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EDUCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The liberation of Guernsey on May 9th, 1945, brought to a close the difficulties of the Occupation, but in the first radiance of joy and relief which spread through the Island could be discerned the shadows of problems yet to come.

The Education Council was faced with the task of getting the evacuated schools back to the Island and setting them going again in their own premises. This alone was going to be a tremendous problem : but the Council soon realised that much had happened since 1940, and that to re-establish the system of public instruction that Guernsey had known in pre-war days would not be sufficient. Guernsey had five years' lee-way to make up.

The Occupation Schools were retained in being until the summer vacation. But a new spirit was evident for the Council was concerned with getting the evacuated schools home again and took less and less interest in the schools that were in the Island. The service of many of the temporary teachers was coming to a close, and the Education Secretary visited these teachers to thank them for what they had done. Protests about the financial treatment they had received secured for them a modest bonus. But the teachers who had been on the permanent staff before the evacuation received no thanks : instead, they received the following circular letter :-

24th July, 1945.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am directed to inform every teacher employed in a Primary School that all teaching posts in those schools will be declared vacant as from the 1st September. As the situation becomes clearer, appointments for next term will be made but priority will be given to those teachers who escorted the children to England in 1940. There is no guarantee that any particular teacher will be re-appointed to the School in which he or she formerly worked.

Yours faithfully,

A. Winterflood

Secretary.

A month later these teachers were amazed to find that they had been dismissed in the following curt terms :-

28th August, 1945

Dear Sir,

Teaching staffs for the elementary schools for next term were appointed yesterday. The principle that priority be given to those teachers who evacuated with the children in 1940 was adhered to with the result, I regret to have to say, that the appointing Committees were unable to offer you a post. They are still somewhat in the dark as regards the number of children

who will ultimately return to the Island but consider their staffing arrangements quite adequate and the most that you can hope for, I am afraid, is that the numbers will ultimately exceed the estimates.

Yours faithfully,

A. Winterflood,

Secretary.

Protests had been raised after the receipt of the first of the two letters against the illegality of the procedure adopted, which was not in accordance with the Education Law of 1935, but were dismissed with assurances that the notice of dismissal was a mere formality. The second letter stung the teachers into collective action. Teachers who had been on the staff of the Intermediate School before the war were not being dismissed, but those from Guernsey's Parish Schools, some of whom had given well over twenty years' service, were apparently to be cast aside in this curt fashion. They resented it and in a protest to the Council refused to consider themselves no longer in service. They pointed out that dismissal at such a time, in such a fashion, was bound to prejudice their chances of future employment, since the obvious inference would be that they had been guilty of unsatisfactory conduct towards the Germans, and they expressed some amazement that the Council should have effected such a volte face in its policy towards them.

By the time the schools were ready to open for the new term, the dismissed teachers had been re-instated, without break in their service; for early in September the Council made a "final review" of staffing arrangements and discovered that earlier calculations had been wrong. Exactly how wrong they had been was not yet fully known.

This sordid business of dismissal of good and faithful servants, who had borne the burden and heat of the day on very reduced salaries, was a bad beginning to Guernsey's post-war educational planning. At a time when England was crying out for 70,000 additional teachers, despite the fact that Guernsey was still paying its teachers at the pre-war rate of Burnham Scale II, and oblivious of the fact that securing enough competent teachers has been a problem which has dogged Guernsey's footsteps for at least the last quarter of a century, the Education Council thought it could afford to discharge what it mistakenly considered to be redundant staff. A few excellent teachers, including a graduate who had been brought in from Jersey, were permanently lost to the Island and the Council could have had only itself to blame if the schools had been found to be short of teachers. In fact, within a few days of the re-opening of the schools, the Council was advertising for teachers and urgently appealing, often in vain, for temporary teachers of occupation days to return to duty. Uncertificated and even totally unqualified persons were recalled to fill the gaps. This is presumably what is meant by the expression "muddling through";

With no idea of the number of children who would return, but apprehensive that fewer would come back than had left, the Council allowed itself to be guided by figures put forward by the Insurance Authority, -figures later admitted to have been "a guess". No encouragement was offered to teachers to return from evacuation, so frightened was the Council that while England might be short of a large number of teachers, Guernsey might have too many. The meeting at which the staffing of the post-war schools was first arranged, was held immediately after a meeting of the States, when the Island's £7,000,000 Occupation Debt was announced, and still overwhelmed by that figure, the members of the Council turned to consider the staffing of the schools. They had before them the number of children who were returning to the Island in school parties and they knew the guesswork of the Insurance Authority. Admitting that they were "still somewhat in the dark as regards the number of children who will ultimately return to the Island", they made staffing arrangements which they considered "quite adequate". In September, a "final review" was made, -evidently the Council expected that families who had been uprooted so suddenly in 1940 would return with the same haste. But as autumn drew on, each week saw the return of literally hundreds more children and conditions in the quite adequately (?) staffed schools became fantastic. The Insurance Authority has given some idea of the intensity of the darkness in which official departments concerned were working. In the Billet d'Etat dated July 10th, 1946, the Insurance Authority quoted from a report that it had drawn up the previous October: "When all evacuees have returned to the Island, the number of children of age 14 and under will number 5690". Continuing, the Authority explains

"Nothing could be ascertained of the exact number of returning children, especially those under school age. The estimate was a guess; the number of children in the Island was doubled. It was considered that a higher number of children than 2,800 could not be expected to return. The recent census reveals however, that instead of 2,800 expected, more than 5,200 returned so that the total now in the Island of age 14 and under is 8096. No satisfactory explanation can be given; the position is inexplicable".

It would indeed be no mean feat to explain away this huge discrepancy, which has since become greater still as evacuees continue to drift back to the Island. And yet this guesswork was accepted by the Education Council, who, frightened by the debt, endeavoured to solve the imaginary problems that it conjured up by callously dismissing the Occupation Teachers.

From this inauspicious beginning, the Education Council moved on to consider financial problems. To an Island accustomed to an annual expenditure of less than nine pounds per head for children in elementary schools, the New Burnham Scale came as a shock, and the Council, whose functions under the Guernsey Education Law include the determining of teachers' salaries timidly brought the matter before the States. The States referred the question to a small committee who reported some months later, early in 1946, that it was not a question of whether Guernsey could

afford to pay the salaries but whether Guernsey could afford NOT to pay them. Accordingly the New Burnham Scale was accepted, though there is reason to believe that the influence of the Ministry of Education was of paramount importance, as the English Pension Act has been made applicable to the Island and the Ministry expressed its unwillingness to pay a pension based on "a fictitious salary", as Guernsey evidently wished them to. About the same time, a States decision to restore the cuts made in salaries during the Occupation resulted in substantial payments to occupation teachers, amounting to some hundreds of pounds in one or two cases.

The attempt to economise by dismissing those few teachers appears in a very poor light now that the New Scale is in operation and the Education Budget has soared by about 100 % to the neighbourhood of £100,000. Guernsey must accustom itself to the fact that the value, let us say even the price, of children has increased. The horticultural industry on which Island prosperity is based is thriving : Guernsey can pay these increased costs without difficulty.

Guernsey cannot afford to drop out of the march of civilisation. Many of the Island's most gifted sons are obliged to seek wider opportunities elsewhere, and local statesmen are conscious of the ever-present threat that the labouring classes too, can easily escape across the Channel into more congenial surroundings, if conditions in Guernsey are allowed to become manifestly inferior. The Island's system of public instruction must inevitably be organised and administered on some basis comparable to what obtains in England, and that basis can only be the Butler Act of 1944. The peculiar temperament of Guernsey men, however, gives rise to a reluctance to make reforms. The Island is well satisfied with its schools, and if it felt that it dared, it would not greatly change them. The Guernsey Evening Press gave expression to a widely held opinion in a leading article of May 17th, 1946 :

"At a meeting of experts in education held in London just before the passing of the Education Act of 1944, it was unanimously considered that the education system in operation in Guernsey was in advance of that in England.

It was shown that while the Guernsey system was both wider and more comprehensive, it remained a complete whole. And it was further shown that the number of passes and successes obtained by Guernsey pupils was far in excess of the English average.

In this editorial column recently, the Education Act of 1944 has been examined at some length as it applies to the Motherland, without suggesting that the scheme can be applied in any advantageous way to supersede the Island's own system. There are many reasons why those who have the true interests at heart of Guernsey scholars of today and tomorrow should hesitate before adopting the ironed-out system designed for the masses in a country with a population of some 40,000,000 people. In the first place, the lure of "free education for all" does not attract. Islanders have a great respect for the education ladder already provided.....

Guernsey schools are turning out boys and girls whose standard of scholarship exceeds that of English schools....."

This self-satisfied attitude is strange in an Island without literature or art and whose most famous "son" was the Frenchman Victor Hugo. It hardly needs to be said that despite the opinions of these mysterious "experts in education", the education system of Guernsey is actually neither as wide nor as comprehensive as that of England. In so many branches, -nursery schools, technical schools, schools for retarded children, further education, and the rest, - as well as in the poor ancillary services, the Guernsey system is without doubt very much below English standards : and to claim that Guernsey schools achieve a higher standard of scholarship than English schools achieve is merely ridiculous. One consideration only is needed to show that Guernsey schools are not without serious fault : almost without a single exception the teachers of Guernsey have for years preferred to send their own children to private schools or as fee-payers to the Colleges and the Intermediate Schools, and have avoided the elementary schools where 90 % of Island children are educated.

The reluctance to see reforms in Guernsey's schools is felt also by the teachers. For five years, these teachers for the most part have been in exile in England : for five years they have looked back to the "Dear Old Guernsey" that they had left behind.

They wish to see again the Guernsey that they once knew, and now that they have returned some of them feel that England has but little contribution to make to Guernsey's serene progress. It is no wonder that Mr. Chuter Ede has told Islanders that "Guernsey is marching backwards into the future".

The Education Council has accepted the English Act of 1944 as the basis of the system which must be constructed in the Island and is already attempting to implement that Act to some limited extent. But some members of the Council are labouring under particularly acute disadvantages, for most of them were in the Island during the Occupation and have learned only since the Liberation of developments in England. The parliamentary debates on the Act and the wide discussions were not reported in Guernsey. The Council did not witness the formative stages of the Act, and in trying to understand the implications of its many clauses, some members of the Council have not yet succeeded in making themselves au fait with the new terminology. It was distressing to read that three members of the Council, including the President, recently put their signatures to a petition to the States asking for the suspension of the newly-passed War Profits Levy, which stated

"Only a few months had elapsed since the Liberation when the matter first came before the States. The membership of the States was then at a very low ebb and the people generally had not got over the effects of the Occupation. The result was that the effect of the recommendations was not fully appreciated. Later, when the law came before the States for consideration, it was so long and complicated that it was impossible for the ordinary layman to understand it. It is probably unfortunate that the Crown officers did not explain it to the members in simple language."

Members of the States are not "ordinary laymen" : they are

legislators. If they admit that they cannot understand a relatively simple local law of 57 Articles (Sections) and 2 Schedules, it is at least probable that the full implications of the much more complicated English Education Act, with its 122 Sections and 9 Schedules, will escape them.

When it is remembered that the Island suffered five years' enemy occupation, during which almost all school buildings were damaged and much school equipment lost, and that the number of children in the Island at the end of the war has since been trebled, it seems advisable that reforms should not be hurried. The Education Council, however, has seen fit to adopt a policy of immediate action, which, in the present state of the education law can only be patchwork. In many parishes of the Island the old-fashioned buildings prevent a re-organisation of schools on the Butler Plan, but wherever buildings have permitted, parish schools have already been remodelled into Primary or Secondary (Modern) Schools, and now draw their pupils from more than one parish. There has been no public discussion of these or of other impending changes, nor has the matter been mentioned in the States. The general public is quite unaware of what is afoot and the Council is trying clandestinely, almost furtively, to implement the English Act of 1944 within the framework of the Education (Guernsey) Law of 1935. Breaks with the past are never made easily in Guernsey.

Without passing fresh legislation and without raising the school leaving age, Guernsey may attempt by patch and daub to re-furbish its out-moded system, renaming its legally "Elementary Schools" more impressively as "Secondary (Modern)". It may retain its system of Parish Education Committees for schools which are no longer on a parochial basis. It may even limit Island education to the Primary and Secondary stages, ignoring the rest. For reform of any consequence must begin with the arrangements for educating children at the post-primary stage, and the vigour with which such reform is carried out will be the measure of the sincerity with which the Council really desires a change. Failure here will make all other reform a sham, a mere palliative : plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

The system that the Council envisages has a secondary stage embracing Grammar, Technical and Modern Schools. Certain of the Parish Schools are to be Modern Schools and some have already been set working as such. The Boys' and Girls' Intermediate Schools are to be the technical branch and the two Colleges are to become Grammar Schools. The Intermediate Schools are giving up their Kindergarten and Preparatory Departments and eventually will take children only from the age of 11 + . All fees will be abolished and entrance will be by examination. Provided that selection of children for the Intermediate (Technical) Schools can be placed on a satisfactory footing other than by competitive examination, the technical side of secondary education might be satisfactorily arranged : particularly now that the Intermediate Schools are administered by the same committee of

the Council as are the Modern Schools. The Colleges, however, are continuing to accept fee-paying children at a very early age and there is no apparent intention ever to dispense with fees. Apart from a small number of children gaining admission by scholarships awarded on the results of a competitive examination, the qualification for entrance to the Colleges (which are to become the Island's only Grammar Schools) is merely ability to pay the very considerable fees. A fee-paying scholar, irrespective of the fact that he might not be fitted for education in a Grammar School and might possibly be occupying a place which would be better filled by a poorer child, is the recipient of a substantial subsidy from public funds, as the following tables for 1939 (the latest available figures) show :

Cost per head to the States of pupils in schools receiving States grant, based on numbers on registers

	£	s.	d.
Elizabeth College	16	11	11
Ladies' College	7	11	11
Intermediate Boys	13	15	0
Intermediate Girls	6	2	5
Elementary Schools	8	18	6

When the cost of scholarships and bursaries are included the figures are increased to

	£	s.	d.
Elizabeth College	23	13	8
Ladies' College	11	14	1
Intermediate Boys	16	1	8
Intermediate Girls	7	14	11

Here is the crux of Guernsey's reconstruction problems. The Island must come to regard all three branches of secondary education as of equal value, and if discrepancies cannot be otherwise eliminated, all three must come under the direct control of the Council. Entrance to all three types of school, Grammar Technical and Modern, must be by the same qualification to rich and poor alike, for civilisation no longer countenances the use of financial affluence for the purchase of special privileges. Guernsey cannot take its place in the modern world if it is to continue to spend twice the amount on the sons of its well-to-do citizens than it spends on children in humbler circumstances, and to rate its girls as worth just half the value of the boys. Guernsey must base its educational reconstruction on Roosevelt's historic declaration : "There must be no place after the war for special privileges, for either individuals or nations".

In the field of Ancillary Services the Education Council must in future take a much wider view of its responsibilities : for with the exception of Medical Inspection such services are almost non-existent. Free medical treatment is given only after a Means Test and there is no School Dental Service. School meals are not served and even the milk-in-schools scheme has been allowed to lapse. The re-organisation of schools means that very many children are now required to travel long distances to school and to remain there for the mid-day meal so that the provision of school meals is now an urgent necessity. The Council

however, is apparently quite satisfied, as in Occupation days, to see private individuals attempt to organise such a service. The milk position is admittedly difficult in Guernsey at present, but failure to provide milk in schools cannot lightly be excused, particularly when lack of bottling-machinery is given as the reason. Hundreds of children are away from home for a full day with only water from the tap to drink, though recently some schools have been encouraged by the Council to serve Horlick's Milk at 2d per third of a pint. When it is considered that parents of children attending re-organised schools are as likely as not paying 1s 8d per child per week on transport (the school bus tickets cost 2d and free transport has been refused), as well as 10d per week for this mid-day drink, there can be no doubt that implementation of the English Act in Guernsey will have to go very much further if it is not to prove a burden to the very people it is designed to assist. The difficulties are great; for stubborn as is the opposition to all reform in Guernsey, the resistance to actual initiation of any new conception is even more determined.

In all its considerations of educational reform, the Council is seriously handicapped by lack of expert advice. Members cannot be expected to be experts in the theory and practice of education and need to rely on the expert professional advice of a Director of Education. Section 88 of the English Act recognises the importance of having a suitably qualified Chief Education Officer, without whose assistance any L.E.A. might become a pilotless ship merely drifting on before the pressure of events. The person occupying the equivalent position in Guernsey is a man of many excellent qualities who has made himself familiar with the business of educational administration. He is, however, a Civil Servant whose training and qualifications have been confined to clerical matters and he was appointed merely as Secretary of the Education Council. The Council has been well served by its Secretary; but he is not able to carry out the duties of a Chief Education Officer. When he retires Guernsey must appoint as his successor a person with very different qualifications but there is good reason to believe that this fact has not yet been appreciated in official circles. In 1946 the first Assistant in the Education Office was promoted to another Department and efforts were made to fill his position by appointing a teacher from the schools. This seemed a good augury; but it soon transpired that a teacher was sought simply because the Civil Service could not at that time spare a suitable person for this post. No inducement was given to any teacher to take up administrative work and any teacher appointed would have suffered financial loss and continuity of service by being treated as a Civil Servant. The post has now been filled; and Guernsey still has not a single member of its administrative staff who has any professional qualifications. Here was an opportunity for the Island to take a step forward but petty considerations prevented clarity of vision and the opportunity was lost. When the position

of Secretary eventually falls vacant,if Guernsey decides to keep the appointment within the Civil Service,remunerated on the Civil Service Salary Scale,and open to persons with merely routine clerical qualifications,the Island will have given an unambiguous demonstration of its inability to see vital issues clearly and of its satisfaction with less than the best.