

the public schools

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contents	1	introduction	1
	2	educational apartheid	3
	3	all the advantages	11
	4	born to rule	17
	5	acting right, acting now	26

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1. introduction

“We are convinced that the nation should now take the decision to end the social inequalities and educational anomalies arising from the existence of a highly influential and privileged private sector of education, outside the state system.” (*Signposts for the sixties*)

“Labour will set up an educational trust to advise on the best way of integrating the public schools into the state system of education.” (*Labour election manifesto*)

In the future these statements may be seen to mark a turning point in the development of British education. For although the Labour Party had severely criticised the public schools system in previous statements of policy, reasons had always been found for inaction. But now Labour is committed to action, and action there will have to be.

True, there are those who seem embarrassed at the party's commitment, and they may try to bring pressure to bear upon the leadership. But sooner or later Labour will carry out the party policy. The fundamental reason why a Labour Government must act is that the public school system is both morally and intellectually indefensible.

There is, however, a more serious danger. Because of its heavy legislative programme and slender majority Labour might think of postponing action for as long as possible. This would be extremely unfortunate, for the integration of the public schools into the state education system will take time and investigation by the trust of ways in which the public schools can be fitted into the state system should begin soon.

For these reasons it is vitally important that the arguments for public school reform should be presented and that solutions should be found to the

practical problems of integration. This is our purpose; for after careful consideration we believe Labour's approach is broadly right.

definitions

What does the term “public school” mean? The official definition is a school whose headmaster is a member of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC). There are nearly 210 of these schools. Nearly half are direct grant or state schools and the term usually refers to schools which are completely outside the state education system. There are 110 of these in England and Wales.

The HMC is a self-selecting body. One of its conditions of membership is that a school's academic standards, as shown particularly by size of sixth form and number of boys going on to university, must reach a high level. There are a numbers of leading boys' schools which are outside the conference. These schools have not been examined owing to the difficulty of collecting information about them. For this reason girls' public schools have also, for the most part, been ignored.

The public schools employ over 4,500 teachers. At the beginning of 1963 the public schools contained about 50,000 boys over the age of 13, and of these about 35,000 were boarders. About two fifths of their boys are sixth formers. They contain between 2 and 3 per cent of all boys aged 14, and 16½ per cent of all boys in sixth forms.

Other independent schools account for a further 2 or 3 per cent of all boys at 14 but only contain a slightly higher proportion of all boys in sixth forms; roughly 4 per cent. Approximately half these boys attend schools which have not been recognised as efficient by the Ministry of Education. All the public

schools have more than 200 boys and 76 of them have over 400. But only about 25 of the other independent schools have more than 200 boys. Certainly in terms of size the public schools are the "commanding heights" of the private sector.

**BOYS AT PUBLIC AND OTHER
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

	age 14	%	6th forms	%
HMC	10,000	2-3	18,900	16.5
ind.*	6,500	1-2	3,550	3
ind.†	5,850	1.5	1,500	1-1.5
all ind.	22,350	6	23,950	21
total boys	377,000	100	114,500	100

* recognised as efficient; † others
source: *Statistics of education*, 1963,
part 1; information from Department
of Education and Science

2. educational apartheid

Of all the arguments that are used against the public schools the most common is that they promote class distinction. The Fleming committee, which was set up during the war to consider the future of the public schools, referred to the separate system of state and public school education that had grown up, and commented, "It made far more difficult the task of those who looked towards a breaking down of hard class distinctions within the society of the nation. It may almost be said that nothing could have been better devised to perpetuate them than this educational development."

In his recent book (*The public schools and the future*) Dancy, the headmaster of Marlborough, said "The public schools can justly be called a divisive factor in society. This in my opinion is not merely regrettable but morally wrong."

Such criticism is echoed by some Conservative politicians. In 1961, during a Commons debate, the then Tory Minister of Education, Sir David Eccles, said, "a small minority of children coming from more or less the same kind of homes and receiving an exceptional kind of education is bad for the harmony of our society." This view was most forcefully put by the then Conservative Member of Parliament, Geoffrey Johnson Smith: "there has been created a kind of educational apartheid based on the financial ability of a number of individuals wealthy enough to segregate their children from the major part of the education system. It is this educational apartheid, this educational separateness, which has led to, or largely contributed to, the remarkable class conscious atmosphere which still pervades our society."

Basically, the moderate public school master and the liberal reformer are

agreed that it is a bad thing for one section of the community to be brought up in complete isolation from the rest. The criticism is not so much of the superior teaching provision public school boys enjoy or the positions of power they fill afterwards; arguments which are more specifically socialist in origin. Nevertheless, the argument is important. It has three main parts:

Public school boys and girls come from a very limited social group. This social exclusiveness is accentuated by the background of the masters and the rules and traditions of the schools themselves. It results in ignorance of the rest of society, and encourages unusually reactionary views about it; the single sex boarding school produces other personal problems.

The reasons for this social isolation are fairly obvious. High fees naturally limit attendance at such schools to a wealthy class. There are very few scholarships given by local authorities and those who obtain them come, almost invariably, from a middle class background.

No survey exists of the social background of pupils at public schools. All that we have is a survey carried out at Ardingly by the headmaster in 1959. It showed that not one working class boy attended the school in 1959. The Crowther Report did contain a class breakdown of pupils in *all* independent efficient schools. In other words, it included a whole range of much less expensive schools. Even so it showed that the proportion of pupils coming from working class homes was only 6 per cent, though children from these classes form 75 per cent of all school children. Moreover, all 6 per cent came from skilled manual worker homes. The proportion from semi- or unskilled working class homes was too small to measure.

The composition of the school, the background of the masters, and the institutional rules and traditions only intensify the exclusiveness of the public school.

fathers

A large proportion of public school boys have fathers who also went to a public school. Nearly every school makes it clear in its prospectus or its letter to applicants that sons of old boys will be given preference unless actually mentally defective. With the Marlborough prospectus, for example, comes a duplicated letter beginning, "The son of a clergyman or of an Old Marlburian may be registered on his seventh birthday, and, if so registered can nearly always be sure of a firm vacancy; for others the entry position is less easy". At Eton 60 per cent of the boys have Old Etonian fathers and the proportion is rising. Even at Winchester, which is more selective than most, the proportion of boys with Wykehamist fathers was 30 per cent in 1956. This figure is three times as high as in the nineteenth century. Only 10 per cent of Wykehamists between 1820 and 1889 had Wykehamist fathers (T. Bishop, unpublished thesis).

In other words, it is not only true that boys at public schools will mix at school only with members of a similar and very small class. Many of these boys will themselves have parents who had a similarly cloistered education. Nor is this counteracted in any way by the typical public school master.

masters

The overwhelming majority of masters have themselves attended public school. Few have ever taught outside the public school system. At Eton no less

than 33 out of the 105 masters are old Etonians. There are no overall figures for masters attending public schools, but it is possible to analyse the previous careers of most of the public school headmasters by going through *Who's Who*.

Of those headmasters for whom there were details, 77 per cent had themselves been to public school. It also showed that only 10 per cent of them had ever taught in a state school. To quote John Wilson in *Public schools and private practice*, one of the main reasons for public school masters entering teaching is "to clothe themselves in the public school aura they knew as boys".

everything is out of bounds

Most of the schools are boarding schools. They are often situated in fairly remote areas, either in the heart of the countryside or in small towns or villages. Very few are in the great industrial centres. In any case most of the town is usually placed "out of bounds". At the Leys school in Cambridge, for instance, there are close restrictions on visiting the town. Clifton publishes a map which marks forbidden areas, while at Bishops Stortford permission is required to visit the town. There are often rules forbidding the use of public transport. A minority of the schools, in particular those run by the Quakers, have few restrictions. But at the other extreme a few schools still censor the boys' mail, only permit certain papers and magazines, and place telephone kiosks out of bounds.

One or two schools have recently made well publicised attempts to establish local contacts. If public schools were really concerned to bring their boys into contact with the outside world, it

would be very easy for them to arrange sports fixtures with state schools. It was therefore with some expectation that we examined their school magazines. Since fewer state schools play rugby, we examined cricket fixtures. Details were available for 36 schools. Out of 400 matches, only 6 (1.7 per cent) were played with state grammar schools. There were no games against secondary moderns. Nearly half of the matches were played against other HMC schools and the rest were with old boys' teams, and cricket clubs with names like "The Shropshire Gentlemen".

Public schools are extremely tightknit communities. To quote John Wilson again (pp55-56) "The degree of communal integration which many schools achieve is equalled or surpassed only by monasteries and nunneries The headmaster, who lives on the spot, is rarely able or willing to spend much time away from his school: and the staff, many of whom live actually in the school buildings, are equally tied down For a society, its rules are strict, and personal freedom severely delimited. It has a corporate religion and a corporate morality, together with a corporate tradition which may well be stronger than either."

Such a community will inevitably be inward looking. There is simply no time for outside interests. The public school community commands the complete loyalty and absorption in its life of its members. Within the community are yet smaller ones — the houses — which in turn absorb the interests and loyalties of their members. At many schools, for instance, it is generally understood that boys from one house do not associate with boys from another.

Such a close community life may be beneficial in itself, but where all mem-

bers of the community come from identical backgrounds, much of the virtue is lost.

the school as divine

Besides the inevitable effects of a tight knit community life in a one class boarding school, there are a number of traditional attitudes and institutions at public schools which help to intensify the boys' isolation from the rest of society. The schools make every attempt to impress the boys with the unique quality of the particular institution. Just how far such adoration can go can perhaps be glimpsed on reading a book like Firth's official history of Winchester. He says at one point "To the Wykehamical brotherhood Winchester is a holy place . . . anyone who, having been bred a Wykehamist, has also the privilege of spending his working lifetime there, must ever thank God, his parents and his kindly nursing mother, for the felicity of dwelling already by faith, as Socrates bade us dwell, in that city whose pattern is laid up in Heaven". If you really feel your school is divine you can hardly be blamed for feeling that the rest of the population has missed something.

Then there is emphasis on training in leadership which the public schools have traditionally given. One of the accepted methods of leadership training is the prefect system. There are privileges for prefects, such as the right to have a fag, to use a bicycle or to walk on certain plots of holy ground. Many schools have house lists putting all boys in order of precedence, and even seating at meals is often in order of seniority.

Compulsory Church of England chapel is another of the less liberal features of the public school tradition. The fact that chapel is compulsory at half of

the schools makes it difficult for Jews to go to public schools. Even where chapel is not compulsory, there is often a quota for Jewish boys. There seem, for instance, to be quotas at two leading London public schools, and anyone writing for a prospectus from Highgate school will find in it a duplicated slip saying, "places for boys not of the Christian faith filled until—" and a space. Inked in last year was the date 1975.

THE DAMAGE OF ISOLATION

A cloistered education amongst children of the same class breeds ignorance. According to Dancy (p88) public school boys "just do not know what the ordinary man is like. The notions they have of him tend to be political clichés or cultural stereotypes, culled from the right wing press or inferred from an unguarded generalisation of their fathers." As Spenser Lieson, a former headmaster of Winchester, once said, "it is unfortunate that contemporaries and future citizens of a great democracy should be so deeply ignorant of each others' thoughts and manner of life" (*The public schools question*, pp10-11).

Exceptionally conservative attitudes are prevalent at the public schools. This is hardly surprising if the following statements by two headmasters are typical of the views of public school staff. A. N. Gilkes, a High Master of St Paul's, said in 1957 (*Independent education* p22) that "There seems a danger that what has been termed the 'maniacal fringe' among the equalitarians will carry the day. A second and bigger dose of planning, restriction and redistribution of income is threatened. Another batch of 20,000 good things will travel on the tumbrel". G. Snow, a headmaster of Lancing, recently observed (*The public schools in*

the new age) that "while the bulk of mankind has been made lazy by protective legislation, and selfish by social security, the public schools are bringing up boys . . . to serve the community The influence of these schools could be a decisive factor in bringing the life of the country back to sanity".

irresponsible power

Perhaps the assumption of superiority is the most undesirable effect of a public school education, and it arises most obviously from the emphasis on leadership which public schools claim to give. If boys are taught to regard themselves as leaders they will come to regard other people as followers.

As prefects boys may be taught that those with power are responsible for those they command but they are unlikely to learn that in a democratic society those in power are responsible to those led. And the idea that boys from public schools will become "leaders" is not confined to those who attended them. A few years ago a Labour MP arranged for a visit of boys from a well known public school to the local mines, and for a return visit of young miners to the school. Asked about it afterwards in a *Radio Newsreel* report one of the young miners said, "It is interesting to see where our future managers get educated".

homosexuality

According to Wilson: "Nearly everywhere homosexual friendships are frequent, and it is not infrequent in most schools for such friendships to reach the point of physical action".

A number of ex-public school boys to whom we spoke felt that homosexuality was the strongest single argu-

ment against their schools. As one, who was at a leading public school in the early fifties, put it, "the inevitable presence of homosexuality in public schools is my own strongest objection to them, because it is here that they hold the capacity to do most harm". Homosexuality is the most obvious form of sexual damage that can be inflicted by public schools. The inhibitions and ignorance caused by segregation from the opposite sex during adolescence are more important. They are certainly more widespread.

sixth form revolt

These limitations are evidently causing something in the nature of a revolt among many of the older boys. This was reflected in a long discussion at the HMC in October 1963. A number of headmasters suggested that the problem might be solved by the creation of separate sixth form houses. The present High Master of St Paul's school was reported in the *Times* (3 October 1963) as saying:

"To free the 18 year olds from part of their double burden of coping with university entrance and with the multifarious and time consuming administration of bath rosters and bed times and net practices; to allow them to go to bed when they want to within reason; to absolve them from a host of petty regulations and . . . to enable them to mix freely with their own age group in the school—these seem to me enormous potential gains."

If these criticisms are valid, what public policy is warranted? Most of the criticisms we have so far mentioned are applicable to independent schools in general. Some of the less famous schools may be less exclusive because they charge lower fees, but the distinction between various types of

school is not sufficiently clear cut to involve different conclusions on policy. All independent schools foster class division.

The question is whether class consciousness promoted by the private sector in education causes sufficient damage to society to justify the community restricting it. The fact that 6 or 7 per cent of the nation's children who attend these schools grow up ignorant of the rest of society is not sufficiently important to justify legal restriction. If parents want to turn their children into snobs they presumably have a right to do so.

Where this snob education also happens to take a disproportionate share of the nation's teaching resources, and where the children who attend these schools fill a half or two thirds of the top jobs in the community, then it does become a matter of concern to the nation who attends these schools.

However, in themselves the social effects are sufficiently injurious to society to constitute a powerful case against any subsidy of private education by the community. How is private education subsidised at present? As their name suggests, independent schools receive no direct grant from public funds. But they do receive indirect subsidies from the taxpayer and ratepayer which are gained in a number of different ways. These can be divided broadly into two categories: first, the tax relief which public and other non profit making independent schools enjoy because of their status as charities; and second, the tax relief which individual parents can obtain.

CHARITIES OF NO PUBLIC BENEFIT

Under the Rating and Valuation Act 1961 public schools are entitled to 50

per cent rating relief. In other words, they pay only half the rate they would otherwise be due to pay. In the case of Eton this amounted to relief of £7,000 in 1961. This is tantamount to a subsidy of £7,000 from the citizens of Eton and Slough Urban District to the needy scholars of Eton.

Public schools are also excused payment of tax on their endowment income. In 1955 Winchester's endowments yielded the school £43,000, or about one fifth of its total income. Moreover, it has been stated that Eton obtains one third of its income from endowments (Sir Robin Williams *Whose public schools?* p26).

Again, the schools can, as charities, recover tax on money covenanted to them. The schools make regular appeals for money and are careful to point out the advantages of covenants. For instance, Bedford school says that the sum for which it is appealing can "only be effectively raised by deeds of covenant"; while the Clifton appeal leaflet points out that a promise of £10 a year for ten years under deed of covenant will provide at the present rate of tax £163 5s 9d.

The public schools raise very large sums of money in this way. We obtained details of the amounts for which 39 schools had appealed or were appealing. These schools alone were appealing for a total of £7 millions. It seems likely that the total value of appeals outstanding is about £12 millions.

It is almost certain that most of this amount will be raised. Those schools which made appeals six to eight years ago have received about four fifths of the sum for which they asked. It was clear from the details given by four or five schools that most of their money was raised in the form of cov-

enants. The average was about 80 per cent. On this basis one would expect that about a quarter of the total appeal income would be in the form of tax refunds. This was true for two schools for which we have information. The circular letter from the Rector of Beaumont College, for example, says "of the present gratifying total of £92,000, £24,300 will be a result of reclaimed tax". Early in 1959 Winchester estimated that tax remissions on its appeal totalled £80,000 out of the £282,000 it had then raised.

The Industrial Fund for the Advancement of Scientific Education in Schools also received tax relief on the income which industry had covenanted upon it. The fund was set up in 1955 by 90 companies — including such giants as ICI, Shell and Vickers — to help independent and direct grant schools to modernise their laboratories. It has given them over £3 millions.

only the rich gain

The definition of a charity is shrouded in antiquity. It originates in the list of charities contained in the Elizabethan *Statute of charitable uses*. The courts still accept the interpretation made by Lord Macnaghten in 1891. He distinguished four categories: trusts for the relief of poverty, trusts for the advancement of education, trusts for the advancement of religion, and trusts for purposes beneficial to the community. The Nathan Committee on Charitable Trusts in 1952 pointed out that "it is well established that within each of Lord Macnaghten's four heads the trust should benefit the community or a substantial section of it".

We doubt whether public schools can be said to benefit a "substantial section of the community". To qualify for charitable status a school should

be open to those from all walks of life. We propose that the law should be amended so that a school must offer a certain proportion of free places before it can qualify as a charity. At present, the public schools are a charity for the rich, and this is nonsense.

covenants and expense accounts

Perhaps even more important are the tax reliefs which are enjoyed by families whose children go to public school. The main device is the covenant. For this you need a rich and obliging relative, say a grandfather. He promises to pay £300, for example, towards his grandson's schooling for seven years or more. Because he is paying out money which has been taxed to someone — the infant grandson, who pays no tax — the grandson is entitled to recover the tax the grandfather has already paid on it, although the father would lose his children's tax allowance. In 1960 sums payable under deed of covenant to individuals amounted to about £30 millions. This represented a loss to the Exchequer of £15 to £20 millions, but of course the proportion of such covenants which were for educational purposes is not known (see *Hansard* 19 May 1960).

Another way of achieving the same object is for parents or grandparents to pay a lump sum to the school which their boy is to attend. The school transfers it to an insurance broker for settlement of the fees as they fall due. This avoids both tax and estate duty provided that the original payment was made eight years in advance. On 9 March 1957 the *Economist* calculated that a parent could pay only £880 for fees which would otherwise total £1,380. At least part of the balance is in effect found by the ordinary taxpayer. "Public schools today," said Sir Edward Gillett when acting for

the trustees of Uppingham in a rating appeal, "would appear to be full and flourishing, and it might seem surprising that parents continue to find the fees out of taxed income. The fact is that they do not," he went on, "the fees are found either by covenant or out of capital, and children are often sent by their grandparents. That is being done today to my knowledge in a great many cases".

Another variation on the theme is for the parent to take out an endowment policy which will cover school fees when they come to be paid. Two ninths of the premiums can be counted against tax.

Some large firms, such as Tube Investments and Shell, take out endowment policies on behalf of their managers as a fringe benefit. The firm can treat the premiums as a business expense. It is not counted as part of the income of the employee if he earns less than £2,000 and they relate to scholarships on the basis of "merit". Other firms, such as Rolls Royce and the Midland Bank, prefer to establish closed scholarships for the benefit of employees' children.

There are strong social arguments against such tax devices as we have described. Only the really wealthy can afford to alienate part of their income for over seven years, and hence only the rich benefit from the tax remission. The fact that these tax loopholes are used in large measure to subsidise private education only makes the general case against them stronger.

reforms required

On both grounds, therefore, we would urge the following tax reforms. For tax purposes a dependant child's income should be included as part of

parental income. Such aggregation occurs in some other countries, and certainly the concept of the family as a single spending unit is at the root of the social security laws. Indeed most of the tax system is already based on this idea. This is why parents' tax liability is reduced when they have children.

If there is a case for tax remissions on endowment premiums at all, it should not apply to such short periods as 15 years. The present tax remission on endowment premiums is limited to premiums which amount to no more than 7 per cent of the sum assured. This rule was originally introduced to include endowment policies lasting for 15 years but not much below that. One reform would be to decrease the percentage limit from 7 per cent so that tax remission could not be gained on policies under 25 years. This would keep the incentive to save and exclude the educational endowment schemes.

Expenditure on public school education for managers' sons should not count as part of an employee's income **if he earns below £2,000**. This is arbitrary, and should disappear.

We have argued that while the social disadvantages of the private sector are not sufficient to justify legal restriction, they are sufficiently great for the community not to subsidise the private sector in any way.

3. all the advantages

A second major criticism of the public schools is that they are a barrier to equal opportunity, that only the comparatively wealthy can afford to send their children to public schools, and that the public schools possess important advantages, which result in academic success.

Even with the help of insurance schemes and tax rebates, the fees effectively exclude the great bulk of the population. While scholarships exist, in practice they go to those who have been to expensive preparatory schools.

all you need is a lot of money

The two most expensive schools are Eton at £554 a year and Harrow at £534. Next come a group of eleven schools, including Rugby and Winchester, with fees of about £500. Another eleven schools have fees around £470. 32 schools cost between £420 and £450. A further 21 cost about £400 and 22 have fees less than £390. On top of these fees can be added the "extras", uniform, travel, equipment and so on. *The Financial Times* some time ago (6 October 1958) put these at £100-£200 a year. Although there are some savings in having a child at boarding school, it is clear that to send a child to public school involves an expenditure of £500 a year throughout the period he is at the school, and probably £300 a year at a good preparatory school for four years previously.

It might be thought that the scholarships which most public schools offer would be a means of entry for boys from poorer homes. The number of scholarships at public schools is indeed quite large. According to the *Public schools yearbook*, 1964, in the year 1962-63 100 schools awarded scholarships to about 870 boys. But

their educational background indicates that very few can have come from working or lower middle class families.

We took a random sample of 28 public schools. In these, 185 out of the 210 boys who won scholarships were already at the school or had attended a school belonging to the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools, of which all the first class preparatory schools are members. Only two boys are known to have come from other schools—one boy from a grammar school who won a music scholarship and one boy from a direct grant school. The present system clearly excludes the vast bulk of the population from the chance of attending the public schools.

The public schools possess a disproportionate share of scarce educational resources. An examination of some of the advantages which the public schools have over state schools makes this clear. They have more teachers, better teachers, and better facilities.

more teachers

Essentially the public schools are offering for sale a single scarce commodity—teachers. The following table shows the number of pupils per teacher in each type of school.

STAFFING RATIOS 1963

	pupils per teacher
secondary modern	20.1
state grammar	17.9
direct grant	17.3
HMC*	11.5
other independent efficient*	11.5

* those which do not take primary pupils.

source: *Statistics of education*, 1963, part 1; HMC figures supplied by Ministry of Education.

It can be seen that at public school there are about twelve pupils for each teacher, compared with 18 at grammar schools and 20 at secondary modern schools. The average sized class in state secondary schools is 28. No figures are published for independent schools but a rough conversion of the pupil-teacher ratio suggests the average size of a class is about 14 or 15.

At a time of serious teaching shortages, the public schools seem to find this embarrassing. Many attempts have been made to show that their pupil-teacher ratios are not all that superior.

Three arguments are used. It is said that the public schools are mainly boarding schools, which require additional staff for unavoidable extra duties; that additional teachers are required because of the wider range of after school activities; and that the schools have large sixth forms which are necessarily expensive in their use of teachers. The extra duties mentioned most frequently are those of the housemaster and other functions which might be called "nannying". They exist but it would be wrong to assume, as it usually is by public school masters, that their burdens are unique. Teachers in state schools have to attend parents' evenings, and collect dinner money, for example. Many have long journeys home, carrying piles of exercise books.

The same is true of those extra duties which arise from activities like school societies and after school coaching. The need for such activities is not confined to those who attend boarding schools. Indeed, the case for them can be made more strongly, as is done in the Newsom Report, in the case of secondary modern schools in poor neighbourhoods. The fact that some of these extra duties are not performed in many state schools is just another disguised aspect of the teaching shortage.

There still remains the argument about large sixth forms. The Crowther committee assumed that since sixth form classes are so small, each sixth former should be counted twice in calculating the pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools. They then concluded that the advantage the public schools enjoyed was not as great as it at first appeared, though they called it "substantial".

In fact, using the latest official figures and double counting sixth formers, the weighted ratio for HMC schools is 16 and for state secondary schools nearly 21, pupils per teacher.

However, the whole assumption that all sixth formers should be counted twice is of very dubious validity. The Crowther committee itself pointed out that small sixth forms need much more generous staffing ratios than large ones. On average, each public school has 172 sixth form pupils. The average grammar school has 88. A straightforward weighting of the ratios does not take this into account.

The fact is that public schools enjoy a considerable advantage in the sheer numbers of staff they employ and none of the attempts to disguise this fact is convincing.

better teachers

It is not simply that the public schools employ more teachers. They also obtain more of those with the best qualifications. According to official Ministry statistics, at grammar and direct grant schools a quarter of the teachers do not have a degree, but at public schools the proportion is only $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. (At other independent efficient schools the proportion is over a third.)

The average public school tends to teach a wider range of subjects. More

public schools teach economics and economic history. Many teach more science subjects and certainly a range of sporting activities unheard of in the best grammar school. 60 per cent of independent public schools offer more than five languages, but only 23 per cent of state grammar schools do so. 53 per cent of public schools teach Russian compared with only 30 per cent of state grammar schools. (*Where*, February 1964.)

better facilities

Enemies of the public schools can still be heard poking fun at the dilapidated buildings which they occupy. This may still be true of a few dormitory blocks which are preserved for historic reasons or have been left standing because of the lingering belief that discomfort is an essential part of public school education. But wherever the public schools believe it is important to have excellent facilities they excel; for example:

Games fields and grounds. Twenty five public schools which give details in their prospectuses, have playing fields which range from 15 to 100 acres, and average 46 acres per school. Only one in three of our secondary modern schools have adequate playing fields at all, according to the Newsom report.

Libraries. Whereas the average public school has a library of 10,000 books, the average grammar school has only 6,300. While the local authority grammar school spends an average of 9s 6d per pupil in a year, the average public school spends 15s 6d. Only one secondary modern school in every four has a proper library. (*Where*, February 1964.)

Laboratories. About a quarter of the grammar schools have prewar laborat-

ories which have not been modernised, but almost all (96 per cent) of the public schools have new or fully modernised laboratories. But this comparison almost certainly understates the advantage which the public schools enjoy. Hardly any grammar schools (1 per cent) have laboratories which reach the standard set by the Industrial Fund, though it is reached by 20 per cent of independent schools.

two prospectuses

If anyone remains unconvinced that public schools enjoy superior facilities he should look through their prospectuses and appeal brochures. He is sure to be impressed by the picture of new buildings; new laboratories; new halls; and new theatres, some of which put those in the West End to shame. Here are descriptions of two schools. The first is Dean Close, a public school, as it describes itself in its prospectus. The second is a secondary modern school, said by the Newsom report to be typical of 40 per cent of those in the country.

Dean Close School. "The school is surrounded by its own playing fields of 70 acres Nearby are the chapel, laboratories, workshops, swimming bath and gymnasium, as well as a changing room block with baths and lavatories. In 1951 a new organ and organ chamber was built and the east end of the chapel was panelled. In 1953 a new block of buildings was completed for metal work, mechanics and geometrical drawing In 1955 a music school was built. In 1956 a new CCF HQ was built. In 1957, with aid from the Industrial Fund for the Advancement of Scientific Education in Schools, a block of four laboratories with ancillary rooms and three new classrooms was added. In 1959 another large block adjoining the last was

built; it contains a new library, an extra laboratory, four classrooms, two common rooms, and studies for three masters and 40 boys. In 1960 13 more rooms for music were added, making 21 in all In 1963 a new indoor 25 metre heated swimming bath and a gymnasium fitted for a full size basketball court, or four badminton courts, or an indoor tennis court was built."

A typical secondary modern school: "A very old building with seven classrooms of 480 square feet each, one of which is at present used for art and music as there is no teacher for the seventh class. Four are separated by movable wood and glass partitions. There is no hall, gymnasium, dining room or special room of any kind. There is a small roof playground, very exposed to wind and weather but no fixed physical education equipment. Netball is played in the courtyard of nearby tenements. Science has to be based on one corridor cupboard."

INEVITABLE SUCCESS

Before assessing the public schools' academic success we must have some idea of the intelligence of their pupils. In his recent book, *The home and the school*, Dr J. W. B. Douglas shows the range of ability of the pupils at different types of school. His findings are given in the following table.

PUPILS' INTELLIGENCE	ability at 11 range of 90%	
	of scores	
secondary modern	47.05	34-59
grammar	60.98	54-68
independent	53.18	40-66

It can be seen that the average level of ability at independent schools was rather lower than at the grammar schools. Though the range of ability

at independent schools went nearly as high as at the grammar schools it also went considerably lower, including all save the lowest levels of ability which the secondary modern schools covered.

Douglas does not distinguish between HMC and other independent schools, but what evidence there is suggests that the pattern is similar.

11 plus failures

It might therefore be expected that few public school eleven plus failures would succeed academically, and that the grammar schools would win the great bulk of open scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge—the proportion of students with very great ability is roughly the same at grammar and at public schools, and the grammar schools have far more boys. If it can be shown that in each case the reverse is true, it will be hard to avoid the conclusion that, due to their superior resources, the public schools have an academic advantage over the state grammar schools.

An article in the *Times Educational Supplement* (17 May 1963) made it possible to compare the GCE performance of eleven plus failures who went to public school and the performance of those who passed the eleven plus and went to grammar school. The authors of this article obtained information about 1,000 boys who had failed the eleven plus and gone to public schools over a period of about ten years. About 75 per cent passed GCE O level in five or more subjects.

The proportion of grammar school leavers, all of whom by definition had passed the eleven plus, gaining five O levels in 1961, was 56 per cent. About one in three of these eleven plus failures obtained three A levels, the

same proportion obtained by grammar school leavers.

It therefore seems that the public schools are able to achieve at least as good results with eleven plus failures as state grammar schools achieve with those who pass the eleven plus. The schools' academic success is also shown by their success in the open scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge:

OXBRIDGE AWARDS, 1964

	%
LEA grammar	33
direct grant	22
HMC independent	43

source: *Times Educational Supplement*.

Although the public schools won nearly half the open awards, they account for under a fifth of all boys in sixth forms and only about a quarter of all third year sixth formers.

Theoretically there are three ways of eliminating the gross inequality that has been mentioned in this chapter. The first is to level up, the second is to level down, and the third is to use the superior resources these schools possess for those in greatest need.

can the state schools catch up?

The most common reaction to the facts we have outlined in this chapter is to say: "This is very wrong. What should really happen is that the state schools should be made as good as the public schools". In reality what this means is that this unequal opportunity should be allowed to continue for the next three generations at least.

Obviously state schools must be improved but it is ridiculous to pretend that their staffing standards can be raised to those of public schools in the

foreseeable future. We should require an extra 96,000 teachers in state secondary schools to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio to that which exists in the public schools. But it would be neither practicable nor desirable to improve standards in secondary schools without improving them in primary schools. An additional 60,000 teachers are necessary merely to eliminate primary classes of over 30. To reduce the size of primary classes to the level which the independent primary schools enjoy would require a further 180,000 teachers. In all, over 300,000 extra teachers would be necessary to reduce staffing ratios in the state schools to the levels which obtain in private schools. The total number of teachers in state schools at present is less than this.

The Robbins committee estimated that even with their programme of expansion, maximum classes of 30 in both primary and secondary schools could not be achieved until after 1983. Assuming the same rate of expansion, state schools will not reach the existing standards of the public schools until well into the next century.

The same kind of arguments can be applied to the other advantages which the public schools enjoy: libraries, laboratories, and so on. To claim that the improvement in the state system of education will provide a solution to the inequalities which are caused by the public schools is to live in cloud cuckoo land.

Faced with inequalities which were nothing like as sharp within the state system, a Conservative Government introduced a measure of "levelling down". They introduced the quota system which limited the supply of teachers going to more favoured areas. Earlier this year the ministry reached the conclusion that, "So long as there

are not enough teachers to go round, control of distribution needs to be continued to protect the shortage areas and avoid gross disparities in staffing standards." If it is wrong that children that live in places like London should enjoy small classes at the expense of children in other parts of the country, why should we not extend the same principle to children whose parents happen to be able to afford private school fees? It has indeed been argued (by Robin Pedley, for example, in *The comprehensive school*) that the quota system we have referred to should be extended to private schools.

But this would destroy first class teaching institutions and yet bring little or no benefit to the other schools in the country, since the number of teachers involved would be very small.

In general this argument seems to us convincing on educational grounds. However, so long as a serious shortage of teachers exists, there is a case for saying that the number of teachers employed in private schools as a whole should not increase. Each independent school could be prevented from employing additional staff even if it took on extra pupils until such time as its pupil-teacher ratio fell to that in the state schools. New schools would have to conform to the state staffing ratio.

In our opinion a more effective way of eliminating the injustice of the present system is to ensure that the best facilities are used by those whose educational needs are greatest. This ideally involves changing the school population in the leading institutions so that their pupils are drawn from those children who have had the least opportunities in life. This is what might be called "the Tawney approach":

"The more anxiously, indeed, a society endeavours to secure the equality of

consideration for all its members, the greater will be the differentiation of treatment which, when once their common human needs have been met, it accords to the special needs of different groups and individuals among them." (*Equality*.)

4. born to rule

The third and most important of all the reasons for taking action on the public schools is the crucial part they play in the power structure of our society.

We believe that it can be argued that positions of power and influence are still dominated to a remarkable degree by those from public schools; that there is no evidence of any great improvement in this situation in recent years; that, at the growing points of power, in the large industrial firms, the influence of the public schools has been growing; and that, finally, the most important link in this chain of power, between the public schools and Oxford and Cambridge, has not weakened at all.

The table opposite shows the extent to which the leading positions in society are filled by those from public schools. The worst offender was the late Tory Cabinet. Only three members, Marples, Barber and Heath, did not come from public schools. This might be dismissed as untypical and has anyway been remedied by the election. But the proportion of public school men amongst city directors must be just as high. Nearly half of all city directors went to six public schools. In a whole range of important posts in the public service two out of three of the occupants came from public schools — senior civil servants, ambassadors, generals and judges. Almost exactly the same ratio holds good amongst business leaders. Next down the list come influential people of one kind and another — members of royal commissions, governors of the BBC, and so on. Nearly half of these have attended public schools. Finally, there are the top managers of companies employing over 10,000 employees. These are a much larger group than the others we have been considering but one in three are public school men, and this proportion is rising.

PERCENTAGE OF POSTS FILLED BY THOSE WITH A PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

	%
Conservative Cabinet (1964) ¹	87
judges (1956) ²	76
Conservative MPs (1964) ³	76
ambassadors (1953) ¹	70
Lieutenants General and above (1953) ^{1*}	70
Governors of the Bank of England (1958) ⁵ †	67
bishops (1953) ¹	66
chief executives in 100 largest firms (1963) ⁶	64
Air Marshals (1953) ⁴	60
civil servants above assistant secretary (1950) ⁷	59
directors of leading firms (1956) ⁸	58
chairman of government committees of enquiry (1944-60) ⁹	55
members of royal commissions (1960) ⁹	51
civil servants above and including assistant secretary (1950) ⁷	48
all city directors (1958) ⁵ †	47
BBC governors (1949-59) ⁹	44
members of Arts and British councils (1950-59) ⁹	41
Labour Cabinet (1964) ¹	35
top managers of 65 largest firms (1953) ¹⁰	33
members of government research councils (1950-55) ⁹	31
Labour MPs (1964) ³	15

* boarding schools only; † only six of the leading schools.

sources: ¹ *Who's who*, etc. ² *Economist* 21 and 28 July 1956. ³ *The Times* 17 Oct 1964. ⁴ Harvey and Hood *The British State* (boarding schools only). ⁵ T. S. Lupton and S. Williams *The Manchester school* (the six schools were Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Charterhouse, Rugby, Marlborough). ⁶ *Business*, November 1963. ⁷ Kelsall *Recruitment of higher civil servants*. ⁸ Copeman *British business leaders*. ⁹ Guttsman *The British political elite*. ¹⁰ Acton Society Trust *Management succession*.

But only 2.5 per cent of the population can enjoy a public school education. It is from this tiny group that so many powerful positions in society are filled. In practice the group is smaller still, for the major schools take a disproportionate share of the top jobs filled by public school men. The examples of the city directorates are a case in point.

It is often argued that as the state system of education improves, so the influence of the public schools will decline. If this were true, one would expect to find that the improvements in state education in this century had already had a substantial effect. This has not happened.

members of the Cabinet

Taking all members of the Cabinet from 1868-1916, 68 per cent came from public schools. In the period 1916-55, the figure had only fallen to 52 per cent. However, this decline is mainly due to the rise of the Labour Party, and not the democratisation of either party. Between 1886 and 1916 just over 80 per cent of Conservative Cabinet ministers had been to public school. Between 1916 and 1955 the average fell to 70 per cent. In 1959 it was 87 per cent. The proportion of public school men in Labour cabinets has also risen. In the 1924 and 1931 governments 17 per cent of the members came from public schools. In the new Labour cabinet, 35 per cent come from public school.

members of parliament

A similar pattern is to be found among MPs. Between 1918 and 1939, 78 per cent of Conservative MPs went to public schools, according to J. P. S. Ross in *Electors and elected*. In 1959, accor-

ding to Butler and Rose, the proportion was 72 per cent. But Ross only had information for 80 per cent of MPs. Since an MP whose education is difficult to find is less likely to have attended a public school, the proportions for public school men in these years are a little too high. This is clear from the figures for 1951 where Ross' figures overlap with David Butler's, who had more complete information. Taking this factor into account, the trend is clear. The proportion of Conservative MPs from public schools has remained almost stationary since the first world war.

The proportion of Labour MPs from these schools is now double that between the wars, though still only a fifth of the Tory figure.

the civil service

At the beginning of the century the proportion of entrants by competitive examination coming from public schools was 80 per cent. This had fallen to about 70 per cent just before the war and is now just over 50 per cent.

TYPE OF SCHOOL LAST ATTENDED BY THOSE ENTERING THE HOME CIVIL SERVICE BY OPEN EXAMINATION, 1909-63

	1909-14	1909-39	1956-63
independent	80.1	71.6	51.3
direct grant	9.1	10.3	12.0
LEA	5.9	15.3	37.0
others	4.8	2.9	—

sources: 1909-39, Kelsall *Higher civil servants in Britain*; 1956-63, civil service commissioners' annual reports.

A closer study of what has been happening is more depressing. In the first place, the young men who took these examinations before 1914 all began their education in the 1890s, and

however much we may criticise our present state system of education it is incomparably better than that of the 1890s. The gap that existed between elementary board school and the education received by someone going to Winchester and New College in the 1890s has narrowed very substantially. It cannot be said that the drop in public school representation has shown a comparable change. The proportion of public school entrants has fallen by a third.

Also, in the postwar period the trend has been checked and even reversed. This is particularly significant, since it is from 1956 onwards that one would expect to see the first fruits of the 1944 Act, the "opening up" of the grammar schools, and more generous university grants.

The civil service entry should be the least affected by old school tie traditions. The very slow improvement in the representation of those from ordinary state schools over the past 50 years gives little room for optimism that there will be radical changes in occupations where entry is less competitive.

businessmen

In an article in the magazine *Business* in November 1963 Nigel Farrow produced figures showing the educational background of the chief business executives in the hundred largest companies as defined by the size of their assets. "Chief executive" was defined as either chairman of the directors or else the managing director. 64 per cent of these men had been to schools who are members of the HMC (that is, not only independent schools).

We took the same 100 companies in 1938 and repeated the analysis, using

the *Stock Exchange year book*, 1938, *Who's who*, etc. 90 of the companies or their equivalent were in existence. The comparable figure was 57 per cent. Since in the 1938 list about a third of the people concerned could not be found in reference books, the figures are not entirely comparable. However, it is clear that at the very least there has been no reduction in the public school contribution to the business world, and there may well have been an increase. The public school element in the city is so large that there is hardly room for a reduction to have occurred.

Lower down the business hierarchy, the public school element is less prominent, but it has increased rapidly.

Management succession analysed the background of all managers above foreman level in firms then employing over 10,000 people. This included 65 companies. Those managers who entered the firms in the first years of this century and were born before 1895 came overwhelmingly from elementary and the local schools. Only 8 per cent came from public schools. Of those born between 1920 and 1924, who entered the firms in the late 1940s, 30 per cent came from public schools.

There is little other detailed information of this kind, but what there is suggests that there has been remarkably little change in the educational background of the elite. In 1926 Professor Tawney showed, in *Equality*, that 66 per cent of judges had been to English public schools, and in 1956 the proportion was 65.5 per cent (*Economist*, July 1956). The proportion of public school boys in the traditional seats of power has changed very little. Where change has occurred, as in the civil service, it has been very gradual. In the new centres of power in our

society—the giant companies— public school influence has grown.

A TIGHTENING GRIP

There is every prospect that an increasing number of the top jobs in our largest industrial firms will be filled by public school men. Even if the public schools' grip on other power points weakens, their hold on industry is almost certain to grow stronger.

One reason why the public schools' grip on industry will tighten is the way in which managers are now selected. "In management selection procedures since the war" state McGivering, Matthews and Scott, *Management in Britain* (p70), "great emphasis has often been placed on the possession of 'social skill', administrative ability or 'capacity for teamwork'—or on some other variant of what is newly considered to be the co-operative approach essential to effective leadership. These social qualities are vague . . . their incidence in the individual cannot be assessed accurately short of a fairly lengthy period of observation. It is not surprising, therefore, if with the best of intentions, decisions about them in selection procedures tend to be based on known qualifications which are *believed* to confer them, rather than on an assessment of the qualities themselves."

The public schools are widely believed to produce boys with just these "social skills". A boy with this background, therefore, has an advantage over non-public school competitors for managerial posts.

This advantage will apply especially when young men are being selected for training schemes designed to lead to top jobs. Schemes of this type have been adopted by many large firms

since the war. In 1954-55, R. V. Clements studied the careers of managers at 28 firms of varying sizes in the Manchester area. He found that a considerable number, especially among those who had been appointed most recently, were ex-managerial trainees. Clements says that "the majority attended public boarding schools; the rest, a sizeable minority, went to the better grammar schools For successful entry to one of these schemes, a public school training plus possibly experience and luck was at first sufficient. More modern and more stereotyped schemes usually require a university education following attendance at a public school." (*Managers: a study of their careers in industry*, p38.)

Numerous remarks by businessmen and public school headmasters show that industry welcomes those with a public school education. The headmaster of Ellesmere College said that "in our conventions and in our interviews with heads of industry we are given to understand most clearly that they are anxious more than ever to have boys from public schools" (*Observer*, 21 June 1959).

As McGivering says (p66), "there has been a marked heightening of interest both on the part of industry in the ex-public school boy, and on the part of the public school in industry. The Director of the Public Schools Appointments Bureau recently acknowledged that the 'generosity of over 340 firms and companies' has enabled the work of the bureau to expand considerably over the last six years."

Never have industry and the public schools been in closer contact or more anxious to serve each other. This is shown not only by the work of the appointments bureau, but also by the financial assistance which industry has given to public schools. The Industrial

Fund for the Advancement of Science and the contribution which industry makes to public school appeals have already been described. The relationship between industry and the public schools is well illustrated by one of the appeal brochures we obtained. On the front cover of the Bromsgrove appeal, in bold type, are the words, "An appeal on behalf of free enterprise in the training of midland youth for midland industry".

The conclusion is clear: the public schools' grip on industry will tighten, partly because they are thought to possess the qualities for which those who run the new management selection and training schemes are looking, and partly because the contacts between industry and the public schools have become extremely close. As Peter Shore says (*Conviction*, p38), "it is this close connection between industry and the public schools that has prevented and will prevent any major break in the continuity of our ruling class. In Britain, at any rate, the emergence of a new industrial society is not producing a new ruling class but is providing instead a new managerial base for the established order."

Oxbridge the key to power

The advantage which an education at Oxford or Cambridge gives is well illustrated by the results of the civil service examinations. Among those entering the administrative grade by open competition the proportion from Oxbridge has, except in the years following the two world wars, stood at over 80 per cent since the beginning of the century. This is very remarkable, for with the rise of provincial universities the proportion of university students at Oxford and Cambridge has declined. Because Oxbridge holds a key to power, it is of the utmost impor-

tance who goes there, and how they get there.

According to the Robbins report in 1961 well over half of the Oxford and Cambridge entrants were from independent schools, but less than a third were from grammar schools. At the other universities the position is very different. Nearly three quarters of their entrants came from grammar schools, and only 15 per cent from independent schools. In 1961 the proportion of Oxbridge entrants from independent schools was slightly smaller than in 1955; 54 per cent in 1961 as against 57 per cent in 1955.

The high proportion of public school men among those who enter Oxford and Cambridge suggests that a public school education is a great advantage in obtaining entry. This has been confirmed by the recently published appendices to the Robbins report. They show that 80 per cent of applicants from independent schools who had one good A level pass were accepted by Oxford and Cambridge. The comparable figure for maintained school applicants with one good A level was 35 per cent. With three or more good A levels 88 per cent of independent school boys were accepted and 65 per cent of maintained school boy applicants. It can be seen that for a pupil from a private school the chance of acceptance varies little according to the number of A levels he passes. It does markedly with a boy from a maintained school.

It may be said that a third year in the sixth form is necessary for entrance to Oxbridge. True, a higher proportion of sixth formers stay on for a third year at public schools than at grammar schools. But the public schools' advantage in gaining Oxbridge places is only partly explained by their large number of third year sixth for-

mers. For although the public schools gain about half of the places at Oxford and Cambridge, they only contain about a quarter of all boys in third year sixth forms; while the grammar schools, which account for well over half of those in third year sixth forms, only obtain 30 per cent of Oxbridge places. The proportion of places won by the direct grant schools is similar to their proportion of third year sixth formers (*Ministry of education statistics*, 1963, part I; and ministry figures).

Although the public schools' great success in obtaining Oxbridge places is not due simply to the high proportion of boys who stay into the third year sixth, it could be due to better teaching and higher academic standards. In many grammar schools the number of third year sixth formers is very small and, instead of a specially designed course, they may have to repeat much of the second year syllabus. And as the public schools probably have more teachers with first rate qualifications this might be expected to raise the academic level. If this was the whole explanation of public school boys' success at gaining entrance to Oxford and Cambridge, it might be expected that their performance at university would be better than other entrants; or at least as good. But as the table below shows, the position is much worse.

**OXBRIDGE DEGREE RESULTS
BY TYPE OF SECONDARY
EDUCATION: MEN, 1958**

	good %	poor %
HMC and direct grant: boarders	32	49
day boys	45	30
LEA grammar	50	33

source: J. G. H. Newfield, paper to British Association, 3 September 1963.

It can be seen that only about a third of the public school boys obtained good degrees (first and upper second class) and that about half received poor degrees (third, pass, and fail degrees). Among former grammar boys the proportions were reversed: half obtained good degrees and only a third were poor. Of course, it may be true that public school boys do so well when they seek admission and so badly when they take their degrees because they have been "forced". If this explanation is valid, and it probably contains some truth, it does not provide an excuse for those in charge of admissions, who should be able to distinguish between those who have the capacity to do well at university and those who have not.

Even more important, this explanation cannot be used to defend the public school system. If it is true that public school boys have an advantage because they have been forced, then those who are able to afford a public school education are, in effect, pushing their children to the front of the queue and purchasing admission to Oxford and Cambridge.

knowing their place

The latest argument used to explain the high proportion of Oxbridge places obtained by public school boys is that relatively fewer boys from maintained schools apply. The Robbins committee adopted this position, and the Oxford administration office has recently produced figures which show that in 1964 the proportion of applicants offered places is slightly higher for grammar than for public school boys (*Guardian*, 13 March 1964). But why do so few grammar school boys bother to apply? According to the Robbins committee (para220), the main explanation is that "they feel convinced that their

chances are small. This in turn is probably connected with the relative lack of contact between the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge and maintained schools."

How often have we been told before that "there is really no problem; it is all a matter of proper communications". If grammar school boys had an equal chance at Oxford and Cambridge surely the word would have been passed round by grammar school masters. And if the colleges were really worried about the high proportion of places taken by public school boys, they would have made contact with the grammar schools long ago. Colleges with a low proportion of grammar school men have only to announce that they plan during the next few years to increase the proportion from say 20 per cent to 50 per cent. The number of applicants will shoot up.

Some colleges at Oxford and Cambridge admit so few grammar boys that it is hardly surprising if only a comparatively small number bother to apply. They know when they are not wanted. The variation between colleges in the proportion of public school men is so large that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that some colleges are more favourable to public school men than others. The extent to which the proportion varies at Oxford colleges is shown in the table opposite.

It can be seen that at Trinity and Christ Church about three quarters of the students are from independent schools, but that at St Peter's and Queen's the proportion is only about a third. Nor is it true that the colleges with a high proportion of public school men have skimmed the best. When ranked according to the proportion of graduates who obtained firsts and seconds, Trinity and Christ Church were respectively 18th and 17th.

UNDERGRADUATES FROM INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AT OXFORD COLLEGES 1962

	%
Trinity	80.6
Christ Church	70.0
Oriel	66.4
New College	66.1
Worcester	64.7
Hertford	62.6
Lincoln	61.2
Corpus Christi	58.5
Balliol	56.9
Magdalen	54.5
Merton	52.9
Brasenose	52.4
University College	50.6
St John's	50.4
Keble	48.6
Exeter	45.3
Jesus	41.9
St Edmund's Hall	40.8
Wadham	39.6
Pembroke	37.6
Queen's	37.2
St Catherine's	30.4
St Peter's	29.3

source: *Oxford magazine*, April 1961.

Not long ago Steven Watson, a tutor at Christ Church, gave the following description of the way in which undergraduates were selected at his college (*Oxford magazine*, December 1960): "Some colleges feel that other things being equal, they should prefer to accept the son of an old member rather than someone with no connections At Christ Church about two thirds will gain admission on the various scholarship examinations by faculties. The remaining third will be taken on by quite another system. They will sit a common entrance examination with fewer papers. On these they will be required to show a decent level of intellectual competence. In this selection the interview will play an important part. So too will the confidential reports made by the schools upon

them . . . Experience has taught us the value of candid opinions from public school masters whom they know. They distrust hyperbole from those they do not know . . . The need to civilise those who are born to great responsibilities, the desire to be tender to the claims of loyal old members will, for a long time to come, continue to work to the benefit of the public schools rather than the obscurer grammar schools."

According to Wilson (pp62-3), it is on the public schools that "the middle and upper classes rely to retain their privileges and values . . . It is a point of some importance that the real motives of the middle classes for sending their children to public schools are to some extent different from the conscious or expressed motives. Thus a typical middle class defendant of the system would talk about discipline, leadership, 'good' (middle class) teachers, morality, mixing with one's fellows, and so on. Somewhere in his mind, however — perhaps at the back of it, but nowadays more probably fairly far in front — are the social and economic advantages: the university, the highly paid job, the useful contacts, the approved manners."

The middle and upper classes are right — when they send their children to public school they are not simply paying for a good education, they are starting their children on the road to power and influence. The principal commodity which those who send their children to public schools are buying is not education but privilege.

class always tells

This has been disputed on two grounds. First, it has been suggested that public school men gain such a high proportion of top posts because

of their merit. Second, it is argued that their advantage derived from their class background and family connections, rather than their education.

In an attempt to show that the success of those with a public school education is due to merit, Dancy uses a most ingenious argument. He says (pp116-7) that "appointments to the civil service, which are made *solely* on merit, go to public school men in a proportion which is indeed greater than sixth form numbers would warrant, but it is not less than the proportion in which other top appointments go to public school men. If public school men have the ability to command two thirds of the top civil service appointments, why should we suspect favouritism when we find them occupying a similar proportion of the best jobs in other professions?"

This argument has a number of serious weaknesses. First, it ignores the possibility that the civil service attracts those public school men who have the best degrees and the highest intelligence. As Rupert Wilkinson has pointed out (in the *British Journal of Sociology*, December 1962), the underlying purpose behind the development of the public school system was the training of capable public servants.

Second, there is evidence, some of which was given earlier and some of which Dancy quotes (pp95-6) that when firms select potential managers they have a predisposition to favour public school men but place comparatively little emphasis on intelligence.

Third, if merit were the only factor at work, it might be expected that those in positions of power and influence would, like civil servants, be drawn fairly evenly from the different public schools. But, as we have seen, a very high proportion were educated at a

few top schools. And how are we to explain that very few men from schools like Manchester Grammar, which are highly selective, and give a very good education, are to be found in top positions? Those who believe that public school men rise because of their merit will find it hard to show that the only reason why old Etonians fill such a high proportion of top places is because of their outstanding talent. Was it, for instance, entirely without significance that eight of the nine men whom Macmillan used to sound out the Tory Party during its leadership crisis were, like Sir Alec Douglas-Home, educated at Eton?

The argument "that the advantage which public school men enjoy in obtaining top positions is due to their class background and family connections and not to their education" seems plausible at first sight, because almost all public school boys come from fairly wealthy families. But it is difficult to believe that a public school education counts for nothing. Parents who pay high fees to send their children to these schools obviously believe that it is important, or they would not waste their money.

The variety and range of advantages enjoyed by public school boys cannot be explained by family connections alone. Nor can they be satisfactorily attributed solely to class background, for increasingly in our society it is education rather than family wealth or parental occupation which is used as a guide to social status. Public schools are a transmission belt for class privilege.

action to ensure that the major public schools cease to perform their present function of perpetuating the class structure. This will not be achieved by any of the measures we have so far advocated. Only complete integration into the state system and allocation of new uses to the schools can achieve this.

The case against the public schools is primarily a democratic one, but it can also be argued in terms of efficiency and modernity. The amateur rather than the professional approach to life survives most firmly in our public schools. If our managers are increasingly drawn from a group of men who have had little or no contact with the way of life of those in other classes, is it much wonder that their attempts at management-worker relations are so ham fisted and inept?

total integration needed

If we are seriously interested in making Britain a democracy in the full sense of that word, we must take

5. acting right, acting now

Expensive private schools promote class divisions. Those who attend them and those who teach in them are drawn from a narrow social class. The boarding schools in particular are often inward looking communities isolated from the rest of society. It is wrong that the private schools should be helped by the tax system as they are at present.

Public schools promote inequality. Those who attend them are taught in smaller classes and enjoy superior facilities. These advantages are reflected in the public schools' academic success. To raise the state schools to the public schools standard would take many years. To lower standards in the public schools would be wrong. Their places should be made available to those who need them most.

Parents who send their children to public schools are not just buying a good education. They are setting their children on the road to power and influence. A high proportion of those who lead in business, industry and the civil service come from public schools. Indeed in some cases the influence of the public schools has grown, despite the improvement of the state education system.

This makes nonsense of democracy. Parents have no more right to purchase a privileged place in society for their children than they have the right to buy a commission in the army.

Taken together these three arguments justify a three part policy towards private education in general and public schools in particular.

All tax and rating concessions to private education should cease to exist. So long as an acute shortage of teachers exists, and so long as it is felt necessary to impose restrictions on the

numbers of teachers state schools may employ, the number of additional qualified teachers which private schools can employ should also be restricted. The commanding heights of the private system should be integrated into the state system. In practice this means HMC and other schools which possess educational facilities distinctly superior to the average state grammar or comprehensive school and those which provide privileged access to positions of power in our society.

There are a number of false solutions to the public school problems which the Labour Government should avoid.

Fleming and super Fleming

The Fleming committee report, *The public schools and the general educational system*, was published in 1944. It recommended that the public schools should begin by offering 25 per cent of their places to local authorities, rather like direct grant grammar schools. This proportion would then rise gradually "with a view to the progressive application of the principle that schools should be accessible to all pupils and that no child otherwise qualified shall be excluded solely owing to lack of means."

There were two main objections to this policy. The first, which virtually killed the proposal on practical grounds, was that neither the government nor the local authorities felt they could justify spending three or four times as much on one child as they did on another. This was largely because the Fleming committee had not established any firm criteria by which boys should be selected. As a result, even in the first flush of early enthusiasm in 1947-48, the number of boys at public schools receiving help from public funds was only about 1,400 (according to the

Manchester Guardian, 9 April 1957)
This only represented about 5 per cent of the total.

The second objection was the small proportion of LEA places which it proposed. Even if the 25 per cent target had been reached it would not have been sufficiently large to change the ethos of the schools. Nothing would have changed except that the public schools might have seemed slightly more democratic. The only result, to use Robin Pedley's graphic phrase, could have been "to give a blood transfusion to a parasite."

After the Fleming scheme had obviously failed, some socialists proposed what might be called a super Fleming solution. For instance, Anthony Crosland proposed that government should "announce that its policy requires the grant by the public school initially of 25 per cent 'free' places, rising rapidly to 50 per cent, and later to at least 75 per cent; the ultimate objective being 100 per cent competitive entry." (*The future of socialism*, 1956, p264).

A scheme of this type would certainly provide a criterion for selection, and hence a reason for spending a large amount on those who are chosen. The scheme would also change the ethos of the schools. They would become out-and-out meritocratic institutions dedicated to the creation of what Lord James used to call "high flyers".

Knowing what we know about "selection by ability", and the ill effect which this has both on those who are selected as first rate material and on those who are told that they are second rate, this solution would gain few supporters today. The cure would be worse than the disease. This is recognised by Crosland in his latest book. "The baffling problem," he writes, "is how to select the free places. If we throw

them open to competitive intelligence tests, as now with grammar schools, three bad results would follow. First, Dr Young's dreaded 'meritocrats' would then finally have their fingers at our throats. Secondly, the state schools would be creamed of many of their best pupils, and so would bitterly oppose the scheme. Thirdly, given the existing distribution of IQ at eleven or 13, middle class children would win most of the places and we should not get the social heterogeneity we want." (*The Conservative enemy*, 1962, p181).

Certainly it would be the height of folly for the Labour Party, having striven for years to end selection at eleven, to reintroduce it at 13.

free choice to push in front

Some socialists, having rejected the super Fleming solution, seem now to be moving towards a policy of parents' choice. "The ideal method of selection", Crosland goes on to say, "would of course be free choice. Suppose that there were 20,000 allotted places annually, and that just this number of children from the state sector, drawn from a complete social and intellectual cross section of the population, *wanted* this type of boarding education, we should have the perfect solution." Crosland also believes that a Labour Government should strive manfully to establish his scheme for free places by entering into an agreement with the public schools.

This solution solves nothing. Public school education is so much more expensive and so academically superior to ordinary state education that admission should only be on the basis of need. The public schools' principal defect is not the absence of working class boys, as Crosland seems to imagine, but the fact that their pupils are

selected according to an arbitrary criterion. Very little can be gained by simply replacing one arbitrary criterion (length of parental purse) by another (strength of parental desire).

Crosland's plan has a second weakness — he hopes to proceed by voluntary agreement with the public schools. This suggestion places too much reliance upon their enthusiasm for change. Even Dancy, who is certainly one of the more progressive headmasters, is only contemplating that by the end of ten years there will be 15 per cent to 20 per cent of pupils who will be assisted (p151).

No doubt the public schools can be gradually pushed forward by the threat of compulsion, though this is hardly likely to improve their tempers. But meanwhile valuable time will be passing by, and Labour's term of office will be drawing to a close. And even if some agreement is reached on the proportion of free places, it will be difficult under a voluntary scheme to prevent headmasters from choosing children from middle class homes.

the dynamite solution

Because most moderate reforms seem unsatisfactory, root and branch solutions have gained some support. A few people have suggested what might be described as the "dynamite solution". In their more moderate moments its supporters see Winchester as an agricultural college and Eton as a mental institution.

This policy is wrong because it is destructive, and because it is destructive it is politically impossible. Most of the public schools provide an excellent academic education and it cannot be right to destroy them, as it would not have been right to abolish Oxford and

Cambridge at the end of the last century because they were the preserve of the idle rich.

THINKING IN TERMS OF NEED

The principal weakness of these suggestions is that they failed to provide for a proper use for the public schools. The right solution must establish satisfactory criteria by which entrants to the schools can be selected. These should be based on need. There are three main groups of boys who start at a disadvantage and would greatly benefit from the superior resources of the public school including their boarding facilities.

the family

There are a large number of boys who are in need of boarding education for special family reasons. These reasons were set out by the ministry of education working party on assistance with the cost of boarding, 1960. It distinguished three categories, which can be interpreted as homes in which there was a lack of suitable parental care because one of the parents was dead or absent; because of the mental or physical ill-health of one or both of the parents; or, because of incompatibility between the parents.

It is clear that the number of boarding places in maintained schools to which local authorities can send boys in these categories is quite inadequate. According to Dancy (p130) "It is unofficially estimated by LEAS that, of children entering secondary schools each year, about 5,000 (boys and girls) need boarding education in the sense described in the working party's report. This means about 26,000 in secondary schools at any one time. Since there are at present only 8,500 boarding

places available in maintained schools, there is an unmet demand of at least 17,500 places.”

Local authorities' reluctance to provide boarding school places, although they have long had the power, certainly suggests that this is likely to be a conservative estimate. The working party discovered for instance that many local authorities only made provision for boys able to pass the eleven plus:

Furthermore in the general run of cases it is the parents who take the initiative in seeking boarding education. This means that few applications are likely to be made on behalf of working class boys. Now, as the local authorities almost certainly based their estimate of the need of boarding education on the number of applications they receive, this suggests that their figure is likely to be a considerable understatement.

This is confirmed by the large number of children whose circumstances must qualify them for boarding education under the criteria which the working party laid down. To establish this it is only necessary to examine the number of children who fall into one of the working party's sub-categories of boys in need of boarding education; children without fathers. It is estimated that there are in Great Britain at least 785,000 children in fatherless families, though of course only a proportion of them will be of secondary school age and not all of these will be in need of boarding education (see, for example, Margaret Wynn, *Fatherless families*, p18). Nevertheless, there must be thousands and thousands of fatherless children who should be at a boarding school.

So there are an extremely large number of children who, because of the family circumstances we have described,

would greatly benefit from a boarding school education. In view of the shortage of boarding school places within the state system the public schools could make an important contribution to their welfare.

class

A great many studies in recent years have shown the effect of a child's class background on his IQ and educational attainment. The education of his parents, the size of the family, the housing conditions, all these can have an adverse effect.

Douglas has, for instance, shown that for working class children there is an important relationship between the standard of housing and measured intelligence. He found that at the age of eleven the test score of manual working class children who live in satisfactory housing was significantly higher than for those who live in unsatisfactory housing. Moreover the definition of unsatisfactory housing was comparatively wide — the housing of over 70 per cent of lower manual working class children was considered to be unsatisfactory (p148).

Furthermore, towards the end of secondary school and certainly at sixth form level it becomes especially difficult for children to study if their family lives in unsatisfactory housing. In many working class families homework has to be done on the kitchen table with the family bursting into the room at frequent intervals and with the television coming loudly through the wall.

This is even likely where families live in council houses, in a relatively fortunate position. The average new council house only has three bedrooms and no downstairs room other than the

living room, while many working class families have three or more children.

It is in assisting working class children who come from homes that are overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory that the public boarding schools have an important part to play. Those boys who wish to stay on in the sixth form but who have difficulty in studying because of their poor housing conditions would benefit greatly from boarding school education.

As a criterion of need, unsatisfactory housing has the great advantage that it is neither difficult nor invidious to apply. There are a number of clear tests which can be applied. The most useful when selecting children for boarding school education would be overcrowding and the lack of facilities for private study.

scattered population

A large number of children are placed at a disadvantage because there is inadequate provision for sixth form education in their area. This is especially true of rural areas and small towns where because the population is scattered the schools are often small and their sixth forms are often tiny. Out of nearly 700 rural secondary schools, almost 400 have less than 400 children and 160 less than 300 children. Obviously many of these must be unable to provide either a wide range of courses at sixth form level or to divide the first and second year sixth form into separate classes.

The difficulties which face small grammar schools in rural areas have been described in a study for the Oxford University Department of Education reported in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 17 August 1962. This investigation, which covered schools with a

one or two form entry, showed that although most of the heads "considered timetabling for almost entirely separate teaching of different years of the sixth forms to be an ideal, only 30 per cent of them could put the ideal into practice. Commonly, each year had roughly half its lessons taught separately Most small grammar schools have one to three pupils in a third year sixth; many do not attempt to enter pupils for Oxford and Cambridge. Little "taught time" can be spared for university candidates, which does train them in working independently. But such pupils are often at a disadvantage in competing for university places. They lack stimulus and competition with others of like ability and the quality of staff in smaller schools is not always sufficiently high According to the heads, staff fight shy of isolated schools, where social amenities are scarce."

Although the report says that small schools have some compensating advantages, it is clear that the position of these sixth form pupils is highly unsatisfactory. Some of these schools could no doubt be closed, but probably most of them must remain, in order to prevent those who attend them from having to travel vast distances each day. But there is, of course, a solution to this seemingly intractable problem. In rural areas where the population is unusually sparse sixth formers can attend boarding school. Here again the public boarding schools have an important role to play.

THE MECHANICS OF CHANGE

Now that we have established which groups are in need of boarding school education, we can decide how the public schools can be fitted into the state education system. For the purpose of integration the schools should be div-

ided into two main groups: those which should become sixth form colleges and those which should continue to take boys at 13 or earlier.

sixth form colleges

Some of the public schools could be turned into sixth form colleges, concentrating on the provision of three year courses for boys and girls who have passed O level.

Some of the most undesirable features of the public school system are due to the fact that the schools include both young boys and young men. This means almost inevitably that the young men are put in charge of the young boys while they are subjected to many of the restrictions which are necessary if young boys are to be kept in order. As a result the young men receive a "training in leadership" which is harmful because the relationship between leaders and led is so unequal, and because the leaders are not responsible — as they should be in a democracy — to those whom they lead. Furthermore the annoying restrictions and tiresome duties which are imposed on the young men are largely responsible for "sixth form revolt".

If the public schools became sixth form colleges these difficulties and dangers would be eliminated. Some of the public schools are themselves considering whether they should establish sixth form houses.

It is at the sixth form level that the public schools can make their greatest contribution. The state education system requires more sixth form facilities; the public day schools might, for instance, become sixth form colleges for their areas. And it is in sixth form teaching that the public schools particularly excel. Even more important,

at least two of the three categories of boys in need of boarding education require it most at a sixth form level: boys from families with unsatisfactory housing and boys from sparsely populated rural areas.

It should be remembered that during the next few years a large number of local authorities are likely to adopt the principle that children should change schools when they reach the sixth form level. As Robin Pedley has argued so convincingly in *Comprehensive education*, there are general educational arguments why there should be a break at about this time. Furthermore, by adopting the sixth form college pattern local authorities will be able to establish comprehensive education without waiting until they can build massive new schools. The secondary modern becomes the junior comprehensive, and the grammar schools become the sixth form colleges. Stoke and Darlington have firm plans for creating a sixth form college system and Croydon has been toying with the idea.

Under a Labour Government dedicated to establish comprehensive education a great number of other LEAs will probably move in the same direction. Hence if most of the public schools become sixth form colleges they will be moving in the same direction as a large part of the state educational system. This will enable them to fit in easily with that system.

boarding at an early age

Some public schools should continue to take boys at 13 or earlier. Their principal purpose will be to provide boarding education for children when special family reasons exist. Also, for reasons of class and geography a certain number of chil-

dren will probably require boarding education at an early age.

Which public schools should be used for these purposes? First, those which because they do not have large or outstanding sixth form departments are less suited to become sixth form colleges; second, those schools which have large junior sections.

who chooses the pupils?

The criteria by which pupils will be selected for public school places have already been described, but who is to make the actual choice?

Each school should be linked to a group of local authorities though it should retain an independent board of governors to be appointed by the Minister of Education. During the first stages of integration those schools which might serve as comprehensive boarding schools for sparsely populated areas may like to accept the opportunity. Where a school is meeting the needs of a rural area in this way it must clearly be open to all children who wish to attend. At schools where the places are to be filled on the basis of the other criteria of need, such as home conditions, it will be necessary to devise a system of selection in which both the local authorities and the governing bodies participate. In order to obtain the maximum diversity, even the rural schools should have a proportion of pupils selected at the discretion of the governors.

The selection procedure should be as follows. First, the local authorities to which a school is attached should nominate children who they think are in need of boarding education or specialist sixth form facilities. Their names should be placed on a single

list and the governors and headmaster of the school would be responsible for making the final choice. The criteria the LEAs should use in nominating the pupils should be laid down by statute. They could then be amplified in a circular from the Ministry. Teachers and parents would be free to put forward names for inclusion in the list. The governing body should be responsible for maintaining a fair social balance in a school.

The reforms which we propose will obviously involve a drastic change in the social balance within the schools. And this, in turn, will do much to ensure that the schools no longer turn out people who are ignorant of ordinary people but confident of their ability to lead them. But a doubt may remain as to whether ordinary people will wish to send their children to these schools.

who will want to go?

Until recently we knew very little about people's preferences for boarding education. But last year Peter Willmott and Michael Young conducted a special survey among a sample of about 600 Swindon parents who had children aged between nine and 16. They were told that there was discussion as to whether schools like Marlborough, which is fairly near, should be linked to the local authority schools. They were asked whether they would like boarding education for their children if they were given the choice.

"It is clear", comment Willmott and Young, "that social class is an important influence on parental attitudes to boarding school. At the same time, a quarter of manual worker parents said they wanted boarding school for their children, and if this proportion

had their way nationally it would mean a dramatic change in the social composition of the boarding schools.”

A change in the social composition of the schools will go a long way to alter their cloistered atmosphere, but it may not go far enough. After all, most public schools are boarding schools and are often physically isolated. However, if weekly boarding were more general the pupils would be kept to some extent in contact with the outside world. Furthermore, each school should have a proportion of day boys. A start should also be made in making the schools coeducational. The public schools are already moving in this direction. One school—Marlborough—now has one girl in its sixth form!

permanent strategy

The schools will have to be vested in the Minister of Education who should appoint their governors, just as the Minister of Health appoints the governors of the teaching hospitals. There should be a statutory duty for him to select up to a third of the governors from the local education authorities with which the public schools will be associated. He will, of course, consult the local authorities before making these appointments. In much the same way the Minister of Health appoints a proportion of the governors of the teaching hospitals from the regional hospital board with which the teaching hospital is associated.

The remaining two thirds of the governors should be drawn in roughly equal numbers from those who work in the educational field, especially from universities in the region served by the school, and those who have deep or expert knowledge of young

people; and from distinguished men and women in all walks of life—including some of the schools' present governors. The governors will select the headmaster, subject to final consent by the Minister. Here, again, there will be a parallel with the teaching hospitals where the governors select the consultants.

When the public schools are taken over, fee paying should be abolished. When a child attends a public school the local authority in which it lives should pay the school just as it does now when a child attends a school outside its area. In 1962 the inter-LEA payment was £181 per annum where the child was over 15. (*Dancy*, p38). The rest of the cost of public school education should be borne directly by the Exchequer. The burden would be comparatively small. Fees at the public schools and other leading boys and girls schools probably only total about £25 millions a year. And some of the cost would be offset by increase in tax revenue with the end of covenants and endowments.

immediate action

The Labour Party propose “to establish, under the Minister of Education, an Educational Trust. After full consultation as to method and timing, with the local authorities and with the schools themselves, the trust will recommend the form of integration that will enable each of them to make its best educational contribution.”

Action should be taken early in the Labour Government's period of office setting up the trust and instructing it to recommend within, say, 18 months, the best use for each of the schools listed in the act. The list ought to include all HMC schools and other independent schools, including girls'

schools, which have a comparable academic standard. Armed with the information which the Ministry of Education already collects, each independent school over a certain size can be ranked according to its pupil-teacher ratio, the proportion of its staff with degrees, the number of sixth formers, the proportion of school leavers obtaining university places and the proportion who have passed five or more subjects at O level and two or more at A level. The trust may find that a few of these schools either should not or cannot be integrated. Finally, as *Signposts* says, "the Educational Trust will be required to make special provision for genuine experimental schools. Independent denominational schools would, of course, retain their existing relationship with their denominations."

As soon as possible after the trust has completed its work and the Minister has considered its reports integration can begin. Virtually no problem of compensation will exist, for as almost all of the schools will be non-profitmaking bodies there will be no one to compensate. This was what happened when the voluntary and teaching hospitals were taken over together with their charitable trusts. The moral justification was that they were to continue to be used as hospitals and that only the administration would alter. Precisely the same is true of the public schools. Indeed in the case of the older foundations the use to which we propose they shall be put is far nearer that of their founders than the function they now perform.

what might go wrong?

First, there is the problem of what to do about children who are already on public school waiting lists. Although parents put their children's names

down years in advance the schools do not enter into a binding commitment until common entrance has been passed. During the transition period while the schools are being integrated they must accept those children who passed common entrance *before* the educational trust was established. A proportion of boys from the rest of the waiting list can also be admitted if there is any difficulty at first in filling all the places at the public schools after they have been taken over.

Second, there is the problem of those boys who are already at the schools when they are taken over. It would obviously be wrong to disrupt their education, and they must therefore continue at the schools until their schooling ends. This also has the great advantage that instead of suddenly having to find as many pupils as the schools have places, which would be necessary if all the existing pupils were turned out, it will only be necessary to fill the annual intake.

Third, there is the problem that if the reforms which we have proposed are completely unacceptable to the public schools there could be a flight among their staff. Is this likely? What public schoolmasters would object to most would be the proposal that their schools be placed under local authority control and that they be turned into day schools. Neither of these steps has been suggested.

On the other hand, the proposals that most of the schools should be turned into sixth form colleges can be expected to appeal to many masters who find sixth form work the most interesting and rewarding part of their work. Some of them will no doubt regret the change in the social composition of the schools, but others will welcome it because they feel that the present situation is morally

wrong. And a large number will surely feel that the entry of working class boys is an exciting challenge. Those who are sceptical and might leave will probably on balance decide to stay on to see the existing pupils through, and will probably discover that the new pupils are not so horrifying after all, and that although their schools have been taken over this does not mean intolerable interference by government officials. A few masters who feel disgusted by the reforms will leave. They will be no great loss.

new public schools will not be founded

No doubt a large number of people will agree in principle that the public school problem should be tackled, but will argue that it is pointless to integrate the leading schools because new public schools will immediately be founded.

Even if a certain number of new public schools are founded, they will have nothing like the prestige of the existing ones. The public school system has been built over a considerable period and it would not be possible to recreate it overnight. It would, for instance, be virtually impossible for new schools to establish particular connections with Oxford and Cambridge which the public schools now enjoy. Wilson makes the point well (pp20-21):

“There is an enormous inertia which attaches itself to a school’s reputation, and a very long timelag between the attainment of a meritorious status by a school and the general recognition of that status. Some schools—Winchester, Eton, Rugby, Marlborough and so on—are known to be ‘good’ schools . . . If a school raises itself to the status of one of these . . . it may be talked

about, but it is regarded with suspicion. It is a *parvenu*, a *nouveau riche*. Its name is not yet a password in the outside world like the names of Eton or Winchester, for its alumni have not yet made their mark in life . . . There are, perhaps, not yet enough of its boys to make a distinctive impression at Oxford and Cambridge . . . In reply to the question, ‘where *were* you?’, they do not feel able to answer, ‘I was at Queen Eleanor’s school, actually’, in that particular tone of voice in which a man pseudo-apologises for what he knows is a point gained. Not till a whole generation—preferably two—has passed though its hands can a school hope to find its merits recognised.”

Those who believe that the solution which we have advocated for the public schools is right can take courage from the NHS. When this was established the teaching hospitals—the “commanding heights” of the hospital system—were taken over. It was because of the inclusion in the state system of these hospitals, which had always provided the very best treatment available, that the state service now caters for all classes of the community, while no private hospital system has sprung up.

If the existing public schools are taken over because they sell “privilege” and new public schools are founded, it will be perfectly obvious that they cater for those who wish to buy privilege. The very rich may continue to use private schools, but among all other sections of the community they are likely to be regarded with a certain scorn.

The public schools present the problem they do because as they have always been there neither the parents who use them nor the rest of the community perceive their essential function—the preservation and transmission of class privilege. If great efforts were

made to refund them, the purpose of the exercise would be much easier to see, just as it is in other countries which have private schools for the very rich, but do not have a traditional public school system like ours (see Wilson, pp64-65).

Quite apart from these general points, if the proposals which we have made were put into effect it is most unlikely that the public school system could be recreated. This could only happen if there was a large scale flight of public school masters when integration began. As we propose that the boys who are there already should stay to complete their schooling and that those who have passed common entrance should be admitted, the staff would feel that they have a duty to stay on to see these pupils through. As we suggested earlier, a large number of public school masters would probably discover that being part of the state system did not mean intolerable interference with their work. Even if they did gradually decide to leave, it would be impossible for them simply to refund the existing schools one by one, each with its own staff and traditions. The time lag of at least five years would have broken the continuity which is such an important characteristic of a public school.

Furthermore, the proposals which we made earlier would, if they were implemented, make it extremely difficult and hardly worthwhile to establish new private schools. If the subsidies the public schools enjoy were stopped the true cost of private education would be brought home to parents and the demand for it would inevitably be reduced. It would, for instance, no longer be possible for schools to recover tax on money covenanted to them.

As it would cost an enormous sum to provide the buildings and equipment for a new public school, this would

make it even more difficult to raise enough money. Just how difficult this would be can be seen from the fact (according to *The Times*, 17 May 1960) that the replacement costs of Shrewsbury school were £1½ millions in 1956. Today the figure would be very much higher. And if our proposal that private schools should be prevented from absorbing an unfair number of teachers is adopted, most parents will no longer consider it worthwhile to send their children to private schools.

why act now?

One question remains—why act now? There are a number of reasons why the Labour Government should tackle the public schools as soon as possible. One of the government's first priorities must be to reorganise secondary education and end selection at eleven plus. If the public schools are to be integrated it is obviously preferable to do so during this period of reorganisation. The introduction of comprehensive education might well boost private schools.

In fact the abolition of the eleven plus removes one of the strongest arguments for public schools, that they are the only way a parent can obtain an academic education for his child if the state system refuses it.

Finally, no government returned to create a "New Britain" can reasonably leave the "old boy" networks unchallenged. There is a mood for change even in many of the public schools. After 1945 the Labour Government missed the opportunity to reform them. It would be a great pity if it failed to harness the same radical mood.

The first priority is to set up an education trust to investigate the form integration can take.

young fabian group

The Young Fabian Group exists to give socialists not over 30 years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda. It aims to help its members publish the results of their research, and so make a more effective contribution to the work of the Labour movement. It therefore welcomes all those who have a thoughtful and radical approach to political matters.

The group is autonomous, electing its own committee. It co-operates closely with the Fabian Society, which gives financial and clerical help. But the group is responsible for its own policy and activity, subject to the constitutional rule that it can have no declared political policy beyond that implied by its commitment to democratic socialism.

The group publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges fortnightly meetings in London, and holds day and weekend schools.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the secretary, Young Fabian Group, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1; telephone 01-930 3077.

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