

Full Length Paper

Changes to the Education System of England and Wales in the last 70 years Part 4: 1970 - 1979

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This article traces the development of the education service in the 1970s and deals with the influence of local government reorganisation, particularly in the West Riding of Yorkshire and the move to the right in both the Conservative and Labour parties at least, in part, caused by difficult economic conditions. The outcome was that the climate for the development of schools was very different at the end of the decade than it had been at the beginning. Local authorities were organised differently and professional concerns and pressures became very different. There was also an increase in the influence of parents in the state system.

Keywords: local government reorganisation; raising of the school leaving age; local government governance

INTRODUCTION

The move to Holme Valley Grammar School was interesting and informative. The Holme valley runs north-east from Holme Moss and eventually veers northwards to run through Holmfirth, Honley and into Huddersfield. It runs roughly parallel with the Colne Valley which was where one of the earliest purpose-built comprehensive schools in the West Riding was built. It is a beautiful part of the West Riding with deep valleys, steep hills and fascinating long-distance views. My wife had passed her driving test in Goole whilst we were at Thorne. That area is so flat that it was not possible to find a situation where a hill start was possible never mind necessary. The Holme Valley was very different and quite a shock. It had a long history of textile manufacture, with many windows on the upper storey of cottages to allow weavers to get plenty of light when the domestic industry was strong and mills in the valley bottoms to make best use of the water of the streams and the river. This was the first time in our teaching careers that we had left the Yorkshire Coalfield, though part of the catchment area of the Grammar School had some mining as part of its industrial mix. The Grammar School was situated in Honley at the northern end of the valley not far from the boundary of the Huddersfield County Borough. When I travelled to attend for interview at the Grammar School I missed the right turn from the bottom of the valley that led up to the school, but soon knew that I was wrong because it was clear that I was in the Borough of Huddersfield.

THE PLAN TO REORGANISE SCHOOLS IN THE HOLME VALLEY

The West Riding had a well-established plan to reorganise the Holme Valley and the surrounding areas. The coalfield area to the east was to be catered for in a newly created and built middle school system with a very large comprehensive, Shelley High School, in process of being built.

The Holme Valley and the adjacent area of Meltham was to be served by two 11-16 High Schools, one on the site of an extended Holme Valley Grammar School and the other on the site of the Secondary Modern School at Holmfirth. Sixth form provision was to be sited at Honley and the school would be called "Honley High School and Sixth Form Centre". The clear assumption was that sixth form students from Holmfirth would transfer to Honley thereby enhancing the academic base provided by the 11-16 school at Honley. Provision for sixth formers at Honley had been enhanced by money for buildings earmarked by the West Riding County Council (WRCC) for the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA). The date for the change was September 1973.

The neighbouring Borough of Huddersfield reorganised on comprehensive lines in 1972. The existing single-sex grammar schools became mixed sixth form colleges and districts of the town had 11-16 comprehensive schools. Many of them, but not all, were newly and purpose-built. The most notable exception was Royds Hall School which had been Harold Wilson's old school. It was not appreciated at the time but became clear much later that local government reorganisation was putting in place systems that would become, almost inevitably, competing units. In 1974, there was an expectation that the catchment area system would remain as a dominant influence.

Local Government reorganisation had been an issue for a number of years before it was achieved in 1974. Elected County Councils were established in 1888 in a system based on historic Counties with County Boroughs making separate entities in some large towns. At the first meeting of the West Riding County Council in 1889, the County Council had no responsibilities for education. This changed in August 1889 with the passing of The Technical Instruction Act which enabled, but did not compel, County Councils to raise a penny rate and spend the proceeds on technical education. The WRCC acted quickly and established a Technical Instruction Committee to put the Act into effect. The importance of education within the structure of the County Council was confirmed by the 1902 Education Act. The pattern of governance, established in 1902, lasted for three-quarters of a century, though there was an attempt to change it during the Second World War by the Ministry of Health. However, the Board of Education was not willing to undertake such a radical change during wartime. There was also a significant change with regard to London when, in 1965, Greater London was established with 32 boroughs. (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit.)

NEW STRUCTURES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There was general agreement in the middle of the century that there were problems with local government. There seemed to be two major problems. First, there was the proliferation of small district councils in rural areas. Secondly, on the borders of the major conurbations, it was felt that the boundaries had been fixed before the pattern of urbanisation had been firmly established. In both circumstances the reality on the ground did not, it was felt, reflect modern needs. The

growth of concern about local government was made manifest when, in 1966, the Local Government Commission was wound up and replaced by a Royal Commission, the Redcliffe-Maud Commission. This body reported to the Labour Government and recommended a system of single-tier unitary authorities for the whole of England outside of London apart from metropolitan areas on Merseyside, Greater Manchester (Selnecc) and the West Midlands.

The Labour Government accepted the Report but the Conservative manifesto for the 1970 General Election committed the Conservatives to a two-tier structure. The Conservatives, under Ted Heath, won the 1970 Election and produced their alternative two-tier structure in a White Paper in 1971. Some aspects of the Redcliffe-Maud proposals were maintained. For instance, White Paper asserted that an education authority must serve an area with a minimum population of 250,000. It also asserted that a district must have a minimum population of 40,000.

There was a great deal of negotiation and adjustment both in the preparation of the Bill and during its passage through Parliament. The changes to the published Bill were a reflection of some local wishes and occasionally the wishes of powerful figures.

The Act created a two-tier system throughout the country with Counties and Districts. In reality, it was a three-tier system because it retained civil Parish Councils. Shire Counties were geographically placed approximating to the ancient entities of Counties. There were some boundary changes. They had a second tier of Districts, which were smaller units. Other Counties were designated as "Metropolitan" and had a core of at least one County Borough often with an extended hinterland. This was particularly true of the proposed reorganisation of the south and west of the West Riding County Council area. The interests of education did have some influence on the 1974 reforms if only in establishing a size of population (250,000) for an educational administration. There was a serious difference of opinion when some reformers wanted to abolish the statutory necessity to have an Education Committee. The motion was defeated, though it is generally true that the position of politicians was enhanced by the reorganisation. It became true that decisions could only be made with the connivance of politicians however influential officers might be in the construction of propositions. Thus, individual committees became not as powerful as they were formerly because of constraints arising from the integration of overall Local Authority policy within a Policy and Resources Committee or a General Purposes Committee which co-ordinated policy and allocated resources. After the reorganisation, control of funding became the source of power. The other factor which became increasingly important was that each committee and each decision was preceded by the deliberations of the group which was intent on maximising the party's influence within the Council. (Shipman, 1984).

Change in Local Government Governance

There is little doubt that the change in local government governance was intended to change the style and methodology within local government. Having heard Sir Alec Clegg speak about the problems he foresaw as a result of the reorganisation, I have little doubt that he took the stated need for change rather personally. I am also sure that many of his fears were prophetic. The meeting was held at Thorne Grammar School and was in front of a considerable audience of teachers and governors. In the event, the West Riding County Council was the only County Council in England which was abolished. Sir Alec Clegg was about retirement age and was removed from the scene after 1974. Unfortunately, he became ill and died after a relatively short retirement.

The West Riding was dismembered by: incorporating a large area in the north of the pre-1974 County and joining it with the North Riding to form the County of North Yorkshire; adding rural districts to Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster to form the County of South Yorkshire; adding rural districts and some urban councils to form Metropolitan Borough Councils within the

County of West Yorkshire; and, by adding parts of the former County to adjacent Counties such as Lancashire and Cumbria.

The changes are set out, below, in figure 1:

Metropolitan Counties	
<p>(1) South Yorkshire. Consisted of the Metropolitan Districts of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield.</p>	<p>Barnsley gained large areas from the WRCC including Penistone, parts of Hemsworth and Wortley Rural District Councils and some of the Dearne valley area.</p> <p>Doncaster gained a lot of the Don valley both in the east and the west as well as Finningley from Nottinghamshire.</p> <p>Rotherham gained large parts of the Dearne valley and the Rotherham Rural District Council.</p> <p>Sheffield gained Stocksbridge and part of the Wortley Rural District Council.</p>
<p>(2) West Yorkshire. Consisted of Bradford, Dewsbury and Huddersfield (to form Kirklees), Halifax (to form Calderdale), Leeds and Wakefield.</p>	<p>Bradford gained parts of the Wharfe Valley, including Ilkley; parts of the Aire Valley including Keighley and the surrounding Moors and part of the Skipton Rural District Council.</p> <p>Kirklees gained Batley, Colne and Holme Valleys, Denby Dale, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Kirkburton, Meltham, Mirfield.</p> <p>Calderdale gained Brighouse, Elland, Hebden Bridge, part of Queensbury, Ripponden, Sowerby Bridge, Todmorden.</p> <p>Leeds gained Aireborough, Garforth, Horsforth, Morley, Otley, Pudsey, Rothwell, part of the Tadcaster Rural District Council, part of the Wetherby Rural District Council, part of the Wharfedale Rural District Council.</p> <p>Wakefield gained Castleford, Featherstone, Hemsworth, Horbury, Knottingley, Normanton, Ossett, Pontefract, Stanley, Wakefield Rural District Council, part of the Hemsworth Rural District Council and part of the Osgoldcross Rural District Council</p> <p>The other MBC to gain a part of the WRCC was Oldham which gained Saddleworth.</p>

Non-Metropolitan Counties

Lancashire gained Earby and Barnoldswick from the WRCC.

Humberside gained Goole and the Goole Rural District Council.

North Yorkshire gained the northern part of the WRCC including Harrogate, Knaresborough and Selby. It also gained the north of the East Riding, including Whitby.

Cumbria gained Sedbergh.

Gosden and Sharp in their book "The Making of an Education Service" recognised that there would need to be another historical account to pass judgement on the dismembering of the service that had been constructed in the preceding three-quarters of a century. That is not my current purpose though it could become an interest if I could gather together enough material.

They did not make any attempt to assess the value of the changes either in their book or later because they felt there would be a great difference in the amount and quality of material from the new authorities compared to the material that had been available from the West Riding. They felt that they had gained access to tremendous detail, including personal correspondence, from the West Riding to an extent not likely to be repeated by the new set up. Any conclusion they reached, they thought, would be rendered less valuable because of the difference in the quality and quantity of evidence.

Maintaining a Steady Policy Direction

There can be little doubt that the West Riding was a hard-working and progressive LEA and that it made a conscious and conscientious attempt to provide a good education and more favourable social circumstance for the areas it served. The area served was economically, socially and politically diverse with power passing between Conservative and Labour majorities not infrequently. It is a testimony to the effectiveness of the officers of the LEA, particularly Sir Alec Clegg, that there were not wide swings in policy when power changed hands. Clegg's proud boast that a change in power was unlikely to make a great difference to County policy and progress was substantially true and it gave confidence to the teachers in the schools. One of the great strengths of the policies arose from the geographical diversity of the County. The southern areas had an industrial tradition based mainly on the mining of coal and metal manufacture and was mainly Labour; the western areas were known mainly for textiles manufacturing and engineering, where political allegiances veered between Labour and Conservative with some Liberal influence mainly in the Colne Valley; the northern areas were Dales, spa towns and market towns which were notably Conservative. The County was providing a universal policy to quite different areas and the formulation of policy was careful and tightly managed. It was not without difficulties but they were not insuperable because the basic subdivision of the County into Divisions allied with the determination to give Divisions a strong voice and administrative purpose made it possible to have diversity within an overall unity. The philosophy had a strong base in communities of many types, geographical, professional and defined by personal interests, but vested a great deal of money and influence in promoting personal success and fulfilment. There was a general belief that every citizen deserved the opportunity to find fulfilment. There was always a strong lead from the centre with Sir Alec Clegg as the main administrator, negotiator

and educational philosopher. He did a very good job and would have been a difficult man to follow.

In the event, because of the dismembering of the County, he was not followed. At a superficial level it seemed sensible for the former geographical area of the West Riding to be split into the three areas of South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, and North Yorkshire because of their traditional interests and political allegiances. It did mean, however, that the need to develop a cross-party consensus to maintain a steady policy direction was lost in all of the regions, and except for those functions, such as the Music and Drama Library to which they all made a financial contribution, there was little need for them to communicate. Communication was necessary when catchment areas were truncated and pupils from one LEA were expected to attend a school in another, though this was not a common problem in many areas as a direct result of local government reorganisation. The general stance taken by the new LEAs was that they expected all pupils resident within their boundaries would be provided for within their schools.

The System of Checks and Balances in the New LEA

It has to be said that within the West Riding County Council, the system of checks and balances and the co-operation between officers and politicians did not always work perfectly. There were instances where problems occurred either because a relationship became too close and self-serving or became difficult because of an inability to agree. A former pupil of Owston Park Secondary School (Allan Cooke) has written a book ("Institutionalised in a Children's Home") detailing his experiences in Skellow Hall as a child taken into care because he was judged to be in need of care and protection. He describes graphically how, when first taken into care, he had a happy childhood under the care of a Superintendent called Mr Rhodes but that the circumstance was changed dramatically when a new Superintendent (Mr Eaves) arrived with a different regime and attitude. Part of Mr Eaves professional and personal belief was that he could cope with whatever was put his way and the Home became a place which accepted a large number of children who had been in trouble and dealt with by the courts. The character of the Home was changed considerably by this and the children who were in need of care and protection lost out. My experience at Owston Park School indicates that this judgement is entirely accurate. It does seem from the evidence in the book that Alderman Baynham, an important member of the Children's Committee and frequently its chairman, acted alongside Mr Eaves and was his friend and protector. The systems used by the County could not break into the relationship and act as a corrective. Even visits and 'interference' by inspectors from the Home Office were unable to make a great impression. Allan believes very strongly that the WRCC got its organisation of Skellow Hall very wrong. The matter was resolved by Local Government Reorganisation. The provision was taken over by Doncaster MBC and became a closed institution with education provided within the premises rather than at the local school. It is now an Old Peoples Care Home. Unintended consequences are always a problem with any form of educational or social provision.

It is probably true that local government reorganisation made a bigger impact in Yorkshire than anywhere else in England and Wales. The West Riding lost some of its strength when it became clear that it would disappear entirely, though it did have some impact in its last year because it used its remaining resources to help particular causes and establishments. There was some money available to Holme Valley Grammar School which was to become Honley High School in order to set up an extended provision for the sixth form, for instance. There was also a legacy

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because former West Riding personnel were included in the political and professional makeup of the new LEA, Kirklees. The Chair of Governors of Colne Valley School (one of the first comprehensive schools in the West Riding) was a very powerful figure in the County Council at Wakefield and in the Huddersfield area. She was named Jessie Smith and was a very able and determined lady who had great influence in Kirklees. The Head of Colne Valley Comprehensive School, Ernest Butcher, was appointed as the first Director of Education in Kirklees. Geoffrey Wilson, who had been a Craft and Design Inspector/Adviser in the West Riding was appointed as the Chief Inspector in Kirklees and Ian McMillan who had been an Adviser with a responsibility for Maths and had pastoral oversight of Holme Valley Grammar School was appointed as Officer for Secondary Education. All were in positions to access residual funding from the West Riding and to bring West Riding practices and influences into the new LEA. There were some very good Inspectors and Officers inherited from the former boroughs and additional personnel were appointed from positions in the West Riding.

The evidence seems to be that Kirklees settled down quite quickly, at least professionally. There was some difficulty with political influence and for many years there was a tendency for a split between Dewsbury and Huddersfield. They were both textile and engineering towns but produced very different textile products. Huddersfield produced fine cloth, especially worsted for making suits and was comparatively rich. Dewsbury and Batley were involved mainly in the production of shoddy which was less prestigious. Each area had a proud history and a strong cultural tradition which was based on the nonconformist tradition and, in the case of Huddersfield, choral music and singing generally. Initially, the political influence of former members of the West Riding County Council was strong but the towns quickly made their influence felt. Huddersfield became the dominant town where the authority administration was concentrated. There were no difficulties regarding secondary reorganisation that had to be dealt with. The plans of the West Riding and the Boroughs had been agreed politically and were in place, though some were not complete. The reorganisation at Honley and Holmfirth would, for instance, take five years to be fully implemented after the start date of September 1973. There were adjustments over the years, some of which were controversial, but no negotiations about comprehensive reorganisation. There was, and still is, one area, Heckmondwike, where selection at eleven-plus still operates. Elsewhere, there is a patchwork of types of comprehensive provision. 11-16 schools with separate sixth forms; 5-9, 9-13, and 13-18 schools; 14-18 High Schools; and, 11-18 High Schools. Kirklees was quite typical of the process of assimilation of areas of the West Riding into other Metropolitan areas in West and South Yorkshire.

The North Yorkshire County Council

The situation in North Yorkshire was different. North Yorkshire was principally a union of the North Riding and parts of the northern areas of the West Riding with Northallerton, the administrative centre of the former North Riding, as its administrative centre. The appointment of Dr Owens (a former Assistant Education Officer in the West Riding) as Chief Education Officer meant that a considerable amount of experience and the spirit of the West Riding would be included in the new Authority. It was organised into Areas which had some of the functions of the Divisions in the West Riding in administrative terms but there was no equivalent to the Divisional Executive politically. The Areas were controlled administratively by Area Officers answerable to County Hall but servicing education in the localities. Area Advisers (the equivalent of the West Riding CCIs) were very important in influencing the processes of decision making by

professionals. It seems to have been accepted that on the whole the process of internal professional development could properly be undertaken by advisers, but that political manipulation was best dealt with by officers. The immediate justification for this type of organisation was the size of the new County and the geography of the Areas, which were different though, by no means as disparate as the Divisions in the West Riding.

The North Yorkshire County Council always had a Conservative majority in the years immediately after 1974, but there were important political shifts within the Conservative Party. Initially, the important input was from the old North Riding and the Earl Swinton was the most prominent figure on the Education Committee. There was a period when old West Riding figures, notably Councillor Bott, became important, but there was the growth of the strength of the Conservatives from Harrogate, Knaresborough, Ripon and Skipton. There was a difference between the town Conservatives and the gentlemen from the shire. The latter had accepted and implemented comprehensive education as being an appropriate way to organise schools in the rural North Riding. Many of the former were united in their opposition to comprehensive education and did not accept the experiences of the North Riding as being appropriate in their townships. The influence of the group and the General Purposes Committee did produce a reduction in the influence of the politicians from the former North Riding. However, in 1974, it seemed that in North Yorkshire there was a greater likelihood of the maintenance of the spirit of the West Riding than the other Authorities in Yorkshire.

Holme Valley Grammar and Holmfirth Secondary Modern

There were other aspects of my appointment at Holme Valley which were interesting. There was a strong internal candidate, Colin Sanderson, for the post of Second Deputy. He was a capable young man and a very pleasant, honest and straightforward character. He worked very closely with the First Deputy, Brian Precious and, in my view, was a very good candidate and likely to be appointed to the post. I was not overly concerned because I had an interview for a headship at Bradfield, near Sheffield, the following week. It was, therefore, something of a surprise when I was offered the post and had to make a very quick decision. Colin and Brian were obviously disappointed but I must stress that both men and their families were always extremely friendly, professional and helpful to me. Obviously, Colin and Brian continued to work closely together, particularly on doing the timetable and I had to make my own way. I was never sure of the attitude of the Head, Ronnie Beaumont, though I have no reason to complain about his treatment of me.

The Grammar School was a very good school which was aspiring and very well run. There was a great emphasis on finding the strengths of individual pupils and encouraging personal and academic development. The staff was well embedded in many local communities and there was enormous support for the school and its pupils from within the communities. Mr Beaumont, Brian Precious and the Senior Mistress, Jean Lees were trusted and admired. All were considered to be possessors of a safe pair of hands and to be very kindly. The staff was very high quality with an excellent academic standing. All worked hard and empathetically to ensure that all pupils had opportunities to fulfil their full potential, socially and academically. The secondary modern school at Holmfirth was also a good school. The Head, Charlie Cocks, was a charismatic character, and his staff (including Mrs Beaumont) worked very well with him. They had good examination results and Charlie was a strong figure in the world of CSE examinations. This was a very important

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position during the time of the West Riding because Clegg had established the examination board (The West Yorkshire and Lindsey Examination Board or TWYLREB) that governed these examinations throughout the West Riding and especially with the development of Mode 3 examinations which teachers controlled, any Head who was part of the structure of TWYLREB was an important figure. There was some rivalry between the two schools and little attempt to ensure that they would work happily in the reorganised system. I saw this clearly when, early in my time at Honley, there was an incident of animosity and poor discipline between pupils going on the bus from Meltham to Holmfirth Secondary School and pupils going from Meltham to Holme Valley Grammar School. I am not sure how I got the job of sorting out the situation but I did and had to deal with the pupils at Honley and the staff at Holmfirth. I did what had to be done and Charlie Cocks rang me to thank me for what I had done. Indeed, we became quite good professional friends over the years.

My job was ill-defined when I arrived before the first day back at school. There were some details such as being responsible for setting out the Hall for Assembly and some teaching with a little of both History and Geography, including some sixth form work in both Geography and General Studies. At the beginning of the term, it was customary for students going into the first year sixth to have an interview with a senior member of staff to make sure that their choice of subjects was suitable and what they wanted and I was involved in this very useful practice. I quickly became involved in the day-to-day running of the school such as substitutions for absent staff, supervising dinner queues and train and bus queues after school and arranging examination timetables. I had an office which was shared with a secretary who did a lot of typing work for the staff and a printing machine and its technician. We were a happy little band and many members of staff used to come in to see Kath Walker or Arthur White which meant that I got to know the staff quickly and was often able to be helpful to them. Brian and Colin were also experts on the printing machine and their visits were also very helpful.

In the first year of my brief stay at Honley there were two areas of the curriculum that needed some work and guidance. The first was the preparation of the curriculum for the first comprehensive intake to the first year in 1973. The second was the preparation of the curriculum for the sixth formers who were expected to be transferred in increasing numbers from the comprehensive school at Holmfirth. After consultations, it was decided that there would be two bands on the timetable of roughly the same ability and the same size (4 forms or roughly 120 children) and that the timetable would be blocked wherever possible. The justification was that this system gave maximum flexibility to departments to organise teaching groups as they saw fit. There were some complications because of having to work through the grammar school systems. The organisation of the curriculum for the sixth was done by maintaining the systems used by the Grammar School and providing a choice of courses as part of a General Studies programme. Some of these consisted of studies to help with the A level General Studies Examination, such as language courses for non-linguists and science courses for non-scientists. Some were courses of general interest such as Philosophy and some had a social base such as visits to help old people in Honley or people in the mental hospital at Storthes Hall. All the courses had, through the Certificate of Extended Education (CEE), a national qualification, developed by TWYLREB, an examination option so that students could, if they wished, get an enhanced number of O Level equivalents. This seemed to be well received by the staff and by the students and I was pleased by the results both in terms of the examination successes and the enthusiasm within the school and in the community. The enthusiasm within the community was important because the position

of the school on the east side of the village which was sparsely populated tended to divorce it from the village of Honley which was on the west side of the valley.

The family situation was also very interesting. We moved from Thorne and had an arrangement with a builder friend of Brian Precious who arranged to build us a house to our design in the village of Wooldale. It was not ready in September 1972 (in fact we finally moved in during February 1973) and we were housed in a caravan on the building site. This was provided by the builder and our daughter, Rebecca, attended the local infant's school and my wife, Susan, and Nick our son and younger child had to accustom themselves to a very different domestic situation from the one at Thorne. Brian Precious, who lived nearby, gave me a lift to school in the mornings and back in the evenings which was both kind and useful because it meant that we got to know each other better and more quickly. After the half term in late October, we decided that the caravan was no longer a suitable habitat and went to my wife's parents some 25 miles away which was kind of them but placed strain on Susan and the children. Nick went to his first school in Wooldale and Rebecca settled very well. We liked the house and fitted in well with the local community and it was not too far from Susan's parents and my mother. We were very happy personally and Susan was reintroduced to teaching because she helped with a sixth form music class at the Grammar School and then was asked to cover a class in the Wooldale Junior School when one of the teachers became ill with stress. She was very successful both with the sixth form and the top class in the Junior School but was most enlivened by her experience in the Junior School.

Aireville Secondary Modern School

I felt that my job at the Grammar/High School was useful and I learned a great deal. It was, therefore, something of a surprise when I applied for and got a job as Headmaster of Aireville Secondary Modern School in Skipton, North Yorkshire.

It was the worst professional career decision that I ever made. My research of the situation in Skipton was inadequate and I took too literally the assurance of the governors of the school and the officers of the County of North Yorkshire that reorganisation would go ahead. I did not really consider the impact of having a Voluntary Controlled and a Voluntary Aided Grammar School within Skipton. The attraction was that of being in at the beginning of a reorganisation and seeing it through to the end. There was also the attraction of being a Head with a greater influence over decision making. When I went into teaching at Owston Park Secondary Modern School, I had no ambitions except to give something back to the area in which I was born and had lived. I was aware that I had been given enormous privileges by attending Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield and Oxford University and wanted to share my good fortune with other people in the area. My parents never understood my decision but did not stand in my way. There was still something of that influence in my thinking about going to another secondary modern school at Skipton but, by 1974 when I was appointed, there was an additional ambition to be able to have a greater influence.

There was, because of our concentration on the day-to-day business of running schools and devising curricula as well as teaching, an imperfect appreciation of how our world was being changed throughout the seventies. This seems to be almost always true of the changes that are not part of our everyday concerns. It was particularly serious in the seventies because these

years were a time when many of the certainties on which we relied began to disappear.

THE ECONOMY AND POLITICS OF THE 1970S AND THE DEBATE WITHIN EDUCATION

The 1970s was a difficult period economically and politically with a great deal of industrial action by unions within a recession and the total dissipation of the post-war consensus and many of the attitudes and provisions it had produced. The General Election in 1970 resulted in a victory for the Conservative Party with Edward Heath as Prime Minister and Margaret Thatcher as his Secretary of State for Education. The change can be simply illustrated when the desire to reduce public expenditure meant that the universal provision of free school milk was abolished by the 1971 Education Act. Economic problems, notably inflation, the rising price of oil and the extent of public borrowing ensured that there was a perceived need to control public expenditure whichever party was in power. One of the responses to the national economic difficulty was to call for greater accountability in the public services.

The post war consensus had lasted a long time but ultimately failed because it depended on increasing prosperity to foster social unity. The oil crisis and the recession of 1971-1973 affected large swathes of British industry and their dependent communities. Some never really recovered. It was, for instance, particularly difficult for the textile industry in West Yorkshire with obvious effects in both Kirkstall and Bradford which can still be seen. In fact the general economic difficulties throughout the western world provided a basis for the argument for cutting public expenditure in many countries. Politics in Britain were difficult and some politicians found it difficult to sustain their influence. In the early 1970s the national scene was dominated by Wilson (Labour) and Heath (Conservative) but neither was the leader of his party by the 1979 General Election.

1974: Two National Elections

In 1974, there were two national elections. The first, on the 28th of February, was very inconclusive and there was some prospect of a Conservative/Liberal coalition. Heath could not, however, agree to promise proportional representation and could not, therefore, form a government. Wilson formed a minority Labour administration, but decided to go to the country again in October. He won a majority of only three seats. Heath's career was virtually over and he was replaced as Leader of the Conservative Party by Margaret Thatcher.

The Labour Party was scarcely more settled. Wilson had two Secretaries of State for Education, Reg Prentice (March 1974) and Fred Mulley (June 1975). Wilson resigned in April 1976 and was replaced by James Callaghan, who appointed Shirley Williams as his Secretary of State for Education. Callaghan intervened in the business of education when he made a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford calling for a "Great Debate" about the nature and purpose of education. Callaghan was ahead in the polls in the autumn of 1978 but decided not to go to the country until May 1979 when he lost to the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher.

The debate about, and within, education reflected both the economic difficulties of the time but also some disenchantment with what the post war consensus had achieved within the education system. The feeling was felt throughout much of the western world. In the USA, for instance, the Headstart Programme, a progressive programme designed to promote struggling children, was

cancelled and the new buzz words, particularly “accountability” became common in educational and political jargon, not least in Callaghan’s Ruskin College speech.

Much of the legislation dealing with Education in the 1970s was uncertain, beneath its apparent certainties, and, consequently uncertain in its outcomes. Circular 10/70 announced that the Conservative Government would not accept further LEA plans for wholesale comprehensive reorganisation and would only accept proposals from individual schools, but, in fact, LEAs continued to submit plans presented as individual school plans, which were accepted. The 1976 Act passed by the Labour Government was also inconclusive. The Act stated the principle that there should be no selection “based wholly or partly on selection by reference to ability or aptitude”. (1976 Act, Section 1(1)). The Act, however, provided so many loopholes that its effect was minimised and there was no effective legal requirement to end selection. Conservative party attitudes had hardened following the political problems of 1974 and rising stars in the party were anxious to help any local people fighting to retain the grammar schools. The advice given was to use every possible tactic to delay the introduction of plans short of defying the law (Letter from Leon Brittan QC to the chair of the governors of Skipton Girls’ High School). The Act was repealed by the Conservatives in 1979.

The Conservatives moved to the right very quickly in the 1970s. They began to demand consumer oriented education the abolition of the Schools Council and an increase in national testing. There was also a demand for the school leaving age to be returned to 15 years old. The agenda for the “anti-progressive movement” was clearly expressed in a series of Black Papers between 1969 and 1977. The full list is:

Year	Title	Edited by	Published by
1969	A Black Paper. Fight for Education	C B Cox and A E Dyson	Critical Quarterly Society
1969	Black Paper Two. The Crisis in Education	C B Cox and A E Dyson	Critical Quarterly Society
1970	Black Paper Three. Goodbye Mr Short	C B Cox and A E Dyson	Critical Quarterly Society
1975	Black Paper Four. The Fight for Education	C B Cox and R Boyson	London: Dent
1977	Black Paper Five	C B Cox and R Boyson	London: Maurice Temple

I do not know what happened after I left Honley but the first three Black Papers were bought and kept in my office so that staff could have access to them. The right wing press, supporting the Black Papers, consistently argued against progressive education, especially in primary schools, comprehensive reorganisation and progressive and egalitarian teaching methods. They claimed that schools had poor discipline and that pupils with academic promise were being deprived by the atmospheres and methodologies within schools. The last two Black Papers openly advocated consumerism by advocating education vouchers with parents receiving a free basic coupon valued at the average cost of schools in a local authority area which they could use at a school of their choice. It was envisaged that this would increase competition between schools which could mean that some unpopular schools could be closed and their staffs dispersed. Choice, competition, parental control and accountability have been important in the development of the education system ever since.

The Labour Government elected in 1974 did not respond aggressively or persuasively to the right wing agenda and did not give the 1976 Act any real teeth. James Callaghan, Prime Minister, commissioned the Yellow Book, produced by the DES. This was supposed to be secret but it was widely leaked to the press. It promoted the imposition of an agreed syllabus and said that the reorganisation of secondary education was now complete. The Labour Government of the late 1970s did not seem to want to advocate the localised professionally led developments which had been characteristic of the West Riding. Indeed, just over ten years after the Labour Party had won an election with “grammar schools for all” as part of its manifesto, a Labour Prime Minister and a Labour Secretary of State for Education and science were both expressing doubts that the comprehensive movement had succeeded in producing what had been promised on its behalf.

All the discussions and decisions were made against a background of economic recession and difficult national finances, including the acceptance of a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Financial difficulties meant that there needed to be cuts to the public services, including in education. Indeed, Callaghan announced, at the Labour Party Conference, that “the post-war settlement is over because the economic growth that enabled it is no more”. In his speech at Ruskin College, Callaghan advocated a national Great Debate about education to gather the views of all the users. He criticised the current system because it gave insufficient attention to the basic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) and was occupied by teachers who lacked the professional skills to instil discipline, good manners and a desire to work hard in the children in their charge. In short, education was not playing its part in helping Britain to survive economically in a highly competitive world.

Intervention in Education

The Great Debate did take place, initially, in a series of set meetings in regional centres around the country. The one I attended was meandering and inconclusive. It was not structured for genuine exchange of ideas but for disconnected interventions which were often either cheap or anecdotal or both. So far as I am aware, none of us received either a transcript of the proceedings or any official comment. Secondly, it was planned that there should be DES proposals to be discussed at eight regional meetings.

The Prime Minister’s intervention in education was followed by much activity by HMI and within the DES. It was, in fact, the important public beginning of the process of achieving a national curriculum. There was concern about the curriculum, the Yellow Book had promised a set curriculum in the form of a agreed syllabus. The flow of DES publications after 1975 kept the education service in the spotlight. In many ways, the most interesting and influential document was the red book produced by HMI on the 11-16 curriculum. This was an interesting attempt to marry school organisation to achieving stated aims and a curriculum philosophy based on areas of experience. This, perhaps as a result of the great debate, was the most clear published attempt to address the problem of the decentralisation of knowledge in the most difficult (ie 11-16 age range) sector of the education system. LEA responses to Circular 14/77 revealed that many LEAs had little knowledge of what was being taught in their schools and how those schools were organised. The returns from that Circular were perused by the next Conservative government and, Mark Carlisle, Sir Keith Joseph and Keeneth were later able to draw on the evidence to justify the need to control what was happening in schools much more closely. (Lecture by R. Wake, retired HMI, at Bramley Grange, September 1987). In the same spirit of accountability and

greater control the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) was also established.

Not all the legislation and thinking was uncertain in the 1970s and there were positive interventions not least in the areas of special needs education, preparation for work, and careful advice to the profession. In 1970, the Education (Handicapped Children) Act discontinued the classification of handicapped children as unsuitable for education. In 1973, Mary Warnock was appointed by Margaret Thatcher to lead a Commission of Enquiry "to review educational provision in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people handicapped by disabilities of body and mind, taking account of medical aspects of their need, together with arrangements to prepare them for entry into employment; to consider the most effective use of resources and to make recommendations". The Report "Special Education Needs" was presented to the Labour Secretary of State in March 1978 and provided the stimulus for the 1981 Act. The 1972 Children Act ensured that the minimum age at which children could be employed would not be affected by any further change in the school leaving age and in 1973, the Education (Work Experience) Act enabled LEAs to arrange for children under school leaving to have work experience as part of their education. In 1973, the Employment and Training Act established the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) which later oversaw the Technical and Vocational Institute (TVEI), which, later brought significant money into some schools.

There were also significant Reports. The James Report (1972), the basis for the White Paper "Education: A Framework for Expansion" recommended a broader role for Colleges of Higher Education alongside diversification and rationalisation. The dip in the birth-rate, with fewer children entering the education system was recognised in Circular 7/73 when it announced the halving of the number of student teachers and proposed that there should be an increase in students following the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE).

In 1975, the Bullock Report made wide-ranging recommendations about English teaching. In 1977, the Taylor Report recommended major changes in the management of schools, particularly an increase in the role of parents on governing bodies. In 1978, the Waddell Report recommended a single examination at age 16 to replace GCE and CSE. The GCSE was introduced in 1986 after considerable experimentation with 16 plus examinations.

HMI were also very active, in print, with 15 discussion documents published in a series entitled "Matters for Discussion". The full list of titles is:

1. Ten Good Schools (1977).
2. Classics in Comprehensive Schools (1977).
3. Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools (1977)
4. Gifted Children in Middle and Comprehensive Schools (1977).
5. The Teaching of Ideas in Geography (1978).
6. Mixed Ability Work Comprehensive Schools (1978).
7. The Education of Children in Hospitals for the Mentally Handicapped (1978).
8. Developments in the B.Ed. Degree Course (1979).
9. Mathematics 5 to 11 (1979).
10. Community Homes with Education (1980).
11. A View of the Curriculum (1980).
12. Modern Languages in Further Education (1980).
13. Girls and Science (1980).

14. Mathematics in the Sixth Form (1982).
15. The New Teacher in School (1982).

Between 1978 and 1982, HMI also published 5 major surveys covering the whole school age-range. These were:

1. Primary Education in England (1978).
2. Aspects of Secondary Education (1979).
3. Education 5 to 9 (1982).
4. 9 - 13 Middle Schools (1982).
5. Education 8 - 12 in Combined Middle Schools.

There was some involvement of expertise from within Higher Education. John Glossop, who supervised my PhD thesis at Leeds University, was involved in a study to validate measures of social background. He had previously approached the Schools Council but regarding the possibility of a not dissimilar research project but his proposal had not been well received. The DES was more receptive a little later. The study involved working with 23 schools in Yorkshire and the administration of tests, questionnaires and some home visits. I will give further details later, but I would comment that the work was thorough, even painstakingly insistent, and conducted with academic rigour. The work was included in the mix within the DES though I am not sure that Mr Glossop was ever told what its impact was.

It was inevitable that there would be a follow-up to the Prime Minister's intervention and the Green Paper "Education in Schools. A Consultative Document" was produced in addition to the red book on the 11-16 curriculum. It was an interesting document though not very prescriptive. Many teachers were mollified and said that they found it mildly comforting but were challenged to do better. The Green Paper acknowledged that primary schools had been changed in recent years and "in the right hands" great benefit had accrued to pupils. However, many teachers did not possess the experience and ability to make the new approaches work. The final challenge, it asserted, was to restore rigour without destroying the benefits of child-centred education. Whatever the colour of the book or Paper, they all clearly indicate the desire to exert greater influence on the actual practice of schools and to make them more accountable to politicians and customers. (Shipman, 1984 op cit.)

Debate on Comprehensive Education

Throughout the comprehensive debate, the teachers' associations concentrated on adequate consultation about schemes of reorganisation which were being implemented. Their contribution to the debate was essentially local and in defence of teachers. There was an increasingly strong perception that not only had schools changed but that teaching was changing as well and the unions became increasingly involved in traditional trade union actions about pay and conditions of service. The unions became political in outlook and organisation and industrial action expressing and utilising grass roots feelings became increasingly common. The change in emphasis did have an impact on pay and conditions and there were two substantial increases in the pay of teachers in the Houghton and the Clegg awards in the 1970s.

CONCLUSION

There seems to have been a great deal of antipathy among practising teachers about educational reforms. In a survey commissioned by the TES (Times Educational Supplement) and the THES (Times Higher Education Supplement) (October 1974) from National Opinion polls of 1,173 teachers, the authors found a “very small degree of support....across all shades of political opinion for the major educational reforms of the past decade – the move towards a comprehensive system of education and the raising of the school-leaving age”. Over 70% disagreed with the statement that all grammar schools should be abolished and that included 37% of those teachers who were both teachers and Labour voters. (TES, October 1974). The unions, therefore, increasingly reflected members’ perceptions about their individual opportunities rather than their professional opinions about the developing education service. With the return of a Conservative government in 1979 and the repeal of the 1976 Act and the withdrawal of 10/76, Thatcher’s philosophy regarding the possibility of grammar schools and comprehensive schools co-existing was implemented.

The process of reorganisation was not, of course, completed nationally. In the mid-1980s, thirty-two local authorities still retained some selective schools and there was a clear significance in the fact that, of the schools that were not reorganised, 40% were either voluntary aided or voluntary controlled (Education Year Book 1985). It can be construed that the sectional interest built into the articles of government of these types of school was successful in maintaining their privileged position.

The pressure for comprehensive education did not come from senior politicians nor was there any groundswell of opinion among the electorate to produce this specific reform. It was rather those organisation which mediate between governors and governed – teachers’ organisation, association of local authorities and, above all, political parties which structured the attitude of parents and ministers producing different results at different times. Both the supporters of the reorganisation process and those who have defied it had to straddle the boundary between education and politics to maintain their foothold in the education policy-making process. The government of education changed as the process of reorganisation took place (Fenwick, 1976 op cit.) From 1944 the process of negotiation gave local initiative its head or local intransigence its way to produce, within localities, a set of sub-systems with their own definitions and structural vested interests. The production of a unitary, national system cannot be easily achieved in this circumstance.

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