CRISIS IN THE SIXTH FORM

by Fred Naylor

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by Fred Naylor

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Summary

THE CRISIS

Increasingly Education Authorities are finding that their sixth-forms are not viable.

In 1978-79, 35.4% of all maintained schools had 50 or fewer sixth formers (and these included many whose courses did not go beyond O-level!)*. Another 29.5% had sixth forms of between 50 and 100.

The problem is particularly acute in cities such as Bristol, Manchester and London. For example, of Manchester's 26 comprehensive schools only 10 succeeeded in gaining 30 or more A-level passes in 1978. Even in major subjects such as Physics and Chemistry over 30% of A-level teaching groups consisted of 4 or fewer pupils (See Appendix 1). The quality of the successes achieved was also low - only one A-grade in French and two in History from all 26 schools. Manchester is proposing to scrap its comprehensive sixth forms and thereby to sacrifice 3 or 4 that are doing well.

Cox and Marks, in their report dealing with 90 ILEA comprehensives, found that 50% of the A-level teaching groups in Physics and Chemistry consisted of only one or two pupils. The 1980 HMI report on the ILEA revealed that, for all the ILEA schools, 35% of A-level teaching groups contained no more than 4 pupils.

Cox and Marks were not making a general attack on comprehensives. They recognise that some were doing a good job and needed encouragement. This is the stand taken in CRISIS IN THE SIXTH FORM.

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* The presence of these non-academic sixth-forms does nothing to solve the problem of non-viable A-level groups since the latter need special courses (See Page 3).

CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

The crisis in the sixth form is due to the attempt to achieve wholesale comprehensivisation. It has arisen mainly because comprehensive schools have been much too small. There might have been a case for thinking that 15 form-entry comprehensives could match 3 form-entry grammar schools in producing viable sixth forms. In fact the average size of a comprehensive in England (950 pupils) is about half this size.

A secondary reason is the overall lack of success of comprehensives, compared with schools in the tripartite system, in producing academic sixth-formers. This may be due in part to the shortage of specialist teachers when they are spread over an inordinately large number of comprehensives and in part to differences of ethos (See Page 5)

The upward movement in the percentage of school-leavers from all maintained schools with 2 or more A-levels, which had doubled between 1962 and 1968, ground to a shuddering and unexpected halt in 1971 - a state of affairs that precipitated the crisis of over-provision in Higher Education.

The national statistics concerning the relative performances of the comprehensive and non-comprehensive sectors are contained in Appendix 3, and discussed on Pages 6 and 7.

THE MYTH OF FALLING ROLLS

The total number of 18 year-olds has been rising over the last decade and in 1982 will reach a peak that is virtually indistinguishable from the 1965 'bulge'. Clearly, present sixth-form difficulties have nothing to do with falling rolls.

Moreover, the fall in the birth rate that is beginning to affect secondary schools is not likely significantly to reduce the numbers admitted to post-16 education. New and striking evidence shows a differential rate of population decrease across social class categories. (See Pages 10-11)

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

There will be a temptation to try to solve the present crisis by another unmonitored and costly reorganisation. This would be as foolish as trying to dispose of a pile of earth by digging another hole to bury it in. The result might be yet another costly reorganisation 10 to 20 years hence.

It is argued on Page 9 that if a mixed system had been pursued, rather than one forcing all schools into the comprehensive mould, the expansion of the number of school-leavers with A-level qualifications have been been maintained.

The main lesson to be learned is that monolithic solutions, entered kupon without proper monitoring , must be avoided. The time has come for a close analysis of our problems and a willingness to admit past mistakes. We must also pay more attention to parental wishes - the best guarantee against the imposition of a monolithic system.

SIXTH FORM COLLEGES

Some see such colleges as the easy answer to the sixth-form problem. But, in the euphoria surrounding them, their many serious disadvantages are being glossed over. These disadvantages concern academic standards, personal development and choice, and the well-being of society. Together they constitute a compelling case against a compulsory break at 16 and hence against the wholesale adoption of the sixth form college or tertiary college (Pages 13-20)

The Further Education College as always existed as an alternative to the sixth form and this arrangement, which provides a genuine choice of ethos or course, should continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Outline*)

1 EXISTING SPECIALISED (SELECTIVE) SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PROTECTED AS A FIRST PRIORITY.

2 THERE SHOULD BE NO ENFORCED BREAK IN EDUCATION AT 16+.

3 WHERE EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS HAVE VIABLE SIXTH FORMS, THESE SHOULD BE RETAINED.

4 WHERE EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS ARE JUDGED TO HAVE UNVIABLE SIXTH FORMS TWO SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:

(A) CO-OPERATIVE SCHEMES BETWEEN GROUPS OF SCHOOLS TO SHARE SIXTH FORM FACILITIES;

(B) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A 'MUSHROOM' SIXTH FORM IN ONE OR MORE OF THE SCHOOLS WITH VIABLE SIXTH FORMS, SIXTH FORMERS FROM THE OTHER SCHOOLS TRANSFERRING AT 16+ INTO A MUSHROOM SIXTH FORM.

5 SOME COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE DESIGNATED 'SPECIAL PROFILE'SCHOOLS.

6 MORE RELIANCE SHOULD BE PLACED ON PARENTAL WISHES IN DETERMINING THE KINDS OF SCHOOL PROVIDED.

7 THE PRESENT CHOICE THAT EXISTS FOR A 16 YEAR-OLD TO LEAVE THE 11-18 SCHOOL AND ENTER A COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION SHOULD BE RETAINED.

8 IF THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR A NEW EXAMINATION, SUPPORTING A GROUPED COURSE STRUCTURE WITH A STRONG PRE-VOCATIONAL CHARACTER, FOR THE NEW SIXTH FORMERS ARE IMPLEMENTED, THESE COURSES SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO ANY ONE TYPE OF INSTITUTION (but see 9).

9 THERE SHOULD BE DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF 16-19 YEAR-OLDS.

10 THE BULK OF THE VOCATIONALLY-ORIENTATED COURSES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE IN FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES.

11 EDUCATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES SHOULD NOT BE LOST SIGHT OF IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT 16-19 PROVISION.

12 NO DECISIONS ON CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR 16-19 YEAR-OLDS SHOULD BE MADE WITHOUT CAREFUL STUDIES USING THE IMPROVED METHOD OF COSTING BEING DEVISED FOR THE DES BY ITS CONSULTANTS (AND EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE IN JULY OR AUGUST 1981).

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* See Pages 21-23 for a full statement of recommendations.

1. THE CRISIS

The sixth form faces a crisis. Increasingly education authorities have been finding themselves, or are going to find themselves, with unviable sixth forms. Attention was drawn to the situation a decade ago. The Schools Council Second Sixth Form Working Party back in 1972* noted that, of existing maintained schools with traditional sixth forms (i.e. those containing pupils following post O-level courses) no less than 40% had sixth forms of 50 pupils or fewer and another 24% had 50-100 pupils (figures are for 1970). That this situation has not substantially changed may be seen from the 1978-79 figures supplied in the Macfarlance Report+. The percentage of schools in 1978-9 with 50 or fewer sixth formers was 35.4%; and the percentage of schools with 50-100 such pupils was 29.5%. The figures given by Macfarlane are inflated by the inclusion of non-traditional sixth formers (i.e. those sixth formers whose courses do not go beyond O-level), and the position therefore is almost certainly worse today than it was in 1970.

The Schools Council Working Party in 1969 also noted that one large authority - Bristol - was in the unenviable position of having 34% of its A-level groups of first-year sixth form pupils consisting of only one or two pupils.

The position that was revealed in Bristol at the end of the sixties is now seen to exist in many other large authorities. Manchester, which went comprehensive in 1967, stopped publishing its schools' examination results ten years later but its A-level results for 1978 were published independently (see Appendix 1 for details). In the case of two schools there was no evidence that any candidate was entered for any A-level at all. Fourteen out of the other 24 comprehensives scored less than 30 passes. Related to the low number of entries and

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* "16-19: Growth and response 1. Curricular bases". Schools Council Working Paper 45.

+ "Education for 16-19 year olds", a review undertaken for the Government and the Local Authority Associations. 1981.

passes was the low quality of the successes achieved. For example all the 26 Manchester comprehensives between them could muster only one A grade in French and two in History. The situation is so bad that Manchester is proposing to scrap its comprehensives' sixth forms.

A similar situation, on a much larger scale, has just been revealed in the ILEA†. Here the report covered the results of 90 schools, wholly maintained by the ILEA which were admittedly not as successful as the other 95 Inner London comprehensives, but which nevertheless catered for 65% of all Inner London secondary school children (see Appendix 2 for details). Nearly half the classes for A-level subjects had no more than two pupils. Furthermore this was happening even in *major* subjects. The proportion of schools with such unviable groups (one or two pupils) was nearly 70% in French, more than 60% in Geography, about 50% in Physics and Chemistry, and about 40% in Maths, Biology and History. As in Manchester the quality of the passes achieved was also low.

The authors of the ILEA survey concluded - amongst other things - that many comprehensive schools, probably a majority, did not have viable sixth forms and that many pupils were being entered for public examinations which they had little or no chance of passing. Scarce teaching resources were being wasted on an enormous scale. Nearly 50% of the A-level groups in *major* subjects were clearly too small to be economic, and it was felt that failure was being encouraged by the policy of entering pupils in order to keep up the pretence that all comprehensives can provide real sixth forms, by schools being unable to provide pupils with the stimulus of other able pupils who are studying the same subject, and by the shortage of first class specialist teachers who were clearly spread too thinly in the ILEA. These findings are

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† "Sixth-Forms in ILEA Comprehensives: A Cruel Confidence Trick," by Caroline Cox and John Marks. National Council for Educational Standards. Occasional Pamphlet - Number 1, 1981.

compatible with the criticisms of A-level teaching in the ILEA schools published in the HMI Report in 1980*. This report also revealed that for *all* the ILEA schools thirty five per cent of the A-level teaching groups contained fewer than five pupils.

The authors of the report on the sixth forms in the ILEA comprehensives, in drawing attention to the waste and low standards in many of the schools, were not making a general attack on comprehensives. They recognised that some comprehensive schools were doing a good job and needed encouragement. We take exactly the same position in our wider look at the crisis in the sixth form.

In considering the viability of sixth forms it is important to distinguish between off-beat, or minority, subjects - often sustained by enthusiastic teachers with considerable sacrifice of their own time - and mainstream subjects. Small groups in the former are often justifiable but small classes in mainstream subjects represent a scandalous waste of scarce teaching resources.

The 'new' sixth form

The crisis in the sixth form is most apparent in relation to the unviability of the traditional sixth form with its emphasis on A-level studies. Concern over this is widespread, but those who share this concern, we believe, are not indifferent to the educational needs of the 'new' sixth formers i.e. those 16-19 year-olds not following post O-level studies. Those putting forward recommendations for the education of 16-19 year-olds, and those responsible for making the related decisions, must have these 'new' sixth formers in mind as well as their traditional peers.

The 'new' sixth formers make up nearly 20% of the school sixth form population. *It is important to note, however, that their presence does little or nothing to solve the problem of small A-level teaching groups.*

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*Report by HM Inspectors on Educational Provision by the Inner London Education Authority, Summer, 1980.

Their needs are very different from those of A-level pupils and special courses have been, and will continue to be, designed for them.

Most of the 'new' sixth formers stay in the sixth form for one year only and are at present mainly working for the pilot Certificate of Extended Education (CEE) courses. Government proposals for a new examination for this target group were put forward in the recently published consultative paper, "Examinations 16-18". If these proposals are implemented, the new examination will support a grouped course structure with a strong pre-vocational character, capable of being mounted in *all* institutions catering for the 16-19 age group.

2. CAUSES OF THE SIXTH FORM CRISIS

We have little doubt that the crisis in the sixth form is due to secondary reorganisation along comprehensive lines. Our reasons for reaching this conclusion form the remainder of this section.

If one were to adopt a neutral stance concerning the effect of comprehensivisation on the overall level of achievement in the sixth form, simple prudence would dictate that a 3-form-entry grammar school, which, it has been demonstrated, is just capable of producing a viable sixth form, should be replaced by a 15-form-entry comprehensive school*. In practice this proved impossible for a number of reasons. The average size of the comprehensive school is in reality only about half of this. (The average comprehensive school in England, in 1980, contained 950 pupils.) This had two consequences: (a) The number of good specialist teachers, which was already not enough to go round in some key subjects, had to be spread over double the number of schools. This might be expected to have an adverse effect on the size of A-level groups, and also on their success rates. (b) The number of able pupils in each school would only be, on average, about half that in a 3-form-entry grammar school.

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*Assuming that the grammar school population represents the top 20%. This is the assumption that was made by the National Foundation of Educational Research in "Achievement in Mathematics", 1967, when the scores of the comprehensives were multiplied by 5 in order to compare them with those of the grammar schools. (In reality parity was only

The first of these consequences - that relating to the number of good specialist teachers - is incontrovertible, and independent of the neutrality of the stance adopted at the beginning of the argument. The second is broadly true, and indicates the prime cause of unviable comprehensive sixth forms. But the magnitude of the effect is related to the stance adopted and hence is open to debate.

Egalitarians* have, without the slightest evidence and completely overlooking the fact that good tripartite systems have always made allowance for those not gaining entry to grammar schools by providing overlap GCE O-level courses in secondary modern schools, assumed that the pool of ability could be increased by the abolition of selection. They have therefore assumed, on the same shaky foundations, that a comprehensive school could afford to be somewhat smaller than a 15-form-entry. 'Differentiators'*, on the other hand, assume that a school cannot be all things to all pupils. On the contrary, any school consisting of 70-80% of non-academics and eschewing competition cannot provide the necessary ethos to ensure the same success rate at A-level as that achieved by an equivalent group of tripartite schools. They therefore argue that

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*The debate is presented as being between egalitarians and differentiators. Egalitarians wish to see distinctions between pupils in the educational system ended while differentiators recognise that the individual needs of children may call for differences of treatment and educational provision. This opposition seems preferable to the one that is usually drawn between egalitarians and elitists, because the objection to egalitarianism can also come from those differentiators who believe that it is not only the able children who have special needs and require different educational treatment. See "Paths to Excellence and the Soviet School", John Dunstan, NFER Publishing Company, 1978, for a fuller discussion.

a comprehensive's size of entry could well need to be greater than the notional 15 to produce the same degree of viability for its sixth form as that possessed by a 3-form-entry grammar school.

'Differentiators', in support of the same argument, also point to the fact that discipline and control in a 15-form-entry comprehensive school is a mammoth task, and that this is another factor that exerts a powerfully adverse effect on the number of pupils able and willing to embark on academic courses in the sixth forms of such schools. In this conclusion they are supported by comprehensivists who have been quick to retort, when their examination results have been criticised, that these would have been very much better if their schools were half the size. (See the letter from Dr. D. Thompson, headmaster of the Woodlands School, Coventry in the Times Educational Supplement, 7 November 1975.)

'Differentiators' also point to the fact that in small A-level groups the stimulation that comes from competition is lacking and that this further reduces the numbers of those who successfully complete the courses.

This debate still rumbles on. The national figures show that leavers from the comprehensive schools have been markedly, and consistently, less successful than leavers from the non-comprehensive sector of the maintained system, in respect of A-level achievements. For example, when the percentage of school leavers with two or more A-levels coming from the comprehensive sector is compared with the corresponding percentage for the tripartite system it is found that the latter is much greater. In 1964 it was nearly twice as large (a superiority of 93%). This was the highest superiority recorded. In 1968 superiority was 30% - the lowest ever recorded - but by 1976 it had risen to 55% (see Appendix 3 for details). Comprehensivists have tried desperately to explain away these figures by suggesting that it is due to 'creaming', but they have been unable to provide any evidence to relate the magnitude of the tripartite schools' superiority to the degree of 'creaming', if any, or to account for the fluctuations observed.

In talking of 'creaming' it is necessary to bear in mind that this

does not refer to creaming by direct-grant grammar schools, as is sometimes supposed. Because the number of leavers from direct-grant schools has been constant throughout the period of secondary reorganisation the creaming effect of these schools has been even-handed with respect to comprehensive and state grammar schools.

Another difficulty in these comparisons is that because of the way the Department of Education and Science defines a comprehensive school (it is comprehensive if the first-year intake is non-selective) the full effects of comprehensivisation cannot be known for at least 7 years.

Another piece of evidence which points to the inferiority of the comprehensive schools in respect of sixth-form achievements is the NFER study, "A Critical Appraisal of Comprehensive Schools", 1972. Of the 11 fully developed comprehensive schools examined, only one came at or above the national average when the percentages of school-leavers attaining two or more A-levels were compared. It is noteworthy too that universities have been concerned at the low level of achievement in maths, science and languages. Some universities have been forced to make special allowances for pupils from comprehensive schools in their admission procedures.

What is certain is that the percentage of school-leavers from all schools within the maintained system, obtaining two or more A-levels, increased from 4.8% in 1962 to 9.6% in 1968. It went on to rise, more slowly, to a maximum of 10.6% in 1971, a figure never subsequently attained. It was only 9.6% in 1974 (the same as in 1968)*. The extremely rapid expansion, which started in the 1950's, continued into the early 1960's, started to slow down in the late 1960's and ground to a shuddering and unexpected half in the 70's. (See Appendix 3.)

How unexpected this was may be judged from the fact that the projected growth, made in Education Planning Paper No 2 (DES 1970) was completely falsified by events. For example, the projected number of school-leavers+

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*All figures are from the DES Statistics of Education.

+The Education Planning Paper figures refer to all schools, including Independent schools recognised as efficient.

with two or more A-levels in 1976 was 124,600. The actual number turned out to be 90,270. The projected percentage increase for the period between 1968 and 1976 was 63.5%. The actual increase was 5.7%. It was of course on the basis of the figures in Education Planning Paper No 2 that plans for Higher Education were made. It was the failure of the projected expansion to materialise that led to over-provision in universities/ polytechnics and other institutions of Higher Education, and it is this over-provision which lies at the heart of their present crisis.

Clearly something started to happen in the late 1960's which dashed all the hopes and expectations entertained for the sixth form and brought on the present crisis. It is extremely difficult to resist the conclusion that a major factor was Circular 10/65, which indeed set out to guide education in a new direction - through reorganisation of secondary schools along comprehensive lines. The fact that the sixth-form crisis is most acute in areas where there has been wholesale comprehensivisation is added confirmation.

In attributing the cause of the sixth-form crisis to secondary reorganisation we should like to distinguish between two quite different policies; (a) It is one thing to have some, or many, comprehensives (b) It is quite another to have nothing but comprehensives. We are aware that some comprehensive schools are doing well academically. But we are also aware that a number of educational disaster areas have been created as a result of wholesale comprehensivisation and that some of the disasters are of such magnitude that educational vandalism is not too strong a term to use. We are not against policy (a), where it can be shown that viable sixth forms can be sustained, but believe that policy (b) has made a major contribution to the difficulties our sixth forms are now in.

The ILEA study referred to in Section 1 revealed a comprehensive school of 1,900 pupils, established before 1958*, which in 1978 achieved only 21 A-level passes overall and 48 failures. In English 9 pupils were

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*The results of the longer established comprehensives were generally found to be poorer.

entered for A-level but only 3 passed. In Maths the success rate was even lower - 13 pupils entered but only 3 passed. In Physics it was lower still with only one pass from the 15 entries. In French only two pupils entered - one passed. In no subject were there more than 3 passes obtained. Also known to us is a comprehensive school of over 2,000 pupils, outside the London area which recently failed to achieve a single O-level pass (or CSE equivalent) in Chemistry. Its results in Maths and Physics were little better. So virtually no one in that school could be said to have had the opportunity to enter the traditional science sixth. Obviously some of the differences between good and bad comprehensive schools must depend to some extent on differences of intake. But there must also be many comprehensive schools of the types just described, where able children from working-class homes become trapped, whereas under selection they would have made their way to grammar schools and to academic success.

Since the percentage of school-leavers with two or more A-levels has remained virtually stationary since 1968, and since many educational disaster areas have been created by universal compulsory comprehensivisation, we deduce that if more common sense had been used and monolithic 'solutions' - based solely on ideology - had been avoided, then the rapid expansion in the percentage of school-leavers with A-level qualifications of the fifties and early sixties might well have been maintained. If successful tripartite systems*, with improved selection procedures at 11+, 12+ and 13+ had been allowed to develop, and comprehensive schools only been set up where parents wanted them and where they had a good chance of being academically successful, then the expansion of the sixth form could have been maintained and the crisis we are now facing could have been avoided.

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*We have seen no evidence to suggest that any comprehensive school can match the achievements of a good tripartite arrangement of schools.

The myth of falling sixth form rolls

The Macfarlane Group, because it contained salaried employees from local and central government, very properly refrained from expressing an opinion on the relative merits of different types of 16-19 provision. "We resist the thought that one form of provision or one educational goal is somehow more worthy than another" (para. 48). Nor did it enter the area of controversy by trying to analyse the causes of the problems which authorities now face. It did, however, assert that the problem of small sixth forms would be exacerbated in the late 1980's owing to the falling rolls. One of the central arguments of the Macfarlane Review is that between now and 1993 the dramatic downturn in the total numbers of 16-19 year-olds (in 1993 numbers will be a quarter below their present level) will 'create major problems for local education authorities as they seek to make the most effective use of resources!

The Review Group acknowledged that 'although regions are expected to follow the national pattern .... there are likely to be considerable variations in the extent of the decline', but they failed to understand that the overall fall in the numbers of the age group does not necessarily lead to a corresponding fall in the numbers of that age group in post-compulsory education. It is of no consequence to say that the number of sixteen year-olds falls from a peak of 876,000 in 1980 to 569,000 in 1993. What is of consequence to those responsible for post-sixteen education is that the fall in births among those who traditionally stay on in the sixth form and colleges is less than 30,000, while the decline in births among those who traditionally leave school at sixteen is over 170,000.

Since both anecdotal and research evidence clearly shows children with fathers in professional, managerial and supervisory occupations are heavily over-represented in full-time post-compulsory education what we really need to know is how many children are born each year to fathers in social classes I, II, and III N (non-manual workers). Before 1970 this was an impossible task, but since 1970 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has produced tables showing the number of legitimate births by social class.

An examination of the figures produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (see Table in Appendix 4) shows that between 1970 and 1978 the number of legitimate births in social classes I and II has *risen* from 148,000 to 151,000, whereas the total number of such births fell from 720,000 to 536,000. If we add together births in classes I, II and III N, then the fall is from 224,000 in 1970 to 206,000 in 1978. The dramatic downturn in births is in social class III M (manual workers) - from 301,000 in 1970 to 202,000 in 1978 - and social classes IV and V.

Contrary, therefore, to the currently accepted analysis of demographic data, the overall fall in the birthrate should not significantly affect admission to post-sixteen education because of the differential rate of population decrease and increase across social class categories. The number of births in social classes I, II and III N (which account for 38.4% of all births) are relatively stable. The number of births in social classes I and II (accounting in 1978 for 28.2% of all births) has actually *increased* since 1970.

Another point on falling rolls needs to be made. It is probable that those wishing to close their eyes to the real causes of unviable sixth forms may seek to make falling rolls the scapegoat. Quite apart from the demographic argument which would rule out such an explanation, it should be noted that the problem of unviable sixth forms has been with us for some time. It is also the case that the total number of 18-year-olds has been rising over the last decade and will reach a peak in 1982 (876,000, which is virtually indistinguishable from the all-time high of 881,000 in 1965). Our *present* overall national problem with unviable sixth forms has therefore nothing at all to do with falling rolls.

We conclude by summarising our arguments on the causes of the sixth form crisis, i.e. the unviability of a large number of sixth forms. We blame it on secondary reorganisation for the following reasons:

(i) comprehensive schools were simply too small to provide viable sixth forms.

(there were powerful educational arguments in favour of limiting their size; as the force of these gradually came to be recognised, the unviability of many sixth forms became inevitable.)

(ii) comprehensive schools are not as successful as the schools in a tripartite partnership in producing academic sixth formers.

This is partly due to the fact that there were not enough good specialist teachers to staff the inordinately large number of comprehensive schools set up, and partly due to differences of ethos.

The present unviable sixth forms have nothing at all to do with falling rolls. Moreover, the overall fall in the birthrate will not significantly reduce the numbers admitted to post-O-level education because of the differential rate of population decrease across social class categories.

3. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Educational issues today are very complex. This is especially true of the sixth form where the problems now loom large. We are like the peasant in the Russian folk tale, who was faced with a pile of earth to dispose of and 'solved' his problem by digging another hole in which to bury it.

Before taking any such 'easy solution', as many education authorities are now doing, we should ask ourselves how the problem arose in the first place. If, like the simple muzhik, we attempt to dispose of our problem without trying to discover where it came from, we could well find ourselves confronted with another educational crisis, entirely of our own making, in another decade's time; and having to embark on yet another costly reorganisation.

Experience suggests that the following are the main lessons to be learned:

(i) Take a long hard look at the situation in each area; try to discover the causes of any problems and avoid the adoption of hurriedly drawn up schemes, which may save pence today but will prove costly tomorrow.

(ii) Admit past mistakes. Guard against new ones by constantly monitoring

what is going on.

(iii) Avoid monolithic solutions.

As the Macfarlane Report puts it (para. 26), "Because of the variety of local conditions there can be no single solution which will be everywhere appropriate". More importantly the pattern of provision should be one that "allows flexible responses *as demand shifts and new requirements emerge*" (our emphasis).

(iv) Do not be in a hurry to give up well-tried arrangements.

In the words of Horace Mann, "Where anything is growing, one former is worth a thousand reformers".

(v) Pay more attention to the rights of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.[1]

This itself will prevent the adoption of monolithic solutions and help to secure the flexibility of response referred to under (iii).

(vi) Make due allowance for the exaggerations, capacity for self-deception and wishful thinking of the enthusiasts for new schemes.

4. SIXTH-FORM COLLEGE EUPHORIA AND THE CASE AGAINST A COMPULSORY BREAK IN EDUCATION AT 16.

Sixth-form colleges have some serious disadvantages, which are being glossed over in the present climate of euphoria about them. The traditional sixth form, as the Macfarlane Report observes (para. 84), is essentially concerned with high academic standards and the personal growth of the pupil. Any realistic assessment of the sixth-form college as an adequate substitute for the traditional sixth form must, we suggest, be concerned with its suitability under the headings of academic standards, personal development of pupils and its contribution to society's well-being.

(i) Academic standards

The sixth-form college is as ill-researched as the comprehensive school has been. In "School or College after 16"[2], the then Senior Chief Inspector

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1 Guaranteed both under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention.

2 Meeting of the British Association (Section L), 1970.

of Schools, W.R. Elliott, described the arrangements or proposals for educating the 16-19 age group that had sprouted at an unprecedented rate. He spoke of the atmosphere of expediency and permissiveness that surrounded them - "permissiveness in new ideas, expediency in fitting them to old buildings". This reminds us of the origins of sixth-form colleges. Most of them arose from the need to respond to Circular 10/65 by making use of buildings that had to cease being used for the purposes for which they were originally designed.

Many claims are being made for the academic success of sixth-form colleges on the basis of A-level results*. These make use of pass rates in individual subjects. These, however, are notoriously unreliable measures of a school's success, and are especially so for the 16-19 sector. The only satisfactory method of comparing the merits of 11-16 comprehensives followed by sixth-form colleges with those of 11-18 schools is by consideration of the proportions of the 11-year-old age group successfully completing their courses under each system. It has to be remembered that any advantages a sixth-form college might seem to possess over unviable sixth forms could be offset by the disadvantages resulting from the decapitation of the 11-16 feeder schools. These include the lack of the stimulus of a sixth form and the loss of able specialist teachers, and are discussed more fully later.

The record of some sixth-form colleges in gaining entries and awards at Oxford and Cambridge is sometimes emphasised. A quantitative study of Oxbridge awards over a number of years would be very useful, but by no stretch of the imagination can such successes of sixth-form colleges bear comparison with the traditional record of state grammar schools in this field. In this connection it is worth noting that the special arrangements which some universities and colleges have had to make by accepting lower entrance

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* We should bear in mind, in this connection, the attempts of such as Professor R.R. Pedley in the 1960's to demonstrate, on the basis of unrepresentative figures, that the comprehensives were vastly superior to schools in the tripartite sector as regards percentages of pupils leaving school with two or more A-levels. See Appendix 3 for the real figures throughout the 1960's and 1970's.

qualifications for groups of schools in some authorities seem to demonstrate their concern over the ability of comprehensive schools to carry out this traditional role of the state grammar schools.

The serious academic disadvantages of 11-16 feeder schools cannot be disguised. Teachers most devoted to their subjects (and that will include many of the best qualified) are bound to gravitate to that sector where there will be the most obvious job satisfaction - A-level teaching - with the consequent loss of their influence in the 11-16 range (a loss to their colleagues as well as to their pupils). As the Macfarlane Review puts it (para. 85), "All pupils need the opportunity before the age of 16 to glimpse the meaning of scholarship and to grapple with interesting ideas". This is taken for granted in grammar schools, and to a lesser extent in comprehensive schools, where teachers engaged with advanced sixth-form groups also find time both to teach much younger pupils and to oversee their development through their departments. In 11-16 schools pupils will be deprived of these advantages. The full effects will not be felt until the staffing of the 11-16 schools comes into equilibrium. Difficulties in recruiting highly qualified teachers are also likely to have significant long-term effects of an adverse kind on the curriculum of 11-16 schools. The possible effects on academic standards, on both these counts, are incalculable.

Another disadvantage of sixth-form colleges stems from the difficulties caused by the transition at 16+. It is much easier to provide the necessary liaison between the pre-16 and the post-16 sector in theory than in practice. The problem that exists at 11+ (a large number of different schools feeding one secondary school) will be re-created at 16+. Pupils in the different feeder schools may be prepared for the examinations of different Examining Boards, and teaching methods can be expected to differ widely. Pupils wishing to re-sit exams they failed in their fifth year will be especially vulnerable. The smooth and continuous course planning which occurs in 11-18 schools will be impossible.

We recognise that for some pupils the transfer at 16 into a different institution can be beneficial. This alternative has always been available to most 16-year-olds in 11-18 schools, who already have the opportunity to transfer to a Further Education (FE) College at the age of 16. These colleges provide a wide choice of course, ranging from academic A-level to vocational courses such as Ordinary National Diplomas and their TEC and BEC replacements. We are pleased that the FE alternative is available, and feel that the choice it permits a 16-year-old - between academic and vocationally orientated studies and the chance to study in a different kind of ethos - is very valuable.

Whilst arguing that the change at 16+ can be beneficial for some, we are strongly of the opinion that for many pupils a break at 16 is harmful, expecially when the period of education immediately following is a mere two years. *As the well-known aphorism on the sixth-form college has it: "The first year is for saying 'Hallo', and the second year is for saying 'Goodbye'."* We do not believe it is possible for staff in a sixth-form college to get to know their pupils well enough to give them the advice they so often urgently need, on their choice of course, their future education or career, or on overcoming possible learning difficulties. The position is even more difficult for the many pupils who leave after only one year in the sixth-form college.

The period after the publication of O-level results is often crucial, and the only people who can give sound advice are those who know the person who lies behind the examination results. The sixth-form college cannot provide this advice. Another crucial stage occurs with the writing of reports on the suitability of pupils for following courses in universities and colleges. These often have to be written around November in the second year of the post-16 stage, and cannot do justice either to the candidate or to the institution for which he is applying, if they have to be made on the basis of a mere 14 months of acquaintance.

We have no hesitation in saying that, for all these reasons, an enforced break at 16+ will have an adverse effect on the high academic standards with which our sixth forms have traditionally been associated.

(ii) Personal development

We have spoken so far in terms of academic matters - standards reached, suitability of courses, help with learning difficulties and the like. Important though these are, there are other aspects of young people's development which are equally, or some would say more, important, and which a nation ignores at its peril. We fully agree with the views expressed in the Macfarlane Review (para. 80): "Education is about much more than intellectual development, examination successes or course completion rates, important though these are: personal, physical, cultural and moral development must also rate highly ... " They went on to add that they saw no possibility of simple measures of effectiveness in these areas, and reminded us that the longer term benefits do not appear until long after the student has left formal education. Again we agree, but, unlike the Macfarlane Group who were committed to a position of neutrality, we believe that this area is so crucial that it ought to be the focus of the main debate on the 16-19 provision. Here we are firmly of the opinion that the well-tried 11-18 school has very important advantages over any system that involves a compulsory break at 16+. These relate to two kinds of benefit: those for the sixth formers and those for the younger pupils.

The great strength of the English sixth form has been its offering of opportunities to its members - under the guidance of adults - to exercise limited authority over, and to assume responsibility for, those in the lower age groups. The assumption of these responsibilities is part of the process of character building traditionally associated with membership of the sixth form. The sixth-formers are at a stage when they can begin to appreciate the school from a different point of view - that of those who have been placed in a position of legal authority to secure its smooth running. Whilst still

close in thought to those in the lower age groups, sixth formers can by their closer association with adults learn to prepare themselves for adult roles and responsibilities in relation to younger members of society, whilst at the same time being given a more nearly adult status by the granting of special privileges. Under forced transfer at 16+ sixth formers would be denied the opportunities at present open to them of developing qualities of leadership and service to others, including in some cases devoting their time to assisting younger pupils in their studies.

The benefit to the younger members of school from having a caring and responsible sixth form cannot be over-estimated. The sixth form is a pointer to every youngster of a stage that lies ahead. In games, school societies and other activities of a curricular or extra-curricular kind, he or she will benefit from the presence of sixth formers - drawing upon their experience and finding models for his or her own behaviour. The tone and standard set by the sixth form determines to a large extent the ethos of the whole school. The removal of sixth formers would impoverish not only the academic life of the school but its social and cultural life too.

(iii) The well-being of society

We believe that the compulsory break in schooling at 16+, itself a break with English tradition, would in time have a profound effect on our society. For it would interfere with the process by which values are transmitted across the generations, a process which is necessary for the stability of any society. It would adversely affect those on the threshold of adulthood and, even more in the long run, those in the earlier adolescent years.

This would be likely to come about in two main ways: by opening up the already serious gap between generations, which is appearing both in families and in schools, and by fostering the climate of permissiveness which is following in the wake of calls for more 'freedom'. The issue of increasing permissiveness is certainly a much wider one than that of sixth-form colleges, but the argument for sixth-form colleges is often based on the

need to give more 'freedom' to 16-18-year-olds and to 'treat them like adults'. Such an argument cannot be evaded by sheltering behind educational clichés. It is central to the main issue.

We are struck by the parallels that can be drawn between some of the arguments being used now in Britain in favour of sixth-form colleges and those that were used in the USA when the senior high schools were set up. We are also struck by the fact that, far from solving the problems, the 'solutions' applied there were followed by the appearance of the same problems among ever younger sections of the population - even, alas, down to the 8- and 9-year-olds. The problems of growing permissiveness in our schools and homes have been carefully monitored by the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers*, and many believe that these are approaching crisis proportions. For example one-quarter of all those arrested in London last year were still at school - a statistic that evoked the remark from the police officer releasing the figures that "morality had flown out of the window". But the extent and degree of vandalism and delinquency in the schools of the USA are as staggering and appalling as they are generally unknown in Britain. The US Senate Sub-committee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, under the Chairmanship of Senator Bayh, recently produced a report* cataloguing the growth of school vandalism and delinquency in the USA. If we wish to avoid some of the horrors revealed in this report - we are told, for example, that the number of students killed as a result of violence in the classrooms and on the campuses of their schools during three of the years studied exceeded the number of US soldiers killed in combat throughout the first three years of the Vietnam war - we must avoid thrusting adulthood on our young people before they are ready for it.

In Appendix 5 we go more deeply into the arguments for ensuring a continuity in the transmission of values and explore the effects of granting adult status prematurely in the name of greater freedom. We examine the

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* Report of the Sub-committee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, by Senator Birch Bayh, Chairman to the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 1975-1977.

analyses of American and other Western societies by the child psychologist Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, the sociologist Hannah Arendt and others, involving such phenomena as 'age segregation', peer-group pressures and freedom, all of which are highly relevant to our approach to the sixth form.

Our study of these issues convinces us that an enforced break at 16+ would have very undesirable consequences for Britain.

Logistics and economics

There are a number of unexpected logistical problems connected with sixth-form colleges. The minimum size of a sixth-form college is, for example, much larger than is usually supposed, because every teacher has to be kept fully engaged teaching sixth formers. Economic assessments are also far more difficult than they seem on the surface, because of the need to look at the 11-18 phase as a whole and to estimate capital costs as well as running costs, both in the short and long terms.

The Macfarlane Review recommended that a costing methodology, generally accepted as valid, be worked out to help authorities to assess the relative costs of different systems, not forgetting the capital costs necessary to bring about conversions. The Department of Education and Science has commissioned consultants to devise a methodology for the improved costing of 16-19 provision. It was hoped that this would be completed 'in the spring of 1981' but it is now expected in July or August of the same year. Problems of economics are important, but we would hope that educational arguments, related to clear educational aims and objectives, will always be considered first.

Tertiary Colleges

'Tertiary College' is the name given to an institution which combines the role of a sixth-form college with that of a College of Further Education (FE). Some FE interests have for some time looked for 'the withering away' of the traditional sixth form and envisaged a state in which the needs of all traditional sixth formers would be catered for in an FE college (i.e. in a tertiary college).

Where the setting up of a tertiary college would involve an enforced break at 16+ for all, we are as opposed to it as to the establishment of a sixth-form college under the same conditions. Indeed our opposition is greater because such education would be conducted under FE regulations, rather than under School regulations, and would in our opinion not be conducive to the kind of personal development that we think desirable (and is desired by the majority of parents). A further objection to the education of all 16-19-year-olds being conducted under FE regulations is the politicisation of student life that would almost inevitably occur under the influence of politically-motivated student unions. The situation would be exacerbated by the dominant position held by a single teachers' union, NATFHE, in the FE sector, particularly in view of the explicit political role of this union and its policy towards the closed shop.

In saying this we are not withdrawing our support for the FE sector as an alternative, in the post-16 stage, to the 11-18 school. An FE college provides a different ethos and is also better equipped than schools for vocationally-orientated courses and for assisting in Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) schemes and providing part-time provision in support of YOP activities and for the young unemployed.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EXISTING SPECIALISED (SELECTIVE) SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PROTECTED AS A FIRST PRIORITY

These schools have no problem with the viability of their sixth forms. The avoidance of selection in education should be recognised for what it is - unrealistic and damaging to educational standards.

2. THERE SHOULD BE NO ENFORCED BREAK IN EDUCATION AT 16+.

Our reasons for this are set out in Section 4. We are also concerned at the morale-shattering effect which another form of reorganisation would have on the education services.

3. WHERE EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS HAVE VIABLE SIXTH FORMS THESE SHOULD BE RETAINED.

They should not be sacrificed to ' make up the numbers' for a sixth-form college.

4. WHERE EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS ARE JUDGED TO HAVE UNVIABLE SIXTH FORMS TWO SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:

(A) CO-OPERATIVE SCHEMES BETWEEN GROUPS OF SCHOOLS TO SHARE SIXTH-FORM FACILITIES

Whilst the onus must be on the LEA's to oversee the total sixth-form provision in their areas, any arrangements for consortia of schools must not infringe the principle that the head of each school is solely responsible to his or her Governing body, for the education of his or her own pupils.

(B) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A 'MUSHROOM' SIXTH FORM IN ONE OR MORE OF THE SCHOOLS WITH VIABLE SIXTH FORMS, SIXTH-FORMERS FROM THE OTHER SCHOOLS TRANSFERRING AT 16+ INTO A MUSHROOM SIXTH FORM

For some pupils this will of course represent an enforced break at 16+ but on the other hand many pupils, possibly a majority, will not have to change school. For this, and other reasons, we see the mushroom sixth-form solution as a desirable compromise.

5. SOME COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE DESIGNATED 'SPECIAL PROFILE' SCHOOLS

The range of A-level subjects offered in a 'special profile' school can be much narrower than in a normal comprehensive school (thus increasing the viability of its sixth form). We are impressed by recent developments in the USSR along these lines, particularly the foreign language schools and those with a maths/computing or other scientific bias. The latter resemble our late lamented technical schools, and it is of interest to note that there are 45 maths/computing schools in Moscow alone. These schools represent the triumph of common sense, in assessing the national interest, over egalitarian or socialist dogma.

6. MORE RELIANCE SHOULD BE PLACED ON PARENTAL WISHES IN DETERMINING THE KINDS OF SCHOOL PROVIDED

Parents will not be able to have all they want immediately, but a movement in this direction will produce a system with more variety and flexibility.

7. THE PRESENT CHOICE THAT EXISTS FOR A 16-YEAR-OLD TO LEAVE THE 11-18 SCHOOL AND ENTER A COLLEGE OF FE SHOULD BE RETAINED

This arrangement provides a choice of ethos and also a choice between an academic, or general, education, and one that is vocationally orientated.

8. IF THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR A NEW EXAMINATION, SUPPORTING A GROUPED COURSE STRUCTURE WITH A STRONG PRE-VOCATIONAL CHARACTER, FOR THE NEW SIXTH-FORMERS ARE IMPLEMENTED, THESE COURSES SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO ANY ONE TYPE OF INSTITUTION (but see 9).

9. THERE SHOULD BE DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF 16-19 YEAR-OLDS

The failure of the universal compulsory comprehensive principle in education should be clearly recognised. There is nothing to be gained by forcing all the existing institutions into a common mould. The existence of overlap courses, e.g. courses of a pre-vocational character in sixth forms and A-level courses in colleges of FE is not incompatible with the preservation of separate institutions with their own distinctive character, and allows for flexibility in the event of wrong choices being made.

10. THE BULK OF THE VOCATIONALLY-ORIENTATED COURSES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE IN FE COLLEGES

FE colleges are equipped to co-operate in Youth Opportunity Programme schemes and to provide part-time provision in support of YOP activities and for the young unemployed.

11. EDUCATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES SHOULD NOT BE NEGLECTED IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT 16-19 PROVISION

Many steps which may seem to bring economies in the short term are likely to prove costly in the long run, not only financially but also in terms of the quality of education which we provide for our young people.

12. NO DECISIONS ON CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR 16-19-YEAR-OLDS SHOULD BE MADE WITHOUT CAREFUL STUDIES USING THE IMPROVED METHOD OF COSTING BEING DEVISED FOR THE D.E.S. BY ITS CONSULTANTS (AND EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE IN JULY OR AUGUST 1981).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: MANCHESTER A-LEVEL RESULTS 1978 (published independently)

Size of groups[1] in major subjects (i.e. those offered by at least half of the 24 comprehensive schools).

School	No. of Pupils	Type[2]	Maths	Phys	Chem	Biol	Eng	Hist	Econ	Geog	French	Art	Gen.St.
No. 1	958	M	16 33	6 21	1 7	3 6	4 14	0 6	2 7	0 5	2 5	11 24	2 2
2	936	M		1 2	2 2	2 2		1 2				3 4	
3	973	M	4 7	1 2	4 10	1 2	1 1	1 5	4 5	2 10			
4	1602	B	11 20	10 21	13 23	14 21	5 5	8 11	6 8	5 7	1 2	1 3	28 47
5	983	B	2 6	2 9	2 6	3 6	0 3	2 3	3 8	2 5	0 2	3 3	9 16
6	903	G	3 8	0 3	5 7	4 12	8 11	6 13		4 4	1 4	2 2	6 15
7	1121	M	5 6	7 9	4 6	3 6	11 13	3 7	5 7	3 3	3 7	2 4	
8	871	M	6 8	5 7	3 5	1 1	0 3		1 1	3 5		1 1	
9	1081	G			1 2	1 2	2 10	2 6		2 4	1 3		
10	462	M	0 3				3 11	0 2		4 8	0 2	8 9	3 3
11	1114	G	2 2	1 3	3 5	1 5	1 8			1 3	1 2	6 7	2 2
12	1075	B	2 3	5 5	3 5	3 5	1 5	2 3	3 9	2 7			
13	848	M	2 2	1 2	0 3	1 2	1 1	2 2	0 1			1 1	2 6
14	857	M	2 3		3 4	1 1		0 1			0 1	1 2	1 1
15	1126	B	7 16	10 13	8 9	6 7	7 12	2 5		12 21	2 2	7 9	23 36
16	1108	G				1 3	7 15	6 9		4 6	2 6	2 2	
17	1562	M	19 33	17 22	18 19	9 12	23 34	18 25	24 30	11 18	12 15	18 19	17 23
18	772	M	0 6	1 1	1 3	2 3	1 4	1 1			0 2	2 2	
19	1270	M	3 6	4 7	3 9	1 8	5 11	6 10		4 5	0 3	4 4	2 5
20	1199	M		1 1	1 1	0 1	0 4		1 2	1 1		2 2	2 7
21	1525	G	3 7	0 3	0 5	4 9	16 19	10 18		0 4	2 6	9 9	8 26
22	1136	M	4 5	4 7	7 7	4 9	1 4	1 9	3 14	0 2	1 3	2 2	5 12
23	1544	M	10 20	4 14	9 13	5 9	9 16	2 2	1 3	1 1	1 4	4 6	12 18
24	1360	M	1 3	1 4	4 6	1 8				0 2		2 2	1 1
AVERAGE	1099[3]	-	5 10	4 8	4 7	3 6	5 10	4 7	4 8	3 6	2 4	4 6	8 14

NOTES: 1. The first column indicates the number of A-level passes obtained, and the second column the size of the group entered for A-level.

2. B = Boys; G = Girls; M = Mixed.

3. The size of a 6 or 7 form entry school.

N.B. There is very wide variation in the size of groups between schools and this of course means that the average size of groups is greatly inflated by the presence of two or three schools with much more viable sixth-forms than the rest.

APPENDIX 2 : A-LEVEL RESULTS FOR 90 ILEA COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS* in 1978

(From "Sixth-Forms in ILEA Comprehensives: A Cruel Confidence Trick?" by Caroline Cox and John Marks. National Council for Educational Standards, Occasional Pamphlet - Number 1.)

TABLE 1 - SIZE OF SUBJECT GROUPS

This shows the average number of pupils per school taking each of the eight main subjects and the numbers passing each subject

Subject	No. of entries per school	No. of passes per school
English Literature	7.3	3.6
Modern Languages	4.2	2.2
Geography	2.5	1.3
History	4.3	2.5
Biology	4.3	2.3
Chemistry	3.8	2.1
Physics	4.1	2.4
Maths	6.0	3.3

TABLE 2 - SMALL SUBJECT GROUPS - MAIN SUBJECTS - 90 SCHOOLS (720 SUBJECT GROUPS)

This shows, for the eight main subjects, the number of schools with no entries at all, with only 1 or 2 entries and with 0, 1 or 2 entries.

Subject	No. of schools with 0 entries	No. of schools with 1 or 2 entries	No. of schools with 0, 1 or 2 entries
English Literature	6	10	16
Modern Languages	36	25	61
Geography	36	21	57
History	16	21	37
Biology	20	19	39
Chemistry	25	18	43
Physics	28	19	47
Maths	22	13	35
Total	189 (26.3%)	146 (20.3%)	335 (46.5%)

* The results are for 90 wholly maintained comprehensive schools in the ILEA area, uniformly distributed over the 10 ILEA divisions. No voluntary schools (aided, controlled or special agreement) are included; this means that the results for most of the denominational schools are not included. All the schools are 11-18 comprehensives except 2 with age ranges of 12-18 and 13-18; 29 are boys' schools, 31 are girls' schools and 30 are mixed. These 90 schools are not a representative sample of ILEA schools; they are admittedly not as successful as the other 95 Inner London comprehensives. Nevertheless they provide comprehensive education for nearly 65% of all Inner London Secondary schoolchildren.

APPENDIX 3. PERCENTAGES OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS WITH 2 or more A-LEVELS - MAINTAINED SCHOOLS ONLY, ENGLAND AND WALES.

1962* - 1978 (From DES Statistics of Education)

ear	All schools	Comprehensive schools	Schools in the non-comprehensive sector	Superiority of schools in the non-comprehensive sector
962 *	4.8	3.0	4.9	60%
963	5.3	2.9	5.5	90%
1964	6.4	3.4	6.6	93%
965	8.1	5.0	8.4	69%
1966	8.5	5.4	8.9	64%
967	9.1	6.7	9.7	45%
968	9.6	7.8	10.1	30%
1969	9.6	7.3	10.4	42%
970	10.0	8.2	10.9	32%
1971	10.6	8.6	11.7	36%
972	10.1	8.4	11.4	36%
973	NOT COMPARABLE BECAUSE OF THE RAISING OF THE SCHHOL LEAVING AGE			
1974	9.6	8.2	11.7	43%
975	9.7	8.3	12.6	52%
1976	10.2	8.9	13.8	55%
977	9.9	8.9	13.7	54%
978	10.1	9.3	13.8	48%

tes * 1962 is the first year for which DES figures have been published.

ecial note

The figures are based on a 10% sample (See DES Statistics of Education for a discussion of the magnitude of sampling errors).

Sixth-form college results have always been included in the figures for comprehensives; and pupils tranferring from one school to another, or to a sixth-orm college, are not counted as leavers.

APPENDIX 4

Year	All Births	Legitimate Births	Legitimate Births by Social Class					Sixteen Years of age in
			I and II	IIIN	IIIM	IV and V	Others	
1967	832	762	Statistics not available					
1968	819	749						
1969	789	730						
1970	784	720	148 (21)	76 (11)	301 (43)	168 (24)	27	1986
1971	783	718	155 (23)	75 (11)	298 (43)	160 (23)	30	1987
1972	725	663	152 (24)	71 (11)	272 (43)	141 (22)	27	1988
1973	676	618	148 (25)	64 (11)	246 (42)	131 (22)	29	1989
1974	640	583	146 (26)	60 (11)	233 (42)	120 (21)	24	1990
1975	603	549	141 (27)	57 (11)	214 (41)	112 (21)	25	1991
1976	584	531	141 (28)	56 (11)	205 (40)	110 (21)	19	1992
1977	569	514	142 (29)	53 (11)	193 (39)	107 (21)	19	1993
1978	596	536	151 (29)	55 (11)	202 (39)	112 (21)	16	1994
Percentage fall	24	26	+ 2	28	33	33	-	-

* Percentage of all legitimate births by social class shown in brackets

Based on Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1978 <u>Birth Statistics</u> (HMSO 1980) Table 11.1 pages 132-5

APPENDIX 5. EFFECTS OF AGE SEGREGATION

A number of philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and less specialised observers have turned their attention to the breakdown of moral values in Western society, particularly in the USA. In general terms they have ascribed this breakdown to permissiveness. More specifically they have pointed to failure on the part of educators and parents to discipline the young and to ensure continuity in the transmission of moral values.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor of Psychology and Child Development and Family Studies at Cornell University, in his "Two Worlds of Childhood" * attempted to answer the question of why children in the West were more likely to cheat at school, to ignore other children and to behave anti-socially than children in the Soviet Union. Bronfenbrenner begins his section on the USA, "The Unmaking of the American Child", with the remarkable words, "Children used to be brought up by their parents." He concludes that, as parents neglect their duties and leave their children more and more to their own devices, peer-group pressures become more powerful. In this way children are greatly influenced by the behaviour of other children and as a result grow up in an atmosphere 'pervaded by subtle opposition to the standards of adult society.' The extent to which peer-group pressures can influence behaviour is demonstrated in the experiments conducted by Solomon Asch, which showed that, even with college students, one third of those involved were prepared to lie in order to win the approval of their peers. Most of these peer-group pressures, Bronfenbrenner believes, lead to anti-social behaviour.

Although Bronfenbrenner strongly dislikes many aspects of the way children are brought up in the USSR he believes that the way in which peer-group pressures there are under the control of adults compares favourably with the situation in the USA, where the adults have lost control. There is of course no reason to think that if American, and British, parents were to regain control over their children their countries would be turned into Soviets. The contrast that Bronfenbrenner draws is between

* 'Two Worlds of Childhood', Urie Bronfenbrenner, Penguin Education, 1974.

the way in which values are handed on in some societies from one generation to the next and the way in which, in other societies, this transmission is either neglected or studiously avoided. The nature of the values themselves is of course a different question.

There are many examples in "Two Worlds of Childhood" of ways in which the natural bonds between adults and children have been weakened in America. Tom Wolfe in his essay on "Mid-Atlantic Man" dealt with the same theme and drew attention to the way in which different age groups have assumed their own sub-cultures and moved apart. To underline the presence of age segregation in American society he quoted the extreme case of a chic restaurant in Hollywood's Sunset Strip which was not prepared to admit even the most glamorous of actresses if she was over the age of twenty three.

The issue of adult control of children has been the subject of wide debate in education. The early American progressives, with their excessively child-centred views, deliberately played down the role of adults in education and these views had a great influence, outside the school, on child-rearing practices, both in America and Britain. G. Stanley Hall, for example, both in his "The Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School", (1891) and in his "The Ideal School as Based on Child Study" ten years later, advanced the revolutionary notion that, instead of aiming to prepare children for life as it really was, schools should be concerned with constructing a radically new curriculum determined solely by data on child growth. Instead of the child being prepared for the real world, the real world would be radically and ideally transformed when the New American Child burst onto the adult scene. If teachers gave their full co-operation, this transformation could be achieved within a single generation.

Hall's notion, however, stands or falls on the question of whether child growth is autonomous or whether it is dependent, even in part, on the active intervention of adults and hence is socially determinable. If it is the latter, there can be no meaningful data on the nature, growth

and development of children that could define the ideal curriculum. Bronfenbrenner's cross-cultural study of advanced societies shows clearly that social factors play a decisive part in child development. Hall's vision can therefore be dismissed as dangerously Utopian without even considering the other dubious assumption that he made that children were naturally good.

The dangers to American schooling arising from the new laissez-faire pedagogy were soon recognised by John Dewey, who is often credited with being the father of the progressive education movement. In a series of essays in the late 1920's and early 1930's, he revealed that he had changed from being the interpreter of this movement to becoming one of its most hostile critics. Its mistake, Dewey insisted, had been to misconceive the nature of freedom. Freedom was not something given at birth; nor was it bred of planlessness. It was something to be achieved, to be systematically wrought out in co-operation with experienced teachers, knowledgeable in their own traditions. In his essay, "How Much Freedom in New Schools", Dewey used his strongest words on this subject, when he attacked "the deplorable egotism, cockiness, impertinence and disregard for the rights of other apparently considered by some persons to be the inevitable accompaniment, if not the essence of freedom." Dewey was in fact making the distinction, which he was later to make in all his writings, between negative freedom (the right not to be restrained) and positive freedom (the freedom to do things which are worth doing, acquired as a result of discipline and training).

The warning Dewey issued went largely unheeded and there were many people who continued to regard self-assertion and "disregard for the rights of others as a necessary accompaniment, if not the essence of freedom". Their influence was particularly strong in education where permissiveness became more prevalent.

The spread of permissiveness was one of the main reasons for setting up senior high schools in the US. It was hoped that this move would help to counter what was euphemistically described as the 'social precocity' of older pupils.

By treating them exactly as if they were adults i.e. virtually letting them do as they liked so long as they did not break the law, it was intended that such permissiveness should be contained and prevented from spreading through the schools to younger pupils, in much the same way that a fire is held at bay by a fire-break.

But it did not work in the way intended. Instead permissiveness became more widespread and the problems that had been discerned amongst the older adolescents increasingly began to be found among ever younger age groups. In 1969 the writer visited a junior high school, where the conditions were so good in relation to those in neighbouring schools that its Principal could describe his appointment as "equivalent to retirement", and was told that manners and morals could no longer be taught in the school. This state of affairs owed much to the recent actions of the courts which had, by a number of judgements, confirmed in teachers' minds the belief that to teach manners and morals was to risk being accused of committing one of the most gross infringements of a pupil's liberty.

The spread of permissiveness is fully documented in the report of the US Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, 1975,* which presents a horrifying picture of the contemporary state of American schools. It also records the rapid growth in the magnitude of the problems throughout the three years covered in the preliminary survey (1970-73), and confirms the fact that the most serious act of delinquency are now occurring with disturbing frequency amongst the 8-11 year olds.

During this three year period serious physical attacks on teachers increased by 77% to reach an annual rate of 70,000; rapes and attempted rapes increased by 40%, forcible rapes reaching a total of 9,000 in 1973; and homicides increased by 18.5%. Over the same period the damage from vandalism doubled to reach an annual cost of $500 million, which equalled the amount the nation spent on textbooks in 1972. The one thousand strong Crips gang located in the Los Angeles schools (the name is short for Cripples, which in turn is derived from the gang's trademark of

* See the note on p.19.

maiming or crippling their victims) boasted two auxiliary units: The Crippetts, composed of girl members, and the Junior Crips formed from the ranks of the elementary schools. This gang is just one of the 143 which operate in the Los Angeles Unified School District. A social worker working with the Los Angeles gangs is quoted as saying:

> "The trend is towards even more violent acts. Our biggest problem is with the 8-11 year olds, not the teenagers. They're into everything - vandalism, assault, petty theft and extortion at school."

One of the ways in which these gangs practise extortion is by occupying the 'rest rooms' and demanding payment from pupils before they are allowed to use the toilets. And this occurs despite the presence of school-employed security officers who patrol the school corridors.

One of the most significant findings of the Bayh report is the escalation in the level of violence in schools over the previous decade. As recently as 1964 a survey found that teachers were, overall, able to rate 70-80% of their classes as exhibiting good to excellent behaviour, whereas in 1975 the situation had reached crisis proportions. The report showed too that the problems were not confined to the cities but were nation wide. Senator Bayh summed it all up in these words: "Clearly the American and elementary school system is facing a crisis of serious dimensions."

This gloomy view of the state of American society is not confined to this Senate Subcommittee. Alistair Cooke in his "America" gives examples of the symptoms of decline which he thinks can be recognised and offers his considered view that the race is now on between its decadence and its vitality. In his analysis of the causes of America's ills he describes as a disastrous sentimentality the rage to believe that we have found the secret of liberty in general permissiveness from the cradle on. He is of course saying just what Dewey said 50

years earlier, but with this difference: the situation he is describing in 1973 is vastly worse.

The most penetrating analysis of the effects of the breaking of the natural link between the generations has been undertaken by the American sociologist, Hannah Arendt, in "Between Past and Future". Dealing with the crisis in education she observes that it is a difficult task to take this as seriously as it deserves, since it is tempting to regard it as a local phenomenon unconnected with the larger issues of the century. She goes on to add that one can take it as a general rule in this century that whatever is possible in one country may in the foreseeable future be equally possible in almost any other - words that have a special chill in view of the Bayh report and the close affinities between the USA and ourselves concerning the principles of child-rearing and education.

The large issue, she argues, is the spread of the view that there exists a child's world, and a society formed amongst children, that is autonomous and which must as far as possible be left to them to govern. Because of the prevalence of such a view, the real and normal relations between children and adults are being destroyed. The children are increasingly failing to get the protection from the family that secures their essential privacy and are being exposed to the public life of the peer-groups.

Turning specifically to education, Arendt maintains that educators stand in relationship to the young as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it. This responsibility is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a continuously changing world. But currently all responsibility for the world is being rejected, the responsibility for giving orders no less than for obeying them. Authority has been discarded by the adults and this can only mean one thing: that the adults refuse to assume responsibility for the world into which they have brought their children.

Furthermore the line drawn between children and adults should signify that one can neither educate adults nor treat children as though they were grown up, but this line should never be permitted to grow into a wall separating children from the adult community as though they were not living in the same world and as though childhood were an autonomous human state living by its own laws.

An important feature of Arendt's analysis is that it relates the crisis in the schools to the crisis in the homes. Parents and educators alike are responsible for breaking the link between the past and the future; it is no use the one trying to evade responsibility by blaming the other. This essential link between the generations, whether it be expressed in terms of the ties between parents and children, teachers and pupils or older children and younger children, is essential for the transmission of moral values and the continuous development of society. If these links are broken society will disintegrate.

Arendt's analysis is supported by the interpretations of Dewey and Bronfenbrenner, and together they provide a convincing explanation of the deterioration that has indubitably taken place in the American schools and which is beginning to be seen in Britain. The analysis also points to ways of reversing the trend and re-creating a society in which the dangerous gap between the world of the child and that of the adult has been eliminated. Adults must assume more responsibility and exercise a greater degree of control over those who are on their way to becoming adults. This is more difficult than relinquishing control in the name of (negative) freedom and liberation, but unless it is done and unless we all recognise that the transition from childhood to adulthood is a long process which demands co-operation between those at different stages along the route, society will become an increasingly more hostile environment for young and old alike. If we allow that to happen, we will have betrayed the young.