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978-0-521-08615-8 - The Rise of a Central Authority for English Education

A. S. Bishop

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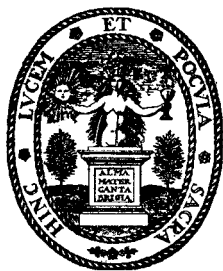
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THE RISE OF A CENTRAL
AUTHORITY FOR
ENGLISH EDUCATION

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He who administers, governs, because he infixes his
own mark and stamps his own character on all public
affairs as they pass through his hands.

Matthew Arnold

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PREFACE

The late Professor Tawney in his book on Equality drew attention to the singular fact that English educational policy has been made, except at brief intervals, 'by men few, if any, of whom have themselves attended the schools principally affected by it, or would dream of allowing their children to attend them'. It was this reference to one of the more curious features of the English educational system, that led the present writer to explore the origins of the paradox, and to try to assess its effects on educational policy and practice over a specified period.

Such an inquiry necessarily began with an examination of the three principal components in the 'national system' during its formative years – the Education Department, the Science and Art Department, and the Charity Commission so far as its educational work was concerned – prior to their amalgamation into one government department under a single responsible minister. Subsequently, the initial, somewhat narrow, field of study was widened into an investigation of the genesis of the Board of Education.

This book, then, traces the nineteenth century formation, growth and structure of the central authority for education in England, the present Department of Education and Science. It describes the influences – religious, social, political, economic and other – that moulded that authority, or more correctly those authorities, and considers the way in which the form they took affected educational provision and progress throughout the Victorian era. In particular, it discusses the impact of the machinery of government upon the developing educational system.

It also considers, and attempts to answer, a number of questions arising from such a survey. To what extent, for example, was the provision and content of institutionalized education determined by essentially administrative considerations? How far was the professional educator, that is the teacher and inspector, permitted or encouraged to contribute to the formulation of educational policy? What factors caused the unhappy fragmentation of such educational services as were provided in England, and was the absence of unity of control or superintendence at the centre the product of chance or design? What difference did the phenomenon

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that Tawney observed make to the quality and structure of English education?

For much of the material upon which this book is based, I have drawn extensively upon numerous British official publications, including the Public General Acts, the official reports of debates in Parliament (commonly referred to as Hansard), and the Parliamentary Papers. This last category comprises a wide variety of documents, viz., accounts and estimates; official returns and communications; annual reports; reports of royal commissions, and of parliamentary, departmental and advisory committees, and frequently the evidence upon which the reports were based. In addition, considerable use has been made of unpublished material – confidential memoranda, correspondence, minutes, inquiries, reports, etc. – deposited for the most part in the Public Record Office, the British Museum and the Reference Library of the Department of Education and Science. Newspapers and periodicals, and the collection of pamphlets, articles and tracts to be found in the archives of that same Department, have also yielded much valuable information as well as providing an indication of contemporary opinion. Equally, I owe much to the specialized work of others in this field, a debt which is acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography.

More particularly, I wish to place on record my gratitude to the late Dr S. Weitzman, formerly of the Institute of Education, University of London, whose teaching inspired in me an interest for educational history; to Professor N. R. Tempest and Dr D.G. Pritchard, both of the University of Liverpool, for their guidance and advice concerning the doctoral thesis out of which this study developed; to my colleague Mr Geoffrey Leyland, who gave generously of his time in reading the manuscript, and of his scholarship in suggesting improvements; to the Editor of this series, Professor A. V. Judges, for his wise and helpful criticism of the book in typescript; and to my wife, without whose patience and encouragement it could not have been written. Needless to say, for any imperfections that remain, I am solely responsible.

For their assistance during my research I should, in addition, like to thank Mr John Vaughan and the staff of the Library of the School of Education, University of Liverpool; Mr John Williams and Mrs M. Wallace, Librarian and Assistant Librarian respectively of St. Katharine's College of Education, Liverpool; Miss

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A. S. B.