

**Earning, Learning and Income: A Historical Analysis of Barriers to  
Accessing the 'Educational Ladder'**

**by**

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## Abstract

In modern capitalist societies such as Britain work performed by children outside school hours is invariably officially portrayed (and, indeed, widely perceived) as a harmless, and even educational activity. However, in recent years research has shown that this 'idealistic' conception of employment alongside learning is not necessarily accurate. In relation to the employment of school children, since the early 1970s a host of studies have been published, which suggest that the paid labour activities performed by children in Western European nations are frequently very demanding, arduous and sometimes dangerous.

In relation to the employment of undergraduate students, both Conservative and Labour governments have presided over changes to the funding the regime that have generated a significant increase in the employment of undergraduate students. Discussions about child employment have long centred on its supposed 'beneficial' aspects, with advocates claiming that it has the potential to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Since the cuts to student funding have been implemented, similar claims have been made about the 'educational potential' of work for undergraduate students. As with child employment, the evidence points to a far more nuanced picture regarding the impact of employment on the studies of undergraduate students, and this non-problematic conception of undergraduate employment has been challenged. Research suggests that students rarely undertake employment of any relevance to chosen studies, and that part-time work frequently appears to have a deleterious, rather than a positive impact upon academic performance.

The aim of this thesis is, using a historical perspective, to assess the competing claims that have been made about the educational utility of 'labour'. It will show, with regards to both child employment and the employment of undergraduate students, the recent fashionable emphasis placed upon the 'beneficial' aspects of 'work experience' alongside learning is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it will be shown that this is a recurring, if unproven, theme throughout the history of debates about education reform and child

employment. Likewise, that the notion that children (and indeed students) ‘enjoy’ working is not new. Nor is the insistence that employment teaches children and young people about rewards for hard work, value for money and the disciplines of getting up for work particularly novel. As will become evident, whenever further restrictions on school children’s employment have been contemplated in major inquiries into the phenomenon, these same claims have been in defence of a deregulatory approach. Hence, throughout this thesis it will be shown that the arguments today to defend child employment in Britain, and indeed the employment of undergraduate students, have a long historical pedigree. A particular focus in the thesis will be upon those interests that have traditionally defended the ‘right’ of children and young people to work, and their claims about the ‘educationally beneficial’ aspects of employment will be tested by reference to historical evidence

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## INTRODUCTION

In modern capitalist societies such as Britain work performed by children outside school hours is invariably officially portrayed (and, indeed, widely perceived) as a harmless and even educational activity. Children are said to enjoy their employment; it is said to give them a sense of worth, promote development of employability skills, and the wages help them to gain important lesson about the links between effort and reward. In this respect, it is more frequently than not depicted as a useful socialising experience which gives children a taste of a real job. Similar claims have been made about the employment activities of college and undergraduate students. Rather than acting as an impediment to their studies, work is portrayed as a beneficial, educational activity, and one that will compliment, not hinder the learning experience.

However, in recent years, research has shown that this ‘idealistic’ conception of employment alongside learning is not necessarily accurate. In relation to the employment of school children, a host of studies have been published since the early 1970s which suggest that the employment activities performed by children in Western European nations are frequently very demanding, arduous and sometimes dangerous. In Britain, for example, it is suggested that “child workers are at considerable risk - of injury, wage exploitation and unsafe and inappropriate work - within a context of inadequate legal protection and law enforcement and patchy local authority planning” (Rikowski, G. & Neary, M, 1997, p.32). A non-problematic conception of child employment, nonetheless, continues to shape the dominant policy paradigm and in recent decades policy seems to have been geared towards relaxing rather than strengthening child employment legislation (DOH, 1995). Hence, in the 1990s, the TUC criticised the then Conservative Government’s approach to child employment, which appeared to be based upon the uncritical and flawed assumptions that it was adequately regulated and that no harm was caused by it (TUC, 1997). The following comments, made in 1997 by Baroness Cumberlege (Conservative Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health) epitomised its stance on the issue:

“The vast majority of children enjoy their paper rounds and their Saturday morning jobs. It teaches them about rewards for hard work, value for money and the disciplines of getting up for work and being reliable. Furthermore, it gives them status in the eyes of their friends. Therefore, the issue must be kept in proportion” (Hansard, House of Lords, 10/3/97, c.1-2).

Likewise, the previous Labour Government’s approach to the issue has faced criticism. For whilst it favoured a more regulatory approach whilst in opposition, when in government, Labour shied away from proposals which would have tightened child employment laws, and afforded children more protection at work (Cunningham, 2001). Indeed, when discussing the issue, the language of Labour Ministers bore more than a close resemblance to their Conservative predecessors, emphasising the positive, educational aspects of such work. Thus, Beverley Hughes, then the UK Labour Government’s Minister for Children Schools and Families, argued that child employment campaigners needed to “keep the issue into perspective”. In most cases, she argued, children’s employment experiences are appropriate and harmless, and the laws governing their work were “strong enough and workable” (Hansard, 17/12/2007, c.581). Hughes’ Ministerial successor, Ed Balls, took an identical position, announcing that the government’s view was that it “is that is not right to toughen up the law” (Hansard, 27/04/2009, c.568).

In relation to the employment of undergraduate students, both Conservative and Labour governments have presided over changes to the funding the higher education (HE) regime that have generated a significant increase in the employment of undergraduate students. In Britain, the 1980s and 1990s saw two major changes occur in relation to higher education. Firstly, the sector saw a rapid growth in student numbers. Secondly, the financial support given by the State to undergraduate students was cut significantly. The state, it was argued, could no longer be expected to meet the burgeoning costs of the much-needed expansion of the HE sector, and there was a need to shift more of the financial burden onto students themselves. The rhetoric of ‘personal responsibility’ and ‘fairness’ was employed by successive Conservative governments to justify the cuts

(Hansard, 21/12/1989, c.619). Subsequently, students' access to welfare benefits was curtailed, the value of maintenance grants was cut significantly, and a system of student loans was introduced. The General Election in May 1997 saw the election of a Labour government. Despite condemning declining levels of support for students in HE when in opposition, Labour pursued a broadly similar strategy to previous Conservative governments. Indeed, soon after its election, Labour announced the introduction of tuition fees, the costs of which increased substantially during its period in office, and the abolition of the traditional maintenance grant. Once again, the language of 'personal responsibility' and 'fairness' was used to justify the changes (DfEE, 1997).

There is now a general agreement that as a consequence of these changes students entering HE face an unprecedented and growing burden of debt. Taylor and Smith (1998, p.3) have linked this development to two emerging trends. Students, they argue, are now increasingly "dropping out of full-time education entirely or are being forced to take part-time employment to finance their time at university". As already hinted, discussions about child employment have long centred on its supposed 'beneficial' aspects, with advocates claiming that it has the potential to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Since the cuts to student funding have been implemented, similar claims have been made about the 'educational potential' of work for undergraduate students. Some have highlighted what they perceive to be the positive aspects of increased undergraduate term-time employment, suggesting it confers management and organisational skills, and encourages financial responsibility (Lucas, 1997, 1998; Curtis and Shani, 2002). This was broadly the position adopted by the previous Labour administration when Ministers were faced with evidence of growing levels of undergraduate employment. Margaret Hodge, then Minister for Higher Education, admitted she was "not too concerned about students doing part-time work when they are studying", stating she would not be opposed to a move towards a US model, whereby almost all students work in some way. In the US, she argues, there is a much greater recognition of the positive impact employment can have on the student learning experience, and of how work can complement rather than detract from study (Hodge, 2002).

As with child employment, the evidence points to a far more nuanced picture regarding the impact of employment on the studies of undergraduate students, and this non-problematic conception of undergraduate employment has been challenged. Research suggests that students rarely undertake employment of any relevance to chosen studies, and that part-time work frequently appears to have a deleterious, rather than a positive impact upon academic performance (TUC, 2000; Hunt et al, 2004; Humphrey, 2006; Robotham, 2009). Hence, the current orthodoxy, which suggests that the majority of students should be expected to work to fund their studies, may, therefore, be misguided. Comparative evidence, for instance, suggests that we should not uncritically assume that employment is necessarily beneficial. The focus of debate in the United States (US), like here, has been on the impact of rising college (university) tuition fees, particularly on students from low-income backgrounds. Jacqueline King, director of the American Council on Education, notes that such students have reduced “the immediate price of attending college by ... working” (Higher Education and National Affairs, 1999). King’s later research concludes that working long hours whilst studying part-time not only increased the time needed for students to earn a degree, but also increased the likelihood of students dropping out (King, 2000; Bozick, 2007). This research has been complimented by the findings of numerous studies conducted in the UK including those of Claire Callender who has repeatedly found that the academic performance of those undergraduates in employment is significantly below that of those not employed. Callender’s research also demonstrates a correlation between the number of hours employed and the level of detriment to academic performance (Callender, 2008).

One of the main aims of this thesis is to show that, with regards to both child employment and the employment of undergraduate students, the recent fashionable emphasis placed upon the ‘beneficial’ aspects of ‘work experience’ alongside learning is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it will be shown that this is a recurring, if unproven, theme throughout the history of debates about education reform and child employment. Likewise, that the notion that children (and indeed students) ‘enjoy’ working is not new, nor is the insistence that employment teaches children and young people about rewards for hard work, value for money and the disciplines of getting up for work and being

reliable. As will become evident, whenever further restrictions on school children's labour have been contemplated in major inquiries into the phenomenon, these same claims have been in defence of a deregulatory approach. Hence, throughout this thesis it will be shown that the arguments today to defend child employment in Britain, and indeed the employment of undergraduate students, have a long historical pedigree. The key points of difference in these debates are between those who argue that employment hinders educational opportunity and those who argue that it has the potential to enhance it.

Of course, a multitude of excellent texts have been already been published examining the history of education policy in the UK, many of which draw attention to the obstacles working class pupils (and indeed students) have faced in accessing educational opportunities (see for instance Simon, B., 1960, 1965, and 1991). However, much of this research has focused on the way the structure of the education system itself has often reinforced rather than mitigated education inequalities. The emphasis that is placed upon the structure of education in such historiographies is certainly valid and appropriate. Indeed, it is my intention in this thesis to examine the way limited, piecemeal educational reforms have continuously and systematically failed to enhance working class opportunities. A persistent theme running through UK education reform is its failure to match up to its promises. In part, of course, this is due to the fact that education policy - and the structures that have emerged out of major educational reforms - has frequently been driven by motives other than enhancing opportunity. As we will see, education policy, particularly in the nineteenth century, was often shaped by quite contrary considerations and concerns, primary amongst which was a desire to create an acquiescent, working class citizenry, who would be prepared to passively accept their station in life. We should not therefore underestimate the extent to which educational reform has all too frequently failed to enhance opportunity.

Just as importantly, though, economic imperatives have also played a crucial, yet under researched, part in shaping and limiting the potential of education policy. As will be shown, these 'economic imperatives' have manifested themselves on a number of levels,

but it is the policy making level that is of most concern to us. One of the central aims of this thesis is to examine how and why governments and civil servants have been reluctant to sanction tighter restrictions on the employment of children and young people. As we will see, historically, one of the key stumbling blocks to the successful implementation of reform has been the concerns policy makers have held about its potential impact on trade interests. As the analysis will show, this was as much true of campaigns to regulate newspaper delivery in the twentieth century as it was the campaign for factory reform in the nineteenth century. An additional key obstacle to reform has been the ideological ‘celebration’ of work, and the uncritical acceptance of arguments concerning the ‘educational benefits’ of employment. These two, related factors, have proven to be an enduring impediment to reform, and they have been fostered and sustained by vigorous, well organised campaigns waged on behalf of particular trade interests at specific junctures in history. Each of the chapters in this thesis looks at such specific moments and examines debates over child employment reform and how they have been resolved. What we will see is that business interests - whether this be factory owners and farmers in the nineteenth century, or more recently newsagents, shopkeepers and supermarkets - have waged remarkably successful campaigns designed to protect their perceived interests, the impact of which has been to limit and check education reform. Previous historiographies of child employment in Britain have, of course, been undertaken (for example Cunningham, 1999). However, there is scope for a more detailed investigation of the way government concerns about the economic ‘costs’ of child employment reform, and employer claims about the supposed ‘utility’ of ‘employment’ on education, have interacted to frustrate educational opportunity.

It is an analysis of such claims that form the cornerstone of this thesis. Throughout the analysis, continuing themes will be identified and parallels between the historical debates and current debates about respective ‘utility’ of ‘education’ versus ‘employment experience’ will be identified. What will emerge is a remarkable degree of consistency in the themes and issues surrounding these debates; issues and themes that will run through the core of the analysis of the thesis.

In countries such as Britain, where hard work and thrift are have always been imbued with positive moral overtones, such arguments have served to represent extremely powerful justifications for allowing children and young people to work outside hours of learning, and not surprisingly, they continue to command widespread popular support today. However, there is little actual evidence to support such claims. Indeed, in recent years a number of authors have cautioned against an uncritical acceptance of such positive interpretations of the effects of child employment. Greenberger and Steinberg, drawing on evidence gathered in the United States, have highlighted a number of potentially detrimental effects which, they argue, advocates of children's work do not appear to have considered. Critical of those who focus almost exclusively on the good things that children's work might inspire, they insist that the forms of employment most children and young people undertake outside school hours may induce a whole range of unanticipated consequences. For example, far from inculcating in children a healthy respect for work, they point out that employment may lead to precisely the opposite effect to that which its proponents intend - the development of cynical and contemptuous attitudes towards working:

“Many youngsters, after all, work at jobs that are not intrinsically interesting or challenging and that offer very limited prospects for learning or significant pay increases and other forms of advancement. In the context of many youngster's motives for working ... they may take away from the workplace a diminished sense that work is a meaningful and satisfying human activity” (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986, p.140).

Greenberger and Steinberg are not opposed to children and young people work per-se. Indeed, they accept that properly organised forms of work experience where, for example, children's employment is properly regulated (by the state) and carefully monitored (by parents, schools, colleges and universities), can achieve some of the positive effects its advocates claim. However, they conclude that the overall picture of children and young people's work in most advanced capitalist societies is not impressive, and that most jobs performed by children are characterised by “little task variety, highly

routinised activity, and the constant repetition of fairly uninteresting tasks” (1986, p.66). Hence, the vast majority of children and young people are not given the opportunity to make any significant decisions, and few are given the chance to learn or practice skills which might be of use to them in any future adult employment.

More recent research from the US provides us with evidence contrary to that of Greenberger and Steinberg. Mortimer (2003) notes the majority of high school children undertake employment but contends that, far from being routinised and uninteresting, employment offers school pupils another domain in which to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Though predominantly employed in the stereotypical areas of retail and fast-food, Mortimer argues that as school pupils spend more time employed within a setting the complexity of their job role increases and so too does their opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills; as pupils progress through high school they are likely to advance from one role to another, for example, “from cashier or behind the counter food server in a fast-food chain to supervisor in the same establishment” (2003, p.57). Notwithstanding the low wages received by employed school children (in comparison to adult wages), Mortimer found that overall job satisfaction was high, though there was an almost equal split between those employed pupils who thought their job permitted them to ‘learn new things’ and those that did not. This suggests that Greenberger and Steinberg’s findings may be valid. Moreover, despite adopting a very pro-employment position, Mortimer concedes that:

“Substantial minorities of adolescents experience stressful work conditions and do not find their jobs rewarding. Furthermore, adolescents generally perceive that their jobs interfere with their schoolwork” (2003, p.79).

Though many pupils reported struggling to balance the dual roles of ‘learner’ and ‘earner’, Mortimer emphasised that, with the exception of those pupils undertaking ‘intensive’ employment (over 20 hours per week) over a sustained period, there was little evidence of employment having a deleterious impact upon academic performance or participation in extra-curricula activities. However, this exception warrants further

attention as it suggests that at the higher end of employment hours there may be negative consequences for academic performance. Mortimer's study fails to fully explore this possibility but does assert that pupils working intensively elected to do so as a result of their lack of engagement in school; it is a strategic decision which facilitates acquisition of skills in an arena more suited to them - the workplace. Conversely, pupils who exhibited a strong commitment to school were found to restrict their employment hours. Interestingly, Mortimer also found that those pupils undertaking intensive employment came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, while pupils from higher socio-economic backgrounds engaged in significantly less employment. Later US research reinforces the correlation between socio-economic background and levels of employment undertaken but, significantly, also highlights the relationship between intensive employment and increased high school drop out rates. For instance, Warren and Citaldi (2006) reported that "students who are advantaged with respect to SES [socio-economic status] and academic characteristics tend to be concentrated in the 'working 1 to 20 hours per week' category" (p.137), and students "who work more than 20 hours per week are about twice as likely to drop out as students who work fewer hours per week" (p.140). However, Mortimer refutes the significance of employment hours as a factor which impacts upon academic performance and drop out, arguing instead that the 'quality' of employment experience is a more significant in relation to educational achievement and wider psychosocial development.

Mortimer's research characterises employment of school children as non-problematic and even beneficial. However, more recent US research offers a very different assessment. Runyan et al (2007), for instance, in their study of the retail and service sector, discovered that employers regularly permit children to be exposed to various hazards, operate dangerous machinery and that training and/or supervision was frequently not provided. Children were also found to be working long hours during the week. Indeed, 37 percent of those under 16 reported having worked past 7pm on a school night, despite the fact that it is prohibited by federal law (16% of the youngest workers - those less than 15 years old - indicated they had worked after 9pm on a school night). The authors argue that evening employment makes children more vulnerable to exposure to violence (e.g.

robbery in the retail setting) and highlight the potential for detriment to academic performance through lack of sleep.

Figures from the General Accounting Office (GAO) (2002) support the claims of Runyan et al (2007) of excessive employment hours of children. 47 per cent of full service restaurants that employ fourteen and fifteen year olds, according to the GAO, do so illegally; 80 per cent of these of these children overworked by at least ten hours above that allowed by law. Such levels of child employment were of concern to the GAO due to its “negative consequences for children’s physical, emotional and educational development” (2002, p.46).

US evidence relating to school children employed in agriculture is particularly damning. Here, children have been described as “endangered and exploited on a daily basis. They work too many hours at too-young ages, burdened with fatigue when they should be studying, playing, or at school. They are not paid minimum wage. Their safety is compromised and their health is at risk. They are also, for the most part, unprotected by the U.S. government” (Tucker, 2000, p.51). In a more recent investigation, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) (2007) found children continued to be engaged in physically damaging employment for long periods in dangerous conditions. As Mortimer (2003) and Warren and Citaldi (2006) found, children undertaking higher levels of employment tend to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, this is particularly true for children from migrant families. In a statement reminiscent of those made by nineteenth century to numerous Royal Commissions on education and child employment, Josie Ellis, a nurse with the North Carolina Migrant Help programme, describes the impact upon migrant children of their employment in agriculture:

“Play is something that migrant children know very little about. Work they know, play not so much. We see frustration, we see really tired kids, we see depression in children, despair, the ability to dream, the inability to see past high school, the

inability to see past junior high school...I think it's shameful that our nation tolerates child labour" (ABC News, 2009).

Though Mortimer (2003) acknowledges that wages for employed children are below that of adult wages, she fails to explore this in the context of employer motive for employing children. Do employers hire children out of a sense of altruism and desire to nurture or develop children, or is the primary reason that children represent cheap and compliant employees? Mortimer's (2003) study emphasises the benefits accrued by children in undertaking employment, however, other US research suggests that it is employers who are the prime beneficiaries of child employment, many of whom are prepared to exploit children in order to capitalise commercially. Tucker (2000), for instance, is sceptical about the good intentions of employers and contends that "Children, being inexperienced and often unassertive, are even more vulnerable to wage exploitation than are adults" (p.13). Similarly, in describing children employed in agriculture, the United Farm Workers Union (UFWU) stated that in many cases these are the children "in California, Arizona, Washington state and Texas...employed as cheap labour in the billion-dollar agricultural industry" (cited in Walsh, 2000).

As we have seen, employment of children for periods beyond legal prescription, their exposure to dangerous and fatiguing work environments, their low pay, and the deleterious impact of work upon education and development are associated with child employment in the US. Accordingly, as the body *ultimately* responsible for the working conditions of children, it can be seen that employers' motives for hiring children are not primarily driven by a concern for child welfare and development, but by a desire for cheap and pliable labour. Moreover, as a by-product of the widespread use of cheap and easily exploitable child employees, employers are 'equipped' to successfully depress the wages they pay to adults; a plentiful supply of child employees who can perform similar or the same tasks as adults for a lower wage affords employers an opportunity for increased financial gain. As Oxfam America (2004) argue, "agricultural employers' ability to employ low-cost child labour (often 'off the books') helps to perpetuate adult farmworkers' low rates of pay, which in turn prevents farmworkers from earning enough

to afford child care or eliminate the need for their children's income from agricultural work".

In the US, this exploitative dynamic between child employee and employer has been permitted to continue due to a combination of factors, these are: low levels of regulation; non-enforcement of/poor inspection of compliance to regulation; and weak sanctions against non-compliant employers. The legislation pertaining to employment is the Fair Labor and Standards Act (1938) (FLSA). It does stipulate certain restrictions on child employment and sets conditions for employment in certain sectors of the economy, however, it also contains loopholes. For instance, it does not apply to businesses with a gross value of sales of less than \$500,000, nor does it apply to newspaper delivery, and it permits special exemptions to agriculture so that it can employ younger children (from age twelve) for an unlimited number of hours with parental permission; indeed, on smaller farms there is no age restriction at all as long as parental consent is granted. Issues of child employment regulation are further complicated by the ability of individual states to impose their own child employment regulations which can be more, or less, stringent than the federal FLSA (Windau and Meyer, 2005). Though some consideration of the variations and complexities of child employment legislation is necessary, the system has been subject to significant criticism. Chief among these critics are the GAO and Sally Greenberg, both of whom attack the DoL for its failure to effectively mitigate the exploitation of child employees. Mirroring both historical and contemporary concerns of UK government departments (Cunningham, 1999, 2002), accusations levied at the DoL by the GAO (2002) highlight DoL manipulation of data to justify its failure to act more rigorously in tackling child employment abuses, and further criticises it for reducing the number of hours committed to its inspection regime. Greenberg (2008) elaborates upon this criticism, claiming that: the US has only 28 full-time dedicated child employment investigators (approximately one for every 115,000 child employees); 2006 saw only 1,344 investigations - the lowest number of DoL investigations for a decade - a 48 per cent decrease from 2004 figures; hours spent undertaking investigations fell from 73,736 in 2001 to 48,005 in 2006; sanctions imposed by prosecutors are not fit for purpose - in 2006, the average penalty for child employment violations was \$939, only 9

per cent of the penalty maximum. Greenberg (2008) concludes, therefore, that the inspection regime and possible sanctions pose little concern to employers contravening child employment.

Studies of child employment conducted in Britain have produced similar 'mixed' findings to those in the US. Here too, children's employment is dominated by jobs which entail the performance of highly routinised, monotonous, unstimulating tasks. The most commonly recorded employment areas for children are newspaper/milk delivery, retail, hotel and catering, agriculture (Lavalette, 1994; Better Regulation Taskforce, 2004; Howieson et al 2006); areas of employment where there are questionable opportunities for children to learn occupational skills or acquire habits which may benefit them in future careers. As is the case in the US, ascertaining accurate numbers of child employment is difficult as the UK government does not compile statistics due to its assumption that child employment is non-problematic; "child workers generally remain 'invisible' as far as central government is concerned" (Hobbs et al, 2007, p.415). However, there is agreement that the majority of school children in the UK, as in the US, will have undertaken employment during their school years. Howieson et al (2006), in their national study of Scotland, found that overall 59 per cent of pupils had engaged in employment, ranging from 48 per cent of thirteen year olds to 83 per cent of sixteen year olds. Though confined to Scottish pupils, these findings are comparable to those of smaller local studies undertaken in England and thus can be reasonably considered representative.

Studies in the UK, as in the US, demonstrate high levels of illegal child employment. Hobbs and McKechnie (1997) found that between 15 per cent and 26 per cent of employed school children started work before the age of eleven, and between 22.5 per cent and 36.5 per cent before the age twelve, despite UK law prohibiting employment of children under thirteen (except in agriculture and performance). The Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF) (2004) claimed that of an estimated population of 3.5 million eleven to fifteen year olds some 2.3 million will have engaged in employment before leaving school; by law, very few eleven and twelve year olds should be engaged in employment.

Illegalities surrounding the employment of school children are not restricted to those children working before the age of thirteen, it also includes the vast majority of children of legal age to be employed but whose employers have failed to comply with employment regulation by not obtaining the required permit from the local authority. The 1933 Children and Young Persons Act established the minimum standards of employment for children, empowered local authorities to impose their own byelaws, and also charged local authorities with responsibility for enforcing regulations. Variability between the regulations of states in the US is replicated in the UK as a result of different byelaws imposed by local authorities. Though local byelaws should conform to national standards, significant variation is evident. For instance, “many local authority byelaws contain out of date information; for example, 36 local authority byelaws state that 10-year-olds may be employed by their parents in light agricultural work”. Moreover, there is “variation between byelaws on which sectors are prohibited from employing children, as well as several byelaws that state an incorrect limit on the maximum number of hours that children may work in a week” (BRTF, 2004, p.9). This inconsistency and confusion is systemic and exacerbated by a plethora of additional national and European legislation that also shapes child employment regulation (ILO, 2006). One recent study in the North West of England discovered that 96 per cent of employers had failed to register their child employees with the local authority (Douglas, 2009); these findings are similar to those of other studies (McKechnie et al, 2005; Howieson et al, 2006). It is reasonable to suggest that the disjointed and uncoordinated legislative situation may offer some explanation for such low levels of employer compliance with child employment regulations, however, other explanations also require our consideration.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, there is little political appetite to ‘toughen up’ child employment regulation due to a widely held and uncritical assumption that it is a beneficial activity; an assumption with a long historical pedigree. It will be shown throughout this thesis that UK Governments have repeatedly adopted a ‘laissez-faire’ attitude to the regulation of child employees (and higher education students for that matter). One such recent example of this can be seen in the inaction of the Labour

Government to the 1998 inter-department review of child employment. In response to a private member bill introduced by Chris Pond MP (Labour), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, Mr. Paul Boateng, announced that model byelaws for child employment would be recommended to local authorities, and that an inter-departmental enquiry on the matter would be undertaken. The enquiry's terms of reference were:

“To consider the present arrangements for protecting children, including regulatory arrangements, levels of protection and enforcement; to examine any research or other evidence that it considers necessary from any source, including interested organisations and individuals; to make any necessary investigations; to draw up any proposals necessary to ensure that children's health, safety, welfare and development are strictly protected, and that they are shielded from exploitation” (Hansard, 13/02/1998, c.727).

Mr Boateng went on to say that “We do not intend to hang around. There is much to be done, and I sense a determination in the House that we should do it” (Ibid). Mr Pond withdrew his bill based upon Mr Boateng's announcements, however, the claim “We do not intend to hang around” would prove to be false. Though the promised enquiry took place, the resultant report was neither acted upon nor made public; as will be shown, this tactic of undertaking enquiries which effectively led to nothing was one adopted on numerous occasions in relation to child employment throughout the twentieth century (Cunningham, 2001). After requesting a copy of the report under the Freedom of Information Act, Hobbs et al (2007) afford us a summary of its recommendations. Perhaps the most important recommendation, for this thesis, was the report's proposal that further research was needed on the relationship between part-time employment and academic performance. This recommendation suggests that the uncritical acceptance of employment as beneficial to children's education was not shared by all members of the review committee and therefore casts doubt upon the validity of the claims by those MPs who asserted employment is not harmful to education. The report also suggested that “there would be little disadvantage in abandoning the work permit system” (Hobbs et al, 2007, p.416). This recommendation acknowledges that the current system of regulation

is to all intents and purposes a 'dead letter'. However, the fact that the report was 'left on a shelf' in much the same way as previous enquiries illustrates the continued lack of genuine impetus from central government to effectively regulate child employment, and perpetuates the 'invisible' nature of the problem. Hobbs et al (2007) suggest that this inaction may also reflect central government's ideological commitment to a 'laissez faire' approach and subsequent opposition to 'meddle' in the affairs of employers. Given this lack of political interest it should perhaps be of little surprise that employer compliance rates are so low.

The lacklustre approach of central government is evident too in the low regard expressed by local authorities to child employment regulation. As we have seen, there is significant inconsistency between the byelaws of local authorities; a point acknowledged by local authority officials themselves (BRTF, 2004). However, though local byelaws may be inconsistent, there is consistency among local authorities in relation to their prioritisation of monitoring child employment; it is regarded as low priority. Local authorities, facing increasing pressure on their duties and dwindling resources, find little time to monitor the employment of children. White (2004) notes that few local authorities have designated child employment officers - there are only twenty five across England and Wales - and this consigns child employment investigations to the bottom of already excessive workloads of educational welfare officers. This results in a situation where, as has been demonstrated by Greenberg (2008) in the US, detection of illegal child employment and subsequent prosecution rates are very low. UNICEF (2005) figures for the UK show that there were only thirty eight prosecutions between 2000 and 2004.

Political inaction and failure to acknowledge the problem of child employment within central government, combined with a lack of resources and consistency at local government level, has created conditions where illegal employment of children can thrive. Under these conditions, employers fail to comply with child employment laws due to: "a lack of awareness of the requirement for a permit"; "the perception that it is a bureaucratic measure"; and perhaps most significantly "a low expectation that employers will be prosecuted" (BRTF, 2004, p.11-12). Clearly, then, employers, should they wish

to do so, have the opportunity to exploit the children they employ, but why should they wish to do so? The somewhat obvious answer is for financial gain. As we saw in the US, the relative cheapness and pliability of child employees is the key driver behind their employment; “Quite apart from the possibility that these younger workers may be exploited, they are a potentially cheaper alternative to adult labour” (Hobbs et al, 2007, p.420). Child employees, as they have historically, are afforded fewer rights than their adult counterparts; they are exempt from minimum wage legislation (until sixteen years old), as well as laws that stipulate requirements for holiday, sick pay, and unfair dismissal - herein lies their attraction to employers. Indeed, the importance of child employment to some employers can be seen in the action taken by the National Federation of Newsagents’ (NFRN) to thwart improved employment conditions for children. In representing approximately 30,000 businesses, the NFRN funded and proved successful in a campaign to overturn an employment tribunal ruling which determined children should be entitled to holiday pay (This is York, 2003). This thesis will show that the NFRN (previously the NFRNBS) has, on several occasions, played a significant role in shaping child employment regulation.

Having outlined the overall scale of and explanations for child employment in the UK, we now turn to discuss its impact upon children. As in the US, there is much evidence highlighting the physical dangers encountered by children through their employment - physical dangers to children historically are considered later in the thesis too. UNICEF (2005, p.38) has condemned the conditions under which thousands of UK school children are working, drawing comparison between the UK and developing countries: “what is certain...is that the child employment laws in this country are not adequate and that thousands of children are exposed to levels of risk which should not be acceptable, either here or in the developing world”. Mckechnie et al (2005) reported that 38 per cent of children had been injured from employment-related accidents; some seriously. These accidents included: injuries from using machinery; falling from scaffolding, ladders and moving vehicles; general motor accidents; and even physical assaults. Children employed in agriculture are particularly exposed to danger in the workplace. The Institute of Rural Health (2003) asserts that “Life on a working farm is not complete

pastoral serenity. Fatigue, time pressures and malfunctioning equipment combine with frequent inclement weather and dark nights to make farming a most dangerous occupation” (p.3). It is usually whilst driving tractors or operating agricultural machinery when children have been killed or seriously injured; as the UK’s Health and Safety Executive (HSE) point out, between 1998 and 2008 thirty-one children under the age of 16 were killed whilst working on farms and many more seriously injured, including amputations and burns (2008). Moreover, given the ‘invisible’ and illegal nature of the vast majority of child employment, reporting of accidents to children at work, by both the child and employer, are unlikely and as a result notoriously unreliable. As Ian Hart, of the National Network of Child Employment and Entertainment, states, “Very few accidents are ever reported to us, most go undetected” (cited in Douglas, 2009).

It should be remembered here that children are exposed to these dangers and yet are paid substantially less than their older colleagues. For instance, in agriculture, where uniquely there is a minimum wage for child employees - set by the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales -, children are entitled to only £2.91 per hour in comparison to the £6.40 per hour minimum for adult employees (Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales, 2009). So, though children are permitted to undertake the same range of tasks as adults in agricultural employment, they are not entitled to the same level of remuneration, or that even of the national minimum wage for 16 and 17 year olds; in this sense, employers are strongly motivated to employ children.

The impact of child employment upon educational experience and academic performance has long been debated. As we have seen in the US, the debate is not clear-cut and the same themes and points of contention are evident in UK discourse. In a survey of 2,500 school children in England and Wales, the TUC (2001) found that: 1 in 10 children admitted to truanting from school in order to undertake employment; despite laws preventing their employment before 7am and after 7pm, 45 per cent of children had worked after 8pm and 23 per cent before 6am; 30 per cent of the ten and eleven year olds who admitted to being employed had been so before 6am; 12 per cent of employed children worked seven days a week, leaving them little time for recreation or school

work; 29 per cent of employed children reported they sometimes or often felt too tired to do their homework. The TUC (2001) concluded that “working excessive hours is clearly having a damaging effect on the performance of children in school” (p.14).

Similar findings were reported by UNICEF (2005) who discovered that many children in the UK commenced employment from the age of eight. Moreover, it found that some children were employed for more than forty hours per week during school terms, whilst others started work as early as 3.30am. The research also investigated the views of teachers with regard to employment of pupils; their responses were reminiscent of those made by teachers in the nineteenth century to numerous Royal Commissions on education and child employment and suggest that employment posed a considerable risk to children’s education. Typical responses included:

“Some of the boys who do milk rounds or paper deliveries turn up shattered and not capable of [school] work. If they have morning jobs they often miss sleep or breakfast” (Wirral teacher).

“Those who work after school or all day on Saturday or Sunday do not have enough time to unwind and relax ... This can result in them having insufficient time to do their homework properly” (Lancashire teacher) (2005, p.43).

Further evidence of the deleterious impact of employment upon the academic performance of school children has been provided by Mckechnie and Hobbs (2001) who found that school children employed for over 10 hours per week were less likely to perform well academically. Similar findings were reported by McCoy and Smyth (2007) in their investigation of Irish school children. They concluded that children “who work while at school, particularly those who work long hours, pay a price in terms of their examination performance and likelihood of completing secondary education” (p.242). Moreover, McCoy and Smyth also reported that “students from more privileged higher professional) backgrounds have not been drawn into paid work in the same numbers as other groups while working-class students tend to work longer hours, thus potentially

exacerbating social class-based differentials in participation and achievement” (2007, p.243). Of particular significance in McCoy and Smyth’s data is that these patterns continue even when controlling for pupil attitude towards school; therefore, pupils employed for over 10 hours per week continued to exhibit poorer performance and increased likelihood of drop out regardless of their feelings (positive or negative) towards school. Clearly, these findings support those of US research that highlighted a correlation between increased employment hours, socio-economic status, negative academic performance and drop out (Mortimer, 2003; Warren and Citaldi, 2006).

In contrast to the research presented so far, Howieson et al (2006), in their national study of Scottish pupils, found little difference between social class background and school pupil propensity to undertake employment. However, many of their findings did support those discussed so far. For instance, they too reported that the majority of pupils had a part-time job (59 per cent) and the percentage of employed pupils rose with age from 48 per cent at age 13 (S3) to 83 per cent at age 16 (S6). Respondents’ main explanation for taking employment was to fund a desired social life and purchase various goods; only 6 per cent of the sample stated their primary reason to be to contribute to household budget. Interestingly, unlike Mortimer’s (2003) findings in the US, and McCoy and Smyth’s (2007) findings in Ireland, Howieson et al (2006) found no significant correlation between social class background and school children’s propensity to undertake employment or, indeed, longer hours of employment. Respondents who had not undertaken employment overwhelmingly stated that this was because they wanted to focus upon their educational performance. Similarly, a substantial number of those pupils who had previously been employed but were no longer claimed they terminated employment to concentrate on their school work. This demonstrates that from a pupil perspective there was considerable concern regarding the deleterious impact of employment upon academic performance; a concern substantiated by the findings of McCoy and Smyth (2007).

As we have seen, Howieson et al (2006) found that the percentage of pupils engaged in employment increased with age. They also reported that the hours of employment

increased with age too; from 7.32 hours per week for 13 year olds to 12.47 per week for 16 year olds. Though these averages are broadly within the safe allowance before detriment to academic performance becomes apparent - up to 10 hours per week as established by recent UK research (McKechnie and Hobbs, 2001; McCoy and Smyth, 2007) -, approximately one third of pupils were employed hours that exceeded this, with some pupils working in excess of 30 hours per week. Previous research (Mortimer, 2003; Warren and Citaldi, 2006; McCoy and Smyth, 2007) has demonstrated a correlation between increased employment hours and lower socio-economic status. However, Howieson et al (2006) found no such association but did report that type of employment was crucial in predicting which pupils are likely to work longer hours. For example, “pupils employed in farm work were likely to work 9.9 hours longer each week than someone employed in delivery work. Working in a fast food outlet compared with delivery work increased working hours by 8.4 hours per week; being employed in a hotel/B&B added 6.7 hours each week while supermarket work increased pupils’ likely working week by 6.4 hours” (Howieson, 2006, p.91).

Non-employed pupils in Howieson et al’s study, it has been shown, were very conscious of the deleterious impact of employment upon academic performance. However, this was also true for employed pupils; no significant difference was found between the views of non-employed and employed pupils in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of employment; pupils’ assessment of the advantages and disadvantages were ‘mixed’. The most important advantage of employment that pupils stated was jointly money and development of personal attributes. By far the most reported disadvantage was impact upon school (48 per cent of sample). It should also be noted here that only 47 per cent of respondents viewed their employment as being advantageous in a work experience capacity. This may be due to the low-skilled nature of employment typically undertaken by school pupils; over half of respondents in this study regarded their employment as lacking challenge. Moreover, half of the respondents in employment stated they had received no training for their job, for those who did receive training it was typically only one to two hours; this suggests that many school children jobs may be low-skilled. The evidence of employment as being unchallenging contradicts that of Mortimer (2003) and

adds support to studies, such as that of Greenberger and Steinburg (1986), which have highlighted the uninteresting and routinised tasks typically performed by child employees and subsequently question the applicability of skills acquired to the classroom. Similar doubts surround the employment of higher education students.

The views of teachers in relation to the employment of school children were also investigated in Howieson et al's study (2006). Some advantages, such as development of teamwork skills and independence, were reported by teachers, though the advantages were outweighed by concerns surrounding the low quality of pupils' employment and its detrimental effect on academic performance. Disadvantages of employment, according to teachers, included: poorer attendance, lower achievement, difficulty in balancing role of employee with role of pupil, increased lateness, tiredness in class, decreased standard of homework, and higher rates of truancy. One headteacher commented that:

“A lot of our youngsters are engaged in work too young where they don't even have work permits and they are away at all hours of the day doing milk rounds and whatever and that I don't think is a good thing. As a society we should be moving away from the drudgery of getting very young people to do work like that, that's a personal view. I think it's exploitative and I think that's wrong” (Howieson et al, 2006, p.105).

Howieson et al (2006) also found that some teachers regarded employment as being more suitable for less academic pupils than for more academically 'inclined' pupils. One teacher commented, “I think it's a really bad idea for academically motivated pupils to try and balance school with work, but I think it's an extremely important idea to employ it with pupils who are non-academic because the curriculum as it stands ...is just not right for these kids” (p.106). In contrast, some teachers expressed concern that it was the less academic pupils who tended to undertake more employment, “I'm concerned that very often it's not our most able group, the ones very focused on their work (schoolwork) tend to be the ones that don't over work because they want to go to university and [not] to jeopardise their chances” (Ibid). The stance that employment is appropriate for some

school children and not others is one fraught with danger as it implies that unless children have demonstrated a requisite level of academic ability by a particular age their potential to engage with higher academic levels at a later stage is unlikely. Such ideas have been widely dismissed and the development of academic prowess is seen as manifesting at different stages for individuals. However, the findings from Howieson et al (2006) and Mortimer (2003) suggest that such views are still evident within society today. One example of this can be seen in the growth of non-academic courses for secondary school pupils who are categorised as ‘disaffected’ and ‘disengaged’; great care needs to be taken so as not to restrict the education of these children as happened in secondary modern schools following the ‘failure’ of the eleven plus examination in post-Second World England. Moreover, there is a danger that, if, as much research has shown, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds do undertake more employment than their more affluent peers, they will be ‘expected’ and even encouraged to engage with employment more so than their more affluent fellow pupils; for working class children a position of ‘academic less eligibility’ may be the norm.

Though employers from a range of sectors offered numerous explanations when asked why they employed school children, Howieson et al (2006) found the most common responses to be that children were flexible in their employment hours and cheaper than adult employees. This was particularly the case for employers in paper delivery and the retail sector. “In one case the employer indicated that these [child] workers were cheaper than adults and as such it allowed him to *carry on his business*”, while another paper delivery employer stated that “no other workers would accept the pay levels offered” (Howieson et al, 2006, p.456). Some employers expressed the view that children’s flexibility meant they would accept employment for short shifts “that adults would not be interested in” (p.457). A number of employers maintained that they employed children as “it was good for them in terms of experience” (p.457). The researchers add an important caveat to the validity of their findings inasmuch as they acknowledge that employers may well be unlikely to acknowledge they employ children primarily due to their low cost. Additionally, in knowing the nature of the research being undertaken, it seems unlikely that employers who excessively employ children or offer very low levels

of pay would elect to take part in the study; therefore further questions surround the data gathered from employers. However, the findings do add support to previous research, both in the US and UK, that highlight the connection between employer motives for employing school children and their desire for a cheap and flexible workforce.

Concern expressed by teachers of the detrimental impact of employment upon school work, the notion that employment is appropriate for 'less able' children more so than more academic children, and employers' hiring of children being motivated by their desire for cheap and flexible employees are themes that have a long historical pedigree. Teachers have long presented such concerns to numerous royal commissions and education/child employment investigations (see for example the Children's Employment Commission, 1843; Education Commission, 1888; Royal Commission on Labour 1892). Discourse surrounding employment as being appropriate for less academic children has existed for centuries in the sense that working class children until the late nineteenth century had no legally required academic instruction and, historically, have been financially compelled to work to contribute to family income; up to this period, the notion that children's employment was necessary, and indeed beneficial, remained largely unquestioned. This discourse continued, however, into the twentieth century despite children being legally required to undertake primary and secondary education (Home Office, 1902a). As will be shown, both the British Medical Association (BMA) (1947) and the Crowther Report (Ministry of Education, 1959a) extolled the virtues of employment for those children attending secondary modern schools - overwhelmingly children of the working class - while cautioning against employment for those children in grammar schools - overwhelmingly middle class children - on the grounds of academic appropriateness. Finally, evidence that employers' motivation for employing children due to their cheapness and flexibility of labour can be seen in their historical attempts to impede the introduction of compulsory education (Education Commission 1861a, 1861b, 1861c) and frustrate later attempts to raise the school-leaving age and/or enhance child employment regulations; more often than not under the pretence that employment was beneficial to children's physical and educational well-being (see for example Education Commission 1887a, 1888; Home Office, 1902a, 1910a, 12/09/1945, 21/01/1952; BOE,

1909a; TUC, 1926). The aforementioned themes and issues are considered throughout this thesis, not only in relation to the conflict between child employment and education but also in connection with the more recent trend of undergraduate student employment.

This introduction has demonstrated that debates surrounding the compatibility of employment with education, though generally associated with times past, are in fact as relevant today as they ever were. We have seen that the majority of today's school children and undergraduate students, both in the UK and US, attempt to combine the dual roles of 'learner' and 'earner', often to the detriment of their academic performance/educational experience and even physical health. This situation is particularly acute for those pupils/students from poorer backgrounds who, much research has shown, are more likely to engage in employment and for longer periods than their more affluent peers. Despite the wealth of evidence highlighting the concerns expressed on this introductory chapter, policy-makers have expressed little genuine enthusiasm to address failings in the regulatory system of child employment, effectively giving employers 'carte blanche' to illegally employ and exploit children; similarly, there is little concern surrounding the employment of undergraduate students. Government inaction has been based upon a long-standing and uncritical view that employment is conducive to educational development, and shaped by an ideological predisposition to prioritise commercial interest over that of education.

## **Methodology**

### **Concepts Operationalised**

Throughout this thesis the term ‘child’ refers to someone who has not yet reached the minimum school-leaving age. Obviously, given the historical nature of this research and the duration of the period under investigation, it is important to remember that the age at which a child left school is not fixed. The term ‘employment’ refers to activities engaged by an individual for the purpose of financial remuneration, this includes employment which takes place within a familial setting.

### **Methodological Approach**

The thesis has been constructed using the methodological approach of documentary analysis. Scott (1990) provides us with a broad definition of a document:

“A document in its most general sense is a written text...Writing is the making of symbols representing words, and involves the use of a pen, pencil, printing machine or other tool for inscribing the message on paper, parchment or some other material medium...Similarly, the invention of magnetic and electronic means of storing and displaying text should encourage us to regard ‘files’ and ‘documents’ contained in computers and word processors as true documents. From this point of view, therefore, documents may be regarded as physically embodied texts, where the containment of the text is the primary purpose of the physical medium” (p. 12-13).

The analysis of documents in educational and social research has come to be seen as unpopular, unfashionable and even boring. As a result, there exist relatively few documentary-based studies in education and social research, and scant literature on the methodological approach as a whole (May, 1997; McCulloch, 2004; Prior, 2003). Explanation for this unpopularity lies in the rise of the social science disciplines from the

inter-war period and their associated approaches to social research. The study of contemporary society became central within social research and methods such as surveys and observations became the accepted mediums through which to facilitate this; documentary analysis came to be seen as better suited to the study of the past and not the present (McCulloch, 2004). Consequently, the study of documents became localised to historical research and an entrenched demarcation between social research and historical research, and study of the 'past' and the 'present', was established.

Notwithstanding its unpopularity in social and educational research, documentary analysis was selected as the method of choice for this thesis due to its inherent qualities and the historical nature of this work. Clearly, given the breadth of period covered in this work, the gathering of primary data from methods such as questionnaires or interviews was not possible. This left documentary analysis as the only viable methodological tool with which to carry out the research. However, though, perhaps, an unfashionable method, it should not be seen as an inferior method, as we shall see, there are many strengths to the method of documentary analysis, particularly in the production of research concerned with historical development of social policies.

One of the central aims of this thesis was to draw attention to historical continuities in the approach taken by the State and numerous interested parties to children's and, later, student's ability to access to education (at all levels) and, in particular, the barrier of employment to that end. This central aim justifies the use of documentary analysis in this thesis as it is the ideal research method to illustrate such continuities. Far from its inaccurately perceived limitation of being solely of use to the study of the past, documentary analysis has the ability to unearth the connection between past and present; documents are "a significant medium through which to understand the way in which our society has developed, and how it continues to develop" (McCulloch, 2004, p.5). Durkheim also highlights the importance of studying the past in order to understand the present; "after all, what is history if it is not an analysis of the present, since the constituent components of the present are only to be found in the past?" (1977, p.14).

In this thesis, the organic connection between past and present is made by chronologically charting the development of educational access, and the employment of children and students whilst in education, through critical analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Though the distinction between primary and secondary sources can be debated, here primary sources are distinguished as those materials created at the time being studied or written by those who actually witnessed the event (May, 1997). Such sources used in this thesis include: government documents, which include departmental/inter-departmental and committee reports and the associated minutes of evidence; surveys undertaken and correspondence by various interested organisations/individuals; Trades Union Congress (TUC) annual reports; contemporary newspaper and journal articles; and Hansard. Many of these primary sources could be classed, according to Marwick (1970), as the pinnacle of, or first level in, the hierarchy of primary sources as they were accessed through archival research at the National Archives in Kew. Marwick states:

“Behind this idea lies the more fundamental and perfectly reasonable one that the historian who has searched around, travelled far, written the necessary ingratiating letters to secure access to a rare document, has put in more man hours than the historian who has relied on printed documents obtainable in all the major libraries” (Marwick, 1970, p.133).

Secondary sources are identified as being works which are produced after the event being studied. These works are written by an author who did not witness the period or event in question, however, they may utilise primary sources originating from the period to inform their work. Marwick elaborates on this, arguing that:

“The secondary source is the coherent work of history, article, dissertation or book, in which the intelligent layman and the historian who is venturing upon a new research topic, or keeping in touch with new discoveries in his chosen field, or seeking to widen his general historical knowledge, will look for what they want” (1970, p.132).

As the name suggests, secondary sources are seen to be of lesser value in research terms than primary sources as the latter embody 'knowledge by acquaintance', and "it is therefore assumed that they are more likely to be an accurate representation of occurrences in terms of both the memory of the author (time) and their proximity to the event (space)" (May, 1997, p.161).

The vast majority of sources used in the production of this thesis fall into the primary source category, most of which could also be placed into Marwick's first level of primary source hierarchy; this clearly adds strength to the thesis. However, this is not to dismiss the role of the secondary sources presented here, as they assist in the crucial function of interpreting the data gleaned from primary sources. Throughout this work, secondary sources have been used to support the researcher's interpretation of primary source data, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of that interpretation. The secondary sources used in this thesis include non-contemporary books, journals, newspapers, and government reports.

The major criticism levelled at documentary research focuses on concerns of source bias and the argument that documents, particularly government documents, reflect only the views of officials, effectively excluding the opinions of the majority of society. McCulloch argues that:

"The bureaucratic records of the modern state were designed to illuminate the official and public outlooks of the social and political elite. They were essentially top-down in nature...They were less forthcoming on the effects of such deliberations on individuals and families, and were even less helpful for an understanding of social groups that were excluded or marginalised" (2004, p.22).

Given the significant use of such records in this thesis it is important to illustrate how this bias has been addressed. As already discussed, secondary sources can be used as a check to qualify interpretation of documents, but they can also serve to highlight discrepancies

or omissions in documentary evidence as identified by later authors. However, perhaps a more effective tool in identifying and compensating for bias is to understand documents in relation to their milieu through contextualisation. Documentary evidence can not be taken at 'face value', it should be regarded as a social and historical construct, and as such, needs to be placed within the wider social and political context. This is achieved throughout this thesis by making use of a wide range of primary sources which represent the viewpoints of individuals or groups who offer alternative viewpoints to those of government officials, e.g. TUC annual reports regularly contradicted government portrayal of the success of the education system.

One other factor which impacts upon document bias, and is linked to social and political context, is the consideration of the process of document production. Here, we refer to, for instance, the process of determining the remit of committees, and/or the decisions made to include or omit particular pieces of evidence in a report; "What people decide to record is itself informed by decisions which, in turn, relate to the social, political and economic environments of which they are a part...documents might be interesting for what they leave out, as well as what they contain" (May, 1997, p.164). Again, this thesis is not blind to such concerns and in response draws attention to such source bias. For instance, numerous Education Commission and Home Office surveys discussed in the thesis failed to accurately portray the conditions of education and child employment respectively by either manipulating the evidence submitted to them or omitting it completely.

In not relying upon these single sources, considering wider primary sources, and testing different documents against each other, this thesis adopts a form of triangulation from which a more accurate truth emerges. Tosh (2002) states:

"The procedure is rather to amass as many pieces of evidence as possible from a wide range of sources - preferably from *all* the sources that have a bearing on the problem at hand. In this way the inaccuracies and distortions of particular sources are more likely to be revealed, and the inferences drawn by the historian can be

corroborated. Each type of source possesses certain strengths and weaknesses; considered together, and compared one against the other, there is at least a chance that they will reveal the true facts - or something very close to them” (p.98).

This thesis has, to the best of the author’s ability, followed the approach as suggested by Tosh in amassing as many sources, both primary and secondary, as possible in an attempt to reveal true facts. The use of triangulation and the contextualisation of sources, in this manner, strengthen the methodological approach taken in the thesis.

Having considered the thesis’ general approach to documentary analysis, we now turn to discuss the theoretical framework through which the documents used have been interpreted. Jupp and Norris (1993) suggest three theoretical traditions within which documentary analysis may be located; these are positivist, interpretative and critical. McCulloch (2004) describes these as follows:

“The positivist approach emphasises the objective, rational, systematic and quantitative nature of the study. The interpretative outlook stresses the nature of social phenomena such as documents being socially constructed. The critical tradition is heavily theoretical and overtly political in nature, emphasising social conflict, power, control and ideology” (p.39).

Though three traditions are advanced, in reality they are far from distinct; “in practice they overlap and interact with each other” (McCulloch, 2004, p.40). All three can be clearly identified within the thesis. For instance: the large number and variety of documentary sources used within the research suggests a positivist approach; the thesis’ focus upon the manipulation of evidence by government committees/departments to distort the ‘truth’ highlights the socially constructed nature of these documents, and, therefore, reflects an interpretative position; while the critical tradition is highly visible throughout the thesis given the strong political nature of the work, the links made

between education/child employment legislation and wider political ideology, and the focus upon class analysis.

As we have seen, the methodological approach of documentary analysis has both strengths and weaknesses. The strategies used to minimise these weaknesses have been explained, and theoretical frameworks of the thesis have been considered. However, some analysis of the specific source types used in the thesis is necessary as each possess their own merits. The sources used in this thesis will be grouped into three categories: archived official documents, published reports/proceedings, books/newspapers/periodicals.

A small number of archived documents were accessed at Lancashire County Council Records Office in Preston, Lancashire, however, the vast majority of archived documents used in the thesis were accessed at the National Archives located in Kew, Surrey. The documents originate from the files of numerous government departments including the Home Office, Education, Cabinet and Health. These files contained: evidence, deputations and letters from various organisations; minutes of meetings; departmental memoranda, notes and survey results; and lastly inter-departmental correspondence. Such documents are a vital source of evidence on public issues as they reveal not only the relationship between State and outside organisations/individuals, but also because they expose the usually 'private' dynamics between civil servants, politicians and interested parties on a range of issues. For instance, this thesis emphatically highlights the tension and contrast of opinion between the Home Office and the Board of Education, and particular individuals within those departments, in relation to the issue of employment of schoolchildren. McCulloch (2004), in referring to analysing committee papers in particular, provides us with an accurate description of the value of such 'private' documents:

“They do reveal a great deal about the discussion of the issues and how the debate developed, and help to take the educational and social researcher behind the scenes to what are in many cases frank and open commentaries, as opposed to the

coded and often cautious public sources...Consulting the records of the committee will reveal the underlying assumptions and aims of the committee in a way that the final approved, careful text may not. It will also provide significant insights into contestation between different interests represented on the committee or in relation to government or community pressures” (p.53).

If archived State documents bare the ‘private’ soul of government workings, then the published reports and proceedings represent the ‘public’ face. This thesis incorporates published documents not only from the State, but also from organisations such as the TUC and Hansard for example. As we have already seen in relation to the reports/surveys presented by the Education Commission and Home Office the scope for bias in documentary information is omnipresent, and this applies too to those documents published by non-government organisations who may well focus upon, or omit, information which supports, or does not support, their own agenda. The same ‘sceptical eye’ has, throughout the thesis, been cast over the sources produced by non-governmental organisations referred to in this work, and they have been subjected to the same form of triangulation applied to governmental documents insomuch as the information presented has been compared with that of alternative sources.

Though subject to the general methodological weakness of all documentary analysis, namely bias, published reports do permit researchers to form a long-term ‘picture’ of the development of the issue under investigation. For instance, in tracing the character of government reports related to child employment over a period of almost two centuries, as this thesis has done, the issue has been placed within a long-term context and key developments charted. Moreover, by comparing child employment reports with those concerned with education and health, a richer, more representative and reliable interpretation of the issue is presented. When the relevant documents from non-governmental organisations are included the research findings are further qualified. This use of multiple documentary source triangulation should be considered as being a major methodological strength of this thesis.

Those published government committee reports which have attached the minutes of evidence presented by witnesses to the committee are a particularly valuable source of information. Many of the reports used in this thesis had volumes of oral and written evidence attached from a myriad of interested witnesses, and, though laborious in extracting pertinent detail, this proved to be of great use in extrapolating more complete findings.

Books, newspapers, and periodicals are sometimes regarded as the ‘poor relation’ in terms of their worth within documentary analysis. Tosh suggests that these sources “contain only what was considered to be fit for public consumption - what governments were prepared to reveal, what journalists could elicit from tight-lipped informants, what editors thought would gratify their readers, or MPs their constituents. In each case there is a controlling purpose which may limit, distort or falsify what is said” (2002, p.65). The use of these source types in this thesis is predominantly to supplement the information extracted from archived official sources and reports/proceedings, therefore Tosh’s concerns should provide minimal concern here. However, some sections of the thesis, particularly the later chapters, are more reliant upon these sources than others, thus some consideration is required. This bias, applicable to some extent in all the source types used in this thesis, has been addressed in the same way it was with the other source types i.e. through use of multiple source triangulation; as diverse a range of sources as possible has been used to minimise the bias effect.

Notwithstanding the potential for bias, books, newspapers and periodicals should be regarded as strong information sources in their own right. Indeed, Tosh (2002) argues the press is the most important public source of material as it “records the political and social views that are most influential at any particular time (and place, it might be added); it provides a day-to-day record of events; and it sometimes offers thorough enquiries into specific issues deemed to be of public concern” (p.63-4). In reflecting the ‘views of the day’, these sources aided in the interpretation of the traditionally more highly regarded archived official documents and reports/proceedings, and, ultimately, assisted in the overall contextualisation of thesis’ findings.

## Procedure

The vast majority of archived documents used in this thesis were located at the National Archives located at Kew, Surrey. As the official archive for the UK government the National Archives was the only available location where access to the relevant government files could be acquired; several visits were made to the archive between 2003 and 2006. Prior to visiting the National Archives a search of the archive's online catalogue was undertaken; search terms such as 'child employment', 'student funding' and many variations of these were used. Files of potential interest were noted and subsequently examined at the archive. However, though of great use, the general description of the documents given by the online catalogue was sometimes misleading and the catalogue is unlikely to have provided all the files pertinent to the research areas of interest. As McCulloch notes, "relevant documents can often be included in a file which is mainly on a different topic, and so a wide range of files need to be checked. Also, a file that seems from the catalogue description to be highly promising for your research may glean very little" (2004, p.46-7). This proved to be the case during visits to the National Archives, with some files offering a plentiful supply of relevant information, while others offered little, if any. In an attempt to capture as much useful information as possible, the files of numerous government departments outside of the obvious Education and Home Office departments were examined; these included the Treasury, the Cabinet Office, the University Grants Committee, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Health, and Pensions and National Insurance files.

The procedure followed when at the National Archives entailed: ordering a number of documents (restricted to six documents at any one time); await delivery of the documents (this could take up to one hour); appraise the usefulness of the information within the document by skim reading it; using a digital camera, photographs of relevant sections were taken (this allowed for as many documents as possible to be examined during brief visits as the information was saved to a memory card for later in-depth analysis); lastly, the documents were returned and the process was repeated on the next batch of

documents. Though many documents were accessed, one weakness with this approach which must be acknowledged is that, due to time constraints, accessing *all* the documents pertinent to this thesis would prove impossible, and, therefore, the documentary analysis will be, to some extent, incomplete.

Archival research was not limited solely to the National Archives; documents were also examined at the Lancashire County Council Records Office, located in Preston, and the Modern Records Centre (MRC), located at the University of Warwick. The procedures at these archives were much the same as those at the National Archive, though access to the National Union of Students (NUS) files at the Modern Records Centre required the consent of senior NUS officials. Access was granted after details of the nature of the research were forwarded to the NUS, though this took several weeks. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the files at the MRC were only superficially examined and little information of relevance was gleaned.

Non-archival sources were identified through a systematic literature search. This search was carried out over several years and focused upon the resources available at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). Prior to commencement of the literature search, there was a need to define, or operationalise, the concepts to be used as key search terms. For the purpose of this thesis the term ‘child employment’ refers to the paid employment of school-aged children either within the family context or outside of the family. The term ‘student funding’ refers to the financial support available to students undertaking an undergraduate course at a higher education institution. All other search terms, and, indeed, terminology used throughout the thesis are self-explanatory.

Initially, a library catalogue search of books related to educational history, child employment and student funding was undertaken. The literature search then moved on to journal articles; this included both physical and electronic sources. Physical journals, such as the Labour Party Records were searched through manually; this was a time-consuming exercise. The electronic journals were searched through a number of online databases available through UCLan e.g. Ebsco and Scopus. Numerous keyword search

terms, and variations thereof, relating to the thesis were used in order to amass a substantial repository of pertinent information. The retrieved articles were analysed and information extracted as required. Articles from numerous newspapers were acquired initially from searching microfiche catalogues at UCLan; again, keywords and variations thereof were utilised as search terms. Microfiche articles were identified, read and printed out. Some newspaper articles were acquired through the online database Lexis Nexus. The use of Lexis Nexus proved a far more effective and efficient means of accessing relevant articles than the microfiche strategy.

Reports and proceedings from numerous organisations were acquired through various online resources. Particularly useful was the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP) resource. This provided access to the government reports related to the development of the English compulsory education system, child employment and higher education. The central reports accessed from the HCPP included: 1861 Newcastle Commission, the 1888 Cross Commission, the 1895 Bryce Commission, the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children, the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, the 1910 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act, and the 1960 Anderson Committee. Given the crucial role these reports played in the development of government policy concerning education and child employment their examination was necessary. Moreover, the HCPP resource also contained the volumes of Minutes of Evidence attached to aforementioned reports. Accessing these proved invaluable as they describe the views of interested parties outside of government and, therefore, act as a form of triangulation by placing the debates into a wider social and political context. Although some of these reports have been examined previously by historians, no one study has been based upon a comprehensive examination of these particular reports collectively. Nor, it has to be said, have previous studies examined these with a view to assessing the central themes of this thesis; that is, the merits or otherwise of the education versus employment debate. The Minutes of Evidence of these reports, in particular, have provided a rich tapestry of previously unused evidence, which helps illuminate the arguments presented by advocates and critics of child labour and education alike.

The final online resource worthy of special note is the TUC History website. This resource provides electronic access to the records of a century of annual TUC meetings, 1868 to 1968. The TUC organisation is a significant force within the political and social context and has demonstrated a strong interest in the in both the central themes of this thesis, education and child employment; it was, therefore, an obvious source of information for this research. As demonstrated throughout the thesis, the TUC regularly contested government policy with regard to education and child employment, and this justifies the inclusion of their views in this research.

The geographical focus of the literature and documents used in this thesis is restricted to England. This was a considered decision, taken due to the historical complexities and variations, both at a national and local government level, between the education systems of the countries of the United Kingdom; a thorough discussion of the individual variations in education policy between all UK countries would have required a higher word count than was available. However, the thesis does necessarily draw upon evidence from other countries occasionally to highlight both similarity and contrast in approaches to education and child employment. There is some comparison made between the UK and United State of America in relation to child employment and the funding of undergraduate students due to the ideological similarities present between the two countries. Such comparison serves to illustrate the connection between political ideology and its bearing upon education and employment policies, and, indeed, social policies more widely.

### Thesis Aims and Structure

The overarching aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the historical continuities in the barriers which have prevented working class children and students from accessing educational options/experiences that have been available to their more affluent peers. This is achieved through analysis of documents, many of which have been previously unused to elicit the data presented here. The data is presented in a chronological format

and focuses on three areas from which barriers to education can be seen to originate, these are: the role of policy-makers and employers in limiting educational expansion and child employment regulations; inequity within structure of the education system; and poverty. Though three areas have been identified as sources of barriers to education, it is important *not* to consider these areas as distinct from each other as they are inherently connected. For example, throughout the nineteenth century and indeed parts of the twentieth century, children's earnings constituted a crucial component of family incomes, meaning that children simply *had* to work if family subsistence needs were to be met. At the same time, though, a parallel and pervasive 'ideological celebration' of children's employment led contemporaries - including employers, politicians and senior civil servants - to argue that working class children *should* work; they maintained that their employment in itself was an educational, morally invigorating experience that should *not* be inhibited, and indeed ought to be encouraged.

As chapter one shows, this ideological celebration of employment, together with contemporary concerns over the narrow 'functions' of schooling for working class children, inevitably led to far fewer educational resources being devoted to their education. In this sense, poverty, employer demand for child employees, and political apathy to extend educational opportunity, combined to form a barrier to education that initially prohibited many working class children from accessing even elementary education, with secondary and higher education proving to be out of reach to almost all. The analysis in this first chapter focuses partly on the findings of two major commissions - the Newcastle (1861) and Cross Commission (1888), both of which were charged with investigating and making recommendations for the elementary education. In relation to secondary education, the Bryce Commission (1895) is discussed. One major theme to emerge from the chapter is the extent of opposition amongst employers, many policy-makers and social commentators towards the extension of elementary education to the working class children.

As chapter two illustrates, the role policy-makers and employers played in limiting educational expansion and child employment regulations would not be confined to the

nineteenth century. This chapter shows how during the first decade of the twentieth century policy-makers failed to provide adequate educational opportunities for working class children. Access to post-elementary education remained severely limited, with poorer children effectively denied the opportunities provided to their more affluent peers. In the same way that elementary school fees had done so in the nineteenth century, secondary school fees and maintenance costs during this period prevented most children from the industrial classes from accessing post-elementary education.

After examining the structure of education in the nineteenth century, Chapter 2 also demonstrates the continued ‘ideological celebration’ of children’s employment amongst policy makers and employers. As will be shown, driven by an ideological opposition to labour market regulation, senior Home Office officials repeatedly refused to objectively engage with evidence presented to them that demonstrated the need to restrict child employment. As was the case in the nineteenth century, policy makers sought to ‘manage’ and manipulate evidence in a way which frustrated calls for tighter restrictions on child employment. Employers too continued to play a crucial and hitherto unacknowledged role in this scenario by extolling the virtues and economic necessity of child employment, particularly for children from working class backgrounds.

Chapter three analyses debates over the merits or otherwise of the half-time system of child employment, which continued to prevail in certain parts of the country until it was abolished under the 1918 Education Act. The campaign to abolish the half-time system that waged throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century provides us with an interesting case study. There was, of course, a broad crossover in debates about child employment generally and the half-time system, with similar arguments used by those favouring retention or abolition. However, there was one crucial difference, in that strong support for the half-time system could also be found amongst the trade unions and workers who were engaged in the industries affected by it. Hence, in theory, a more effective power-bloc of opposition to reform existed in the case of the half-time system compared to child employment generally. Despite this, the recommendations of the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption were very different from those made

by earlier departmental inquiries into child employment, and claims made by employers relating to the alleged financial, educational and health benefits of the half-time system were wholeheartedly rejected. The analysis examines the factors that contributed to this differential outcome, focusing in particular on ideological predispositions of the committee itself.

Chapter four focuses upon the role of policy-makers and employers in addressing concerns surrounding the general employment of school children and their education in the second decade of the twentieth century. As will be shown, child employment investigations and government inquiries - in particular the 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903 - continued to provide overwhelming evidence that highlighted the deleterious impact of child employment upon the education and health of children. However, as will be shown, officials, supported by employers, continued to embrace the conception of child employment which saw it as an educationally and economically beneficial activity. The chapter also analysis the extent to which the 'peculiar conditions' of war impacted upon the educational experiences of working class children, and, importantly, attitudes towards child employment. It was during this period that serious tensions between the Home Office's and Board of Education's approach towards child employment begin to emerge, and the chapter examines the importance and impact of these.

Chapter five maintains the thesis' established analysis of the role of policy-makers, employers, and the impact of the structure of the education system upon working class children's access to education during the inter-war period. It begins with a discussion of the educational aftermath of the increased child employment during the First World War and moves on to consider whether the educational reforms that were promised in the Act were fulfilled, both in terms of extending educational opportunity to working class children and the curtailment of their employment. Given the impetus that had gathered to compensate children for the 'educational' sacrifices made between 1914 and 1918, there are strong grounds for supposing that education and child employment policy would be driven by a more 'progressive' agenda. Ultimately, as will be shown, the optimism

surrounding the extension of educational opportunity and curtailment of the employment working class children in the years following the end of the First World War was not fulfilled. The analysis in this chapter examines the how and why this proved to be the case, once again focussing on the ‘tripartite’ themes of educational inadequacies, employer influence on policy, and poverty.

The Second World War, like the First World War, placed the spotlight on questions relating to educational opportunity. The widespread utilisation of child employment also led to a re-ignition of debates about the merits or otherwise of child employment regulation. As will be shown in chapter six, the Home Office, despite opposition from the BOE, complied with calls from employers and other government departments for a relaxation of child employment regulations during the war. The consequent widespread concern that developed over the impact of this afforded an opportunity to banish child employment and extend educational opportunity. The passage of the 1944 Education was the vehicle through which attempts were made to achieve both these aims. Much of the analysis in this chapter is devoted to analysing the how the Home Office responded to and managed these pressures. The discussion then moves on to look at the ‘settlement’ that emerged after 1945, examining the extent to which the demands made by educational reformers and child employment campaigners were realised. The changing structure of child employment in the 1950s and the 1960s is also considered, with particular attention given to the emergence of a non-problematic conception of child employment.

Hitherto the thesis has focused primarily upon barriers to elementary and secondary education, and the interaction between educational opportunities, poverty and employment. Chapter seven takes the next logical step and extends the analysis of these themes to the ‘next rung’ on the ‘educational ladder’, higher education. After discussing the barriers facing working class access to HE during the inter-war period the chapter moves on to consider the impact of the Second World War upon HE provision. Here, it is shown again that, as it did for secondary education, the war acted as a catalyst to stimulate some extension of educational opportunity in HE. However, to what extent did all sections of society benefit from this expansion, and were opportunities to access HE

shared equally? Hence, as in earlier chapters in the thesis, the analysis will examine the extent to which funding mechanisms enhanced or inhibited working class access to educational opportunities. It also draws attention to contemporary debates about the utility or otherwise of undergraduate employment - that is, the vacation employment of undergraduate students. Here, we will see that there were remarkable continuities in debates about its potential impact, but the debate was characterised by a much stronger degree of scepticism over the potential 'utility', or 'beneficial' nature of employment.

Finally, chapter eight extends the analysis developed in chapter seven, analysing in greater detail the extent to which the structure of HE funding has contributed to greater access to HE opportunities. It begins by discussing the crucially important and much neglected (in academic literature) Anderson Committee, the recommendations of which were responsible for the structure of student funding from the early 1960s until the 1980s. Of particular interest was the committee's discussion of vacation grants and the combination of full time HE with vacation employment, discussion focuses upon its recommendations regarding the merits or otherwise of students combining their undergraduate studies with paid work. The analysis then moves on to chart the wider ideological shifts that influenced educational policy from the 1980s onwards, assessing the impact these had on both HE funding and debates over the 'utility' of undergraduate employment. Here, we outline a 'sea change' in government attitudes, to both funding and the principle of undergraduate employment, one which was characterised by a good degree of political consensus. This ideological shift continues to shape attitudes towards the combination of employment and undergraduate study to this day. Earlier chapters analysed the interaction between poverty, children's education and employment, and their impact upon educational opportunity. Here, we do the same in relation to HE, providing a critical evaluation of literature relating to the employment of undergraduate students.

Overall, the analysis aims to demonstrate the historical continuities in the barriers which have prevented working class children and students from accessing educational options or maximising educational experiences that have been available to those for whom financial considerations have proven less impeding. Just as they did in the nineteenth and

twentieth century, poverty and low income, a structure of education that fails to provide genuine opportunities, and a continuing propensity for working class children and students to work alongside their studies, continue today to inhibit educational potential and limit opportunity.

## CHAPTER 1

### BARRIERS TO EDUCATION – THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the development of education throughout the nineteenth century, focusing particularly upon the barriers facing working class children in accessing elementary education and, later, secondary education. Brief consideration is given to higher education (HE) towards the end of the chapter, though, given the obstacles poorer children had to contend with to access even elementary education during this period, higher education was effectively unfeasible and so does not warrant sizeable discussion here. The findings of the two major government appointed commissions - the Newcastle (1861) and Cross Commission (1888) - charged with investigating and making recommendations for the elementary education system are considered. In relation to secondary education, the Bryce Commission (1895) is discussed. The chapter also considers the findings of commissions established to investigate employment, and the employment of children in particular. These employment commissions are discussed in the context of education as, it will be demonstrated, the employment of children proved to be one of the most significant barriers to accessing and fully profiting from education for working class children. Numerous other pieces of legislation and evidence from various interested organisations such as the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Social Democratic Federation (SDF) are also discussed.

One major theme to emerge from the chapter is the visceral hostility toward the compulsory extension of elementary education to the working class expressed by employers, many policy-makers and social commentators. These groups' hostility stemmed from numerous concerns. Employers' primary concern was the loss of child employees from their workforce to the school; many employers claimed that they needed employees from a young age in order for the children to acquire skills required to function effectively in the workplace. Indeed, employers regarded the 'industrial

education' they offered to be of more benefit to working class children than the education received by them in schools. Some employers were, perhaps, a little more honest in expressing their concerns and emphasised the increased costs of having to employ older employees if younger children were legally compelled to attend school; a problem that would increase for employers if school-leaving age was increased too. Moreover, an increasingly educated workforce represented a frightening prospect for employers who had become accustomed to docile, pliable and flexible employees.

Like employers, some policy-makers were concerned by the possible removal of young children from employment into the classroom and the impact this would have upon commerce. However, political concerns were also aroused by the ideological threat to classical liberal laissez-faire values that increased State involvement in education could bring. The commissions set up to investigate and shape education during this period were, it will be shown, used as vehicles to minimise this ideological threat and retard educational advancement for the working class. This was achieved by careful selection of witnesses invited to give evidence to the commissions, combined with manipulation and skilful use of the evidence they provided, in order to produce final reports which *prima facie* suggested State involvement in extending educational opportunities was not needed and any inequality in accessing education was the result of parental fecklessness; therefore the commission reports conformed to classical laissez-faire values. The failure of policy-makers and their subsequent inaction to address the woeful and inequitable conditions of working class education created a system characterised by regional variation and one which served to maintain traditional class positions.

In addition to the aforementioned barriers to education, this chapter will also highlight the crucial role that poverty played in limiting the education of the poorest. The inability of parents to afford school fees and forgo their children's earning potential were significant factors in the impediment of accessing education for many children. Therefore, poverty, employer demand for child employees, and political apathy to extend educational opportunity, conspired together to form a barrier to education that initially prohibited

many working class children from accessing even elementary education, with secondary and higher education proving to be effectively unfeasible.

### Development of Education and the 1870 Education Act

Until 1833 delivery of education in Great Britain was inextricably linked with the Church. 1833 is a key year in this respect as it represents the first occasion where public monies are allocated to the system of education. Although a public grant, the Church was involved as this money (£20,000) was to be distributed by various religious societies. Carpentier (2003) suggests that, in terms of public expenditure, prior to the 1830s formal education was very much secondary in consideration to the supply of materials and machinery needed to fuel the first industrial revolution (1790-1820); the value of wider public education, either culturally or economically, was not yet widely recognised, hence public expenditure on education was estimated at 0.01% of GDP. Not only was mass education not valued, it was actively perceived by some as being of danger to national stability. One such proponent of this view was Davies Giddy MP whom, upon the introduction of a Parliamentary bill intent on extending educational opportunity to working class children in 1807, stated:

“[Giving] education to the labouring classes of the poor...would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank in society destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity” (cited in Dyson and Lovelock, 1975, p.45).

As will be discussed later, similar arguments pertaining to the restricting of education for the working classes as being in their ‘best interest’ would be forwarded over half a century later in the 1861 Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State

of Popular Education in England; indeed, the argument still exists to some extent in the twenty-first century.

Though not yet at the fore of government concern, despite the views of those such as Giddy, the campaign to expand educational provision for the 'masses' was becoming more prominent at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The work of philanthropists such as Robert Owen and Joseph Lancaster was gaining credence, but it is important to acknowledge that at this early point the education system lay outside the realm of government, depending as it did upon religious provision to a generally low academic standard.

However, as the 1800s progressed so too did the level of public expenditure and government involvement in the education system. It is important to briefly examine the explanations for this development of education. Ellis (1925) places priority upon the expansion of humanitarianism, the extension of the franchise to an increasing body of the nation, and a developing appreciation of the cultural value of education. Though these concerns undoubtedly played some role in the development of education during this period, many have argued that the major stimulus was the deleterious effect upon the national economy of a poorly educated workforce; it is no coincidence that the first example of public money being spent on education occurred at the same time as the national economy began showing signs of slowing down. As Carpentier notes, the period 1830-50 "which saw a slowdown in the dynamic of the first industrial revolution, also witnessed a series of public initiatives in education" (2003, p.9). This appears to be the initial acknowledgement on the part of the state of some relationship between education and national economy. The notion that public expenditure upon education may be translated into national efficiency benefits appears to have continued throughout the 1800s and is reflected in the sixfold increase in spending between 1830-50.

Outside of the sphere of religious provision, public expenditure and state involvement lay in the private education of grammar and public schools. Traditionally, the purpose of the 'great' public schools was to provide free education to those poor scholars who displayed

exceptional merit (it should be noted here that the term 'poor scholars' refers not to the poorest children of the nation, for whom any form of education was unrealistic, but to those children from a 'relatively' poor background). "Eton, apart from twenty pupils of noble birth, was a free grammar school to all who came" (Lindsay, 1926, p.189). The historical foundations of Oxford and Cambridge were much the same. The poor student "appears indeed to have enjoyed, where capacity was proved, something like a preferential treatment" (Ellis, 1925, p.ix). However, by the nineteenth century the demography of the grammar, public schools and universities in particular had to all intents and purposes removed the poor pupil from the scene. There had been a gradual process of transference of endowments from the relatively poor to the relatively wealthy. As Vernon writes, although Oxbridge endowments were originally intended for the poor, "by the end of the nineteenth century most scholarships had been appropriated by public schoolboys" (2008, p.241). The result of this was that university education was out of reach for the vast majority.

The period 1830-70 realised an increasing role and interest in education on the part of the state. Public grants continued to increase in number and value, and between 1850-70 there were five Royal Commissions established to consider the gamut of the education system. Lindsay (1926) argues that the demands of a growing population and subsequent increases in public expenditure compelled the state to enact more comprehensive legislation. Thus, it can be seen that, from the first use of public money in 1833 for education purposes, there was a steady (though by no means total) movement towards increased acceptance on the part of the state to play a more substantive role in the provision of education.

A more substantive role was needed given that approximately half the children of elementary school age were not in attendance of school at all. Figures show that of 4.3 million school-aged children in 1870 1.3 million were receiving education in religious schools (funded in roughly equal parts by fees, government grants and voluntary donations), 1 million were educated in private schools, and the remaining 2 million or so were not in school whatsoever (Lindsay, 1926).

The 1870 Education Act signalled the State's acknowledgement of, and commitment to, all children receiving, at least, education to an elementary standard. "The decision had at long last been taken that the children should be schooled" (Simon, 1991, p.24). As suggested earlier, this extension of state intervention into education was motivated less by benevolent paternalism and more by concerns pertaining to national efficiency. For example, average economic growth in Britain slowed from 3.6% in the 1860s to 1.6% by the 1880s, a figure which was considerably lower than its industrial competitors (Hall, 1984), and there was a general feeling that the expansion of education could help restore competitiveness. Evidence of this is found in the rationale given by W.E. Forster for the introduction of his Education Bill to Parliament. He clearly recognised a correlation between education and national economic growth stating that upon:

"The speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity. It is of no use trying to give technical teaching to our artizans without elementary education; uneducated labourers – and many of our labourers are utterly uneducated – are, for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our workfolk any longer unskilled, not withstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become overmatched in the competition of the world" (Hansard, 17/02/1870, c. 456).

This acceptance of the value of education to the national economy is re-affirmed by continued and increased public expenditure on education; despite the economic depression of the time, public spending on education between 1870-1897 increased approximately twentyfold or from 0.1% of GDP to 1.2% of GDP (Carpentier, 2003, p.10). Mitch too supports the notion of education being crucial to national economic concerns. He posits that the general skill level needed for economic growth in the early 1800s was not sufficient for the later 1800s. "Although a worker did not have to be literate to run a spinning mule in a cotton factory during the early nineteenth century he did in order to run a railroad locomotive or deliver a letter in the last half of the century"

(Mitch cited in Sanderson, 1999, p.7). This, then, may contribute to the explanation of the State's acceptance of the need for compulsory elementary education.

In addition to the goal of reversing economic decline, the 1870 Education Act was also stimulated as result of the 1867 Reform Act which significantly extended the franchise to a wider group of the population, including some of the lesser educated lower classes. Forster acknowledged this too in his introduction of the bill remarking that:

“Upon this speedy provision depends also, I fully believe, the good, the safe working of our constitutional system. To its honour, Parliament has lately decided that England shall in the future be governed by popular government. I am one of those who would not wait until the people were educated before I would trust them with political power. If we had thus waited we might have waited long for education; but now that we have given them political power we must not wait any longer to give them education” (Hansard, 17/02/1870, c. 456).

Also prominent, in the context of extension of the franchise and the development of new unionism and socialist organisations, were concerns about the need to maintain social control and discipline. As James Kay Shuttleworth agreed, “a general system of public education” could be used to help rear “a loyal, intelligent and Christian population...the alternative was a destructive revolution of monstrous proportions” (cited in Simon, 1965, p.354-5). To allay these concerns and fulfil its commitment to compulsory education the Act was designed with the purpose of ‘filling the gaps’ in the existing elementary system. Gaps were to be filled with the creation of school boards which would oversee the expansion of elementary education:

“The creation of school boards heralded a significant transformation in the role of the state in education. In 1868 the public contribution to the income of state-aided schools was 33%, rising to 60% in 1887 and 90% in 1902. The new board schools were financed by central grants and local rates” (Carpentier, 2003, p.10).

The significant transformation in the role of the State, as described in the above quote, is clearly evident in the increased public expenditure devoted to education. However, this did not mean that the state was the sole provider of elementary education post-1870. Religious schools continued to provide a substantial proportion of elementary education, though they now were joined by local authority providers. Both types of school were funded by the state and charged fees, but religious schools received additional funds from voluntary contributions, whilst local authority schools were in receipt of additional monies from education charges on local rates. Outside of the state-aided elementary system there continued to exist a significant amount of private provision.

In the decade following the 1870 Act the compulsory attendance of children was gradually implemented. Various supplementary Education Acts led to the condition where by 1880 all children under the age of 10 had to attend school and for children aged 10-13 there was a 'half-time' qualification available. It is a popular misconception that the 1891 Free Education Act abolished all fees in elementary schools; it merely empowered school boards to allow free admission to children without reference to their family pecuniary condition. "Meanwhile, fees, if somewhat reduced, continued to be levied in many public elementary and voluntary schools; in 1894 there were still 800,000 fee-paying scholars in elementary schools" (Simon, 1965, p.131).

Though, superficially at least, it would appear that the State had embraced universal elementary education with the passing of the 1870 Education Act, this was far from reality. There still existed many social, economic, and political barriers to accessing elementary education for the working classes. These barriers are highlighted in the following discussion of two key education Commissions; the 1861 Newcastle Commission and the 1888 Cross Commission.

### The 1861 Newcastle Commission

It is worth noting here that the primary interests of the 1861 Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State of Popular Education in England - commonly referred to as the Newcastle Commission - and the 1888 Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Elementary Education Acts in England and Wales - commonly referred to as the Cross Commission - were educational matters and for this reason are often overlooked in historiographies considering issues of child employment. This thesis addresses this anomaly by emphasising the relationship between child employment and educational opportunities, hitherto missing in academic debate, through analysis of the evidence submitted to the Commissions.

Despite the apparently progressive nature of the 1870 Act in extending elementary to all children, it is important to note that the expansion of elementary education was not embraced by all sections of the nation. The Newcastle Commission concluded that compulsory education was neither 'desirable' nor 'attainable'. There was also hostility towards the compulsory extension of education to all children from some parts of commerce, parents and politicians. The concerns from the commercial standpoint surrounded the loss of the child as a source of labour, as evidenced by submissions to the Newcastle Commission. In reporting upon several areas in Wales, one of the report's assistant commissioners, Mr Jenkins, made it clear that commercial interests there were opposed to further educational development. Jenkins states, "it is objected that where the demand for labour is so great, and competition so strong, there will always be a danger that any enactment which interferes with the general labour market will operate injuriously on commercial interests by becoming a tax on the cost of production" (Education Commission, Vol. II, 1861, p.478). Education then, even elementary education, was perceived by some employers to be a detriment rather than an advantage to economic employment performance. Indeed, only two of the fifteen assistant commissioners, Mr Foster and the future secretary of the Education Department, Mr Cumin, both of whom investigated areas dominated by collieries (in the north-east and Bristol areas respectively) recommended the adoption of compulsory education to the Newcastle Commission based upon evidence collected in their areas.

Evidence submitted to the Newcastle Commission also highlighted that, with few exceptions, employers attached little, if any, value to an educated workforce. Mr Winder, assistant commissioner for Rochdale and Bradford, stated that “man for man, the uneducated seem as valuable as the educated in a commercial sense; at any rate they earn as much money, and are engaged quite as readily, and without any questions asked” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.204). Given the costs attached to attaining education at this time it is quite logical, therefore, that children and their parents would wish to withdraw from school as early as possible. Indeed, there was evidence not just of employer apathy towards educated workers but also of active dislike. In his report, assistant commissioner Mr Hedley found that:

“If the question were put to the farmers, whether the labourers are in their opinion any the better for education, the answer would generally be in the negative. Farmers do not find the labourer any the more valuable for being able to read, write, &c.; on the contrary, if they express any preference, it is that they would rather have domestic servants *unable* to read and write. They attribute the restless character which distinguishes the servants and labourers of the present day to education, and this is a feeling with regard to domestic servants widely shared in by persons of other classes” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.165).

These comments illustrate the extent to which education was still seen by many employers as a ‘threat’ rather than an opportunity. They feared its potential to inculcate ‘insubordinate’, ‘seditious’ thoughts, and the encouragement of a ‘questioning’ attitude which would ultimately make employees less amenable. As the earlier quote by Davies Giddy illustrates, views such as these were neither uncommon nor new, and represented the continuous desire to maintain firm class distinctions. An educated labouring class was, it was thought, ‘dangerous’ and ‘undesirable’ to manufacturers, and indeed to labourers themselves. Additional evidence of this attitude can be found in the testimony submitted to the assistant commissioner Josiah Wilkinson. A teacher referred to as Mr N. P. had apparently told him that that:

“A lad who has been at school till he is twelve or fourteen is not the same creature he was at eight or ten; probably not so docile, homely, or useful; would not do for the same wages, or be kept on the same food...Urging children to remain long at school has been pushed too far for their interest, and that of the working classes generally” (Education Commission, 1861b, p. 455).

Similarity between the views of Giddy and the evidence given to the Newcastle Commission over fifty years later are clear; educating the working classes may render them disgruntled with their position in society and ultimately increase their desire and capability to change this. There can be little doubt that members of the Commission were sympathetic to this view. For instance, just one year prior to being appointed to the Commission, John Taylor Coleridge, delivered a lecture entitled Public School Education at the Athenaeum, Tiverton, in which he warned of the dangers associated with educating the ‘lower orders’. Whilst accepting that it would be “presumptuous to pronounce it as an evil”, and insisting that he had “no fear of the lower orders as such”, he was quite clear that any their educational opportunities had to be limited, and at the same time accompanied by vast improvements in the education of their ‘betters’. Utilising Darwinian language, he argued that whilst the “underwood in the forest is making vigorous shoots...the most vigorous and skilful swimmers in the race ... must not stand still, lest happily we should be overgrown and stifled”. “There is a danger”, Coleridge warned, “if the farmer be more ignorant of his labourer, or the master unequal to the mechanic who toils in his workshop”. Education of the lower orders, he insisted, should be limited towards ensuring workers utilise their growing powers “to the improvement of society, not to its uprooting”. It should be designed to make them “fit to exercise the privileges and functions which will be cast on them”. At the same time, the “middle and higher classes” (where he clearly placed himself), “must be diligent in our own education ... in order to preserve our just place and proportions (Coleridge, 1860, p. 9-11).

Evidence given by Herbert S. Skeats, an author, statistician, and prominent member of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage, in written response to a circular distributed by the Newcastle Commission, continues the theme of maintenance of

social class distinctions. In response to a question concerning the appropriate amount of education that should be popularly received, he wrote:

“I think it neither necessary nor desirable that, as a rule, children should remain at school for the whole day, for a longer period than the particular circumstances of their station in life would legitimately warrant”.

He continued, “it seems to me that it would be highly dangerous and inexpedient to make any provision for such an education as would be likely to interfere with the social relations of the class to which the child may belong” (Education Commission, 1861c, p.368).

Skeats too, then, as with the previous evidence, was not in favour of extending education for those whose ‘natural’ position it was to labour. However, Skeats was not only concerned with the social unrest that education would bring, but also the impact upon the labour dynamic:

“The age at which children now leave school is mainly regulated by the supply and demand for labour. If you do anything to increase this age, either by artificial stimulus or legal restriction, you in effect put a bounty upon education at the expense of labour, and thus violate one of the soundest and most generally recognised maxims of political economy” (Education Commission, 1861c, p.368).

The Newcastle Commission report fails to overtly recognise the inherent competing interests of commerce and the extension of educational opportunity. Instead, the report ‘directs’ and ‘manages’ the debate to focus upon the benefits of child labour to the working classes themselves whilst paying scant attention to the benefits reaped by employers. One such example of this, frequently illustrated in the reports of the assistant commissioners, was the employer axiom that if a child was not employed by a certain age they would be unable to develop the requisite skills to become an effective worker. In

considering the possibility of a compulsory period of education assistant commissioner Rev. James Fraser stated:

“It was well pointed out to me by the Hon. And Rev. W. Scott, of Maiden Newton (where there is an excellent though over-crowded school) that it is a question whether it would be even *desirable* to do so; whether you might not be doing an irreparable injury to the after-life prospects of the agricultural boy, by keeping him at school too long” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.46).

In discussing the necessary skills for the agricultural boy Fraser continued:

“Now this kind of skill can only be picked up at an early age, when the imitative faculties are strong; and I have again and again heard old labourers accounting for the bungling work made by some novice in the craft, by saying, ‘Ah, he never turned his hand to it till he got too old’. So that even if it were possible, I doubt whether it would be desirable, with a view to the real interests of the peasant boy, to keep him at school” (Ibid).

The attitude that non-compulsory education was in the best interests of both poor children and their families permeates the Newcastle Commission report thereby ‘masking’ the genuine ideological justification beneath a disguised paternal benevolence.

While there is little doubt that given the widespread poverty levels of the working classes of the day, few of them were able to forego potential earnings of their children, the report exhorted a pre-determined case for the subordination of educational interests to those of short-term commercial interests built upon cheap child employment. As has been shown, the report achieved this by ‘glossing over’ the issue of commercial gains in continued child employment, and by non-acknowledgement of interested parties concerned with the maintenance of class relations.

Further criticism of the Newcastle Commission report can be levied against its lack of engagement with issues surrounding the employment conditions of children. The section of the report which addresses child employment, entitled ‘The State of Juvenile Labour as Affecting Attendance at School’, discusses issues of mode of employment (continuous or intermittent), types of employment, advantages of child employment to the local area and family, inspection of employers, and demand for child employment. A picture of moderate contentment is painted in relation to these issues. However, at no point does the report tackle the issue of the physical conditions under which children laboured and subsequent impact upon their education and physical health. This is of concern given the dreadful working environment of children reported by the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission and evidence presented to the 1892 Royal Commission on Labour. The 1843 Children’s Employment Commission found that children as young as three years old were employed, though, in general, regular employment commenced at seven years. It concluded:

“In the great majority of instances the places of work are very defective in drainage, ventilation, and the due regulation of temperature, while little or no attention is paid to cleanliness ... That in all the districts the privies are very commonly in a disgusting state of filth, and in great numbers of instances there is no separate accommodation for the males and females ... There is really little or no interruption to the labour, and the food is taken very irregularly ... That in the cases in which the children are the servants of the workmen, and under their sole control, the master apparently knowing nothing about their treatment, and certainly taking no charge of it, they are almost always roughly, very often harshly, and sometimes cruelly used; and in the districts around Wolverhampton, in particular, the treatment of them is oppressive and brutal to the last degree ... From the early ages at which the great majority commence work, from their long hours of work, and from the insufficiency of their food and clothing, their ‘bodily health’ is seriously and generally injured; they are for the most part stunted in growth, their aspect being pale, delicate and sickly, and they present altogether

the appearance of a race which has suffered general physical deterioration” (Children’s Employment Commission, 1843, p.196-199).

The 1843 Commission clearly illustrates the appalling arena of child employment conditions; this may explain the Newcastle Commission’s failure to address this issue in its report as it graphically contradicts the superficial notion that child employment was in the best interest of the child. In its defence, the Newcastle Commission did state that a full investigation of child employment would fall outside its remit. However, this is a weak defence given that the issue of working conditions is at least as likely to impact upon education as those other issues linked to child employment that were investigated (as listed above). Indeed, an example of this impact was highlighted in the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission when it asserted that “in regard, particularly to the children and young persons employed in the mines of coal and iron, the fatigue produced by their labour is in general so great, that they cannot, with any advantage, attend school after the work day is over” (Children’s Employment Commission, 1843, p.202).

This issue of the deleterious impact of employment upon academic performance continued to be problematic as similar evidence was presented some half a decade later by the Half-Time Council of Teachers to the 1892 Royal Commission on Labour. In response to the Commission’s query surrounding the ‘accepted’ wisdom that the half-time system promoted a child’s intelligence and receptiveness to education, Mr R. Waddington, a public elementary school teacher and representative of the Half-Time Council of Teachers, replied “it is absurd” and “contrary to the experience of the whole of the teachers in the half-time districts”. He continued, that after a long morning of labour a half-time child was “fatigued and drowsy in the afternoon” (Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, p.145). Clearly, then, the idea of education and employment being mutually compatible is highly problematic and one which the Newcastle Commission must have been surreptitiously aware of. The view that education and employment can be beneficially combined, therefore, is not a recent phenomenon; it is one which became increasingly important and remains so, particularly in relation to school children in the

early twentieth century, as well as students in higher education in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. These will be discussed in some detail later.

The above evidence reflects the reality that for employers and commerce the best interests of the child were secondary to short-term profit maximisation. Sanderson (1999) supports this claim asserting that the general attitude towards education in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century was one which had changed little since the start of industrialisation. He argues that, historically, commerce thrived on a poorly educated workforce and states:

“There was a preference for practical learning on the job, starting in early adolescence if not before, and it served the country well at that time. It was not surprising that such attitudes - that education had not mattered much for industrialisation in the past and probably did not in the present - lasted well into the nineteenth century. Middle-aged businessmen in the 1880s would have been brought up with the outlook of the 1830s, 40s, and 50s” (p.16).

For Sanderson, then, the dependence upon child employment and the restriction of education was the legacy of previous generations of commercially interested groups from a time when Britain was economically dominant. In not recommending compulsory education, the Newcastle Commission can be seen to be supporting this legacy and the associated impact this had upon children, their employment, and indeed the economy whose needs were changing.

In written response to the circular questions of the Newcastle Commission report, T. W. Allies, Secretary of the Catholic Poor School Committee, provides a fitting description of the relationship between commerce and child. He wrote:

“There is no monster, I believe, so utterly savage and inhuman as the modern industrialism which has sprung up in our manufacturing and mining districts. It

cares neither for soul nor body, and will listen to nothing but the most material self-interest” (Education Commission, 1861c, p.28).

Allies’ evidence to the Newcastle Commission was one of the few examples that highlighted the physical and educational cost to children of continued exploitation of their employment. Such evidence clearly supported the findings of the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission and the later 1892 Royal Commission on Labour; placing it at odds with the ethos of the Newcastle Commission and perhaps explaining its omission from the main report.

The conscious non-engagement with areas of crucial importance by the Newcastle Commission can be further explained in analysis of its methodological approach taken to data collection. In amassing their evidence, the assistant commissioners rarely sought input from members of the working classes. Indeed, in the ‘Instructions to Assistant Commissioners’ section of the report, assistant commissioners were ordered to gather answers “by detailed enquiry amongst persons of intelligence of either sex conversant with the locality” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.10). Hurt (1979) develops this point stating:

“The opinions of the working classes reached the commissioners through the filtration of *intelligent*, that is knowledgeable, local middle-class mouthpieces whose evidence received the embellishment of a further gloss from the assistant commissioners” (p.38).

The consequence of this is a report representing the subjective views not of those whom the recommendations would primarily impact upon, but of those who were regarded as their superiors. Plainly, this undermines the validity of the Newcastle Commission report and helps to explain the case for regarding it as tool for maintenance of the status quo.

Additional criticism of the method used by the Newcastle Commission in producing their report can be seen in the sample of areas studied. Though the commissioners were

Careful to select areas of different character (two metropolitan, two agricultural, two manufacturing, two mining, and two maritime), they ignored many major areas with dense expanding populations such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, and Sheffield. Within these areas there was significant poverty, both pecuniary and educational, which the Newcastle Commission did not investigate and thus the national picture of the state of popular education was unclear. Hurt (1979) makes a similar point in describing the Commission's study of London districts; acknowledging that the report did examine some areas of destitution, Hurt writes:

“In the London Metropolitan area two assistant commissioners examined the Unions of St Pancras, St George in the East, Chelsea, St George in Southwark, Newington, Wandsworth, and the Unions of St Olave and St Saviour, Southwark. Although this included some impoverished areas - the Medical Officer of Health for St George in the East had attributed over 120 deaths there to starvation in the first three months of 1868 - the Commissioners made no attempt to measure the extent of educational destitution in London as a whole” (p.53).

This calls into question the representativeness and validity of the report, again casting doubt on the findings and recommendations. Interestingly, private studies conducted later in the 1860s in Manchester and Birmingham (areas omitted by the Newcastle Commission) arrived at conclusions inconsistent with those of the Newcastle Commission report. These studies, conducted by the Manchester & Salford Education Aid Society and the Birmingham Education Aid Society, found that less than half of school-age children in these areas were receiving any form of education, and also found that poverty was a primary factor even when parents were in receipt of tickets to free education (Hurt, 1979). These findings serve to discredit the Newcastle Commission report given that it concluded that three-fifths of school-age children were attending elementary school sufficiently and gaining an appropriate education. The situation, it continued, could be improved, but:

“We do not think that it warrants very gloomy views or calls for extreme measures” (Education Commission, 1861, p.174).

In contrast to the general satisfaction of the state of education exhibited by the Newcastle Commission, additional surveys were undertaken in other cities ignored by the Commission on the strength of the increasing scepticism of its findings. Hurt writes:

“W. E. Forster, the Vice-President of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education in Gladstone’s first administration, accordingly appointed two inspectors to survey the great cities of Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham, all of which had been the subjects of recent private enquiries that had produced results at variance with those of the Newcastle Commissioners” (1979, p.54).

The surveys appointed by Forster found similar evidence of poor uptake of education as with those of the Manchester & Salford Education Aid Society and the Birmingham Education Aid Society.

Though subject to much criticism, and justifiably so, the Newcastle Commission report, its findings, and its approach of excluding the working classes from the investigative process were indicative of a mindset evident in the higher echelons of educational policy-making. This can be seen in the opposition in 1858 of the Vice President of the Committee of Council, Mr. Cowper, to the need for an investigation of the state of popular education (the Newcastle Commission). The case for the appointment of a Commission to investigate popular education was put forward by Sir John Pakington, the Conservative MP for Droitwich, who argued there was abundant evidence that a large proportion of the population were in a state of ‘deplorable ignorance’ and there were many areas facing an acute shortage of efficient schools or any schools altogether. In response to these claims, Cowper, pre-empting the recommendation of the Newcastle Commission, stated:

“The present system might have many defects, but it had sprung out of the habits of the English people...The demand for children’s labour was so enduring and so urgent that he despaired of seeing any measure adopted by which the children of the working classes might be induced to remain at school as long as was necessary for their education...Schools must be adapted to the circumstances of those for whom they were intended” (Education Commission, 1888, p.12).

In many respects then, the report represented an ideological defence of a pre-determined case; similar accusations have been employed toward recent reports concerned with student funding and higher education: the Dearing report for example (NCIHE, 1997). Given the recommendation of the Newcastle Commission for non-compulsion of elementary education based upon commercial concerns, Mr Cowper’s objection to the Commission’s appointment proved unnecessary. Cowper’s views also reinforce the point, as made earlier, that the needs of commercial interests took precedence over improved educational uptake, thereby serving to maintain class positions.

The desire for limiting the educational experience of the working classes, as demonstrated by Mr Cowper, was also exhibited by others well placed to shape education policy. Simon (1965) suggests that the attitude of those at the Education Department toward elementary education during this period was reflective of wider societal class division. According to G.W. Kekewich (later Secretary of the Board of Education) “the staff of distinguished aristocratic scholars from the Universities treated elementary education and elementary teachers with contempt...A ploughman’s son was destined to be a ploughman” (cited in Simon, 1965, p.114). This ‘superior’ mentality was also evident in the equation used to categorise class groups by the Education Department in relation to the type of education intended for them:

“One-seventh of the population belonged to the upper and middle classes who were expected to make their own arrangements for the education of their children. As a corollary it was argued that these parents would not want their children to

attend a school in the company of those of the remaining six-sevenths” (Hurt, 1979, p.5).

The political will to maintain clear class distinction in education helped to fuel, from the 1850s, a move by grammar schools to segregate pupils along class lines. Grammar schools aspired to be like the great public schools by increasing boarding, charging fees and restricting intake to the upper classes. However, in doing this, they were manoeuvring themselves away from their traditional role of providing free education to local day scholars such as the sons of working men such as tradesman and farmers who were unable to pay for boarding and fees. This move was further facilitated by the 1869 Endowed Schools Act “which legalised the use of endowments for purposes other than that for which they were originally made – the furtherance of local education” (Simon, 1965, p.98). The result of this movement and the 1869 Endowed Schools Act was that some of the grammar schools, using newly liberated endowment money, built ‘lesser’ or ‘lower’ schools nearby for those not of ‘gentleman’ class so as not to contaminate the upper class ethos with the lower social tone of local ‘foundationers’. Class separation, therefore, was maintained and the lower schools would placate the local community whose children would now not be able to attend the original grammar school. However, local communities were not readily appeased.

One such example of resistance to the exclusion of poorer pupils in this manner from grammar schools is reported by Bell (1912) who describes the transformation of Giggleswick School. Up until 1872 Giggleswick had been a free school, after this date pupils had to pay “an entrance fee not exceeding £3 and a tuition fee not less than £12 or more than £24. Fees for boarding in the Hostel were not to exceed £45” (Bell, 1912, p.176). Bell adds, “the fundamental alteration of its character had been vigorously opposed by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood for close on ten years. They were fighting a losing battle” (Ibid, p.177) and the school underwent a massive transformation from educating 58 boys in 1871 to erecting new buildings, boarding accommodation, and classrooms to accommodate 240 pupils. Local schoolchildren were effectively resigned to local elementary schools.

The evidence presented in the last few pages has demonstrated some of the obstacles impeding the extension of educational provision to the working classes. This includes: the political acceptance of class division; the notion of employment as being in the best interest of the child; the conscious lack of direct engagement with the working classes in, and manipulation of social policy investigation; and the dominance of commercial interests over education. These obstacles can be described as originating from the ‘top-down’ as the working classes had little control over these obstacles. However, it is important to consider the views of working class parents and it is this to which the discussion now turns.

Parent’s concerns about the expansion of education were, as with those of employers, strongly financial inasmuch as those from poor backgrounds feared the impact upon household income of losing the earning capacity of their children. This was the point put forward by Lord Shaftesbury who, in 1870, somewhat inconsistently given his prominent role in factory reform, argued for a reduction in the number of years a child should remain in elementary school. Shaftesbury stated that “the extent to which persons in London depended upon the labour of their children their Lordships would scarcely be aware of, and it was impossible that a man could maintain wife and family on nine shillings a week, unless he was assisted by such labour” (Lindsay, 1926, p.51). The debate surrounding the ability of parents to forego the potential earning capacity of their children was one that had persisted for many decades before and would continue to do so well after 1870. Indeed, the 1861 Newcastle Commission regarded the issue as being one central to its remit. On the whole, evidence submitted to the Commission found that the poor did value education but were frequently unable to send their children to attend school due to financial constraints. T. W. Allies, in reference to the Registrar General’s report, stated:

“That even the lowest amount of wages which the child of a labouring man will receive (from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per week), must be so great a relief to the parents as to

render it almost hopeless that they withstand the inducement, and retain the child at the school in the face of such temptation”.

Allies continued:

“How can we expect from a class labouring for the necessaries of life a greater sacrifice than the professional and independent classes themselves would make, with all the prizes which life offers them for the education of their children. How many clergymen, lawyers, physicians, or squires would pay for each child’s schooling a sum forming the same proportion to their whole income, which the 1s. 6d. or 2s. per week bears to the poor man’s? The obstacle, therefore, which the demand for juvenile labour causes to the prolongation of the period of instruction, can scarcely be remedied by any appeal to the will of parents” (Education Commission, 1861c, p.28).

Though the Newcastle Commission, to some extent, acknowledged the significance of children’s income in mitigating the poverty faced by the working classes, it did not regard this as being the major cause of non-attendance at school. Responsibility for non-attendance was placed primarily at the feet of parents:

“The commonest cause, however, of an entire absence of schooling is to be found in the intemperance, apathy, and recklessness of the most degraded part of the population” (Education Commission, 1861, p.179).

The report, using evidence primarily from assistant commissioner Fraser, continued to blame “the indifference, thriftlessness, and recklessness of their parents” (Ibid).

However, in its haste to attribute blame to lax parental morality, the Newcastle report fails to identify the examples of abject poverty recorded by the assistant commissioners

in explanation for children not attending school. For example, assistant commissioner Winder found that:

“In a huge town like Bradford, there are not a few families who, through misfortune or misconduct, are in a state of chronic destitution. A far larger class, though able to maintain themselves unassisted, can still barely maintain themselves...the unsteadiness of the circumstances under which they live is eminently unfavourable for the formation of those habits of prudent foresight, with which the desire of education seems most intimately connected” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.200).

Indeed, assistant commissioner Hedley reported several instances where attendance was greatly improved in several schools due to the payment of monetary prizes for regular attendance, and, in one example, where parents were in receipt of school monies for maintaining their children’s attendance. This evidence highlights the significance of poverty as a barrier to undertaking education.

Though his report concluded that poor attendance was essentially caused by parental inadequacy, assistant commissioner Fraser did find that some parents were too poor to be able to adequately clothe their children for school. “The difficulty of providing them with decent clothing, particularly with shoes and warm wraps in the winter months, is, no doubt, keenly felt, and here and there, when the children are young, the weather bad, the roads muddy, and the school perhaps a mile or two away, the inability assumes proportions which every candid inquirer would allow to be fairly insurmountable” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.68).

Despite the evidence submitted to the Newcastle Commission by Winder, Fraser and others, the report insisted that poor parenting, not poverty, was the root cause of lack of educational uptake. The Commission also failed to identify the significance of the poverty-related issue of school fees. Calls for the removal of school fees had been voiced by the Labour movement since the 1850s, yet the Newcastle report paid scant attention to

the issue, suggesting that payment of fees was a contributing factor to non-attendance only in a small minority of cases. Again, there are parallels to today's debates about the impact of tuition fees upon educational opportunity. Recent reports on higher education funding have tended to adopt an identical position, and like the Newcastle Commission, their conclusions appear to represent more of an ideological defence of a pre-determined position than they do a realistic impartial analysis of the evidence. However, the evidence presented to the Commission by assistant commissioner Jenkins directly contradicts the Commission's portrayal of the minimal impact of fees. In describing the access problems associated with variation in fees between schools in his allocated area Mr Jenkins states:

“The fact is, that a large proportion of our public schools for the professed education of “the poor” are really only schools for sections of the working classes, and those the better-off sections. They are not available to the vast mass of unskilled labourers found equally in our town and country districts; or if in some sense available, it is under circumstances which, on minute inquiry, will be found to throw obstacles in the way of that general diffusion of education which, it is desirable, should be found among us. Take the case of a common labourer, earning at most some 16s. or 18s. a week. He has probably three children of school-going ages. At 2d. a week the amount of school fees he would have to pay would be 6d. a week, or, admitting that the second and third of the children are taken at a penny fee, it would be 4d. What is the actual practice in such a case? The older children are sent to school, and the youngest kept at home, and when a certain age has been attained the eldest is withdrawn and the youngest substituted for it. Thus the high fee leads to the abridgement of the term of education, and to the perpetuation among the unskilled labour class of an educational inferiority to the social duties which even their station imposes upon them” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.526).

Jenkins concluded that the school fee was unpopular and an obstacle for the mass of the labouring class, and, subsequently should have been restricted in value. He also hints

that this situation entailed a national economic cost as it rendered the unskilled labour class unable to develop the requisite skills for effective production. Assistant commissioner Winder supported the findings of Jenkins in relation to the impact of school fees upon attendance in his comments concerning the working classes, he claimed that “amongst these various classes there are not a few persons to whom the payment of the school fee for two or three children would be felt as a real burden” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.200). However, despite their clear significance, the findings of both Jenkins and Winder are omitted from the main Newcastle report in favour of the findings of assistant commissioner Hedley who asserted that he had “met with very few instance indeed where children are supposed to kept away from school through the inability of their parents to pay for them” (Education Commission, 1861, p.178). The lack of balance and objectivity in the use of evidence relating to school fees by the Newcastle Commission in its main report suggest that, as was seen with the examples given earlier in this chapter, the Commission were ideologically opposed to increased state involvement in the extension of education for the working classes, intent instead on portraying the lack of educational uptake as being a decision taken freely and willingly by the working classes. Again, similar debates exist today surrounding issues of access to and funding for higher education.

One further obstacle to be faced by the working classes in accessing the bottom rung of education was the dearth of quality teaching available in both public and non-public elementary schools (including Factory Schools used in the half-time system under the Factory Acts). Evidence presented to the Newcastle Commission from school inspectors and the assistant commissioners was unanimous in condemnation of the general state of defective teaching. Teaching was criticised on several counts including: poor buildings, particularly those of private schools, which were not subject to inspection; poor quality instruction, widely described as mechanistic and routine, focused on memorisation, and not aimed at developing understanding, thought or adaption; the linked issue of poor quality teacher training and training of pupil-teachers; and lastly, a generally inappropriate teacher-pupil ratio in classrooms.

Poor quality instruction, it was hoped, would be addressed by the introduction of the 1862 revised code which used the 'payment by results' system to determine the level of grant state-aided schools received based upon the number of passes as measured by the standards (I to IV) in conjunction with attendance rates. However, far from improving the quality of teaching, the existing problems continued and even intensified. The revised code led to elementary teachers utilising rote learning techniques applied to a narrow curriculum (reading, writing and arithmetic) enforced by physical punishment. Edmond Holmes, Chief Inspector of Schools during this period, warned of an intensification of this stifling system as a result of too many teachers receiving a "given proportion of the grant, consequently his value in the market, and therefore prospects of promotion tended to turn on his effectiveness as a grant earner" (cited in Simon, 1965, p.116); similar concerns have been raised in recent years in relation to the impact of standard attainment tests (SATS) and the 'exam culture' now found in secondary schools. The revised code reduced elementary education to a mechanistic process where children would passively listen, memorise and repeat. Holmes later went on to describe the approach of elementary school teachers as being to dominate the child, "to leave nothing to his nature, nothing to his spontaneous life, nothing to his free activity; to repress all his natural impulses; to drill his energies into complete quiescence; to keep his whole being in a state of sustained and painful tension" (cited in Simon, 1965, p.118). The majority of evidence on this matter submitted to the Newcastle Commission supports the views of Holmes that deficient or unskilful teaching was a key factor in the overall low standard of popular education. This was acknowledged in the Newcastle Report in its assessment of the training undertaken by those teachers who attended teacher training colleges:

"An opinion appears to prevail that the principles upon which the course of teaching in the training colleges is framed are unsound. This is based upon a general impression, which appears to us to be founded on fact, that the teachers do not in fact teach as well as they should" (Education Commission, 1861, p.130).

The Newcastle Commission identifies defective teaching as an issue to address; in fact it states:

“The children do not, in fact, receive the kind of education they require. We have just noticed the extravagant disproportion between those who receive some education and those who receive a sufficient education. We know that the uninspected schools are in this respect far below the inspected; but even with regard to the inspected, we have seen overwhelming evidence from Her Majesty’s Inspectors, to the effect that not more than one-fourth of the children receive a good education” (Education Commission, 1861, p.295).

Notwithstanding the admission that the vast majority of children in receipt of popular elementary education do not receive ‘sufficient education’, the Newcastle Report fails to concede that it was a significant obstacle in promoting school attendance, particularly to those who would have to sacrifice the most to receive poor quality instruction for their children. Evidence submitted to the Newcastle Commission by several assistant commissioners clearly highlights that defective teaching was a barrier to education and strongly discouraged attendance. One example of this comes from Mr Foster’s report, he writes:

“[In] by far the greater proportion in the district I have gone over, there is a strong desire to have their children educated; and if this has not issued in sending them to school, it has been chiefly due to the inefficiency and repulsive character of the schools within reach” (Education Commission, 1861a, p.350).

The above statement exemplifies the rationality with which parents from the working classes calculated the cost-benefit ratio of sending their children to a school which statistically would likely offer an education not sufficient to requirement. Logically, parents would be correct in choosing not to send their children into such an environment when the child’s time could be spent more productively outside of ineffective schooling. This argument weakens the Newcastle Commission’s foundation that the act of restricting children’s attendance at school was one based upon immorality on the part of working class parents; it could, in fact, be seen as a most sensible and calculated act.

Concerns surrounding quality issues, as mentioned above, of education offered in elementary schools as well as in latter stages of education continued into the twentieth century, and indeed are still evident in twenty-first century.

Despite the great volume of evidence of the inability of the poor to forego their children's earnings, afford school fees, and justify paying for defective teaching the Newcastle Commission did not recommend free elementary education on the basis that it was the moral duty of parents, not the state, to make necessary sacrifices in order to suitably educate their children; once more, analogous reasoning has been presented in recent years for the transfer of responsibility from the state to the individual in funding for higher education. As the 1870 Education Act did not provide free education but did compel attendance this left many poorer families caught by what Hurt (1979) refers to as the 'nineteenth century poverty trap'. These families, then, were deemed not poor enough to warrant assistance from the poor law, but were, in reality, poor enough to need to withdraw or withhold their children from school. "So wedded were the Newcastle Commissioners to a moralistic attitude towards the poor that they virtually denied poverty to be a cause of absenteeism from school" (Hurt, 1979, p.36). The independence of the family from the state was paramount, a reflection of the continued influence of laissez-faire inspired classical liberalism on social policy:

"In the first place independence is of more importance than education; and if the wages of the child's labour are necessary, either to keep the parents from the poor rates, or to relieve the pressure of severe and bitter poverty, it is far better that it should go to work at the earliest age at which it can bear the physical exertion than that it should remain at school" (Education Commission, 1861, p.188).

Ultimately, in relation to children and employment, the 1861 report concluded that "neither the Government nor private persons can effectually resist, or would be morally justified in resisting, the natural demands of labour when the child has arrived, physically speaking, at the proper age for labour, and when its wages are such as to form a strong motive to its parents for withdrawing it from school" (Education Commission, 1861,

p.225). The debate surrounding foregoing of earning potential in lieu of further education is a point which will be returned to in discussion of both secondary and higher education, and, indeed, is a debate still relevant in the twenty-first century.

### The 1888 Cross Commission

Though elementary education was by 1880 widely compulsory, many of the other themes considered by the Newcastle Commission were to be examined again more than a quarter of a century later by the 1888 Royal Commission on Elementary Education Acts (commonly referred to as the Cross Commission). Discussion of the Cross Commission is important as it represented a continued political consensus on the education question due to its adoption of the same position as the Newcastle Commission on the key issues of school fees and poverty, parental responsibility for educational provision, and child employment.

In relation to school fees and poverty, the Cross Commission shared the view of the Newcastle Commission that neither was too prohibitive in accessing education despite the continuation of charging variable fees for elementary education in both voluntary and board schools; higher rates of fees tended to be applied by school boards in more affluent areas, effectively excluding poorer children from those schools and forcing them seek education sometimes in schools far from their homes. This act of sustaining class distinction in elementary education was discussed by Thomas Smyth, a plasterer by trade and organiser of evening classes in his home district. He was one of only two witnesses categorised as ‘representative of the working classes’ out of over one hundred and fifty to give evidence before the Cross Commission. One of the commissioners, Rev. Dr. Morse, argued that there was no class distinction between board schools and that ‘middle class’ board schools simply did not exist, he stated that local boards:

“Fix the fees according to the presumed capacity of the people living in that locality to pay: if it should happen that certain localities are better off than others, naturally the fees would be fixed at a higher price, but the children who attended

would be children from the particular locality where they happened to live, would they not?”.

Smyth replied:

“If a school charging 6d. a week as its fee is built in a particular district they build that school in that district and charge that fee, because they believe that the people in the neighbourhood are able to pay that fee. Therefore they are middle class people in comparison with the people that are able to pay no fee, or only to pay a 1d. fee”.

Morse responded:

“In that point of view you may call it a middle class board school, but the curriculum pursued is the same as in the other schools, where the fee is 2d., 3d., or 4d. a week; therefore I do not see in what way the children are injured by the fee?”.

To which Smyth replied:

“Where there is a school built in such a district as that they are not absolutely all rich people that live in that district. There is one particular district that I know of where, in a large school, they have to pay 6d. a week, and there are thousands of children who have to go out of that district to other board schools, because they can not afford to pay the fee at the board school in their own district” (Education Commission, 1887a, p.388).

Morse appeared to have no answer to Smyth’s response and proceeded to change the line of questioning. However, there was support for views such as those of Smyth from the Labour movement and organisations such as the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Social Democratic Federation (SDF). Presenting evidence echoing that of assistant

commissioners Jenkins and Winder of the Newcastle Commission some twenty-five years earlier, Councillor Threllfall, President of the TUC, in his address to the 1885 annual congress called for free elementary education. He stated:

“As our Education Acts are now framed they inflict great privation upon vast multitudes of the poorest parents, because the school pence, paltry as it may be to the well-to-do, is a considerable sum when taken from a family whose weekly income amounts to less than a pound a week. Take the case of a family with an income of 15s. or 18s. per week, and with a family of four school-going children. There has to be a limitation of food or clothing to supply the requisite pence for education” (TUC, 1885, p.19).

Threllfall goes on to argue that abolition of elementary school fees would evoke a more welcoming attitude towards education from poorer families and reduce the numbers evading the full term of education. Harry Quelch of the SDF continued this theme suggesting that approximately twenty six percent of total non-attendance in London schools was a result primarily of the imposition of fees (cited in Simon, 1965, p.127).

Variation in fees did not only impact upon the elementary education of the poorest, it effectively precluded them from the secondary tier of education too. In order to win the scholarship likely needed to progress to secondary education, the working class child needed to attend one of the more expensive elementary schools as it was these schools that offered the best chance of success due to better facilities such as certified teachers, smaller class sizes, and significantly, the option of preparatory classes focused upon passing the scholarship examination. Evidence presented here shows how remote a financial possibility this was. This difficulty was further compounded by the fact that local authorities had “considerable latitude for variation and experiment” and used this “to adapt the education provided to the industrial needs of different localities” (Board of Education, 1916, p.9). In reality, this meant that the curriculum in poorer districts was frequently restricted and focused, based on the needs of local commerce, subsequently removing the liberal academic education needed to compete in scholarship examination.

Issues surrounding poverty and fees, then, were pertinent in respect of accessing both elementary and secondary education.

Those against the abolition of the school fee during the 1870s and 1880s continued to justify their position based upon moralistic arguments similar to those projected by the Newcastle Commission. The Church of England contended that abolition of fees would relieve parents too much of their natural responsibility to their children; a view ultimately shared by the Cross Commission in their final report recommendation not to abolish fees.

The Cross Commission final report was, though, more balanced in its discussion of the fees issue than the Newcastle Commission report, as it dedicated a roughly equal amount of wordage to both abolition and retention arguments. However, though the case for abolition was strong in the Newcastle report, it was even stronger in the Cross report due to several post-Newcastle developments. Firstly, as maintained earlier, the 1869 Endowed Schools Act further segregated education to the exclusion of the poor from grammar schools. Secondly, the introduction of board schools in 1870 and their variable fees had also contributed to class distinctions in education as Smyth had asserted to the Cross Commission. Significantly, in a Minority report of the Cross Commission, several commissioners acknowledged that the Majority report did not adequately address the issue of fee variability and recommended that the Education Department should have the power to restrict fees in both voluntary and board schools “to make it work fairly and tolerably to the poor” (Education Commission, 1888, p.246); the majority report, however, argued that it was not the responsibility of the Education Department to do this. Thirdly, as seen in evidence presented by the TUC and SDF, the poverty of the working classes was still a major obstacle to accessing education. Indeed, numerous witnesses gave evidence to the Cross Commission highlighting the inability of parents to afford even the lowest fees; the Chairman of the School Management Committee of the Birmingham School Board, Rev. Dr. H. W. Crosskey, stated that his school board assessed one-third of school children as necessitating free places in October 1886 (Education Commission, 1887). This pressure on the finances of poor families was increasing due to a trend in rising fee costs. Hurt (1979) notes that “average attendance

more than trebled from 1,152,389 in 1870 to 3,749,956 by 1891” meanwhile the “total annual expenditure on school fees almost quadrupled from £502,023 in 1870 to £1,969,370 by 1891” (p.159). Supporters of fee retention argued that fees in both voluntary and board schools were frequently remitted in a proven case of poverty, however, this was not as frequent as suggested and the act of attaining remittance was, in many instances, degrading. Parents with children in voluntary schools had to look to poor law guardians if unable to pay their school fees and the Cross Commission, on this process, stated that:

“A great many witnesses complain that it is difficult to get fees paid by the guardians; parents refuse to apply for them on account of the fact that the guardians in many cases compel the applicants to appear before their board. They feel, says one witness, the humiliation, not only of seeking relief at all, but of having to ask *in forma pauperis*; they have to go to the same office, and to the same officer, as if they were applying for out-door relief, and the same time of attendance is generally appointed for them. They object to the exposure of their private family circumstances, and to the offensive examination subsequently by the relieving officer, who goes through the rooms of their homes, and makes inquires at the workshops and works, and so on; and they also object to the harshness and oppressiveness of the guardians, who treat every applicant more or less as an imposter, or as being lazy or inebriate. Similar objections are repeated over and over again” (Education Commission, 1888, p.196-7).

In addition to the negative treatment faced by fees claimants the guardians were not generous in their awarding of payment. Award levels varied regionally, and Hurt (1979) calculated that in 1890 only four per cent of children on school registers nationally received fee payment from guardians. A similar process was undertaken by those parents whose children attended board schools, and though the Birmingham School Board awarded one-third of school children free places, other areas were less generous; four per cent in London and six per cent in Huddersfield for example (Education Commission

1888). Notwithstanding the evidence presented on the ordeal, and likelihood, of receiving a free school place, the Cross Commission offered its support for the status quo.

The fourth, final, and perhaps strongest reason for the abolition of school fees was the implementation of compulsory attendance under the 1870 Education Act. Compulsion was gradually rolled out, and by 1880 was widely required. Numerous witnesses to the Cross Commission contended that if the state demanded the education of children it should be ultimately responsible for providing it. Moreover, the political justification for compulsion was, according to, amongst others, the minister responsible for the 1870 Education Act, W. E. Forster, one of national economic interest. This strengthened the arguments of witnesses such as Smyth and Crosskey who called for free education on the basis that, not only would it diminish the obstacle of poverty in accessing education, if it was in the national interest, free education was a corollary of compulsion. Smyth stated that:

“We believe, and it is commonly asserted and told to us largely, that the education given to workmen, the establishment of schools and everything connected with them, is in the interest and for the benefit of the state. That being so, we claim that if it is for the benefit of the state to have a well educated population in the future, the state ought to provide the necessary expenses (Education Commission, 1887a, p.380).

In response to calls for free education in the evidence presented to them Cross Commission members frequently raised the question of financing free education. They repeatedly questioned such witnesses, and Crosskey in particular, on the appropriateness of increasing local rates or taxation to meet the additional costs of free education; the same debate exists today in relation to the source of funding for higher education. This line of questioning was not impartial and exemplified the views of the commissioners as the language used was strongly bias and portrayed any increase in rates or taxes as negative. One such example of this can be seen in an exchange between commissioner Rev. Dr. Morse and Crosskey; Morse asks:

“Do you not think that a system of free schools is likely to throw a heavy and unnecessary burden upon the ratepayer or taxpayer?”

To which Crosskey replied:

“I think the ratepayer ought not to pay it; I think it should come from the taxes; but I believe that in the end it would be a not uneconomical thing; that the cost of providing for the free education of the people is so legitimate a charge upon the public funds that a great many things for which funds are wasted should be stopped, and the money devoted to this purpose” (Education Commission, 1887, p.571).

Crosskey later adds that:

“The condition of the working classes, the circumstances under which they live, the troubles and struggles they have to go through, the severity of their toils, and also their tremendous influence on the industries of the country, their work being really the basis of national wealth, all these things justify a very considerable expense being bestowed on their education”.

He continued, “I believe that an immeasurable addition to the resources of the country, as well as to the happiness of the people would be obtained” (Education Commission, 1887, p.650-1).

All but one of the Cross Commission members (Sydney Buxton, Liberal MP and progressive educationalist) disagreed with the evidence submitted in favour of fee abolition and subsequently did not recommend its abolition. As noted earlier, a primary explanation for this was the Cross Commissioners’ concern to maintain parental responsibility as typified in the following exchange again between Morse and Crosskey on the impact fee abolition. Morse clearly states his position:

“There is one change which it would produce to which I direct your attention; it would substitute the authority of the State for the responsibility of the parent. That I regard as a very grave social change; and wherever it has been tried, so far as I know, the moral results have been disastrous; what do you think on that point?”.

Crosskey responded:

“I think there would be nothing but moral good from a free school. The parent has a tremendous burden of responsibility; you cannot take parental responsibilities from a poor man, he has plenty of them; and in the case of a subject, such as education, which can be best provided by the co-operation of all, and best provided by a free system, I think it is a perfectly legitimate action to relieve him. I believe, moreover, that his moral independence will not suffer at all. In fact in much more exceptional forms you do not see the moral independence of free students at college suffer at all. I think that the moral independence of a working man who pays a fair share of the rates and taxes is not touched; because you must remember he would have to pay his rates and taxes” (Education Commission, 1887, p.571).

The statement by Morse reflects the position of the majority of members of the Cross Commission evident in their questioning of witnesses. It also echoed the conclusions of the Newcastle Commission more than twenty-five years earlier in that it was the moral responsibility of parents, not the state, to ensure education was being received, and poverty was not an acceptable excuse. In further defence of its position, the Cross Commission stated that:

“Many persons entertain the opinion that the assumption by the State of duties primarily belonging to its individual members not only violates sound principles of political economy, but also tends to sap that independence of character which

differentiates English methods of conducting the affairs of life from the action of other countries, whose citizens are content to leave to a superior and central authority the initiation and conduct, as well as the control, of all undertakings for the public weal” (Education Commission, 1888, p.200).

Again, the above statement parallels the recommendations of the Newcastle Commission and the justification for those recommendations; emphasis is firmly placed on the responsibility of the individual and reflects the continued influence of laissez-faire inspired classical liberalism on education policy. Ultimately, in relation to school fees, the Cross Commission concluded:

“If, as we think, provision of the due necessities of education, as well as of the necessities of life, is part of the responsibility incumbent on parents, it may well be believed that public contributions and private benevolence are already doing all that can be safely required of them in augmentation of the payments properly exacted from parents. On the whole, we are of the opinion that the balance of advantage is greatly in favour of maintaining the present system, established by the Act of 1870, whereby the parents who can afford it contribute a substantial proportion of the cost of the education of their children in the form of school fees” (Education Commission, 1888, p.200).

Not only were similarities between the Newcastle and Cross Commission seen in the context of fee retention, they were also evident in relation to the matter of child employment. As previously discussed, the Newcastle Commission placed the interests of commerce over those of educational expansion; a similar approach was taken by the Cross Commission. Much evidence was presented to the Cross Commission by school inspectors, managers, and teachers calling for an increase in the age at which a child could leave school, for both half-time and full-time exemption, and/or an increase in the educational standard necessary to move on to employment; “The expression of opinion is very strongly in favour of a longer school life” (Education Commission, 1888, p.109). However, though it recommended raising the age for half-time to eleven and full-time to

thirteen years, the Cross Commission did not recommend the significant increase widely called for due to the concerns of employers fearing the loss of their child labour supply. The Cross Commission posited:

“It must be remembered that not only agricultural but many other employments require to be begun at an early age; and that industrial education is not always to be postponed for longer instruction at school. While we do not desire to see either the standard or range of elementary education unduly restricted, we must bear in mind that, in the case of children preparing for many employments, including agriculture, a prolonged school life is incompatible with the practical instruction of the field or workshop, which must necessarily commence at an early age” (Education Commission, 1888, p.109).

The majority report’s support for commercial interest above education is further apparent in its omission of evidence pertaining to examples of school fees being raised in the higher standards with the goal of driving children from the classroom to employment. For example, Her Majesty’s Inspector for West Somerset, Alfred Perceval Graves, stated that he was aware of employers’ involvement in “raising the fee in the fourth and upper standards” as they “were anxious to get children to work early”. He continued, “The parents have not been able to pay it, and consequently the children have left school” (Education Commission, 1887a, p.581). In such circumstances it is quite wrong to lay blame on parental indifference or immorality for irregular attendance or early withdrawal of their children from education as the majority report did; a point which signatories to the minority were keen to emphasise.

The above discussions highlight the similarity of sentiment between the Newcastle and Cross Commission; education for the working classes was of secondary importance to fulfilling the commercial need of employers for child employees; the ‘interests’ of the working classes, and their education, were to be found in the ‘practical instruction of the field or workshop’. The Newcastle Commission used the same argument in conjunction with notions of maintenance of established class divisions as justification for not

recommending compulsion; for the Cross Commission it was used to curtail the compulsory period of schooling as called for by many. In both cases the commercial interest superseded that of education.

Analysis of the Newcastle and Cross Commissions has clearly demonstrated that, despite the claims of the State as to its national importance and ready availability, obstacles facing the working classes in accessing elementary education were substantial and in many cases insurmountable. Given these difficulties in accessing elementary education for the working classes it is perhaps unsurprising that the likelihood of such a child from any state-aided elementary school progressing to secondary education was very remote. Secondary education was still the preserve of the privileged and “elementary education continued to be something specifically provided for the working class” (Lawson & Silver, 1973, p.365). Some similarity between the barriers to accessing elementary and secondary education during this period, and the barriers to accessing higher education in the later twentieth and early twenty-first century are clear; financial obstacles remain most important. Though touched upon briefly here, the following section will discuss the equality of opportunity in accessing the later stages of education towards the end of the nineteenth century.

### The Development of Secondary and Higher Education Opportunities

Until the Education Act 1902 the system of secondary education in England was one outside of the State’s remit. “The very large majority of schools in which pupils between the ages of twelve and eighteen were being educated were quite independent of any kind of State or local control” (Board of Education, 1925, p.12). Though of independent status, the secondary school system did educate a very small number of pupils in receipt of assistance from some local authorities. These local authority scholarships only became possible following the creation of county councils in 1888 and the passing of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act 1889. According to Lindsay:

“The most important event during these years was the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889, which may fairly be said to have laid the foundations for the 1902 Act. For the first time a rate was raised for secondary education, County Councils received larger powers; a series of schools were set up, whose functions were to take the most promising pupils of elementary schools, continue their general education, and pass on the most able to the University” (1926, p.53).

The significance of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act 1889 is clear as a forerunner to the 1902 Education Act which permitted English local authorities to fund and provide secondary education from local rates. However, despite its significance, there was one other, rarely discussed, piece of legislation that allowed English local authorities to award scholarships to post-elementary education before 1902, the 1891 Technical Instruction Act.

The 1891 Technical Instruction Act can be characterised as a ‘humble’ piece of legislation on two counts. Firstly, its powers were permissive so local authorities were under no obligation to implement it, and, secondly, it was small-scale effecting only a few hundred students annually. Despite this, the Act set an important precedent as it stated that “a local authority may provide or assist in providing scholarships for or pay or assist in paying the fees of a student ordinarily resident in the district of the local authority at schools or institutions within or outside that district” (cited in Sharp, 1974, p.37). These scholarships, controlled by council Technical Instruction Boards (or Technical Instruction Committees) and funded predominantly from Excise money (known commonly as ‘Whisky’ money), were aimed at developing technical education. Yet, notwithstanding the name, the 1891 Act allowed local authorities to spend a substantial proportion of their technical instruction money on ‘general’ education as was needed to lay the foundations for developing technical education. Subsequently, as part of the overall formula, scholarships were tenable at a variety of institutions such as grammar schools and higher education providers (including universities and university colleges).

Allocation of Technical scholarships was by competitive examination. This was regarded as the most effective mechanism through which the best candidates could be selected to take up scholarships. However, though the system of competitive examination could identify the best candidates based upon examination performance, it could not necessarily identify the best candidates within a locale as many children, through no fault of their own, would not have sat the examination. Here it is important to return to the earlier point concerning variations in the quality of elementary education children received based upon socio-economic status; children living in more affluent areas and attending higher fee charging schools were better placed to win scholarships. This argument is supported in an 1897 letter written by the Metropolitan Board Teachers' Association to Sidney Webb during his tenure as Chairman of the London Technical Education Board. It stated that:

“If the Technical Education Board wishes the poorer districts to obtain scholarships, the remedy is in its own hands. The present competitive plan must be dropped and the scholarships allocated to schools. Inquiry will prove that it is not the teachers of the poorer districts who are responsible for the scholarship going to the children of the better off parents. We respectfully suggest that if such an inquiry included the following queries the replies would convince the Technical Education Board that a better system of allocating the scholarships is urgently needed in order to give children of a poorer class of workers some chance of availing themselves of the advantages offered: (1) Is not special ‘coaching’ necessary for the winning of scholarships? (2) Is not such ‘coaching’ done after school hours, sometimes at the teachers’ homes? (3) Are not many of the large schools able to have a scholarship class and a special teacher for such a class? (4) Are not parents in poorer districts more anxious about labour certificates than LCC scholarships? (5) Is not the ‘age limit’ often an obstacle? (6) Can the poorest parents afford to avail themselves of the scholarships?” (cited in Sharp, 1974, p.40).

Similar criticisms to those above were given of the scholarship system several years earlier by the National Union of Teachers (NUT). In giving evidence to the 1895 Royal Commission on Secondary Education, commonly known as the Bryce Commission, the Chairman of the Secondary and Technical Education Committee of the Executive of the NUT, T. J. Macnamara stated that “I must strongly insist out of my own experience in a very poor elementary school that scholarships awarded under this plan as a rule fall only to children whose parents can provide special and often expensive coaching” (Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895b, p.236).

The above evidence highlights the obstacles facing children and parents from the working classes in accessing post-elementary education and shows also the persistence of the key issue of ability, or lack thereof, to forego the earning potential of a child and focus upon acquiring a labour certificate in lieu of continuing education. Indeed, in many cases where a child of modest family background had won a scholarship, it was refused by the child or parents as its value was not enough to offset the financial losses to the family associated with its undertaking (discussed further later). Notwithstanding the passionate plea of the Metropolitan Board Teachers’ Association, competitive examination remained the method used to allocate scholarships.

Some effort was made to target scholarship resources to poorer families through the application of a means test. The 1895 Bryce Commission recommended that secondary education should be provided free to able children of working class, not the middle classes, and so explicitly recommended that a parental poverty test for all secondary education scholarships be performed by local authorities (interestingly, the Commission argued that scholarships for higher education institutions should be more open to the middle classes). While some local authorities did impose parental means tests (approximately only eight county councils and eight county boroughs by 1900) the majority did not. Between those imposing means tests there was vast variation in threshold limits with London setting the lowest limit of £150 per annum, compared to £500 per annum in other authorities. Such a range of income threshold limits was clearly detrimental to establishing equality of opportunity, on a national scale, for the inclusion

of the working class in secondary education, particularly should they have resided in a local authority area with a higher scholarship income threshold. However, despite their shortcomings, there is some redistributive significance, even if symbolic only, in the actions of those local authorities that did impose a means test when contrasted with the majority that did not. It can be argued that authorities with no means test were content to allow the advantage enjoyed by the middle classes in gaining scholarships for secondary education. In response to a question asked by the Bryce Commission on why his county had not imposed a scholarship means test, the Chairman of Norfolk Technical Instruction Committee, Mr H. Lee Warner, responded:

“Sometimes people get scholarships of whom our Committee say, I do not think so-and-so ought to have sent his son or daughter to compete for these scholarships. At present we have said that they are free for any, going on the principle that so much is done for elementary education, that one may do something for secondary freely” (Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895a, p.398).

Essentially, it can be inferred from the above quote that, according to Mr Warner, as long as the working class were receiving free elementary education there was no need to offer additional local authority support to offset the obstacles they faced in accessing secondary education. Such ambivalence serves to reinforce one of this chapter’s themes, that of maintenance of social class division, and the point made earlier of the general acceptance that elementary education was sufficient for the working classes and they should be happy with their lot.

The Bryce Commission, in addition to parental means testing, also “recommended that scholarships should consist of two different parts: (a) Cost of tuition, books etc.; (b) contribution towards maintenance on basis of individual need. In a word, the principle of maintenance allowances was conceded on the grounds of social justice, partly to replace earnings and partly to assist the parent” (Lindsay, 1926, p.35). Given the acknowledgement by the Bryce Commission of the need for maintenance allowances

based on social justice concerns, coupled with their recommendation for means tested scholarships in general, it is somewhat surprising that the Committee was also strongly supportive of complete local authority autonomy and regional variation in such matters. “In our opinion each Local Authority, at any rate in the first instance, should within its own area be the judge of what is required in the way of scholarships, both as regards number and value and as regards place and conditions of tenure” (Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, p.302). To acknowledge the centrality of key elements of policy design whilst at the same time promote the potential for unstructured deviation appears contradictory and inconsistent. This reflects the continuation, on the part of investigative Commissions and the State more generally, of identifying fundamental obstacles to much needed improvement in education provision without taking the steps necessary to affect the improvement. As was shown earlier, both the 1861 Newcastle Commission and 1888 Cross Commission acknowledged the relationship between parental poverty and child attendance at school, but did not take the evidenced logical step of recommending free elementary education on the grounds of promoting parental responsibility and independence from the State. A similar situation can be seen with the Bryce Commission and its claim to “have frequent occasion to point out the danger of over-interference by the State’ (Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, p.16). Explanation for this may be found in reflection upon the wider ideological political landscape, insomuch as there existed a continued reluctance to break with the principle of laissez-faire and to countenance wider measures of social reform. Certainly, the State now intervened more directly than it had previously in the economic and social sphere, but the steps that it took continued to be tentative. Consequently, much legislation continued to be permissive and local authorities continued to be allowed considerable discretion.

The result of this contradiction was, as might be expected, a situation where the value and number of scholarships varied wildly; some scholarships covered fees only; some included transport costs; and a significant number of local authorities offered no scholarships at all. In London the scholarship contained provision for fees and associated costs such as books, as well as a maintenance allowance given in an attempt to offset loss

of earnings and promote take-up by the working classes. Webb, in a statement to the Bryce Commission, explained that “it was felt by those who were best acquainted with the poorer districts of London that scholarships of less than £10 a year, in addition to free education, would not reach the wage earning class. You must practically provide the whole maintenance of the boy or girl from the age of 13 if you are to succeed in enabling the parents to withdraw that boy or girl from the labour market at 13” (Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895a, p.259). Webb’s sentiments obviously sat well with the Commission given their subsequent recommendation for maintenance allowances, but, again, serve to highlight the ambivalence on the part of those authorities offering lower value awards or no awards at all.

A child resident in an administrative council had a substantially better chance of winning a scholarship than a child in a county borough area. This was due to a narrower interpretation of Technical Education in the boroughs than the counties; boroughs focused their resources on meeting the vocational needs of students in the towns (through evening classes and technical institutes) thereby restricting opportunities for the general academic development offered by grammar schools and higher education institutions. In 1895 there were only five counties offering no scholarships at all compared with thirty-four boroughs. Though the number of both counties and boroughs offering scholarships gradually improved towards the turn of the century, the general pattern remained for several decades afterward and those areas that were progressive pre-1900 continued to be so in the 1900s (discussed in next chapter). By 1900, boroughs’ expenditure on scholarships was approximately one-fifth of that of county councils. The scholarships held at higher education institutions were of significantly higher value than those at secondary education. In 1894 there were less than six hundred scholarships with a value in the region of £19,000 held in higher education institutions, less than half of which were held at universities or university colleges. By 1900 the number of higher education (HE) scholarships was approximately seven hundred. The general pattern of expenditure between council and borough was evident in HE scholarships too; boroughs spent about a quarter of that of councils (Sharp, 1974). Thus, again it is shown that regional variation

was a fundamental factor in the likelihood of a child progressing to secondary or higher education at this time.

Much as was the case for increasing public expenditure on education pre-1870, and the subsequent introduction of the 1870 Education Act, it is suggested that the rationale for the 1891 Technical Instruction Act and its associated scholarship system was primarily attributable to the drive for national efficiency rather than humanitarian or social justice causes. Though, as has been shown, there were some grains of social justice consideration in the recommendations of the Bryce Commission, the extensive regional variation, as supported by the Commission, continued to reinforce social class distinctions, and the permissive nature of the Act precludes social justice as a primary driver. It was the continuing belief in the ability of education to confer economic benefits upon the community that fuelled the slight increase in the numbers of children entering secondary or higher education, and it was usually those from more affluent backgrounds who benefitted from this. Webb, in discussing the 1891 Act, stated that “we hope and trust that the public money which we are now expending in this way will come back to the community in the future multiplied a hundred fold” (cited in Sharp, 1974, p.47). However, unlike the national system of compulsory elementary education, the 1891 Act was left in its entirety to be implemented permissively by local authorities.

Notwithstanding its criticisms, the 1891 Technical Instruction Act, did, at the very least (in conjunction with the 1889 Welsh Intermediate Education Act), establish a precedent that local authorities had some role to play in extending post-elementary educational opportunities to those students within their areas. Nevertheless, it is difficult to conclude anything other than the child from a poor background was highly unlikely to attend secondary education, and even less likely to enter higher education. Both Lindsay (1926) and Ellis (1925) describe the chances of a poor child entering university, Oxford and Cambridge in particular, as being virtually impossible during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Scholarships:

“Could really only be won by boys from the great public schools, and less frequently by the boys from certain endowed grammar schools...These grammar schools...in some instances had both entrance and leaving scholarships of their own, and through this narrow gate the poor child may very infrequently have reached the University. In general he was quite debarred by the fact that the value of the scholarship, at least at the University stage, was quite inadequate to his support unless he had resources of his own” (Ellis, 1925, p.2).

Needless to say that the possibility of a poor child gaining entry to either an appropriate grammar school or one of the great public schools was remote enough in itself without entertaining thoughts of reaching university. Girls of the working class were particularly disadvantaged due to non-existence of endowed grammar schools for girls.

In attempting to access university, Ellis argues that opportunities for the poor were actually worse after 1850 than before. This was a result of the 1850 Royal Commissions on Oxford and Cambridge which determined that attainment in open competitive examination should be the allocator of college scholarships, not poverty. Effectively, in much the same way as wealthier elementary schools did (as discussed earlier), this led to scholarships being monopolised by pupils in privileged, more expensive secondary schools which were able to offer ‘special’ examination preparation to their pupils, not necessarily the most able or potentially gifted pupils in ‘lesser’ schools. To compound the situation further, the 1850 Royal Commission also restricted the number of closed scholarships which had hitherto been allocated to smaller and poorer local grammar schools.

### Conclusion

The nineteenth century represents a critical period in the educational landscape of England. It witnessed the start of public expenditure on education in 1833 and an exponential increase from then on, even during times of national economic hardship. The 1870 Education Act increased the role of the State in the provision of elementary

education and acknowledged that every child should receive some form of education. However, there was hostility towards both the initial compulsion and the later extension of the period of education from employers and some parents who were both financially penalised through loss of child employment. Notions of class maintenance and evidence of political hostility have also been demonstrated as significant in restricting educational opportunity. Elementary education, despite being national in composition, was far from equal in delivery, and the structural inequalities in terms of access were set along poverty lines and local authority variations in implementation. Similar criticisms are levied against the 1891 Technical Instruction Act which permitted local authorities to award scholarships for post-elementary education. Though delivered on a local basis, there were vast differences in the number, value and overall operation of scholarships between local authorities. Ultimately, it was the working classes who were least able to win scholarships for much the same reasons as they were disadvantaged in elementary education; that is to say they were unable to afford fee payment, forego child earnings and unable to successfully negotiate the competitive examination system due to pecuniary disadvantage. Post-elementary education, and University in particular, was virtually impossible for the poorest.

Several key themes can be identified during the nineteenth century. Firstly, State intervention, both nationally and locally, developed in education matters in response primarily to a declining economy and national efficiency concerns. Secondly, ideological and commercial concerns surrounding the extension of educational opportunities to the working classes were very prominent. Thirdly, the entire education system was subject to very substantial regional variation in its implementation. This is underlined by the creation of the Board of Education in 1899, whose function was to oversee, though not control, the development of secondary education. Evidence has been presented here that this regional variation was to the detriment of equality of educational opportunity for the poorest. Lastly, on the rare occasion where a child from a poor family background did win a scholarship, it was likely that the opportunity could not be taken due general family poverty and the inability to forego potential earnings. Elementary education was still the 'discipline of a class'.

## CHAPTER 2

### A NEW CENTURY AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES?

#### Introduction

The turn of the century potentially heralded a new era for education, epitomised by the passage of the 1902 Education Act, which theoretically promised to expand educational opportunity beyond elementary schools. However, improvements in opportunities for working class children continued to be checked. On the one hand, elementary and post-elementary provision remained inadequate. On the other hand, a combination of low parental income and a continued demand on the part of employers for cheap and amenable child employees meant that most children were unable to benefit from the limited improvements in provision that did occur.

This chapter focuses upon the first decade of the twentieth century and examines the barriers bright working class pupils faced in accessing post-elementary schooling. It shows how the structure of the education system, and regional variations between Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in particular, resulted in a little improved chance of poorer children accessing secondary education despite the introduction of a 'Free Place Scheme' by the Board of Education (BOE) in 1907.

Policy-makers and employers are also shown to play a significant role in the continued barriers faced by working class children in accessing post-elementary education. Evidence is presented demonstrating that senior officials at the Home Office were inherently hostile to the extension of school life at the expense of child employment which was regarded, by such officials, as an activity beneficial to education and health; this belief led to Home Office manipulation of evidence presented to the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children. Echoing the practice of 'managing' evidence carried out by earlier education commissions, the Home Office skilfully 'reframed' a predominantly anti-child employment body of evidence to suit their

ideological beliefs. Such tactics served to represent the position of employers who, like the Home Office, ‘celebrated’ the benefits of child employment both to commerce and child employees. Indeed, the evidence presented to the committee by employers was congruent with that submitted by Home Office officials themselves; this ‘unified’ force combined to frustrate calls for stringent child employment legislation by child employment campaigners and facilitated the continued dominance of trade concerns over educational advancement.

In addition to educational structure inconsistencies and the role of policy-makers and employers, the overarching theme of poverty is also considered. The chapter illustrates that poorer children were blocked from accessing post-elementary education due to their likely attendance at schools which were academically ‘limited’ and consequently unable to compete effectively against schools in more affluent locations for financially necessary scholarships. Moreover, in the rare instances when poorer children did win a scholarship it was more often than not refused on the grounds of parental inability to forgo their children’s earnings through employment.

#### Extended Educational Opportunity? - The 1902 Education Act and ‘Free Place System’

The 1902 Education Act, also known as the Balfour Act, played an important role in the development of education in the twentieth century. It created Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and imbued them with the authority to “take such steps as seem to them desirable ... to supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary, and to promote the general co-ordination of all forms of education” (Lawson and Silver, 1973, p.370). In doing this, the 1902 Education Act effectively swept away the school boards and technical instruction committees who had previously overseen the majority of education provision.

The passage of the 1902 Education Act was significant to the barriers to education debate on several counts. Firstly, the abolition of democratically elected local school boards meant that development of higher grade elementary schools (for which school boards

were responsible) ceased. Though these schools did not come under the secondary code, they did offer post-elementary education for working class children, particularly in areas of science and technology. However, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had been concerned for several years prior to the 1902 Education Act about the failure of higher grade elementary schools to provide adequate opportunities:

“These schools have been mainly supported by grants for specific subjects and by the grants of the Science and Art Department, which was established many years ago to promote instruction in Science and Art ‘especially among the industrial classes’. The present government has struck these words out of the Directory. It has withdrawn these grants from many of the scholars of ‘the industrial classes’, and has diverted them to middle-class schools” (TUC, 1900, p.120).

In addition to the redirection of educational funds from higher elementary to middle-class schools and the eventual scrapping of school boards altogether, the TUC was also troubled by the second major barrier to extending educational opportunities, the permissive nature of the 1902 Education Act. The 1902 Act did not require that LEAs provide secondary education mandatorily but merely ‘aid in the supply of’ it as they deemed necessary. Therefore, under the auspices of a less than enthusiastic LEA, it was possible that working class access to post-elementary education would be further limited by dwindling higher elementary school provision and compounded by aversion to secondary education development. In his Presidential address to the TUC, W.C. Steadman described the 1902 Education Bill as giving “no answer to the pressing question as to how secondary education may be brought within the reach of the children of the industrial classes” (TUC, 1902, p.32). The theme of permissive legislation and resultant regional variation in education provision was one carried through from the nineteenth (see chapter one) to the twentieth century and proved to be very significant in the barriers to education debate. It will be revisited later in discussion of the relationship between child employment and education.

In response to the aforementioned accusations of reducing educational opportunities to the lower classes, Robert Morant, the key architect of the 1902 Education Act at the Board of Education (BOE), argued that higher grade elementary schools effectively stunted the natural local demand for 'real' secondary education, consequently, they were, in his view, a barrier to educational development. However, Lawson and Silver suggest that the values of Morant and others at the BOE were strongly tied to maintenance of class distinction, "His view of elementary education was based on a strong sense of social hierarchy. He and Balfour had similar middle-class educational values, similar doubts about the abilities of the masses" (1973, p.373). This interpretation is supported by the evidence provided in the previous chapter surrounding the 'superior' mentality and ideological leanings of those devising educational policy. Even Morant's predecessor at the BOE, G.W. Kekewich, acknowledged that "the staff of distinguished aristocratic scholars from the Universities treated elementary education and elementary teachers with contempt...A ploughman's son was destined to be a ploughman" (cited in Simon, 1965, p.114). Thus, the TUC's concern about the lack of educational opportunities for the industrial classes appears to have been justified.

The newly created LEAs were now responsible for the allocation of scholarships to assist children in accessing secondary education. Elementary schools would identify suitable eleven year old candidates to undertake the competitive examination in order to win a scholarship to secondary school. However, this post-1902 system was subject to the same criticisms as the pre-1902 system (see previous chapter) with the added controversy that children prepared to commit their careers to teaching would be given preference in allocation of scholarships. "In 1906 approximately half of the scholarships in secondary schools were held by pupils pledged to teaching" (Lawson and Silver, 1973, p.381). This narrowing of career option for those too poor to afford secondary education without LEA assistance was to be repeated in the scramble for scholarships to higher education (HE).

In 1907 the system of state support for accessing secondary education was 'enhanced'. The 'Free Place Scheme', as it was known, offered grants from the Board of Education (BOE) to secondary schools in return for them offering a quarter of their places to non-

fee paying ex-elementary pupils. This system, implemented to extend educational opportunity to the working classes, would prove to be the basis of secondary education scholarship provision for almost the next forty years.

Kenneth Lindsay, in his 1926 book *'Social Progress and Educational Waste'*, was one of the few people to critically examine the free place and scholarship system during its existence. Lindsay discusses several criticisms of the free place system and highlights the subsequent barriers to secondary education; barriers which echo the issues and debates from the nineteenth century. The key barriers were poverty, lack of capacity in secondary education provision, and regional variation.

Lindsay's exhaustive survey demonstrated a clear correlation between socio-economic status and the probability of accessing/utilising a free place or scholarship; poorer areas won fewer scholarships to secondary schools. Several explanations are forwarded for this situation. Firstly, the permissive nature of the 1902 Education Act meant that in 1903 there were only 31 state controlled secondary schools. This number rose gradually to 1249 in 1921, of which 460 of were endowed schools - endowed schools received some of their funding from private sources, were not created as a result of the 1902 Act and tended to offer fewer free places. In all, 362,025 pupils were receiving some form of schooling in secondary schools (Ellis, 1925). There was, therefore, an overwhelming shortage of secondary schools offering free places. The BOE themselves acknowledged this shortage in their 1910-11 Annual Report, stating that "there is little doubt that the supply both of secondary schools and of scholarships is quite inadequate to meet the demand that exists" (cited in Roderick and Stephens, 1978, p.47). This shortage effectively transformed the qualifying examination taken at the age of eleven into a competitive examination for the few free places that existed. Consequently, many candidates judged capable of benefiting from a secondary education were not offered a place.

Another factor impacting upon access to a free place was geographical location. Regional variation in both the number of free places available and the administration of

the free place system was substantial. Lindsay looked in detail at the systems in place in many areas including Bradford, Manchester, London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Wales for example. Areas with progressive LEAs built more secondary schools and therefore offered more free places than those areas with less educationally enthusiastic LEAs. Additionally, evidence presented by the TUC to the President of the Board of Education, Walter Runciman, in 1910 showed that many LEAs had refused to implement the twenty-five per cent free place principle (TUC, 1910).

A further key difference between areas was whether or not all children undertook the examination for secondary education. This was an important point as those areas which examined all children were better able to determine the level of educational ability and subsequent requirement of secondary education expansion. Where all children were examined the numbers in secondary education were comparably high. Lindsay argued “it must be more than a coincidence that Bradford and Wallasey, the two districts with the highest secondary school population, one industrial and one residential, have made the most searching and careful annual review of their children” (1926, p.10). However, most local authorities did not examine all children, so the actual number of children educationally able to undertake secondary education was widely unknown. In addition to lacking crucial evidence on levels of educational ‘wastage’ this knowledge gap served to reduce the pressure placed upon LEAs to expand secondary school numbers, thereby constituting a significant barrier to educational development.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, therefore, there was little progress in terms of working class participation in secondary education, despite the efforts of the free place system. By 1919/20 only approximately one quarter of pupils in grant-aided secondary schools were in receipt of a free place (Ellis, 1925). In addition, many of these were not necessarily from working class families. As stated earlier, there was a correlation between socio-economic status and probability of accessing and utilising a free place. Lindsay illustrates an example of this in his examination of London where he found children from middle class districts were much more likely to win scholarships. In contrasting the predominantly middle class Lewisham with other London boroughs,

Lindsay found it won “between four and five times the number of scholarships, and has nine times the number of its children in secondary school...there are schools in Lewisham that win as many scholarships as the whole of Bermondsey” (1926, p.95). Lawson and Silver support Lindsay’s findings in highlighting the decline in the percentage of scholarships won by children of working class families between 1905 and 1921:

“Of the holders of scholarships in London in 1905, 24 per cent were described as having parents of ‘lower middle’ class status, 49 per cent were ‘skilled working’ and 25 per cent ‘unskilled working’ (a few were ‘unclassified’). In 1920-1 the proportions of successful candidates were 42 per cent ‘lower middle’, 41 per cent ‘skilled working’ and 17 per cent ‘unskilled working’” (1973, p.382).

These figures demonstrate that while the middle class utilisation of secondary school scholarships almost doubled during this time working class utilisation declined substantially. Moreover, Lindsay’s evidence showed that, in London, despite a doubling of pupil numbers in maintained secondary schools between 1913 and 1923 the proportion of free-placers to fee-payers actually declined by four per cent (1926).

Concern surrounding the allocation of scholarships was increasingly discussed by the TUC from 1908 onwards. The views expressed by Will Thorne (Gasworkers Union) and others mirrored those of Sidney Webb and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) some twenty years earlier (as discussed in chapter one) that scholarships were the province of middle classes due to their financial ability to forgo their children’s earnings and to provide private tutoring. At the 1911 annual TUC meeting Mr P. Walls of the Blastfurnaceman Union put it to Walter Runciman (still President of the Board of Education) that free places and scholarships were going to families who could afford to pay for secondary education in the first place as they could also afford to pay for coaching to pass the examination. He also drew attention to the impact child employment continued to have on the ability of working class children to profit from their education. Mr. Walls described the system as a ‘farce’. In response, Mr Runciman stated:

“If a child or its parents wish that child to work outside school hours, we have no means of preventing it, and, indeed, I would not like to prevent it. If they are anxious enough or industrious enough, let them do it by all means. What we do is to restrict those free places to children who attend the public elementary schools. They are all of one class; working-class children” (TUC, 1911, p.31).

Runciman’s successor at the BOE, Mr J.A. Pease, echoed the views of his predecessor to the TUC two years later claiming “I am as anxious as you are that free places should be given, but we must expect parents to make certain sacrifices in the interest of their children” (TUC, 1913, p.85).

Despite these claims, as has been demonstrated, the possibility of working class children attaining a free place and scholarship to secondary education was significantly restricted. Where this possibility did occur it was likely that the opportunity would be refused on the grounds of parental poverty. Unquestionably, poverty was the dominant and constant barrier to accessing secondary education at this time. This situation is confirmed by the fact that even in the two local authorities where fees had been abolished for council secondary schools, Bradford and Glamorgan, “the number of refusals of free-places exceeds the number of acceptances” (Lindsay, 1926, p.11). The findings from Bradford were replicated across the country (though acceptance figures for Scotland and Wales were significantly higher); approximately half of free places in Manchester, and sixty per cent of free places in Birmingham were refused on these grounds. The poverty that drove working class parents to refuse hard earned free places for their children stemmed from two related sources; their inability to forego the earnings of a child for the full duration of a secondary education, and secondly, the lack of adequate maintenance grants to support acceptance of a free place.

The inability of parents to forgo the earnings of their children was not a novel problem; as discussed earlier, it was a major barrier to accessing elementary education as seen in the 1861 Newcastle Report and accessing secondary education by the 1888 Cross

Commission and 1895 Bryce Commission. In 1919, Bradford, which many regarded as pioneering in terms of accessing education, examined all children aged ten to twelve working at Standard four or above and yet only 1100 out of 3000 who qualified for a free place accepted. Lindsay (1926) found that, notwithstanding the abolition of secondary school fees here, poorer families were very likely to withdraw their children from education at the earliest opportunity in order that they gain employment in Bradford's many mills. This is supported by figures showing that pupils from 'good' districts who won free places had a 45% likelihood of accepting the place, in comparison to 19% likelihood of those from 'rather poor' districts (Ibid); again, this pattern was repeated across the country. It appears then that Lord Shaftesbury's assertion in 1870 that the level to which poorer parents relied upon their children's earnings was unknown to politicians still held true.

Parental poverty, as an obstacle to continued education, may well have been less significant if maintenance grants for those winning free places were adequate to offset the loss of potential child earnings and associated costs of secondary education. Though the maintenance grant was widely means-tested (income thresholds for assistance varied by area), its implementation was, as with the education system more generally, characterised by regional variation. A few areas offered maintenance to those aged eleven upwards, while many areas offered no assistance whatsoever until a child had passed the age of compulsory school attendance. Manchester and London, for example, would offer assistance to children aged less than fourteen years, however, assistance was not generous and would only cover costs such as travel and meals. Furthermore, London, in addition to means-testing, only awarded maintenance grants to children achieving the highest marks in their qualifying examination. "In a word, free education is offered to a poor student capable of profiting, but an extra standard is required for maintenance" (Lindsay, 1926, p.39). The lack of adequate, if any, maintenance support for those aged between eleven and fourteen in secondary education represented a barrier to working class participation as the financial lure of employment at the earliest opportunity was enough for them and their families to readily refuse the offer of a free place at secondary school. Calls for a better system of maintenance grants had been made by the 1895 Bryce

Commission in an attempt to deal with this problem, however, this call had not been heeded and the maintenance of eleven to fourteen year olds continued to prove a barrier.

### Child Employment as a Barrier to Education

As we have seen, employment of children was important to poorer families and a disincentive to continuing education. However, the availability of a pool of child labourers was even more important to employers. In part, this perhaps explains the reluctance of policy makers to ensure that adequate levels of support and maintenance were put in place to provide for genuine educational opportunity. As demonstrated in discussion of the 1861 Newcastle Commission and 1888 Cross Commission reports in the previous chapter, commercial desire for cheap child labour was one that policy makers had great sympathy with; sympathy strong enough to resist widely called for education reforms. This sympathy continued into the twentieth century, as did the calls to extend school life and reduce levels of child employment.

The early years of the twentieth century coincided with a growth in interest in the associated problems of child employment and lack of educational opportunity. Much of this concern was motivated by contemporary anxieties about national efficiency and physical deterioration. The publication of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 strengthened the perception that the conditions of child life were contributing to the development of an inefficient, incapable, physically stunted working population and that something needed to be done to arrest what was seen as a pressing national problem. The Report of the Inter-Departmental Departmental Committee did draw attention to the extent to which working conditions children were a key contributor to declining levels of physical efficiency, and not surprisingly, child employment campaigners tapped into these concerns when pressing their cases for tighter regulation (Alden, 1908).

Of course, as was shown in the previous chapter, the campaign to restrict child employment pre-dates these early twentieth century concerns about national efficiency

and physical deterioration. The TUC had been calling for the extension of school life to the age of sixteen, and simultaneously the raising of the employment age and abolition of the half-time system from the mid-1890s. Pete Curran (Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union), at the 1897 annual TUC described child labour as being a crime against the human race, capitalist exploitation, and being responsible for the lack of educational equality facing the working class (TUC, 1897). The following year, the TUC President, Mr J. O'Grady, depicted the half-time system and child labour generally as a 'blinding shame' and a 'disgrace'; "from the point of view of the physical and mental development of the coming generation of citizens...this is a matter of immediate practical concern" (TUC, 1898, p.29). O'Grady continues:

"Speaking on the question of the education of children, Mr. Richard Waddington, the president of the National Union of Teachers, says that the upper standards of our schools present a beggarly array of empty benches. Of the estimated school population between the ages of eleven and fourteen 500,000 have left school, of those that remain 120,000 are half-timers. More than half these half-timers are in Lancashire, and fully three-quarters are to be found in Lancashire and Yorkshire" (Ibid).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, a number of official committees of inquiry looked into the controversy over the impact of child employment upon children's educational potential. These national departmental committees of inquiry into child labour, as well as detailed investigations in particular areas, uncovered conclusive evidence that premature employment continued to have a negative impact upon educational potential and child welfare. The first and perhaps most significant of these was the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, which published its findings in 1902.

The 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children

Cunningham (2000) has discussed the origins of this inquiry. As he points out, the Home Office, not the Education Department, had administrative responsibility for school children's employment, and it was under the former's remit that this investigation was set up. The location of administrative responsibility for child employment was important, because whilst officials in the Education Department were somewhat sympathetic towards the views of child employment campaigners, their counterparts in the Home Office were far less so. Indeed, as Cunningham (2000) notes, the latter saw the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Committee in 1901 as a mechanism of preventing reforms that they were ideologically opposed to from being implemented. In interpreting this stance, Cunningham points to the existence of a 'public order' conception of child labour within the Home Office. Put simply, he argues that senior Home Office officials felt that employment out of school hours kept children busy and 'out of mischief'. This view certainly fitted in with the Home Office's wider departmental remit of combating crime, including juvenile crime, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that public order concerns shape its approach. However, more prominence needs to be given to the Home Office's more general opposition to labour market intervention, and its ideological affinity with employer interests.

In gathering its evidence, the Inter-Departmental Committee interviewed scores of expert witnesses and interested observers. Perhaps not surprisingly, a continuing theme throughout the evidence it received was the pivotal role parental poverty played in influencing the supply of child employees. Indeed, countless witnesses drew attention to the links between poverty and child employment. In theory, of course, such evidence could have been interpreted as representing a need for higher adult wages, or more adequate levels of Poor Law relief, both of which would have helped reduce parental reliance on children's earnings. However, Home Office members of the Committee seized on the 'poverty connection', seeing it as a powerful justification for limiting the scope of any reforms. H.H.S. Cunynghame, the Home Office's chairman of the inquiry, and C.E. Troup, another senior Home Office official, demanded to know from those witnesses favouring tighter restrictions what the impact of their proposals would be on family incomes. Under pressure, even those who were strongly supportive of tighter

restrictions being placed upon child employment acknowledged the difficulties that some families would face in the absence of children's earnings. For example, Dr Charles Elliott, representing the London School Board, stated that he would defer his more general objection to child employment if "it was really necessary for the comfort and well-being of the family" (Home Office, 1902a, p.4). The Reverend B Waugh, representing the National Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, made much the same point, suggesting that the welfare of employed children would be still worse were it not for the wages and support 'in kind' provided by employment. He stated that "my experience is in many cases children share the food of their employer, and would not get it at home, as the income of the parents would not be adequate" (Home Office, 1902a, p.113). The following exchange, between C.E.Troup and the future Labour leader and Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald, was fairly representative of the tone of questioning faced by witnesses whose statements were at variance with the Home Office's preference for minimal regulation. MacDonald was giving evidence on behalf of the Committee for Wage Earning Children (CWEC), an umbrella group representing a variety of child welfare campaigners and organisations. Whilst being interviewed, he was skilfully 'cajoled' by Troup into reluctantly accepting that child employment was, in some instances, acceptable and necessary:

Troup: "You would not suppress a child's desire to help it parent"?

MacDonald: "If you gratify the desire, the evils follow" ...

Troup: "If a child wanted to earn a shilling a week for his parents you would stop it?"

MacDonald: "If you gratify that the whole of the evils follow ... I should limit it".

Troup: "At any rate, you would postpone the entire suppression until you had some reasonable alternative to offer?"

MacDonald: "Yes" (Home Office, 1902a, p.112).

Cunynghame and Troup's questioning of witnesses was clearly influenced by their own predetermined opposition to tighter restrictions being placed upon the employment of children. So too was the evidence submitted by the Home Office itself to the committee,

much of which emphasised the beneficial role employment could play in enhancing the educational welfare and health, both physical and moral, of children. One such example was the memorandum submitted by J.G. Legge, Chief Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools. He argued that manual activity was as worthy a pastime as formal education and suggested that it was “even desirable for the working classes that the hours of attendance at public elementary school should be shortened” (Home Office, 1902a, p.474). Evidence of a similar ilk to that of Legge’s was warmly embraced by the Home Office representatives on the Committee, something that was reflected in the final report itself:

“It has been urged that children ought not to be permitted to do any work at all. We cannot accept this view. The strongest evidence has been given us ... tending to show that moderate work under healthy conditions may be and in most cases will be a benefit. Further, a small amount of regular employment is of itself a useful part of a boy’s education. It would be well if a larger number of children could at an early age be introduced to some of the practical work of the carpenter, the shoemaker, or the blacksmith; but if this is impossible, even the running of errands, or the selling of newspapers, helps to make them alert and industrious and prepares them for the part they have to take in after life” (Home Office, 1902, p.19).

It is easy to see parallels between the sentiments expressed in this report and those found in the previously discussed nineteenth century reports of inquiries into education and child labour. It contains the same ideological celebration of children’s employment; the same claims as to its educationally ‘beneficial’ aspects, and the same underlying assumption that manual labour is the natural and inevitable destiny of elementary school children.

The Committee’s recommendations were also very much in keeping with the evidence submitted by representatives of businesses who employed children, including the Newspaper Society, the Retail Newsagents and Booksellers Union, the Federation of

Grocers Associations of the United Kingdom, the Metropolitan Grocers' Provision Dealers and Oilmen's Association and the London Master Bakers Protection Society. The comments made by R. Allen, one of the proprietors of the Manchester Evening News, were fairly typical in this respect. When asked about the impact of street trading on an average twelve year old boy, he replied:

“It might do them more good than harm, because instead of remaining at home, in very bad surroundings very often, they get a run in the better part of the streets. They get fresh air and learn how to earn an honest penny and learn how to help their people” (Home Office, 1902a, p.206).

Similar sentiments regarding the ‘educational’ potential of child employment were made by, H.J. Palmer, the President of the Newspaper Society. He argued that “many of the boys following this employment become in course of time small wholesale street agents themselves and acquire a position of stability and comfort such as would not otherwise be open to them”. However, he also described how child employment was central to the successful distribution of newspapers, and how its removal would be the source of serious economic inconvenience to his industry:

“In my opinion the services of street sellers are indispensable ... in relation to the distribution of evening newspapers. The editions are so numerous and need to be so rapidly circulated that the delay involved in depositing them in shops would be fatal to the promptitude of supply which merchandise so perishable demands” (Home Office, 1902a, p.101).

It is fair to say that the employer evidence, though consistent, was not particularly voluminous. In fact, the Committee's final report acknowledged that ‘it proved a matter of some difficulty’ to gauge the variety of views of different employers of children. In fact, the overwhelming body of evidence received by the Committee was entirely at variance with the Home Office's position, exposing the deleterious, harmful effects of employment. Obviously, the Committee could not simply ignore the wealth of such

evidence. What it did seek to do was discredit it. One of the ways they did this was by using the final report to explicitly refute some of the more specific, scandalous examples of child labour that had been drawn to their attention. One such example was the case of the school boy who was reported to the Committee to be working 62.5 hours per week, who, the report implied, was ‘appropriately’ employed:

“Two members of the Committee saw this boy and found that the place where he works is a fish and vegetable shop and that his hours of employment are even longer than reported. The shop is close to his school ... He has all his meals from the employer and gives the greater part of his weekly wages of 6s and 6d towards the support of 10 brothers and sisters ... We found him, we are bound to say, a bright and intelligent boy, looking well fed and healthy, and evidently fond of his work and his employer, who appeared to be a kind hearted woman with a motherly interest in his welfare. It was impossible to say that the boy suffered either in health or character from his employment” (Home Office, 1902, p.10).

This case typifies the more general apologetic, indeed condoning tone the report took towards child employment. Hence, whilst accepting that some regulation of out of school employment was necessary - as was the case for factory and mine employment - it rejected all calls for the general employment of school children to be prohibited. The final report as a result, recommended that, under general statutory proposals, children could be safely employed for twenty-five hours per week in addition to undertaking their school work; it should be remembered here that statutory regulation of children’s employment had, traditionally, proven to be ineffective in curtailing the exploitation of children, as discussed earlier, and would continue to be so, as later analysis will demonstrate. The employment of children before school hours was also permitted to continue, though this should not occur before 6am; this, the CWEC argued, was a clear concession to employers such as the newspaper industry who had pressed the Home Office hard not to remove early morning child labour from them (Home Office, 1902a, p.71).

In a move mirroring the permissive nature of the 1902 Education Act (as discussed earlier), the Home Office committee also recommended that these statutory proposals, minimal as they were, would be enough to quell excessive child employment; therefore, local authorities should not be compelled to introduce child employment byelaws which could extend the restriction of child employment. Herein lay the origin of the patchwork, variable system of child employment regulation that would continue right through the twentieth century and beyond. Again, the permissive nature of the legislation was seen by groups such as the CWEC as further concession to employers (Ibid). Indeed, the committee, in response to calls from employers, went so far as to recommend that the Home Office should be empowered to undertake inquiries where they thought proposed local authority byelaws to limit child employment would damage the interests of employers. The outcome of this recommendation was that the Home Office effectively controlled local authority byelaws and throughout the following two decades it would regularly use these powers to block local authority attempts to limit child employment through their demand for complex and time consuming evidence to support their application. Therefore, the Home Office use of permissive legislation and its concern for commercial interest meant that in some local authorities, where few secondary schools existed and child employment byelaws were weak, if they existed at all, children would be excessively employed and education provision continued to be subordinated to commercial interests.

Clearly, the report of 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children confirms the Home Office's bias towards commerce at the expense of education and child welfare, and it is interesting on those grounds alone. However, it also demonstrates the important role that the ideological predispositions of committee members, particularly non-elected officials, played in shaping recommendations and policy. As Cunningham (2000) argues, the committee was dominated by conservative-minded officials, who were wedded to the status quo. Their natural instincts led them to defend employer interests and oppose tighter regulation. As will be remembered from previous chapters, the 1861 Newcastle Commission also 'directed' and 'managed' the evidence submitted to it. It produced a pre-determined report which failed to impartially

analyse the impact of employment upon school children, instead choosing to extol the virtues of child employment at the expense of working class children's educational development. The 1888 Cross Commission too refused to countenance an extension to the school leaving age for fear of damage to commercial interests.

It appears, then, that in the forty years since the Newcastle Commission little had changed in terms of the relative priority given to employment and education in official circles. Despite contemporary concerns about national efficiency and physical deterioration, those responsible for devising policy continued to show a distinct disregard for the educational potential of working class children, as well as the potential harm caused by their employment. As already stated, Cunningham (2000) suggests that the Home Office's concern to keep children 'out of mischief' whilst out of school was a primary consideration. Although this was important, the Home Office's instinctive ideological affinity with employer interests should not be underestimated.

#### Government Response to the 1902 Committee's Report

The recommendations of the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children were implemented under the 1903 Employment of Children Act. When introducing the Bill into the House of Commons, the Home Secretary, Akers Douglas, claimed that the Bill would "do a great deal to counteract the dangers to which these children are now exposed, both in regard to their health and morals". However, he also made it clear that those who were anxious that the regulations might be too stringent need not be too concerned. The making of byelaws, he pointed out, was "entirely at the option of the Councils" but they had "to receive the sanction of the Secretary of State before they come into operation". Moreover, he emphasised that if the Home Office felt that the byelaws did "not represent the general view of the locality ... an individual enquiry can be made in that district" (Hansard, 04/03/1903, c.1423). These comments were designed to placate the Bill's critics, many of whom remained ideologically opposed to labour market intervention in this and other spheres. George Bartley, a Conservative and an author of numerous books promoting thrift amongst the poor, was one such individual:

“It seemed to him that there was some hardship and a chance that the children would be worse off after the passage of the Bill than before ... The House must be very careful as to these byelaws and see that they did not make it altogether impossible for these persons to live” (Ibid, c.1425).

MPs more supportive of child employment regulation dismissed the demands of those such as Bartley that poverty should be seen as a justification for diluting or relaxing the Act’s provisions. John Burns, the charismatic former dockers leader implored the Home Secretary to “beware of the widders”:

“As to the parents, I would warn the right hon. Gentleman against the ‘poor lone widow’. She will doubtless be invoked on the Grand Committee. Fancy pictures will be drawn of the lady who does a little charing with some of the duties of Mrs Gamp, who has two or three children selling flowers at Victoria Station, another selling newspapers at Charing Cross, and another who will be up with the milk at 4 o’clock in the morning or selling newspapers until twelve o’clock at night. Let the right hon. Gentleman ‘beware of the widders’ and take no notice of the lady who too frequently lives out of the labours of the children”.

Burns was also well aware of the Act’s limitations, in particular the implications of Home Office’s powers of approval. He described the legislation as merely a “little measure”, but one that would nonetheless face “a good deal of opposition ... from people who have more weight in these matters than they ought to have. viz the newspaper proprietors”. His plea, that the Home Office should use its powers to ensure that the Act’s provisions were not “whittled away” by the demands of local businessmen would subsequently be shown to have been made in vain (Ibid). In fact, it soon became evident that the Home Office would prove to be very adept at using its powers of approval to dilute the impact of the Act’s provisions.

As might be expected, the 1903 Employment of Children Act proved ineffective in relieving the burden of child employment. From the beginning the Home Office sought to encourage local authorities to adopt a 'light' approach towards regulation, and its initial guidance to local authorities on implementing the Act emphasised the educationally 'beneficial' aspects of employment. It stressed that "no harm" resulted "from children doing a limited amount of work" and that "on the contrary, limited and restricted work may be a benefit to them" (cited in Keeling, 1914, p.301). Indeed, the Home Office did its utmost to prevent local authorities from utilising the full powers available to them under the Act by refusing to approve byelaws that it considered to be too stringent. Cunningham (2000) has discussed the case of the London County Council in some detail, but numerous other local authorities found that their attempts to regulate child employment more thoroughly were frustrated. The Home Office's obstructive approach did not go unnoticed and before long the department faced accusations of being biased in favour of trade interests. In 1904, Sir John Gorst, a former head of the Education Department, made the following comments about the Home office's administration of the Act:

"The Act vested in the Home Office the duty of approving the by-laws made by the local authorities. That sort of power was a great snare. The idea of Parliament in granting the power was that anything extremely outrageous, any provisions contrary to the liberty of the subject or to general principles of policy, should be eliminated before the by-laws were allowed to come into force; but the Home Office ... were apt to interpret the power as meaning that the local authorities should pass by-laws, not in accordance with the wishes of the people of the locality, but based on a general scheme invented in the Department, from which no departures were to be permitted unless very strong local reasons could be urged. He was afraid that the making of these by-laws was being delayed by the attempt which the Home Office was making to reduce all these by-laws to one common pattern, instead of allowing the great county councils and borough councils a free hand to make such regulations as they thought proper. The Home Office were requiring these councils to send up their by-laws for revision and they

would not be passed until they had been examined by a number of officials who were imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances”.

Gorst went on to accuse the Home office of pandering to “certain capitalists and manufacturers who though ... the council byelaws might interfere with the transaction of their business” (Hansard, 04/08/1904, c. 1014-5).

The 1903 Employment of Children Act was clearly underpinned by the notion that ‘earning and learning’ were compatible pursuits and indeed that employment was a useful educational activity for working class children, imbuing in them skills and values that were ‘appropriate’ to their pre-ordained station in life. Importantly, as has been shown, the Act would also be administered by the Home Office, a government department with little or no interest in educational welfare or opportunity, and one that was inclined to be ideologically ‘in tune’ with the needs and demands of employers. However, this should not detract from the fact that the Act was a formative and indeed ‘landmark’ piece of legislation. Apart from the regulations governing the half-time employment of children (discussed in the following chapter), it represented the first attempt to regulate children’s out of school employment. In addition, as already hinted, the legacy of the ‘patchwork’, byelaw system of regulation that it initiated - that is, massive geographical inconsistencies and variation in child employment regulation - can still be seen today.

### Conclusion

The same barriers which had impeded working class children’s access to education in the nineteenth century continued to do so in the first decade of the twentieth century. Though access to elementary education was now universal, there had been little progression in the ability of working class children to access post-elementary education. We have seen that the structure of the education system continued to create formidable obstacles for poorer children to overcome. For instance, just as elementary school fees had done so in the nineteenth century, secondary school fees and maintenance costs

during this period precluded most children from the industrial classes from accessing post-elementary education, even when they had won a scholarship. This was caused by a combination of regional variation in the capacity of secondary school provision, variation in the application of the Free Place System, variation in scholarship value, and overarching poverty which meant poorer families - who required significant and consistent financial support in order to access secondary education - were unable to successfully negotiate these structural inconsistencies and forgo their children's employment so their children might access secondary education.

Policy-makers, particularly within the Home Office, also continued to oppose the extension of educational opportunities to working class children on the grounds that employment conferred both educational and health benefits to children, and ameliorated household poverty. Moreover, employers too continued to extol the virtues of child employment and helped to provide Home Office officials with the 'ammunition' it needed to minimise child employment regulation via the 1903 Employment of Children Act. This was achieved through skilful Home Office control of the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children and manipulation of the evidence submitted which, despite a very strong case for more stringent child employment regulation, resulted in employment concerns taking priority over educational concerns; as we have seen, similar tactics were adopted by policy-makers and employers in nineteenth century commissions to achieve similar ends.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HALF-TIME SYSTEM

#### Introduction

The ideological celebration of the ‘beneficial’ aspects of work that was a characteristic feature of debates over children’s out of school employment did not extend to all aspects of the child labour debate, in particular, the half-time system. This system, whereby working class children divided their day between school and factory, was found predominantly in the Lancashire textile towns, together with those of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Of course, the half-time system had been widely criticised by education campaigners well before the turn of the twentieth century. However, support for the retention of the system remained strong in the areas where it was most predominant. The extent of approval of partial exemption amongst the Lancashire populace in the nineteenth century can be gauged by this extract from the 1888 North Western Inspector of Schools Report:

“The abolition of half time employment and the raising of the age for first employment are naturally ‘burning questions’ in this cotton manufacturing and coal mining district.....they have influenced the School Board election just over in Blackburn, so much so that one of the opposing thought it necessary to issue a special manifesto stigmatising as false a statement that it was prepared to the raising of the age for first employment from eleven to twelve” (HMSO, 1888, p.145).

Some ten years later, in 1898, a Factory Inspector visiting a textile mill in Bolton held a ballot on proposals to raise the school leaving age and only 22 were in favour whereas 110 opposed the motion. As we will see, this support for the half time system continued well into the twentieth century and it was frequently cited by policy-makers and politicians as a significant impediment to reform.

The campaign to abolish the half-time system that waged throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century provides us with an interesting case study. In many respects, the arguments presented against the half-time system were the same as those that had been marshalled against children's out of school employment, with the focus being on the educational, physical and moral harm caused by the practice. Indeed, the case against half-timing was often made by the same individuals and organisations that had given evidence to the committees of inquiry discussed in previous chapters. Of course, the 'dangers' said to be associated with the half-time system were seen to be far more serious, by virtue of the fact that half-time scholars were working in factories, often undertaking 'adult'-like labour, with all the attendant dangers that this presented. There was, though, a good deal of consistency, in terms of the arguments presented against both forms of child employment, and the individuals and groups who were calling for tighter restrictions.

The arguments marshalled in favour of the retention of the system also resembled those used by supporters of other forms of child employment, and those who defended the practice were often the same individuals and groups that were supportive of child employment generally - employers, free market liberals and Conservatives. As was the case with more general child employment, they described the half-time system as an educationally beneficial activity, and one that represented a useful form of socialisation into the world of work. Many manufacturers also insisted that the half-timers undertook crucial tasks that adults struggled to perform and hence that their employment was 'vital' to the functioning of the industries in which they worked. Family poverty was also described as a major obstacle to the abolition of the half-time system as, it was argued, many families were heavily reliant upon the earnings that children brought into the family. There was, therefore, a broad crossover in debates about child employment generally and the half-time system. However, there was one crucial difference, in that strong support for the half time system could also be found amongst the trade unions and workers who were engaged in the industries affected by it. In this respect, in theory, a more effective power-bloc of opposition to reform existed in the case of the half-time

system compared to child employment generally. Despite this, as we will see, the half-time system was abolished following the passage of the 1918 Education Act, whereas child employment generally remained largely unregulated. This chapter focuses upon this issue, looking at the ‘half-time campaign’ in Lancashire and Yorkshire in particular, counties in which support for the system amongst the local populace remained consistently robust.

### The 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption

Before focusing specifically on the Committee on Partial Exemption, it is logical to contextualise the extent of the issue it investigated. Nationally, the number of children working half-time had declined consistently during the first two decades of the century. Board of Education returns show that between 1903-04 and 1917-18 the number of children so employed had fallen some 17.7% from 78,840 to 64,894 (BOE, 1906 and 1919). In an earlier report, the Board had suggested that the decline in the incidence of half-timing was “undoubtedly” a consequence of “an increased public appreciation of the benefits of education and of the disadvantage which children suffer both at the time and later in life by being withdrawn from school at the earliest age” (BOE, 1903, p.27). Certainly, in a number of districts manufacturers and workers had been convinced of the need to end the system, and steps had been taken to eliminate the use of half-timers in factories and workshops (BOE, 1909). However, in the textile towns and Boroughs of Lancashire and Yorkshire quite different attitudes towards child labour prevailed. The number of half-timers employed in Lancashire actually increased from 39,116 to 42,899 between 1910-11 and 1917. Lancashire’s percentage of the national total of half timers also rose from 54.7% to 66.1% during the same period (BOE, 1912 and 1919).

Support for the retention of child employment in Lancashire and Yorkshire districts remained strong, and textile operatives themselves resisted progressive reform. Indeed, the influential Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption, which recommended the abolition of the half-time system, concluded that “a large number of the working class of Lancashire” were “not yet prepared voluntarily to accept any raising of the [school

leaving] age” and were “averse to any such legislative enactment” (BOE, 1909, p.13). The deliberations of this committee are important for a number of reasons. The half-time system, for example, was obviously a contentious subject, and like previous inquiries, it received passionate evidence from both those in favour and those against child employment. However, this committee stands out from the previous ones in that the committee members themselves were drawn from professions which meant that they were more likely to be receptive to evidence which emphasised the deleterious impact of child employment on children. This was a Board of Education-led inquiry, and given our earlier discussions of the earlier Home Office-led investigations, the significance of this should not be underestimated.

The evidence given to this committee reflected much the same views and opinions as those given by the various witnesses to the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children and earlier inquiries such as the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission, 1861 Newcastle Commission, 1888 Cross Commission and 1892 Royal Commission on Labour discussed in earlier chapters. It reported unanimous evidence from teachers and headmasters as to the destructive impact upon school organisation and the education of children generally as a product of the half-time system. Half-time children had their attention split between employment and school and their “progress was retarded, if not brought absolutely to a standstill” (BOE, 1909, p.4). In terms of organisation, the committee found that:

“The organisation of any school in which there are half-timers suffers considerably. Arrangements have to be made for teaching in the same class children who attend the whole week and children who are only attending half. The full-time children frequently may receive two hours’ instruction in a given subject, while the half-timer can only attend one hour’s teaching per week in the same subject. The result is obviously detrimental to the half-time child, who loses part of his education. If the half-timers are a small minority of the class they tend to be neglected and left behind the others. If, on the other hand, they are numerous, the teacher has necessarily to give them special attention while they

are in school. The consequence is that the full-timers suffer in their turn; for the whole class tends to have its pace reduced to the pace of the slower children” (BOE, 1909, p.5).

Evidence of such a scenario was presented by His Majesty’s Inspector for North West Lancashire, Mr H.M. Richards, who asserted that due to the vast majority of children in Lancashire being half-time the teachers had little choice but to tailor lessons for them and not full-time pupils; consequently, full-timers were held back (BOE, 1909a, p.196).

This situation was particularly acute for those half-timers not employed in factories but in domestic or other settings as their school attendance was not subject to standardised routine; they attended as and when they pleased so long as they made the minimum number of attendances per week. Sir Henry Hibbert, Chairman of Lancashire County Council Education Committee, argued there was a lot of this domestic half-time taking place and it severely disorganised the children (BOE, 1909a); such children could effectively avoid classes they did not enjoy. This is an aspect of the half-time system that is rarely acknowledged in official histories of the period, which have tended to focus on the experiences of the factory child. Clearly factory work was a more ‘visible’ phenomenon and more likely to prompt public outrage. However, the evidence to the inquiry suggests that we should not underestimate the extent or impact of the ‘hidden’, yet equally deleterious form of domestic half-timing.

Scholastic achievement of half-timers was further impaired by the early morning start necessitated by employment in the mills. Most mills commenced work at 6am which meant half-time children had to wake several hours before those attending school full-time. The majority of witnesses gave evidence to support the position that this led to children arriving at school in the afternoon in a condition unfit to receive instruction and frequently too tired to remain awake. Mr Robert Morley, President of the Halifax District Trades and Labour Council, for example, stated that:

“In nearly every case in the first three months after the child goes half-time it seems to be in a half-dull, passive, tired condition. The new occupation exhausts both its physical energy and mental capacity, and they do exceptionally well in school if they maintain the standard they were at when they went to the factory”.

Morley goes on state that children were so tired “both masters and mistresses admit to me that, out of mere humanity, when they see boys or girls dozing off, they let them doze” (BOE, 1909a, p.138).

The early start was not the preserve of the factory or mill worker, in fact, half-timers were employed in numerous occupations including errand boys, newspaper boys, milk boys, and in barbers’ shops. Here too, children worked before school hours and the impact upon educational performance was detrimental. According to Mrs Haslam, of the CWEC, “Milk-boys”, for example, were “very often late for school” and complaints were made as to their general attendance (BOE, 1909a, p.189).

Clearly, then, the early start was significant in restricting scholastic progress, however, it should also be noted that the combined hours of employment and school attendance the half-timer was subject to was greatly more than that of the full-time pupil:

“During the week when the child was in the mill in the morning, it spends 30 hours in the factory and 12.5 in the school, and during the week when it attends school in the morning, it spends 25.5 hours in the factory and 15 in the school. On an average therefore of a fortnight’s work the half-time child has been engaged at work and school together for half as much again in actual hours as the full-time scholar. And when the child goes to the mill in the morning it has by the time it begins to attend school in the afternoon already worked for as long in the mill as the total school hours of a full-time child” (BOE, 1909, p.7).

Given the overall volume of work, both academic and vocational, undertaken by half-time children it is unsurprising that they were consistently described in evidence to the

committee as being ‘dull’, ‘unfit for instruction’, ‘overworked’ and ‘ruined’. Specific evidence was given by several witnesses attesting to the deleterious impact of half-time employment upon academic performance. For instance, Mr A.R. Pickles, Principle Teacher at Burnley Wood Council School and former President of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), submitted the results of an examination he carried out with his pupils aged twelve and a half. He found that the half-time pupils scored significantly lower marks than full-time pupils. The results were as follows:

“Full-time children in composition reach 73.9 per cent. of marks, and the half-time children 63.4; dictation, full-timers, 93.4, half-timers 76.4 per cent; arithmetic, which shows the most marked difference, full-time children, 70.2 per cent., and half-time children 35.3 per cent.; geography, full-timers, 61.2, and half-timers, 56.2 per cent.; history, 75.1 and 57.2 per cent. I want to put those figures in as absolute evidence of the difference in educational attainments” (BOE, 1909a, p.16).

Similar findings were presented to the Committee by Mr H. Firth, His Majesty’s Inspector for the West Riding of Yorkshire, who compared exam success in Huddersfield (an area without any half-timers) with success rates in the same exam at the same time in Halifax (an area with significant numbers of half-time children). Firth found that while 85 per cent passed in Huddersfield only 25 per cent passed in Halifax (BOE, 1909a, p.185). Instruction in Huddersfield, Firth acknowledged, was better than average, however, he was of no doubt that the marked difference in academic performance was in no small part attributable to Halifax’s use of the half-time system.

Interestingly, though there were far fewer half-time children in agricultural areas, Mr R.N. Lewis, Headmaster of Boulter’s School in Lincolnshire, asserted that the half-time system under the agricultural clause was even more damaging to educational performance than half-time in the towns due to partial exemption being available here from age eleven (under the 1899 Robson Act) and the differing application of the system whereby children would be completely exempt from school attendance between the

months of May to September. He stated that “a child who gets out under that agricultural clause practically finishes his education when he leaves at 11 years of age...When that child is away all the summer months I think you will see at once that when he comes back to the school he has forgotten nearly all that he had learned before” (BOE, 1909a, p.21).

The committee was also concerned for the longer term education of half-timers and regarded the system as a serious barrier to continuing education in post-elementary settings, thereby creating significant educational wastage through the loss of potential contribution to national efficiency from half-timers. This educational loss, the committee argued, was demonstrated by the dearth of half-timers accessing secondary schools via the Free Places Scheme (discussed in the previous chapter) and the small numbers entering, and achieving in, continuation or evening schools. Half-timers, as earlier evidence highlights, were academically weaker than full-timers and therefore stood little chance of winning a competitive scholarship to a secondary school; knowing this themselves their desire for continuance of education was lost. Additionally, the Committee noted that dividing of attention between employment and school left the half-timer with little appetite for any more school work than was absolutely necessary:

“Secondary education is practically closed to the half-timer...it is hopeless for the half-timer to compete with the full-time scholar for Scholarships...The half-timer appears either to have lost the desire for education, or to be discouraged by his meagre attainments from following after knowledge which the full-timer is better fitted to obtain by his superior start” (BOE, 1909, p.7).

The experience of post-elementary education for those small numbers of half-timers that did continue was found wanting. Due to their comparatively lower academic attainment, half-timers were unable to access more advanced and interesting classes and tended to languish in preparatory classes where they continued to be educated at an elementary level; whereas those who had been full-time scholars were much more likely to access and profit by more advanced classes. This was borne out in an investigation of a Halifax

Evening School conducted by Mr H. Firth. He found that of the boys aged 13-14 receiving advanced instruction in 1903-4 79 per cent had not been half-timers, while only 25 per cent who had been half-timers received instruction of a similar level. Moreover, half-time children were much more likely to drop out during the early stages of instruction than full-timers who tended to last for up to four years. Thus, 33.5 per cent of full-timers received advanced instruction for at least two years beyond the preparatory level, while the equivalent figure for half-timers was only 3.5 per cent (BOE, 1909a, p.183). This situation, the committee noted, was typical of areas where half-time was substantial.

Though the aforementioned points clearly illustrate the deleterious impact the half-time system exerted upon the education experience, it is important to note that not all evidence submitted to the committee was so negative. Indeed, the evidence from most employers and related bodies, such as various Chambers of Commerce, put forward an opposing argument celebrating the benefits of half-time to the education experience. For instance, the President of Bradford Chamber of Commerce and Managing Director of a spinners and manufactures mill near Bradford, Colonel Herbert A. Foster, claimed that the effect of half-time was “distinctly in favour of the children. The experience is that a child who has worked half-time is more intelligent than one who has been in school all the time...intelligence is increased by doing light work” (BOE, 1909a, p.78). A similar line was taken by the ex-President of Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Mr T.H. Morris, in his assertion that children who split their time between the mill and school were “brighter and more intelligent” (BOE, 1909a, p.113). Mr F.A Hargreaves, Secretary of the North and North East Lancashire Cotton Spinners’ and Manufacturers Association in addition to representing various bodies including the Cotton Employers’ Parliamentary Association, played down the impact upon education by suggesting that teachers’ claims that half-time children were too tired for instruction were fuelled not by concerns over educational attainment, but by concerns surrounding the lower grant schools received for half-timers in comparison to full-timers. He went on to profess that the early morning start faced by half-timers had no bad effect (BOE, 1909a, p.119), a view shared by Mr Morris (BOE, 1909a).

One of the strongest arguments forwarded in support of the half-time system was that it was needed to develop in children the requisite skills for them to become effective workers; an argument which had been forwarded for many years, as seen in previous chapters. Moreover, these skills would prove to be of value in training for future employment in the textile trade. Such claims of value in this technical education, or pseudo apprenticeship, were declared most enthusiastically by the same groups who refuted the half-time's detrimental impact upon scholastic attainment. Thus, Mr John Holdsworth Robinson, Managing Director of a spinners and manufacturers mill in Bradford and Chairman of the Spinners Section of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, argued that factory life was of educational/industrial value to those children who would continue in the textile trade (BOE, 1909a). Similarly, Mr F.A. Hargreaves regarded the extra experience gained by the half-timer in the factory or mill to be of great value for their future:

“I hold the opinion most strongly that half time employment in the textile industry and half time attendance at school go very well together. I regard the half time work in the mill as technical education in the broadest and best sense...I think I would rather have a child working half time at its employment and going half time to school than coming straight from school and commencing to work full time” (BOE, 1909a, p.117).

Herein lay the related issue of appropriate age for partial exemption eligibility. Declaring that the work undertaken by half-timers was of educational and personal training value, some employers maintained that in order to capitalise on this training children were needed in the employment setting at a young age. Typically, employer evidence submitted to the committee claimed that the younger the child the better and more skilful a worker they became; it will be recalled that the same claim was made by employers to the Newcastle Commission some fifty years earlier and the 1888 Cross Commission. Moreover, employers argued that if training did not begin at a young enough age

essential skills would never be fully acquired. Mr W.H. Mitchell, Director of Messrs. Fison and Co. spinners and manufacturers of Burley-in-Wharfedale, stated:

“The earlier they learn the better. Early in life mind and body are more receptive. That applies very largely to work like spinning which requires very delicate manipulation and delicate fingers. If you don’t learn to be skilful early in life you will never be very good at it” (BOE, 1909a, p.106).

The point was repeated by Morris, Hargreaves, Foster and Robinson. They contended that any further increase in the age of eligibility for partial exemption was not only unnecessary but would prove to be damaging to trade. Morris and Foster pressed this point arguing that it would “seriously dislocate the trade” (BOE, 1909a, p.115) as they claimed it had done when the age of eligibility was raised previously from eleven to twelve years. The raising of the age by one year, according to Morris, led to a significant reduction in the available number of half-timers, “practically speaking, we have not run all our spinning machinery since” (BOE, 1909a, p.114). Such concerns led not only to critical comments from employers when the committee asked for their views on the possible raising of half-time age another year (effectively abolishing it), but also to calls from Mr Foster and Mr Robinson that it should, if anything, be lowered. Mr Foster stated:

“In my opinion, if any alteration [in the law] were made it should be in the direction of reducing the limit to 11 years for all strong and well-developed children, who would then have the opportunity of beginning their industrial training early in life” (BOE, 1909a, p.79).

Cries for the necessity of youth were not restricted to areas of textile industry; agricultural employers made the same demands. The Worcester Chamber of Agriculture, for example, unanimously passed a resolution calling for “increased facilities for removing children from school at an earlier age in rural districts, a course which would permit these children to commence the practical and more important part of their

education while still of receptive years”. Representing the Chamber, Mr W.S. Lane, a tenant farmer and member of Worcestershire LEA, stated that “the children seem more clumsy when they do not leave school before the ages of 13 or 14. They are not so handy with horses or cattle” (BOE, 1909a, p.166). He continued, “people think it is very simple to pull turnips but if you put anybody at it who has not been accustomed to the work and compare him with one who is you will see the difference at once” (BOE, 1909a, p.167). The BOE’s Special Advisor on Matters of Rural Education and His Majesty’s Inspector of Lincolnshire, Mr T.S. Dymond, asserted that training on the farm from the age of twelve was of ‘supreme value’ and older children are less likely to pick it up or turn their hand to it as they would expect to find a better class of employment.

The above serves to demonstrate that employers took a dim view of academic education choosing instead to celebrate the ‘benefits’ that half-time added to educational attainment and personal development, or, instead, choosing to attack its relevance to the future for which the working classes were ‘intended’. Such notions of class maintenance, as we have seen, had strong historical tradition, and can be strongly associated with evidence presented by employers to this committee. Mitchell, for instance, argued that the half-time system was ideal for the child wishing to be a textile worker; it was “...a better education for the purposes of his or her life than the child who is all the time at school”. Not many children were capable of benefitting from additional education, Mitchell continued, and “it is worth doing that for the few who are fitted...but don’t try to take all the children and bring them up in that way” (BOE, 1909a, p.111); later chapters will refute claims that the working classes offered a minimal ‘pool of ability’ and demonstrate their academic potential which had been, and continues to be, suppressed. Indeed, many employers regarded the education given to the working classes as being impractical and of little use. According to Morris, “the education given to the children in the manufacturing districts at present is not an education that is generally useful for a child that has to earn its living” (BOE, 1909a, p.114). In adopting their hostile position to the extension of education via arguments that it was not in the best interests of working class children, employers sought to present their claims as actions of paternalistic benevolence. In reality, their concerns were far less altruistic.

Unlike the previous committees of inquiry examined earlier in the thesis, the 1909 Committee was not 'taken in' by, nor too sympathetic to, the arguments forwarded by employers. The vast majority of evidence, as we have seen, contradicted employers' assertions that half-time employment was beneficial to children's academic performance. Moreover, the arguments *against* claims that children were needed young to acquire necessary skills - while their fingers and hands were still dextrous - and to enhance their futures through industrial training/technical education were equally dominant in the evidence to the committee. Miss Mary M. Paterson, Factory Inspector in Scotland and North of England, when questioned about the necessity of youth in skill acquisition stated that:

“When I began as an inspector, the age [for half-time] was 10, and there was an agitation to raise it to 11, and that point was urged very strongly both in Lancashire and Dundee, that the child, especially in the spinning mills, would never obtain the necessary facility unless she began at an age when the fingers would be supple. When the age came to be raised to 12 exactly the same happened, and the argument did not turn out to be true in either case. I suppose it would still be the same” (BOE, 1909a, p.50).

Mr B. Turner, President of the General Union of Weavers' and Textile Workers' Association of Yorkshire, agreed with Miss Paterson and stated that “as regards suppleness of finger and dexterity, the hand of a lad or lass has not become hard by labour until they are 16. They are supple all the time, right up to 17 years of age” (BOE, 1909a, p.67). The vast majority of evidence concurred with this opinion.

Statements from some relevant bodies in agricultural areas also questioned the necessity of youth in skill acquisition. As an ex-farmer himself, the Chairman of Staffordshire Education Committee, Mr J.T. Homer, informed the 1909 Committee that he could:

“See no possible advantage in children leaving school to indulge in agricultural operations at an early age...they can be of little use...the right kind of man to teach farming to is not a boy of immature age, but a thoroughly well-educated and intelligent person who will be able to take it up with greater rapidity than anyone else. The greatest thing we can do for agriculture is not to provide immature child labour, but to educate properly the children before we send them on the farm” (BOE, 1909a, p.175).

Interestingly, the only support for Homer’s view from agricultural evidence submitted to the Committee came from another witness who crossed both the farming and educationalist professions; Mr J. Wilkinson, a farmer and school manager in the East Riding of Yorkshire agreed that children under thirteen were of little use to farmers.

What the above serves to illustrate is that though the majority of the evidence from agricultural areas expressed a need for children to commence employment at a younger age, a significant amount of agricultural evidence suggested otherwise. When this is considered alongside the overwhelming evidence from textile areas that such a necessity was a fallacy the argument loses much credibility. The final ‘blow’ to this claim by employers is dealt by the indisputable fact that half-time only occurred in a relatively small number of areas on the national scale. Much evidence presented to the committee showed that industries in areas where half-time did not exist were just as efficient and competitive with the same industry in areas where significant numbers of half-timers were employed, thereby negating employers’ claims as to the necessity of the youthful employees. Moreover, employers located very close to each other often took opposing positions on the employment of half-timers. A Factory Inspector for Yorkshire, Miss Rose Squire, told the committee that some employers regularly emphasised the importance of the half-timer to their industry, “yet side by side with these there are manufacturers doing the same class of work in the same way as far as one can judge, and employing no half-timers at all”. She asserted there was no economic necessity for employers to use half-timers but “those who employ them will generally tell you that they are indispensable” (BOE, 1909a, p.54). Miss Paterson gave evidence along the same

theme, and the Lancashire Secretary of the Committee of School Attendance Officers, Mr R. Dickin, argued that other trades, such as the electrical trade, required even more skills and dexterity, yet they did not employ half-timers and seemed to prosper (BOE, 1909a).

Employers' claims to the committee that the industrial training or technical education half-timers received was necessary to enhance their future employment prospects were also highly suspect. It was the contention of the majority of witnesses that the employment undertaken by half-timers was easily learnt, routine, tedious, and consequently of little value to future employment. Robert Morley told the Committee:

“I am one of those who had the unfortunate experience of being forced at a very early age to do work outside school hours and then forced to take half-time in a factory. I say the work is monotonous and within a month any part of that technical education that is supposed to be got can be got by a child that goes into the factory” (BOE, 1909a, p.138).

Mr J.H. Crabtree, the Oldham Factory Inspector and ex-teacher, concurred with Morley's view and stated, “In my judgement a child is taught in the first month. What comes after is mere repetition, practice of what the child has already been taught” (BOE, 1909a, p.43). Rose Squire too adopted this stance arguing that half-timers received little in the way of industrial training and tended to undertake basic tasks such as sweeping and cleaning. Children were employed, she continued, “because they are a cheap form of labour, and there is no industrial training at all connected with the employment” (BOE, 1909a, p.52).

Moreover, in many cases half-time children found themselves engaged in irregular, infrequent or domestic employment to which no genuine claim of industrial or technical education could be attached. In his evidence to the Committee, the Clerk to East Riding of Yorkshire LEA, Mr J. Bickersteth, produced a book containing the findings of attendance officers pertaining to the employment of partial exemption scholars in his area. He told the committee that the attendance officers:

“Were asked to report on the employment that they actually found the children engaged in during their monthly visits. I open the book at random, and I find that one boy who was first employed at reaping corn was the second month working for his mother, and in another month he was doing potato picking for somebody else. I think that shows that the occupation of children obtaining partial exemption is just cadging for work wherever they can find it. They have one job one day and another the next, and many days they spend in idleness. It was just a chance when our officer went round if he found the boy at work” (BOE, 1909a, p.161).

Much the same situation was described by Mr J. Wilkinson who asserted that children picked up odd jobs as and when they could. In the interim they tended to frequent village corners or blacksmith’s shops. Mr H.M. Richards, His Majesty’s Inspector for North-West Lancashire, contended that children in Blackpool and Morecambe were exempt from school between the months of June and October in order to take employment during the summer holiday season. Most were employed, Richards notes, in domestic work in ‘company houses’ or some form of street selling such as minding stalls or selling postcards; jobs in which no technical education of merit was required or gained. In predominantly agricultural areas the employment of half-timers was just as trivial. Evidence from a member of Gloucestershire Education Committee and ex-President of the Gloucestershire Chamber of Agriculture, Mr Charles Bathurst, demonstrated that many half-timers, far from receiving training in the ways of agriculture, were in fact put to work, not on the farm, but in the house; it was employment “more or less of a domestic character”. When asked by the committee if such employment held any industrial training value Bathurst replied, “speaking more or less as an educationalist, I cannot possibly answer that in the affirmative” (BOE, 1909a, p.210). In Burnley, A.R. Pickles found that many half-timers, particularly girls, were dividing their allotted employment time between the mill and the home where they performed domestic duties. Evidence of ad hoc, inconsistent and domestic employment, then, was inextricably linked with the half-time system. Given the frequency of its occurrence the validity of employers’ claims

that half-time employment offered children long-term industrial or technical training for future employment appears very doubtful.

Employer concern for the future employment prospects of half-timers can be further questioned by evidence of the ‘forcing out’ or ‘letting go’ of employees when they reached the age of fifteen or sixteen. Using evidence from the 1901 census, Mr Harry Smith, Inspector under the Employment of Children Act and Secretary of the Bradford Cinderella Club, explained to the committee that the number of male half-timers who continued to be employed in Bradford’s textile trades after the age of fifteen was remarkably low:

“...the number of males employed...between the ages of 10 and 15, which is really between 12 and 15, is 3,164. In the next period from 15 to 25 it is only 7,912, and it ought to be over three times as many as in the first period if they were all kept on in the whole of the textile trades. That is shown in the case of girls. The number in the case of girls in the second period is 11,699 as compared with 3,178 in the 10 to 15 period” (BOE, 1909a, p.135).

Smith goes on to argue that most left between the ages of fifteen and eighteen without any transferable skills and, therefore, particularly for boys, the half-time experience was of no industrial value; “it unfits them for any other occupation” (BOE, 1909a, p.135). Explanation for this ‘culling’ of employment from fifteen years of age onwards was offered by the Headmaster of Great Horton Council School in Bradford and ex-President of the NUT, Mr T.P. Sykes. Like Smith, Sykes contended that long-term employment in the textile trades for half-timers was unlikely:

“It is not an apprenticeship in any sense of the word. The boys at the age of 16 or 17 are dismissed by the overlooker or they leave...I found that the overlooker is in the habit of picking quarrels with them over trifles, and he dismisses them or he makes their work a little too disagreeable for them, and somehow they are got out at about 17 and told to go find a trade”.

Therefore, once they ceased to be half-timers, these young workers were effectively 'pushed out' and left to seek employment for which they unqualified. Sykes' explanation for this 'rough' treatment was that "at that age they are beginning to expect their wages to be more according to their age, and they can be dispensed with so that their places can be filled up with cheaper child labour" (BOE, 1909a, p.11). Many witnesses concurred with this assessment. R.N. Lewis stated the desire on the part of farmers for cheap labour was the main motive for employing half-timers. As noted earlier, Miss Rose Squire too stated that the central reason for employment of half-timers was that they were a cheap labour source. The Secretary of Bradford district Weavers and Textile Workers, Mr Thomas Brown, agreed with Smith, Sykes, Lewis and Squire, and called for employers to pay a fair 'living wage' to older children instead of setting them adrift.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, employers' evidence to the 1909 Committee almost entirely failed to declare any financial self-interest or motivation in their support for continuation of the half-time system. As we have seen, their motives, according to the evidence submitted to the committee, lay predominantly in 'enhancing' the academic prowess and occupational future interests of the child. However, one employer association, the Association of Beamers, Twisters and Drawers, was quite 'up-front' about its position. Its representative, Mr W.C. Robinson, admitted that his association was opposed to the raising of the half-time age based upon the want of cheap employees:

"34 branches out of 38 are opposed to the abolition of half-time and are opposed to any increase in the age. Their views, of course, are regulated largely by the fact that these young persons are cheap labour...it is a reasonable position you must come to, that you will get a child of 12 or 13 to work for less money than a child of 15 or 16".

Moreover, Robinson, when questioned on the evidence of the majority of employers that it was essential to begin half-time at the age of twelve in order to acquire necessary skills,

declared “I am not going to argue that it does because I don’t imagine it does for a moment” (BOE, 1909a, p.132).

The sharp contrast between the views of employers and educationalists was also apparent in evidence relating to the notion that the half-time system offered relief from poverty. It will be remembered from earlier discussion of the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, the 1888 Cross Commission, and the 1861 Newcastle Commission, that alleviation of poverty was regularly cited as reason for not restricting child labour or not extending school life; the same reasoning was applied by employers in their evidence to the 1909 Committee. John Holdsworth Robinson argued that the wages of the half-timer were “essential for the family to obtain the bare necessities of life” and frequently “prevented families from becoming paupers, thus preserving their independence and cultivating self-reliance” (BOE, 1909a, p.87). Colonel Foster added, “the non-contribution of children to the upkeep of the household often means the difference between living in want or comparative affluence...if you take away from the children who are at present employed as half-timers the opportunity of earning wages and contributing to the maintenance of their parents, you will be acting contrary to the interests of the children and the interests of the parents” (BOE, 1909a, p.78 and p.80). W.H. Mitchell agreed with Robinson and Foster claiming he was in no doubt of the importance of the half-time wage to the poor family. It did, he stated, make “a great difference to the welfare of the whole family, and it makes a serious difference in the way of food, and enables them to get sufficient food where otherwise they would not”. Mitchell goes on to declare that the half-time wage was inextricably linked to family morality and levels of decency:

“The extra income enables the mother to stay at home instead of having to go to work, with the result that the children are properly cared for, which cannot be done if the mother is absent at work...I am talking about cases which are very common...the mother has to go out working, and when the children come home they do not get their food properly cooked, and the whole home goes to the bad. The mother works hard all day, and cannot look after her daughters, and they get

out into the streets, and everything bad comes to them. If the mother can be kept at home by some of the children going out to work it is a great advantage” (BOE, 1909a, p.108).

While employers espoused the financial and moral benefits of half-time to the child and, more broadly, the family, the majority of evidence to the Committee refuted any palliative offered by half-time wages to poverty. Much of the evidence demonstrated that half-timers came from relatively affluent working class backgrounds and very few from the often cited ‘widow’ home. The Half-time Council, an organisation composed of teachers from Lancashire and Yorkshire, found that less than one in ten half-timers during this period were children of widows, and many such children did not avail themselves of half-time employment though eligible to do so (BOE, 1909a, p.18). Mr B. Turner agreed with the Half-time Council regarding the ‘widow’ and poverty argument. He stated:

“Unfortunately I think the widow is made the scapegoat, and in the case of many towns like Halifax and Brighouse and a bit in the Spen Valley, where there are half-timers, the poor widow is not the person who does it, but the person with £2 or 30s. a week” (BOE, 1909a, p.67).

The Committee on Wage Earning Children (CWEC) representative from Bolton, Mrs Haslam, also posited that families where the income was of such a good level it was quite unnecessary for their children to work half-time, would continue to expect their children to do so. Moreover, Harry Smith informed the 1909 Committee that for the poorest who had no option but to accept poor law relief, sending their children to work half-time would have no impact upon household income as the value of the half-time wage would be deducted from the relief given (BOE, 1909a, p.136).

Further doubt can be cast upon the assertion that half-time wages were necessary to alleviate poverty in analysis of the process through which children received their wage. Numerous witnesses referred to evidence of children employed half-time and receiving

no payment for their employment for considerable periods of time. A.R. Pickles presented the committee with a return he had prepared showing that some children had been employed for over a year without receiving any wages whatsoever. Similarly, Mr Henry Whittick, the Headmaster of Audley Range Council School in Blackburn, stated:

“Children in our district often remain in the mill working a whole year without payment...It is a very undesirable thing, because it does not take long for a lad to learn the work required from him. He should be paid as soon as he is fit to do his work” (BOE, 1909a, p.23).

Employers’ claims of paternal benevolence and the necessity of half-time wages as a palliative to poverty do not sit easily with the above evidence. A more likely explanation, perhaps, of this withholding of payment lies in the previously discussed employer desire for cheap, or, in this case, free labour; perhaps employers’ regarded the value of the ‘industrial training’ they provided to be such that they felt it unnecessary to pay children for their labour. Whatever the explanation, the fact remained that children were not in receipt of wages for many months, if not years, thus their family income was unchanged at the cost of their education.

The half-time system was also objected to on the grounds that, far from alleviating poverty, it, in reality, reinforced poverty by suppressing adult wage levels while at the same time increasing unemployment levels for adults. Harry Smith stated that “wages generally have been brought down by this employment of children in the factory” (BOE, 1909a, p.136). Mr J. Hitchiner, Secretary of the Macclesfield Power Loom Silk Weavers’ Association, concurred with Smith, as did J.T Homer who argued that:

“...child labour had brought down the wages of the men, and limited the opportunities of employment for men. If child labour was abolished it would mean more for the men” (BOE, 1909a, p.176).

If, as the above evidence demonstrates, the half-time system did not mitigate poverty, but did in fact intensify its impact, explanation for its enduring continuation must, at least in part, lay elsewhere. Within the committee evidence given by those opposed to half-time there was a broad consensus that the half-time system continued to exist primarily due to the habitual behaviour of parents. In some areas it was customary behaviour that children should be engaged in half-time employment, just as their parents had. T.P. Sykes, in explanation, declared, “the custom of the district, I think, weighs very largely” (BOE, 1909a, p.11). Headmaster of Redcross Street School in Rochdale and representative of the National Association of Head Teachers, Mr T.L. Roberts, stated, “the practice is largely one of custom and habit, and the fact that parents went to the mills themselves at an early age” (BOE, 1909a, p.37). Elaborating on this point, one representative of the CWEC, Mrs Higgs told the Committee:

“Almost all the parents have been themselves half-timers. There is a feeling amongst them that there is no need for the children to be better off than they were. In a great many Lancashire homes the feeling on the part of the parents is ‘What has been good enough for me is good enough for you’” (BOE, 1909a, p.190).

Given the geographical variations in prevalence of the half-time system it is very plausible that parental habit and local custom were significant to its continuance. As we have seen, districts next to each other could demonstrate very different attitudes towards the half-time employment of their children. Harry Smith argued that abolition of the half-time system in the textile trades, where it was predominant, would lead to the custom being dropped in other areas of employment including domestic employment. Smith noted that Leeds had no custom of half-time in textile trades and subsequently no half-time at all. Bradford, on the other hand, had a strong custom of half-time in the textile trade and this permeated into other occupations (BOE, 1909a, p.136).

Parental habit and local custom were, clearly, important to the maintenance of half-time. However, employer demand for half-timers as a cheaper alternative to adult employees, as discussed earlier, was also crucial. Though employers were reluctant to admit their

desire for cheap employees to the committee, evidence of this desire was illustrated by several witnesses. Mrs Paterson spoke of her experience of employers so keen for half-time labour that they had “been bringing a good deal of pressure to bear on the parents to bring the children to work as soon as they could” (BOE, 1909a, p.50). Similarly, in his role as Headmaster, Henry Whittick recounted personal encounters with employers arriving at the school enquiring as to the availability of children for half-time. He stated that he had “employers of these young folks coming and asking if we have any children ready for half-time whom we can send to the mill. Of course, we are simply civil to them and send them away” (BOE, 1909a, p.25). Moreover, according to Rose Squire, employer demand for half-time employees was such that in some areas, Bradford in particular, employers ‘imported’ children from other parts of the country:

“I have heard that it has come to the knowledge of the Poor Law Authorities in Woolwich that widows on relief had been asked to allow themselves to be transported to Bradford, and other from Kent and other places. Employers made many inquiries and sent out emissaries to find out whether widows with children would come to live in Bradford” (BOE, 1909a, p.51).

It was not the adult that was wanted, Squire continued, but the employment of their children. When the Committee questioned him about this situation the President of Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and major employer in Bradford, Colonel Foster admitted it had been occurring for some time and he supported the approach. Employers, he added, like to have a ‘family of workers’. “Suppose there was a widow down in Woolwich with a large family, I don’t think it would be any hardship to come to a textile district so that the family could earn wages” (BOE, 1909a, p.80).

Foster’s views were typical of the other employer evidence given to the committee and demonstrate scant regard for the education of working class children. It was their demand for cheap half-time labour, in conjunction with parental attitudes in areas where half-time was customary, which fuelled the continued existence of the half-time system. Additionally, notions of class maintenance, as seen from employers’ evidence to the

Cross and Newcastle Commissions, continued to linger in defence of limiting the education of the working classes. Though ‘clothed’ within their celebration of the ‘benefits’ of the half-time system, employers were still fearful of workers developing ‘ideas above their station’, and, perhaps even more so, paying wages congruent to improved mental capacity. The Secretary of Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, Mr W. Frankish, called for working class children to receive only a “rudimentary education” as the longer they stayed at school the ‘loftier’ their ambition became. Frankish went on to state that “the more he is taught to read the more he thinks...it is not a great advantage for a boy to be taught too much” (BOE, 1909a, p.178-9). Though directed towards children in agricultural areas, Frankish’s statements, as we have seen, resonate strongly with the evidence given by employers in textile areas too. Such notions of class maintenance had historically plagued the extension of education to the working classes and would continue to do so.

As discussed earlier, the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption was a BOE-led inquiry. This becomes apparent when its conclusions are contrasted with those of the Home Office-led 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, particularly given the similarity of evidence presented to both Committees. Half-time employment, the 1909 Committee concluded, did have a deleterious impact upon education; the early start, increased workload, and disruption to school organisation were very detrimental to a child’s elementary education experience, and this in turn severely restricted post-elementary opportunities.

The committee’s report dismissed claims from numerous Chambers of Commerce and employers that children were needed young in order to acquire necessary skills ‘unobtainable’ at an older age. Such claims, it argued, were negated by the effective functioning of the same industries not using half-timers as those employing them and claiming to need more. Moreover, the position of the textile industry, according to the committee, was not so special that it warranted access to child employees any earlier than that of other employment areas. “We feel compelled to doubt whether there is anything in the processes of cotton and worsted spinning and weaving which differentiates them so

completely from other industries as to make it essential to have children at 12 to commence labour” (BOE, 1909, p.11).

Employers’ conception of the half-time system being a vehicle for imparting a technical education or offering industrial training of significant value was not supported in the committee’s report. It stated that:

“The children lose their education at school with no training to compensate them. It is still more harmful and useless where children are granted partial exemption in order to run errands, to lick labels or act as golf-caddies, or at certain seasons at sea-side resorts to sell picture postcards or distribute programmes at popular entertainments. Many girls again in the half-time districts are kept away from school to do small jobs as domestic servants or remain at home half the day to help in the house. It cannot be argued that it is necessary to begin training for a housemaid at twelve instead of fourteen” (BOE, 1909, p.8).

The report goes on to acknowledge the small percentage of half-timers, particularly boys in Bradford and Halifax, which continue in the textile trade when they reach the age of between fifteen and eighteen. Though the ‘forcing out’ or ‘letting go’ of boys in favour of recruiting cheaper half-time labour (as discussed earlier in the chapter) is not directly referred to in the committee’s report, it does state that “the system seems calculated to create casual and unskilled male labour...Under these circumstances, we cannot except without considerable qualification the argument that half-time is a valuable system of apprenticeship” (BOE, 1909, p. 11).

In respect of the ability of the half-time system to alleviate poverty the committee concluded that such claims were, on the whole, groundless. Though there were a small number of cases where half-time wages may have relieved some distress, the committee was of the opinion that such cases were very rare and did not represent strong justification for the continuance of the half-time system. “The wages earned by the half-timers are never very considerable; in many cases in the cotton trade no payment is made

for some weeks and in some cases months” (BOE, 1909, p.12). The committee also concurred with evidence demonstrating that the vast majority of half-time employment was undertaken by children from families where poverty was of little concern. “In no case, it will be observed, do the figures indicate that a large proportion of the families are depending on child labour” (Ibid). This, the committee noted, was clear to see in areas where parental applications for their children to go half-time were subject to a poverty test. Areas such as Bury and Huddersfield had refused half-time applications unless parents could prove the financial necessity of their children’s employment. Consequently, while half-time numbers were increasing in most textile areas they were falling rapidly in Huddersfield and Bury, illustrating that family poverty was not truly central to the continuation of half-time.

As we have seen, much evidence submitted to the committee highlighted the suppression of adult wage value as a result of the half-time system. The committee acknowledged this in their report stating that the adult wage was “often ill-paid owing to the prevalence of ... child labour in the district” (Ibid). This, in turn, acted as a stimulus for more parents to send their children into half-time employment thereby fuelling the ‘cycle’ of continual wage suppression.

Given the circumstances as discussed above, it is clear that the half-time system was an ineffective means of tackling poverty. Ultimately, the committee was of the opinion that the education of the child should not be sacrificed for the false economies of the half-time system:

“Even if half-time were one method of meeting distress we are not disposed to regard it with much favour for that purpose. It is hopelessly inadequate. It is obtained at the expense of the weakest part of the family. It is not found necessary except in the textile districts. There is a large part of the population in London as poor as in Bradford, and there is poverty in Newcastle and the towns of the North-east coast as well as in Lancashire. But half-time is not regarded as a remedy for poverty in London or the North-east” (BOE, 1909, p.13).

The committee's recommendations reflect the dominance of the evidence portraying half-time employment as detrimental to education. Thus, the report recommended that partial exemption should be abolished, as should total exemption below the age of thirteen. Additionally, it was argued that granting total exemption on the basis of meeting the minimum attendance requirement should also be abolished as such "conditions of exemption are practically no educational test" (BOE, 1909, p.14). Furthermore, total exemption at thirteen years should only be granted if the employment undertaken was deemed 'beneficial' in terms of industrial value or 'necessary' to the family circumstances, with the additional proviso that the child would attend continuation classes.

Not only do these recommendations reflect the weight of evidence submitted to the committee, but also the environment within which the deliberations took place. Unlike the inquiries previously discussed, this BOE-led inquiry was undertaken by politicians of Liberal and Labour Party allegiance along with progressive-thinking employers and trade unionists renowned for their affinity with employee well-being. During his tenure as Committee Chairman Charles Trevelyan was a Liberal M.P. but would later join the Labour Party and become BOE President in 1924 where he pressed for extension of the school leaving age and more opportunities for the working classes to access secondary and university education. Similarly, Committee member Edward Lyulph Stanley, Liberal M.P. for Scarborough, had been present on the 1888 Cross Commission and was one of the Minority Report signatories calling for lower school fees and tougher restrictions on the employment of children. Such pro-educational positions were apparent in their fellow Committee members and explain why, given the similarity in evidence submitted, the 1909 BOE inquiry conclusions as to the impact of employment upon education contrast so sharply with those of the 1902 Home Office inquiry.

#### Response to the 1909 Committee's Report

As has been shown, the Committee's final recommendations rejected claims that the half-time system was 'beneficial' and an 'economic necessity' and recommended its abolition. However, although the system continued to be the subject of much national opprobrium, support for it in some areas continued to remain strong, even after the publication of the committee's findings. For instance, textile interests in Lancashire - both employers' and workers' - continued to show hostility towards progressive change. Evidence of this hostility was to be provided by the findings of three separate ballots held by the United Textile Factory Workers Association (UTFWA) on the half-time question in 1909, 1911 and 1918. In February 1909, for example, a vote taken on a motion "in favour of the abolition of half time up to the age of 13" was lost by 151,032 votes to 34,120 (Bolin Hort, 1989, p.235). A second ballot, held on the same question in 1911, produced a broadly similar result, and despite a strong recommendation of support from the UTFWA's Legislative Council, the motion was lost by 116,573 votes to 29,933 (Ibid). By 1918, the leaders of the textile operatives had themselves become convinced of the case for reform, and the wording of the third ballot paper in 1918 illustrated the exasperation felt by the leaders of the cotton operatives towards their members' consistent refusal to countenance change:

"For many years the cotton workers of Lancashire and the adjacent counties have been censured for being the stumbling block to the cause of education, but we hope on this occasion you will show to the workpeople in other industries that you are second to none in your determination to improve the educational facilities of the children by voting for the abolition of half-time employment ...We hope you will support the recommendation, as the raising of the age of employment will be beneficial to the children both physically and mentally" (UTFWA, 1918).

The UTFWA's leadership hoped that the ballot would produce a resounding vote of approval for H.A.L. Fisher's Education Bill, which proposed to abolish the half-time system. Fisher himself viewed half-timing as an abhorrence, and as we will see later, he subsequently cited the desire to see an end to the system as one of the principal reasons he entered politics. However, as Bolin Hort acknowledges, the Lancashire operatives

were “recalcitrant to the very end” and 68.7% of the 141,424 taking part rejected the proposed educational reform (1989, p.234).

Lancashire textile workers’ opposition to child employment reform had been the subject of criticism within the trades union movement as early as 1896. At that year’s Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.), Will Thorne, representing the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, “amidst loud cheers” and in the face of “anticipated serious opposition from the textile workers”, successfully moved a motion condemning child labour in factories as a “crime against the human race” (TUC, 1887, p.62-3). As Griggs notes, the reactionary stance adopted by the cotton operatives created a considerable amount of tension and hostility at most subsequent Congresses prior to the introduction of the 1918 Education Act. However, despite this criticism, support within the county for the retention of the half-time system remained consistently strong, particularly among those working within the affected trades (Griggs, 1983). Many commentators felt that the opinions held in Lancashire on this question had become a major obstacle to change, and by 1909, official reports were condemning the county’s textile workers for resisting progressive child labour reform:

“It is among a section of the working class themselves that the half time system finds very strong support. The feeling that it is worth making almost any sacrifice to prolong the education of a child is spreading only slowly through society. The parents of the children in textile towns earned money as half-timers for their parents. They think it natural that their children should do the same for them ... It has often not occurred to them to weigh the value of investment in a good education against the immediate gain of an increase in family comfort” (BOE, 1909, p.12).

Various explanations have been advanced to account for the stubborn defence of child employment found in textile towns and districts. As the following comments made by Joseph Cross, member of the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption

and Secretary of the UTFWA, in 1909 highlight, at the time workers representatives found the stance adopted by their members hard to rationalise:

“That the [half-time] system had a deep and strong hold on the textile workers was useless to deny, and the reason was difficult to explain. The present situation is rather embarrassing and very discouraging, as it shows that the textile workers still favour the system of child labour in the cotton trade” (Bolin Hort, 1989, p.233).

Others, in explaining the lack of support for progressive ameliorative measures in textile districts, pointed the finger at the cotton operatives’ representatives themselves. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, writing in 1919, commented upon the “ancestral conservatism” of the “cotton men” of Lancashire, and criticised their “sectional”, vocationally oriented approach to trade unionism. According to the Webbs, cotton trade union officials had devoted themselves almost entirely to protecting their members’ trade interests, and had shown ignorance and a lack of support towards proposals for more fundamental change in society. They had, it was argued, “fallen out of harmony with the newer currents of thought in the trade union world” (Webb, S. and Webb, B, 1919, p.479). The suggestion that support for child employment in Lancashire was a consequence of the ideological and political backwardness of the textile workers and their representatives is supported by some historians such as Griggs (1983). Others, such as Bolin Hort (1989), prefer to emphasise the influence of traditional work patterns, such as the ‘subcontracting’ arrangement under the half-time system, which gave workers a vested interest in obtaining cheap labour. For our purposes, the precise causes of Lancashire’s conservative stance are less important than its consequences. For, as the following comments made by the President of the Board of Education Mr. W. Runciman to a TUC deputation highlight, it allowed the government to cite public opinion in the county as a major obstacle to progressive change:

“[The 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption From School Attendance] came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for the raising of the

half-time age ... And I must confess that I was a little disappointed to see the result of the poll taken in Lancashire ... I am sure ... that the best thing that can happen in Lancashire is that it should come face to face with this problem and that we should have on this problem ranged on our side, in opposition to those who wish to keep the half-time age down, the rest of the trade union movement” (TUC, 1911a).

Later in 1914, the then President of the Board, Mr. Pease, made it clear to TUC representatives that they were prepared to raise the school leaving age only “if public opinion would support it”, and he insisted that the workers themselves must first realise that they were “wasting the vitality of their children” (Griggs, 1983, p.40).

Whether ‘public opinion’ was, in fact, the real reason why reform was checked, or whether governments simply used the opinions of the people of Lancashire as an excuse for inaction is an important question. After all, as we have already seen, apologists for child employment had always cited the need for ‘consent’ in these matters, and highlighted the potential ‘dangers’ which would arise if any attempts to impose radical reform upon unsympathetic communities were made. The fact that the eventual demise of the half time system was ultimately forced through, despite the continued opposition of the county’s cotton operatives, does seem to suggest that the need for ‘consent’ was a less significant prerequisite than those such as Runciman and Pease had claimed. Of much more importance, no doubt, was employer opposition to reform and a consequent lack of support for further regulatory measures among those sympathetic to trade interests in Parliament.

What developments, then, led policy-makers to conclude by 1918 that the half-time system could and should come to end? Significantly, by the time Fisher’s Bill was passing through Parliament, employer opposition to the abolition of half-time exemptions had begun to give way to a recognition that the practice was neither efficient nor desirable. As early as the turn of the century many employers appeared indifferent, or even hostile towards the half-time employment of children in their factories (Bolin Hort,

1989). By 1909, the half-time system had been “voluntarily abandoned” by management in a significant number of mills, and others were “no longer convinced of its value” (BOE, 1909, p.10). Newer mills, in particular, were more reluctant to employ half-timers, preferring instead full-timers whom they regarded as less troublesome and just as effective. Indeed, some textile manufacturers refused to employ half-timers as far back as the 1870s. One such employer, Mr F.W. Chance, of Ferguson Brothers in Carlisle, commented:

“I think we commenced experimentally doing away with the half-time system in 1879. It proved a success, and we did away with the half-time system entirely in our works a few years later. The conclusion we came to was that the half-time system was not good for the children and no advantage to the employer, and we certainly have not experienced any bad results from the abolition of half-time...I believe a great many [in Carlisle] followed our lead” (BOE, 1909a, p.97).

According to Mr. Acland, who spoke on the Education Bill’s Second Reading, by 1918 “something like half of the employers” in the affected industries had publicly come out in favour of abolishing the system (Hansard, 13/03/1918, c.336).

Also important, given the huge number of fatalities and casualties which occurred between 1914-1918, were concerns about national efficiency. For example, officials and politicians were only too aware that the number of children claiming partial and full-time exemption from school attendance had significantly increased during the war, and the potentially disturbing consequences of this trend were highlighted in numerous official reports. The rapid growth of both half and full-time exemptions appeared to have led to a genuine concern among state officials and educationalists that the current system was encouraging the development of a worthless “race of illiterates” (Ministry of Reconstruction, 1919, p.4). According to Sir George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, the “physical evils” resulting from the massive expansion of child employment were “insidious” and “far reaching”. The “physiological growth of the child” was being undermined at a “critical juncture in life” and this would “surely lead to

premature disablement, incapacity and unemployability” (BOE, 1918, p.156). As Table 1 illustrates, also of great concern was the fact that the rate of school exemptions was increasing in areas which were not previously noted for high levels of child employment:

**Table 1**  
**Number of Children Exempted From School Attendance**

	1915	1917
Birmingham	875	1,439
Liverpool	1,311	2,117
Sheffield	1,617	4,151

(Source: BOE, 1918, p.156)

Hence, by 1917, the notion that the abolition of the half-time system was dependent upon the approval of the people of Lancashire was abruptly dismissed in official reports:

“[In] a few localities in which the system has become a habit ... its removal would entail some modification of familiar economic conditions. Our recent investigations have been limited to an attempt to ascertain whether recent events have led to any material change of public sentiment in these areas. We do not find much reason to suppose that this is the case, but we are satisfied that ... the necessary industrial reorganisation ... should be made at the earliest possible moment” (BOE, 1917, p.9).

As we will see later, the 1918 Education Act swept aside such concerns and finally brought to an end the system of partial exemption. However, within Lancashire, anxieties over the impact of its abolition, particularly upon family incomes, continued to be expressed. For example, in October 1920 Preston Borough Council published its Draft Scheme of the Local Education Authority under Section 1 of the Education Act 1918. In this, the authority acknowledged the potential difficulties that it felt it faced in

imposing a new statutory minimum school leaving age of fourteen in an area which had grown accustomed to a system of half-time employment of children from the age of twelve:

“Many of the inhabitants have been engaged in the mills from quite tender years, have had few opportunities for a school education and frequently look to their children to become wage earners as soon as possible. The new Act, therefore, by the abolition ‘half timers’, the addition of a year to school life ... will bring considerable economic changes in its train” (Preston Borough Council, 1920).

In addition, parents in Lancashire continued to avail themselves of the ‘opportunities’ provided by the half-time system for as long as was legally possible; up until 1921/2, when the relevant legislative provision came into force. The following comments are taken from the school log book for the All Hallows Elementary School in Preston in 1919 and 1920 and they serve to illustrate the continued demand for child employment. The comments also provide an indication of the disruption that the half time system - even as late as 1920 - must have had upon the effective running of schools like this:

12<sup>th</sup> October 1919: “New lad admitted-a removal case from St. Thomas'. This lad hopes to be a half timer at Christmas and is only fit for Standard III”.

17<sup>th</sup> December 1919: “Many lads have applied for half time”.

5<sup>th</sup> January 1920: “The attendance is good considering the number of boys gone half time”.

16<sup>th</sup> April 1920: “The number of half timers is now 28 and all the lads leave as soon as possible”.

27<sup>th</sup> June 1920: “The mills have been stopped this week and attendance is good-average 143.3 - in fact the highest on record for boys department since 1910” (All Hallows Boys Department School Log Book, Various Dates).

Notwithstanding the significant levels of opposition, the half-time system ended in Yorkshire and Lancashire with remarkably little overt public opposition, dislocation to trade, or obvious hardship to local working class families. Indeed, given the heightened levels of concern that surrounded debates about ending the system, the absence of any disruption or vocal complaints around its demise is notable. The fact that the abolition of the half-time system had to be forced through, as one vocal critic argued “in the teeth of the opinion of the people who [were] going to be affected” was significant. Had legislators prioritised ‘public opinion’ and waited for the endorsement of the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire, the demise of the system would undoubtedly have been postponed for many years to come. This example is, perhaps, instructive in that it clearly illustrates that without some element of compulsion many local authorities would, or could not implement progressive child employment reform, which, in turn, would have continued to contribute to the limitations faced by half-time children in their educational experience.

### Conclusion

Through analysis of the half-time system and the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption in particular, this chapter has demonstrated the continued importance of the role played by policy-makers and employers in addressing a significant barrier to education. Though the evidence presented to the 1909 Committee was very similar to that of the various committees discussed earlier in this thesis, the conclusions drawn by this committee stood in stark contrast to those of previous education and child employment investigations. Explanation for this lies in the diversity of the composition of committee members (which included Liberal and Labour MPs, progressive educationalists, and trade unionists) and the fact that the committee was BOE-led. Under the guidance of the BOE and comprising of members ideologically in tune with notions

of extending educational opportunity, it should be of no surprise that evidence submitted by employers espousing the financial, educational and health benefits of the half-time system should have been treated *without* the sympathies of earlier commissions and dismissed in favour of the majority of evidence which highlighted the destructive impact upon the education and well being of children.

Very strong evidence of the deleterious impact of half-time employment on education was presented to the committee: disruption to classes; children too exhausted to receive instruction; half-timers' poor academic performance left them little possibility of post-elementary education. Yet, employers continued to extol the virtues of the half-time system and argued they needed children at a young age so as to impart the skills and 'industrial' education that would serve working class children well in their future employment. Moreover, employers also maintained that the earnings of children were needed to alleviate family poverty and preserve family stability. Such claims of paternal benevolence from employers was discredited by the majority of evidence presented to the committee which illustrated that employers utilised children for tedious, boring and simple tasks which required little if any training; the primary reason for employing half-timers, and children in general, was to reduce wage costs.

This chapter has shown that role of policy-makers and employers was central to the half-time debate. Though employers, particularly in Lancashire and Yorkshire, had for a long time opposed any further restrictions on the age of part-time exemption, it was their gradual recognition of the false economy of the half-time system which contributed significantly to its abolition. As the number of employers using half-timers reduced, the political viability for its abolition increased. Thus, some ten years after the 1909 Committee recommended it, the half-time system was abolished as part of the 1918 Education Act. Despite ongoing opposition from employers and employees in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the State eventually took the decisive step to prioritise education over the half-time child employment demands of employers, albeit a limited demand by this time. The same political step was not to be forthcoming for child employment in general.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE GENERAL EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the role of policy-makers and employers in addressing concerns surrounding the general employment of school children and their education in the second decade of the twentieth century. The 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903 is discussed in some detail as it affords us the opportunity to identify the continuity of overwhelming evidence that highlighted the deleterious impact of child employment upon the education and health of children. Moreover, it also demonstrates continuity in the ideological position taken by employers, the Home Office and Conservative politicians in defence of child employment during this period despite the voluminous body of evidence to the contrary.

The impact of the First World War upon child employment and education is also considered. Here it will be shown that the war offered employers an opportunity to increase their use of child employees in lieu of adult employees which, employers claimed, were no longer available due to the war effort. The validity of employers' claims is questioned and it is posited that the true motives driving employer demand for 'relaxation' of child employment regulation, such as it was, were as they had been historically: a desire for cheap, pliable, and poorly educated employees and opportunity to suppress wage levels. Nevertheless, employers seized this opportunity with the assistance of sympathetic policy-makers and this led to a disastrous impact upon the schooling of many children.

As a result of the war-time relaxation of child employment regulations and subsequent impact upon school attendance and educational 'wastage', the BOE came under increasing pressure to return children to the classroom. The final section of this chapter discusses the BOE's attempts to have administrative responsibility for child employment

transferred from the Home Office to itself. This discussion illustrates the ideological divide between the BOE and the Home Office; the BOE seeking to restrict child employment to enhance educational opportunity, and the Home Office adopting its traditional position of seeking the opposite.

### Background to the 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903

The steadfast, determined stance that was adopted by legislators in relation to the abolition of the half-time system was not reflected in official approaches to the more general employment of school children, despite the proliferation of evidence drawing attention to its potentially harmful nature. As Cunningham (2000) has shown, policy makers were well aware of evidence linking child employment to poor educational achievement before 1914. A number of independent surveys had been completed (see, for instance Keeling 1914) and these, along with several major departmental inquiries into child employment, had uncovered widespread evidence as to its deleterious impact.

One such inquiry was the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Though educational matters were not its primary focus, the commission's findings were in agreement with those of the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption inasmuch as they argued much child employment was of no industrial or education value and led to a cycle of casual and unskilled employment. Furthermore, the Majority Report of the Royal Commission found that child employment was not conducive to educational attainment and recommended the school leaving age be raised to fifteen with early leaving exemption granted only in cases where a child was employed in a 'skilled trade'. The Minority Report went further and called for no exemptions for those under fifteen and restriction of employment to thirty hours per week until aged eighteen. Moreover, the Minority Report, concerned by the ideological predispositions of the Home Office, recommended that administrative control over child employment matters should be transferred to the more 'appropriate' BOE (Royal Commission, 1909). It can be seen, therefore, that, in the context of the general employment of school children, the Royal

Commission supported the extension of school hours and educational development over and above the demand for child employment in much the same way as did the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption.

Clearly, then, the opening decade of the twentieth century represents a crucial period in the analysis of the relationship between child employment and education. The 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children, the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, and the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption all considered the matter. However, there was one more inquiry assembled to investigate the issue; the 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903.

#### 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903

Growing levels of concern surrounding children's education, welfare, and national efficiency more widely, led to the formation of the Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903 in 1909. This committee was charged with investigating whether or not further legislation or restriction was needed in the arena of child employment as dealt with by the 1903 Employment of Children Act. Unlike the 1902 Committee, which comprised solely of officials, the committee formed in 1909 consisted of a broader composition of politicians, 'interested' individuals, and civil servants. The MP committee members included J.A. Simon (Liberal) and chairman of the investigation, J.W. Gulland (Liberal), A. Sherwell (Liberal), T.F. Richards (Labour), W.C. Bridgeman (Conservative), W. Guinness (Conservative) and H.A. Law (Irish Nationalist). The Home Office was represented by M. Delevingne (head of the Industrial and Parliamentary Department of the Home Office), and the Board of Education by E.K. Chambers (Assistant Secretary, Board of Education). Dorothy Gladstone (wife of the Home Secretary) and J.H. Whitehouse (Toynbee Hall) were the remaining two members of the ten-strong committee. As will be shown, this more politically diverse composition would generate greater dissent from the Home Office's 'official' stance, which had changed little since 1902. Indeed, the disagreements were such that a Majority and

Minority Report were published. However, Home Office control over the implementation of the Committee's recommendations would, as we will see, be the decisive factor in shaping the official response to it.

The deliberations of this committee took place at the same time as those of the Committee on Partial Exemption. As we have seen, the latter committee's recommendations emphasised the negative features of child employment, particularly on education, ultimately recommending the abolition of the half time system. This was a Board of Education-led inquiry and this was reflected in the committee's deliberations and conclusions. By contrast, the 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children was a Home Office-led investigation, and as for reasons which should by now be evident, this was of significance. As explained earlier, ideologically, the Home Office had always shown a willingness to be sympathetic towards the needs of those trade interests who favoured the continued use of child employment. As Cunningham (2000) has shown, in part this reflected its 'public order' conception of child employment which prevailed within the Home Office, who viewed it as a means of reducing delinquent behaviour amongst working class children. However, the Home Office's sympathy towards trade interests generally, and its support for a minimalist approach towards labour market regulation, should not be underestimated.

Evidence from broadly the same interested groups as the earlier inquiry was taken, including; newspaper proprietors, members of education committees from various locations, headmasters, the CWEC, community workers, social workers, attendance officers, doctors and health visitors. Indeed, many of the same witnesses from the earlier committee were called again. Interestingly, though several headmasters gave evidence to the committee, no teachers were called to give evidence. This is somewhat surprising given their unique position to identify the impact of employment upon their pupils' physical, moral, and, perhaps, more importantly, educational well being. As Miss Constance Smith of the CWEC pointed out to the committee, "very often the education authorities themselves are not aware of the amount of wage-earning that goes on. I think the teachers generally know, but not the managers by any means" (Home Office, 1910a,

p.36). Many of the witnesses called referred to their own investigations or experiences of teachers' views, but none were asked to give evidence in person to the committee.

Though its composition may have been more diverse, the evidence submitted to the committee, and the ideological allegiances, were much the same as that evident in the earlier 1902 Committee. This was immediately demonstrated by the Home Office's representative, Malcolm Delevingne, who sought to limit the scope of the inquiry exclusively to a narrow conception of child employment, that of street trading only (Home Office, 11/06/1909). Though his attempt to restrict the inquiry failed, it did serve to illustrate the 'dogged' determination of the Home Office to cling to its traditional pro-employment stance. Thus, the committee's investigation examined legislation of child employment in a general sense, but particular attention was given to the occupation of street trading as it was widely regarded as one of the most controversial forms of employment available to school children.

What emerges most starkly from the evidence is the continuation of the same debates, themes, and approaches associated with the same groups as seen in the 1902 Committee's and 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption evidence. Essentially, evidence was polarised between those adopting the non-problematic and even beneficial conception of employment for school children, and those highlighting its destructive physical, moral, and educational impact upon school children. Advocates for the continued use of child employment, overwhelmingly employers (predominantly in the newspaper industry), regarded it as serving several positive functions. These were the mitigation of family poverty, its necessity for the newspaper industry, its ability to enhance educational performance, and, lastly, its beneficial health qualities. Opponents of the continuation of child employment as it stood, represented by the vast majority of witnesses, argued that child employment legislation was ineffective, did not alleviate poverty, and responsible for both the physical and educational deterioration of children employed.

The first witness to give evidence to the Committee was Sir Edward Troup. Troup was Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office and, as one of its committee members,

played a key role in the manipulation of evidence to the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee to fulfil his department's traditional agenda. Just as in 1902, Troup championed the virtues of child employment both in terms of its economic benefit to the country and its educational value to children (Home Office, 1910a). In relation to street trading in particular, he argued that it was a more appropriate form of employment for school children than for those who had left school as it was, he assumed, "a comparatively small thing" when "carried on along with school work" (Home Office, 1910a, p.9). His assumption was contradicted by the vast majority of evidence submitted to the committee which confirmed that school children were regularly employed excessively before school hours, during their dinner hour, after school, and during the weekend in a wide range of employment areas including the supposedly 'well regulated' job of street trading. Explanation for the long working hours undertaken by school children lay in the inability or, in some cases, the unwillingness of local authorities to implement and enforce effective byelaws to restrict employment. This was a direct result of the recommendations of the 1902 Home Office Committee (as discussed earlier), in which Troup's influence was crucial; it permitted the continuation of employment before school hours, gave local authorities the *option* of introducing employment byelaws, and empowered the Home Office to allow, *or not*, employment byelaws proposed by local authorities wishing to extend protective restrictions for children's employment.

Though Troup conceded that some local authorities might be well advised to adopt byelaws or 'toughen' them up, he maintained his position that legislation was unnecessary and child employment regulation was a matter for local authorities who should not be forced to enact byelaws. In assessing the byelaw system he stated, "I should say on the whole it has been a success, and on the whole the byelaws, which they have mostly adopted from Home Office *suggestions* [my emphasis], have been satisfactory" (Home Office, 1910a, p.15).

Troup's claim that employment of school children was sufficiently well regulated was a somewhat hollow one. His 'concern' for the over-employment of children to the detriment of their education belied his ideological predisposition toward fulfilling the

needs of commerce. In a statement echoing his views during deliberations of the 1902 Committee, Troup made it clear that he regarded the academic education of working class children as being of little 'practical' value. "At any rate", he stated, "there are certain instances...where the actual practical work is very much more educative than anything you can do in schools" (Home Office, 1910a, p.12). Such a statement bears strong resemblance to the assertions of employers in earlier inquiries that the value of school education was less than that of industrial or technical education acquired through employment and consequently 'justified' their demands for child employees at as young an age as possible. Additionally, Troup maintained the Home Office view that children's earnings were vital to alleviate family poverty, and that too tight a restriction on the employment of children would lead to "cases of very great hardship" (Home Office, 1910a, p.9). Again, the same claim was made by employers in previous inquiries and would be repeated during this inquiry in support of their want for child employees.

Employers' evidence to the committee mirrored that of Troup's. They agreed that employment of school children was non-problematic, celebrated the 'benefits' it bestowed upon children and their families, and argued it was essential to the effective operation of their businesses. For example, when asked if the existing legislation on child employment was satisfactory, Sir George Riddell, representing the London Newspaper Proprietors Association, concurred with Troup and stated "Yes, it is, in my opinion. In the opinion of those whom I come here to represent, this is a question that should be dealt with by the local authorities, as provided by the existing law...the local authorities are alive to their responsibilities" (Home Office, 1910a, p.316). Mrs Gladstone pressed Riddell on his assessment of the satisfactory nature of the legislation and asked him, "Do you mean that it is satisfactory from the point of view of the newspapers, or from the point of view of the boys?". To which he replied, "From the point of view of both" (Home Office, 1910a, p.317). Riddell's fellow employers made similar statements regarding the mutual satisfaction of themselves and their child employees of the regulations despite the weight of evidence submitted to the committee illustrating that school children were exploited. However, it is important to note that employers were not always satisfied with local authority byelaws. For example, in

Bolton, where relatively stringent byelaws were enacted to protect school children from excessive employment, employers, particularly in the newspaper and barber business, repeatedly attacked the local authority in an attempt to employ school children for longer hours (Home Office, 1910a, p326). Similarly, when London County Council put forward proposals for new byelaws, the only opposition it encountered came from employers (Home Office, 1910a, p.343).

The longstanding argument that the wages of children greatly assisted families, and the 'poor widow' particularly, in averting poverty were again utilised by employers. One such example was given by the proprietor of the Manchester Evening News, Mr Russell Allan. He stated:

“Supposing you take the case of a poor women who has three or four children...and there is very little money coming in, it seems to me that it would have a raising effect on the child to feel it was doing something...to keep the home together” (Home Office, 1910a, p.128).

Mr Allan Jones, Assistant Manager of the Liverpool Daily Post, commented “I think any further restriction [on the employment of school children] would be very hard on the selling class in Liverpool” (Home Office, 1910a, p.282). Clearly, this line of argument was one regularly deployed and had been for many years as seen in earlier inquiries. However, the counter-argument, also discussed in relation to previous inquiries, would again prove to be dominant in the evidence submitted to the committee.

The necessity of youthful workforce to employers, those in the newspaper business particularly, was emphasised by employers to the committee. In evidence virtually identical to that of the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, employers claimed that older children or adults were unable to perform the tasks required to the same standard of younger school children, and any further age restrictions placed upon employment of school children would prove ruinous. Riddell told the committee that:

“You cannot get a substitute for the boy labour. There is not the slightest doubt that if you further restrict the sale by young people to any material extent, you are very seriously injuring the sale of newspapers” (Home Office, 1910a, p.318).

However, Riddell’s spurious ‘concerns’ surrounding the capabilities of an older workforce were somewhat undermined by his later comments revealing his primary concern to be the capture of cheap employees, not capable employees:

“You cannot get suitable men to do this work at the price which it is possible to pay for it...if you were to ask a man who is able to get about, and who is active, to do the same thing for the same amount of money, he might do it for a day or two, but he would not turn up on the third day” (Ibid).

Again, the same ‘tactic’ was utilised by employers in evidence submitted to previous inquiries; claims of the necessity of youth masked the true motive of acquiring cheap child employees.

The final argument marshalled in defence of the employment of school children to the committee was that of the physical and educational benefits to children bestowed by their employment. Many employers argued that employment where a child was required to exert physical effort and be outdoors conferred upon them health benefits. Russell Allan informed the committee that the running around and distances travelled on foot by street traders selling newspapers “probably does them good”. He continued, “it seems to me that the run out into the streets, and having this exercise, and having this feeling of responsibility, and having something to occupy their attention ...will do them good” (Home Office, 1910a, p.128). In relation to the educational benefits of school children’s employment Mr Alfred Williams, manager of the Birmingham Daily Post and Birmingham Daily Mirror, asserted that the selling of newspapers by the school child “makes him smart” and “a good man” (Home Office, 1910a, p.382). In support of this, Troup maintained the Home Office position that a couple of hours employment before school “would not interfere with the learning capacity of the child” and “was not

injurious to school work” (Home Office, 1910a, p.12). As was clear from earlier inquiries, evidence that employment of school children was very detrimental to both the physical and educational well-being was plentiful, and will be demonstrated again in the evidence submitted to this committee.

Proportionately, the volume of evidence submitted to the 1910 Committee emphasising the negative aspects of school children’s employment was overwhelming. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of witnesses stood opposed to the evidence presented by Troup and employers. On the effectiveness of the regulation of school children’s employment, there was consensus on the part of non-employer witnesses that both the 1903 Employment of Children Act and the local authority byelaw system were widely disregarded or not enforced with any conviction in many areas. Evidence from Nottingham and Essex, for example, described a situation where regulation of child employment was practically non-existent. Oliver Watts Hind, a Nottingham Probation Officer, told the committee the 1903 Act “is not enforced because the Watch Committee have been very indifferent about it” (Home Office, 1910a, p.353). His research found considerable numbers of children as young as seven employed - the legal minimum age of employment was eleven - in street trading and other occupations, and children working between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., all of which contravened the statutory limits of the 1903 Act. Hind shared his findings with the Nottingham Watch Committee who continued to act with indifference; “They were certainly breaking the existing law and they knew it” he commented (Home Office, 1910a, p.354). Of equal concern, were the long hours children were employed without infringing the 1903 Act. Hind gives an example of one school child employed for fifty-two hours per week:

“He works at his employment from 7.30 to 9 in the morning, from 12.30 to 1.30, and from 5 to 8.30 in the evening; on Saturdays from 7.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. On Sunday he works from 7.30 to 1.30, and from 4 to 7...The total is 52 hours per week, in addition to the full time at school” (Home Office, 1910a, p.355).

Clearly dismayed by such examples, Hind highlighted that, in the above case, there was no “breach of the Act there, because the Act does not apply to Sunday work at all, and the boy is not working after 9 p.m.” (Ibid). The above example did not break child employment law, however, Hind’s evidence did highlight the impunity with which employers could act due to the lax enforcement of statutory legislation and local byelaws where they were adopted. Though not discussed here at length, the ‘distaste’ on the part of local authorities to prosecute employers who contravened child employment laws was long-established either through lack of interest in the matter or due to logistical difficulties and costs associated with bringing a prosecution.

A similar picture was illustrated by the School Medical Officer for Essex County Council, Dr Harold Emlyn Jones, who found in one district of Essex a quarter of the employed school children to be under the age of eleven. In considering all the districts of Essex, he stated “the [1903] Act is absolutely ignored, and no byelaws have been made by any local authority” (Home Office, 1910a, p.363). Mr Alfred George Chammings, Principle Assistant to the London County Council (LCC) Education Officer, also presented cases of children as young as eight employed in street trading, and estimated that in approximately 75 per cent of school child employment some infringement occurred (Home Office, 1910a, p.341).

The 1903 Act was clearly a ‘dead letter’ in many areas, however, even in places where byelaws had been enacted they proved to be of variable effectiveness. Constance Smith argued that “a good many” of the byelaws, where they existed, “are so exceedingly meagre that they do not afford very much protection” (Home Office, 1910a, p.23). Such evidence was presented in abundance to the 1910 Committee and explains the call from the vast majority of witnesses for tougher statutory regulation to be fit for purpose, not permissive local authority byelaws.

As was seen in the evidence submitted to 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, the claim that employment of school children was essential to mitigate the poverty experienced by the poorest was once again refuted by the vast majority of witnesses in

this inquiry. R.H. Tawney, for example, asserted that it was not the children from the poorest families who were necessarily employed for the longest hours. “Many of them”, he stated, “belong to quite respectable working homes...I do not think it can be defended as being necessitous to the poor widow, because a large number of parents [whose children worked long hours] are not poor widows” (Home Office, 1910a, p.131). Constance Smith told the Committee that a CWEC investigation had produced findings akin to those of Tawney’s view. “As regards family income, in very many cases it has been a matter of astonishment in this [CWEC] inquiry to find from what comparatively prosperous homes children are sent out trading” (Home Office, 1910a, p.25). Indeed, in those areas where byelaws were enforced to restrict young children from employment, Smith claimed that family poverty had not intensified as “there has often been better employment for the older children of the family, and things have righted themselves in that way” (Home Office, 1910a, p.30). The same claim, that the removal of school children from the employment market led to better employment opportunities and wages for older workers, was made by witnesses to the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, and had been espoused by the TUC since the 1890s. The continuity of inter-inquiry evidence on this point is also seen in the contention that children’s earnings tended to spent with ‘equal dispatch’ and thus were rarely ‘handed over’ to the family income. Mr Frederick Wilkinson, Director of Education for Bolton, told the Committee that children’s wages “very often go in cigarettes and betting” (Home Office, 1910a, p.323).

Clearly, the above discussion casts serious doubts on the, perhaps ‘expected’, argument of the Home Office and employers that employment of school children was necessary to alleviate the poverty of poor families. The following section will demonstrate that the ‘physical’ and, more importantly to this thesis, ‘educational’ benefits of employment as forwarded by employers to the 1910 Committee were also highly dubious.

Voluminous evidence to the committee re-affirmed the connection between the employment of school children and their declining health. In response to the assertion of the committee member, and Conservative MP, Mr Bridgeman that a properly fed and clothed child would display *no* harm from employment, Constance Smith stated that she

“had a great deal of evidence that a great many children *have* [my emphasis] been injured by sheer over-fatigue, when they were healthy to begin with” (Home Office, 1910a, p.28). Smith’s statement was supported by the evidence presented by all three medical professionals to the committee. As a result of his experience as Assistant Medical Officer of London County Council’s Education Department, Dr Charles James Thomas pressed the committee to completely abolish the employment of school children. He stated:

“I have come to the conclusion that a good deal of harm was being done to boys employed for long periods of time...The long hours on Saturday were particularly harmful, and the work in the dinner hour also was very harmful...The most striking effects were deformities, especially of the spine, and heart disease...[they also] showed a good deal of nervous strain” (Home Office, 1910a, p.359).

Thomas’ colleague, Dr Jones, shared his concerns and submitted similar evidence to the committee pertaining to the physical condition of employed school children in Essex. He found that *ninety* per cent of boy street traders in the Grays area of Essex were malnourished, not from poverty but as a result of exhaustion and over-tiredness caused by their employment. This led to various associated conditions such as deformities, anaemia, dilated heart, and general nervousness. Their health, Jones insisted, would be much improved if they were not employed. Unconvinced by Jones’ assessment of the relationship between employment and ill health, committee member Mr Bridgeman, again, attempted to ‘cajole’ the witness into accepting that employment was not the cause of physical decline in children. Bridgeman suggested that the illnesses Jones reported were caused by malnutrition *not* the child’s employment. Jones remained resolute in his evidence and stated he had seen:

“Cases of boys who were quite decently nourished, and nothing was the matter with them, and six months afterwards I was called in to see some of the children, and I examined three boys and each was suffering from dilated heart and was under weight...During that time the boy had been employed, and his parents had

been having the same wages and work as before, and the other conditions were the same, except that he had been employed” (Home Office, 1910a, p.366).

If the evidence contradicting the ‘physical benefits’ of employment for school children was comprehensive, the arguments against claims that employment was conducive to education were even more so. The majority of witnesses complained that education of employed school children was, to all intents and purposes, being wasted as they were regularly unfit for instruction owing to the fatigue they exhibited as a result of employment. Dr Thomas told the committee that children working long hours:

“Were unable to do their work. They get backward in their classes, and they fell asleep in school from fatigue, and their general responses were very exaggerated - their reflections were exaggerated - many of them stammered and so on” (Home Office, 1910a, p.359).

Thomas added that many children were even employed during their school dinner hour; a situation he described as being “extremely prejudicial to health. They generally had to rush their dinner, and rush back to their work after dinner, and those boys were particularly unhealthy and fatigued and nervous” (Ibid). Mr J. Commander, Headmaster of Summer Lane School in Birmingham, commented, “if a boy does 40 to 50 hours work in a week he cannot do his school work properly”, and it was frequently the case that children would work right up to school time and therefore arrive hungry and over-fatigued, a situation he described as “very serious” (Home Office, 1910a, p.276). Dr Hope placed particular stress on the deleterious impact upon academic performance of children working before school hours. He stated, “I think if children were left alone in the morning and fresh to school it would be much better” (Home Office, 1910a, p.314).

Long hours of employment outside of school hours, combined with morning employment up to school hours and employment during school dinner hour, effectively robbed many children of their education and further reduced already limited opportunity to progress to secondary and higher education. Such employment practices not only “created an

aversion to school work”, according to Constance Smith, but also explain the correlation between employed children and lower attainment. Smith presented evidence from Newcastle and London where many street traders aged thirteen had yet to attain Standard II or III, and in some cases Standard I; the national average age to reach Standard IV was eleven (Home Office, 1910a). Dr Thomas’ investigations supported Smith’s findings. Thomas stated that analysis of the school work of children employed in all wage earning occupations within the London County Council area, revealed that in “over 65 per cent. of cases retardation was noted” (Home Office, 1910a, p.359). Similar evidence was provided by Dr Jones in relation to the employed school children of Essex who became “backward” with over-work, in many cases leaving their education “entirely wasted” (Home Office, 1910a, p.367). The former President of the NUT and Headmaster of a Manchester municipal school, Mr Sharples, pressed for total abolition of the employment of the school child as it, he concisely stated, “drives him into a collar which he feels for years afterwards” (Home Office, 1910a, p.144). Even Mr J.G. Legge, who had advocated the reduction of teaching hours in elementary schools in favour of increased child employment to the 1902 Committee, now supported calls for tighter restrictions on the employment of school children. He regarded employment before school hours as an evil that brought the “child to school tired and unfit to benefit by the school life” and subsequently called for its abolition (Home Office, 1910a, p.311).

As we have seen, the body of evidence demonstrating the destructive impact of employment upon the school child and, particularly, his education was overwhelming. It will also be remembered that evidence of a very similar ilk was submitted to previous inquiries on the issue. However, one aspect of the debate not discussed at any length until the 1910 Committee, was the reluctance of employers to submit to inspection of the working hours of their school children employees. Numerous witnesses raised concerns surrounding the accuracy of official statistics claiming to measure the occurrence of school children’s employment both commercially and domestically. However, these concerns had been raised in earlier inquiries. New to the 1910 Committee was witness evidence that inspectors were ‘brushed off’ by employers when making enquiries as to the employment hours of school children. Mr Cyril Jackson, Chairman of London

County Council Education Committee, stated “our great difficulty...is that we can get no information. We cannot get into the shops” (Home Office, 1910a, p.335). Dr Hope gave an example of problems faced by inspectors seeking to establish the employment patterns of school children. He explained that, “the employer, not wishing to tell him, affects to be very busy indeed and cannot attend to him. He keeps him there for an hour without information” (Home Office, 1910a, p.314).

After considering the evidence the committee were split in their views and a Majority and Minority Report were presented. The Majority Report, in much the same way as the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, and the 1902 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, accepted the evidence that the employment of school children was detrimental to their education, health, and long-term national efficiency. As R.H. Tawney pointed out, “what is wanted is to increase the potentiality of the younger generation” (Home Office, 1910a, p.131). The Majority Report also acknowledged that the 1903 Employment of Children Act and subsequent local authority byelaws, where adopted, were ineffective.

As did the 1909 Committee on Partial Exemption, so too did the Majority Report assert that poverty was not the primary driver for the undertaking of employment by school children:

“We learnt that much of this money [child’s earnings], so readily made, is spent with equal dispatch. The children spend it on sweets and cigarettes, and in attending music halls, and in very many cases only a portion, if any, of the daily earnings is taken home” (Home Office, 1910, p.12).

Therefore, perhaps the most important conclusion drawn by the Majority Report, in the context of this thesis, was its acceptance that employed school children were exploited and educationally sacrificed - not only in street trading, but in employment more widely - not for any reason so noble as the alleviation of family poverty, but simply because of

employer demand for cheap child employees. The Majority Report said of school children:

*“It must be doubtful whether it is to their advantage that they should be employed at all [my emphasis]”* (Home Office, 1910, p.14).

In a wider context, the Majority Report recommendations represented the continuation of not only the pro-educational findings of earlier inquiries, but also the continuation of the weakening ideological commitment to laissez-faire. The 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws Report recommended a system of more generous relief to tackle poverty and enhance educational opportunities. The Majority Report made the same recommendation of increases in public relief with the addition of more stringent regulation of child employment in an attempt to improve children’s education, well-being, and national efficiency:

*“We feel...that the cases of widows and others who are now too often economically dependent upon child labour should be met no longer by the sacrifice of the future to the present, but rather by more scientific and possibly more generous methods of public assistance...And in so far as some slight commercial inconvenience might result from the prohibition of street trading, we do not feel that it ought to be allowed to weigh greatly in the balance as against the wholly uneconomic nature of the present system and the ruin and wastage of child life which are its results”* (Home Office, 1910, p.15).

While the Majority Report was of the opinion that the child and its education should not be sacrificed for commercial interests, the Minority Report adopted a different view. As was the case with the Newcastle and Cross Commissions, it placed more importance on the value of child employment to commerce than education, and stuck doggedly to the notion of employment as a palliative to poverty and delinquency despite voluminous evidence to the contrary.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, signatories to the Minority Report included the Home Office representative (Delevigne) and Conservative members (Bridgeman and Guinness), while signatories to the Majority Report included the Board of Education representative and MPs from the Liberal Party and Labour Party. This split along departmental and political lines had, as we have seen, become a familiar pattern as evident in previous committee reports, and would continue in the child employment debate for decades to come following publication of this committee's report in 1910. Though popular opinion, including that of the TUC, lay with the Majority Report, attempts to reduce the employment levels of children continued to face opposition from the Home Office and some trade unions.

### Response to the 1910 Committee

The Lancashire and Yorkshire cotton and textile unions were particularly vociferous in their support for maintenance of the status quo in child employment. They shared the opinion of the Home Office and employers that child employment was necessary and beneficial to both employers (who needed children young in order for them acquire requisite skills) and families (who needed the income). Trade unions such as the Northern Weavers and Bolton Spinners remained resolute in their opposition to further restrictions on child employment, the raising of school-leaving age and abolition of the half-time system (as discussed in the previous chapter), and though overwhelmingly in a minority within the TUC, their position elicited concern from Walter Runciman, President of the BOE, who admitted to the TUC his desire to raise school leaving age but expressed concern at the position taken by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Unions (TUC, 1910).

Attempts were made following publication of the report in 1910 to amend the Employment of Children Act (1903). Lord Shaftesbury and Richard Denman (Liberal, Carlisle), in 1911 and 1913 respectively, both attempted to further restrict child employment and facilitate the transfer of responsibility for the matter from the Home Office to the BOE. Both of their Bills were blocked by the Home Office. However,

these events served to highlight the growing tension between the Home Office and the BOE on the issue of responsibility for child employment. Joseph Pease, now President of the BOE, echoed the sentiments of his earlier predecessor Sir John Gorst in a letter he sent to the Home Office accusing them of scant concern for education in favour of satisfying commercial interests (BOE, 05/03/1913). Other interested groups, such as the TUC, the National Education Association, the CWEC, the National Union of Teachers, and some local authorities, were highly critical of the Home Office approach and continued to press for tighter regulation of child employment in order to maximise educational outcomes. For example, in 1913, Mr. W.F. Dawtry of the Steam Engine Makers Trade Union (and long-time figurehead of the half-time abolition movement) again addressed the TUC calling for the abolition of the half-time system. He stated that:

“I would urge Congress to realise that the main thing we want is a sound elementary education for all children, especially in the industrial centres, and that it is absolutely useless to talk about secondary education, because it is altogether outside the grasp of the half-timer...It is inhuman, especially in the winter time, to drag the kids out of bed to go to the mill, and then, after they have had a good sweating there, to send them along to end the day in school by attending afternoon classes” (TUC, 1913, p.326).

Clearly, then, despite the plethora of evidence demonstrating the continuing deleterious impact upon children, their families, and the long-term national interest of combining education with employment, calls to limit employment of school children to educationally conducive levels remained elusive. As we shall see, the concerns of educationalists were to be elevated by the onset of the First World War as it afforded supporters of child employment a ‘glorious’ opportunity to ‘retake’ ground perceived to have been lost in the battle to restrict education and capitalise on the employment of school children.

### Child Employment and the First World War

Commencement of the First World War created fertile conditions for the increase in the use of child employees, particularly in agricultural areas, at the expense of education. Agricultural employers in some parts of the country claimed to be experiencing a shortage of adult male employees due to the war effort and consequently requested school exemptions from local authorities for children aged eleven to fourteen in order that they may replace adult workers. Organisations such as the Central Chamber of Agriculture (CCA) and the National Farmers Union (NFU) supported these calls, as did their chiefly Conservative Parliamentary supporters. Interestingly, given the opposition he expressed in evidence to the 1909 Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption to the half-time system due to its deleterious impact upon the child's education, the now Conservative M.P. Charles Bathurst pressed Prime Minister Asquith to suspend provisions from the Education Acts that prevented boys aged 11-14 from employment in farm operations. Asquith allowed local authorities discretion in granting school exemptions in areas facing difficulty. However, Labour M.P. Kier Hardie (Merthyr) drew attention to evidence that farmers and rural LEAs were abusing the discretionary exemption policy ultimately removing wholesale in some areas children aged 11 -14 from the school to the farm. Hardie's concerns were corroborated by BOE investigations that showed some local authorities were illegally refusing to enforce school attendance. Indeed, according to the BOE, small rural attendance committees, predominantly consisting of farmers, were of the view they could "do as they please" (26/01/1915). Such practices were not restricted solely to rural areas. The BOE and Home Office came under pressure from employers in urban areas too, such as the textile industry, who called for early exemption from school. Again, here too, there was evidence that attendance laws were commonly evaded.

Opposition to the relaxation of employment law and its associated abuse came from trade unionists, educationalists and some politicians. The TUC were highly critical of this practice and argued that the true motivation behind the movement was the suppression of educational progress in rural areas based upon financial and ideological concerns. Mr. R. B. Walker of the Agricultural Labourers Union asserted that:

“We want the agricultural child to have a better chance in the way of mental development than the past generations have had. An educated democracy on the countryside is not wanted by our pastors and so-called masters we know, because they would no longer remain content to work for 12s. a week if they were adequately educated...They would, moreover, refuse to toil and moil from early morning until late at night for a mere subsistence wage. That is why the employers are so keen, and are making such big efforts for the reintroduction of child labour, which means uneducated and cheap labour...When we see the county magnates, the titled personages, and the landlords and squires who live upon our countryside, and the farmers, taking their children from the schools and sending them to work in the fields, we will reconsider the matter” (TUC, 1915, p.301).

Support for this argument came from A.J. Mundella, the Secretary of the National Education Association and former Liberal Vice-President of the Education Department (1880-5), who, writing in *The Review of Reviews* (March 1915) condemned the “greed and ignorance of short sighted farmers” who continued to display a “class conscious...dread of an educated democracy”. Mundella went on to argue that where employee shortages did occur they were not a product of war but a reaction by rural workers to wretched wages that forced them to seek work elsewhere. Therefore, according to Mundella, farmers and other employers were maliciously using the war conditions to disguise the true cause of labour shortages. R.B. Walker made a similar point in his 1915 speech to the TUC casting doubt on the severity of the employee shortage claimed by agricultural employers - the motion for TUC resistance to this increase in child employment was carried. It was, then, for Walker, Mundella and others, the commercial desire to suppress wages and maintain the supply of child labour by restricting education that ‘justified’ relaxation and abuse of employment laws, not a genuine shortage of adult male employees. Such opposition to the use of child employment and claims of ideological hostility from employers to children receiving education clearly echo those debates surrounding the compulsion and extension of education as seen in the education

and labour commissions of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century discussed in earlier chapters.

The BOE maintained its pre-war position that education should not be subordinate to the whims of commerce and its President, Joseph Pease, repeated many of the aforementioned points made by Mundella, Hardie and Walker in Parliamentary debate. For example, he accused farmers of too readily using child employees without first exploring other options such as female or refugee employees. Neither did they adequately seek the assistance of labour exchanges to alleviate their claimed labour shortage. This led Pease to the same conclusion as Mundella, Hardie and Walker that commercial desire for cheap employees at the cost of education was the true motivation behind calls for employment law relaxation (Hansard, 25/02/1915, c.470-2). Pease also continued to stress the deleterious impact of employment upon educational performance and child well-being by challenging the notion forwarded by farmers' supporters (and the traditional view of the Home Office) in the Commons that agricultural employment was conducive educationally. Citing evidence similar to that submitted to the various commissions of the first decade of the twentieth century, Pease referred to a more recent study conducted by Devon's School Medical Officer who found that children were not physically equipped to withstand the demands of both school and employment. This was manifest in the discovery that in Devon 42% of children combining school with agricultural employment were substantially below the average height of non-employed children of the same age (Ibid). Further support for this provided by Dr Christopher Addison, Parliamentary Secretary to the BOE, in later Parliamentary debate showed that employed school children exhibited increased tiredness and spinal injuries in addition to height and weight deficiencies (Hansard, 04/03/1915, c.1040-6).

The growing body of evidence revealing the abuse of child employment laws and the consequences upon children's access to education and physical development was of increasing concern to the BOE particularly as it was they, not the Home Office, who were responsible for school attendance matters. The BOE increasingly found itself being blamed for poor school attendance even though the root cause of the problem lay in the

weaknesses of the 1903 Employment of Children Act, as the BOE had identified, and therefore the Home Office. In response to its fielding of criticism that should by all rights have been aimed toward the Home Office, the case for transfer of responsibility for child employment laws from the Home Office to the BOE was strengthened. An unsigned BOE memo stated that:

“There can be no doubt that this employment in many parts of the country at present constitutes a very grievous scandal...We are constantly receiving reports from our inspectors complaining of the excessive toil of children who are attending school and asking if some remedy cannot be found...Paralysis...has resulted from the fact that...the Home Office, who are the central authority under the Act, have no driving force behind them, and their experience tends to make them rather more anxious not to interfere with industry than to promote education. It seems to me that the case for transferring the administration of the Employment of Children Act 1903...to the Board of Education as the central authority is quite unanswerable. As you are no doubt aware, many attempts have been made to carry this out by means of legislation, but the attitude of the Home Office is not encouraging and a Bill on the subject at the present time would scarcely be uncontroversial” (BOE, c. June 1915).

The transfer of administrative responsibility for child employment to the BOE would, as we have seen, likely have had a restrictive influence upon levels of child employment and improved school attendance. However, despite the BOE’s desire for this responsibility, it was acutely aware that any action that may lead to curbing child employment would prove contentious with the Home Office, the Board of Agriculture and some unions. This sensitivity on the part of the BOE was apparent in the actions of Pease’s replacement as President, Labour M.P. Arthur Henderson. Like Pease, Henderson was dismayed with the behaviour of some local authorities which had ‘turned a blind eye’ to child employment and school attendance directions. BOE figures showed a massive increase in the number of school exemptions in the first two years of the war. For example, in the counties of Peterborough and Huntingdonshire approximately half of elementary school

boys aged 11-14 were excused from school attendance (BOE, 1916). Worryingly, the NUT pointed out that such figures were likely to be a significant underestimation as they represented only those children granted exemption by local authorities and not those children whom stayed away from school for long periods without exemption and without prosecution by local authorities (Hansard, 18/07/1916, c.945). Indeed, even research conducted by the Home Office revealed the situation to be worse than the BOE's findings. The Home Office study of 91 schools in 5 (anonymous) agricultural counties found 60% of boys aged 9-14 were employed, 38% of whom for more than 20 hours per week (Home Office, 31/07/1918). Henderson, though concerned with lack of attendance, was aware of the weak position of the BOE in terms of pushing for increased power to rectify the situation, particularly during the war effort; this could have left the BOE open to criticism of not acting in a 'nationally unified' manner. BOE officials, therefore, chose not to press the issue too far at this time and acquiesce to some degree with the employment situation. In his address on the matter to the TUC, Henderson stated, "Legislation, especially of a controversial character, is almost certainly out of the question during the period of war" and went on to request TUC assistance in supplying "facts and figures" to "strengthen my hands in dealing with the other Departments primarily concerned, namely, the Board of Agriculture" (TUC, 1916, p.84). The TUC wanted more positive action from the BOE; this led to the TUC passing J.R. Clynes (National General Workers) motion that "emphatically protests against permitting children of school age to be taken from schools to labour in agricultural work and in factories and workshops, and calls upon the President of the Board of Education to decline to sanction any removal of legal restrictions upon the employment of child labour" (Ibid, p.365).

Though conditions were hostile to increasing school-life for children during the early to middle period of the First World War, it appeared that towards the end of the war an opportunity to improve the situation was presented. Henderson's successor at the BOE, H.A.L. Fisher, was adamant that no child or young person should be "debarred from receiving the benefits of any form of education by which they are capable of profiting" (Curtis & Boulwood, 1967, p.180). He asserted that two obstacles continued to block

the path of children fulfilling their potential; poverty and premature employment. Fisher's Education Bill (1917) aimed to remove the first of these obstacles by proposing to improve funding for education and abolish fees in elementary schools. The second barrier would be addressed by the Bill's call to ban employment of children under twelve; prohibit employment before school; abolish the half-time system; raise school leaving age to fourteen; and the introduction of continuation classes for children aged over fourteen. For Fisher and others, the Bill represented an attempt to rectify the erosion of academic potential (exacerbated during WW1) which, in turn, would address wider concerns surrounding national efficiency. He was determined that employment would not impede the education of working class children in peacetime, and claimed his Bill would "put a prompt end to an evil" that had "grown to alarming proportions" (cited in Marwick, 1965, p.244).

The BOE continued to receive reports from education inspectors demonstrating the lack of regulation in, and excessive nature of, child employment. Informed by evidence gathered from school medical officers across the country, the Annual Report of the Board's Chief Medical Officer for 1917 declared that employment of school children was, by this time, out of control. Children were, it added, excessively employed in all kinds of work and the 'educational and physical objections' to child employment outside of school were 'well founded and justified' even in towns and cities where byelaws had been enacted they were hugely variable and excessive child employment continued (BOE, 1918, p.151-2). Employed children were frequently late for school, exhibited lower attendance and higher illness rates overall. Moreover, when in attendance, they were regularly hungry, over-fatigued or in wet clothes; this left them unable to benefit from classroom instruction, was reflected in their academic performance, and represented an unsound economic policy of wasting public money on the provision of education not fully utilised. The Chief Medical Officer at the BOE, Sir George Newman, stated that the:

*"Physical injury of excessive labour which manifests itself is insidious and inconspicuous, but far reaching. Malnutrition, anaemia, fatigue, defective vision*

and strain of heart or nervous system...lay the foundations of disease, and they undermine the physiological growth of the child at a critical juncture in life. The strain of the stuff is past repair, the opportunity for laying healthy foundations has been irretrievably lost, the seeds have been of body habit or disease which inevitably and surely lead to premature disablement, incapacity and unemployability...Whatever be the physical evils resulting there is almost invariably *mental retardation* following on premature or excessive employment” (Ibid, p.156) [original emphasis].

Newman highlighted the similarity between child employment during WW1 and the treatment of employed children in the factory system a century before, claiming that, in both cases, the cause was attributable to weak regulation and supervision. Evidence such as that above explains why the BOE continued to display its displeasure with the Home Office and maintained its claim to rightful responsibility for administration of matters pertaining to child employment.

The decision as to whether or not administrative responsibility would be transferred from the Home Office to the BOE lay in the hands of the War Cabinet. H.A.L. Fisher and his counterpart at the Home Office, Home Secretary Sir George Cave, both submitted memoranda to Ministers detailing their views. Fisher built his claim upon the evidence of the destructive impact of child employment, the central importance of education over employment, and the Home Office’s unsuitability to manage this issue as demonstrated in their failure to satisfactorily enforce current restrictions due to favouring trade interests. His memo stated that the:

“Evidence of the Board’s inspectors as to the prevalence of excessive employment of school children, its injurious effect upon their education, and the ineffective manner in which the employment of children is at present regulated is emphatic. The matter is really one of notoriety to all persons concerned in educational administration” (BOE, 04/06/1917).

Cave's memo to the Cabinet argued that the Home Office should maintain administrative responsibility for child employment primarily because the BOE, should responsibility be transferred to it, would place too much emphasis upon educational well being to the detriment of commercial interest. Cave, conforming to earlier Home Office views, also referred to the dangers of restrictions upon 'harmless' wage earning opportunities for children and the subsequent moral and physical benefits attached to this.

Despite the mass of evidence in support of the claims of the BOE, the War Cabinet took the decision to maintain the status quo and the Home Office continued to hold responsibility for administration of child employment matters. Fisher's original 1917 Education Bill was also abandoned. Two reasons can be forwarded in explanation of these outcomes. Firstly, the Home Office, many MPs, and some social commentators remained invested in the notion that employment kept children occupied and was useful in their moral development. Representative of this view were the comments from Frederick Booth (Liberal, Pontefract) who stated:

"I think hon. Members should bear in mind that idleness is a vice and a disgrace. It is quite important if children are to be useful and industrious they should be taught these qualities in their early days...Members appear to have ignored the fact that the salvation of this country has been in the action of parents in insisting their children be useful...Unless they get that idea into their heads, and unless it is instilled into them fairly early in life, no amount of teaching in mathematics will compensate for it' (Hansard, 11/06/1918, c.2119-20).

Secondly, there was strong opposition from employer groups against the transfer of administrative responsibility and the employment restricting aspects of Fisher's 1917 Bill. Employer hostility was aimed at the proposal for continuation classes for 14-16 year olds. The Federation of British Industries (FBI) "declared that industry would be unable to bear the burden of releasing its juvenile labour over the age of fourteen for eight hours a week" (cited in Lawson & Silver, 1973, p.394). Sanderson (1999) and the TUC (1925) argued that employers opposed continuation schools due to their preference

for employing fourteen to sixteen year olds as they did not require employers to contribute to national insurance costs and they could also pay them lower wages than adults. However, it was the proposal to prohibit employment before school that elicited the most vehement opposition from employer groups. Fisher regarded this proposal as one of the utmost importance to his plan for post-war education and argued during the Committee stage of the Bill that the:

“Clause in the Bill which prohibits the employment of children before school was not drafted lightly. It was drafted in response to an overwhelming mass of evidence, coming from all quarters of the country, to the effect that a very large number of children come to school in the early morning so tired out by work, breakfastless, and often very wet, that some relief must be given. I remember at a gathering of our leading inspectors at the Board of Education some months ago, when this question was being considered, I put the question, ‘Of all the reforms which have been promulgated in this country and elsewhere, which do you consider to be the most beneficial?’. They replied unanimously, ‘The prohibition of employment during school hours’...I feel that the Committee would be well advised in adhering to the terms of the Bill” (Hansard, 11/06/1918, c. 2147).

Despite Fisher’s argument, the employment clause was dropped due to pressure on the BOE from groups such as the FBI and agricultural and newspaper lobbying, all of which received support from the Home Office. Ultimately, the 1918 Education Act allowed children aged twelve and over to be employed for one hour before school and two hours after school.

### Conclusion

We have seen that, in their pursuit to maintain the use of child employment, the role of policy-makers and employers continued to be crucial in opposing attempts to remove barriers to working class education. Despite the overwhelming strength of evidence against the ‘benefits’ of child employment, the Home Office and employers continued to

combine their forces to frustrate the efforts of the BOE, educationalists, trade unions and other interested parties aiming to enhance the educational experience of working class children. The successful defence of child employment, aided in part by the First World War, effectively blocked many working class children from accessing and benefiting fully from elementary education, much as it had in the nineteenth century and for the same reasons.

Trade interests continued to be held in higher regard than those of educationalists, and the national interest was perceived by the Governments of the time to be best served accordingly. This attitude was fuelled by an ongoing Government commitment to laissez-faire ideology evident in the failure to address wider poverty concerns as recommended by the Majority Report of the Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act 1903 (1910), and a Home Office department, with more political strength than the BOE, particularly receptive to the needs of employers. Evidence of this can be seen in the: Home Office's successful blocking of numerous Bills following the recommendations of the Majority Report of the 1910 Committee for tighter child employment regulation; failure of the BOE to win administrative control of child employment from the Home Office; and the pressure applied to the BOE by the Home Office and employers to abandon the original 1917 Education Bill which would have significantly curtailed child employment in favour of extending educational opportunity to working class children.

Both the Home Office and the BOE were committed to furthering national prosperity but they differed in their views on how best to achieve this. The Home office adopted an orthodox economic approach fundamentally concerned with minimal labour market regulation, whereas the BOE, acutely aware of the physical deterioration and intellectual wastage resultant from the orthodox approach, regarded improved national efficiency to be best achieved through investment in national education and intellectual training. It was the orthodox approach which prevailed at this time and once again education was sacrificed to employment.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE INTER-WAR YEARS

#### Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, both the Home Office and employers continued to frustrate attempts to extend educational opportunities to working class children and in favour of protecting trade interests. This chapter maintains the thesis' established analysis of the role of policy-makers, employers, and the impact of the structure of the education system upon working class children's access to education during the inter-war period; brief consideration of the start of World War II is also presented. It will be shown that during this period the relationship between child employment and education remained largely unchanged from the periods discussed in earlier chapters as a result of the continued dominance of pro-child employment politics over progressive educational campaigners.

The chapter starts by discussing the educational aftermath of the increased child employment during the First World War and moves on to consider the impact of the 1918 Education Act. Here it is shown that, despite initial optimism, the structural changes promised in the Act were not fulfilled both in terms of extending educational opportunity to working class children and the tighter restrictions placed upon the employment of school children. This was a result of continued opposition to such aims from the Home Office, many Conservative MPs and employers who remained wedded to their long-established positions, but also the financial cuts to public expenditure during the early 1920s. These expenditure cuts also restricted the number 'free place' scholarships offered by secondary schools and led to increased use of untrained teachers and inappropriate accommodation for classes; all of which damaged the educational experience and opportunities of working class children in particular. The campaign to address these issues and improve both the quality of elementary education and access to secondary schooling is then considered; a campaign opposed by employers.

Finally, the chapter critically analyses the activities of the Home Office in its handling of investigations of child employment during the 1920s and 1930s. Much as they had done in previous investigations/committees, the Home Office is shown to have continued their approach of evidence manipulation in these investigations in order to distort the ‘picture’ of child employment and reinforce their trade ‘friendly’ and non-problematic conception of the issue in contrast to overwhelming contrary evidence. This approach and support from employers and Conservative MPs allowed the Home Office, as they had done earlier in the century, to block numerous Bills intended to restrict child employment and extend educational opportunity to working class children during this period.

#### Impact of the 1918 Education Act

As we saw in the previous chapter, the dislocation of war, subsequent employer calls for child employment regulations to be relaxed, and a politically sympathetic ear had disrupted children’s education severely, and after the cessation of hostilities, government committees tasked with developing proposals for ‘reconstruction’ sought to audit the ‘damage’ that had been caused. The 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction pamphlet, ‘Juvenile Employment’, concluded that there could be “little doubt that the conditions of the past four years have had unfortunate reactions upon the educational opportunities of a large number of children”. It lamented the “increased number of children engaged in wage earning occupations while still at school”, pointing out that “with few exceptions those in close touch with the children express the opinion that the consequences to their health and education have been wholly bad” (MOR, 1919).

It was widely hoped that the measures included in the 1918 Education Act would prove adequate compensation for the sacrifices to schooling between 1914 and 1918. Certainly there were grounds at the time for contemporaries to be optimistic about the future of schooling for working class children. The Act did, after all, declare that no child shall be debarred from undertaking any form of education through inability to pay. It abolished fees in elementary schools, raising the school leaving age to fourteen, and included

powers enabling local authorities to increase this to 15 if they so desired. It also legislated for the establishment of continuation classes, whereby elementary school leavers would be expected to attend day continuation schools for 320 hours per year up to the age of eighteen. In relation to child employment, the Act brought to an end to the much derided, but resilient half-time system, freeing children from being forced to combine school with arduous employment in factory and field. In addition, it included a range of provisions relating to the general employment of school children. Fisher himself was proud of his achievements, in particular the child employment provisions in his Act, as he made clear in his address to meeting of the Half Time Council in Manchester in November 1922:

“When I first came to the House of Commons a friend of mine asked me what I intended to do. I said, ‘I intend among other things to abolish half time’, and my friend, who was an old and experienced Parliamentarian, said, ‘You don’t know what you’re up against. You will never do it. Take my advice and drop it’ ... Of all the events in my own career there is none to which I can look back with more unqualified satisfaction than the part I have played ... in getting that clause through the House of Commons ... Another form of employment which had been restricted and regulated was the employment of school children ... The hours of labour during the school day are now strictly limited, and we have now created the conditions which enabled the children to take full advantage of their schooling” (cited in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 18/11/1922, p.3).

Fisher was, of course, equally proud of the Act’s educational provisions, and he continued to defend these even when national economy measures threatened to destabilise the Act’s more progressive provisions. Whilst accepting that certain clauses of the Act had, due to financial concerns, been temporarily postponed, he insisted that “we have the framework now of the greatest educational system of any country in the world” (cited in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 18/11/1922, p.3). In part, Fisher’s continued optimism was perhaps a result of the strong commitments he had received about educational funding during the passage of the Act. As Simon notes, Fisher had

been reassured that education was a national priority and as late as 1922 he was convinced that the ‘clouds’ surrounding the financing of the Act would “pass over” (Simon, 1974, p.31).

Influential educational opinion continued to share Fisher’s continued optimism about the progressive potential of the Education Act. Like Fisher, the *Times Educational Supplement* heaped scorn upon those who were concerned that that many of its more progressive provisions were, under the auspices of national ‘economy’, being quietly shelved. In an editorial in 1922, it dismissed claims that the Act was a ‘dead letter’ and listed what it saw as its ‘achievements’:

“Nonsense of this sort almost makes one despair ... In future no child can leave school before the completion, at least, of his fourteenth year. Half-time is dead; the system of whole or partial exemption from school attendance has gone ... To this ... is added the practical extinction of child labour; No child at school can any longer work, as he worked throughout the nineteenth century, and for the first two decades of this century, for long and disastrous hours. Child labour is reduced to a healthy minimum” (*Times Educational Supplement*, 22/07/1922, p.4).

The Ministry of Reconstruction’s 1919 report, ‘Child Welfare’, also concurred with the view that the Act would address the problems previously associated with the employment of children:

“The effect of employment upon the physical and educational welfare of the child worker is of supreme importance to the nation. Many children are employed more or less extensively while still at school. In some cases no harm is done, in others permanent injury may be caused to the health of the over-taxed child by too early employment, regardless of the physical and mental capacity, or by unfavourable conditions ... The Education Act of 1918 makes provision to meet substantially the needs of the situation, and means should now be available for bringing an end to the abuses which have arisen” (MOR, 1919a).

Notwithstanding undoubted improvements which did occur, the Act cannot really be regarded as a success, neither in terms of its educational provisions, or its attempts to regulate child employment. In relation to education, fees may well have been abolished, but the power granted to local authorities to raise the age to 15 was postponed indefinitely by Board of Education Circular 1202 (1922), which announced that the Board “under present conditions are not prepared in any area to approve by-laws requiring attendance up to the age of fifteen” (*Times Educational Supplement*, 22/07/1922, p.4). In any event, it is important to point out that Fisher’s desired option had, in fact, been to raise the age to sixteen (not fifteen), but that this had been frustrated by the continued political sympathy within government generally to employers’ demands for child employment. In this respect, the age of fifteen represented a concession to powerful vested trade interests who did not wish to lose juvenile employees. Fisher hinted at this in 1918, when, in an address to the TUC, he admitted that “It would be a great advantage to have the age raised to 16, but they had to realise the industrial forms of society as they existed” (TUC, 1918, p.72-3). By way of compensation the 1918 Education Act required LEAs to provide continuation schools, but due to the aforementioned employer pressure and severe expenditure cuts post-1918, Fisher’s compensation package of continuation schools failed to materialise (Simon, 1974).

The success of the child employment provisions of the 1918 Act was equally mixed. Certainly, the abolition of the half-time system *did* represent a substantial victory in the removal of one key barrier to education for the working classes. However, whether or not it was the 1918 Act itself that signalled the ‘death knell’ of the system is a matter of debate. As discussed earlier in the thesis, by the time Fisher’s Bill was passing through Parliament employer demand for half-time employees had reduced substantially due to the majority of employers themselves recognising that the system was not desirable or sustainable. Hence, the system was arguably close to its demise in any event. The other child employment provisions in the 1918 Act - that is, those relating to the more general employment of school children - could not be described as a success. As was the case with previous attempts to regulate the practice, a combination of Home Office

intransigence and influential employer interests ensured that the legislation failed to provide adequate protection to children throughout the inter-war years.

In summary then, there was much for contemporary educationalists and child employment campaigners to be hopeful for with the passage of the 1918, and, to an extent, the optimism surrounding the Act is understandable. There was a genuine feeling that the Act would go a good way to redressing the evils of child employment and create an environment within which ‘human energies’ would be nurtured. However, as will be shown, such optimism was to prove misplaced as the 1918 Education was unable to achieve the lofty goals set by Fisher and barriers to accessing education persisted in various forms for the following decades.

As demonstrated, employer organisations had long been opposed to extending school life for financial reasons. However, they (and some politicians) also asserted a more ideological argument claiming that the pool of ability to benefit from extending educational access was too shallow. The Federation of British Industry claimed that very few children possessed the intellect to warrant additional education past the age of fourteen. In contrast, evidence presented by Ellis (1925) and Lindsay (1926) demonstrated that “at least 50 per cent of the pupils in elementary schools could profit by some form of post-primary education up to the age of 16” (Lindsay, 1926, p.7). Additionally, some employers continued to be invested in notions of class maintenance. Examples of agricultural employers seeking restrictions on the education of children persisted well after the First World War, for instance, at the 1926 annual TUC conference Mr. W. Porter of the Agricultural Workers Union moved that the TUC should resist “proposals to limit rural education for the sons and daughters of rural workers” (TUC, 1926, p.479). Mr. George Edwards, also from the Agricultural Workers Union, seconded the resolution and added that:

“Farmers are against the education of the children. To put it in a very homely phrase, if I may, the farmers look upon the education of the rural child as being something that is unnecessary and against their interests. They rather like the

children of the rural worker to be thick of the head and strong of the arm; it suits the farmer better. Of course, when educated he is no longer prepared to accept a sweated wage” (TUC, 1926, p.480).

Employer organisations such as the FBI did little to assuage this ideological stance, warning as they did against “creating, as in India, a large class of persons whose education is unsuitable for the employment which they eventually enter” (cited in Lawson & Silver, 1973, p.394). Clearly, then, some employers remained opposed to education for much the same reasons as they did during the First World War and in the nineteenth century, and the State, to a greater extent than not, acted in the employers’ interests to the detriment of education.

#### Financial Retrenchment and Educational Opportunity

The employment of school children was omnipresent in the lives of the working classes, however, their ability to access educational opportunities in elementary schooling and beyond was further compounded by reductions in State expenditure on education. The TUC had been concerned by education spending cuts taken by some local authorities during the First World War, however, worse was to come. Notwithstanding H. A. L. Fisher’s defiant claim that he was not prepared to concede ground on the educational progress made, the general expenditure cuts taken in the early 1920s by the government as a result of the Geddes recommendations (1921) did reinforce barriers to the poorest. Mr. A. W. Tapp of the Shipconstructors and Shipwrights Union stated:

“Unfortunately, owing to the economy stunt that seems to be permeating every atmosphere, there appears to be a reduction even in the facilities for secondary education. Education authorities are increasing their fees...The Council of which I have the honour to be a member has increased its fees from £10 to £15 per annum...This means reducing the opportunities for some of the parents belonging to the industrial classes who wish to send their children as fee-paying pupils to

secondary schools... and as a result there will be a reduction in the number of free places for scholars” (TUC, 1921, p.369-70).

Secondary school fees continued to rise throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a point to which the TUC remained ever opposed. Increasing fees acted as a disincentive to families of potential fee-paying pupils which subsequently meant the numbers of free places were reduced too. The twenty-five per cent ratio of free-placers to fee-payers could be raised to forty per cent at the discretion of local authorities, however, this option was withdrawn as part of the Geddes cuts. Furthermore, the twenty-five per cent ratio could also be reduced by half upon special application to the BOE. In response to Geddes, an increasing number of secondary schools (particularly the more prestigious endowed schools) made such an application, decreasing their free-place numbers and consequently further restricting access to working class pupils; a situation that Ellis (1925) described as “disappointing”. Clearly, extension of educational opportunities to the poorer children in society was not a Government top priority.

The impact of the Geddes axe upon educational standards and equality provoked a major response from the TUC annual meeting in 1922. Several important concerns were raised including the increasing use of untrained teachers as an economy measure, particularly when there were many trained teachers available for employment. Lawson and Silver support the claims of the TUC, stating that “the search for professional status was profoundly undermined by the cuts in teachers’ salaries during the economic crises of 1922-3 and 1931” (1973, p.388). Lack of appropriate accommodation for schooling left an estimated twelve thousand children unable to access elementary education across the country. Mr. John Hill (Boilermakers Union) argued that these cuts were inflicted most heavily upon the working class:

“Take Manchester, where half the children in the city are crowded into classes of from 45 to 60 under one teacher. This education question is our question. It does not affect the Prime Minister, or Mr. Fisher, or the middle-class people at all.

Their children do not go to these overcrowded and inefficient schools” (TUC, 1922, p.414).

Another issue raised in 1922 by the TUC, though not one directly associated with the Geddes cuts, was the absurd situation where many children in secondary schools, accessed via their ability to afford the fees, were undertaking education of an elementary nature due to their lack of ability. Effectively, this served to reduce secondary opportunities for bright children from poorer backgrounds and resulted in significant waste of future potential. This had been a long-standing problem and would continue to be so. In their 1935 study ‘Ability and Opportunity in English Education’ Gray and Moshinsky found that, though far fewer in number, overwhelmingly the free place children were academically far superior to the fee-paying majority:

*“When we compare present free with present fee-paying pupils, we find that the former contain between four and five times as many gifted children as the latter”* (1935, p.151) [my emphasis].

In examining the lower end of the academic spectrum, Gray and Moshinsky present perhaps their most damning evidence:

*“While only three per thousand of free pupils in secondary schools fall below the selected level of ability, the corresponding figure for the entire group of fee-paying pupils (all of whom nevertheless enjoy the opportunity of a higher education) is nearly 50 per cent”* (1935, p.160).

Sanderson lends his support to the above evidence arguing that “even in the 1930s the unintelligent well-to-do were cluttering up grammar schools supposedly for the academically highly intelligent, while three-quarters of the stock of the nation’s high intelligence were in schools where they would leave early” (1999, p.63). Clearly, the concerns of the TUC in this matter were justified and considerable doubt can be cast upon claims that the nation’s pool of ability was minimal.

The need to improve the quality of elementary education and, in turn, the chances of elementary school pupils accessing secondary education, were increasingly prominent in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1926 the Consultative Committee to the BOE produced a report calling for the reorganisation of elementary schooling into three distinct stages (infant, junior, and senior), and also called for ending of the parallel system of elementary and secondary education for children aged eleven and over. This report, commonly known as the Hadow Report, argued that distinct stages in elementary schooling would raise academic standards as it would encourage specialist teaching practice attuned to each particular stage. However, despite a warm response from the BOE who encouraged local authorities to reorganise their elementary provision along Hadow lines, the progress of reorganisation was slow. This was particularly true in the case of voluntary Church schools who, as they had in the nineteenth century, continued to provide education at a standard widely regarded as defective. “By 1938 only 16 per cent of Church schools had been reorganised compared with 62 per cent of Council schools. This meant that, at this date, several million children still experienced their entire schooling within a single, old-type, unreorganised, all-age school taking children from five to fourteen and normally unable to offer any specialised teaching whatsoever” (Simon, 1991, p.52). The likelihood of pupils in these schools accessing secondary education was even less than that of those in council controlled elementary schools. Interestingly, there were still 133 all-age schools in 1966 (Lawson & Silver, 1973).

The Hadow Report’s recommendation for elementary education to cease at age eleven and secondary education to commence thereafter was, perhaps, even more important in the battle to extend secondary schooling to the working class. In making this recommendation, it highlighted the long-standing inequity of the funding allocated for those aged eleven and over in elementary schools compared with that of those aged eleven and over in secondary schools; the education of these groups was subject to separate codes of regulation. Simon asserted:

“This defined the conditions within which elementary education operated, at a level very considerably below that of the secondary schools, which had their own, more generous code of regulations, involving better buildings, equipment, and higher salaries for the teachers” (1991, p.28).

Therefore, the system of separate codes left the majority of the nation’s pool of high intelligence - residing in the working classes - being educated in conditions far less conducive to harnessing their education potential than those of children from more affluent backgrounds in secondary schools. This situation fuelled calls for a single code and free secondary education for all; a call that had been Labour Party policy since 1922, and TUC policy for two decades before that. A later publication by the Consultative Committee to the BOE, the Spens Report (1938), picked up the gauntlet and continued to press the case for a single code and free secondary education for all pupils aged eleven and over. The TUC supported the report’s recommendations in these matters (though it disagreed with some of its other proposals – particularly related to the structure of secondary education), however, the BOE was less enthusiastic. Though receptive to the Hadow reorganisation of elementary schools, the BOE was far from compliant in the call for a single code and free secondary education for all, describing the recommendations as “utopian” and totally unnecessary (Simon, 1991). The BOE’s stance remained one opposed to the growing numbers accepting that the system, as it was, was one that served to perpetuate class barriers to accessing secondary education.

Employer’s position on the value of education and use of child employment during the inter-war years remained much as it had done during the First World War and before. In much the same way as they had contested the need for continuation schools, employers opposed Hadow’s recommendations for reorganisation and extending secondary education to all. Sanderson (1999) argues that employers preferred the limited education offered in all age elementary schools as this meant more fourteen year olds were available to employ and such employees would exhibit more ‘pliable character’. This position continued into the 1930s where demand for child employment continued. The TUC, on the other hand, maintained their opposition campaign to child employment,

asserting that the most effective remedy would be to raise the school leaving age to sixteen and offer universal free secondary education.

Though committed to a policy of secondary education for all, the Labour Party was less forthright in seizing the opportunity presented to it in tackling the continuing issue of child employment upon its election in 1924. The former Minister of Education, Arthur Henderson, was appointed Home Secretary in MacDonald's minority Government and now had the opportunity to address the problem of child employment which had "dismayed" him during his tenure as Minister of Education. It was within Henderson's power to further tighten restrictions upon local authority byelaws, under the 1918 Education Act, in allowing child employment and before school hours in particular. Though Henderson did not avail himself of this he did order an investigation into the operation of the restrictions and byelaws of the 1918 Education Act as one of his first acts as Home Secretary suggesting that his concerns surrounding child employment were still present.

The 1924 investigation assessed the impact of the 1918 Education Act upon child employment by asking twenty five local authorities about the prevalence, hours worked, and effect of child employment in their area. Findings from the investigation, as composed by the Children's Branch of the Home Office, concluded that the 1918 Education Act had "reduced to a considerable extent the employment of children under 14" (Home Office, 1924). The table below, taken from the findings memorandum presented by the Home Office, shows the apparent reduction in child employment according to the Children's Branch:

**Apparent Reduction in the Extent of School Children's Employment (Ibid)**

Local authority	Number of children known to be working prior to introduction of byelaws	Number of children known to be working in 1924
Cardiff	c. 2000	304

Leicester	1671	592
Liverpool	3082	1646
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1836	287
Plymouth	1010	156
Portsmouth	1538	170
Wolverhampton	1386	323

Similarly ‘impressive’ improvements were reported in the number of hours children were engaged in employment. According to the memorandum, fifteen hours was now the weekly maximum, whereas “before the new restrictions came into operation children were known who worked 37 and 48 hours” (Ibid). Henderson was also provided with evidence of the improvements in the health and well-being of employed children; “The majority of the authorities state definitely that the amount of employment allowed by the present restrictions produces no adverse effect on the health and condition of the children” (Ibid). With regard to the specific issue of employment before school, the investigation did acknowledge conflicting evidence from local authorities stating that “it would be rash to pronounce a considered judgement as to the general effect on the health and education of the employment of children before school” (Ibid). Clearly, then, with the exception of the uncertainty surrounding morning employment, the 1924 investigation clearly regarded the 1918 Education Act as a resounding success in removing the evils associated with child employment.

Though Home Office officials were now content that the controversy associated with child employment could be laid to rest, other evidence highlights the inaccuracies of the information presented by the 1924 investigation. Cunningham (1999) asserts that the data gathered for the investigation was both methodologically unsound in its collection and bias in its application.

Firstly, the investigation report:

“Failed to highlight that in most cases local authorities were comparing irreconcilable information. In those instances where the greatest reductions were claimed, figures from earlier ‘pupils survey’ type studies were compared with 1924 local education authority (LEA) returns of *registered* child labour. The memorandum, therefore, took it for granted that officially recorded levels of child employment provided an accurate indication as to the amount of work actually undertaken, ignoring the fact that the earlier pupil survey methods provided far more reliable, and higher, estimates of the number of children working” (Cunningham, 1999, p.147).

Similar weaknesses are found in the memorandum’s claim that the number of hours children worked had significantly reduced. The investigation simply compared the excessive hours reported in previous pupil surveys, with that of the legal amount of hours children could work according to a sample of byelaws – no attempt was made to ascertain the actual amount of hours children worked, and the possibility that employment over and above the byelaw maximum was taking place was not addressed (Ibid).

Assuming that the hours some children worked were above those stipulated in byelaws, the memorandum’s assertion that these ‘limits’ consequently remove the danger of employment to children’s health and well-being appear spurious. Moreover, though the requirement for medical examination of children was included on the Home Office’s ‘model’ byelaws, it was not in fact a statutory requirement of local authorities, and six of the twenty-five authorities sampled in the investigation lacked such provision (Ibid). Information from the CWEC casts further doubt on the validity of the investigation’s findings in this matter. In a letter to the Home Office, the CWEC illustrated that even where medical examinations did occur, they were undertaken before employment commenced and rarely repeated during the period of employment – the time “when the results of the employment whether beneficial or injurious should have had time to show” (CWEC, 04/05/1921). Responses from numerous local authorities to the Home Office investigation characterised medical examinations, where they took place, as not fit for purpose. For example, in Wolverhampton, it was reported that some children were

passed fit for employment “from motives of expediency rather than from the fitness of the candidate”; whilst in Nottingham, very few children were excluded from employment on health grounds due to its school medical officer’s “very generous view” of what constituted ill health (Home Office, 1924).

As the above demonstrates, the data gathered for the 1924 memorandum was highly suspect. However, the second criticism levied at the memorandum by Cunningham (1999), the biased application of the data, is equally compelling. This is best revealed in discussion of the Home Office’s use of data concerning the issue of morning employment in the memorandum. Though the memorandum acknowledged the morning employment situation was unclear, the Home Office failed to further investigate or attach due credence to data supplied by six of the twenty-five local authorities who, so concerned with the impact of morning employment, had managed to prohibit it. Cardiff, for instance, reported that “investigation had clearly shown that such employment had a very harmful effect both on the physique and on the ability of such children to secure full benefit from their education” (Home Office, 1924); similar evidence was submitted by Plymouth and Glamorgan among others. Yet, despite such evidence, the 1924 Home Office memorandum chose to emphasise and allocate considerable attention to those views which regarded morning employment as beneficial to children’s health and well-being. The memorandum devoted a full page to the pro-morning employment views of Cheshire County Council’s Medical Officer who insisted that there:

“Is not lacking evidence, vouchsafed for by ... high authorities, that boys engaged in the towns in delivering newspapers to their destinations, retailing milk, etc. do it cheerfully, attend school without fail and are among the cleverest and most healthy of the scholars; that moreover their occupation inculcates sufficiently early an admirable sense of responsibility and in consequence the children are more likely to make good citizens” (Home Office, 1924).

Cunningham (1999) posits that this bias in the application of data to debate surrounding this issue is explained by the Home Office desire to strengthen and maintain its long-

standing ideological adherence to a non-problematic conception of child employment - this was evident in their support for local authorities who resisted prosecuting employers for contravening employment laws as set down by the 1918 Education Act (Home Office, 1924). It will be remembered that similar manipulation of data was evident too in the Home Office led 1901 Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children as well as the 1888 Cross Commission and 1861 Newcastle Commission in particular. In each of these investigations evidence of the deleterious impact of child employment upon the health, well-being and educational opportunities to children was disregarded in favour of pro-employment evidence which better fit departmental or wider political ideology.

Ultimately, the 1924 Home Office investigation served to appease the majority of political disquiet concerning the employment of school children, whilst, at the same time, bolstering public opinion that the 1918 Education Act employment regulations had ‘firm control’ over the issue. Indeed, even the *Times Educational Supplement*, which had long been an opponent to employment of school children, was swayed by the investigation findings, printing that the findings demonstrated:

“A great reduction has taken place in the number of children and young persons employed, while the hours worked rarely exceed from seven to fifteen weekly. Child labour has not yet disappeared, but judging by the fall in the numbers since 1919 there seems good reason to anticipate that within the next decade it will have vanished altogether” (04/04/1925, p.2).

The ‘findings’ from the 1924 investigation allowed for a period of calm relating to the employment of school children in the Home Office lasting for five years. However, the issue re-emerged as part of a campaign primarily concerned with the regulation of employment hours for juveniles aged 14-18. In 1928 Susan Lawrence (Labour, East Ham) introduced the Children and Young Persons (Protection) Bill which included proposals to further restrict the employment of school children by raising the minimum employment age from twelve to thirteen, and prohibit employment before school and on

Sundays (it also proposed to raise employment age for older children in certain areas such as street trading). Lawrence's Bill received support from her Labour colleagues, the CWEC and the *Times Educational Supplement*. Home Office officials were, however, less enthusiastic and advised the Home Secretary (Sir William Joynson-Hicks) to block the Bill as its proposals would significantly damage commercial interest in areas such as the newspaper and milk trades (Home Office, 10/02/1928). Again, as was the case in 1924, Home Office officials failed to impartially analyse the situation dismissing the Bill's proposals and choosing instead to remain blindly committed to the longstanding departmental approach.

Though unsuccessful, Lawrence's Bill was symbolic of a return to the political radar of the child employment debate. By the time the second Labour government won the 1929 general election the issue was firmly 'up for debate'. The *Times Educational Supplement*, now accepting that the 1918 Education Act was not the success they had claimed in 1925, called for more stringent measures to combat ongoing child employment:

“The Act of 1918 marked a distinct advance in child employment legislation, in that it prohibited all employment under the age of twelve. That age, however, has been recognised for some years as much too low. The time is ripe for raising it by at least two years...It does not appear improbable that supporters of the Government may press strongly for the total prohibition of all child labour. As things are, there is, no doubt, substance in the contention that education and employment are irreconcilable” (05/10/1929, p.3).

Such calls led Reginald Sorenson (Labour, Leyton West) to introduce his Children and Young Persons (Employment and Protection) Bill to the Commons in November 1929. The Bill, like Lawrence's the previous year, proposed to raise the employment age to thirteen, prohibit employment before school and on Sundays, and raise the employment age for street trading. Sorenson's justification for the Bill's introduction was that it would enhance national efficiency through reducing the educational waste created by the

luring of children from the classroom to employment. During the Bill's Second Reading Sorenson asserted that "it will not hurt anyone, it will impose no suffering on a single soul, but undoubtedly will release child life in many quarters to-day from the shadows which at the moment are falling upon them" (Hansard, 29/11/1929, c.1815). Sorenson continued to speak of the wide-ranging support for the proposals from educationalists and politicians alike. However, it was clear from debate during the Second Reading that Conservatives were far from supportive and expressed strong concerns that the Bill's proposals would harm both children and trade. Working class children, it was argued, would lose 'healthy' respect for manual labour which would subsequently diminish their educational capacity; it will be remembered that similar links between employment and 'improved' educational performance had been made and supported by Home Office officials for some time. Trade, the Conservatives continued, would hit hard by the loss of child employment. Dr. Vernon Davies (Conservative, Royton) stated that his Party colleagues wished to see that children:

"Are looked after industrially in the best way possible, that their lives may be happy, and their interests and their health looked after, with the important proviso that there is a minimum adverse effect upon industry" (Hansard, 29/11/1929, c.1863).

The concerns of the Conservatives were, then, the same as those advanced by the Home Office, both shared a non-problematic conception of child employment and regarded it as a worthwhile, even beneficial, activity which should not be impeded by educational concerns. Labour MPs, on the other hand, countered the Conservative claim of likely damage to trade by emphasising the long-term national efficiency and commercial gains to be made by investing in human capital through extending school life. Dr. Marion Phillips (Labour, Sunderland), for instance, insisted that:

"What this house has to consider is whether it is a wise saving to save on the health and strength of the young people. Cheap boy and girl labour means inefficient maturity, and therefore inefficient adult labour ... We believe that the

strength of this country, whether considered as an industrial nation or any other point of view, must lie in bringing together boys and girls who will make strong and healthy fathers and mothers and workers in industrial, commercial and other occupations” (Hansard, 29/11/1929, c.1819).

Similar arguments were advanced by the TUC at their 1929 Conference on Industrial Reorganisation and Industrial Relations. They agreed that investment in human capital through withdrawing children from the employment arena, and extending school life, would create better educated and, therefore, more skilled future employees which would logically provide long-term commercial gains and, more immediately, also assist in reducing unemployment:

“The raising of the standard of education among the workers generally would, in our opinion, be a very wise measure from the more immediate as well as the ultimate point of view of industry. Under modern conditions, the development of industry along progressive lines is largely dependent upon there being a greater supply of trained workers. Low-grade education will not lead to high-grade production” (TUC, 1929, p.196).

However, officials at the Home Office maintained their disposition toward favouring employment above education, and, despite the Labour Party holding political office, were in agreement with the views expressed by Conservative MPs. Thus, just as they had done in 1928 with Lawrence’s Bill, Home Office officials claimed scant evidence existed to justify the Bill’s proposals and that existing legislation was appropriate (Home Office, 1929). The Home Secretary (J.R. Clynes) accepted the ‘evidence’ of his department and subsequently requested that Sorenson withdraw the Bill, which he did.

Though attempts by Lawrence and Sorenson had proven unsuccessful, the desire for child employment reform did not disappear. In 1931 the International Labour Office (ILO), at its conference in Geneva, began preparations for drafting a Convention dealing with children employed in non-industrial occupations – earlier Conventions already limited the

age of employment in agricultural, industrial, and maritime occupations. Through the process of devising a questionnaire for completion by ILO member states conflict between the Home Office and the TUC became apparent. It was clear from debate on the form of questions to be submitted to member governments that the ILO Committee responsible for dealing with child employment were generally “in favour of extending the protection, so much needed, to the hundreds of thousands of children who are still subject to exploitation” (TUC, 1931, p. 226). However, the British government representative on the committee, and now Home Office Deputy Under-Secretary, Sir Malcolm Delevingne was not part of this consensus. Delevingne remained averse to action that may reduce the availability of child employment and, just as he did in the 1910 Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children (1903), attempted to manipulate the remit of the questionnaire to better suit the Home Office’s departmental view. On the other hand, the British Workers’ delegate, and TUC member, H.H. Elvin (General Secretary of the Clerks and Administrative Union) was trying to steer the questionnaire down a path whereby the Convention would further restrict child employment. The TUC’s Non-Manual Advisory Council had advised Elvin to work towards raising the minimum employment age to fourteen for all employment (including employment by parents) except street trading which should be restricted to those over sixteen (TUC, 1931). Elvin was successful in ensuring that questions concerning the age of fourteen as a minimum for employment, and the prohibition of employment altogether of children outside school hours “in order that they may receive adequate educational advantages”, were included in the questionnaire submitted to Governments (TUC, 1931, p.227). Less successfully, though, Elvin was unable to:

“Prevent a question being framed for eliciting from Governments their opinion as to allowing *light employment* [my emphasis] outside school hours, and the desirability of leaving to the competent authority in each country to define such ‘light employment’; also that Governments should be asked their views as to the desirability of taking special account, and, if so, in what way, of certain occupations, such as domestic work” (Ibid).

The inclusion of such lines of enquiry was exactly what the TUC had hoped to avoid and represent some success on the part of “certain members of the Committee”, such as Delvingne, who “dealt with child labour solely in economic terms, and took no account of the human considerations involved” (TUC, 1931, p.226).

Pressure to reform child employment legislation came not only from the ILO and TUC; the Labour Party’s own Education Advisory Committee (LPEAC) recommended changes along ILO lines and the Bills’ of Lawrence and Sorenson. Cunningham (1999) notes that the LPEAC were highly critical of child employment laws and, in particular, the long-standing variation in enforcement and prosecution rates between local authorities of employers who contravened them.

In the face of such pressure the Home Office undertook another investigation of school children’s employment in 1931. This investigation was carried out and presented in a similar vein to that of the 1924 investigation, and, as such, is subject to the same criticisms. The survey found that of the 933,947 school children aged 12-14 in England and Wales only 6.6% were employed (Home Office, 1931). However, just as in 1924, the data was gathered using local authority returns of children registered as employed and took no account of the masses of unregistered employed children. Evidence from Education Committees such as Cardiff, Newcastle, and Manchester showed that child employment rates were, in reality, many times that of the registered numbers. Cardiff, for instance, had only 180 registered child employees in 1929, yet the Education Committee discovered 630 children employed in the same year (Cardiff Education Committee, 1929). Undoubtedly, the Home Office was aware of the scale of the problem, hence it chose not to request estimated levels of illegal child employment in its survey.

In 1932, several members of the TUC General Council sat on the National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment. Here, they pressed the Advisory Council to state clearly to Parliament (among other employment recommendations) a fixed maximum number of hours (forty-eight hours per week) to be worked by boys and girls aged fifteen

and over in unregulated occupations. This request was not well received by employer representatives on the Advisory Council. “Throughout the proceedings of the Advisory Council on this subject the employer’s representatives opposed the making of any recommendations. They did not subscribe to the Majority Report, and submitted a Minority Report of their own” (TUC, 1932, p.159). Ultimately, employers need not have been too concerned with the Advisory Council’s recommendations as the Government chose not include any of the recommendations in its 1932 Children and Young Persons Bill. Again, it would appear that the interests of employers were shared by those of Government.

The same year saw Mr. T. Scollan (Distributive and Allied Workers Union) move a resolution declaring the TUC’s opposition to the continuing employment of schoolchildren in non-industrial occupations on both schooldays (outside of school hours) and non-schooldays. He contended that raising the minimum employment age from twelve to fourteen years, as it was for industrial occupations, would not only reduce unemployment for older teenagers, but would also improve the academic performance of schoolchildren. In evidence similar to that given to the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission and by Richard Waddington to the 1892 Royal Commission on Labour, Mr. Scollan argued schoolchildren:

“Were not supposed to start till 8 o’clock, but they generally started at 7 o’clock, and were employed right up to school time. Boys and girls who had to run about all over the town, and then rush off to school, were not in a fit state to get the benefits of the education they should have got. But that was not all, because immediately they had finished school they had to rush back again and work up till probably 8 o’clock or 9 o’clock at night. This practice still prevails, perhaps in an even greater degree now than before on account of the general depression, because there is not a shopkeeper in the country who has not looked upon it for hundreds of years as his right to exploit child labour” (TUC, 1932, p.334-5).

Scollan's motion was carried, however, his wishes and those of the TUC on this matter were far from realisation; concerns surrounding child employment would be frequently raised throughout the rest of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Just two years after Scollan's speech, Mr. A Clifton (Shop Assistants Union), in response to ongoing exploitation of young workers, moved that the TUC press the Government to raise the school leaving age (with adequate maintenance allowances) and age of employment to sixteen, in addition to better regulation of juvenile working conditions in non-industrial settings. He posited that the condition of child employment at the time of the address was little better than one hundred years prior and likened it to slavery. In seconding the motion, Mr. J. Hallsworth (Distributive and Allied Workers Union) discussed the plight of employed schoolchildren, stating that:

“There are not less than 100,000 of such school children in Great Britain to-day working out of school hours, and on Saturdays and Sundays, under conditions and at times when their fathers themselves would not consent to work. Therefore when we talk about raising the school-leaving age let us mean what we say, do not let us, while the child and the young person's school career is in progress, blight it and damn it and make it impossible of fulfilment, in the ripe fruits of a sound mental equipment, by compelling that young person prematurely to engage in wage-earning labour” (TUC, 1934, p.240).

On the face of it, the 1936 Education Bill appeared to suggest that the National Government had taken on board some of the views of those organisations such as the TUC calling for a later school leaving age, raising as it did the leaving age to fifteen by 1939. However, the Bill included a clause that permitted exemption from the final year for fourteen year olds who secured 'beneficial employment' or where required for 'home duties' without which 'exceptional hardship' would result; no maintenance awards were to be awarded. Vehemently opposed to these aspects of the Bill, the TUC informed Mr. Oliver Stanley, President of the BOE, that in over half those areas where school leaving age had been raised to fifteen via local by-law, more than nine in ten children were exempted before the age of fifteen (TUC, 1936). Despite the pleas to Oliver Stanley, the

exemption clauses were included in the 1936 Education Act. Simon (1991) described the Act as a ‘con’ on the part of the Government who he argues were more concerned with supplying the massive demand for cheap child employees than genuinely attempting to raise the school leaving age. However, the wave of discontent surrounding the issue did result in the inclusion in the Act of ‘conditions’ for exemption to be determined by LEAs; effectively giving them discretion in the definition and awarding of exemptions. In recollecting his own childhood experience of local authority assessment of ‘beneficial employment’ Mr. G. Tomlinson (Rishton Weavers Union) stated:

“I have at home an exemption certificate that was granted for part-time exemption as a half-timer. I was allowed to go into the mill from 6 in the morning until noon, and then to go for so many hours to school. On that certificate it is significant that the local authority of that day were convinced that I had obtained beneficial employment. I want you to understand that the term ‘beneficial employment’ is not new. It was beneficial employment when a lad went into the mill for half-a-crown a week of 36 hours” (TUC, 1937, p.279).

Though Mr. Tomlinson hoped that LEAs would seize this opportunity and use their exemption powers wisely to support a full school life, he was fearful that they would lack motivation to do so and bow to pressure from the BOE to grant exemptions. Tomlinson’s fears proved well founded as in August 1937 the BOE issued Circular 1457 to LEAs advising them on the issuing of exemption certificates; advice that failed to convey the importance of maintaining children’s education. In response, the TUC issued a memorandum to relevant organisations, including LEAs, detailing their conditions for exemption on the grounds of beneficial employment, these included; employment guarantee for twelve months; organised training should form part of the employment leading to a skilled profession; employment should be less than forty-eight hours per week between the hours of 8am to 6pm with no overtime and suitable breaks; a half-day holiday once per week and two weeks holiday with full pay; a requirement that local authorities would supervise employed children. For children exempted on the grounds of necessary home duties, the TUC memorandum pressed for a reduction in exemption

numbers and a tightening of the definition of 'exceptional hardship' that required a stronger case be put forward; here exemption should be for limited periods only. The more progressive LEAs went some way to following the TUC recommendations; Glasgow and some LEAs in Lancashire and Yorkshire for example. However, due to its local nature, conditions for exemption were regionally variable. In 1939, the year in which the Education Act (1936) was due to be implemented World War Two commenced. This led to the postponement of the Act and subsequently the raising of the school leaving age. The TUC accepted the circumstances of the time but did communicate to the BOE their expectation that once hostilities ceased the Act be implemented without the exemption clauses discussed above. Most importantly, what the 'beneficial employment' debate showed was the continuation of the Government's position of placing the concerns of employers over the extension of education to children of the working classes.

Despite the outbreak of World War Two, the issue of child employment and its impact upon the development of education was unremitting. Legislation such as the Shops Act (1934), Education Act (1936), Factories Act (1937), and the Young Persons (Employment) Act (1938) had at least made some attempt to mitigate some of the problems with employment of schoolchildren and young people, however, the problem was far from resolved. Figures from 1939 revealed that 104,000 school children aged twelve to fourteen were employed before and/or after school, at weekends, and during school holidays. Perhaps more worryingly, over 12,000 children under the age of twelve were employed by their parents to undertake 'light' agricultural or horticultural work; of these 12,000 over 1,500 were under eight years old (TUC, 1939). This troubled the TUC who were at pains to highlight the deleterious impact this employment had upon these children's education and health, and in turn led them into 'blind alley' occupations.

The evacuation of children from towns to country created the circumstance where children from the towns required more robust footwear and clothing in order to maintain school attendance in the area in which they now resided. Parents of many of these children were unable to afford such costs, consequently their evacuated children were

less likely to attend school in such an alien environment. This matter was raised with BOE by the TUC General Council who were dismayed by the BOE's reluctance to support LEAs in dealing with the situation. This example of lack of Government support bears strong resemblance to that evidence given to the 1861 Newcastle Commission by assistant commissioner Fraser explaining that inadequate clothing was a significant factor in determining whether or not a child would attend school, particularly in poor travelling conditions (Education Commission, 1861a).

As a barrier to accessing education the Second World War was formidable. In evacuated areas the Government had taken the decision to abandon the compulsory attendance of children and closed schools. However, many children remained in such areas, or returned after a period of evacuation; for these children no education was available and subsequently other school services such as medical care and meals were missed too. Under these conditions many children were recruited into employment, leading the TUC to press the Government to maintain education provision during the war and make necessary adaptations where needed. Though the principle of compulsory attendance was later restored, the occurrence of child employment continued to grow (to the detriment of school attendance) due to war conditions and was further exacerbated by the variations in by-laws between local authorities in relation to exemption and working hours. The TUC declared that "while it is not possible to produce statistical evidence, observers have reached the conclusion that the decreased opportunities for school attendance, resulting from the reduced provision of educational facilities, has led to an appreciable increase in the employment of children of school age" (1941, p.124).

### Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the optimism surrounding the extension of educational opportunity and curtailment of child employment for the working classes in the years immediately following the end of the First World War was not fulfilled. Explanation for this is found, in part, in the financial retrenchment of public expenditure during the inter-war period but also, more importantly, in the strong continuity in the roles played by the

Home Office, employers and Conservative MPs. These groups maintained their historical opposition to tighter restrictions on child employment which would have facilitated extended education for working class children and subsequently were successful in limiting the impact of the 1918 Education Act. In addition to their traditional justifications for maintaining child employment and opposing increased school life employers and sympathetic politicians now claimed that very few children had the ability to benefit from schooling past the age of fourteen; an argument debunked by contemporary research and a thinly veiled attempt to reinforce class maintenance and secure a continued supply of cheap, pliable child employees.

Expenditure cuts led to declining standards in elementary education and further restricted access to secondary education for poorer children. Increased use of untrained teachers, rising secondary school fees, decreased numbers of free place scholarships, and increased instances of teaching in unsuitable surroundings all served to reinforce the barriers facing working class children in maximising their educational potential. In accepting the Hadow Committee's recommendation for elementary school reorganisation the BOE did make some attempt to address declining standards, but some local authorities were more enthusiastic in implementing reorganisation than others, and voluntary schools were particularly slow to act. However, the BOE were not receptive to the Hadow, and later Spens Committee, recommendations to end the parallel system of education, commence secondary education from the age of eleven, and abolish the separation between elementary and secondary education codes. This demonstrates that, though keen to extend educational opportunity to working class children through tighter restriction of child employment, the BOE was not prepared to extend secondary education to all children at this time; an educational improvement called for by the Labour Party and TUC, and opposed by many employers.

Given their call for extending educational opportunities and more stringent regulation of child employment it may have been expected that the Labour Party, when elected to office in 1924 and 1929, should have made significant improvements in these areas; this was not to be. Though several investigations of child employment were undertaken by

the Home Office, the same manipulation of evidence and methodological inconsistencies apparent in previous investigations were applied here too. Thus, the Home Office findings suggested that the problems associated with child employment were much improved as a result of the 1918 Education Act and tighter regulation was unnecessary; these inaccurate findings ‘soothed’ disquiet on the matter for several years. However, by the late 1920s child employment had returned to the political agenda with several Bills put forward by Labour MPs proposing to further restrict child employment. These Bills were opposed by employers and Conservative MPs on the grounds that further restrictions to child employment would damage commercial interests and negate the ‘benefits’ of employment to children; the Home Office concurred and advised the Bills be withdrawn, which they were.

Clearly, then, despite initial post-war optimism and the election of Labour Governments, the inter-war period did not represent a shift in attitudes from either policy-makers or employers on the matters of education or child employment. Indeed, the barriers facing working class children in accessing educational opportunity during this period were particularly significant, reinforced as they were by the continued anti-education position of policy-makers and employers, and exacerbated by Government financial retrenchment.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT AND AFTER

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the role played by policy-makers and employers in maintaining the employment of school children from the period of the Second World War to the 1970s. It will be shown that the Second World War created the conditions whereby the problem of child employment, and its detrimental impact upon education, could have been consigned to history. However, though the war afforded the opportunity to banish child employment and extend educational opportunity, it also facilitated policy-makers and employers to re-affirm the place of child employment in the consciousness of the nation; an opportunity taken by child employment advocates.

Beginning with a discussion of the disruption to education and subsequent increase in child employment resulting from the Second World War, the chapter demonstrates how the Home Office, despite opposition from the BOE, complied with calls from employers and other government departments for relaxation of child employment regulations during the war. The resultant increase in child employment provoked outrage from child welfare groups and the Labour Party and fuelled calls for a progressive Education Act which would compensate for the educational damage caused in the name of the war effort. Support for the proposed extension of secondary education to all, and improvement in access to higher education, was universally welcomed, however, the Coalition Government was unprepared for the strength of support for tighter regulation of child employment in response to the abuses evident during the war.

Nonetheless, the Home Office were able to block several amendments made by Labour MPs to the Education Bill which would have effectively abolished child employment,

though they had to pledge to undertake another investigation into the condition of child employment. The chapter analyses this investigation and finds that, as they had in previous investigations, the Home Office manipulated evidence submitted to them in an attempt to reinforce their long-standing pro-child employment position. However, in the face of damning evidence from its own investigation of the increase in child employment and its deleterious impact upon education, combined with strong external pressures for reform, the Home Office was forced to acknowledge that exploration of reform was needed.

Proposals for reform were formulated by the Local Authority Advisory Committee (LAAC), but even here the Home Office was able to extend its influence as the committee was chaired by one of their senior officials who ‘steered’ the committee away from recommendations that conflicted with traditional Home Office child employment views and managed to secure the concession that trade interests would be consulted before any legislation was enacted. We will see that trade interests continued to oppose any tightening of child employment regulation on the grounds that it was educationally beneficial, promoted health, financially expedient, and necessitated by employers’ requirement for ‘flexible’ employees. Ultimately, employers need not have been concerned about the LAAC recommendations as the Home Office was able to fulfil its traditional function of subverting pressure for child employment reform and managed to quietly ‘shelve’ plans to reform child employment due, in part, to a hectic Parliamentary timetable focused upon pushing through Attlee’s historic social reforms.

The final section of the chapter illustrates the significance of Attlee’s social reforms upon the perception of child employment and demonstrates how it came to be ‘deproblematized’ and ‘destigmatized’ as a result of improved social conditions and universal access to some form of secondary education; a shift occurred in the public perception of child employment back towards it being regarded as positive activity and one which complemented education. Again, employers capitalised on this opportunity

and used it to further ‘beat back’ attempts to tighten regulations, claiming that ‘times had moved on’. Though this remained the state of affairs until the 1970s, it is important to note that educationalists continued to highlight the detrimental impact of child employment upon education and maintained calls for tighter regulation. Moreover, there was a strong, yet unacknowledged, class dimension to the rediscovery of the ‘benefits’ of child employment inasmuch as it was deemed appropriate for children attending secondary modern schools and less so for grammar school children; the former being typically populated by children from working class backgrounds and the latter by children from more affluent families. This represented clear political continuity in the pattern of presumed educational requirement based along class lines as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis.

#### The Extent and Nature of Child Employment During the Second World War

As Cunningham (2002) has shown, there were many reasons why the Second World War had the potential to be a catalyst, sparking an expansion of educational opportunity and a tightening of legislation governing child employment. It is, for instance, difficult to underestimate the disruption caused to the education of working class children between 1939 and 1945, or the extent to which this contributed to calls for the introduction of progressive educational reform. The call-up of teachers to fight in the war, the destruction of schools by the Luftwaffe, the dislocation caused by the evacuation programme, as well as a widespread appreciation that child employment had grown to unacceptable levels, helped to generate a general acceptance that significant proposals for educational advance should be implemented. This partly explains why so few voices of opposition were raised against the broad principles that underpinned the 1944 Education Act, which was the only significant piece of social policy legislation to be passed during the Second World War. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the harm caused to wartime education, the rhetoric that accompanied the introduction of the Coalition’s plans for educational reform was overwhelmingly progressive. Linking into a more general war-inspired impulse in favour of social reform, the introduction to the Board of Education’s 1943 White Paper,

'Educational Reconstruction', emphasised the extent to which the war had "revealed afresh the resources and character of the British people". The government would, it was stated, "recast the national education service" and compensate working class children for the sacrifices that had been made to their education during the war. However, as had been the case in the past, educational reform was just as much influenced by economic imperatives as it was social ones. "In the youth of our nation", the White Paper stated, "we have our greatest national asset. Even on the basis of expediency, we cannot afford not to develop this asset to the greatest advantage. It is the object of the present proposals to strengthen and inspire the younger generation" (BOE, 1943, p.3). The following extract from *The Times* serves to illustrate the popular levels of support that accompanied the publication of the White Paper:

"The unmistakable trend of the public discussion of educational reform which has been going on, with rising intensity, during the past two years has made it certain that little if any opposition will be raised to most of the main proposals in the White Paper: Increased care for children below school age; better buildings and smaller class sizes for juniors; the abolition of 'special place' examinations; secondary education of varied type for all, with lengthening of the school life and part-time education to follow; expanded and improved facilities for technical and adult education - on the necessity for all these reforms public opinion has shown itself to be substantially agreed ... the main conclusion must be that Mr Butler has produced a scheme which will enable the community to accomplish the single advance in education that it demands and deserves. There can be no question of the industry and patience that have been lavished on its preparation" (*The Times*, 17/07/1943, p.5).

*The Times* described the Act as one of the greatest educational advance since 1870. Key to the reforms was the proposal to introduce secondary education for all. As we shall see, the Act has since justly faced criticism for introducing a divisive, tripartite structure of education; one which reinforced rather than eradicated pre-existing inequalities. Nonetheless, at the time, many did see it as a progressive educational measure. Moreover,

it was not only in the field of secondary education that an expansion of educational opportunity was envisaged. Butler's education proposals also promised to provide able working class scholars with unprecedented access to higher education, and the White Paper identified a number of problems with the existing system:

“The path of the poor scholar to the university has been made broader and less difficult during the past twenty years...None the less, it has to be admitted that the provision of scholarships and bursaries is still inadequate in total and uneven in its incidence...The aim of a national policy must be to ensure that high ability is not handicapped by the accidents of place of residence or lack of means in securing a university education” (Timmins, 1995, p.90).

The expansion of opportunities to attend university was another development which *The Times* felt would have widespread support. “The changes proposed for broadening and smoothing the path to the University for the able but indigent should”, it stated, “command general approval” (*The Times*, 17/07/1943, p.5).

Of course, Butler's Act did not pass without *any* controversy. Heated debates occurred over the 'religious question' and also the date at which the school leaving age should be raised to 16. In addition, the Coalition government suffered its only significant defeat over the war years over the question of equal pay for women teachers. However, what is rarely acknowledged in accounts of the passage of the 1944 Act is the closeness to which the government came to suffering another humiliating defeat; this time over the Bill's child employment clauses. The government seriously underestimated the strength of support in favour of tightening the laws governing child employment, and as will be shown, it was forced to act promptly in order to avert what would have been a second major defeat on the Bill in a matter of days. In order to understand the strength of feeling on this issue, it is perhaps necessary to first appreciate how concerns over the extent of child employment and its associated detrimental consequences had accelerated during the war.

Contemporary newspaper accounts provide testimony as to the increased incidence and awareness of child employment during the Second World War. They also provide a picture of growing exploitation and malpractice, problems that became more acute as the war drew on. As early as October 1939, the Committee on Wage Earning Children (CWEC) wrote to *The Times* demanding that the problems associated with child employment during the First World War should not be repeated. Its letter was prompted by concerns that Ely's Education Committee had permitted the premature withdrawal of children aged twelve and over from school to work on the land. "It is hoped", the CWEC stated, "that the Board of Education will see that such abnormal and injurious employment is not allowed during the present war" (*The Times*, 05/10/1939, p.6). Some two days after the publication of this letter, an internal Home Office memorandum outlined the pressure it was coming under to relax its enforcement of the regulations. As it pointed out, farmers and their representatives wanted to see the wholesale withdrawal of children from schools:

"The problem arises of course mainly in agricultural counties, where farming interests are strong on the local authority and where (so I have been told by two or three local directors of education) it is not really so much a question of some immediate temporary help in getting in a harvest or a crop as a desire on the part of some farmers to get hold of the services of school children from agriculture during the war" (Home Office, 1939).

The memorandum went on to outline the Board of Education's position. The Board of Education, it stated, "would not be likely to agree to any general interference with the normal education of school children in favour of farmers". "The real question thus at issue", concluded the memorandum, "is the relative priority of the claims of education and agriculture" (Ibid). This indeed was the 'real question', and as Cunningham (2002) argues, all the available evidence points to the question been resolved in favour of farming interests. Consequently the war years saw an increased incidence and intensity of child employment. As Cunningham points out, the Home Office, the government department tasked with responsibility for child employment regulation, presided over

what turned out to be a significant and wilful relaxation of the law. Indeed, as early as February 1940, local authorities had received a Home Office circular, which in effect signalled an easing of the regulations governing the use of child employment.

“The Secretary of State recognizes that during the coming summer farmers will in many cases be short of adult labour, and in consequence there may be a desire to make up part of the deficiency by the employment of children in urgent work. Children who live in the country are accustomed to help on the farms, and when they are not at school the Secretary of State would see no objection to a certain amount of employment so long as it is suited to their age and physique” (Home Office, 07/02/1940).

A Defence Regulation followed in April 1942, which had the effect of allowing children aged 12 and upwards to miss up to twenty school meetings per year for the purposes of working in agriculture. Some historians have suggested that the relaxation of the law relating to the employment of children in agriculture was an unfortunate necessity, given the scale of the national emergency and the manpower problems facing the nation. However, this perhaps underestimates the level of abuse that was identified, and, perhaps even more importantly, the fact that child employment laws relating to other areas of industry and trade were not applied any more effectively. Indeed, Home Office officials were regularly rebuked by their counterparts in the Board of Education for failing in their duty to protect employed children, but they continued to maintain what Cunningham (2002) has rightly referred to as a recalcitrant stance.

This stance was not without its consequences for employed children, and official inquiries into the extent and nature of child employment furnished some uncomfortable findings. According to correspondence between the Board of Education and the Home Office, the latter’s February 1940 circular had led magistrates in many areas to conclude that the law could be “broken with impunity” and had led to widespread flagrances of the law. In its response, the Home Office brushed aside the Board of Education’s demands for more effective regulation, citing the unprecedented demand for child employment

from industry and agriculture (BOE, 20/02/1941). As already hinted, it continued to maintain this stance, despite regular expressions of concern from the Board of Education. Official documents of the period show that despite a desire on the part of the Board of Education to maintain the integrity of child employment legislation, it largely failed to ensure that the legislation was upheld. As Cunningham (2000) argues, it found itself largely powerless to cope with the countervailing pressure applied by the Home Office and Ministry of Agriculture, both of which were sympathetic to calls, particularly those from agricultural interests, for the law to be relaxed. Ultimately, the Home Office's position as the department with administrative responsibility for child employment meant that its views prevailed, and like the period before 1939, its approach towards regulation was ideologically in accordance with that of employers.

Needless to say, the exponential growth in child employment was greeted with outrage by organisations interested in child welfare, as was evidence of a more general failure on the part of the Home Office to ensure that working children employed in agricultural and other settings were afforded adequate protection. By the time Butler's Education Bill was being discussed in 1944, the CWEC had been joined by others in calling for reform, such as the British Association of Residential Settlements, along with the many trade unions and the TUC. Each of these organisations was lobbying in favour of much tighter restrictions being placed upon the employment of children. Their views were encapsulated in a letter written by the CWEC to *The Times* in February of that year. "We feel", argued the CWEC, "that that the time is now overdue for further reform of the law relating to the employment of children during the years of compulsory education". It rejected claims that education and employment were in any way compatible, pointing to the refusal of 'better off' parents to allow their children to work:

"We are not impressed by the supposed beneficial influence of early wage earning, a benefit from which well-to-do parents sedulously protect their own children. The argument from poverty only strengthens the case for the early introduction of children's allowances...We therefore invite support for strengthening the employment clauses of the present Bill, so as to prohibit the

gainful employment of children while they are compulsorily attending school”  
(*The Times*, 05/02/1944, p.5).

These proposals did command a good degree of public support, as evidenced by letters to *The Times* and *The Times Educational Supplement*. In February 1944, *The Times* provided its unqualified support for proposals for a stronger regulatory framework, lamenting that “the new Education Bill in no way alters the existing practice”:

“A century ago controversy over child labour turned upon the number of hours that a young child should work in a factory. Factory life for the child is past, and to-day...what is left of the controversy is concerned with activities out of school...Work for children outside school hours...must be subject to careful restrictions such as will rule out economic exploitation and any type of occupation likely to inflict physical or mental strain. Perhaps the best statement of ideal was that incorporated in the TUC memorandum on education after the war: ‘Industrial questions should not be allowed to determine educational policy. Let the greatest possible educational advance be secured; then let industrial practices be adapted to the new educational situation’” (Ibid).

The passage of the 1944 Education Bill therefore afforded social reformers with a historic opportunity to resolve the ‘education versus employment’ debate once and for all. It seemed that the war had created conditions conducive to the abolition of child employment and campaigners sought to utilise and amend the employment clauses of the Education Bill to secure that goal. The fact that the Labour Party had itself become convinced of the need for such reform made the possibility of achieving it all the more possible. Labour’s strength of feeling can be gauged in the following comments made by Arthur Greenwood in Labour’s response to the Second Reading of the Bill. Greenwood, at the time at the time Acting Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, described the failure to address the issue of child employment in the Bill as an “absurd and crude anomaly”:

“It seems absurd, when every section of this House has become convinced of the necessity of lengthening the school life of our children, that we should continue to tolerate the gainful employment of school children, both before and after school hours. I hope that before the passage of the Bill we may have an indication of the Government's intention in this matter” (Hansard, 20/01/1944, c.408).

Labour returned to this issue when the Bill reached its Committee stage on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, where it moved a number of important amendments to the Bill. One of these amendments would have transferred responsibility for child employment to the Board of Education, and needless to say this was opposed outright by the Home Office. Sir Richard Denman, a Labour MP with a long-standing interest in child employment and the person responsible for moving this amendment, stated that “Those who are most interested in the problems of the employment of children regard this as a major Amendment”. “For at least 20 years”, he stated, “we have been wanting to give the Board of Education the power of approving these by-laws, but it has never been the ‘appropriate moment’ up till now” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1174). Denman was, of course, right; a number of attempts had been made in the past to transfer administrative responsibility to the Board of Education, but all had failed due to Home Office opposition. He gave a number of reasons for moving the amendment. Firstly, local education authorities would be formulating child employment byelaws, so it made sense for the Board to be the approving authority. Secondly, there had been a steady growth in responsibility in the Board of Education for all aspects of children’s lives, and given this, the proposed change seemed rationale and justified. Finally, Denman pointed to the Board of Education’s expanded remit into ‘industrial’ areas (for example, technical schools and planned growth of the college sector), suggesting that this too strengthened the case for the transfer of powers.

Osbert Peake, the Conservative Under-Secretary at the Home Office, was dispatched to persuade the Committee of MPs to reject Denman’s amendment. His defence of the status quo mirrored the arguments that had been marshalled by Home Office officials in the past. He referred to the Home Office’s long and ‘honourable’ tradition of administering

the law relating to not only the employment of children, but also the employment of young people. Peake also fell back upon a familiar Home Office defence used whenever this question had arose, insisting that “when you are considering administrative arrangements, between education on the one hand and employment on the other, rather than to draw your boundary at the age of 14, 15, or 16, and say that up to that age all the activities of the child shall be looked after by one Government Department, and that after that age they shall be looked after by another Government Department. I think that the boundary between education and employment is a good one, from the administrative point of view”. In addition, he insisted that there was little concrete evidence of malpractice and argued that the onus of proof should be upon the proposals of the amendment to show, in detail, how the transfer of administrative responsibility would be a change for the better. “I suggest”, he stated, “that this administration has worked well in the past”. Finally, Peake cited the current national emergency as being an inconvenient time to introduce this change:

“At any rate, at present, with Government Departments very much overworked, it would be highly inconvenient to transfer this function of the Home Secretary, which I think he has administered with considerable satisfaction to all concerned for nearly 40 years, and I, therefore, urge that the Amendment should not be pressed” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1177-9).

This amendment was not ultimately successful, but the contentious nature of the debate provided a precursor for a more significant clash over the principle of child employment generally. For next on the Committee’s agenda was an amendment moved by Rhys Davies, another Labour MP with a long standing interest, in child employment. The amendment stipulated that “No child under the age of compulsory attendance shall be employed before or after school hours or at week ends or during school holidays”. The impact of this should not be underestimated. This amendment, if passed, would effectively have prohibited the employment of school children completely - during term-time and in school holidays.

Peake was appalled at the scope of Davies's amendment, and, in no uncertain terms, raised a point of order. "The amendment, it seems to me, with respect, raises issues of the widest character" (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1182). He, along with a number of other MPs, including Clement Davies (Liberal) and Earl Winterton (Conservative) sought to close the discussion of the amendment, insisting that it had no place in an Education Bill. Winterton was particularly concerned about whether, if passed, it would negate the Emergency Powers Act, which, as we saw earlier, allowed children to be withdrawn from school to engage in agricultural work:

"If this Amendment were passed, it would directly nullify the provisions of the Emergency Powers Act which gives power to the Minister to allow the employment of persons which would not otherwise be allowed. Should we not, therefore, have to amend the Emergency Powers Act? Otherwise we should have passed two Acts of Parliament, one of which contradicts the other?" (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1184).

However, noting Davies' argument that HAL Fisher's 'great' 1918 Education Act had included provisions abolishing the half-time system, the Chairman of the Committee, the Labour MP James Milner, ruled the amendment in order and allowed the debate to continue. "This particular Clause as drawn", Milner stated, "also deals specifically with the restriction of employment as it affects education. I therefore selected the Amendment". Once, given the opportunity to do so, Davies set out his case for moving the amendment:

"I am in favour of the complete abolition of employment of school children; I regard this Clause as the creaking rung in the educational ladder. I have been trying to find out what the actual position is. The hon. Gentleman who spoke about the Home Office dealing with this problem, surely, knows that the model by-laws governing the employment of school children are flouted in many cases. In some schools it is quite possible that there are more children employed under 12 without the knowledge and consent of the ideal authority than there are from

12 years upwards. The regulation of the employment of school children by model by-laws has practically broken down during the war in many cases” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1185).

Davies addressed the issue of child employment in agriculture, rejecting the notion that this work was in any way ‘beneficial’ or ‘educational’. The prime motivation, he insisted was profit, and he condemned the way local farmers were able to use their status within the community to further their own interests at the expense of children’s education. “It is not uncommon”, he argued, “for employers to pick up 100 to 150 children after school hours between the ages of 8 and 14 - not 12 and 14 - and convey them to work in the fields till 9.30 pm...What offends me most is that the managers of some of these schools are the local farmers, the employers of the school children are the same farmers...those farmers are the magistrates as well [and for this reason] they allow this employment in spite of the law” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1186-7). Davies went on to comment on the employment before school, imploring the Committee to ignore the arguments that would be “trotted out to-day on behalf of the newspaper proprietors”. “It has been said on the best authority”, he argued, “that some of these children are too sleepy and incapable in the classrooms to receive that education provided for them because of this form of employment” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1187).

Peake responded by insisting that the Education Bill was not the correct platform to enter into discussions about the principle of school children’s employment. He feared that such a course of action “would be liable to retard the progress of the Bill and would raise various controversial issues which ought to be considered not in the light of the war-time conditions of to-day but of peace-time conditions”. However, this appeal, to the ‘special circumstances’ of war and the ‘national emergency’ did not impress Arthur Greenwood. As was the case during the Second Reading of the Bill, he rose to support calls for tighter regulation. Whilst accepting Peake’s case, that this *particular* Education Bill may not be the best place to thrash out new child employment legislation, he demanded an undertaking that the government would tackle the “absurd ... anomaly of children being employed before school-time and after school-time”. “I think it might ease the situation”,

he stated, “if my right hon. Friend gave some sort of undertaking that ... the Government will make some announcement of their intention to deal with this problem” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1189):

“It would be intolerable, indeed it would create doubts in the minds of many people if we passed my right hon. Friend’s Bill and still permitted young children to work before and after school hours for a few pence. If we could have some sort of undertaking that the Government would ... consider this and be prepared to make a statement, I think many of us in the Committee would feel somewhat relieved ... I am not asking for the inclusion of a solution of the problem in this Bill - I realise the difficulty about that - but I still think the Government ... really ought to submit some parallel legislation dealing with the employment of young people of school age outside school hours” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1189, 1192).

Opinions were clearly running high on this issue and it was clear that government was likely to be defeated, with the possibility of the Bill’s progress delayed. At this point, R.A. Butler himself intervened in the debate, indicating that he would engage in urgent discussions with the Home Office about the matter, and “examine it with a microscope, so important is it”. “I can, at once”, he said, “give the Committee an assurance that I shall, in the light of the discussions in the Committee to-day, discuss the matter with the Home Secretary” (Hansard, 23/03/1944, c.1193-4).

This debate prompted a flurry of activity within the Home Office. Officials were obviously stung by the general tone of the debate and within days a memorandum for Ministers was prepared, the clear intention of which was to seek to defend its ‘departmental view’ and forestall reform. “Rhys Davies”, the memorandum began, “said that he was in favour of the complete abolition of the employment of school children. It is not so easy as it sounds”. If all employment were prohibited, the memorandum argued, “a lodging house keeper would be debarred from having the help of her daughter in getting the breakfast for the lodgers in an emergency; a gardener would be debarred from taking his son to help him with his work on a Saturday morning, and a farmer would be debarred

from sending his son to feed the chickens or collect the eggs”. Here, officials were clearly seeking to conjure up the image of an all encompassing state, interfering unduly in family affairs, to the detriment of common sense and personal freedom. The memorandum went on to discuss the “special consideration” that was needed when considering child employment in agriculture. Interestingly, particular attention was drawn to Rhys Davies’ comments regarding wilful evasion of the law in these areas. Indeed, officials accepted that “it often happens that the employers are farmers, the school managers are farmers and the magistrates themselves are farmers”. However, rather than viewing this as an unacceptable impediment to reform, and one that should be addressed in order to promote education and child welfare, the Home Office merely accepted these arrangements as ‘given’:

“In these circumstances what chances would there be of securing the enforcement of total prohibition of employment of children in agricultural work? ... There can be no doubt that such a prohibition would appear to the whole community to be completely unreasonable”.

The memorandum ended with a cautious recommendation, suggesting that any decision on child employment reform ought to be delayed until a thorough survey of the phenomenon had been undertaken. This was clearly a delaying tactic, designed to placate what was seen as an ‘unruly’, reform-inclined House of Commons:

“Enough has been said to show that careful investigation is needed before any drastic extension of the present restrictions can be decided upon ... If early investigation is promised, it is to be hoped the House of Commons, even in its present mood, will not press for a pledge to be given in advance in favour of any of these proposals” (Home Office, 1944).

### 1944 Survey into Child Employment

A pledge was indeed made to undertake a review of child employment and this culminated in the Home Office contacting all 316 local authorities with a view to ascertaining the extent of child employment in their areas, as well as their views on the desirability of reform. Cunningham (2000) has summarised the statistical data gathered by this survey. However, its significance lies less in its estimations as to the extent of employment, which were clearly inaccurate, and more in the insight it provides us into contemporary attitudes towards the prospect of child employment reform among local education authorities. Their officials had close, first-hand experience of how child employment had detrimentally impacted upon children's education, and their responses to the survey serve to illustrate both the failure to regulate child employment, as well as the depth of support that existed amongst educationalists in favour of significant reform.

It is perhaps worth first making some brief comments regarding the accuracy of the data returned to the Home Office by local education authorities. In all, these led the Home Office to estimate that 77,125 boys and 11,458 girls in England and Wales were employed. This represented 15.3% and 2.3% respectively of the numbers of boys and girls in those countries who had attained the age of twelve. Compared to a previous survey conducted in 1937, this represented an increase of around 30% in child employment. However, children employed in seasonal work during the holidays, or in term-time under the Defence Regulations, were not included in the Home Office statistical returns presented to Ministers. One later and separate estimate put this at around 77,800 children (51,800 boys and 26,000 girls), almost as many again as those included in the original statistical return (Home Office, 1944a). In addition to this, it is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of the returns were based solely upon the numbers of children who were registered under local byelaws for employment, thus ignoring the large numbers of children who were working illegally. Liverpool, for instance, simply stated "no registrations" in its return, despite the fact that thousands of children in the city were known to have been employed. Likewise, Cardiff gave no estimates, despite the fact that its education committee was well aware of extensive levels of illegal child employment. In this sense, the return seriously underestimates the extent of employment being undertaken, a fact that rendered the statistical return largely useless

in terms of it providing an accurate estimation of employment activity. This was a point made by Essex's Education Committee, who declined to furnish a return for precisely these reasons:

“The Committee stated that under war conditions there has undoubtedly been evasion of the law in the employment of children and systematic administration of the statutory provisions and byelaws had not been possible. There had also been an appreciable amount of casual and short term employment and the Committee felt that the statistics prepared under these circumstances would give an entirely inaccurate picture and that they would not be making any useful contribution by submitting the information asked for”.

In fact, the Home Office itself went on to admit the flaws in its methodology. “A number of authorities”, it accepted, “have mentioned that there is known to be a good deal of illegal or unauthorized employment, particularly of very young children, in their areas and that there is difficulty, under war conditions, in exercising the supervision needed to eradicate it” (Home Office, 1944b). Commenting on the returns of six county councils, all of whom furnished ‘nil’ returns in their estimates of child employment, the officials noted that “it is hard to believe [they] represent the total facts”.

Inaccuracies aside, this survey remains an important historical document, for as already hinted, it provides a very useful and compelling summary of the views of local authorities on the question of child employment reform. What it illustrates is the extent to which local education authorities and teachers had not been immune to either the increased levels of child employment in their areas, or its deleterious affects on the children concerned. London County Council's Education Committee, for instance, was among twenty five other respondents whose concerns were such that they called for a complete abolition of child employment. It argued that “in view of the prospective educational and social developments, i.e. the placing of children over 11 in secondary schools and the payment of family allowances, power to prohibit employment entirely should be embodied in any new legislation” (cited in Home Office, 1944a). Others who shared the

same view included: Somerset teachers, Bournemouth LEA, Burnley's Town Clerk, Dudley's Director of Education, Newcastle-upon-Tyne's Director of Education, Rotheram's LEA, Smethwick's LEA, York's Secretary for Education, Colchester's LEA, Congleton's LEA, Darwen's LEA, Glossop's LEA, Guildford's LEA, Ilkeston's LEA, Newbury's LEA, Stalybridge's LEA, Willesden's LEA, Abertilly's Director of Education, Durham's LEA, West Ham's LEA, Sunderland's LEA, Edmonton's LEA, and Shipley's LEA.

It is interesting to see how the Home Office responded to such concerns. In fact, it reacted by seeking to cast doubt upon the representative nature of the returns from these and other authorities, a response that was perhaps illustrative of its continued opposition to reform. For instance, officials highlighted the fact that a number of the returns were completed by individuals, rather than LEAs, and they implied that it was very likely that many of these, as a consequence, were 'tainted' by the "personal views" of those responsible for them:

"In this connection it is worth while mentioning the remarks of the Education Officer for Hertfordshire, who points out that generalisations by teachers and local education authority sub-committees 'have no scientific value, are mutually contradictory and should not be quoted' and says that the effect of employment can only be determined with any accuracy by means of a careful examination, extending over several months, of the children concerned and a study of comparable statistics in the pre-war period" (Home Office, 1944a).

However, even the most recalcitrant officials in the Home Office could not obscure the widespread support that existed for the abolition of employment before school. Amongst those recommending its abolition were: London County Council, Leicestershire's LEA; Norfolk's LEA, Warwickshire's LEA, East Riding of Yorkshire's LEA, Anglesey's LEA, Denbighshire's teachers, Blackburn's LEA, Bolton's Director of Education, Brighton's LEA, Chester's LEA, Northampton's LEA, Cardiff's Town Clerk, Chesterfield's Education Officer, Congleton's LEA, Ealing's Director of Education, Harrogate's LEA,

Newcastle-under-Lyme's Director of Education, Scarborough's Director of Education, Stockton-on-Tees LEA, Tipton's LEA, Pontypridd's LEA, Port Talbot's LEA, Cornwall's LEA, East Suffolk's LEA, Poole's LEA, Bedford's LEA, Widnes' LEA and Kingston-upon-Thames LEA. In fact, the attitude of LEAs and educationalists towards the issue of morning employment was compelling and unequivocal, and officials accepted that educational opinion was strongly in favour of its abolition. "There is clearly a large measure of agreement", they stated, "even in areas where the views expressed are not unfavourable to employment at other times, that employment before school is detrimental, both to the health and education of the child". Included in the return was a summary of the arguments that LEAs had presented against such work:

"Children so employed often arrive at school late and in wet clothing (particularly under war conditions when newspapers are often delayed and clothing is rationed.

They have frequently little or no time for breakfast

They arrive at school tired and are less alert than other children.

They show a lack of attention to personal cleanliness.

During double summer time they are getting up and working when they ought to be resting, and consequently they often appear nervous and irritable through lack of sleep" (Ibid).

However, it is clear that there was support for wider reforms, as evidenced by the inclusion, towards the end of the statistical return, of a list of the arguments that LEAs had presented against child employment generally:

"Employed children often come from poor homes and are often less robust than the normal child; they are in fact the children least fitted for employment.

They often get wet and contract colds which result in a loss of school attendance.

They often go straight to work without tea and have to wait about for delivery vans.

They show a lack of energy and inability to concentrate in school.

They are apt to regard employment as more important than school.

They are deprived of opportunities to take part in organized games and other out-of-school activities.

Employment restricts the time available for recreation and study; it interferes with home work when the children attend secondary schools.

Delivery work is a 'blind alley' type of employment of no value in fitting a boy for full-time employment.

Employed children are inclined to become precocious, bad-mannered and even dishonest.

A high proportion of the children who appear before the juvenile court are employed.

Employment is particularly undesirable for girls who often have to help very considerably at home" (Ibid).

A summary was also provided of arguments that had been presented in favour of child employment. Needless to say, this was a somewhat smaller list. In relation to employment before school, only one LEA sought to defend the practice, on the grounds that it encouraged children to rise early. Another argument presented in favour of

employment generally was that (where child employment byelaws stipulated medical examinations) it afforded the opportunity to assess whether working class children needed medical attention. It was also suggested that employers sometimes insisted upon children being “decently clothed and shod”. Apart from these, only two other points were made in favour of employment. The first of these, that it provided “an outlet for youthful energy and adventurous spirit”, obviously appealed to Home Office officials, who, as we have seen, had long embraced a ‘public order’ conception of school children’s employment. The other argument, that “children are brighter, sharper and more confident, self-reliant and responsible than other children”, had clearly been contradicted by the bulk of the evidence submitted in the returns (Ibid). In short, then, there appeared to be a groundswell of opinion in favour of significant elements of child employment reform, and in this respect, the comments made during the passage of the Education Bill by those such as Walter Greenwood, Rhys Davies and Sir Richard Denman, were representative of educational opinion generally.

#### Proposals for Legislation: A False Dawn

The pressure for reform was such that officials were compelled to begin formulating proposals for amending the law relating to the employment of school children. The body chosen to make recommendations was the Local Authority Advisory Committee (LAAC), which consisted of representatives from the County Councils Association, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the Association of Education Committees and the London County Council. Alexander Maxwell, the Home Office’s influential Permanent Under-Secretary, chaired the Committee’s deliberations and a powerful group of civil servants from other departments of State, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, were also present at meetings. Maxwell set the tone for the Committee’s deliberations in his introduction to the first meeting. “While it may be true”, he stated, “that the claims of education must come first, and that any form of employment which militated against it should be restricted or forbidden ... There is, however, a considerable difference of opinion on the question of the employment of children” (Home Office, 08/03/1945). Cunningham has documented

the Home Office's close 'management' of this process in some detail, drawing attention to the reluctance that continued to prevail in the Home Office over the principle of child employment reform, and its ability to steer the LAAC away from proposals that officials considered to be too 'radical'. For example, the minutes of this meeting document the fact that "Some [local authority] members expressed the view that employment after school should be abolished altogether". Maxwell was clearly perturbed by this suggestion and pressed the Committee to come up with some 'alternative' proposals:

"The Chairman said that if there was a strong feeling that employment on school days should be prohibited he would report it to the Secretary of State, but he would like some alternative suggestion. Mrs Malone [London County Council] suggested that restriction to one hour should be accepted pending total prohibition" (Ibid).

The restriction of employment to one hour after school was one of the Committee's final recommendations, though interestingly, the "pending total prohibition" component of Malone's suggestion was dropped. The Ministry of Agriculture was also able to ensure that agricultural interests were more than adequately represented during the Committee's proceedings. Its representative, Mr H. Meadows was able to secure an exception for rural areas for the proposal that employment be restricted to the final year of school:

Mr Meadows ... said that his Minister wanted to retain the age for agricultural work at 12 years, even if the age for other occupations were raised. He pointed out that the country must continue to grow foodstuffs at the present rate for some time after the war, and to raise the age above 12 for agriculture would rule out a valuable source of labour ... After further discussion, it was generally agreed that agricultural work should be treated as an exception" (Ibid).

A subsequent memorandum, written by Maxwell and submitted to the Home Secretary, set out the recommendations that eventually emerged out of the Committee's proceedings. "There was a large measure of agreement", Maxwell stated, that

employment before school should be prohibited; that employment on school days should be limited to between 8.30am and 6.30pm (except in agricultural work); that employment after school should be limited to one hour; that employment on non-school days should be limited to five per day (six in agriculture) and thirty per week, and that employment should be subjected to a medical certificate. Maxwell concluded the memorandum by emphasising the need to consult trade interests prior to pressing ahead with any proposals for legislation:

“Before any legislation is introduced it would seem right to give opportunity for representations to be made by those persons, such as the newsagents, who will regard the new proposals as unduly restrictive” (Home Office, 1944c).

These proposals were formulated prior to the General Election in 1945. By the time the Home Office received a deputation from the National Federation of Retail Newsagents, Booksellers and Stationers (NFRNBS) on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1945, Labour had won its landslide victory and begun putting plans in motion for introducing its comprehensive package of social reforms. The Federation was received by G.H. Oliver, Labour’s Under-Secretary of State, along with two Home Office officials (Miss J. Wall and F.L. Haigh) and an official from the Scottish office. The newsagents’ representatives made it clear to Oliver that they were opposed to the introduction of any regulations which went beyond the existing legislation. The arguments they presented bore all the hallmarks of those utilised by employers giving evidence to the inquiries into child employment examined in previous chapters. As had previously been the case, the Federation’s representatives claimed that their members were motivated by altruistic concerns, rather than material gain. They were, it was argued, teaching children to be good, responsible hard working young citizens and in doing so were making a great contribution to the social and economic well being of the nation. They insisted that the delivery of newspapers was “specially adapted, by its conditions, to juvenile employment” and they were “proud of the service given by its members”:

Newsagents...were convinced that it [employment before school] was detrimental neither to the education or the health of the boys. On the contrary, the boys go to school fresher and more alert for the outdoor exercise in the clear morning air and their health is definitely improved. The work gives the boys a new interest in life. It encourages initiative and ambition and, being carried out without direct supervision, and in contact with the public, fosters a sense of self reliance and overcomes shyness. Many people who have risen to high positions started their careers by delivering newspapers and boys ought not to be encouraged to think that there is something objectionable in an honest job of work” (Home Office, 12/9/45).

Interestingly, the NFRNBS were far less sympathetic to the plight of other trades competing for the employment of school children, and they contended that only newspaper delivery could provide youngsters with such a ‘healthy’, ‘beneficial’ learning experience. For example, the Federation claimed that employment of children in the milk trade interfered with adult employment and had a potentially “detrimental effect on general wage levels”. Here, they alleged, children were exploited by roundsmen who “caused discontent” by using child employees to deliver more milk and so increase their commission. The Federation, it appears, were opposed to children being engaged in street trading for the same reasons. This occupation was “bound to lead to undesirable contacts conducive to bad habits” and the Federation “agreed that street trading was objectionable” and welcomed “any increased restrictions” which might be applied to it (Ibid).

Of course, the objections raised by the NFRNBS were motivated primarily by self-interest and not a concern for the well-being of employed school children. Street vendors, for instance, were seen by newsagents as fierce competitors and the Federation’s warm endorsement of additional street trading regulations should be seen in this context. Not surprisingly, the Federation was less than welcoming towards proposals to control child employment in their own industry a little more closely, and they condemned even the existing limited legislation for forcing their members into committing “irregularities”.

The Federation's admission to the existence of "irregularities" was noteworthy, for it is clear most of the criticisms they made of conditions in other trades were equally applicable those found in their own industry. Indeed, when asked by the Under-Secretary of State what the position was in areas where morning employment had not been prohibited by byelaw, the Federation's representatives frankly admitted to the existence of widespread evasion of the law:

"Mr Whinfrey said that he was afraid that in these areas the prohibition was consistently not observed. The Federation, who were anxious that its members should be law abiding citizens, deplored that the growing tendency to impose restrictive regulations was driving some of them into irregularities of this kind" (Ibid).

Despite its claims to be motivated by 'altruism', the Federation did acknowledge the centrality of children's employment to the businesses and profitability of its members. "The small price of newspapers", it stated, "even with the addition of 'delivery' charges, did not permit the employment of adults, and in any case adults were reluctant to take jobs for an hour or two in the mornings". The Federation insisted that any extension of the current regulations would pose a serious threat to its members' livelihoods, but it was particularly concerned about proposals to prohibit morning work:

"The present was a most inopportune time to prohibit their employment in urban areas. Many newsagents were still serving in the forces or away from home on war work and their wives were struggling to keep their businesses going. Many were feeling the strain of doing so and any added burden might well result in the closing of the business and the loss of livelihood of the men on their return" (Ibid).

In effect, of course, this was an inadvertent, but frank admission that the appeal of children's employment to the Federation's members lay in its 'flexibility' and its cheapness. Put simply, children were willing to perform tasks at levels of wages and

conditions of service which more mature workers regarded as unacceptable. This ‘flexibility’ and cheapness stemmed mainly from its unorganised and unregulated nature; a scenario that the Federation clearly wanted to preserve. For, as we have seen throughout this and earlier chapters, whilst child employment was theoretically restricted by national statutes and local byelaws, the regulations were very rarely enforced and employers, such as newsagents, were given an unprecedented degree of control over their young workers. In this sense, the newsagents’ claims, “that the delivery of newspapers was a useful service to the community and was specially adapted, by its conditions, to juvenile employment”, should be treated with caution. The NFRNBS’ actions were clearly driven by a desire to represent the material interests of its members rather than the welfare of the ‘community’. It was seeking to maintain a situation whereby children employed by its members were afforded none of the workplace protection measures deemed appropriate for adolescents or adults; one where they would continue to be poorly paid, have no employment rights, and be forced to work unsociable hours, to the detriment of their education and health..

As Cunningham (2000) has shown, the period following this meeting can only be described as a period of inertia, and the impetus that had gripped the campaign to reform child employment laws appeared to subside. Proposals to publish a White Paper and draft Employment of Children Bill were quietly shelved within the Home Office. In part, this can be explained as a result of pressure of Parliamentary business, and this was the reason given for the failure to introduce a Bill in Labour’s first Parliamentary session (Home Office, 1947). Clearly, Attlee’s Labour government was pushing through Parliament a host of bold, controversial measures of social reform, and legislation on the employment of children would clearly have to wait its turn. However, departmental inertia, influenced by a lack of official support for reforms, seems the most likely explanation. For instance, in a memorandum written in May 1945, just two months after she had received the deputation from the NFRNBS, Miss J. Wall appears to have rejected the need for amending legislation. Whilst accepting that some further legislation may be required in relation to the employment of children in films and entertainments, she advised “that other employment under Section 18 of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, could

be covered by pressure on local authorities to tighten up their existing byelaws". A Home Office memorandum written in December 1947, in reaction to a TUC inquiry about the progress of legislation on the matter, noted that "There has been no further progress since that time". Unsure how to respond to the TUC's request for information, officials recommended the following response be made to the TUC's:

"It will not be very satisfactory ... to tell the TUC that the inter-departmental action which was begun in April, 1944, is still being pursued in December, 1947. It might be better to be quite frank with the TUC and say that consideration of the question has had to be postponed by pressure of other matters but that steps are now being taken to revive the matter and it is hoped that time may yet be found for a Bill dealing with the employment of children" (Home Office, 1947).

The suggested Bill would never emerge, and, unfortunately for those who had been in favour of reform, it appeared that the decisive moment had been lost. In 1944, during the passage of the Education Bill, educational opinion, and crucially political opinion, was on the side of those calling for more stringent restrictions. Perhaps more than any other time in history, this was the moment when the education versus employment debate could have been settled in favour of education once and for all. As we have seen in this chapter, there was a real prospect that the employment of school children would be prohibited. However, once the war-impulsed impetus in favour of social reform had subsided, so too did the pressure to amend child employment legislation, and although organisations such as the TUC periodically raised concerns about school children's employment, the 'moment', it seemed, had passed. Changing economic and social trends contributed to a change in attitudes towards child employment and the prospects for reform subsided. As Cunningham (2000) has shown, the final 'death knell' for the Local Authority Advisory Committee recommendations arrived in 1951, following the publication of the Bateson Report on child employment in the entertainment industry. Within months of its publication a detailed memorandum was submitted to the Home Secretary setting out why, in the Home Office's view, measures such as the prohibition of morning employment and the restriction of employment to the final year of school, were

unnecessary. The memorandum pointed to changed public opinions on the question, and only one relatively minor proposal for reform was put forward; that is, that children employed in the morning should not be allowed to work again in the evening. The practical effect of this would be that newsagents would be unable to employ the same children in morning and evening delivery work, a relatively minor inconvenience compared to the earlier suggested measures. This, it was pointed out, would bring UK legislation in line with a 1946 ILO convention on child employment, which stipulated a 14 hour night interval between periods of employment. In retrospect, therefore, the decision not to press the wartime coalition government into including amending legislation in the 1944 Education Bill meant that best opportunity to implement fundamental child employment reform in the twentieth century had been missed.

### Post-War Social Reform and Child Employment

The Britain that emerged in the years after the Second World War would be a different, less fractious, socially and economically divided Britain than the one that entered the war in 1939. As one influential commentator on Britain's post-war welfare state has put it:

“The redistribution by the classic welfare state of both social status and power is...undeniable. Freedom from fear of absolute poverty and universal access to services such as the NHS and secondary education dramatically improved the lives of many. So too did the comparative job security and, above all, the sustained rise in average living standards that emanated from full employment” (Lowe, 1993, p.292).

By 1957, the Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan was proclaiming that Britain's population had ‘never had it so good’, and he was not alone in this assessment as to the impact of post-war economic and social trends. In his influential social democratic text, *The Future of Socialism*, the Labour intellectual, Anthony Crosland, described capitalism as having been fundamentally transformed:

“Thus almost all the basic, characteristic features of traditional pre-1914 capitalism have been either greatly modified, or completely transformed. Does it then make sense to go on speaking as though contemporary Britain were still similar in kind to the society historically designated by the word capitalism? Surely not...I believe that our present society is sufficiently defined, and distinct from classical capitalism, to require a different name (p.37-8)...the planned full-employment welfare state which has been the outcome of the first spell of Labour government, is a society...[which]...would have seemed a paradise to many early socialist pioneers. Poverty and inequality are in the process of disappearing. Living standards are rising rapidly” (2006, p.89).

Certainly, the 1950s and 1960s were decades of relatively full employment and hence one of the primary causes of poverty in the inter-war years - unemployment - had been effectively removed. Healthcare and secondary education (albeit, *some form* of secondary education) was now free to all, and better social security and housing provision had helped alleviate some of some of the chronic levels of poverty and destitution that were a feature of inter-war Britain. There was a genuine feeling of optimism, and Lowe is correct in his assessment that things *really had* improved. Such optimistic assessments of the impact of the welfare state had been reinforced by the findings of Seebhom Rowntree’s third survey of poverty in York, published in 1951, which concluded that full employment and the welfare state had largely succeeded in eradicating the poverty that characterised the inter-war years. His 1936 survey of York had found that nearly two persons in every eleven were in poverty, but by 1951 this had apparently fallen to two in every 118. As *The Times* (15/10/1951, p.7) pointed out, it seemed that a “remarkable improvement - no less than the virtual abolition of the sheerest want – has been brought about”.

Contemporary political analysts such as Bell and Lipset were equally impressed at the apparent ease with which the key problems which had traditionally dogged western capitalist societies had been resolved. Lipset, for example, believed that “the fundamental problems of the industrial revolution have been solved; the workers have achieved

industrial and political citizenship” (cited in Miliband, 1969, p.11). Both these writers celebrated the peaceful, consensual nature of this ‘transformation’ and drew attention to what they felt were the converging economic and social policies of traditionally antagonistic political parties. The “ideological age”, they believed, had ended and politicians of both left and right were now committed to “the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of decentralised power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism” (Bell, D. 1962, p.402). Others such as Mark Abrams and Butler and Rose cited rising income and consumption patterns as evidence of a blurring of class differences and of a homogenisation of living standards. The Marxian notion of ‘embourgeoisement’ was used to describe the process whereby large sections of the working class were seen to be adopting middle class values and norms (Goldthorpe, 1969, p.157).

That the claims made by theorists such as Lipset, Bell, Abrams, etc. were premature is not now in doubt. The growth in industrial conflict in the 1950s; the ‘rediscovery’ of poverty; the re-emergence of political conflict; and the appearance of radical protest movements in the 1960s proved that the arguments presented by exponents of the ‘end of ideology’ and ‘embourgeoisement’ theses were premature. So too did the rise of neo-liberalism on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1970s. To be fair, contemporary commentators in the 1950s and 1960s did express a certain amount of caution as to the impact of post war socio-economic changes. Hence, Goldthorpe et al. argued, “increases in earnings, improvements in working conditions, more enlightened and liberal employment policies and so on” did not “in themselves basically alter the class situation of the industrial worker” (Ibid). This should not, however, detract from the significance of the changes which undoubtedly did occur, or the way they were commonly portrayed and perceived. Sustained economic growth, for example did take place; unemployment did remain at unprecedentedly low levels; working class standards of living did improve, and manual workers were able to consume goods and services which had hitherto been almost exclusively enjoyed by their middle class counterparts. In addition, there was also a feeling that industrial capitalism had been irreversibly radically transformed and that its worst excesses had been overcome.

Each of these changes and developments were, for our purposes important, for collectively they helped transform the way child employment was perceived, partly because families became far less reliant upon their younger children's earnings. Indeed, it became obvious that most school children who worked did so not in order to supplement their family's incomes, but instead to earn money to enable them to purchase leisure and consumer goods. Consequently, their employment gradually became less associated with hardship and poverty. As this process accelerated, and children's wages became less significant to working class families, child employment progressively became de-stigmatised. By 1959 a survey into child employment undertaken for the Crowther Report showed that only 9% of grammar and secondary modern school boys worked in order to supplement their family's incomes. As the table below illustrates, most worked in order to provide for their own rather than their family's needs.

Table showing motives for children working outside school: (Source: Ministry of Education, 1959, p.30).

Reasons for taking part-time Jobs while still at School	Grammar and Technical School Boys	Modern and All-age School Boys	Grammar and Technical School Girls	Modern and All-age School Girls
Wanted to earn money	percentage 48	percentage 47	percentage 25	percentage 11
Other reasons than earning money	5	8	5	6
Did not have a part-time job	47	45	70	83
Number= 100 %	561	878	520	801
The Purposes for which Money was needed when part-time Jobs were taken in order to earn Money				
For general pocket money	62	64	50	60
Saving to buy a specific object or for holidays	36	28	22	19
For clothes	14	12	32	49
To help at home	9	9	4	7
Miscellaneous reasons	3	1	6	2
Number of young people needing money = 100 %	267	408	127	90
Some gave more than one reason, therefore percentages add to more than 100. No. of reasons:	329	471	145	123

We will comment further on the implications of the growing numbers of grammar school children engaging in employment later. For the moment, though, it is worth just emphasising that this too seemed to signify a change in attitudes towards out of school employment. This trend was also important, for it seemed to signify that some of the psychological barriers which had prevented many non-working class parents from allowing their children take part-time work had dissipated. What we appear to be witnessing is a fundamental change the way child employment was perceived in post-war Britain. In some respects, therefore, Home Office officials had been right when, in the memorandum they submitted to Ministers in 1951, they talked about changed attitudes towards child employment.

This change in perceptions surrounding child employment was a point not lost on the NFRNBS, when it once again set about defending its members 'right' to employ children in 1953. This time, its representations to the Home Office were prompted by discussions within Whitehall over the one proposal that the Home Office had brought forward following the publication of the Bateson Report in 1951; the introduction of a 14 hour night interval between periods of child employment. Rather than being relieved at the relative mildness of the proposals, the Federation demanded a meeting with the Home Office to discuss the issue. The deputation was received on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1953. The minutes of the meeting record that the Federation was strongly opposed to the proposal that employment on school days should be restricted to either one hour in the morning or one hour in the evening and for a 14 hour night interval, in view of their effects on the delivery of newspapers. Once again, the Federation hinted at the centrality of children's employment to their members business interests, pointing out that this would "add to the cost of delivery" and that "These costs would have to be passed on to the public". In addition, "they would have great difficulty in finding sufficient staff". The Home Office officials present pointed out the UK had already ratified the 1946 ILO convention, and that "it was the policy of successive governments to try and give a lead to other nations in complying as far as possible with conventions". It would, they pointed out "be difficult for a Minister...to justify a departure from the convention unless there was a convincing

case to do so". The Federation replied by referring to the 'changed' attitudes towards child employment:

"The deputation, whilst appreciating this point, felt that there had been a change in atmosphere since the early post war years. In view of the raising of the school leaving age, employment of children was not regarded as a bad thing in itself; on the contrary there was growing feeling that, properly safeguarded, employment by providing a healthy outlet for children's energies and enabling them to earn money was a factor in preventing juvenile delinquency. The Convention itself was rather Utopian, and it would be interesting to know whether any nation had actually implemented it in its legislation or proposed to do so" (Home Office, 21/01/53).

As Cunningham's (2000) trawl of the post-war period illustrates, to an extent, the Federation were right. Child employment was no longer seen as a significant problem and attitudes towards the phenomenon did seem to have changed somewhat. The growing numbers of grammar school children and indeed girls engaging in out of school employment, also seems to confirm that an attitudinal change towards the practice had taken place. Indeed, even formative educational documents, such as the Crowther Report, began to refer to child employment as a useful, even educational pursuit, and one that policy makers should be seeking to encourage rather than prohibit:

"It seems to us important that boys and girls who want to stand on their own feet financially should not be prevented from doing so...If the desire of a teen-ager to get more independence can be linked with a realisation that this is something that has to be paid for and worked for - in fact that work is worth doing - a valuable moral lesson has been learnt" (Ministry of Education, 1959a, p.127-8).

In this respect, the employment versus education debate took a new turn, and one which looked backwards rather than forwards, to a time when child employment was celebrated rather than deprecated. Of course, this is not to say that the employment of school

children was not, in reality, problematic, nor is it to suggest that further regulations were not indeed necessary. Indeed, we should not be blind to the fact that educational welfare officers, teachers and many local authorities continued to remain convinced as to its deleterious effects, and still pressed governments to implement reforms. However, the ideological climate had changed, and as Cunningham's (2000) research implies, employment out of school began to be presented as a useful means of bridging the potentially troublesome gap between school and work. Indeed, there is evidence that some head teachers, particularly secondary modern school head teachers, felt that even the current regulations were too stringent, representing an impediment to much 'useful' activity. One such Essex secondary modern head teacher made the following comments in a letter to *The Times*, where he argued that child employment laws as currently constituted, had "the effect of usurping the functions of a parent and of obstructing useful employment of the young":

"The mass of rules and regulations and the accumulated administrative paraphernalia, with its medical inspections, employment cards and what not...create unreasonable difficulties for all...For all children, but particularly for those whose energies turn to practical pursuits, the proper use of their time for useful and socially valuable work (whether paid or unpaid) is a primary problem of our times. Indeed, for the bulk of the older pupils at *secondary modern schools* [my emphasis], a wise integration of their school work with useful activity outside would introduce reality to lives that are far too often chiefly concerned with a sort of 'make believe'" (Chapman, A.W. in *The Times*, 09/09/1955, p.11).

It is therefore important to acknowledge that there was a 'class' dimension to the claims made about the beneficial nature of employment outside school, and this is something that previous research has failed to fully identify. For instance, the Crowther Report's positive comments about the effects of child employment were made in relation to secondary modern school pupils, and not grammar school children. They were directed towards those pupils whose "home circumstances, and their lack of ability and purpose, make it almost certain that for them the solution [to their educational 'deficit'] does not

lie in homework so much as in some form of directed activities out of school hours". The report went on:

“The experience of comprehensive and modern schools is showing that homework can profitably form part of the education of far more boys and girls than used to be believed, but it cannot be anything like the whole solution for pupils who are markedly below average. Allowance must also be made for other forms of work quite unconnected with school. Half the boys add such paid work as paper rounds to their school day, and most girls have home duties...It seems to us important that [such] boys and girls who want to stand on their own feet financially should not be prevented from doing so...If the desire of a teen-ager to get more independence can be linked with a realisation that this is something that has to be paid for and worked for - in fact that work is worth doing - a valuable moral lesson has been learnt ... In both these matters it seems to us that (not least for the less able pupils, who are often the most early to mature) the last year at school should take full account of their interest in the world of employment, which they are soon going to enter” (Ministry of Education, 1959a, p.127-8)

This is an important point, and it should perhaps help us qualify some of the points that Cunningham (2000) makes about the ‘deproblematization’ of child employment. For whilst it was seen as an ‘appropriate’ activity for working class children - something that would, to quote the Crowther Report, develop “their interest in the world of employment, which they are soon going to enter” - the same was by no means universally true of grammar school children. Hence, in its submission to the 1947 Gower Committee on juvenile employment, the British Medical Association suggested that out of school employment was “beneficial”, encouraging “responsibility and healthy independence”. However, it qualified this statement by expressing the opinion that the opposite might well be the case for grammar and technical school children (BMA, 1947).

As already hinted, Cunningham’s analysis of the post-war period serves to illustrate the extent to which concerns over the impact of employment on education continued to be

expressed. Teachers, teaching trade unions and educational welfare officers - that is, those in a best position to be able to ascertain its impact - periodically called upon governments to place closer restrictions on the employment of children. However, the 'deproblematization' of child employment, and the widespread perception that employment conferred upon children useful 'skills', meant that such demands were relatively easy for senior officials and Ministers to ignore or dismiss. It was not until the beginning of 1970s, when a number of high profile abuses of the law received national publicity, that this non-problematic conception of school children's employment began to be undermined. One such scandal occurred in London's borough of Haringey, where it was found that "many children" were "working up to 30 hours a week in shops, and others spending their Friday nights and Saturdays in local factories". The Secretary of the Haringey Teachers Association, John Elkington, told the *Guardian* newspaper that, "many children were arriving at his school too tired to concentrate on their school work. Others had no time for their homework, and several were unable to stay for after-school activities, because of their jobs" (cited in Dean, M. *The Guardian*, 07/01/1970). As a result of the publicity given to this and other such cases, Edward Heath's Conservative government commissioned Dr W. Emrys Davies, a research associate at Manchester University's department of education, to undertake an inquiry into child employment. The resulting findings, only a summary of which has thus far ever been published, served to shatter the notion that child employment was 'educationally beneficial'. "Part time jobs done by children", *The Times* reported, "have a bad effect on their school progress, a report published today suggests. Boys who do morning jobs, such as newspaper and milk rounds, play truant more often, behave worse, and do not work as hard as those without such jobs". Davies' survey was the most comprehensive ever conducted into the employment of children, involving 1413 boys and 1,361 girls in secondary schools across England and Wales. It found that "the regulations governing child employment are widely ignored" and that "many children work at ages well below the legal minimum of 13" (*The Times*, 10/11/1972, p.3).

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined a period which seemed to present child welfare campaigners and educationalists with an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that tougher restrictions were placed upon the employment of children. Faced with evidence of widespread abuse, and being forced to negotiate with restless, reform-minded House of Commons, Ministers and civil servants were compelled to make commitments that, ideologically, they were opposed to. Ultimately, as we have seen, these commitments were quietly diluted, then dropped entirely, and despite the strong pressure to introduce reforms, the legislative framework regarding the employment of children after the war remained largely the same as it had prior to 1939. This was due to the continuity in the role of the Home Office and employers who maintained their traditional positions and acted in the manner in which they had done so for many years; the Home Office continued to manipulate evidence gathered in its investigation of child employment, and employers continued to extol the virtues of employment for children. However, the post-war ideological shift away from laissez-faire via Attlee's social reforms was also significant as they went some way to 'deproblematise' the concept of child employment. Though concerns about the impact of child employment upon education quietly 'rumbled' on, the potentially most formative moment in the twentieth century for reform, it seems, had been missed, and the rest of the post-war period was one that was characterised by a non-problematic conception of child employment.

The survey undertaken by Dr Emrys Davies represented the beginning of a more cautious approach towards the question of child employment, certainly within the academic community at least. As was mentioned in the thesis introduction, this was perhaps the first of many late twentieth century surveys to draw attention to the potentially problematic nature of child employment on education. The fact that the Davies Report was never fully published is perhaps illustrative of continued resistance within Whitehall towards the question of child employment reform.

## CHAPTER 7

### HIGHER EDUCATION: ACCESS TO UNIVERISTY AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

#### Introduction

Previous chapters in this thesis have shown that access to both elementary and secondary education has not been equitable for working class children; education policy has served to reinforce rather than remove pre-existing inequalities in education. As we have seen, barriers to accessing education have progressively ‘shifted’ initially from elementary education to secondary education. For instance, even where the principal of access to education was conceded, school fees, together with financial constraints that surrounded working class families, meant that many children were unable to take up the limited opportunities that were theoretically available. Significant barriers to educational opportunity continued to exist, even when elementary education became compulsory. Throughout the inter-war period, working class parents were unable to afford to required school fees, and the systems of maintenance support that existed were skewed in favour of middle class families, who had the cultural and financial capital needed to tutor their children through local authority entrance tests. Much the same can be said of the post-war period. Despite the progressive rhetoric surrounding Butler’s 1944 Education Act, it is now generally accepted that the tripartite system of education that it introduced served to reinforce rather than remove pre-existing inequalities in education. Whilst it may have guaranteed access to ‘some form’ of secondary education, the system of selection for the three types of schools that emerged - secondary moderns, technical and grammar - invariably acted as a form of social selection, consigning working class children to secondary modern schools and middle class children to the superior technical and grammar schools (Benn, 1970) where progression to higher education (HE) was far more realistic.

As access to elementary and, later, secondary education was gradually established for the working classes their ability to maximise educational potential was impeded though

undertaking employment. As we have seen, child employment has been a strongly contested issue between those who argued it was a ‘fitting’ activity for working class children to facilitate their absorption into future adult employment: a necessary remedy to familial poverty; a tool through which children could ‘enhance’ their educational performance whilst simultaneously improving their physical well-being; and those who contended that child employment was highly detrimental to educational performance: a physical threat to children’s well-being; an effective medium through which some employers could ensure compliant employees, suppress wage levels and reinforce class boundaries.

Hitherto, this thesis has focused primarily upon barriers to elementary and secondary education. Therefore, this chapter takes the next logical step and continues to engage with the central themes of structural inequity in the education system, employment, the role of policy-makers and poverty as barriers to education by critically analysing working class scholars’ access to, and experience of, the ‘next rung’ on the ‘educational ladder’, higher education. We start by discussing the barriers facing working class access to HE during the inter-war period and emphasise the structural inequity of the undergraduate funding system which, much like the scholarship system available for secondary education, was based upon permissive legislation and subsequently characterised by substantial regional variation in provision; variable provision which impeded working class access to HE much more than those of more affluent means.

The chapter then moves on to consider the impact of the Second World War upon HE provision. Here, it is shown again that, as it did for secondary education, the war acted as a catalyst to stimulate some extension of educational opportunity in HE. Though perhaps not as obvious as the extension of free secondary education to all, the effect of the war upon HE can be seen in both the political will it generated to tackle the technical and general educational deficiencies highlighted through warfare, and the collective national identity it fostered which naturally led to demands for a more egalitarian post-war society; the expansion of HE was needed to achieve both of these goals. While the 1944 Education Act had little immediate direct impact upon HE, it did re-affirm the principle

of the 1918 Education Act that no student should be financially debarred from accessing education from which they are able to profit; a principle which later reports from the Barlow Committee and Universities and Increase of Scientific Manpower Committee also supported on the grounds of national interest and used to justify their recommendations for expansion of HE opportunity.

Post-Second World War funding for undergraduate students is then examined. Here it will be seen that despite significant increases in student numbers, the system of funding remained regionally variable, and insufficient to overcome the financial debarment or disadvantageous experience of poorer students in HE. Calls from the 1948 Working Party on University Awards and numerous educational interest groups to significantly increase award values and standardise the funding system were largely dismissed by the MOE despite increasing tuition and maintenance costs. By the late 1950s the discrepancy between State scholarship and LEA award values had disappeared, however, regional variation in the administration of awards by LEAs remained, particularly in relation to the application of the parental means test. Evidence suggests that some LEAs were more likely to allocate awards to students from more affluent backgrounds due to the reduced cost to the LEA as determined by the means test. This led to calls from many groups for the abolition of the means test; calls which were denied by the MOE and Treasury on historically familiar ideological grounds of personal responsibility.

The final section of this chapter discusses the rise and impact of undergraduate vacation employment. Unlike the child employment discussed earlier in this thesis, the employment of undergraduate students did not occur to any great extent until the Second World War due to its restriction to students from predominantly affluent backgrounds. However, the post-war gradual increase in working class students accessing HE, combined with low value and regionally variable funding systems, resulted in increased demand by students for vacation employment; poorer students were compelled to undertake vacation employment. Evidence is presented here that illustrates the similarity in debate between the deleterious impact of child employment upon educational performance and the impact of undergraduate employment upon academic performance.

Further similarity between child employment and undergraduate employment can be seen in the role of policy-makers who, as they did with child employment, tended to adopt a non-problematic conception of undergraduate employment despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary.

#### Access to HE: The Inter-War Years

“To the vast majority of people brought up in the 1920s or 1930s higher education was an unattainable dream” (Kogan and Kogan, 1983, p.15). During this period the higher education (HE) system in the UK was strongly elitist with only one in thirty of those who stayed on at school till sixteen accessing it, equating to approximately 50,000 full-time university students in 1938/9 falling to around 35,000 during the Second World War (Simon, 1991). The primary factors for the low uptake of HE were lack of capacity in higher education, shortage in the ‘pool of ability’ (due to the inadequate and inequitable nature of the education system generally), and, most significantly, the costs associated with undertaking HE.

Of course, inter-war policies on higher education must also be placed in the context of period when, as we have seen, access to even secondary education for all was still a matter of debate. Restricted capacity in HE provision was, perhaps, understandable given the lack of pressure applied to the State by organisations such as the TUC, the Fabian Society, and even the Labour Party to press for HE expansion; as we have seen, their efforts tended to be focused on the more pressing need to provide secondary schooling for all school children (Simon, 1991). Even by the late 1930s, up to 80% of school children in the UK finished their education at 14, leaving school with no educational qualifications at all. Overall, only 14% of children went to secondary school between 1918-1939 (Branson and Heineman, 1971, p. 188).

The dearth of secondary education opportunities, particularly for working class children, meant that little evidence existed to demonstrate their ability to succeed within secondary education and, indeed, progress to HE. This served to fuel the dominant perception held

by influential policy-makers and some educational commentators that intelligence was genetic and, subsequently, the 'pool of ability' to benefit from HE was limited; therefore, HE expansion, from their perspective, would be a waste of resources. As seen in previous chapters, similar claims based upon 'lack of evidence' of 'educational need' were exhorted - and proven highly questionable (see Ellis, 1925 and Gray & Moshinsky, 1935) - to justify restricting access to elementary education and later the Free Place System for secondary education.

Restricted capacity and the perceived limited 'pool of ability' were significant barriers facing working class children in accessing HE. However, as had been the case in accessing elementary education (good quality elementary schools in particular) and, later, secondary education, the most significant barrier to HE for the working classes were tuition and maintenance costs. The vast majority of HE students, with the exception of those who committed themselves to Board of Education (BOE) subsidised intending teacher courses, had to finance their education from private sources during the inter-war period, but limited support was available from three sources: open awards, State scholarships and local authority scholarships/awards. Open awards were offered by universities as a prestigious, non-repayable financial prize to exceptional students. However, open awards were the preserve of Oxford and Cambridge - newer universities such as Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bristol and Durham tended not to offer them (Ellis, 1925) - who between them offered approximately 450 awards per year (Whitely, 1935) predominantly for the study of the classics. This effectively restricted open awards to pupils of affluent backgrounds who had the means to attend the great public schools to which teaching of the classics tended to be restricted.

State scholarships, available from 1920, were provided by the BOE and allocated to a very small number of students who displayed exceptional academic performance through Higher Certificate Examinations and had attended a grant-aided secondary school (a school which offered a proportion of free places to pupils from public elementary schools). 200 State scholarships were available in 1920, rising to 300 in 1930, and reaching 360 in 1937. As with the open award, the State scholarship was non-repayable,

however, it was subject to a parental means test. Both sources of support were numerically few and of varying financial value; even the usually more generous State scholarship was unlikely to cover the entire cost of both fees and maintenance especially for those studying away from home.

The targeting of State scholarships to pupils from grant-aided secondary schools may appear, *prima facie*, to promote working class pupils' participation in HE, however, it must be remembered that the numbers of such children in these schools was proportionately very low - approximately 25% in 1920 according to Ellis (1925) (see chapter 2 for further details), therefore, the likelihood of them obtaining State scholarship was remote. Additionally, the number of pupils that progressed to university from grant-aided schools, in comparison to the more prestigious endowed grammar and even more exclusive public schools (which were financially inaccessible to working class children), was limited; in 1930 only 18% of English university students had previously attended an elementary school (Whitely, 1935). While the number of State scholarships slowly increased during the inter-war years, its already limited use and availability to working class pupils was further eroded when, in 1936, the BOE permitted all pupils undertaking secondary education in all schools. The resultant increase in competition created a further barrier to working class participation in HE.

The third source of financial support for HE students, local authority scholarship, was the most significant in terms of number of awards made (625 in 1921), but was also the most complex and unjust to negotiate. As we saw in chapter one, local authorities had permissive power to financially assist students in accessing HE since the 1891 Technical Instruction Act (Sharp, 1974), a power which was later transferred to local education authorities (LEAs) with their creation by the 1902 Education Act. Indeed, the regional variation that existed between local authorities in awarding scholarships to secondary and higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century continued into the inter-war period and, arguably, intensified due to the ongoing permissive nature of education policy in this area. Viscount Haldane of Cloan, who, as a Liberal MP, had considerable experience in matters of HE (Oxford DNB, No Date), provides an excellent

overview of the local authority scholarship system in the foreword to Ellis' study on the subject:

“Different Education Authorities differ very greatly...these differences are not wholly explicable by differences of population and economic resources. Some...award scholarships of a fixed value; some fix a minimum value which can subsequently be increased; some...vary the award according to the income of the parents; some grade it according to the University for which it is awarded: a few give scholarships in the form of a loan. There appears to be a wide divergence of views as to their purpose, which finds expression in grants varying from £100 at Grimsby and Bournemouth, or £75 plus books in Cheshire, to as little, apparently, as £25 in West Suffolk” (1925, p.VI).

Such variation was evident also in the process of qualifying for a local authority award; some authorities required candidates to be aged eighteen years and achieve excellent results in the second school examination; others offered awards at younger ages; some authorities insisted upon candidates sitting a ‘special’ examination or character test; while others restricted scholarships to those who had won an open award from a university. Moreover, Ellis found that 25% of local authorities offered no scholarship provision whatsoever.

Clearly, the ‘patchwork’ approach which characterised the administration of local authority scholarships posed the greatest obstacle to the poorest pupils who were more dependant upon financial assistance to access HE than their wealthier fellow pupils; working class pupils in the 25% of local authorities where no provision at all existed would have been acutely effected; for wealthier pupils such variations would have been less inhibiting. For example, in those LEAs where the winning of an open award was required to gain a scholarship working class pupils would be precluded due to their attendance at a secondary school which, in all probability, would not offer teaching of the classics. Similarly, the reduction in scholarship value awarded by some LEAs, and, in some cases, the removal of entitlement to them altogether, for students who had won

other awards or prizes was felt most keenly by the poorest. It is important to note here that LEA scholarships were usually far less valuable than State scholarships which themselves would not cover both tuition and maintenance costs. The average value of a scholarship awarded by English LEAs in 1922 was only £28; Ellis estimated the annual costs of a typical Arts student at Cambridge University in 1919 to be £135 and “this excluded the cost of laundry, books, stationery, miscellaneous personal expenditure, and, what is the heaviest item of all, the cost of maintenance during the six months of the year the student is not in residence” (1925, p.37). The costs for science students were even higher.

The paucity of, and variation in, financial assistance from English LEAs had predictable consequences. In the first instance, such a system deprived many working class pupils of their ‘against all odds’ opportunity to accept a university place. Figures for the year 1920/21, and, significantly, including newer universities and non-medical students only, from Ellis’ study reveal that only 0.73% of children who had attended elementary school and did not transfer to secondary education progressed to university; those who did attend an elementary school for some time but were fortunate enough to win a free place, or could afford the fees, at a secondary school had a 38% chance of accessing HE (Ellis, 1925). Given these proportionately small numbers of poorer students accessing the newer universities, the need for increased numbers of, and more generous, scholarships was crucial to ensure that they could seize such a rare opportunity; an opportunity made statistically far rarer if figures from the older universities and medical students are factored into the equation. Thus, in her follow up to Ellis’ (1925) study, Whitely (1935) found that when the total population of English universities in 1929/30 was considered, the probability of ex-elementary pupils accessing university dropped from Ellis’ reported 38% to 18.4%:

“It is evident that extensive sources of assistance for University education in England are not available to pupils from public Elementary and Secondary schools” (Whitely, 1935, p.38).

Poorer students who did accept a university place were effectively excluded from Oxford, Cambridge and London University due to higher tuition and maintenance costs. This applied even to those rare ex-elementary students who won the more generous state scholarships. In analysis of Oxford and Cambridge students only, Whitely (1935) found the percentage of ex-elementary students dropped from 18.4% to 10.8%; this contrasts sharply with figures from the newer/provincial universities where ex-elementary pupils accounted for 36.1% of students. It is interesting to note here that, although the overall numbers undertaking a university course increased in the period between the Ellis (1925) and Whitely (1935) studies, the proportion of poorer students in newer universities actually decreased from 38% to 36.1%; a particularly disturbing trend given that these institutions represented the best opportunity poorer students had to achieve a higher education. This decrease is explained by the continued increase in university costs, increasing numbers of qualified applicants for university due to the gradual extension of secondary schooling, and the failure of LEAs to increase both the number and value of scholarships accordingly. Ellis (1925) estimated that between 1914 and 1922 university costs increased 80% and a significant number of LEAs failed to respond to this. Even in those local authorities where scholarship values were increased, the increase was negligible. This pattern continued after Ellis' study, and, in the case of Rochdale local authority, Whitley (1935) found evidence of reduction in scholarship value.

The financial obstacles that restricted poorer students to provincial universities also restricted them to cheaper courses of study:

“To the poor student...the amount of scholarship holding is all important. Frequently it determines his choice of a University or of a course of study...Under present conditions medical courses are almost invariably ruled out by reason of their expense. Teaching courses are too frequently entered upon. Science courses are sometimes surrendered for Arts courses because the latter are relatively inexpensive. Only too often the choice which presents itself is to surrender an inadequate but hard-won scholarship or to raise a very considerable sum in addition to it upon loan” (Ellis, 1925, p.33).

As noted earlier, students on intending teacher courses received subsidy from the BOE. Given the condition of student funding during this period, undertaking a teaching course was the only realistic option available to many poorer students, and female students in particular. Females accounted for just over a quarter of full-time HE students in English universities in 1922/3. They were subject to a secondary education system which prioritised the education of boys; boys' secondary schools were more numerous, prestigious, and wealthier than girls' schools which, consequently, offered a much lower probability of attaining a university place. This was reflected in the ratio of candidates for State scholarships which, in 1924, was 2:1 against female students (BOE, 1925); in 1935 only five State scholarships were awarded to females (*The Times*, 07/12/1935). Discrimination was also present in the open awards made by the older universities, the majority of which were allocated to male students only or in subject areas which girls received no tuition; given that many LEAs offered scholarships only to those who had won open awards, female students found local authority support far more elusive than males. Moreover, it was common practice for LEAs to fix their allocation of scholarships based upon sex; invariably the ratio was in favour of male applicants, and when female applicants were awarded LEA scholarships they tended to be of a lesser value than those awarded to males. Under these conditions it is clear why, despite constituting only a quarter of HE numbers overall, females made up half of the students on teaching courses in the early 1930s - they were effectively forced to do so if they required financial assistance. Whitely argued that such discriminatory practice explains the percentage decrease in full-time female students in English universities from 30.7% in 1924/5 to 27.2% in 1930/31, but also alluded to a wider social context where "girls are expected to stand aside in order to allow their brothers to proceed to a further education. Since scholarship provision for girls is relatively small, the girls of a family are less frequently able to claim precedence on the grounds of an Open or other scholarship" (1935, p.24).

One rarely acknowledged aspect of student funding at this time was that most LEAs, and those which provided lower value scholarships in particular, offered students the option of a loan to supplement the meagre scholarship. Local authorities were reluctant to

provide details of their loan schemes, hence, both Ellis (1925) and Whitely (1935) provide scant evidence of the practice. However, it is clear that loans were increasingly used throughout the inter-war years by LEAs to offset their expenditure on scholarships. Indeed, some LEAs went so far as to replace their scholarships with loans, as Ellis noted:

“The County of Kent has recently substituted for an excellent scholarship scheme the alternative of lending money. It has declared that this change is likely to increase the independence of the student” (1925, p.34).

Many LEAs charged commercial levels of interest on their loans and attached certain conditions of entitlement. One such condition was that the student had to have a life insurance policy, taken at their expense, in order to ensure loan repayment to the local authority in case of death; repayment periods varied between one to five years depending on the LEA (Whitely, 1935). Loans tended to be taken out by poorer students and intending teachers in particular. This permitted some LEAs to insist that loan recipients on teaching courses pledge a period of service to the local authority until such time that the loan had been repaid via deductions from their salary (Whitely, 1935). The rationale that loans promoted student independence, as suggested by the county of Kent, is not compatible with the evidence presented here. Indeed, the use of loans left poor students beholden to local authorities and unable to direct their personal and professional lives as they may have wished until repayment had been made.

Clearly, then, the barriers faced by working class pupils wishing to access HE were substantial. Initially, access to secondary education was unlikely, and access to schools with a strong tradition of pupils attaining university places even less likely. The few poorer students that earned a university place faced seeking financial assistance from a system riddled with inconsistencies, scholarships of low value, and consequently were restricted in both choice of university and course of study; female students were particularly disadvantaged. This system conformed to the same pattern of administration as that of the system for scholarships for the transfer of working class pupils from elementary to secondary schools as discussed in chapters one and two. Both were the

product of permissive legislation which allowed local authorities wide discretion in their provision, or non-provision in some cases, of scholarships which, in turn, resulted in wide ranging administrative regional variations. The most distinctive constant between these systems was that those who most needed financial assistance were those least likely to receive it; access to assistance was skewed in favour of middle class families; clear similarities can be drawn between children who were forced to refuse scholarships to access secondary education due to financial constraint, and students forced to refuse HE scholarships or compelled to accept BOE subsidised teaching courses.

Failure to provide adequate opportunities to access higher education prior to the Second World War was perhaps hardly surprising, given the general reluctance of inter-war governments (of all political complexions) to intervene to combat the wide range of economic and social ills that gripped large parts of Britain during these years. As numerous commentators have pointed out, governments remained wedded to the idea that individuals were best left to pursue their own interests, and hence followed orthodox, laissez faire economic and social policies (Fraser, 2003). This is evident in the failure of central government to offer adequate numbers of State scholarships and standardise the approach taken to student funding by local authorities whose increasing use of loans under the guise of promoting independence exemplified the principle of laissez-faire. Perhaps the most salient point to make here is that the sums of money required to remove the aforementioned barriers and create a significantly more generous and equitable student funding system were, according to Ellis, so small that even poorer areas could have easily afforded to do so; “No doubt the idea is to limit the commitment of the authority to the individual student and to save an almost imperceptible call upon the pocket of the ratepayer” (1925, p.33).

### The Second World War and Its Impact Upon Access to HE

As we have seen, little progress was evident in the removal of barriers to accessing HE for poorer students during the inter-war period; access to higher education was largely determined by the same criterion that governed access to other goods and services -

ability to pay. However, there can be little doubt that the Second World War was a formative moment in terms of the way it changed attitudes towards social reform, and education in particular. As Titmuss (1950, p. 508) points out, it was a catalyst in the development of post-war social policy. Pressures for a higher standard of welfare and social justice gained in strength as the “war-warmed impulse of people for a more generous society...[and] set in motion ideas and talks of principles and plans”. Simon (1991) supported Titmuss’ assertion and argued that education policy would be the key driver of social transformation, “the redistribution of incomes, through social but specifically educational policies, could, in a period of economic growth, act as a palliative to social problems, stabilising the mixed economy through a drive towards equality” (p.222).

The previous chapter highlighted the significance and, indeed, the flaws of the 1944 Education Act, both in relation to its education and child employment clauses, but it was nonetheless the most substantive measure of social reform passed during the Second World War. However, though it fundamentally restructured compulsory education, the Act did not address HE except to re-affirm the pre-war principle that LEAs can make awards “for the purpose of enabling pupils to take advantage without hardship to themselves or their parents of any educational facilities available to them” (Ministry of Education, 1944, p.59). Therefore, the explosion in HE numbers that was to follow the Second World War is explained, not by the 1944 Education Act but by the impact of the war itself. Simon (1991) suggests that:

“As in the case of the First World War, scientific and technological deficiencies soon became apparent and there developed a determination to remedy these in the future”. Not only did the war highlight educational deficiencies, “it also brought to the fore human aspects too readily discarded in peace time. When men (and women) are required to die for their country, the thought necessarily arises that a country worth dying for must also be worth living in - not merely for the fortunate few but for all citizens” (p.34-5).

Such concerns were evident in the numerous committees that were established to correct these issues. Perhaps the most significant of these committees was the Barlow Committee (1946) which recommended a doubling of university output to address the need for many more skilled citizens. Significantly, the Barlow Report recommendations were not limited to increases in scientific and technological skill shortages; they also recommended substantial increases in student numbers in the humanities. Secondly, the Universities and Increase of Scientific Manpower Report, published by the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (an influential pressure group comprising of MPs, Peers, and representatives from scientific and technical institutes) seven months after the Barlow Report, specifically recommended further financial support for students so that “no young person of requisite ability should be prevented from participating in these increased facilities for university” (cited in Simon, 1991, p.94); a recommendation that concurred with the student funding principle of the 1944 Education Act.

The political consensus of the need for expansion coincided with the proof that capacity for expansion was possible, as a result of the Further Education and Training Scheme (FETS). This scheme facilitated the return to HE for those whose studies were interrupted or delayed by the war.

“In the years immediately following the end of hostilities, the universities responded willingly to the request of the Ministry of Labour and National Service that in allocating vacancies, preference should be given to ex-service men and women, and to those who had been engaged on civilian work of national importance. This arrangement, together with the financial assistance available under the further education and training scheme, made it possible for most of those who wished to enter a university and possessed the necessary qualifications, to obtain admission” (University Grants Committee, 1953, p.11).

Figures from the University Grants Committee (UGC) (1953) showed that, understandably, full-time student numbers decreased during the war to 37,000 from 50,000 in 1938-9. As a result of committees, such as Barlow, recommending HE

expansion, and the FETS, the number of full-time students increased dramatically from 37,839 in 1944-5 to 85,421 in 1949-50.

### Post-War Student Funding

Though the numbers gaining admission to university education increased after the war, the system of student funding had improved little since the inter-war period; debate surrounding the value and number of scholarships and awards continued. The TUC, for example, in their 1942 memorandum 'Education After the War' argued that the opportunity of working class pupils to gain access to HE was still remote and the small number that did gain access could not take full part due to low value scholarships. LEA variation in the number, value, and qualification criteria for scholarships continued to pose a substantial barrier for poorer students according to the TUC, and the subsequent 'forcing' onto teaching courses was grossly unfair. The memorandum called for the provision of State scholarships (not LEA) for all able to profit by HE (TUC, 1942). Similar demands were made immediately following the war by organisations such as the National Union of Students, the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools (IAAMSS).

Tentative steps to improve the student funding system began to be taken in 1946 when the Ministry of Education (MOE [the department name was changed from the Board of Education with the enactment of the 1944 Education Act]) adopted the policy of offering supplementary awards to all scholarship holders (including State, LEA, and open award winners), subject to a parental means test, to assist towards university fees and maintenance. The full supplementary award was offered to students whose parents income was below £600 per year and the value decreased according to a graduated scale of contribution up to an income of £1,500 per year; it also took into account the value of the award already won (*The Times*, 20/05/1946). In offering this award the MOE relieved some of the financial pressure placed upon LEA scholarship provision as they would now no longer be required to offer assistance to students holding open awards; this meant LEAs could focus their expenditure on those students offered a university place

but without winning an open award or State scholarship. Therefore, both the financial and academic anxieties of poorer students were reduced, to some extent, as their chances of gaining a LEA scholarship were slightly improved due to the lightened load faced by LEAs, and they no longer would have to sit numerous examinations in order to win other awards. Notwithstanding this improvement in student funding policy, it is important to note here that MOE calculations relating to the general value of this award were based upon a standard figure of cost of tuition and maintenance agreed with individual universities. These standard costs were set at very conservative levels - as was the case with scholarships more widely - and the ability of students to survive on these alone was unlikely.

The period from the late 1940s to the late 1950s was one of significant increases in the number of awards made to students, however, the number of students attending HE remained relatively constant at around 100,000. By the end of the 1950s State scholarships numbers (not all of which were awarded) increased from their pre-war level of 360 per year to 1850, and supplementary awards reached 1600 per year. It was the number of LEA awards, however, that were primarily responsible for the increased number of students receiving financial assistance from public funds; LEA awards rose in number from 11,000 in 1948 to 47,000 some ten years later (MOE, 1960). Despite the increase in their number, the long-standing debates of award value and variability continued throughout this period.

A key report in these debates was the 1948 Working Party on University Awards. It recommended to the Minister of Education, George Tomlinson (Labour) that a substantial increase in both the number and value of awards was required to ensure compliance with the 1944 Education Act principle that no qualified student should be debarred from accessing university by lack of means:

“This would mean increasing the number of State scholarships from 800 to about 2,000; increasing the number of entrance scholarships [open awards] and exhibitions which qualify for supplementation from the Ministry from 1,200-

1,500 to 2,000; and increasing the number of awards made by local authorities from 4,000 to a minimum of 7,000 a year” (*The Times*, 08/12/1948, p.4).

These recommendations were warmly welcomed by the NUS, AUT, and Incorporated Association of Head Masters (IAHM), all of whom also called for a standardised funding system to overcome the disparities between State awards and LEA awards. Tomlinson accepted some of the Working Party’s recommendations and subsequently increased the number of State scholarships from 800 to 900 per year and revised the parental contribution to be more generous in certain allowances; for example, the number of dependant children in a family, however, no raising of the maximum value of awards was made at this time.

The value of State scholarships - to which LEA awards aspired - remained unchanged for the next few years. This situation greatly concerned the TUC who informed the MOE that, while the value of awards stagnated, tuition fees had risen on average by 10% (TUC 1951). It was not until 1952 that the MOE announced the value of State scholarships were to be increased. This increase was applied only to those students living away from home but was of such trivial value that it would have little impact upon their increasing costs:

“A student at Oxford or Cambridge, living in college, hostel or lodgings will receive up to £288 a year instead of £265; a student at London in college or hostel £254 instead of £241; and at other universities or university colleges £230 instead of £215” (*The Times*, 20/06/1952, p.3).

These figures included a separate vacation grant of £25 at Oxford and Cambridge and £20 for all other institutions. One Cambridge tutor, in an article written a year prior to the announcement of this increase, estimated the annual cost for a student to participate reasonably at Cambridge to be between £350 and £360 (*The Times*, 22/12/1952); some £60 to £70 more than the newly announced maximum. Such a shortfall in the value of awards led to many reports of student hardship including the inability to purchase the essential ‘tools of their trade’, books:

“Freshmen are naturally somewhat overwhelmed when faced with the present cost of textbooks, especially when this has to be met from finely adjusted maintenance grants. Most university booksellers will agree that, in spite of the increased numbers of students, their trade with the undergraduate population is not what it was in the past” (*The Times*, 01/01/1953, p.9).

Disappointing as such a small increase was, the parallel announcement of a lowering in the threshold at which the means test of parental income for contribution towards a child’s university education would be applied was, perhaps, even more of a barrier to accessing HE; the income contribution scale was reduced from £600 in 1946 to £450. Clearly, this would place additional burden upon those families, and hardship upon those students, least able to afford increasing costs of HE.

The ongoing failure of the MOE to provide adequate awards that would facilitate access to the poorer student continued to fuel calls from the NUS, AUT and other educational bodies for a level of student funding which would remove financial constraint. In 1952, both the Home Universities’ conference and the TUC drew attention to paucity of student awards. The TUC was particularly concerned with the continuing disparities between both State and local awards, and amongst local awards themselves. At a time, the TUC claimed, when HE expansion was needed for national improvement and to demonstrate educational equality, it was necessary to have parity across all awards and set them at an adequate level. In spite of the MOE issued Circular 252 which advised LEAs to match their awards to those of the State scholarship less than two thirds of LEAs claimed to have adopted ‘entirely or substantially’ the State scholarship rates (TUC, 1951, 1952). London County Council’s Education Committee, for instance, was unable to match even the modest increase in State scholarships announced by the MOE:

“For the coming academic year residential holders of London awards at Oxford and Cambridge will receive £243, at London University £221, and elsewhere

£194, an increase in each case of £18; the Minister suggests £263, £234, and £210 respectively” (*The Guardian*, 28/07/1952, p.7).

London County Council was not unique in its inability to match State scholarship rates; local authorities across England displayed a similar approach. Given that the overwhelming majority of awards were provided by LEAs - approximately fifteen LEA awards were made for every one State scholarship - the scale of this barrier to accessing HE was immense. The situation was exacerbated by the 5% cut to education expenditure imposed by the MOE upon LEAs in the early 1950s. Therefore, on the one hand, the MOE was recommending that LEAs match State scholarship rates, and on the other hand it was pressing them to reduce expenditure. For the TUC, then, the best solution to variable award value and distribution was to remove the individuality of LEAs from the system altogether and centralise award making to the MOE (TUC, 1952); the NUS and AUT supported calls for this solution, however, the role of LEAs in award making was not to be withdrawn.

As the 1950s progressed, the number of LEAs that matched the value of their awards to that of State scholarships gradually increased and in 1957 the NUS declared that all LEAs now did so. Nevertheless, major variations between LEAs in their administration of awards persisted, as Ronald Freeman, President of the NUS, explained:

“Now that the battle for uniform maintenance grants had been won, the union was fighting for uniformity in other grants and in the selection and standards required of candidates” (*The Guardian*, 09/03/1957, p.4).

The most significant inconsistencies still facing candidates for LEA awards lay in the qualification standard needed to merit an award and in the application of the means test for parental contribution by LEAs. In relation to qualification standard, the MOE had recommended to LEAs in 1952 that they set their minimum level for an award at two advanced GCE passes. Interestingly, the Education Minister claimed in 1953 that 118 of 146 LEAs had adopted this minimum level (*The Times*, 02/11/1953); a claim disputed by

the NUS who in a 1957 study found only 84 compliant LEAs in 1956 and 104 in 1957 (*The Guardian*, 09/03/1957). Evidence of variation in LEA measuring of parental income and application of allowances relating to the means test were highlighted in the Institute of Municipal Treasurers' 1954 book '*An Investigation into the Problem of Assessment Scales*'. The investigation was restricted to local authorities only but concluded that "there is clearly a most marked lack of consistency or even similarity between the practices of different authorities" (cited in *The Times*, 14/06/1954, p.7).

In addition to the aforementioned LEA inconsistencies the TUC reported disturbing and widely unacknowledged evidence of LEAs selecting candidates for awards based upon their economic background. Where two candidates, one from a 'comfortably-off' home with a good income and one from a lower income background, applied for one award:

"It would be a great temptation to some local authorities, and in others a natural reaction, to choose the one who is going to cost the local authority less money" (TUC, 1959, p.389).

Such practice clearly contradicted the principle that no qualified student should be debarred from accessing university by lack of means and posed an insurmountable barrier to those from lower income households who found themselves in such a situation.

By the mid-1950s, evidence of inconsistent LEA practice was voluminous and led to intensification of calls for abolition of the means test. The AUT, NUS and British Federation of University Women, amongst others, continued to press for its abolition on grounds of variation in its application, the sense of burden it instilled in students towards their parents, and the overall deleterious impact it imposed on expanding student numbers at a time when highly educated workers were crucial to 'national need'. Pressure for means test abolition led to Parliamentary debate on the matter from 1954 onwards. Discussion initially focused upon the possibility of means test abolition for State scholarships but was ruled out by the Education Minister (David Eccles, Conservative) who argued abolition would contravene the 1944 Education Act principle that students

should be granted awards not regardless of parents' means but without causing hardship; the Ministry of Education reinterpreted this to mean that parents *must* contribute as much as they can reasonably be expected to do so. James Johnson MP (Labour) requested Eccles to reconsider the matter due its impact upon families and the increased likelihood of scholarships not being taken. There were, Eccles acknowledged, some "hard cases" but new legislation would be required to abolish the test (*The Times*, 17/12/1954, p.4); new legislation was not forthcoming and the means test debate continued.

Eccles' replacement, Lord Hailsham (Conservative), agreed that new legislation would have been necessary to abolish the test but there was, he argued, a good case for abolition. In recollecting his own student experience he stated "I was anxious not to be beholden to my parent, even though my parent could afford it. I regarded the scholarship that I won as a proof that I was able to stand on my own feet". He also added that, should abolition occur, it ought not to be limited to State scholarships only and should apply to local awards too as "people who take the local education authority awards...do not, by any means generally, do worse at their universities...There are no general grounds...for stating that they are less praiseworthy than state scholars" (*The Times*, 11/06/1957, p.9). Lord Hailsham's 'good case' for abolition was not shared as enthusiastically by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Peter Thorneycroft (Conservative), who was concerned by the estimated £350,000 cost of abolition for State scholarships, "and if it was extended to local education authority awards, which might be a logical extension of the principle, it would cost say another £3m" (*The Times*, 05/06/1957, p.4).

The final years of the 1950s were characterised by the same debates surrounding value of awards, selection for awards, and administration of awards. State scholarships were increased slightly in both number and value in 1955 and again in 1958, but the increased value was too small to compensate for sharply rising maintenance and fee costs students encountered. For instance, between 1951 and 1954 tuition fees at Oxford increased by 45 to 70% (*The Times*, 28/12/1954) while the increase in State scholarship value had not approached double figures. Though some improvement in the inconsistencies of LEA awards was made, variations in the selection for and administration of awards persisted

between LEAs until the start of the 1960s. Therefore, financial support was still available to some students, yet not to others who were equally eligible. The impact of this was particularly debilitating for those academically able students from poorer backgrounds who continued to fall upon these inconsistencies. Equal opportunity to a university education was therefore blocked by, as Longden states, “this arbitrary arrangement relating to inconsistent student support building a barrier between bright, able, willing youngsters from continuing their studies because of insufficient financial support” (2001, p.164). This was the conclusion of a 1954 Political and Economic Planning report into university access which showed that only 21.6% of men and 19.2% of women at Redbrick universities could be described as ‘workers children’. As the *Manchester Guardian* pointed out, finance remained a key impediment to access. Discussing the Political and Economic Planning findings, it drew attention to the shortfall that existed between the costs of university education and the maintenance support that was provided. Citing Hull University as an example, it pointed out that the costs of accommodation alone were higher than the support provided by almost all of the grants received by students there.

“Taking the country as a whole, the representation of the manual workers’ children at universities is therefore unlikely to exceed one-fifth, as compared with a ratio of about two-thirds of this class in the general population...It is reasonable to conclude from this that finance...is clearly a limiting factor” (*Manchester Guardian*, 08/11/1954, p.4).

Clearly, then, in spite of improvements in student funding (particularly in the increased number of LEA awards offered), inadequate financial support and LEA variation remained, as they had been from the late 1800s and throughout the inter-war years, the most significant barriers to accessing HE for candidates from poorer backgrounds.

### The Employment of undergraduate Students

As we have seen, post-Second World War calls for expansion in student numbers and subsequent increases in the number of scholarships/awards led to a doubling of the student population between the end of the war and the end of the 1950s in England. Correspondingly, the number of students from lower income backgrounds entering universities also increased. However, as has been discussed, it was these students who were disadvantaged most keenly by the inadequacies of the available funding system, and, consequently, were compelled most strongly to undertake employment during their time at university. The following section discusses the undertaking of employment by undergraduates after the Second World War and its impact upon the academic performance of those who did so.

Evidence of undergraduate employment prior to the 1940s is scarce. This is partially explained by the high unemployment rates of the inter-war period which would not have provided conditions conducive to employment of students. However, the primary reason for the dearth of student employment is that the vast majority of undergraduate students came from higher income backgrounds and therefore had little need to supplement their finances whilst studying. This is not to say that student employment was non-existent; as one of its functions the NUS had sought vacation employment for some of its members since the 1920s, but this was at this time, according to its President, “practically unknown” (*The Times*, 10/06/1929, p.12). During the 1930s the low level of student employment continued; the Oxford University Appointments Board found vacation employment for just seven students in 1931 (*Manchester Guardian*, 12/03/1931), while the Manchester University Appointments Board did the same for just forty students in 1935 (*Manchester Guardian*, 15/11/1935). In spite of the small numbers employed, there was some evidence that those undertaking vacation tended to come from working class backgrounds. For example, during a Bangor City Council meeting, the Mayor made a special request on behalf of some students at University College of North Wales who were seeking vacation employment, “the majority” of whom “were the sons of working men” (*Manchester Guardian*, 23/03/1938, p.4).

As had been the case for children in elementary education, the Second World War also created the conditions in which employment for university students increased substantially. During the war, the NUS actively encouraged its members, some 25,000 students, to ‘contribute to victory’ and urged them “to realise their war-time obligation to work as hard as possible” in useful war work (*The Observer*, 07/02/1943, p.6). However, the result of employment upon university students was not as deleterious to their education as that experienced by their younger counterparts as undergraduate employment was restricted to vacation periods, unlike those school children whose education was, in some instances, cut short.

Naturally, student employment levels reduced after the war, but they did not return to low pre-war levels. The increased numbers of State scholarships, introduction of State supplementary awards, and vast increase in LEA awards from 1946/7 led to a significant rise in student numbers and subsequent demand for vacation employment. Increasing student numbers also meant increasing numbers of students from non-traditional HE backgrounds. This, in conjunction with the low value of awards and funding inconsistencies, intensified the need for vacation employment for poorer students particularly. Demand was such that in 1948 the NUS had to establish a dedicated department in order to process calls for employment from its members; in 1951 the NUS Vacation Work Department estimated that 10,000 of its members would require vacation employment (*Manchester Guardian*, 17/03/1951).

It is important to note here that the NUS was not advocating the employment of students, it viewed its employment service as being borne of necessity and a response to a system of inadequate student funding. F.F. Jarvis, NUS President, in a letter to *The Times* stated:

“Sheer necessity...has obliged us to provide a vacation employment service for our members. This service now provides approximately 10,000 jobs each year, but this is still insufficient to meet the demand. Many jobs attract three to four applicants and every morning at this office there is a queue of students seeking employment. There is no doubt that the vast majority of these students would

prefer to spend their vacations in private study or relaxation, but their income is such that they have no alternative but to seek employment, often for the whole vacation” (22/07/1953, p.9).

Overwhelmingly, the evidence shows that students were not ‘choosing’ to spend their vacations in employment, they were forced to in order to supplement their inadequate grants. The NUS, AUT, Political and Economic Planning, Home Universities, and the University Grants Committee (UGC) all agreed that award levels were too low and compelled poorer students in particular to undertake vacation employment. The progressive erosion of the value of scholarships/awards, in real terms, due to increasing tuition fees, maintenance costs, and the reduction in the minimum income level at which parental contribution to HE costs began all served to ensure that students continued to undertake vacation employment and reflected the transfer of HE costs from the State to the individual. Moreover, the NUS asserted that the erosion in the value of the vacation grant element of awards, which was originally set at a level *not* intended to keep students during the long vacation, represented a tacit acceptance of vacation employment by the MOE (*The Times*, 08/06/1957).

Many reports noted that students from working-class backgrounds were most likely to undertake vacation employment. For example, in its 1953 report ‘University Development’, the UGC drew attention to a direct link between the increase in numbers of lower income students, the low value of awards, and the increase in vacation employment. It claimed that a “change in the economic and social background of university students has led to an increasing tendency for students to enter paid employment during the vacation” and called for award-making bodies to improve grants so as to minimise the financial need to do so (UGC, 1953, p.25). Similarly, in his 1953 article for *The Observer*, Kenneth Harris argued that “undergraduates...drawn from working-class homes...are reported to be doing less academic work in the vacations, mainly because they have to take part-time jobs, such as waiting in hotels or driving lorries, to raise extra funds” (29/11/1953, p.6). In support of the UGC’s and Harris’ claims, a 1957 survey conducted by the NUS found that the old universities, where a

proportionately high percentage of students came from affluent backgrounds, contained far fewer employed students than the newer universities, where there were comparatively more students from lower income backgrounds. Thus, the survey reported:

“The hardest working students are those from the Manchester Faculty of Technology, from Nottingham, and from Sheffield, where 100 per cent of the male student population does some vacation work. The idlest colleges are Balliol, Magdalen, Lady Margaret Hall and St. Hilda’s, which are all way down in the 20 per cent range” (*The Guardian*, 13/11/1957, p.5).

The growth in vacation employment and its tendency to be undertaken by poorer students should have concerned the MOE more than it did. Indeed, the National Association of Labour Student Organizations, in discussions with the MOE, argued “it is now the attitude at the Ministry of Education that vacation employment is not necessarily undesirable” (*The Times*, 15/07/1953, p.9). The MOE’s position on vacation employment was contradictory to the vast majority of evidence which clearly demonstrated the negative impact it posed to academic performance. University tutors were particularly hostile to vacation employment, and numerous letters were written to newspapers during the 1950s to express concerns. One such letter, penned by a tutor at Oxford, commented:

“A recent Oxford graduate, a scholar of his college, showed, when I taught him in his second year, promise of being potentially First Class, provided he spent sufficient time reading during his last Long Vacation. He spent in fact the whole of it in a job and consequently sank to a Third Class in his Final Examinations, missing a Fourth by a narrow margin” (*The Times*, 29/12/1953, p.7).

Similarly, a tutor at Reading University regarded vacation employment as responsible for “the failure of many students adjudged promising on the present basis of selection” and, perhaps more disturbingly, an increased “incidence of mental sickness and suicide” (*The Times*, 01/01/1954, p.9). Though the UGC argued that a few weeks of the long vacation

could be safely spent employed in “the open air”, it stated that “to spend whole vacations, particularly in the summer, in clerical or menial occupations indoors is thoroughly bad. Not only has the student made no progress with his studies but he may return to the university fagged and unrefreshed” (1953, p.25). The AUT adopted the same position as the UGC in this matter. In their response to the increased costs facing students during the 1950s, they claimed that:

“Students have been thrown back more and more on the regrettable expedient of seeking paid vacation employment, often of a menial and exhausting kind; and many return to the university at the beginning of a new session rusty in their studies and jaded in their bodies and minds. This association is not unaware of the beneficial results of certain kinds of appropriate paid employment during a part of the long vacation, but in the form in which it is now so widely practiced the association regards it as highly undesirable and we are doing our best to discourage it. Unhappily, in present circumstances, we seem to be fighting a losing battle. There can be no reasonable doubt that a serious situation exists which, if it is not checked by an immediate increase in the amount of students’ awards, will have very deleterious effects on university students” (*The Times*, 10/03/1955, p.9).

Those who considered a small amount of vacation employment to be acceptable did so on the grounds that the employment would be in some way be linked to the students’ field of study, thereby contributing to both professional and financial development. Unskilled manual work was seen to be unacceptable as it was of no value, other than financial, to the student who was, in more cases than not, receiving some subsidy from taxpayers to focus their energies upon professional and academic progress. *The Observer* commentator, Ivor Brown, wrote:

“It is surely reasonable to wonder whether the taxpayers, as the endowers of education, are getting the best results when large slices of the educational year are spent working lifts of serving tables...The argument that it does undergraduates

good to see life below the stairs and get down to the manual grind is nonsense...The true business of the student is study” (*The Observer*, 04/09/1955, p.6).

Brown’s view in this matter was echoed by many, not least the Norwich Education Committee who warned students that it would withhold grants from those who undertook vacation employment they considered to be “obviously harmful to academic activities”. It also expected the students holding awards to ‘clear’ their vacation employment plans with the Committee before commencing employment (*The Observer*, 11/09/1955, p.7). Several of the colleges at Oxford also requested their students to submit their plans for employment to tutors for the same reason (*The Observer*, 24/11/1957).

There were, then, very real concerns, and evidence to support these concerns, that vacation employment was detrimental to academic performance and a disadvantage experienced more by students from lower income backgrounds than those from more affluent homes. Max Beloff, then editor of the Oxford Magazine, felt sufficiently strong concerns about the issue to prompt him to write a letter to *The Times*. He warned of the danger of creating a ‘two-tier’ system of higher education, whereby those who could afford to do so would spend their vacation time ‘sensibly’ on academic pursuits, whereas students from less affluent backgrounds would be forced to work to support their studies:

“The result is that for all our talk of ‘democratising’ the universities we are, in fact, busy creating a new privileged class, that of those students who can afford to spend their vacations in the proper way” (*The Times*, 24/12/1953, p.7).

Beloff’s concerns were not addressed. As we have seen, little progress was made in rectifying the causes of vacation employment during the late 1940s and 1950s; low value of awards and inconsistencies between both State scholarships and local authority awards, and between local authorities themselves continued and the poor student was resigned to their long-standing position of disadvantage.

## Conclusion

It has been shown in this chapter that many of the issues and themes discussed earlier in the thesis in relation to child employment are also central to discussion of undergraduate employment as a barrier to HE. We have seen that, just as working class children were once debarred from elementary and later secondary education due to the role of policy-makers, structural inequalities in the education system, financial need for employment, and, ultimately, poverty, the same was evident in attempts to access and maximise experience of HE until the 1960s.

The working class scholar was disadvantaged throughout their educational career, but should they have defied the odds and been offered a university place during this period they were faced with a system of scholarships/awards which was so ad hoc and financially meagre that a significant number refused the opportunity they were statistically so unlikely to achieve. Indeed, those working class students that did accept the offer of a university were frequently restricted to subsidised teaching courses, cheaper universities and cheaper courses due to a funding system not fit for purpose and subsequent financial exigencies.

Despite the increased enthusiasm for HE expansion stimulated by the Second World War and minor improvements made to student funding thereafter, working class access to HE remained restricted by continued inconsistencies in the funding system and a Ministry of Education and Treasury opposed to standardising the administration and increasing the value of scholarships/awards on the ideological grounds of personal responsibility; a position which contradicted the recommendations of the 1944 Education Act and several committees which emphasised the national interest in extending HE to all those who could benefit from it.

Clearly, then, given the paucity of financial support for working class students and seemingly relentless increases in tuition and maintenance costs, the poorer student was compelled to undertake vacation employment in order to meet these costs. This, as we

have seen, was detrimental to academic performance and general student experience; a fact that many educationally interested groups, including the UGC, local education committees and universities themselves were aware of. Indeed, concerns were so strong that students' employment, in some instances, was subject to scrutiny and authorisation from various educational institutions in order to assess its suitability. Despite such serious concerns, higher value scholarship/awards/vacation grants were not forthcoming; a point which suggests State acceptance of the practice. Thus, a two-tier system of HE experience emerged; the first being where students could spend their vacations immersed in healthy academic pursuits, and the second where poorer students had no choice but to undertake typically menial and exhausting employment. This class dynamic was clear to see in research which demonstrated that student employment levels were much higher in the newer and cheaper universities than in the older, more prestigious and more expensive universities whose intakes were from predominantly affluent backgrounds.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE ANDERSON COMMITTEE AND UNDERGRADUATE EMPLOYMENT TODAY**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter draws attention to the similarities in debates surrounding child employment and undergraduate student employment. It demonstrated that role of policy-makers, structural inequalities in the education system, financial need for employment, and, ultimately, poverty were barriers to accessing HE in much the same way as they had been to accessing elementary and secondary education. This chapter continues to analyse these themes and brings the debate into the twenty-first century.

We begin by discussing the crucially important and much neglected (in academic literature) Anderson Committee whose recommendations were responsible for the structure of student funding from the early 1960s until the funding changes of the 1980s. As we saw in the previous chapter, the system of student funding was riddled with inconsistencies and generally offered scholarships/awards of nominal value; it was this system which the Anderson Committee was tasked with improving. It will be shown that the committee's recommendations went some way to reducing working class barriers to HE by improving the system of student funding on the grounds of national interest and an appreciation of the inherent social value attached to extending HE opportunities. However, of particular interest to this thesis is the committee's discussion of vacation grants and the combination of full time HE with vacation employment; the committee concluded that the two were incompatible and recommended measures to minimise the occurrence of vacation employment.

The next section charts the re-establishment of ideological notions of 'personal responsibility', 'fairness' and 'individual benefits' associated with funding HE students. Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, wedded to the aforementioned

ideological notions, curtailed public expenditure on student funding and introduced loans to offset decreasing award values. The New Labour Government elected in 1997 maintained the legacy of the previous Conservative Government despite its objections when in opposition. These fundamental changes to the system of student funding led to an explosive increase in the take up of undergraduate employment, no longer limited to vacations but now widely undertaken in term-time; a development which did not concern the Labour Government which took the position that term-time employment was non-problematic and even beneficial to students.

In the final section of the chapter, we consider the characteristics of term-time employment and its impact upon academic performance and HE experience. Here it will be shown that it is the poorest students who, as they had done since their noticeable introduction into HE from the post-Second World War onwards, are most likely to undertake term-time employment and for longer periods of time in comparison with students from more affluent backgrounds. Student employment is typically low paid, low skilled and tends to be located in the retail and service sectors where students are regarded by employers as being a cheap, flexible and desirable source of labour; here, again, there are clear similarities between student employment and child employment. The much contested debate surrounding the benefits of term-time employment, on the one hand, and negative consequences, on the other, are explored. It is concluded that term-time employment is highly detrimental to academic performance and HE experience, increases likelihood of drop out, and is experienced most keenly by the working class.

### The Anderson Report 'Grants to Students'

The Anderson Committee was set up in 1958 by the then Conservative Minister of Education Geoffrey Lloyd. Chaired by Sir Colin Anderson, and comprising of sixteen members (including Anderson), its task was to “consider the present system of awards from public funds to students attending first degree courses at universities and comparable courses at other institutions and to make recommendations” (MOE, 1960,

Para. 5). The committee's findings and its recommendations represent a crucially important, yet neglected, contribution to debates about post-war HE policy, constituting the first concrete attempt to address the issue of student funding. Given the well-established links between student funding and undergraduate employment its proceedings are of relevance and importance. As will be shown, it grappled with a number of key issues and themes, many of which continue to lie at the heart of policy debates today.

The committee attempted to address a number of areas of contention focusing upon equality of access to a higher education for those academically able to undertake it. Significant differences emerged between members of the committee over the most important issue - abolition of the means test for parental contribution to HE funding - and as explained below, two sets of recommendations emerged out of its deliberations over this topic. In addition to this contentious issue, the committee also discussed: the aims and objectives of higher education, focusing on the question of whether it should be seen *solely* as a means of advancing the national interest; the need to tackle geographical variations in awards; the merits or otherwise of a system of students loans with reference to committee's comments on comparative systems including that of the US; the role vacation grants could play in mitigating student employment and ensuring that the primary focus of students' attention remained on their studies. All of these areas are of interest to the issues discussed throughout this thesis. However, the last point is of particular interest to us, and as will be shown, the committee were insistent that employment and study were *not* mutually compatible pursuits.

### The Aims and Objectives of Higher Education

One of the most significant principles influencing the committee's recommendations was that of the need to meet the 'national interest'. Building upon recommendations of the 1946 Barlow Committee and Parliamentary and Scientific Committee report *Universities and Increase of Scientific Manpower*, the Anderson Report stated, "the nation urgently needs the greatest number of highly educated men and women" (MOE, 1960, Para. 12). However, while the practical economic importance to the nation was clear (and had been

for some time), the report also highlighted that “Full-time paid employment is not the only means of enriching the national life; nor are the benefits that a university or comparable form of education can confer on the individual or the community measurable only in terms of later earning capacity” (MOE, 1960, Para.13). This is an important statement as it acknowledges that, while there is benefit to the nation as a whole, there exists also an inherent social value/good within education. An educated society is more desirable than a poorly educated one no matter what the national conditions, and a university education should be seen as much more than a mere commodity. This notion was reflected in the work of contemporary political theorists (e.g. Crosland, 1956), who saw education as a ‘common good’, the opportunity to excel at which should be available to all. The social value concept appears to have been disregarded in recent debates surrounding student funding where justification for reduction in public funds for students has been exhorted based upon notions of personal responsibility and the financial value/benefit to the individual of undertaking higher education. Either this ‘social value’ has reduced, or no longer exists. An examination of the ideological factors that have contributed to the lack of emphasis now placed upon the notion of collective, societal responsibility for higher education will form a key part of the discussion below.

### The Abolition of the Means Test

From the committee members perception, abolition, or non-abolition, of the means test was the most significant and troublesome issue to be tackled. The report describes the issue as the “vexed question whether parents should be expected to contribute to the higher education of their sons and daughters in accordance with their own resources” (MOE, 1960, p.44). The contentious nature of this subject was reflected in the variation of opinion submitted to the committee by the numerous organisations invited to do so. Nonetheless, forty of the seventy organisations who gave evidence did so in support of total abolition of the means test (both for fees and maintenance), fifteen supported means test abolition for fees only, and the remainder recommended its retention with amendments to the existing system.

Ultimately, this issue led to an irreconcilable division between the committee members, and, subsequently, two separate conclusions are offered in the report. Notwithstanding this division, there was common ground on several matters in relation to the parental contribution. Firstly, all members were agreed that to remove the means test would represent a fundamental change. It was in their assessment of the impact of this change and subsequent effects where their disagreements manifested. “Some of us are firmly convinced that they would be beneficial; others see a strong possibility of harm and do not consider the difficulties of the present system serious enough to warrant taking the risks which abolition involves” (MOE, 1960, p.45). Secondly, there was agreement in the rejection of various ‘half measures’ such as awarding the full grant and reclaiming this through parental income tax, and awarding fee payment only without means test. Thirdly, the nation’s need for increased numbers of university educated workers was not in dispute. Lastly, the committee agreed that the means test did discourage some of those with the ability to undertake a university education, due predominantly to the demand placed upon parents which the committee considered to be too heavy. “We are agreed that the present system imposes too heavy a burden on many parents and students and that if contributions are retained they must be substantially reduced” (MOE, 1960, p.48).

Having outlined some areas of committee unity on this issue, it is now necessary to examine the two opposing conclusions forwarded by the report. The case for abolition of the parental means test will be discussed first, followed by the case for maintaining the means test. It should be noted that abolition of the means test was supported by, not only the majority of evidence submitting organisations, but, also, the majority of the committee; eleven of the sixteen members recommended abolition.

The abolitionist argument starts with the belief that ‘times had moved on’ from the era when an award was made only to those who would suffer ‘true’ hardship should they wish for their children to enter HE. They proposed that “Over the years the system of public awards has been extended widely and now includes income groups that can not be described as ‘poor’. This extension of the field of awards, together with changes in general financial circumstances and in the incidence of taxation, have led to a progressive

relaxation of the criterion of ‘hardship’” (MOE, 1960, p.50). This statement reflects the changing ‘mood of the times’ that accompanied the ideological shift that occurred after 1945. Debates about the direction of social policy - in education, as elsewhere - were characterised by increased willingness to advocate state intervention and assistance in a bid to promote social justice and wider opportunities. For the abolitionists within the committee the removal of the means test represented a modest step in a continuing progressive direction and its retention was seen a ‘trace of something past’ that should, in the context of 1950s Britain, be removed.

The second point raised by the abolitionist supporters within the committee revolved around ‘national interest’. As evidenced in the Barlow and Parliamentary and Scientific Committee reports, war raised awareness of the need for a highly educated workforce, and this need continued in a post-war society engaged economically in the world scene. It was vital, according to the abolitionists, that all who had the ability to engage with HE should be able to access it without financial deterrent. The trend of extending awards at this time, it was argued, required continuation and a more positive attitude from the government as no country could afford to waste its limited supply of intellectual ability. This ‘national need’ would only be satisfied through increased numbers in HE, and, in particular, would necessitate recruitment from those families without HE or even advanced school tradition. The abolitionists argued that the “fears of financial liabilities implied in the requirement that a parent should contribute according to his means towards the cost of the university education of his child, cannot fail to act as a deterrent and prevent a number of well-qualified persons from seeking to follow a university course” (MOE, 1960, p.51). Notwithstanding the lack of official statistics illustrating the frequency of the above scenario, the committee received considerable evidence from witnesses (particularly from teachers) which confirmed that this was an issue. Therefore, the abolitionists suggested, in a great many cases the option of HE was dismissed early on in a child’s educational experience.

In countering the above argument, supporters of retaining the means test within the committee made several points. Firstly, and most notably, some of the retentionists

would have supported the abolition of the means test if the inequalities in the pre-university education system were addressed. In particular, these committee members advocated improvement in the small numbers of HE students from maintained schools (a result of the costs parents faced in keeping their children in education after the school leaving age and before entering HE), and, also, the elimination of the advantages afforded to pupils from direct-grant and high profile independent schools in reference to preparation for HE admission (particularly for Oxbridge). Though these factors lay on the very outskirts of the committee's remit, had they been addressed, the recommendation for abolition of the means test may well have been almost unanimous.

In the context within which these concerns were raised, some of the objections raised by the retentionists were perhaps understandable. After all, the bulk of working class secondary school children at the time attended secondary modern schools, very few of which offered any formal educational qualifications at all. Grammar schools, which did offer pupils a 'ladder of opportunity' to a university education were populated, on the whole, by middle class pupils whose parents possessed the financial and cultural capital needed to enable their children to overcome the hurdle of the 11+. This point was supported by the TUC in their evidence given to the Anderson Committee. They gave their backing to the principle that everyone able to undertake HE should be able to do so without financial concern and argued that awards should, at the very least, cover fees and other course expenses. However, they also added that those parents in a position to contribute to their child's maintenance should do so, primarily so that additional public money could be directed toward widening access to HE through much needed public expenditure addressing the inequalities in secondary education. According to the TUC:

"A different view [of the parental contribution] might be taken...if it were established that such an arrangement limited access to higher education of certain children. But at present wider entry to higher education is limited by other factors, such as the unsatisfactory quality of the secondary education provided for many children...Where public money is available, they suggest it should go on remedying these defects" (cited in *The Times*, 05/01/1959, p.5).

In the absence of any such improvement, the TUC felt that the main beneficiaries of the means test's abolition would be middle class families and students. Therefore, the TUC's position could be seen to be in support of both the abolition and retentionist positions. However, assuming the inequalities in secondary education were addressed, the TUC were in support of the abolition of the mean test.

That said, there can be little doubt that there were those among the retentionists whose views were motivated more by their own ideological preconceptions than they were a concern for social justice. Like today's advocates of personal responsibility, they felt it right and proper that individuals who benefited from HE should be expected to bear some of the costs. For example, they argued that if it were to be abolished it would damage the relationship between citizen and state by reducing the ability of citizens to 'look after themselves'. Their view was that "the abolition of the parental contribution" would have "a softening tendency upon the public and therefore upon the nation". They argued that "self-reliance and self-respect are precious and not lightly to be exchanged for yet one more dip into the public purse" (MOE, 1960, Para. 183). This ideological stance contrasts sharply with both the dominant political consensus of the day and the established trend in extending student awards at that time.

It may well be that the 'retentionist' argument could be seen to be justifiable on social justice grounds in the early 1960s. The TUC, for instance, were probably right to draw attention to the failings of secondary education, and one can understand why it argued that efforts to enhance educational opportunity at secondary level should be given financial precedence over demands for greater HE funding. In this sense perhaps, calls for the retention of both the means test and an element of 'personal responsibility' were not *entirely* motivated by a desire to restrict educational opportunity to a 'privileged few'. Whilst some on the committee may, ideologically, have been opposed to abolition for such reasons, this was not exclusively the case. That said, it is worth noting at this point that there are, of course, far less foundation for such arguments in favour of 'personal responsibility' in the context of the UK today, when many more people are able to meet

the entry criterion for HE. Research today suggests that educational attainment/ability is far less of a barrier to HE today than it was in the past, and that the costs of university-level education now operate as a key impediment.

### Loans

The committee also considered the possibility of introducing a system of student loans for student financing. In doing so, it examined funding arrangements in other countries in order to assess the viability of importing another country's model of student funding to the UK. However, despite initial optimism, the committee soon came to the conclusion that the systems in other countries, in particular those where loan arrangements predominated, were inappropriate for the UK. Social justice concerns were paramount, and ultimately it "had no hesitation in rejecting loans as an integral part of the national awards system". As the committee argued, "The obligation to repay, no matter how easy the terms, must represent a untimely burden at the outset of a career" (MOE, 1960, p.7).

Again, the contrast between this approach and that adopted today to the question of student funding could not be clearer. Today, the fact that students graduate with debts of approximately £20,000, rising to more than double this amount in some instances (medical students for example), barely generates any controversy at all. Indeed, the prospect of 'debt' is seen as a 'good thing'. It is said to perform an economic function, in that it leads prospective students to choose more vocationally oriented, potentially 'financially rewarding' disciplines, as opposed to less vocational or less economically 'worthy' humanities and social science subjects. Interestingly, this is exactly the kind of scenario that the Anderson Committee hoped the introduction of a universal maintenance grant would avoid. Indeed, they argued that "diversion of an undue proportion of talent into certain professions and careers [that is, business, industry and commerce], leaving others, equally important, such as medicine and teaching, with less than their proper share" (MOE, 1960, p.51) was in the interest of neither the student nor the nation.

### Geographical Variations in Awards

As the previous chapter illustrated, there were many ‘issues’ relating to the discrepancies in awards made by LEAs. In this area the Anderson Report was primarily interested in the selection process through which LEA award applicants had to pass. It highlighted that, at the time, English and Welsh LEAs were imposing a second selection process upon award applicants whereas Scottish Education Authorities worked on the principle that “no candidate who satisfies the entrance requirements of an institution, and is accepted for a course there should be refused a bursary by the education authority merely on educational grounds” (MOE, 1960, p.10). On the other hand, and following guidance as set out by the Minister of Education in Circular 263 (March 1953), English and Welsh LEAs made awards based upon the following:

“All candidates who have secured passes at advanced level in two subjects of the G.C.E. and can show evidence of general education should be considered; that performance in written examination should not be the only criterion but that other factors, such as personal qualities, should be taken into account; and that regard should be paid to headmasters’ reports and, where practicable, to the findings of a suitably qualified interviewing panel” (MOE, 1960, p.10).

This variation in approach meant that in 1958/9 of 19,088 award applications to English and Welsh LEAs 2,396 (12.5%) were refused, of whom 407 had achieved a university place. From these 407 applications, 331 were denied on grounds of academic inability. By contrast, in Scotland, only 146 of 2,200 (6.6%) of applications were refused, of which 77 had achieved a university place and none were refused on academic grounds (due to the aforementioned principle) (MOE, 1960).

Moving away from national system comparison, substantial variation within England itself occurred. The Anderson Report discussed this and acknowledged that “standards of selection do vary, and the difference between the most and least exacting authorities is considerable. So long as any element of judgement is left to each of the 146 authorities, variations of practice will be found” (MOE, 1960, Para.37). This statement highlights the

continued impediment to consistency faced by award applicants despite the guidance issued to LEAs from the Ministry of Education.

In attempting to rectify these variations, the report recommended that the second selection process should be removed for several reasons. The ‘ability test’, it was argued, was inappropriate and unnecessary as the prevailing restrictions in HE capacity meant that the levels of competition for a place/an award already maintained a high benchmark in student quality; it was in the best interest of universities themselves to select the most suitable applicants. Therefore, secondary LEA selection was merely duplication which wasted time, resources (both on the part of the LEA and schools who must compile reports for LEAs regarding the applicant) and placed undue burden upon those already accepted into university. Moreover, the report added, “It is not unknown for an applicant to be refused an award so near the beginning of the academic year that the university department which he had hoped to enter cannot fill the vacancy thus created” (MOE, 1960, p.12). This scenario was viewed as intolerable given the heavy demand for HE places and the predicted intensification of such demand. Furthermore, the report argued that candidates would feel rightly aggrieved to be denied their hard-worked-for future by an authority which is perhaps less qualified to pass such judgements than the university which has already accepted their suitability and offered a place. “Such cases are not so rare as to be negligible and are often made worse by the news that a schoolfellow, known to be no better academically, has secured an award from another authority” (Ibid).

Another reason advanced for the removal of the second selection process stems from the original justification for its existence, that of protection of public funds against students who fail to graduate. The Anderson Committee agreed that this stance could no longer be followed stating that “we do not think that it can necessarily be taken for granted that a student’s time has been entirely wasted if he fails to obtain a degree: this would be to equate the value of a university education with the final qualification obtained at its conclusion” (MOE, 1960, p.13). This statement undoubtedly reflects the committee’s view of education as being of inherent social value, and, indeed, locates this social value as being equal to, if not more valuable than, the economic value to the country of HE.

Interestingly, as will be shown later, this contradicts the rationale behind more recent changes to the funding of HE students. The language of ‘personal responsibility’, ‘personal financial gains’ and ‘fairness’ - particularly to those taxpayers who did not benefit from HE but have to subsidise it - is employed to justify the increasing shift towards personal funding for HE students. This focus upon individual gains could not be further removed from the spirit of the recommendations of the Anderson Committee, which overtly acknowledged the ‘social value’ of HE provision.

Ultimately, the report recommended that, as part of the removal of LEA secondary selection, universities should adhere to a minimum national qualifying standard for automatic grant of award. This was set at the same level required for LEA awards (that of two GCE passes at A-level) and effectively meant that those who secured a university place now secured an award. However, the report still recommended that LEAs should have discretion to make or refuse awards to the few who did not meet the new national standard or in other exceptional circumstances.

### Vacation Grants

In considering the arrangements for means tested vacation grants the committee was aware that it was intended only to provide a ‘contribution’ *towards* maintenance, not full maintenance during vacation. However, the committee was unhappy with the differential treatment of State scholars and LEA award holders. State scholars whose parents’ balance of income (after deductions) was no more than £1,200 per annum received a ‘standard’ vacation grant. After £1,200 the value of the grant was progressively curtailed until the parents’ income reached £1,400 at which point no grant was given. “For students with local awards, this system is also followed by about two-thirds of the 146 education authorities; the remaining authorities have varying and, on the whole, less generous arrangements which, incidentally, produce anomalous comparisons between one student and another” (MOE, 1960, p.39). Furthermore, a ‘higher’ vacation grant was available via recommendation from a university in exceptional circumstances. Once again, it was more likely to be received by State scholars than those holding LEA awards.

Given that pupils from less affluent backgrounds had a much lower likelihood of winning a State scholarship (see chapter seven), we see, again, that the lack of uniformity in the funding of HE students due to the distinction between State scholar and LEA award holder, and the funding variations between LEAs, resulted in poorer students being more susceptible to less financial support and, subsequently, an increased need to undertake employment as a result of this financial disadvantage.

The relatively low value of the vacation grant and its inaccessibility to a substantial number of students (particularly LEA award holders) posed concerns to the Anderson Committee. However, its main concern with the vacation grant lay in its belief that vacations are not holidays for students. On the contrary, the committee regarded them as a time for students to further their studies and consolidate their learning. “On this view, opportunity to study during vacations must be allowed to be as important for students as opportunity to attend the university during term-time” (MOE, 1960, p.40). The underlying concern here was that of education being sacrificed in an attempt to mitigate accruing further personal or family costs through undertaking paid employment during vacation. Again, as will be shown, this is a striking contrast to the dominant perception of student employment in more recent years. The notion that vacation periods, or indeed any period spent outside university hours, should be devoted exclusively to study has been progressively eroded.

To combat this, the report recommended several changes to vacation grants. Firstly, the value of the standard vacation grant needed to be increased to the term-time ‘keep at home’ maintenance rate. Secondly, the grant should be available to *all* award holders. Lastly:

“The award-holder should be required to declare, after each vacation, whether he has been in paid employment during that vacation, and if so, to state the time so spent. If the declaration shows that the award-holder has been in paid employment, the award-making body should then deduct from a subsequent

payment of grant an amount equal to the vacation grant for the period of unemployment” (MOE, 1960, p.40).

The report’s recommendations here plainly reflect the continued importance placed upon the value of HE to the ‘national interest’ and emphasised the committee’s position that paid employment upon academic performance, even during vacation, was deleterious to academic performance. This contrasts sharply to the philosophy of more recent governments given their pro-employment stance during both vacation and term-time for students, and their continued push towards self-funding and personal responsibility for HE. Rather than discouraging students from undertaking paid work, students are now effectively forced into employment during their studies.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the NUS strongly supported the Anderson Committee’s recommendations and called for vacation grants to be more than doubled. It estimated that 86% of men and 77% of women students worked in vacation periods because of financial need. The current rates, it argued, “merely encourage students to take vacation jobs” and “give rise to pressure, over-specialisation and intense strain in keeping up with the pace of advanced study” (cited in *The Times*, 4/12/1961, p.15).

Following the publication of the Anderson’s Committee’s recommendations, improvements to funding did occur, and, theoretically, there was less pressure on HE students to supplement their grant awards with paid employment. However, concerns continued to be expressed about the failure of maintenance support to meet the financial needs of university students. Again, anxieties continued to be focused upon the need for students to work in order to supplement the support they received from the State. In 1960, the British Medical Students Association passed a resolution calling for an increase in the maintenance grant. It demanded:

“The provision of a vacation allowance sufficient to enable medical students to continue extra curricula studies without being under a financial obligation of obtaining unskilled employment” (*The Guardian*, 14/11/1960, p.3).

Concerns appear to have been particularly high within the Oxbridge academic community, and in 1961 students at St John's College, Oxford, received a letter from the College's President stating that they should consult tutors before undertaking any employment during their vacations:

“May I urge all my undergraduate friends to consider carefully the proper use of their vacations? They occupy in total more than half the year. The value and justification of this arrangement lies in the opportunity it should give for concentrated and quiet reading...But...the lure of paid jobs during the vacation is insidious and can only too easily lead a student to forget that the prime purpose is to study. I would urge gentlemen to be very careful before they entertain the idea of taking on work which is not compatible with the proper persecution of their studies” (*The Times*, 02/02/1961, p.15).

The letter was said to have received a ‘mixed reception’ from students, some of whom felt that it was blind to the economic pressures that compelled students to work. A similar reaction greeted the demands made by a Cambridge don, Dr Ian Jack, in 1964, when, in an article in the *Cambridge Review*, he stated that “the only vacation work appropriate to a student is study”. Although expressing a view that was shared by many other academics, student representatives responded by pointing out that Jack was ignorant of the financial pressures that they were subjected to (cited in *The Guardian*, 11/02/1964, p.4).

As the preceding evidence illustrates, throughout much of the post-war period, higher education students were perceived by their universities as salaried ‘educational employees’. Whilst this principal was never wholly endorsed by the State, through, for example, the provision of adequate maintenance support and the retention of the parental means test, the mere existence of ‘vacation grants’ serves to emphasise the generally accepted assumption was that university study was a full time job. Students were seen to be investing focused time and energies for the good of the nation. In the next section, we

look at the process by which this general assumption was progressively undermined. Students would gradually come to be seen as the primary beneficiaries of HE, and, subsequently, it was increasingly argued that they should be liable for the costs incurred and undertake employment to fund their personal quest.

### Shifting Attitudes About Personal Responsibility and Employment

The period between the Anderson Committee and the 1980s was one of few changes in relation to financial support for students (Callender, 2002). However, this 'period of calm' was to be relatively short-lived. In Britain, the 1980s and 1990s saw two major changes occur in relation to Higher Education (HE). Firstly, the sector saw a rapid growth in student numbers. Secondly, the financial support given by the State to undergraduate students was cut significantly. The State, it was argued, could no longer be expected to meet the burgeoning costs of the much-needed expansion of the HE sector, and there was a need to shift more of the financial burden onto students themselves. The rhetoric of 'personal responsibility' and 'fairness' was employed by successive Conservative governments to justify the cuts (Hansard, 21 Dec 1989, c.619). Subsequently, students' access to welfare benefits was curtailed, the value of maintenance grants was cut significantly, and a system of student loans was introduced. As a result of these cuts the issues and debates relating to student employment have intensified as students are financially compelled to undertake not only vacation employment, but, also term-time employment. Within contemporary discourses, employment has become much more accepted as 'part of the package' of student life and is, more often than not, no longer perceived as problematic (though, as we will see, the most prestigious universities still advise against it). Accordingly, recent debate tends to focus upon the impact of term-time employment.

The General Election in May 1997 saw the election of a Labour government. Despite condemning declining levels of support for students in HE when in opposition, Labour has pursued a broadly similar strategy to previous Conservative governments. Indeed, soon after its election, Labour announced the introduction of tuition fees and the abolition

of the maintenance grant. Once again, the language of ‘personal responsibility’ and ‘fairness’ was used to justify the changes (DfEE, 1997).

There is now a general agreement that as a consequence of these changes students entering HE face an unprecedented and growing burden of debt. Taylor and Smith (1998, p.3) have linked this development to two emerging trends. Students, they argue, are now increasingly “dropping out of full-time education entirely or are being forced to take part-time employment to finance their time at university”. At the turn of the millennium, the impact of the cuts in student funding on dropout rates began to emerge as a significant issue (House of Commons Education and Employment Select Committee, 2001). However, even today, little is known about the overall impact of employment on students’ educational performance, or on their ability to continue their studies. While a number of small-scale in-house surveys concerning the levels of employment undertaken by undergraduate students have taken place within individual institutions (McKechnie et al, 1998; Lucas and Lammont, 1998; Taylor and Smith, 1998; Leonard, 1995, Hunt et al, 2004; Humphrey, 2006; Rochford et al, 2009; Robotham, 2009), no attempt has hitherto been made to draw this material together. In addition, a number of issues remain unresolved. For example, although it is clear that a significant level of undergraduate employment is occurring, there is disagreement concerning the effects of this work.

Some studies have highlighted what they perceive to be the positive aspects of increased undergraduate term-time employment, suggesting that it confers management and organisational skills, and encourages financial responsibility. This is broadly the position adopted by the previous Labour administration. Margaret Hodge, the then Minister for Higher Education, admitted she was “not too concerned about students doing part-time work when they are studying”, and that she would not be opposed to a move towards an American model, whereby almost all students work in some way. In the US, she suggests, there is a much greater recognition of the positive impact employment can have on the student learning experience, and of how work can compliment rather than detract from study (Hodge, 2002). This statement draws strong historical parallels to the State and employer’s approach to child employment as seen earlier in this thesis.

This is a concern, because many UK-based studies have challenged this non-problematic conception of undergraduate employment. These suggest that students rarely undertake employment of any relevance to chosen studies, and that their part-time work frequently appears to have a deleterious, rather than a positive impact upon academic performance (TUC, 2000; Taylor and Smith, 1998; Leonard, 1995, Hunt et al, 2004; Humphrey, 2006; Rochford et al, 2009; Robotham, 2009). The Labour government's confidence in a US-style model of higher education, where the vast majority of students are expected to work in order to fund their studies, may, therefore, have been misguided. Issues relating to levels of student funding and its impact on the ability to study, on drop out and on undergraduate employment had, in fact, been debated in the US for some time and had Labour Ministers been familiar with the findings of this they may have come to different conclusions. The evidence that was available suggested that they should perhaps not have uncritically assumed that employment was necessarily beneficial. The focus of debate in the US, like here, was on the impact of rising college (university) tuition fees, particularly on students from low-income backgrounds. Jacqueline King, director of the American Council on Education, noted that such students had reduced "the immediate price of attending college by...working" (Higher Education and National Affairs, 1999). Other research published by King concluded that working long hours whilst studying part-time not only increased the time needed for a student to earn a degree, but also increased the possibility that a student would drop out (King, 2000).

King's findings have found support in more recent US research conducted by Robert Bozick. Bozick (2007) agrees that students from low-income backgrounds have a significantly higher probability of non-completion than their fellow students from wealthier backgrounds. This, he explains, is a result of the rising cost in HE and the subsequent two cost-saving strategies adopted by poorer students in order to access HE. Firstly, lower-income students are more likely to undertake term-time employment in order to finance their education. Secondly, lower-income students are more likely to live at home with their parents to reduce the costs of their education. Bozick found that poorer students exhibited higher prevalence of undertaking term-time employment, and

that employment of 20 hours per week and over significantly limited students' ability to maintain enrolment. In explaining this, Bozick posits that:

“Balancing the demands and stresses of both school and work takes its toll on youths. The requirements of college course work and the intimidating social landscape of the university tend to be more overwhelming than first-year students anticipate. If these students are working more than 20 hours a week, they may not be able to keep up with their courses, their jobs, and their familial and social commitments...the long road ahead may be too daunting...The most practical choice at the time may be to drop out and to work...for poor youths who are facing an uphill road to finance their education, the lure of an instant paycheck may be too strong” (2007, p.277-8).

This study also found that living on campus during the first year of university conferred ‘protective factors’ against drop out. “It is likely that by living on campus, students are able to develop a stronger commitment to their education by establishing and maintaining relationships with faculty, staff, and classmates which prevents them from dropping out” (Bozick, 2007, p.278). Given their financial propensity to live at home with parents, students from low-income backgrounds are unable to benefit from such ‘protective factors’ and, consequently, are 41 percent less likely than their more affluent counterparts to complete their studies. Therefore, the strategies poorer students are forced, as a result of funding restraints, to adopt to facilitate access to HE also represent a very serious threat to their chances of successful completion. By contrast, according to Bozick, “The picture is far different at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Students from affluent families often have many more post-secondary options - they can enroll in the most expensive and prestigious four-year schools. Financial aid is not a consideration because they can expect continued support from their families. These students often live in dormitories and forgo or limit their time working to focus on their studies” (2007, p.278).

Clearly, then, the uncritical position of the New Labour government in its acceptance of the US model of student funding and corresponding non-problematic conception of student employment, is one which should attract healthy scepticism based upon the aforementioned evidence from the US itself. The remainder of this chapter examines the research findings of UK studies that have looked into the impact of employment on undergraduate study. As we will see, many of the arguments presented here, both for and against term-time employment, mirror the arguments evident in the US and, as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, in relation to child employment and post-World War undergraduate employment.

### Undergraduate Employment Today

Existing literature concerning levels and impact of undergraduate employment is, more often than not, focused upon a single institution; see for example: Leonard (1995), McKechnie et al (1998), Taylor (1998), Taylor and Smith (1998), Lucas & Lamont (1998), Barke et al (2000), Curtis and Shani (2002), Neill et al (2004), Hunt et al (2004), Humphrey (2006); Curtis (2007), Holmes (2008), Greenbank et al 2009, Barron & Anastasiadou (2009), Rochford et al (2009), Robotham (2009). Research conducted for the Department for Education and Employment by Claire Callender and Martin Kemp (2000) did briefly address issues concerning the impact of undergraduate employment upon academic performance across eighty seven HE institutions, however, the focus of the research lay in assessing income, expenditure and loan take-up of students, not the impact of employment. Furthermore, the report by Callender and Kemp was based on data collected before the abolition of the maintenance grant, further limiting its application to the employment debate after this funding change. A synthesis of more recent studies into the phenomenon is provided below. It reveals many common themes and areas of contention. These revolve around issues including: who undertakes term-time employment and why, levels of employment, areas of employment, and impact (both positive and negative) of employment.

There is a general consensus across all the studies considered that the number of students undertaking term-time employment has increased consistently, and in some cases very sharply, over the previous ten to fifteen years. This may appear to be an obvious consequence of increasing student numbers in higher education, however, early figures from the Income Data Service (cited in Taylor and Smith, 1998) suggested that the increase in ‘student workers’ was massively disproportionate to the increase in student numbers. “Since 1984, the number of full-time students aged between 16-24 has risen by 65%, while the number of full-time students who are also in employment has risen by 170%” (Taylor and Smith, 1998, p.6). Taylor and Smith’s figures relate to a period when the value of student awards were progressively cut and loans made available to offset the decline in award value. More recent studies address the period since the introduction of tuition fees and find, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the percentage of students undertaking term-time employment continues to increase (Broadbridge and Swanson, 2006; Robotham, 2009). Recent single-institution studies show that more than two-thirds of students are now engaged in term-time employment, with some reporting figures of 80 and even 90 percent (Holmes, 2008; Rochford, 2009; Greenbank et al, 2009). Holmes’ (2008) study of Queen’s University students in Belfast is both unique and pertinent here as it provides us with a clear picture of the continued increase in student employment. It contrasts employment at the institution in the early 1990s with that of fifteen years later in the same institution and found that the percentage of students engaged in term-time employment had almost doubled from 46 percent to 83 percent. As Taylor and Smith’s (1998) early survey suggested, the increasingly flexible labour market may play some part in these increases, as there are now more opportunities for students to undertake part-time work in a whole range of sectors from which they may previously have been excluded. However, virtually all the student employment studies that have been undertaken conclude that the primary explanation lies within the changes to the funding system of students.

### Who Undertakes Term-Time Employment and Why?

Two areas of contention within the existing literature surrounds the issue of who undertakes term-time employment and why. As has been shown, the number of students undertaking term-time employment has increased in recent times. Yet, there is very little data surrounding the social characteristics of these students as few studies have addressed this (most likely due to data protection issues in identification of socioeconomic background of students). Several studies allude to a relationship between social class and term-time employment but neglect to explore this as far as they perhaps should. Despite this, Callendar and Kemp (2000) found that “Students’ propensity to work increased as their social class declined. So while 54 per cent of students from social class IV and V worked during term-time, only 44 per cent of students from social classes I and II did” (p.125). Using data gathered in the same year as Callendar and Kemp’s study (1998/99), Hunt et al’s (2004) study undertaken at the University of Northumbria, also found that participation rates in term-time employment varied according to social class. “Those from the most well-off (professional) backgrounds participate to a much lesser degree in employment. Those from the intermediate group also had lower participation in 1998/9 and 1999/2000” (Hunt et al, 2004, p.8).

Interestingly, while term-time employment data was being gathered at Northumbria, it was also being gathered at the nearby Newcastle University. Humphrey’s (2006) findings at Newcastle concurred with those of Callendar and Kemp (2000) and Hunt et al (2004) insomuch as he too found that students undertaking employment were disproportionately drawn from lower socio-economic backgrounds and, shockingly, “almost all students who worked came from state schools” (p.270). Students from higher social class backgrounds, he argues, “were much more likely to obtain money from their parents as an alternative to term-time work” (2006, p.276). Humphrey also draws attention to the overall lower participation rates in term-time employment at Newcastle (23%) in comparison with Northumbria (48.7%) and explains this as resulting from the difference in the socio-economic characteristics of students studying at each institution. According to Humphrey, Newcastle University, a well established Russell Group institution, attracts “a large proportion of students who have attended independent fee-paying schools (32 per cent) and students who have travelled to study from outside the

region (74 per cent) but only a few students who have decided to stay in the parental home during their time at university (13 per cent). By contrast, the other large university in Newcastle, Northumbria, a 'new' university inaugurated in 1992, attracted more students from the region (46 per cent) and more students who lived with their parents (26 per cent) during their time at university" (p.274). These associations are significant as they:

“Reinforce the image of local students as being less privileged and choosing to stay in the region for economic reasons. The cultural tradition, in England at least, of university undergraduate students travelling away from their homes and out of their regions is still strong among more privileged families, who can afford to pay for private schooling and also send their sons and daughters away to live in another part of the country” (Ibid).

Humphrey also found that while only 13 percent of Newcastle University students lived in the parental home, they had a 68 percent chance of undertaking term-time employment. This contrasts sharply with those Newcastle students who did not live at home and were found to have only a 16 percent chance of undertaking term-time employment. Indeed, Unite, in its annual survey of 'student experience' has repeatedly reported similar findings. Its 2007 report, which included respondents from twenty UK universities, found that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (that is social grade ABC1) rely more on their parents, and have parents that are more able to help them financially, than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (social grade C2DE). Students from the lower social grade were also found to be twice as likely to have nobody to assist them financially (Unite, 2007). Similar patterns were evident in analysis of courses taken and term-time employment. Students enrolled on courses which typically recruit from more affluent backgrounds - such as medicine and dentistry - were found to be much less likely (29%) to undertake term-time employment in comparison with students enrolled on courses such as art and design (approximately 50%) which typically attract far fewer students from affluent backgrounds (Unite, 2007). Moreover, the survey also found that lower social grade students were almost twice as likely to live at home as

their counterparts from higher social grades. The findings of Humphrey and Unite clearly support each other as well the earlier works of Callendar and Kemp and Hunt et al in establishing the link between class and term-time employment. They also reinforce Bozick's US study in highlighting the propensity for poorer students to both live at home and undertake employment to reduce the costs/debt accrued whilst in HE. Moreover, strong historical parallels can be seen here between class and HE experience today and that of the mid-twentieth century as discussed in the previous chapter.

The above evidence clearly demonstrates the significance of socio-economic background to the propensity for term-time employment, and, though few studies appear keen to highlight this correlation, there is tacit acknowledgment of this in the consistency of students' responses to the question 'Why are you employed?'. Overwhelmingly, the most popular response to this question, across all studies in this area, is that students work due to financial necessity and to avoid hardship. Ford et al (1995) found that 48% of their respondents said the main reason they worked was because their income was inadequate, and only a small minority worked in preference to borrowing. A 1998 study by McKechnie et al shows that the dominant explanation for term-time employment was to maintain 'basic subsistence of self' (p.46). The 'Student Hardship Survey' carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS) in 1999 ranked students' reasons for working in the following order: paying for living costs, social life, and controlling debts. A similar pattern was reported by Hunt et al (2004), they found that "2000/01 data indicates that 66% worked to achieve a desired standard of living, 53% to enable me to remain at university, 49% as an alternative to additional borrowing, and only 8% suggested that the job is related to what I wanted to do after university" (p.7). Findings from later studies highlight the continued significance of this explanation for term-time employment. For instance, Unite reported that "67% work to buy basic essentials" (2007, p.25), and Barron and Anastasiadou (2009) cited "financial concerns" as being the most frequently indicated "with 60 per cent of respondents identifying this as the main reason for becoming involved in part-time employment whilst studying" (p.146) (see also Curtis, 2007; Rochford, 2009; and Robotham, 2009 for similar findings).

What is clear, is that the primary driver behind the rise in the term-time employment during the last thirty years has been the transfer of financial responsibility from the State to the student in funding their higher education. As we have seen, this funding shift has led to students from poorer backgrounds being disproportionately drawn into the arena of term-time employment in an attempt to offset the financial disadvantage they face due to their parents' inability to absorb the financial pressures placed upon them during this period. Though there may be some peripheral explanations associated with the uptake of employment, for example, it can offer a means of personal self-improvement, the dominant explanation is that it is financial necessity that compels students to seek term-time employment. Having established who undertakes term-time employment and why, discussion now turns to how much and what type of employment students undertake and its impact upon students.

#### Frequency, Type and Impact of Term-Time Employment

The impact of term-time employment upon the academic performance of undergraduate students is a relatively under-researched area (Barron and Anastasiadou, 2009). Throughout this section the variables associated with term-time employment i.e. levels, type, and impact should be considered as a whole as they are strongly interconnected. Evidence from studies which disclose the term-time employment hours of students suggest that, though highly variable, the average weekly number of hours students engaged in term-time employment is approximately 15 hours per week. However, in one study, that average was 20 hours per week (Watts, 2000), and in others there were a significant minority (30% of respondents in Curtis and Shani, 2002, McKechnie et al, 1998) working more than 20 hours per week. Interestingly, Hunt et al (2004) found that the average weekly number of hours increased yearly during the three years of the study – 12 hours in 1998/99, 14 hours in 1999/00, and 15 hours in 2000/01 – this may be as a result of the changes to student funding during these years. More recent studies report an increase in the number of students employed over 20 hours per week. For instance, Barron and Anastasiadou (2009) found average weekly hours of term-time employment to be between 16 to 20 hours, but, more worryingly, also discovered a quarter of their

sample employed for 21 to 25 hours per week, with a further 14 percent employed between 26 and 30 hours. Similarly, Rochford et al (2009) found some nursing students employed for up to 35 hours per week during term-time. It would appear, then, that the number of students undertaking levels of term-time employment that exceed the 'part-time' category is increasing. Moreover, in consideration of these most recent studies, the average hours of term-time employment appears to be on the rise too. Unite (2007) reported that it is now the 'norm' for students to work 20 hours per week.

These findings should prove of concern to both policy-makers and education professionals. Crucially, the government's own guidelines on levels of term-time employment recommend no more than 10 to 12 hours per week (Higher Education and Employment Committee on Student Retention, 2001); the same recommendation has been made for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000). Even if we accept the lower average employment hours of 15 hours per week as described above, the government's own recommendations have been significantly exceeded. If we accept the findings of more recent evidence, then the doubling of recommended guidelines becomes the norm with a significant number of students trebling these recommended weekly employment hours.

The type of employment students undertake has been widely characterised as being low-paid and low-skilled. In their 1995 study, Ford et al described employed students as performing tasks that were generally unskilled and unrelated to their studies; this was reflected in the low levels of pay received by them. Students were working predominantly in the service and retail sectors typically as shelf stackers, petrol station attendants, bar staff and cleaners. Later studies confirm that this type of employment is still the norm for students today and that they are regarded, much as child employees have been traditionally, as a cheap, flexible, and subsequently desirable source of labour (Curtis and Lucas, 2001; Broadbridge and Swanson, 2006; Greenbank et al, 2009; Robotham, 2009).

That students represent cheap labour and undertake low skilled tasks is not in dispute within current literature. However, what is in dispute is the most contentious issue to be

addressed in this section of the thesis: that of the impact of term-time employment upon academic performance. Here, there is a split between those studies that view term-time employment as predominantly beneficial to students and those which report primarily negative effects.

Before looking at these themes, it might be worth briefly considering the previous Labour government's position on undergraduate employment, given that its changes to funding had the potential to lead to a dramatic increase in its incidence. There can, in fact, be little doubt that Labour governments advocated that students undertake term-time employment. For instance, in their response to the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) recommendation that universities should help students to become more familiar with employment (recommendation 18) the government agreed and stated that "enhancing the employability of graduates is a key task for higher education and that work experience can be very valuable in helping students to develop" (DfEE, 1997, 6.6). Indeed, as pointed out earlier, when she was Minister for Higher Education, Margaret Hodge stated that she was "not too concerned about students doing part-time work when they are studying", and indeed that there should be much greater recognition of the positive impact employment can have on the student learning experience. She insisted that employment can compliment rather than detract from study (Hodge, 2002). Bill Rammell (2008), a more recent Minister for Higher Education, echoed these views. In a statement to the National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES) he argued that students "find that the time spent in a part time job gives them a useful insight into the world of work, fosters a positive attitude and helps them develop the flexibility and skills for employability". One of the aims of the thesis (and this synthesis) is to consider the extent to which such claims are supported by the research evidence.

### Term-Time Employment as Beneficial

Three studies that principally support term-time employment are authored by Lucas (1997), Lucas and Lammont (1998) and Curtis and Shani (2002). In her 1997 study Lucas is primarily concerned with investigating divisions within the workplace based

upon age and gender. However, the study makes some points pertinent to the impact of term-time employment debate. Lucas found that respondents were more likely to convey satisfaction than dissatisfaction in relation to employment regardless of the fact that they were unlikely to exhibit any long-term orientation to their area of term-time employment. This finding, Lucas suggests, is explained by two factors. Firstly, gaining experience of work is of importance to students as it develops 'people' skills, confidence and time management. Secondly, Lucas argues that, though low paid, from the employment came a "fulfillment of social needs with one student describing work as a 'social life in the workplace'" (1997, p.609). One of Lucas' concluding points is that students are "generally satisfied with their low paid status" (1997, p.610). This statement, as well as the claim that work constitutes a form of 'self-fulfilment', can be found to be in conflict with the results of many other studies and will be examined later. In the 1998 study Lucas and Lammont report similar findings to the 1997 study in relation to the reported positive impact of term-time employment. However, the 1998 study does find that students are less inclined to work during their final year (due to detrimental effect upon study) and that the main reason given for not working (across all years of study) was overwhelmingly its 'interference with studies'. The authors fail to acknowledge the significance of these findings in reflecting the negative impact of term-time employment. Instead, they argue that this relationship is 'too simplistic' and emphasise the social and skills accrual value of employment (as Lucas did in 1997). Furthermore, they characterise employment as "a way of going out without spending money" (Lucas & Lammont, 1998, p.53). Again, the majority of other studies within this area would contradict the significance of this 'social and skills value'.

Curtis and Shani (2002) report similar findings to those of Lucas (1997) and Lucas and Lammont (1998). Though they acknowledge some negative impact of term-time employment upon academic performance (more so than the positive impact in fact) in their study, Curtis & Shani reported that only 34% of those in term-time employment felt it had a negative impact, whereas 65% felt it was helpful or had no effect. They also reported similar responses to Lucas with regard to the areas of benefit gained from term-time employment (acquisition of skills, confidence improvement and social gains).

However, Curtis & Shani attempt to ‘downplay’ the responses which draw attention to the negative impact of employment upon students in their study by asserting that “Some students may tend to devalue the experience of working as they do not believe their part-time jobs have any long-term significance” (Steinburg cited in Curtis & Shani, 2002, p.135); if this is true, then it would lend support to the view of term-time employment as ‘beneficial’. However, studies from Taylor and Smith (1998) and McKechnie et al (1998) suggest the opposite is in fact true. These authors posit that some respondents in their studies depicted employment in the best possible light, even when they felt negatively about it; “It is an attempt at a positive rationalisation of the reluctantly undertaken commitment to employment and should not be confused with a positive endorsement of the experience of working” (Taylor and Smith, 1998, p.11-12). This would suggest that the ‘beneficial’ findings of Curtis and Shani, Lucas, and indeed all ‘positive’ findings in studies relating to the impact of student employment should be viewed cautiously.

Taylor and Smith (1998) cast further doubts on the reported benefits of term-time employment by posing the hypothetical question, “how many students would choose to work if a combination of adequate grants and state benefits provided them with sufficient financial resources so they did not have to?” (p.12). If the general findings of Curtis and Shani (2002), Lucas (1997), and Lucas and Lammont (1998) are accurate and representative, then the answer to this question would be ‘the majority’. However, this answer appears unlikely as much evidence suggests that the reporting of positive effects from term-time employment may be applicable predominantly to a relatively small group of students. Both McKechnie et al (1998) and Barron and Anastasiadou (2009) suggest that students enrolled on vocationally specific courses, such as business, computing, and hospitality/tourism, are more likely to report positive effects from their employment due to the congruence between academic course content and its transferable application into the typical student employment setting; “such students can directly relate the experiences of working part-time which, in turn, enhanced and improved their academic knowledge, academic motivation and employment prospects” (Barron and Anastasiadou, 2009, p.142). Indeed, both Lucas (1997) and Curtis and Shani (2002) tentatively acknowledge

that their samples of hotel/catering and business/management students, respectively, *may* have some bias upon their findings. Analysis of more recent studies confirms that those whose findings also emphasise the positive effects of term-time employment tend to be based upon responses from similar samples as those of Lucas (1997) and Curtis and Shani (2002) (see Curtis, 2007; Barron and Anastasiadou, 2009; Greenbank et al, 2009).

There appears, then, to be a little acknowledged association within this area between reported benefits of employment and the respondents from which these benefits were gleaned. In addition, the ‘positive spin’ which some respondents may display in an effort to ‘rationalise’ their reluctant acceptance of term-time employment needs also to be further acknowledged. As we have seen, pro-employment studies fail to do this and maintain the benefits of employment are applicable to all students. However, the evidence presented here suggests that these data/sample issues require further examination as their potential to substantially affect the validity of research in this area is clear.

#### Term-Time Employment as Harmful

The vast majority of studies related to the term-time employment of students find that negative outcomes outweigh the positive. This is not to say that such studies do not find some positive aspects of employment, indeed, even the most staunchly anti-employment studies acknowledge that in some cases there may well be some benefit for students. Here, however, it will be shown that term-time employment should be viewed overall as deleterious to students’ academic performance and their HE experience in general.

Central to discourses on the effects of undergraduate employment is the issue of the number of hours students are employed for. Overwhelmingly, research shows that the greater number of hours a student is employed the greater the deleterious impact upon their academic performance and HE experience. McKechnie et al (1998) found a correlation between the number of hours worked and perceived impact upon academic performance in responses from University of Paisley students. Students employed over

ten hours per week were more likely to miss classes frequently and report a negative impact upon coursework and exam performance than those employed for less than ten hours per week. Curtis (2007) draws attention to the cumulative impact of employment upon academic study in her assertion that “There is a positive relationship between longer hours of work and increasingly adverse effects on study” (p.382); these findings are representative of the majority of studies (see Taylor and Smith, 1998; Hunt et al, 2004; Carney et al, 2005; Rochford et al; 2009). While some research notes that students’ *perceive* their academic performance to be negatively impacted the more they work, other research has demonstrated it. For instance, Lindsay and Paton-Saltzberg (1993) reported that, in their study of Oxford Brookes students “Approximately 24.8% of students holding permanent jobs during the term would be expected to achieve a degree which was one class higher than if they had not worked” (cited in McKechnie et al, 1998, p.49). Similarly, Humphrey’s study of Newcastle University found “there was a marked and significant reduction in the end-of-year average of students who were employed”. Humphrey continues:

“Our calculations indicate...that 37.7 per cent of those who had a job could have achieved a higher class of degree result for that year if they not been in employment; 2.6 per cent would not have failed but would have achieved a third, 6.5 per cent would have achieved a 2.2 rather than a third; 23.4 per cent would have gained a 2.1; and a further 5.2 per cent would have gained a first” (2006, p.275).

These findings should cause concern, particularly given the prevalence of term-time employment exceeding the government guidelines of ten hours per week (Higher Education and Employment Committee on Student Retention, 2001; Scottish Executive, 2000).

The explanations of why term-time employment negatively impacts academic performance are numerous and somewhat obvious. Firstly, combining the roles of full-time student and part-time employee (in some cases full-time employee) leaves a

significant number of students reporting tiredness, missing lectures and submitting assignments late (Taylor and Smith, 1998; McKechnie et al, 1998; Hunt et al, 2004; Broadbridge and Swanson, 2006; Curtis, 2007; Rochford et al, 2009). One often overlooked point to mention here is that a full-time HE student is expected to both attend lectures and undertake substantial independent study:

“Pedagogic styles in English higher education are underpinned by assumptions about students being able to study independently, outside the lecture theatre. If time spent studying independently is limited by engagement in paid employment, these key assumptions are threatened” (Humphrey, 2006, p.283).

Interestingly, Taylor and Smith (1998) found that although most students were employed outside of formal teaching hours (evenings and weekends) there existed substantial ‘fallout’ from this as it “does not mean that the spheres of work and study are distinct” (p.20). Ironically, the more pro-employment studies by Lucas (1997), Lucas and Lammont (1998), and Curtis and Shani (2002) make the same point, though they argue that employment and education exist in a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship. However, according to Taylor and Smith (1998), this relationship is anything but beneficial to the student due to the increased incidence of stress, tiredness, and exhaustion caused by the demands placed upon them in combining employment and study; clearly, these are not conditions conducive to developing academic ability.

Increased tiredness, stress, reduced attendance and late submission of assignments will, understandably, negatively impact upon academic performance. However, these consequences of employment are particularly applicable to full-time students undertaking part-time work as a result of the areas of employment they are typically engaged in. As we have seen, students tend to work in low paid jobs and this in itself may induce significant financial stress and reduce available study time; low pay means students will have to work longer hours in order to pay for basic essentials and minimise debt accrual. Moreover, the problems of stress, tiredness and diminished academic performance are exacerbated by the significant numbers of students working unsociable hours and the

increasing trend of late opening hours across the service sector. More generally, the deregulation and ‘flexibilisation’ of the labour market over recent decades means that low paid employees are afforded little in the way of workplace protection. Taylor and Smith (1998) noted substantial numbers of students reported problems committing to their studies as a result of employers varying their working hours with little notice given. “Almost without exception students described how they make a range of short-term and long-term time management calculations in order to successfully merge their two timetables. The simplest of changes to the working pattern made by a manager can throw into confusion the delicate balance between the two timetables” (p.21). More recent studies acknowledge that this continues to be pose significant problems for students (Curtis and Lucas, 2001; Robotham, 2009). Curtis and Lucas found that 66 percent of respondents in their study worked varying hours and almost half were never or only sometimes consulted with regard to their rota: “We never know our hours”, stated one respondent, “there are loads of changes all over the rota, they put you on when you are at college, it’s a nightmare” (2001, p.47). This study also draws attention to student’s employment hours being regularly increased or decreased at short notice. Under such working conditions, it is difficult to see how students can develop the employability skill of time management which studies with pro-employment leanings insist student employment imparts.

In addition to low pay and variability in hours, research suggests part-time student employees are receiving poor treatment in the workplace more widely. As we have seen, students are predominantly employed in the service and retail sectors, areas which *require* ‘flexible’ employees. However, employer demand for flexibility and students’ awareness of the precarious nature of their employment appears to condemn a significant number of students to a relationship in which they are frequently exploited. For instance, several studies provide evidence of students feeling pressured by employers to take on overtime when offered, and regularly for no additional payment (Curtis and Lucas, 2001; Broadbridge and Swanson, 2006; Barron and Anastasidou, 2009; Greenbank et al, 2009). “One respondent who worked in retailing said that she was expected to stay behind after work for no pay, and the managers were prepared to discipline anyone who commented

on it” (Curtis and Lucas, 2001, p.50). The same study also found further mistreatment of student employees who reported performing tasks outside of their job description, having to miss breaks, not receiving holiday entitlement which they should have, and being unable to work fewer hours during critical periods of their academic life (i.e. during examination periods). This evidence clearly demonstrates that, for some employers, flexibility is not reciprocal and their needs take precedence over those of the student employee. Given the increasing financial impetus thrust upon students to undertake term-time employment it would appear that employer needs will continue to take precedence, particularly if, as Curtis and Lucas state, “Students are easy to control and are reluctant to vocalise their grievances about the work” (2001, p.48).

It has been shown, so far, that as a result of changes to undergraduate funding, student employment is: no longer restricted vacation periods and now prevalent in during term-time; increasingly undertaken, predominantly by poorer students; deleterious to academic performance, particularly so as engagement increases; low paid and often exploits the student. If we accept, as this chapter has argued, that it is students from lower socio-economic backgrounds that are most likely to engage in term-time employment, then it is these students who will have to overcome the above obstacles during their time in HE. However, perhaps the most extreme negative outcome associated with term-time employment yet to be discussed here, in the UK context, is student drop out. Earlier in this chapter, evidence was presented demonstrating that students from low-income backgrounds in the US were more likely to drop out of HE due to their strategy of undertaking term-time employment and living at home to offset increasing college fees (Higher Education and National Affairs, 1999; King, 2000; Bozick, 2007). The same strategy, as we have seen, is also increasingly adopted by low-income students in the UK, and evidence here replicates the findings of these US studies. Several UK studies have drawn attention to a connection between poverty, term-time employment and the increased likelihood of dropping out of university. For instance, Palmer’s (2001) study identified that that many students consider dropping out due to financial pressures. Similarly, Bennett (2003) found student self-declared financial hardship was a very strong predictor of a student’s decision to drop out. More recently, Powdthavee and

Vignoles (2008) reported that though drop out rates in the UK are relatively small (in comparison to the US) - six percent for first year drop out - the rate is increasing significantly (see also Unite, 2007):

“We should be alert to the fact that this will tend to widen the socio-economic in degree completion, since poorer students drop out to a greater extent even after allowing for their prior achievement” (p.22).

Again, the research demonstrates that it is the poorest students experiencing the most severe financial pressure and subsequently higher drop out rates. The correlation between low-income background, term-time employment and drop out is further highlighted in relation to the overall ‘student experience’ of HE. Just as Bozick (2007) observed in the US, numerous UK studies have shown that by undertaking higher levels of employment poorer students are not only disadvantaged academically, but also socially and therefore fail to fully participate in the university ‘experience’; this leaves them even more prone to drop out of HE. Humphrey (2006) agrees that, in addition to achieving lower marks and lower degree classes, employed students “are also disadvantaged in a more subtle way because of their lesser participation in the extra-curricular activities that flesh out the university experience and add to the cultural and social capital that students can accrue while at university” (p.283); similar findings are reported by Broadbridge and Swanson (2006), Unite (2007), and Rochford et al (2009). It is reasonable to adopt the position, as both Humphrey (2006) and Bozick (2007) do, that poor integration into university life, as a result of term-time employment or living at home, removes ‘protective factors’ and increases the likelihood of voluntary drop out. This evidence suggests some comparison of discourse relating to drop out rates between the US and UK drop is appropriate.

Perhaps the most compelling indictment of the harmful effects of term-time employment is displayed by the varied approaches taken towards it by higher education institutions (HEIs). As we have seen, the poorest students are those most likely to undertake term-time employment and, therefore, it stands to reason that HEIs with proportionately high

intakes of these students will have to contend with this issue more so than HEIs whose cohorts' backgrounds are more affluent. This distinction is broadly represented in the demarcation between the more prestigious HEIs such as the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which tend to enrol students from higher social grades, and those of the 'newer' universities inaugurated after 1992 which tend to enrol students from lower social grades. Curtis (2007) highlights this distinction in stating that "The proportion of students who work differs between universities, most of the research on student employment having been carried out in the 'newer' universities" (p.382). The reason for this is self-evident; it is because students in these HEIs undertake higher levels of term-time employment. Humphrey's (2006) study of Newcastle University, and contrast with neighbouring HEI, Northumbria University, affords us a good example of this demarcation and its relation to the employment debate. As a 'newer' university, he found Northumbria students to be more than twice as likely to be engaged in term-time employment as students from the more prestigious Newcastle University and argued this was attributable to the 'typical' socio-economic characteristics traditionally associated with the cohort of each institution; it will be remembered that research conducted in the mid-twentieth century found similar patterns in undergraduate employment between HEIs. Clearly, then, the occurrence of the deleterious effects of term-time employment, as outlined in this chapter, will be felt, as it has historically, most acutely by those students in the 'newer' universities based upon the relationship between socio-economic background and likely HEI attended.

This relationship is also apparent in the approach taken by universities to the employment of their students. Some universities have banned students from engaging in term-time employment (Curtis and Lucas, 2001). Ironically, these universities are the HEIs where relatively little employment transpires due to the more affluent background of their students. For instance, in their academic regulations, both the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge explicitly forbid the undertaking of term-time employment by their students due its deleterious impact upon academic performance. They even discourage employment during vacations; the University of Oxford warns their undergraduates that "academic work is expected of them in every vacation, and it should

take priority over commitments” (University of Oxford, 2013). Moreover, a senior tutor at the University of Cambridge, Dr Kelvin Bowkett, explains “We don’t allow students to have jobs during term time because of the considerable risk that academic work might suffer” (Hilton, 2000). Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that if the ‘traditional’ student from a prestigious university such as Oxford or Cambridge does undertake term-time employment, it is often not the low-skilled and low-paid employment that working class students at ‘newer’ universities usually engage with, but more likely skilled non-manual employment acquired through middle class cultural capital and better social networks (Greenbank et al, 2008). This evidence clearly illustrates the historical continuity of the more prestigious universities in their opposition to undergraduate employment particularly in term-time but also in vacation periods on the grounds that it is harmful to academic performance; a position which was exhorted by the Anderson Committee and has been progressively eroded due to the financial realities facing those students typically enrolled in less prestigious HEIs.

### Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the commonality and continued historical pedigree of themes surrounding the employment of undergraduates and the employment of children through discussion of the role of the Anderson Committee, the impact of ideological shift in the 1980s and 1990s, and analysis of the subsequent development of term-time student employment. We have seen that the recommendations of the Anderson Majority Report represented a continuation of the enthusiasm for extension of HE opportunities as seen in the recommendations of committees immediately after the Second World War, and an official acknowledgement that this was of social value as well as economic value. The Anderson Committee recommendations did lead to a more standardised system of student funding, rejected the use of student loans, and concluded that full-time undergraduate study and vacation employment were not successfully compatible. However, though it went some way to removing working class barriers in HE, the failure to abolish the means test and significantly increase the value of awards, and vacation grants in

particular, left many poorer students resigned to educationally damaging levels of vacation employment.

The shifting political winds of the 1980s and 1990s left dominant notions of HE as a socially valuable process behind and saw a return to the laissez-faire landscape of 'personal responsibility' and 'fairness'; the taxpayer could no longer be reasonably expected to foot the bill for expanding HE, subsequently HE returned to a state of economic commodity. Transfer of HE costs from the State to the student through declining maintenance grant value, withdrawal of access to benefits, the introduction of loans and later tuition fees have led to a vast increase in the take up of undergraduate employment and at increased levels. Moreover, this employment is no longer limited to vacations but now widely undertaken in term-time; a development which did not concern the Labour Government which assumed the traditional position of Governments that employment, whether of children or undergraduates is non-problematic and even beneficial.

Critical analysis of the body of research examining the nature and impact of undergraduate term-time employment has shown that, as employees, students are engaged in low paid, low skilled work and are frequently exploited. The majority of research emphasises the deleterious impact of such employment upon the academic performance and HE experience of students, and working class students in particular as it is they who, due to lack of financial support, are most likely to undertake term-time employment and for longer periods of time when compared with students from more affluent backgrounds. Thus, working class students, in attempting to offset increased HE costs are compromising their academic performance; increasing their risk of drop out; selecting HEIs based upon costs and geographical convenience as opposed to academic suitability; and experiencing higher levels of stress. Whilst these barriers are not faced exclusively by working class students, this chapter has demonstrated that they are most prevalent within this group. Ultimately, poverty, and the subsequent financial need to undertake employment remains a significant barrier to HE.

## CONCLUSION

The fundamental aim of this thesis has been to explore the barriers to education - both in terms of access and ability to fully participate - facing working class children and students from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and demonstrate the historical continuities therein. This has been achieved through analysis of documents, many of which have been previously unused to elicit the data presented here. The content analysed has focused upon three areas from which barriers to education can be seen to originate, these are: the role of policy-makers and employers in extending educational opportunities, child employment regulations and undergraduate employment; inequity within structure of the education system; and poverty. Though these areas have been distinguished throughout the thesis, their inherent connection is assumed in the work. Inevitably, given the breadth of the period under discussion, the analysis has had to remain at a broad level, but despite this, the research has identified strong continuity in the barriers to education, and their causes and effects, facing working class children and students.

Throughout the thesis the role of policy-makers and employers has remained remarkably consistent. With the exception, perhaps, of the period from 1945 to the early 1960s - when there appeared to be a genuine political impetus to reduce some of the barriers impeding working class to HE - the role of policy-makers and employers has been shown, on the whole, to be one averse to extending educational opportunity to the working class and tightening child employment regulation on grounds of damage to employer interests, the 'beneficial' qualities of employment, the amelioration of poverty, and class maintenance. Thus, detailed analysis of previously unused data in this area, such as that found in the Minutes of Evidence of numerous education and employment commissions/investigations from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, highlighted consistent manipulation of evidence and methodological bias so as to minimise glaring examples of educational deficiencies and inequalities in support of a pre-determined ideological approach; an orthodox economic approach concerned with maintaining minimal employment regulation and pandering to the whims of employers. This

approach, taken by policy-makers, was as true of the 1861 Newcastle Commission as it was of the Home Office departmental commissions/investigations of the twentieth century. Employers were anxious that extending educational opportunities to working class children might encourage disaffection if working class children were encouraged to think critically and aspire to positions 'above' their station. This could potentially disturb the natural 'equilibrium' that had, for centuries, ensured stability, a healthy respect amongst working class children for their 'betters' and permitted employers to suppress wage levels; evidence is presented in chapters one and two of the thesis to suggest that similar anxieties were expressed by policy-makers. Though issues of class maintenance may no longer be as prevalent, evidence that employers' continued employment of children, and indeed undergraduate students, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is motivated by financial self-interest is provided throughout the thesis.

Despite overwhelming evidence of employment as barrier to maximising the educational experience, policy-makers have managed to project a non-problematic conception of employment throughout the period analysed in relation to both child employment and student employment. This has been made possible by the aforementioned manipulation of evidence by policy-makers, but also by powerful employer lobby groups who have been remarkably successful in persuading senior officials and Ministers of their claims. Hence, whenever child employment legislation has been contemplated, employers have lobbied departments of State – in particular, as we have seen, the Home Office – and persuaded them to either dilute or drop completely proposals for reform; a process made easier when both parties share an ideological aversion to employment market regulation. Hobbs et al (2007) suggest the 'sweeping under the carpet' of the 1998 Inter-Departmental Review of Child Employment recommendations for regulation reform reflect central government's continued ideological commitment to a 'laissez-faire' approach and subsequent opposition to 'meddle' in the affairs of employers. This was true of the 'great' departmental inquiries of 1902 and 1910, and of the reform proposals that were unanimously agreed by the Local Authority Advisory Committee in 1945. Previous research has identified reluctance on the part of the State to enact measures of reform (see, for example, Cunningham, 2000), but the focus that has been placed here

upon employer interests has not been the subject of previous historical inquiry. Nor either, have the minutes of evidence of the ‘great’ twentieth century departmental and inter-departmental committees been the subject of such detailed analysis.

In defence of sustaining child employment, not tightening regulation and subsequently restricting educational opportunities in elementary, secondary and higher education, policy-makers and employers have continued to extol the virtues of combining employment with education for the last 150 years. With the exception of the historically significant argument that child employment was necessary to alleviate family poverty (claimed until the 1940s), the basis of these claims by policy-makers and employers has changed little during the last century and a half. They assert that employment whilst in full-time education can enhance academic performance, improve health, impart desirable employability skills, and enhance personal and social development. Similarly, there is strong historical continuity in evidence that demonstrates such claims to be highly spurious and these have been presented throughout this thesis. Voluminous evidence, both in the UK and US has been forwarded by a plethora of interested groups, including the Government’s own Education Department at times, which directly contradicts the ‘benefits’ attributed to combining education and employment by policy-makers and employers. This evidence demonstrates that employment has been, and continues today to be, detrimental to the academic performance of both children and undergraduate students. It leaves pupils and students tired and unfit for instruction, restricts time for independent study, is detrimental to physical and mental health, and more often than not fails to confer the employment skills claimed by advocates.

Despite this evidence, policy-makers continue to ignore such concerns. One example of this can be seen in the non-publication and ‘shelving’ of the findings of the 1998 Inter-Departmental Review of Child Employment. This review cast doubt upon the beneficial aspects of employment upon the academic performance of school children and also found that child employment regulation continued to be a ‘dead letter’ (Hobbs et al, 2007). More recent evidence continues to suggest that policy-makers need to address poor enforcement of child employment regulation and the subsequent deleterious impact it

facilitates upon academic performance (BRTF, 2004; McCoy and Smyth, 2007). Despite this, Beverley Hughes, then the UK Labour Government's Minister for Children Schools and Families, argued that child employment campaigners needed to "keep the issue into perspective". In most cases, she argued, children's employment experiences are appropriate and harmless, and the laws governing their work were "strong enough and workable" (Hansard, 17/12/2007, c.581). Hughes' Ministerial successor, Ed Balls, took an identical position, announcing that the government's view was that it "is that is not right to toughen up the law" (Hansard, 27/04/2009, c.568).

In HE too, policy-makers choose to ignore the majority of research that finds employment to be deleterious to academic performance and HE experience, instead choosing to project the non-problematic and beneficial conception. For instance, in their response to the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) recommendation that universities should help students to become more familiar with employment (recommendation 18) the government agreed and stated that "enhancing the employability of graduates is a key task for higher education and that work experience can be very valuable in helping students to develop" (DfEE, 1997, 6.6). This sentiment was later echoed by the then Minister for Higher Education, Margaret Hodge who stated she was "not too concerned about students doing part-time work when they are studying", and indeed that there should be much greater recognition of the positive impact employment can have on the student learning experience. She insisted that employment can compliment rather than detract from study (Hodge, 2002). Similarly, Bill Rammell (2008), a more recent Minister for Higher Education, reinforced the Labour Government's position and argued that students "find that the time spent in a part time job gives them a useful insight into the world of work, fosters a positive attitude and helps them develop the flexibility and skills for employability".

As our analysis of the relevant research has shown, policy-makers' and employers' claims of the educational benefits of employment are not borne out by the majority of research findings, for either the UK or the US, a country which has a similar method of funding. Indeed, they appear to be no more based upon fact than the claims made by the

early proponents of child employment that were discussed in chapter one. These, it seems, merely represent a pragmatic response to motivated financial self-interest on the part of employers, and ideologically influenced shifts in the provision of education and mechanisms for student funding in the case of policy-makers. Put simply, employers want cheap, flexible and compliant employees, so naturally exaggerate the benefits of combining employment with education in order to procure a ready supply of child and student employees who fulfil their financial criteria. Similarly, if access to educational provision is limited, or cuts to funding are made forcing students to undertake employment, then naturally policy-makers will seek to persuade us that employment in place of secondary education is a 'good option' for children, or that term-time employment offers undergraduates a 'beneficial learning opportunity'. In reality, much of this employment has no more educational value than that conducted by children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but like then, it is in the interests of policy-makers to propagate the contrary view.

In addition to the crucial role played by policy-makers and employers in forming barriers to education, the thesis has also demonstrated the significance of the closely linked barrier of structural inequalities in the education system. We have seen that the notion of 'paying for education' in the form of tuition fees and maintenance costs, applied at all levels of education during the period covered in this thesis, has proven to be a most serious barrier to education and is strongly connected to the diversion of children and students from the classroom to the workplace. Chapters one and two focused predominantly on the impact of tuition fees and associated costs upon the take-up of elementary and secondary education; later chapters focus increasingly on secondary and higher education. It was shown that the notion of paying for education when wage-earning was deeply embedded habit in many communities, particularly in working class areas, was a barrier to education few were prepared to overcome; even to today, the notion of being debt-averse continues to impede access to HE.

Moreover, the financial support mechanisms in place to facilitate access to fee-paying education have continually proven ineffective throughout the period under discussion and

at all stages of education. Here, regional variations in the administration of support systems have been shown to be vital to decisions to undertake education or seek employment. Regional variation between the fee assistance offered by poor law guardians to parents of children in voluntary elementary schools, and that offered by school boards to parents with children at board schools, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, proved significant in the frequency of children's attendance and subsequent educational potential. Similarly, the secondary school scholarship system of the same era, and later 'Free Place System' (from 1907), was one characterised by significant regional variation in its administration. Here, permissive legislation, following the 1902 Education Act, encouraged great variation between LEAs in the value of their scholarships, their selection processes and the number of scholarships offered. Furthermore, those LEAs which lacked enthusiasm for the expansion of secondary education tended to build few secondary schools, thus limiting the options for children in their area; indeed, some LEAs chose not to offer any 'free places' at all. The same criticisms are levied at the structure of LEA higher education student funding mechanisms in chapters seven and eight. Here too, then, until the implementation of the Anderson Committee recommendations in the early 1960s, the financial support system varied significantly along much the same lines as secondary system just outlined. However, the HE support system was further complicated by the fact that three sources of support were available; open awards, State scholarships and LEA awards. As chapter seven illustrates, LEA awards were by far the most numerous form of student support but also of less value than State scholarships which, like open awards, working class students had little chance of accessing. The most consistent aspects of all the aforementioned financial support systems were the parsimonious value of awards, their variation in administration, and their subsequent effect of pupil/student refusal to advance their educational development or financially compelling pupils/students to combine education with employment; the academically deleterious consequences of which are particularly relevant to HE today, as demonstrated in chapter 8.

The persistence of the Half-Time system during the nineteenth century until the early 1920s represents further evidence of educational structure as a barrier to education.

Chapter three illustrated the destructive impact this system had on the educational experience and future educational opportunities of school children, particularly in the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The system obstructed not only the education of those children engaged in half-time employment, but also the education of those not employed half-time as teachers in areas where half-timing was commonplace had to organise and focus classes around the special attention required by the half-time children who sacrificed much of their class time to employment; “The consequence is that the full-timers suffer in their turn; for the whole class tends to have its pace reduced to the pace of the slower children” (BOE, 1909, p.5). Combining education and employment left children so tired and exhausted that teachers regularly let them sleep in class; the deleterious impact of this, both academically and physically is obvious and clearly demonstrated in chapter three. Suffice to say that evidence of this system as a barrier to academic achievement and the later stages of education was substantial. Perhaps if, as discussed in chapters four, five and six, administrative responsibility for child employment had been transferred from the ideologically pro-employment Home Office to the BOE, as the BOE and others had called for, the barrier of the Half-Time system could have removed sooner.

We have seen that the role of policy-makers and employers, and the structure of the education system itself have continued to be significant barriers to education throughout the period addressed in this thesis. However, the overarching barrier to education has been, and continues to be poverty. Every barrier to education explored in this thesis is a barrier which has impeded the educational experience of the poorest to a far greater extent than that of those from more affluent backgrounds. For instance, the inability to afford fees, associated costs (clothing, meals etc), and forgo their children’s earnings meant that poorer parents struggled to provide their children with an elementary education during the nineteenth century; the only realistic option in many cases was employment for their children. Moreover, the ‘better quality’ elementary schools charged higher fees which were beyond the means of many working class families; it was these schools which, as chapters one and two demonstrate, were most likely to attract

both the majority of scholarships for secondary education and pupils with the financial means to pay for additional tuition in order to pass scholarship examinations.

Opportunity to access secondary education in the early decades of the twentieth century improved little for poorer children who were, again, precluded by pecuniary means. The introduction of the Free Place System from 1907 proved ineffective in increasing working class participation in secondary education, partly as a result of the regional variations in its administration, but predominantly due to its low value of scholarship which was insufficient to cover even fees in some cases, let alone maintenance. Such meagre financial assistance meant that, once again, working class parents were unable to 'foot the bill' as well as forgo their children's earnings. Consequently, more scholarships were refused than accepted; indeed, the number of working class holding free places in secondary schools actually declined between 1913 and 1923 (Lindsay, 1926). As Gray and Moshinsky (1935) pointed out, the vast majority of the nation's talent was debarred from secondary education, while less intelligent but financially 'better off' children were 'cluttering up' secondary schools simply because they could afford to.

Higher education was even more elusive to the working class than secondary education. A lack of structural capacity and working class 'pool of ability', due to the aforementioned barriers in elementary and secondary education, were significant in blocking access to HE for poorer students during the first half of the twentieth century. However, in a repeat of the inadequacy of the secondary school scholarship system, it was the low value financial support and regional variations in administration which were most significant as a barrier to HE for the working class; some LEAs offered no awards at all during the decades of 1900s. Moreover, it was not until the late 1950s that the value of LEA awards was comparable to that of the rarer State scholarship. Constantly increasing tuition fees and maintenance costs, set against low value awards which did not cover the cost of HE, led to a proportional decrease in working class attendance at universities during the inter-war period and increased incidence of awards being surrendered due to their inadequacy. The poor student's best chance of accessing HE was to limit their both their educational and future professional options and commit

themselves to a BOE subsidised teaching course or a cheaper course at a less prestigious institution; access to Oxford, Cambridge, or London was considerably more expensive. Though some minor improvements were made, not even the educational impetus generated by the Second World War could rectify such inadequacies. Indeed, there was evidence of LEAs selecting candidates for awards based upon income; candidates who required less financial support from the LEA - determined by a means-test - were sometimes given priority of award selection as they would be less 'draining' upon LEA resources. Chapter seven demonstrates how the weaker financial position of poorer students that did manage to access HE increased their likelihood of undertaking vacation employment to the detriment of their academic performance and general HE experience; thus, having overcome the many barriers they faced as a result of their socio-economic status, when they did arrive at HE poorer students were unable to maximise their academic potential due to the need to take employment.

What this serves to show is that the educational barriers facing the working class at all stages of education were predominantly financial; this continued to be the case in the latter part of the twentieth century and remains so today. The introduction to this thesis presents recent evidence of a correlation between socio-economic status of school children and propensity to undertake employment both in the UK and US. Much of this research illustrates that the long-standing claims as to the benefits of combining employment with education are spurious today as they were in the nineteenth century, and that the impact of employment upon the academic and overall well-being of schoolchildren is particularly detrimental as employment hours increase; a trait still associated with the employment poorer schoolchildren.

The same dynamic continues to be evident in the relationship between poorer undergraduate students and employment. Chapter eight established that working class students' financial necessity to undertake vacation employment from the 1940s onwards due to low value student support and increasing HE costs continues today and has been exacerbated by the ideologically driven transfer of financial responsibility from the State to the individual through the decreased grant value, the introduction of loans and

increasing tuition fee payment. The majority of recent research concurs with that of the mid-twentieth century in demonstrating that employment, and the relatively recent and financially necessary explosion of term-time employment in particular, deleterious to academic performance and HE experience in general. It limits the time students can spend on their studies, reduces attendance, increases drop out rates and stress. These consequences are intensified as the amount of employment undertaken increases; again, it is students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who undertake the highest levels of term-time employment and subsequently fail to maximise their educational and future professional opportunities.

In summary, the thesis has achieved its aim to demonstrate the historical continuities in the barriers which have prevented working class children and students from accessing educational options or maximising educational experiences that have been available to those for whom financial considerations have proven less impeding. Just as they did in the nineteenth and twentieth century, poverty and low income, a structure of education that fails to provide genuine opportunities, and a continuing propensity for working class children and students to work alongside their studies, continue today to inhibit educational potential and limit opportunity.

#### The Research Process: A Personal Reflection

At the point of completing this thesis I am now in a position to reflect upon the experience in its entirety and identify the relative weaknesses in the work, make recommendations for future research (these are considered together as one informs the other), and consider my personal progress as a researcher. In reflecting upon the weaknesses of the research several areas for improvement have been identified. Firstly, as discussed in the methodology section, after a lengthy process of negotiating access to the NUS archives at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, very little information of relevance was gleaned. This was a result of both time pressures and financial constraints. As a part-time and self-funded research student I had to balance research avenues and opportunities with practical financial considerations and

professional commitments. However, upon reflection, there was a considerable amount of archived data that I did not have time to access which would undoubtedly have added to the debates explored in this thesis. Similarly, though several lengthy visits to the National Archives at Kew were made, I feel that all avenues of research were not exhausted and additional information remains to be discovered which could add to the body of knowledge presented here. In particular, further research of the minutes of the nineteenth century Education Department committee meetings, and the 1960 Anderson Committee, may have proven enlightening. Had professional commitments and financial resources been less of a priority, further exploration of these and other resources at the Modern Records Centre and National Archives would have addressed this weakness in the thesis' content. This weakness in the thesis' content extends an opportunity for future research to rectify this and build upon the evidence presented here.

The second weakness of this thesis is evident in its methodological approach. As was acknowledged in the methodology section of the thesis introduction, documentary analysis has become an unpopular research method in social and educational investigation. However, while a strong and correct defence of the methodological approach used here has been provided in the methodology section, it is conceded that, upon reflection, some incorporation of primary data collection may have enhanced the thesis and produced a more 'rounded' piece of work. Several recent studies, as shown in the thesis' introduction, have explored the views of children regarding their employment and their perceptions of its impact both positive and negative. However, there is a strong case for investigating the experiences of children employed in the 1960s and 1970s in greater detail; a period when, as Emrys Davies' 1972 report showed, illegal child employment was not only rife, but in both its illegal and legal forms, was harmful to education. This could be achieved through use of oral history techniques and would enhance the methodological validity of the thesis. Moreover, such primary research would lend itself to a complimentary analysis of departmental files for this period and would, perhaps, illuminate the continued resistance within Whitehall and government to the implementation of tighter child employment regulations; an area of analysis which is

missing from this thesis. This omission from the thesis, again, offers another avenue for future research.

In relation to the employment of undergraduate students, further historical research might seek to examine discussions between officials about the merits of providing additional support to students in vacation periods. As we have seen, the post-war period has seen a shift in perceptions about the educational 'utility' of students engaging in work alongside their studies, and it would be interesting to see when, how and why attitudinal shifts occurred within the Ministry of Education. Was the shift a product of evidence, pointing to the educationally beneficial nature 'work', or was it a pragmatic response to ideologically influenced cuts in funding? All of these questions could perhaps usefully be examined by future research in the area. This research would clearly be limited by the '30 year rule' which govern the disclosure of official documents, but such an exercise would nonetheless be worthwhile.

The final weakness of the work lies in its execution. As is frequently the way with part-time and self-funded research, this thesis has been susceptible to considerable periods of time where little progress has been made due to financial, professional, personal and health obstacles. Consequently, completion has taken considerably longer than anticipated and the mode of completion has been ad hoc. The pattern of periods of engagement, followed periods of non-engagement may well have impacted upon the coherence and 'natural flow' of the work as the ability to re-engage with such a body of work from the same mind-set as when previously engaged is a difficult, if not impossible, task. Though strenuous attempts have been made to 'iron out' any disjointedness in the body of the work, I feel that it is important to acknowledge this as a potential weakness.

My personal development as a researcher has undoubtedly been enhanced through the process of undertaking this research, particularly as this was the first piece of research of this magnitude I have undertaken. Though I initially felt a little intimidated and displayed some doubt as to my ability to study at PhD-level, these concerns were assuaged relatively quickly as I began reading extensively on the topic area and became

increasing familiar and comfortable with the topic and content. Over time the direction and structure of the research became progressively clearer and logical, and my self-confidence in my academic abilities developed accordingly. As the research process continued and the thesis structure became increasingly coherent it was expected by the university that I should be able defend and justify my research at numerous graduate research events. My attendance and contribution to such events aided in my development of the skills required to clearly and concisely present my research to audiences from a wide-range of academic and professional disciplines. Furthermore, it forced me to enhance my admittedly inappropriate knowledge of research methods in order to justify the methodological approach I was adopting. These experiences undoubtedly left me imbued with more confidence as a researcher and a healthy proclivity for constructive self-evaluation which has been demonstrated in the earlier evaluation of the thesis' weaknesses.

As discussed earlier, my somewhat protracted execution of this thesis has necessitated a considerable amount of patience, commitment and, perhaps more importantly, time management. These are attributes which serve a researcher well, and ones I did not possess in bountiful quantities. However, these are traits that, I feel, I have continued to develop throughout this process. For instance, there have been several occasions where sincere consideration had been given to withdrawing from study, particularly given the lengthy period it has taken to complete this research; it appeared to be a reasonable and convenient course of action. However, my genuine interest in, and commitment to the topic, as a researcher, facilitated its completion. Moreover, the successful completion of a comprehensive and long-term study, such as this, required that I developed robust time management and organisation skills in order to balance competing demands on my time. Though these skills have 'tested' on several occasions throughout the duration of the research process, I consider my grasp of these essential research skills to have improved as a result of this experience.

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