Organised teachers and the labour movement 1900-1930

Thesis

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PART THREE
The Easter Conference of the Union in 1919 had three main items on the agenda - the admission of uncertificated teachers to full union membership, a national scale of salaries and Whitley committees. A fourth emerged strongly in the debate - professional self-government.

The issue of the Whitley committees was a significant one for the teachers. These committees were named after T. H. Whitley, the Chairman of a Committee on the Relations of Employers and Employed, which had issued its Report in the summer of 1917. The Report proposed that in essence capital and labour should work in harmony in each industry through the establishment of Joint Industrial Councils (Whitley committees) which would promote industrial efficiency and cooperation. In practice, these committees were rejected by the well-organised industries, such as shipbuilding and mining, but they were received well in the smaller or less well organised industries and introduced collective national bargaining which was a step forward from the situation prevailing pre-war. This was the case in municipal and civil services and in effect, this was to be the argument in the Union - did the Whitley committees provide an opportunity in education for the teachers to have some administrative power, to be self-governing, perhaps?

The arguments which raged up and down the country among the organised working class about Whitley committees also operated within the Union.

The great difficulty that the local associations had was the lack of a means by which to negotiate with their employer, the local authority. Indeed, negotiation is too powerful a word to describe the process of salary complaints and the deputations to the Education Committees which seemed to prevail through most of England and Wales.
Certainly arbitration between teachers and the local authority was extremely rare prior to 1918; local authorities refused to accept people as arbitrators as they earlier refused to accept Union actions at all as they cut across their right to manage the local education system. This attitude can be quite clearly seen at West Ham in 1907, in Herefordshire in 1914 and in the North Riding in 1919. The only outside intervention that was at all significant to them was one that was loath to be presented, that was a letter of mild protest or reproval from the Board of Education. This letter as a rule made vague threats about the education grant and the quality of the service.

C. W. Crook, a former President of the NUT and a Conservative, felt that the Union was being accused unfairly of a refusal to go to arbitration (in The Times Educational Supplement, Aug. 15, 1918, there was a major editorial on this question) when it was never an available option -

"The executive has never refused arbitration by an unbiased authority and has never secured it until a strike has loomed or taken effect." 1

Only a strike produced arbitration, only a strike or the threat of a strike in 1918 or 1919 saw negotiations treated seriously. Crook mentions several current disputes; in Glamorganshire, the Education Committee refused to meet the teachers until a number of them went on strike, in Ebbw Vale and Widnes a similar situation prevailed and so on. Refusal to meet the teachers or go to arbitration, Crook suggests, could be overcome by properly constituted Whitley committees. What the proper constitution of Whitley committees at national and local level was became clearer from The Times Educational Supplement in a full-length article. The employees would have to be represented by the Teachers' Registration Council and not the National Union. It had the advantage of representing all grades of teachers and also, but this was
little emphasised, its four equal membership groups would balance the 160,000 elementary teachers to the few hundred university lecturers - each having equal representation. The Teachers' Council, as it would become, would promote understanding between teachers not just represent strongly the elementary teachers. 2 Would it be the path of 'sectional interest' and 'class prejudice' or a new professional opportunity? 3

At the Union Conference, the following week, the answer came very loud. A resolution was considered which included the statement that Whitley committees needed to be established. Steer, for the Executive, said that teachers must be taken into partnership with rate payer representatives. An immediate amendment, from W. W. Hill (a guild socialist) claimed that the profession should be organised on a self-governing basis, with full partnership in administration. He cited the power of doctors and lawyers in validating their own entry qualifications and the miners and railway workers who were fighting for joint control in their industries. Michael Conway supporting him declared for joint control to

"discuss things on equal terms with Board of Education and Local Authorities". 4

Several teachers spoke in favour of joint control and

"a Rhondda delegate spoke of the educational progress made in the Rhondda Valley under the control of the workers." 5

Although Powell, the Chairman of the Salaries Committee, described it in a hostile way, as "frank syndicalism" it was carried amid 'considerable enthusiasm'.

So, Whitley committees were seen in the Union, according to the new Conference policy, as a means of joint administrative control of the industry. The same year, G. D. H. Cole, an opponent of the
Whitley committees republished his book, 'The World of Labour', with an introduction which described Whitley committees as offering only a share in the profits, but not substantially altering the question of control and ownership. His own guild socialist view was that control meant

"The democratisation of the actual management of industry and the securing for the organised workers of a real measure of control over the conditions of their work."6

He noted Hill's success in his book, produced the following year, 'Chaos and Order in Industry' because it was precisely a syndicalist, a guild socialist amendment, that the Union had passed in the full knowledge of its origin.

It was not Whitley committees but joint control the teachers wanted but they would seek this under the convenient flag of Whitleyism. Indeed, local teacher associations, as in London, even laid out the rules, in their opinion, on which the employers' side should be selected - these suggested that the side should have no education officials but only elected representatives.7 The Times Educational Supplement correspondent noted that at this large meeting of the London Teachers Association the 'younger members' had taken over and also moved for strike action.

Whitley committees were springing up throughout the country, Goldstone remarked in his Union Notes column,8 but they had metamorphosed into 'joint advisory committees'. However in London and in his example, Leeds, the elementary teachers had shared the employee side in amicable arrangements with secondary teachers, deliberate steps to a union-based unity. Goldstone argued for a committee brief that would include recommendations on school organisation, salaries and curricular matters, and that it should have the status of a standing committee to the Executive Committee not reporting only to a sub-committee.9
Hill argued the case for professional self-government in a long article in the *Schoolmaster* the following March. From his point of view, the movement was away from the State livery of the elementary teacher and externally imposed restrictions (the Board, Inspectors etc.) and towards "...professional control over purely professional affairs and joint control with the authorities in administration".10 It would be responsible for its own training and qualifications, and

"The profession would act in conjunction with public authorities in managing the schools. Together, the teachers and representatives of the public would decide the curricula, the conditions of employment of teachers, the size of classes, the type of building and equipment".11

The Whitley committee could become the means of achieving this state of affairs and the Teachers' Registration Council, if it wished, could look after the question of qualifications etc. The Burnham Committee on salaries, while not statutory, was an example of Whitleyism. Nothing less than a transformation, that was Hill's view of professional self-government - right down into the schools, with a staff committee and enterprising teachers.

The 1920 Conference saw Cove and Hill try again to extend the notion of Whitley committees, or rather subvert them, into a call for self-government and full local and national partnership with administration. An Executive resolution referred to Whitley committees as a necessary step to joint control and that their formation be expedited. Cove argued for a policy of immediate control; he said they would not be given control only consultation and the Whitley committee was not a first step but the only step. Again, like the doctors and lawyers, Cove added, certainly like the aims of the miners and railwaymen, they wanted self-government and 'joint executive control'. Cove argued the advanced industrial argument -
'Whitley Committees were being rejected in the industrial world because it was recognised that they were based upon the principle of identity of interest between capital and labour when in reality there was no such interest (applause). Whitley Committees were merely the means by which the workers were being sidetracked from the real thing they were after."12

Teachers wanted the power to appoint their own inspectors and directors and to beat the continued power of denominational interests.

However, Powell, in replying, as in the previous year, proved to the Conference that Whitley committees were wanted - in the country areas. What was being rejected by the syndicalist urban wing of teachers was treated as a major breakthrough in the rural county areas. This time, the resolution in favour of Whitley committees was passed.

A letter in the Schoolmaster soon after this debate argued Hill's point - teaching was important now but will probably not be soon. Their only hope was self-government, to become a free body of workers and in doing so to defeat the State, the enemy of the teacher, who wanted them to produce a citizen according to its plan. A self-governing profession would educate not indoctrinate and open the schools to a searching criticism.13

It is impossible to appreciate this movement solely by reference back to the Union's earlier claims for professional status or even a Register with control over entry. This was now part of the 1919 confidence and militancy of the general working class movement, still moving forward, creating plans for a new social order, influenced enormously by socialism and particularly syndicalist and guild socialist ideas. 'Working with the grain' certainly but a Union leadership from the floor, using current socialist ideas, to move the Union forward yet based on the major contradiction, consistently there - the relation with the employers and the freedom to develop education.
The other major question was pay. Following the 1919 Conference and throughout the year, the NUT discussed the question of a national salary scale. At Cheltenham nineteen motions favourable to a national scale of salaries were put forward yet within the Union there was some uncertainty as to the best course of action. A Schoolmaster editorial (24th May) had raised one objection — "It was not at all certain that the worst paid would be raised to the level of the best paid."

In areas where there were good local scales the thought of any 'levelling down' was anathema.

Fisher's policy on pay was part of a wider direction shared by the Lloyd George Coalition government. The Trade Board policy and wage regulation went together, part of a move to increased State intervention in industry. In education, the Reports of Departmental Committees in February 1918 'illustrating' probable permanent scales should be seen within the State intervention policy. Fisher was uncertain if a national salary scale should be guaranteed or paid by central government as this would create a 'state teacher corps' which his own officials at the Board warned him against.

The Government's policy, in a period of considerable political unrest, was to consider a national minimum wage, as proposed by the National Industrial Council of employers and workers in 1919. It was decided that the new Trade Boards should deal solely with low pay in poorly unionised industries. Fisher's creation of a 'Standing Joint Committee on a Provisional Minimum Scale of Salaries for Teachers in Public Elementary Schools', known after its first Chairman, Lord Burnham (proprietor of the Daily Telegraph) should be seen as part of the Trade Board and low pay policy forced out of the Government by the unrest. The Burnham Committee was composed of equal numbers of
teachers and local authority representatives and was the first joint national negotiating committee the educational system had. Its proposals, made in November 1919, for a 'provisional minimum scale', were accepted, with difficulty, by the Union at a special conference in January, 1920.

On the teachers' side, there were two main problems associated with the Burnham Committee in 1919 and 1920. Firstly, did the acceptance of the minimum scale mean that teachers earning more than the minimum would be accepting a cut? Secondly, the Committee's power to refer threatened strike action to arbitration was seen as a threat to the right to strike.

The growing success of the salary campaign, especially in the urban areas, was proof to some teachers of a correct industrial policy, based on local action, supported nationally and with a broad teacher alliance. In these urban areas, such as London and Birmingham, local associations had a consistent and successful tradition of negotiation. They had achieved relatively high pay scales. The 'provisional minimum' was not of as much interest to them as it was to the rural teachers. The NUT policy was to regard the move towards national scales as a move to the minimum wage scale. The London Special Conference in January 1920 was concerned that the salary scale should be seen as a minimum only, not a maximum. An executive member, Powell, spoke to this issue —

"Any authority that reduces its scale in order to come down to the minimum places itself outside any protection which this Report may offer to the Authorities — (applause) — and leaves itself open to any action which the Union may choose to take".15

The reported debate gives the strong impression that the Union viewpoint was that, after the provisional minimum salary was accepted, then the 'law of supply and demand' and Union action would make each local authority compete with each other in the supply of attractive work conditions and salaries.
The same conference was affected by any implied commitment on their behalf to give up the 'right to strike' in accepting the national minimum scale. Cove argued that their power on the Burnham Committee was derived from their economic power and the acceptance of the Burnham Report would bind the teachers, and leave the authorities unbound. Rhys Nicholas, from the Rhondda, argued that they were accepting Board of Education conditions about striking and its arguments that it was 'ineffective' as well;

"He came from an area where sense of unionism was so strong that the men could not be bought at a price, and when wages were increased they had to be increased unconditionally and without having their hands fettered and their feet shackled." 16

The anxiety of these delegates about the strike weapon and its consequent loss in the Burnham agreement was not borne out yet only two weeks later, the Union vote to accept the 'Provisional Minimum Scale' was treated by the right-wing Morning Post as a matter for congratulation on 'relinquishing' their strike rights'. 17 Their fear was compounded by Schoolmaster editorials which counterposed the rapid progress made in local pay awards since the 'provisional minimum' with the slower progress made when the NUT had used strikes. 18 By April, 170 Authorities had scales in advance of the minimum scale. Three Authorities, the Isles of Scilly, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire, had refused to accept the minimum. 19

Between September and December, the Burnham Committee produced four 'standard' scales, ranging from urban/metropolitan areas to rural areas, decreasing in value according to the 'cost of living' difference in these areas. Again, the NUT regarded the four scales as
"standards which might be improved upon by local negotiation instead of absolute figures which were not to be changed at the local level".  

As Gosden notes, some teachers, in Birmingham for instance, were being paid above the standard four (highest) scale. In passing, it is important to recognise that although the scales were a boost to teachers' pay, roughly doubling it, if the wartime rise in the cost of living is taken into account (Tropp says this was 164%) then the salary award (159% on pre-war wages) was actually a slight cut. This general point was made by Sir George Kekewich in 1920 - the teacher's purchasing power does not greatly, if at all, exceed what it was before the present inflation of values". 

Wage awards were generally five to fifteen per cent above the pre-War level, after the cost of living increase was taken into account, according to W. A. Orton, writing in 1921, so teachers received an award that was not excessive and was behind the major industrial awards. What distinguished the Burnham standard scales from other pay awards, including Civil Service agreements, was that no provision was made to relate them to the cost of living index - the scales would not go up or down in tandem with the index but would remain constant. It was expected that the cost of living would decrease and so the teacher's award would increase in value through the 1920's. The scales were accepted by the NUT at a special conference in November 1920 by a majority of two to one, not by any means, unanimously.

The cost of the Burnham awards and of implementing the 1918 Education Act drew the Treasury into the education arena to defend the position it was fighting with the Ministry of Labour elsewhere. The response of the 'social' ministries, Labour, Health and Transport, to
the wartime crisis was a 'forward' policy of expansion of services and active government. This was now echoed by the Board of Education. From the Ministry of Labour's point of view, Whitley committee and Trade Boards were part of a policy of 'home rule for industry', underpinned to a degree by state intervention. This was also Fisher's education policy. One of its chief opponents was the Treasury, a proponent of an orthodox economic policy, in which de-regulation and market forces were paramount.

By 1919, Fisher was under pressure from Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Fisher argued that the Burnham Committee had not just dealt with the worst-paid areas as he expected it to but inflation was the main problem - it was not the rise in teacher pay but the cost of living which, he argued, made educational spending so inflated. By 1920, economy was becoming paramount - the Treasury argued that the Board should have firmer control over the local authority spending and should try to increase the rate contribution to education.

When the counter attack on the teachers' salaries came, it was part of a generally recognised attack on the insurgent working class, its rising unionism and pay claims. The rapid rise of unemployment in the last few months of 1921, the falling wage rates, dropping to the nationally agreed minima and below, and the pressure on the Trade Boards to disband or reduce their statutory minima all increased the pressure in 1921 on the organised working class. By 1921, Britain was in a slump and the cost of living fell.

The Committee on National Expenditure, created by Lloyd George, and with the industrialist Sir Eric Geddes as Chairman, had attacked the growing expenditure on education in late 1920 and the Board of Education followed by trying to stop new local authority agreements accepting the Burnham scales. By the time of the first
report of the Geddes Committee on the 10th February 1922, teachers had held protest meetings throughout the country, mainly because the cuts had preceded many authorities' decisions to accept the scales - so teachers were still on the 'provisional minimum' agreed in 1919 and not yet on the new scales. The Daily Herald reported in January (1922) that 170 local associations had backed a Union call for resistance to projected cuts in salaries and some local associations were beginning to use their right to a special levy (under their own local constitution) to take contributions to strike funds. A week later, a further 46 associations had backed the Union position. A Birmingham rally of 2000 teachers, addressed by a local Executive member, Matthews, was asked to fight against the cuts by joining the Labour Party - 'to fight against the big businessmen - the capitalists', and by other speakers, by

'standing together with our fellow wage earners, of the mines and railways and workshops and use our political force in the right direction....to resist these attacks'.

In the same issue, Cove addressing teachers in MerthyrTydfil said that if the battle against the cuts was lost, blame would rest on the rank and file not the Union executive.

To rumours of impending cuts due from the Geddes Committee were added details from the Board of Education's discussions with Yoxall, the Union Secretary. The hard-won non-contributory pension, created by Act of Parliament in 1918, now was to include a 5 percent contribution from the teachers.

The Geddes committee made initial expenditure cuts of £75 million pounds - in education, they would amount to £16 million. Among other recommendations, the Committee asked that the new non-contributory teachers' pension should now include a five per cent contribution from teachers and a reduction on the Burnham scales commensurate
with the lowered cost of living since 1920. The Committee had
two main areas in which to cut spending - teacher salaries and the
number of pupils per teacher. The school entry age limit was to
be raised to six years, urban teacher-pupil ratios were to be moved
from 1:32 to 1:50 pupils, and schools below 100 pupils should be
closed. These proposals were to be promoted by a system of cash limits
on the local authorities. They summarised their section on education-

"[The reduction of expenditure] can only be done by
raising the lower age limit, by putting more pupils
under one teacher, and paying the teachers less, and we
think the teachers and education authorities should be
asked to face this fact".29

The publication of this Report was the signal for an outbreak
of public meetings and statements by teachers in local associations and
on the NUT executive. It was also a signifier of the new wave of
attacks about to be made by the local education authorities on teachers' pay and conditions. Elementary education and teachers' pay became
once again a most important local and national issue, but this time,
full-scale attacks on teachers were made - their power was seen as
diminished. The rest of the working class were under severe economic
and social pressure and unable to support the teachers as before.

In London, the effect of the Geddes proposals was, according to
the London County Council Education Committee, to reduce its teachers
in elementary schools by 6,200 and in secondary schools by 1,500. Local
authorities, such as Swansea,30 began to cut teachers' salaries and in
those areas where above-scale payments were being made, due to past campaigns, they were also being reduced; in Tottenham, all the teachers received their notice (eight hundred of them), after the Board of Education refused to pay the local grant because of the high scales.31 Long-standing uncertificated teachers were often in this position, and the NUT
held a special conference for them in which this issue was discussed. Some local authorities began to sack some of their teachers, particularly the married women teachers - Bridlington, Isleworth and Heston, Macclesfield, Durham and Dover were reported to be doing this.

The Workers' Educational Association held meetings in support of the 1918 Act and against the cuts, as did the Cooperative Union and the Institute of Working Men's Clubs. The by-election at Camberwell, won by C. G. Ammon, was, he said, a result of the proposed Geddes cuts and the high turnout for Labour by teachers. The Schoolteachers' Superannuation Bill, which was the proposal to include a five per cent contribution from teachers towards their pension, derived from Geddes, was, in the main, the only direct Geddes proposal in education to survive from the Government. This was passed after a deal of acrimony, about their betrayal, by the NUT.

The real attack was continuing throughout the country. It had two main thrusts, both economic and aimed at reducing educational expenditure on working class schools and at by-passing teacher power. Salary scales were under attack constantly by the LEAs and cheap, untrained labour was allowed to teach. Fisher had proposed the latter in Parliament as

"suitable women without certificates or academic qualifications will be eligible as assistants in infant schools".

The London County Council, later that year, decided to introduce a hundred young women to teach nursery classes in their schools. The day on which twenty of these women were sent to schools, and were then sent back by the headteachers, a breakaway section of the NUT, the National Union of Women Teachers, held a large meeting of over a thousand teachers outside County Hall in protest. They wore badges inscribed 'we won't teach blacklegs' and 'no unqualified teachers for children'.
This Union had, earlier in the year, reported to the Daily Herald that

"Inspectors are approaching student teachers in the London schools and suggesting to them that they should give up the idea of becoming trained certificated teachers and that they should enter the LCC schools as supplementary teachers i.e. as teachers with no recognised qualifications or status". 37

The Superannuation Bill was only the most obvious and public part of a State counter-attack on services, conditions and union power in elementary education. What the Geddes proposal did was to allow the more reactionary local authorities to move back on the offensive after the LEA unity on the Burnham committee in 1919-1922, to regain their previous education policy - running a cheap, shoestring service. Other authorities, on the surface staying within the Burnham agreement, were trying to recruit cheaper labour even though it was untrained. The move to increased quality of educational provision was being replaced by the earlier prevailing 'cheap' policy.

Other local authorities defended the salary scales against the Geddes proposals and the Board of Education was still threatening recalcitrant local education authorities with grant withdrawal on the grounds of inefficiency if proposed local economies were continued. 38 Many of the local education authorities did not wish to create again the conditions for local competition between themselves over salaries and recruitment.

A writer to the Daily Herald in July 1922 explains the processes at work that year in the country. In his opinion, the Burnham scales would not be attacked directly but indirectly. By creating a pool of unemployed teachers, teacher would be divided from teacher, and the teacher reserve would have to 'blackleg' or demand the withdrawal of the Burnham scale to be re-employed at a cheaper salary,
"The older men in responsible posts are being sacked, men below them are given their posts, while their vacancies are either left unfilled or filled by cheap labour in the form of non-graduate, non-trained young lads who are out of work in other professions..."39

In other words, the left-over of State intervention, the Burnham Committee, was to be broken by that element of the State now dominant in reaction, the Treasury and its businessmen allies, using market forces. Herbert Morrison, in a debate by the London County Council, reported in the Daily Herald, said that

"behind [this recruitment of unqualified teachers] was a move to flood the profession and then to cut salaries."40

A Burnham Committee meeting on November 28th, was the scene of a successful attempt by the local authorities to impose a "voluntary" reduction of five per cent on the teachers' salaries.41 The teachers eventually accepted this reduction partly out of fear of further cuts and in an atmosphere created by the press of anti-teacher bitterness.42

The NUT managed to salvage from this employer pressure, as usual generated by the rural counties, agreement that the 5 per cent cut should only apply in local authority areas that had put into force the Burnham scales. This was important. At the time, many authorities had still not accepted the national scales. In 1925, when they were due for revision, forty authorities were still outstanding and not until 1928 was there a general acceptance. So, many teachers were on pre-Burnham scales.43

In 1924, an interesting article in the 'Contemporary Review' by Stanley Rowland tried to explain to its readers the position that the teachers were finding themselves in, in the early Twenties. Instead of being able, as they expected, to improve on the Burnham minimum scales, the teachers found themselves not only unable to do this because of
financial constraints laid on the local authorities by the Board of Education, but also that the Board was not intervening to make 'local reactionaries' keep to the agreed scales. At the same time, some newspapers were describing the teachers as 'war-profiteers'. The teachers had to yield a five per cent cut "though there was many an honest voice that hotly repudiated the hypocrisy of terming their compulsory surrender, a 'voluntary gift'". So although the teachers had bound themselves to accept the Burnham scales and not to strike, local authorities, and not only the rural ones, were cutting wage-awards and employing untrained teachers.

The reaction, then, was threefold; a direct cut taken at national level on the Burnham committee, a refusal by some local authorities to adopt the recommended scales and a pressure by the Board of Education on local authorities to economise. For the latter, a reference by the Smethwick Education Committee in 1923 is an example — since the publication of the scales, the authority, like all the rest, had been subject to

"a shower of circulars in the shape of decisions, rulings and interpretations of the scales...to such an extent that it is a practical impossibility for a teacher's salary to be fixed with a degree of exactitude until every care has been taken to ensure that the Board's interpretations are complied with. No grant is receivable from the Board in respect of the salary of any teacher which the Board regard as in excess of their rulings".

There was a further part to this reaction which had first been noted in the world war. Local Authorities and, in particular, the London County Council were revising their policy of employing untrained female teachers, a source of cheap labour similar to the old, mainly rural, supplementary teachers. The NUT President, Alderman Sainsbury, that year made clear the probable impact of the new move to dilution, in his Conference address.
The demand for teachers was being artificially reduced by the economy campaign, a deliberate campaign to reduce the cost of the teachers. Large classes were one result of this policy, another was the employment of the unqualified teacher - not only in the infant schools but increasingly in the senior and special schools. Sainsbury noted the trend in London towards a reduction in the numbers and composition of the teaching staff -

"The LCC proposes... to bring the number of unqualified teachers in infants' schools up to 600 during the next three years [1923-1926]."46

Sainsbury, no NUT radical, saw this trend as extremely serious, certainly in terms of his chosen concept 'status', but also in terms of economic hardship and loss of educational quality. His suggested policy to this 'deliberate dilution' was a call for unity to resist the Board. In the Annual Report for that year, the Tenure Committee stressed the pressure on local authorities to reduce their staffing establishment by threatening teachers with dismissal or asking them to resign. In this latter category appear the married women teachers, who, attracted back into the service during the war shortage, were now being 'pushed out' of the teaching force. One local authority, without any irony described this process in its official history. It remarked upon

....."The readiness shown by former women teachers in Smethwick, who had married and left the profession, in coming forward to fill the vacancies caused by the withdrawal of the men from civil duty. At one time during the War period, and for a year or two afterwards, the Local Authority had as many as eighty married women serving in the elementary schools, and it was only by utilising their services that the committee were able to carry on the schools. However with the gradual return to more normal conditions this number has been reduced and the services of the married ladies have been dispensed with, so there are very few indeed, occupying any posts under the Authority."47
What was the response of the Union and its allies to this attack on themselves and the education system? As we saw, a large meeting in Birmingham in January 1922 had rehearsed the new industrial and political policy of strike action and Labour Party support. These were to be the two main policies of the Union in the early Twenties—the main policies, in effect, if not always in Executive resolutions.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 9


2. The Times Educational Supplement, Teachers in Council, April 10, 1919.

3. The Times Educational Supplement, April 17, 1919.

4. The Times Educational Supplement, May 1, 1919.

5. The Times Educational Supplement, May 1, 1919.


Others have argued that the Whitley committees were deliberately proposed to take power away from the shopfloor and towards the management/union top hierarchy; a response in other words, to the shop stewards movement. An adviser to the Lloyd George War cabinet, Sir Lyndon Macassey, in charge of dilution on the Clyde and elsewhere, openly made this point in his book, 'Labour Policy, False and True' - quoted in Hutt, A. (1942 Ed.). 'British Trade Unionism' Lawrence and Wishart (p.81).


8. The Times Educational Supplement, May 15, 1919. On May 1, 1919 The Times Educational Supplement, Goldstone made his view of the self-government proposal clear, "...[it] is a repetition in the realm of education of the demand which the miners and other bodies of organised workers are putting forward in respect of their several industries".

9. Probably nearer to S. Webb (Teacher in Politics) notion of Prof. Advisory Committees, except these would be only teachers - yet conveying the 'responsible judgement' to authorities - not to decide but to advise.


12. **Schoolmaster**, April 10, 1920 - An insight into the intertwining of syndicalist arguments and their perspective on the T.R.C, seen in this light, is the fact that since 1916 W. W. Hill, and 1920, W. G. Cove, had been members of the T.R.C [1922 official list].


16. **Schoolmaster**, Jan. 3, 1920. Rowland (Schoolmasters' Position) said teachers agreed to the truce until expiration of agreement in 1925 and to refrain from further agitation or strikes p. 599.


19. Tropp also mentions Union pressure brought on Breconshire, Newcastle under Lyme, and the Isle of Man. Strike notices seem to have meant the authority accepted the minimum in Worcestershire; 1126 out of 1160 teachers resigned before it did so.

20. Gosden, p.45.


25. Sherington, p.149.
26. The alliance that Fisher had recognised between a forward education policy and commercial and business interests began to break up. The pressure for cuts in the public services became paramount in decision-making.

27. Daily Herald, Jan. 25, 1922 - Cornwall & Twickenham mentioned.
33. Daily Herald, March 1, May 13, June 29 and Oct. 16.
34. Daily Herald, Feb. 21, 1922 and Simon Vol. 3, p.47. Turned Tory 4,000 majority to Labour 1,000 out of 10,000 total.
35. Daily Herald, April 28, 1922.
38. Daily Herald (Southampton) July 6 and (Wiltshire) July 22. There was also the beginning of a concern about the left in the Union by AEC representatives. Percy Jackson (W. Yorkshire) warned the Panel that if it broke up without agreement, "I think we shall have done more for revolution and Bolshevism and all that means than any body of men sat down at this moment face to face" Barnes, p.225.
41. A special NUT conference accepted this further cut.


43. NUT memo 'The Teacher's Case' publ. in 'The Union and the Crisis' Aug./Sept. 1931 NUT.

44. S. Rowlands, 'The Schoolmasters Position' in The Contemporary Review Nov. 1924. When Essex began to ignore the Burnham scales and create its own, it was encouraged by Percy who declared its action 'not unreasonable' and, who was, in turn, rebuked not only by the teachers but the Panel Chairman.

45. Smethwick Education Committee, 1923 'Fifty Years of Education in Smethwick 1873-1923'.

46. NUT Annual Report 1923.

47. Smethwick op.cit. Further reference to this issue will be made in Chapter 12.
10. DEFENDING THE UNION: 1921/1930

As the Twenties progressed there was a series of hard-fought strikes by the NUT against local authorities still not operating the Burnham scales or economising on teacher salaries. This period saw a partial reconciliation of the two contradictory State policies with regard to education and the teachers. The system was to return to its original basis, to be as cheap and efficient as possible, and the teachers were to be continually encouraged to be patriotic and responsible (the remainder of Fisher's policy). It is to the former this chapter turns. The economic cuts of Geddes encouraged local authorities to pursue their own policies, secure in the knowledge that the Board of Education would find it hard to resist policies which lay in line with a national economy campaign. In Southampton and in Lowestoft, the Union had to fight hard to stop two local authorities reneging on Burnham and a flood of others waiting to try the same tactic. Although the teachers had been placed under great pressure to accept 'voluntary cuts' in their salaries, no such pressure seems to have been applied to local authorities (until 1925) to accept the Burnham Award.

In Southampton, the local authority was still paying its teachers on the Provisional Minimum Scale although in 1921 the authority agreed that the Burnham Scale 3 was the appropriate scale for the area. The local teachers association had written to the Education Committee in January, 1922 a year after the decision to defer the acceptance of Scale 3 for the area. The Hampshire Advertiser records that local councillors complained of the cost, of higher rates and the unlikelihood of any increase in teacher efficiency. A local ratepayers' group stiffened their resolve after they organised a public meeting which complained of the financial burden of the rates and that teachers already
had a 'living wage'. The Southampton councillors decided in March to reduce the local rate from 3s to 2s9d in the pound which meant that they intended to cut five per cent from the teachers' salaries - that is, instead of paying them more (the Scale 3) they intended to cut their present salary (the Provisional Minimum Scale) by 5%. The local Southampton and District Teachers' Association was probably not either well organised or part of the forward movement in the Union. Its President complained to a special meeting of the teachers that they were

"being paid on the lowest scale in England today. Teachers in all the surrounding areas were being paid on higher scales... [They were] underpaid before the War; our salaries were greatly reduced during the War, and since the War, and the agreement arrived at should be honoured."²

The conciliatory policy of the Staff and Salaries Sub-Committee and the Education Committee towards Burnham arbitration was unacceptable to the Council. The Advertiser reported that the Council had 'repeatedly and emphatically resolved against'³ the Scale 3 Award and reprimanded the Education Committee for bringing the matter up again! The Council meeting on February 25th agreed to the cuts proposal and to save £15,000 gave notice to its teachers terminating their employment and offering re-appointment from October 1st on terms involving a twenty per cent cut on the Minimum Scale.⁴ Notices to 620 teachers were given out though it turned out that only 460 were valid (the assistant teacher notices) - in the other cases, the Council in its haste ignored the fact that Headteachers needed 3 months' notice, non provided school teachers were in contract to school managers not the Council and secondary teachers needed two months' notice.⁵
In its confusion the Council attempted to withdraw the notice of dismissal until it worked out whether the nationally agreed cut of 5% applied to its area, indeed whether it was part of a Burnham Agreement or not. On the advice of the Union Executive, the teachers refused to consent to this withdrawal. On March 31st, the schools were closed.

Although in some confusion, the Council refused to compromise. It refused to set up a Special Committee to talk to the teachers (although it later changed its mind) and to accept a salary compromise, and then demanded a return to work before any discussion. By the end of May, even the Board of Education felt it had to remind the Council that it stood to lose part of its central grant if the schools were closed. On this the Council met the NUT in an attempt to return to the status quo - without cuts or rises. On the failure of these meetings, the Council began in earnest to recruit teachers from elsewhere.

The Daily Herald mentioned, as part of its regular reports on the Southampton dispute, that 625 applications had been received to the Southampton advertisements even though it was 'blacklisted' by the Union. This must be a reflection of the great unemployment amongst teachers in the early Twenties. Yet of this number, 308 were unqualified as teachers. Indeed, both Goldsmith and Winchester Training College students had pledged themselves not to accept jobs in Southampton. Local Trades Council members were asked to refuse to allow their children to attend 'blackleg' schools.

One of the first signs of disunity among teachers occurred in the strike. The National Association of Schoolmasters, at this time still allowing dual membership with the NUT, was reported, in the Herald, to have sent a deputation to the Council asking it to "pay the Burnham Scale with modified increments to men teachers, the Association would (then) recommend to its members to restart work forthwith".6
This action was disowned by the NUT as an act of desertion.

W.G. Cove later argued that this action 'broke' the National Association of Schoolmasters in Southampton, as members rejoined the NUT. Yet the way in which he argued that only unity won at Southampton suggests that the argument of the NAS that cuts were probably inevitable because men and women teacher salaries were almost equal, is a problem for the NUT in keeping hold of some of its male teachers. He went on -

"My great point was that the teachers' salaries could be saved only by the maintenance of a contract [that is, the Burnham Agreement]... and that if the contract was broken for women it would inevitably be broken for men".

It was certainly his view that, objectively, the NAS was "helping to defeat the teachers by encouraging the employers to cut sections".

The Board of Education intervened again with the Council and on July 4th, both sides met at the Board of Education. On the refusal of the Council to compromise, the Board warned it not only of a probable loss of grant but a fine as well. Two days later the Council agreed to the Scale 3 award, over a period of three years; the Union demand. This was accepted at a mass meeting of the teachers after a fourteen week strike.

Southampton was only one of several local authorities that were trying to reduce teachers' wages further. Sunderland local education authority had written to Southampton Council during the strike asking for support for its proposed policy of further 'cuts'. Croydon was in dispute with its teachers over the refusal to adopt the proper London scale. Wiltshire was about to make severe cuts in staffing. In other words, the reaction was so great that the national policy of a five percent 'voluntary' cut was insufficient for some local authorities who intended to act by reducing further teachers' wages. Other authorities
seemed to be looking for support in deciding to cut. The Board of Education was constantly encouraging local economies in staffing consequent to the Geddes proposals but in turn, had to act as a brake on the rippling retreat from Burnham that seemed about to begin.

In Gateshead, the local authority had paid the proper Burnham scale from April 1st, 1921 until in September 1922, it gave dismissal notices to its teachers unless they either, in the primary school, accepted a lower salary scale or, in the secondary school, accepted a 10% cut. Following the same tactics as at Southampton, the teachers accepted their dismissal notices and refused the reappointment at a lower wage. They were willing to continue working on Scale 3 until arbitration by the Burnham Committee was completed but the Council refused. Indeed in December, they passed a resolution urging the Government to scrap the Burnham Committee altogether. Even the NUT Special Conference agreement in December to accept a 'voluntary' 5% cut was described by the Council as a 'trifling' reduction. After a strike which had lasted from the 1st November by its 500 teachers, the Council considered a resolution in early January, 1923, to re-staff and re-open the schools with imported teachers - again like Southampton. However, although the Gateshead Council was still determined to resist the teachers' action, it agreed to accept the national 5% cut as a satisfactory reduction though it would only do so for a year. The teachers accepted the national settlement with the Council but pledged themselves to continue strike action again if the Council interfered with the settlement. The schools reopened on January 15th, 1923 after two and a half months of strike action by the teachers.

In the previous month of December, Herefordshire Council gave notice to its headteachers and teachers from March 21, 1923 and their re-employment at lower salary scales - mentioning the need to lower rates
in the county. Again, the teachers were still being paid on the Provisional Minimum Scale, like Southampton, and this would be a further reduction. The teachers intimated that if they were paid on the appropriate Burnham Salary scale for the area, a Scale 1, they would accept the 'voluntary' 5% cut. Again, as in Southampton, the Council tried to divide the teachers, not headteachers from teachers, but men from women teachers. They offered to cut the male salary scales by 7½% and the female salary scales by 10%. The Union would be under great pressure in areas of the country that were not well organised and which were known areas of reaction, the rural areas, to defend the Burnham scales and especially when new-found unity between certificated and uncertificated teachers was under great pressure from the male/female division attempted by the local employers.

The Report of the NUT Tenure Committee for 1922 makes clear the pressure on the Union which was constant in every county and urban area though not as dramatic as the rearguard strike actions of Southampton and Gateshead. Continuous attempts were being made by local education authorities and the Board of Education to reduce the number of teachers teaching. A Board of Education Circular sent out in the previous May, 1922, had stated that

"...it appears to the Board that, upon the returns for the year ended March 31st last, the possibility of effecting some economy in the staffing of the public elementary schools of the area requires consideration".12

In Southampton this had stiffened the resolve of the Council to continue their course of action even though later letters from the Board threatened them because of the speed and extent of their reduction policies. A later circular from the Board detailed the areas of teaching establishment that could be reduced - excess teachers in a school, consolidation or closure of small schools, accelerated retirement and the dismissal of
married women teachers. In the year 1922, the Union Tenure Committee had to meet more often to cope with the number of member enquiries or requests for help. Examples of local authority policies included small school closures, replacement of Headmasters by Headmistresses in small schools, abolition of the post of head and assistant teachers, and the stoppage or reduction of salary increments. The Committee felt that in all cases they had been largely successful in overcoming these individual problems.

The strength of the rural reaction lay not just in the economies suggested by the Board or their ratepayer associations but in an attempt to join together to impose a lower (than Burnham) rural salary scale. Although the Union had technically won its case in Herefordshire and later Huntingdonshire, it had to agree to a 'carry over' period of several years before the full scale was fully adopted. But in Devon an attempt was made to reduce the wages of teachers on the Provisional Minimum Scale by 25%. The Union managed to fight this and the victory settlement was a cut of 3½ per cent of Provisional Minimum Scale. In other words, in Devon there was no settlement including the Burnham Scale. The 1923 Salaries Committee Report mentions the combination of employers -

"Certain of the Provisional Minimum Scale Authorities published a scale for rural areas which the Executive has emphatically condemned and decided to oppose strenuously when any attempts are made to render it operative".

The battle with one of these authorities, Lowestoft Education Committee, became the major concern of the Union in 1923 and 1924. The vigour of the struggle on both sides is illustrative of the great changes that had taken place among the teachers since the war - the new debates and struggles - and the necessity of the employing authorities to break the power of the Union. Both sides saw their duty clearly!
Two issues emerge from the committee meetings and reports in and about Lowestoft. Firstly, the Union was extremely worried that if the Lowestoft Council won, other authorities would follow its lead. In effect, the Burnham Agreement would begin to erode. Though many authorities were not expected to follow this course the logic of the situation - cheaper teachers in some places - would eventually subvert the idea of a national agreement and the pre-1919 position would be soon regained. Secondly, Lowestoft wished to retain cheaper teachers for its schools and could only do this by 'breaking' the united action of its teachers. The question of unionisation and its effect on the employers' right to manage was the issue. The authority could not undertake the policy it wished to unless the power of the teachers was dismissed. So, the right to organise and the right to control were both clearly at stake at Lowestoft - as the members of the Council made clear.

In December 1972, the Lowestoft Education Committee had decided to make an overall cut of 10% on its teachers' salary bill. This was not a 10% cut in wages for every teacher, but more or less depending upon the teacher's position on the scale. The 'voluntary' cut of 5% agreed nationally was not sufficient for Lowestoft and the decision to repudiate the Burnham Agreement was taken.

The authority sent notices to its teachers asking them to sign new contracts by March 31st, with payment reduced by approximately 10% otherwise their employment would be terminated. This was reported by the Lowestoft newspaper, The Journal, as involving sixteen schools and two hundred teachers, though later, it was claimed that one hundred and sixty three teachers, including Headteachers, had been dismissed and that this was all the teachers in Lowestoft.
The Authority argued that the 'present scale is too high for existing conditions', and that they only adopted the scale under duress. In the same edition of The Journal, the NUT's continuing position was made clear—

"The N.U.T. cannot waive its settled policy of refusing to recognise the right of an individual authority to make a breach in a national agreement, properly arrived at..."

The position of the Lowestoft Education Committee was that it signed the Burnham Agreement under duress. Or at least members of the Committee, including the current Chairman, Mr. H. C. Adams, argued that they were under duress - if they did not sign, the Board of Education would remove their grant. The question of duress was fully argued out in a Town Council meeting on Friday, March 30th. The Town Clerk and other members of the Council, including an ex-chairman of the Education Committee argued that there was no duress. Indeed the Town Clerk said that the idea of duress was 'an absolute fiction' and went to say that

"if the Education Committee did not know when adopting the scale that they had a free hand, they were sadly lacking in their public duty. It was their business to know." 

This was also the argument of the Lowestoft Teachers' Association. In an advertisement placed alongside the Council Report and headed 'The Crisis in the Schools, open letter to Ratepayers', they attacked the idea of a 'mistake' or 'compulsion' —

"Rarely has a more damaging admission been made by a public body for the official documents containing the scales and the schedules make it abundantly clear that such a mistake could not be made by anyone who took the trouble to read the documents for himself".

Whether or not the question of compulsion was an excuse for the Lowestoft action, the councillors felt themselves to be under sufficient economic pressure to break the high level of teacher
remuneration. There is a constant reference to the economic depression, the increasing burden of sea defence, the recent bad fishing seasons and unemployment. It was said by one councillor, representing a ward, where 90% were on relief from the Guardians or the Labour Exchange, that no other town was suffering as Lowestoft was. These Conservative, Liberal or Ratepayer councillors, in the main, saw teachers' salaries as indisputably high, a burden on the rates, yet capable of being reduced in a way that sea-wall capital expenditure, say, wasn't. Their obligation was to the ratepayers - no one else - and only to a minimum efficiency in local services.

Mr. H. C. Adams, a councillor for some twenty years by 1923, was a leading figure in the action taken against the teachers. He had been the Chairman of the Finance Committee and had taken the Chairmanship of the Education Committee in the period immediately before the action. Judging by newspaper reports of public and council meetings, Adams was an extremely powerful figure on the council, a councillor with strong opinions and a decisive factor in the strike. He had won the consent of the Council for the Education Committee to have full delegated powers of the Council for 12 months from early March and that the Council could not question its actions in the dispute except over the question of financial detail. So, Adams was the prime mover against the teachers and represented an employer 'forward' policy of reducing salaries and creating a cheaper education service.

The Council meeting on March 30th was acrimonious. It had been called under special orders by several councillors and aldermen trying to provide for a new procedure for negotiating with the teachers. These people, supported in effect by the Town Clerk, argued that Lowestoft schools were good and efficient, the teachers were tried and trusted
and that both parties had entered into an agreement fairly and it
should be a point of honour to continue it. The possibility of
recruiting teachers who were under-qualified and with the old teachers
supported by parents was not a pleasing prospect for these councillors.
These councillors were not radicals or great allies of the teachers but
were a party of moderates, disliking the Burnham Agreement but after it
was ratified, sticking to it. There was a general resentment against
the teachers expressed in the debate and particularly against women
teachers - Adams said at one point

"no similar class of the community was enjoying the
benefits enjoyed by the teachers. Two ladies walked
up the town the other day, and he looked at them.
Single ladies with no responsibilities. They carried
over £600 of the ratepayers' money per year".19

Another member, a moderate for sticking to Burnham, even though it was a
'bad bargain' said of the teachers that

"many businessmen would like to receive for their
income the salaries that some of the teachers got" 20

So, the Council of householders, businessmen and shopkeepers were no
friends of the education service except if it was cheap. The obstacle
to cheapness was the teachers and their organisation, the NUT.
Members wanted a compromise and no strike or lockout yet this would
involve them breaking the Burnham Scale, the national agreement.
There was little fear of the Board of Education, almost invisible
in their deliberations, but a greater fear of the Union. This was
the organisation keeping up their rates. Although Adams, as Chairman
of the Education Committee, tried to unite the councillors by talking
of further meetings with the Lowestoft teachers, it was obvious that the
councillors had been superseded in a 'palace' or town hall revolution.
Adams controlled the discussion - attacking the Town Clerk, refusing
compromise, and gaining new powers in the creation of a selection
committee to appoint new teachers. Alderman Notley, asking for compromise
and reason, asked that the Burnham arbitration procedures be used
"...The teachers must not be allowed to leave the town. Let them
be met". Adams replied "Not with the NUT".21

The Union was seen as the problem. Lowestoft teachers were
reasonable. The NUT was the barrier to a solution of the pay dispute.
Again, Adams said that any proposal from the teachers would be considered
but "the teachers'union advised them not to offer any concession whatever."22

At the end of the meeting Adams very astutely offered to suspend the
appointment of new teachers if the Council passed a vote of confidence
in the Education Committee. This was passed and the meeting closed.
This apparent attempt at unity and a compromise with the teachers was
broken three days later in a meeting of the Education Committee. Adams
made it clear, mainly to a councillor who was a teacher representative,
that although they were willing to listen to any new teacher proposals,
the ultimatum (on contract termination) would not be withdrawn.

In other words, the Committee intended to negotiate only about
exactly how the 10% could be cut not whether there should be a cut of
this magnitude at all. It was stated again that the teachers were
being forced into a strike by the Union. One councillor protested that
they had always been willing to talk to the teachers -

"They were willing to meet the teachers but they were not
willing to meet the officials of the Union, who were out
for trouble. If the teachers were left alone they would
meet the committee and there would be no difficulty in
compromising. It was not the teachers they were fighting.
Every teacher he had spoken to said 'It is not a question
of money; I might give way but my Union will not allow
me to'".23

In retrospect, it is difficult to imagine that this councillor,
like the other members of the committee, did not believe this view
unless his speech was intended to unite the worried councillors on the
committee. It is a view similar to that expressed in West Ham and the
North Riding and in other disputes; a view of a subservient class of employees, a feudal class, loyal and trustworthy, in penury yet inexplicably, earning more and acting in ways 'out of their class'. The Union is an outsider in this relationship and is a powerful but interfering element in a straightforward situation. The teachers are misguided and the Union needs to be eliminated from the situation for peace to prevail. Peace is defined by the councillors as the situation in which their views and power continue to be dominant.

A large public meeting was held in the Regent Theatre on April 13th. Packed out and with hundreds more outside, it was a presentation by the teachers of their side of the dispute. The Chairman of the Education Committee was vilified throughout the evening, with audience approval, and eventually, forbidden to address the meeting. In many ways, the dispute was seen as Adam's lockout. The Education Committee policy of the preceding three months was identified as his policy, and one speaker talked of the 'astounding amount of power invested in one man'. His method of negotiating was described as 'surrender your case before you come, and we will talk'.

One councillor spoke in favour of the teachers and against the Council or Adam's policy, arguing for the Burnham Scale and the now 5% 'voluntary' cut, and suggesting that, with the strike pay of the teachers paid by the NUT, a quick agreement would result in savings for the Council. A further speaker, Fred Mander, an NUT Executive member (and later General Secretary) tried to divide the Education Committee by attacking Adams and quoting from statements made by him referring to 'teacher double-dealing' and yet speaking of honest but misguided councillors.

Whether it was Adam's lockout or not, the accounts read as if, by general assent, he spearheaded the attack on the teachers.
In his eagerness, he created a massive opposition from the parents, united the teachers and irritated the churches. The parents voted overwhelmingly at the Regent Theatre meeting to register their 'independent protest' at the dismissals and for the Council to dismiss Adams from his Chairman's post. The teachers were solid for the strike even though by April, Adams had appointed 125 new teachers who, he claimed, were better qualified and cheaper than their predecessors (and who would now benefit from increased book and equipment capitation allowances), and even when Adams had tried to divide the certificated from the uncertificated teachers by his intention to treat the latter 'favourably'. The Church of England incumbents in Lowestoft had withdrawn their support from the Education Committee when it tried, unilaterally, to break the Burnham Settlement and later began to dismiss teachers in the council schools against the wishes of the Managers who were often vicars or rectors and later still, allowed thousands of children on to the streets.

Though Mr. Adams was unlikely to care, he had also alienated the Labour movement. The Trades and Labour Council in Lowestoft had protested to the Town Clerk in early March about the actions of the Education Committee. It was an ex-councillor for Labour, John Joplin Jnr. who moved the unanimous resolution at the Regent Theatre - the meeting which Mr. Adams left, driving slowly "through the hostile crowds, with a headteacher on each footboard of his car and a posse of police as bodyguard." Mrs. Godfrey, a Labour Party parent, became one of the strongest supporters of the teachers - at the same meeting, she had said that if the parents didn't strike, the children would!
The connections between the farmworkers' union in Norfolk and Suffolk, some village schoolteachers and the organised Labour movement in Norwich, Ipswich and Lowestoft were strong. It was not only Tom Higdon at Burston, the centre of the teacher-farmworker alliance, who was connected into the east Anglian labour and socialist movement but other teachers like Arnett and Leadbetter. George Edwards, the farmworkers' leader and a local Labour M.P. said at the Mayday meeting in Lowestoft -

"I want to tell you teachers that you have the entire sympathy of the Agricultural Workers' Union, we are with you and we have been watching your great struggle. They had no bigger sympathisers in the recent agricultural struggle than the teachers, because they knew of the necessity of their cause".29

Sympathy and support for the teachers then came from the Lowestoft parents, organised by the Labour Party, and the wider Labour movement in Suffolk which already recognised a common struggle against the same class of employers - the farmers or businessmen and shopkeepers, the people who ran the councils, from parish to borough level.

The Monday night following the parents' meeting, Adams held, in the Regent Theatre, a public meeting to explain the case for the Education Committee. The meeting was described in the Lowestoft Journal as one of 'considerable uproar'. It was full of teachers and friends who shouted and whistled throughout.30 Adams addressed the crowd, whenever he could, in a combative and confident manner. As the evening wore on, his explanation of the Education Committee's course of action, the point of being under duress and his consistent opposition to the Burnham scales, degenerated into an exchange of insults and persistent denigration of the moderate councillors, who were, in his opinion, turncoats. Later, he called his opposition Bolshevikites which caused 'furious uproar' and then offered to name teachers who had volunteered to the committee a willingness to accept the 10% cut. Again, uproar
Yet, a motion of confidence in the Council's action was passed or at least, declared 'even' although many declared it was a majority of six to one against.

Some time in the week following this meeting, the Education Committee had a closed session in which the names of the appointed teachers were read out by Adams and approving comments made about their qualifications. The list of teachers Adams attempted to keep secret, even from other councillors, if his supporters.

The following day, a specially convened Town Council meeting was called by four moderate councillors who tried to pass a resolution calling on the authority to accept the Burnham scale but allowing for a special committee which would enquire if circumstances in Lowestoft allowed for a further financial reduction. In other words, this was an attempt at a face-saving compromise. However, Adams was set on greater things - the lockout was having a national impact - he said

"They had lighted a fire in Lowestoft last December which has raised a blaze throughout the country."31

Two new developments in the strike were mentioned. One, that children were being encouraged to strike if they had 'blackleg' teachers and two, that the Union had succeeded in convincing a number of these teachers about the inadvisability of working in Lowestoft.

The reference to a childrens' strike was the result of fourteen meetings held by teachers and parents throughout Lowestoft that week, at which parents had explained their desire to keep their children away as a sign of solidarity with the teachers. One such mass meeting resolved, after the teachers had withdrawn, that they would "abstain from sending the children to school until the old teachers are reinstated in their former positions."32 The Journal also reported that numerous petitions had been sent to the Town Hall, sometimes taken by
'mothers with sundry forceful expressions'.

The children's strike on Tuesday, 1st May when the new teachers started work was a mixed affair. There were many school-refusers that day and a large march through the town by a thousand or so children, organised by Joplin and Godfrey of the Labour Party, yet many of the schools were open with most of their normal complement. The Journal reported that the schoolchildren attending were often unruly and the police were in attendance at one school. Many parents were anxious about their children and the new teachers and were reported as needing a good deal of persuading about leaving their children.

The march through Lowestoft was an exuberant affair. Parents lined the streets, traffic was halted; flags waving, the children shouted 'ditties' about Adams or shouted 'no settlement, no school'. In reply to the shouted question 'when are you going back' the reply came 'never, till we get our teachers back'.

As we have seen, the teachers in the schools had been described by Adams to the Education Committee as often better qualified and certainly cheaper than the striking teachers. At a Committee meeting the day before the schools re-opened, it appeared that a number of the new teachers had not arrived in Lowestoft. It was Adam's opinion that the Union had 'pressured' them, in one case, with actual violence, not to join the 'blackleg' teachers. A figure of 48 teachers out of an appointment list of 125 was mentioned as having been lost due to Union pressure. It came out at the meeting that one of these new teachers

"had not been in the profession for twenty years.... He was a Headmaster until 1903 then took up farming which had proved disastrous and he had turned his attention to his old profession".

The secretive action of Adams in controlling the list of teachers and their qualifications lead to widespread suspicion that they were under qualified or low quality or even, it was said, that they
included criminals.

The strike teachers and their parent supporters held another large public meeting at the Regent Theatre that week. Great play was made of the solid united action of the teachers, the lack of justice in the action taken against them, that Adams was a 'danger to the town' and that success would come to the teachers, slowly but surely. When Fred Mander used that phrase it came from his confidence that the authority would lose their grant given by the Board for an 'efficient' education system. This would happen after inspection and not immediately.

W. G. Cove spoke from the platform and his speech illustrates a continuing theme of this study - the popular appeal made by teachers who defended vigorously 'professional' standards. He argued that

"schools were going to be started with imported blackleg labour, and it was said that the NUT would be defeated by these imported blackleg teachers but he told them that the struggle would not cease before the NUT had been victorious (Applause). He declared that a body of men and women who had not the professional spirit in them, a body of men and women acting contrary to the interests of the great community to which they belonged, a body of men and women who were prepared to let down their brothers and sisters in the struggle, who had no sense of comradeship...men and women who did not feel that the highest interests of the children were at stake in this struggle were not fit to teach in the Lowestoft Elementary Schools (Applause)."

The sense of struggle, unionism, defence of education and children and a professional spirit are inseparable in Cove's view of teaching and teachers. There is no distinction between unionism and professionalism, one is the organised defence of the other. There is a clear community addressed and that is the working class parents and children on whose behalf the teachers worked. Strikes were the active defence of the worker's education system and an extension of a classroom professional responsibility. For Cove, the NUT was the highest expression of an
active professionalism. It stood for unity not individualism, comradeship not selfishness, a principled defence of education, and the 'highest professional interests'. This active industrial policy taken in defence of teachers and education was of popular appeal. It was not the call of a privileged elite for the maintenance of privileges - it was a conscious alliance with working class parents, aided by the growing active element within both sides of the Labour Party.

In a superb extension of Cove's argument that was both a propaganda coup and a practical cementation of the alliance, the NUT, aided by the Labour movement (particularly John Joplin Jnr.), created a number of Welfare Centres. These were in fact strike schools where the strike children were taught by the striking teachers. For the remainder of the strike, between a quarter to a third of the Lowestoft elementary children were being taught in three centres (approximately 1500 children), even though the authority prosecuted parents for the non-attendance of their children at the Council's schools and threatened to deprive scholarship children of their scholarships. Like in the Burston strike, the parents and teachers 'clubbed' together to pay the fines and the children continued to attend the Welfare Centres. In November 1923, the Board of Education Inspectors thoroughly inspected the Council Schools and the Welfare Centres. The report on the schools was in the NUT's words, sufficiently unfavourable to lead the Board of Education to suspend the grant. On the other hand, the good report on the Welfare Centres, was a propaganda victory. As reported in The Schoolmaster, the Inspectors had noted that

"...in no fewer than nine [elementary] departments [out of twenty-five], there has been a serious deterioration of efficiency since that date, and a perceptible deterioration in three others, while no improvement is visible at any school...much reason to fear [by the Board] a progressive deterioration in the general efficiency of the educational provision for Lowestoft".
The Schoolmaster also reported on the curriculum of the Welfare Centres; this had steadily developed to incorporate swimming and cooking facilities, and the use of cinema films in the curriculum. A main event became the organisation of a summer camp.

The pressure on the Council and the Education Committee increased after the unfavourable Inspectors' report and the Daily Herald was suggesting on the 7th January that the Board grants were being suspended and that the burden of financing the schools would fall fully on to the ratepayers. Adams led a delegation to the Board to complain about the inspections' findings and provide explanations but to no avail. By February, it was obvious the Council would have to negotiate directly with the NUT. A Special Council Meeting on the 8th February appointed a Negotiating Committee drawn from the Council and from the Education Committee members as well. Several members of the Committee met a NUT delegation on February 15th. After two hours discussion agreement was reached, and the Committee members then withdrew to confer with the remainder of the Committee in an adjoining room in the Council Chamber. After another hour's discussion, the terms were approved by the negotiators by a majority vote. The terms of the settlement were entirely the demands of the NUT; reinstatement of the 163 teachers to their old posts, the Burnham Scale II minus the 5% abatement and back pay for the 'locked-out' teachers. The ultramontanes on the Education Committee met the following Monday, the 18th February, and voted against the settlement - by twelve votes to six. A sign that unlike previous NUT disputes, the Education Committee was in the hands of the financial retrenchers, such as Adams, rather than educationalists who were often out of step with their Conservative Councils.

The Council had begun to dissociate itself from the policy of the Education Committee; the almost united front had been seriously weakened by the threatened loss of grant. It could face a lockout
of 163 teachers, 1500 pupils gone from its schools, a poorer quality education in the schools and mass meetings of parents, but not the grant loss. This would affect their finances and their businesses. It voted on the Thursday to accept the terms of settlement by twenty-three votes to sixteen.

So, the Union remained intact after the assault by Adams. It had withstood an eleven-month strike that threatened not only the livelihoods of its local members but the start of a major counterattack by some authorities on the Burnham scales. As the Burnham settlement was not binding the result of a defeat in Lowestoft would surely have lost all the rural areas and country towns from the salary scales and back to the pre-war standards. It couldn't have defeated a council so determined to win if it wasn't for the absolute unity of the 'locked-out' teachers. The Schoolmaster's columns were full of praise for the fact that, in times of great unemployment for teachers, not a single teacher had broken ranks. The Education Committee had tried to divide the certificated from the uncertificated, the men from the women, the class teachers from the headteachers and failed. The symbol of the unity shown there was not lost on a Union which had overcome previous divisions among certificated and uncertificated teachers but was now faced by new divisions between male and female, with new associations created for each sex. As an NUT ex-president, Miss Conway noted the teachers consisted of 120 women and 47 men; the latter were offered good pay and conditions if they broke with the women but their strike unity prevailed. Lowestoft became important in the Twenties not only for the significant way in which recalcitrant local authorities were dissuaded from leaving the Burnham settlement and those who remained in it stayed there, but as a symbol of industrial unity.
It was not only the syndicalists or socialists who were putting forward a professional union argument, for instance, people like W. G. Cove. These ideas had a wider currency. When the Executive of the Union in private or public meetings discussed the victory it was in terms very close to the polemics of Cove or Hill three years previously. Fred Mander, the Executive member who took charge of the overall strike policy in Lowestoft (and later became General Secretary) made a report to a Special Conference on Salaries in January, 1924, that illustrates the strength of the syndicalist ideas, whether recognised or not, in the Union. Mander, in a speech that was enthusiastically received, said the teachers

"...acted in a thoroughly professional manner and were setting a shining example of Unionism...This little band of teachers had stood firm for twelve, long, weary months with never a waverer or backslider among them. When they had a body of professional people who could stand as the Lowestoft teachers had done for a course which was just and when those people had behind them the whole resources and driving force of the Union there could only be one end to the fight...[They] had made a big contribution towards the stabilising of a position that was tottering". 41

Lowestoft was the new symbol, replacing the Rhondda, of a united industrial union, overcoming divisions between teachers and resisting the employers. There was no contradiction in their minds between unionism and professionalism. There was one Big Union, attacking the problems of the child and the teacher, allied overtly or implicitly with the working class, and bound by an ideology of professional skill. 42

Though Lowestoft stopped a slide, there were places in England that still did not pay Burnham Scales and the Union was unable to force them. Again, it was the mainly Southern rural counties - in a belt from Worcestershire to Berkshire and Oxfordshire and on to Suffolk - and small country towns within those areas or the West Country - like Maidenhead, Barnstaple or Falmouth. These areas, twenty one in all,
paid teachers on the Provisional Minimum Scale, two years after Burnham, but it appears that the West Country (Cornwall, Devon and Penzance) paid their teachers the Provisional Minimum Scale minus three and a quarter per cent.

By 1926, the Burnham scales were made compulsory although odd disputes still occurred so that not until 1926 did Essex adopt the Burnham scales and it was 1927 when Carmarthen did. The final local problem was at Abertillery in 1928 when teacher salaries were again the focus of public expenditure cuts. In that case, Chamberlain, as Minister of Health, had used special commissioners to replace local councils guilty in his opinion, of high expenditure. Three local councillors, a secondary school undertaker, an unemployed miner and an industrial insurance agent, were made Commissioners. These three decided on a twenty percent cut in teacher salaries. The NUT complained to the Board of Education and Lord Eustace Percy met the Commissioners. According to Sir Percy Watkins, from whom this account is drawn, Eustace Percy tried to persuade them of the 'sanctity of national agreements' (i.e. Burnham) and even appealed to their 'Labour experiences'. The Commissioners remained adamant. In later conversations with the Commissioners, after the NUT threat of strike action, Percy also threatened a school inspection and a possible reduction in grant as happened at Lowestoft. He warned them, according to Watkins, against, as they intended, using 'blacklegs'. Even though a reduction of grant in Abertillery would be serious, due to the high percentage of grant given to a 'necessitous area', the Commissioners were still unmoved. Although the Burnham scales were now supposedly statutory, the Board of Education could not override the authority. Watkins explained that
"the Burnham Award [which] was no more than a general agreement between the Authorities and the teachers' associations and did not override the contractual powers of any single authority'.

Until the schools became 'inefficient', there was no direct way for the Board to act and yet it wanted to keep the national Burnham agreement. Chamberlain met with the Commissioners and, again according to Watkins, he was anxious "to preserve the inviolability of the Burnham Award, lest there should be a landslide as a result of its being ignored and defied by one authority".

However, with the help of the local Labour party, the NUT 'swamped' Abertillery with a statement of its case in the urban district Council elections, and the new councillors, hostile to the Commissioners, resumed Council functions and paid the appropriate Burnham scale to the teachers.

What Abertillery shows is the fragility of the Burnham Award and the Union's constant attempt to 'police' its operation, faced with local councils willing to lose national grants to reduce the cost of local education services. There was also a pool of unemployed teachers, some briefly trained after leaving the Army, who were often not unionised and, as we saw at Lowestoft, they moved around the country to any teaching job. 'Blacklegs' were a constant threat to the Burnham Award. Records of the 'blacklegs' used in Lowestoft show that they varied in qualification and experience but rarely had they been involved with Union membership. The Union had agreed not to victimise the sacked teachers but if they wished to join the Union, their past record and a decision on it had to be made by a Special Committee. Several of the teachers were ex-servicemen, for instance Mr. Smith

"He served during the War and without teaching experience, when the War was finished he took the grant and training offered to certain Army Ranks and the only place he could serve was at Lowestoft."
Others joined the 'blacklegs' straight from College although many college students signed agreements not to strike break

Some were 'poor' teachers, drifting from job to job - for instance, Miss Raynill

"Apparently served Palace Road School, Croydon, 25th to 30th April 1923. Has also been at Crouch End, Stroud Green and Hornsey and from information received her teaching ability is by no means of the highest."49

Some of the teachers seemed unaware of the issues at stake or even the course of the dispute; a Welsh teacher applied to Lowestoft to get the Headship of a larger school than the one he was at, another wrote of the lack of knowledge of Unionism he had as an ex-Army man -

"...I realise now that I had never really taken the trouble to question views which had been handed down to me from childhood. I now fully realise the Union point of view and can see if you will pardon the expression what a fool I have been."50

Another was a married woman teacher unable to get work since marriage and posing as a widow to gain a post at Lowestoft.

The Union might have agreed not to victimise these teachers but letters from Headteachers in the country asked constantly whether a job applicant had been at Lowestoft. Instead it had a list of people who were 'excluded' from Union membership.

Throughout the Nineteen-Twenties the Union had to be vigilant about the local education authorities and their commitment to the Burnham Award. The main part of its work as a Union became a constant surveillance of local developments which would endanger the local Burnham scales. It also had to try to pressure County Associations to adopt the Burnham scales. In these two activities it was again a logical extension of the labour alliance period (1917-1921) to continue to forge strong links with local Labour parties and Trades Councils. These were the consistent allies of the local teachers' associations though they themselves were
often weakly organised. Nationally and locally, the prevailing idea of a professional, industrial Union defending itself and its client class was the common feature of the 'forward' policy of the Union, expressed by Cove, Hill and later, Mander, and its local alliance network of the Labour Movement. With or without overtly syndicalist or guild socialist ideas, there was a common feeling of social progress in which the teacher union, the local and national Labour Party and working class parents did not express the contradictions of their alliance so much as complementary and mutually acceptable aims. A better educational system for the working class would involve the betterment of the economic position of the skilled workers in that system.

The weakness of the Labour Party nationally and its short burst of Government in 1924 left the Union still dependent on its own local associations and their allies. Victories over recalcitrant local authorities were only possible with a strong and determined local association which had, in the years preceding the dispute, built open links with the Trades or Labour offices. These victories were not to be found in the big urban areas, where open disputes were unlikely and negotiation a more usual way of conducting industrial relations, nor in the rural countries of the South and West, which appear to have associations incapable of pressurising their authorities, but in the county towns or smaller industrial towns. These Councils were often run by shopkeepers and small employers and the associations were used to meeting and discussing educational problems and policy. They were also geographically nearer to each other as teachers than the rural teachers. Judging by the Executive reaction to the Lowestoft dispute, the Union was surprised at the unity and strength of the local teacher unionists. As we have seen the post war educational and political debates in the Union were part of a wider industrial movement, both in and outside of the
teachers' union. The growing teacher resistance to conditions of work and the quality of education were not merely Executive rhetoric but had fundamentally altered the way in which the Union saw itself. The *Schoolmaster* in its editorials, notes and letter columns reveals a Union shaping itself with new ideas, borrowed from socialism or new industrial policies of the working class, and grounded in its main contradiction as a Union—thatis, its problems were directly the result of employer policies. The new 'forward' policy of the post 1917 period could not have grown and developed in the Union without the ready-made conditions which prevailed. The consistent policy of the Union to control its conditions of work which involved an antagonism, in some form or another, to the local and national bodies acting, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, as its employing class. Professionalism and unionism became indistinguishable, so completely intertwined, that professional problems were to be solved by Union action, the unified profession was both one big Union and a potentially self-governing profession!

On reflection, the Union policy of the Nineteen Twenties would have to be treated as more effective on the local authorities than on the Board of Education. The local authorities, in their new organisation, the Association of Education Committees, were struggling to present a united policy to the Union. In general, the AEC supported the Burnham Award but some of its members were willing to risk a return to a free market wage for teachers—these were usually a county or county boroughs. Much more of a problem to the Union was the gradual 'dilution' pressures occurring from local authority employment policies. The London County Council employment of untrained nursery and infant staff was the major evidence of a cheap teacher movement. The reserve of unemployed, created by a Training College over-production (after a period of severe school economies on staff), and a short training for ex-Army personnel, was
used to lower the actual wages of the teachers. Young teachers were appointed on the bottom of the scales and older teachers or married women teachers were dismissed. Vacancies were filled by the unqualified or by cheaper, single women teachers. The policy adopted by Lowestoft was only an example, even though short and severe, of a staffing policy occurring nationwide.

Nationally, the voluntary pay cut of five per cent, followed by the five per cent compulsory pension contribution (or extra income tax as it was called) had reduced the Burnham Award. The Award it has already been noted was not much in excess of the inflation rate between 1914 to 1920, although it has been described as substantial. The teachers had taken a 10% cut in their salaries - some had not even achieved the Award at all until 1927. The Union demand, made in 1920/1, that the Award was a minimum, a basis for local action to increase it (and in some cases, to reach the level it was before the Award!) was soon forgotten. Effort was needed to achieve the Award nationally.

However, because the Burnham Scales were not tied to the cost of living, and were created in a period of high prices, they were attached to a national 'normal' cost of living standard which, luckily for them, was not reached through the Twenties. The value of their Award rose, in effect, as prices, the cost of living index, fell.

In the Twenties, Union action and not the Board of Education defended the Burnham Settlement. It was only partially successful but the forces against it were formidable. Government lip-service to a formal agreement, between teachers and employers, was being eroded by employment policies and national pay cuts. In a period of diminishing industrial working class strength, the Union succeeded in keeping the relative gains of an earlier period of militancy. In effect, the
attention of its members was drawn more and more to the Labour Party - the party of education which was not yet in office for any considerable period. The battle with the employers was not just between teachers and councillors but more and more with the major employer, the supplier of major Exchequer grants and the operator of a Treasury policy which moved and shifted teacher pay, the Board of Education and the Government. The Labour Party was seen as an effective way of influencing the Government - the new social order in education could be voted in. This was an extension of the borrowing of socialist ideas and the creation of local Labour teacher alliances. It was a recognition that ultimately teacher control over education and the education service had to be a political not just an industrial policy.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 10

1. Hampshire Advertiser, Jan. 7, 1922. In March, (Advertiser, April 1) 1200 summonses for non-payment of rates were made in Southampton.


3. Hampshire Advertiser, Feb. 18, 1922.


6. Daily Herald, April 6, 1922.


15. NUT Annual Report 1924. Salaries Committee


Godfrey exhorted people to contribute to the relief of the farm labourers' wives and children and a large sum was collected.

This was denied by the local NUT officer who threatened Adams with legal action if he repeated the slanders outside the Education Committee.

These strike schools were to be an inspiration to socialist teachers and were described in depth by the Teachers' Labour League in their journal.

Schoolmaster, Jan. 11th, 1924.

These divisions among the teachers will be discussed in later chapters.

Schoolmaster, Feb. 1, 1924.

Schoolmaster, March 14, 1924. At an Executive Committee meeting Mander talked of the 'unparalleled example of loyalty, fortitude and devotion to the principles of unionism' and Papineau (Salaries Committee Chairman) of the 'splendid
42. professional enthusiasm of the Lowestoft teachers. They had given an example of real united opposition without suggestion of divisions either of sex or section. The meeting passed a resolution citing the 'practical example of effective unionism' of the teachers.

43. Percy was prevailed upon by the Burnham Committee to make the scales compulsory. This was agreed upon in February 1926 with the very important caveat - "except so far as the Board of Education specifically accept any variation from the award"

Tropp. p.222.

44. Sir Percy Watkins (1943) 'A Welshman Remembers', William Lewis, Cardiff. Watkins in this period was the Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the Board of Education.

45. Watkins, op.cit.

46. Watkins, op.cit.

47. NUT File 'Lowestoft Case', Legal Correspondence.

48. NUT File 'Lowestoft Case', Applications for membership.

49. Lowestoft Case, Applications for membership.

50. Lowestoft Case, Applications for membership.

51. 'Education and the Economy' Labour White Paper No. 49, 1933, LRD.

Certificated Assistant Master 1920 £200 min. After cuts £182.8s
Certificated Assistant Mistress 1920 £187.10s After cuts £171.

52. In the Thirties however, a further cut of 10% was imposed (1931). According to Branson, N. and Weidenfeld M. (1971) 'Britain in the 1930's' Weidefed and Nicholson, teachers' salaries were cut the most severely of all in the public sector and as much as workers in the most depressed industries.
11. PURGE OF THE LEFT

On the 20th February, 1922, C.G. Ammon won Camberwell, at a by-election, for Labour. This was seen as a considerable blow to the Lloyd George Coalition Government. It followed another major by-election victory for Labour at Manchester three days earlier. In each case, an important factor in the Labour victory was the threat of the Geddes 'axe' on education, and the large turn-out of teachers canvassing for the Labour candidates. Philip Snowden, in conversation with Lloyd George, is quoted as pointing out this support:

"All the schoolmasters and schoolmistresses have been working like blacks for the Labour man."¹

These by-elections were the start of the unofficial alliance by the teachers with the Labour Party, the party of education. They were also the basis for a revival of interest by the governing parties, especially the Tories, in the social danger the teacher represented. Lloyd George already held this opinion which Fisher had offered him several years before. Lord Riddell, a newspaper owner, was to express this view in the same exchange with Snowden and Lloyd George - Riddell, resisting the Geddes cuts, said

"If you cut down the teachers' salaries, the result will be to turn them into Bolsheviks. I look upon adequate payment for teachers as an insurance, as well as an act of justice... [He added later]. If you don't take care, you will have the next generation educated by disgruntled people who will inculcate ideas prejudicial to the stability of the country".²

It is to these two elements of the same contradiction that this chapter is concerned: the move of the teachers to the Left and the ways the governing elite tried to stop them. This movement between these two forces is a major feature of the twenties. It appears in by-election victories, Labour Party statements, purges of individuals and a determined
attempt to influence the school curriculum, away from the teacher's own perceived views. The counter attack on the teachers and their Labour movement alliances came at a time when these alliances were not really consummated. Apart from a capable and eloquent minority, the leftward trend among the teachers was a voting trend only, born out of a general natural sympathy that existed between working class parents, teachers and the Labour Party. The alliance was never officially recognised in NUT membership of the Labour Party or of the Trades Union Congress.

The Conservative Party at all levels started to be concerned at the teachers' move to the Labour Party. Locally and nationally the teachers' action was seen as a major threat to the status quo. In view of the correspondence generated between M.P.'s and the President of the Board of Education and letters of complaint written the shires, two files were started at the Board. One, entitled 'Teachers and the Oath of Allegiance' began in 1922 and the other, 'Drift of teachers towards the Labour Party' in 1923; both these files are important indicators to the state of feeling, public and private, of the new connection between teachers and Labour. As the decade moved on the file not only contained the inquiries or condemnations from the shires but Special Branch reports on radical teachers, and the public speeches made by Lord Eustace Percy, the Board of Education President, on the dangers of socialist teachers. Percy was under considerable pressure to sack Labour Party teachers and he chose instead to try and isolate them from other teachers and parents. In Parliament, the first shot came from Gideon Murray, M.P. who asked that

"in view of the fact that schoolteachers are paid public servants and are pensioned by the State, he will consider the desirability of arranging that they take the oath of allegiance upon appointment". 4
The idea of the oath of allegiance closely resembles an earlier option discussed at the Board on controlling the conduct of teachers. The Civil Servant option was rejected because it would make clear the links between the State and the teacher. The same argument was to be used by the Board against the oath of allegiance although there was a consistent pressure, from Murray onwards, from the Conservative M.P.'s and associations for an oath. The involvement of some teachers in the General Strike of 1926 prompted Col. Vaughan Morgan M.P. for Fulham East to write to Percy, referring to constituents' concern for the youth of the country in these teachers' hands and asking for an oath. Later that year, a Society for the Promotion of Duty and Discipline unsuccessfully tried to promote a Parliamentary bill making it compulsory for state school teachers to take an oath of allegiance. The most interesting correspondence on the issue came between Percy and a persistent supporter of this idea, Colonel Sir Charles Yate. Yate had written to the Morning Post in February 1926 and January 1927, suggesting an oath of allegiance for teachers, prompted by the socialist teachers of the Teachers' Labour League. He wrote to Percy in January 1927 and Percy replied with some impatience to the idea - he wrote back that it would only create a 'class of insincere Vicars of Bray' continuing

"But if we are going to try to counteract modern subversive activities by administering Oaths of Allegiance we shall need a very different kind of Oath from anything which has yet been contemplated. The subversive propaganda of the present day is concerned with the class war and with attacks on religion. We all know from everyday experience that the holding or propagation of such opinions is generally regarded as quite compatible with professions of loyalty to the King. An Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty is, therefore, from this point of view quite beside the point".

The sophistication of Percy's response to the 'law and order' section of his own Party was formidable, for he then went on to agree that

"the fact of compulsion in Education does put a heavy responsibility on the state but what could be worse
from your point of view than to encourage a conception that teachers are servants of a Government in the same way as Civil Servants and, therefore, must teach in their schools precisely what any future Labour Government may tell them to teach?"

Essentially his view was taken from the experience of teachers in Eton and Harrow - they were not servants but semi-autonomous. Percy continued with the view he was to express in a number of major speeches in 1927 and 1928 -

"I still believe that the best safeguard against such irregularities is to give teachers a sense of reasonable independence and not to subordinate them too much either to a Central or to a Local Authority".5

This was not a laissez-faire policy. On the contrary, it was a difference with Yate and others about means and ends. Percy had written back to Vaughan Morgan in 1926 that he would deal effectively with any teacher who could be shown to be inculcating views of a 'partisan political character'.6 It was Percy's view, similar to that of Baldwin in whose Government he served, that the State should not intervene openly and widely in ways that would ultimately endanger its own policies. Rather than an oath of allegiance, he encouraged his own Party activists with the idea that he would act if there was evidence and spent time, in public speeches, promoting the isolation of the Teachers' Labour League.

He also, in ways that might not have been obvious to him considering their poor personal relations, continued Fisher's policy of encouraging a responsible professionalism. This was to be the bulwark against subversive teaching and an oath of allegiance, and taken with a regard for the problems raised by 'structural' controls between the State and the teachers which could be used effectively by a Labour Government.

Percy's sophistication of response to the radicalisation of teachers was opposed by the backwoods Tories and other extreme right-wing bodies yet it was in line with the policies of the Baldwin Administration and, according to Percy, derived from Lord Lugard's view of colonial...
administration. It was consistent with the decentralisation of the
education system occurring since Fisher's time yet still with a concern
for 'real tactical control' from Whitehall. For Percy, Lugard's
view of 'indirect rule' was very 'applicable to teachers'. There
was no statutory control over them, it had to be by external pressure
applied judiciously. Conservative Members of Parliament and
Conservative Associations were given short shrift by Percy; the long
correspondence throughout 1927 between Percy and Yate (and involving
Samuel at the Treasury & Austen Chamberlain at the Home Office) must
have been unsatisfactory to Yate. Percy even rejected a call for a
religious and loyalty test for teachers from his own Conservative Party
Headquarters, describing the idea of the test as causing "a great deal
more embarrassment that it is worth".

Giving a loyalty oath to teachers was only one possibility
open to the Government. There was another - having an education policy.

The Conservative Party seemed unaware of its lack of an
education policy for the state schools. Percy remarked, in his memoirs,
that the rising tide of concern for 'equality of opportunity' had hardly
risen above the level of municipal politics. Neville Chamberlain had
said to him in 1924 that Conservative public opinion was in favour of
economies in education. Economies in education seemed to be the
Conservative policy. The Westminster Gazette commented in October 1924
that there was the clearest possible connection between the actual Tory
education policy and the teachers' lack of zeal for the Tories. It
was this apathy that on the same day made the Conservative Party
conference pass unanimously a motion demanding new policies to attract
to the Party schoolteachers "on account of the tremendous influence
they hold over the rising generation". It was in this context of an
increasingly confident Labour Party attracting large numbers of teachers,
and a Conservative Party [as the main governing party], becoming concerned about this process on schools and society, that C.W. Crook sent a letter to the Tory Headquarters, to Colonel Jessel. Crook was an ex-President of the NUT, a Conservative for Parliament in East Ham North and honorary secretary of the Conservative teachers' advisory committee. He had been the main opponent within the Union of the move to Labour Party affiliation in 1917. His letter argued that the Labour affiliation movement had died down after 1917 but

"the action of the Government in imposing a 5% levy for superannuation, in not enforcing the Burnham Scales and in not taking action to prevent the breach of a National agreement in Lowestoft has given the movement a very strong impetus."12

He added that although he was an official NUT sponsored M.P. his own constituency now had a 'Teachers' Labour Association' which opposed him and that, nationally, this association would be a strong menace to the Conservative Party at the election just called by Baldwin.

Within days, Col. Jessel and other members of the Unionist Central Office met with a group of Conservative teachers. Three complaints surfaced in the discussion between them and appear in a memorandum written after the meeting. Firstly, the Board of Education should have insisted that Lowestoft Council pay their allocated Burnham Scale; secondly, that local education authorities were making considerable cuts to their staffing, particularly of women teachers and thirdly, that the Burnham Committee was under great pressure from the Board of Education to substantially reduce the salary awards.13 A deputation to Baldwin was arranged for the 20th November, 1923.

Biographers of Baldwin make little or no mention of his attitude to state education at this time, it most probably reflected Chamberlain's view, expressed to Percy. In the President of the Board of Education's papers, preceding the reports of the deputation's meeting
with Baldwin, it was suggested that Baldwin wished to dismantle the Burnham Committee but instead it was to be placed in 'harness'.

The Parliamentary Private Secretary to Baldwin sent a note to the President that he had warned him that 'the NUT generally and Sir James Yoxall (NUT Gen. Sec.) particularly were very close to joining the Labour Party and he remarked that such a move would not suit Sir James Yoxall's game at all.'

So, Baldwin in his knowledge of Yoxall and his lack of concern for elementary education saw little threat to either the Conservative Party or the State from teachers moving to the Labour Party. Indeed, after the deputation, his views remained unchanged. During the election campaign, Baldwin made public speeches calling for cuts in teachers' salaries, on the basis that they were fixed in totally different circumstances and should be renewed. Only later did he change his approach to the teachers.

The deputation consisted of Jessel, Ray (vice chairman of the LCC Education Committee), Crook, Major Ernest Gray (a Union stalwart and NUT sponsored Conservative M.P. from 1895-1906 and 1918-1922), Sainsbury (a Chelsea Alderman and President of the NUT in 1923) and Benchley, a retired Headteacher. Crook argued in the same vein as in his letter to Jessel but added that, in the Union, "our present Vice President is a strong Labour man; our present ex-President is a strong Labour man and I suppose now we have practically a majority of Labour men on our Executive".

This movement was unthinkable before the war, he added, and was a danger to the teachers and the state.

Sainsbury chided the Government for not allowing the nineteen authorities who were willing to pay above the Burnham scale to do so, but concentrated mainly on the Lowestoft strike. Sainsbury said that most of the striking teachers were Conservatives but as a result of the
strike, they had all worked for the Labour Party at the municipal elections and elected five out of eight councillors. It was happening in Devonshire, Hereford, Huntingdon, Lindsay (in Lincolnshire)\textsuperscript{17} and in Sheffield —

"every teacher in Sheffield turned away from the Conservative Party and a Conservative teacher was run as a Labour candidate and got returned at the top of the poll".\textsuperscript{18}

Sainsbury complained of the letter from the Board of Education to the Burnham committee demanding large reductions in expenditure. In that case, he said, it cannot be a Whitley Committee if the negotiations are preceded by the demands of economy. Returning to Lowestoft again, he said

"we have Lowestoft teachers going into every district in England, the rural districts included, to preach what the doctrine of Lowestoft means. It means that Lowestoft does not recognise the standard scales and therefore no standard scales may in future be recognised. It means that Lowestoft is departing.... and therefore everybody can do the same".

Gray mentioned the landslide to Labour and the lack of enforcement by the Board of the scales yet it intervened to stop payment above the scale. Ray, from the L.C.C., complained about the Labour Group which constantly found ways to express their sympathy with the teaching profession over the dismissal of married women teachers and the introduction of untrained infant assistants etc.

Baldwin's response was unimpressive considering the air of desperation that united the deputation and their plea to Baldwin to reassure the teachers in some way, even by producing a Conservative manifesto on Education. He thought that teachers joining a single Party was for themselves and the country 'hopelessly bad'.\textsuperscript{19}

According to Brian Simon\textsuperscript{20} Baldwin's electoral defeat was the beginning of a new attitude by the Conservative Party towards teachers; teachers were to be taken account of in the politics of education, they
had to face up to the loss of the education vote in the country. This point is further confirmed in the Board of Education's files on the teachers in the following correspondence between Wood, the part-time President of the Board in 1923 and Edward Cadogan who had just lost his Parliamentary seat at Reading. He wrote to Wood, complaining about Baldwin's speech on salary cuts for teachers which he believed lost him the election, and added that the great number of teachers would be against the Conservatives if the economies continued. Wood replied that he was constantly thinking about the danger of teachers going over to the Labour Party but shortage of money left him powerless to act. Cadogan replied the next day that teachers were a special sector "They hold very considerable influence among their contemporaries and the influence that they have over the coming generation is incalculable".21

So, to 'take account' of the teachers began to take several forms, and not, as perhaps it is implied by Simon, a dialogue between the teachers and the Government. For the remainder of the Twenties, there was direct Special Branch reporting on the Teachers Labour League, at home and abroad (in its Teachers' International meetings) from the Home Office to the Board of Education; a constant attempt to divide the radical teachers of the Teachers' Labour League or Labour Party teachers away from other teachers; the encouragement of local attempts to intimidate teachers not teaching the right things, that is "unpatriotic" teaching. Ways of dealing with the radical teachers took effect within a developing framework of de-centralisation and 'indirect rule' we glimpsed in the writings of Percy and Baldwin. They were part of the 'real tactical control' options. These were actions taken not just because the Conservatives were losing teacher votes to Labour but because of the powerful effect the teachers had on the young. In other words, there was a continuation of the Fisher/Lloyd George approach to the teachers;
they were a social danger if not treated carefully. The difference in approach lay not in their agreement about a responsible profession but in the opportunity, denied to Fisher/Lloyd George, to isolate and contain radical teachers. The working class movement was in retreat from 1921 and flight from 1926. Professionalism could now be enhanced with an 'autonomy' fostered under 'indirect rule' but the dangerous elements could be isolated. It was the opportunity to express what Simon called the 'assumption that the State machine belonged to conservatism' and the fear of the instability to the State a radicalised teaching force could create.

Membership of the Labour Party was seen as evidence of subversion of the state by some Conservative M.P's and Education Committees, aided by a constant stream of vituperation by the Morning Post and Daily Mail. When Gideon Murray had asked his question on the oath of allegiance in May 1922, he named a teacher who in his opinion was undermining the patriotism of pupils and goodwill towards the British constitution. He complained of

"...the conduct of Mr. H. Moore, a teacher at Isleworth County School, who... walks out of the room when the National Anthem is played; will not permit the boys to use capital letters for King, Empire, etc. and asks them whether they are Socialists".

This kind of allegation against teachers became quite common, reported in the Post or Mail or Daily Herald, and could lead to suspensions and inquiries. Although Percy might try to reassure the Tory shire committees and the backbench M.P's by talking of a small minority of teachers, they saw Labour Party membership as synonymous with school subversion. His well publicised speech in Leicester that

"a danger that threatened education was that some people seemed anxious to use the schools not for the purpose of teaching and of inculcating knowledge and the love of knowledge but for the purpose of propaganda".
became in the context of the period less a warning to a few
(the Communist teachers he was receiving reports on,) than an encourage-
ment to the many Conservative councillors, M.P's and school governors
to check their teachers. Judging from reported comments, Conservative
associations were in a near frenzy of rooting out subversive teachers.
Letters in the two Board of Education files came from the National Citizens'
Union, The British Womens' Patriotic League, The Somerset Womens'
Unionist Association and The Imperial Fascisti as well as from several
newspaper reports. The impossible had to be achieved: Lady Askwith
of the Ladies Imperial Club quoted a Workers' Weekly report that teachers
could be class conscious by teaching them little known facts not
opinions, and declared that 'that must be stopped'.
So far, the alliance between teachers and the Labour movement
has been treated as a question of redefining professionalism through
the influence of socialist and syndicalist ideas and the clear attach-
ment of many teachers to the Labour Party, seen as the party of education.
The exception to this political perspective has been the Burston Strike
school which turned a political alliance into an educational programme,
a working class curriculum.25
The earlier concern, expressed by W.R. Lawson26 about the
growing secular power of teachers was realised by the growing examples
of teachers acting against the 'militaristic' approach to the curriculum
in the war and post-war period. The concern for the future generations
and the stability of the State expressed by Conservative Party members
was founded on the translation by socialist and pacifist teachers of
social ideals to educational practice. Many teachers separated their
political and educational work until a change to a Labour Government
became possible, others either began a new critical approach in their
classrooms or were accused, by their enemies, of doing so. What is
so extraordinary about this period is that the people complaining of 'propaganda' or 'sedition' in schools were those who were implicated in their present social conservatism - the local squires, businessmen or vicars!

John Langdon-Davies in his book *Militarism in Education* argued that, in 1919, schools were becoming Prussianised, he cites evidence of the work of the Navy League (concerned with armaments and the value of imperialism) and the general encouragement of patriotism in schools through Empire Day, lantern lectures and prize essay competitions. He cites one particular case, drawn from a National Council for Civil Liberties report. A teacher in a boys' school in Chester refused to give a Trafalgar Day lesson based on a Navy League pamphlet in 1917. The pamphlet consisted of 'atrocities' stories, brag about the 'starving' of Germany and denunciation of Lloyd George and other 'Little Navyites'. This pamphlet was presumably distributed by the local education authority because that teacher's refusal to teach from the pamphlet led to her being ordered to resign in order to avoid dismissal! A Conservative M.P., C.B. Stanton, asked the Board of Education in 1916 to make sure that schoolteachers who subscribe to 'anti-British' ideas were dismissed. The *Herald* editorialised about this statement, seeing it as part of a general movement, like Langdon-Davies, to militarise children and dismiss teachers throughout the country. Conscientious objectors were dismissed from teaching or not appointed even when there was a shortage. The Lord Mayor of London was proposing to start a national organisation of cadets from the age of nine; in this he was supported by the Director of Education at Leicester (quoted in Langdon-Davies) who encouraged teachers to create a new kind of training, like cadets, based on obedience, 'the first and final element' of discipline. The *Herald*, at that time the main paper
of the Left, argued not for a socialist dogmatism in schools but for fair-mindedness, seeing two sides of the question and so on. It is this reasonable approach that would have attracted teachers wishing to break the monopoly of militaristic and capitalist sentiments expressed in their schools.

An observer at the time described the pressure on teachers as affecting them by

"denying promotion, removal to a new school, forced resignation and removal and other incidents which do not make a dramatic record but are quite effective". 29

As examples of the latter, he mentions the growing power of the inspectorate and the powers of heads and governors to keep control over the teachers. Certainly many teachers who were opposed to or did not participate in the war were dismissed, and were penalised officially until 1924. Conscientious objectors in London and other places were granted a forced leave without pay, and even if medically unfit were dismissed. 30

Starr was of the opinion that the post-war period saw teachers moving more towards social history and away from jingoistic nationalism. Percy, in his memoirs, describes this as-

"[.. a flight from reality.] War has become an unthinkable horror; the earlier reaction against mere 'drum and trumpet' history, for instance, had been heightened by the nightmare of four years of trench warfare. That obsession will have to be reckoned with by the future social historians and in the 'twenties it operated nowhere more dangerously than on the teaching profession. This was after all the truth about war, not the panache of Agincourt or Ramillies or Salamanca; and the thoughts of children must be deliberately directed away from that horror to the serenities of the League of Nations".31

The movement toward a social history which he deplores as childishness [in his memoirs], does not reflect the urgency of the issue addressed to him in the 'twenties. The pressure of creating a loyalist and patriotic curriculum was redoubled after the General Strike in 1926.
Even Lord Burnham, as President of the Royal Society for St. George, led a deputation to Percy on the necessity for systematic training in patriotism. In February 1922, and later in March 1923, a 'Seditious Teachings Bill' was tabled in Parliament by Conservative M.P's (including Neville Chamberlain) whose purpose was to 'prevent the teachings of seditious or anarchial doctrines or methods to the young' on pain of a substantial fine or three months imprisonment. Starr mentions internal resolutions within the Conservative Party to make the flying of the Union Jack compulsory in schools.

Yet, evidence exists that political and religious selection, very similar to that existing at the turn of the century, continued in schools. They were still controlled by Conservative or Liberal politicians or in Church Schools by local Church of England vicars. These people had no compunction in excluding socialist, pacifist or 'nonconformist' teachers. For instance, at a Conservative Party Conference in 1926, the emphasis on political opinion and not qualification was stressed. A delegate, Mrs. Gower of Pontypool declared that

"by quiet and private efforts she had secured a position in her district in which 75 per cent of the teachers were Church and Conservative and 80 per cent members of the Junior Imperial League".

Another delegate, Sir Mervyn Peel, was reported as saying he always asked any teaching applicant if he were a socialist, and never voted for a socialist teacher. An item in the Schoolmaster included a verbatim report of interview questions for headship of a British school. They included

"What are you - a Methodist, Baptist or what? Are you a Bolshevik? Would you salute the Union Jack? Would you sing the National Anthem and stand bareheaded when you sing?"

And again, in 1925, it reported that the managers of a Church of England
school in Derbyshire asked a headship candidate

"Have you any socialist leanings? I've heard you have. We do not want any socialistic teaching in this school. This is a Tory village and parents of children are all Tories and we want them bringing up (sic) in the faith of their fathers". 36

In Church schools it was still common for the vicar to be the major influence in appointing teachers and expecting that they would act as unpaid church assistants in choir training and organ playing. 37 Only rarely was the contradiction between the claim to a national freedom in education and its actual controllers revealed. For instance, a Capt. Gee M.P. writing to The Times, complained of the move of teachers to the Labour Party and accused Labour authorities of employing only socialist teachers. 38 It was later revealed, Starr records, that in his own constituency his local Conservative Party had sent free tickets to teachers for their pupils to 'A Conservative Victory - Children's Tea and Entertainment'. 39

Faced in the Twenties with a resurgence of political and economic power by their employers, socialist teachers must have taken a very circumspect line, avoiding public declarations of political allegiance and even denying it outright, or made certain that their classroom work was good and clearly fair-minded in operation. This was vital as the national press regularly made reference in the period to teachers who were in the Labour Party and to complaints about their teaching made against them. In some papers, like the Morning Post or Daily Mail, it was sufficient often for a mention of a teacher's actions, such as speaking on a Labour platform, for now and again, an editorial comment would fume at the Bolshevisation of education. 40 So references to obscure council or by-election victories, made by teachers in the Labour Party were not accidental but part of a major drive to divorce
them from working class parents. For instance, a Richmond headteacher speaking publically in support of a local Labour candidate had a Council meeting discussing his work and searching for evidence of indoctrination during school hours; no evidence was found, it was later mentioned, but the interrogation was made.\(^1\) The \textit{Daily News} mentions, as in passing, that a local headteacher, Shepherd, won Darlington for the Labour Party. The \textit{Times} was probably the most detailed in its reports of Labour teachers, especially in fully reporting the meetings of the Teachers' Labour League and identifying clearly its speakers and place of origin, and always following these reports, days later, by noting Conservative protest meetings about the Teachers Labour League. It gave several columns to Percy's speeches on the dangers of socialist teachers and the virtues of the rest and encouraged the creation of a Conservative Teachers' Group.

The dangers of being active trade unionists and Labour Party workers or voters must have been very clear to teachers in the Twenties. The newspapers clearly detailed the difficulties they would face if most of the local employing authorities were in a position to act as they would wish on this type of teacher.

When Charles Trevelyan, the ex-President of the Board of Education for Labour asked the Board in 1926 to define and explain the rules on the political activity of teachers, the memorandum produced in the Board to aid Percy's reply said initially that teachers had the same constitutional freedoms as other citizens. A paragraph added to the Departmental memo, however, takes a different view —

"There can be little doubt that notice given by the employers... to the teacher on the ground that these activities were detrimental to the proper discharge of his duties would be held, in the absence of mala fides, to be good".\(^2\)

This view prevailed in future advice offered by the Board in the next
decade. In effect this was an attempt to include Civil Service conditions of employment on teachers without the necessity to directly employ them. It allowed a new post-1926 political straitjacket to be applied to teachers. The civil servants had legislative action taken to enforce this neutralisation of their class alliances in the 1927 Trade Union Act but the teachers had, instead, a legal opinion added to the considerable social and economic power already wielded by their employers in a period of teacher unemployment.

Dan Griffiths, a conscientious objector in the war, and later a candidate for the NUT Executive, was a Labour Party parliamentary candidate in Stroud. In 1921, a 'deputation of women' laid a complaint against the Education Committee in Llanelly. At the time he was a teacher in New Dock School and was a part-time tutor for the Plebs League, writing for the journal Plebs ('Revolution - How?' May 1919) and working as a day school tutor, (Plebs May 1924). He was accused of bringing The Communist and the Daily Herald into school, of discontinuing morning prayers and breaking some other school rules. A special Education Committee was called a month later to receive the deputation, which was asked to produce charges in writing, and Griffiths attended with the NUT solicitor. The charge failed as the deputation would not write down their allegations. A local councillor, obviously sympathetic to Griffiths said there was nothing to prevent other teachers from taking in the Daily Mail to school! The Conservative M.P. Major Boyd Carpenter, repeated the parents' charges and had to make a public apology.

Other attempts to dismiss teachers for their Labour Party membership were not so easily dismissed. Miss Spurrell, a certificated teacher and Labour Party candidate for Totnes, was viciously attacked in a letter in the Kingsbridge Gazette, a local paper standing, as it
often reminded its readers, for "God, King and Country'. Spurrell was accused of teaching atheism, revolution and communism. An appeal was made for parents to write to the local M.P. in complaint. The letter described the other local teachers as being in one of the 'finest professions', the irony of which to Devon teachers on less than the provisional minimum scale would not have been lost. Spurrell contacted the NUT solicitor who wrote to the letter writer and the publisher asking them to withdraw. A writ for libel was issued.

Spurrell was described in court as a teacher for 21 years and a Wesleyan Methodist School Superintendent. Two headteachers of the school in which she had previously worked for 13 years gave evidence that she was a Christian and a good teacher. From her testimony, it is clear that Spurrell was a radical, Christian Socialist, working for a fundamental change in society through the Labour Party. She was not a communist yet her accusers made great play of her faith in the Red Flag and her singing of the Internationale. One of her election addresses included the paragraph

"We are out to make rebels; we are a revolutionary party, do not forget it. We are out for revolution."

It was obvious this revolution was as much a spiritual as a material revolution for her, she emphasised 'class love' not class war.

The main point of the defendant's submission was that it was impossible to hold these beliefs (that is, in revolution) and membership of the Labour Party without affecting the children - their Q.C. put this position expressly to the jury

"When a lady in public service, paid out of public rates came forward at an election, was heard by others to express opinions which were anathema and detestable to them, they were entitled to take objection to such opinions. In the case of a schoolteacher who put herself forward as vitally
interested in the reform of civilization and admitted being a revolutionary, how could it be that she should keep herself free from politics in her teaching of children under her charge."49.

And there was a further point. Labour Party membership in itself was evidence that indoctrination was taking place which a ratepayer had every right to wish to discontinue by forcing the teacher's dismissal.

The Lord Chief Justice, extremely annoyed at the unwillingness of the defendants to appear in the witness box, was clearly impressed by the divorce of the political from the educational in that Spurrell had campaigned widely on a socialist platform yet she had taken part in every Empire Day celebration, according to her headteacher. She was a devout Christian and an efficient teacher to examination level.50 High damages and costs were awarded to her against the publisher and the correspondent of the Kingsbridge Gazette.

Spurrell's case illustrates how open the Labour teachers were to attack and even dismissal in the towns and in the country. They were seen as a threat to entrenched interests and more, as usurping a right to teach children values – once Conservative, now Socialist. Yet these teachers had to be most circumspect in their private and public behaviour and in their classroom teaching. They were, in one sense, marked individuals.51 Spurrell's case proved that without evidence of classroom misdemeanour it should have been hard to dismiss teachers. This jars however with the legal advice offered by the Board, a year later, to Trevelyan, which suggests that political prominence alone was a sufficient ground for teacher dismissal. The 1926 strike heralded a further reaction which allowed communist teachers, if not Labour Party teachers, to be sacked on the grounds that they were communist alone.
While the legal situation may not have been clear the results of the dismissal cases in the remainder of the Twenties must have been very clear to teachers. There was a very good chance that in some areas, attempts were to be made to dismiss you if you were a Labour supporter or candidate, and in other areas, after 1926, if you were a communist you were unlikely to be appointed or keep your job.

After 1926, several teachers were sacked and their teaching certificate withdrawn. The General Strike over, many workers did not get re-employment and in its aftermath, teachers who helped the local Strike Committees, were victimised.

In Blackburn, Norah Brown addressed a crowd of four to five hundred people on May 13th on the subject of the TUC betrayal of the miners. She was fined under the Emergency Regulations as likely to "cause disaffection amongst the civilian population". Her husband, the secretary of the local Communist party and a schoolteacher, was dismissed the day the summons was served on his wife. Her prosecutor was a Governor of his school, Blackburn Grammar. The headmaster learnt that he was a Communist from a parent, and warned Brown that he had no right, as a teacher, to 'political opinions' and that he should not have sat on a public platform with Philip Snowden (later the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer). He was also told that his probationary year completed, he would be dismissed through reasons other than for being a Communist. A local parent, Hargreaves, wrote a letter, headed 'The Blackburn Communist' to the Blackburn Times asking if a teacher had been found guilty of 'teaching Communism' and had been banned from his School Debating Society because of 'communist activity'. He suggested that school governors should not concern themselves solely with qualifications but with 'character'. A correspondence between Brown and Hargreaves followed; Hargreaves was supported by a letter
(Bolshevism in Schools) from the secretary of the Primrose League (a right wing Conservative organisation) describing the penetration of elementary schools by Moscow. Parents were encouraged to find out the active communist teachers. As Brown makes clear, the issue at stake was simple: he was dismissed not for his teaching skill (described by the Head as good) nor for acting illegally but simply for being a Communist.

Marjorie Pollitt, (wife of Harry Pollitt, later General Secretary of the Communist Party) was a schoolteacher and Communist. She taught a class of fifty 12 year old girls at St. Johns Road Elementary School in Hoxton. During the General Strike she was convicted under The Emergency Powers Act for publishing false information in the Communist Workers Bulletin. Her name had been used as nominal editor. Both the District School Inspector and her Headmistress supported her continuing right to teach and declared that she had never introduced her political views into her school work. Yet despite the support of Labour councillors, the London County Council dismissed her.

The causes of Margaret Clarke and John Towers were causes célèbres for the teachers on the Left in the Union. In both cases their prosecution and dismissal is connected to their active support of the working class - in the General Strike. For Clarke, Union support was not as readily forthcoming as for Towers. Their cases illustrate the way in which the movement of some teachers to the Left, particularly the Teachers' Labour League, placed them in a perilous position in the late 1920's as the earlier mass movement of teachers (the 'forward' industrial policy) had shrunk with the counter-reaction of the employers, and the later divisions in the Labour movement itself. The broad alliance for educational progress in the Union, appears to recede
in the Twenties leaving a Left rump exhorting the remainder of the Union to take actions on educational cuts which it was unwilling to do. At the same time, a move against Communists, particularly Communist teachers, by the Labour Party reduced the support available to these teachers when they were prosecuted by employers or Conservative Party activists.

Margaret Clarke was a Birmingham secondary school teacher who was prosecuted under the Emergency Powers Act for typing material used in the local Strike Bulletin, the Birmingham Worker, and fined. She was then suspended by the chairman of the Technical Schools Committee and on July 5th, 1926, received a letter from the Board of Education requesting the return of her teaching certificate. The issues at stake were the same as in earlier cases of teacher victimisation; it was an infringement of their political liberties as a citizen expressed outside the school, and it was another example of victimisation of socialist teachers (not those from any other political group). The latter was forcefully illustrated by the fact that her replacement at the school was a prominent worker for the Conservative Party and a member of the Executive of the Birmingham Fascisti. The NUT encouraged Miss Clarke to apologise to regain her post and teacher's license. The form of the apology was one in which Clarke was, in effect, apologising for her political opinions and actions. It was most unlikely that Clarke would accept this form of apology; she was closely involved with the Teachers' Labour League, as a delegate to the Education Workers' International in Vienna that August, and in January, 1927, was elected to its National Executive. After assurances from the Union, Miss Clarke did eventually apologise, got her certificate back and in April, 1928, was given a post in an elementary school by Birmingham Education Committee. However between November 1927 and
April 1928, she did not receive sustentation from the Union, which had received several appeals from her local association and from many other local associations in the country, helped by a special committee on her case organised by the Teachers' Labour League. The Union Executive even ignored the Tenure Committee recommendation that sustentation be granted. So, the Clarke case was a symbol for the socialist teachers of the backward policies of the Union Executive and in turn, must have been seen by Mander and the Executive as a personal fight to control elements in the Union who, in their opinion, were bringing it into disrepute. It was not what Clarke initially did that was the problem for the Executive but her stand and the support it gained within the Union. Again, for Clarke, and other socialist teachers, the issue was one of Union support for an action which was legitimate and involved a double punishment - a fine and the loss of employment.

John Towers was headmaster of Hedley Hill School in Durham and had volunteered to take charge of a canteen supplying food to the children of locked-out miners in 1926. Two children, whose father had returned to work, continued to eat in the canteen and Towers caned them for their disobedience. He was fined for assaulting them as the use of corporal punishment out of school was inadmissible. His teaching certificate was also withdrawn. After accepting a union-drafted apology, Towers was eventually reinstated though as an assistant teacher, with the Union paying the salary difference.59

These cases were only the most visible aspect of a process of controlling teachers by sacking key activists - a process made easier after 1926 by Labour and Communist divisions. The Board of Education might not have started prosecutions, as an indirect employer it could not, but it had a conscious policy of radical teacher surveillance and was in correspondence with 'grassroot' Tory organisations about
individual cases or the general problem of the subversive teacher. The tone of the correspondence was one of dismay that some teachers were unpatriotic and a rising feeling of impotence that the 'normal' channels of control, their school governors and local councillors, were sometimes unable to eliminate these teachers. At the Board, there was, as expressed in Percy's notes and speeches, a further concern for the stability of the State when the Conservatives lost control over the younger generations to their Labour teachers. At the same time, it was Percy's policy, reflecting a Baldwinian political approach, that direct action was inadvisable on these teachers. Instead, some radicals were to be removed, if at all possible, their organisation (the Teachers' Labour League) was to be attacked (especially after its break with the Labour Party) and the remainder of the teachers to be praised in their professional commonsense. This latter appeal to their professionalism was significantly 'weaker' than Fisher's own appeals; the climate of uprising and militancy had gone and it was not now necessary to talk of a 'self governing profession' in the same way the idea was mooted in 1919! Instead Percy generated a tactical control over the education system that was based on a lifting of further restrictions on teachers and their training and an appeal to their professionalism and love of teaching; divisions in education became a question of extremist socialists teachers not of extremist Conservative school governors. Talk of autonomy did not mean ceasing to control from the centre but choosing instead to directly control, or indirectly control when the issue was important, and creating a general climate of opinion about what was and what was not reasonable in education and in teaching.

This policy of Percy's was created in counterpoint to the rising demands of the Teachers Labour League, always well reported in
The Times. In many respects the policy of the League on teachers' unity and a new curriculum had a wide currency amongst teachers although expressed in terms increasingly out of joint with them. The concern which Percy expressed publically about school propaganda was directed at a school curriculum, influenced by pacifism and social issues which, while not directly socialist, was supported by socialist and other teachers. In itself, a difficult subject to control centrally and yet one which he described as expressing a 'revolutionary frame of mind' seen as a 'positive principle of education'. More than just the League this creation of, for him, a divided education system on class lines was to be seen in the Labour Party. In his memoirs, Percy mentions the 1926 resolution on Education passed at the Labour Party conference as an example of the revolutionary tendency in education.60

The resolution had six parts. It argued for a scheme of self-government in education, similar to workers' control of industry; a proletarian curriculum; civil rights for teachers and for secondary expansion. It was overwhelmingly passed by the conference. It is no wonder then that in his reply to Sir Charles Yate in January, 1927, he argued that making teachers servants of the State would make them available to a future Labour Government who could tell them what to teach; he argued for a 'reasonable independence' not subordination. It is this point which John White has tried to illustrate in an essay which explores the possible motivation Percy had to remove curricula regulations from the 1926 code. One of his hypotheses was that it forestalled a Labour government operating with centralised powers, which is confirmed by his letter to Yates, and that this was unlikely to be repeated by Labour as it would be unpopular with teachers (to reassert central control), which the other elements in this study confirm. So, Percy managed to forestall a centralised socialist curriculum (or at least, the possibility of one) and earn
some respect for a Tory education policy with teachers, and, at the same
time, retain a tactical or indirect control over schools by use of the
HMI's, education reports (like Hadow) and by secondary regulations.

This significant move on the 1926 Code seemed to solve many
of the pressing problems with the socialist teachers and the Conservative
appeal to teachers, and left Percy free to continue his policy of
isolating the Teachers Labour League and their ideas of a socialist
curriculum.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. Simon, 1974 'Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940'
p. 46/47 from 'Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the
Peace Conference and After' 1933.
Schoolmaster, Nov. 3, 1922 Editorial. Following election of a
Union official, Chuter Ede in by-election at Mitcham as a
Labour Party M.P. and on an education platform, the editorial
talks of the teachers' line of work spoiled, profiteers robbing
schools and threatens Liberals and Conservatives with a Labour
's drift if present policies continued.

2. Simon, as above.

3. PRO Ed/24 1753 and PRO/Ed 24 1757 Public Records Office.

4. PRO ED24/1753 Hansard, 22 May, 1922.

5. PRO ED/24 1757 HN, 06250

6. PRO ED/24 1753 28th May, 1926.

7. Percy, Eustace (1958) 'Some Memories' Eyre & Spottiswoode, London,
pp. 121-123.

8. PRO ED/24 1753.


13. PRO ED/24 1757 Memo.

14. PRO ED/24 1757 Memo.

15. PRO ED/24 1757 Letter from Woods (Pres. Board of Educ.)
to Cadogan.

16. PRO ED/24 1757 Memo 20th Nov. 1923.

17. All places of current Union dispute.

18. PRO ED/24 1757. Sheffield had tried to sack several
Contd. headteachers on efficiency grounds, which a High Court case overruled. Percy, in his memoirs said that Labour won control of Sheffield in 1926 and the leader of the Council said he could guarantee to hold it for Labour on the educational issue alone, p.96.

This view was consistent with a view he expressed two months earlier at Philip Stott College, to trainee teachers. He argued that the 'teacher should never be the servant of the State in this way, that he preaches and teaches what he thinks the Government would like to have him do" (Earl Baldwin 1938 Ed.) On England, Penguin pp. 154. It was not the 'victory of party' (p.166) but a concern for truth and unfolding the child's personality which was the teachers' task. This latter comment, made in an essay 'Teachers and Taught', written in November 1924, is a by the way reply to the move of teachers to the left and a statement of educational principle and values which the Conservative teacher deputation required. Baldwin, it made clear, was on the side of educational progress (including pay) and for the teachers of the new democracy. Although this contrasts with his actions up to that date, it is a sign of Conservative awareness of the problem of the teacher and a justification of the way Percy was dealing with them.

Simon, (74), p.74.


Simon, (74), p.73.

Daily Herald, May 23, 1922.

Yorkshire Post, Feb. 13, 1925.

B. Edwards (74) 'Burston School Strike' Lawrence & Wishart - referenced throughout to curriculum content and approach.


28. Herald, Jan. 27, 1917. The article mentions a Govan teacher dismissed for refusing to collect from his scholars for the War Savings Committee, and a Portsmouth teacher fired by her local Education Committee for having 'seditious literature' in her possession.


30. Morgan Jones, M.P., a leading spokesman for the Labour Party in the Twenties, was himself a conscientious objector, sent to prison, deprived of his teaching certificate and not reinstated.


32. Starr, p.20.

33. Simon, (74), p.73. Storr felt this Bill was mainly directed at Socialist Sunday Schools.

34. The Schoolmaster, Oct. 8, 1926.

35. The Schoolmaster, Dec. 26, 1924.


37. See Chapter 3.

38. The Times, 8 Dec. 1924 'Politics in Schools'.


42. PRO ED/24 1761 Political Activities of Teachers 1926-1934.

43. PRO ED/24 1761. Letter from President of Board to W. Wellock M.P. - if the activities were 'prominent' then they may be inconsistent with being a teacher.

45. This claim to action by the Board on socialist teachers also applied to their work outside schools, for instance in Socialist Sunday Schools. If there was evidence that a teacher was "teaching children out of school what he was not permitted to teach them in school" they would try to get him dismissed. PRO ED/24 1757. Corr. 23 Feb. 1934.  


47. Stratford Express, June 4, 1923. Parent complained that children in a local school did not celebrate Empire Day because headteacher was a socialist. Inquiry held. Newcastle Weekly Chronicle June 2, 1923. Parent complains that teachers were absent from Empire Day celebrations. Mayor of Newcastle inquiry reveals only one or two teachers left to organise Empire Day.  


49. Kingsbridge Gazette, June 12, 1925.  

50. No issue was taken with her admission (echoing the advice of the Workers Weekly) that she had taught her children about child welfare and the physical deterioration of Devon schoolchildren.  

51. Starr, p. 90. After the 1926 strike, the Ratepayers' Association asked the Education Committee to sack Spurrell because of a speech where she was reported to have said 'Thank
God for the strike'. In November, 1926 another attempt was made because of her reference to 'The cant and hypocrisy of Armistic Day'. Anonymous letters were repeatedly sent to the Press as well.

52. Blackburn Times, May 29, 1926. "Schoolteacher's wife distributes mischievous literature".


54. Blackburn Times, July 17, 1929.

55. Mahon, John (1976) 'Harry Pollitt - a biography', Lawrence and Wishart, p.121. She had been married to Pollitt for a year and been a Communist for about the same period. She met him in St. Malo with two friends of hers from the West Ham Socialist Sunday School; at that time she was in the Independent Labour Party.

56. Starr, p.92.

The Times, May 1/May 10, 1927.

57. Starr, p.92.

58. Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 11 Sept 27. i.e. "Those abnormal conditions have long since passed away and are not likely to occur .... I will not knowingly take any steps in future which would expose me to proceedings of a similar kind".

59. Starr, p.93.

Barker, p.151.

60. Percy, 'Memories' p.103.


The group of teachers which attracted much opprobrium in the Twenties was, without doubt, the Teachers' Labour League. It concentrated the minds of the Conservatives in the Party, the Union and the Government because it represented openly and without reservation an active alliance with the organised working class.

When it was originally created is obscure though its roots are not; all commentators trace the Teachers' Labour League back to the massive campaign for affiliation to the Labour Party in 1917. G.D. Bell, the main proposer of the Labour affiliation proposal in 1917, Independent Labour Party member and later a Union District organiser, claimed that the Teachers' Labour League was formed in 1917 to advocate Labour affiliation. In a letter in The Schoolmaster Bell talks of the T.L.L. as his idea, created and supported within the Essex County Association (which is the area he represented in the Union) and at the Birmingham special conference. Other writers also talk of their membership of the League.

Yet there is also evidence that the League was reformed in May, 1923. The Times reported a meeting held at the University of London Union to frame the constitution and rules of a Teachers' Labour Group. Milton, who presided over the meeting, mentions that already in membership were 142 teachers and some Labour M.P.'s. The purpose of the Group was to create a definite link with the Labour movement and affiliate to the Labour Party. It is to this group C.W. Crook refers in his meeting at the Conservative Party H.Q. in 1923. It is most probable that the new T.L.L. and the old T.L.L. are connected but by a loose grouping rather than directly congruent membership.

Over the next two years, the T.L.L. grew from 142 to 800
members. It had several branches in London – at St. Pancras, East Ham, Leyton, Hackney, Wood Green and Southgate – and at Chester Le Street, Cambridge and Portsmouth. By 1926, it also included branches at Blackburn, Brighton, Manchester, Merseyside, Norfolk and Plymouth and in London, new branches had been formed in Croydon, East Ham, Hackney, Kennington, Lewisham, West Ham and West London.

Associated with the Teachers' Labour League in an honorary capacity were Charles Trevelyan (the Labour President of the Board of Education), R. H. Tawney, Bertrand Russell, J.P.M. Millar (of the National Council for Labour Colleges) and Sidney Webb (with Tawney, a T.L.L. Vice President). As a focus for radical teachers, it is not surprising to note that W. G. Cove was a member, that Dan Griffiths wrote an article called the 'Teacher and Politics' for it, that Tom Higdon of the Burston school was an Executive Member or that James Maxton (the M.P., ex-teacher and a founder member with John Maclean of the Scottish Socialist Teachers' Society) wrote for its journal, the Educational Worker. Members of the NUT who were to play a leading role in a later period include its first secretary, Leah Manning (NUT President 1930) and C.G.T. Giles, an early Executive member of the T.L.L. who became the first communist President of the NUT in 1944. A. S. Neill wrote an article called 'What the Young Teacher must fight for' and there were articles about Mayday or Empire Day in school and the Boy Scouts – all part of a critique of school curriculum pressures in the Twenties. Trade unionists like George Hicks, of the Building Workers' Union and Trades Union Congress Chairman in 1927, or A. J. Cooke, of the Miners' Union, wrote for the journal, the Educational Worker; Cooke wrote 'Are Teachers Workers' and reminded the teachers how he had supported them in the Rhondda strike.

In the early years of its foundation, from 1923 to 1925, its national conferences debated issues reflecting Labour Party policy.
It discussed full democratic control of education, extending the secondary school curriculum, full civic rights for teachers and secondary education for all. Labour Party members, like Leah Manning, or M.P.'s, like Morgan Jones, took a leading part in raising issues which can be traced back to Labour Party documents like 'Labour and the New Social Order' or Tawney's 'Secondary Education for All'. In essence, it appeared to be a debating organisation to clarify or extend Labour education policy, to get individual teachers to join the Labour Party or to use the League as an election agency in local constituencies. Milton, in a conference address in 1924, described the aim of the League as involved in

"active participation in the work of the Labour movement... [and] a fit instrument for the achievement of great educational ideals, and he appealed to the members for help in doing their best for the cause of the common people."6

Its tone was of a non-specific Labourism, gearing teachers to the role outlined for them in a future Labour-governed education system, reflecting the professional self-government theme developed by Webb and Tawney.

The change in the League that was to radically alter it first appeared in the 1925 Conference. Redgrove, the President-elect, gave a speech which contrasted strongly with the farewell address of Leah Manning, the outgoing President. She had talked about Circular 1371 which had just been published in November, 1925, and proposed several cuts in educational expenditure. Redgrove, on the other hand, complained that schools were turning out workers' children who were not equipped for citizenship, and by that he meant, children who were not socialists; to understand rights and privileges in society, he went on, meant curriculum involving the principles of socialism. The contradiction in the League was compounded by the resolutions it
passed that day; it voted to remove education from party politics and campaign for socialism among British teachers. Although theoretically possible to hold both these views, it was naive of the members to assume the Conservative Government could support the first if the latter prevailed.

The great debate and precursor of a major split in the League was its affiliation to the Educational Workers' International, whose general secretary, Vernochet, had just addressed them. The Educational Workers' International was part of the newly formed '2½' International, formed in Vienna in 1921, to reconcile the parliamentarian and revolutionary wings of socialism. The Educational Workers' International was to contain teacher unions affiliated to the revolutionary Red International of Labour Unions, based in Moscow and the social democratic International Federation of Trade Unions, based in Amsterdam. Although it contained many small left wing teacher associations it mainly consisted of the Russian Teachers' Union. It merged with the Socialist International (IFTU) in 1928.

The National Executive Committee of the League was split on the issue of Education Workers' International affiliation. Although David Capper spoke for affiliation, Wilton spoke against, arguing that it was a Communist body and many teachers moving in the direction of Labour would be lost to the League. In agreement with Wilton were St. John Reade (Bristol branch) and E. P. Bell, the General Secretary; their argument was that its views were unclear and that it was financed by 'Communist money'. For affiliation was C.G.T. Giles (West London branch) and W. G. Cove, who argued that they could not be socialists unless internationalists and that the League should have an influence in international affairs. The resolution was carried by 291 to 211 votes.
Bell, Capper and E.C. Williams (Norfolk branch) addressed the Education Workers' International Congress at Vienna in August 1926 in the first meeting since the League affiliated. A Special Branch agent at the Conference reported that

"E.P. Bell,.. delivered a lengthy tirade against the educational system and problems in England... that one Capper, said to be an Englishman, followed Bell and spoke on similar lines and Williams also spoke on the educational problems in England and became very bitter". 11

Bell must have overcome his misgivings; the same file (PRO ED/24 1757) quoted from the Russian news agency, Inprecorr that Bell

"had stated that they were trying to build up in England a strong Socialist minority of teachers working to bring the big organisations such as the NUT as trade unions into the ranks of the proletarian workers and to develop a strong socialist policy inside the Labour movement on education along these lines."

Although this was the League policy, Bell must have been making a general secretary's report as he did not himself fully go along with the view he expressed.

During 1926, The Times contained a number of letters consequent on the meeting of the League, especially Redgrove's address on a socialist curriculum. This was the year in which several Conservative Party individuals or associations had written to Percy drawing his attention to socialist teachers and the Teachers' Labour League in particular. The Times reported a number of meetings, Parliamentary questions or readers' letters about the League. 12

Percy, replying to a demand from a Major Kindersley, in Parliament, to prevent League teachers from working, replied that the Board was not their employer and that they were free to join any lawful association as long as it did not interfere with their work. 13 This statement contrasts with the dismissals of teachers taking place in the country for either being communists or typing strike bulletins, and also does
not reflect advice offered to the Board in the 1930's that Communist party membership could be sufficient in itself to lead to discharge.\textsuperscript{14}

Percy's reassuring reply to the House did not give any hint that the Special Branch had reported regularly through 1925 on left wing teachers - in May it reported

"As far as can be ascertained this body (Teachers' Labour League) is the left wing of the NUT which is deeply tainted with Socialism. Attempts are being made to form a Communist minority group within this organisation. Those connected with this movement are under observation."

In August, a further memo added -

"The number of English teachers who are definitely Communists is very small; seven are known to this department and it is doubtful if there are any more. The activities of the chief agent in England of the Educational Workers' International are kept under observation."\textsuperscript{15}

It is possible that the agent mentioned was Capper; but it is more likely a fragment of Special Branch imagination.

During 1925 and 1926, the Teachers' Labour League had had some success in passing educational resolutions at the annual Labour Party Conferences. A Tamworth Labour Party delegate spoke on behalf of the Teachers' Labour League in 1925; he spoke in favour of a radical education system, not just an extension of education, to further the establishment of a 'Socialist Cooperative Commonwealth'. Although the point was partially lost, Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour Party Chairman, did say that

"he welcomed most heartily the teachers' delegate and he hoped there would be a long association between the Conference and the Teachers' Labour League."\textsuperscript{16}

The following year, Redgrove spoke to a comprehensive resolution expressing many points of the League's ideas including class size reduction, nursery schools establishment, teacher representation on governing bodies and Education Committees. He also condemned anti-
working class bias in schoolbooks, the celebration of Empire Day and the use of the Emergency Powers Act to dismiss teachers. All in all, a comprehensive resolution which was carried. 17

The influence of the RILU and the Educational Workers' International can be seen on the general aim of the Teachers' Labour League in 1926 and beyond. Initially, the League had seen itself as a Labour Party pressure group and not until 1924 had Wilton mentioned teacher association unity in his speech at Conference. Yet in the first two editions of the Educational Worker, the journal of the League, in November and December 1926, there had been a strong appeal to a working class unity and teachers' organisation unity; the aim of the League was to become more directly addressed to teachers in unions and this was accelerated after the break with the Labour Party. Harry Pollitt, at that time the Honorary General Secretary of the Minority Movement (and in 1929, to become General Secretary of the Communist Party), described the Red International (RILU) policy as class struggle not class collaboration, and that it would be necessary to unite every trade union struggle, that there should be one union for each industry, workshop organisation and consultation on changes to the production process. 18 By 1926, this was becoming the League's own policy for teachers. The editorial in November argued that teachers must stand with other workers in the intensifying economic struggle - as evidence of this it cited the hundreds of unemployed teachers, the incipient bankruptcy of the local educational authorities and Baldwin's call for low wages, it concluded

"We do not believe that teachers will escape from the attack. The struggle of all workers is therefore the recognised business of every class conscious teacher. We stand or fall together." 19

The following month, it argued for unity among teachers. Beginning with a point the League never really resolved, whether any of the
teachers' organisations were proper trade unions, it continued on two main lines - teachers' organisations were often violently antagonistic to each other which would soon prove disastrous to them, and that education and politics were interdependent. In contrast to the arguments of the last decade, it suggested that teachers were politically apathetic because they had been economically 'bought-off' by the capitalists, and ceased identifying themselves with other workers. The League stood for a single Educational Workers' Trade Union, affiliated to the Labour Party and the T.U.C. It called on teachers to cast aside their passivity and negation.

So, the League in 1926 was steadily committing itself to policies which it felt were not popular with the mass of teachers. It despaired of teachers, their lack of either unity or political sense, and this despair was to break through increasingly in the journal though coupled with exhortations and edited progress reports. The task it set itself (or had set for it by RILU) became out of joint with the teachers it needed to reach. This was something it increasingly recognised but which led to a redoubling of effort not clear self-appraisal.

The Labour Party was altering, following the provision for individual membership in 1918 and the short-lived Labour Government of 1924. Political power had to be achieved by a broad alliance with middle class voters and this came to mean the exclusion of the 'independent' Left policies pursued by the Communist Party and later the Independent Labour Party within the Labour Party. At the Labour Conferences of the middle Twenties a series of proscriptions were voted in, in support of MacDonald and the right wing of Labour, against the Communists. First, that they were not eligible as labour candidates in elections, then that they were barred from individual membership and finally, that they were also barred as trade union
delegates to Conference. Any local party or Trades and Labour council which refused to operate these bans were disaffiliated; twenty three of them were in 1927.

The socialist utopianism which infected the socialist teachers of the 1917-1921 period, associated with the Independent Labour Party began to dissolve into two camps, with a claim to different socialist traditions, policies and Internationals. The central issue appeared to be, though often as a symbol, the question of revolutionary Russia, and where socialists stood in Britain in relation to it.

Redgrove reported back from the 1926 Margate Conference, not on the successes of the major education resolutions passed reflecting League policies, but the cleavage between 'left' and 'right' in the Party. He added a significant point -

"The position is a difficult one for an organisation such as the Teachers' Labour League which has consistently opened its ranks to those holding the most diverse types of socialist philosophy."20

In December, 1926, the League met for its fifth annual conference. Redgrove opened the meeting by commending the Independent Labour Party for its policy document, 'Socialism in our Time'; Arthur Henderson, M.P., MacDonald's Home Secretary, conveyed greetings from the Labour Party Executive, emphasising the agreement with the aims of the League, complaints were registered at the Government's refusal to allow entry visas to international delegates21; Morgan Jones, M.P., said he would raise a protest in Parliament.

Redgrove, in his address, commented again on the Labour Party policy of expelling Communists and disaffiliating local parties, describing it as a new 'war psychology' involving

"The spectacle of workers, claiming to be politically and industrially class conscious, expending their time and energies and using their most powerful invective in fighting each other within the working class movement."22
He made a strong claim for unity in the League, a group of every shade of socialist opinion, yet he was aware of the tensions in the membership. He remarked that

"there are indications that some of us are allowing the great ideal of unity to become clouded in our minds."23

One indication was the collapse of the Cambridge branch. Its leading light, Leah Manning, had been opposed to the affiliation with the Educational Workers' International and attended the Conference with the purpose of organising a split in its ranks.24 She was a formidable opponent of the communist teachers (later becoming M.P. for East Islington).

Bell, the General Secretary, reported that there had been a loss of members in 1926 (from 640 to 594) and he condemned Redgrove's actions at the Margate Conference (where Redgrove had attempted to reintroduce the question of communist membership of the Labour Party) and vowed to resign if Redgrove was re-elected by Conference. Although mainly an attack on Redgrove, his point was

"Are we to remain a Socialist body or to become a part of the so-called Left Wing movement?"25

Although the International affiliation had been the main focus of conflict in the last Conference, a vote on disaffiliation was barely supported. Wilton and Bell, both opponents of it in 1925 now declared themselves in support. Indeed Bell, who had given a major address at the Congress in Vienna, declared that it was not a Communist organisation, emphasised the moderation and good sense of the Russian delegates to Vienna, and suggested it was the nucleus of a real united International.

In the afternoon of its first day, a new attack was made by Leah Manning and Morgan Jones on the influence of the communists in
the League. Manning contrasted the early aims of the League to 'win teachers for Labour by the mildest and quietest methods' and the communist purposes, which she did not define. Morgan Jones attacked the 'class-conscious' educational ideas of the Educational Workers' International and emphasised that the League should be carrying out Labour policy. After the 1926 Margate resolutions on education, this is an odd reference; either the Labour Party (whatever that was) was not paying attention when the resolutions were passed or Jones was tackling the wrong issue. In this debate, though, it was obviously not sufficient to declare something or somebody to be communist to have the membership reject them. The Labour Party could organise its block votes but the League had either mandated delegates or individual delegates.

It was evident in this debate that factionalism had been rife in the League for a couple of months with an attempt by Manning, Jones and others to issue a manifesto or voting slate for the Conference elections. This must have centred on the question of communist influence on the policies of the League. Within the Conference delegates this group had little support. The second day, Redgrove was elected by a large majority, and so was Capper; the 'right wing' group came at the bottom of the poll. Bell then resigned, followed by the Treasurer and Morgan Jones. They left the meeting followed by 22 other members (leaving 126 in the hall). According to the Educational Worker, now left in the hands of the 'left wing', these delegates were either not mandated by their branches to act as they did or were unattached members (individuals not branch members).

As Morgan Jones left he said that he felt no personal bitterness and he would continue to work inside the Labour Party. When delegates shouted back, 'so shall we', he replied "we shall see". This suggests,
as events proved, that this division of the League had taken place with Labour Party Executive consultation or confidence in their eventual support.

The new Executive of the League was then voted in and included two possible communists and two definite communists (Capper and Giles) out of eleven members. This was grist to the mill of the secessionists who, to justify and strengthen their continued existence, had to blacken the position of the League. Soon after, they met with Egerton Wake, the Labour Party National Agent, who promised them that "if grounds for disaffiliation [of the League] could be furnished to the Labour Party, then he would be prepared to bring these before the Party."28

All did not go quite as planned. R.H. Tawney was upset with the secessionists' actions and the Chester-le-Street branch of the League disaffiliated but set itself up as a separate group, not connected with the secessionists. Other branches did the same.29 The evidence they supplied to Wake emphasised their loyalty to the Labour Party and the implicit disloyalty of the League; viz. communists on the Executive, the International affiliation, and the fact that the new General Secretary, Duncan, was connected with a disaffiliated local Labour Party in Hackney.30 There was also two further points, that the League had sent speakers against Morgan Jones in Caerphilly and E.P. Bell in Wood Green during election time, describing their 'splitting' actions.

The edition of the Education Worker which followed the Conference gave details of the Conference proceedings but hastened to reassure League members that only a minority had left (although a majority of the old Executive). In addition, it argued that there was little in the way of policy difference with these people, and described them as either 'personalities'31 or Communist witchhunters.
Burkev in describes the action of the secessionists as a surprise to the Conference but some action was definitely expected. Both factions had been preparing for a decisive action on the future of the League for several months.\(^\text{32}\)

An interesting illumination on the different aims and policies that were at stake in the League comes from reports written by Vernochet, the Secretary of the Education Workers' International. A Home Office memo, drawn from a Special Branch interception, contains advice given by Vernochet after the split, about future League policies. He advised the League to either rebuild itself as a trade union for teachers and affiliate to the Trades Union Congress or re-affiliate to the Labour Party. For the latter, this should be prepared by Maxton the [the L.L.P. leader] or others...

and a candidate devoted to unity should be found for the chairmanship. Redgrove's candidature is impossible for the future".

The Labour programme (on education) "which interests Trevelyan, should not be neglected."\(^\text{33}\) This advice was not taken - although Redgrove disappears from view in the Educational Worker, the unity candidate was Duncan, a member of a proscribed Labour organisation!

Georges Cogniot, the later secretary of the Educational Workers' International gave a more useful analysis of the development in the League that the split symbolised in a report on the organisation of the Teachers' International (EWI) affiliate in England in preparation for its 7th Conference in 1932. The report describes the old League, soon to be renamed the Educational Workers' League, as "a largely propagandist body, a part of the vote catching Parliamentary machine of the Labour Party,"\(^\text{34}\) and describes its neutralisation as part of 'revolutionary trade union opposition' (like the Minority Movement).

The report continues -

"In the early days the Teachers' Labour League had no paper and hardly felt the need of one. The 'Labour' press was open to it and in any case its activities
were spasmodic and consisted chiefly of interventions in elections in support of Labour candidates together with the pushing of Teachers' Labour League members into positions in the professional organisations by wire-pulling methods.35

The importance of the monthly journal, The Educational Worker, for the 'left' wing of the League is also explained -

"The 'Educational Worker' was born during the internal struggle before the split and from the start was largely under the control of the revolutionary section. It played a big part in deciding the issue and when the split came it was of vital importance in keeping the League alive in those difficult days."36

So, clearly a split was in the offing for some time although the issue was brought to a head by the Labour Party proscription actions. The 'left wing' of the League, though not by any means, all communists must have foreseen the outcome - that if they did not beat the secessionists, they themselves would be forced to leave the League to continue its Labour Party affiliation. Although personalities and particular events may have precipitated the split, it was inevitable. The social democratic and revolutionary wings of the socialist movement were moving further away from each other. The middle ground could not hold. Between MacDonald and revolutionary trade unionism the League was split.

The split between the Labour Party and the Communist Party did not mean that the communists were left in control of the League. The Independent Labour Party had always been a recruiter of teachers since its pioneering work in demanding health and meals services in schools. The Independent Labour Party had, like The League, chosen to join the Vienna Union, as a mediating force between the Communist and Socialist Internationals. James Maxton, the leader of the Independent Labour Party and supporter of the League, expressed, in 1927, a point of view which was very similar to Redgrove's -
"In recent times the tendency to divide the working class movement in two watertight compartments seems to have hardened. The reformist or gradualist bans the revolutionary with bell, book and candle, and the revolutionary replies in kind".37

This led Maxton to join forces with A.J. Cook (another great supporter of the teachers) in a 'Call to the workers of Britain' in 1928, against the revisionism of the Labour Party under Ramsay MacDonald. Again, Maxton (with Cook) argued the Independent Labour Party position that "much of the energy which should be expended in fighting capitalism is now expended in crushing everybody who dares to remain true to the ideals of the movement".38

So it is possible to argue that within the League there was a number of idealists, connected to the Independent Labour Party, who tried to reconcile the two wings of socialism, the reformist and the revolutionary.39 Of course, as the years progressed this path became impossible. The Independent Labour Party itself was expelled from the Labour Party in the early 30's.

During 1926, when the League was divided, the campaign against Socialist teachers and a socialist curriculum continued. Percy was a key figure in the debate. To summarise Percy's position, I have argued that it was necessary for him to separate the radical teacher from the other teachers or else his policy of tactical control would be under pressure from his Party lobby for direct constraints on teachers. This, he felt, would threaten the long term future of the Party and the State for it would leave structural controls in education which the 'radical' Labour Government would use against the Conservatives and for a socialist education system, apart from clearly drawing teachers' attention to their employer, the State, and away from local education authorities. After the split between the Labour Party and the League, Percy redoubled his efforts to divide teachers and attack the League
and the Labour Party.

On the 6th January, 1927, Percy had made a speech at the North of England Education Conference which The Times leader then used to attack the League and its supporters, such as Trevelyan and Morgan Jones. Percy quoted from the Margate resolutions on education, as he was to do again in his memoirs. Commenting on a 'proletarian outlook', civil rights for teachers, the antipathy to Empire Day and bourgeois psychology etc., he declared that

"a good many ordinary people are getting uncomfortable about the propagation of disloyal and Socialist doctrines in some schools".40

He added that he was unable to reassure them as the Labour Party was in support of this approach. The Times went further than Percy - attacking the League, Trevelyan (for writing a letter of support to the Educational Worker), Morgan Jones (for once being a conscientious objector), Arthur Henderson (for his greetings to the League) and Bernard Shaw (Shaw had just made a statement about the need 'to teach children the necessity for Socialism and Communism'). Its venom was concentrated on the League, making disparaging references to the International, a visit by members to Russia and its support for the Burston school. It took umbrage at the reference to the teachers' civic rights (an important issue for socialist teachers, especially after the General Strike). The notion of civic rights was false, it suggested strongly, teachers had a duty to the State, not only as citizens, but as teachers; they had undertaken a special duty for the State to act as trustees for the education of its citizens. It saw the view of civic rights in the League as one of abolishing capitalism, replacing the capitalist state and involvement in the General Strike, all of which were antithetical to the rights of the teacher.

On February 18th, The Times carried a report from Parliament
where Percy had been asked to dismiss teachers for teaching party politics\(^{41}\) in schools. Percy saw this, as it was, as a reference to the League, and expressed once more his view on the subject -

"I believe that the House can confidently rely upon the strong opinion of the teaching profession as a whole to counteract such propaganda ... but I am of course prepared to deal effectively with any teacher who can be shown to have abused his position in this way".\(^{42}\)

He followed up what was really a threat which he would have difficulty in operating (lack of proof and corroboration), by attacking Trevelyan.\(^{43}\)

The Educational Worker reported a meeting of the League of Young Britons (another Conservative option) in December 1927 (vol. 2. No. 14) at which Davison, the President of the League, said its work was described in the meeting as being non-political but the children were taught patriotism, love of Empire and good citizenship to counter Communism.

Seven years later, Davison wrote to the Parliamentary Secretary of the President of the Board of Education (PRO Ed/24 1961), in a letter marked 'Secret' saying,

"My dear Ramsbotham,

I was asked by a very responsible schoolmaster whether the Board of Education has any power to deal with the masters in Secondary and Primary schools who are avowed Communists and who teach Communism, and even instruct their pupils in the art of singing the Red Flag. I am sure you know that Moscow has given up attempting to seduce the adult population of Great Britain and is now busy trying to infiltrate the educational system with Communist cells. So far I imagine they have not been able to do much in the Public Schools, although I know one where a very sincere Communist is on the staff, a fact which I have recently brought to the notice of the Head, who happens to be a friend of mine.

My wife's work as Chairman of the Young Britons confirms in every way the fact that the revolutionary Socialists are concentrating on the young children in congested and depressed areas. It is not always easy to get
proof that the teaching of a particular individual
is subversive and all I want to know is whether if
proof is obtainable there is power of action.

Yours ever,

J.C.C.D."

So, while the Labour Party chose an even-handed policy on the school
curriculum, the Conservatives were encouraging the rooting out of
communist teachers and the creation of a ultra-patriotic curriculum,
disguised as 'non-political'. The League might not have been
necessary, in its demands for a socialist curriculum. The existence
of socialist teachers was enough to generate this Conservative policy,
previously operated by its school governors - local councillors.

The League, if its journal is a guide, seemed unperturbed by
the hornets' nest it was provoking nor its increasing lack of Labour
Party allies.

It continued to publish articles on teachers and politics,
a constant theme in this period, interwoven as it was with the idea of
a teachers' civic rights. James Maxton, the Independent Labour
Party leader and part-founder of the Scottish Socialist Teachers'
Society44, wrote on this theme, and was followed by Dan Griffiths the
next month.45 Separating politics from school was impossible, Maxton
said; he was not talking about teaching political theory but 'high
ideals of social life'. Griffiths, on the other hand, included under
'politics' class size, salaries, local and national educational
expenditure, teachers' health and the physical and mental welfare of the
pupils. An inspirational example of politics in school was, of course,
the Burston Strike School. Tom Higdon was on the League's Executive
in 1927 (voted in after the split) and spoke at branch meetings on the
Strike School and its curriculum. Until League members became familiar
with Soviet education after the League organised a touring exhibition
in 1931, the Burston school epitomised the socialist changes they
expected in the schools. An article about the school, written in December, 1926 (vol. 1. No. 2) probably by C.G.T. Giles told of the 'comradeship', 'self organisation' and 'initiative' at the school. At the 1926 Conference Tom Higdon moved a resolution asking branches to investigate the problem of class conscious versus neutral education, using Burston children's compositions as examples. In December 1927, the results of the investigation was published. That the League opposed Empire Day, class distinctions in schooling and bias in textbooks in its work is clear but the research showed that although League members were agreed that education in Britain was an instrument of class domination, a smaller number of them felt that the future basis for a State education system should be a class not a neutral ethic. Others felt that a teacher should be free to present all sides of a problem. In other words, the League was aware what it was against but still working out the basis for what it was for in changing schools.

Other elements of its education policy were listed in 1927. Teachers should have full political and civil liberties, equal pay for men and women and receive a university education or equivalent. Married women teachers should not be liable to dismissal and there should be equal rates of pay between certificated and experienced uncertificated teachers. On the administration of schools, the League wanted teacher and parent representatives on school management and local education Committees. It reported on other areas of interest to it such as secular education, Parents councils, central schools, the Scout Movement and compulsory attendance in schools. A further programme explained in September 1927 attacked the old grievances of teachers; demands upon them for compulsory out of school activities, dismissal for political expression or offences and preferential employment for
acceptable religious and political views. The League was concerned at the continuing sweated labour of uncertificated and supplementary teachers and a new class of teachers, the commercial teachers (working in private schools and commercial colleges). It urged action on unemployed teachers and on unemployed ex-service teachers seeing both, with good reason, as a labour reserve used by local education authorities to reduce wages.

During August 1927 the League had to produce a special, rushed edition of the Educational Worker, with thousands of extra copies, for distribution to Labour party and trade union branches. In early August, Redgrove had received a letter from Egerton Wake, the Labour Party National Agent, acting on the information given by the secessionists to the Executive, disaffiliating the League from the Labour Party. This decision must have been made very fast, for League resolutions had already been printed on the Labour Party agenda, Redgrove had been made a delegate to the Conference and even nominated for its Executive and then it was suddenly disaffiliated and the League was not allowed to be represented at Conference. Wake's letter suggested that the League had originally been granted affiliation as a special concession as an organisation of teacher supporters of the Labour Party and its educational programme and it had now departed from that agreement.

At the Party Conference an Amalgamated Engineering Union delegate asked about the reasons for the League's disaffiliation. The conference chairman, Ramsay MacDonald explained. The case rested upon the 'considerable Communist influence' in the League and its attacks on loyal Labour people (i.e. the secessionists), although he agreed that in the League there was still a number of people who were 'good, sound Labour adherents'.

Redgrove, who had managed to become a delegate of his local
Labour Party in Croydon, pointed out to the Conference that the
League had never had any complaints or warning from the Party previous
to the disaffiliation and no replies to letters sent afterwards. He admitted that there were communists in the League (3 per cent) but
that it had abided by Conference decisions and they were never sent
as delegates to Labour Party Conferences. Redgrove also had need to
explain why the League had attacked Morgan Jones and Percy Bell in
their constituencies by means of speakers and letters. A League
supporter from Manchester contrasted MacDonald's action on the League
and his regret that the National Union of Seamen, a right-wing union,
had left the Party. After a speech by Morgan Jones, using not the
Communist 'bogy' but the League's actions against him, the Conference
voted overwhelmingly to disaffiliate the League.

At a distance, it is difficult to establish how great a blow
disaffiliation was to the League. It was barely mentioned in the
Annual Report that year though it was described as an attempt to 'smash
the League'. Indeed the report was written as if it had never taken
place. It is full of references to meetings with Labour councillors
throughout the country, speakers sent to Labour Party organisations
and the importance of rallying parents and teachers to Labour. Whether
this represents the period before disaffiliation or a pretence that
nothing had changed to its readers or another attempt to prove its
loyalty to Labour is not known. What is clear is that expulsion changed
the nature of the League and made it redouble its organisational
efforts.

The policy of the League had been moving away from being a
Labour Party discussion group and towards the teacher unions before the
split. Indeed it has been mentioned that the League had changed its
original constitution to this end. In 1925, the annual conference had
included in its objects the need to work for a teachers' trade union, affiliated to the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. The emphasis on uniting teachers in a single union or a federation of teacher unions dominated the future work of the League and it is difficult to ignore how much this reflected the general union approach of the Minority Movement. As with the Minority Movement it is difficult to avoid the question that the divisions caused by small, red factions of teachers or workers in unions could not be overcome by their calls for unity.

Separate organisations with their own pamphlets, journals and organising secretaries became the focus not for unity but conflict between teacher and teacher. Although the Communist Party did not create the Minority Movement but moved with the demands of militants, its policy of a separate trade union structure in the 1920's weakened the role of socialists in the unions.

The problem for the League in its union work was twofold. It believed that the teachers were divided from other workers, and that teachers were divided between themselves.

Only a few years previously it had looked as if a considerable number of teachers were moving towards the Labour Party and the trade union movement. From the League's perspective in 1926, this movement had either disappeared or was insufficient. An editorial 'Need for Unity' argued as if there had been no Rhondda strike or syndicalist movement in the NUT, and no referendum for Labour affiliation. It accused teachers of 'political apathy', having a 'privileged economic position' and being isolated from other workers. The divisions between the different teachers' organisations and lack of a 'properly constituted Trade Union' was, it warned, likely to be disastrous in the coming crisis. An explanation for this editorial is needed. One possibility is that it is an accurate statement of the state of affairs
among teachers. They had a decent wage, increasing in value as the cost of living fell which may have made the consolidation of a political alliance with Labour impossible. A second possibility is that the poor organisation of the industrial militants in the NUT could not build on their early successes and the post 1921 employers' counter attack left them unprepared and with Labour Party membership their only option. There is some truth in the editorial's claim that teachers were divided yet it barely recognises the victory at Lowestoft which solid union action made possible. It describes teachers as being in a privileged economic position and as incapable of economic betterment because of their disunity, and suggests that their good standard of living was due to the 'far sighted' capitalists not their own actions. There are then some unexplained contradictions in the editorial. This may be due to the fact that it seems to have been taken from a longer article, written under a pseudonym in the Communist Party journal, Labour Monthly, seven months before. It is not sympathetic to successful actions that teachers had taken and seems to despise their apathy and privilege, reflecting a view of teachers rather than a view from teachers. It was similar in style to the ultra-leftism of the Minority Movement, which in its actions if not its later justification had a view of trade unions like the editor.

In fact the Educational Worker could never decide if the NUT was a trade union or not. It describes its actions as approximating to trade union action or being a trade union stance. In one article 'Teachers Labour League and organised teachers', it says that "the NUT is not and never has been a Trade Union in the sense that the National Union of Railwaymen or the NUAW are Trade Unions", and continued that the work of the NUT has been trade union work in "the fight for security of tenure, wages and conditions". What stops the NUT being
a Trade Union, for the League, is its refusal to officially recognise its place in the Labour movement, to stop being 'non-political', to affiliate to the TUC and Labour Party and to stop having aspirations to professional status (the Teachers Registration Council). It charged the NUT with 'political ignorance and snobbery' and declared "Teachers are workers; their interests are inextricably bound up with those of the rest of the workers in the struggle against reaction; and only through a mutual understanding of their relative positions by teachers and the organised workers can the teachers' allotted position in the ranks of the organised workers be filled".59

There is a mixture of exasperation and confidence about the statements by The League on teachers. Exasperation because teachers did not seem to be listening to their shout that 'the Emperor had no clothes' yet there was a confidence, too. This came from the strength of the Communist Party political line on teachers, which had incorporated the lessons of the 1910-1920 period in its analysis of class action and class determination. Teachers were workers, they were workers in production, yet why then did they not join with other workers? League members seem to be the inheritors of the industrial militancy in the NUT - they used its ideas and calls to action. But they were isolated or felt themselves to be. It was not just a question of Labour teachers because if it was they must have recognised the movement teachers had been making - the Conservatives had. The League wanted more. Membership of the League or buying the journal were good steps but hanging over them was a further step - joining the Communist Party.

The League industrial policy, developed as its main emphasis, after shedding articles on educational innovations, a number of points the capitalist class were about to counterattack - teachers had become privileged and had lost their working class awareness -
teachers were workers whether they were aware of this or not. Only unity could save the teachers - unity between male and female, certificated or uncertificated, the teacher organisations - unity based on a common economic programme.

A main policy editorial in 1927 presented the League's argument. This editorial was the basis for the League's work with teachers, culminating in its greatest triumph in 1931. It is worth quoting in full.

"The struggle of the teachers for proper conditions cannot be separated from the wider struggle to raise the level of the education of the masses or from the still wider struggle for a new Socialist order.

This is not mere theory - it is a fact proved by the events of the last ten years.

What was the origin of The Burnham Agreement of 1920 - the so-called Charter of the Teaching Profession?. Undoubtedly it was the result of a ferment in the profession caused by the serious economic position of large numbers of teachers and indicated by the strike of the Rhondda teachers, by the sudden elevation to the Presidency of the NUT of W.G. Cove, a well known militant socialist and by the energetic campaign for affiliation to the Labour movement of the various teachers' organisations. In short the teachers succeeded in improving their position because the actions of their organisations approximated to trade union action.

There was another reason, namely, that this period of militancy among teachers coincided with increasing power and militancy in the whole Labour movement which obtained for the workers substantial concessions, including the Education Act of 1919.

Thus the struggle of the teachers on this occasion was closely linked with the wider struggle of the workers.

If further proof were needed of this fundamental, it is provided by still more recent history. Pacified by the concessions of 1920, the teachers became once again 'respectable' and their organisations 'non-political'. They cut themselves off from any direct contact with the Labour movement. At the same time the slump weakened the power of the working class. The 'Powers That Be' made the most of their opportunity. Then followed two five per cent reductions which the professional organisations,
having failed to ally themselves with the Labour movement, were powerless to resist. Since then, with the exception of a bright interlude when a Labour Government reversed the engines, the reaction has been continuous if slow.

What of the future? Economies continue, unemployment grows, individual liberty is curtailed, everywhere pressure increases.

In 1930, the Burnham Scales come up for revision. Then - if not before - teachers will be called upon to resist an onslaught on their wages and conditions. Divided as they are from the rest of their workers, their natural allies, they will be compelled to fight under serious handicaps.60

The League's analysis is probably accurate on several counts - the parallel and linked militancy of the teachers and other workers, Rhondda and Cove, the slump and the cuts. It contains, within a 'fall from grace' metaphor, some problems. How can a trade union acting as a trade union, and an organisation approximating to a trade union be told apart? What did they mean by teachers being 'respectable', when they had voted for a Labour Government described as a 'bright interlude'? The contrast between the pre- and post-1920 period in the teachers' history is too abrupt. The year divides a golden age of revolutionary pressure from a trough of non-political isolation. It seems unlikely that either existed as characterised by the League and their interpretation reflects their own myths and predilections. Their disappointment in a lack of revolutionary attitudes among teachers is understandable but it generated a distrust of teachers. They had become respectable, non-political, duplicitors and hankered after professional status.

Although they had faith in the effect the Rhondda strike had they could not really trust the teachers, this means describing the action as approximating to union actions, or later, saying it was entirely the support of the workers which had brought victory.61 Likewise the Burnham Award, seen as either a result of militant action or the creation of
far-sighted capitalists. The League saw the Award not as the result of union action but the deliberate act of an employing class because it blamed it for the rise in teachers' standard of living and their consequent loss to Labour. Struggle was obviously not a means to an end but the end itself! Indeed the positive aspects of the teachers' struggles, the generally favourable Burnham Award and the closer alliance between individuals and the Labour Party both began to appear as demerits in the League's arguments.

The issue it focussed on was the absolute necessity for teachers to work with other workers, in and out of struggle. The support of the organised workers it regarded, quite rightly, as crucial to the success in the Rhondda and in Lowestoft. The insistence of the NUT on its non-partisan approach it saw as hypocrisy (and worse). The NUT depended upon the solidarity of the workers to win and yet never created a formal alliance nationally or locally. This perspective on the NUT is apparent in its analysis of the Lowestoft Strike and the Abertillery struggle in which it intervened. It is epitomised in an article by A.J. Cook, the miners' leader, extending the viewpoint he had given as a speech to a League meeting of 700 teachers on the eve of the NUT Conference at Cambridge.

Cook said that the miners were puzzled by the non-political attitude of the NUT and its policy of financing the election of Tory, Liberal and Labour M.Ps. No politics in schools, he said, meant no Labour politics, and this allowed socialist teachers to be victimised and persecuted, making teachers the willing tools of the master. His main point, which he drove home, was that teachers were workers, whether they liked it or not, and whether they admitted it or not. They were workers because they were wage-earners and they had struck to maintain their wages. Again, like the League, he stressed the teachers,
dependence on the Labour movement - their wages and conditions were not the result of

"their own unaided power and efforts but the power and efforts of the Trade Union and Labour movement. Whether they know it or not that is the truth, and it is high time that someone reminded them of their true position in society and of their responsibilities to their fellow workers".63

What concerned Cook was that the workers' goodwill to teachers was running out. He reminded them of what he and others had done for the Rhondda teachers and what the miners in Abertillery had been asked to do and had done; the latter had been appealed to by the NUT Executive for support against wage reductions and the importation of blackleg labour. But the policy of non-political organisation was creating in the minds of the workers an antagonism which the Tory Government at the time would use to force a reduction in wages. Without the trade unions, the teachers would be hopelessly beaten, he added, and if it wasn't for the League they would have been in Abertillery.

Again, an editorial entitled 'A warning to teachers' diminished the value of the past teachers' struggles seeing teachers as the recipients of a prudent governing class policy to keep them contented. It compared teachers to engineers. They were both part of an aristocracy of labour, both threatened by a capitalist class whose profits were being reduced. The demand for external examinations it saw as the counterpart of the engineering employers' demands for increased production and payment by results. Similarly victimisation of militant teachers (blacklisting) will deprive them of natural leaders in the struggle to come. Local authorities, like some engineering firms, were refusing either to honour the National Agreement or submit the dispute to arbitration.64

So it was in this context of the close parallels between
teachers and other workers and the refusal by teachers to generally recognise this, coupled with the changing nature of teaching and the employers' counter attack on wages and work conditions, that the journal produced an article on the Lowestoft Strike. Headlined 'Memories of Lowestoft', it was not just a sentimental return to a success story but a pointed lesson to teachers in their local struggles. The key element in the victory, for the League, was the provision of the Welfare Centres. They had a twofold purpose. Firstly, they kept the children out of the blackleg schools and

"it was obvious ... that the pupils - especially the older ones were aware of the fact that their teachers were fighting the same battle as that in which their parents were always more or less engaged i.e. the wage struggle". The key element in the victory, for the League, was the provision of the Welfare Centres. They had a twofold purpose. Firstly, they kept the children out of the blackleg schools and

Secondly, a new education was created in the Centres. It did not involve corporal punishment. There was a freedom and a camaraderie between teachers and pupils and the "children became mentally more alive; they showed a greater capacity for tackling jobs on their own initiative". Yet again it came back to the old weakness. Parents and pupils were on the teachers' side and in public meetings, canvassing and local elections they showed it. Never once did the NUT approach organised workers directly, even though their support won the strike.

During 1928 came two of the expected attacks on teachers' pay expected by the Educational Worker since its first edition talked of bankrupt education authorities, especially in the mining areas. In Carmarthenshire, the local education authority refused to renew the Burnham Award scales in 1926, when they were due for renewal. They also refused to go to arbitration. Eventually after NUT threat of strike action, Lord Burnham arbitrated between the l.e.a. and the Union. The arbitration award effectively repudiated the original scales and the League saw this as the beginning of the new economy policy, the
result of the capitalist crisis. Unlike 1921 it argued, the Government is not anxious to avoid trouble with teachers and is bound to reduce the costs of education, to the extent of repudiating a national agreement. The new award for Carmarthen included new scales not on the original, a device to divide teacher from teacher and break down solidarity, the Educational Worker argued. Again the League stressed that this defeat for the Union was due to the failure to secure the support of organised labour. In the 1926 miners' strike in Carmarthenshire the teachers had been hostile. It was not uncommon, an article suggested, for miners to say of teachers, "I hope to God they'll be pulled down a peg", and it continued in an angry vein, complaining of a teacher's attitude which could not convince miners of the importance of fighting a wage reduction. Obviously the successful alliance in the Rhondda, between the young teachers and miners, sharing a common political philosophy, translated into unity, was rejected in Carmarthenshire. This suggests not only that the political and economic climate had altered but that many teachers had never been aware of the way in which the Rhondda strike had broken the class mould.

The League attacked the NUT Executive for its ambivalence to the struggle in Abertillery in 1928. It praised the initial stand of the NUT President who had compared Abertillery to Lowestoft, and expected the Union to form a local Labour alliance and set up welfare centres or strike schools again. It was appalled by a Schoolmaster editorial on a suggestion that, if wages were protected at Abertillery (and the Commissioners wanted a 20 per cent cut), then the teachers should offer a refund to a rates relief fund or local distress funds. Instead of rejecting the idea, the League was suspicious that new 'voluntary' cuts might be agreed with all the 'knock-on' consequences elsewhere. The Educational Worker strongly suggested that the struggle in Abertillery
should follow the successful struggle at Lowestoft -

"They must appeal to the workers of the district over the head of [the Commissioners]. Miners know full well the value of National Agreement and are prepared to fight for any section of the workers ... but they must be appealed to as fellow workers and fellow Trade Unionists and as the parents of the children in the schools. If that is done and done in all sincerity, the miners of Abertillery and the miners' children will support the teachers, as the agricultural labourers of Norfolk supported Mr. and Mrs. Higdon in Burston 14 years ago".70

It was only slightly encouraged by the NUT President's 'lip-service' to the non-political policy and all-out appeal to the Abertillery workers.71

The League sent an Executive member to address the Trades Council. This was important as six months earlier the Trades Council had supported a cut in the salaries of all higher-paid officials in the Borough, including teachers, not surprisingly as the miners were asked to make economies although they were on low wages. The Executive member, Margaret Clarke, still fighting her case for a sustentation allowance from the NUT, spoke at the Trades Council meetings and at an election meeting, arguing that a reduction of the teachers' pay would not help other workers and that it was the Government's job to solve the financial mess in Abertillery. The League then moved into the vacuum it felt was left by the inaction of the Union Executive and the inexperience of the local teachers. The questions it used to organise the campaign are of interest in that they show the League's reflection on past action by teachers -

"What was the position of headteachers not yet locked-out, if blacklegs were introduced into the schools? What preparations were to be made for running special schools? What was to be the attitude of the National Association of Schoolmasters? and to the unorganised teachers? Above all could nothing be done to influence the workers who really held the key to the situation?"72

The League worked closely with the militants in the Minority Movement,
perhaps after some joint negotiations between Communist Party members, and the Minority Movement issued an appeal calling for teacher/worker solidarity and argued the case in miners' lodges. Mander, the NUT President, then came to Abertillery to address a mass meeting, asking for support against the use of blackleg labour and for the maintenance of national agreements. Mander was embarrassed by a question at the meeting which asked why this appeal was not made directly to the Trades Council and he had to reiterate the Union non-political policy. The League obviously felt that its intervention at Abertillery had gone further than the Union in creating a link between teachers and the Labour movement there. In several ways, it was, from their point of view, a successful re-creation of the best features of the Rhondda and Lowestoft disputes. It had united the local teachers and workers, held in check the signs of a Burnham Award collapse and proved the League in concert with the Minority Movement could act effectively in industrial policy. It had done this even though it had misgivings about the economic gap which had been created by Burnham and the fall in the cost of living between teachers and other workers, and recognised the dangers to the teachers' standard of living if they lost their alliance with organised labour. The following October, neighbouring Glamorgan, Labour controlled, tried to reduce all its well-paid employees' wages - for the League this only reaffirmed the necessity for the constant renewal of the teacher/worker alliance.

The Abertillery dispute confirmed the re-organisation of the League along Trade Union lines. It spent more time co-ordinating work in the teacher unions and the Educational Worker now contained a regular Trade Union notes column. The paper began to be sold more in staff rooms or local association meetings, reflecting the shift in emphasis from place of residence to place of work. The paper became detailed and concrete, related to the impending struggle (in 1931) for the Burnham
Award renewal. League members mainly worked within the NUT but there were active members in the National Union of Women Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters and the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters. 'Close the Ranks' became the key to its work.

In the year of the split, 1926, the annual conference had laid the foundations of this policy, when a resolution was passed, instructing the Executive:

"to organise groups of League members inside all local and national bodies of teachers, these groups to meet regularly, to function as definite units of the League, and to pursue a common policy as outlined by the NEC of the League".74

This policy, reflecting the growth of Minority Movement arguments in the League, was quite difficult to operate. The NUT was now divided by bitter feuding from the National Association of Schoolmasters and the National Union of Women Teachers on the issue of equal pay - neither of these small associations was happy with the NUT's position on the issue. The NUT's decision to recruit secondary teachers in 1928 had also led to recriminations with the Assistant Masters' Association.

Yet the League worked hard to create a concern for federation between the Unions.75 This was the policy expressed with determination from 1928, as the League was certain that in 1931, when the Burnham Award had to be re-negotiated, there would be a concerted attack by the local authorities and the Board of Education on the teachers' standard of living.

Its not unreasonable view of teachers in this period was one of depression at the conflicts and divisions among them -

"... the central school teachers are agitating for a separate scale, men teachers are threatened with exclusion from the proposed junior schools, head teachers are facing down-grading on a large scale. Add to this the existing differentiation between men and women, between secondary and elementary, between certificated and uncertificated, between
between rural and urban areas, and you have a picture of a thoroughly divided and sectionalised profession".76

The League had to begin to work effectively with divided teachers and to produce a programme around which they could be mobilised. For instance, it demanded that no more uncertificated teachers should be allowed to start teaching yet

"all unqualified and under qualified teachers now in schools who have given satisfactory service for a number of years shall be paid as qualified teachers".77

The general category of unqualified or under qualified teachers the Educational Worker generally referred to as sweated teachers, and they meant the supplementary teacher (revived by the London County Council in infant schools), the commercial or private college teacher and the uncertificated teachers. Equal pay had become the stumbling block to teacher unity in the Twenties but the League was unreservedly against discrimination between men and women teachers and in favour of equal pay. The basis on which it argued for equal pay had to satisfy the different approaches of the NUT, the National Association of Schoolmasters and the National Union of Women Teachers. It proposed that there should be a national minimum wage, based on the wages current in large towns and the industrial areas, for men and women teachers in all types of schools and that there should be state allowances for dependents78 and extra payment for degrees and other qualifications.

In a meeting in London, with members drawn from all the teachers' organisations, C.G.T. Giles led a discussion on equal pay, reported in the Educational Worker. His main point was that existing (1929) standards would have to be defended in 1931 and that could only be done successfully by uniting teachers on a common programme. Without this and an alliance with organised workers, defeat was certain.79

By 1930, the aims of the League had altered considerably from
those of some of its early founders. It was no longer a teachers' advisory group in the Labour Party, it had been disaffiliated. It no longer represented all socialist opinion within its ranks; many Labour teachers had left the League. It had gradually come to act as a body of teachers owing a great deal to Communist Party membership or tactics, either directly or through Minority Movement influence. The idea of a discussion group of Labour teachers had given way to an organisation working on trade union lines, with its own branches, paper and a developing political and economic policy. In nearly every way, it was the opposite of its earlier self.

By 1930 its identification with Communist Party policies and organisations was close. It decided that year to affiliate to the Minority Movement and the Red International of Labour Unions. Yet from 1923 to 1930, as its attitudes to struggle, to unity and to alliance with organised workers had grown and developed, it had seemed to shrink in numbers and influence on teachers. The sureness of its line and the clarification of its aims with regard to the State was offset by a quarrelsome, despondent attitude to other teachers. Calling always for unity, it seemed to despise rank and file teachers and Union Executives. As its aims and organisation developed, the scope of its task increased. The growing gap between the Capitalist recession and the employers' attacks in education and its inability to rouse teachers caused it great frustration. The battle cry of Rhondda or Lowestoft had an effect on Abertillery but not elsewhere.

The example of Soviet education had come to supersede Burston as a guiding light on what could be achieved. The 'fascisation' of the school and the entry of teachers into the revolutionary working class had become the concerns of the League, and quite often, its old comrades in the Labour Party were the reformist obstacles to progress.
The secessionist association, the National Association of Labour Teachers, was now everything it did not wish to be, representing everything it was opposed to.

Although this is not clear, the Education Workers' League seems to have been following the policies of the Minority Movement long before its decision to join it in 1930. Its career as an organisation has many parallels with the Minority Movement. A.J. Cook, the Minority Movement's general secretary in the Twenties, was a close ally. It moved from being a propagandist body to a disciplined organisation in 1926/7, the same time the Minority Movement did. In its early phase it was concerned with broad left moderate policies and later (after the political shift to the extreme left in the Communist Party, the 'class against class' period) moved to an interest in revolutionary trade unionism. The Minority Movement declined and disappeared before the Educational Workers' League but by that time, the League itself was probably the Communist party organisation for its teachers. The failures of the League to grow and shape teachers' organisation was, in part, a reflection of the failure of Minority Movement policies.


3. Other references inc. Labour Monthly May 1926 (Teachers' Labour League formed in 1923) and Educational Worker (journal of Teachers' Labour League) 1926 ("after 4 years of steadily increasing strength").


6. Times, Jan 5, 1924.

7. [Also Chairman of the London Labour Agents Group, member of Croydon Labour Party and Independent Labour Party.]

8. The British Bureau of the Red International Labour Union was closely associated with the Minority Movement (created in 1924) which began to share many of the same ideas of working as the League.

Labour Monthly (May 1920, No. 5) ('Teachers and Class Struggle' AMA) described the International as neither communist nor affiliated to Moscow but remarked that this did not stop the press from talking of 'Red plots or Moscow gold'. It continued "the organisation (Educational Workers' International) stands uncompromisingly on the basis of class struggle. It reflects with complete frankness the attitude of the socialist teacher to the bourgeois state." It is not clear as to the status of the Educational Workers' International after 1923. In practice, it grew closer to the Minority Movement (RILU) in Britain.

9. Capper, a vice-Chairman of the League, later went to work with Vernochat at the Paris Headquarters of the Educational Workers' International because it became impossible for him to obtain a
9. teaching post in Britain. Even so, he was elected President contd. of the London Teachers' Association in 1948 when attacks on Communist Party teachers in London were prevalent. [Max Morris 'Education Today & Tomorrow' Dec. 1974]. The Special Branch had several reports on Capper in this period 1925-30.

PRO ED/24 1757.

10. A teacher at Clifton College, Bristol and close friend of Leah Manning. Manning p.78.

11. PRO ED/24 1757.


14. PRO ED/24 1761.

15. PRO ED/24 1757.

16. Labour Party Annual Conference Reports 1925. MacDonald's statement contrasts with his actions in the following years.

17. Labour Party Annual Report 1926. This was also the Conference which passed overwhelmingly the Manchester resolution on workers' control of education and civil rights for teachers. Barker (p.150) discussed the defensive reaction of a Labour Party against both a Communist and a Conservative Party at this time – especially on the question of socialist education. The demise of the Margate resolution is followed in Barker (p.152) and the attempts by Teachers' Labour Leagues' allies, Tawney, Cove and Trevelyan, to keep it alive.


21. PRO ED/24 1757. Percy replied to a Foreign Office query about the two delegates, Korostelev and Romm (Russian Teachers' Union) from the Educational Workers' International, that he was strongly of the opinion that visas should not be granted in these two cases. Clement (Luxembourg Teachers' Union) was also refused permission to enter Britain.


23. Ibid.


25. Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 3, Jan 1927. The connection with the Minority Movement and Communist Party was stressed again in their statement after the secession.

26. Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 3, Jan. 1927. Manning does not refer to the League at all in her autobiography, 'A Life for Education' (Collancz, 1970) but ironically, refers to a period, in the Twenties, when, visiting Russia with a deputation of teachers, she had been very impressed by its hope and enthusiasm and referred to the bitter anger of teachers at unemployment in Britain, and their action in joining the Communist Party. Others were happy working with Communists "I did myself" p.108.

27. Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 3, Jan. 1927. According to section of PRO ED/24 1757 on secessionists mainly due to Morgan Jones it included Manning, Chuter Ede and Alderman Conway. A.M.A. in May 1926 (Labour Monthly) had forecast this split. Members of the Executive had complained in the Daily Herald, after the International affiliation. He described them as "....those elements who are consciously or
27. unconsciously...opposed to a class policy, national or international. They argue that an open avowal of the class position will frighten off a large number of teachers who are ready to come into the Labour Movement. They are in fact in complete sympathy with the Liberalising tendencies at present in control of the Labour Party machinery - with or without the assistance of Eccleston Square, the minority may even be prepared to split the League rather than abide by a decision of which they disapprove. But so far the members of the League have refused to be stampeded by the Communist bogey”.


31. This is echoed by a report in The Times Educational Supplement Jan. 8, 1927, referring to the secessionists as "all the members who are known beyond the ranks of the League".

32. PRO ED/24 1757. Home Office Memo 24 Jan. 1928 contains evidence that in March 1926, Wake had warned the Teachers' Labour League that Educational Workers' International affiliation was inconsistent with Labour Party membership.

33. PRO ED/24 1757 Memo 24 Jan, 1928.


35. As (34) above.

36. As (34) above.


38. As (37) above, p.171.

39. Jennie Lee, a teacher and Independent Labour Party members
39. and friend of Charles Trevelyan, described how the Communists and Independent Labour Partiers were at odds in Scotland in 1927, and this must have increasingly occurred in the League.


41. Both Percy and his questioners always used 'party politics' when they meant socialist politics. Their commonsense view of the natural order of things leaves out any legitimacy for socialist teachers. Indeed it wasn't really necessary to have Conservative teachers - only those that did what was asked, at the right price.

42. Times, Feb. 18, 1927. Percy's policy was not the only policy available to the Conservatives - dismissal and oaths of allegiance were mooted. Another was the creation of a Conservative Teachers' Group. Although such a group (in the Morning Post and Yorkshire Post) had been declared unthinkable (by Percy in Dec. 1926 - PRO Ed/24 1753), T.C.C. Davidson, a close friend of Bonar Law and Baldwin and Chairman of the Party, addressed the first annual general meeting of the Lancashire and Cheshire Conservative Teachers' Circle on Feb. 27, 1927. In his address, he accused the League of being a Communist organisation, out to destroy the youth of the country, and although Conservatives would not wish to think of education from a party view, it was"no good being blind to the fact that politics have entered into education and we have to turn them out" (Times, Feb. 28, 1927).

43. In this speech he makes use of Special Branch notes on League membership and the teaching positions of some of its members viz. Capper.
Maxton had been trained as a schoolteacher as were his parents. After joining the Independent Labour Party (1904), he had worked as a propagandist and an Executive member of the Educational Institute of Scotland (the teachers' Union) and was dismissed by the Glasgow School Board in 1914 as a conscientious objector. He later became known as one of the Red Clydesider M.P.s. He had sometimes worked with John Maclean, the Glasgow teacher and leading Scottish Marxist, in the Marxist evening class Maclean ran weekly from 1908 to 1915. Maclean had founded the Scottish Socialist Teachers' Society before 1913, and it was involved in Autumn, 1913 with organising a teachers' strike in Renfrewshire. When Maclean was dismissed by the Govan School Board in 1915 after his imprisonment for sedition, his support from the working class was immense, with hundreds of resolutions protesting at his dismissal and a huge public demonstration met him from prison. The Scottish Socialist Teachers' Society had joined the Educational Workers' International and had close links with the Teachers' Labour League.


Giles, a teacher in West London, sent his son to the Strike School. Edwards p.153 There must have been a general awareness of the kind of socialist curriculum operating at Burston. It included visits to local strikers, collections for Russian famine victims, protest meetings about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, Christian Socialist instruction (Jesus
46. and the poor etc.), visits to union branch meetings and a regular social evening with parents (with cooking by the pupils). (Edwards, B. p.153).

47. This investigation became the basis for Starr's book, published in 1929, which he acknowledges in his foreword.


1925: 600 unemployed after leaving Training College.
1926: 1000 " " " "
1927: 4000 " " " "


As a result of the Geddes 'Axe' they were trained as teachers. They faced unemployment after 1923 and yet were debarred from accepting dole due to Ministry of Labour retraining they had undergone.


55. For instance, W. G. Cove had been a great supporter of the League yet within a year the secessionists (the National Association of Labour Teachers) could record that the Rhondda was one of its principal branches. The gains of a united action in the Rhondda in 1919 became a footnote in 1927, Burgevin, p.50.

Labour Monthly, May 1926 'Teachers and the Class Struggle'.

The two articles are very close to each other in argument (though the League editorial is much shorter) and share sentences or paragraphs only slightly rearranged, i.e.

Labour Monthly "Among them are organisations which are violently antagonistic to one another. Not one of them is registered as a Trade Union" and Educational Worker "Among these professional bodies are many which are violently antagonistic to one another, and not one of them is a properly constituted Trade Union" and so on. These parallels must reflect the accuracy of the 1932 Teachers International report which placed the journal in the left-wing's hands from the beginning. It also connects the left to the Communist Party very closely. It also follows a political line similar to that of the Minority Movement with its own blindspots on what a Trade Union really was ('properly constituted' etc.). It does seem an act of political outrageousness to argue this way on the eve of a League meeting which split it, suggesting that the Left was confident of ultimate victory.


Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 11, Sept. 1927. 'Teachers and Labour'.

Educational Worker, Vol. 2, No. 17, April 1928.

George Hicks, the TUC Chairman in 1927 argued a similar case. Unionism was necessary to obtain a living wage and like the manual worker "The educational worker sells his power to teach": that complex of intellectual and persuasive faculties which make the pedagogue. He can only live by doing so."

Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 6, April 1927.
64. Educational Worker, Vol. 1, No. 8, June 1927. 
66. Educational Worker, Vol. 2, No. 19, June 1928. The curriculum itself involved the 3 R's, History, Geography, Games and Educational films. "...These were workers' schools. They were run by educational workers for the children of the other workers. They were outside the Capitalist Educational machine for the moment."

68. The League's explanation, generally, was that the most advanced section of the teachers were never in direct contact with the working class movement (Educational Worker, Vol. 2, No. 19, June 1928). A further extension of that thesis should have been that they were never in touch with the least advanced in the teaching force. 

73. A postscript to Abertillery, reported in The Educational Worker, was that the local Trades Council had asked the NUT branch to affiliate to it, after showing they had supported the teachers. The NUT Executive sent a letter to its local branch saying that in the opinion of legal counsel this affiliation would be illegal because of the NUT constitution, this does not explain, however, the branch affiliations present in the rest of the country. 

74. Labour Monthly No. 5, May 1926 'Teachers and Class Struggle'.
Unity and federation always meant to the League on the basis of class conscious action i.e. joining the TUC - not just a lowest common denominator.


Educational Worker, Vol. 3, No. 26, March 1929. This policy is opposed by a view commonly held in the NUT before 1919 and even after when uncertificated teachers were allowed to join. The Educational Worker was speaking about supplementary teachers though and not just the uncertificated.

Without this item, in an age without family allowance, the National Association of Schoolmasters would be unlikely to agree to equal pay, holding as it did, that a man's wage had to be a family wage, the woman's wage an additional or a single person's wage.


It argued, in 1931 (Educational Worker, Vol. 5, No. 48, June 1931) that teachers were leaving the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party for the Minority Movement or Communist Party.


These parallels can be read into, though not discussed in Martin, R. (1969) 'Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924-1933. A study of the National Minority Movement', Clarendon Press.
13. DIVIDED TEACHERS: MEN AND WOMEN

The general pattern emerging from this study of teacher unionism is of a gradual unity among teachers forged by a struggle over conditions of work and influenced by the new socialist ideas and practical assistance from the Labour movement. It has been argued that with the move from a craft union to an industrial approach taken by the NUT, a significant step towards a unity of certificated and uncertificated teachers had been achieved, and this implied a new unity of male and female teachers. Yet at the very moment of unity in 1919, the Union had two secessions in the shape of a woman teachers' association (the National Union of Women Teachers) and a man teachers' association (soon to be the National Association of Schoolmasters). Conflict between members of these two groups had been dormant for many years yet new ideas and movements in society influenced both of them. This chapter tries to show the antecedents of the split and the conditions under which it occurred. The sources for this discussion are fairly limited yet the points raised are fundamental to understanding the gradual fragmentation of the new-found unity among the teachers. The deep divisions between teachers, sustained in a period of political and social retrenchment in the 1920's, need to be explained as the energies of much of the left wing of the NUT was spent in this decade on re-uniting the teachers to face further onslaughts on their economic position. Socialist ideas taken from the Webbs or G.D.H. Cole became important in the public argument with the men secessionists though they seem strangely absent from debate with women secessionists. For the latter, the argument became one of tactics versus feminist arguments of male culpability.

Before 1900, the seeds of a dispute in the teachers' ranks
were present. The craft union approach was conservative and male-dominated. Male domination in that period was probably a reflection of the wider patriarchal and sexist divisions in society which reserved for women a place in the home or a view of intelligence and capability that attempted to make them second-class. This attitude was promoted within teaching by the divided scale of payment for men and women teachers. Though most teachers were badly paid, women teachers were in a large substratum paid even less. As the State education grew from the 1870's, uncertificated teachers grew in number and they were followed by newly-created types of teacher, including the supplementaries. Teaching had become a 'feminized' industry. They outnumbered men in each of the teaching categories - certificated, uncertificated and supplementary - yet proportionately, men were more likely to gain headship promotions.

Of the majority of women teaching, as high as three-quarters or four-fifths of the elementary workforce by 1914, very few were organised in the Union in 1900. Of course, only certificated teachers were eligible and a large number of women teachers were uncertificated or supplementary, yet within the certificated only a third of women teachers eligible were Union members in 1895. The presence of women in the Union began to be felt after 1904 and this was a reflection of the rise of the women's movement organised around votes for a proportion of women and equal pay. The two parts of the programme were of equal concern to women teachers and they were involved in organisations which concentrated on one or the other, the Equal Pay League or the Women Teachers' Franchise Union. For a number of women teachers, the source of their energy and organisation among other women teachers came from their involvement in the Pankhurst's suffragette organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union, founded in 1903.
Before we explore the rise of the women's movement among teachers we should mention one group that took a different course, preceding in some ways the actions of the Union militants in the Rhondda. A small National Union of Uncertificated teachers (later, the National Union of Schoolteachers) had been formed in 1913 by a Miss Walsh, who organised it from Manchester. The National Union of Schoolteachers was extremely bitter at the attitudes towards the uncertificated and supplementary teachers prevailing in the NUT. The injustices placed upon these teachers who were the victims of family poverty and unable to support themselves in training or had qualifications not recognised as full certificates fuelled the NUST. Its supporters saw themselves working in a sweated industry where other teachers got better remuneration, smaller classes and pensions. The cry of 'equal pay for equal work' was welcomed by their allies in the Trades and Labour Councils and in the Trades Union Congress. The arguments that Miss Walsh offered to the TUC were based on qualification and experience, not on divisions by sex; in other words, she argued for parity not because the NUST and its women members deserved equal pay because they were women but because they were doubly exploited by their employers.

There was a separate and growing movement among women teachers associated with the Women's Social and Political Union. The fight for equal pay was part of the fight for their political emancipation. It was not based on arguments of industrial exploitation or sweated labour but was part of their recognition as full citizens with economic, political and social rights. Within the NUT, they demanded their due - they were paid less for the same work as men. Initially they may have been influenced, like the early organisers of the Women's Social and Political Union, by the aims of the Independent Labour Party,
which included women's suffrage as part of a full adult suffrage, but gradually, within and without the Union, the movement took on a political and tactical direction that was not linked to political parties or class arguments but based on sexual divisions in teaching. Several of the early group that created the Women's Social and Political Union were Independent Labour Party teachers. For instance, two of the leading organisers of the Women's Social and Political Union between 1903 to 1910 were Teresa Billington and Mary Gawthorpe, both ex-elementary school teachers. [Although these two teachers were from working class backgrounds, Beatrice Webb has argued that it was middle class women newly entered into teaching who were the agents of the new women's movement in teaching. Class arguments, as Sylvia Pankhurst argued, did not prevail long in the Women's Social and Political Union except in the sense she describes Christabel, an 'incipient Tory'.] The first secretary of the National Federation of Women Teachers, Miss E. Froud (the NFT was the successor to the Equal Pay League) was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union and had been selected for the post on the basis of her organising ability in the Women's Social and Political Union. The Equal Pay League had been formed in 1904 by Mr. J. Tate, who, in turn, had been converted by a London teacher, Miss E. Lane who had fought for equal benefits for male and female teachers from the Benevolent Fund. The League encouraged increased representation of women teachers at the Union Conferences and on the Union Executive, as well as equal pay. In 1904, it had 73 members (of which 5 were men); the latter dropped out when it became the National Federation of Women Teachers in 1906. One of the arguments for a separate organisation was that women had to 'stand on their own feet' in a period when they were beginning to take their place as paid workers. A separate organisation,
it was felt, would help them "to know what they wanted and how to get it through their own efforts". Within the NUT Conferences, resolutions for equal pay caused uproar and in the London Teachers' Association (in 1907 and subsequent years) the attempt was stopped after "whistles were blown, feet stamped, comic songs were sung by an organised opposition..." A member of the NUT Executive, Allen Croft, speaking to a resolution on women's suffrage was faced with a 'furious and sustained uproar'.

From 1908, the NFWT concentrated on trying to get the Union to declare itself in favour of women's suffrage and placed equal pay in abeyance. The difficulty in getting a Conference resolution on the agenda was made extremely difficult by the tactics of local associations which included allowing its delegates to vote regardless of association decisions. The Union Conference (1914) resolved that women's suffrage was outside the NUT's purview - this was an odd decision considering that teacher sponsored M.P.'s were sitting in Parliament. In accordance with its early principles, the NFWT tried to get women members of the Executive increased in number. To some extent this was a success but they decided in 1916 not to persist due to two factors. The first, interestingly, was the 'apathy on the part of a very large number of NUT women'. The other reason was the control of election machinery by men - they created fraudulent voter's lists or tampered with the voting papers etc. Apart from the contacts with the Women's Social and Political Union and the shared cultural milieu which the NFWT shared with it, there are other clues to the NFWT membership. One area which had a strong influence on the organisation in London and the national leadership of the NFWT was West Ham. The women teachers in West Ham had formed their own Association, within the NUT, in 1912, due to the opposition of the men teachers to the suffrage question. This Association joined the Federation after the debate at the 1911 NUT
Conference at Aberystwyth where Allen Croft was shouted down. Other strong associations who had been capable of influencing local authority negotiations on pay and producing an equal minimum for men and women teachers were Swansea, East Ham, Wood Green, Leyton and York.  

The National Federation of Women Teachers began to secede from the NUT, tired by continuous battles and of the 'apathy' of the women teachers. In 1915 it had rented offices, then employed a paid organiser and by 1917 was holding its own Conference at a different time of year to the NUT. After furious debate, its original object 'to recruit women teachers to join the NUT' was deleted and by 1921, it forbade its Central Council members to hold joint membership with the NUT. The Federation was completely against any kind of compromise over equal pay and opportunities with the men teachers in the NUT, and by compromise it meant any delay whatsoever. Unity was not possible it was argued between

"those who believe that payment should depend on sex and those who believe that it should be based on the value of the work done [and those who think] ... that it is derogatory for a man to serve under a headmistress but not derogatory for a woman to serve under a headmaster".  

In a publication called 'Why I left the NUT' women Federation members wrote about their reasons which mainly consisted of a lack of belief in the Union's policy on equal pay and its attempts to achieve it, and a freedom to pursue pressure on local authorities without NUT interference.  

The NUT in 1918 and 1919 was deeply altered by the influence of the women delegates to the annual Conferences and the severance policy of the Federation seemed in retrospect inopportune. Miss E.R. Conway, the NUT President in 1918, spoke on the problems of women teachers and chaired a debate on equal pay. She made the point that equal pay should wait on schemes for State endowment of motherhood and
taxation relief for children. A referendum was agreed on the principle of 'equal pay for men and women of the same professional status' by a margin of over 2:1. It is possible that influential opponents of equal pay, like C.W. Crooks, felt that a compromise which was radical in theory but inactive in practice might keep the NUT from splitting. A split that was likely to occur from the Federation and from a newly-formed National Association of Men Teachers. Again, in 1919, Goldstone in the Times Educational Supplement remarked upon the number of women delegates at the Cheltenham Conference and their activity and perhaps pointed out the area of mistrust between the NFWT members and the Union Executive. He suggested that after the equal pay referendum Union pay scales would have to be formulated but

"The Executive is spared the difficult duty which some delegates would have thrust upon it, of not only propounding a new scale but also of presenting it to local education authorities in the form of an ultimatum".

The issue is centred upon the action of the NUT; whether it was controlled by men teachers who had no wish to see equal pay (the view of the NFWT) or that equal pay was becoming but had not yet become a strong possibility which, with certain caveats, the Union could adopt and obtain. The latter was too pragmatic a view for the NFWT and was seen as 'bad faith'.

Inescapably, the actions of the women teachers in the NFWT was bound up with the pre-war militant campaigns of the Women's Social and Political Union. Civil disobedience, arson and physical damage were part of the suffragette campaign and in turn this generated or, perhaps, renewed the street violence of men towards them, men often described as gentry or middle class by observers. The violence and conspiracy entered into by men in the Union has to be seen as part of
the wider social relations. The NFWT speakers were seen as (and often were) suffragettes. So, in a legal action taken by the Federation against the London Teachers' Association which was altering its constitution to enable the Executive to exclude Federation motions, the legal counsel advised the women teachers, that, although they had a good case,

"because of the prejudice against suffragists at the time warned certain women that their names were prominently before the public and that they were known as suffragettes; it was therefore better for the sake of the result that less well-known names should be before the Court".21

When the parliamentary franchise was increased to include women over 30 years (in 1918), the Women Teachers' Franchise Union dissolved itself into the NFWT in London, forming a unit of 7 thousand teachers. The collapse of the old WSPU which after a number of internal purges had metamorphosed into an ultra-patriotic league in the war and the changes in the franchise left its ex-members in the NFWT free to pursue questions on equal pay and other campaigns.22 Yet these campaigns bore many of the hallmarks of the WSPU. Christabel Pankhurst's strong interest in venereal disease and the higher moral standards of women culminating in her book 'The Great Scourge and How to End It', was turned into a NFWT pamphlet by Theodora Bonwick. The year following the book's publication, the NFWT in 1914 passed a Conference resolution on Sex Hygiene and carried on a campaign among teachers and 'selected groups of older girls'.23 The second deputation it ever organised to the Board of Education was on the Teaching of Sex Hygiene, in 1919. Like the WSPU, great emphasis was laid on display and green and gold banners were often seen in their open-air processions.24 This was because they believed that psychologically, reasoning was not sufficient to change opinions,
"the imagination must first be roused by means of striking and beautiful sights or sounds".  

All the demonstrations had great displays of banners and flags, community singing, processions and were sometimes (as in the WSPU) led by a member on horseback.

The years 1919 to 1921 saw the final split with the NUT and the Federation formed itself into the National Union of Women Teachers. Disappointment and anger was felt at the Burnham Agreement and the betrayal of equal pay by the men of the NUT on the Burnham Committee; the very composition of the NUT delegation was soon resented - five women out of twenty two delegates. Their argument as a Federation was that in some areas before 1919 their organisation had pressured some local authorities to grant equal minima on the pay scales, and sometimes even equal increments; these areas were Wood Green, Tottenham, East Ham, Leyton, Acton and Swansea and York outside London. It is of interest to note that 'equal pay' meant, to the NFWT, equal pay between men and women with the same qualifications, and not, as with the NUST, equal pay for equal work, regardless of qualifications. Equal pay is related to qualification, and so, a discussion about the value of a Swansea settlement where men and women college-trained certificated teachers were paid one sum, and non-collegiate teachers less, and uncertificated teachers half as much was regarded as fairly satisfactory to the NFWT. The Burnham Award was a retrograde step in the London areas mentioned because it increased the differentials between men and women and removed the equal minima. It was this and not the fact that in urban areas it often reduced salary gains that the Federation regarded it as an 'outstanding evil'. The Burnham reaction was part of a number of defeats in which the gains made by women were being pushed back. The Federation called a number of large demonstrations in London on the
issue of equal pay in the early Twenties, and against the Geddes proposals (in 1921).

The main enemy of the Federation was the NUT. Evidence of its perfidy was culled from the Schoolmaster or Conference reports. It was not just a question of recruitment, though the NUT was a rival, but the fact that "men teachers had vested interests in the maintenance of existing inequality of conditions", and women teachers needed to rely upon themselves and organise.

It was not just equal pay that was the issue, there was also the question of a marriage bar for women. This had been a problem since 1900; some LEA's had imposed marriage bars on women teachers but only on teachers new to work, not on teachers who were already married, others banned all married women. The movement developed with the shortage of pupil teachers (from 1908) and before recruitment from secondary schools and colleges was really underway. The grounds for the bar was probably a form of economy; it was cheaper to employ a young teacher who was energetic if not experienced, than the older teacher. This would apply in areas that had salary scales, the pressure of the rural areas was not as acute as they did not generally have scales. Yet the bar could not have operated if the social climate of the period, influenced strongly by male assumptions of the nature of families and family support, did not unite some of the male teachers with the employers. Discrimination against the married woman teacher increased divisions among teachers. A marriage bar had also operated in the Civil Service for some time. Before 1896, it had been customary to resign on marriage but after, it was made a universal rule. It was the Civil Service that was mentioned in discussions of a marriage ban. Beatrice Webb talked of an 'Association of London Married Women Teachers', formed in 1909, to defend their interests against serious
attacks. The London School Board and the London County Council always employed and protected married teachers (due, I should think to the influence of the teachers' associations and shortage of staff) but voluntary schools in London often tried to dismiss these teachers, and in one case, there was a large demonstration organised by the London Teachers' Association.

The war changed this situation. The married women ex-teachers were treated as a reserve army of labour, drafted in to replace the conscripted men. With the political reaction of 1921, local authorities again imposed bans and dismissed teachers who were about to or were married. Again this was generally an urban policy, rural areas had difficulties enough retaining staff on lower scales; bans were recorded in Nottingham, Lincoln, Leeds, Rotherham, Sheffield and Smethwick. The official record of the work of Smethwick's education service after describing the valour of its men teachers in the war, discussed its ban by means of a euphemism:

"mention should also be made of the readiness shown by former women teachers in Smethwick who had married and left the profession, in coming forward to fill the vacancies caused by the withdrawal of the men from civil duty. At one time during the war period, and for a year or two afterwards, the Local Authority had as many as eighty married women serving in the Elementary schools, and it was only by utilising their services that the Committee were able to carry on the schools. However with the gradual return to more normal conditions this number has been reduced, and the services of the married ladies have been dispensed with, so that there are now very few, indeed, occupying any posts under the Authority".

Legal action was taken by the NUT to support any of its teachers faced with a marriage ban. The East Ham branch brought an action against the Borough Council to restrain it from dismissing one of its teachers. The High Court gave judgement against the teacher and so all the married women teachers in East Ham were dismissed. Sometimes married women
teachers were allowed to continue if they had dependants or were widows but rarely if their husbands were working.

In Rhondda, the married women teachers had been threatened with dismissal in 1919, as had all those qualified for a pension. Local women teachers met representatives of the Labour women's organisations and co-operative guilds (and W.G. Cove) to form a permanent women's organisation to enforce women's rights and participate in municipal elections. 39 In February, 1920, they organised a deputation to the Council on the issue of a married women bar and dismissal of the pensionable age teachers. Marie Stopes, who had just written a book called 'Penalising Marriage' led the deputation. She argued against the waste of public money that would be involved in the teachers' dismissals (the cost of their training and experience), the stability that these teachers brought to schools filled with unmarried teachers 40 and that they were enslaving women to their husbands. Without much reported discussion, except in favour of their continued employment, the Council voted eleven to eight for dismissal by August 1920. In 1922, some of these teachers, still working, appealed to the NUT Legal and Tenure Committee for help. The NUT solicitor told them not to continue legal action although other lawyers were more favourable. The report in the Daily Herald added that 'the majority of local teachers are not in sympathy with the married women'. 41 A High Court injunction to stop the dismissals was rejected and the court decided the local authority was within its rights. 42 High teacher unemployment and strong sexual divisions, reflecting continuing structural differences in the service over pay and conditions and a cultural milieu unfavourable to women's rights, served to aid the dismissals. As the London Teacher Association was to comment, some years later,
"It has been the custom of LEA's to regard married women teachers as the means whereby they can solve staffing difficulties dismissing them when there is a surplus ... and re-employing them when there is an insufficiency of supply".43

The other major issue for the NUWT was promotions. This was closely connected to the large school amalgamations that took place in the Twenties and the reservation of many of the new headteacher posts created for men teachers. Although infant departments were usually controlled by a woman headteacher, when they were amalgamated with junior elementary schools that took boys and girls, the post nearly always went to a man. The rule invariably was that if boys were present in single or mixed schools, headteachers were male. This was a reflection of the interests of the people controlling the Education Committees or voluntary schools. The NUT policy was that the 'best person' should be appointed but the NUWT felt that, in practice, the NUT allowed the domination by men of these posts. The NUWT policy was that infants schools should have women headteachers and that there should be open competition between men and women for mixed school headships. In school amalgamations, the NUWT policy was that the better qualified teacher should be appointed. In practice it seems experienced or better qualified teachers might be passed over for the man teacher. In 1927 and 1928, deputations from the NUWT visited the Board of Education to complain of the continuing loss of headships for women.44 The Union fought hard to retain separate infants schools and to oppose the amalgamation of boys and girls schools.45 This issue was also contentious from the point of view of the National Association of Schoolmasters, to whom I now turn. Their policy of 'Men Teachers for Boys' included in its scope the infants schools as well as the higher levels. All kinds of arguments and allies were enrolled to keep women teachers away from boys, and consequently
away from school headships (with the move to amalgamations) Claims that the nation would be feminized or boys made deceitful abounded.46

The NAS (or the National Association of Men Teachers as it was at first) was formed in response to the 1919 Equal Pay Referendum and its first branches were formed in places where equal pay had started to appear (equal minima etc.) and the National Association of Men Teachers was established in West Ham, East Ham, Cardiff and Walthamstow, and other places in Merseyside and the North East.47 It continued as a National Union of Teachers' pressure group until 1922 when the National Association of Schoolmasters was formed. Initially, it claimed no hostile intention to the National Federation of Women Teachers or the National Union of Teachers.48

Several issues were involved in the 'Men Teachers for Boys' argument. The NAS felt betrayed by the power of the women teachers in the NUT and blamed their control of the Union for the decline of the number of men teachers. This bitterness was expressed in an Association pamphlet - the NAS had wanted the number of women teachers in the Union controlled:

"Ignoring the stark realities of war, its women preferred to stress their part in the classroom and 1919 produced a situation and an atmosphere of sentimentality of which they took full advantage. With men still embodied in the Army, the NUT adopted 'equal pay' as its salary basis. With men's posts filled by women who wanted to keep them, the NUT found itself unable to advocate 'Men Teachers for Boys'. Women comprising four-fifths of the membership, dictated the policy of the monopoly. After four years of war, men were stunned by such callous opportunism.... The men were muzzled".49

Indeed they only blamed the last ditch blocking of 'equal pay' on the male employers panel in the Burnham negotiations.50 The NAS explanation of the decline of male teachers excludes the role of the employers, who created the mass of cheap labour many women teachers represented and who
employed women as a reserve in time of their need. 'Men Teachers for Boys' was a way of controlling their decline which would appeal to some employers in the local authorities and would reserve sections of the labour market for themselves against a cheaper labour force. It recruited help from well-known establishment figures and psychologists to justify its claim. So, in one pamphlet, it argued that, between 8-12 years, the boy passes into the 'first masculine phase' and that schools had the responsibility, now that fathers were away at work for most of the week, to meet "the child's natural needs for male impact" and to surmount the 'mother-fixation' (aided by women teachers) which would "cramp his development and leave him immature, effeminate, easy-going and afraid of the responsibilities of adult life".51

At other times its arguments were not so crude. It argued that men and women both had good qualities - they were different but not superior or inferior to each other. When the balance between them in schools was upset trouble ensued; the balance was made up of men for boys, women for girls. With this formula it was possible to work out that there was a severe shortage of men teachers (or the reverse, over representation of women teachers)52. Similar arguments were expressed in the NUT. The Executive debated one resolution that asked for 'men teachers for boys' in the two years preceding transfer to the senior elementary school. It was rejected on the basis of Union policy, which Ald. Michael Conway expressed, that it was a question of ability not sex that should be the issue.53

The teachers associated with people like Conway or Cove had little time for the NAS arguments and actions. They were seen as 'splitters' who were denigrating and damaging the NUT at a time when unity should have been paramount. The Daily Herald often reported the NAS meetings in London as the Association worked for Labour
candidates in 1921/2; it had helped George Ammons to victory in Camberwell, along with NUT teachers. An insight into the complex behaviour of the NAS is that it was reported as demanding that workers should stick together in the face of Government attacks, particularly the Geddes proposals. The NAS action in Southampton, during the strike, when the local branch secretary offered to take the men teachers back if higher increments were offered to them was held against the NAS. Indeed Cove agreed that this action had revealed the true nature of the NAS to many men teachers and that many of them in Southampton rejoined the NUT. Inconsistencies in the NAS arguments were analysed in The Schoolmaster in the early 1920's, which was, presumably, a reflection on the influence of NAS arguments on some male teachers. In particular, NAS arguments about women's salaries and against equal pay failed to attract the post-Rhondda militants. One, in a Presidential address in Liverpool, where there was some conflict with the NAS, argued that

"he could not give assent to the proposition that a decrease in the salary of women teachers was the necessary concomitant of an increase in the salary of men. On the contrary, the economic tendency which operated in other trades and professions affected the teaching profession also; and a fall in the remuneration of any one section in the group of workers was the prelude to a fall in the remuneration of all.... He failed to see that an increased differentiation between men's and women's salaries would in fact operate the other way and would tend to drive men out".

Of course, the NAS did not accept this argument. It was true, they said, that in industry 'equal pay for equal work' was advocated but only because it could never be secured, women could not produce the same work as men. So, the NAS continued, women before and after the war were better off than men, they did not do the same work as the men and they did not need the men's wage which was a family wage. The fact that women were really better off than men did not count; for the NAS, man's
wages should be a family wage and so women teachers paid less were actually on a better standard of living because they did not support a family. Further, the NAS also invoked a view of women as 'mother' and 'homemaker' which would obviously deprecate going out to work (viz. women teachers), unless, of course, they were single and should need as much money anyway. This idea of the teachers' wives was explained thus -

"they would frequently have to undertake extraneous work in addition to, and almost always to the neglect of, their home life and domestic duties. The fact is often forgotten that 'motherhood is the noblest of all professions' and is of primary importance to the nation, and of worth above that of any other calling ... the men realise the truth of the fact that 'women's vital force can, and generally does, pour itself into motherhood'. They know too that the best women find in motherhood and prefer to find in it, their chief work, their most absorbing interest .... what manner of bitterness is that in some women which makes them so blind to what is the most elementary justice to members of their own sex?."59

On the point that women's work in teaching was different (and inferior) to men's work, the NAS invoked a passage from the Webbs' Industrial Democracy' which describes the Union organisation in the cotton industry: the different sections, such as overlockers or spinners, were organised in different sections and the whole joined in a federation. This, the NAS proposed as the way in which teachers could organise - instead of sections divided according to occupation, now they would be divided according to sex. The NUT argued against this idea; any parallel between teachers and cotton workers was discounted, particularly as the two groups of elementary teachers, class teachers and headteachers, were both in the Union. Furthermore, the Union saw no differentiation between the work a woman or man teacher did - they worked under the same roof, with the same conditions. Goldstone, the NUT General Secretary in the early Twenties, wrote to Beatrice Webb with reference to the analogy
used by the NAS. She replied that teachers were interchangeable in their work, unlike the overlookers and spinners (etc.), and saw the NAS breakaway as wrong — particularly because they were trying

"to protect one particular section of the members against another section in an occupation where the persons concerned are in fact largely interchangeable". 60

The NUT's arguments were not, as once they might have been, that of a sectional craft union. The lessons of the last few years and the breakthrough of 1919 had altered it. A leaflet (no. 42) used the arguments of industrial unionism and of amalgamation — it too quoted from 'Industrial Democracy'

"It is one of the conditions of effective trade union action that a union should include all the workmen whose occupation or training is such as to enable them, at short notice, to fill the places held by its members", 61 and later, talked of craft union strikes broken by 'female blacklegs'. It was probably W.W. Hill, who had argued for a guild socialist view of professional self-government at the 1920 and 1921 NUT Conferences, who wrote the Union pamphlet. In a Schoolmaster article of the same year he expressed very similar arguments, and this time referred to G.D.H. Cole, as well as the Webbs, to talk of industrial unionism. 62

Beatrice Webb, in her New Statesman supplement on teachers, written ten years before the conflicts with the NUWT and the NAS, had compared the value of a clear-cut specialised association as opposed to the large, centralised union. She recognised that, in that period, these associations were necessary to represent the views of the majority to an executive controlled by male, college-trained headteachers, but, nevertheless, their actions were sometimes incompatible and even contradictory.

It is to the last point that the divisions among the teachers on the basis of sex must turn. Were these divisions impossible to solve within the new ideology of industrial unionism of the NUT? Were they
in fact antagonistic? Or were they a product of social and cultural movements in the period which the NUT's structure could not contain within itself?

The National Union of Women Teachers was closely connected with the Women's Social and Political Union, and its aims were to achieve women's suffrage and equal pay. As the campaigns of the Women's Social and Political Union grew in militancy, and this in turn created a militant group within the NUT, the forward movement it expressed was faced with a male, certificated teacher craft union, incapable of coming to terms with it and in a conservative phase. In turn, the women teachers of the National Union of Women Teachers did not, and probably could not because of class and political ideology, enter into any alliance with the Left in the Union. They represented the old ILP past from which the Women's Social and Political Union had escaped (with the exception of Sylvia Pankhurst). The Union fundamentally altered in 1919 but this was too late for a group with its own momentum and ideological reference points. The relative success of the Union could not meet the single issue that the NFWT was concentrating on - equal pay. It is unlikely that, even if it was achieved against employer resistance in 1921, it could have withstood the strong reaction and economic depression of the Twenties. Yet, clearly, the sexual division of society and of the Labour movement were at work in the Union. Was equal pay supported fully? The NAS obviously thought it was but even unequal scales it would argue still led to female dominance in the Union and the decline of the man teacher. Arguments about equal pay preserving jobs for men in teaching cut little ice with the NAS. Its viewpoint was sex-based, patriarchal and paternalistic. It might have included Labour supporters in its ranks, though the evidence exists only for the early Twenties when most teachers were waiting for Labour and its education policies, but their ideas were a continuance of the old,
conservative craft union approach; old prejudices were built into a union strategy. The defection of the NAS was not only based upon male-female divisions in the union but on the parting between the industrial and the craft unionists. The new ideas of the Union had been forged in a period when the army teachers were elsewhere. On their return, their betrayal was seen as woman-inspired but it was also based upon the new Left arguments. The NAS represented elements of the old male, craft approach, now in temporary decline in the Union.

The very strength of the NUT in 1920 allowed secessions based on an almost ultra-left position of single issue 'equal pay now', regardless of the coming reaction, and on a right wing male-dominated elitist approach based on mythologies of patriarchy and craft unionism. Each of these secessions were probably incapable of being resolved within the NUT as each moved to the sound of a very different drummer, yet each was to undermine the unity achieved by the NUT industrial or syndicalist ideas of the Big Union.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 13

1. Partington, G. (1976) 'Women Teachers in the 20th Century'
   NFER, p.3.
   Women teachers (1900 to 1914) - eight-eight thousand to one
   hundred and twenty thousand.
   Men teachers (1900 to 1914) - thirty to forty thousand.

2. In the sense of women being in a majority and being cheap
   labour. Prentice, Alison. 'The Relations between the
   Sexes in Teaching" Unpub. paper. York/University of Toronto

3. The proportion of certificated females to males was over 2:1
   and uncertificated 8:1.


5. The NUST probably joined the TUC in 1919. It had six
   thousand members that year and 14 thousand by 1921. Allies
   speaking for NUST resolutions in the TUC were from the
   Workers' Union (predecessor of the TGWU), dockers, cotton spinners
   and warehouse and general workers. TUC Annual Congress Reports
   1919-1921.

6. Teresa Billington was a teacher and a member of the Manchester
   branch of the Independent Labour Party with the Pankhursts.
   She was a secretary of the Manchester Teachers' Equal Pay
   League in 1903, the second national organiser for the Independent
   Labour Party in 1906 and then the first paid national organiser
   for the Womens' Social and Political Union. She was a
   socialist and an agnostic and had refused to teach religion
   in school; she was saved from dismissal by the intervention of
   Mrs. Pankhurst, a member of Manchester Education Committee.
   She was a member of the small group of Independent Labour Party
6. women who founded the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903.

7. Mary Gawthorpe was a vice-President of the Leeds Independent Labour Party and then a Women's Social and Political Union organiser. In 1909 she ran the Lancashire Regional office. Other teachers involved with the Women's Social and Political Union were Theodora Bonwick (NFWT member), Dorothy Evans, Edith How Martin, Annie Neligan and Edith New (a leading militant and the Newcastle organiser in 1909). An elder stateswoman of the Women's Social and Political Union was Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy who was a Manchester teacher and an early organiser of the Manchester Board schoolmistresses and women's suffrage champion.


Winifred Holtby, the writer, was both a feminist and Independent Labour Party member in the late 1920's and wrote a column for the paper of the National Union of Women Teachers, as well as addressing their conferences. Brittain, Vera (1940), 'Testament of Friendship', Macmillan.

8. Webb, B. (1915), p.8. Widdowson (1981) has argued that it was lower middle class women who entered teaching. This would tend to place them as products of the new secondary schools and college trained (as envisaged in the 1907 Pupil Teacher Memorandum).


15. Phipps, p.27. West Ham Women Teachers' Association.
(The General Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and Chairwomen of
the important Mutual Aid Fund were from West Ham. The West Ham
Secretary was also on the Federations' Central Council.)
16. Phipps, p. 85. West and East Ham were among the first NUT
local associations that were troubled with the rise of a
Men Teachers' Association. Indeed West Ham was taken over
by it in 1919. Partington, p.19.
17. Phipps, p.34.
19. Times Educational Supplement, May 1, 1919. "Not many years
ago a large majority of the delegates were men. A steadily
increasing proportion of women has been a noticeable feature of
the attendance at recent conferences until at Cheltenham
there appeared to be an almost equality of sexes...[also] a
marked change in outlook and debating power".
20. Times Educational Supplement, May 1, 1919.
21. Phipps, p.18. "so large a proportion of its members were
fighters in the Suffrage Campaign", p.59.
22. For instance, the NFWT was in the forefront of the fight against
women supplementary teachers, especially in London, where, during
and after the war, the LCC had employed untrained women as infant
teachers. It was well organised in London and didn't find it
difficult to raise 10 thousand signatures in half a day against
suggested London salary scales in 1918. [Article in The Herald, June 29, 1918 by NUWT member.]

Phipps, p.72.

Rosen, p.103/4. WSPU had 8 ft x 3 ft long banners of purple, white and green, plus flags and sashes.

As evidence of this Phipps (p.59) referred to an opponent, a man, who became a suffragist, when he saw '700 women graduates in academic class'.

Phipps, p.85.

Phipps, p.86.

Partington, p.22/3. The Atkins Committee on Equal Pay, the 1919 Sex Discrimination Removal Act and the 1920 Hills Resolution were all rendered ineffective.

Phipps, p.88.

Widdowson, p.65.


Webb, (1915) p.8. Webb added that the 'precedents in State and municipal administration are against the employment of married women'.

In 1909 in London, 40% of headteachers and 23% of class teachers were married women. Widdowson, p.65.

ie. in Bradford "married women were encouraged to return to teaching from which they had been barred by reason of their married state", Education in Bradford, Bradford Executive Committee, 1970.

36. Smethwick Education Committee 'Fifty Years of Education in Smethwick 1873-1923', p.29.

37. Pierotti, p.20.

38. Phipps.


40. Young teachers were often in a "constant state of nervousness".

41. Daily Herald, Sept. 28, 1922.

42. Partington, p.31.

43. Partington, p.33 quoting Times Educational Supplement, 9th Nov. 1929. Partington illustrates with numerous examples the serious attack on women teachers and women's rights in this period.

44. Phipps, p.74-78.

45. Pierotti, p.28.

46. Partington, p.36-42. Allies included the Daily Mail which used the New Schoolmaster, the NAS paper, to good effect against an old foe, the NUT.

47. Partington, p.19.


49. NAS 'A Reply and a Warning', Pamphlet No. 45, 1940?

50. The NUWT blamed it on them and the NUT made deputation members!

51. NAS 'The State and its Responsibility to the Boy', NAS Pamphlet No. 44 (1938?)

52. NAS 'Equal Pay in the Teaching Profession' NAS Pamphlet No. 49. 1946? It argued a gap of 16 thousand male teachers. The rise in juvenile delinquency was also related to this shortfall.
53. The Schoolmaster, April 11th, 1924. The Union also argued that the policy of the NAS would break up mixed schools and classes, create many small schools, and displace rural headmasters. NUT Leaflet 42 (1924) 'Group Home Rule'.


55. Daily Herald, June 9, 1922.

56. Partington, p. 19. 'An NUT Mass Meeting supported equal pay by 585 votes to 382 in June 1919 after a bitter debate'.

57. The Schoolmaster, Jan. 2, 1925.

58. NAS Pamphlet No. 49 'Equal Pay in the Teaching Profession'.

59. NAS Pamphlet No. 49 'Equal Pay in the Teaching Profession'.

60. NUT Pamphlet 42 'Group Home Rule', 1924.

61. NUT Pamphlet 42 'Group Home Rule', 1924; 1920(ed) p.128 Industrial Democracy.

62. The Schoolmaster, March 14, 1924.

63. These issues needed to be raised within this study even though primary sources are virtually non-existent and secondary sources extremely rare.
CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to provide categories of interpretation generated from a sympathetic reconstruction of teachers' own problems, tensions and felt contradictions in the period 1900 to 1930. The shared assumptions of the literature on teachers is due to the overlap between social stratification theory and neo-Marxist theory which most of the relevant observers use. The static nature of social class analysis, associated with these two theoretical approaches, is only slightly alleviated with the use of occupational strategies for social mobility which at least allows for the study of process over time. Yet, for teachers, the occupational strategy is always towards professionalism. Both the strategy and the aim are held to be internally coherent - that is, understood by most teachers and expressed in their organised actions - and without real tension or contradiction. Other problem areas that these approaches do not sufficiently tackle are firstly the definition and role of the State towards teachers and secondly, the relationship between teachers, and their difficulties and successes, to other parts of the Labour movement. The case study revealed a language about teaching and education which involved new ideas about how teachers viewed their problems and solutions to them - syndicalism, craft unionism, labour alliances, Labour and Conservative Party relations and so on. It also revealed the dynamics of teacher change rather than its static elements, the complexity of argued options rather than simple strategies and contradiction rather than a single strategy. It is to be expected that historical case studies tend to reveal ambiguities, create complexity and dissolve theoretical boundaries. This study provides a detail and a sense of struggle to the educational, social and political milieu which teachers moved in yet, even here, there is still a reality lost to an historical
outsider - for instance, how did the teachers and miners in the Plebs League or the Independent Labour Party groups cope with each other? How did men and women teachers in urban areas view each other as organised teachers? In this conclusion, I will try to tease out the threads of the study, contrasting elements of existing interpretation with categories generated from the narrative.

As the study progressed, it generated a number of questions derived from the existing literature and from observations on particular incidents or strikes. I include a number of these questions to illustrate the starting point for the later summaries. For instance, with regard to teachers' employers, a number of questions arose - was it possible to treat the actions of central and local government as compatible or antagonistic? Was there more than one aim for a mass education under capitalism - were there contradictory aims? How did the State generate policies to cope with elementary teachers? Was a new status quo between teachers and the State created in this period (1900-1930)? Regarding teachers, a few questions were always present - how was the term 'professionalism' used by teachers and what courses of action depended upon which definitions? Was there a clear-cut social or educational strategy present among the organised teachers? How did teachers try to improve their work in education? Were financial struggles divorced from the political unrest and educational debates of the period?

The State is a concept which looms large in current neo-Marxist debates about, or impinging on, teachers and their work. The State is seen as operating a clear strategy for its own continued existence of using education to produce ideological and cultural domination. In the study, the main way in which teachers' employers were seen was divided between the daily battle with the immediate employer and the
tentative recognition of the vital but indistinct influence of central government. Teachers were employed by a variety of people, from various religious groups, ratepayer parties, citizen coalitions or rarely, Labour associations. What united these people, with the exception of some Labour representatives, was their determination to manage without interference an education service which had to be cheap or efficient. Between 1900 and 1919, disputes and conflicts were local, centred around individuals known to each other or living near each other. The question of the management or the employing class being geographically remote didn't arise. Managers lived near, came in and told the teacher what was and what was not required. Dismissal could result from disputing these demands. Management, whether in villages or cities, fought hard for the right to manage without interference from the teachers, the local education Committee or the Board of Education, depending on the type of school and area. Management meant deciding the local rate for the job, imposing duties and dismissing teachers. It rarely concerned itself with the-content as opposed to the infrastructure of education in the sense of direct imposition on teachers. A teacher's duty was to obey management. There was no other duty. Central government rarely impinged on the teacher's work except through Inspectors and laws may or may not have been observed locally. The Board of Education produced a number of Circulars and Reports after 1900 in which situational reviews or policy options were offered or recommended but grants-in-aid were not withdrawn nor was it the Board's decision (but the Treasury's) to reduce their overall value after 1910. Local Authorities often seemed to feel that the Board was their opponent in a way that the teachers were not. At least the teachers were employees and could be controlled yet the Board and its suggestions and hints of new requirements complicated their task of controlling the expansion of
services and keeping rates down. As salaries were a large part of the budget and there was no specific grant attached to them, it was essential to reduce them or severely control them, and that meant ignoring the local teacher associations. All combinations of employees were a threat to the rate policy and so to the right to manage. Not until 1917 is there a growing appearance of State policies for education, that is a direct long-term view of the relationship of the State to its education service, in which options are reviewed, rejected or created for the management of schools and teachers and the relationship between education and society expressed. Education took on a positive quality rather than a minimal, begrudged compulsory one it had had previously. This was during a wartime government that had taken a number of steps envisaging wider powers of intervention in industry to control a grave management crisis, help the war effort and to provide the foundation for ambitious reconstruction plans. Education was viewed in a similar way - it was becoming a danger to the State, at the same time as it had a new, vital role in the rebuilding of industry, accumulation of capital and creating social cohesion. For teachers, a Whitley Committee with joint, national employer-employee negotiations and an enhanced professionalism of duty and responsibility were on offer. Local management seem strangely uninvolved with this grand design. After 'taking the new salary grants, it was not long before, encouraged by national economy campaigns, teachers were back in the old routine with local authorities. Refusing to recognise the union, importing blacklegs, refusing to negotiate were all back. National policy, as defined by Percy, was bent on creating the social cohesion aspect of education by encouraging Conservative and ratepayer attacks and the isolation of leftwing teachers. Ideological definitions of teachers' work were emphasised - civic and patriotic duty and the possibility of oaths of allegiance - yet within a State policy which was operating an 'indirect rule' model.
The central State always removed itself from direct control of teachers; it rejected civil service status, Exchequer payment and Board of Education direct management. One of the reasons for this was the relative strength and unity of the teachers and a lively local management, intent on retaining independence, financial control and teachers in their station. By subtle interference, private encouragement and exhortation, the Board of Education used a changed political climate in the Twenties to shape and order as much as possible a teaching force in ways that suited its purpose. Ideological domination was two-fold; the exclusion of radicals from teaching and a public campaign built on notions of the civic responsibility of teachers. Yet, earlier in the Twenties, during a crisis in public spending, financial cuts alone took precedence over ideological arguments. The State is not then an homogeneous institution. At different levels of government service, central and municipal, different aims in management take precedence over other 'outside' aims. There is a tension between the local State and the central State. In periods of economic crisis or working class unrest or unity, compromise or negotiation may be paramount or, where there is weakness, straight diktat precedes ideological argument. To talk of the State's 'determination' of teachers is to take on face-value what some elements of the State aspired to rather than what they were able to achieve, and to ignore contradictions between competing groups in government. When teachers had a local or national unity, management was in disarray - united in local areas only by common policies on finance which broke down with strike action into different camps. Were teachers a social danger? Even within the short period contained in the case study, there is a sense of unease in Conservative
observers at firstly, the growth of a major secular force in society which had ousted the Church and secondly, the tentative alliance building up between the socialist societies and teachers in particular areas on education policy. It was not until the war that the 'social danger' thesis grew. Up to then it would have been centred on local authorities' right to manage their employees and the rise of teacher unionism which shaped or affected this right. In wartime, there was a growing clash between organised workers in key industries and the Government's right to govern and intervene in many new parts of the industrial world. Teachers were seen as a force which could, because of their class background, interests and audience, serve to continue the political and social unrest in schools to new generations. With the new 'human capital' argument in reconstruction plans, teachers became a central pivot in social rehabilitation and reorganisation. Teachers emerged as the crux of the State's stability as defined by the employing class. They were also the main agent for a new social democracy and/or a strengthened independent working class education as seen by Labour. The question of whether teachers were a social danger has to be artificially separated. From the view of the State a new importance for education as a generator of skills and a source of civic unity and patriotism was created by the industrial unrest and the need for a revival of economic power. The social danger was not just what teachers did, which was not comparable to actions on Clydeside or Sheffield by industrial workers, but, at that crucial moment, that any radicalisation or working class alliance could undermine the State's plans. Radicalisation in the pre-war period, when elementary education had merely to be cheap, was very different from radicalisation in the war/post war period. Now it threatened the State. It was part of a general insurgencea
and it was central to plans to contain that insurgence. There was also unease about the emergent class of teachers. A previously unknown quality (seen as narrow or ill-educated), they were emerging as a force for radicalism. Teachers were at the head of revolutionary movements on the Continent, and at home involved with revolutionary socialism, though these were just individuals their actions were seen as symbolic by people like Lloyd George and Fisher. In the Twenties it is this potential for radicalism which is covertly observed by the action of the Special Branch but the social danger became an electoral danger. Although Conservatives saw themselves as the natural party of government and even as the guardians of the State, who needed to act to preserve teaching from socialist teachers as a patriotic duty, they were also preserving themselves. It was not just future generations but the electoral attraction of teachers to the Conservative Party that needed action. Baldwin was not too convinced about teachers and Labour, or the importance of education, but he supported Percy's plans to isolate the radicals and create a Conservative education policy. The social danger existed not so much as a concrete threat but as a potential weapon. A vision of professionalism as a duty, with attendant status and registration, was offered by the very agency of the State that was part of the teacher's main problem. The social danger had been, in part, created by the actions of the local and central State, and it became the duty of the Board to provide an ideal vision of responsibility seen within a new professionalism (Fisher) or a semi-autonomous body 'harnessed' within an 'indirect rule' (Percy). The causes of the creation of this teacher unrest were only partly resolved in the Burnham settlement but it was not initially guaranteed by the central government, and the problem of control over entry (and so over skill and unemployment)
was not involved in any vision of responsibility. Duty was defined elsewhere - not by teachers!

Educational work meant that which was required by the employers, at a salary and in conditions decided by them. An arbitrary or penny-pinching approach to working class education did not win teachers' consent. It had to be enforced through management demands. Resistance to these interventions is recorded in urban areas in the resolutions and demands of the well-organised teacher associations and even in rural areas in continuous small-scale struggles involving extra fines, school attendance officers and encouraging a children's or village solidarity. In areas of teacher shortage, certificated teachers may have left, voting with their feet, but employers licensed others to fill their places.

Work did not necessarily mean education - it meant schooling, discipline and moral control. [The Bishop of Hereford wanted the children back in schools, not because they were missing their education but developing out of moral control.] Teacher resistance to compulsory extra duties did not mean that they resisted extra work. Clues exist to the formulation of other definitions of work than that of the employers.

Teachers were involved in the growth of the social welfare facilities created in certain towns and cities - providing soup or drinks in the classroom, working with health workers, and organising after-school health clubs. Furthermore, teacher interest in new curricula involved them in more work, retraining themselves, making resources or breaking down classroom management into new class groups. Not all teachers - there was still the considerable difficulty of corporal punishment though it began to decline after the war. A gap existed between the logic of the businessman and ratepayer demands for cheapness and the service or duty felt by the teachers for their children. This was
strengthened by the teacher's identification with the children with
the poor or working class, and the managers with the shopkeeper,
squirearchy or local employer class. This service ethic or
'professional spirit' was not necessarily at odds with the central
State, only with its unruly local agents. Indeed in common with many
Labour supporters, the intervention of the State was actively demanded;
it was seen as an impartial referee that was not sufficiently involved
in the guarantee of conditions and fair play. It was at odds with clear
management actions that cut across educational and social welfare as
defined by teachers (among others). Work could be redefined with some
success by Fisher, given this demand, as notions of altruism, vocation
and selflessness contained within his call for a profession and a new
education service could only be tested over time by teachers. Yet
there was a strong, residual antagonism to this redefinition among
teachers who associated the central and local State together, who were
influenced by current socialist ideas and actions (in 1917-1919) and who
took ideas of professional service to a new degree of sophistication
in alliance with a confident Labour Party. Professionalism for teachers
contained a service ethic which was a response to having work defined
by interchangeability of staff and financial criteria, and began to
appeal to the public on the basis of educational quality when faced with
'blacklegging' or untrained staff. Teachers even set up their own
schools in emergencies.

Professionalism was not opposed to unionism. The dividing
line is unclear. Were the teachers approximating to 'trade union' or
'professional' approaches to work? The strongest professional argument
that included support for the Teachers Registration Council, Conservative
Party membership and the apolitical nature of the NUT, came from within
the Union by people who also talked of dilution and a salary campaign.
The argument for a strike fund, one union for all teachers, full-time organisers and strikes, within a materialist frame of reference, could also talk of professional self-government and join the TRC. They were differences. The same vocabulary disguised different approaches. Whether the NUT could be dissected and pronounced to be a Trade Union or not, even by close observers, is not important. In all practical ways, it was, if there was confusion about striking or whether petitions were more effective, it was no different from many other unions or parts of unions in this period. What was at stake, within this exchange, was whether the State could be trusted in its description of a new education system where teachers had more power, or whether this was a sham, a diversion from acting to take power. The arguments over the TRC or civil service status or Whitley Committees were all within this tension. A self-governing profession was the cry of the syndicalist Left in the Union not the old guard 'professional' elitists; a shared language hid deep divisions.

An undercurrent in the exchange over teachers and professionalism lay in the NUT's movement from being a craft to an industrial union. Craft attitudes which depended on qualification to protect skill were giving way to an industrial strategy, based on one union for certificated and uncertificated teachers, that protected skill by unity and organisation. Control over the marketplace became essential for this strategy to succeed. It was not important to metamorphose into a state-licensed elite body within teaching for that, it had been shown, could be easily undercut by dilution, cheap untrained labour and school closure. What was important was to unite the teachers to control the supply of teachers. If they could not control the technical point of entry, the colleges or local authority employment points, then they would control the supply
of teachers for jobs, raise the salary and protect educational quality. A self-governing profession was the specific application in education of the syndicalist guild socialism. This idea was strengthened by links with Labour and plans to democratise society. Though the people who held these ideas were probably few, in G.D.H. Cole's phrase, they were 'working with the grain' in teaching. The State could not be trusted. Power had to be taken to resolve that central contradiction for teachers, their relation with their employers. The point seen within the speeches of Cove, the Lowestoft comment of Mander and the contemporary observation of Thompson is that a strong union protected professionalism and was not in contradiction to it. It was an active defence of altruism, perhaps, but more likely, of service and quality and the power to shape the education system.

The Labour movement could mean several things to teachers. After the socialist revival of the late 1890s, and the decline of payment by results, a natural alliance between radical teachers and working class socialists in the Independent Labour Party or connected to the large general unions, like Will Thorne's Gasworkers, was created on the basis of the centrality of education in the changes to come. Education was an obsession with those socialists — as a matter of improving the lot of the workers' children, physically and mentally, but as a way to study and improve yourself and your class. The vague appeals to working class organisations, made by the NUT, in 1909, on class size was made specific by the Labour Party referendum of 1917. In the meantime, teachers were joining together in associations which then joined local Trades and Labour Councils (political and industrial bodies), working with the Independent Labour Party in Yorkshire and Lancashire, Labour
councillors in West Ham, the miners in South Wales and agricultural workers in East Anglia. Ideas which were rooted in libertarian, collectivist or industrial versions of socialism affected the arguments and actions of teachers. Not only individuals, bright working class students to whom teaching was the only avenue of further education, but groups of like-minded activists in Bradford, the Rhondda or Merthyr and London. The wider Labour movement had no single dominant strand of socialism and neither did the teachers. At different periods, advances made in West Ham or Bradford or South Wales by the local working class were affected by different socialist ideas and organisations and by the fast-moving social and political scene. Municipal socialism, collectivism and syndicalism, extended services and an independent working class education were all part of the move forward. Local teachers benefitted from these advances and were part of them, then or later, but their effect was much wider - West Ham teachers (with G.D. Bell in the area), Michael Conway from Bradford and W. G. Cove from the Rhondda all altered the way teachers saw themselves and their capabilities. The Union was revitalised by these people who debated up and down the country and on the Executive - teachers were not isolated, education was part of a wider problem of public services, industrial and political power could be taken. The Labour movement wanted the teachers to help in a new democratic society. The message differed sometimes - teachers should join the organised party of Labour which could protect them or that they had a strength of their own if they did but recognise their place in the construction of surplus value. There was a further factor in the influential writings of Wells, the Webbs, Tawney, Cole and Neill. In their different ways, they established a value for teaching which the teachers felt had not been widely recognised before. It was detailed and consistent and placed them firmly in the middle of the reconstruction
of society. Whether they were advisors or socialist missionaries or autonomous workers was shaded but the import wasn't - socialism and the Labour Party was the natural, and eager, ally of the teachers. A new State could be created with teachers in a central role. Of course, socialist ideas did not just bring the promise of Utopia. They could bring self-recognition. Teachers were not just the natural allies of a labour movement eager for power and education. They now had the opportunity to see themselves as workers. In common with other white-collar workers, although well-organised before the clerks and local government employees, teachers had been separated from the manual working class yet open to the same influences at work. The proletarianisation of the white-collar worker by dilution, grading and mechanisation was similar to the changing work conditions experienced by workers, so was the employers' tactics of making slight concessions encouraging a 'superiority' and creating a reserve Labour force. The production of a new analysis of the white collar or black-coated proletariat was two way. In teaching it came from the Marxists involved with the Plebs League or the Social Democratic Federation (and later the British Socialist Party and Communist Party). In turn, it came back from the left in the Unions or socialist groups. Each tried to convince its membership - the teachers or the Labour movement. The division between the teachers and the manual working class was generally wide, but for Marxists and other socialists, in pockets throughout the country, it was closed. Teachers being a part of a working class was a position fully argued in the affiliation to Labour referendum. It brought with it an identification and a reasoning based on the production of value. For some socialist teachers, notably in the Teachers'Labour League or post-war pacifist organisations, it also brought a direct assault on an ideological hegemony based on patriotism; being defined in the main by Conservatives,
sometimes with the assent of Labour politicians, could mean as
teachers being apolitical, supporters of Empire Day and the Navy
League, anti-strikes, supporters of religious education etc. In
other words, it meant whatever the Conservatives chose it to mean -
naturally defined in this way, it opposed many socialist ideals and
practices. One way or another, these teachers tried to create a
critical or a socialist practice in schools; by resisting patriotic
ceremony, cultivating critical outlook in their students, supporting
internationalism in the curriculum etc. Many Labour teachers did not
do this." Teachers were divided.

As the Labour Movement split and fragmented in the Twenties
and the Labour Party was created in a particular way, excluding Utopian
and materialist socialists and their policies, so the left-wing teachers
split. They took different paths - as advisors, voters and Labour
Party politicians on the one hand, and on the other, as activists,
revolutionaries and so on. These splits occurred in a period of
industrial decline and reaction with union membership in a dive
Arguments for self-government, as workers, lost ground and survival,
defence of gains, took precedence. Judging by the criticism of the
Labour League, and this was representative of only one strand of a
Labour minority in the Union, the Union lost its way almost as an act
of will. Given that fighting was extremely difficult for the Union and
occupied its members, officials and organisers in many local authorities,
the gains of an earlier period seem to be put aside. The League kept
reminding its readers of working-class unity, of alliances and tactics
that teachers had formed and of accumulated ways of fighting it had
experienced. At Abertillery it felt itself to be the sole inheritor
of a tradition of action that had now been replaced by the Union tactics
of an earlier period - the period of appeal to working class organisation
or parents of elementary school children. Perhaps like white collar unions in the post 1920 decline or like some craft unions, the NUT was not able to build upon its new found ideas and notions. Teachers were divided. As militancy submerged, old ideas were dusted off in the Executive about the danger of a Labour Party alliance, or the uneven organisation of the Union in rural and urban areas led to divisions over what was attainable, what was a gain. The vigilance against local employers, resumed again in the Twenties, seemed a poor second at times to the sexual divisions that were creating conflict between teachers.

Some men teachers, away at war, returned with a sense of betrayal at the partial loss of their craft differential (as they saw it) to the unskilled women. The craft ideology had not disappeared but came back in a new form - the latent divisions between male and female, and based on female acceptance of them - and could not exist within the new industrial unionism. It recruited on the basis of sex and job protection (men teachers for boys) to provide the possibility of stronger differentials. At the same time, some women teachers, strengthened by involvement with the Suffrage movement and by their Union strength, peaking in wartime, became disappointed by the lack of progress on equal pay. Men became the problem, they were seen as a conservative force denying women their just rights. Over a period of time it is not clear what responses were made by the NUT - it lost men teachers in some areas but probably not many women teachers (the NUWT recruited from secondary teachers as well though it must have affected the London Teachers' Association recruitment). There is a deafening silence existing between the NUWT and the left-wing of the NUT, no correspondence seems to exist by the men or women of the left in the Union on the NUWT. Certainly there was no question of it being in any way a socialist organisation, indeed it seemed, in common with other womens' organisation
at the time, of being divorced from any working class connection.

Was the NUT a federation with several interest groups capable of containing within itself a sex based division, fuelled by different pay scales, in a period when unity was the only way to defend what was already achieved? In any case, the secession of the NUWT probably allowed a revival of the craft/patriarchal attitude to regain some strength in the NUT.

In conclusion therefore, the period 1900 to 1930 cannot continue to be treated as providing unequivocal evidence for the thesis purporting to show the gradual assimilation of teachers into a professional middle class, nor for a thesis which in viewing evidence of trade union and socialist ideas among organised teachers constantly treats this evidence as an aberration or to be discounted by reason of deep structural or State apparatus theory. It is to be hoped that this study of a single period in teachers' history raises fundamental questions for current theorising about teachers and their class and professional actions in this and other periods.
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