



Teachers and the Dual System in England and Wales

Jarvis Fred

Pour citer cet article

Jarvis Fred, « Teachers and the Dual System in England and Wales », *Cycnos*, vol. 13.2 (Éducation et religion dans les Îles Britanniques), 1996, mis en ligne en 2021.

<http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/811>

Lien vers la notice <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/811>

Lien du document <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/cycnos/811.pdf>

Cycnos, études anglophones

revue électronique éditée sur épi-Revel à Nice

ISSN 1765-3118 ISSN papier 0992-1893

AVERTISSEMENT

Les publications déposées sur la plate-forme épi-revel sont protégées par les dispositions générales du Code de la propriété intellectuelle. Conditions d'utilisation : respect du droit d'auteur et de la propriété intellectuelle.

L'accès aux références bibliographiques, au texte intégral, aux outils de recherche, au feuilletage de l'ensemble des revues est libre, cependant article, recension et autre contribution sont couvertes par le droit d'auteur et sont la propriété de leurs auteurs. Les utilisateurs doivent toujours associer à toute unité documentaire les éléments bibliographiques permettant de l'identifier correctement, notamment toujours faire mention du nom de l'auteur, du titre de l'article, de la revue et du site épi-revel. Ces mentions apparaissent sur la page de garde des documents sauvegardés ou imprimés par les utilisateurs. L'université Côte d'Azur est l'éditeur du portail épi-revel et à ce titre détient la propriété intellectuelle et les droits d'exploitation du site. L'exploitation du site à des fins commerciales ou publicitaires est interdite ainsi que toute diffusion massive du contenu ou modification des données sans l'accord des auteurs et de l'équipe d'épi-revel.

Le présent document a été numérisé à partir de la revue papier. Nous avons procédé à une reconnaissance automatique du texte sans correction manuelle ultérieure, ce qui peut générer des erreurs de transcription, de recherche ou de copie du texte associé au document.

EPI-REVEL

Revue électronique de l'Université Côte d'Azur

Teachers and the Dual System in England and Wales

Fred Jarvis*

In his excellent book, *Education in England and Wales*, Professor Michel Lemosse points out that whereas French teachers would accept nothing but a totally secular school, teachers in England “were not opposed, in their majority, to religious instruction in schools, even if resistance to this did exist, and insistence on a purely secular form of education was not at all uncommon. The tradition in England was to accept the notion that sound education should be founded on strong, solid Christian principles.”

The Essence of the Dual System

The fact that I have been asked to deal with our teachers’ acceptance of the Dual System suggests that our French colleagues are as mystified by that as they are by their acceptance of religious instruction in our schools.

The essence of our “Dual system” is that the schools owned by the local authorities (the so-called “County schools”) and, now, schools wholly or mainly, funded directly by the State (principally the “grant-maintained” schools) combine with Church Schools (which also receive public funds) to constitute a single education system governed by national education legislation.

Why are teachers in England and Wales prepared to accept such a system when their French colleagues are so strongly insistent on a purely secular form of education?

The answer lies partly in history and partly in the nature and purpose of our teacher organisations.

First, and briefly, history. Pressure of time/space precludes any detailed examination of the origins and development of our education system but, in any case, for my purpose here the central feature was put succinctly in a recent circular issued by our Department for Education and Employment.

The circular said: “Partnership between Churches and State is *central* to our school system and historically the State has been the junior partner. The first State schools appeared after 1870 to *supplement* church and voluntary provision” (my italics).¹

So the Church was the first on the scene and the limited role of the State was to fill gaps in provision and act as the junior partner. Over time, of

* Former general secretary of the National Union of Teachers.

¹ Department for Education and Employment, *Consultative paper on self-government for voluntary aided schools* (October 1995).

course, the State has come to assume the dominant role, whilst giving substantial funds and assuming degrees of control over the Church schools. At no time, however, has it sought to eliminate Church participation in the education system.

During the last war, at the time of debate on what was to become the most significant education reform in our history, the passage of the 1944 Education Act, the role of the Churches and the future of the Dual System was one of the most contentious issues faced by the wartime Coalition Government. Yet at no point in all the protracted negotiations was there any suggestion by any of the parties in the Government, or by their Civil Servants, that the Dual System should be brought to an end.

Memories of 1902

Certainly, there was no wish on the part of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to see a recurrence of the enormous controversy which had arisen at the beginning of the century when the 1902 Education Bill was under consideration.

The purpose of that bill was to provide rate support to the Church schools while leaving the voluntary bodies with a clear majority on the boards of managers.

That was the period when the country witnessed the greatest outburst of feeling, not against the existence and future of the Church schools, but against the giving of public funds to them.

"No Rome on the Rates" was the battle cry of Lloyd George and the Liberals, the emerging trade union and Labour movement, and the Nonconformist Churches. Some Welsh Nonconformists went so far as to refuse to pay that part of the rate that would be going to Anglican schools.

The Nonconformists had no schools of their own and were bitterly opposed to public funds being given to the Church of England and Catholic schools. They claimed that up to half of the children going to Anglican schools were from Nonconformist families.

While there was widespread opposition to the 1902 Bill's proposals, significantly, the National Union of Teachers did not oppose them. Yet the Union, and teachers generally, had no reason to love the Churches and their role.

Working conditions and resources in the Church schools were poor in relation to those to be found in the growing number of state schools, which were better endowed by the School Boards which at that time were responsible for them. Moreover, many individual teachers in Church schools had suffered badly at the hands of the clergy in a variety of ways.

Despite those powerful considerations, the NUT took the view that for the sake of the children and the teachers, the country could not afford to go on permitting the standards in half its schools to be so markedly inferior to the rest.

The NUT was strongly criticised by the Nonconformists for its stance over the Bill and it would be intriguing to speculate whether the educational

history of the time would have been different if the Union had joined forces with the other opponents of the Bill.

Equally, one might ask why, given the reasons for establishing the teacher organisations, their leaders did not seize the opportunity to bring an end to the poor conditions, the oppressive interventions of individual clergymen and the imposition of tests on teachers, which might have been achieved if the Bill had been defeated.

However, that would probably be expecting too much of an organisation made up primarily (as it was at the time) of teachers who had mostly been trained in Church training colleges and who taught in Church schools.

A teachers' union is not a political party. It has to reflect and pursue the needs of its members and in that period one of the main aims of the NUT was to secure "freedom from obnoxious interference." It was, therefore, more intent on enabling its members to assert their rights against the interfering clergy, than seeking to change the educational framework altogether.

The Potential for Division

One recalls the events of 1902 to explain why Winston Churchill did not want, at a critical stage in the war, to see any reemergence in the country of the divisions which had occurred in that year.

The potential for a reemergence was certainly there, not least because of the attacks which had been made by Church leaders on teachers in State schools, particularly when, in 1941, the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales issued a public statement emphasising their concern that schools should instruct their pupils in "the Christian view of life."

Those attacks were greatly resented by the leaders of the NUT and that resentment was vehemently expressed by the Union's General Secretary, Sir Frederick Mander, in a series of articles in the *Union's Journal* in January-February 1942.²

The following extracts from the articles indicate the serious potential for conflict which existed at the time.

The recent Propagandist activities of the churches and other agencies have so thoroughly aroused the suspicion of the teaching profession that whatever settlement may be discussed there will still linger certain atavistic fears lest on appointment, or when promotion is in question, some local authorities, bodies of managers, or individual members of appointed committees may be tempted to investigate.

I am sorry to say that I share these fears. I am convinced that unless the Government safeguard this position in any new Legislation, such things may continue to happen. The Archbishops, in their appeal, it is true, urge that no teacher should be prejudiced professionally by reason of abstention from religious teaching. But the very fact that they do so implies a disquieting possibility.

Times have greatly changed since 1870 or 1902. The clerical profession can no longer claim any particular intellectual advantage over the teaching

² Series of articles by Sir Frederick Mander, "The religious instruction controversy," *Schoolmaster and Women Teachers Chronicle* (January-February 1942).

profession and teachers will not be satisfied with a lesser degree of intellectual freedom than that so rightly enjoyed and exercised by their clerical brethren. Teachers today are certainly not prepared to acquiesce in their minds being impressed into the particular ecclesiastical mould from which that of the bishop of the diocese for the time being happens to emerge.

Teachers in the schools want a general educational advance. They know that this can only come with the achievement of a national system of schools within which the local authorities can provide, maintain, re-group, re-organise, close or replace and generally control all the schools and teaching staffs in their respective areas. They see no reason whatsoever why the Archbishops and their Anglican colleagues should continue to call the tune in schools maintained, although not provided, by the local authorities, and in addition, with the help of the Free Churches, call the tune in the schools both provided and maintained out of public money. They feel this the more strongly when they fear, as many of them do, that certain of the suggestions now being mooted or discussed might threaten their professional interests on such tender and vital points as appointment, dismissal, tenure, promotion and even freedom of conscience.

Concluding his series of articles, Sir Frederick said:

A gesture from the clerical profession disclaiming any desire to inspect, supervise, or otherwise to exercise control over the work of the teacher, accompanied by a voluntary withdrawal from the provided schools at present subject to their visitations, would go far to provide a basis for a more hopeful and happy future for the churches and schools of the country.

While the main feature of the Mander articles was his reply to the Archbishops' criticisms of teachers and his insistence on the need to end any interference by the clergy in the work of teachers, it will be seen that he was also prepared to contemplate the end of the Dual System. That system he had described, on another occasion, as "a tank trap across the highway to educational advance" and at another point in the series he made this prophesy:

The Dual System as we know it can only persist with an educationally stagnant nation — and stagnation in respect of their children's education will not be tolerated by the ordinary people of this country after 'the toil and sweat, and blood and tears' of this war.

The Deficiencies of the Church schools

But the attacks of the clergy, and the fear of a return to religious tests for teachers and other forms of interference, were not the only reasons why the NUT might have been expected to support an end to the Dual System. Another reason recalls the considerations that arose at the time of the 1902 Bill and led the Union to support that Bill — the bad conditions in many Church Schools and their inability to implement educational reforms.

Before the war they had been unable to implement the reforms advocated by the Hadow Report, reforms which the NUT and others supported. Concern about the deficiencies of the Church schools was not confined to the teachers' organisations. It was shared by the Board of Education.

The wartime Green Book, which set out the Board's proposals for educational reform, said:

The need for modernisation or replacement of much of the non-provided school accommodation for junior and infant children, a (large) number of

whom are housed in conditions little short of scandalous, faces the churches with a financial problem greater in extent and no less urgent than that in respect of senior children, a problem which they have shown themselves quite unable to meet in recent years.³

While the Board of Education recognised the deficiencies of the Church schools, it did not go as far as to contemplate the ending of the Dual System, the Green Book arguing that

public opinion would not tolerate what might mean the large scale abolition of non-provided schools, but would look rather for some measure of extended financial assistance, accompanied, as it must be, by such extended public control as is necessary, not simply to secure a *quid pro quo*, but to ensure effective and economical organisation and development of both primary and secondary education.

At that time the National Union of Teachers did not share the reluctance of the Board of Education to contemplate ending the Dual System. In response to the consultation on the Government's reform proposals it published a "Sage Green Book" in which it called, among other things, for its abolition.

The NUT was not alone in favouring that course. The Association of Education Committees (AEC) supported it too, arguing that the local education authorities would end up paying for the Church Schools anyway.

Like the NUT, the AEC exerted a strong influence on education policy. It was the national voice of the local authority education committees. Its Secretary, Sir Percival Sharp, together with the Secretary to the Board of Education, Sir Maurice Holmes, and Sir Fredrick Mander (of the NUT) formed a triumvirate which had a major influence on the running and development of the education system.

Given their influence, their relations with his ministry and the pressures they were exerting on the issue of reform, the Minister charged with preparing the Government's education legislation, R. A. Butler, wished to accommodate the NUT and AEC as far as he could. He was prepared to move on a number of reforms wanted by the NUT, but politically he saw no prospect of abolishing the Church schools, even if he had wanted to.

The Pressures on Butler

Butler's biggest problems in the negotiations over the proposals for education reform were with the Churches, not the teachers or the local authorities. The Churches wanted more public money, but the minimum of State interference, especially the Catholics, and they had strong supporters within the Conservative ranks in Parliament.

The Minister and his civil servants were, however, prepared to resist some of the Churches' demands and he put forward various options whereby, in return for more state aid, various degrees of state control over the Church schools could be achieved.

The Church of England was more willing to consider his proposals than the Catholics, with whom Butler had a number of very difficult

³ Board of Education Green Paper, 1941.

meetings. Eventually he decided he could make no further concessions to the Churches and was prepared to face the consequences. He did not, however, contemplate the ending of the Dual System. He proposed its continuation on a compromise basis.

In the very difficult negotiations Butler was greatly helped by his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, James Chuter Ede. Chuter Ede was a very experienced parliamentarian, a highly respected Nonconformist — and a prominent member of the NUT. (In the postwar Labour Government he was to become Home Secretary and Leader of the House. I was privileged to work with him in later years, when he acted as a parliamentary consultant to the NUT. When the Union instituted a series of public lectures in honour of Chuter Ede, the first lecture was given by Butler.)

With such an ally so well-placed at the heart of the negotiations on the new education reforms, why did the NUT not press for the implementation of the policy it had set out in its Sage Green Book, given its resentment at the attacks of the Archbishops and the poor conditions in the Church schools?

While the Union undoubtedly gained considerable benefit from the role of Chuter Ede, his first duty was to Butler and the Government and, as indicated, there was no possibility, in spite of all the difficulties they were experiencing with the Churches, that the two Ministers would come round to proposing abolition for they were under no pressure from within Parliament to do so.

Their close relations with Chuter Ede would have made the NUT leaders well aware of the likelihood that abolition could not be achieved, but in any case, the Union had other, broader and more positive aims to pursue. From the outset in the discussions of the need for change it had made it clear that it was seeking a series of education reforms and foremost among those was the introduction of universal secondary education.

Universal Secondary Education the first priority

In all the negotiations on the new Education Act it put the achievement of that aim as its first priority and that was an aim that the Government was prepared to concede. In effect, it was the most significant of all the changes being considered.

As the negotiations over the Act neared their climax, the questions the NUT leaders had to ask themselves were: first, with the Union's major policy objective in sight of being achieved, should that be put at risk by the prevention of a settlement on the religious issue? Second, was the Union prepared, in respect of a religious settlement, to agree to what the Churches were to be promised in return for changes in the status of their schools?

The answer they gave to the first question was "No" and to the second question, "Yes".

As Ronald Gould, who later succeeded Mander as General Secretary, put it:

It was very easy to summarise our position as being opposed to all Church schools and that had indeed been our traditional policy. We still thought it the right policy but realistically had to accept that dual control would only be modified.

And the positive gain was expressed by the Union's President of the time, C. G. T. Giles (a Communist), who declared: "With all its limitations the Act was a great step forward to a democratic system of education."

Given that many NUT members still worked in Church schools, and that the Union had fought for and secured safeguards on appointments and against interference by the clergy, there was no reason in principle why it should not accept the proposals on religious instruction and a collective act of worship which were to form part of the Religious Settlement which the Government was seeking to achieve.

No tradition of "Laicisme"

Unlike their French colleagues, the teachers of England and Wales had no tradition of "Laicisme," though there were strong Nonconformist elements in the profession (Ronald Gould was an active Methodist and lay preacher).

Therefore, if teachers' interests were protected, and freedom to opt out of religious instruction on grounds of conscience was assured, the Union saw no reason to oppose the Government's proposals.

If there had been a possibility of political support for rejection of the government's religious proposals, and for an end to the Dual System, the Union might have maintained its original position, but at what was a critical time in the war there was no prospect of such political support.

Moreover, while in the country at large there was a broad movement campaigning for educational advance, there was no repetition of the massive opposition to public funds for Church schools which had led to big demonstrations in 1902. The reforms the campaigners wanted were: nursery education, universal secondary education, the raising of the school-leaving age, and more adult and further education.

In Parliament, there was no sign of Labour M.P.s being prepared to support any call for the abolition of the Dual System. Many of them represented working class areas with a considerable number of Catholics who voted Labour who would not be slow to exert pressure at the request of their church. Such M.P.s would see more votes being lost than gained if they supported abolition.

After prolonged consultations and negotiations, the 1944 Education Act was eventually passed, with the Dual System preserved but with greater state interference in and control of the Church schools, who in turn received increased funding.

The Act created three categories of Church school:

a) *Voluntary Controlled Schools* : These accept a high degree of control by the local education authorities which become responsible for the maintenance of the school building and the payment of teachers' salaries.

b) *Voluntary Aided Schools*: These schools are given more autonomy but fewer public funds.

c) *Special Agreement Schools*: These are schools for which neither of the other categories would be suitable. There are very few of them.

The Act provided that the school day should begin with a collective Act of Worship and that religious education should be given in every County and Voluntary school.

Teachers were given the right to withdraw from the Act of Worship, security of tenure and freedom from interference.

As indicated earlier, the principal reform was the introduction of universal secondary education, together with the gradual raising of the school-leaving age to 16.

The Religious Settlement - A Compromise

The Religious Settlement that was agreed was certainly a compromise between all the main interests but it averted a major clash and the possible rejection of the 1944 Education Act. The Churches have, from time to time sought to obtain more financial support from the State for their schools but have had only limited success.

The teachers' organisations have had, on occasion, to take action on behalf of individual members working in church schools but they have not challenged the existence of the Dual System. Indeed, so much is the matter not an issue with them that when I consulted the organisations prior to the Colloquium, one organisation did not know what the Religious Settlement was. The others all indicated that they accepted the Religious Settlement and the existence of the Dual System. No organisation has sought, or is seeking, the introduction of a secular system.

The organisations do have concerns relevant to my theme, and they are not alone in their concerns. For example, they point to the difficulty schools are having in attempting to comply with the requirement, now embodied in law, that the daily Act of Worship should be "predominantly Christian in character."

There are also problems arising from the shortage of teachers of religious education and apprehensions about the possible establishment of Muslim schools. And last year there was considerable anxiety when the Government proposed to allow Church schools a "fast track" procedure for opting out of the Local Education Authority framework. Happily that particular proposal was dropped by the Government after it had come in for heavy criticism from the Churches and the teachers and others.

Given the past antagonisms between the NUT and the Churches to which I have referred, it is necessary to say that in recent years the NUT and the other teacher unions have often found themselves working with the Churches in opposition to various aspects of the Government's education policies. Our French colleagues may therefore see some merit in the pragmatism of our teacher unions.

And in response to the statement made in the course of the Colloquium that "unless there is total separation of Church and State, a society cannot be said to have fully developed as a democracy," I would suggest that we in England and Wales do not feel we are less democratic than the French. And perhaps we would feel that there are other tests to apply when assessing the quality of a democracy.