

Full Length Paper

Changes to the Education System of England and Wales in the last 70 years Part 3: The 1960s and the 1970s

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This article examines particular changes in the 1960s and the early 1970s in the pattern of secondary education in England and Wales. There is an emphasis on the immediate effects on institutions in the West Riding County Council in which the writer served. Nationally it details the effects of Circular 10/65 and the arguments used by the Labour Party to justify its implementation as well as the growing backlash against comprehensive reorganisation within the Conservative Party.

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The school to which I moved in 1963, Wath-upon-Deerne Grammar School, had undergone a reorganisation and was designated as a comprehensive school though, in reality, it was a bilateral school. It was a grammar school serving a large part of the Deerne valley with the secondary modern school at Wath added. This type of scheme for reorganisation was quite important in the West Riding in the early years after the 1944 Act when rationalisation of existing resources was a very important consideration. It does seem to have been a relatively successful form of reorganisation, if only because it seemed to preserve the essential elements of the established grammar school including the large and successful sixth form and the traditional esteem within the community.

The school was very good. The academic departments were strong and the school had a strong ethic with close connections with the communities it served and splendid sporting, musical and dramatic traditions. The Headmaster was Dr Saffell, the best Head I ever served under. He was clever, direct, knowledgeable and very much in command of the operation, whilst giving his staff a considerable sense of self-worth and empowerment. His pupils treated him like a god. He was greatly respected within the West Riding though there was one occasion when Clegg's Deputy Director, Mr Hogan made an unscheduled and unsupervised visit to the school during the holidays and chose to write a critical letter about what he found. The reply from Dr Saffell was a masterpiece. He read it out to the entire staff. We were not told what happened when Dr Saffell visited Wakefield again. My guess is that Hogan would be much discomfited.

It was very different from being at Owston Park Secondary School. I do not think that any pupil was caned whilst I was at the school. The biggest threat was that a pupil not putting in

sufficient effort might be demoted to the basic wing, that is, the secondary modern school. I do not remember that happening though I knew of several who were promoted into the grammar school streams. I was there from September 1963 until Easter 1969 and I enjoyed every minute of my time there.

The Geography department was strong and the teaching good quality. It was a young department. Derek Hinchcliffe was the Head of Department and John Leeson was the other established figure. John Lawton and I made up the teaching force for Geography. We were both appointed as a result of the same interviewing process. There was another teacher in the 'basic wing' and I had to give him some teaching time. I taught some History as well as Geography and some General Studies. John Lawton, who became a very good friend, and I started a class in Geology and entered candidates for the GCE O Level. I ran a junior rugby team, assisted with the tennis team and helped the Senior Master with careers guidance as well as editing the school magazine and taking in musical and dramatic activities. I even got the job of calling the assembly to order each morning. It was very busy. The crucial thing was that all that happened in the school was purposeful and I can remember very few instances when there was friction within the staff.

At the same time that I started at Wath, my wife was employed to teach Music at a Secondary Modern School at Lundwood near Barnsley. The school drew from two villages, Lundwood which was produced by clearance from Barnsley and accommodation for miners and their families and Monk Bretton which was a long established village which had been extended because of the development of mining and transport links in the area. Lundwood Secondary School had to cope with the educational needs of those youngsters who had not been selected to go to Holgate Grammar School (boys) or the Barnsley Girls' High School. The atmosphere in the school was quite traditional secondary modern. The school was quite tough but she managed the job very well. For three years, we both had a great deal of preparation work to undertake. Both schools had a clear function and were settled, though we were both involved in the development of CSE syllabuses. Lundwood became involved in secondary reorganisation after my wife had left. Wath Grammar School was already classed as a comprehensive school despite its actual functioning being bi-lateral. It was an island of calm and seemed to be not affected when the Labour Party adopted a comprehensive policy in the run-up to the 1964 General Election.

Adoption by the Labour Party

Comprehensive schools were finally brought to the political forefront in the run-up to the 1964 election when they became a major plant in the policy of the Labour Party. It has been suggested (Fenwick, 1976 op cit) that the particular educational stance adopted was part of a deal between different wings of Labour which was designed to promote party unity. The Labour Party nationally had come to terms with the increase in the number of comprehensive schools and the wish of some of its activists to introduce them across the board.

This group was given a lot of ammunition by the Newsom Report "Half Our Future" (1963) which highlighted problems with the education of 13-16 year olds of average or less than average ability. In 1951, the Conservatives had cut educational spending but recognised later that increased educational spending was thought likely to produce national economic growth.

Thus, public expenditure on education grew from 3% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 1953-4 to 4.3% in 1964-5. This had undoubtedly made a difference in the rate of building and re-building schools and in providing additional equipment and materials to schools. The Newsom Report did, however, highlight a number of problems. Many buildings were overcrowded and inadequate, there was a lack of playing fields for some schools and staffing was often difficult with little continuity of teaching. The report highlighted particularly that expectations were low and that there was a lack of homework and little variety in the curriculum.

Many of the activists felt that the authority of the Minister must replace local initiatives as the driving force in the development of comprehensive schools. The demand was similar to that made by Cove in the 1940s and was in contrast to the attitude adopted by the Ministers following the 1944 Act. It was a wish to centralise the education system around the principle of non-selection which produced considerable change within the service in the 1960s and the 1970s. Neither the ideology nor the operational details were thought out and both were the object of considerable manipulation by educators and politicians alike. Associated negotiations gave considerable importance to reference and interest groups, particularly those within the profession.

In any event, in "Signposts for the Sixties", equality of opportunity in education was one of the five clear themes with secondary reorganisation, improvements in the teacher-pupil ratio in primary schools and the broadening of university entrance as its major measures. These educational ideas were linked with the notion of national revival and education was placed firmly on the political agenda for the 1964 election. It seemed to do the party no harm and the National Opinion Poll (NOP) found that education was second only to the cost of living as a concern among floating voters. The Conservatives tried to nullify the advantage of the apparent certainty by describing the Labour notions as doctrinaire (Fenwick, 1976 op cit).

After its election success, Labour did not have an easy ride because the Secretary of State (Michael Stewart) needed time to decide how the process of establishing a comprehensive system was to be achieved. He was given little time because several LEAs had plans which they wished him to consider. He was determined to try to hold the middle ground and, in the cases of both Bristol and Liverpool where there was considerable vocal opposition to reorganisation, he played for time by promising a statement in parliament. The leading educationists in the Conservative Party were not anxious to be disparaging about comprehensive education, but they rejected the case for a national policy. Both Quintin Hogg and Edward Boyle were ready to approve a bi-partisan approach based on the views of non-political educationists. Michael Stewart was prepared to go along with that notion providing that the Conservatives were prepared to reject selection at eleven-plus.

When Anthony Crosland replaced Michael Stewart, he also needed time. Crosland asserted that the complete establishment of comprehensive secondary education would take a considerable time but set himself the target that in five years time, the comprehensive system would be accepted as the normal pattern towards which all LEAs would be working though necessarily at different speeds. He was not prepared to make the full shift to central direction even about schemes. He was not prepared to accept makeshift schemes and he held back approval of Liverpool's scheme pending further consideration (Fenwick, 1976 op cit).

The movement to centralise the system was limited because Circular 10/65 was in the tradition of Circulars and its efficacy was still conditioned by the response of LEAs. The education system was still decentralised and following central decisions, local negotiations had to take place.

Circular 10/65

Crosland really wanted to produce a national policy following consultations with teachers' organisations. Where any pioneering was done, it was due to progressive LEAs, both Labour and Conservative controlled, and it was to local authorities that the government and the DES turned when it came to drawing up Circular 10/65. (Benn and Simon, 1970) Anger was felt by some Labour supporters at Crosland's decision not to incorporate compulsion in his Circular when it was finally produced on 12th July 1965.

The format of the Circular was to detail alternative schemes of reorganisation which would be acceptable in principle. Plans were to be submitted within a year and should contain both a general statement of the Authority's long-term proposals and a detailed plan for change over three years starting not later than September 1967. (Circular 10/65)

Six models were presented. Four were described as truly comprehensive and two were described as transitional. The models were: (1) all through 11-18 schools (preferred); (2) 11-13 or 14 schools followed by 13 or 14-18 schools; (3) 5-8 schools, 8-12 schools followed by 12-18 schools; or 5-9 schools, 9-13 schools followed by 13-18 schools (this was to be allowed in only a few instances for the time being because the age of transfer was being considered; (4) 11-16 schools followed by sixth form colleges.

Transitional arrangements could be (1) 11-13/14 schools for all with transfer for some to senior schools at 13/14; or (2) transfer at 13/14 to specialist senior schools (Circular 10/65). The Minister saw the major problem of implementation as being the provision of funds for building especially in view of the minimum recommended size of 6 FE (Form Entry). This point was emphasised in the reactions of the teachers' organisations. The Joint Four criticised the Circular; the other unions were more welcoming but all emphasised that if Authorities were going to develop a comprehensive system then the money would have to be provided. The same point was made both by the Association of Education Committees (AEC) and the Division Executives for Education Conference. (Benn and Simon, 1970 op cit) took the argument further by asserting that important as funds were, the real weakness was policy. In their view, the weakness was that reorganisation was permissive rather than mandatory.

National Reactions

Conservative opposition was initially not well orchestrated but in the 1966 election the party made much of local freedom and attacked a DES Circular which implied that "capital loan sanction would only be available for secondary building on comprehensive principles". (Fenwick, 1976 op cit)

There is evidence both of the gap between the general public and advocates of reorganisation and some confusion within the general public in the findings of a poll conducted by Research

Services Ltd and New Society. Superficially, the findings seemed to indicate that public opinion had turned in favour of reorganisation as 52 per cent answered positively to the question "Are you in favour or against comprehensive reorganisation?" Further analysis showed, however, that 76 per cent of the same (probably including 68 per cent of those in favour of comprehensives) were in favour of retaining grammar schools and 47 per cent would choose a grammar school place for their children. Over half the sample thought that they ought to know more about educational matters. (Donnison, 1967) It seems that the vote was in favour of grammar schools for all and represented a vote of no confidence in the secondary modern schools rather than a vote in favour of comprehensive schools. (Weeks, 1986 op cit)

West Riding County Council and Circular 10/65

In the West Riding, with Labour in power and Broughton in the chair, the Circular was welcomed and the Authority agreed to comply with the requirements of the Ministry within one year. The procedure to be followed in those Divisions which still had to go comprehensive was fixed. Representative working parties would be established in the Divisions and their proposals would be fully discussed with the local teachers' associations and appropriate bodies of parents. It was expected that Clegg and his staff would consult with DEOs (Divisional Education Officers), attend meetings and give advice on the formulation of schemes.

It was made clear to Divisional Executives and Officers that there were several features which were not acceptable in normal circumstances. These were: two year 11-13 schools; transfer at fourteen; selection for senior high schools based on parental choice; and, the creation of large schools on split sites which were widely separated. After consultation with senior heads, it was decided that 11-16 schools should have a minimum annual intake of 180 pupils (6 FE) to ensure adequate opportunities for both able and less able pupils, and that 11-18 schools should have a minimum annual intake of 240 pupils (8 FE) to ensure an adequate sixth form.

Clegg continued to stress the importance of having large sixth forms to attract good specialist staff and offer a wide range of A level subjects. He maintained that sixth formers in the West Riding should have the same opportunities as in public and direct grant schools. In the spring of 1966, Broughton tried to commit the Authority to a policy of complete comprehensive reorganisation and whilst the Conservatives opposed the motion and lost, their return to power in the spring of 1967 made little difference to the policy of the Authority. (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit) On the 19th July 1966, the bulk of the Authority's proposals were submitted to the DES and it was emphasised in the preamble that the schemes emanated from the Divisions and that in only a few instances had the local proposals been modified and that radical alterations had been made in fewer still. (West Riding's Response to Circular 10/65)

The Problem of Identity

From the publication of Circular 10/65 education was not only an essential part of politics but politics became an essential part of education. It would be wrong to imagine that 10/65 marked a sudden change of policy, but it did bestow official blessing on a piecemeal process which had been going on for several years and which it hoped to accelerate and make more general. Circular 10/65 was evolutionary in the sense that it grew out of and legitimised a process which had achieved a growing momentum until there was advantage in its adoption by a

political party. Comprehensive education was “sold” to the electorate and to some extent the profession as part of Wilson’s “white-hot technological revolution” and it was regarded as grammar school education for all. The political process of selling the idea replaced an argument which ought to have been about the organisation of schools and the content and delivery of the curriculum. Public perceptions were fashioned by the assurance that the grammar schools were being extended not eliminated. Circular 10/65 stated that the Government wished to “preserve all that is valuable in grammar school education for the children who now receive it and make it available for more children”. This notion was an expression of political convenience rather than educational thinking. There was no active consideration of the characteristics of the institutions which would replace tripartite schools. Developments were left largely to LEA and professional interpretations. This led to a large number of curriculum initiatives and experiments in teaching methods with a minimum of coordination. This emphasised the decentralised nature of the system and was encouraged by many LEAs and the Schools Council which saw itself as having the role of encouraging initiatives with schools picking and choosing. Developments were necessarily diverse and the resulting ideology inevitably hesitant.

From 1965, opposition to comprehensive reorganisation was concentrated around interest groups such as the National Education Association whose remit was “to safeguard parents’ freedom of choice in secondary schooling”. The organisation was federal and the Association hoped to coordinate and fund local opposition including legal action where necessary. The maintaining of the principle of freedom of choice was important historically because it provided the platform from which the Conservative philosophies of later decades would develop. There was also the National association of Aided Grammar Schools, which had significance in the Craven District of the West Riding in the mid-1960s. The aim of this organisation was to maintain the status and the academic standards of particular schools. An even greater reaction was foreshadowed, in 1969, by the publication of the First Black Paper in the *Critical Quarterly* edited by Cox and Dyson.

An important result of 10/65 was, therefore, that the ideologies were thrust in the ring. For those who favoured comprehensive education one of the problems was the lack of a single clear ideology and method of organisation to underpin their plans. Those who favoured the retention of the grammar schools were much clearer about where they stood, though they faced the difficulty of the agreed inadequacy of the eleven-plus as a system of differentiating between children. There was also the difficulty that the tripartite system was dominant and, therefore, its operational problems were measured against a largely hypothetical system which was perceived to have significant advantages.

The difficulty of pro-comprehensive groups was that whilst it was agreed that their educational hopes centred on the principle of equality of opportunity, there was neither agreed statement of what that meant nor how it was to be achieved. There was, thus, disagreement about what the units within the system were trying to achieve. The initial national political impetus was to spread a grammar school education to more people which implied a particular view of comprehensive schools in both personal and economic terms. Equality of opportunity, in this context, was interpreted as the supply of a potential place in a pool of economic talent. (Weeks, 1986 op cit)

This was not only what politicians wanted, but also seems to have been in accord with parental expectations. (Marsden, 1969) Delayed selection was a way out of the dilemma posed by parental objections to traditional forms of selection at eleven-plus. In comprehensive schools assessments by teachers could form the basis for movements between streams. The evolution of a process of continuous teacher assessment in the comprehensive school could discover the “real” ability of pupils more efficiently than the eleven-plus system. This “traditional” view of the comprehensive school hinged on the removal of the difficulties caused by eleven-plus selection and the making of the system more efficient both personally and economically.

Other writers, notably Marsden, expressed another view which was called “progressive”. They saw comprehensive education as serving personal need and the underlying thrust was to create a more equal society. They wrote in terms of personal talent, personal growth and the need to develop the potential of individuals. They were against institutional devices such as orders of merit and streaming and called for equal prestige for a wide variety of achievements. (Marsden, 1969 op cit)

Comprehensive schools, therefore, varied considerably in goals and atmospheres according to the influence of a number of part causes such as the source of the school (grammar/secondary modern/from scratch), the make-up of the staff, the area served, the character of the head and relationships with the LEA. At this stage, decentralisation of knowledge showed itself in significant differences between schools. A significant facilitating mechanism was the examination system. Both GCE and CSE were single subject examinations which encouraged a pick and mix approach to examination options. In some schools, particularly in areas like the West Riding where mode 3 syllabuses were encouraged, the teachers had considerable control over the subject content and even the processes of examination and assessment. The “ownership” of the curriculum by teachers was encouraged by the Schools Council which had grown out of the interest shown by Sir David Eccles (Minister, 1961-62) in the curricula of schools. The study group, which this interest generated in the Ministry, led to the development of the Schools Council which became a quango dominated by LEAs and teacher associations. The whole policy of this body was to encourage initiatives from within the teaching force with little attention being paid to the problem of dissemination. (Maclure, 1987) The coincidence of the introduction of single subject examinations; mode 3 examinations; the Schools Council controlled by the profession; and, negotiations about schemes for comprehensive reorganisation encouraged decentralisation and diversity as well as increasing the influence of professionals.

Local Difficulties

As a result of Circular 10/65 and the demands made on LEAs in that document there was an acceleration of the rate of preparation of comprehensive plans. By 1970 most authorities -129 out of 163- had implemented comprehensive schemes or produced scenarios acceptable to the Minister. However, it takes at least six years to complete the feed-through process of reorganisation and 74% of children in English LEAs were still in grammar, technical or modern schools. Moreover, 137 LEAs still retained their eleven-plus selection procedures. To the radical left, the rate of progress was far too slow. (Richmond, 1978 op cit)

In many LEAs the areas which remained without schemes were either those from which there

was strong local opposition, such as Skipton and Ripon in the West Riding, or where there were particularly intractable difficulties often connected with buildings, such as in the Dearne valley in the West Riding. When the Conservatives regained power in the West Riding in 1967, Clegg felt that it had made little difference but by 1970 the debate about specific schemes had become strongly politicised. This was very apparent in disputes about reorganisations in the Mexborough and Normanton divisions where it had become clear that the only way of abolishing selection within a comparatively short period of time was to amalgamate schools on different sites.

The issue came to a head because the Labour members of the Education Committee supported Labour-controlled Divisional Executives and the Conservatives followed traditional County policy in opposing large comprehensive schools on split sites. The political battle culminated in a censure motion on the policy of the Education Committee moved by C T Broughton when he maintained that the Committee was ignoring local wishes and professional advice by continuing the practice of selection. The Normanton situation was resolved but Clegg had to consult with the teachers in the Mexborough area and had to present a document to the committee of the County Council showing great local support for the amalgamation of the schools on different sites before it was agreed to make an exception in this case. (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit)

Local opposition to comprehensive education was a factor in the failure to implement comprehensive schooling in a few areas and in the West Riding this was true of both Ripon and Skipton. Ripon did not produce a scheme in the time of the West Riding. Skipton produced a lot of schemes. The end result was the same – neither township was reorganised.

I left Wath-upon-Deerne Grammar School at Easter in 1969 when I was appointed Head of Geography at Thorne Grammar School. This school served a large catchment area to the east of Doncaster and was still a grammar school operating within a system of selection at eleven-plus. The method of selection was the Thorne scheme (see Part 1 and Part 2: <http://www.journalacademicmarketingmysticismonline.net/index.php/JAMMO/issue/view/34> <http://www.journalacademicmarketingmysticismonline.net/index.php/JAMMO/issue/view/D-2524-2012>) developed in this part of the West Riding. The grammar school had survived developments following Circular 10/65 partly because of strong local opposition though there was a scheme developed within the Goole Division involving Middle Schools and 13-18 High Schools. The catchment was very mixed drawing pupils from mining villages, from the developing urban sprawl east of Doncaster, as well as a large rural area which included the large RAF establishments at Finningley and Lindholme and the market town of Thorne itself. There was some deprivation in the area because the large and deep mine at Moorends, adjacent to Thorne, had never worked fully and had been closed for a number of years. I knew quite a lot about the area because I had written a thesis on the Isle of Axholme whilst at Oxford and my mother's relatives still lived at Misterton not far away.

The school was interesting and had some of the strengths of Wath. It had a strong position in the community with well-established traditions and it acted as a centre for community activities for a wide area. The operatic society met there and was part of a well-established and well-run Further Education set-up. There was a strong rugby club- the Thornensians- which had close connections with the school and there was talk of establishing a Youth Centre in the grounds

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of the school. The school had many well-qualified and able members of staff and a large sixth form. My own department had three full-time members, myself, Pete Trimmingham who was an ex-pupil, and Adrian Kidd as well as some part-time hours from the Economics Department.

The Headmaster was P T Griffiths (aka PTG to the staff). He was not as impressive a man as Dr Saffell was at Wath. He was a classicist, precise and very keen that the language used in anything to do with the school must be not only clear but well-written. He was not far from retirement but had known tragedy in his earlier life and had married a second wife in later life and had a young family, not a lot older than the children we had. He was a kindly man and I liked him as a person. He had taken the school over when the previous head, Shipley-Turner died whilst still in post. This is always difficult, as Mr Guy found with Mr Sharpe at Owston Park Secondary School. Shipley-Turner was very idiosyncratic and had a strong personality and consequently was much revered. So much so, that PTG found it difficult to match the memory.

The school was organised in tight departments with great competition for attracting pupils into taking your subject in the sixth form. Academic progress was measured by an accumulation of marks and the forms and the timetable were organised around a three stream principle – upper at the top, lower at the bottom and remove for those who were either going up or going down. School exams were very formal and a whole week of school exams was organised every summer term after the external exams had been taken. Report writing was intently scrutinised by the Head and the Senior Mistress, who was the Deputy. Members of staff who made spelling errors or who wrote less than clear and grammatical English had their reports returned to them. The only complaint that I received was that my writing was very small. There was a House system which was used mainly for sporting activity. Much else was undertaken by James Lawson who was officially Head of the History Department. He was an intelligent, determined and well organised man who had been responsible for running the FE provision for many years. Both Mr Lawson and PTG were greatly helped when Jean Felton was appointed Deputy Head. She was a mathematician with a keen brain, an excellent memory and both energy and time which she was prepared to use in the interests of the school.

It was the easiest job I ever had. We lived about 100 yards from the staffroom door and most days were neatly divided into two because a lot of the staff, including PTG, used to go home for lunch. The lunchtime was quite long and school finished at 4 pm. There was a lot of development work that I wanted to do but there was time to do it and both Pete and Adrian were very anxious to be involved. Pete lived nearby at Fishlake and Adrian, whose home was in Thirsk, stayed in a local hotel during the week. We established a corridor of three rooms as our territory and prepared work, including fieldwork, which we could all access and spent as much time as we could with the pupils to help with their individual work. It was hard work but it was exciting and the people in the community were very welcoming.

Throughout my first year at the school, there was little discussion about comprehensive reorganisation that was official and in the public domain. The big discussion was about the development of a Youth Centre adjacent to the school and well within the school grounds. I had done a lot of youth work, mainly associated with the Methodist Church, throughout my career and this was known by PTG because it had been part of my application for the job. He asked me to represent the school in the negotiations about the building and the establishment of the Youth centre. I agreed and at the first meeting I was appointed as secretary to the

development meeting and eventually to the Management Committee. The Chair was a former member of the Grammar School staff who had left the school to marry the local doctor who had become a widower. He also was on the committee as was the Chair of Governors of the Grammar School, Mr Hinds, though Mr Hinds played little part in the running of the Management Committee. I became a major support for the Youth Centre staff, especially when they had difficulties with recalcitrant young people. This was occasional because they were very good at their job.

There was a change of atmosphere in the summer of 1970 when the Conservatives regained power at Westminster. The details of what happened nationally will be dealt with later but it certainly changed perspectives at Thorne. The traditionalists, many of whom had attended the Grammar School, and some with children or grandchildren, including the Chair of Governors, at the school began to be more active in agitating for the school to remain unchanged. They received support from quite a lot of the staff, though many others watched and said little. There was considerable anxiety about academic standards and the quality and size of the sixth form. Some meetings were held to meet with other staffs who might be in Middle Schools or who might wish to apply to the Grammar School or to the other projected High School at Hatfield. There were also meetings involving members of staff from Hatfield Secondary Modern School and the Grammar School. I found these quite depressing because it was quickly obvious that there was little sympathy between the different groups of professionals and little common ground between PTG and the Head of Hatfield, Frank Colley. It was also felt that Mr Colley had the ear of both the Divisional Executive at Goole and the Officers at County Hall.

This feeling was increased when it was announced that Sir Alec Clegg was to come from Wakefield to talk with the staff at the Grammar School. There was the distinct impression that the staff at the Hatfield Secondary Modern School was very much in favour of the proposed reorganisation and that the Grammar School was seen as a problem. I was interested in the meeting largely because I had never seen Sir Alec Clegg. There was obviously some conversation before the meeting though I do not remember discussing any tactics with anyone before Clegg came. He was 'mob-handed' with several Officers, Advisers including a man called Crawford who was very senior. After the inevitable pleasantries several of the staff weighed in quite ferociously criticising the demise of the grammar schools generally and particularly the Middle Schools and the 13-18 school plan, which was Clegg's favoured format. As I remember it, it was a very strange meeting which meandered along almost pre-determined paths with the non-elected spokespersons from the staff stating objections and the Officers, especially Clegg, protesting educational ideals. Some of the episodes were quite violent but I remember feeling that nobody was getting anywhere and I decided to intervene. I argued that the meeting needed a new focus and that whilst there were problems inherent in the application of Cleggs' favoured scheme, they were not irresolvable but were unlikely to be resolved in a meeting like the one we were having. I also argued that the school had particularly urgent needs in terms of expansion and refurbishment to meet the needs of comprehensive reorganisation which we were likely to get from the West Riding, because the Authority was keen to establish a reorganised system in the area. Then I argued for an extension of the vision and work of the school in relation to the community which had particular geographical and socio-economic problems. There were probably many other things but I cannot remember exactly what I said. The speech, for that is what it became, was well received and the objectors were silenced. I forget the resolution that was achieved at the end

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of the meeting except that Clegg acknowledged the need to go away and consult with his Officers and the Division again to produce a definitive proposal. He sent a message to me asking me to write to him with an analysis of the problems faced by the community with further suggestions. I did this at some considerable length. Unfortunately, I have not kept a copy of the letter.

The meeting gave me a profile in the County and in the staff of the Grammar School. Some were obviously suspicious and regarded me as being too jumped up and clever by half. Some realised that there was the possibility that whilst the grammar school would have to be lost, there was a new way forward. Conversations between James Lawson and Jean Felton and I became earnest and highly focussed and with some of the younger members of staff, there was real excitement. There was also a steady influx of Advisers from Wakefield including a Mr Sedgewick who was a Youth Adviser and Fred Tunstall who was a Geography and Environmental Studies Adviser. W J (Willie) Morrell, of the "Division Executives for Education Conference" also came to the School, though not to see me. I knew him through the Methodist Church and my wife's family. It was he who reassured my disappointed father that everything would be alright when I decided to go to teach at Owston Park Secondary School.

Clegg's further discussions brought no further changes to the basic scheme but left the way open for changes to details. PTG had announced his intention to retire before reorganisation and Clegg agreed that a new Head should be appointed to work alongside PTG for his final year to organise the reorganisation and make suitable plans for the school. The Authority also put on courses which staff from the Grammar School were encouraged to attend. These were well organised though always vague and lacking in detail necessarily relevant to Thorne. When the headship was advertised, I was encouraged to apply, especially by James Lawson and Jean Felton. I did apply which was probably a tactical error. It might have been better for Jean Felton to apply and for me to hope to be appointed Deputy Head alongside James Lawson. She would have made a good Head and was more likely to be politically acceptable to the local governors than I was. In the event, I was interviewed and was not successful despite being supported by representatives from the County Council. Unfortunately, I did not take to the person who was appointed and I decided to try to get a job elsewhere. I applied to the West Riding for a headship at Bradfield, near Sheffield and a job as a Second Deputy Head at Holme Valley Grammar School, near Huddersfield. The interview for the Holme Valley post was one week before the Bradfield interview. The job was offered and I decided that the bird in the hand is better than that in the bush and I accepted. We left Thorne with considerable regret in the summer of 1972. There was a big job to be done and I wanted to tackle it. Unfortunately, the school was not highly successful, Jean Felton left to become a Head elsewhere and James Lawson retired, and after years of travail it was made an Academy by the Labour government in 2005. For reasons to be discussed much later, the Academy has enjoyed a successful start.

The negotiations at Thorne resonated with the themes discernible nationally. In fact, at the beginning of the 1970s, comprehensive reorganisation maintained its momentum despite the return of a Conservative government pledged to support the grammar schools. Following 10/65, negotiations had proceeded so far that they were difficult to stop and, curiously, Margaret Thatcher (the Secretary of State) held office when more grammar schools disappeared than at any other time. The influence of the localities was still strong which

ensured both that some schemes of reorganisation proceeded despite central government wishes, and also that some schemes of reorganisation would not take place because resisting institutions could rely on the backing of central government against local authority directives. In Thorne, the attitude of the LEA and the Divisional politicians favoured the development of a comprehensive school at Hatfield rather than the maintenance of the Grammar School.

The change of government in 1970 was an important factor in strengthening the hand of the local Conservative groups as was the prior failure of the Labour government's 1970 Education Bill. This Bill which sought powers for the Secretary of State "to require local authorities to submit one or more plans for going comprehensive" was rejected in committee largely because of Labour backbenchers' abstentions. (Richmond, 1978 op cit)

Before the election of 1970, the Conservative spokesman on education was Margaret Thatcher and she sought to shift the base of the argument. She argued that equality in education would not be achieved by comprehensive education if only because of the differential effects of neighbourhood on school success. (Fenwick, 1976 op cit) Thatcher's claim was that grammar schools and comprehensive schools could exist side by side. This notion was as imprecise as the claim that grammar schools could be extended to all. There was no mention of secondary modern schools and how they would manage to exist meaningfully in a situation where they were squeezed between grammar and comprehensive schools.

When the Conservatives were elected to government in 1970, Thatcher produced circular 10/70 which effectively withdrew Circular 10/65 but did not call for a halt to plans for comprehensive reorganisation, but throughout her tenure she acted consistently with the belief that comprehensive and grammar schools could co-exist and when considering schemes and making decisions under section 13 of the 1944 Education Act she had great regard to the views of objectors. If Thatcher's Circular 10/70 did little more than slow down the already slow progress of reorganisation, Labour's determination to speed it up by threatening legislation to enforce it was to prove no less abortive, culminating in 1976 in a cause celebre, DES versus Tameside, in which the Law Lords decided that the Secretary of State had exceeded his powers. (Fenwick, 1976 op cit)

There has been a pre-occupation with secondary education in this section of the article because of the elements of my own career used to illustrate tendencies. There were, however, other significant developments especially, though not exclusively, in primary schools. There had been an important development in independent education. It had been a Labour ambition to integrate the independent ("public") schools into the national system but had not pursued this end with much determination. The Public Schools Commission considered the issue, especially of direct grant schools, at great length and in 1970 the Donnison Report proposed that the direct grammar schools should either become comprehensive or go fully private. Over the next six years a third of them (about 50 schools) went comprehensive with the majority (more than a hundred schools, including Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield) deciding to join the private sector.

Primary education also had a period of considerable change in the 1960s, much of which was facilitated by, if not a direct result of comprehensive reorganisation. Where comprehensive

reorganisation took place the abolition of the eleven-plus examination freed the curriculum of the junior schools. This allowed the development of a more informal, child-centred education with an emphasis on individual learning and learning by discovery. The ideas that were generated about this tendency were generally termed “progressive” and were characteristic of those areas that had embraced comprehensive education most readily such as Oxfordshire, Leicestershire, Bristol, London and the West Riding. Other areas developed the progressive practices more slowly but by the mid-sixties there was an acceleration of more child-centred practices. Many causes and part causes have been suggested such as the permissive society, full employment and relative affluence, increased confidence in young people, the encouragement of LEAs, increased professionalism in teachers and schools, and increased confidence within the teaching profession.

Professionally, teachers gained great strength from the Plowden Report. This Report published in 1967 by the Central Advisory Council for Education and called “Children and their Primary Schools” was published at a time of strong questioning of the practice of streaming systems in schools. Setting within individual subjects was encouraged by single subject examinations within both GCE and CSE, though there was also a tendency in secondary schools for banding systems to be used. The Plowden Report expressed the enthusiasm and the optimism of the time. Perhaps the most famous line in the whole Report occurred in Chapter 2 where it read “At the heart of the educational process lies the child”. It stressed that no class of children was homogeneous and that each class consisted of individual children with differing needs and requiring individual attention. (Plowden Report, 1967) There was a stress on the need for primary schools to strengthen children’s intrinsic interest in learning and lead them to learn for themselves rather than to try to teach through a fear of adult disapproval if they failed. Children should learn individually through discovery and teachers should construct flexible curricula and use the environment and practical examples as far as possible.

The spirit of Plowden probably gave great encouragement to Alec Clegg as he considered processes of reorganisation and grew to favour the development of Middle Schools. He was also greatly encouraged by the 1964 Education Act put through parliament by the Conservative Minister, Sir Edward Boyle, which permitted transfer at ages other than 11. This Act was a direct modification of the 1944 Education Act but it was widely supported in parliament and was probably the last Act within the post-war consensus which was so essential to the passage of 1944 Act. Circular 10/65 put an end to all that. There was no academic research into the effectiveness of middle schools and it is worth remembering that they were made necessary by financial stringency and the need to develop a system using existing buildings most effectively. They did get some encouragement through the DES in 1970 in “Towards the Middle School” which quoted experts in child development and psychologists asserting that they would provide good pastoral support especially for girls and early maturing boys and would shield children from the undesirable pressures of early examinations.

The other measure that caused some ripples within some areas of the West Riding was the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA) in 1972. Within many grammar schools and many comprehensive schools this was quite acceptable. It was in the main a simple continuation of existing practices. Indeed, many schools benefited from money for additional building to accommodate additional numbers or the social needs of fifth-form pupils. Secondary modern

schools had in many instances developed examination courses and were able to give extra time and put in more effort to examination classes when part of the cohort had left. When they had to cater for the full year age group, it was felt necessary for them to separate out the examination groups and find other things for the less able to do. In some schools, the teachers were not happy about this additional commitment. I remember a ROSLA meeting at Snaith Secondary Modern School chaired by the Headmistress of Selby Girls Grammar School when she was very surprised by the vehemence of some of secondary modern teachers and the meeting had to be rescued.

Within the years described in this Part, there were many points that could be described as changing points in the development of education such as the Circular 10/65 and the re-election of the Conservatives to national government in 1970 with Margaret Thatcher as Minister of Education. There is one factor, however, which seems to me, has been consistently underestimated. Local government was reorganised in 1974 and this was a critical factor in what was to happen in the aftermath.

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