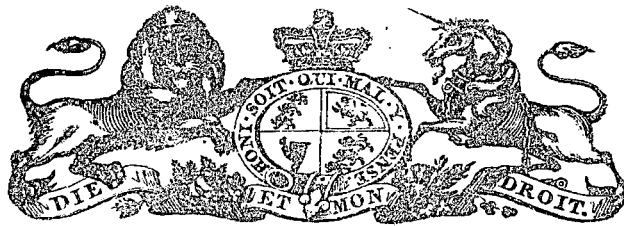


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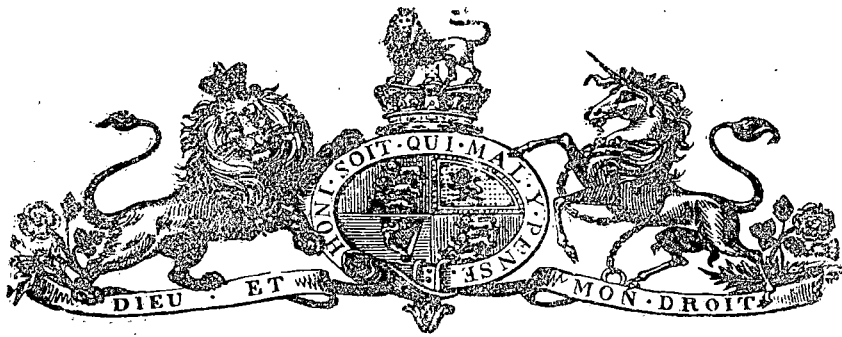
T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

P U B L I C E D U C A T I O N.

MEMORANDUM TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FROM
MR. RULE, MARCH 10, 1875.

Laid upon the Table by the Attorney-General, and ordered by the House to be
printed, August 25, 1875.



THE enclosed memoranda are respectfully submitted to the Board of Education, in order that the Board, in the event of their contemplating any radical change in our system of Public Education, may have before them the opinions held by the writer, and the majority of other practical teachers whom he has consulted, on questions coming peculiarly within their observation.

J. RULE.
10th March, 1875.

SCHOOL PREMISES, &c.

1. It is a great defect in our system of Education that the initiative in all matters of building, furnishing, and repairing Schools depends on private voluntary effort and contribution of funds.

2. The fact of many schools continuing for years in bad repair and ill furnished, and populous districts remaining without school accommodation at all, from no fault either of the Board of Education or of school boards, but simply because the latter have no funds at their command, is so well known; and there are so many instances of this being a hindrance to the work of public education, that no further proof is needed to show that, for the purposes above mentioned, school boards ought to have at their disposal the funds derived from local school rates, which for several reasons it will be found necessary to levy in the various school districts.

FREE SCHOOLS.

There are several reasons to show why the present system of providing education for poor children, by means of free certificates, ragged schools, &c. should be abolished, and the Public Schools thrown open to rich and poor alike without fee.

1. The present system has a pauperising effect, as most chairmen of school boards and head teachers can testify: many workmen receiving good wages are not ashamed to plead poverty for the purpose of getting a free education for their children.

2. In not a few cases inability to pay fees makes parents, with excusable unwillingness to parade their poverty, keep their children from school, in spite of the compulsory law.

3. Country teachers find fees a very poor source of income. The good effect their teaching might have on the character of children is sadly interfered with, when they have to wrangle with the parents over every sixpence they receive from them. In collecting his weekly fees a teacher meets the most miserable excuses and shifts to avoid payment; and unprincipled people soon discover, that persistency in these shifts enables them to go scot free. The Board's annual reports show the natural result of this state of things. A clause in the Public Schools Act empowers a teacher to 'recover' arrears of fees by a summary process; but it requires very little knowledge of the world to enable a teacher to see the futility in his case of such a course. Besides, it is obvious that his power for good is hopelessly gone, when the minds of the parents are embittered against him personally. A public teacher obliged to collect fees from the poor as a part of his living is placed in a false position.

4. The chief arguments brought against a general system of free schools are:—

1st. "They do injustice to private teachers."

2nd. "They tend to pauperise a community."

3rd. "It is unjust to make those who do not use the public schools pay for those who do."

5. With regard to the first argument, it is plain that whatever force it may have, it applies more strongly to the present system; indeed parents are more likely to prefer private schools for their children, when the public schools are quite free: for a small fee is only nominal payment for a rich man, but it nevertheless tends to sift out the less respectable of the poor into the 'Ragged' schools and other free institutions, thereby lessening his objection to send his children to the public schools.

6. The argument that a completely free system would be more pauperising than the schools are at present, is ill considered. If those who make it mean to say that an independent spirit is encouraged

among the poor by their being made to pay fees, they must also mean that the fees paid are an adequate return for the benefits received; which is manifestly a delusion, but one into which ignorant people are easily led. If State assistance in the education of the people acts injuriously on their independence of character, it is far more likely to do so under a partial system, where a man is tempted to escape, by false representations or by dogged refusal to pay, the small prescribed fee: which, if he does pay it, by no means warrants him in thinking that he is fully remunerating the teacher for the education of his children. On the other hand, the removal of the distinction of free and paying pupils, and of free schools and schools not free, is the removal of a very mischievous principle now at work among labourers and mechanics earning fair wages. Men in constant employment at 30s. a week and upwards are not ashamed to send their children to 'Ragged' Schools, or to make such representations as to induce school boards to put them on the free list. It ought to be borne in mind that it is not the receipt of State aid that pauperises people, but the suing for it *in formâ pauperis*. The benefits derived from public roads, bridges, water supplies, &c. have no pauperising tendency whatever: but they would have, if while rates were paid by all to maintain them, a fee were charged for their use, from the payment of which fee any one pleading poverty could escape.

7. The question of injustice to taxpayers who might not use the public schools for their own children under a free system needs very few remarks. The principle that national education is a state duty is already conceded; else there would be no vote for education: It involves the question, whether a rich man should be called upon to help the poor in the education of their children, which has been answered in the affirmative by some of the foremost thinkers of the day. They have shown that the security and welfare of every individual in a community depends on the intelligence and virtue of the people as a whole.

8. Another argument in favour of fees is that if they form part of a teacher's living his work is likely to be better done. If this argument ever had any validity, it has ceased to be applicable to country schools since the compulsory law came into force. Even in Hobart Town, where it is perhaps supposed to cause a healthy rivalry among the head teachers, the fees received depend less upon effectual work than ability on the part of the teacher to make parents believe in his skill; and one that uses the most effectual means of doing so is not certainly doing the greatest amount of real work. It is unfortunately the truth, that the majority of parents are easily deceived with regard to their children's progress. The notion that fees are a guarantee of good work in school is a fallacy. The only effectual guarantee, over and above confidence in a teacher's sense of duty, is thorough examination at regular intervals by the Board's Inspector.

9. The allowance to teachers in lieu of school fees would be a fair charge upon local school rates.

THE PUPIL TEACHER SYSTEM.

The Pupil Teacher System is condemned entirely by some; but the majority of the English educationists consider it the best practical mode of providing a supply of teachers for elementary schools.

1. Considered with respect to its twofold purpose, that of training young teachers to take charge of country schools, and that of providing assistance to the Masters and Mistresses of larger town schools, our Pupil Teacher System is defective. The Pupil Teachers are taken into the service too young and too ignorant to afford anything like efficient help in a large school; where it commonly happens that the head teacher is the only one qualified to teach the highest classes at all; or any class as it ought to be taught. For this reason, and also because of the limited amount of assistance afforded him, his time is chiefly taken up in mere class teaching, and so the pupil teachers are left for the most part to themselves. The consequence is that the lower classes are badly taught. The pupil teachers do not receive a complete training; and the upper classes suffer from the head teacher's attention being too frequently withdrawn from them, not in training his subordinates, but in trying to maintain more or less imperfectly the general order of the school.

2. Under our present system the work of the pupil teachers is very exhausting, when they endeavour to do it well; and either their progress in learning or their health suffers in consequence of this.

3. The absence of a provision for their more liberal training after their term of service as pupil teachers has expired is another serious defect, which could be met by the adoption of the graded system of organizing schools sketched out in another paper.

4. I would suggest that new regulations be issued concerning the employment of pupil teachers, raising the standards of age and knowledge necessary for appointment, and providing for them during their course a more liberal education than the present programme requires. It would be well to employ paid monitors, or probationary pupil teachers, from the age of fourteen to that of sixteen, engaged for a term of two years only, with the understanding that those who show a natural fitness for the office of teacher shall be engaged as pupil teachers at the discretion of the Board for a farther term of three years; also, to let probationary pupil teachers receive instruction with the other pupil teachers as a matter of right, instead of grace as paid monitors do now.

5. Under a system of graded schools the youngest teachers would be employed principally in merely mechanical work, such as superintending the writing from dictation, &c., and would have more energy to spare when they came to their own studies; and, moreover, when their turn came to work in the higher grades they would participate largely in the instruction addressed to their classes by the qualified teachers. Hence we might expect more rapid advancement among them than is obtainable now. Another advantage

to them with regard to their learning in the graded schools would be the division of subjects of study among the certificated teachers, the result of which would be not only economy of teaching power, but great advantage to the learners.

6. With regard to the proportion of pupil teachers to other teachers, and that of teachers of all ranks to the number of children, Professor Huxley's Committee of the London School Board is reported to have arrived at this conclusion:—That a school of 500 children requires 16 teachers; viz., one principal, four certificated assistant teachers, and eleven pupil teachers; and that for every 120 children over the first 500, there should be one certificated assistant and three pupil teachers.

7. To make it fit in conformably with the pupil teacher system, the scale of classification for Masters and Mistresses needs to be reconsidered. At present when a pupil teacher has finished his course, he finds, on examining the syllabus of subjects prescribed for the examination of candidates for the Board's Third Class Certificate as a Master, that his knowledge is already in advance of what is required, and he naturally concludes that after the two years that must elapse before he can present himself as a candidate, he will be perfectly certain to pass the examination, having already passed one much harder; conceiving that he therefore need not keep advancing in his learning, he is tempted to remain stationary, as he thinks, but in yielding to the temptation he really goes back, and runs the risk of being plucked. This is only one of several inconsistencies in the Board's schemes of examination; but to discuss the subject properly a separate paper would be required.

GRADED SCHOOLS.

It is a serious imperfection in our large schools, that there should be only one certificated teacher to each; for, considering the work he has to do, it is impossible it can be well done. The staff of subordinate teachers allowed is not sufficient to relieve him of the charge of the older pupils; and if they were sufficient in number, none of them are well enough informed to teach the Fifth and Sixth Classes efficiently. The head teacher must therefore conduct those classes as well as superintend the rest of the school; but in schools as large as ours this is impracticable, and consequently the lower classes receive very little of his attention; the pupil teachers are imperfectly trained; and the distraction of the head teacher's attention from the work of teaching the upper classes, merely to maintain order, prevents even that work being well done.

For these reasons I think it is very desirable that a change should be made in the organization of the Board's large schools; and as the appointment of a second certificated teacher to each would be very expensive, while the present school premises need improvement in any case to give even the very best staff of teachers a fair chance of doing satisfactory work, I would recommend that the Town Schools should be *graded*. 1st. for the sake of economy in the use of skilled labour, 2nd. to make adequate provision for the training of young teachers, and 3rd. to combine reform in organization with that extension of school accommodation which must be sooner or later inevitable.

For this purpose I would suggest that the Hobart Town Schools should be graded according to the following tabular form, and that the Infant Schools should be placed in the out-lying parts of town, while those for pupils over seven years of age should form one large establishment in the Barrack Square fronting on Davey-street, a position not quite as central as might be desired, but sufficiently so for all children above the infant stage.

In addition to the teachers mentioned in the tabular statement, I would recommend the appointment of a Principal to direct the general work of all the schools, to act as training-master, and, assisted by the certificated teachers, to give instruction in general subjects to pupil teachers, ex-pupil teachers, and others under training.

It is to be expected that, as the system improves in its working, the number of children of advanced age in the lower standards will decrease, and that the relative numbers in the different grades will alter considerably in favour of the higher standards.

I would suggest that one or more additional standards be added to the Board's programme to meet the requirements of pupils remaining at school after passing the Sixth.

The question of preliminary expense in making the changes suggested is a very important one: it would of course be large; but then it would eventually make primary education in Hobart Town much cheaper than, in proportion to results, it is at present, or than it would be were the present system simply extended to meet the requirements of the population.

I have estimated the average number of children on the Rolls as nearly double that given in the Board's last Report, as it is desirable to make such a provision of school premises as will not need extension for many years to come.

It is probable that the total cost of building and furnishing the Graded Schools in the Barrack Square would be about £12,000, and that of purchasing sites for and building and furnishing the Infant Schools might be each £1500. If the schools at present in the occupation of the Board be converted into Infant Schools, the cost will be inconsiderable.

These figures are rather staggering; and, if the funds at present entrusted to the Board be taken as the limiting measure of their operations, the revolution I have recommended is simply Utopian. But if an

educational rate were levied, there is no reason why money should not be borrowed on the security of the rate, and the large preliminary expense thus spread over a number of years.

As the planning of school premises demands in the architect an acquaintance with methods of organization, I would suggest that, in the erection or extension of buildings involving large outlay, two or three of the Board's most experienced teachers be called upon,—1st. to assist in deciding the particular method of organization most desirable, and 2nd. to advise the architect in matters of detail. Great improvements have been made in England recently in methods of furnishing, lighting, ventilating, and warming schools; and it is desirable that we should adopt those that are suitable to our circumstance if they are within our means.

AN Estimated Average of 2400 Children on the Books in Hobart Town.

For	Infants under Seven Years.	Grade I. for Standards First and Second.	Grade II. for Standards Third and Fourth.	Grade III. for Standards Fifth and above.	
Number of Schools.....	4	2	1	1	
Distribution of Pupils..... (Probable proportion at first*)	960	680	530	230	
					TOTAL.
Teachers—Certificated †.....	4	2	2	1	Male 4 Female 5
Assistants, viz.—Ex-Pupil Teachers and others under training.....	4	5	5	4	Male 9 Female 9
Pupil Teachers.....	4	5	8	3	Male 10 Female 10
Paid Monitors.....	12	5	—	—	Male 3 Female 14
<i>Total</i>	24	17	15	8	Male 26 Female 38
Average No. of Pupils per Teacher.....	40	40	35	30	

* These proportions are roughly estimated from the numbers given in the various Classes for the year 1872. Those for 1873 have not been published for the separate Schools. We may reasonably expect, if education progresses as it ought, that very few Children over Seven will be found in Standard First, so the Standards for the different grades will naturally rise.

† A proper proportion of Male and Female Teachers of all ranks is to be desired, excepting in the Infant Schools, which ought to be exclusively under Female Teachers.

LESSON BOOKS.

The Reading Books published by the Irish Board, especially those of the *New Series*, are in many respects unsuitable for children. A few preliminary remarks are necessary to make this plain.

1. The chief use of class reading books is to teach children to read, that is to name words at sight, and understand the import of the ordinary forms of speech used by educated people.

2. Words that are new to children should not be used figuratively. The most natural sense should be firmly associated with the sound and form of each word in their minds.

3. Books for teaching reading should be specially prepared for that purpose; the difficulty in words and structure of sentences should be gradual. Hard uncommon words requiring either breadth of knowledge or power of thought to understand them should be avoided in the earlier books, as likewise should involved or obscure sentences.

4. The reading books ought to be such as are calculated to enlist the interest of children and give them a desire to read.

5. If useful knowledge can be taught in them, so much the better; but this purpose is secondary to the mere teaching to read.

6. The useful knowledge imparted must be judiciously arranged, so as to lay a solid foundation in the pupils' minds. If it is not within their intellectual range mere bewilderment is the consequence, and the mischievous habit is induced of reading without the attempt to understand the subject read.

7. The same remarks apply to didactic and moral lessons, specimens of oratory, poetry, &c.

8. In all or most of these respects the Irish Reading Books must be condemned. From the 'Second' upwards the use of intricately involved sentences and figurative expressions continually occur.

9. Useful knowledge forms a small part of the subject matter, and is treated in a desultory manner. The lessons are extracted from standard writings addressed to mature minds, and can only have been selected for the purpose of familiarising the pupils with the different kinds of phraseology in which the subjects are treated; since there is no attempt at such systematic arrangement as is necessary to lay a proper foundation of elementary knowledge in the several subjects. The lessons are mere fragments as they stand in the books; and the only way to make some of them intelligible to children is for the teachers to stop at every other sentence, and give a half-hour's lecture to the class. This ought not to be necessary, because the progress of the class in acquiring a knowledge of words and fluency in reading is thus seriously impeded.

10. The didactic and moral lessons are quite as bad. The ideas are quite beyond what children can grasp.

11. The specimens of oratory are principally from the published speeches of Burke, Sheridan, Fox, and Grattan, and are not only ridiculously out of place, but also positively mischievous. In the minds of those who cannot follow their lofty flights they induce the habit of reading without attaching any definite meaning to the words; and in a few possessing the knack of remembering high sounding words and phrases, they encourage that tendency to rhetorical display which too often passes for eloquence and sound reasoning.

12. Some of the poetry selected for lessons is very appropriate, but the great majority of the selections are calculated to give children a settled distaste for it. The lofty imagery of Milton and Byron is quite beyond their reach; and almost equally so are the moral disquisitions in verse by Dr. Johnson and Pope. These are very good intrinsically; but, addressed to mature intellects, they are out of place in elementary books for children. Much of the poetry, so called, is the work of obscure authors, and has no excellence of any kind to recommend it: its chief characteristics are stilted language, clumsy composition, and poverty of thought. No simple rhymes are inserted in the early books to give children an easy introduction to poetry, and furnish them with a good stock of words and phrases in a shape likely to make them cling to the memory.

13. Alike in the poetical and in the didactic and moral lessons, it too frequently happens that an extensive acquaintance with both ancient and modern literature and history is necessary to make the reading intelligible; and as very few teachers can be fairly called well read in either ancient or modern literature, they cannot make the reading intelligible without having recourse to an encyclopædia; and when they can explain the many allusions to out of the way events and persons, the very attempt to do so is a hindrance to the work of teaching reading.

14. Dogmatic theology is taught in many of the lessons intended for religious instruction, and gives a tone to many of the others throughout the books. This is to be deprecated, inasmuch as different teachers take different views of these matters, and it is undesirable that there should be any plausible pretext for discussing them in schools open to children of all denominations.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

In some of the country districts Local Boards appear systematically to neglect the Compulsory Law; and in Hobart Town it has not yet done any perceptible good to education. No doubt the attendance at the different Schools has been kept higher than it might have been without the law; but many children thus forced into school attend in a manner so desultory as to produce little good to themselves and great disturbance to those attending regularly. It is also too obvious that many parents contrive to elude the vigilance of the Board's Visiting Officer.* I think it may be estimated that ten per cent. of the children in Hobart Town, of school age, are not being educated at all, and that twenty per cent. more attend too irregularly to be educated properly. If the Compulsory Law is to be effective,—

- (1.) Its execution must not be left to School Boards or Municipal Councils; the members of which are too often, as employers of labour, interested in conniving at its violation.
- (2.) Officers responsible to the Board of Education should be appointed to enforce the law, as a peremptory duty.† If the police were "centralised," the Superintendent of Police in each district could be required to collect and supply to the Board's officers such information as might be needed, and to assist generally in the execution of the law.
- (3.) Policemen on duty should be empowered to arrest truants and march them into school.

* The gentleman holding this position in Hobart Town does, I believe, all that can fairly be expected of him under present circumstances to carry out the law; and I should be sorry to be thought in this Memorandum to cast any reflection on the manner in which he performs his duty.—J. R.

† There seems to me no insuperable objection to the duty of enforcing the Compulsory Law being put upon the Superintendents of Police. Any other effectual provision for doing so will be found too expensive for our means.

- (4.) Authentic lists of the names of children in each school district should be made, with information as to their ages supplied by the Registrar; and these lists should be corrected periodically by the police clerk (or some other officer to whom the duty might be more suitable).
- (5.) Officers employed in the execution of the Compulsory Law must have power to examine the attendance registers of private schools, and the teachers of private schools must be held responsible for the correctness of the information contained in their registers of attendance.
- (6.) Employers of labour must be forbidden under penalty to employ children of school age during school time; although, to meet the necessities of some districts, their annual holidays might be arranged so as to permit what may be called legitimate child labour,—such for instance as hop-picking. Local Boards might be authorised to fix the holidays for their respective districts, but they ought not to exceed six weeks throughout the year. It would be better in a district like Fenton Forest to have the school closed altogether for a few weeks during hop-picking, than to have the law set at defiance by the whole population.

THE INSECURE POSITION OF TEACHERS IN SMALL SCHOOLS.

When a school is established in a thinly-peopled district it is generally at the instance of the inhabitants who promise to send a certain number of children—say thirty or thirty-five—which under ordinary circumstances, should they fairly keep their promise, secures an average attendance of twenty-five or thirty. But after the flush of enthusiasm that caused them to apply for and obtain a school has subsided, it often happens that the average attendance sinks to twenty, or lower; and this becomes a source of heavy anxiety to the teacher, for, according to the Board's regulation, his salary is stopped when the average attendance for six months has sunk below twenty, and he is paid by a capitation grant, which he finds insufficient to maintain his family. Now it must be observed that it is not always a teacher's fault that causes a school's attendance to fall off. Where compulsion is not carried out the very best teachers fail to induce parents to send their children regularly. To make teachers feel themselves responsible in such cases is not only unjust to them but mischievous to the cause of education, as they have thereby to face approximate destitution; the life and soul is taken out of their teaching, and their gloomy prospects tell upon the school's work and make it less effective, for children's minds do not develop as they ought without moral sunshine.

The obvious remedy is to make every teacher's position under the Board so far secure that the failure of a school will not cause him to have his income lessened below a fair standard, or to lose his employment, unless he can be shown clearly to be in fault.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.

Under the present system of reporting the results of inspection, the Board of Education are liable in some cases to remain uninformed as to the amount of educational work done in the Public Schools. The Inspector's work at present is to examine the pupils according to the programme in the classes in which they are presented by the teachers, ascertain how many reach the standards of the respective classes, and how many fail to do so, and report accordingly. This is well enough so far; but if the standards really attained by those pupils that have failed to justify the teacher's estimate of their progress are not reported, the state of education cannot be fairly judged by the Board. Suppose, for the sake of example, the following to be a true description of two schools, equal as to the number of pupils and their proficiency in learning:—In one the master is too sanguine in his estimate of the pupils' ability to pass the examination, and presents in the Fifth Class those who are able to pass easily in the Fourth, because he thinks it is really more profitable for them to be doing the Fifth Class work than to be repeating that of the Fourth. They all fail to satisfy the Inspector, and as the teacher has made the same mistake throughout the school, it is pronounced a failure. The other master avoids this mistake throughout his school, all his pupils pass, and the School is a success. In the latter of the two supposed cases the Board would receive from their Inspector a correct statement of children's progress, but not so in the former. It may be truly said that no such extreme cases are likely to happen, still they are possible; and in fact the mistake I have supposed is with the best intentions made by every master to some extent. In actual school work it can never be altogether avoided, and we ought not to be too ready in condemning a teacher for such an error of judgment. Over-hopefulness is an error in the right direction, and it is one into which good teachers are apt to fall.

I would suggest that the Board's Inspector be instructed to report the standards actually attained by every pupil in the Public Schools, as well as the per centage of pupils that justify their teacher's estimate of their attainments. This will give an inspector a little more work, but it is the only means by which the Board can be informed certainly concerning the state of public education.

J. RULE.