with education in Ireland. Walsh was the most high-profile Catholic prelate to sit on the Board since the days of Archbishop Daniel Murray in the 1830s.[111] As the manager of both St. Patrick's and Our Lady of Mercy Teacher Training Colleges, Walsh was both eminently knowledgeable of educational matters and a key figure on the educational landscape. Moreover, it was primarily through the agency of Walsh that the commissioners embarked on their most imperative initiative – the establishment of the Belmore Inquiry which led to the New Programme.[112] Although under the chairmanship of Lord Belmore, the fact that many referred to it as the 'Walsh Commission' is indicative of his contribution and influence.

The resignation of Archbishop Walsh was a source of grave disquiet at all levels. Calls for a parliamentary enquiry were numerous and a flood of resolutions deploring his resignation poured into the office of the chief secretary. Typical of such was one from a branch of the INTO:

> That we view with keen regret and well-grounded alarm, the extraordinary circumstances which compelled His Grace, the Archbishop of Dublin, to resign his position…That we call upon the Government to immediately grant an Inquiry – as demanded by His Grace into the causes which deprive the educational machinery of Ireland of His invaluable services.[113]

The Resident Commissioner also did not escape censure and calls were made for his resignation. Starkie, for his part, was full of regret at the loss of a talented colleague. Years later, he recalled:

> Thus, through misunderstandings directly traceable to disaffection and incompetence of some higher officials, a valued friendship was sacrificed, and I became the unwitting instrument whereby a lasting blow was dealt to the cause of reform. For

[110] Hansard 4, H.C., vol 99 c1139, 16 August 1901.
[111] Daniel Murray (1878–1852), RC Archbishop of Dublin, was a strong advocate of setting up of the national school system in 1831 and member of the first CNEI.
[112] *Mins. CNEI*, 31 March 1896.
[113] NAI, CSO RP 10032/04.

> many years after the calamity of the Archbishop's resignation we resembled a tree whose roots had been severed.[114]

It is difficult to bring absolute clarity to the reasons for Walsh's resignation. Neither of his biographers cast any light on the subject or even allude to the incident in their books.[115] Miller has observed of Walsh in *Church, State and Nation in Ireland*:

> His motives for taking this drastic action over what can only be described as an extremely trivial matter are obscure, though it was very much in character for him to be a stickler for precise execution of established procedures.[116]

As already outlined, a year previously he had offered his resignation to the lord lieutenant and the government at the time prevailed on him to change his mind. Second time round, with much public airing of conflicting views on matters pertaining to the National Board and its workings, no such overtures to Walsh were forthcoming. Since its inception in 1831 the system of national education had evolved from a *de jure* non-denominational to a *de facto* denominational status. In 1900 Cardinal Logue declared in a pastoral letter that national education 'in a great part of Ireland is now, in fact, whatever it is in name, as denominational as we could desire'.[117] Walsh's experience in education was just not confined to the primary schools as he was also a member of the Intermediate Board. Added to that he was a strong advocate of the pressing need for a Catholic University. In 1901, the Robertson Commission was set up to report on university education provision. Trinity College were excluded from the commission's remit due to concerns of Protestant opposition regarding its status.[118] Perhaps this was the juncture when Walsh decided there were bigger fish to fry and severed his ties with primary education in order to concentrate on the university question.

1.6 Starkie consolidates power within the National Board, 1901–02

Despite, or perhaps because of the serious setback he had received as a result of Walsh's resignation, Starkie sought to capitalise on the event to extend his reform to

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[114] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 13.
[115] Thomas J. Morrissey, *William J Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin 1841–1921* (Dublin, 2000); also P.J. Walsh, *William J Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin* (Dublin, 1928).
[116] David W. Miller, *Church, state and nation in Ireland 1898–1921* (Dublin, 1973), p. 81. Henceforth Miller, *Church, state and nation.*
[117] Logue Pastoral Letter, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 20,1900, cited in Leslie J. Francis and David W. Lankshear (eds), *Christian perspectives on church schools* (Herefordshire, 1993) p. 194.
[118] Judith Harford, 'Women and the Irish university question' in Judith Hartford and Claire Rush (eds) *Have women made a difference?: Women in Irish universities, 1850-2010* (Bern, 2010), p.12.

address deficiencies within the Board of Commissioners, their interaction with him and the various strands of responsibility in Head Office. At the Board meeting of 5 November 1901, on a motion proposed by Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, it was ordered:

> That a Committee be appointed to consider what questions should be brought before the Board at ordinary meetings, and what matters should be decided on the responsibility of the Resident Commissioner. Also what changes, if any, are required in regard to the procedure at the Board's meetings. The Committee [was] also to report on the relations existing between the Resident Commissioner and the Departmental Staff (indoor and outdoor) in regard to promotions, superannuations, &c., whether these relations should be modified and if so, in what respects.[119]

A sub-committee of six was selected with instructions to report back to the Board in early January 1902. The members were Lord Chief Baron Christopher Palles, Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, Judge James Johnston Shaw, Right Rev. Mervyn Archdall, the Bishop of Killaloe, Dr Anthony Traill and Starkie. William Molloy, who kept the recently resigned Archbishop Walsh informed of Board matters, wrote waspishly, 'That official Hercules Sir R Blennerhassett has nominated his Committee … with expectations of having the Augean stable in fair order forthwith.'[120] This committee's report presented at the Board meeting of 7 January 1902 did not disappoint, containing wide-ranging proposals for change. It recommended that the Board should meet fortnightly instead of weekly and that the designation of 'Office Committee' and 'Finance Committee' should cease to be used – in effect, abolished. The Resident Commissioner was also to be empowered to superannuate any officer over the age of sixty 'who he [Starkie] shall be of opinion ought, in the interests of public service, to cease to hold office.'[121] Mindful of the events which triggered the resignation of Walsh, the report specified:

> That all orders or written directions given by the Secretaries to any official, either of the Indoor or the Outdoor Departmental Staffs, or to the other officers of the Board, shall be assumed to

[119] *Mins. CNEI*, 5 November 1901.
[120] DDA, Walsh Papers. Molloy to Walsh, 12 November 1901, marked 'Private'. Molloy was a commissioner and former Board official. Walsh's correspondence shows that over the years, both prior and subsequent to his [Walsh's] resignation, Molloy kept him informed, often sarcastically, of events at Board meetings.
[121] *Mins. CNEI*, 7 January 1902.

> have been made by the authority, general or special, of the Board or of the Resident Commissioner.[122]

Finally, it suggested 'that…the Secretaries, Financial Assistant Secretary, and Chief Inspectors shall be independent of each other, and under the direct authority of the Board and the Resident Commissioner.'[123]

Without any major dissenting voice, the report was adopted by the Board. The changes taken in their totality, marked a dramatic departure from precedent. Heretofore the Office Committee, consisting of the Resident Commissioner, the two secretaries and the chief inspectors, dealt with important issues for decision prior to their presentation to the Board meetings for their formal approval. They dealt with new school applications and other serious matters arising from inspectors' reports, such as suspensions and fining teachers. The Finance Committee consisted of Starkie and Young (the Financial Assistant Secretary) who in a similar fashion dealt with the fiscal issues that required the attention of the Board members. Henceforth the powers vested in these sub-committees were transferred to the Resident Commissioner alone. The connection between heads of office staff and the inspectorate was severed and any senior office holder deemed not acting in the public interest could be 'superannuated.' With Board meetings now reduced from weekly to fortnightly, the office and finance committees abolished, the curtailing of the inspectorate to duties in the field and confining the office staff to administration, the Resident Commissioner had aggregated to himself, and to a lesser extent his fellow commissioners, far greater authority and control than any of his predecessors.

1.7 Conclusion

The national education system in Ireland, founded in 1831, was ostensibly in a flourishing state at the century's end. The 1890s saw a period of curricular reform both nationally and internationally. In Ireland, a commission was set up with a view to the introduction of manual and practical instruction. Resulting from this, the Commissioners of National Education were tasked with implementing its recommendations. Dr Starkie, the newly appointed Resident Commissioner, introduced within three years a radical overhaul of the school curriculum, a revised system of teachers' remuneration combined with the reorganisation of the inspectorate and

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

administrative staff. Taken together, these measures were revolutionary in concept. However, in practice their implementation proved challenging and problematic.

Starkie's failure to grasp the human dimension of his educational innovations had serious consequences. It was one thing to endeavour to usher in change without financial incentives but it was quite another to do so without proper consultation. Such interaction with teachers and managers in the preparation of the Revised Programme was nil and with the inspectorate, minimal. The unilateral decision to alter drastically the conditions of employment and pay structure of both teachers and inspectors was high-handed in the extreme and led to antipathy and bitterness.

The death of Professor Fitzgerald and the resignation of Archbishop Walsh in 1901 were hugely detrimental to the cause of Irish primary education and to Starkie in particular. Many years later Starkie commented on Walsh's departure with a tone of compunction: 'I cannot conceal the fact that I regret it, as I have never regretted anything before.'[124] The true motivation for this resignation remains opaque. Walsh may well have felt that his energies might be better focussed on the 'Catholic University Question' which was another battleground occupying ecclesiastical minds at this time. For their part, the government side seemed content to record and publish the relevant documentation as a parliamentary paper and let the matter slide. Tacitly, they stood by Starkie – their own man in Dublin, in whom they had placed great trust. Time would reveal if Starkie could be relied on to deliver on their expectation of continued reform of Irish elementary education.

[124] Starkie, *Confidential evidence,* p. 10.

Chapter Two

The visit and report of F.H. Dale, 1903

2.1 Introduction

By 1903, Starkie had been the Resident Commissioner, in charge of Irish primary education for four years. During that time the payment by results scheme was abolished, a new school programme was introduced and a rationalisation of the inspectorate and head office administration had been carried out. However, it was not without tension and opposition that these extensive reforming measures had come into effect. The major stakeholders – teachers, inspectors and administrators, each in turn, had been presented with change. If the school managers considered that they were to escape the reforming zeal of the Resident Commissioner, they were soon to be disabused of that notion. On 11 September 1902, Starkie addressed the British Association in Belfast and gave his candid evaluation of both the primary and intermediate education systems.[1] At the core of his speech was a harsh criticism of the school management system and the need for a rethinking and recalibration of the Irish system of education. In this he was concurring with the views of Chief Secretary Wyndham and the Treasury, who were already laying plans to implement the changes they envisaged. To advance this purpose, the services of F.H. Dale, Chief Inspector of Schools in England and Wales, was engaged to inquire into and compare education provision in Irish primary schools with that of England. Dale's subsequent report revealed the unvarnished truth of the unsatisfactory state of Irish education. The solution, it posited, lay in the replication of reforms recently introduced in England.

2.2 The plan is hatched

Much of the critique of Irish education outlined in Starkie's Belfast speech was already in the public domain. However, it was his observations on school management, lack of local funding and interest in education, taken with the neglect in the building and maintenance of schools which proved controversial. The following statement, posed as a question, was the most contentious:

[1] W.J.M. Starkie, *Recent reforms in Irish education, primary and secondary with a view to their co-ordination* (Dublin, 1902), henceforth Starkie, *Recent reforms*.

> What is the most efficacious method to induce Managers, who can find money for everything except education, to keep their schools, built largely at the expense of the State, in such a habitable condition that it is not a cruelty to send children there?[2]

Warming to the topic, he continued:

> It would be disingenuous to conceal the fact that our inspectors report that the majority of managers are quite indifferent to education and that in many cases the schools are left well-nigh derelict, the only supervision given to them being that of the Board's inspector. This neglect is demoralising to the teacher, but its ruinous effects are most discernible in the material condition of the schools. Many of them; even buildings recently erected…are described as resembling 'half-ruined tenement houses' and the outhouses are as 'dangerous sources of disease and death'.[3]

The response to Starkie's speech was immediate and visceral. Calls for his resignation flooded into Tyrone House, Dublin Castle and the public press.[4] Particularly incensed were the Catholic school managers who represented the majority of denominational schools. Significantly, within a few months, they decided to set up a formal organisation, the Catholic Clerical School Managers' Association [CCSMA], to represent their interests. At their inaugural meeting on 17 November 1903 the clerical managers, having tendered their 'filial homage to Pope Pius X' and assured him of their 'devoted allegiance to his Sacred Person and Throne,' adopted as their first resolution:

> That we regard the Board of National Education as at present constituted as not sufficiently representative of Catholic Principles with a bare moiety of Catholic numbers in great part controlled by one who has gratuitously and unjustly maligned the Catholic Clerical Managers of the country…and we declare that the time has come for the substitution in its stead of a board that will direct the education of the youth of the country, an over-whelming majority of which are Catholic, with due consideration to Catholic interests.[5]

Despite the barrage of protestation, Starkie showed little intention of qualifying or withdrawing his controversial statement. At best he signalled that he had spoken in an individual capacity rather than as head of the National Board. Uncompromisingly he

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[2] Ibid., p. 24.
[3] Ibid., pp 37–8.
[4] Tyrone House was the head office of the CNEI.
[5] *Minutes Catholic Clerical School Managers' Association*, pp 5–6.

published the text of his Belfast speech in pamphlet form and further bolstered his arguments regarding the conditions of schools by including additional damning extracts from inspectors' reports. He also stressed in the document, that his comments and criticisms applied to schools and managers of all denominations and was particularly critical of areas in the North where many schools were under Presbyterian management. In truth, what engaged the minds of denominational church leaders at the time was not so much the physical condition of schools but their management and control. Starkie in his speech deplored the absence of local rates to aid education. To the ecclesiastical mind, any such financial input by a local authority would lead to a dilution of denominational influence in the management in schools and this was to be stoutly resisted.

In a broader context, throughout Europe and the USA, in the second half of the nineteenth century, systems of publicly financed elementary schools were rapidly developed. In England, it was widely accepted that their system of education was greatly in need of reform. Responsibility for the administration of education in England rested with three entities: the Department of Science and Art, the Charity Commission and the Education Department. All acted independently of each other. This lack of coordination was deemed ineffectual and the Bryce Commission of 1895, although ostensibly set up to consider secondary education, concurred. It reported:

> We conceive…that some central authority is required, not in order to control…but to endeavour to bring about among the various agencies which provide that education, a harmony and co–operation that are now wanting.[6]

The passing in 1899 of the Board of Education Act provided for the formation of one central authority to govern education. The year 1899 also witnessed a series of attacks by prominent Conservatives, notably Sir John Gorst, on what they considered the inappropriate use of rates to fund higher-grade or adult classes. By law, such funding was allowed solely for elementary schooling but anomalies had arisen. Gorst's private secretary, Robert Morant, is credited with the pursuit of a test case between the School of Art in London, obviously not an elementary school entity, and the London School

[6] *Royal Commission on Secondary Education, vol. 1, report,* [C 7862], H.C. 1895, xliii, p. 257; more commonly referred to as the Bryce Report 1895.

Board.[7] The action was successful and copper-fastened by this legal precedent, school boards could only provide funding for elementary schools. In essence, what was now required was a new education act to regularise matters. The Conservatives, led by Arthur Balfour, presented such an education bill to the House of Commons in 1902. The proposed legislation advocated the abolition of school boards and their replacement by local education authorities. It met with strong opposition from both sides of the House, prompted by the apprehension that the local funding of education would cause disaffection among ratepayers. Religious clauses in the bill caused particular concern to Dissenters, who opposed support for denominational education, especially aid to Roman Catholic schools which was described as 'Rome on the rates.'[8] In any event, with Balfour's dire warning that 'England is behind all continental rivals in education', the bill was enacted into law.[9] The building blocks for the orderly development of the various strands of education in England were now in place.

Having effected a major reconstruction and realignment in the administration and funding of education in England, the government aspired to do likewise in Ireland. Starkie alluded in his Belfast speech to the lack of coordination in Irish education and to the need to provide local financial assistance through rates. In doing so, as already stated, he reflected government opinion. Chief Secretary Wyndham had made this clear to him by letter in May 1901:

> I am in complete agreement with you on the question of amalgamation & am much encouraged to learn that His Grace [Archbishop Walsh] is of the same opinion. My hand is strengthened by the introduction of an English Education Bill. I do not believe that we shall do much good in Ireland until we have an Education Department…but nothing could be worse than the present arrangement…The fact that the English Bill proposes to transfer a large discretion to local bodies might pave the way in the case of Ireland for advisory councils.[10]

The circumstances surrounding the acrimonious resignation of Archbishop Walsh from the National Board of Education had reinforced the perception at large that it (the

[7] D. Gillard, *Education in England: a brief history* (2018), pp 1–2. *http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter04.html*

[8] B. Gates, 'Faith schools and colleges of education since 1800' in R. Gardner, J. Cairns and D. Lawton (eds), *Faith schools: consensus or conflict?* (London, 2005), p. 19.

[9] Andy Green, *Education and state formation: the rise of education systems in England, France and the USA* (London, 1990), p. 10.

[10] TCD, MS 9210, no.572, 17 May 1901, Wyndham to Starkie. "His Grace" refers to Archbishop Walsh of Dublin. "Amalgamation" refers to bringing the National and the Intermediate Education Boards under one central authority, certainly not the amalgamation of small schools.

Board) might not be fit for purpose. Philip Hanson, private secretary to Wyndham, had written scathingly at the time to Starkie about his fellow commissioners of National Education:

> These fellows are a great nuisance but we are by no means ready to put anything in their place just yet, and therefore we must play along with them as well as we can in the meantime. You get the rubs and it is hard on you.[11]

The death of Professor George Fitzgerald and Archbishop Walsh's resignation, both in 1901, deprived Starkie of two of his most able commissioners.[12] Nevertheless, Starkie was not deflected from his path of change and improvement. The problem of the inadequate provision for new school buildings and the improvement of conditions in existing schools was his next priority. Various proposals to remedy the situation were made to government by the Board but these were rejected by the Treasury. However, in August 1902, the Treasury was instrumental in establishing an inter-departmental Building Committee which included representatives of the Board of Works, the Treasury and the Board of National Education, and an inspector of schools from Scotland.[13] Starkie represented the National Board on the committee; however significantly the chairmanship went to Sir Robert Holmes, the Treasury Remembrancer. The government duly received their report in November 1902, but its contents were not revealed to the National Board until 1905-6 and even then it was only with difficulty that a copy was obtained.[14] Clearly the government and the Treasury were looking beyond Starkie and his commissioners in dealing with this crucial problem.

The truth of the matter was that the intergovernmental committee on school buildings which had reported to government, recommended that a system of local rating be introduced in support of Irish national education.[15] In early January 1903, the chief secretary wrote to the Treasury stating that the lord lieutenant considers that 'the present time appears suitable for considering the whole subject in view of the large addition to

[11] TCD, MS 9209, no.254, 24 June 1901, Hanson to Starkie. Sir Philip Hanson (1871–1955) private secretary to Chief Secretary Wyndham and significantly brother-in-law of English school inspector, F.H. Dale.
[12] Fitzgerald died in May and Walsh resigned in June, both in 1901.
[13] CNEI, *Seventieth report…1903,* [Cd 2230], H.C. 1904, xx, p. 4.
[14] Ibid, *Seventy-second report…1905–06*, [Cd 3154], H.C. 1906, xxix, p.14. See the findings of this Committee on pp.7-18.
[15] Hyland, Áine, 'The Treasury and Irish education, 1850–1922: the myth and the reality', *Irish Educational Studies*, 3:2 (2008), p. 68.

be made to the Imperial contribution to the cost of elementary education in England.'[16] Here the lord lieutenant was referring to the increased exchequer spending of £1,400,000 on education in England arising from the passing of the Education Act of 1902. If precedent was followed under the 1888 and 1890 Goshen Acts, Ireland would be entitled to an Equivalent Grant of roughly £185,000 per annum.[17]

There followed a critique of the Irish national school system and its funding and administration. The education commissioners, it suggested, due to their particular circumstances found it impossible 'to exact a satisfactory degree of efficiency or to exercise a due control over expenditure.'[18] In England and Scotland, the responsibility of providing elementary education rested with locally elected bodies. The Irish system was therefore lacking two important factors – the stimulus of local interest and the efficiency of state control. The letter concluded with a proposal to institute an inquiry

> into the constitution and workings of the various Boards (in particular, the Board of National Education) which control education in Ireland; and the introduction of such reforms as the facts may suggest…His Excellency proposes that this investigation should be conducted by an Inspector of the English Board of Education, who would be able to compare what he saw with the conditions with which he was familiar in England.[19]

The Treasury's response welcomed the proposed inquiry but stipulated that their consent was contingent on the funds ensuing from the English Education Act being applied not only for the purpose of education but also the promotion of the economic development and transport facilities in Ireland, while acknowledging that educational purposes would have first claim on the grant.[20] The Lords of the Treasury also agreed, that pending the completion and report of the above inquiry, not to recommend fresh expenditure for the building of new schools. Looking to the future, this recommendation to pause school building was to prove very contentious.

Within days, the under-secretary in reply expressed the lord lieutenant's concurrence with the observations of the Treasury, but added one significant change. The proposed grant should be applied, as stated above, but there followed in parentheses 'so far as not

[16] NAI, CSO RP 29524/03, 3 January 1903, Wyndham to the Treasury.
[17] *Vide* Chapter 5 p.131 re the origins and significance of these Goshen Acts and Equivalent Grants.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] NAI, CSO RP 4356/03, 23 January 1903, Treasury to Wyndham.

absorbed under the provisions of the proposed Land Purchase Bill.'[21] This was significant. Wyndham was now signalling that expenditure in education would take second place to the requirements of tenant land purchase – at least for the present. The various Irish educational interests, both Catholic and Protestant, pleaded for the grant to be expended solely on education. Miller explained that 'when it became clear that pressing their claim…might endanger the land question…[they] quietly dropped the matter.'[22]

In late February, the Chief Secretary's Office (CSO) wrote to the English education authorities in Whitehall specifying the mode of inquiry his administration proposed:

> His Excellency…proposes to have an inquiry, which he thinks and the Treasury agree, could best be conducted by an Inspector of the English Board of Education, with experience of the Head Quarters office and some knowledge of foreign systems of Education, into the conditions of Irish elementary schools as regards teaching, discipline, management and relations with the National Board.[23]

The Irish administration had already selected their man, as the correspondence revealed that 'F.H. Dale has the qualifications[24] desired and he [the lord lieutenant] would be very glad if the [English] Board can see their way to select him.'[25] It was hardly a coincidence that Dale was a brother-in-law of Philip Hanson, Wyndham's private secretary. Hanson had written contemporaneously to Starkie:

> I can only advise you to keep quiet on the Board for a bit and let things slide. We have our hands full just now; this inspection by Dale is a preliminary move; if we intend to attack the Board we must do it ourselves and *en masse*, not put you forward as a forlorn hope to be slaughtered.[26]

Dale's appointment was duly sanctioned and it was now considered timely to inform the commissioners of the proposed inquiry. In an internal minute to Under-Secretary MacDonnell**,** it was noted that

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[21] Ibid., 4356/03, 26 February 1903, Wyndham to Treasury.
[22] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, p. 92.
[23] NAI, CSO RP 4356/03, 23 Feb 1903, Wyndham to English Board of Education.
[24] Ibid., 10032/04, 11 July 1904, Dale telegram to Wyndham outlining his qualifications – 'formerly Fellow Merton College and Lecturer of University College of Oxford. Has investigated Ed in Germany for the Dept of Sp Enquiries & Reports under the English Bd of Ed. Examiner for the Diploma in Ed granted to Ts by the Universities of Oxford & Durham. For some years in service of Bd of Ed first as an Examiner, then as Inspector of Schools.'
[25] Ibid., 26 Feb 1903, Hanson on behalf of Wyndham to the English Board.
[26] TCD, MS 9209, no.266, 7 March 1903, Hanson to Starkie.

> the co-operation of these Boards would be necessary to enable the Inspector to carry out his inquiry. It is possible that they may resent an inquiry into their systems by an inspector of an English Education Department.[27]

Feelings of resentment or not, the under-secretary concurred that the Board should be informed but cautioned that 'it sh[oul]d not go into any details and sh[oul]d avoid any form of expression calculated to create controversy.'[28] The commissioners were duly requested to 'lend their co-operation in the matter by affording the Inspector who may be selected the necessary facilities for prosecuting his enquiries.'[29] Privately, Hanson advised Starkie that Dale was 'not appointed to report on the Board or on the organisation of the Dept. and his main business will be out in the country.'[30] On 21 March 1903, at their fortnightly meeting the commissioners, satisfied that oversight of their stewardship was outside the remit of the proposed inquiry, duly agreed to the visit. Of significance is the fact that prior to the Board's formal agreement to the visit of Dale, Starkie had foreknowledge of the inquiry. Cognisant of the administration's overall plans for reform, he chose not to inform his fellow commissioners.

2.3 Dale's inspection of Irish national schools and his report

Dale's visit of inspection began on 2 April 1903. He spent two months visiting selected schools, usually in the company of local inspectors and frequently accompanied by Starkie. This was requested by Hanson who had written to Starkie prior to the visit, 'Dale thinks & I agree that it would be most useful for you to go about with him as you can find time for.'[31] Dale was anxious to make as complete an evaluation as possible of the various schools large and small, urban and rural. In total, he visited eighty-seven ordinary national schools, eight large convent schools and six Model Schools. To assist him in ensuring that a representative cross section of schools was evaluated, Dale requested local inspectors to provide a list of four schools considered to be the best in his district, six middling and two bad. Prior to each school visit the inspectors were

[27] NAI, CSO RP 4356/03, 2 March 1903, Internal memo to MacDonnell. Sir Anthony MacDonnell (1844–1925) was under-secretary from 1902–08.
[28] Ibid., 4 March 1903.
[29] Ibid.
[30] TCD, MS 9209, no.265, 5 March 1903, Hanson to Starkie.
[31] Ibid., no.267, 13 March 1903, Hanson to Starkie.

expected to furnish Dale with a detailed report on that school.[32] There can be little doubt that Dale approached his task with great clarity of purpose, his object being

> to ascertain to what extent any individual School might be considered typical, in its merits and defects, of the general standard of education in the locality, as well to note from my own observation the common features presented by Schools in widely-separated parts of the country.[33]

Dale was tasked in his terms of reference with comparing English and Irish primary schools with regard to premises, equipment, staffing and instruction. True to his brief, his report was arranged under those four headings, followed by a general summary of conclusions and recommendations. With regard to **premises,** he firstly observed the sanitary conditions of schools in the broadest sense - space, ventilation, heat, light, cleanliness, out-offices, etc. In urban schools, classified by the Irish inspectors as bad, he concluded:

> In point of unsuitability and unhealthiness, they far exceed any premises which it had ever fallen to my lot to condemn in England…The fact that such buildings though exceptionally bad, are still in use as National Schools in cities of the importance of Dublin and Belfast, is in itself a sign of a low standard with regard to the conditions which all School buildings should satisfy.[34]

The classrooms of country schools, which comprised three quarters of all national schools, were considered to be more satisfactory in general than their urban counterparts. There was more space for the pupils, the lighting and ventilation being sufficient. However, even in schools otherwise satisfactory, there was a lack of cleanliness and a neglect of repairs. These were only emblematic of a starker malaise:

> A more serious matter is the condition of the out-offices, which are rarely quite clean, and were at times indescribably filthy; out of the hundreds of Schools that I have inspected in various districts in England, I have never seen any in which the offices were kept with such utter disregard of health and decency as several cases that I saw during my short stay in Ireland.[35]

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[32] *Report of Mr. F. H. Dale, his majesty's inspector of schools, board of education, on primary education in Ireland*, [Cd. 1981], H.C. 1904, xx, p. 1. Henceforth *Dale report.*
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 4.
[35] Ibid., p. 5.

Dale next directed his attention to the causes of the inferiority of Irish school buildings and conditions. In England, local authorities were charged with the duty of aiding the provision and maintenance of the schools in their area. The absence of such local input and oversight had resulted in the grave defects outlined in Irish schools. Regarding minor repairs, heating and cleaning of schools, in England the responsibility fell specifically on the local managers. This was the case also in Scotland, France and Germany. In Ireland, the arrangements varied greatly. If the school was vested in the commissioners, the State assumed the liability for school repairs. Schools termed non-vested, were in fact vested in local trustees. However, there were over 5,000 non-vested Schools and it was among these that the most serious cases of neglect occurred. Dale concluded that

> the Managers in Ireland, though frequently visiting their schools and taking an interest in them, do not in numerous cases consider supervision of the cleanliness and sanitation of the School-building to be one of their primary duties to the same degree as Managers in England. The arrangements to be made in order to secure these objects are regarded as the concern of the Teacher; and criticism or supervision of them as devolving solely to the Government Inspector.[36]

Significantly, he considered two or three visits per year from an inspector, a poor substitute for the constant care and attention which, he stressed, local management and funding could alone supply.

The next headline matter considered by Dale was **equipment**. Dale noted that generally most of the schools he visited had seating provision only for about half of the children that were enrolled. In England this was regarded as a grave defect, but Irish inspectors pointed out that the change of position from sitting to standing 'is far from being a disadvantage to the health of the younger children and adults.'[37] In small schools this rotation facilitated teaching in groups – pupils standing to do oral work while the others sat engaged in written tasks. Of greater concern was the quality of the seating 'in some cases…a form without desk or back' and in only five schools, dual desks suitable for infants were found.[38]

[36] Ibid., p. 12. Dale had specifically asked about the amount expended by teachers on the cleaning of schools and was informed that this amount varied from *9s.* or *10s* to about £4 per annum.
[37] Ibid., p. 13.
[38] Ibid., p. 14.

In England, following an Education Act of 1891, schoolbooks and teaching aids were provided free of cost to pupils by the manager. In Ireland, every new school, on recognition by the commissioners, received a free grant of books and equipment. Subsequently these could be purchased by children at rates approved by the National Board. According to Dale, this system held some advantages over the system in England where the books remained the property of the managers. In Ireland, the books being the property of the children, were taken home and parents could thus be 'induced to take some interest in the School.' [39] Overall, Dale concluded:

> the equipment of the ordinary National Schools is, as a rule, most meagre, and barely attains the level reached by the poorest English Voluntary Schools.[40]

There was only one exception: convent schools were singled out many times throughout the report as 'admirably furnished and ornamented, and as well-equipped as the majority of large Schools in England.'[41] In summary, Dale submitted that the deficiency in the equipping of Irish schools was due in part to poverty but also to the fact that public opinion did not attach as much importance to the maintenance of high standards of attractiveness and comfort as their counterparts in England.

When Dale considered the matter of **staffing** in his report, he set himself the formidable challenge of comparing the main principles upon which Irish and English teachers were trained, graded, appointed, promoted, and remunerated. With regard to training, a substantially higher proportion of teachers in Ireland were qualified – statistics in 1902 indicated 55 per cent as compared to 37 per cent in England.[42] Another positive facet was that in Ireland since 1900, all newly appointed principal teachers were required to have a training qualification.

As already outlined, the grading of teachers and their salaries had been the focus of much discontent since the abolition of the payment by results system in 1900. Dale found that in general the payment of teachers in Ireland was on a level with those similarly circumstanced in England. However, in England, due to the existence of many large schools supported by wealthy localities, the number of highly-paid posts was far greater than in Ireland. Furthermore, the fact that all Irish teachers began at the lowest

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p. 15.
[41] Ibid., pp15, 65–6.
[42] Ibid., p. 17.

grade of salary, irrespective of the size of the school, was considered by Dale to be unjust. Compelled to work in that grade and salary for three years, and then required to overcome at least six variable criteria for promotion to a higher grade was even more so. He was also critical of the arrangement whereby the selection of teachers for grade promotion rested with the inspectors of the National Board and observed:

> It imposes upon the Irish Central Authority, and in particular on the Irish Inspectors, a responsibility which in England the Central Authority has always avoided, viz., the selection of individual teachers for promotion. The present position of inspectors…is for several reasons hardly compatible with the performance of such a delicate and invidious task.[43]

In this, Dale was strikingly prescient, as the matter of grades and teacher promotion was to prove an ongoing bugbear for all concerned. Dale understood the misgivings of teachers in respect of the matter and suggested that school size should be a greater factor in determining a teacher's salary. If the conditions regarding promotion were made with more clarity and concision, 'the initial salary for a new post would be proportioned more closely to the responsibility involved.'[44]

Not surprisingly, the greater part of the report was devoted to the topic of **instruction**. The Revised Programme of Instruction introduced in 1900 with its broader curriculum had brought about the convergence of Irish and English schools as regards instruction. Because the teaching of the new subjects was at an early stage, Dale ventured that 'the results attained cannot fairly be measured by a standard derived from a country where they have long been familiar.'[45] In a report which contained mostly candid but pejorative comments, Dale observed that 'the Irish children impressed me, as they did English Inspectors in 1868, as brighter and more intelligent than the English.'[46] However, there followed a trenchant exposition of 'certain radical defects' in the general circumstances and conditions under which schools operated and their organisation, which taken together

[43] Ibid., p. 29.
[44] Ibid., p. 31.
[45] Ibid., p. 34.
[46] Ibid. In 1868, the Powis Commission was established to enquire into the state of the National Education System in Ireland.

> are bound to impair the efficiency of any syllabus of instruction however well devised, and to render the expenditure of public money on education wasteful and unproductive.[47]

The ever-logical Dale set out these limitations under four headings: the multiplicity of small schools, the deplorable lack of local interest in primary education, the inadequate and faulty distribution of staff and the great irregularity in attendance of pupils. All of these he evaluated and compared with the situation in England, but primacy was given to the proliferation of small schools. Although the population in Ireland was diminishing, the number of schools was increasing. This increase was due to the establishment of separate schools for Protestants and Catholics, for different Protestant denominations and for pupils segregated by sex and age. The preference for a strictly denominational system was the primary cause and this, Dale correctly stated, ran counter to the original principle of the National School system instituted in 1831, namely united secular and separate religious instruction. Of greater import, the maintenance of the system as had now evolved, led to a high measure of expenditure without a commensurate level of educational efficiency. The fact that in Ireland individual teachers were paid their salaries, not by way of a capitation grant based on attendance as was the case in England, facilitated the establishing of small schools. Accordingly, under this system, Irish school managers were insulated from financial responsibility for their actions in sponsoring the proliferation of unnecessary schools.

Dale was of the opinion that the improvements in primary education in England had been brought about by the greater interest shown by various classes of the community. In Ireland, there was little or no local interest in the schools, except perhaps among the clergy. This deficiency, he considered, was due in large part to the failure of government to devolve financial responsibility to the locality and managers. To remedy this, it was imperative to form groups in each locality under some responsible authority that would be tasked with the distribution of the State-grant but under the supervision of the National Board of Education. In the meantime, that body needed to apply greater scrutiny over the supply and organisation of schools. What was especially needed was a focussed evaluation of the existing education provision in each town and district. This should be compiled and furnished in addition to the ongoing statistical returns made to

[47] Ibid.

the Board annually. To this end, the rules of the Board should be amended to give it specific authority to discontinue aid to what were considered unnecessary schools.

Outside of large urban centres school attendance was not compulsory and was more irregular than in England. This was especially true of rural areas. Poverty, inclement weather, agricultural work practices and parental attitudes were considered the main reasons for this. The Compulsory Attendance Act, passed in 1892, had resulted in improved attendance in larger towns. But Irish legislation set a limit on the number of days per year a child needed to attend and this was not conducive to regular attendance. Fines on parents for breaches of the law were much lower than those in England which blunted their effectiveness. Still Dale was sceptical of the merits of extending compulsory attendance to rural localities. He instead argued that State-aid offering direct local financial inducement, as happened in England, would improve the attendance at school.

In the final pages of his report, Dale offered some general remarks on his overall impression of the Irish schools. Discipline compared unfavourably with their English counterparts. The unsuitability for purpose of school buildings, lack of adequate equipment and faulty organisation were given as the causes of this. Regarding instruction, Ireland compared well 'in point of accuracy' but quite unfavourably 'in point of intelligence and aim.'[48] This was attributed to the residual effect of the old payment by results system and the narrow curriculum prior to 1900. The implementation of the Revised Programme should remediate these defects.

When Dale set out the format of his report, he stressed from the beginning he would deal with the Model Schools 'in a separate Excursus' because their formation and constitution set them apart from other schools.[49] This exposition took the form of an appendix which ran to six pages. Dale could not make a valid comparison as no such equivalent school system existed in England, but that did not protect them from close scrutiny. From the foundation of the national education system in Ireland, Model Schools were built and funded exclusively by the National Board. The commissioners appointed and dismissed teachers, while each model school was managed by an inspector. In the Annual Report of 1901–2, the number of such schools was thirty. According to Rule 111 of the Board, Dale quoted that

[48] Ibid., p. 91.
[49] Ibid., p. 1.

> the chief objects of Model Schools are to promote united education, to exhibit to surrounding Schools the most improved methods of literary and scientific instruction, and to educate young persons for the office of Teacher.[50]

With reference to the latter objective, a special category of teacher, called a pupil-teacher was established. It was originally envisaged by the commissioners that these pupil-teachers in the District Model Schools would be the source of supply for entry to the central training establishment in Marlborough Street, Dublin. This had not transpired and these pupil-teachers competed for entry into training colleges on the same standing as other entrants. At the time, there were roughly 180 pupil-teachers employed in Model Schools at a cost of approximately £5,000 per annum. The attritional nature of the system was illustrated by a survey over a five-year period to July 1901, which showed that of the 388 pupil-teachers trained, 37 per cent 'did not adopt the teaching profession.' Dale was crystal clear in his assessment:

> There does not…appear to be any reason of sufficient weight to justify the existence of this special class of Teacher in Model Schools. No educational advantage is secured, either to the Pupil-Teachers themselves or to the Schools, which cannot be obtained equally well under the ordinary monitorial system.[51]

With regard to the physical condition of the Model Schools, satisfaction was expressed as regards heating, lighting, sanitation and playground facilities. However, it was considered 'quite impossible to regard their buildings as models of what a School-building should be in order to satisfy modern requirements.'[52] The number of classrooms was not sufficient resulting in large numbers of children being taught in one room. Of particular concern was the fact that many of the Model Schools had a low enrolment especially in areas with a large Roman Catholic population.[53] Thus, buildings built to accommodate 250 to 700 pupils often had only 50 to 100 pupils on rolls. Dale noted:

> It is well known that they have absolutely failed in one of their chief objects – the promotion of the united education of children of all creeds…in no less than eleven Model Schools there were in 1901, no Roman Catholic pupils at all; and in others the

[50] Ibid., p. 93.
[51] Ibid., p. 95.
[52] Ibid., p. 93.
[53] Since the appointment of Paul Cullen in 1850 as head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, opposition to the Model School system became an integral part of ecclesiastical policy.

> number did not exceed twenty five, and generally fell below ten.[54]

In 1902, the net expenditure on Model Schools, excluding the amount spent by the Board of Works on maintenance etc., was £30,732 10*s.* 5*d*. The cost to the state averaged £4 10*s*. per pupil, which was high when compared with the average cost per pupil in an ordinary national school of £1 5*s*. to £2 10*s*. More to the point, Dale concluded that the education provided by the Model Schools 'is no better than, and in some cases not as good as, that given in the best ordinary Schools.'[55] He advocated that radical changes should be made to assuage the objections of the Catholic hierarchy to these schools or else that 'unsuccessful' Model Schools in predominantly Catholic areas be phased out. Regarding the others, with an eye to the future, in the event of local authority liability being established, the State could supply the buildings rent free while the locality would bear the cost of their upkeep. This was in line with the Powis Commission's findings decades earlier.[56]

Dale's report was the epitome of lucidity and objectivity and provided a concise and detailed account of where the Irish national system of education stood at the turn of the century. O'Donovan has correctly observed that it 'provided the all-important contextual background to national education that was not considered by the Belmore Commission six years previously.'[57] Dale's experience and expertise coupled with the fact that he acted in a singular capacity helped bring focus to his report.

2.4 Problems with the publication of Dale's Report

On 19 January 1904, Dale forwarded his report to Under-Secretary Antony MacDonnell, expressing his regret 'that the correction and verification of the proofs [had] taken longer than expected.'[58] A week later the chief secretary was advised by MacDonnell, 'it will be necessary for the Government to determine what publicity is to be given to Mr. Dale's report. The print at present is marked Confidential.'[59] He pointed out that as the National Board had cooperated with the inquiry, they would expect to see the results. However, if a copy of the report was given to them it would be difficult to avoid publicity. The report, he cautioned, 'gives a very bad aspect to the sanitary and

[54] *Dale report 1904*, p. 96.
[55] Ibid., p. 97.
[56] Ibid.
[57] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, p. 270.
[58] NAI, CSO RP 1305/04, 19 Jan 1904, Dale to MacDonnell.
[59] Ibid., 26 Jan 1904, MacDonnell to Wyndham.

other conditions of the schools but this was already well known.'[60] He stated that 'in the interim…I am preparing to express my own views upon the Report.'[61]

Shortly afterwards, MacDonnell submitted to the chief secretary a twenty-page critique of Dale's report, which he described, rather disingenuously, as a 'brief memorandum.'[62] Sir Antony MacDonnell was appointed under-secretary in October 1902. A Catholic and a self-professed liberal, MacDonnell was a graduate of Queen's College Galway, who had a long and distinguished career in the civil service in India from 1864 to 1901. Noted for his administrative ability which combined with his tenacity in facilitating land reform earned him the soubriquet of 'The Bengal Tiger'. MacDonnell did not actively seek out the post, but when offered it, he requested from Wyndham

> adequate opportunities of influencing the policy and acts of the Irish Administration, and (subject of course to your control) freedom of action in executive matters.[63]

Wyndham seemed only too happy to acquire such an experienced and well-recommended colleague. Meanwhile, MacDonnell was in no doubt as to the formidable task that lay ahead:

> It was understood that while I was to discharge the Under Secretary's duties with more than the usual freedom, I was also to assist in solving the various pending political questions, namely Land, Education, Irish Administration, and the reconciliation of the people to the Government.[64]

MacDonnell's comprehensive memorandum on Dale's report was emblematic of his thorough approach. Dale's findings generally found favour with MacDonnell. Thus the establishment of school boards under local educational authorities was viewed by MacDonnell as highly commendable for the greater part of Ireland. However, in 'backward' localities it would be difficult to find 'either the materials out of which efficient School Boards could be made or the public spirit by which they could be supported.'[65] Moreover, he observed that any proposal which might impinge on 'the exclusive control which the priests now exercise over National Schools' would meet

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] NAI, CSO RP 4173/04, date unclear 1904, MacDonnell's memorandum to Wyndham.
[63] Balfour MS 49804, 22 September 1902, MacDonnell to Wyndham, cited in Eunan O'Halpin, *The decline of the Union: British government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1987), p. 33.
[64] Ibid., p. 34.
[65] NAI, CSO RP 4173/04, MacDonnell's memo contd.

with the determined opposition of the Catholic Hierarchy.[66] This he considered regrettable as the introduction of some lay control over elementary education had 'the potentiality of great good for this country in many directions.'[67]

In the matter of central control of education, MacDonnell commented at length on this topic even though it was outside Dale's terms of reference, and he had referred to it only tangentially in his report. Owing to the absence of connection and coordination between the National and Intermediate Boards he proposed the replacement of the two boards with one entity, a Department of Public Instruction. He was at pains to stress the following:

> It is obvious to me that in no other way can efficient control and direction be practised or co-ordination of Primary and Secondary Education – which is one of the greatest wants of education in Ireland at present – be successfully effected.[68]

Legislation would be necessary to bring this about. The National Board could be dissolved by the withdrawal of its Charter but the abolition of the Intermediate Board could not happen without altering the law. If the concept of a single new Board, or Department of Public Instruction as MacDonnell termed it, was accepted, he recommended that it should consist partly of members nominated by the Crown and partly of elected members; the latter should represent the crucial interests of the ratepayers, the school managers and the teachers.[69] The powers of control over such a central board would rest with the government because

> in any delegation of authority…the Government must reserve to itself full power to see that the delegated authority is duly exercised, and to make good deficiencies when they occur. It must reserve not only a general control in all financial questions, but full power of direction in all matters of principle and of revision when necessity arises.[70]

Under the heading 'Administrative Detail', MacDonnell stressed the centrality of the matter of building grants. Noting the urgency of the call in Dale's report for improvements in school premises to advance the quality of education, he added his personal opinion that 'there is no doubt at all that a large number of existing

[66] Ibid., p. 2.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., p. 3.
[69] Ibid., p. 4.
[70] Ibid.

schoolhouses should be abandoned, while a still latter number are unfit, in their present state, for purposes of teaching.'[71] He outlined a narrative on the funding of school buildings. In England, the payment by government for the building of schools ceased with the passing of the Education Act of 1870; after this the expense was defrayed by local rates. MacDonnell argued that the Treasury was 'antipathetic to Irish demands' and there was no hope that remonstrance or argument would prevail.[72] He stressed that if educational progress was to be assured some form of a local rate would have to be established. He anticipated opposition to any such increase as existing rates were already considered very burdensome. He was at pains to point out:

> But no matter how the pill may be gilded it will not be readily swallowed. People may prefer to organize the present spasmodic efforts of Sunday collections at Churches for School and Church repairs.[73]

MacDonnell also noted that repeated complaints had been made regarding the delay in publishing the new standard plans for future school buildings. But he pointed out that the Committee on School Buildings, which had been convened in autumn of 1902, had submitted their report. They recommended two new sets of school plans; a 'Higher' which matched the maximum standards of the English system, and a 'Lower' which met the minimum requirements.[74] The Committee considered that in the circumstances of Ireland, the all-round adoption of the higher standard school plans would be a 'counsel of perfection.'[75] Instead, they recommended, and MacDonnell agreed, that such plans would be adopted for County Boroughs schools or those in excess of 140 pupils. For all other schools the lower standard plans would suffice.

The proliferation of small schools was the next issue considered. MacDonnell opined that 'so far as sectarian sentiment' operated in school management, little could be done to amalgamate these schools.[76] The emphasis should be 'to set our face against separate schools for differences of sex and age.' The National Board fully recognised this necessity but acknowledged that challenges stood in the way. The government had

[71] Ibid., p. 5.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p. 11.
[74] Ibid., p.12.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 17.

requested ‘a detailed statement of the lines upon which they wish to operate’, on receipt of which a submission would be made to the Treasury.[77]

Finally, MacDonnell returned to the interconnectedness of primary and secondary education and stated that one could not be adequately considered apart from the other. He went further to proclaim that no great national education settlement could be secured without the University Question being also resolved. Solutions, acceptable to the great majority of the Irish people, were before the chief secretary and he cautioned:

> Delay…will prejudicially affect any arrangement touching Primary and Secondary Education that may be adopted. Without the culture which University training will give Teachers in Schools, our Elementary and Secondary Education will be mechanical and unproductive of its true ends.[78]

While considering MacDonnell’s memorandum, Wyndham voiced serious concerns on specific aspects of Dale’s report. These misgivings he outlined in a minute to MacDonnell marked ‘Immediate’ which instructed him to present Dale’s report ‘in the form shown in [the] annexed copy.’[79] He stipulated that some amendments and deletions be made to the existing document. These consisted of references to the Report on Building Grants which had not been made public to date and also to some confidential information furnished to Dale by his office. His instructions were clear:

> Will you please have fresh proofs of the Report, as amended struck off and sent to me. The paging…must be made to square with the Report. It would be desirable, therefore, when deleting the marked passages simply to enlarge the spacing where necessary and not to disturb the type otherwise. The Report will be presented as a Command Paper.[80]

In total fifteen changes were ordered to be made to the report submitted by Dale. These ranged from the deletion of passages in totality to their substitution by alternative wording. While Dale had sight of the Report of the Committee on Building Grants, the Commissioners of National Education had not. All references by him to its contents in his report were erased. A typical example of a change in emphasis can be found in the *General Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations* – Premises No. 5: ‘The

[77] Ibid., The issue of the proliferation of small schools and their amalgamation, under a new rule 127(b), is dealt with in Chapter Six p.152
[78] Ibid., p. 18.
[79] NAI, CSO RP 3180/04, 29 Feb 1904, Wyndham to MacDonnell.
[80] Ibid.

premises of about 10 per cent of the Irish country schools compare unfavourably as regards the requirements essential for a School building with country Schools in England.' This was changed to 'A majority of the Irish country Schools compare not unfavourably as regards the requirements essential for a School building with country Schools in England.'[81] A more material amendment to Dale's report concerned Appendix VII. This two-page appendix was Dale's final submission entitled '*An estimate of the ultimate financial effect of certain of the proposals made in this Report*.' This section was directed to be deleted *in toto*. The inference to be drawn from its excision was that in matters financial, the Irish administration would be relying on their own counsel. One can only conjecture Wyndham's motivation in his other emendations of Dale's text. In particular, all references to building grants were deleted. The administration was well aware of the conclusions of the unpublished 1902 Building Grants Inquiry, which included the recommendation to introduce local rates to fund education. Politically this was acutely sensitive, as local rates implied a modicum of local accountability in education administration. Such a development would impinge on the denominational control of management of national schools, hence the circumspection.

2.5 Response of the National Board to Dale's Report

The National Board as the main stakeholder in Irish education was understandably anxious to be appraised of the contents of Dale's report. In early February they wrote to the office of the chief secretary requesting information. Having failed to receive a reply, Bishop Archdall of Killaloe, at their board meeting on 1 March 1904, proposed and it was ordered accordingly:

> That the Lord Lieutenant be informed…that the Commissioners are surprised that a report which has been so long in the hands of the Government has not yet been supplied to the members of the Board.[82]

The following day the CSO wrote to the Board explaining that the delay

> was occasioned by considerations of presentation to Parliament and while I am happy to supply you with the number of copies asked for I am to state that in the form in which it has been decided to present the Report certain references to the report of the committee on Building Grants and to confidential returns

[81] NAI, CSO RP 10032/04.
[82] *Mins. CNEI*, p. 60, 1 March 1904.

> supplied to Mr Dale as well as for one or two other matters have been deleted; and His Excellency must request that the copies enclosed, which are in the original unrevised form are to be regarded as confidential.[83]

On the 9 May 1904, in reply to a letter from the CSO, dated 25 March, the Commissioners of National Education reported that they had given consideration to Dale's Report at three special meetings of the Board.[84] Usually the regular Board meetings were chaired by the longest serving member. Breaking with custom, Starkie took the chair at these sessions, which gave an indication of the importance he attached to the Dale report. However, the eleven-page response from the Board was a disappointment. The first four pages were dedicated to school buildings and their maintenance. Wherever the blame for shortcomings was to fall, they stated, it should not fall on the commissioners who 'for many years past…have been urging successive Governments to make adequate provision in the annual estimates for this purpose.'[85] The Board, they emphasised, had no funds at their disposal for repairs and maintenance. The commissioners blandly aspired to see 'organised co-operation amongst the managers' with a view to providing for the wants of their schools.[86] Similarly, regarding the various strands of Dale's report, the tone was one of agreement with his findings in general while stressing that the reforms suggested were already in hand or had in the recent past been rebuffed by government and Treasury due to lack of funding. In summary, the Board's response could be described as more of a commentary than a critique.

Soon another problem arose, albeit this time indirectly, from Dale's report. Traditionally, the Commissioners of National Education published an annual report on the various aspects of primary schooling under their charge. Prior to publication, following precedent, a draft copy was presented for approval to the CSO. At their Board meeting on 5 July 1904, the commissioners approved the final draft of their report for 1903 which included in its content 'copies of the letters from the Board to the Irish Government…[pertaining] to Mr Dale's Report.'[87] Acceptance of these reports was generally a formality. However in this instance a Government Minute under the subject

[83] NAI, CSO RP 3180/04, 2 March 1904, Wyndham to Lemass.
[84] Ibid., 8692/04, 9 May 1904, Board's letter of response to Wyndham re Dale's report.
[85] Ibid.
[86] *Mins. CNEI*, 27 April 1904.
[87] Ibid., 5 July 1904.

heading of 'National Education – Annual Report for 1903' asked that before this report was accepted by the government for publication, certain matters should be revisited.[88] The writer intimated that the CNEI annual report gave the distinct impression that the Board was locked in an ongoing struggle for much-needed reforms which the government stoutly resisted and which in turn 'forced upon the Board a policy of inaction.'[89] He also drew attention to the publication in the report of copies of Board letters to the government regarding proposed reforms and aspects of Dale's Report. Apart from the unfairness of presenting only one side of the argument, it was the view of the Judicial Division official that such correspondence was confidential and consequently not for publication. In an accompanying minute, Assistant Under-Secretary J.B. Dougherty agreed totally that:

> The report is not a report but an 'apologia' intended to roll the blame for existing educational deficiencies from the shoulders of the Board to those of the Government. The publication of the letters to the Under Secretary without any reference…to Govt. is most objectionable and should not be permitted without remonstration.[90]

Dougherty suggested that the matter should be raised with the Resident Commissioner as he was an officer of government. On the following day MacDonnell wrote to Starkie drawing his attention to the publication of the letters from the Board to the government which should be regarded as confidential.[91] He was asked to bring the matter to the commissioners' attention. If he did so, it is not recorded and the report remained unamended and unpublished.

In due course, the CNEI Report for 1903 reached the chief secretary. As the minister with responsibility to parliament for the expenditure and control of funding for Education in Ireland, Wyndham declared he had found passages to which he must take exception. He explained:

> I have undertaken to discuss the whole question of Pr[imary] Ed[ucation], including Building Grants & the allocation of the Development Grant with the Tr[easury] in the Autumn. I cannot,

[88] NAI, CSO RP 13709/04, 21 July 1904, internal minute for attention of MacDonnell.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] *Mins. CNEI*, 22 July 1904.

> therefore, put my 'imprimatur' on passages calculated to prejudice that discussion.[92]

Wyndham indicated that he had taken steps to draw Starkie's attention to the objectionable passages in the report and that in the meanwhile he ordered that its publication be delayed.[93] A special meeting of the Board was held on 26 July to consider the impasse. It was decided that the actual correspondence be omitted, but that their substance and content be incorporated into the body of the report.[94] On the 6 August 1904, Wyndham was relieved to inform MacDonnell:

> The Board of National Education now submit a revised Report. There has been expunged from the Report the whole of the correspondence with gov[ernment] as such, but the bulk of the statements and recommendations made by the B[oar]d in that correspondence have been transferred bodily into the Report itself as recommendations *de novo*.[95]

He was of the opinion, and MacDonnell agreed, that no exception could now be taken to publication and that the usual letter of acknowledgement should issue which sanctioned publication of Seventieth Report of CNEI for 1903. Be that as it may, the report was not circulated until January 1905.[96]

2.6 Response of the Managers to Dale's Report

The government was anxious to ascertain the views of the public, and especially those of the managers of national schools, prior to taking 'effective action' on Dale's Report and it was ordered that any 'newspaper criticisms and allusions' on the matter should be cut out and filed.[97] The responses that issued on the publication of the report were voluminous and mostly vituperative. The *Freeman's Journal*, in its editorial, had little doubt about the motivation behind the despatch of Dale 'to scurry through' eighty-seven national schools and use that as a basis to report on over eight thousand. It observed:

> There is a clear design revealed in Mr. Dale's Report to provide an excuse for cutting down even the present insufficient

[92] NAI, CSO RP 13709/04, 21 March 1904, internal minute.
[93] Ibid.
[94] *Mins. CNEI*, 26 July 1904.
[95] NAI, CSO RP 15095/04, 6 August 1904, Wyndham to MacDonnell.
[96] Ibid., 11 January 1905, MacDonnell to H.M. Stationary Office.
[97] Ibid., 3180/04, 16 March 1904, Internal minute.

> expenditure on Irish education, and throwing the burden on the Irish ratepayer and the charitable subscriber.[98]

Archbishop Walsh, now engaged with the Irish University Question, took an overall pessimistic view. He cautioned against the possibility of the Irish administration introducing reforms based on the recommendations of Dale 'wild as some of them are':

> There is no possible mistake in connection with the work of education in Ireland, that I should be disposed to regard as beyond the capacity…of our present Irish Administration to commit.[99]

The Bishop of Meath, Dr Matthew Gaffney deplored the secularisation of education in Ireland 'by the Government, whose helmsman [Starkie] rules like the Autocrat of Russia and whose shrieking speech of slander against our priest managers is still ringing in our ears.' He vowed:

> As long as I live I shall defend to the last shred of parochial property the schools of this diocese against any encroachment on their former rights; and it is pleasing to know I shall have a strong bodyguard.[100]

The Irish hierarchy at their June meeting in Maynooth, issued a forceful statement on their position under the headings of 'The Right of Managerial Control Exposure' and 'Repudiation of Secularism'. This asserted that any limitation or reduction of the control of the clerical management would, if adopted, be injurious 'to the religious interests of our people' and would cause them to reconsider their 'whole position in relation to those schools.'[101] The lower clergy also had their say. Rev. E. O'Reilly of Kilcormac, Co. Offaly, speaking at a meeting of clergy and teachers asked: 'Can the Government take our schools? Can the Government as it did of old with our churches, take now our schools and add another item to the roll of plunder?'[102]

The Church of Ireland was also concerned about changes to the school management system, especially regarding the financing of schools by local rates. An article in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* noted:

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[98] *FJ*, 11 April 1904.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 12 Aug 1904.
[101] Ibid., 3 June 1904.
[102] Ibid., 12 July 1904.

> School-rates, it is said, will be levied; and if levied, then on the principle of no taxation without representation, local school committees will be elected by the general body of ratepayers. Have we at all grasped what this would mean? Or do we know that such popularly elected school committees in three-fourths of Ireland would mean the placing of our Church schools under Roman Catholic management? Are we prepared to yield to this?[103]

In the House of Commons, some days after the publication of Dale's report, John Redmond, leader of the Irish Party, quoted freely from the author's description of the derelict state of Irish national schools:

> [Dale] said they were generally dirty, small repairs were neglected, and the out offices were rarely clean and sometimes indescribably filthy; out of 100 schools he had inspected in England he had never seen any kept with such utter disregard of care and decency as in Ireland.[104]

Redmond added from his own personal observation that the teacher frequently had to pay for the upkeep and heating out of 'his own miserable pittance'. However, he studiously avoided lending support for Dale's recommendations which were specifically intended to ameliorate such adverse circumstances. Redmond had touched a raw nerve as evidenced by the statement issued on behalf of the Catholic clerical managers of Elphin diocese:

> That we consider the statement of a prominent member of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons in March last that the repairs, up-keep, and heating of the schools are done by teachers [as] misleading and untrue; and we regret that in this…the speaker relied on the report of Mr. Dale, an English Inspector imported by the Government to prop up Dr. Starkie in his false charges against the managers, and his attack on their present influence in the management of the schools.[105]

There was little room for doubt that any attempt from any quarter to dilute denominational control of schools would be met with stout resistance, and that rather than facilitating the much needed reform of the system, the Dale report had aroused the opposition of the main Churches to any reform of the system that would, in any way, diminish the control they had established over schooling.

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[103] *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 29 April 1904.
[104] Hansard 4, H.C. debate, vol 131 c1283, 16 March 1904.
[105] *FJ*, 18 April 1904.

2.7 Conclusion

The appointment of William Starkie as Resident Commissioner accelerated the process of curricular reform underway in Irish primary education as he spearheaded an accompanying programme of administrative restructuring. His Belfast speech in September 1902 gave an indication of the order of change that was envisaged. Central to his presentation was his criticism of the lack of interest shown by managers in the upkeep and running of schools under their care and the absence of a local rate to finance education. The content of Starkie's speech reflected the position of Chief Secretary George Wyndham, whose object was an Education Department to replace the National Board. Wyndham was encouraged to believe progress might be made to this end by the passing into law of the Education Act of 1902 which saw the provision of the various strands of education in England and Wales transferred from individual school boards to local education authorities under the control of a central Board of Education. The fact that the extra expenditure of £1.4 million required to implement the Education Act would, if a comparable arrangement was followed in Ireland, bring a financial windfall to Irish education of £185,000 was a further incentive to move in that direction, and it was with this object in mind that Wyndham had Frank Dale, an inspector of the English Board of Education, compare the Irish education system with that of England. Dale reported an under-resourced primary education system marred by ill-equipped and poorly designed schools, many of which were in an unsanitary state. He identified the fundamental defects of the Irish system as the multiplicity of small schools, the inadequate and faulty distribution of staff, irregularity of school attendance and the want of local interest and funding. Using English educational conditions as a benchmark, Dale's solution to the shortcomings in Irish educational provision was the replication of the administrative, legislative and pedagogical practices recently introduced in England.

The reaction of denominational managerial interests, especially those of Catholics, to Dale's finding was one of open hostility. They, correctly, interpreted Dale's inquiry as a tactic to pave the way for the abolition of the Board and its replacement with a department of education. The National Board, with all its flaws, was far more acceptable to them than a new education department which would introduce new modes of management and funding. The Churches in particular were simply not prepared to surrender the managerial control that had taken so much effort to achieve in the nineteenth century. They perceived that the proposed changes amounted to a

secularisation of the schools. From a religious viewpoint the salvation of immortal souls was a higher and more important goal than either curricular improvement or administrative efficiency. But change was in air and the battle lines had been drawn. In Part 2 consideration is given to the political dimension of the push for education reform. As titular head of the Irish administration, the chief secretary was key to this process.

Part Two

Politics and Primary Education 1900–116

Chapter Three

The frustration of administrative reform – the chief secretaries from Wyndham to Birrell, 1900–16

3.1 Introduction

For the duration of the period of this study, the dominant political issue was the constitutional relationship between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. All political deliberation was viewed through the prism of Home Rule. For nationalists, the criterion was clear – would the outcome advance or hinder the prospects of Home Rule? For unionists, the overriding consideration was to avoid any dilution of British influence in Irish affairs. Accordingly, the effective administration of the country was often determined by what was feasible rather than by what was best. One manifestation of this was the Balfourian policies adopted in the late nineteenth century. This period of Conservative Party dominance was marked in Ireland by the policy of what is termed 'constructive unionism', as a result of which ameliorative legislation in key areas such as land tenure, local government, poverty, emigration and education was enacted. It was intended that these measures would diminish nationalist aspirations for Home Rule by showing alternative ways in which Ireland could benefit from the Union. By the time George Wyndham arrived in 1900, this process had brought about marked progress in land tenure legislation, the setting up of the Congested Districts Board in 1891 and the passing of the Local Government Act of 1898. The situation was not so positive when it came to education. Confident that Dale's report and Starkie's reforms heralded a new era, Wyndham outlined his education plans to Parliament in early 1904. The response was not what he anticipated. Both Wyndham and his successor Walter Long (March–December 1905) were soon to discover the limits of what could be achieved in a fractured polity. It remained to be seen if the appointment, in 1902, of the talented and forceful Antony MacDonnell as under-secretary would be beneficial. The Liberals' return to power in 1906, saw in time, Chief Secretaries James Bryce (1905–7) and Augustine Birrell (1907–16) engage more fully with the problems confronting education. Contemporaneously, the question of the teaching of the Irish language in national schools emerged as a key issue for both the Commissioners of the Board of Education and the administration at Dublin Castle.

3.2 Tenure of Conservatives Wyndham and Long 1900 to 1906

George Wyndham succeeded Gerald Balfour as chief secretary for Ireland in November 1900. An active and energetic figure, he possessed an intimate knowledge of the working of the Irish administration, having previously served as private secretary to A.J. Balfour, the chief secretary from 1887–91. The initial period of Wyndham's tenure was marred by tension between himself and Lord Lieutenant Cadogan, particularly in the matter of policing agrarian unrest. Although Wyndham had the ear of Prime Minister Balfour, Cadogan occupied a seat at the cabinet table. This situation resolved itself with the departure of Cadogan in August 1902 and the appointment of the more amenable Lord Dudley in his stead. An added bonus was that the cabinet seat, reserved for Ireland, was allocated to the chief secretary. Another significant factor was his appointment of Sir Antony MacDonnell as under-secretary in 1902. As already indicated in Chapter Two, Wyndham reached out to him out to implement his programme of reforms. MacDonnell, a man of formidable character, looked for and received assurances that his role would be more administrative than consultative. Miller has observed that the appointment of Starkie and now MacDonnell 'harmonised well with [Dublin Castle's] ideas of reducing religious animosity and promoting independence from clerical dictation.'[1]

Starkie's appointment as Resident Commissioner brought about significant changes in the administration and provision of primary education in Ireland. In his 1902 Belfast speech Starkie stoutly nailed his colours to the mast regarding the necessity for further reform. Despite trenchant criticism, he doubled down on his message by the publication and dissemination of his speech. Wyndham concurred and the dispatch of Frank Dale to report on Irish schools was part of a strategy to confirm the necessity for a recalibration of educational provision in Ireland. With the publication of Dale's report in March 1904 and its adverse conclusions on the state of schools, expectation was high of an official response. They did not have long to wait.

On 18 April 1904, during an estimates debate in the House of Commons, the IPP tabled a motion: 'That, in the opinion of this House, the system of primary education in Ireland is fundamentally defective, and has proved injurious to its operation.'[2] It was generally

[1] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, p. 91.
[2] *Hansard* 4, H.C. debate, vol 133 cc397–451, 18 April 1904. The MPs in order of speaking were Joseph Nannetti (Dublin, College Green), Thomas O'Donnell (Kerry West), Sir John Gorst (Cambridge University), John Redmond (Waterford), T.W. Russell (Tyrone South), T.P. O'Connor (Liverpool

anticipated that Wyndham would avail of the opportunity to reveal his plans for Irish education. It also provided Irish MPs with a unique opportunity to lay before parliament their observations and grievances on Irish education. Over twenty MPs participated, with most speakers invoking the Dale Report in support of their arguments. Of particular note was Thomas O'Donnell, the MP for Kerry West, a former teacher, who stated that Dale

> saw nothing but schools badly built, wretchedly equipped, insanitary and cheerless, children shivering in winter with no fire to warm them, teachers poorly paid and with poorer prospects of promotion or recognition of service.[3]

In a lengthy contribution, he cited educational research from England, Scotland, Germany and the USA in support of his argument that:

> Education in Ireland required to be nationalised and modernised; nominated boards should be swept away… primary, secondary, technical and University [education] should be coordinated…the position of the teacher should be raised in importance, that his salary and prospects should be enlarged and his training connected with the national university…Steps should be taken to teach the Irish language as a compulsory subject, to inculcate patriotism, civic duties and responsibilities, love of home and fatherland; to banish corporal punishment; and to pay more attention to the formation of character than to the mere giving of information.[4]

To achieve this outcome, O'Donnell stressed that 'nothing but the most enthusiastic application on the part of the people, guided and encouraged by a fostering Irish Parliament, could ever repair the mischief of the past.'

Sir John Gorst, a leading light in educational circles in England, was the only contributor to the debate without a political connection to Ireland. He, together with his private secretary Robert Morant, were responsible for the formulation and enactment (in the face of much opposition) of the Education Act 1902 for England and Wales. Gorst sought to impress upon the chief secretary that in any scheme brought forward for

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Scotland) Samuel Young (Cavan East), John Lonsdale (Armagh Mid) Chief Secretary Wyndham, Charles Devlin (Galway), William Redmond (Clare East), Sir James Haslett (Belfast North), John Clancy (Dublin County North), Colonel John Nolan (Galway North), Thomas Sloan (Belfast South), Dr T.J. Macnamara (Camberwell North), William London (Limerick East), John Boland (Kerry South), Gustav Wolff (Belfast East) and William Field (Dublin St. Patrick's).

[3] *Hansard* 4, H.C. debate, vol 133 cc397–451, 18 April 1904.

[4] Ibid.

remodelling Irish education, the multiplicity of boards in its administration must cease. He further added:

> There ought to be a real root-and-branch reform of Irish education, and he was sure that all parties in the House…would do their best to help the Irish people to have a really proper and valuable scheme established. That scheme should be one responsible to Parliament, and the Department which had charge in Ireland of education should undertake the whole education of Ireland – elementary, intermediate and technical – and should be responsible to this House for the mode in which the money voted by this House was expended.[5]

If the intention of the government was to utilise Gorst's contribution as a device to soften up Irish MPs, prior to the unveiling of Wyndham's blueprint for Irish education, it quickly became unstuck. John Redmond intervened and gave notice to the chief secretary:

> To warn him that so far as the sentiments entertained by the Irish members were concerned, they did not approve and would not tolerate…the creation of a new Castle board to take the place of the present Board of National Education…The creation of what they called a new Government Department in Ireland to take over responsibility for primary education in that country would not receive their sanction, and most certainly would not receive the confidence of the mass of the Irish people.[6]

Redmond, referring to the Dale report, described its contents as an utter condemnation of the Board of National Education. He stated the present system was rotten and had to go. However, as he sat on the opposition benches, 'he did not propose to suggest a scheme for remedying the difficulties.' The eventual solution could only be found in the implementation of Home Rule. Redmond's intervention was unplanned, and unanticipated. His original intention had been to speak after the chief secretary, but he was not prepared to leave Gorst's contribution unanswered and he seized on the moment to forewarn Wyndham that a new government department along the lines suggested was totally unacceptable to the IPP.

When Chief Secretary Wyndham rose to speak, it was clear that Redmond's blunt enunciation of his party's position had compelled him to revise his approach. He admitted that 'had he risen [to speak] an hour before' he would have proposed that

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

‘reform in Irish education could be carried out on the lines which had come to be regarded as normal in respect of the English Education Act and the Scotch Education Bill.’ Now, faced with open opposition, he told the House he intended to deal with Irish educational reform ‘in a tentative spirit that afternoon.’ In the interests of clarity, he bluntly stated that he did not believe ‘there was any alternative between a board which was not responsible to the House and a board which was a Government Department.’ He stressed that in England and Wales, the three branches of education were now coordinated under one government department, all assisted by local rates and under popular control. With regard to financing in 1902–3, public funding for education in England amounted to £9,750,000. A sum of £9,500,000 was provided by local rates and loans taken out by Local Education Authorities. In summary, public funding for education was matched £1 for £1 by local contributions. In Ireland the amount was a mere 1s. to £1, one in twenty. While admitting that Ireland was a poor country, he pointed out that primary education received a substantial amount of public money but no local assistance. Multiple schools segregated by religion, sex and age rendered the system not only expensive but inefficient. Anyone who read Dale’s report could not deny the need for reform but it was extremely hard to find a scheme that would be generally acceptable.

Wyndham outlined the various approaches that could be pursued. He suggested the Government could continue ‘to pour Irish money into three separate and uncoordinated receptacles’, namely primary, secondary and technical schools. This in his opinion was unsustainable. Another possibility was ‘a very ambitious and comprehensive attempt’ at reform. There is little doubt that his aim was a coordinated single department for education in Ireland, funded in part by local contributions and modelled on the lines of the 1902 English Education Act. This was his preferred course, but it carried with it the risk of failure and that this might ‘delay the course of educational reform for years.’ Accordingly, his chosen path was one of a gradual introduction of coordination, rate-aided funding and local control to begin at technical and secondary level. This approach would be extended to cover the primary system ‘at not a very late date’. In the interim, in an oblique reference to substandard conditions as outlined in Dale’s report, he intended to accompany ‘this first attempt at organic reform with the remedying of material defects in primary education’. Looking to the future, Wyndham concluded his speech with an aspirational flourish:

> The difficulties were great; but it was the duty of Parliament to get over them, through them, or round them, and in any case to get beyond them, so as to prevent a new disability on the rising generation of a country for whose welfare they held themselves constitutionally responsible.[7]

Wyndham's speech was not to everyone's liking, but at last the speculation was at an end. He had outlined government policy for Irish education as one of the coordination of the three strands of schooling and the gradual introduction of local rates and control, beginning with secondary schools and extending to the primary sector in due course. As an indication of the seriousness of his intent, Dale's investigative talents were availed of again. On this occasion he was required in the company of T.A. Stephens, another English-based inspector, to report on the intermediate system. With the government's intentions now in full view, denominational interests took stock of the situation.

If Wyndham considered that the moderate exposition and gradualist nature of the elaboration of his plans for education would placate clerical sensitivities, he was greatly mistaken. Speaking to students in Maynooth on 21 June 1904, Cardinal Logue adverted to the peregrinations of Dale, accompanied by Stephens, through the intermediate schools. He viewed this as an act of desperation on the part of Wyndham, who having failed to 'departmentalise' primary education now wished to gain control over secondary schools. Any attempt in this regard was bound to fail. He declared emphatically:

> The Intermediate School authorities will preserve their independence, submit their educational results to public test, but admitting no further interference with their management. Catholic Ireland has produced its Intermediate Schools; it is not going to surrender them to the domination of Orange Toryism, Nonconformist Liberalism or Mugmump Agnosticism organised by any Government Department.[8]

The Irish hierarchy convened the following day. Having given consideration to recent developments in primary education, they issued a forceful statement on their position under the headings of 'The Right of Managerial Control Exposure' and 'Exposure of Repudiation of Secularism'. It declared that any limitation or reduction of the control of the clerical management would, if adopted, be injurious 'to the religious interests of our

[7] Ibid.
[8] *FJ*, 22 June 1904.

people' and would cause them to reconsider their 'whole position in relation to those schools.'[9] The bishops further emphasised:

> We regard with distrust this new-found zeal for educational reform and the importation of English secularists to propagate their views, and are satisfied that its purpose is not the improvement of our schools, but the elimination from them of the religious influence of the Church…This is a state of things to which we shall never assent…We shall not be induced by specious pretexts to adopt measures that are conceived in an anti-Catholic and an anti-National spirit.[10]

With regard to funding of education, they stated:

> England is transferring over a million a year from local rates to Imperial taxation for the support of her schools, the Equivalent Grant for this country is refused to our primary schools on the score that our poor people do not contribute enough locally to their support. [This grant] by itself would be sufficient to remove practically all the material defects about which complaints are now being made.[11]

The Catholic hierarchy in their June statement commended John Redmond for the prompt and decisive action he took in the House of Commons when Wyndham outlined his education proposals in April. Moreover, Redmond and the Irish Party had popular support in Ireland as reflected in the support which came from local councils protesting against the suggestion of the secularisation of schools, and thereby, Miller suggests, in effect disclaiming 'any desire [by them] to accept responsibilities in education.'[12]

Wyndham's resounding success in progressing land reform encouraged him to believe he could do likewise in the sphere of education.[13] However, at the prompting of MacDonnell, he did concede in the allocation of a portion of the Equivalent Grant for education purposes. In August 1904, MacDonnell wrote to the chief secretary:

> [The grant] is by origin an educational grant and if the prior lien on it, created by the Land Purchase Act of last year, is satisfied,

[9] Ibid., 23 June 1904.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, p. 123.
[13] Between 1903 and 1920 nearly nine million acres changed hands from landlord to tenants and two million more were in the process of being sold.

> education must be admitted to have the next permanent claim to its resources.[14]

The annual report of the CNEI for 1905–6 indicated that this was a significant concession. It noted:

> We have now been found to enable managers to appoint assistant teachers in every school with an average of fifty pupils or over, by the assignment of a share of the Ireland Development Fund to this purpose.[15]

In the meantime, Under-Secretary MacDonnell was instrumental in nudging Wyndham in the direction of a measure of devolution, which might serve as precursor to Home Rule, and which might, he conceived, offer a way forward. MacDonnell, on the understanding he had the support of Lord Lieutenant Dudley as well as Wyndham, collaborated with some moderate landlords such as the Earl of Dunraven, to draft a proposed scheme. What was envisaged was the establishment of a financial council of twelve elected and twelve nominated members to control certain aspects of Irish administration. However, this was dangerous political territory and when unionists became aware of it, Wyndham publicly disowned the proposals which he had supported in private conversations. In the ensuing furore and in failing health, he retired as chief secretary in March 1905, having failed to advance the plan of educational reform which he believed was warranted. Moreover, Wyndham's appointment of MacDonnell as under-secretary did not have the positive effect he had anticipated. While resourceful and energetic in the matter of land legislation, the under-secretary was lacking in political judgement. With the passage of time, this became more apparent.

Wyndham was replaced by Walter H. Long, an arch-Conservative and unionist. By this time, the Dale and Stephens Report on Intermediate education in Ireland was published. Similar to the Dale findings on primary education, it drew attention to the negative effects of the lack 'of coordination…[and] the non-existence in Ireland of any department with power to survey the two systems as a whole.'[16] This prompted Long to consider ways in which this lack of coordination might be addressed. Cognisant that legislation would be required to deal effectively with the issue, and that legislation was

[14] NAI, CSO RP 10032/04, Aug 1904, MacDonnell to Wyndham.
[15] CNEI, *Seventy-second Report* …1905–6, p. 20.
[16] *Dale report*, p. 84.

an arduous process, he cast about for an alternative approach. In November, Long wrote to the Intermediate Board:

> I cannot avoid the conclusion that much can be done in this direction by administrative action within the powers already possessed by the two Boards concerned, and that many educational advantages might be attained by the extended adaptation of existing machinery.[17]

The 'existing machinery' that Long had in mind was the consultative committee mechanism set up under the Agricultural and Technical Act of 1899. It consisted of representatives of the Department of Agriculture & Technical Instruction (DATI), combined with the National and Intermediate Boards. In its composition, the DATI representatives outnumbered the other boards three to two. The intended purpose of the grouping was to afford them the opportunity to consider areas of mutual cooperation. This was exactly what they did not do. They rarely met and when they did sectional interests prevailed. Starkie considered such meetings a waste of time as DATI could outvote the others and held an effective veto on proceedings. In response, Long proposed that such a committee should continue to meet, and in order to ensure a more equitable representation, that the three bodies should each nominate two representatives. In this fashion the numerical advantage which the DATI held previously was nullified. The three educational bodies duly agreed and met on 29 November 1905. The committee completed its report with little delay and in early January 1906 it was forwarded to Dublin Castle. Extending to a meagre seven pages, which perhaps reflected the paucity of interest in the exercise, the report blandly commented:

> The three chief departments controlling education in this country have been brought into close contact with each other, and...a large measure of co-ordination in their work has already been secured.[18]

The report highlighted the factors obstructing closer coordination, but it is difficult to disagree with Hyland's conclusion that 'the Conference was simply used as a vehicle through which each of the existing bodies brought their main grievances to the attention of the Chief Secretary.'[19] All the participants were representatives of the three strands of

[17] NAI, CSO RP 1839/14, 11 November 1905, Long to Intermediate Board.
[18] *Report of the Conference of Representatives* cited in Áine Hyland, 'An analysis of the administration and financing of National and Secondary Education in Ireland, 1850–1922' (unpublished PhD thesis, TCD, 1982), p. 264. Henceforth Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*
[19] Ibid., p. 265.

educational provision, each with a vested interest and it was always unlikely that substantive reform would issue from Long's initiative. In any event, Long's nine month's tenure came to an end with the calling of a General Election. The Consultative Committee report landed on a Liberal desk rather than a Conservative one and was soon forgotten. The attempts by the Conservative Chief Secretaries Wyndham and Long to effect changes to Irish education had not advanced. The reforms suggested by Starkie, Dale, Wyndham and MacDonnell all stressed the necessity of local rate aid and a measure of local control. This was stoutly resisted by the Catholic hierarchy in particular and also the IPP. Wyndham did provide some funding for education from the Equivalent Grant, which was put to good use, but Long's brief tenure was unremarkable.

3.3 The Liberals return to power 1906

In December of 1905, Prime Minister A.J. Balfour tendered his resignation to the King. The resultant general election in January 1906 brought a resounding victory and an overall majority to the Liberal party. In Ireland, expectations were high that a strong Liberal government would be in a position to advance the long-held aspirations of Home Rule. Significantly, with regard to education provision, the Catholic bishops were quick to set out their priorities which were outlined in a letter from the Episcopal Standing Committee to Redmond on 25 January 1906. They wished, they pronounced:

> to put it strongly to the new government that the Liberal principles enunciated at the Election in regard to Ireland…at least must imply in the domain of Education, such a system as will accord with the wishes and convictions which the great bulk of the Irish people entertain in common with their bishops and clergy.[20]

Their lordships impressed on the Irish Party the necessity 'to see that in any changes made in our educational systems, Irish ideas and Irish wishes, and not English fads, will be followed.'[21]

The Liberals appointed James Bryce as the new chief secretary. A Belfast native and the son of a schoolteacher, Bryce had participated in a number of education commissions in England. Accordingly, his appointment was welcomed among education stakeholders. On 29 January 1906, Redmond forwarded to Bryce a copy of the letter the IPP had

[20] Letter of Episcopal Standing Committee to Redmond, cited in Millar, *Church, state and nation*, p. 147.
[21] Ibid.

received from the Episcopal Standing Committee. If not already aware of denominational sensitivities surrounding education provision in Ireland, he now had ample forewarning. However, Under-Secretary Anthony MacDonnell had his own opinions on how matters might progress. For him, a strong Liberal majority in parliament was an opportunity for long overdue administrative reform, not least in education.

Once the Liberals had assumed the reins of power, MacDonnell thought it propitious to revisit the devolution scheme abandoned in 1905. He had in mind a more nuanced version which he thought would be acceptable to nationalist aspirations and what the Liberal leadership might consider politically feasible. In February, in a memo to Bryce, MacDonnell submitted the outline of a plan to form an executive council of thirty members to advise and assist in the government of Ireland – twenty to be selected by County Councils and ten to be nominated by the lord lieutenant. The aim of the scheme was to 'co-ordinate and bring under a reasonable measure of popular control' a number of Irish boards and departments.[22] With regard to education, the National and Intermediate Boards should be abolished and replaced by a department of education with a paid director answerable to the proposed new council.[23] Due to the sensitivity of the issue, the development of the plan was carried out in great secrecy. There were fears on the government side that, if details of the proposals were leaked, the scheme might be derailed before getting ample consideration. When Chief Secretary Bryce unveiled the scheme to Redmond in October, the latter witheringly stated that 'at first sight it seemed beneath contempt.'[24] For him, such devolution was dilution and far removed from the holy grail of Home Rule. In various guises this devolution scheme failed to gain traction and it too withered on the vine. The new year saw Bryce appointed as ambassador to the United States and Augustine Birrell replaced him.

Augustine Birrell's appointment as chief secretary in January 1907 received a broad welcome. Personable, witty and non-confrontational he seemed admirably suited for the office. True to form, Under-Secretary MacDonnell soon brought to Birrell's attention the devolution proposals which had failed to gain traction the previous autumn. Although not fully convinced of their efficacy, Birrell acquiesced to their consideration,

[22] A.C. Hepburn, 'The Irish Council Bill and the fall of Sir Antony MacDonnell, 1906–7', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17:9 (1971), p. 472.
[23] Ibid., p. 473.
[24] Ibid., p. 476.

although on this occasion Redmond was appraised of their progress. The rationale of this devolution initiative was to make the measures amenable to Irish nationalist aspirations while advocating their acceptance simultaneously in British parliamentary circles. The early months of 1907 saw the terms of the devolution scheme evolve into a draft bill ready for parliament. The Irish Council Bill 'for the better government of Ireland' proposed the coordination of the various Irish boards, reduced in number from forty-five to eight, and under a central partly elected authority. These would be placed under the control of the new Irish Council. The Council when established would be composed of 107 members – 82 elected and 24 nominated by the lord lieutenant. The under-secretary would be an *ex-officio* member also nominated by the latter. The new council had no taxing powers but would administer an annual grant from the exchequer. Regarding education, a new Department would be set up to replace the National and Intermediate Boards.

The Bill had it first reading in the House of Commons on 7 May 1907. Redmond was circumspect in his response to the Bill and played for time:

> I do not rise, let me say at once, for the purpose of answering the speech [of the Chief Secretary]. Until the actual Bill…is in my hands and until I and my colleagues have had time to consider every portion of that scheme and to elicit Irish public opinion with reference to it, no one will expect me to offer a deliberation or final judgement.[25]

From what he had heard, he observed pointedly:

> What they offer us today is not Home Rule; it is not offered to us as Home Rule; it is not offered to us as a substitute for Home Rule.[26]

In general, there was little enthusiasm among the general public for the scheme. Hepburn has summarised the reaction:

> of the 35 local bodies whose decisions were reported in the *Freeman's Journal* between 9 and 20 May 1907, 16 instructed their delegates to vote against the bill, and only 5 voted in favour of it or considered it worthwhile to make a serious effort to obtain amendments. The remaining 14 instructed their

[25] *Hansard* 4, H.C. debate, vol. 174 c113, 7 May 1907.
[26] Ibid., c114.

> delegates to vote as directed by Redmond, but in almost all cases hostility to the measure was first expressed.[27]

The *Freeman's Journal*, usually supportive of Redmond, warned him that the bill was 'in no sense a Home Rule Bill or a substitute for Home Rule.'[28]

The Catholic Church authorities were gravely dissatisfied with the education proposals contained in the bill which proposed that the Boards of National and Intermediate Education be dissolved and reconstituted as an Education Department under the remit of the new Council. The proposed department would also control the DATI, as well as reformatory and industrial schools. The bishops apprehended that the implementation of these measures would undermine and dilute clerical control and influence in the provision of education, and it was this concern that guided their strongly negative response.

The bishop of Limerick, Dr Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, made it clear that this was unacceptable when he denounced the concept of a single education department as 'a ruinous policy'. It would in effect result in

> the hopeless relegation of all effective control into the hands of officials; the utter enslavement and possible starvation of the teachers; the destruction of the absolute freedom which our secondary schools now enjoy; the confusion of two distinct and different types of education, and the inevitable transfer, ultimately, of all management to the local authorities.'[29]

The *Irish Catholic* pronounced in a similar unequivocal fashion that the Bill 'should be burned at every cross-roads in Ireland as a protest against the indignity it offers to the nation.'[30]

As far as the clergy were concerned the matter of education superseded all other considerations in the Irish Council Bill. Not only would the new Department of Education hold sway over primary and secondary schools, but the intention was that it also have jurisdiction over the DATI, reformatory and industrial schools. This position was highly unacceptable to them and gave credence to their fear of the government's pernicious intent.

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[27] Hepburn, op. cit., p. 491.
[28] *FJ*, 11 May 1907.
[29] Ibid.,13 May 1907.
[30] *Irish Catholic*, 10 May 1907.

On 21 May, a convention to consider the bill, assembled in the Mansion House, with as many as 3,000 delegates in attendance. Redmond was the keynote speaker and reflecting the mood of nationalist opinion he bluntly urged that the bill should be rejected. Speaker after speaker followed in its denunciation. Politically the Irish Council Bill was dead. On 24 May, Birrell wrote a letter of resignation to the Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, which was declined. He wrote with regret:

> Our mistake was to have touched devolution at all. Home Rule we could not give, and we should have contented ourselves with land reform and the university question; and in both we should have taken our own line and left Sir Antony in the lurch…As to Redmond and Dillon, we have no case against them. They misjudged the situation, that is all.'[31]

The Irish Council Bill was an unsuccessful bid to bring much needed administrative reform in the educational sector through the medium of a limited scheme of devolution. Under-Secretary MacDonnell and to a lesser extent Chief Secretary Bryce suggested a modest version in 1906. Under Birrell there was wider consultation with nationalist interests and their proposed assembly had enhanced powers and a more representative remit. However, on publication of the bill, it was attacked by nationalist leaders as inadequate and denounced by denominational interests due to the potential loss of clerical control in schools. The very idea of a new department of education to replace the existing boards was rejected out of hand.

3.4 Birrell and the teachers

The appointment of Birrell as chief secretary was viewed in a favourable light by teachers. Prior to his appointment, he had served as President of the English Board of Education. O'Connell pointed out that while in office 'he became well and favourably known to the English teachers, and…addressed a number of meetings organised by the teaching associations.'[32] It was not surprising then, that shortly after his appointment as chief secretary, the executive of the INTO was emboldened to request him to receive a deputation which sought to press for greater financial provision for education, including of course, their claims for improved pay. Their overtures were successful and on 25 February, Redmond and Dillon introduced the INTO representatives to Birrell. He was accompanied by Walter Runciman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, a fact the teachers may have considered an auspicious omen. They were encouraged by the fact

[31] Leon Ó Broin, *The chief secretary – Augustine Birrell in Ireland* (London, 1969), p. 15.
[32] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 155.

that, as they reported, Birrell 'listened with close attention to the representations, took copious notes of all the points…and seemed to be impressed by many of them.'[33] In fact the meeting went so well that Birrell was invited to the forthcoming annual INTO Congress in Dublin at Easter. He appeared glad to accept.

True to his word, Birrell attended the Congress at the Rotunda on 4 April 1907. His lengthy speech was delivered with style and wit, and peppered with aphorisms and rhetorical musings. As regards the parsimony of the Treasury, he asked, 'by what means are we to obtain that further sum of public money for the purpose of supplementing the salaries of teachers and to create scholarships, prizes and bursaries?'[34] To the teachers he declared:

> I say unhesitatingly that you Irish teachers can invite the most careful examination…because anybody who has any acquaintance whatsoever with educational work…must admit that the scale of your salaries is most meagre and insufficient and that your chances of promotion are not only poor, but most disheartening.[35]

Regarding the National Board he was quite outspoken:

> You are the victims of a bad system, a Board over whom you have naturally no control (*hear, hear*), whom you cannot reach and who do not appear to be tremendously desirous to ascertain your opinions (*loud applause*). You are disappointed with the Board. What am I to do with it? (*A voice – abolish it*) Am I to bring in an Act of Parliament to abolish it? (*Cries of 'yes'*)

He concluded his address with the following aspiration:

> I hope, if I remain in office a sufficient length of time, and if things go on as I trust they will go, before long to come before you, not only with sympathetic words, but with full hands.'[36]

Despite the heady atmosphere created at the Easter Congress, scant progress ensued on the salary issue. At a meeting of the INTO CEC on 6 July 1907, it was decided to request a meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On 22 July, a deputation from the organisation, accompanied by some fifty Irish MPs led by John Redmond, met with Chancellor Asquith, who was accompanied by Birrell and Treasury Secretary

[33] Ibid., p. 156.
[34] *Irish School Weekly* (*ISW*), 13 April 1907.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

Runciman.[37] Having listened to their case, Asquith ruled out any extra funding in the current financial year. However, he promised that the following year proposals would be laid before parliament 'which would do something to remedy what all admit is a real grievance.'[38] Cognisant that the following year's departmental estimates were prepared in November, the INTO forwarded Birrell and Asquith a comprehensive memo setting out their claims. Simply put, what was requested was a substantial increase to all teachers, increased increments to be paid annually and the removal of unjust barriers to promotion.[39] To fully satisfy their demands, a sum of £500,000 was needed, a tall order considering that the annual parliamentary vote was for £1,500,000. When the National Board submitted its estimates for 1908–9 a figure of £133,000 was included for increased salaries for teachers. The Treasury in reply stated that they considered the figure mentioned excessive but indicated that they were open to a proposal 'for increasing the salaries of national teachers at a moderate cost.' In typical Treasury fashion they felt 'they could not entertain' such a large demand and counselled:

> They would urge that the Commissioners of National Education should be pressed to take measures calculated to reduce expenditure in other directions, so as to make a substantial set-off to the proposed increase.[40]

As it transpired, due to Treasury oversight (or so they said), only an additional £50,000 was agreed in the estimates for salary increases for teachers. This provoked great anger among teachers whose hopes had been raised by the chief secretary. Considerable political pressure and lobbying resulted in Birrell's announcement in June 1908 that the sum of £114,000 had received government and Treasury approval. The grant was paid to all teachers on 23 October 1908. The granting of the increase was considered by the teachers to be due mainly to the chief secretary's personal intervention and it became popularly known as the Birrell Grant. In subsequent years the grant was issued as a separate payment to salary which further reinforced this belief. The fact that the National Board had made similar, but unsuccessful, applications on numerous occasions counted for little.

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[37] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 159.
[38] *ISW*, 24 August 1907.
[39] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 160.
[40] Treasury Letter to the National Board, 10 January 1908, cited in Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*, p. 286.

In early 1908, while the teachers were busying themselves with their overtures to government regarding salary increases, Under-Secretary MacDonnell, undaunted by the Irish Council Bill fiasco, turned his mind once more to reform. Previous broad-based attempts at reform in education had been rejected out of hand but a more focussed scheme of reform might, he considered, yield results. The recent and successful resolution of the University Question, so long a thorn in the side of all denominational educationalists, gave reasons for optimism.[41] In May 1908, MacDonnell set out fresh proposals for reform in education in Ireland. He felt the time was ripe

> to deal with this question in a complete and decisive manner, I indulge in the hope that the Chief Secretary, who now sees his way to provide University education for the majority of the Irish people, will be able to complete the work of educational reform by dealing with the question of Primary and Secondary schools.[42]

MacDonnell restated the oft-repeated complaints of the lack of coordination between the administration of the primary, secondary and technical levels. Smarting from the rejection of the Irish Council Bill with its attendant plans for an overarching Department of Education, he now proposed a remodelled Board. He outlined its composition as follows:

> As to the constitution of the remodelled Board, I am of [the] opinion that it should have, to some extent, a representative element. If the Board consisted of 12 members…one might be selected by the National Teachers' Association and one by the Association of Secondary Schoolmasters; two might be selected by a College of County Councils or the General Assembly of County Councils; and the balance might be appointed by the Crown.

Regarding technical education, he felt it should be removed from the DATI:

> The business [technical instruction] is educational in the strictest sense of the term and should be brought within the ambit of the [new] Board's functions. The Department of Agriculture has no efficient means of controlling or inspecting technical instruction, nor has it staff or agency suitable for the performance of the work.

[41] The Universities Act of 1908 main provisions were the abolition of the Royal University and the constitution of two new universities – Queen's University Belfast and the National University of Ireland, the latter to be made up from the old Queen's Colleges of Cork and Galway while the new University College Dublin replaced the dissolved Royal University.
[42] NAI, CSO RP 1839/14, n.d. May 1908, MacDonnell to Birrell.

MacDonnell's scheme ticked a lot of boxes. The remodelled board would in theory effect the much-sought coordination and provide a model of inclusive management for all stakeholders. However, Birrell was having none of it. Unlike MacDonnell, he realised that attempts at reform in the face of opposition, especially clerical, was futile. A curt footnote from Birrell's office reflected this sentiment stating:

> The Chief Secretary does not think it possible during the present [Parliamentary] session to take up the reform of the Education system.[43]

In July 1908, Under-Secretary MacDonnell tendered his resignation. His attempts at reforming education, firstly under the Conservatives and latterly under the Liberals, had failed to come to pass. Birrell had been burned by the debacle of the Irish Council Bill and decided a change of approach was necessary. In his inimitable fashion, the chief secretary described the system of Irish national education

> as one of those ill-growths of English ideas planted without due consideration upon Irish soil, and left to grow, and what it is grown to[,] you can see. A more ridiculous history I have never heard in all my life.[44]

Birrell, while not enamoured of many aspects of the administration of national education, was not convinced that financial pressure should be brought to bear to coerce Irish education into alignment with the rest of the UK. Here he was intimating the abandonment of fiscal restriction in education. Convincing the Treasury would be another matter. He was helped by the appointment of Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer in May 1908. The new chancellor initiated a raft of social initiatives which included old age pensions, unemployment benefit and health insurance. In the sphere of Irish education, teacher salaries under the 'Birrell Grant' in October 1908 were enhanced. In the meantime. the long-standing issue of funding for school buildings was also resolved (see Chapter Five).

3.5 A new decade

The opening of the second decade was marked by the General Election of 1910. The Liberals were returned to office but without an overall majority. The IPP now held the balance of power, which gave them the political leverage for the introduction of Home Rule legislation. By April 1912, sufficient common ground was established between the

[43] Ibid.
[44] *FJ*, 23 November 1907.

parties and the Government of Ireland Bill was passed by the House of Commons. The passing of the Parliamentary Act of 1911 ensured that any veto by the House of Lords could only defer the legislation for two years. Thus, it was anticipated that Home Rule would be on the statute book by 1914.

The proximity of a new political structure focused the minds of many on the specific terms of the Home Rule Bill and none more so than those with a vested interest in national education. The fact that the existing National and Intermediate Boards would be retained was welcomed. What was of major concern was the proposed funding model. This decreed that a fixed sum was granted each year for each department or board. The fear was that this might be an inflexible amount and insufficient for the needs of education year on year into the future. This concern was articulated by Dr O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick:

> It would be a great misfortune if the present wretched condition of our schools should be stereotyped under a new form of government. If we are to set up house ourselves, it is not unreasonable…to claim that we should be provided with sufficient means to keep the house properly. I am quite confident that the Irish Parliamentary representatives will see to it that in the financial settlement between the two countries, Irish education is not left in a half-starved condition.[45]

As might be expected, the National Board regarded the Home Rule Bill with unease. At their meeting on 25 June 1912, the commissioners unanimously passed a resolution which warned of the dire consequences that would ensue from permanently fixing

> the grants for Primary Education at their present figure, and [we] earnestly request a reconsideration of this policy, sincerely believing that without a sound well-endowed system of Primary Education no substantial progress can be attained in any direction by the people of Ireland.[46]

Copies of the resolution were ordered to be sent to Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman and the chief secretary. At their next Board meeting on 9 July, it was proposed that a deputation of the whole Board should meet the Prime Minister, during his forthcoming visit, with a view to discussing the provision for Irish education under Home Rule.[47] This meeting did not take place as the Board was informed that the Prime

[45] *FJ*, 5 February 1912.
[46] *Mins. CNEI*, 25 June 1912.
[47] Ibid., 9 July 1912.

Minister would be so fully occupied it would be impossible for him to receive a deputation. Not easily rebuffed, the Board informed the Prime Minister that due to the urgency of the matter, they were prepared to travel to London to facilitate the meeting.[48] Through his secretary, Campbell-Bannerman regretted he could not accede to the request to receive a deputation.[49] Frustrated by the lack of progress in having their views placed on record, they requested Chief Secretary Birrell to receive a deputation. No response was forthcoming.

3.6 Problems with another annual report

It soon became clear why the administration had not responded to the Board's approaches. It was the custom of the Board, at this time of the year, to forward a draft copy of their annual report to the CSO for formal approval. Usually this was a straightforward procedure and a simple letter of approval would issue from Dublin Castle sanctioning the report's publication. The report for the year 1911–12 was one of the occasions when such approval was withheld. The under-secretary bluntly informed the commissioners that pejorative references to the government and Treasury included in the Board's report for 1911–12 was 'quite out of place in a Report which properly should be only a review of the state of Primary Education in the country during the year.' He asked the commissioners to omit 'their views on the provisions of the Government of Ireland Bill…which does not come within the scope of the Report.'[50] The Board was unimpressed. Far from complying with the under-secretary's request, the commissioners stated that they were unable to do so for the following reasons:

> Under the Stanley letter and the subsequent Charters, the Commissioners of National Education are not an ordinary Department of the Public Service represented by a Minister in Parliament, but an independent body invested with absolute control over the funds which may be annually voted by Parliament. Their rules, except in respect of a few fundamental principles, do not require the sanction of the government and successive Chief Secretaries have stated in Parliament that they are not responsible for the Board and cannot control its decisions. The Commissioners cannot therefore regard themselves in their relations with the Executive as bound by the rules that govern other departments of the Public Service, represented by Parliamentary chiefs who are members of the Ministry and can be called to account…in Parliament. The

[48] Ibid., 23 July 1912.
[49] Ibid., 6 August 1912.
[50] Ibid., 20 August 1912.

> Commissioners have no such Ministerial representative responsible for their acts and entrusted with their defence.[51]

Having trenchantly outlined their stance, the commissioners directed

> that, if the usual letter from the under-secretary formally acknowledging the receipt of the 78th Annual Report be not received by the beginning of next week, a communication be sent to the Press intimating that the Board had sought interviews with the Prime Minister and Chief Secretary with reference to the provision for National Education in the Government of Ireland Bill; but that no opportunity of placing their views in person before these gentlemen had been afforded them. [52]

Accordingly, the commissioners let it be known that it was their intention 'to place before the public their observations on this important subject.'

At their next meeting, when the secretary informed the Board that there was no reply from Dublin Castle, they authorised the issuing of a statement to the press. This press release expressed the viewpoint of the Board on the terms appertaining to education in the forthcoming legislation. It warned that the maintenance of its present position, not to speak of the future of National Education, would be gravely imperilled unless some satisfactory amendments were made in the financial proposals of the bill. These provided a fixed annual sum to be provided under the new Irish Consolidated Fund; the amount to be determined by its cost in the year in which the bill was ratified. The commissioners demonstrated in the press release how the cost of Irish education was not fixed or static. If a fixed sum was provided, the cost of any future improvements would have to come from either competition with other transferred departments or by new Irish taxation. They stated that the future held

> the prospect, therefore, of a struggle for the necessary funds in which the educational authorities will find themselves pitted against the representatives of other Irish departments on the one hand, or the Irish taxpayer on the other, is not a reassuring one, and is not calculated to make smooth the path of educational reform.[53]

The statement concluded with the declaration that the commissioners considered 'it is their bounden duty, as guardians and trustees of elementary

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

education in this country, to lay their reasoned views on the subject before the public.'[54]

Thus, the matter rumbled on well into 1913. Finally, in July common sense prevailed. The main sticking point from the start was the Board's criticism of the financial terms of the Home Rule Bill. At the Board meeting of 22 July, the final item on the agenda was 'The Commissioners' Annual Report for 1911–12'. Starkie, noting that the Board's objections had been well publicised in the statements to the press, proposed that this section be now omitted from the draft report, 'but that a brief reference be made to it therein'.[55] This was duly accepted by the Board, and with the offending material removed, the chief secretary agreed to its publication.

Any further agitation and overtures with regard to putting pressure on the government and Treasury on the matter of educational funding were cut short by the outbreak of war in August 1914. The implementation of Home Rule was suspended for the duration of the war. At the same time, the Treasury announced the curtailment of all public expenditure. Even though the Treasury had recently agreed to sanction an increase for school building up to a new limit of £475,000, this initiative was now postponed.[56] This was a blow to the commissioners in dealing with a backlog in their building programme. Grants for this purpose were not restored to pre-war levels in the lifetime of the Board.

3.7 Conclusion

The conciliatory stance of the Conservative chief secretaries apparent at the outset of the twentieth century regarding primary education in Ireland did not result in any significant measure of educational administrative reform. The essentially minor changes that did take place were within the National Board itself and these were made under the stewardship of Resident Commissioner Starkie. The most significant development of these years was the Catholic Church's total opposition to the setting up of a department of education. Allied to that was their rejection of any suggestion of funding through rates which they felt might result in a dilution of clerical control of schools. That stance, in time, gained the support of the IPP. Although Wyndham's Land Acts brought about permanent and transformative changes in land tenure, in the matter of education apart from the identification of the problems that existed, little of substance was achieved.

[54] Ibid., 3 September 1912.
[55] Ibid., 22 July 1913.
[56] Ibid., 28 July 1914.

The coming to power of the Liberals in 1906, brought with it renewed hope of Home Rule. Chief Secretaries Bryce and Birrell, influenced by Under-Secretary MacDonnell, floated various devolution measures which incorporated elements of educational reform, but these were also rejected by nationalist and clerical interests. Birrell was the first to accept that efforts to coerce Irish education into alignment with the rest of the UK were futile. Politically Home Rule legislation took precedence, but its formulation was contentious. The proposed provisions for education, particularly with regard to a fixed funding model, were criticised by Church authorities. They found an unexpected ally in the National Board who had long suffered in the administration of education without adequate funding. The outbreak of war in August 1914 ensured that such issues were pushed to one side, with the inevitable result that, with Home Rule put on hold, the fitful efforts to bring about the administrative reform of primary education that had been pursued over the previous decade and a half may be said to have been brought to a conclusion. This did not signal the end of the efforts of the Irish administration to modernise the structures of Irish education. There was to be another attempt in 1918 (see Chapter 7). By then the environment had changed dramatically as the force of Irish popular nationalism, and in particular the place of the Irish language, in the educational realm was a critical matter.

Chapter Four

The Board of Education and the Irish Language, 1900–22

4.1 Introduction

The Irish language was another critical matter in the early twentieth century with which the National Board and the educational system generally wrestled. From its inception, the national school system paid scant regard to Irish, notwithstanding the fact that for a considerable number of its pupils it was their mother tongue. Thus, the pedagogically unconscionable practise of instructing Irish speaking children through the medium of English persisted for over seventy years. The drive for literacy and numeracy in English in the schools was the overarching imperative. During the final twenty years of the nineteenth century, some minor concessions on the teaching of Irish were grudgingly conceded by the commissioners. These were more indicative of a low level of interest on the part of the Board than anything else. It was the awakening of cultural nationalism, and more particularly the foundation in 1893 of the Gaelic League, that brought the issue of the Irish language in national schools centre-stage. This chapter outlines the push for the inclusion of Irish in the curriculum and the introduction of a bilingual programme for schools. For the National Board, issues of a confessional nature were a persistent bugbear in the nineteenth century. Facing into a new century, the teaching of Irish was to prove no different.

4.2 The National Board and the Irish Language prior to 1900

The continuing decline of the Irish language in the nineteenth century resulted in its displacement by English as the vernacular of the majority of the Irish people.[1] It is generally accepted that by the nineteenth century's close a multiplicity of interrelated factors resulted in the use of the Irish language being perceived by some as a badge of poverty, disaffection, defeat and ignorance.[2] English was the language of commerce and law, and increasingly that of the Catholic Church. A severe blow was dealt by the Great Famine, causing death and dislocation in areas in which the language was most entrenched and vibrant. The exclusion of the Irish language from the new system of national schools was a further factor in its decline, although hardly a fatal one. To quantify with certainty the rate of decline of Irish as the vernacular is problematic. Even

[1] Aidan Doyle, 'Language and literacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' in James Kelly (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Ireland*, iii, 1730–1880 (Cambridge, 2018), p. 353.
[2] P. Ó Loinsigh, 'The Irish language in the nineteenth century', *Oideas* 14 (1975), p. 5.

the most competent of statistical analysts counsel caution when mediating the data collected in the decennial census returns. Questions about language use were included for the first time in the census of 1851. What can be said with certainty was that by that time the everyday language of the majority of the Irish people was English. From then onwards 'the decline in the use of Irish continued steadily, with successive enumerations revealing an acceleration in the decline in the numbers of those who spoke Irish only and in the numbers of those in younger age groups who could speak Irish.'[3] Behind the statistics lay the reality that the vast majority of the Irish speaking population lived in rural areas and were also financially disadvantaged. For many of these, economic and social pressures led them to increasingly view 'English as the language of the pulpit, commerce, prosperity and emigration.'[4]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the focus of much of the population shifted from Westminster and its politics towards ideas of national identity and culture. This shift of emphasis was characterised by the establishment of societies committed to the recalibration of how Irish civil society operated. Comerford has described this movement as

> a profusion of formal and informal campaigns – sometimes dependent on one another, sometimes independent, frequently antagonistic to one another, but considerably overlapping in support – on such issues as native manufacturers, native games, rural reform, agricultural cooperation, national literature, national theatre, national self-reliance, anti-imperialism, dual monarchy, separatism, the curbing of clerical power, the organisation of labour, de-Anglicization, and the revival of Irish.[5]

The founding of the GAA in 1884 and the Irish Literary Society in 1892 awakened an increased consciousness of Irish pastimes and culture. However, it was the Gaelic League founded in 1893 which had the most profound influence in spreading a new awareness of national distinctiveness throughout the length and breadth of the country. With its identification of language as the key, and with a rapidly expanding network of branches, the League vigorously set about the task of 'de-anglicising' Irish society. Principal among its aims was the restoration of the Irish language and since it perceived

[3] Brian Ó Cuív, 'Irish language and literature 1845–1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed), *A new history of Ireland, vol. VI: Ireland under the Union, II, 1870–1921* (Oxford, 2010) p. 386.
[4] Walsh, *Curriculum and context*, p. 11.
[5] R.V. Comerford, 'Nation, nationalism and the Irish language', in Thomas E. Hachey and Lawrence John McCaffrey (eds), *Perspectives on Irish nationalism* (Kentucky, 1989), p. 29.

the school system to be the strongest agency militating against the language, battle was enjoined on the educational front.

No reference was made to the Irish language in the 1831 Stanley Letter, the foundation document underpinning the nascent national education system. From the outset, the National Board excluded the Irish language as a means of instruction and as a school subject. While no evidence exists to suggest that the Board was possessed of a coherent plan to discourage the Irish language and its use, there is little doubt that the framers of the national school system exhibited a considered indifference towards it. Corkery stated that the National Board's stance reflected the dismissive attitude of the government which 'presumed that the Catholic people did not exist'; hence there was a presumption that the Irish language did not exist.[6] Akenson contended that the commissioners were not hostile to the Irish language as much as unaware, adding 'there was no rule against its use, but hardly anyone seems to have considered that it might be used.'[7] While this situation held for the early years of the Board's tenure, the records show otherwise for the latter years of the nineteenth century.

Between 1831 and 1870 there were only two occasions when the teaching of Irish was addressed by the Board. The first, in 1834, was an application to appoint a teacher of Irish which was summarily refused as it was not considered by the commissioners to be commensurate with their remit on education. The second, in 1844, occurred when a manager requested permission that Irish be taught in his school. He was refused.[8] It must not be assumed, however, that there was no voice on the National Board critical of the practice of teaching children whose mother tongue was Irish through the medium of English. There was, and foremost of these was Patrick Keenan, then head inspector, who outlined his position in the appendices of the annual reports of the CNEI of 1855, 1857 and 1858.[9] In 1855, Keenan voiced his frustration regarding schooling in Irish speaking districts:

> It is hard to conceive any more difficult school exercise than to begin our *first* alphabet, and *first* syllabication, and *first* attempt

[6] Daniel Corkery, *Imeachtaí na Teanga Gaeilge – the fortunes of the Irish Language* (Cork, 1956), p. 114.
[7] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*, p. 381.
[8] Séamas Ó Buachalla, 'The language in the classroom', *The Crane Bag*, 5:2 (1981), p. 18.
[9] Patrick Keenan, born 1826, became a school monitor and trained as a teacher at the Central Model School in Marlborough St. Dublin. At the relatively young age of 22 he was appointed district inspector. Further promotion followed when he rose to the rank of head inspector (1854–59). A reforming and efficient public servant, he advanced to chief of inspection (1859–71) and finally to Resident Commissioner of National Education in Ireland (1871–94), the first Catholic to hold the post.

> at reading, in a language of which we know nothing, and all this without the means of reference to, or comparison with, a word of our mother tongue. Yet this is the ordeal Irish children have to pass through…The real policy of an educationalist [would be] to teach them English through the medium of their native tongue.[10]

Despite such practical advice, the views of this highly regarded observer went unheeded by the Board. However, when he was appointed Resident Commissioner in 1871 some changes were effected. In 1878, following a vigorous campaign by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language,[11] Irish was placed on the same footing as French, Latin and Greek. Thereafter, Irish could be taught as an 'extra' subject, outside of regular school hours to the pupils in fifth and sixth standards. As part of the payment by results system, additional fees accrued to the teacher for this tuition. Annual assessment by inspectors was conducted on the basis of translation using printed cards but the outcome was not encouraging.

Table 2

Language tuition outside of school hours 1885–1900

Year	Subject	Schools	Pupils Examined	Passed	% Pass
1885	Irish	12	185	161	87.0
	French	109	1,140	919	80.6
	Latin	30	146	126	86.3
	Greek	7	24	20	83.3
1890	Irish	50	1,026	602	58.7
	French	100	1,103	845	76.6
	Latin	32	142	106	74.6
	Greek	3	10	10	100.0
1895	Irish	63	1,176	737	62.7
	French	94	1,036	756	73.0
	Latin	37	150	114	76.0

[10] CNEI, *Appendix to the twenty-second report…1855*, *Section II*,[2142-1], H.C.1856, xxvii, p. 75; also Nicholas M. Wolf, 'The national school system and the Irish language in the nineteenth century' in James Kelly and Susan Hegarty (eds), *Schools and schooling, 1650–2000* (Dublin, 2017), pp 73–4.
[11] The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded in 1876. Unlike similar organisations its focus was not antiquarian, but the preservation of the Irish language as a living entity.

	Greek	2	17	15	88.2
1899*	Irish	105	1,825	1,443	79.1
	French	89	906	710	78.4
	Latin	28	114	93	81.6
	Greek	1	7	6	85.7

Source: Annual Reports CNEI 1885–99.
*Payment by results fees abolished from 1 April 1900, so 1899 figures used.

As Table 2 shows, the number of schools which participated in the teaching of Irish between 1885 and 1899 rarely exceeded 100, while the total of pupils examined never surpassed 2,000. These levels of uptake were gravely disappointing, but hardly surprising. Ó Buachalla stated that 'very few of the inspectors knew the language, [while] some were openly hostile to it.'[12] Of far more significance was the requirement that teachers who wished to earn results fees for teaching Irish were required to pass an examination in the subject, even if they were native speakers, and few were disposed to do so. In the decade between 1885–95, the total number of teachers who held such certification was a mere 161.[13]

Nevertheless in 1884, cognisant of the absurdity of what was transpiring in schools in Irish speaking districts, the Board conceded that teachers, 'if acquainted with the Irish language', may use it as 'an aid to the elucidation and acquisition of the English language.'[14] As if to bring finality to the matter, a Board memorandum stressed they were 'confident that they have reached a limit to the steps which, in the public interest, could wisely be taken in respect of the cultivation of the Irish language.'[15] And in a memo to the chief secretary some months later they affirmed their position, citing

> the anxiety of the [original] promoters of the National System was to encourage the cultivation of the English language, and to make English the language of the schools.[16]

[12] Séamas Ó Buachalla, 'Educational policy and the role of the Irish language from 1831 to 1981', *European Journal of Education*, 19:1 (1984), p. 77.
[13] Ibid., p. 79.
[14] *Mins. CNEI*, 4 Mar 1884.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 27 June 1844.

However, such certitude was soon to be tested as stronger influences came to the fore to promote the Irish language.

4.3 The Gaelic League and the Board

On 25 November 1892, Douglas Hyde, addressing the National Literary Society in Dublin, made a general appeal to 'arrest the decay of the [Irish] language'.[17] The title of his lecture was unambiguous: 'The necessity for De-Anglicizing the Irish Nation'. Hyde's exhortation resonated with the emerging spirit of cultural nationalism and it paved the way for the establishment in the following year of the Gaelic League. The chief aim of the Gaelic League was the revival of the Irish language with the distinct purpose of establishing 'Ireland, first and foremost, as a culturally distinct nation.'[18] Initially the focus was on the acquisition of Irish through evening classes organised through its branch network, Irish lessons in its weekly bilingual newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis*,[19] and the publication of pamphlets. In furtherance of its cultural remit, the League expanded its programme to include Irish history, music, dancing and folklore. Within ten years it had advanced its membership to over 50,000 participating in 600 branches throughout the country.[20]

As it grew in strength, the League turned its attention to the State education structures as a vehicle for language revival.[21] The timing could not have been more propitious. Curricular reform, exemplified by the report of the Belmore Commission of 1898, emerged as the dominant issue in primary education. The newly appointed Resident Commissioner William Starkie was formulating a Revised Programme of instruction, which sought to modernise the curriculum and reform the instructional ethos along heuristic lines. In a wide-ranging address on national education in February 1900 Starkie was openly critical of the language programme of the national school system:

> Without committing myself to the extravagances of some of the enthusiasts of the Gaelic League, I fancy few practical educationalists will deny, that the National Board was guilty of a

[17] Cited in P.S. O'Hegarty, *A history of Ireland under the Union, 1900–1922* (London, 1952) p. 618.
[18] John J. Laukaitis, 'The politics of language and national school reform: The Gaelic League's call for an Irish Ireland 1893–1922' , *American History Journal*, 37:1 (2010), p. 223.
[19] *An Claidheamh Soluis* was the official weekly bilingual newspaper of the Gaelic League, appearing first on 17 March 1899. Its editors included Pádraig Pearse, Eoin Mac Néill and The O'Rahilly. Priced at one penny, it was hugely instrumental in promulgating the cultural objectives of the League.
[20] Breandán S. Mac Aodha, 'Was this a social revolution?' in Seán Ó Tuama (ed), *The Gaelic League idea* (Cork, 1972), p. 21.
[21] In this the Gaelic League was mirroring the strategies already used by Welsh and Scottish language revivalist groups.

> disastrous blunder in thrusting upon a Gaelic speaking race a system of education produced after a foreign model and utterly alien to their sympathies and antecedents.[22]

The tenor as well as the content of this address certainly encouraged those hopeful for change. Eager to avail of the opportunity, the Gaelic League launched a determined campaign to improve the status of Irish in the proposed new programme by seeking (a) where Irish was the language of the home, it should also be the medium of instruction and (b) that in other schools it should be lawful to teach Irish as an ordinary school subject.[23] These proposals secured widespread ecclesiastical and political support and the National Board was deluged with petitions and resolutions from managerial bodies. However, to the chagrin of language supporters, when the Revised Programme was issued on 1 April 1900, it contained no worthwhile additional provision for the teaching or status of Irish. Irish would still be taught as an 'extra' subject outside of school hours for the payment of a fee subject to examination.

As the main facilitators for curriculum change at the Belmore Commission in 1898, and as serving members of the Board at the time of Starkie's appointment, the attitude of Archbishop William Walsh and Professor George Fitzgerald reflected the divided attitude of educationalists to the Irish language and bilingual education at the end of the nineteenth century. Together with the new Resident Commissioner, they were seen as the main architects of the enlightened Revised Programme of 1900. Walsh was a vigorous advocate for Irish language revival, whereas Fitzgerald was totally opposed. The latter was on record as claiming:

> Both in the interests of the Irish speaking people themselves, and in my native country, I will use all of my influence, as in the past, to ensure that Irish as a spoken language shall die out as quickly as possible.[24]

Such sentiments resonated with some of his fellow commissioners. On 6 July 1901, *An Claidheamh Soluis* reported on a speech given by Sir Malcolm Inglis, at the presentation of prizes for religious knowledge to the Presbyterian students at

[22] TCD, MS 9210 a/5, 19 February 1900, Starkie speech Glasnevin.
[23] *CS*, 20 January 1900.
[24] *CS*, 21 July 1900. At a Gaelic League rally in the Rotunda on 19 July 1900, Douglas Hyde quoted from a letter written by Fitzgerald. The League had written to all the education commissioners to ascertain their views on the Irish language.

Marlborough Street Training College.[25] In the course of his address he admitted the desirability of using Irish in the education of Irish speaking children. However, he further ventured to say that English speaking children, in his opinion, should not be allowed to learn Irish, because Irish 'could be of no earthly use to any individual.'[26] As reported in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the editor having duly rebutted the sentiments of Sir Malcolm, commented on the composition of the Board, where 'half [the membership] is chosen to protect the religious interests of one-fourth.' Warming to the task, he cautioned

> when the representatives of the minority make use of this artificial position of theirs, given them solely on religious grounds, to impose their ideas outside religious matters on the majority…the time has come when the anti-Irish section of this Board…must learn that any attempt of theirs to lord it with their notions over the nation and the national interest will not be tolerated.[27]

It was well established that Archbishop Walsh favoured the bilingual teaching for children in Irish speaking areas and was disappointed that the Revised Programme did not address this shortcoming. Starkie concurred but was playing the long game. Both were acutely aware of the strength of the opposition at Board level towards the Irish language. At a meeting of the commissioners on 29 May 1900, Professor Fitzgerald had proposed a motion 'that no programme for Irish National Schools be authorised in which it is proposed to teach children of a lower class than the fifth to read and write Irish.' The motion was defeated by 11 votes to 3. By a similar margin the following motion was carried, which was in effect a restatement of what was in the Revised Programme: 'that the Board's Rules make no provision for the teaching of Irish except as an extra subject taught outside school hours.'[28] However, a more ominous note was struck by an addendum to the motion, which was also approved:

> It is suggested that inspectors be instructed to report as a breach of rules any case in which it may appear that Irish is taught within ordinary school hours.[29]

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[25] Sir Malcolm Inglis, Presbyterian and a Scottish liberal unionist, came to Dublin in 1859. He was head of Heiton & Co. iron and coal merchants, as well as shipowners. He was a commissioner of national education from 1887 to 1902.
[26] *CS*, 6 July 1901.
[27] Ibid., 6 July 1901.
[28] *Mins. CNEI*, 29 May 1900.
[29] Ibid.

Almost certainly it appears the purpose was to focus the Board's energies on the introduction of the new Revised Programme and its allied reforms without what was considered the distraction of bilingualism. The addendum appeared to bring finality to the possibility of Irish being taught during school hours. Nevertheless, some weeks later, Starkie wrote privately to Walsh pointing out that although such teaching was not prohibited by rule, it was prudent to let the matter rest for the present.[30]

The Gaelic League responded to the failure of the New Programme published in April 1900 to address the question of bilingualism, by redoubling its efforts. With its encouragement, 201 managers representing 1,164 national schools in Irish speaking areas petitioned the Board seeking a bilingual programme for their schools and branding the existing system 'unnatural and irrational.'[31] On 20 June 1900, no doubt prompted by Archbishop Walsh, the Catholic hierarchy passed a twofold resolution, firstly recommending that in Irish speaking districts the education should be bilingual, with English being taught through the medium of Irish, and secondly, in the remaining districts, that Irish be taught during school hours as an ordinary subject, contingent upon managerial permission and parental consent in third standard and higher.[32] The determination of the League in pursuance of its aims culminated in a protest meeting at the Rotunda in Dublin on 19 July 1900. Letters of support were received from W.B. Yeats, Cardinal Logue, Lady Gregory and Michael Davitt. The meeting was chaired by Douglas Hyde, who in his opening address got straight to the point by stating:

> The refusal to teach a child to read and write the only language he speaks was not due to any educational theory, but to political hatred and rancour.

His main target was the Board of Education and a narrow cadre within it for daring

> to refuse the reform demanded by the entire Irish people…Is the country to be overridden by a dozen or so dilettante gentlemen sitting in a backroom in Dublin?

John M'Neill was also highly critical of the Board, which he accused of withholding the contents of the Revised Programme from the public, hoping thereby to escape 'the

[30] DDA, Walsh papers, 31 Aug 1900, Starkie to Walsh.
[31] *Mins. CNEI*, 10 March 1900.
[32] *CS*, 14 July 1900.

wholesome criticism of the Nation.'[33] Such a strategy would only strengthen their resolve. He singled out Professor Fitzgerald as the education commissioner most strongly opposed to the teaching of Irish in schools. He chided:

> Professor Fitzgerald was an eminent authority of physics (hisses and laughter) … [of whom] a distinguished member of Trinity College Dublin told him [M'Neill] that Professor Fitzgerald had arrived at the profound belief, after years of consideration of physics, that the universe in which they lived revolved around Professor Fitzgerald.

Tom O'Donnell, MP for Kerry West, speaking in Irish and in English on behalf of the national teachers, stressed that although bound to carry out the rules of the National Board teachers were anxious to stand by their native language and were willing to promote its revival. At the conclusion of the meeting a telegram was dispatched to London for the attention of John Redmond, leader of the Irish Party, which informed him:

> Enormous mass meeting, overcrowding Rotunda…expresses warmest indignation at absence of provisions for proper bilingual education under new regulations of National Board, and calls upon Irish members to strenuously oppose any Bill which does not fulfil the Maynooth resolutions.[34]

On the following day, the vote on the estimates for national education in Ireland took place in the House of Commons. This afforded the IPP an opportunity to highlight the unfavourable treatment of Irish in the recently published Revised Programme. Led by John Redmond, eighteen members of the Irish Party, contributed to the debate. The main thrust of their argument was grounded on the dual recommendations of the Catholic hierarchy at their June meeting. Redmond, echoing their sentiments, observed:

> All that we ask is that the bilingual system of teaching should be set up in Irish speaking districts where the children come from Irish speaking homes, and that in other districts Irish may be one of the remunerated subjects taught, if the managers so desire it, in the school hours…As a matter of fact, we are asking for that which is today possessed by Wales, and not more than is possessed by the Highlands of Scotland. I want to know by what constitutional theory of this demand, put forward by practically

[33] John M'Neill, in Irish Eoin Mac Néill. In the early days of the Gaelic League it seemed as if the membership were unaware of the Irish form of their names. Hence the first secretary signed his name as Patrick Daly or Patrick O'Daly, before settling for the Irish version Pádraig Ó Dálaigh.
[34] Ibid.

> every class and creed in Ireland, and proved to be reasonable in the opinion of skilled educationalists, is to be refused. [35]

Timothy Harrington, MP for Dublin Harbour, addressing the chief secretary, pointed out that Welsh was a remunerated subject taught during school hours and schoolbooks were printed in both Welsh and English. He stated 'Let the right hon. Gentleman place us in that position, and the whole of our demand will be conceded.'[36] An opposing view was expressed by James Rentoul, unionist MP for Down East, who deemed the idea of reviving the Irish language an 'idle dream'. The Irish language might merit discussion on antiquarian grounds but he objected to listening to 'an entirely worthless and foolish demand by gentlemen very few of whom understand and speak five sentences of the language about which they indulge in a long and empty and ludicrous debate.'[37]

In reply, Chief Secretary Balfour, stated rather limply that he had no actual power in the matter beyond making suggestions and he could not promise whether the National Board would accept his suggestions or not. He confirmed that 'Irish is now, and will be in the future, an extra subject taught out of school hours, and I think that is a very desirable thing.' He further informed the House:

> Personally I have no objection to bilingual teaching in Gaelic districts…I do not think, however, that very much time should be spent upon teaching children to write in Irish, but I hold that where Irish is the home language it would be better that instruction in that language should be given.[38]

However, the essence of the chief secretary's contribution was simply an affirmation and restatement of the *status quo*. With regard to the teaching of Irish, no change was envisaged by the introduction of the Revised Programme. He went further when he observed:

> If it is suggested that Irish be a compulsory subject, whether in Irish-speaking districts or not…that I believe to be an impossibility and I am not prepared to encourage it…The fact is that there is no real, genuine, spontaneous desire in Ireland to revive the national language. I am glad of this, for it would be a retrograde step, doomed to failure.[39]

[35] Hansard 4, H.C. debate, vol 86 cc689–70, 20 July 1900.
[36] Ibid., c712.
[37] Ibid., c700.
[38] Ibid., cc 708–9
[39] Ibid.

For revivalists and those who supported the use of Irish in primary schools, it was a severe setback.

Nevertheless, when the new code of Rules and Regulations for National Schools was published on 28 March 1901 it brought a modicum of satisfaction for the Gaelic League. These rules incorporated formally the framework for the implementation of the Revised Curriculum. They included specific information on salary, promotion, inspection, classroom and curricular organisation. Of special significance was a new rule, No. 54 which dealt with language tuition. The rule stated:

> The Commissioners sanction Irish, French, Latin, Mathematics and Instrumental Music, as optional branches that may be taught in all National Schools, and that may be taught in these schools during the ordinary school hours, provided that the adequacy of the course of instruction in the ordinary Day Schools subjects is not impaired or hampered thereby.[40]

Irish could now be taught as an optional subject within school hours. There can be little doubt but that this constituted a *volte face* on the part of the Board. What had been deemed an impossibility some months previously was now in place. Evidently Starkie's tactical appeal to Walsh for patience in August 1900 had paid off, although the decision was not without its detractors. In May 1901, Judge Shaw tabled a motion that the teaching of Irish be deleted from the list of optional subjects which could be taught within school hours. The resultant vote ended in a tie, seven votes each, so the motion failed, but it was indicative of how evenly divided the Board was on the issue.[41]

Bilingualism in Irish education was again debated in the House of Commons in May 1901 in response to a motion proposed by Patrick Doogan, MP for Tyrone East:

> That in the opinion of this House it is essential in the interests of education that bilingualism, as a system, be introduced into the national schools in districts where Irish is extensively spoken, and that special facilities be afforded to meet the demand for the teaching of Irish throughout Ireland.[42]

[40] CNEI, *National Education (Ireland), New Rules and Regulations 1900–1*, [Cd 601], H.C. 1901, lvii, p. 9.
[41] *Mins. CNEI*, 14 May 1901.
[42] Hansard 4, H.C. debate, vol 94 c860, 21 May1901.

Doogan drew the attention of parliament to the difficulties faced by school-going children from Irish speaking localities who came from homes where they might never have heard a word of English in their lives. These children

> are set to struggle to acquire English, which to them is a foreign language, through a vocalism to which their tongues have been untrained, their ears are unfamiliar, and they are frequently taught by a teacher who knows not a single word of Irish.[43]

He added that the whole educational process was impaired, resulting in children leaving school at an earlier age inadequately prepared for life. He stressed that the resolution tabled was basically a demand for educational reform that was 'only to be applied to Irish speaking districts, where education under the existing system, [was] a nullity.'[44] Thomas O'Donnell, the MP for Kerry West, seconding the motion, emphasised the antiquity of the Irish language. He cited the research of international scholars which gave support to the Irish language as a literary medium worthy of preservation, and harkened back to a period in Irish history when the country was renowned for its scholarship throughout Europe. He stated:

> But today we stand – the descendants of a people who were ever remarkable for their educational ability; we, the descendants of a people who loved knowledge and learning more than all the people on earth – we stand today, cursed by a vicious system of government, declared by you to be illiterate, uneducated, and underdeveloped.[45]

O'Donnell urged the House to set aside politics and support the resolution.

Chief Secretary George Wyndham, responded by observing that the resolution dealt with two issues. The first he summarised as a question: 'Ought instruction be given through the medium of Irish to a child who either can only speak Irish, or who speaks a little English, but thinks in Irish?' The answer, he stated, was a resounding 'Yes', and as far as he was concerned the matter was not in dispute and had the sanction of both himself and the government. The second part of the resolution, Wyndham observed, was more contentious and debatable. Again, he posed the issue in the form of a question: 'Ought Irish to be taught in non-Irish speaking districts?' In answer to the question, he found himself in complete agreement with the National Board of Education

[43] Ibid., c848.
[44] Ibid., c851.
[45] Ibid., c860.

as set out in Rule 54 in March of that year. The rule stated that Irish could be taught as an optional subject during school hours in any national school provided that the course of instruction in the usual day subjects was not hampered or impaired. If this could not be achieved within the school day, the commissioners were prepared to pay for the teaching of Irish as an extra subject outside of school hours. Moreover, he pointed out, this was also the position of Archbishop Walsh, who was 'justly reputed to be a great authority upon education.' He quoted Walsh as follows:

> I for my part regard what has been done by the Commissioners in reference to the teaching of Irish as satisfactory enough, at all events for the present. I see that in this matter also people are writing to the newspapers, trying to make out that Irish may not be taught in schools as the programme says it may be taught now. Plainly, what people of that description want is not facilities for the teaching of Irish, but what they want is a grievance, and in this particular matter the occupation of the grievance-monger is rapidly coming to an end.[46]

Wyndham's shrewd quotation of Walsh's opinion was sufficient to discourage any further opposition. He ended his speech with an emollient flourish:

> There is no heresy to the Union in permitting to Ireland which we promote in Scotland and in Wales; on the contrary, it is an article of the Unionist creed that within the ambit of the Empire there shall be room for the cooperation of races, maintaining each a memory of its own past as a point of departure for converging assaults on the problems of the future. Therefore I really see no objection to the motion at all.[47]

John Redmond while congratulating the chief secretary on his 'rhetorical triumph', expressed his gratitude that the resolution had received acceptance. However, he warned that it would be impossible to carry out the good intentions he [Wyndham] had enunciated unless, in the words of the resolution, 'special facilities be afforded for training the teachers to meet the demand for the teaching of Irish throughout Ireland.'[48]

At first sight Wyndham's contribution, when contrasted with that of Balfour a year earlier, appeared to strike a more conciliatory approach. However, when closely examined, it was little more than a blanket of comfort to ward off the chill of the Board's critics. Irish could now be used as a medium of instruction in Irish speaking

[46] Ibid., cc870–8.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., c879.

areas. This was the case since 1884. Irish could be taught outside of school hours for a fee. This scheme was in place since 1878. The addition of Irish as an optional subject to be taught during school hours, was not a major adjustment. The Revised Programme retained almost all of the existing curriculum and added many new subjects. Where was time to be found in an already overloaded system for optional subjects? Would teachers engage in the unpaid teaching of Irish when they could teach it outside of school hours for fees? Most significant of all was the lack of suitably trained teachers to fulfil the measure in classrooms and Treasury sanction for funding to remedy this situation.[49] At best, clarity was brought to bear on the position of Irish in the New Rules and Regulations, but no steps were put in place to facilitate their implementation. Subsequently, both Starkie and Walsh 'talked up' the rule change as a significant development. For the Gaelic League however, this was not the bilingual programme they sought – it was a mere starting point.

4.4 Agitating for a meaningful Bilingual Programme

Dr Michael O'Hickey, Professor of Irish at Maynooth and Vice-President of the Gaelic League, was a vocal protagonist in the language debate. He was sympathetically disposed towards the pedagogical ideas underpinning 'the new education' movement and the Revised Curriculum. He shrewdly recognised they could be used to advance the bilingual objectives of the Gaelic League. He set out his ideas in a pamphlet entitled *The Future of Irish in the National Schools* published in 1900. From the outset, he went on the attack:

> How the system of education in vogue in Irish speaking districts has been tolerated on Irish soil or on the face of the earth, no one knows…Of all things educational it is the most hideous and appalling thing which on any educational ground, it is utterly impossible to justify, excuse, palliate, or explain away.[50]

O'Hickey was of the opinion that the Revised Programme offered new possibilities and opportunities due to the flexibility it afforded managers in drawing up schemes of schoolwork suitable to local circumstances. He advised managers that if they so desired, they could 'draw up a bilingual programme…provided the local circumstances and

[49] See pp 121–2 for details on teacher training and the Irish language.
[50] Rev. Michael O'Hickey, *The future of Irish in the National Schools* (Dublin, 1900), p. 11.

requirements justify or demand it'.[51] O'Hickey insisted his interpretation of the 'elasticity' underpinning the spirit of the Revised Programme was correct, but advised:

> What has been asked in the case of the Irish-speaking districts has not been conceded, and will only be conceded when the Board makes up its mind to formally recognise bilingualism…and when furthermore it takes the lead in establishing such a system.[52]

Archbishop Walsh appeared to be in agreement with O'Hickey. Speaking to student teachers in Baggot Street Training College on 7 December 1900, he observed:

> The New Programme has been officially issued. Whatever may have been the case formally, no one can any longer allege that any obstacle is placed by the Commissioners of National Education to the introduction of a rational system of education for the children of our Irish speaking districts.[53]

Walsh emphasised 'the essential elasticity of the system' as the key. Holding aloft a copy of the memorial which the managers of schools in Irish speaking districts had sent the Board some months previously, he repeated 'as far as the Commissioners…are concerned …there is no longer any obstacle in the way of the introduction of this great reform.' With an eye to the future he offered a prize of £25 to the student who would devise a detailed programme for the working of a school in an Irish speaking district along 'bilingual' lines. The successful submission would, he felt, result 'in the taking of some really effective step for the education on rational lines…of the children of our schools in the Irish speaking districts of Ireland.'[54] The message of Archbishop Walsh suggested to those who wanted a bilingual school in an Irish speaking district that, due to the flexibility allowed under the Revised Programme, the Board would not object. This unlikely scenario was never tested by any manager but it allowed Walsh to save face with the language revivalists.

The winner of Archbishop Walsh's prize of £25 was announced in September of 1901. Mr D. Lehane, national school inspector, presented the prizes and the bilingual programmes of the four finalists were published by the Gaelic League in the form of a pamphlet. In the interim Walsh had prepared a pamphlet on bilingual education, a copy

[51] Ibid., p. 3.
[52] Ibid., p .8.
[53] *CS*, 15 December 1900.
[54] Ibid.

of which was sent to every teacher and school manager in the country. The editorial of *An Claidheamh Soluis* strongly proclaimed:

> The last vestige of excuse for not immediately introducing bilingual instruction into every single school in the Irish speaking districts disappears. Nothing now stands in the way but the hostility or indifference of the managers and the incompetency or unwillingness of the teachers.[55]

Nevertheless, the Board did not escape criticism for contenting itself with 'the mere negative attitude of placing no obstruction in the way' while taking no positive steps itself towards a bilingual programme. Whilst the Gaelic League was vehemently critical of what it characterised as the lassitude of the Board with regard to the Irish language, their view of the Resident Commissioner was more benign:

> The least observant Gaelic Leaguer cannot have failed to see that Dr Starkie is a fearless promoter of a bilingual system…We know that the projected scheme is being prepared by him, that he is a supporter of bilingual education, and that he has the courage to initiate reforms, when it might be more to his advantage to let things drift.[56]

As already outlined, sharp divisions persisted among the commissioners on the question of Irish. Those of a unionist mindset favoured the utilitarian, economic and imperialist argument on language. Others like Starkie (and Walsh before his resignation and indeed afterwards) opposed that viewpoint, favouring instead the cultural and educational advantages of including Irish and Irish studies in the schools. As a result, Starkie was a consistent and pragmatic advocate for change in the Board's policy. Following the rule changes in 1901, he reviewed and refined his thinking further, and he had arrived at a point by the beginning of 1904 whereby he was able to recommend to Under-Secretary MacDonnell:

> In Irish speaking districts I propose that Irish speaking children sh[oul]d be taught English through the medium of their national langu[age] and for this a bilingual programme is desirable…All my public utterances have shown that I sympathise with the study of Irish.[57]

[55] *CS*, 14 September 1901.
[56] Ibid., 9 May 1903.
[57] TCD, MS 9210 no. 370, 18 March 1904, Starkie to MacDonnell.

Moreover, Starkie's view prevailed when in April 1904 the National Board announced the introduction of a bilingual programme for use in Irish speaking localities. The commissioners belatedly explained their position:

> We recognise the educational necessity for instruction in Irish in Irish-speaking and bilingual districts, in as much as children who are wholly or largely Irish speaking do not adequately profit by the instruction given them in English unless they are instructed in Irish also, and unless this instruction is utilised in teaching them English…We must, however, be satisfied that instruction in the ordinary day school subjects will not be interfered with or hampered by the adaptation of the bilingual programme, and that the teacher of the school has a good literary and oral knowledge of Irish.[58]

Contemporaneously they issued a circular which emphasised that, as well as fostering knowledge of Irish, the new bilingual programme was 'to facilitate the acquisition of a sound knowledge of English by Irish speaking pupils.'[59] In contrast with the whimsical aspirations of 1901, a detailed syllabus for Irish and English was designed for each standard in bilingual national schools.

The advent of the bilingual programme received an enthusiastic welcome from the Gaelic League. *An Claidheamh Soluis* proclaimed enthusiastically:

> We have no hesitation in describing the programme as an admirable one: indeed, having read it with a glow of something akin to paternal pride, for not only do we find the majority of the principles for which we have contended, carried into practice, but the Irish side of the programme is almost bodily lifted from our columns.[60]

Some months later, in an editorial for the same publication, Pádraig Pearse happily claimed:

> The Gaelic League has got its foot well within the school door. Its grip of its position is strong, and it may not be dislodged. The complete capture of the schools is now only a question of time.[61]

He also directed his readers' attention to a recent speech by Pádraig Ó Séaghdha, a teacher, quoting from it:

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[58] CNEI, *Seventy-third report…1906–07*, [Cd 3699], H.C. 1907, xxii, p. 95.
[59] NAI, CSO RP 4734/05.
[60] *CS*, 23 April 1904.
[61] Ibid., 20 August 1904.

> If in any school in Ireland, Irish and Irish history are not yet taught and Irishism systematically inculcated, the fault is no longer the National Board but that of the teacher, the manager or the parents.[62]

This was mere rhetoric, as the Board's rules ensured that all books were scrutinised closely prior to sanction for use in national schools.[63] However it was indicative of the temper of the times.

Crucially, the introduction of the bilingual programme in a school was subject to the teacher having a good literary and oral knowledge of Irish. This was soon to prove problematic. In 1904 there were seven teacher training colleges in operation. There is no doubt but that their inception, most of them only some 20 years previously, had the effect of transforming the professional standards of national teachers. However, when it came to the Irish language, they mirrored the indifference of the National Board, showing no great interest in its acquisition or retention. For example, excluding their core pedagogical training, student teachers were required to select one optional subject for special study. They could choose from fourteen options, Irish being just one of them. In the opinion of a writer in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the training colleges 'made less provision for its teaching [of Irish] than they do for the teaching of Latin or algebra'.[64] As a result, few teachers possessed the requisite knowledge to carry out the new programme. Matters became more complicated when, in 1906, the Board decreed that newly appointed teachers in Irish speaking districts should possess a certificate or other proof of competency in Irish. Mr D. Lehane, the Board's inspector in Irish, stated the obvious in his annual report:

> In view of the requirement…of the Board's rules that newly appointed teachers in Irish speaking districts must know Irish, it would appear desirable that more importance should be attached to this subject during a teacher's course of training.[65]

Given the Board's misgivings about the Gaelic League's ardent tactics, it was ironic that the commissioners were obliged to turn to them to provide a solution. From its foundation, the Gaelic League organised evening and weekend classes for the teaching

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Invariably Rule 124(a) was cited, with this remark added… 'the book in question has not been sanctioned as reasonable objection to it might from its general tenor be entertained on political grounds.'

[64] Cited in Séamas Ó Buachalla, *A significant Irish educationalist: the educational writings of P.H.Pearse* (Dublin, 1980), p. 78.

[65] CNEI, *Appendix to the seventy-third report…1906–7, section I,* [Cd 3861], H.C. 1908, xxviii, p. 147.

of the Irish language and allied cultural activities to its members. The appointment of full-time *timirí* [66] and part-time organisers spread their influence widely. Acting on resolutions passed at their annual congress in 1904, the League's executive wrote to the training colleges seeking to interview them with a view to upgrading the status of Irish in their institutions. The response, if at all, was lukewarm.[67] Undaunted the Gaelic League decided to set up facilities of their own to train teachers. The initiative took the form of summer colleges, generally located in Irish speaking localities.[68] The first college to be founded was in Ballingeary, Co. Cork; three more followed in 1905, and a further two in 1906.[69] These colleges only opened for the summer months – courses were of one month's duration. The success of these intensive courses prompted the Board to give them recognition and a grant of £5 per capita was paid. O'Connell claimed, 'these colleges – and the Leinster College especially – on whose governing body the INTO was officially represented – took the place of the training colleges in enabling many teachers to acquire a fair working knowledge of the language which the training colleges had failed to supply.'[70] It is estimated that in excess of 3,000 teachers were qualified to teach Irish using this scheme, which was far in excess of the 572 students who graduated from the training colleges during the same period with a similar capacity.[71]

4.5 Treasury push-back

When Starkie wrote to Under-Secretary MacDonnell in March 1904 outlining the Board's plans to sanction the bilingual programme he did not confine himself to that one matter. He expanded on his thinking on the teaching of Irish as an extra subject when he wrote:

> I cannot resist the opinions of our experts that the teaching of it outside of school hours for a fee is largely a bogus. P.S. I suppose that 'Extra' sh[oul]d be abolished. If you feel strongly and are willing to support me, I will face the music and get it done. [72]

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[66] Timirí were generally native speakers, who in addition to holding language classes, taught Irish dancing, history, folklore, music if possible and organised feiseanna, céilithe and aeraíochtaí [open air cultural events].
[67] De La Salle Training College, Waterford was the only teacher training college to reply.
[68] A notable exception was the Leinster College of Irish situated in Dublin.
[69] John Coolahan, 'Education as cultural imperialism: the denial of Irish language to Irish speakers, 1831–1922' in *Paedagogica Historica*, 37:1 (2001), p. 30.
[70] O'Connell, *100 years*, pp.340–1.
[71] CNEI, *Eighty-sixth report …1919–20*, [Cmd 1476], H.C. 1921, xi, p. 455.
[72] TCD, MS 9210, no.370, 18 March 1904, Starkie to MacDonnell.

This proved in time to be a hostage to fortune. While no proof exists that Starkie's views were made known formally to the Treasury, MacDonnell certainly would have passed the information to the chief secretary, with the inevitable result that the increased expenditure entailed in the operation of the Irish language measures was brought to the attention of the Treasury, who, ever mindful of keeping expenditure in check, sought to bring about its abolition. Citing a recommendation of the Belmore Commission of 1898, the Treasury gave notice that fees for 'extra' subjects taught outside school hours should be discontinued after the school year ending in June 1906.[73] The crux was that Irish was the main subject for which fees were paid. In 1905, Irish was taught as an extra to 24,914 pupils in 1,204 schools at a cost of £12,000, which was paid in fees to their teachers.[74] Inevitably, the abolition of these fees, incurred the wrath of teachers and of course, the Gaelic League. Miller states that 'though the appropriate target for the ensuing protest would have been the Treasury, the Gaelic League focused its wrath on its old enemy, the National Board.'[75] Now, it was not only the Board's policies which were decried, but its composition:

> We do not call for the total abolition of the National Board, or for an education department under Dublin Castle, or under a minister responsible to the British Parliament. We have long made clear what it is we do want. We want to see a drastic change in the mode of appointing Commissioners of National Education and in the class of person appointed. We want to see duly-accredited representatives of the school managers, of the teachers, and of the people of Ireland on the Board. We want to see the deadheads and the bigots, the castle lawyers and the fox-hunting squires, fired out. We want educationalists on the Board, and we want MEN on the Board. We want a body of Commissioners who will grapple boldly and masterfully with the immense problems of Irish primary education…This we want, and this, be the cost what it may, we must get.[76]

Enjoined with the League and teachers' representatives were hundreds of public bodies and the Catholic hierarchy which demanded the immediate restoration of fees. In December 1905 when the Conservatives were replaced in government by the Liberals the new Chief Secretary James Bryce soon found himself grappling with the issue. Starkie was moved to write to Bryce:

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[73] CNEI, *Seventy-second report…1905–06*, p. 22.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Millar, *Church, state and nation*, p. 132.
[76] *CS*, 9 September 1905.

> Dr Hyde & co. do not realise the attitude of Treasury [,] as to the Board they have gone so far that they would not agree to any increase in expenditure on the subject [,] but they would not tolerate the teaching (compulsory) of Irish to all children in all schools[.] Nor should anyone tolerate it, who cares for the interests of the children, who as infants have quite enough to learn without being further burdened with a foreign language…but the Gaelic League have no bowels of compassion.[77]

Persistent lobbying and agitation by the Gaelic League and language revivalists proved successful once again, with the result that the grants for the teaching of Irish as an extra subject outside of school hours were restored from the 1 July 1907.[78]

4.6 The status of Irish after the introduction of the Bilingual Programme

From 1906 the status of the Irish language within the national school system was altered in three ways. Firstly, a bilingual programme was introduced in Irish speaking areas. Secondly, it could be taught in any school during school hours provided it had managerial and parental approval and did not impede progress on the core curriculum. Thirdly, Irish could be taught as an extra subject outside of school hours for a fee on examination.

Succeeding years saw the gradual amelioration of both the government's and the Board's stance on Irish and the introduction of further supportive measures. In 1907 a knowledge of a second language, which could be Irish, was required of candidates entering teacher training. Significantly also in 1907, the Board appointed six organisers for the teaching of Irish.[79] There were over 200 applicants for these positions, who undertook oral and written examinations in Irish. Two candidates were selected for each of the three dialects of Munster, Ulster and Connaught.[80] These were tasked with visiting schools and giving model lessons according to the most approved methods of language teaching. The provision of courses for teachers at weekends was recommended, as well as rendering assistance to the inspectorate in the promotion of the language. Years later Starkie reported to the Dill Inquiry that one third of the

[77] TCD, MS 9209 no.58, 30 June 1906. Starkie to Bryce.
[78] NAI, CSO RP 9032/08 & 15959/08.
[79] CNEI, *Seventy-fourth report…1907–08*, [Cd 4291], H.C. 1908, xxviii, p. 12.
[80] *Mins. CNEI*, 24 September 1907. The successful candidates for Munster were Miss Mary O'Sullivan and Mr P. M'Sweeny, both of whom had been timirí/organisers for the Gaelic League.

inspection staff knew Irish and for every alternative appointment to the inspectorate, the successful candidate required a knowledge of Irish, which had the effect of increasing the proportion of Irish speaking inspectors to 50 per cent.[81]

In schools where it was considered there was a lack of ability to teach Irish, extern or visiting teachers could be appointed. In general, the inspectors were critical of this arrangement. Too much time was spent travelling from school to school and some of these externs had no experience of teaching children or lacked control over their classes. More often than not, they were met with the passive resistance of teachers and pupils alike.[82]

As happened with the general question of the teaching of Irish in schools, there were varying shades of opinion regarding the introduction of the bilingual programme in Irish speaking areas. Its introduction was not universally welcomed. In many instances there were parental objections, especially in areas where there was a large migration of working males to the east of Ireland, and also to England and Scotland. The return of these workers with a modicum of English and improved financial resources tended 'to establish in the minds of the local population an association between the English language and prosperity.'[83] In many cases managers objected to the introduction of the system with claims that the area was not Irish speaking or the parents refused to speak Irish to their children. Séamus Fenton, school inspector in Co. Mayo, remarked:

> The force against the revival of Irish as a spoken language was amazingly strong…Those of us acquainted with the drama of life in school and home saw that the most powerful forces operating against living Irish were poverty and emigration.[84]

Considering the degree of agitation mounted by the Gaelic League to secure the introduction of the bilingual programme into schools in Irish speaking areas, it was not surprising that the initial uptake was rapid. From 36 schools at its inception in 1906–07, the numbers rose sharply to 205 by 1913. Subsequently the level of participation plateaued. By 1921, 239 schools were partaking in the scheme, which, O'Donoghue suggests, represented 55 per cent of the total number of schools in Irish speaking

[81] *Appendix second report Dill*, p. 281.
[82] CNEI, *Appendix to the seventy-sixth report …1909–10, section I*, [Cd 5491], H.C. 1911, xxi, p. 164.
[83] Tom O'Donoghue, *Bilingual education in pre-independent Irish speaking Ireland: 1800–1922* (New York, 2006), p. 78.
[84] Séamus Fenton, *It all happened* (Dublin, 1948), p. 170.

districts.[85] The inspectors and organisers in their reports gave indication that where there was parental support, with committed and competent trained teachers, the programme was successful. Overall, the inspectors testified to a vast improvement on the situation that prevailed in the Irish speaking schools following the introduction of the bilingual scheme. P.J. Fitzgerald, the Senior Inspector of the Tralee Circuit, remarked:

> I have inspected a large number of bilingual schools, and noted that Irish is used extensively as a medium of instruction in all of them … The pupils of these schools are keener and quicker than those in which only unilingual instruction is practised.[86]

H. Morris, the Irish language organiser for Ulster, observed:

> The better bilingual schools, though found in the most remote districts, might challenge any part of the country for brightness and intelligence of their pupils, and for a clear grasp and accurate expression of what they know.[87]

Where Irish was taught as an optional subject within school hours the Board's inspectors were critical overall. In some schools it was taught in first and second class as a preparation for the teaching of the subject as an extra for fees when the pupils were promoted in third and fourth class. Comments on such schools ranged from 'badly taught and of no value' to 'no benefit to the education of children, and of no material help to the language or its cause.'[88] Another report scathingly observed: 'the teaching of Irish as an optional subject may be dismissed with the remark that there is not much of it, and that most of it is of an inferior kind.'[89] These outcomes, it was suggested in the reports, were due to a number of factors - in an already crowded curriculum adequate time could not be found; the lack of suitable training for teachers; and non-payment of fees for tuition which took place during school hours was a disincentive.

When reporting on the teaching of Irish as an 'extra' subject outside of school hours, which attracted a fee on annual examination, the Board's inspectors were equally critical. Pupils could only be presented for examination from third standard upwards. The inspectors observed that in most cases the children were presented for examination

[85] O'Donoghue, op. cit., p. 121.
[86] CNEI, *Appendix to the seventy-ninth report…1912–13, section I,* [Cd 7382], H.C. 1914, xxvii, p. 111.
[87] Ibid., *Appendix to the eightieth report…1913–14, section I,* [Cd 7966], H.C. 1914–16, xx, p. 140.
[88] Ibid., *Appendix to the seventy-seventh report…1910–11, section I,* [Cd 6042], H.C. 1912–13, xxiv, p. 132.
[89] Ibid., *Appendix to the seventy-eight report…1911–12, section I,* [Cd 7061], H.C. 1914, xxvii, p. 149.

at level three or four and seldom at the higher levels even though these attracted higher fees. For the school year of 1913–14, no classes were presented for examination by a fifth of schools who proposed at the start of the year to teach Irish as an extra subject.[90] Apart from a lack of efficacy in the process, such an omission was indicative of the general malaise surrounding this aspect of Irish language provision.

Coolahan observes that while 'bilingual schools eased problems in Irish speaking areas, ...no great leap forward for an Irish-type education took place.'[91] The annual reports of the Board's inspectors bear this out. Of the three strands of the teaching of Irish, only the bilingual schools emerge with some credit. But it was at a cost. Despite the enthusiasm and no little effort exercised by the language revivalists, the bilingual scheme did as much, if not more, to facilitate the learning of English. To quote again from Séamus Fenton, inspector of bilingual schools, 'it was apparent at an early stage that the scheme favoured the advance of English at the expense of Irish.'[92]

4.7 Conclusion

An alliance of the Gaelic League, the Catholic hierarchy and nationalist politicians forced the Commissioners of National Education to introduce a bilingual programme for schools in Irish speaking localities. It was a notable and largely popular educational reform. The Board's inspectorate of Irish for the period were sparing in their approval of the various strands of the teaching of Irish, apart from the bilingual schools. What is of note is that the scheme had consequences its most enthusiastic advocates never anticipated. The revivalists were to learn the hard way that language as a live agent does not flow unidirectionally. In this instance, it can be stated that contrary to expectations, the advance of English in the Irish speaking districts accelerated.

The interaction of politics and education in the early years of the twentieth century was marked initially by a period of hope and raised expectation. The introduction of the Revised Programme and the abolition of the results-based inspection system received a broad welcome. It was anticipated that the equivalent funding arising from the passing of the 1902 Education Act would place Irish education on a more secure financial footing. However, it soon became evident that the British government was resolute that Irish education should be restructured along the lines recently established in England – a

[90] Ibid., *Appendix to eightieth report …for 1913-14*, p. 137.
[91] Coolahan, op. cit., p. 30.
[92] Séamus Fenton, op. cit., p. 256.

coordination of primary and secondary education, financed by rates and under local control. Such an arrangement ran totally counter to denominational school managerial interests, especially those of Catholics. The resulting standoff had serious consequences for national schools, a period which Starkie would later describe as ‘the lean years’, which provides the theme for what follows.

Part Three

The Lean Years 1902–13

Chapter Five

Funding, Finance and the Building Grants Debacle, 1902–8

5.1 Introduction

The 'lean years', referred to in this section [Part Three], appertain to the years 1902–13 when the national education system was starved of funding at a time when the successful implementation of a new curriculum necessitated substantial investment in school building and equipment. At the best of times, the interaction of the Irish administration with the British Exchequer, through the Lords of the Treasury, was frequently tense. When dealing with the Board of National Education, this was even more pronounced, as the commissioners were firmly of the view that the unique character of their institution gave them financial autonomy. The passing of time, however, saw the Treasury become increasingly interventionist. The role of the Treasury in the introduction of the Revised Curriculum, teacher grades and salary, has been outlined already. This was of even greater significance as the need for new and improved schools evolved. Even before the 1903 visit of F.H. Dale the doleful condition of Irish schools was a cause of concern. The stark findings of Dale's report, coupled with an imperative to introduce a new programme of instruction along heuristic lines, set the government, the National Board and the Treasury on a collision course that delayed the implementation of the much needed programme of school building and renovation.

5.2 The growth of Treasury influence and the frustrations of the National Board

The setting up of the national school system gave the National Board of Education, in the words of Stanley's letter, 'absolute control over the funds…annually voted by parliament.'[1] Accordingly, in the initial years of its existence, the Board operated free of Treasury oversight. However, pressure emerged at Westminster in the 1850s to ensure that the public moneys voted by parliament were dealt with in a transparent and accountable manner. This aspiration was realised with the passing of the Exchequer and

[1] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*, p. 400.

Audit Departments Act in 1866 which created 'the first effective machinery for a retrospective annual audit of government expenditure'.[2]

Henceforth, all administrative entities, including the National Board, were subject to ongoing Treasury scrutiny. This was facilitated by the requirement to submit each November its estimated expenditure for the following financial year commencing on 1 April. Arising out of this, unexpended funding at a year's end was forfeited and new expenditure could be vetoed by Treasury. This was viewed by the National Board as an intrusion on their remit but they were powerless to prevent increased Treasury scrutiny. In the latter years of the nineteenth century, issues such as funding for teachers' residences, building grants and the distribution of the money from the Probate Duties Act of 1888 and the Customs and Excise Act of 1890, were all areas of contention on which the commissioners had to cede ground.[3] These acts of parliament were part of plans to reduce local taxation in England through increased funding from the exchequer. Moneys collected from probate and excise duties financed this measure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer George Goshen determined in 1888 that the ratio for allocating the funds should be proportionate to the contribution made to the imperial exchequer by the relevant jurisdictions. Thus 80 per cent was allocated to England, 11 per cent to Scotland and 9 per cent to Ireland. This money was termed thereafter as the Equivalent Grant and the method of its allocation was described as the Goshen ratio. In April 1892, the amount of the Equivalent Grant to Irish education totalled £210,000 and this was the sum that was also received for the next two years. Belatedly, the education commissioners realised that the revenues of the imperial exchequer increased year on year and that if the Goshen ratio was applied in 1894–5 the grant should have increased to £248,962.[4] Moroney and Akenson give a detailed account of the furore that ensued from the commissioners' bid to recover the shortfall, which does not reflect well on the Board. Akenson argues:

> After watching the commissioners surrender on issue after issue to the lords of the treasury, it is reasonable to conclude that as a body they were either unconcerned with the question of who

[2] Henry Roseveare, *The Treasury: the evolution of a British Institution* (London, 1969) p. 141.
[3] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*, p. 334.
[4] Michael Moroney, *National Teachers' salaries and pensions 1831-2000* (Dublin. 2007) p. 44. Henceforth Moroney, *NTs' salaries.*

> was to have direction of the system of national education, or were almost totally without political weight.[5]

To accept this view is to ignore the political realities of the Board's position. In the above instance it was an oversight on the part of the Board, but it was also a sleight of hand on the part of the Treasury. As early as 1887, the Treasury had informed the commissioners that it did not accept

> that it was ever the intention of the government to place in the hands of the national education commissioners[,] authority to incur unlimited obligations to be defrayed from the exchequer. As has already been stated, they exercise their power under no statutory authority…[Accordingly], it is the power of the treasury to place a limit to the amount up to which grants may be made.[6]

A compromise solution was reached on this occasion but the supremacy of Treasury oversight was confirmed. The Board received its arrears but the Treasury stipulated emphatically how the funds were to be dispersed.

The introduction of funding which accrued to Irish education from the Goshen measures was a mixed blessing. Additional money was always a boon, but in this case it tied the fortunes of Irish education to that of two other countries. Such an arrangement was invidious, as education in Ireland, unlike England, Scotland and Wales, derived no income from local rate aid. It was against this backdrop that the crisis in the provision of grants for the building and repair of national schools unfolded in the early years of the new century.

When the Commissioners of Education met in January 1907 the main item on the agenda was new school plans. This was not unusual. Hardly a meeting had taken place since the start of the decade where school building and repairs did not take centre stage. But on this occasion, the frustration of the Board at the glacial pace of progress in arriving at a solution to the problem of funding this necessary development caused them to write to the lord lieutenant disavowing any responsibility for this state of affairs, and the blame was laid squarely on to the Treasury:

> The Commissioners request His Excellency to permit the publication of the report of the Treasury Committee of 1902 [on school building grants] and subsequent correspondence. They

[5] Akenson, *Ir. ed. experiment*, p. 331.
[6] *Mins. CNEI*, 20 December 1887, copy of Treasury letter of 8 December 1887.

> [the Commissioners] have been much criticised for the present conditions of building grants and they submit that they should not be subjected to misrepresentations touching the disastrous consequences of this administrative scandal for which they are not responsible. The provision of suitable school buildings vitally affects the welfare of Ireland, and the Commissioners consider that the time has come for submitting to the judgement of the country the retrograde and unpatriotic policy which the Lords of His Majesty's Treasury have been seeking to force upon them for the last five years.[7]

It was unusual for one arm of the state to be quite so forthright in its criticism of another, but the Board felt it could no longer refrain from making clear its disappointment with a situation that had been several years in gestation. In 1903, the commissioners' annual report opened with the observation:

> The past year has in many respects been remarkable in the history of primary education in Ireland…Ireland has been compared with Great Britain, America, and continental countries, and reflections have been made on the National Board because the education of the Irish people is not as advanced as that of nations more happily circumstanced.[8]

They were referring specifically to the recently published findings and report of F.H. Dale. The commissioners deemed the occasion

> opportune to refer to the state of primary education in Ireland…and to some of the difficulties with which we have had to contend in our work of promoting the education of the people.[9]

One of the most serious deficiencies of the national system was the inadequacy of the school infrastructure – specifically the proliferation of what the Board identified as 'wretched school-houses [where teachers] cannot possibly do satisfactory work under the new curriculum.'[10] The commissioners outlined how matters had come to this sorry pass. National schools in Ireland were divided into two classes, vested and non–vested. Provision for vested schools was made entirely or in part by state funding. The vested schools were, the commissioners explained, usually built according to plans prepared by the Board of Public Works. But such plans, based on the education ideas of the previous

[7] Ibid., 15 January 1907.
[8] CNEI, *Seventieth report…1903*, p. 1.
[9] Ibid., pp 1–2.
[10] NAI, CSO RP, 9475/05, 1 January 1901. National Board letter to Dublin Castle.

seventy years, were no longer fit for purpose. This compared unfavourably with the situation in Great Britain, where

> owing to the wealth of the country, the general cooperation of the people with the system of elementary education established by Acts of Parliament, and the devolution of control in educational matters to local authorities, the majority of schools of the old type have been superseded by buildings constructed according to modern ideas.[11]

The situation with regard to non–vested schools was worse. These schools received state funding only for salary and school equipment alone – the school building was paid for by local sources. To avoid excessive expenditure, existing buildings usually located near places of worship, were frequently adapted for school use. As a result, new schools were not built to any general plan or were completed to a minimum standard. The commissioners were at pains to make clear that this reflected the particular circumstances which prevailed in Ireland, unlike elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Due to denominational concerns

> A very considerable number of managers, especially in the north of Ireland, have hitherto declined to seek building grants for schools, which, being vested, would come under the more stringent articles of the religious instruction code.[12]

As a consequence, such schools were vested in local trustees and maintained by local subscription. This duty, the commissioners concluded regretfully, was often neglected or imperfectly performed. In short, the existing stock of school buildings, both vested and non–vested, was in a poor state of repair, of an outdated design or both. The commissioners emphasised that for many years they had urged successive governments to make adequate provision to remedy this situation.

In the appendices to their annual reports, the Board gave examples of the miserable physical conditions appertaining in many national schools. They made for shocking reading. For example, in a school in Belfast, an inspector reported that there were twenty classrooms in which there was no heating. In another Belfast school, Ballymacarrett, the problem was overcrowding, as the inspector's report made clear:

> Two days ago…I visited a school and found 401 present, though there is proper accommodation for only 209…But much worse

[11] *Seventieth report*, p. 3.
[12] Ibid.

> remains to be told. I found 78 infants in a room 19 feet by 9½ feet, 64 First Standard pupils in a room 14 feet by 9½ feet (with one window admitting to be opened) and 33 First Standard pupils in a room 14½ feet by 10 feet…The congestion is so great that lavatories, cloak-rooms, halls and passages are utilised for class purposes.[13]

While overcrowding was the prime defect in urban areas, the poor condition of school buildings was the major issue in the countryside. Many rural schools were likened to hovels, with uneven earthen floors, leaking roofs, faulty windows and inadequate sanitation. Even in schools with adequate accommodation and sanitation, 'it [was] no uncommon thing to find three or more teachers instructing the children in one large room, [and] really satisfactory work cannot be accomplished under such conditions.'[14]

5.3 An interdepartmental committee on school building, 1902

Prompted by the need to address the situation, upon his appointment Resident Commissioner Starkie met G.A. Stevenson, Commissioner of Public Works, in September 1899 to discuss the overall issue of school buildings. The introduction of the Revised Curriculum in September 1900 brought with it a new urgency to address the problem of the substandard building stock which was seen as crucial to its effective implementation, but the response was slow. In August 1902, at the instigation of the Treasury, an interdepartmental committee was set up to examine revised new plans and costings for national schools.[15] This was a small committee on which Starkie represented the interests of the National Board.[16] In the interim, while the committee deliberated, grants for school buildings were suspended. The committee worked quickly and the report was forwarded to Sir Francis Mowatt, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, on 22 November 1902.

The report was now in the hands of the Treasury. As already noted, the task was delegated to a small committee of four members – R.W.A. Holmes, Treasury Remembrancer; R. O'Shaughnessy, Office of the Board of Public Works; W.Y. King, Inspector of Schools, Scotland and W.J.M. Starkie, the Resident Commissioner. The terms of reference were twofold:

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[13] CNEI, *Seventy-second report …1905-06*, p. 16.
[14] Ibid., p. 17
[15] NAI, CSO RP 9475/05, 6 August 1902. This committee was variously described as 'The Committee of 1902' or 'The Building Grants Committee of 1902'.
[16] *Mins. CNEI*, 5 August 1902. Reply to Treasury letter of 30 July. The Board expressed its agreement to participate in the interdepartmental committee.

> (1) To consider the Standard Scale of cost as recently revised by the Board of Works, and to report whether it accurately represents the cost, under present conditions, of providing school accommodation in Ireland.
> (2) To consider and report whether any, and if so what modifications are needed in the Standard Plans of the Board of Works in view of modern educational requirements.[17]

Since 1890, a set of Standard Plans, drawn up by the Board of Works, were used in the provision of new school buildings.[18] Tasked with their revision, the committee decided to invite Robson, the consulting architect to the English Board of Education, to attend and advise the enquiry. Cochrane, Principal Surveyor of the Board of Works was also present.[19]

From the outset, the committee conceded that the existing building stock was inadequate and that the existing set of school plans required 'to be modified in view of modern educational requirements.'[20] To this end, Cochrane was tasked with the preparation of a set of school plans which 'should be closely similar in essential principles to those which have been framed for England and Scotland.'[21] The resultant plans posed a particular dilemma for the Building Committee, that of cost. They concluded that by giving approval for plans of such a high standard throughout the whole country 'would be a mere counsel of perfection'. Instead, they recommended a cost–saving two–tiered strategy. Firstly, they indicated:

> There can be no valid reason…[why] rules similar to those to be observed in planning and fitting up public and elementary Schools in England and Scotland should not apply to all schools proposed to be built in the six county boroughs of Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry and Waterford, and to all schools elsewhere…to provide for a maximum attendance of not less than 140 [pupils].[22]

With regard to all other schools, it was recommended to use one of the revised plans devised by Cochrane to provide only for those requirements which could not, in the interests of children, be safely disregarded – in the terms of the committee itself they

[17] *Building Grants for National Schools*, Report of the Committee 1902, (Thom & Co., 1902), p. 1. Henceforth *Building Grants Report*.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p. 8.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p. 9.

favoured 'plans of a minimum requirement'. As the vast majority of schools were in this category these would be provided at a lower level of specification and cost. However, of particular significance is the specific caution urged in the report:

> We think, that pending a decision upon the course to be ultimately taken upon the several important questions raised in this Report…it would be expedient, save as regards applications at present under consideration, to refuse to make any Grant.[23] [My emphasis]

This was to prove crucial. While awaiting the political decision of government in response to the report the committee members were advocating a cessation of building grants. In exceptional cases of school disrepair, they suggested that grant aid might be permitted.

Another issue of deep concern was the question of funding and finance, which was not provided for in the committee's terms of reference. Specifically, they considered the cost of schools in disadvantaged areas. Ordinarily the Board required one third of the cost of building a new school to be sourced locally. In poorer localities, this outlay was usually waived by the Board, with the total cost grant aided. The Report proposed 'to make local rates liable for one-third of the cost of these schools'. The committee openly conceded they were digressing from their remit:

> It is true that this question has not been referred to us, but if, as we believe, it is inseparable from the discussion of any comprehensive scheme for the improvement of Irish National School Buildings, we should not be treating their Lordships fairly in ignoring it, while making recommendations which, without this solution, we do not believe to be practicable. This course would require legislation, and we are quite aware of the difficulties in the way of it, and that it may involve considerations of policy outside the scope of this inquiry…We cannot think that the consideration of it can be long postponed.[24]

Two salient facts arise from the report. The first was the recommendation to stall or refuse building grant applications until the government had acted on the report's findings. The second was the proposal that local rates should be levied to finance education provision. Considering the fact that Treasury Remembrancer Robert Holmes was chairman of the Committee, it was most unlikely that any opportunity to replicate

[23] Ibid., p. 10.
[24] Ibid., p. 6. The term 'Lordships' refers to the Treasury.

the situation in England, where local rates were an essential element in the funding of school building, would be missed. It was after all a Treasury report, instigated by it, chaired by a Treasury official and forwarded on its completion to the Treasury Permanent Secretary.

5.4 Behind the scenes

In the penultimate paragraph of that report, the centrality of the integral involvement of the National Board in what lay ahead was emphasised, when it stated:

> whatever changes may be decided on as a result of our recommendations must … be embodied in the system administered by the Commissioners of National Education by means of suitable words in their Regulations, and that the framing of these Regulations will necessarily give that Body an opportunity of discussing the expediency of the proposed changes.[25]

However, this is exactly what did not happen as the Board was not given an opportunity to consider the report until September 1905. Starkie was aware of its contents and recommendations, of course, but deliberations thereon were confined to the Treasury and the chief secretary's office.

As building grants had been suspended since August of the previous year, the commissioners in early January 1903 requested the government to expedite its decision on the recommendations of the report.[26] The government did not reply until 27 March stating they were considering 'the Committee's valuable report' and had no firm proposals to make at that time. They suggested that grants could be given in urgent cases.[27] But the Board's hands were effectively tied as existing standard school plans were outdated and due to be superseded by revised ones. The commissioners anticipated that these would be published shortly as part of the report of the Building Committee of 1902 but their expectation was misplaced. Contemporaneously but unknown to the commissioners, the Treasury wrote to the chief secretary on 27 January endorsing the conclusions of the report. In this letter concurrence was expressed with the view of the committee that the liability for the maintenance of schools vested in local trustees

[25] *Buildings Grant Report*, p. 13.
[26] *Mins. CNEI*, 20 January 1903.
[27] NAI, CSO RP 2947/07, 11 June 1906, statement presented on behalf of the Board of National Education by the Resident Commissioner at a meeting with the chief secretary.

should be met out of the rates, and that legislative steps should be taken to bring it into effect:

> My Lords consider therefore that steps should be taken, by legislation, to impose upon the rates the cost of upkeep of these schools … and that, if this is done, the opportunity should [then] be taken to authorise the charge upon the rates of contributions towards the cost of school buildings.[28]

The letter further stressed that, as far as the Treasury was concerned, voting large annual grants towards the cost of schools in Ireland was 'an entirely anomalous one compared with practice in England and Scotland.'[29] The Treasury also drew attention to the forthcoming Equivalent Grant, which in England was to be paid to offset the increased charges which were to fall on the rates through the operation of the recent Education Act of 1902. In Ireland, the Treasury stated:

> It follows from the parallel of the English case…that the money granted to Ireland should be applicable, in the first instance, to legitimate educational purposes, and preferably for purposes connected with National Education.[30]

Looking to the future, they could see no justification for allowing any funding for the erection of school buildings after the institution of the Equivalent Grant.[31] As far as the Treasury was concerned, building grants were to be financed from the Equivalent Grant or by local rates. The fact that, due to political expediency, the Equivalent Grant morphed into the Irish Development Grant and was, in the main sequestered, for purposes other than education, mattered little. That the Irish executive was politically unwilling or unable to legislate for rates to fund education mattered even less. In effect, an impasse had arisen, resulting in the cessation of school building and renovation. It was a state of affairs that was to defy easy resolution.

A year elapsed before, using their annual report for 1904, the commissioners 'strongly animadverted on the unfortunate consequences of the delay on the part of the Government' to communicate with them on the findings of the report.[32] They reiterated

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[28] Ibid., 9475/05, 27 January 1903, Treasury letter to chief secretary.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] This refers to the Equivalent Grant arising from funding to implement the Education Act of 1902 in England – not to be confused with the Equivalent Grant arising from the Goshen Acts in the late 1800s, which was replaced in the financial year 1896–7 by a simple capitation grant of ten shillings per pupils in average daily attendance.
[32] CNEI, *Seventy-first report…1904*, [Cd 2567], H.C. 1905, xxviii, p. 23.

that existing plans for schools were antiquated and the scales of grants insufficient. The commissioners acknowledged that in Great Britain such expenditure was levied on the rates. However, the Board's priority was the effective provision of national education in Ireland, irrespective of the sources from which it was funded. They pointedly observed:

> It seems to us to be involved in the Legislative Union, and to be a necessary consequence of the identity of taxation in Great Britain and Ireland, that the Irish child should enjoy equal advantages, so far as education is concerned, with children in English and Scotch schools.[33]

The matter of revised plans and estimates for school buildings, far from being resolved, deteriorated to such an extent that all grants for building and improvements ceased. The next annual report in 1905 laid the blame firmly on the Treasury, as having

> recently attached certain conditions, impossible of acceptance by us, to their promise of funds for this service, it would seem as if the resumption of the awarding of aid has been postponed indefinitely.[34]

One such condition was a Treasury order to confine grant aid to cases specified in a 1902 confidential return of unsuitable schools.[35] The commissioners responded strongly by challenging the Treasury's proposal to restricting grant aid to schools in this confidential return. They stressed that this return, compiled in 1902 at the Treasury's behest, was really a scoping exercise 'to provide a list of the cases of unsatisfactory school accommodation throughout the country in which managers had not taken action' – that, in other words it did not apply to schools that had not applied for a building grant. The commissioners dismissed the list as an incomplete and outdated document. Less than half of the schools mentioned had since sought aid. Were zealous managers with earlier grant applications to be penalised? This was so entirely unacceptable to the commissioners that they felt compelled to assert that the allocation of funding was the sole responsibility of the Board and none other. They also rejected out of hand the implication that the Treasury should have a veto on which schools were to be considered for grant aid:

> we and we alone [are] the judges of the particular class of cases to which the funds voted by Parliament for building grants

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., *Seventy-second report…*1905-6, p. 7.
[35] This 'confidential return' is not to be confused with the interdepartmental Building Committee Report of 1902.

> should be applied, and that, subject to general rules to be agreed upon between us and the Treasury, we should be absolutely unfettered in the application of these funds.[36]

5.5 The National Board and the Building Committee Report of 1902

After several years' delay the Board was finally given access in September 1905 to the Building Report which had been withheld since 1902. To their dismay, they discovered the school plans, prepared by the Board of Public Works and published as an appendix, fell far short of the Building Committee's own recommendations and those of the National Board. Unwilling to back down, the commissioners informed the Irish government and the Treasury of the modifications to the school plans which they considered to be indispensable. They insisted that the standard school building should be constructed in a manner that would include the following features as a minimum:

- A classroom for each teacher.
- Each classroom to have an independent entrance.
- Every part of the room be fully lighted and the light, as far as possible, to be admitted from the left side of the scholars.
- Seating accommodation in dual desks graduated in size.
- Suitable cloakrooms and lavatory accommodation.
- Apart from windows and doors, provision to be made for an appropriate inlet of fresh air.[37]

In response, in May 1906, the Treasury wrote to Dublin Castle explaining why the Board of Public Works' plans, published as an appendix to the report, did not meet the commissioners' criteria. The letter stressed that the late chief secretary and his predecessors concurred with the Treasury that the plans of the Committee of 1902 were 'too expensive and unsuitable for the existing social conditions in Ireland'. However, they now agreed that the National Board could submit their own plans. Not surprisingly, they cautioned, these should be 'less expensive than those of the Committee'.[38] Accordingly, the Board arranged for the drawing up of new plans which reflected the relevant recommendations of the Dale Report and also those of the interdepartmental Committee Report.

By late 1906, the Commissioners were in possession of their own set of draft plans for schools incorporating the necessary elements absent in those drawn up by the Board of

[36] *Seventy-second report*, p. 13.
[37] Ibid., p. 9.
[38] *Mins. CNEI*, 5 June 1906.

Works and the Treasury.[39] These were forwarded to Dublin Castle and then passed to the Office of Public Works. As was to be expected, that body reverted to the Treasury on 12 December 1906 with a detailed critique on the National Board's plans. They pointed out that while the new proposals were

> considerably more expensive than those made by Their Lordships [of the Treasury], they are also in most cases, rather more expensive than those made by the Committee of 1902, which latter, as Their Lordships will remember, were not accepted by the Chief Secretary of the day on the ground that they were too extravagant, regard being had to the home circumstances of Irish school children.'[40]

It was clearly the view of the chief secretary, and the Treasury did not disagree, that criteria for the provision of school buildings in Ireland should be commensurate with the domestic circumstances of the pupils. Anything more was considered an extravagance. Table 3 illustrates the costings of the various plans under consideration at the time.

Table 3

Comparative costs and specifications of schools according to plans submitted by (i) The Building Committee of 1902, (ii) The Treasury in 1905; and (iii) The Board of National Education 1906

Children to be accomm-odated	1902 Committee			Treasury			Board of Nat. Ed.		
	Sq.ft. per child	No. Rms*	Cost (£stg)	Sq.ft. per child	No. Rms	Cost (£stg)	Sq.ft. per child	No. Rms	Cost (£stg)
40	10	1	312	10	1	268	10	2	374
80	10	2	594	9	2	480	9	2	600
120	10	3	857	9	2	738	9	3	904
160	10	4	1,197	9	3	1,032	9	4	1,220
200	10	5	1,584	9	4	1,440	9	5	1,518

Source: Annual Reports CNEI 1885–99.
*Payment by results fees abolished from 1 April 1900, so 1899 figures used.

[39] Ibid., 5 August 1902. On this date, the Commissioners engaged the services of an independent architect to advise them on building matters on an ongoing basis.
[40] NAI, CSO RP 2946/07, 12 December 1906, Office of Public Works letter to Treasury. The chief secretary alluded to was George Wyndham.

As can be seen from Table 3, the overall costings of the three plans were not greatly at variance. That did not deter the Office of Public Works from mounting a stout defence of their actions to date. Their correspondence emphasised that the difference in costs arose from the fact that the other plans, those of the 1902 Committee and the Treasury of 1905, were prepared with the object of providing accommodation in the cheapest possible manner consistent with sound and durable construction. The plans of the National Board, they pointed out, were made without particular regard to cost. Aspects such as the suitability or utility of the plans were not alluded to in their letter. The Office of Public Works dealt with the allocation of floor space per pupil in great detail. They were aware that the National Board wished to future proof their building plans. As the average attendance in Ireland was only 67 per cent, calculations of floor space based on a lower figure would not be sufficient in the future. The education commissioners' contention was that school attendance was rising and with improved teaching and better facilities, more not less, accommodation would be required.

The Board of Works had a novel solution to counter this argument; they proposed to raise the entry age at which children attended school. They quoted from the National Board's annual report that 8.8 per cent of the children who attended national schools, some 64,590 pupils, were under five years of age. They advised:

> The best educational opinion in England is, the Board [of Works] understand, against allowing children under 5 years old to attend school, except in the worst parts of large towns. If this opinion should be carried into practice and applied to Ireland, it would be sufficient to neutralize the effect of a considerable improvement in average attendance.[41]

A copy of this correspondence was forwarded to the chief secretary with a suggestion from the Treasury that a conference with the Irish administration might be useful in the circumstances. The chief secretary was in agreement, but pertinently pointed out that

> if such a conference is to advance matters…it is necessary that some member or members of Board of Commissioners of National Education should take part in it…[as] the Irish Government would be insufficiently informed as to questions of

[41] Ibid.

> detail and would, consequently, find it difficult to deal with all aspects of the matter.[42]

In any event, the under-secretary forwarded a copy of the Board of Works' correspondence of 12 December to the Commissioners of Education in January 1907. They responded promptly, and in detail, with a defence of their building plans which they regarded as prudent and consistent with their views as to educational requirements. However, they were sharply critical of the final paragraph of the report

> in which it is suggested that in accordance with the best educational opinion, children below five years of age be excluded from Irish primary schools. The Board of Public Works have, in their report, admitted that on an educational question they are not competent to advise the Treasury; and the Commissioners regret that, in that paragraph, they have expressed an opinion as to educational policy with which they have no concern.[43]

They acknowledged that the question of the age at which children begin school was a difficult one involving educational and social considerations of great complexity, but they were firm in their conviction that this was a retrograde suggestion. The English analogy, posited by the Board of Works, was an unwelcome development. The commissioners viewed the correspondence as a blatant intrusion on their educational remit and it prompted an angry reply to Dublin Castle. They emphatically declared that

> the time has come for submitting to the judgement of the country the retrograde and unpatriotic policy which the Lords of His Majesty's Treasury have been seeking to force upon them for the last five years.

The long-suffering commissioners, gave notice that enough was enough and a resolution of the problem was necessary and overdue.

5.6 The Irish administration grasps the nettle

The blunt tone of the commissioners' response made an impression in Dublin Castle. In any event, the administration was undoubtedly aware that a continuance of matters at an impasse was politically unsustainable. A briefing note prepared for the chief secretary indicated as much. It intimated that in the interests of harmony, it might be better not to appraise the Treasury of the National Board's most recent salvo:

[42] Ibid., 14 January 1907, CSO to Treasury.
[43] Ibid., National Board letter to Under-Secretary.

> If it is not absolutely essential, it is clearly better not to raise further matters of controversy for the moment…I think it might be as well to suspend any further letters to the Treasury excepting letters directly dealing with the arrangements for the Conference.[44]

Ten days later, Sir F.J. Cullinan of the Chief Secretary's Office prepared a comprehensive briefing minute in advance of the upcoming conference between the Treasury and the Irish executive. He suggested there were two aspects on which to concentrate – firstly, the funding of building grants and secondly, the proposed plans for schools. With reference to building grants, the Treasury offered to provide £140,000 backdated to April 1903. They calculated that since some £60,000 had already been expended between that date and mid-1906, it left some £80,000 to meet all further requirements for school building for an indeterminate time. The Treasury recommended that any additional funding should be provided from the rates or from the Irish Development Grant. Cullinan advised the Irish executive to reject this Treasury position which he deemed to be without merit. He observed:

> Successive Irish Governments have explained to the Treasury that political reasons render it impossible to contemplate legislation bringing the rates in Ireland into calculation for purposes of Public Education, and until there has been a Cabinet decision to the contrary, it is futile for permanent Treasury Officials to rely on this as an argument carrying with it any weight or consequence whatsoever, and it should not be used in what is merely a Departmental correspondence and not a Cabinet pronouncement.[45]

Regarding the Irish Development Grant, Cullinan stated he had sent the Treasury a copy of a memorandum he had prepared for the chief secretary showing quite clearly that, owing to its many commitments, the grant was not only not in a position to incur any fresh liabilities, but was in need of early attention and expert advice. He summarised the situation bluntly as follows:

> The Rates are out of practical politics, the Irish Development Grant is out of the question, and, I think, the Irish Government must agree with the Board of National Education in holding that these building grants have always, heretofore, existed are not a

[44] Ibid., Handwritten minute by Cullinan to the under-secretary.
[45] NAI, CSO RP 9579/11, 27 January 1907, Cullinan minute for Irish government. The Treasury mooted the convening of such a conference as early as June 1906, but at that stage the differences between the parties were most likely too great to find convergence.

> terminable charge, but must continue to be provided for in the Vote for Public Works and Buildings.[46]

Having starkly outlined the problem, Cullinan turned to possible solutions. He cited the Board of National Education's calculation that a total of £1,100,000 was needed to bring the school building stock to a satisfactory standard – and that £100,000 a year was required to begin the process. He cited the commissioners' position:

> In order to enable us to deal with the large number of cases that have accumulated in consequence of the practical suspension of grants for the past four years, it is necessary that a sum of £100,000 per annum should be placed at our disposal for the next five years, and that after that date a reduced sum, which can be decided beforehand, should be voted each year in the estimates.[47]

The Board of Works was of the opinion that £100,000 was excessive given the delay caused by the many formalities to be observed in the planning and tendering process. They suggested a sum of £50,000 per year. Cullinan concurred and suggested the government should ask the Treasury to make a provision for the sum of £50,000 over the next five years, after which it could be reduced to £25,000. He was also in favour of the National Board's request that unexpended balances should not be surrendered but carried forward to supplement the full £50,000 for each subsequent year. Significantly, he thought it fair to propose to the Treasury 'to release the Irish Development Grant from the liability for building grants thrown on it by the late [Conservative] Government.'

Cullinan next addressed the matter of school plans. He referred to the Dale Report and its negative finding that only seven square feet of floor space per pupil was provided in Ireland, instead of ten square feet as in England. The Treasury insisted on nine square feet based on the average attendance. The Board wanted ten. The Treasury altered its stance to ten square feet multiplied by the mean between the average attendance and the number on rolls. Cullinan was of the opinion the reasonable stance would be to agree to the latter, with the reservation that special cases should be exceptionally treated.

Finally, Cullinan drew attention to Treasury correspondence which referred to, and relied on, a confidential return of substandard schools drawn up by the Board in 1902,

[46] Ibid.
[47] *Mins. CNEI*, 5 June 1906.

and to what he inaccurately identified as the Report of the Treasury Committee on building grants of 1902. He boldly asserted 'I don't think either of these documents has any weight or application to the questions of the present day.' As the Board had indicated their inability to restrict their grants to the schools listed in the 'confidential return', he advised that 'all necessitous cases must now be taken into account and dealt with.' He was equally scathing with regard to the Report on building grants in 1902, presided over by Sir Robert Holmes:

> I think they [the Committee] greatly weakened the value which might, at the time, have attached to their recommendations by bringing in the question of making local rates as inseparable from the discussion of any comprehensive scheme for the improvement of Irish National School Buildings.[48]

Since the contents of Cullinan's brief mirrored what the Board had said for years, there seemed a reasonable prospect that the meeting with the Treasury might finally bring some resolution to the long running problem of school building.

5.7 The Conference of 15 February 1907 and a resolution

On 23 January the Treasury wrote to the Under-Secretary MacDonnell advising, 'My Lords willingly agree to one or two members of National Education Board attending the proposed conference with representatives of the Irish government.'[49] Starkie and Justice Ross were duly selected by the National Board as representatives. The conference, which took place on 15 February in the Treasury chambers in London, was not without drama. The minutes of the Board do not provide a detailed reconstruction but certain insights can be acquired. Of considerable concern to the commissioners was the suggestion that Under-Secretary Antony MacDonnell, initially 'denied the right of Mr. Justice Ross to appear on behalf of this Board.' The paper trail was eminently clear – representatives were invited, Starkie and Ross were appointed, Dublin Castle and the Treasury both acknowledged Ross's nomination. The Board asserted by motion 'their right as the authority officially responsible…for Primary Education in Ireland, to be heard on the subject of the Conference.'[50]

MacDonnell wrote to Starkie suggesting that the Board had acted precipitately without a full inquiry into the facts. In any event, he stated, it was the Irish government who

[48] NAI, CSO RP 9579/11, 27 January 1907, Cullinan minute for Irish government.
[49] Ibid., 23 January 1907, Treasury letter to the under-secretary.
[50] *Mins. CNEI*, 26 February 1907.

prevailed on the Treasury to agree to the Board's attendance. The Treasury gave their consent 'not without reluctance'. Next MacDonnell dissembled stating he had asked, through Starkie, to meet Ross an hour before the scheduled time of the meeting and that Ross failed to turn up until the last moment. The under-secretary's explanation was weak. What sounds more like the truth can be gathered from a later part of MacDonnell's letter:

> It was impossible for me to permit without protest the introduction by anyone of fresh proposals which had not been previously communicated to the Irish Government, and which there was no evidence to show had either been sanctioned by or even submitted by the Board.

MacDonnell was well-reputed for his circumspection. The proceedings of the National Board while confidential, were often leaked by individual commissioners to sectional or denominational parties. The matters to be discussed at the conference had proven quite intractable and were of the utmost sensitivity. Starkie though frequently outspoken could be relied upon. For MacDonnell, discretion won the day and Ross was excluded.

As already stated, it is not recorded in the minutes of the National Board what progress, if any, was made at the conference. But it is apparent from the communication to the commissioners from the Treasury of 15 March that the thirteen points of contention were addressed or ameliorated. Indicatively, the Treasury no longer insisted on relying on the infamous flawed list of 1902 and agreed that applications for building grants could now be dealt with in order of urgency and merit. A compromise was also reached on the square footage of floor area per pupil and discretion could be exercised for exceptional cases. Funding of £40,000 was promised for each of the next school years 1907–8, 1908–9 and 1909–10.[51] Of great significance was that the annual sum provided would be considered as a 'grant-in-aid'. This meant that any unexpended surplus at the end of the financial year need not be returned to the exchequer but carried forward in full to the next year. The Treasury was understandably anxious that this arrangement would not be termed a 'grant-in-aid' but they manifested flexibility on this point also by agreeing 'to what will have the same effect'. The Treasury reserved the right to refuse funding for the building of new small schools for denominational reasons but since this had never been in dispute in any case it did not matter.

[51] CNEI, *Seventy-third report…1906–7*, [Cd 3699], H.C 1907, xxii, p. 8.

The National Board, of course, accepted the proposals *in toto.* They did add a proviso in which they requested at least £25,000 per annum from the Irish Development Grant.[52] Given the precarious state of this source, the commissioners were anxious to stake their claim to any extra funding whatever the source. This they considered necessary if they were to deal with the backlog and to verify what funding was available to them at least two years in advance, but this was effectively a matter for the future.

By the time the Board's 1907–8 annual report was published, the observations under the heading of Building Grants were, in stark contrast to those of previous years, of a most positive nature. In the past school year, the commissioners reported, sanction had been obtained from the Treasury for 'special grants for extra works, including heating by means of hot water, play sheds, concreting playgrounds, water supply, drainage, gas fittings, well sinking and the provision of pumps.'[53] The following school year of 1908–9, the commissioners commented approvingly on school managers who had, with 'commendable zeal, made numerous applications to us for money to build and improve the schoolhouses in all parts of the country.'[54] Because of the cessation of grants in previous years, the backlog was immense. By March 1908, the Board had approved expenditure of over £120,000 and they acknowledged that 'a very large number of urgent cases still remains undealt with.'[55]

Some tensions around funding did arise in 1909 when a new tranche of funding was due. In September, the Board requested the Treasury to make 'a liberal provision' for three years beginning on 1 April 1910.[56] In January 1910, the Treasury replied with sanction for £40,000 per annum for the next three years. A Parliamentary Question confirmed this on 4 July 1910. To support the continuation of this amount, the commissioners were stated

> to have before them 236 applications for grants…to replace old and unsuitable buildings, many of which have been condemned by the Board's inspectors.

[52] NAI, CSO RP, 18877/07, 27 March 1907, National Board to Treasury.
[53] CNEI, *Seventy-fourth report…1907–8*, H.C. 1908 [Cd 4291] xxvii, p. 5.
[54] Ibid., *Seventy-fifth report…1908–9*, H.C. 1909 [Cd 4873] xx, p. 6.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., *Seventy-sixth report…*1909-10, H.C. 1910 [Cd 5340] xxv, p. 8.

In their annual report for 1912–13 the commissioners expressed disappointment that their power to make grants for new buildings was 'at present limited to the more urgent cases'. Still it gave them great satisfaction to state that

> much activity in the provision of new school buildings has been apparent in all parts of the country…There is increasing evidence of the satisfaction afforded by the revised plans on which all our new schoolhouses have been erected for the past five years and which we believe may be favourably compared with rural school buildings in any part of Europe.[57]

Maurice Headlam, Treasury Remembrancer, in his evidence to the Killanin Inquiry in 1918, stated that many years after the provision of school buildings by the state had ceased in England and Scotland, the system continued in Ireland. He observed that considering 'the bad state of certain schools, it would be inequitable to stop the building grants at once.'[58] Anxious to paint an overall picture of benign Treasury funding for school building, he pointed out that a total sum of £410,767 was spent between 1903 and 1915. But highlighting the total spent occluded the difficulties encountered in resolving the logjam and the length of time it took. Closer examination of the figures reveals that from 1903 to 1908 the total expended on school building was £77,936 or an average of £15,587 a year. For the post 1907 Conference period the spend was £332,831 or an average of £47,547. Headlam's suggestion that the low spend in the earlier period was due 'to the fact that the standard plans were being enquired into' was feeble in the extreme and a gross misrepresentation of the facts.[59]

In the House of Commons in December 1906, John Dillon asked Chief Secretary Bryce, that given the intense interest in the matter in Ireland, would he consent to publish the Report of 1902 and the correspondence on the subject of school building from 1900 to the present date. Bryce passed the question to the secretary of the Treasury, who answered that

> The Report referred to was a confidential document prepared for the information of that Department. The late Government decided that no action should be taken upon it, and there would be no advantage in publishing it [now].[60]

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[57] Ibid., *Seventy-ninth report…*1912-13, H.C. 1914 [Cd 7141] xxviii, p. 8.
[58] *Report of the Viceregal Committee of Enquiry into Primary Education (Ireland) 1918, vol. I*, [Cmd 60], H.C. 1919 xxi, p. 33. Henceforth *Killanin report*.
[59] Ibid.
[60] *FJ*, 6 December 1906. Walter Runciman was Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

Thus, the report of the interdepartmental Building Committee, which was the cause of so much dissention, and central to the interruption in school construction for five years, was never placed in the public domain.

5.8 Conclusion

In 1907 the long-standing problem of grants for school building was finally resolved. This had come about, firstly, due to the persistence of the National Board and secondly, the preparedness of the Irish executive to face down the Treasury, which had resorted to tactics of brinkmanship, obstruction and denial in support of its contention that the funding for the infrastructure of Irish schools should come from rates or the Development Grant. The setting up of the interdepartmental Committee of 1902, the drawing up of the confidential list of substandard schools also in 1902, the petty squabbles over floor space per child, the insistence on drawing on direct parallels between circumstances in Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom were just distractions and stalling tactics. In the meantime, the school children, teachers, inspectors and managers each in their own way, suffered. Above all, the National Board suffered huge reputational damage. It found itself fighting a fire on many fronts – with teachers on salary and inspection issues, with managers on denominational concerns, with both groups on the amalgamation of small schools, with the Gaelic League on the teaching of Irish and of course with the Irish government and the Treasury with regard to funding. Starkie encapsulated the Board's dilemma in his Belfast speech in July 1911:

> During the last decade, in the face of the most persistent opposition and misrepresentations, which are generally ill-informed, and often malicious, the Board has carried through a revolution such as no other European country has effected in so short a time...Discouraged by the Executive, hampered at every step by the Treasury, it has never taken its hand from the plough.[61]

[61] W.J.M. Starkie, *The History of Irish primary and secondary education during the last decade* (Belfast, 1911). Speech delivered at Queen's University Belfast on 3 July 1911.

Chapter Six

Rule 127(b) addressing the problem of small schools and its impact on the teaching profession

6.1 Introduction

Writing in 1968, the former and long-time INTO general secretary T.J. O'Connell recalled:

> It is doubtful if any rule introduced by the National Board during the 90 years of its existence caused such a storm of opposition from teachers, managers and the public press as did Rule 127(b).[1]

This innocuous sounding rule, after its promulgation in early 1905, caused widespread consternation among the various stakeholders in Irish primary education. The genesis of the rule can be attributed to F.H. Dale, the English head inspector, and arose from his Irish national school evaluation in 1903. Chief among the shortcomings he perceived in the Irish system of elementary education was what he described as 'the multiplication of small schools, often unsuitably staffed and organised.'[2] Despite a fall in population, the number of schools continued to increase. Dale went to great lengths to examine how this proliferation of schools evolved in Ireland, but more significantly gave indication of how the problem might be addressed. This chapter outlines how the Board saw fit to deal with the matter by rule changes and the ensuing negative reaction of both the INTO and clerical managers. For teachers and managers, it was viewed as another money-saving attempt by the administration to deprive Irish education of necessary funding.

6.2 The proliferation of small schools

Despite the continued decline in the population of Ireland and in pupil enrolment numbers, the number of national schools sustained a relentless upwards trajectory.

[1] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 13.
[2] *Dale report*, p. 89.

Overall, during the period 1899 to 1903, the number of pupils on the rolls dropped by 97,808, while the number of schools rose by 469 (Table 4).[3]

Table 4

No. of schools in operation and no. of pupils enrolled 1899–1903

Year	Schools	Pupils
1889	8,251	839,603
1890	8,298	828,520
1891	8,346	824,818
1892	8,403	815,972
1893	8,459	832,545
1894	8,505	832,821
1895	8,557	826,046
1896	8,606	815,248
1897	8,631	816,001
1898	8,651	808,467
1899	8,670	796,163
1900	8,684	770,622
1901	8,692	754,028
1902	8,712	747,864
1903	8,720	741,795

Source: Annual Reports CNEI 1889 to 1903.

In the decades following its inception, the annual reports of the Commissioners of National Education identified the increase in the number of schools as an indicator of the system's efficacy. However, by the late 1800s the numbers began to plateau and by 1901 the Board could declare:

> We cannot report any material increase in the number of National Schools in operation during the past year, but no great increase in this respect was anticipated, as the accommodation now provided in our schools is [excluding Dublin and

[3] CNEI, *Seventieth report…1903*, p. 22.

> Belfast]…more than sufficient for the school-going population of the country.[4]

However, behind the broad picture of the adequacy of the number of schools in operation lay two uncomfortable truths. The first was the number of schools in poor condition and in need of repair or replacement as outlined in the last chapter. The second was the proliferation of small schools which rendered them both educationally and economically ineffective.

A more telling picture of the proliferation of the small schools is provided on page 27 of the same annual report. Here national schools were classified according to the average attendance of the pupils, which gave a clearer presentation of school size.

Table 5

No. of primary schools in 1903 ranked by average daily attendance

Average daily Attendance	Schools	Average daily Attendance	Schools
Under 10 pupils	7	100 to 110	140
10 to 20	544	110 to 120	64
20 to 30	1,732	120 to 130	33
30 to 40	1,861	130 to 140	40
40 to 50	1,273	140 to 150	56
50 to 60	832	150 to 175	68
60 to 65	505	175 to 200	52
65 to 70	290	200 to 250	60
70 to 75	209	250 to 300	29
75 to 80	125	300 to 350	8
80 to 85	90	350 to 400	3
85 to 90	82	400 and above	7
90 to 100	169		

Source: CNEI, *Seventieth report…1903*, p. 27.

As Table 5 demonstrates over a quarter of the school population attended schools of under 30 pupils while half the schools in total had an attendance of under 50.[5] It is

[4] Ibid., *Sixty-eight report…1901,* H.C. 1902 [Cd 1198] xxx, p. 5.

worthy of note, the publication of myriads of statistical data notwithstanding, that there is no specific information on schools, classified according to teacher numbers, namely the number of one-teacher schools, two-teacher schools etc. Although they evidently had the data, it was never published in this format. Starkie in his evidence to the Dill Inquiry in 1913 stated that in 1904 there were 5,680 one-teacher schools.[6] This was a far more damning statistic than the anodyne observation that more than half the school-going population attended schools with an average daily attendance of less than sixty.

Dale was critical of the multiplicity of small schools for two reasons. Apart from the financial costs, he highlighted the educational implications of the sub-division of what should be a single school into two or more departments. He gave as an example a mixed school of sixty pupils, taught by two teachers:

> One teacher can devote his undivided time to the instruction of the older children, the other to the younger; but when the school is split up into two separate departments [schools] of thirty boys and thirty girls, each teacher has to take both older and younger children, with the natural result of…impairing the efficiency of his [or her] work.[7]

Dale adverted specifically to what he described as 'the most disastrous consequence' of the instruction of boys from the age of three to seven years of age by a male teacher, who 'by temperament and training is unfitted to teach infants.'[8] In practice, he found that in such schools, the master concentrated his attention on the older pupils, rendering instruction of the infants unsuitable and ineffective. Dale concluded:

> It [cannot] be reasonably expected that a man should possess the patience and sympathy with very young children which are natural to even an unskilled woman teacher, and which are the indispensable prerequisites for any teaching of infants.[9]

Dale outlined the circumstances which gave rise to this proliferation of small schools – it was the inevitable consequence of the establishment of separate schools for (a) Roman Catholic and Protestant children, (b) the children of different Protestant denominations, (c) the provision of separate schools for boys and girls and (d) three

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[5] Ibid., Convent, monastery, industrial and Poor Law Unions schools were excluded from this table.
[6] *Second Report Dill*, p. 301.
[7] *Dale report*, p. 37.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

separate schools for girls, namely infant, junior and senior. Thus, he instanced the case of Rush, Co. Dublin, then a small country town, which had five schools under Roman Catholic management. Cookstown, Co. Tyrone (population 3,500) had ten schools under various denominational managements, while Magherafelt, Co. Derry (population 1,400) had eight schools. The founding principle of the National School system was 'to afford combined literary and moral, and separate religious instruction, to children of all persuasions as far as possible in the same school.' As the system evolved, the participating denominations preferred to establish entirely separate schools wherever possible. In time it became the practice, especially under Catholic management, whereby boys and girls were taught separately, often in the one building and thus creating two schools.

Dale was quite specific on how to deal with the preponderance of small schools and he recommended:

> After a date to be specified by the Board, in all schools where separate departments exist for boys and girls, no child under seven years of age shall be placed in the boys' department save under exceptional circumstances.[10]

Accordingly, it cannot have been a surprise when the Board came to revise its rules and regulations in early 1905, it introduced a rule which stated:

> Boys under eight years of age are ineligible for enrolment in a boys' school where there is not an assistant mistress, unless there is no suitable school under a mistress available in the locality.[11]

The implementation of this innocuous-sounding measure, Rule127(b) for the reorganisation of primary schools was augmented by two further new rules, namely Rules 86 and 87. In addition, some existing rules were amended with the overall purpose of reducing the proliferation of small schools. Taken together, the new rules and the amended ones provided a formidable strategy to achieve this aim. However, as it was Rule 127(b) that proved the most objectionable, its name became synonymous with the furore created around the issue.

Consistent with the strongly held belief of Dale, the National Board ruled that women were the most able and suitable teachers for infant pupils. Accordingly, these new

[10] Ibid., p. 40.
[11] CNEI, *Appendix to seventy-first report…1904, section II,* [Cd 2773], H.C. 1906, xxix, p. 141.

regulations provided for an increased role for women in the teaching of younger pupils. For example, Rule 86 stipulated that in a mixed school under a male principal, when the averages allowed, an assistant mistress should be appointed unless a manual instructress was not already in place. In mixed schools with attendance of under thirty-five, the teacher should be a woman. Finally, a mistress could be appointed to a boys' school to teach the junior pupils. This was a significant development, as heretofore, women teachers could not be appointed as assistant teachers in such schools.

Rule 87 brought yet further restrictions under two headings:

> (a) A master, whether principal or assistant, is not recognised in a girls' school; nor is an assistant master recognised in any school under a mistress.
> (b) A mistress is not recognised as principal of a boys' school unless the school is attended by infants only.[12]

Whatever about the educational dividend these rules were intended to provide, the future career paths of male assistant teachers in particular were seriously diminished. In practical terms, if boys under eight years of age were withdrawn from schools as stipulated by the new rule, hundreds of male assistants, particularly in small schools, would lose their positions due to reduced average attendance. The INTO understandably strongly objected to the rule change which they insisted would lead to loss of salary, promotion and incremental rights for male members. Clerical managers, irrespective of their denominational hue, viewed the new rules as an encroachment on their managerial domain. The practices that they had carefully nurtured over time to mould the National School system into what was by 1900, in essence, a religiously segregated one, were now challenged. The added prospect of coeducation due to the amalgamation of adjoining boys' and girls' schools was for others a step too far. For those outside the educational sphere, the new rules were seen as yet another retrogressive money-saving strategy on the part of the British Treasury.

6.3 Pushback against the new rules

Initially the INTO viewed the introduction of Rule 127(b) as yet another economising measure by the government and Treasury to deprive Irish education of funding. This viewpoint was articulated in the *Irish School Monthly*

[12] *ISM*, May 1905, p. 268.

> Nineteen Irish gentlemen, receiving no pay and owning no authority, including in their number two Bishops, four Judges, one Peer, one Lord and two Baronets, have entered into a vile and nefarious conspiracy to deprive Ireland of education. And they have done this, it seems to be universally accepted, merely to please certain clerks of the British Treasury.[13]

An editorial in the *Irish School Weekly* was more specific – it promoted the view that Chief Secretary Wyndham was using the new rule as a vehicle to reduce education spending in order to finance his land purchase schemes.[14] The employment of more women on lower salaries would reduce the overall expenditure. Another crucial outcome of the removal of boys under eight years to girls' schools was that it would lead to a reduction in salary for male teachers. As the average attendance of pupils was a critical determinant of a teacher's salary, dire consequences were predicted. The lack of consultation by the Board in the matter was likened to the autocratic actions of the Russian imperial family: 'we never thought to find that twenty grand dukes were sitting fortnightly in Tyrone house,'[15] the *Irish School Weekly* commented, advising its readers that 'It is the teachers' manifest duty, in conjunction with the Gaelic League, to denounce this starvation policy from every platform in the Country.'[16]

An interesting aspect arising from the proposed rule change was the evocation of gender rivalry among teachers. The *Irish School Weekly* of 4 March 1905 carried an article entitled *The Passing of the Male Teacher* in which the writer alluded to the wider implications of the new rule. Apart from the obvious threat to the tenure of male teachers, it was now possible 'for the first time a woman could be appointed as an assistant in an exclusively boys' school and that only women would be recognised as teachers of all schools under 19 average attendance or of mixed schools under 35.'[17] Women teachers did not see the matter this way. Female principals pointed out that in the case of adjoining boys' and girls' schools faced with amalgamation, the male teacher would be appointed principal. Although their salary would be safeguarded, their status would not. A lively correspondence ensued in the teaching journals. One irate

[13] Ibid.
[14] *ISW*, 4 March 1905.
[15] *ISM*, May 1905, p. 267.
[16] *ISW*, 8 April 1905.
[17] Ibid., 4 March 1905. Also O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 139. O'Connell identifies the writer of the article as Jeremiah Henly, then Professor at Kildare Street Training College, who regularly contributed articles on current educational matters under the *nom-de-plume* of "Beta".

female principal asserted that 'I, for one would prefer reduction of my salary by half, rather than submit to such a degradation.'[18] Another letter signed by 'Mistress' stated:

> You say many lady principals would probably resent being made assistants…especially if…the girls' school has been always superior to the boys', the attendance larger, the examinations and reports better [,] the teacher more highly classed and in receipt of a higher salary. How would such a mistress feel to be 'amalgamated' with the inferior school?[19]

The INTO response to the controversy over Rule127(b) was reflective of the status held by women in the organisation as well as society at large. The fact that male teachers were guaranteed to retain their principalships in amalgamated schools, irrespective of the merits of their female counterparts, reflected the primacy of the position given to men in the educational system and chimed with Chuinneagáin's assessment:

> From its foundation, the INTO protected women teachers' interests especially where these coincided with men teachers. But where there was a conflict of interests, women teachers' concerns were often relegated to second place.[20]

The controversy surrounding the introduction of Rule127(b) suggested that the Catholic clerical managers and teachers had found common cause. However, circumstances dictated that the Catholic hierarchy had less freedom of action when it came to the matter. Since the controversial resignation of Archbishop Walsh in 1901, his position remained unfilled on the National Board of Education despite many overtures from the official side. Finally, in early 1905, Bishop Patrick Foley of Kildare and Leighlin accepted the post and attended his first Board meeting on 17 January. Unfortunately for him, his appointment coincided with the publication of the new and revised Rules and Regulations for National Schools which included the contentious Rule127(b). The fact that the Board's decision on the rules review and changes was made in the autumn prior to his nomination cut little ice with its critics and, as Miller observed, 'Foley soon found himself caught between an almost frenzied clerical agitation against the new rule and the difficulty of rationally defending the clerical position to his fellow Board members.'[21]

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[18] *ISW*, 8 April 1905.
[19] Ibid., 1 April 1905.
[20] Síle Chuinneagáin, *Catherine Mahon: first woman president of the INTO* (Dublin, 1998) p. 14. Henceforth Chuinneagáin, *Catherine Mahon*.
[21] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, p. 131.

Moreover, Foley's appointment to the National Board was no random happenstance. In effect he was the choice of the Catholic hierarchy to represent their interests in primary education. The timing may have been unpropitious but he was to prove a formidable advocate. He bided his time, took stock of the workings of the Board and no doubt, consulted with both officials and his fellow bishops. On 15 March 1905, he prepared a public letter to the *Freeman's Journal* replying 'to all the communications respecting Rule127(b)…with which I have been favoured during the past few weeks.'[22] Foley expressed the wish that his letter might allay some of the anxiety among managers and teachers. He had no hesitation in stating that boys under seven years of age would be better off at home 'if they have a decent one, than in a school exclusively taught by men.' He was pleased to note that his correspondents based their objections on effects the new rule might have on the schools which these boys might attend, rather than the suggestion they 'would be turned into "mollies" if sent to schools under mistresses.' The sole intention of the commissioners, he stressed, was to make proper provision for the educational needs of such children. Bishop Foley emphasised that a large number of boys' schools would be unaffected, as at present they had no infants enrolled. Further the rule only applied where there existed a suitable girls' school to enrol infant boys. By this, Foley understood 'suitable' to mean those possessed of the proper accommodation and capacity to provide for the efficient teaching of infants. However, he observed:

> Highly as I esteem the advantages which would attend the transfer to a "suitable school" of all boys under six, seven or even eight years of age, I would not dream of sacrificing the immense superiority of two-teacher over a one-teacher school for the purpose.

To avoid this outcome, Foley cautioned against a 'wooden' or inflexible interpretation of the rule in order 'to obtain the advantages which the rule aims at conferring without the disadvantages which were merely accidental.'[23] Here Foley was giving notice of how he intended to proceed – to work within the Board's structures to ameliorate the rule rather than rescind it. In conclusion, he cited some damning statistics from the CNEI Report of 1903 – the most serious concern was that over 45 per cent of children on the rolls of national schools were made up of infants and others who reached only the First standard. This, above all, rendered it imperative for the commissioners to

[22] *FJ*, 21 March 1905.
[23] Ibid.

intervene in order to give adequate provision for the educational needs of all children in national schools. Significantly he warned:

> Grave will be the responsibility of the Lords of the Treasury if for the sake of any additional expenditure that may be necessary, they make up their minds to once more frustrate the intentions of the Commissioners and block the way of progress.

The measured words of the newly appointed commissioner initially fell on deaf ears such was the strength of Catholic clerical apprehension. Miller estimated that in the period 18 March to 3 May 1905, no less than twenty-two of the twenty-seven bishops indicated their opposition to the new rule in letters to the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent*.[24] Meanwhile, Bishop Foley busied himself at Board meetings to lessen the impact of a full application of Rule 127(b). During March progress was slow and incremental. On 11 April, he was outvoted thirteen to two on a complex composite motion. However, when he subdivided his motion, he was defeated eleven to five on one, but was unanimously successful on the other.[25] Time constraints postponed further discussion. By the next meeting on 28 April, it was obvious a compromise was forthcoming when the Resident Commissioner expressed his willingness to accept Foley's proposals for the lowering of the age limit for the transfer of boys from eight to seven and the protection from amalgamation of a boys' school whose attendance was reduced due the transfer of older boys to a neighbouring suitable girls' school.[26] Starkie's offer was conditional on Foley's acceptance that there would be no further amendment to Rule127(b) and that he [Foley] should use his good offices to persuade the Catholic hierarchy and managers to abandon their opposition to it. Foley, unable to guarantee such an outcome, suggested that his proposals 'would go some way to obviate the objections of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and clerical managers', and that, so far as his influence went, he would exert it to obviate these objections. The Board was satisfied with these assurances and the Bishop's motion was adopted '*nemine dissentiente'*.[27]

Within weeks, Foley met with the Standing Committee of the Bishops and reported back on the satisfaction expressed by them on the amendments to the rule. However, as

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[24] Miller, *Church, state and nation,* p. 131.
[25] *National Education (Ireland), Copy of the minutes of the proceedings of the Commissioners of National Education relating to Rule 127(b) of their Code of Regulations,* (184), H.C. 1905, lx, p. 6.
[26] Miller, *Church, state and nation,* p. 131.
[27] *Mins. CNEI,* 28 April 1905.

the amalgamation of boys' and girls' schools remained central to the scheme, the bishops felt compelled by 'insuperable objections on moral grounds…to oppose them by every legitimate means in their power.'[28] The CCSMA at their annual general meeting on 7 June declared that the rule, even as modified, was unsatisfactory.[29] A further meeting on 12 September advised managers to

> refuse to regard [these] objectionable rules as binding as…they will inevitably in the not too distant future, place most of the boys of Ireland of all school going ages under the care of female teachers and most of the girls of a school going age in the same school as boys to the great detriment of education and morality.[30]

And there the matter was left. By the time of their next annual general meeting in 1906, the issue had lost its centrality; it merely merited a few lines – 'that our secretary be also directed to bring under the notice of the Chief Secretary the persistence of the Board of Education in maintaining Rule127(b).'[31] In truth the terms of the original rule were diluted only in a marginal fashion. The age limit for transfer of boys was reduced from eight to seven. Principals of amalgamated schools would retain their pay and pension entitlements. A tweaking of the numbers needed for the appointment of assistant teachers and the use of the words 'special consideration' covered a multitude of uncertainties. The rule won grudging acceptance.

6.4 A new class of teacher: Junior Assistant Mistresses

A significant outcome of the implementation of the new rule was the introduction of a new class of teacher, Junior Assistant Mistresses, subsequently referred to as 'JAMs'. These were appointed in one-teacher schools of low average attendance to teach junior classes, singing to all pupils and needlework to girls. This category of female teachers was first introduced into the national school system in 1900 when they were called 'manual instructresses'. Such appointments at that time were sanctioned for schools where there were no female teachers and where the average attendance was insufficient to employ an assistant teacher. By 1904, the Commissioners proposed the expansion in the use of manual instructresses to small schools in order to 'convert a very large number of single-teacher schools into two-teacher schools in a way that will vastly

[28] Ibid., 9 May 1905.
[29] *Mins. CCSMA*, 7 June 1905, p. 27.
[30] Ibid., 12 September 1905, pp 51-2.
[31] Ibid., 5 June 1906, p. 62.

increase their efficiency.'[32] These appointees were untrained but the Board planned to expand their cohort of kindergarten organisers to provide 'a suitable training'.[33]

Table 6. Distribution of principals, assistants, JAMs and 'other' teachers 1904–19

Yrs	Principals	Assists	J.A.Ms	Others	Total Teachers	J.A.Ms as % of Assists	J.A.Ms as % of Total Teachers
1904	8,272	4,009		1,111	13,302		
1905	8,189	4,338	715	368	13,610	16.5%	5.3%
1906	8,152	4,446	1,494	247	14,339	33.6%	10.4%
1907	8,101	4,604	1,815	221	14,771	39.4%	12.3%
1908	8,026	4,705	2,022	188	14,941	43.0%	13.5%
1909	7,957	4,884	2,231	172	15,244	45.7%	14.6%
1910	7,890	4,939	2,301	151	15,281	46.6%	15.1%
1911	7,851	5,182	2,374	126	15,533	45.8%	15.3%
1912	7,816	5,398	2,336	103	15,653	43.3%	15.0%
1913	n.p.*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1914	7,783	5,675	2,338	76	15,872	41.3%	14.7%
1915	7,728	5,743	2,300	65	15,836	40.0%	14.5%
1916	7,687	5,734	2,271	55	15,747	39.6%	14.4%
1917	7,650	5,760	2,360	54	15,820	41.0%	15.0%
1918	7,540	5,770	2,380	45	15,785	41.2%	15.0%
1919	7,540	5,730	2,400	40	15,710	41.9%	15.2%

Source: CNEI, *Annual Reports 1904-19.*
n.p.*: CNEI report for 1913 not published.

The first official records of teachers categorised specifically as JAMs was in the Commissioner's Annual Report for 1905–6 which stated their number as 715. The previous year there were 660 'manual instructresses'. It is safe to assume that the latter cohort was given a new title and retained in their positions as the salary of the new recruits was similar. Year on year, the number of JAMs increased, until by December

[32] CNEI, *Seventy-first report…1904*, p. 21.
[33] Ibid., *Seventy-second report…1905–6*, p. 20.

1919 they numbered 2,400. Table 6 illustrates the dramatic rise of their recruitment in the years 1904 to 1919.[34] Keeping in mind that all these posts were filled by women, it had the effect of transforming the role of assistant teacher into a female dominated sphere. In 1905, the number of assistant teachers was 4,338; 1,219 men (28 per cent) and 3,119 women (72 per cent). By 1919, the total number of assistants was 5,730; the number of males teachers remained static at 1,240 while their female assistant counterparts rose to 4,490 in number.[35] Percentage wise, male numbers fell to 22 per cent as opposed to an increase to 78 per cent for women. The addition of 3,195 female school principals gives evidence to the fact that by December 1919, female teachers outnumbered their male counterparts by a ratio of two to one.

The introduction of JAMs did not come without opposition. A writer in the *Irish School Weekly*, unkindly described them as 'animated broomsticks', while trained members of serving teachers viewed their introduction as a diminution of their professional status.[36] The school inspectorate's response to their introduction was lukewarm. Most were critical of the training courses provided by the kindergarten organisers. Mr W.J. McClintock, an inspector on the Enniskillen Circuit, reported:

> this short course, though very beneficial, is not sufficient for the attainment of the skill which is required to realise the mental development contemplated by the code in the case of the younger pupils. Hence the teaching of these junior assistant mistresses is still too mechanical – there is still too much instruction, too little education.[37]

Other inspectors were more positive. One such was Mr Clements of the Omagh Circuit, who stated:

> The junior assistant mistresses who were recently trained in kindergarten methods have improved their method of teaching and in the schools in which they are employed the infants are carefully taught and trained.[38]

The head kindergarten organiser, Edith O'Farrell, in her progress report on the in-service training for the year ending July 1911 stated that combined with her five assistant organisers, they made visits to 932 individual schools. In addition, they

[34] Reports CNEI, 1904 to 1919. The last report published was for 1919-20.
[35] CNEI, *Eighty-sixth report…1919–20*, [Cmd 1476] H.C. 1921, xi, p. 21.
[36] *ISW*, 11 March,1905.
[37] CNEI, *Appendix to seventy-sixth report…1909–10, section I*, p. 31
[38] Ibid., p. 20.

conducted kindergarten courses of four week's duration in 32 centres for a total of 334 teachers. While a breakdown of the attendees is not provided, it can be reasonably deduced that the majority of them were trainee JAMs, as extra organisers for that specific task were recruited in 1906.

At the Dill Inquiry in 1913, Starkie went on record to state: 'In my opinion, the introduction of junior assistant mistresses is the greatest improvement we have made in education.'[39] He further reported the reduction of 'small and unnecessary' schools which previously had been increasing year on year. This trend was reversed and the number of one-teacher schools had reduced by 3,000 since 1904.[40]

6.5 Conclusion

The introduction of Rule 127(b) in 1905 to deal with the proliferation of small schools evoked so much controversy that the government ordered the compilation of a dossier of the documentation pertaining solely to this rule. Included were the Board minutes, reports from the inspectorate and extracts from correspondence with the Treasury. These were published as a parliamentary paper on 31 May 1905 and as happened in the case of the resignation of Archbishop Walsh in 1901, another disputatious matter was put to rest. The felicitous appointment of Bishop Foley to the Board of National Education, which coincided with the promulgation of the rule, proved to be the key in unlocking the obstruction to its implementation. His patient policy of modifying the harsher elements of the rule provided the delicate compromise needed. The Catholic hierarchy, which some months previously called for the abolition of the National Board, gave indication that they were willing to work within the existing structures in order to preserve their interests in primary education. The other denominations largely remained aloof. The proliferation of small schools also suited their spiritual remit, so they were content to let the Roman Catholic Church do the heavy lifting. Moreover, if the proposed changes were an educational imperative and could not be resisted, so be it. With the passage of time, Rule127(b) became embedded in the national school system, where it intermittently caused local friction, centred on the closure of small rural schools, until the 1980s.

[39] *Second Dill Report*, p. 297.
[40] Ibid., p. 309.

Chapter Seven

Assessing the state of the national school system – the Dill Committee of Inquiry 1913

7.1 Introduction

The twentieth century ushered in a new era in primary education with the appointment of a new resident commissioner and the rolling out of a revised curriculum. At the same time, a new system of pay, increments and promotions was introduced for teachers. This was accompanied by a revision of the system of inspection. As these new elements bedded in, anomalies arose, centred around what teachers identified as the lack of uniformity by inspectors in the award of merit marks. These marks were crucial to teachers, not only in securing their triennial increments but also their promotion through the grades. In two areas, Belfast and Clonmel, this divergence from uniformity was so great that teachers and their association appealed to the National Board for redress. Matters came to a head with the dismissal in 1912 of the outspoken Edmund Mansfield, an INTO activist and teacher, which gained national headlines. The ensuing furore in press and in public brought demands for an inquiry, which Chief Secretary Birrell set up under the chairmanship of Sir Samuel Dill to report on the pay, promotion and uniformity of inspection of teachers. This was perceived by Starkie, as titular head of the National Board, as an evaluation, not only of his administration since his appointment in 1899, but also of Irish primary education after more than a decade of change and both he, and to a lesser extent, the Board, left no stone unturned as they sought to vindicate their stewardship of Irish education.

7.2 Teacher dissatisfaction with the Board and school inspection

The introduction of the Revised Programme into Irish Primary Schools in 1900 was, in the main, welcomed by teachers. The accompanying new scale of salary and increments, which when taken with changes to the mode of inspection, proved more problematic. As already outlined in Chapter 1, it was intended that no teacher should be financially disadvantaged under the new scheme. This proved in practice to be difficult to implement leading to dissatisfaction and disaffection. More seriously, the changes introduced in 1900 gave school inspectors effective control over the awarding of increments and promotions to teachers. Previously under the old results system, only

one-third of a teacher's income was determined by the annual examination. Now, to merit promotion to a higher grade, it was necessary to obtain a good report for three consecutive years. Any decline in standards was penalised – two good reports followed by an unsatisfactory one returned the teacher to the starting point. This system positioned the inspector as the gatekeeper to the advancement of a teacher's career and financial prospects. Little wonder then, as the new system bedded in and its practical effects came to the fore, that grave misgivings arose among teachers.

Under the old system of payment by results, the main focus of inspection was centred on the annual examination of the individual pupils on a narrowly defined curriculum. Under the new system, emphasis was placed on the observation and evaluation of teacher methodology leading to an estimation of the quality of work carried out in the classroom. Incidental unannounced school visits, together with a formal inspection (with prior notice) would, it was believed, assist in the formulation of an annual report on each school. This resultant report went into minute detail – there were over 100 separate questions, requiring information on not only the pupils' proficiency but also every conceivable facet of the school's operation including premises, organisation, equipment, staff, attendance and the observation of rules.[1]

The annual report under the new system brought not only a new dimension to school inspection but unwelcome consequences as well, considering that the awarding of triennial salary increments to teachers and their promotion through the grading system were based, apart from training and average pupil attendance, on the inspector's evaluation and report. This assessment was arrived at by a gradation of merit marks into five bands: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Middling/Bad. In order to qualify for a triennial increment a teacher had to maintain a high rating for three consecutive years. To further complicate matters seven criteria were invoked in the evaluation of a school's efficacy. These were (a) whole programme taught in a creditable manner (b) best teaching methods are in use (c) ample educational equipment (d) discipline and tone of a high order (e) exemplary tidiness and order (f) school records neat and complete and (g) school premises in good order.[2] The blending of so many differing

[1] The Parliamentary Papers covering the Dill Inquiry consist of the following: *Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland) 1913, First Report*, [Cd 6828], H.C. 1913, xxii; *Appendix* ditto [Cd 6829]; *Second repor*t [Cd 7228], *Appendix* ditto [Cd 7229]; *Third Report* [Cd 7479], *Appendix* ditto [Cd 7480] and *Final report* [Cd 7235]. Henceforth these are referenced as *First report Dill et seq.* Above reference *Appendix First report Dill*, pp 151-9.
[2] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, pp 280-1.

elements in school evaluation rendered the concept of uniformity and consistency in marking very problematic. It was only a matter of time before difficulties arose. When they did and it was in Belfast and Clonmel where the most serious anomalies came to light.

In 1910, teachers in excess of one hundred Belfast schools were alarmed on finding their merit marks had decreased, which seriously damaged their prospects for promotion and increments. When compared with national statistics for the period 1907–9, their number of satisfactory reports declined by 4.5 per cent while elsewhere they increased by 4 per cent.[3] In late 1910, the Belfast Teachers' Association petitioned the Board decrying the situation whereby Belfast teachers were marked more stringently than anywhere else in the country. Under pressure from teachers, the Board received a deputation of Belfast teachers on 6 February 1911. Also present were the inspectors central to the matter, who responded to the complaints of the teachers, while Chief Inspectors Purser and Hynes were dispatched to reinspect a random sample of the schools involved. They reported that there was no justification in the charges made by the teachers. In May, the Board wrote to teachers stating they had received 'the observations of the inspectors whose conduct had been impugned.' The letter rejected the teachers' criticism and upheld the findings of the inspectors involved, claiming:

> There is no evidence to show that there has been any concerted action on the part of the administration to deal severely with the Belfast teachers, or that the present standard of marking is unduly high in the schools…They consider that the colour given to some of the incidents cited and some of the innuendoes made by some members of the deputation are devoid of any justification.[4]

The teachers in turn, requested copies of the inspectors' observations on their grievances. The Board deemed this information to be confidential, but did not communicate this decision to the teachers until June. In the meantime, the teachers obtained copies unofficially, almost certainly from a source in Tyrone House. This in turn heightened their suspicion of a cover-up. The brusque treatment of the teachers' grievances only served to strengthen their resolve. Some years later, reflecting on the Belfast episode and the role of the Chief Inspectors Purser and Hynes, Starkie admitted that 'it [was] impossible to induce the gentlemen to write a well-balanced and impartial

[3] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 46.
[4] *Mins. CNEI*, 30 May 1911.

report'; their reports he described as 'breathing a narrow, bitter, partisan spirit in every line.'[5]

At the same time, teachers in the Clonmel circuit were experiencing comparable problems with their school inspection. The timing of their dissatisfaction coincided with a change of inspector. In July 1909, W.A. Brown who had served in the circuit for six years was replaced by William H. Welply. Brown, who was deemed a lenient inspector, was popular with the teachers. However, within months, complaints emerged about his successor's 'rudeness and uncouthness in manner' and an accompanying accusation that 'he demeaned the teacher[s] before the children.'[6] Of far more serious import was the merit marks awarded to the teachers in their annual reports. The total marks termed 'good' awarded in the Clonmel circuit fell from 81 to 61 per cent and the number of 'excellent' and 'very good' nearly halved, dropping from 137 to 70.[7] This naturally angered the teachers concerned who conveyed their disquiet in a memorial that came before the Board in June 1911. The memorialists stressed that the cordiality that had existed prior to the appointment of Welply had been replaced with distrust. His arrival was deemed directly responsible for depressing the merit marks in many schools which adversely affected their reputation, increments and promotion prospects. They respectfully requested consideration of their complaints and the transfer of Welply to another circuit.

Cognisant of the implications in the light of the ongoing problems in Belfast, Starkie chose to involve himself personally in this case. In October 1911, in the company of Board Secretary William J. Dilworth, he visited seventy schools in the Clonmel circuit. He further identified a number of schools for re-inspection by Chief Inspector J.J. Hynes. Overall, Starkie took the view that the marking prior to Welply's appointment had been too lenient. Hynes concurred and went further, remarking on the unbecoming manner in which some teachers were critical of Welply. He singled out Edmund Mansfield of Cullen National School for particular reprimand: 'If public utterances of this kind by a teacher is [sic] allowed to go unpunished, the effect on the teaching body in general will be most injurious'.[8]

[5] *Appendix Second report Dill*, p. 306.
[6] Ibid., p. 307.
[7] *Final report Dill*, p. 21.
[8] *Appendix First report Dill*, p. 215.

The matter of inspection in the Clonmel circuit was discussed in detail at a meeting of the Board on 12 December 1911. The consensus was that Welply's standard was not unreasonably high and consequently no injustice had taken place. This was conveyed in a Board letter to the Co. Tipperary Teachers' Association. To add insult to injury, the Board was critical of teachers for not appealing their cases more promptly. The letter further suggested that they deliberately

> hold back a number of complaints for a considerable time then to submit them simultaneously as a mass of evidence in support of various charges, some vague and ill-defined. [This] is a course not adapted to enable the Commissioners to give a full and satisfactory consideration to the case. Such a proceeding is objectionable.[9]

The censorious tone of the Board's response to their grievances did not sit well with the Clonmel teachers. Protest meetings were convened, a direct appeal to parliament was mooted and the Board was petitioned once more to transfer Welply. However, the spark which ignited the flame of events and elevated the dispute to a still higher level was lit at a teachers' meeting in Clonmel in July 1912, when Edmund Mansfield spoke in derogatory terms of Board's officials:

> There is no doubt that Dr Starkie made fine speeches in Belfast and Cork and elsewhere – glorious speeches they were, perfect models of eloquence and reason, and perhaps patriotism sometimes. But it is hard to reconcile Dr Starkie's views with the actions of his petted and pampered officials. The very men who were slave driving in the schools were the pampered pets of his office.[10]

In forthright terms he called for the removal of Welply.

Mansfield would later claim that his remarks were made off the record at a private meeting and intended only for the ears of his fellow teachers. Unfortunately for him, they were reported in two local newspapers. It was thus only a matter of time before the newspaper articles were brought to the attention of the Board. Not surprisingly the Board took umbrage at the statements attributed to Mansfield and called for their unqualified retraction. This, Mansfield was unwilling to do. Dease, a member of the Board, later recalled: 'If Mr Mansfield had been an isolated teacher acting for himself alone, it would have been less serious and he might have been easily dealt with.' But

[9] *Mins. CNEI*, 15 December 1911.
[10] *Appendix Third report Dill*, p. 405.

Mansfield was a formidable figure – vice-president of the INTO, a leading light in the Gaelic League and a noted 'seasoned campaigner on various issues.'[11] Be that as it may, the Board decided on a firm show of strength and at their meeting of 15 October 1912 voted, by 12 votes to 1, to dismiss Mansfield.[12] The one dissenting voice was Philip Ward, a former teacher.

News of Mansfield's dismissal was received with outrage by teachers and disbelief by others. Within days, Canon M.P. O'Neill, his school manager, wrote to the Board:

> I am very sorry, indeed, that the Commissioners have acted so harshly to Mr. Mansfield. They have deprived me of a teacher of great ability and capacity, a hard-working faithful man in discharge of his duties. In my opinion, it is wanton and tyrannical exercise of authority to ruin such a teacher, his future prospects and family,[13]

The Irish Independent concurred. Under its editorial headline of 'Insufferable Tyranny', it castigated the Board:

> We do not hesitate to say that a more outrageous act of tyranny than the dismissal of Mr. Mansfield has never been committed by a junta which believes itself responsible to nobody and free to indulge a capricious levity at times…In fact, if they [the teachers] do not make up their minds to fight out the question with Dr. Starkie and the Commissioners they had better dissolve their organisation at once.[14]

It was not surprising that *The Irish School Weekly* was of the same opinion: 'It is a state of war, and every means must be used to bring tyranny before the bar of public opinion.'[15] Catherine Mahon, the president of the INTO, saw the dismissal as an opportunity to embarrass the Board, observing that 'tactful and far-seeing teachers recognise in this dismissal a great and grand opportunity of sweeping away for ever the present inspectorial system'.[16] O'Connell, also from an INTO perspective, described the situation bluntly when he wrote:

> Without the knowledge or approval of the other nineteen Commissioners and without consultation with managers and

[11] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, p. 315.
[12] *Mins. CNEI*, 15 October 1912. Ward was the first teacher to be appointed as a commissioner in September 1910.
[13] *Appendix Third report Dill*, p. 140.
[14] *IrI*, 18 October 1912.
[15] *ISW*, 2 November 1912.
[16] Ibid.

> teachers circulars of instruction were issued to the inspectors; teachers were reprimanded, demoted, fined or dismissed. Appeals against unfair or unjust reports were invariably turned down. Payment of an increment depended on three successive satisfactory reports. Numerous cases were quoted where two such good reports were followed by an unsatisfactory one, thus compelling the teacher to start again building the three good or very good reports necessary for an increment and for promotion to a higher grade with the same certainty that his efforts would not suffer the same fate.[17]

The situation nationally was more nuanced, but the momentum was with the teachers, and they sought to press home their advantage. They convened a mass meeting in the Mansion House on 25 October demanding an inquiry to right their wrongs. From the outset the National Board, but especially Starkie, was totally opposed to any discussion of reinstatement for Mansfield never mind the very idea of an inquiry. However, during the course of the Mansion House meeting, portions of letters written by Chief Inspector Alfred Purser to a Co. Limerick teacher were read. These contained the allegation that Starkie had in another case 'supressed facts and reports and then prevented the Board coming to a proper or any decision.'[18] The letters concerned a difference in the marking of Cloondaff NS, Co. Mayo involving Purser and Joseph S. Cussen, the senior inspector of the Castlebar Circuit. This incident dated from early 1911. It was, in effect, a relatively minor procedural matter which in normal times would wind its way through the maze of the Board's bureaucracy. Unfortunately, in the febrile atmosphere surrounding the teachers' grievances, the publication of Purser's criticism of Starkie could not be ignored and Purser was forced to resign on 6 November.[19]

In early November, Chief Secretary Birrell seemed reasonably sanguine that the matter might soon be put to bed. He wrote to Starkie, 'as for Mansfield of course nothing can be done. His letters are worse than his speeches'.[20] However when a deputation, which included Irish MPs and Mansfield, travelled to the House of Commons to outline their case to him, he relented. 'It was impossible', he explained feebly to Starkie by letter, 'for me to resist granting some sort of inquiry, and I don't know but the present opportunity is one in which the interests of education, might not be advantageously

[17] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 405. T.J. O'Connell (1882-1969) became General Secretary of the INTO in 1916, succeeding Edmund Mansfield who had served in that capacity since 1913. O'Connell retained the post until 1948.
[18] *IrI*, 26 October 1912.
[19] *Mins. CNEI*, 6 November 1906.
[20] TCD, MS 9209 no. 37, 3 November 1912, Birrell to Starkie.

taken.'[21] There is little doubting that the parliamentary deputation forced Birrell's hand in ceding the request for an inquiry. However, in the same letter he was advising Starkie that the proposed inquiry provided an opportunity for both himself and the Board to highlight their endeavours to modernise the national school system against a backdrop of considerable opposition. Within weeks, the government announced the setting up of a vice-regal committee of inquiry into school inspection. Wiser heads were well aware that there was more at stake.

7.3 The Committee of Inquiry under Dill

Sir Samuel Dill, LittD, Professor of Greek in Queen's University Belfast was appointed to chair the inquiry.[22] For Birrell, Dill's appointment proved the easy bit. His efforts to achieve an equitable balance of interests in his selection of committee members proved a more formidable task. In frustration Birrell wrote to Starkie:

> I am really grieved – But what a place Ireland is!...Long before I so much as think of anybody, I am told he will never do – because he is somebody's friend or enemy…The cure will be worse than the disease.[23]

Dill, the chairman of the inquiry, was also concerned about its composition, but for different and practical reasons. He confided to Starkie:

> I am anxious from what I hear about the composition of the commission [sic]. If men however excellent are put on who are not generally known in public life I fear the results will not be accepted with respect. And someone from the North will be needed to appease the jealous fears which always obsess us here.[24]

Starkie too was uneasy. His preoccupation was to ensure the chosen appointees were, at the very least, not antagonistic to the Board and its officials. His main objection was towards Jeremiah Henly, a former teacher and professor of teaching method at the Church of Ireland Training College, of whom he observed in a letter to Birrell:

> It is well known that he has been Mr Purser's (Chief Inspector who is largely responsible for the present agitation) right hand man in denouncing me and the new system…He wrote most of the articles in the *Teachers' Journal* against me…and has been

[21] Ibid., no. 38, 8 November 1912, Birrell to Starkie.
[22] Samuel Dill was also a member of the Intermediate Education Board.
[23] TCD, MS, 9209, no. 42, 21 December 1912, Birrell to Starkie.
[24] Ibid., no.131, 23 November 1912, Dill to Starkie.

> my personal enemy for years. I sh[oul]d regard it as a humiliation to have to give evidence before him. Indeed I sh[oul]d have to consider whether I sh[oul]d not refuse to give evidence at all.[25]

In further correspondence to Birrell, Starkie objected to another potential nominee, John Coffey, who was also a former teacher. Starkie witheringly described him as 'possibly indigestible' but conceded that 'he might please the teachers.' Entirely more acceptable was Bishop Denis Kelly of Ross, portrayed by Starkie as 'no friend of mine', who had 'great experience of commissions…and is really a very agreeable, clever, patriotic person.' In the same letter he doubled down on his criticism of Henly: 'may I implore of you, however the consequences may be, to reconsider your choice of Henly to whom we all object more than any other conceivable Irishman. He is corrupt, obscene and malignant.'[26] Birrell was apologetic in his reply, explaining, 'I am really sorry about Henly…[but] I have the North to remember & I thought a well accredited son of the Reformation [suitable].'[27]

As matters transpired, Birrell did appoint Henly, Coffey and Kelly, while adding four others to complete the committee under the chairmanship of Dill – Walter MacMurragh Kavanagh, Thomas Michael Kettle, Sir Hiram Shaw Wilkinson and Heneage R.B. Harrison.[28] What was quite remarkable was the fact that, for the first time since its formation, the National Board had no representative on such a committee.

Regarding the terms of reference for the inquiry, the records show no formal contact with the Board. However, Birrell did seek Starkie's observations when he wrote privately to him on 8 November: 'I enclose a rough draft of what I have in mind and I shall be glad if you will favour me confidentially with your criticisms upon it.'[29] While no reply has been traced, it is most unlikely that Starkie declined the opportunity.

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[25] Ibid., Starkie to Birrell, no. 43, 20 December 1912. Henly had a distinguished teaching career, before his appointment as professor of method at the Kildare Place Church of Ireland Teacher Training College in 1901. He was a regular contributor to the *Irish School Weekly*, writing under the pen-name 'Beta'. These articles were highly and consistently critical of the Revised Programme, Starkie and the National Board.

[26] Ibid., no. 46, Starkie to Birrell, 1 January 1913.

[27] Ibid., no. 47, Birrell to Starkie, 3 January 1913.

[28] MacMurragh Kavanagh was a former Irish Party MP; Kettle, professor of national economics at UCD and also a former MP; Wilkinson a former diplomat and retired judge; and Harrison, a former English school inspector.

[29] TCD, MS 9209, no. 38, Birrell to Starkie, 8 Nov 1912.

Given the widespread unrest prevailing in educational circles, it was generally assumed that the terms of reference for the inquiry, when published, would have a wide remit. However, perhaps with an eye to the future and the potential for a new education dispensation under Home Rule legislation, Birrell limited its scope to the relationship between teachers, the inspectorate and the Board. Thus, the terms of reference asked the Committee of Inquiry to consider

> whether the rules, regulations and practice of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland with regard to the inspection of schools and to the awarding of increments and promotion to teachers, and the methods adopted by the Inspectors in carrying out their inspection are conducive to sound education, to efficiency on the part of the teachers, and to fairness and uniformity in their treatment; and whether any, and, if so, what changes are desirable in the system of inspection; and also to report on the relations of the Commissioners and their Inspectors to the teachers; and upon the rules and regulations of the Commissioners with regard to the conduct of the teachers, and especially as to whether such rules and regulations unduly restrict the liberty of the teachers in any respect, and whether in any cases some notion of the intention to make new rules should be published, and whether due facilities for appeal and means of access to the Board are allowed to the teachers.[30]

It must have come as a surprise that no specific mention was made of the Belfast and Tipperary schools nor indeed the dismissal of Mansfield, given that these issues were foremost in the minds of all the parties. Still, such phrases as 'whether such rules ... restrict the liberty of the teachers' and 'whether…notice of the intention to make new rules should be published' were not without implication. There were answers to be provided and there was little doubting the Board would be tasked with delivering them.

On Thursday, 13 February 1913, the committee of inquiry convened at Dublin Castle for the first day of evidence.[31] The expectation, certainly from the teachers' side, was that the inquiry would be held in public. This did not happen. By way of mitigation, the chairman stated that, subject to the lord lieutenant's approval, 'we propose to issue from time to time in advance of our [final] report further instalments of the evidence [as] taken.'[32] This did not mollify the teacher associations and they indicated that they would

[30] *First report Dill*, p. iii.
[31] The first five days of evidence were held in the Chief Secretary's Office in Dublin Castle. The remaining sessions were held at 23 Kildare Street.
[32] *First report Dill*, p. iv. Dill was true to his word: the first report, evidence and appendices were issued 16 May 1913.

not give evidence before the inquiry. However, the publication on 16 May of the evidence heard to date allayed their fears regarding the integrity and scope of the inquiry. Thereupon, they reconsidered their position and in early June they resolved to attend and give evidence. The CCSMA although they took no formal part in the proceedings of the inquiry were strongly supportive of the teachers' stance. On 24 June, they declared

> That we, the Standing Committee [of the CCSMA], seize the occasion of the coming inquiry into the system of inspection in primary schools, to repeat our expressions of sympathy with our teachers in all their legitimate grievances and we gladly anticipate as an outcome of the inquiry that the defects in the present system of inspection shall be removed to the advantage of education and the increased freedom and efficiency of the teacher.[33]

From the outset, the perceived narrowness of the inquiry's remit notwithstanding, there was little doubting that the National Board, its inspectorate and above all, Resident Commissioner Starkie were under scrutiny. The inquiry spread its net widely when calling witnesses who gave evidence over fifty-two days. Apart from Starkie, extensive testimony was received from his private secretary, chief inspectors past and present, the Board's accountant, secretaries and individual commissioners. Representatives of managers' associations connected with the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church were involved. As stated above, no representative of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association attended. Perceiving no vital interest was at stake, they were content to sit this one out. Their attitude towards the inquiry can be gauged from the statement issued after their annual general meeting in June 1913:

> The system of management which has prevailed for so long in Ireland to the satisfaction of all sections of the community is outside the terms of reference. As, therefore the interests we are appointed to safeguard will not be brought into discussion, we are of the opinion that…[we] need take no representative part in the investigation.[34]

Perhaps the fact that Bishop Kelly of Ross was a member of the committee of inquiry, may have assured them that their sectional interests were safeguarded. Also consulted were F.H. Dale and John L. Robertson, Chief Inspectors of the English and Scottish

[33] *Mins. CCSMA*, 24 June 1913, p. 137.
[34] Ibid., p. 138.

Education Departments respectively, who contributed to 'matters cognate to [the] Inquiry.'[35] Teacher association representatives and individual teachers were the last to give evidence from 26 June to 17 September 1913.[36]

From the record, it is clear that both the committee members and witnesses were given the latitude to examine in minute detail all aspects of primary education, and that this extended to the legitimacy of the Resident Commissioner's powers and authority. Starkie's meticulous preparation for his appearance before the committee of inquiry was well advised. Absent from meetings of the Board from the 5 February to the 15 April, he used this time in the preparation of his 'confidential' submission.[37] How confidential it actually was is difficult to ascertain, but it is unlikely that Dill shared it with all committee members, reflecting the amity between himself and Starkie.[38] By any standards it is an extraordinary document. Running to over 50,000 words and 58 pages of tightly printed text, it was subdivided into eleven sections.[39] Taken in its totality, Starkie provided a veritable *vade mecum* on the progress of national education since his appointment as chief administrator of national education in 1899. The clear intention of the document was to provide the general framework for the robust defence of his stewardship of the national school system that Starkie was determined to lay before the committee.

Starkie commenced his evidence to the inquiry for the first time on 29 May 1913. This was the twenty-fourth day of the hearing of evidence and already twenty witnesses had contributed.[40] The introductory preliminaries completed, Starkie outlined the crucial changes he had made to reform the inspectorate and head office following his appointment. He described the manner in which he introduced a revised curriculum and a new pay structure for teachers. In the course of his testimony, he did not shy away from the disaffection and disloyalty of some key postholders. One such was Alfred Purser, retired Chief Inspector, who Starkie singled out for special blame: 'By his

[35] *Final report Dill*, p. 1.
[36] *Appendix Third report Dill*, pp iii-iv.
[37] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 1.
[38] Dill was well known to Starkie as they both served as commissioners on the Intermediate Education Board. Both were classical scholars and had published works in this field.
[39] Ibid. The section headings as follows: 1. Introduction of new scheme & observations on higher staff of the Education Office. 2. State of education before new scheme & subsequent improvements. 3. School visits by the Resident Commissioner. 4. Access to the Board & Resident Commissioner by the teachers. 5. Board's circulars on the methods of inspection. 6. Uniform standard of inspection. 7. The petition of the Belfast teachers. 8. Dismissal of teachers since 1900. 9. Regulations affecting teachers' conduct. 10. Annual increments. 11. Memorandum on the Cloondaff Case.
[40] For a full list of witnesses and dates of attendance see Appendix 2.

malignant influence he has done more than any other man to check the progress of education during the last fifteen years; and he has crowned his beneficent career by securing the appointment of this Committee.'[41] This was overstating the case, but it was indicative of the adversarial tone and nature of things to come.

Starkie alleged that 'the analogy of what was being done in England to co-ordinate education induced Mr [George] Wyndham to entertain designs against the National Board.'[42] The diversion of the Irish Development Grant, intended for education, to facilitate the Land Act and other purposes, meant the Board was starved of funding. He had little doubt that

> the present Committee of Inquiry, which, if the true source of the teachers' grievances is to be found, should be sitting on the Government, not upon us…[It] was appointed, without consultation with the Board, after an interview with the Board's servants and on evidence, such as Mr Purser's letters, which was not submitted to the Board for its observations. The members of the Board are a long-suffering race, but I fancy that their patience is at breaking-point, as may be shown on the conclusion of this inquiry.[43]

In his 'confidential statement' Starkie took 'this opportunity of briefly summarising the improvements in the system which the Board has introduced, or attempted to introduce, since 1900.'[44] He then outlined a list of twenty-one areas where advancement had been achieved. 'That more had not been done,' he concluded, 'is due to the apathy of the Executive, and the opposition of the Treasury, not to the negligence of the Board.'[45]

Starkie impressed on the inquiry the extent and complexity in the administration of the Board of Education. The commissioners presided over a highly centralised system of over 8,000 schools responsible for the individual payment of over 17,000 teachers. Each year the secretaries dealt with in excess of 25,000 letters, inspectors generated 16,000 reports and another 10,000 communications were dealt with from the Board of Public Works and the Pensions Office together with official returns, forms and circulars demanding official attention.[46] It was impossible for any Board, unpaid apart from himself, and meeting only once fortnightly to deal with this enormous volume of work.

[41] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 3.
[42] Ibid., p. 13.
[43] Ibid., p. 14.
[44] Ibid., pp 20-4.
[45] Ibid. p. 20.
[46] Ibid., p. 30.

Hence its daily management was deputed to clerks and officials to administer in strict conformity with its instructions.

Another matter Starkie set before the inquiry was the importance of his personal visits to schools. Here he wanted to stress the close affinity he personally had with the day to day operation of the schools. These visits commenced when Starkie accompanied Dale on his visitation of schools in April-June 1903. Since then, he claimed to have travelled 30,000 miles and visited about 2,800 schools in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales.[47] These visits were informal in nature and no penal action was ever taken against a teacher based on his private judgement. He was accompanied on his visits by one of his secretaries or senior inspectors. He listed among the aims for his school visitation:

> to gain personal knowledge of the schools and to ascertain the grievances and difficulties of teachers; to ensure the policy of the Board was faithfully carried out and to compare education provision in various parts of the country in order to secure uniformity of marking in the [inspectoral] circuits; to secure the rapid adoption of certain school subjects the Board may be desirous to advance and to remedy the most flagrant defects in Irish schools, such as dirty out-offices and classrooms, bad school-houses and unsightly school-grounds; above all to advance, by personal example, a kindly feeling between the administration and the teachers.[48]

All of this was necessary, Starkie declared, 'in consequence of the absolute uselessness of the chief inspectors as advisors of the Board.'[49]

Starkie's evidence before the inquiry took all of seven days. During this time he dealt with over 2,700 questions, which when transcribed ran to almost 150 closely typed pages.[50] Despite this voluminous output, close reading gives little indication of any coherent engagement with the terms of reference of the inquiry. Much of the questioning of Starkie was random and repetitive while in turn his answers although lucid were long-winded. No opportunity was lost for the settling of old scores, and some new ones as well. Starkie even took the opportunity to castigate Birrell for capitulating to teachers by allowing the inquiry:

[47] *Appendix Second report Dill*, p. 302.
[48] Starkie, *Confidential evidence*, p. 25.
[49] Ibid.
[50] *Appendix Second report Dill*, pp 280-426.

> Mr Birrell, said he was our [the Board's] gramophone, but…it is a very freakish instrument…you never know what tune the gramophone is going to play.[51]

This was typical of Starkie's response to any challenge to his evidence, which one may characterise as defiance embellished with verbal wit and dexterity. When Sir Hiram Wilson questioned whether the powers of the Resident Commissioner were specified in the Charter of 1844 which gave legal status to the Board as a corporate body, Starkie in reply glibly remarked, 'I am like the Prime Minister who is unknown to the constitution.'[52] When John Coffey questioned Starkie's status as to when the Board was not in session, he replied, 'I have always understood and the Board has always supported me in this view, that I am the Board, and everything belonging to it. *L'etat c'est moi*.'[53] Again responding to Coffey regarding the Board's hierarchy of responsibility and who had 'higher authority' he responded, 'Sometimes the higher authority is myself, sometimes it is the whole Board…I am not like the sun; I am like the moon – I shine by borrowed light.'[54]

The most robust exchanges were between Starkie and Coffey, who was supported by Henly and Kettle. Coffey in particular was a resolute and formidable querist. An example of this is illustrated by the following exchanges concerning Starkie's intervention in the Clonmel dispute. Recalling his visit to the district, Starkie stated in his evidence that he personally selected the most superior schools for re-inspection because he felt this would be to the teachers' advantage. Coffey certainly had doubts about this and challenged the Resident Commissioner on the point:

> Q.13585. [Coffey]…may I ask you to say whether it is not trifling with the capacity of this committee to ask them to accept your evidence…? – [Starkie's replies in italics] *Why?*
>
> Q.13586. I am not here to answer questions. – *I must say that when a charge is made against me that I am trifling with the committee, I insist on my right to ask you what you mean by it.*
>
> Q.13587. I make no charge; it rather suggested itself? – *You used the words.*

[51] Ibid., p. 341.
[52] Ibid., p. 356.
[53] Ibid., p. 389.
[54] Ibid., p. 426.

> Q.13588. I am not willing to ask you any questions that could be regarded as acutely contentious, but it struck me that in asking us to accept the statement that you selected cases in the Clonmel Circuit, which were particularly favourable to the teachers…that seemed to me to be trifling with the Committee. That is my own view. I do not say that the Committee is of that view? – *I have no idea what you are driving at, Mr Coffey.*
>
> Q.13589. Well, if you have no idea what I am driving at, I may say that I have a most exalted respect for your scholarship, and I have the highest respect for your office, I have had friendly association with your Board all through my life, but when you ask us to accept the statement that you selected the cases which were most favourable to the teachers, I think that I am fairly entitled, and so is the committee entitled, to ask for some elucidation? – *My position is this: having stated to the Board, and with its full approbation, that I was visiting Tipperary for the purpose of selecting schools which I thought most favourable to the teachers, and my colleagues having accepted my report on the circuit with full confidence in my character as an honourable man, I expect the members of this Committee to accept the same view. At any rate, it is no use my occupying your time day after day, except on the assumption that my statements are accepted as an honourable man. Otherwise it seems to be a waste of time to continue my evidence.*
>
> Q.13590. I do not think that that is exactly the point, because we accept your statements as an honourable gentleman, but we, as a Committee, have to sift them? – *Certainly, I have not the slightest objection to your sifting them, but you should not start by begging the question.*[55]

It must be noted that this exchange took place on the last day of Starkie's evidence when perhaps fatigue was setting in all around. O'Donovan refers to a letter of Starkie's found in miscellaneous papers of the Dill Committee. In it, Starkie complained that on return after lunch one day he was jostled on the way in by Coffey, who he claimed was under the influence of alcohol.[56] In a contemporaneous letter George Dease, a fellow commissioner, referred to 'that drunken swine we were discussing today. I hope to goodness we shall insist on his misconduct being publicly known.'[57] The Board's minutes reported on 'certain occurrences' when Starkie was under examination on Friday, 20 June. This was the final day of his evidence. It was ordered that a letter of protest be sent to the chairman of the inquiry re 'the painful circumstances attending his

[55] *Appendix Second report Dill*, p. 412.
[56] O'Donovan, *Stanley's letter*, p. 319.
[57] TCD, MS 9209, no.121, 24 June 1913, Dease to Starkie.

[Starkie's] examination on Friday last, [and] desire to be informed what action the Committee propose to take in relation to the matter.'[58] The response from the inquiry was non-committal intimating the committee had 'no observations to make.'[59] In later years Starkie bitterly recalled in his diary: 'Duke called the Dill Commission "a poisonous body", at any rate I said there were 3 drunkards on it, and I was examined for a whole day by a man who had drink taken.'[60] That being the case, it is little wonder that Starkie was so testy. On the other hand, Coffey's forensic questioning and cross-examination, might lead one to query the accuracy of Starkie's evaluation.

In contrast to the *ad hominem* exchanges between Starkie and Coffey, the school inspection system was central to the terms of reference of the committee. Evidence was received from a wide range of witnesses. John McNeill, the current Chief Inspector, outlined the exacting procedure for the selection and training of new inspectors.[61] He also outlined details of the reorganisation of school inspection in 1900 when the country was divided into twenty-two circuits, each under the charge of one senior and two junior inspectors. The Secretary of the Board, William J. Dilworth, outlined the details regarding the introduction of the revised curriculum.[62] With the abolition of individual examination of children, the Board considered it essential that, in fairness to teachers, a uniform standard of inspection should be established. To that end, among others, it instructed that all three inspectors in a circuit should reside in a common centre. In this way, 'it was thought that any error in judgement on the part of one inspector would be corrected by the opinion of his two colleagues.'[63] In time, this arrangement proved impractical as residing at one centre entailed lengthy journeys and long absences from home. Accordingly, in 1906 a new system was introduced whereby each circuit was divided into two sections with a junior inspector in charge of each and with a senior in overall charge. All three lived in separate locations rendering convenient the most effective discharge of their duties. It did however offer less opportunity for them to confer on the vital matter of uniformity.

The importance of periodical conferences for the inspectorate was emphasised in several circulars from the Board. In July 1902, a circular instructed: 'The inspectors of

[58] *Mins. CNEI*, 24 June 1913.
[59] Ibid., 8 July 1913.
[60] TCD, MS, 9210d, 22 December 1917. Duke was Chief Secretary from 31 July 1916 to 5 May 1918.
[61] *Appendix First report Dill*, p. 46.
[62] Ibid, p. 2
[63] Ibid., p. 4.

each circuit should meet…once a month for a conference. At least one conference in a year will be held in each circuit by the Chief Inspector.'[64] In 1903 and 1904, conferences of a fortnight's duration for senior inspectors were convened, mainly to review progress of the new programme. Starkie was anxious to stress in his direct evidence that agreement was secured 'regarding the value to be allotted to the different merit marks that might be assigned to the schools and the teachers.'[65] Subsequent to the reorganisation of the inspection circuits in 1906, a further circular was issued by the Board and another in 1907 on this issue. Also in 1907, the commissioners gave consideration to asking the government to sanction three or four new inspectors, to be called 'provincial inspectors' who would supervise five or six circuits each with a view 'to correct any divergencies from a fair standard of inspection.'[66] From the above, it is clear that the commissioners were anxious to impress on the inquiry that the question of a uniform standard of school evaluation greatly exercised their minds and it was a subject they returned to on an ongoing basis. But significantly, it is also clear that the Board did not follow through on the initiatives.

7.4 The final report and recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry

The completion of Starkie's evidence on 20 June did not mark the end of his contact with the inquiry.[67] Indicative of a mindset intent on ensuring that his version of events given to the inquiry prevailed, Starkie requested and was given copies of the proofs of the proceedings. On 28 August, he received a letter from Dill which stated, 'I have heard from Donnelly that he is agitated by the extent of your revisions.' Arthur J. Donnelly was Secretary of the Committee of Inquiry. Dill who was anxious to avoid further delay, lamented 'I shall have thrown away nearly a year of my old age.' He reassured Starkie that his evidence 'was so able and masterly…that I really think you have no need to be scrupulous about phrases and style.'[68] However, Starkie stated in a letter to Donnelly: 'I must insist on correct proofs as every word I say will be scanned by positively malevolent eyes.'[69] The following day he wrote defensively to Dill, regarding his concerns:

[64] Ibid., p. 141.
[65] *Appendix Second report Dill*, p. 319.
[66] Ibid., p. 42.
[67] The taking of evidence at the inquiry continued until 17 September.
[68] TCD, MS 9209, no. 141, 28 August 1913, Dill to Starkie.
[69] Ibid., no.160, 28 August 1913, Starkie to Donnelly.

> I have spoken very fast – in fact the shorthand taker told me so – and the result was that [in] many of my speeches he caught single words here and there and subsequently made sentences out of them, which was not my intention. These are often indecipherable & not such as I sh[oul]d care to be published under my name.[70]

By way of clarification, he stated: 'My evidence is naturally so important to the future of Irish education, and indeed to my own prospects that I am very anxious that it sh[oul]d be as good as I can make it.' He concluded by stating that he had already spent 'three weeks correcting it, three times over.'[71] Some ten days later, he was still working on the proofs. Once more he reminded Dill:

> It sh[oul]d be remembered that I am not an ordinary witness, but Head of the Administration. Again I have been placed in the dock for my unselfish services in wh[ich] no one can say I ever thought of my own interests…I must claim the right to alter the wording of my replies so as to make them intelligible and grammatical.[72]

Within weeks the correspondence on the matter petered out in an amicable fashion. Regardless of the impropriety of Starkie's actions, it begs the question whether a similar facility was allowed to any other witnesses.

The inspectors were certainly far from happy with the manner in which the inquiry was conducted. In contrast with Starkie, they were treated in an offhand manner. Andrew Bonaparte Wyse, once a school inspector himself, was the Board spokesman at the inquiry. He strongly objected to the fact that serious allegations about individual inspectors were levelled at the inquiry and that they [the inspectors] in turn were denied the opportunity to defend themselves. In March 1913, Dill wrote to Wyse to reassure him that

> the Committee has decided that should any allegation be made by any witness before them against any person, a copy of the evidence will be forwarded to the person against whom such allegation is made, and an opportunity will be afforded the latter to give evidence in reply.[73]

[70] Ibid., no.137, 29 August 1913, Starkie to Dill.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., no.138, 9 September 1913, Starkie to Dill.
[73] Cited in Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*, p. 363.

This did not happen. On 2 December 1913, a disgruntled Purser wrote to the chief secretary to complain that the committee had refused him the opportunity to rebut serious allegations make against him by Starkie in his evidence. Some days later he was curtly informed, 'His Excellency is unable to intervene in the matter.'[74] In similar fashion, the recently retired Chief Inspector J.J. Hynes, was not allowed the opportunity to refute the 'unfounded charges' made by Starkie against him. Hynes' five-page appeal is indicative of the hurt he felt at Starkie's unfair and unexpected criticism. He suggested to the chief secretary:

> However you have probably noticed before now that this is the way. He [Starkie] loves a heroic pose – Ajax defying the government lightning or Hercules cleaning out the Marlboro' Street stables.

Needless to say, this appeal also fell on deaf ears and Hynes received the same response as Purser.[75]

The committee of inquiry, despite delays owing to Starkie's revision, proceeded expeditiously and published their unanimous final report on 27 January 1914. Three preliminary reports, running to a total 1,300 pages of evidence, had already been published.[76] In contrast the final report ran to a mere fifty-two pages but contained therein a concise synthesis of testimony given at the inquiry. In total, nineteen recommendations were made, six of which dealt with increments, grades and promotion – the main causative factors of the setting up of the inquiry. The report suggested modifications to facilitate the rapid promotion of able teachers. Increments within the relevant grade, in the absence of an adverse report, should be automatic and annual. Until these changes were brought into effect, a teacher should only lose his increment for that year. Merit marks assigned to schools and teachers should be abolished.

With regard to the Belfast case, the inquiry was satisfied that there was a significant lowering of teachers' marks in the period 1907–9 affecting 47 per cent of schools. It concluded that 'a large number of teachers who had previously received creditable marks for a series of years, suddenly found themselves reduced and deprived of an

[74] NAI, CSO RP, 23544/13, 2 and 4 December 1913, CSO to Purser.
[75] Ibid., 23907/13, 8 December 1913, CSO to Hynes.
[76] *First report Dill* was published on 16 May 1913; the *Second Report* on 31 December 1913 and the *Third report* on 24 January 1914.

increment or promotion.'[77] The report indicated that further progress on the matter should be made by appeal to the Board, in other words, redress. The committee considered the Clonmel cases as more serious. Taken at its most severe, one inspector reduced the marks in 78 per cent of his schools. Whether an earlier inspector was too lenient or his successor too exacting was considered outside the committee's remit. What could be concluded however, was that the inspectors' divergence of judgement cast a serious doubt on whether the system of merit marks as so described could 'be worked satisfactorily by any men, however conscientious they may be.'[78] Earlier in the report the committee felt compelled to draw attention to the fact that the scale of merit marks for increments and promotion had never been published in the rules of the Board, with the alarming result that teachers were never appraised of the criteria of the standard to which they were expected to aspire. In response to this travesty, the inquiry rather lamely concluded:

> It would certainly seem reasonable in a matter seriously affecting the teacher's professional status and emoluments, that they should possess authoritative information of the principles the Board make their awards.[79]

The committee report also felt compelled to remark on the lack of proper courtesy and actual rudeness on the part of some inspectors towards the teachers. They observed:

> We are glad to say that the evidence of managers, corroborated by many teachers, was favourable to the inspectors generally as regards the tact, temper and zeal with which they discharge their difficult duties. At the same time…grave charges have been made of want of proper consideration, and even common courtesy, affecting members of the staff, and we regret that some of these charges appear to us to be not wholly without foundation.[80]

In general, every school should have a regular thorough inspection, although not necessarily each year. At least a week's notice should be given to managers and teachers. A full report should issue based on close investigation of teaching methods, with children's progress tested both orally and in writing, accompanied by a commentary on their general bearing and habit formation. That inspection should occur in the latter half of the year. District inspectors should, as far as possible, be maintained

[77] *Final report Dill*, p. 21.
[78] Ibid.
[79] *Final report Dill,* p. 19.
[80] Ibid., p. 16.

for some years in the same district to ensure continuity and consistency. A redistribution of inspectors' districts should take place so that the sole responsibility for reporting on the schools of a district would rest on one inspector. Inspectors' reports should be communicated in full and without delay to both managers and teachers. Appeals against an unfavourable inspector's report should be considered by the chief inspector. If a *prima facie* case be established, a full re-inspection should be granted, undertaken by an inspector of more senior rank. Where a teacher was accused of any grave matter which might involve dismissal or serious penalty, the Board should order an investigation to be conducted by the chief inspectors. Legal assistance might be allowed to teachers in such circumstances. A full report should be furnished to the Board for decision, giving the teacher an opportunity to appeal if necessary. In view of the increased duties which might be imposed on the two chief inspectors, the committee strongly endorsed the Board's proposal to appoint at least an additional four divisional inspectors to assist them.

With a view to promoting transparency, Board circulars with instructions to inspectors regarding the general discharge of their duties should also be issued to managers and teachers. Further, it suggested, before the introduction of any new rule, the Board should give due notice of that intent and an opportunity should be afforded managers and teachers to inform it of their views. In general, the committee whilst not faulting the current appointment procedures for inspectors, observed that 'there are qualities of judgement, tact and sympathy which are of immense importance for such an office, and which cannot be tested by any examination' – no doubt a reminder to the Board that the milk of human kindness may have been lacking in the recent past.[81] Finally, they recommended that the contentious observation book in schools should be abolished.[82]

From the outset the inquiry stressed that 'our terms of reference did not empower us to examine alleged grievances of individual teachers with a view to their redress.' This ruled out any specific investigation into Edmund Mansfield's dismissal. That notwithstanding, the response of teachers could be encapsulated by an editorial of the *Irish School Weekly* which saw the results as a triumph over 'glaring injustice and

[81] *Final report Dill*, p. 8.
[82] Ibid., pp 50-2.

arrogant despotism'.[83] At their annual congress some months later the INTO welcomed the findings:

> Teachers everywhere have accepted the report as a fair and reasonable verdict, and while expressing their disappointment that it is not wider and emphatic, they have adopted it and asked for its immediate enforcement.[84]

Nevertheless, Catherine Mahon, who had formidably advanced the organisation's brief at the inquiry, availed of the opportunity to describe as 'the unfinished business' the reinstatement of Mansfield as principal of Cullen national school. The expectation among teachers was that this would be granted forthwith. The animus of most Board members towards Mansfield thwarted any quick resolution of the matter. An apology was demanded by the commissioners. Mansfield offered to submit a letter of regret. By December, a formula of words acceptable to all was arrived at and forwarded to the Board. Mansfield in his letter stated:

> While submitting that I was, at the time of making the speech complained of, and subsequently during my correspondence with the Board, labouring under a sense of injustice, in which I believed and still believe, myself to be justified, I admit that the tone of my observations should have been different, and I thereby express regret for it.[85]

With this formula of words, the Board reinstated him and restored grants to his school. Interestingly Dease, who originally proposed the dismissal of Mansfield back in October 1912, was the only dissenting voice to his reinstatement.

Despite the criticism of many aspects of the Board's administration, Starkie emerged from the report's findings relatively unscathed. It was not a ringing endorsement of his tenure but his commitment and energy could not be denied. The report commented:

> The task of the Resident Commissioner was a most exacting one, and whatever judgement may be passed on the success and failure of his reconstruction, no one acquainted with his enormous difficulties can fail to recognise the vigour and fertility of resource with which he met them.[86]

[83] *ISW*, 21 February 1914.
[84] Ibid., 18 April 1914.
[85] *Mins. CNEI*, 8 December 1914.
[86] *Final report Dill*, p. 6.

However, without decrying the merits of Starkie's annual school visitation, the committee pointedly steered him away from any future involvement in inspection when they suggested:

> The Resident Commissioner…might well ask to be relieved of a function which is so invidious, and the proper discharge of which seems to demand that minute knowledge of the Inspectorate, and the schools, which can only be possessed by an outdoor officer of rank.[87]

Significantly, the tone of the final report was the essence of equanimity. Whatever the imperfections highlighted, the honourable intent of high officials was never in question. After all, it claimed:

> A change amounting to a revolution could not be effected so rapidly without arousing suspicion and criticism especially among officials who had for a generation been serving under the system which had been displaced.[88]

Although the Final Report was published on 27 January 1914 and its contents widely promulgated, it was 31 March before the Board formally gave consideration to its contents.[89] The delay may well be due to correspondence in February from the inspectorate as to the non-fulfilment of undertakings given by the Committee of Inquiry, already referred to above.[90] This was an exercise in futility as the report was already published. In due course, the Board considered the findings of the final report. Regarding the central issue of inspection and the legacy issue of the Belfast and Clonmel teachers, the commissioners decided that in the case of the Belfast teachers the matter was closed. With regard to the Clonmel teachers, consideration was given to eighteen individual teachers whose merit marks were severely depressed and had suffered financially. These had their increments and promotions if so affected, restored.

On the wider implications of the report, the Board set out in their own annual report for 1914–15 their 'proposals to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee [of Inquiry].'[91] These they categorised under two headings. Firstly, those of a financial nature, which required Treasury sanction and secondly, those of an administrative character not requiring an increase in the Education Vote. Proposals for the former were

[87] Ibid., pp 41-2
[88] Ibid., p. 7.
[89] *Mins. CNEI*, 31 March 1914.
[90] Ibid., 17 February 1914.
[91] CNEI, *Eighty-first report…1914-15*, [Cd 8341], H.C. 1916, viii, p.6.

submitted to the Irish government in July 1914. These included a new scale of salaries for teachers in which annual increments were provided instead of the contentious triennial ones, coupled with the abolition of the restrictions as to the number of teachers in each grade. However, with Great Britain's declaration of war on 4 August, the Treasury refused to sanction them. Accordingly, only those recommendations which did not require additional expenditure were introduced. The system of assigning merit marks was discontinued and eligibility for promotion and increments was decided by the inspector on assessing the teacher's efficiency. Three days advance notice of the visit for the annual general report were given to the managers and teachers. At this notified visit, the inspector should test the proficiency of the classes as a whole, rather than individual examination of pupils.

Rather than abolish the Observation Book as suggested by the inquiry committee, the Board decided on its retention, now styled as the Inspector's Suggestion Book. In this were recorded suggestions made in conference with the teacher and deemed helpful as a guidance for future work. In the matter of the condition of school buildings, furniture and equipment, communication should take place directly with the manager, either orally or in writing. A new appeals procedure was initiated for teachers unhappy with an inspector's report. In future all circulars to inspectors, bearing on teachers' work, must be issued simultaneously to managers and to teachers. Finally, and significantly, prior to the adoption of any new regulation, likely to prove contentious, full opportunity would be afforded to managers, teachers and other interested persons, to present their views to the Board.

Thus, the Board claimed, 'We have given effect, so far as it lies in our power, to almost all of the Committee's recommendations.'[92] Regarding any not adopted in their entirety, only slight changes warranted by the Board's experience were effected. There was only one to which they objected unequivocally, namely the proposal advocating the redistribution of inspectors' districts so that sole responsibility for the reporting on schools in a district should rest with one inspector. They quite sensibly pointed out the impracticality in expecting greater uniformity 'if each of the sixty inspectors were isolated from a colleague with whom he might confer in cases of doubt.'[93]

[92] Ibid., p. 9.
[93] Ibid.

For the teachers, the Dill Inquiry highlighted their grievances. The system of school inspection was improved but only in a minor way. The Board still ruled supreme, with its labyrinthine administrative bureaucracy intact. Enormous amounts of energy were expended and turmoil created in the education system by the inquiry. When the dust had settled an air of rancour persisted. Even the reinstatement of Mansfield, grudgingly conceded by the Board, was viewed simply as the righting of a serious wrong. Coolahan and O'Donovan concluded that 'while minor changes were suggested, the inquiry did not produce a comprehensive analysis of the inspectorate nor of its linkage with the office administration.'[94]

On a broader scale, the whole national school system suffered severe reputational damage by the unseemly and rancorous evidence presented to the inquiry and openly reported in the public press. It provided in later years for a legacy of mistrust between teachers and inspectors, and they in turn with the Board. It also marked a downturn in the reputation of Starkie as Resident Commissioner, accruing to him a certain malevolence of character. Terms such as 'despot', 'tyrant' and even 'ogre' were frequently used and his tenure in office was often described pejoratively thereafter as the 'Starkie Era'. For the INTO, the episode was a defining moment. It provided them with a cause with which to energise its base, organise its members and insert itself into the decision-making process of education. In contrast, the Board and its commissioners looked authoritarian, inflexible and hidebound by rigid rules and regulations. The inspectorate, caught in the middle, suffered great reputational damage. In short, the inquiry was a missed opportunity. For Starkie, without contrition there was no redemption in the eyes of the teachers. For the Board instead of flexibility and understanding, they exuded an air of intransigence. For the teachers it was a disappointment and the inspection system, though modified, continued to be viewed by them with distrust and suspicion.

7.5 Conclusion

The years subsequent to the appointment of Dr Starkie as Resident Commissioner were marked by innovation and change for all stakeholders in education. The scale and impact of these initiatives created extraordinary tensions that were to persist in the system for many years. One was the existential friction that pertained between the

[94] John Coolahan with Patrick F. O'Donovan, *A history of Ireland's school inspectorate, 1831-2008* (Dublin, 2009), p. 74.

National Board and the Treasury. This was epitomised in the debacle which developed concerning the building grants for national schools, where the sclerotic attitude of the Treasury brought the repair and renewal of educational infrastructure to a halt – just at a time when it was most needed to implement the Revised Curriculum. The inescapable fact was the determination of government that Irish education provision should be remodelled and funded along the same lines as in England. The introduction of Rule127(b) following a recommendation by Dale in his report of 1904 had at its core both a reformative and a money-saving intent. However, for the Churches and the teachers, it only added to the discontent already engendered among the former in the matter of school management and the latter regarding pay and promotions. Catherine Mahon of the INTO, giving evidence to the Dill Inquiry of 1913, described Starkie's tenure up to then as 'thirteen years of civil war'.[95] Her opinion was coloured by the animus which existed personally between herself and Starkie. But the stand-off between the Board and teachers on the matter of school inspection, the issue that prompted the setting up of the inquiry, was emblematic of the general dissatisfaction that had come to permeate the national school system as a result of the organisational changes that were pursued as part of the programme of curricular reform that was initiated in 1899. It was not that no progress was made during the 'lean years' when this issue was at its most acute. The building grant issue was mediated, Rule 127(b) remained part of the national school system for eighty years and the Dill Inquiry provided a forum for all interested parties to voice their opinions on primary education. Some minor changes ensued, but a general air of antipathy persisted. Matters did not auger well, as Ireland embarked on an era of great political uncertainty that inevitably, brought new issues to add to the already large number of ongoing challenges.

[95] *Appendix Third Dill Report*, p. 377.

Part Four

War, Insurrection and the National Board, 1916–22

Chapter Eight

Rebellion, another inquiry and a new Education Bill, 1916–19

8.1 Introduction

The resignation of Chief Secretary Birrell in the aftermath of the Easter Rebellion in 1916 did not mark the end of the British government's endeavours to restructure Irish education. If anything, by placing the Irish administration 'in the hands of less conciliatory men', it facilitated a more robust approach.[1] Birrell's successors: Henry E. Duke, Edward Shortt and Ian Macpherson each in their own way endeavoured to refashion the Irish education system along similar lines as the rest of the UK. It was to prove as intractable for them as it had been for their predecessors. The tensions resulting from the Dill Inquiry, the outbreak of war, succeeded two years later by rebellion in Dublin, created an environment unamenable to education reform. Still, it was not as if opportunities were not presented. The transformation of education provision in England as envisioned by Herbert Fisher in his 1918 Education Act, offered prospects of a similar recalibration in Ireland. The setting up in 1918 of the Killanin Inquiry and its attendant recommendations brought new hope to those eager for reform of the system. However, by this point, the Catholic hierarchy viewed the educational landscape as their fiefdom and any measures perceived to threaten their interests were stoutly resisted. Added to this, was a nationalist ardency which objected reflexively to the proposed changes. Teachers were less hostile, but pay and conditions were their priority. The Church of Ireland school managers were generally favourably disposed to the proposed changes but, given the political uncertainty of Ireland's governance, they were nonplussed by the timing of the proposed legislation. The northern Unionists' parliamentary solo run of introducing an Education (Belfast) Bill in 1919 may be termed as political opportunism, but it was indicative of things to come. This chapter highlights the capacity of the Catholic Church to prevail and its defiant stance served to demonstrate how powerfully placed it was. The failure of the Education Bill resulted in the continuance of denominational control of both primary and secondary schools. For the Catholic Church, looking to the future, this was of more consequence to them than any educational considerations.

[1] E. Brian Titley, *Church, state and the control of schooling in Ireland 1900-1944* (Dublin, 1983), p. 52.

8.2 A new Education Bill for England – for Ireland another inquiry, 1914–18

The years 1906-16 were shaped by successive Liberal governments which had large majorities in the House of Commons. Although the principles of *laissez-faire* with its pillars of free trade and enterprise were paramount in guiding their approach, it was accepted by politicians across the spectrum, but particularly Liberals, that social reforms were necessary. The landslide victory they achieved in 1906 gave the Liberals the impetus to advance measures to safeguard, and sometimes advance, vital social reforms. Thus, the Old Age Pension Act of 1908, the National Health Insurance Act of 1911 and allied measures served to ameliorate the problems of old age, ill-health and unemployment. This approach was not viewed approvingly by all. Dissenting voices believed that such problems could be dealt with more suitably by charitable organisations and the application of the Poor Law.

In education circles in Britain great concern was expressed at the continued employment of children both during and outside school hours. This remained a significant social problem. The scale of this practice has been quantified by Andrews:

> By the time of the First World War there were…300,000 children in England, Scotland and Wales aged under 14 employed in factories, mines and agriculture and in miscellaneous street trading occupations.[2]

The 'half-time' system of employment, whereby children attended school for half a day and worked in a factory or mill for the other half, was an additional concern. By 1914–15, it was estimated that there were approximately 70,000 half-timers in England and Wales.[3] Of further concern was the fact that most of these children, already irregular attenders, left the school system entirely at thirteen years of age or less. This is not to suggest that in a wider context, the needs of school-going children were left entirely unaddressed. Prompted by observations made during the Second Boer War (1899–1902) when army recruiters reported on the manifestly low physical standard of the men examined, concern was expressed at the general well-being of the nation.[4] With a view to combatting ill-health and malnutrition, the Liberal government introduced the Education (Provision of Meals) Act 1906 to provide school meals. The following year local education authorities were tasked with the provision of medical inspection. Further

[2] Laurence Andrews, *The Education Act 1918* (London, 1976), p. 6.
[3] Ibid., p. 7.
[4] Ibid., p. 4.

legislation was enacted thereafter to meet the needs of the mentally handicapped and special children's courts were set up to hear cases involving children who had committed crimes.

There were serious misgivings too concerning the efficacy of the Balfour Education Act of 1902 and its ability to effectively meet the challenges in the administration of elementary education. In 1906, Birrell, then President of the Board of Education, tried unsuccessfully to enact amending legislation. Seven years were to elapse and three subsequent office holders appointed before the matter was revisited. In July 1913, J.A. Pease, the serving education president, gave notice in parliament that this matter was now a priority:

> It is eleven years since the Act of 1902 was passed by this House … There is a lack of co-ordination and completeness in the system … A well-organised system of education is the most powerful means we have of developing the social life of the nation…It must be the subject matter for legislation next session.[5]

Acknowledging the necessity for reform, he outlined the provisions of an education bill which he hoped to introduce in the autumn of 1914. However, these plans were shelved with the outbreak of war and the matter remained untouched until the cessation of hostilities, when it was revisited.

In England, the sombre aftermath of the World War I ushered in dramatic reforms in salary, structure and administration of the education system. This was facilitated by the appointment of Herbert Fisher as President of the Board of Education in December 1916. At the time Fisher was Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University and a well-known historian. Lloyd George, who succeeded Asquith as prime minister, realised the importance of education in the reconstruction of post-war Britain and specifically selected Fisher for the task. Fisher was reluctant to accept the post, mainly due to his lack of parliamentary experience. The Prime Minister allayed such fears pointing out that a stage has been reached in the country's history when it was more likely crucial reforms 'would be accepted from an educationalist than from a politician.'[6] More

[5] *Hansard* 5, H.C. debate, vol 55 cc1909-11, 22 July 1913.
[6] H.A.L. Fisher, *An unfinished autobiography* (London,1940), p. 91

importantly, Fisher was assured by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bonar Law, that adequate funding would be made available.[7]

In April 1917, in a House of Commons debate on the 1918 estimates for the Board of Education, Fisher first signalled his intention to pursue a substantial programme of reform when he declared:

> This great calamity [World War 1] has directed attention to every circumstance which may bear upon national strength and national welfare. It has exhibited the full range of our deficiencies, and it has invited us to take stock of all the available agencies for their approval.[8]

Announcing a supplementary estimate of £3,856,000 for the improvement in elementary and secondary education, Fisher outlined the general parameters of the reforms he had in mind, and within months he had formulated a bill which he stated was

> prompted by deficiencies which have been revealed by the war; it is framed to repair the intellectual wastage which has been caused by the war…[especially] I allude to the industrial pressure upon the child life of this country; and it will greatly facilitate the solution of many problems of juvenile employment, which will certainly be affected by the transition of the country from a basis of war to a basis of peace.[9]

The proposals laid out in the bill were comprehensive and wide-ranging in scope. Significantly, the legislation provided for the establishment of a 'national system of public education available for all persons capable of profiting thereby.'[10] Every grade and type of school was to be coordinated, with local authorities tasked with delivering integrated and progressive curricular programmes for all elementary, technical, commercial and secondary schools. The bill proposed raising the school-leaving age to fourteen; the abolition of half-time employment of children; medical inspection and treatment of pupils; the provision of 220 physical training, holiday and school camps, playing fields and school baths; and the inspection of schools outside the state sector of education.[11] Considering the scale of the financial input envisaged, coupled with its ambitious measures for reform, Fisher's bill was a transformative piece of legislation. As it transpired, in the fullness of time, political and fiscal constraints diluted the full

[7] Ibid., p. 92.
[8] *Hansard* 5, H.C. debate, vol 92 cc1888-9, 19 April 1917.
[9] Ibid., vol 55 cc795-811, 18 August 1917.
[10] Education Act, 1918. [8 & 9 Geo. V c.39], p. 3.
[11] Andrews, op. cit., p. 24.

implementation of many of his aspirations. Of more importance was the fact that Fisher's legislation placed children and their welfare at the centre of the education process.

The plans for educational reform in England were keenly watched from Ireland. The planned substantial increase in expenditure would only widen the disparity in education funding between Ireland and Britain. It was also indicative that another attempt at the restructuring of Irish education would certainly follow. This expectation was reinforced when Henry E. Duke, Ireland's new chief secretary, in answer to a question in the House of Commons, gave this response:

> I am communicating with various educational authorities in Ireland in order to formulate proposals for securing, in connection with Irish education, advantages equivalent to any which may be granted to this country [England].[12]

Pressed by Laurence Ginnell, the MP for Westmeath North, to put a figure on this amount Duke responded evasively: 'It is not a very thrifty thing to allot an amount first and then find out what is necessary afterwards.' When pressed for an estimate, he coyly replied that the honourable member should 'be content for the time being with the answers I have given.'[13] It could be inferred from these comments that if extra funding was on the way, it would have strings attached.

The prospect of a possible funding increase for Irish education was accorded a broad welcome from teacher representative bodies and church authorities in Ireland. The Church of Ireland's General Synod passed a resolution in support of a memorandum from the INTO, which deprecated the inadequacy of salaries paid to national teachers and demanded the equivalent to that proposed for England. The Archdeacon of Down identified low pay as the reason for the diminishing number of entrants into teaching training:

> What were the facts? A highly qualified assistant woman teacher commenced with less than £1 a week, while a junior assistant mistress got the magnificent salary of about 9*s*.2*d*. a week. They talked of sweated labour. What was this?[14]

At a specially convened meeting, the CCSMA was of the same mind when it resolved:

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[12] *Hansard* 5, H.C. debate, vol 92 cc1802-3, 19 April 1917.
[13] Ibid.
[14] *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 27 April 1917. The archdeacon is not named.

> That a grant be now made for Primary Education in Ireland fully equivalent to the grant just announced for England. Furthermore, in as much as Primary Education in this country has been hitherto financially starved, we consider that the time has arrived when such measure of help should be given as will compensate for past neglect…We consider the grant should be chiefly devoted to the improvement in teachers' salaries. The teachers have been badly paid in the past, and in these days their salary is hardly a living wage.[15]

Significantly, while all parties concurred on equivalent funding for Irish education, they expressed no interest in reforming the existing framework of delivery – the administration and structure of the system was to be left unaltered.

In April 1917, the government wrote to the National Board inviting them 'to submit proposals for the improvement of our system'. This resulted in a conference which took place in Tyrone House in May 1917. Present were the Resident Commissioner, his private secretary, the Board secretaries and accountant together with the chief inspectors. Strangely, there were no board members in attendance, though the minutes state that the findings of the conference were submitted to the Board for approval. In brief, the proposals related to salary improvement for teachers and increased grants for existing schemes already in operation. The only 'new' measure called for was the application to establish Higher Grade Departments in national schools, which had been suggested as far back as 1902.

Having received Board approval, the proposals were forwarded to Dublin Castle. By the strict application of the Goshen formula, Irish education could anticipate an equivalent grant of £384,000. The expenditure proposed by the Board amounted to more than a million pounds. Nevertheless, they did not feel bound by the Goshen calculation as they stated boldly:

> the amount of money to be voted for Irish education should not be determined by a calculation of an equivalent for a sum to be spent in England but should be limited only by what might be necessary to secure for Irish children advantages not less than those provided by the state for English pupils.[16]

In due course, Duke gave consideration to the Board's proposals. Duke was generally supportive of the salary demands but rejected the Board's other demands. The costing

[15] *Mins. CCSMA*, 25 April 1917.
[16] CNEI, *Eighty-third report…1916-17*, [Cd 9097], H.C. 1918, ix, p. 6.

of Duke's proposals amounted to £380,000 not far shy of the equivalent grant estimate. But when the details of Duke's new salary arrangements were announced in July 1917, they were flatly rejected by the INTO. They were dissatisfied not only with the inadequacy of the grant but also with its proposed distribution. Their CEC formulated a radical approach to the existing pay structure. They advocated the abolition of the grade system, which they considered a barrier to fair promotion, and the introduction of a common basic salary scale for all national teachers.[17] In September, they held two special conferences to formulate their strategies going forward. After the first, O'Connell of the INTO reported that teacher frustration at the lack of progress threatened the unity of the organisation, and even worse encouraged various interests to believe that sectional agitation might be more effective than joint action:

> There was, for instance, the assistants' union…the principals' union with branches in Dublin, Belfast and Cork, the under-graded teachers…the transition teachers and the paper-promoted teachers. There was…a special claim for higher [pay] rates for the city teachers, and as a counterblast, the formation of a rural teachers' union [was] strongly advocated.[18]

However, in the interests of unity and solidarity, a second conference was called for 18 September. Here after a full day's deliberations, agreement was reached among the delegates and a common front restored. A subsequent meeting between the INTO and Chief Secretary Duke failed to produce clarity on the detail of the proposed salary changes. In the absence of progress, the possibility of strike action was considered. In early November, the *Irish School Weekly* reported:

> It is evident that the national teachers are beginning to lose hope of securing redress of their grievances by ordinary methods. The mere fact that they are said to be considering the advisability of a general strike shows how seriously they regard their position. When men of their intelligence and education contemplate such a step their outlook must be dark indeed.[19]

The threat of strike action prompted some movement because on 29 November the Treasury wrote to Dublin Castle setting out its views. The ever-consistent Treasury viewed Duke's proposals as a missed opportunity to effect reform. They contended an

[17] Moroney, *NTs' salaries*, p. 76.
[18] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 173
[19] *ISW*, 10 November 1917.

inquiry should be held and pending its outcome, that teachers should receive a temporary pay increase:

> The present large increase in the provision for elementary education in Ireland should have been taken to secure a radical revision after adequate inquiry of the present admittedly defective system and that pending the result of such an inquiry the immediate needs of the teachers should have been relieved by the distribution of the new grant temporarily in the form of an additional war bonus.[20]

It is noteworthy that Duke had earlier that year obtained prior approval for his expenditure, which reduced the Treasury's ability to secure any major adjustment to the scheme. True to form, they declared that it was only with the greatest reluctance that they sanctioned approval of proposals which they viewed as supporting 'the present … defective scheme.'[21] In December 1917, Duke presented a White Paper to parliament which was duly approved. Its main proposals were as follows: improved grade salary scales, of varying amounts backdated to 1 April; increments, which were converted from triennial to annual payments, while 'highly efficient' principals of larger schools were set to have their salary increased.

Significantly, the demands of the INTO regarding the contentious grading and promotion system went unheeded. Requests by the INTO to meet with the chief secretary went unanswered. In March the teachers' union issued a press statement in which they outlined the events of the previous six months and concluded:

> We have, therefore, decided on taking an immediate referendum of all the associated teachers on the question of withdrawing from the schools until such time as the Government agree to concede our reasonable and just demands.[22]

The prospect of a teachers' strike propelled the administration to action. Within weeks Arthur Samuels, the Solicitor-General for Ireland, announced in the House of Commons that it was the intention of the government to instigate a committee to inquire into the pay and conditions of employment of national teachers. Samuels also stated he was open to the possibility of extending the scope of the inquiry to include the salaries of secondary teachers. For his part, he felt the inquiries should be separate. Pending the

[20] Cited in Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*, p. 439.
[21] Ibid.
[22] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 179.

setting up of this committee of inquiry, the executive of the INTO pragmatically advised its members to accept any moneys which might accrue to them under the 'Duke scheme.' Such payments could be considered as instalments on the salary increases, which they anticipated would ensue from the upcoming inquiry. For their part, the Board ensured that the necessary payments were completed 'with a minimum of friction and delay.'[23]

The Fisher Act was influential in the Irish educational context in two ways. Firstly, it presented a blueprint to transform Irish education. Secondly, the substantial financial investment it provided for would, if applied according to the Goshen principle, have financed the reformative measures. However, it was unlikely that such a financial windfall would be forthcoming without strings attached.

8.3 The Killanin Inquiry, 1918–19

In early May 1918, Duke was replaced as Chief Secretary by Edward Shortt, to whom it fell to make arrangements for the setting up of two inquiries, one into the primary and the other into secondary education. On 12 August, Lord Killanin, a Catholic peer and a serving member of the National Board, was appointed chairman of the Vice-Regal Committee on national education. Unlike the unseemly jockeying that preceded the make-up of the Dill Inquiry, there was no controversy on this occasion. Representatives of all the major stakeholders were appointed as members – the Churches, teachers, universities and the National Board.[24] Subsequently three clerical managers were co-opted. Maurice Headlam was appointed to represent the Treasury. True to form, the Lords of the Treasury were anxious to ensure that the committee of inquiry be made fully aware of the necessity of financial prudence in their deliberations. Thus, in his letter of authorisation, they pointedly cautioned Headlam:

> Their Lordships have made it clear to the Irish Government that they cannot be regarded as in any way committed to any

[23] CNEI, *Eighty-fourth report…1917-18*, [Cmd 299], H.C. 1919, xxi, p. 6.
[24] The composition of the Vice-Regal Commission was as follows: The Right Hon. Lord Killanin (Chairman); Patrick O'Donnell, DD, Bishop of Raphoe (RC); Benjamin J. Plunkett, Bishop of Tuam (C of I); William A. Goligher, LittD, TCD; Robert T. Martin, BA, Senate Member, Queen's University Belfast; Miss Margaret Doyle, MA, Women Assistants' Representative, INTO; William Haslett, Vice-Chairman, Belfast Principal Teachers' Union; Robert Judge, President INTO; Thomas J. Nunan, Vice-President INTO; William O'Neill, President Teachers' Union; George Ramsey, JP, Ex-President INTO; Maurice F. Headlam, Treasury Remembrancer and Andrew N. Bonaparte Wyse, MA, Secretary, Board of National Education Ireland.

> financial proposals which may be formulated by this committee.[25]

The Killanin committee's terms of reference were as follows:

> To inquire and report as to the possible improvement in the position, conditions of service, promotion and remuneration of the teachers in Irish National schools, and in the distribution of grants from public funds for Primary Education in Ireland with a view to recommending suitable scales of salaries and pensions for different classes of teachers, having regard to the character and length of training necessary, the special qualifications obtained, the nature of the duties which have to be performed, and other relevant considerations.[26]

The Committee of Inquiry held thirty-two meetings in total, of which sixteen were allocated to the receipt of evidence. The prior submission of a large amount of documentary information combined with the 'expert knowledge of different branches of education…possessed by members of the Committee' facilitated the expeditious conduct by the inquiry of its work.[27] Direct evidence was provided by the National Board, the inspectorate, school attendance officers, the INTO and the teachers' pension office.

The Killanin Report was forwarded to Dublin Castle on 1 March 1919. The forty-four page document was a concise and damning critique of the primary education system. Its findings and observations were largely similar to those of the Dill Inquiry report of 1914. But there was a significant difference. As a result of world-wide war and national rebellion, they warned that 'society had grown profoundly apprehensive of the dangers that lurk behind many neglected ills in the body politic.'[28] Accordingly, the members of the inquiry urged that this opportunity was not lost:

> The Committee believe that there will be a great awakening of educational interests and ideals, and that a new estimate of the value of education is about to pervade society; and so, while bearing in mind the limitations of the terms of reference of the Enquiry, we have endeavoured to view our task in as broad and hopeful spirit as possible, and to do what we could to ensure that Irish Primary Education shall enjoy its full share of the

[25] Treasury letter dated 6 Aug 1918, cited in Hyland, op.cit, p. 442.
[26] *Killanin report*, p. iii.
[27] Ibid., p. 1.
[28] Ibid.

> advantages of a time and occasion when a propitious era in educational history seems about to dawn.[29]

Despite this encouraging pronouncement, the report was critical overall, listing a raft of government failures and mismanagement, and the negative effect of an arrangement whereby Ireland could only get extra funding on an 'equivalent grant' basis. Their criticism was trenchant:

> We think it wrong that the amounts of the grants for a great service in one country should be decided by the needs of the corresponding service in another country. If English Primary Education happens to require financial aid from the Treasury, Irish Primary Education is to get some, and in proportion thereto. If England happens not to require any, then, of course, neither does Ireland. A starving man is to be fed only if someone else is hungry.[30]

The committee traced the funding difficulty back to the introduction in 1900 of a new consolidated salary structure, with Treasury insistence that it be done at no added cost to the exchequer. The scheme was thus hampered from the beginning by anomalies and injustices which were compounded year on year. Moreover, they went on, the problems created were exacerbated by the diversion in 1902 of the 'equivalent grant' money from education to other purposes. As a result, building grants were restricted and ceased completely for a period. Defects in the day to day running of schools were listed – poor attendance, lack of public interest, inadequate arrangements for heating, poor sanitation, urban overcrowding and the proliferation of small schools in rural areas. The solution, according to the report, was to set up local committees to provide local aid.

To this end, it was proposed that county councils and city boroughs would, in conjunction with the Board of National Education, appoint School Committees constituted along the same lines as existing School Attendance Committees.[31] Their powers were to be extended to include the enforcement of school attendance measures for all schools, urban and rural, as well as making adequate provision for the maintenance, repair, heating, cleaning and equipping of national schools. The provision of school books for necessitous children and their medical and dental care were also recommended. The report considered:

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[29] Ibid., p. 2.
[30] Ibid., p. 22.
[31] The Irish Education Act of 1892 introduced a measure of compulsory school attendance, limited to urban areas only. Even then its application was randomly applied.

> Such a body with its knowledge of the social and economic conditions and possibilities of its neighbourhood would be eminently fitted to undertake these duties and obligations. It would bring into activity local capabilities and forces, responsible to local needs.[32]

In order to finance the provision and administration of these activities, it was recommended that the committees be empowered to strike a local rate for this purpose. When it came to the payment of teachers, the report strongly supported the existing system of payment of teachers from the public purse. It argued that the state should provide, at a minimum, elementary education for all. It should be suitable, efficient and universally available. It further stressed:

> The need is imperative and ubiquitous; and the corresponding obligation is not a matter to be left dependant upon local inclination, varying according to means, energy or public spirit. The teachers' salaries should therefore … be a State charge, based on a national scale; and correspondingly the teachers are servants of the State with obligations and duties to it.[33]

Having thus endorsed the *status quo* re the funding of teachers' salaries, the report recommended much improved incremental scales, qualification allowances and enhanced opportunities for promotion. In summation, the inquiry recommended that local rates should assist the funding and upkeep of schools, that local school committees should be set up to manage them, but that teachers should continue to be paid by the exchequer.

The report was signed by all the members on 26 February 1919 and published forthwith, but this did not mean that they were in total agreement, as there was a number of dissenting voices who submitted minority reports.[34] Chief among these was Maurice Headlam, the Treasury Remembrancer, who cited a series of statistics to show that Irish primary education was not financially disadvantaged when all grant aid was taken into account. This was really a sleight of hand because he was not comparing like with like. The parliamentary grant for elementary education in England and Wales was supplemented by a local contribution through rates, which amounted, in certain circumstances, to as much as 50 per cent. The rest of the committee members had

[32] *Killanin report*, p. 6.
[33] Ibid., p. 21.
[34] Ibid., p. 26. Fourteen members were originally appointed to the Vice-Regal Committee. In order to better ascertain the views of clerical managers, another three members were added: Canon H.B. Kennedy, BD, Canon Thomas F. Macken, PP, VF and Rev. W.G. Strahan, BA.

already rejected any such comparison. Bishop Patrick O'Donnell of Raphoe also had misgivings. These centred on the imposition of local rates to finance education. Ireland was, he observed, already over-taxed and this would be a further burden on a country already paying more than its fair share. This was echoed in a statement from the CCSMA which stated: 'In view of the over-taxation of Ireland, as clearly proved by the Childer's Commission, the requisite financial aid should be provided by the Imperial Treasury.'[35] This was old news. The Childer's Report of 1894 revealed that when compared with the rest of the UK, Ireland had been overtaxed on a per capita basis by the sum of £2 to £3 million annually in previous decades. The matter had engaged the minds of many political economists, but the reliance of the Catholic managers on such an argument rang hollow. Their real concern was the possible loss of control in schools as the conclusion of their statement made clear:

> Any interference with the present managerial system or with the influence of managers in safeguarding the religious interests of our Irish children will meet with most strenuous opposition from this Association.[36]

This echoed the views expressed some months previously by Cardinal Logue in his Lenten pastoral. While not directly referring to the Killanin Report, there was little doubting what he had in mind when he condemned the proposed local rate as opening the door to 'godless education.' He painted a melancholy scenario:

> Instead of having their tender minds moulded by habits of piety, innocence and morality, they shall be saturated with the impiety, corruption and materialism of the age. We shall no longer see them…crowding the communion rails Sunday after Sunday, but rather thronging the courts for juvenile delinquents.[37]

The INTO, by contrast, warmly welcomed the publication of the Killanin Report and requested an early meeting with the National Board. This took place on 8 April 1919 when Robert Judge, its president and T.J. O'Connell, its general secretary, put on record their approval of the report's recommendations. They urged the Board to implement without delay the salary and pension elements which did not require legislation, adding that the matter of local rating and allied issues could be dealt with subsequently by

[35] *Mins. CCSMA,* 24 June 1919.
[36] Ibid.
[37] *FJ*, 3 March 1919.

parliament. By comparison, the commissioners of the Board of Education were unenthusiastic, choosing simply to observe:

> That the Commissioners cordially approve of the Report of the Vice-Regal Commission and earnestly hope that the Government will as soon as possible take action to put the recommendations into effect.[38]

Running contemporaneously with the Killanin Inquiry was a committee of inquiry into the intermediate education system. This was convened under the chairmanship of Thomas F. Molony, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. This committee's report was published within days of the Killanin Report.[39] There were similarities in both reports' recommendations especially with regard to inadequate salaries and funding. The introduction of a local rate in aid of education was also advised by Molony. However, by far the most significant proposal to emerge from the Molony Committee was the recommendation to establish a single entity tasked with the responsibility for primary, secondary and technical education.

In contrast with his active stance during the Dill Inquiry, Starkie remained aloof from proceedings. The appointment of Killanin as chairman of the inquiry was certainly a source of comfort to him, given that he [Killanin] was a longstanding member of the National Board.[40] Starkie merely counselled Killanin, prior to the hearings, that 'the ground tilled by the Dill Commission [sic]' should not undergo another ploughing.[41] In any event, Bonaparte Wyse, by now promoted joint Board Secretary, was a member of the inquiry and in a position to keep Starkie informed.

8.4 A new chief secretary's plans for Irish Education

In January 1919, Ian Macpherson replaced Duke as chief secretary. It fell to him to decide what measures were required to implement the recommendations of both the Killanin and Molony reports. On 3 April 1919, Macpherson informed the House of Commons that he proposed

> to ask a Departmental Committee of experts to consider these two reports [Killanin and Molony] to see what proposals can be

[38] *Mins. CNEI*, 8 April 1919.
[39] *Report of Vice-Regal Committee…on Intermediate Education in Ireland*, [Cmd 66], H.C. 1919, xxi, generally referred to as the Molony Report.
[40] Killanin was appointed as a commissioner of education in 1904.
[41] TCD, MS 9211, 20 July 1918, Starkie to Killanin.

> formulated for me to embody in a Bill which I hope to introduce.[42]

This brief announcement came at the close of a day-long debate on Home Rule. Earlier in the day, Edward Carson availed of the opportunity to highlight the difficulties concerning education provision in his new Belfast constituency. He stated:

> At the present moment there are from 15,000 to 20,000 children who cannot go to school from day to day because there is no school for them to go [to]…and eighty of the schools that are there [are] insanitary and condemned.[43]

He concluded that drastic action was needed. The Corporation in Belfast was quite willing to adopt a rate to remedy the situation. However, the proposals of the Killanin committee on primary education even if implemented would not suffice. Such rates only covered the costs of upkeep and maintenance of existing schools but not the building of new ones. Carson was keen to emphasise:

> That will not do for us because we must get schools and more modern schools, and we know perfectly well we cannot come here looking for large grants in the present state of affairs. We are willing to pay for them ourselves if this Parliament will only allow us to do so.[44]

Directly addressing the chief secretary, he said:

> I hope my right hon. friend will tell us that he will try, as far as Belfast is concerned at all events, to bring us up to date. By that I mean that he will give us all that is given to England and Scotland by what I may call the Fisher Acts.[45]

The nationalist MP, Joseph Devlin quickly intervened to chide Carson. He reminded him of his close and continuous association with powerful figures of the establishment and his failure over twenty-five years in parliament to use his influence to extract some 'of those golden British sovereigns that would have brought some comfort to the shivering children' in substandard schools. Devlin continued:

> He [Carson] painted a picture of bad housing, of starved teachers, of neglected education, of shivering children, of an inflated British Treasury refusing to disburse a single farthing

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

> for the promotion of anything in Ireland. How long has the right hon. gentleman been asleep? He constitutes himself tonight the vocal Rip Van Winkle of British politics.

This interlude of verbal jousting between the Belfast MPs did not mark the end of this matter. It would soon crop up again. When announcing his intention to introduce legislation for education in Ireland, the chief secretary expressed great empathy with all those involved. However, he outlined his limitations within the existing administrative structure in Ireland:

> I am not responsible in this House for the defects of education in Ireland, though I seem to be responsible, for I get all the blame, for everything else. When my right hon. Friend [Carson] asks me a question about education in Ireland all I can do is to stand up and read a carefully prepared answer, prepared by someone else, as best I can.[46]

Macpherson stated it was his wish, during his term of office, that a minister solely responsible for Irish education and answerable to parliament would be appointed. Regarding future legislation, he felt there were two main points to be considered. The first was the desirability of establishing a central authority to coordinate the three existing education departments in Ireland. The second was whether a rate should be levied for purely educational purposes. On the chief secretary's part, it appeared that the question of rates in aid of education was already decided, because he surmised whether the new Departmental Committee would decide if the proposed rate should be levied at a national or county basis. This was the first occasion that anyone had ever suggested the possibility that a national rather than a local rate be raised for education in Ireland. Moreover, it was his considered view that this could be implemented without risk to the denominational concerns that had been expressed on this very point. Winding up his pronouncement on education, the chief secretary said that he wished to state unequivocally that he would not be party to what was referred to as 'Godless education':

> In my judgement, it could easily be provided for in any Bill which is brought forward that the religious atmosphere and the control of any school, whether Protestant or Catholic, should be left as at present and should be preserved as at present.[47]

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

Macpherson promptly appointed a committee which included members from outside the Irish departments. The chairman was Andrew Bonaparte Wyse, secretary of the National Board. The other members were George Fletcher of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, W.F. Butler of the Intermediate Board, G.W. Alexander, assistant secretary of the Scottish Education Office, and P.A. Bennett, retired Chief Inspector of the English Board of Education.[48] This expert committee was tasked with synthesising the two vice-regal committee reports with a view to formulating new legislation for presentation to parliament by the chief secretary.

In the meantime, the unsatisfactory situation in the city of Belfast with regard to the primary education provision again came to the fore. In the course of the Killanin Inquiry the problem of sub-standard schools in Belfast was highlighted. Included in that report was the alarm expressed by Rev. R.T. Martin at the 'startling evidence about the serious want of schools' in the city and 'that children were actually excluded from schools on account of overcrowding.'[49] Killanin's report expressed the aspiration that its new proposals would facilitate 'new energy and zeal' to deal with the problem. Rev. Martin held out no such hope and firmly stated his case:

> The partnership between the State and voluntary effort through Managers has failed to meet the needs of Belfast…A new partnership must be created between the State and a local authority suitably constituted and adapted to the local circumstances with power to levy a rate for the provision of new schools and…to contribute towards existing buildings to make them suitable.[50]

The situation in Belfast was unique because it reflected the dramatic increase in population that had taken place in the city due to its expanding industrial base and the failure of the Churches in the city to assume the responsibility, embraced elsewhere in the country, to put schools in place.

The increased funding provision and enhanced salary structures announced in the Fisher Bill impacted Belfast in two ways. If the funding model in England was transferred to the Belfast situation, rapid improvement of the school provision could be brought about. On the other hand, if matters remained as they were, which was the preference of the

[48] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 291.
[49] *Killanin report*, pp 27-30. The paragraph referred to is on p.7 of the report.
[50] Ibid., p. 30.

Catholic Church, existing teachers would effectively be lured away from Belfast by the prospect of better pay and promotion in Britain.

In early December 1918, a sub-committee of Belfast Corporation, the Library and Technical Committee, addressed a memorandum to Edward Carson, expressing their concerns at how recent legislation in England might have negative effects in their city.[51] In February, Carson wrote to Fisher outlining the problem. It should be noted that in doing so he sidestepped the usual channels of communication – the Board of National Education and the Irish administration. Although the provision of national education in Ireland was outside of Fisher's remit, he replied to Carson in a supportive manner. He concurred that unless action was taken, Irish children would be left 'in a position of great educational inferiority to the children of England, Scotland and Wales.' He advocated local rates to aid education and a more robust presentation of Irish education issues in parliament. He concluded: 'Belfast would certainly be doing a great service to Ireland if it will lead the way on this, the most certain path to progress.'[52] Encouraged by this and with the cooperation of Belfast Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce, Carson set about designing a scheme to reform education provision for Belfast.

In April 1919, a set of proposals were forwarded to Chief Secretary Macpherson by Hugh M. Pollock, President of Belfast Chamber of Commerce.[53] While Macpherson was well-disposed to the overall content, as chief secretary he could not be seen to support a local sectional initiative, especially as he observed, 'in view of the fact that they [the government] had in contemplation a comparative measure for all [of] Ireland on similar lines to [yours].[54]

The equivocation of the chief secretary and the fact that only a week previously he had announced an outline of his education plans, did not deter the Belfast proponents from pursuing their objectives. On 9 May 1919, Samuel McGuffin, Unionist MP for Woodvale, laid the Education (Belfast) Bill before parliament. The main thrust of the bill was to create a General Education Committee, under the auspices of Belfast

[51] Cited in Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*, p. 459 This memorandum was dated the 12 December. Polling in the 1918 General Election took place on 14 December. Carson was MP for Dublin University from 1892 to 1918 when he resigned his seat. He next stood as a Unionist candidate for Duncairn (Belfast) and was duly elected.
[52] Ibid., p. 460.
[53] James Macpherson, a Scottish Presbyterian, was appointed chief secretary in January 1919.
[54] Cited in Hyland, op. cit., p. 461. 10 April 1919, Macpherson to Pollock.

Corporation, to address the dire educational needs of the city. The city corporation had the power and machinery to levy a rate to fund such a committee. After all, he argued:

> If we have control of the baths, libraries and museums, why should we not have control of the primary schools? There can be no possible objection to that seeing as we are considering a class of people…most deserving of our consideration.[55]

Parliamentary opposition to the Bill was limited. The recent routing of the IPP by Sinn Féin in the 1918 General Election and the abstention from the House of Commons of these elected members resulted in only a handful of Irish Party MPs in attendance. Thus, it fell to Joseph Devlin and Jeremiah MacVeigh to hold the line on behalf of Catholic interests. Devlin viewed the proposed legislation as handing over the administration of education to Belfast Corporation and he did not mask his strong opposition to any such suggestion which he viewed as contrary to the well-being of Catholic children:

> In many respects they are a very efficient body, but I would soon as trust a number of lambs before a jury of butchers as trust Catholic [education] interests before the interests of Belfast Corporation.[56]

Others viewed it as indicative of the influence of Carson that the matter was even on the order paper. MacVeigh saw Carson's hand in all of this when he observed that the bill did 'not have...a dog's chance of reaching the Statute Book.' He suggested:

> It only comes from the fertile brain of the right honourable gentleman, the Member from Duncairn [Carson]. The brilliant idea occurred to him that they should start this education stunt and use it as a red herring to drag across the path of Home Rule.[57]

Not surprisingly Carson flatly denied this. What ostensibly appeared to be an education measure and a political initiative to deal with a pressing local need had become a fully-fledged confrontation regarding the administrative control of national schools. Given the separatist narratives evolving around Home Rule, the proposed legislation chimed with unionist sentiments that Ulster's problems could be dealt with in an Ulster fashion.

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[55] *Hansard* 5, H.C. debate, vol 115 cc1128-9, 9 May 1919.
[56] Ibid., cc1243.
[57] Ibid., cc1282.

8.5 Macpherson's Education Bill, 1919–20

On 24 November 1919, Macpherson presented his new Education Bill for its first reading in parliament. The bill proposed the amalgamation of the three existing boards – National, Intermediate and the Technical section of the DATI into a single Department of Education. The chief secretary would head up the new department as president, together with Hugh Barrie of DATI and a third person to be nominated by the lord lieutenant as vice-presidents. A sixteen-member advisory board would be appointed by the department and a further thirty-two would represent local authorities, managerial and teacher groupings. Local Education Committees would be established for each county and borough council. These committees, composed of local council members, department nominees and in the case of primary schools, managerial representatives, were empowered to strike a local rate in support of local education provision. Another significant clause sought to maintain the *status quo* over denominational management of national schools. It stated that the overall funding for education provided under the Bill would be decided according to the Goshen ratio of $\frac{80}{100}:\frac{11}{100}:\frac{9}{100}$ tying it permanently to English funding.[58] As O'Connell observed:

> The amount due to the Fund, calculated on the Goshen ratio, would be voted each year by Parliament and, once voted, the British treasury would have no control over it. The method of its expenditure and allocation would rest entirely with the Irish department and money expended in one year could be carried over to the next and used in such manner as determined by the department.[59]

This would result in removing the much hated Treasury veto over Irish education spending. More importantly, the measure could unlock significant equivalent funding in view of substantial investment in English education under the Fisher Act of 1918.

Some days after the chief secretary had presented his new bill to parliament, Starkie wrote to Macpherson, both to caution and to counsel him:

> You may prepare yourself for furious opposition from two parties, the Hierarchy and Gill [the secretary of DATI]. Dr Foley, Bishop of Kildare, said at the Board the last day, that any

[58] The ratio was calculated by G. J. Goshen, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1887-92. Using the proportionality of $\frac{80}{100}:\frac{11}{100}:\frac{9}{100}$, the funding for English education was reflected in Scotland getting $\frac{11}{100}$s and Ireland $\frac{9}{100}$s

[59] O'Connell, *100 years,* p. 295

> bill proposing to make Mr McPherson [sic] responsible to Parliament for education would be blown sky high…Nothing less than the intervention of the Almighty would persuade this country to agree about anything at present. But force your bill through and you will find the opposition will melt into smoke. The measure is a good one, in particular since it frees us from Treasury control.[60]

In further correspondence, Starkie reiterated his support for and concurrence with Macpherson's proposals, when he confided: 'I wish you luck with your courageous proposals which carry out all the ideals which have been in my mind for twenty years.'[61]

The Bill was welcomed by the Protestant Churches and also by those newspapers generally supportive of the unionist viewpoint both in Dublin and Belfast. The *Irish Times*, while it reacted favourably to the bill, presciently viewed the introduction of a local rate for education as problematic. Such a rate, the editor stated, was the bill's

> misfortune and chief merit – its misfortune because the Principle will be opposed bitterly by influential persons in this country; its chief merit because this principle at last brings Ireland into line with progressive democracies.[62]

The *Church of Ireland Gazette* was puzzled by the timing of the Education Act, given that the government purported to be busily drafting legislation to extend self-government to Ireland. If that were so, the writer argued:

> Why should they spend the time of the Imperial Parliament in debating a measure when in a short time they propose to set up a legislature capable of pulling it to pieces again? [63]

However, their overall view was that the bill was welcome and long overdue. The lack of coordination between the three strands and the absence of rate aid had seriously impaired the advance of education. The writer concluded:

> Our educational system is years behind that of England and Scotland, and our Irish children handicapped in the race of life because of it. Rate aid must carry with it popular control, and the principle of popular control has been accepted in every democratic State and by every Protestant community.[64]

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[60] TCD, MS 9210, no. 412, 28 November 1919, Starkie to Macpherson.
[61] Ibid., no. 414, 4 December 1919, Starkie to Macpherson.
[62] *IT*, 29 November 1919.
[63] *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 5 December 1919.
[64] Ibid.

The nationalist press by contrast was highly critical of the bill. The *Freeman's Journal* described it as an 'impudent proposal' designed 'by English bigots at Westminster' to take control of Irish education. It sought to do nothing less than 'to destroy such fragments of educational self-government as Ireland possessed.'[65] The *Irish Independent* also denounced the measure and in particular, the composition of the proposed Education Department which it claimed was 'universally condemned as reactionary and undemocratic.'[66] Such sentiments were ironic given the strident criticism of the National Board over many years, published in the same newspapers, which condemned the commissioners in similar terms.

The teachers responded favourably to the details of the bill, especially those which provided for a statutory and permanent model of funding. Long-sought demands were now addressed, namely improved salary and pension provision, as well as a compulsory attendance scheme. Local rates would fund the heating, cleaning and maintenance of schools. The cost of school equipment, schoolbooks for necessitous children, and schemes for medical and dental examination could be similarly funded. The teachers were anxious however to advance the new proposed salary elements forthwith, rather than await the passage of the Bill in full. On 10 December, a deputation of teachers' representatives met with Macpherson in London with a view to progressing these objectives. The chief secretary, while promising that no effort would be spared to enact the bill as soon as possible, was at pains to stress:

> It was only natural that the teachers should be specially interested in the financial provisions of the bill, for they must realise that a considerable sum of money must come to Irish education under its provisions. But the Treasury could not contemplate handing over this sum unless they were assured that some such system of Irish educational improvement as was provided in the bill would be carried into effect.[67]

The reporter further observed that it was evident that the chief secretary's position was 'the salary scales would not apply until the bill was law.' The message simply put was that without the passing of the bill no money would be forthcoming. If that was

[65] *FJ*, 27 November 1919.
[66] *IrI*, 26 November 1919.
[67] *IT*, 11 December 1919. The deputation included T.J. Nunan, President INTO; T.J. O'Connell, Secretary INTO; T.J. Banks, Secretary Secondary Teachers' Association; D.R. McDonald and J.J. O'Connor representing the Technical Teachers. The chief secretary was accompanied by A. Bonaparte Wyse and Major Harris, Chairman and Secretary respectively of the Expert Committee who prepared the Bill.

unwelcome news for the deputation, there was worse to follow. O'Connell, who was a member of the group, recalled:

> By the time the interview was over, the Dublin papers for December 10, 1919, had arrived and, sitting in a London restaurant, the members of the deputation read the following [headline]: Statement of the [opposition of the] Standing Committee of the Bishops of Ireland on the proposed Education Act…Consternation and frustration were the feelings which dominated the teachers on reading this statement.[68]

The future of the legislation and with it, the teachers' aspirations now appeared gravely uncertain. Given the determined tone of the Catholic Bishops' statement of opposition, the enactment of the Education Bill was in jeopardy. The statement issued on the hierarchy's behalf forthrightly condemned the proposed new education structure as

> a British department [devised] at the instigation of an intolerant minority in one angle of the country…[who] demanded that others should be taxed with them to do what they… should long ago have done voluntarily for themselves.[69]

The proposals on local rating and school committees were described as an imposition on already over-taxed ratepayers. Miller suggests that the bishops 'had to tread lightly' in this matter, as one of their own number, Bishop O'Donnell had signed the recent Killanin Report. For the bishops, it was the composition of the proposed Department of Education that was most problematic, given the backgrounds of the triumvirate selected to administer it. The chief secretary and the vice-president of the DATI would be president and vice-president respectively. The third permanent representative, 'whose name the authors of the Bill have not seen fit to disclose', would be selected by the lord lieutenant. James Macpherson, the chief secretary was a Scot. The vice-president of the DATI at the time was Hugh T. Barrie. Miller describes the latter as 'an Ulster Presbyterian', which he was, and a lot more besides.[70] Barrie was born in Glasgow, migrated to Coleraine aged nineteen and funded by his father, set up a thriving export business. Success in the political arena followed which saw his election as Unionist MP for North Londonderry from 1906. He was noted as an able and engaged MP. However, what marked him out for prominence was his antipathy to Home Rule. He was a trusted lieutenant of Edward Carson and a fiery supporter of the Ulster Volunteer

[68] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 297.
[69] *FJ*, 10 Dec 1919.
[70] Miller, *Church, state and nation*, p. 438.

Force. In September 1913, when he addressed a recently formed unit outside Myroe Orange Hall, he stated that he

> strongly commended the object of the UVF. The movement was rapidly growing all over the province, and by the end of the year there would be a mighty army of trained men, fired by the most robust of all purposes, protection of their homes, preservation of their religion and maintenance of the Union.[71]

The fact that two of the three men selected to administer the new department were Scottish and Presbyterian was a step too far for the Catholic hierarchy who pronounced:

> Now we have the prospect of a department to control Irish education with no particular educational strength, unless it be that its members, so far as they are known, are neither Catholic nor Irishmen.[72]

Looking to the future, the standing committee declared that the majority of the Irish people would not accept such a department, unless presided over by a Minister of Education, elected and selected by its own parliament. Until that time

> The people of this country will set their faces against the appointment of any minister or combinations of ministers who, as foreigners, are absolutely unfit to guide the intellectual destinies of Ireland. No time should be lost by the ratepayers and public bodies of the country in trying to weigh the overwhelming burden of foreign origin which the Bill would impose on them.

Another significant episcopal intervention came from Dr Patrick Foley, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. Of special note was the fact that he was a serving commissioner of the National Board. At a meeting of Carlow Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, of which he was chairman, he proposed a motion:

> indignantly protesting against the Education Bill which proposed to bind in foreign fetters the mind and soul of the Irish nation by the establishment of a Department of Education consisting of three members, one of whom was unknown and the other two Presbyterian Scotsmen who [are] party political hacks and devoid of any qualification of an educational character.[73]

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[71] Aaron Callan, 'H .T. Barrie – the forgotten man of Ulster politics?', *History Ireland*, 7:2 (2019), p. 30.
[72] It was widely accepted that Andrew Bonaparte Wyse, a Catholic, would be appointed as permanent representative on the proposed Department of Education.
[73] Cited in Callan, 'H .T. Barrie', p.306. No reference given.

In the months ahead, this interpretation of the Education Bill as a means to usurp the management of national schools and place them under alien control was to become the preoccupation and primary focus of those who opposed it.

The Education Bill was scheduled for its second reading on 15 December. Although they numbered just six, the IPP led by Joe Devlin seized on an event in Dublin to thwart the parliamentary timetable in Westminster. On the previous day, as part of a clampdown on anti-government sentiment, the *Freeman's Journal* was suppressed. In order that the matter be raised in parliament, an emergency motion needed the support of forty members. Devlin secured the necessary backing and the motion was timetabled for 8.15 p.m. The rules of the House of Commons required that a bill which failed to receive a second reading before the end of the session, died forthwith. When the House convened at 3 p.m., Devlin and three of his colleagues, mirroring the tactics of Parnell and Biggar, engaged the House in a prolonged filibuster. The Education Bill was thus successfully 'talked out.'[74] But it was only a temporary respite. The matter could be returned to in the next parliamentary session in January.

Back in Dublin, the teachers' representatives met to consider their position. The consensus viewpoint was that the general public needed to be informed that failure to enact the proposed legislation would be a lost opportunity for Irish education. The INTO argued in their support of the bill that there was scant difference between a National Board selected by the lord lieutenant and the proposed new Education Department nominated by the government. The bill offered advantages hitherto unavailable because education would now be free from Treasury scrutiny and oversight. O'Connell recalled how he was tasked by the INTO with 'informing the public of the existing and proposed position regarding primary educational administration.'[75] This was a formidable challenge. Arrayed against him and the teachers' viewpoint was a large segment of the popular press, augmented by the urban corporations and county councils, practically all of which were controlled by nationalist members. To this was added censure from pulpit and episcopal palace. One such emanated from Bishop Denis Hallinan of Limerick who, shortly before Christmas, was reported in the press as describing the Irish Education Bill as 'anti-Irish, anti-democratic and dishonest.' The object of the bill, he stated, was to control the formation of the minds of future

[74] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 303
[75] O'Connell, op. cit., p. 300.

generations of Irish men and women. In his opinion, the government was using the discontent of underpaid and devoted teachers to bribe them into betraying the educational, financial and national interests of Ireland. He challenged the teachers:

> What would be the answer of the teachers today to this educational souperism? Unless he was greatly mistaken in them, as a body they would rise up in their anger, refuse to touch this unholy thing, and say to their poor old Mother Erin, "Mother, death is better." [76]

It is unlikely that this contribution by the bishop of Limerick turned many teachers' heads. Rather what engaged their attention were O'Connell's efforts to inform the public of the positive consequences that would arise from the passing of the Education Bill. He wrote a series of letters to the *Irish Independent* on 8, 9 and 10 January in his capacity as general secretary of the INTO. This was reinforced with a full statement of the CEC position which was published on 12 January in all the daily newspapers. The response from teachers was generally positive. What was totally unexpected was a damaging letter from Catherine Mahon in the *Irish Independent* on 20 January. Catherine Mahon was a former President of the INTO. Due to her prominence in the Mansfield episode and her evidence before the Dill Inquiry, she held considerable influence among teachers. Mahon always had a nationalistic disposition and after the Rising in 1916 her views were of a more ardent hue. In her opinion, the INTO and its executive had sold out to the British government. She described their press statement issued some days earlier, as 'an apology for the British Government in Ireland.' Instead of supporting the Education Bill, the CEC should:

> concentrate on the increase in salaries, which the proposals in this bill are an admission we are entitled to…and refuse to be dragged into the vortex of controversial politics in opposition to the country, an area which by present [INTO] rules we are not allowed to enter under any circumstance.[77]

Taken aback by the tone of the letter, O'Connell and the INTO president Nunan responded in a measured way pointing out that they had not in fact acted *ultra vires* in their handling of the matter. However, a tit for tat correspondence commenced with each side in turn becoming more critical and adversarial. Inevitably, a line was crossed when O'Connell unkindly listed the advances made by the organisation since Mahon's

[76] *IT*, 22 December 1919.
[77] *IrI*, 20 January 1920.

departure from the executive. Mahon responded with an insinuation that the proposers and defenders of the bill were 'place men, job hunters and…prospective office holders', thus intimating that CEC members were supporting the bill with a view to securing appointments in the suggested new education department. Chuinneagán states clearly that Mahon's assertion that the INTO president and general secretary were supportive of the bill out of self-interest 'was unfounded and deeply offensive to the two men concerned.'[78] Smarting from these attacks on their integrity, legal advice was sought by the CEC which confirmed that the allegations were libellous. Court proceedings followed, in which Mahon did not appear or enter a defence. Accordingly, judgement by default was awarded against her and she became liable for the costs. The INTO did not seek damages and paid the legal fees. Puirséal suggests that Mahon 'due to her Sinn Féin beliefs' refused to participate in the proceedings, held as they were under the British court system.[79] In any event, the verdict had the effect of silencing the adversaries and bringing the public airing of division to a timely end.

On 5 March 1920, Cardinal Michael Logue addressed a letter to the Irish bishops outlining the Church's opposition to the chief secretary's 'pernicious Education Bill'. He declared that all legitimate means should be harnessed to resist its coming into law. Due to prevailing circumstances, meaningful opposition in Parliament was futile and therefore it was necessary to fall back on 'the active and earnest co-operation of our faithful people.' Above all, reliance needed to be placed on Divine aid and accordingly he suggested that a solemn novena be proclaimed to enlist the aid of the National Apostle. It was St Patrick, he continued, who

> bequeathed to the children of Ireland a glorious inheritance which with God's blessing has been hitherto faithfully kept, despite sufferings, sacrifices and persecution; it is for us to see that it is handed down to future generations with equal fidelity.[80]

The cardinal's letter stressed the obligation and responsibility of parents to rear and educate their children as faithful Catholics, under the direction of their pastors. He cautioned:

> Though we have not yet, thank God, arrived at the stage dreamt of by the extreme socialists, when the children of the people will

[78] Chuinneagáin, *Catherine Mahon*, p. 211.
[79] Niamh Puirséal, *Kindling the flame – 150 years of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation* (Dublin, 2017), p. 61.
[80] Cited in O'Connell, *100 years*, pp 319-20.

> become mere chattels of the state, the Bill in question seems to tend notably in that direction.[81]

As Bonar Law had promised, the bill (with minor amendments) was submitted to parliament once more on 28 February. These adjustments were not enough to allay the reservations of the Catholic hierarchy and there was no let-up in their opposition. As time elapsed the enactment of the bill became more and more improbable. The sudden resignation of Macpherson as chief secretary was a mortal blow to the proponents of the measure. Threats of assassination and the general deteriorating security situation throughout the country had impaired his general health. The appointment of Sir Thomas Hamar Greenwood in his stead in April 1920 removed any momentum that the matter had once possessed and it was not given a second reading. With the political focus now firmly directed at the maintenance of law and order, education reform was no longer a priority. The Education Bill was in effect now dead.

8.6 Conclusion

The 1919 Education Bill was the final attempt by the Westminster parliament to effect education reform in a thirty-two county Ireland. The episode highlighted the might of the Catholic Church in the educational realm, while the forceful language to which it had recourse illustrated its determination to perpetuate the control it had established. The harmonisation over time of religion and nation was a formidable combination. It enabled the Catholic Church to effect and retain control which amounted in practice to a power of veto over the funding and organisation of the sector. The failure of Macpherson's bill ensured the unaltered continuance of denominational management of both primary and secondary schools. For the Catholic Church, looking to the future, this was of more consequence than all other educational considerations. The National Board of Education endured, but it was clear also that it was on borrowed time. For those who had eyes to see, the locus of power in education in Ireland no longer resided in Dublin or Westminster.

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[81] Ibid.

Chapter Nine

The final years of the National Board, 1916–22

9.1 Introduction

Three major issues dominated the closing phase of the era of the National Board of Education. Firstly, the 1916 rebellion had a profoundly transformative impact on the environment in which the Board functioned and in particular it had to deal with the controversy arising from the perception that teachers and schools had played a role in the Rising. This imputation arose from the belief that anti-British sentiment was inculcated in schools and consequently, was partly to blame for the rebellion. The ensuing furore set in train an intensive investigation by the Board into its teaching force. In tandem with this they undertook an evaluation of school history textbooks to establish if any of their content might have engendered disaffection. The publication and dissemination of a pamphlet on the teaching of patriotism, authored by Starkie's wife May, evoked further controversy. Secondly, the ongoing issue of teachers' pay and conditions, which was a bugbear for the commissioners for in excess of twenty years, was brought to a resolution against the backdrop of post-war retrenchment. Thirdly, the premature death in July 1920 of Resident Commissioner Starkie raised the question of the future leadership of the Board at a particularly sensitive moment, as the hostilities associated with the ongoing War of Independence posed serious questions as to the Board's future. Powerful forces, North and South, were intent on developing new governmental structures which did not include the Board. The Government of Ireland Act received royal assent on 23 December 1920 but resistance against British rule showed no signs of abating. The consequent societal dislocation impinged greatly on the day to day administration of the country and education in particular was severely impacted. The failure of the administration to appoint a successor to Starkie did little to imbue stability. The future of the National Board of Education was no longer a matter of doubt – its days were numbered.

9.2 The National Board and Revolution, 1916–18

The suppression of the1916 Rising and the resultant execution of its leaders provoked John Dillon to observe in the House of Commons:

> I say deliberately that in the whole of modern history…there has been no rebellion or insurrection put down with so much blood and so much savagery.[1]

Within days, the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, J.P. Mahaffy, having condemned Dillon's parliamentary speech in *The Times* as 'a series of foul falsehoods', proceeded to outline what he considered the underlying cause of the recent rebellion. He observed:

> There has been throughout the National Schools a propaganda of hatred to England on the part of schoolmasters living on the pay of the Imperial Government…The rising generation have been so carefully soaked in disloyal sentiments that the large majority of the population is now against Imperial law and order.[2]

To remedy this situation, the Provost suggested that all post holders, in receipt of pay from the Crown, should be requested periodically to make a public declaration of their loyalty. In the cases of teachers, particularly national teachers, this should take place in the presence of the whole school. He further stressed:

> The violating of this declaration should entail dismissal from their posts…At present they pocket their salaries and spread treason with perfect impunity.[3]

The publication of Mahaffy's letter prompted Fr Peter Byrne, president of St. Patrick's Training College, to write to *The Times* questioning the right of Mahaffy to make 'such a sweeping statement' without providing any grounds or authority for his opinions. Based on his experience as head of the largest teacher training college for twenty-eight years and his knowledge of some 2,400 students, Byrne rejected the accusation of disloyalty and disaffection on the part of teachers:

> I venture to believe that I am in agreement with the general body of Inspectors and Managers [who are] the only men who have officially a personal knowledge of the working of the schools.[4]

However, Mahaffy's sentiments were repeated and amplified in the *Times Education Supplement* in June. He stressed again the root cause of the rebellion:

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[1] *Hansard 5*, H.C. debate, vol 82 c946, 11 May 1916.
[2] *The Times*, 16 May 1916.
[3] Ibid. Mahaffy wrote this letter on Saturday, 13 May. On that day he entertained Prime Minister Asquith at TCD.
[4] *FJ*, 23 May 1916. This letter was written by Byrne on 16 May and sent to *The Times* but was not published.

> It can be proved to any man who will listen to the evidence of those who lived through the whole insurrection in Dublin that it was deliberately planned…by the careful instilling of revolutionary principles in the teaching of many of our primary schools.[5]

On this occasion, the president of the INTO George Ramsay took issue. He described the article as 'utterly false and slanderous.' Because of the rebellious nature of a minority of the population, the general body of teachers were visited with 'wrathful denunciation'. He scathingly commented:

> Everyone knows that the history courses adopted in National Schools are approved of by the National Board, and, what is equally important, the books used must have their sanction.[6]

Contemporaneously the issue of teachers and their suggested involvement in the rebellion engaged the National Board. In the minutes of their meeting on 6 June 1916, under the heading of 'National Teachers and the Sinn Féin Movement', Justice Ross expressed 'the desirability of taking steps to dissociate the teaching in national schools from disloyal and seditious tendencies'. To this end, the Board invited representatives of the training colleges and school managers' associations to meet in conference. Appearing as if the Board accepted Mahaffy's proposition, the stated purpose of the consultation was the consideration of 'measures to prevent the spread of seditious tendencies among the national teachers'.[7] The observations of the schools inspectors on the subject were also requested. The Provost was invited to state on what evidence he had based his statement to the press as to the seditious teaching or seditious acts by national teachers.[8] Mahaffy failed to respond.

By 22 July the commissioners had concluded their investigation and issued a formal press release. They insisted from the outset that it was incumbent upon them to inquire into accusations of sedition on the part of teachers in national schools, with a view to taking remedial measures, if such were found to exist. Extracts from two of the Provost's letters to *The Times* were quoted. Mahaffy was again invited to furnish the Board with evidence to substantiate these serious charges. No reply was received.

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[5] Niamh Puirséal, 'The schoolmaster's rebellion: teachers, the INTO and 1916', *Saothar*, 41 (2016) p. 286.
[6] *FJ*, 19 June 1916.
[7] *Mins. CNEI*, 6 June 1916.
[8] Ibid., 4 July 1916.

The commissioners stated that, after close scrutiny, they had ascertained that the involvement of primary teachers in the 1916 rebellion was as follows: two national teachers were undergoing penal servitude, while fifteen others were imprisoned, seven of whom had been released. Three others were reported to the Board as members of the Irish Volunteers. These had severed their connection with that organisation as a condition of retaining their posts. The press release concluded:

> It is to be borne in mind that there are about 5,700 men national teachers, and it would, therefore, be clearly unjust to the teaching body as a whole to find a general charge of disloyalty on the fact that a very small proportion have been either implicated in the recent rising or suspected of complicity with it.[9]

The investigation into accusations of teachers' disloyalty was not the only matter to engage the Commissioners arising out of the Rebellion. At their meeting on 4 July, item five on the agenda appertained to a 'Pamphlet entitled 'What is Patriotism – The Teaching of Patriotism by May C. Starkie.' It was proposed and agreed by the Board to print and issue the pamphlet to all managers, inspectors and teachers, accompanied by a circular advising teachers that lessons based on its contents be given to national school pupils.[10]

The circumstances leading up to the writing of this sixteen-page booklet by Starkie's wife May are unclear, but its tone and content are consistent with the conclusion that it was in gestation prior to the 1916 Rising, and that it was conceived and written in an attempt to rally support for the imperial war effort. The pamphlet commenced with a discussion of the nature and origins of patriotism, which it defined as 'a passion as strong as religious faith … able to transport men to the sublimest heights of self-sacrifice.'[11] The writer elaborated that this feeling of patriotism went 'deeper than political forms, for nations, like individuals, have souls, and in great crises are able to merge their differences…for the survival of the ideal as a whole.'[12] The lofty rhetoric of the next few pages led logically to a consideration of the objective of the Irish patriot and to the following question:

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[9] NAI, CSORP 13179/16, *National Teachers and the Rebellion – Statement by the Education Commissioners.*
[10] *Mins. CNEI*, 4 July 1916.
[11] May C. Starkie, *What is patriotism: the Teaching of patriotism* (HMSO, 1916), p. 4.
[12] Ibid., p. 6.

> And now that we have come to the greatest and most widespread upheaval that this world of nations and of men has endured, can we the Irish people plead ignorance or unconsciousness of the electrical currents convulsing creation?[13]

In lauding the heroics of the Dublin Fusiliers, Connaught Rangers and the London Irish Rifles, Mrs Starkie left little doubt who she considered should be foremost in the minds of the true patriot. Having thus set the stage, she turned her attention to the inculcation of a deep love of one's country. The key agents in this process were the church, family and schools, especially the latter where 'the little seed of loyalty [if sown]…can grow to a strong healthy tree'.[14] Great exhortations were made to teachers and schools regarding empathy and generosity in supporting those fighting far from home and others 'ready to do their part'. The pamphlet concluded with the aspiration that every child so imbued with the spirit of true patriotism would 'be fit to serve his country in whatever capacity she may determine when she calls upon him.'[15]

Given the febrile atmosphere of the post Easter Rising months, it is a matter of little surprise that the dissemination of the pamphlet to schools and managers provoked an immediate and often angry response. What marked its uniqueness, David Fitzpatrick observed, was that it provided 'a rare target of united opposition by Catholics and Protestants.'[16] Invigorated by his recent spat in the newspapers with General Maxwell, Edward O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, was first to take the field. In a letter to the managers of national schools in his diocese he cautioned them that the recent pamphlet 'pretends to discuss Patriotism, but that is only a blind.'[17] The reality, he suggested, was that the document was a recruiting manifesto. He reminded his clergy:

> Recent events in Dublin, the perfidy of the English Government on Home Rule, the dishonesty with which we were promised self-government as a consideration for supporting England in the war, so that our people were led to believe [that] in reality it was a war for Ireland and a thousand other phases of the duplicity which has just been revealed in Parliament, have put the Irish people in a temper that will not brook the trifling of

[13] Ibid., p. 9.
[14] Ibid., p. 15.
[15] Ibid., p. 16.
[16] David Fitzpatrick, 'The futility of history' in Ciaran Brady and Ivan Berend (eds.) *Ideology and the historians* (Dublin, 1991), p. 180.
[17] *FJ*, 7 August 1916. The letter was dated 3 August.

> England's retainers, or accept lessons on Patriotism from them.[18]

Starkie himself did not escape censure for allowing the females in his family a right of semi-official interference in the workings of the National Board. O'Dwyer dubbed the author as 'an educational Mrs. Proudie'[19] before concluding his caution against the promulgation of the pamphlet into schools with an Horatian flourish – '*incedis per ignes…*'.[20]

Within days, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* responded with a defence of the pamphlet and a criticism of O'Dwyer. The editor stated:

> It is perfectly plain that the Bishop regards membership in the Army as tantamount to faithlessness in Ireland; and in his view, if words mean anything, Irishmen can best show their patriotism by refusing to enlist in the struggle against Germany.[21]

A constant in the critique of the Starkie pamphlet was the failure to identify the object of the allegiance to which a patriot might aspire. A Church of Ireland manager in a letter to The *Irish Times* observed that having read the pamphlet closely, he could not ascertain to what country the teacher or child are to show loyalty; the word 'England' or 'British Empire' do not appear in its pages. He concluded, 'when I want to teach patriotism, I shall try and be a little more definite than this pamphlet.'[22]

Doubts have been expressed as to whether May Starkie was the author of the pamphlet, but there can be little doubt as to her role in its composition. In his diaries, Starkie refers on two occasions to 'May's article' and 'May's essay'.[23] Although his comments are not contemporaneous with the publication in 1916, they do attest to her authorial prowess. Also, their daughter Enid in her autobiography recalled that her mother 'used…to read papers at certain societies on educational theories.'[24] Be that as it may, publication without the Resident Commissioner's say-so and *imprimatur* would have been most unlikely. Furthermore, the views expressed therein were consistent with

[18] Ibid.
[19] Mrs Proudie is a fictional character in Anthony Trollope's Barchester Towers. Wife of the bishop of Barchester, she is portrayed as vulgar and domineering.
[20] The full quotation is 'incedis per ignes suppositos cineri doloso' – you are treading on fires hidden under a treacherous crust of ashes: Horace Bk. 3.
[21] *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 11 August 1916.
[22] *IT*, 10 August 1916. The writer was James J. Sherrard, The Vicarage, Banagher, Co. Offaly.
[23] TCD, MS 9211, 19 May and 20 June 1916, diary entry.
[24] Enid Starkie, *A lady's child* (London, 1941), p. 125.

those of the Resident Commissioner. As already outlined, Starkie's political stance was typical of the 'Castle Catholic' – pro King and Empire. As he manifested throughout his career, his forthright expression of what he believed in was proclaimed without fear of the consequences. In this instance, any championing, not only of the case for publication of the pamphlet but also its printing and distribution by the National Board of Education, at such a politically sensitive moment was an act of folly.

The lukewarm reception on all sides for May Starkie's pamphlet was not lost on the commissioners and thereafter greater caution was exercised in their dealings with matters of a political nature. This was particularly manifest in their treatment of teachers who were deemed to have been active in the recent Rising. It was no surprise to anyone when in September 1916 Thomas Ashe and Fionán Lynch both had their recognition as national teachers withdrawn and were summarily dismissed. Lynch who was Captain of F Company, 1st. Battalion, Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers, stated that both Ashe and he were warned in January 1916 by their managers at the behest of the National Board, that they should disavow their paramilitary connection or face withdrawal of salary. On the orders of their commanding officers, they formally severed the connection but continued to operate behind the scenes.[25] Both were sentenced to penal servitude due to their participation in the Rising. However, other teachers who were arrested and subsequently released were paid for the duration of their absences and permitted to return to their schools. The teachers not yet released were forbidden to return to their posts without the permission of the commissioners. With regard to membership of the Irish Volunteers it was required 'as a condition for continued recognition as National Teachers, [to] resign all connection with this organisation as being political.'[26] The commissioners felt it was incumbent on them to write to Dublin Castle to explain and justify their decisions considering the 'very grave character' of the charges against such teachers. They advised the under-secretary:

> In view of the action of the authorities in liberating the teachers concerned, the Commissioners do not feel themselves in a position to adopt penal measures in any case, as they assume that the circumstances of each case was fully investigated, and that complicity in the rebellion was not substantiated… accordingly…no action will be taken by the Commissioners

[25] Bureau of Military History, *Witnesses*, WS 192, File: S.495, Fionán Lynch, Captain, Irish Volunteers.
[26] *Mins. CNEI*, 26 September 1916.

> beyond enquiring from each…an assurance that he is not a member of any party political or disloyal organisation.[27]

The minutes reveal the disquiet at Dublin Castle on the issue. Despite the Resident Commissioner's attempt to reassure the lord lieutenant, a further communication was received from the chief secretary's office, which requested that a committee be appointed to inquire into the cases of national teachers suspected of complicity in the rebellion and recommended that a committee of three commissioners be established to deal with the matter. The Board stood firmly by their original decision and declared:

> That the Irish Government be informed that if they think it well to have a special enquiry regarding these teachers it should be made by persons appointed by the Government. The Commissioners of National Education are, by the nature of the case, unfit to act in a judicial capacity, and this applies to any committee which might be appointed by them.[28]

The issue of teachers arrested and still interned remained outstanding. At a Board meeting on 5 December, the commissioners requested from the under-secretary 'definite information in regard to the four teachers who are presumed to be still interned.'[29] In late January 1917, Dublin Castle responded that in the lord lieutenant's opinion the decision to retain or dismiss these teachers must rest with the commissioners. If it would help the Board in their deliberations, he promised to furnish 'confidentially such information he had in his possession'.[30] The ball was now back in the Board's court. It fell to Justice Ross to provide a solution. He drew the commissioners' attention to the recent committee of inquiry, chaired by Justice John Sankey, which investigated the cases of over a thousand persons interned post-rebellion.[31] Sankey's manner of proceeding was not at all rigorous and was devoid of any formal judicial element. Those who denied foreknowledge of or leadership in the Rising were released. Internees who refused to co-operate in the process or expressed defiance were retained in detention. Accordingly, Ross proposed:

> That, following the precedent of the course adopted by the Executive in dismissing all Civil Servants who had been deemed deserving of continued internment, by the Advisory Committee

[27] Ibid., 7 November 1916
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 5 December 1916.
[30] Ibid., 30 January 1917.
[31] Eunan O'Halpin, *The Civil Service and the Revolution in Ireland, 1912 to 1938* (Dublin, 1987) p. 126.

> presided over by Mr. Sankey, recognition as national teachers be withdrawn from [these four teachers].[32]

The motion was carried by 8 votes to 5. Accordingly, Jeremiah O'Sullivan, James Layng, Michael Thornton and James Smyth were dismissed. Thus, the Board of National Education brought closure to the episode provocatively described by Provost Mahaffy as the 'Schoolmasters' Rebellion'.

As Mahaffy's intervention demonstrated, the extent to which the teaching of history and the content of textbooks in national schools influenced events, exercised the minds of many after the 1916 Rebellion. On 3 May 1917, the chief secretary was asked in the House of Commons for a list of history textbooks banned by the Commissioners of National Education. He responded that following a re-examination of texts sanctioned for use, some had been withdrawn while others 'had been continued, subject to omission or modification of certain passages.'[33] On 10 May, in reply to further parliamentary questioning, he elaborated on the methodology and criteria used to evaluate the history textbooks. A sub-committee of the Board, which included 'gentlemen who have made a special study of Irish history', decided what to sanction. In addition, a senior Board inspector provided a report in each case. Sanction for unsuitable textbooks was withdrawn. The chief secretary observed:

> In addition to containing many inaccuracies in matters of detail, the presentment of historical facts in these books is, in the opinion of the Commissioners, misleading and open to reasonable objection on political grounds.[34]

For all that, ingrained perceptions were hard to dispel. A letter to Chief Secretary Greenwood in January 1921 from Cuthbert James, arising from a conversation with friends who held 'the most intimate and authoritative knowledge of Irish affairs', was not untypical. These sources informed James:

> that one of the chief permanent causes of unrest in that unhappy country was the character of the school-books in use…The history is essentially one-sided Irish history. The development of the Empire is left to time and chance…[Education authorities

[32] Ibid.
[33] *Mins. CNEI*, 8 May 1917.
[34] Ibid.

> should ensure a child] is not taught 'how to become a rebel' from the moment he or she enters the school class room.[35]

9.3 Teacher agitation for enhanced war bonuses and salaries, 1916–20

Parallel with the attention given to the issue of the alleged participation of teachers in the 1916 rebellion, teachers pressed ahead with their ongoing efforts to improve their pay. The outbreak of WWI in August 1914 brought about the postponement and non-payment of salary increases due to teachers. As the war progressed the cost of living rose sharply. These increases bore heavily on all those with fixed incomes. In July 1916, with a view to mitigating its impact, the government announced a war bonus for civil servants of four shillings a week for men and two shillings for women. It was under duress that a similar bonus was offered to teachers. However, the INTO turned down the offer, deeming the award inadequate, not retrospective in payment and lacking parity for women teachers who by now formed a majority of its membership. This position was not accepted by the government. However, responding to pressure from the CNEI, school managerial bodies and MPs, war bonuses were conceded to all teachers. Both women and men were paid at the same rate, provided their weekly salary did not exceed £3, and the payment was made retrospective from 1 July 1916.[36]

In truth, it was the agitation of the women teachers that achieved pay parity in this instance. Their endeavour was spearheaded by an intensive letter writing campaign to the national press and the teachers' journal, the *Irish School Weekly*. Their case was forcibly articulated by former INTO President Catherine Mahon who challenged the CEC to give their full backing to the women's claim. She warned:

> If the Executive refuse to act, or act only in a half-hearted, unsuccessful manner, then I do not see that it will be any further advantage to the women teachers to remain members of the organisation, contributing equally to its funds, and sharing equal responsibility for all the liabilities incurred by it, unless this was reflected in their war bonuses.[37]

In an earlier letter to the *Irish Independent* she encouraged 'every lady teacher in Ireland' to write to Chief Secretary Duke for equality of treatment. She argued strongly that given the level of discontent in the country, Duke could hardly ignore the just

[35] NAI, CSO RP 25821/20, 15 January 1921, letter from Lieutenant Colonel Cuthbert James to Sir Hamar Greenwood.
[36] Moroney, *NTs' salaries*, p. 75.
[37] *FJ*, 24 October 1916.

claims of 9,000 women teachers and reinforced her case by claiming that in the absence of a satisfactory resolution, female teachers would secede from the INTO and form their own organisation:

> The present crisis brings to a head, an idea which I have long had in my mind, viz., the desirability of establishing a special association for women teachers. It would work in sympathy with the [present] organisation; its officers would constitute a Standing Council, which…would be more effective than isolated and uncertain individual action.[38]

This stance of suggested sectionalism did not sit well with the CEC, which recognised that engagement rather that confrontation was likely to bring about the result teachers desired. Even after the successful outcome, INTO president George Ramsay pointedly remarked:

> The equal rate has been won, not by hysterical appeals to the press advocating one plan of campaign after another…but by reason and arguments placed in black and white before the chancellor of the exchequer.[39]

Mahon's proposal for a women's teacher association never came to pass. Moreover, the case she made for a separate women's organisation receded as further war bonus payments were made to teachers in January and June 1919. These were now paid at different rates for men and women, evidence that the precedent of equal pay was both once-off and short-lived. Furthermore, the CEC considered their focus should be on a bigger prize, namely the pursuit of postponed increases to their permanent salary structure.

The shelving of Macpherson's 1919 education bill left the teachers in economic limbo. All sides agreed that their salaries needed redress. However, the government's insistence that the granting of pay increases was dependent on the passing into law of reforming legislation hindered progress towards that end. It was during at this juncture that the INTO achieved national prominence as an advocate for the national teacher's position. Its membership by 1919 had risen to in excess of 11,000, its highest ever.[40] The appointment in 1916 of T.J. O'Connell as full-time general secretary was especially significant. Young and energetic, O'Connell was a forceful speaker and a cogent

[38] *IrI*, 1 November 1916.
[39] *ISW*, 2 December 1916.
[40] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 185.

thinker. During the recent Killanin Inquiry, in his evidence over four days he had outlined teachers' grievances with unflinching clarity.

Under the stewardship of O'Connell, the INTO undertook to apply to the Civil Service Arbitration Board to reignite their salary campaign. This Board, established in 1917, was set up to arbitrate on claims from civil servants for increased remuneration. Teachers were expressly debarred from participating in this procedure. However, the realisation that the Education Bill was not destined to make it into law caused the Treasury to relent and allow the teachers to present their case before the Arbitration Board. Even at this stage, the Treasury endeavoured to avoid the granting of a permanent salary increase, as a Treasury memo of 14 September 1920 made clear:

> While the Education Bill is not absolutely dead, there is a small hope of its passing while the Irish question remains in its present unsettled state. Accordingly our only hope of preventing an award of permanent salaries is by being able to show that we are giving an adequate war bonus.[41]

This position was flatly rejected by the INTO who threatened an all-out strike. Unwilling to risk the societal disruption that would inevitably accompany school closures, the Treasury allowed the Arbitration Board to work unhindered. On 29 November 1920 agreement was reached. The new annual salary scales were fixed at £175 to £340 for men and £160 to £272 for women. These pay increases were retrospective to 1 April 1920, payable over three years, with the final moiety on 1 April 1922. While the salary increases were long overdue, they were substantial, and the attraction of what was offered was enhanced by the abolition of the grading system. The latter was in accordance with the recommendations of the Killanin Report. A single salary scale, with differing rates for men and women, was now in place through which all teachers of efficient service could advance. To encourage teachers of exceptional efficiency, a higher scale was proposed. Principal teachers of larger schools were awarded extra remuneration and capitation grants for convent and monastery schools were enhanced.[42] The outcome was a triumph for the INTO and its negotiators, particularly O'Connell, and the organisation did not hesitate to emphasise its significance in a booklet they published in 1920:

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[41] Quoted in Hyland, *Analysis nat. and sec. ed. Ir.*, p. 476.
[42] CNEI, *Eighty-sixth report…1919-20*, p. 6.

> For the first time since 1831, when State payment to Irish teachers was first introduced, can it be stated with any degree of truth that the salary of the Irish primary teacher is fair, just and commensurate with the important work which he [sic] is called on to perform.[43]

The National Board concurred and it pronounced that the new salary arrangements 'will be memorable in the history of Irish primary education.' And in their annual report for 1919–20 they added:

> There can be no doubt that the pre-war salaries of the national teachers were unduly low and such as to discourage the best class of candidates from entering the profession…we have no hesitation in stating that a satisfactory settlement of this long standing grievance has been arrived at.[44]

The timing of the salary increases for teachers was most fortuitous, as on 9 December 1920, ten days after the announcement of the settlement, the historiography of Irish education maintains that what is often termed the 'Geddes Axe' fell. This attribution is a misrepresentation. Lloyd George appointed Sir Eric Geddes as head of a committee to find economies in public expenditure in August 1921.[45] What actually occurred on the 9 December 1920 – a full eight months before Geddes' appointment and a year before his first interim report – was a government announcement by Chancellor of Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, freezing all wage demands and salary negotiations.

These wider changes notwithstanding, the successful outcome of the salary negotiations was enhanced by a drop in the cost of living by some 50 per cent between 1920 and 1922. However, this advantage was short-lived. Economic circumstances post-independence resulted in the reduction of teachers' salaries on six occasions by a cumulative twenty per cent.[46]

9.4 Starkie's final years; financial problems and ill-health, 1917–20

Starkie's diaries and the autobiographical works of his children Enid and Walter give ample evidence of a well lived life. Fine dining, lavish parties, private tuition for his children, mountain climbing in the Alps and yachting in Dublin Bay all came at a price.

[43] O'Connell, *100 years*, p. 197.
[44] *Eighty sixth report*, p. 5.
[45] The Geddes Committee issued three reports advocating economies of totalling £87 million in public spending.
[46] Moroney, *NTs' Salaries*, p. 93.

Although the annual salary of the Resident Commissioner amounted to £1,500 (unchanged since 1874), his personal finances were now in disarray. His son Walter recalled:

> In January 1917 my father's financial worries reached a climax when he received a letter from his bank warning him that his overdraft had reached perilous dimensions…Now he suddenly learned [that he owed] several thousands of pounds and the Bank requested him to cover the deficit.[47]

In his diary Starkie (senior) recorded, 'at my office after 2 p.m. Received a v[ery] unpleasant letter from Bank in evening which kept me awake all night.'[48] The following days were spent at home mulling over his extravagant lifestyle and the remedial measures that were required. He now turned his back on the expensive habits of a lifetime to pursue a life of thrift. His daughter Enid, portraying his reduced circumstances, described his self-denial:

> He bought no more new clothes until the last months of his life, when his salary was increased…He gave up his wines, his cigars, his delicacies…the expensive pencils, by the dozen…There was something pathetic in seeing him with a pencil jealously guarded in his pocket. In a few days he seemed to turn ascetic. For the rest of his life he spent almost nothing on himself.[49]

It was around this time also that Walter noticed a decline in his father's overall health, the most visible manifestation of which was the rapid loss of over a stone in weight. This was the first indication of Starkie's diabetic condition, due perhaps in part to earlier lifestyle choices. The use of insulin as a treatment for diabetes was not introduced until 1922, more than a year after Starkie's death.

The drastic downturn in Starkie's fortunes did not go unnoticed among his peers. Perhaps to explain away his financial difficulties, he unburdened himself on more than one occasion, to acquaintances. A diary entry of his in December 1917 revealed the

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[47] Walter Starkie, *Scholars and gypsies, an autobiography* (London, 1963), p. 158. Walter Starkie (1894-1976) was educated at Shrewsbury School, Shropshire, and Trinity College Dublin. Linguist, musician and author, he lectured in TCD, Madrid and finally was Professor in residence in six Departments at the University of California; he authored multiple works on travel, biography and translation, and was decorated by the Spanish, Italian, French and British Governments.

[48] TCD, MS 9210d, 19 January 1917, diary entry.

[49] Enid Starkie, *A lady's child*, p. 256. Enid Starkie (1897-1970), educated Alexandra College Dublin, Oxford and the Sorbonne. Fellow Somerville College, Oxford; Lecturer then Reader in French; author of multiple works, mostly biographical of French poets.

following exchanges: 'Moore was surprised to hear I had only £1500 while Gill had £1800' and also '[Sullivan] always had as much money as he wanted: I said I never had.'[50] In any event, the word was out and Starkie soon learned that it was money and not just status that gave cohesion to the upper echelons of Edwardian Dublin society. Enid remembered her father lunched 'every Saturday of his life' with Laurence 'Larky' Waldron, his stockbroker friend, in his Killiney mansion.[51] Once a regular event, it became a rare occurrence. In his diary Starkie noted with regret, 'did not go to Killiney as I was not asked'.[52] On a subsequent occasion when he was invited, Waldron failed to offer him his customary lift home, choosing instead to drive another guest back to the city. Starkie commented waspishly to Waldron about the favoured guest: 'He is a much younger man than I, and a newer friend: have you become a Mr. Veneering?' Waldron drove Starkie to Blackrock station and dropped him, as he described 'like one of Rousseau's bastards.'[53]

John Pentland Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College, was another who fell from grace in Starkie's estimation. Once firm friends (he was godfather to Walter), both were classical scholars and renowned for their witticisms and epigrammatic quips. In the earlier years of Starkie's tenure at the National Board, Mahaffy was his regular guest at Sunday lunch.[54] In 1908, Mahaffy accompanied Starkie and Bonaparte Wyse on a tour of schools in counties Donegal and Antrim.[55] Perhaps it was as a result of Mahaffy's ill-founded claim that the 1916 Rising had its origins in the national schools that Starkie took a distinct dislike to him. In a diary entry he described Mahaffy as

> quick, witty, but not humorous – but shallow as a puddle – and vicious – one of the few men who have no soul that I've ever met – with the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master![56]

Or perhaps there was more than a hint of jealousy in his remark. Mahaffy was appointed Provost of Trinity College in November 1914. Some years later, reflecting on

[50] TCD, MS 9210d, 20 & 30 December 1917, diary entry. The Resident Commissioner's salary was fixed at £1,500 in 1874. Thomas P. Gill was head of DATI set up in 1900.
[51] Enid Starkie, op. cit., p.30.
[52] TCD, MS 9210d, 1 September 1917.
[53] Ibid., 15 December 1917, diary entry. Mr Veneering, a character from Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend*. Veneering and his wife were a *nouveau riche* couple whose main preoccupation was upward social mobility.
[54] Starkie, *Scholars and gypsies*, p. 15.
[55] Ibid., pp 59-60.
[56] TCD, MS 9210e, 9 March 1918, diary entry.

Mahaffy's selection, Starkie noted: 'No one outside [TCD] was so well fitted, nor inside, though my religion was against me.'[57] Mahaffy died in April 1919. Whatever about his ambitions in 1914, the downturn in Starkie's financial circumstances in the interim, gave him an added incentive to aspire to replace Mahaffy as provost. Apart from the prestige and emoluments which accompanied the post, the incumbent enjoyed the right to gracious living in the palatial Provost's House. Starkie mused in his diary about his prospects:

> There is no doubt that Catholics cannot look for preferment in Trin[ity]: no case could be stronger than mine – I am popular with them, I am not a priests' man, and I am known, in addition to being a scholar, an administrator and a fighting man.[58]

It was not to be. On 7 June 1919 he learned that John H. Bernard, the Archbishop of Dublin, was named as the next provost. It was fanciful of Starkie to hold ambitions of becoming provost. The first Catholic appointed to this post was Thomas Noel Mitchell in 1991.

In June 1920, Starkie's physician, William Boxwell, imparted the doleful news of his diabetic condition. He noted ruefully in his diary:

> I got a bad diagnosis from Dr. Boxwell today. He found quite a lot of sugar in my urine, diacetic acid…I am afraid it is all up with the 'commissioner'…Even still I am sanguine but I shall have a poor broken living: nothing but an invalid or worse. What about my family? Starvation and descent in the world.[59]

The following month Starkie visited Cushendun, Co. Antrim, on holidays. His son Walter described his father's distressed state of mind prior his departure:

> He began to worry about many things he had omitted to do. He went through his papers searching for this or that document he had been using at Board meetings. This entailed ringing various officials in the education office…I felt that all the time his brain was working at full pressure, trying to gather together all the scattered strands of his manifold activities and control them in a desperate endeavour to find peace of mind. Hence his haste to depart to Cushendun where he imagined he would find peace at last.[60]

[57] Ibid., 9210d, 11 January 1917.
[58] Ibid., 5 May 1919.
[59] Ibid., 20 June 1920.
[60] TCD, MS 9187, Walter Starkie Autobiography manuscript, pp. 31-2.

It was customary for Starkie to combine a portion of his summer holidays with school visits and he did so on this occasion also. His daughter Enid, who sometimes accompanied him, observed that while he insisted on the continuance of the practice, 'visibly the effort was too much for him…[and] he was often absent-minded and tired.'[61] It was after one such school visit on Thursday 15 July that Starkie's health deteriorated sharply. By Sunday he was in a coma and on Wednesday he passed away peacefully. He was 59 years of age. It could be said that Starkie, Resident Commissioner of National Education for over two decades, died engaged in what he loved best – the visitation of schools.

In the weeks and months following his death, numerous tributes and obituaries gave testimony to Starkie as an academic and educationalist. The *Irish Times* gave affirmation of his scholarship by describing him as 'the greatest editor of Aristophanes in the nineteenth century and it is hard to believe that the twentieth will produce a greater.' As an educationalist they praised him as 'a strong, bold and clear-sighted administrator' who introduced long-delayed reforms into the Irish national school system. This, they observed, came at a cost and 'for several years, Tyrone House, under Dr. Starkie, was a veritable storm-centre in the educational world.'[62] The *Freeman's Journal* noted that he devoted himself unsparingly to his public duties and that 'he made no attempt to gain any personal popularity…those who differed most strongly from him never hesitate to give him credit for his sincerity.'[63] At their Board meeting in Tyrone House on 27 July 1920, it was unanimously resolved:

> That we, the Commissioners of National Education desire to place on record our deep and sincere sorrow at the great loss we have sustained by the death of the Right Honourable W.J.M. Starkie, Litt.D., LL.D., who has been Resident Commissioner of National Education for over twenty one years. Occupying as he did a foremost place in the educational world, he brought his brilliant and wide scholarship, coupled with sound judgement, to bear upon the many difficult problems which arose during his long tenure in office, and he was responsible for introducing many important and far-reaching reforms into the system of national education. His transparent honesty of purpose, his boundless energy, and his many varied

[61] Starkie, *A lady's child*, p. 315.
[62] *IT*, 22 July 1920.
[63] *FJ*, 22 July 1920.

> gifts commanded our admiration and respect, and he leaves a vacant place among us which it will be impossible to fill.[64]

As a mark of respect and in recognition of his services to education and scholarship his colleagues and acquaintances donated a memorial to mark his grave in Glasnevin cemetery. It bears an inscription from Horace: '*justum et tenacem propositi virum*' translated as 'a man upright and firm of purpose.'[65]

Starkie's unexpected death added to the uncertainty that had come increasingly to characterise the environment in which education policy was formed in the second half of the 1910s. Despite widespread speculation, the administration showed little urgency in naming a successor. The suitability of Bonaparte Wyse was generally accepted. As Starkie's private secretary, he was foremost in the Board's dealings with the Irish Office in London and the Treasury. The quality of contributions at the recent Killanin Inquiry marked him out as having an in-depth knowledge of education matters. Be that as it may, there was no shortage of interest in the post. However, the post was never filled. From the government point of view, there was a possibility, although a very slim one, that the Education Bill of 1919 might become law. That eventuality would allow for the review and recasting of the role of Resident Commissioner. As events transpired, the administration of the National Board was delegated to a triumvirate from within its own ranks – namely its two secretaries, Andrew Bonaparte Wyse and William Dilworth, assisted by David Frizzell, the Head Office accountant.

An unusual proposal emanated from Sir John Ross when he wrote to Dublin Castle suggesting that Commissioners Holland and Parr be appointed as temporary assistant Resident Commissioners. Both were former teachers and he argued that this course of action would 'please and quiet[en] the National school teachers during this critical period'.[66] In response, the joint under-secretary Sir James MacMahon, rejected the proposal out of hand. He wrote:

> quite the contrary: the managers of schools would certainly resent the appointment of Messrs Holland & Parr – the staff of the National education Office would feel much hurt…There is no evidence to show that primary educational matters have

[64] *Mins. CNEI*, 27 July 1920
[65] Horace, *Odes Book 3*, the opening line.
[66] NAI, CSO RP 3120/21, Sir John Ross to the under-secretary.

> become chaotic, as Sir John Ross says, they are no more so now than they were in Dr. Starkie's lifetime anyhow.[67]

The suggestion that the National Board was 'in chaos' was one frequently used by Starkie's adversaries in his lifetime. Over the years there certainly were instances of disquiet and dissention, but certainly not chaos. Starkie did cleanse the 'Augean stable'. By the time of his death he had set in place a structure that could operate efficiently and independently in his absence. The emergence of Bonaparte Wyse and Dilworth, willing and confident in their leadership, was evidence of Starkie's capacity as an administrator who encouraged and promoted those with ability. During preparations for the ill-fated Education Bill, Chief Secretary Macpherson singled out Bonaparte Wyse's outstanding contribution. Starkie concurred, noting, 'What you say is very grateful [sic] to me as he is a discovery of mine. He certainly merits your commendation.'[68] Dilworth was another personally selected by Starkie. In 1903, despite nine inspectors applying for the post as Secretary, he picked William Dilworth, then principal of the male training college in Marlborough Street. Dilworth proved himself an able and resourceful official and his untimely death in 1923 deprived the new state of valuable administrative experience.

9.5 Administrative reform in Dublin Castle as the country descends into chaos

In post war Britain, there was a realisation of the need to modify and streamline the administration of government. There had been a visible lack of coordination and unnecessary overlapping of functions between government departments. The situation, Fanning observes, 'had revealed, above all, the need for a more homogeneous, centralised and efficient civil service.'[69] To this end, five separate committees chaired by Viscount Haldane, Sir Warren Fisher, Sir John Bradbury, John H. Whitley, and Sir Malcom Ramsay with George H. Stuart-Bunning reported between 1917 and 1919. The publication of these reports resulted in a complete reconfiguration of the administration of the Treasury and interdepartmental relationships. This reorganisation was applied to Ireland as well. When Sir Warren Fisher, the newly appointed permanent secretary to the Treasury, visited Dublin Castle in May 1920, he was dismayed at what he saw:

> [Dublin Castle] does not administer…The prevailing conception of the post of Under Secretary – appears to be that he is a

[67] Ibid. 26 April 1921, letter from MacMahon to Chief Secretary Greenwood.
[68] TCD, MS 9209, no. 412, 28 November 1919. Starkie to Macpherson.
[69] Ronan Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance 1922-58* (Dublin,1978), p. 7.

> routine clerk…The Chief Secretary…even though he has the position and emoluments of permanent head of the Irish Administration…is entirely unconcerned with the exploration or settlements of the problems which the Irish administration exists to solve.[70]

Fisher was even more damning, observing in a confidential memo:

> [The government of Ireland] strikes one as almost woodenly stupid and quite devoid of imagination. It listens solely to the ascendancy party…and it never seemed to think of the utility of keeping in close touch with opinions of any kind.[71]

Radical changes in personnel ensued, of which the most important were the appointment of Sir John Anderson as under-secretary and A.P. Waterfield, who headed the office in Dublin Castle, under the new title Treasury (Ireland). The sweeping reforms wrought by this duo, ensured that the incoming provisional government inherited an administrative entity of far greater efficiency than existed pre-1920. Fanning asserted:

> The British civil servants who ran the Castle from 1920 had not the same political axe to grind; they were neither Nationalist nor Unionist … [and that] was a factor of inestimable importance for the smooth transfer of administrative power under the provisional government.[72]

Another significant factor that facilitated the administrative change was the creation of a departmental Whitley Council in the Office of National Education. These councils derived their name from John H. Whitley, the former speaker of the House of Commons, who in 1916 chaired a government committee on relations between employers and employees. The report of this committee, giving due recognition to the status of workers, recommended that councils be set up in every industry, with equal representation from employees and their managers. The scheme was accepted and promoted by government with a view to fostering harmonious industrial relations. Initially civil servants and public servants were excluded from the process but soon it was extended to all.

A Whitley Council was established for the Board of National Education in October 1919. At its inaugural meeting, convened by Starkie, a constitution was drafted. The

[70] Ibid., p. 10.
[71] Ibid., p. 11.
[72] Ibid., p. 13.

council consisted of seventeen members – seven appointed from the official side and ten from the staff employees. The stated aim of the council was

> to secure the greatest measure of cooperation between the Administration, in its capacity as employer, and the general body of staff in matters affecting the Department with [a] view to increasing efficiency in the Department, combined with the well-being of those employed; to provide machinery for dealing with grievances and generally to bring together the experience and different points of view respecting conditions of service within the department.[73]

In the period from October 1919 to January 1922, the council met on eleven occasions. The records reveal that the subjects discussed ranged from staffing levels to improved working conditions and facilities. Of greater importance was the fact that the head office in Tyrone House was totally re-organised and that this was achieved with the joint participation of officials and staff.

The same council was central also to the arrangements to transfer personnel to Northern Ireland under the proposed Government of Ireland Act. On 22 April 1921, the Departmental Whitley Council agreed that a sub-committee be set up to arrange for the allocation of staff between the North and South. In December 1921, all government departments' employees were circularised to ascertain their views on potential transfers. The Whitley Council of the National Education office submitted the names of thirty staff members of various grades to transfer north. Similarly with the inspection staff – five senior inspectors and twelve district inspectors were selected. This was less problematic as all except one were already stationed there. Apart from the above, two senior administrative officials also decided to move north. These were the Board secretary Andrew Bonaparte Wyse and chief accountant David Frizzell. Bonaparte Wyse in particular was a huge loss to the Irish education administration in the South.[74]

The Government of Ireland Act received royal assent on 23 December 1920. In Northern Ireland, the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act were accepted and elections duly took place in May 1921. Its parliament was officially opened by George V on 22 June 1921, with James Craig appointed as prime minister. In the South, the act

[73] *Mins. CNEI*, 20 October 1919.
[74] Andrew Bonaparte Wyse (1870-1940) educated Downside School and University of London. Inspector of national schools and later secretary of CNEI. In 1922, transferred to Northern Ireland Ministry of Education, commuting weekly to Belfast from his home in Blackrock, Co. Dublin. In 1927 appointed Permanent Secretary, the only Roman Catholic at that grade until Patrick Shea in 1969.

was generally not accepted and ongoing hostilities against British rule continued unabated. The resultant strife greatly impinged on the daily lives of the populace and on the functioning of the educational system. The following extracts from the Minutes of the CNEI between 19 October 1920 and December 1921 are illustrative of its disruptive impact:

> 19 October 1920:
>
> Secretary reports a letter from Mr Weatherup, Inspector, stating he was removed by force from Magoney NS, Co. Monaghan while engaged in inspection. Handed an order from the IRA directing him to leave the county at once. Failure to obey this order would render him liable to be shot on sight.
>
> 2 November 1920:
>
> Case of Mr Cussen, inspector of Portarlington Circuit. Inspecting Stradbally Convent NS on 20 October was removed by six armed men and ordered to leave Queen's Co. at once 'as his methods were nor acceptable.'
> Resolved: Mr Cussen to be transferred to Cork and Mr O'Riordan from Omagh to Portarlington.
>
> 16 November 1920:
>
> Letter from Mr Cussen who considered his transfer to Cork 'would be very undesirable.'
>
> 14 December 1920:
>
> Kilclonfert NS, King's Co.: This school had been boycotted and no pupils have attended since 28 June 1920 both teachers are married to policemen who are residing in Tullamore RIC barracks, their homes having been wrecked. Fr Campion informed the Board's inspector if the husbands resigned from the police, the teachers would be allowed resume their duties. The manager said he was utterly powerless in the matter.
>
> 11 January 1921:
>
> Correspondence from Rev. J. Blaney…[C of I], Newtownhamilton, Co. Armagh enquiring whether national teachers are permitted to join the new forces of the Special Constabulary now being formed in Ireland and to attend the necessary drills.
> Ordered – That Rev. Mr Blaney be informed that the Commissioners consider that under Rule 88(a) it is not open to a teacher to join the Special Constabulary.

15 March 1921:

Furbough NS, Co. Galway: Principal teacher Michael Thornton absent due to raids on his residence by police. Also letter from Mr. John Dickie, Senior Inspector, Ballymena stating that on the 18th ult., while holding an inspection, he was accosted by armed men and that he would be murdered unless he left Co. Antrim immediately. Mr Dickie, as a result of a similar incident in Co. Tipperary, was transferred from Clonmel to Ballymena some time ago.

3 May 1921:

Barna BNS, Co. Galway: It was reported Mr Patrick Joyce was removed from his residence by armed and masked men. No information on his whereabouts. It is subsequently ascertained that Joyce was executed by the IRA as an alleged informer.

28 June 1921:

Ballyvoughan GNS, Co. Clare: School was closed from 22nd to 28th February, consequent to a raid by armed men who removed the key of the schoolhouse. The manager re-opened the school on 1st March, but the school was boycotted. Mrs Hoare, Principal, attended the school daily. She is the wife of a District Inspector, RIC.

26 July 1921:

Tarmon NS, Co. Roscommon: Board's inspector reported on an attempt by Military Authorities on 22 November 1920 to arrest Daniel O'Rourke, Principal. He avoided officers who had been sent to arrest him, was fired on and wounded. He is sought on the ground that he is Commandant of a battalion of the so-called IRA.

4 October 1921:

Mr. Parr moves 'that having regard to the abnormal conditions, owing to riot, prevailing [in] the district surrounding the Belfast Model and other schools, the Treasury be specially requested to consider the claims of the teachers of these schools against serious financial loss'.

18 October 1921:

Dunmanway Model NS, Co. Cork: Letter from Major P. de Havilland, Commanding Officer, Auxiliary Division RIC requesting permission for the use of a spare room in above school to enable cadets under his command to play badminton.
Ordered – that permission be not granted.

1 November 1921:

Letter from Minister of Education Northern Ireland,[75] with copy letter from Fr O'Neill, Conway Street NS, addressed to Colonel in Command, 15th Infantry Belfast: the above school, situated on the fringe of a Protestant area, has frequently had to be closed owing to the menacing attitude of the people towards the teachers and children and suggest that this school be handed over to Protestant management in exchange for the Belfast Model Schools, situated in a completely Catholic District. Also letter from Dr Joseph MacRory, Bishop of Down and Conor, making a formal application for the above.
Ordered: That the Law Officer be asked to advise whether there is any legal impediment to consider in the matter.

29 November 1921:

Communication from Manager of Conway Street NS reported the school was burned down on the morning of the 24th inst.

13 December 1921:

Case of National Teachers who were arrested, detained and interned by military authorities against whom no charge had been proffered. Question of sanctioning immediate payment of salary to the National Teachers who were released last week from internment camps by order of the Government,
Ordered: That the practice adopted in 1916, as well as most recently, as regards payment of salaries, be followed; that salaries be paid.[76]

In July 1921 a truce was declared. The ensuing negotiations resulted in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921. The Provisional Government assumed responsibility for the remaining twenty-six counties. The transfer of administration from British to Irish rule took place on 16 January 1922.

9.6 Last meeting of the Commissioners

The last meeting of the Board took place on 31 January 1922. Major Gerald Dease chaired the meeting and eleven other commissioners attended. At their previous meeting, a week earlier, it was recorded that Finian Lynch visited the Education Office on two occasions.[77] Considering that the Board had dismissed Lynch for his participation in the 1916 Rising, it was a matter of supreme irony that he was returning as Minister for Education in the new political dispensation. It was arranged that Mr

[75] Charles Vane-Temple-Stewart, 7th Marquess of Londonderry was appointed Minister of Education, Northern Ireland, on 7 June 1921.
[76] *Mins. CNEI*, 19 October 1920 to 13 December 1921.
[77] Various documents give Lynch's christian name as Finian/Fionan or the Irish version Fionán.

Lynch would 'place before the Board some aspects of the Provisional Government in regard to primary education and its administration.'[78] In the meantime it transpired that Lynch had appointed Pádraic Ó Brolcháin as a temporary Chief Executive Officer to attend as his representative.[79] The secretary read a letter from Lynch officially confirming this appointment. After a brief introduction, Ó Brolcháin read a statement on behalf of the Minister and the Provisional Government in which he stated his task was to take full control of and responsibility for primary education in Ireland. It was soon apparent that the new political dispensation did not envisage a continuance of the existing educational structures. Thus, after ninety years in existence the remit of the Board and of the Commissioners of National Education was terminated. Although they were thereby relieved of their duties, the Minister hoped he could in the future avail of the commissioners' long and varied experience:

> The members of the Board, being largely representative of what has hitherto been known as the minority, will be all the more useful to the Ministry in advising as to how far schemes of education…may fully commend themselves to the majority of the population.[80]

He continued that it was the intention of the new administration to strengthen the 'national fibre by giving the language, history, music and tradition of Ireland' pride of place in Irish schools. He further stressed:

> In the movement which has done so much for the national revival in Irish Education, representatives of the minority have been among the pioneers and the most strenuous workers and, every day brings fresh evidence that, in the great and many-sided work of re-building, which lies before us, no class will be able to claim a monopoly of patriotism.[81]

Next Ó Brolcháin reminded the commissioners that the Minister had already directed that immediate steps be taken to have Irish taught or used as a medium of instruction for at least an hour in schools where teachers had that competency. Owing to conditions that appertained in the past, many teachers and inspectors lacked a sufficient knowledge of the language. To remedy this situation, he promised on behalf of the government

[78] *Mins CNEI*, 24 January 1922.
[79]. Ibid., 31 January 1922. Pádraic Ó Brolcháin (Patrick Bradley) was secretary in the National Health Insurance Committee. At the above meeting, he stressed that his appointment to represent Lynch was both temporary and without salary.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

'that every effort will be made to make the path of duty as easy as possible.' He concluded by expressing the hope that, when he assumed his duties the following day, he would receive the cooperation of all the staff, which he would do all in his power to reciprocate.

In reply to a question from one of the commissioners, Ó Brolcháin expressed the hope that members of the Board would continue to act in an advisory capacity. After some discussion, the Board members decided:

> That in the absence of seven members of the Board who have not therefore had an opportunity of hearing the letter and statement which were read today, the consideration of the matter be postponed until this day next week 7th proximo at 4 p.m.[82]

Ó Brolcháin had no objection to this course of action. He did however inform the Board that it was the intention of the Provisional Government to publish the statement he had earlier communicated to the Board. At that point he left the meeting.

The minutes record the final issue considered by the commissioners. At their previous meeting the Board acceded to a request by the Theatre Royal Dublin that the commissioners allow national school pupils attend a cinema performance entitled 'With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia'. Permission was granted under Rule 128 to any manager who so desired to allow pupils to attend. At this juncture however, secretary Dilworth drew the commissioners' attention to a recently released press statement. It bluntly stated:

> The Minister of Education (Mr. Fionán Lynch) entirely disapproves of the action of the Commissioners in this matter, and has called upon them, immediately to withdraw the official sanction given to these proposed performances.[83]

The last recorded words of the Commissioners of the Board of National Education were 'No action – the Board adjourns.' The Board did not reconvene the following Tuesday. Its era had come to an end.

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

Conclusion

As the nineteenth century approached its conclusion, the national school system was firmly embedded in the social and physical landscape of Ireland. The educational memoirist and teacher T.J. McElligott characterised the phenomenon in inimitable fashion when he observed: 'Next to our pillar boxes, probably the most distinctive monument recalling English rule in Ireland, is the system of education.'[1] While the latter part of his claim may still not hold true, the substitution of the word 'education' by the phrase 'old national school buildings' has more currency. The original remit, famously defined by Lord Stanley in 1831, to provide for a school system that combined literary and moral education, with religious instruction provided separately, was forsaken over time by the refusal of the main religious denominations to adhere to its terms. As a result, by the end of the century 90 per cent of national schools were under sole denominational management. That notwithstanding, by this time the achievements of the Board of National Education were considerable – 796,163 pupils enrolled in over 8,670 schools, being taught by 13,074 teachers.[2] Added to that was a viable school inspectorate and six state-aided teacher training colleges. Presiding over this system was the Board of National Education whose twenty commissioners provided stable, if not necessarily inspirational leadership and who if not revered, were at least respected. More importantly, the boon of literacy and numeracy was imparted to even the remotest and most impoverished localities in the land. The census of 1901 showed that the male cohort aged between fifteen and twenty-four years had a 93.2 per cent literacy level with the female grouping reaching a more impressive 95.2 per cent.[3]

The manifest progress that had been registered notwithstanding, there was a growing realisation that the system was in need of fundamental reform to provide a more practical orientation to serve the country's developmental needs. The payment by results system, introduced in 1871, centred on the inculcation and examination of a narrow and rigid curriculum emphasising the three R's. Approaching the end of the

[1] T.J. McElligott, 'Some thoughts on our educational discontents, *University Review* 1:5 (1955) p. 27.
[2] Statistics for 1899. CNEI, Seventy-seventh report…for 1899, 1900[Cd 285] xxiii, p. 13 & 19.
[3] David Fitzpatrick, 'Knowledge, belief and the Irish Revolution: the impact of schooling' in James Kelly and Susan Hegarty (eds), *Schools and Schooling, 1650–2000: new perspectives on the history of education* (Dublin, 2017), p. 115.

nineteenth century, there was widespread scepticism regarding its suitability, especially the payment by results system, which had been discontinued in England and Scotland. Archbishop William Walsh and Professor George Fitzgerald of TCD, both education commissioners, were foremost but not alone in advocating the revision of the national school programme. This reformist intent found expression in the setting up of the Belmore Commission in 1897, which recommended the introduction of a suite of practical subjects such as drawing, science, physical education and handiwork as well as kindergartens for infants. Taken with the existing subjects, these elements were incorporated into a curricular entity known as the Revised Programme. This programme was an ambitious and progressive departure from the old system which had been marked by rote learning and inflexibility. Conceptually the old didactic mode of instruction was to be replaced by a more heuristic child-centred one.

The responsibility to implement the recommendations of the Belmore Commission fell to Dr W.J.M. Starkie, the newly appointed Resident Commissioner. Starkie, an academic and classicist, lacked any experience of the national school system. However, by sheer force of intellect and energy, and aided by Walsh and Fitzgerald, Starkie formulated a Revised Programme of instruction which was ready for implementation in 1901. Moreover, his reforming zeal was not just confined to a recalibration of the curriculum. Simultaneously, a new salary and promotion structure for teachers, combined with a reorganisation of the inspectorate and Board administration were put in place.

If Starkie anticipated that a benign Treasury would provide the fiscal resources that were required to facilitate his proposals, he was wide of the mark. The Treasury's message was terse – reform if you will, but it must come at no extra cost to the exchequer. It was this constraint more than any other which had the most far-reaching effects on the roll-out of the new arrangements. The Revised Programme was initially well-received by teachers who demonstrated their support for the new programme by their enthusiasm in its adoption and by their attendance at in-service courses. However, that well of goodwill was subject to increasing strain due to delays in improving the quality of schools and even more so by the problems arising from the new system of

school evaluation, which saw teachers' pay and promotion now firmly interconnected with inspectors' reports.

Although impressive in itself, the Belmore Commission Report which underpinned the rationale for such dramatic change, was not without flaws. In its drive to synthesise the best of curricular thinking and practice internationally, it gave insufficient consideration to the legion of serious infrastructural deficits prevalent in Irish education at the time, which included poor attendance, small schools, substandard buildings, untrained teachers and little local financial support. Despite casting its net widely to garner information, it failed in any meaningful way either to seek or to consider the advice of the Education Office, its inspectorate and the teachers. Accordingly, the people tasked with the implementation of the commission's findings, were neither properly consulted nor were they fully persuaded of its merits or advantages.

The British government, which had introduced a state-aided system of primary education in Ireland a full forty years before its introduction in England and which was now guided by a combination of fiscal and administrative imperatives, also viewed the educational landscape post-Belmore Commission, in a more nuanced light. The education system in the UK, rationalised in 1870s, combined primary, secondary and technical schools under one central authority, namely the Board of Education. More significantly, in their funding model, the cost of education was shared between the exchequer and local education committees – the latter receiving financial support from local rates. The logic of political Union demanded that the government set in train a congruent policy for Irish education.

With his reformative programme under way, Starkie availed of the occasion of an address to the British Association in Belfast in 1902 to engage publicly with the core issue of funding, which was, he conceived, the primary obstacle to his ability to advance his agenda of reform. At the core of his speech was criticism of the managers of national schools who were generally negligent in the upkeep of their schools, which he ascribed to a lack of local funding and local interest. The reaction was swift and vituperative. Local funding such as rates would inevitably dilute clerical influence in

school management. For religions of every hue, the control of schools and schooling was a moral imperative superseding all other educational concerns and outcomes. For the Catholic Church authorities in particular, the maintenance of control through the existing system of school management was paramount. Unmoved by these concerns, of which he was well aware, Starkie published the speech with *addenda*. Moreover, he had powerful backing as Chief Secretary Wyndham initiated a review of the system of Irish elementary education, which sought explicitly to compare it with that of England. In anticipation that this would pave the way for structural reform, F.H. Dale, a young English inspector, was appointed and generally in the company of Starkie, spent two months visiting schools. The results were damning.

Dale's report confirmed Starkie's analysis that the Irish school system was marked by too many small schools and that the system as a whole was generally ill-maintained and underfunded because of the absence of local involvement and local funding. It was the proliferation of small schools that brought Starkie and his commissioners into direct conflict with the Churches. For the Board the matter of funding school building, of which the multiplicity of small schools was a manifestation, was one of the prudent utilisation of educational resources. For the Treasury this was a financial imperative, but for teachers it raised concerns about their security of tenure. The Churches viewed it as an unwarranted intrusion on their managerial role, which the Catholic authorities in particular objected to on moral grounds. Starkie was fortunate that the vacancy created by the inconvenient, and histrionic resignation of Archbishop William Walsh in July 1901 had been filled by Bishop Patrick Foley of Kildare and Leighlin in January 1905. Over time Foley proved to be the key to easing this thorny problem by mediating changes to rule 127(b) which made it more acceptable to the Catholic hierarchy.

The fundamental issue of funding remained, however, and it acted as major brake on the advancement of the programme of reform that had been put in place. This is best exemplified by the five-year standoff over building grants between 1902 and 1907 when a combination of red tape, brinkmanship and procrastination on the part of the Treasury and officialdom seriously frustrated the Board's aspiration to improve and modernise its schools. The long-term effect of this episode was that school building stock remained

greatly inferior to what it should have been and not at all conducive to carry into effect the new Revised Programme. Moreover, controversy and tension were never far from the surface.

Although the Revised Programme had been generally well received and implemented, other issues such as teachers' remuneration and school inspection were ongoing causes for concern. Teachers' triennial pay increments and progress through the grades were conditional on consecutive satisfactory reports. Alleged inconsistencies in inspectors reports on schools in the Belfast area and in County Tipperary, led to a drastic marking down of teachers' evaluation which affected the income and promotional prospects of teachers in both parts of the country. In the resulting furore, Chief Secretary Birrell ordered an inquiry into the matter. As it transpired, the chairman of the inquiry Sir Samuel Dill, did not feel constrained by the inquiry's narrow remit to examine and report on the mode of school inspection. Instead, it evolved into an evaluation of the tenure of Resident Commissioner Starkie and his commissioners. The evidence presented at the inquiry provided an invaluable insight into the workings of the Board between 1899 and 1913. What emerged was the acceptance that the system of national education was in dire need of reform at the turn of the century, but that the changes introduced were without adequate, or in many cases no, consultation. Worse still was the new system of pay, increments and grades for teachers which even after a decade still rankled. There was much personalised criticism also of Starkie's leadership which was viewed as autocratic and aloof. Be that as it may, the Dill Inquiry marked the nadir of the relationship between the commissioners, teachers and inspectors, and it left an air of rancour that persisted for many years.

The efforts of successive chief secretaries and administration officials to bring about a restructuring of Irish education along English lines never bore fruit. Birrell's ill-fated Irish Council Bill, with its aspiration of devolution, contained within it a plan to merge the primary and secondary education boards into a single department. The bill made provision for the control of education by a ten-man assembly, the majority of whom would be locally elected. This was sufficient to engender episcopal opposition which considered the bill to be the thin edge of the wedge to dislodge the religious from school management. The major Protestant denominations did not regard the issue of school management and control with the same fixation. Of course, they wanted control of their

'own' schools – in the nineteenth century they too had engaged vigorously to undermine Stanley's vision of non-denominational schooling. However, if local education committees and rate-aid was part and parcel of their coreligionists in the rest of the UK, they also could live with it. If there was any diminution of Catholic clerical influence in the management of national schools, all the better.

The opening years of the twentieth century saw the Catholic Church assume a more assertive role in the protection of its interests in education. Up to the resignation of Archbishop Walsh, its approach was one of flexibility – the control of school management was paramount but there was a preparedness (exemplified by Walsh's support for curricular expansion in the 1890s) to take a lead in curricular reform. With Walsh's departure and Starkie's reformist agenda firmly in place, matters passed to less sophisticated hands. Preserving control became the default position.

In society in general, there was an awakening of nationalist sentiment bolstered by the cultural revival, initiated in the 1880s, which continued to assume an ever more exigent form. In part, this was exemplified by the Irish language revivalists, represented organisationally by the Gaelic League which campaigned vigorously for wider use of the Irish language in schools. Their aspirations were accommodated through gradual changes to the school programme. However, when radical nationalism made its play in 1916, public opinion, especially among nationalists soon shifted. Where aspirations for Home Rule were once sufficient, new imperatives demanded independence. The Conscription Crisis in 1918 found common purpose between the Catholic Church and nationalist ardency and forged a bond hitherto unprecedented. In educational matters what was formerly humbly petitioned was now demanded as a right.

In 1918 the administration made one final push for education reform when Chief Secretary Macpherson initiated two major investigations into education in Ireland – the Killanin Commission for primary education and the Molony Commission into the intermediate system. A synthesis of their findings resulted in an education bill in 1919. This bill ostensibly ticked all the boxes to deal with the problems facing Irish education – a single department responsible for the three strands of education, local education

committees and the provision for funding from rates. The Protestant Churches and the unionist-minded press, keenly aware of the way the political wind was blowing, were strongly in favour of the legislation. Not surprisingly, so too were the teachers, as they had been warned by government 'no bill, no money'. The Catholic hierarchy, however, took a different position, and bolstered by nationalist fervour expressed through local county and city councils, were strident in their opposition. At the best of times, it would have proven highly challenging to pass such a bill. Given the febrile atmosphere appertaining in the country it was an impossibility. The bill failed to reach even a second reading in parliament. Thus ended two decades of government intent to impose a model of education comparable to that appertaining to England.

With the ending of the War of Independence and the imposition of partition on the country, it fell to those best circumstanced to shape what ensued. In the North, unionists gained supremacy. For those in the South, advanced nationalists and the Catholic Church were best positioned to influence the future dispensation, and the outcome reflected their priorities. The National Board convened its final meeting in January 1922 where it was addressed by Pádraic Ó Brolcháin on behalf of the Provisional Government. From the outset, he outlined that the work of the schools was 'to strengthen the national fibre' and that as the Board could not, for ideological reasons, be entrusted with that task, it was to be abolished forthwith. The educational implication of this decision was not simply a transfer of responsibility. It meant also that Starkie's vision of placing the child at the centre of the education process was put to one side for fifty years – until 1971 when the New Curriculum was published. The imperative of nation building and the revival of the Irish language were effectively placed within a structure under denominational control, which was given precedence for a full half century, with all that that implied.

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APPENDIX 1

COMMISSIONERS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION 1900–1920*

Names	Dates
Right Hon. Lord Morris and Killanin	1868–1901
Edmund G. Dease, Esq., D.L.	1880–1904
J. Malcolm Inglis, Esq., J.P.	1887–1902
Sir Percy R. Grace, Bart., D.L.	1888–1903
James Morell, Esq.	1888–1905
George F. FitzGerald, Esq., F.T.C.D., F.R.S.	1888–1901
Sir Henry Bellingham, Bart., D.L.	1890–1920
Right Hon. Christopher Palles, Lord Chief Baron	1890–1915
Rev. Henry Evans, D.D.	1890–1920
Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, Bart., D.L.	1891–1909
His Honour Judge Shaw	1891–1910
Rev. Hamilton B. Wilson, D.D.	1892–1907
Most Rev. Wm. J. Walsh, D.D., Archbishop of Dublin	1895–1901
Stanley Harrington, Esq., J.P.	1895–1920
Wm. R. J. Molloy, Esq., J.P.	1895–1910
Edward Dowden, Esq., LL.D., D.C.L.	1896–1902
Rev. John Henry Bernard, D.D., F.T.C.D.	1897–1902
Right Rev. Marvyn Archdall, D.D., Bishop of Killaloe	1897–1911
William J.M. Starkie, Esq., M.A., Litt. D.	1899–1920
Right Hon. Mr. Justice Gibson	1899–1905
Anthony Traill, Esq., LL.D., M.D., S.F.T.C.D.	1901–1913
Right Hon. Lord Frederick FitzGerald	1902–1920
His Honour Judge Carton	1902–1907

Rev. David A. Taylor, M.A., D.D.	1902–1920
Right Hon. Lord Killanin	1904–1920
Most Rev. Pk. Foley, D.D., Bishop Kildare/Leighlin	1905–1922
Edward John Gwynn, Esq., M.A., F.T.C.D.	1905–1915
Gerald Dease, Esq., D.L.	1905–1920
Right Hon. Mr. Justice Ross	1905–1920
Richard Bagwell, Esq., M.A., D.L.	1905–1918
Lieutenant-General Sir William F. Butler, G.C.B.	1907–1910
Rev. John C. Clarke, D.D.	1908–1917
Laurence Ambrose Waldron, Esq., M.P.	1909–1920
David M. Moriarty, Esq.	1910–1920
John A. McClelland, Esq., M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.	1910–1919
Philip Ward, Esq.	1910–1917
Right Rev. Maurice Day, D.D., Bishop of Clogher	1911–1920
Rev. Robert Miller, M.A,	1913–1920
Robert Donovan, Esq., B.A.	1915–1920
William E. Thrift, Esq., M.A., F.T.C.D.	1915–1920
Denis Holland, Esq., J.P.	1917–1920
William Parr, Esq.	1919–1920

*Last CNEI Report was in 1920. Last Board meeting February1922.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF WITNESSES AT THE DILL COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY 1913

Day of Enquiry	Date	Name	Occupation/Status
1st. Day	13 February 1913	Mr W.J. Dilworth, M.A	Secretary, Board of National Education Ireland
2nd. Day	14 February 1913	Mr W.J. Dilworth, M.A	Secretary, Board of National Education Ireland
3rd. Day	26 February 1913	Mr W.J. Dilworth, M.A	Secretary, Board of National Education Ireland
4th. Day	27 February 1913	Mr John McNeill	Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
5h. Day	28 February 1913	Mr John McNeill Mr A.N. Bonaparte Wyse, M.A.	Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland Private Secretary to Resident Commissioner
6th. Day	11 March 1913	Mr A.N. Bonaparte Wyse, M.A Mr T.P. O'Connor, B.A.	Private Secretary to Resident Commissioner Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
7th. Day	12 March 1913	Mr Walter J. Purcell	Examiner, Board of National Education Ireland
8th. Day	13 March 1913	Mr Alfred Purser	Late Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
9th. Day	14 March 1913	Mr Alfred Purser	Late Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
10th. Day	1 April 1913	Mr Edmond Downing	Late Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland

11th. Day	2 April 1913	Mr Edmond Downing	Late Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
12th. Day	3 April 1913	The Ven. Lewis Pooler, D.D. The Very Rev. Charles Grierson, B.D. The Rev. T.M. Benson, M.A.	Archdeacon of Down, C of I Dean of Belfast, C of I Chancellor of Conor, C of I
13th. Day	4 April 1913	The Rev. Maurice H.F. Collis The Rev. Alfred S. Woodward, M.A.	Vicar of Antrim, C of I Rector of St. Mark's, Antrim, C of I
14th. Day	15 April 1913	Mr James J. Hynes, M.A.	Late Chief Inspector, Board of National Education Ireland
15th. Day	17 April 1913	The Rev. J. Bingham, D.D. The Rev. D. Cummins, M.A.	Rep. Ed. Committee General Assembly Presbyterian Church Rep. Ed. Committee General Assembly Presbyterian Church
16th. Day	18 April 1913	The Rev. D. MacLaughlin, Ph.D. Mr T.P. Gill Mr Francis Miller	Minister of Drummins, Co. Armagh Secretary DATI Principal of Tobermore NS, Co. Derry
17th. Day	29 April 1913	The Rev. Gilbert Mahaffy, M.A.	Canon, Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin
18th. Day	30 April 1913	The Rev. J. Courtenay Clarke, D.D.	Commissioner of National Education Ireland
19th. Day	1 May 1913	Mr Philip Ward	Commissioner of National Education Ireland
20th. Day	20 May 1913	Mr F.C. Forth	Director Technical Instruction, Belfast
21st. Day	21 May 1913	The Rev. J.W. Tristram, D.D.	Rep. Bd of Ed. General Synod C of I
22nd. Day	22 May 1913	Mr F.H. Dale	H.M. Chief Inspector of Elementary Schools, England

23rd. Day	23 May 1913	Mr P.E. Lemass	Secretary Board of National Education Ireland
24th. Day	28 May 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
25th. Day	29 May 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
26th. Day	30 May 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
27th. Day	17 June 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
28th. Day	18 June 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
29th. Day	19 June 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
30th. Day	20 June 1913	Dr W.J.M. Starkie,	Resident Commissioner National Education Ireland
31st. Day	24 June 1913	Mr David Frizzell Rev. E.W. Hobson	Accountant to the Board of National Education Ireland Rector of Portadown
32nd. Day	25 June 1913	Mr P.E. Lemass	Secretary Board of National Education Ireland
33rd. Day	26 June 1913	The Very Rev. Isaac Coulter, D.D. The Rev. E.D. Crowe, M.A. Mr C.H. Todd	Dean of Kilmore, Diocesan Assoc. School Managers C of I Rector of Cavan, Diocesan Assoc. School Managers C of I Principal Ballymacarrett Road NS, Belfast
34th. Day	27 June 1913	Mr C.H. Todd Mr C.W. Boyd	Principal Ballymacarrett Road NS, Belfast Principal Ravenscroft NS, Belfast
35th. Day	15 July 1913	Mr J.L. Robertson, LL.D.	H.M Chief Schools Inspector Scotland

36th. Day	16 July 1913	Mr T.R. McCluggage, B.A.	Principal Hilden NS, Lisburn
		Mr J.E. Larmour	Principal St. James's NS, Belfast
37th. Day	17 July 1913	Mr David Elliott, B.A.	Treasurer INTO
38th. Day	18 July 1913	Mr H.E. Carter, B.A.	Principal Ormeau Road NS, Belfast
		Mr T. Cahill	Principal Tyconnaught NS, Co. Down
		Mr J. Smyth, B.A., B.Sc.	Principal Nicholson Memorial NS, Lisburn
39th. Day	22 July 1913	Mr T. Jamison, B.A.	Principal Madrid St. NS, Belfast
		Mr W. Anderson	Principal Dunover NS., Co. Down
40th. Day	23 July 1913	Mr J.A. Gregg	Principal Sydenham NS, Belfast
		Mr E. Crowe	Principal Lowtown Boys' NS, Co. Limerick
		Mr M. O'Gorman, B.A.	Principal Killenaule NS, Co. Tipperary
41st. Day	24 July 1913	Mr M. O'Mahony	Principal Mohober NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr P. Owens, B.A.	Late Principal Roscrea NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr P.J. Fogarty	Principal Gortnagowna NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr E. Guiry	Principal Rathgormack NS, Co. Waterford
42nd. Day	25 July 1913	Miss M.A. Sweeney	Principal Mardyke NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr M. O'Donnell	Asst. Teacher, Boys' Monard NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr M. O'Grady	Principal Templenoe NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr M. O'Flanagan	Principal Killenaive NS, Co. Tipperary

43rd. Day	29 July 1913	Mr T. Keegan	Principal Rosegreen NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr J.R. Nash	Principal Templetouhy NS. Co. Tipperary & CEC INTO
		Mr R. Quinn	Principal Retheming NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr P. Barry	Principal Slieveardagh, NS, Co. Tipperary.
		Mr P. Leahy	Principal Glenbane NS, Co. Tipperary
44th. Day	30 July 1913	Mr D.C. Maher, B.A.	Principal Ardmoyle NS, Co. Tipperary
		Mr G. O'Callaghan	Principal Mahoonagh NS, Co. Limerick
		Mr G. Ramsay	Principal Oldtown NS, Co. Tyrone & CEC INTO
		Mr M. Landers	Principal Blessington NS, Co. Wicklow
45th. Day	2 September 1913	Mr E. Mansfield	Secretary INTO, Late Principal Cullen NS, Co. Tipperary
46th. Day	3 September 1913	Mr E. Mansfield	Secretary INTO, Late Principal Cullen NS, Co. Tipperary
47th. Day	4 September 1913	Mr C. MacSweeney	Principal Aughrim NS & CEC INTO
48th. Day	5 September 1913	Major G. Dease, D.L.	Commissioner National Education Ireland
49th. Day	9 September 1913	Miss Catherine Mahon	President INTO & School Principal
50th. Day	10 September 1913	Miss Catherine Mahon	President INTO & School Principal
51st. Day	16 September 1913	Miss Catherine Mahon	President INTO & School Principal
52nd. Day	17 September 1913	Miss Catherine Mahon	President INTO & School Principal
		Mr E. Mansfield	Secretary INTO, Late Principal Cullen NS, Co. Tipperary.

Source: Appendix to Second report Dill, pp ii-iii and Appendix Third report Dill, pp ii-iv.