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Old bush schools: life and education in the small schools of Western Australia 1893 to 1961

John A. McKenzie

Edith Cowan University

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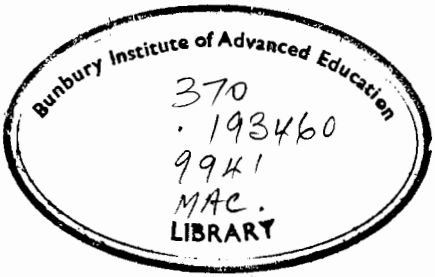

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FRONT COVER: Wiluna State School (Photo 1931)

TO

The thousands of teachers of the one-teacher schools:
'The men and women who blazed the track in the days when the State was wide; who suffered the privations and rude surroundings of the young agricultural settlements, the primitive conditions of the woodline and the semi-civilisation of the timber mill'.

Presidential address to the
Country Teachers' Association Annual Meeting,
May 1913

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.E.R.	Australian Council for Educational Research
C.T.C.	Claremont Teachers' College
E.C.	Education Circular
E.D.	Education Department
E.D.A.R.	Education Department Annual Report
E.D.F.	Education Department File
R.I.S.P.	Rural and Isolated Schools Project
R.W.A.H.S.	Royal Western Australian Historical Society
S.P.D.	Sparsely populated district
T.H.C.	Teachers' Higher Certificate
T.J.	Teachers' Journal
U.W.A.	University of Western Australia

OBSOLETE MEASURES

Money values:

£.s.d. = pounds, shillings, pence. Cannot in any meaningful way be converted to dollars. Should be compared (from 1907) with the basic wage for the year.

Measures of length:

Miles = 1.61 Km.
Feet = 30.5 cm

Measure of area:

Acre = .405 hectares

APPENDIX

PROFESSIONAL HEADS OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1893 — 1960

James Walton	Chief Inspector	1893 — 1896
Cyril Jackson	Inspector-General	1897 — 1903
Cecil R P Andrews	Inspector-General, later Director of Education.	1903 — 1929
Wallace Clubb	Director of Education	1929 — 1935
James A Klein	Director of Education	1935 — 1938
Charles Hadley	Director of Education	1938 — 1940
Murray Little	Director of Education	1940 — 1950
Thomas L Robertson	Director, later Director-General of Education.	1951 — 1960(6)

INTRODUCTION

In researching and recording historical and anecdotal comment on the Old Bush Schools of Western Australia, John McKenzie has secured oral elements of our history which could well have been lost forever, and woven them into the recorded facts of past decades. He has produced an entertaining and particularly illuminating picture of the life of the small-school teacher in outback Western Australia during most decades of the last one hundred years.

Even more importantly, he has described the social history of this State and its intimate relationship with the development of the education system.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century as government legislation, the expansion of railway systems and increases in immigration, all contributed to the expansion of rural industries, the proliferation of bush schools began in earnest. At times, schools were established at alluvial diggings, near railway sidings, or in timber camps as a direct result of economic expansion; at the same time economic expansion occurred in particular localities, precisely because of the small school in operation there.

Gold discoveries in the late 1880's and early 1890's provided a rapid influx of miners, all of whom could not be sustained in the industry, as the greater alluvial fields were worked out. Many of these, no doubt influenced by attractive conditions established as a result of legislation at the time, moved into the agricultural areas, especially those serviced by the railways, and created from holdings considerably eastwards and northwards of those already established. In many of these farming, mining and pastoral areas, there were insufficient children to warrant construction of a school building, educational provisions in the form of correspondence service contracts or itinerant teachers were extended to meet the need. In some cases, half-time schools were developed and many readers will not know, from their own readings into Australian history, of the trials and tribulations encountered by teachers in those early days. Indeed, the experiences attributed to W James, 1962, clearly indicate that such trials and trauma were a vivid part of the backgrounds of many current teachers and principals.

In addition, as the population and the economic activity expanded, the timber industry developed to take advantage of the enabling legislation and,

by the closing years of the nineteenth century, one million acres of forest had been leased with more than forty mills employing in excess of 2500 men. The small schools associated with this development were created throughout the South-West timber centres as well as dairying, fruit growing and small scale mining localities. In timber centres the schools were sometimes ephemeral, opening in response to local demand and closing as economic timber stands were cut out. In a general sense, the first half of the century tends to be marked, in some localities, by substantial pupil turnover as families moved in search of work, accompanied timbercutters, followed the various harvests from one season to another or moved from diggings to diggings in search of a brighter future.

Perhaps it is in the goldfields where the juxtaposition of social history and educational history is best seen in this State. Tent schools, half-time schools, portable schools and relatively substantial permanent schools are all a part of this history and Inspector Miles' comment of 1912 that 'our schools are perfect barometers of the rise and fall of centres of population' is well made. The demographic movements associated with World War 1 caused the closure of many small schools; a good many more only remained open through the Department's gazettal of a new classification of school — the 'assisted school' — for which the provision of a suitable teacher and building were the parents' responsibility. At the end of this period, the return of servicemen and the development of the Soldier Settlement and group Settlement Schemes brought about an unprecedented situation and the history of social and economic activity indeed being interwoven. John McKenzie is clearly a most competent historian detailing developments from the late eighteen hundreds, through the periods of consolidation in recent decades to the present time. However this foreword would be particularly lacking if it confined itself to progress and places without commenting upon the more important factor: people and professional pioneers.

Throughout the pages, anecdote and recorded fact reveal the hardships encountered by outback teachers in our small remote schools and the cheerfulness with which most faced them. Many of those concerned in the early decades were not well prepared by background or training for the experience that awaited them, and, not infrequently, had difficulty finding out where their township and its school were located!

It is in reading the chapters relating to the bush chalkie and his or her living conditions that one perceives at the closest level the 'magnificent distances', the 'lonely vacancies' and the frequently primitive circumstances experienced. Anecdotes about individual schools such as the abandoned dwelling made of bricks crudely fashioned from the red soil of Goolguddering which was Claire's appointment to a school near Gate 89 on the rabbit proof fence when Teachers College closed because of the Depression; Grace's appointment as a fifteen year old to the position of assisted teacher at Milton; Myrtle's board in a private home made of bag, whitewashed, with a dirt floor with lino on it; Miss Thackrah's perception that, water being a problem and there being permitted only one bath per week, if the teacher-boarder was popular she was first and, if unpopular,

third; and the report by a retired teacher who was blackmailed into paying more often than warranted, for the emptying of her school's pan toilets at Malya, will all be recognizable to a substantial number of teachers who have taught in small country schools even in relatively recent years.

It is anecdotes such as these which will be powerful sources of nostalgia for many in our profession and for members of their families.

Most of the old bush schools have closed and many can now scarcely be located, but the history of our profession is not written only in chronicles of school establishments and closures. It is written too, in the lives of bush chalkies past and present as they share in the sorrows described by Roy Grace 'as if they were one of the family', and in the 'lonely exile' of social and geographical isolation, and in the joys and celebrations of their communities.

John McKenzie has woven fact and feeling in a manner which is both a credit to his skill and a magnificent tribute to the pioneering spirit of our outback teachers. This spirit still exists and is demonstrated afresh each year by each new generation of appointees but the times John McKenzie writes about were so very hard and the teacher's task so difficult that I shall be surprised if a few readers do not shed a silent tear because of their familiarity with and tremendous respect for the bush chalkie who is revealed in the pages which follow.

DR R VICKERY,
Director-General of Education (1982-86)

FOREWORD

The isolated small schools of Western Australia were always referred to in the official reports of the 1890s as 'Bush Schools' and they retained this descriptive title in popular speech long after the official world had dropped it. Such were the one-teacher and two-teacher schools, or the one-teacher school with a monitor, who despite his complete lack of training, usually taught full-time, under the direction of the 'head-teacher'.

Not all the small schools were in rural areas. There were some created for specific purposes, such as the Claremont Practising School, and the special 'rural' school at Gosnells designed for teacher training purposes. Some existed on the periphery of the Perth city area, such as Belmont and Hawthorn. Some were outer suburban, or 'sub-metropolitan' as the term had it in the early years, such as Armadale, Hamilton Hill and Guildford West. Not all the schools that existed in rural areas were small schools nor were they all in 'the bush'. In Australia, officialdom tends to define 'urban' as metropolitan, and 'rural' as non-metropolitan; but many of these 'rural' areas are important outposts, sizeable inland towns based on successful agriculture, or populous mining areas. Such non-metropolitan towns in Australia almost from their beginning took on the characteristics of the capital city.

In Western Australia 'the bush' signified those areas of thin settlement, associated over-whelmingly with agricultural and pastoral production or the timber industry, where the population was so small that not more than a dozen or so children could be mustered together to make a school. These one-teacher schools in the country, because of their geographical and social setting, and the isolation of the teacher from professional companionship and often from persons of comparable culture, constituted a category of their own. It is with this type of genuine 'bush school' that this study is concerned. What went on in those schools is part of the life experience of a significant proportion of the adult population of the state. Their story is as important to the social history of Western Australia as it is to its educational history.

The one-teacher schools have been a striking feature of the educational scene, each serving its own sparsely settled locality. Did they arise as an

expedient, a product of geographic and demographic factors, or as a product of a theoretical conviction as to its special educational suitability for rural areas?

In Western Australia the governing factor would appear to have been the scattered nature of settlement. The early pattern of school development was in the Perth city area and its environs, in the outports of Geraldton, Bunbury, Busselton and Albany, and in the more easily accessible areas immediately over the Darling scarp, such as Toodyay, Northam and York. In the late 1880s and the early 1890s mineral discoveries created concentrated pockets of population far removed from the capital city and the developing towns, in such places as the Pilbara, the Yilgarn and the eastern goldfields. The schools in most of these areas, beginning usually as one-teacher schools, grew rapidly into sizeable multi-teacher institutions. Elsewhere the predominant economic activities were agriculture, sheep and cattle grazing, and timber cutting.

The one-teacher school was the only way in which education could be provided for the widely scattered children of these areas. It is in fact in these areas that most one-teacher schools were established and where the archetypal 'bush school' evolved.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
The rise and fall of the bush schools

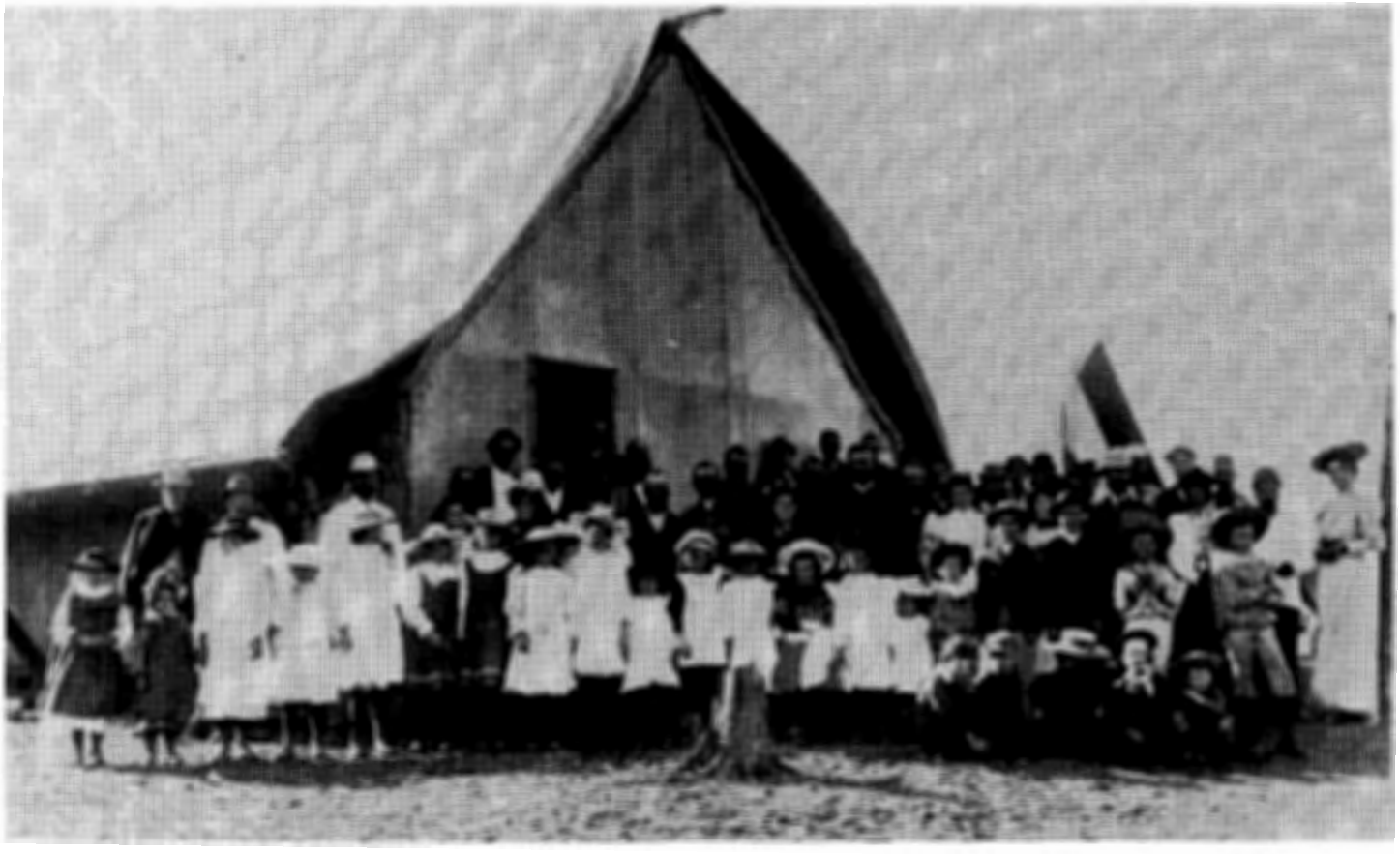
1. The bush school explosion

In the newly self-governing State of Western Australia the nineties were a time of hope and a time of despair, of exciting adventure and dull routine, of expansion here and contraction there, a time of restless, shifting population. On the Goldfields, camp towns sprang up in a matter of days, existed for a time, and vanished overnight, as the miners spread over the state — some to other 'rushes', some to exchange mine for farm, some to wield axes and tend saws in the hardwood forests of the south-west. It was a time when Western Australia, which the older inhabitants still thought of as the Swan River Colony, burst from its colonial shell and became the Golden West; when the pace of economic development in the Western Third, and the accompanying quality of life, moved rapidly towards that of the still distant older states of the eastern two-thirds.

But though comforts multiplied in the capital city, the closer outports and the larger inland towns, life was rough and tough in the mining camps, the timber villages, the outback farms, for the man at the rockface or sawbench, for the well-sinker, the fencer, the cockatoo farmer and the farm labourer. The children of the bush people, bound to the economic involvements of their fathers, were old before their time with the responsibilities of contributing towards the family living. The outback teacher knew physical privation and suffered even more from the psychological blows of culture shock.

It was still an age of horse-power and man-power. Pioneer technologies flourished and pioneer improvisations studded the landscapes. The axe, the hammer and the hand-saw were still the basic tools of the outback. The horseworks powered simple machines like the chaff-cutter; the blacksmith's forge kept machines in day to day repair; basic farm implements were the horse-drawn plough, drill and harvester; transport of men and goods in areas beyond the railway relied on the sulky and the spring cart, the dray and the wagon, on roads of gravel or natural earth.

It was still possible in many parts of the State to walk in the primitive



1. Coolgardie Tent School 1984. (Courtesy of the WEST AUSTRALIAN newspaper).

bushland as it existed before the white man disturbed the age-old rhythms of nature, and before the teeth and hooves of sheep and cattle had destroyed the wildflowers.

In the late 1880s and during the 1890s several factors came together to create economic expansion and rapid population growth. The pattern of settlement was determined by the expansion of agriculture, and the development of the pastoral, timber and gold mining industries, all stimulated by governmental legislation, by railway building, and by immigration.

The discovery of gold in Southern Cross in 1887 opened up within less than a decade a vast area known as the Eastern Goldfields where a population of tens of thousands spread over alluvial fields, living in mining camps, large and small. Such camps were all too often ephemeral and only where the Education Department was satisfied that there were reasonable hopes of permanency did it establish a school. The mining situation gave rise to the phenomenon of the 'tent school', and the portable school.

The gold discoveries brought increased population which provided a market for food. A demand arose for meat, grain, milk, butter, fruit and vegetables. When the great alluvial fields were worked out and deep reef mining proved unable to absorb all the available labour, surplus diggers settled on the land. Many were in fact experienced in the conditions of the wheat-growing areas of South Australia and Victoria and were among those who pioneered the land east, north and south of the old established farming districts of Northam, York and Beverley. Some of our most successful farming families today are descendents of 'miners turned farmers'. (1)

Mining, pastoralism, timber cutting and agriculture were the main industries of Western Australia before 1914. Of these agriculture made the biggest contribution to the spread of population throughout the countryside. Generally throughout Australia soil fertility is poor in comparison with other countries where agriculture has equal importance in the economy. In Western Australia good agricultural land occurs in patches, interspersed with rock and sand. Family farms to be viable had to be of far greater size than is found in most other countries. They tended to be around 3000 acres in extent. Clearly then, closely settled peasant populations could not emerge in Australia. On the contrary, farming population was scattered widely, and farming families lived far from towns and in relative isolation from each other.

The West Australian Government, encouraged by signs of an expanding economy, consequent on the boom in gold, adopted an energetic policy of borrowing loan moneys for railway building, and lent money through the Agricultural Bank to new settlers on the land. Railways, built to link outports and mining areas with the capital city, also assisted the opening up of agricultural land by providing the efficient and reliable transport hitherto lacking. The farms followed the railways, spreading out on either side of the line to a breadth of twenty miles. In those days of horse-drawn wagons it used to be said that a wheat farm could not be successful at a distance of more than twenty miles from a railway siding — the so-called 'twenty mile rule'. After the main lines

had been established, the Government built loop lines and spur lines to serve outlying farms and to encourage the opening up of new areas. Thus the new land laws, financial assistance and reliable transport led to the extension of farming eastwards and northwards into areas previously considered unsuitable and unsafe.

Between the years 1908 and 1912 the wheat areas of the State were trebled, stimulated by government encouragement, good prices and a run of good seasons. By the outbreak of the Great War the so-called Wheat Belt had been substantially occupied, from the Murchison in the north to the coast south-east of Albany at an approximate width of 120 miles. Some idea of the speed of development can be seen from the figures for the area of land under wheat production, which jumped from 74,308 acres in 1900 to 1,104,753 acres in 1913. (2)

It was this vast agricultural expansion which, more than any other single factor, provided the raison d'etre for the rash of one-teacher schools which were opened in the early 1900s.

Pastoral development extended settlement into remote areas also, but, unless associated with other forms of economic activity (such as mining, pearling etc), did not provide the child population to stimulate much school building. For some considerable time schooling in such areas was provided by correspondence, by itinerant teachers, and by half-time schools.

Extensive exploitation of the timber resources of the state had to wait on general economic growth, together with population growth, since this provided a local market and also a labour force, the timber industry being in its early days very labour intensive. Forests with viable commercial timbers were situated in the south-west Land Division, and the majority of log-sawing mills were located there. They tended to concentrate isolated pockets of population in a village-type situation. Timber getting was predominantly an occupation of single men, so that the existence of a mill did not necessarily mean the existence of a school. But where it was associated with other forms of economic activity such as fruit-growing, dairying or small-scale mining, a sufficient child population existed to warrant the setting up of a one-teacher school.

Consequent upon the rapid economic development of the late 1890s and early 1900s the numerical growth of child population was remarkable. The rate of increase can be illustrated by a random comparison of almost any two years. At the end of 1896 there were 9008 children at school in the government system. At the end of 1897 there were 12,257, an increase of one-third in one year! In the ten years from 1898 to 1908 both the school population and the number of schools more than doubled.

In the story of the one-teacher schools it is not so much the total growth of child population that is important as the *spread* of population, consequent upon the settlement of new land in the development of wheat farming. In the later years of the 1900s, for example, there was a slowing down of the rate of growth of child population, but a veritable explosion of school building.

In 1909 Education Department Inspector Klein explained the phenomenon

2. Full enrolment, Moojebing one-teacher school, 1927.

3. Springfield School. Group 2, near Pemberton. (Photo 1932).

of the West Australian one-teacher school in these terms:

> The scattered nature of our settlements and the difficulties of transit render concentration impossible, and, until circumstances alter, the only possible policy is the establishment of the small one-man school. When visiting districts to enquire into applications for establishment of schools I attempt to persuade settlers of the advantages of concentration, but each little settlement has its progress Association, and each of these associations is equally anxious to have its own school, and so anything like consolidation in rural education is for a time at any rate out of the question. (3)

In 1937 P.R. Cole published an extensive review of education in rural Australia wherein he stated:

> In Australia one-third of the people dwell in sparsely populated places; and it may well be understood that the small rural school, one-teacher or two-teacher, means more to Australia than to almost any other country. (4)

Such a situation was certainly not unique to Australia, though it is doubtful if any newly colonised country had such oppressive tyranny of distance and such geographic and economic factors conditioning dispersal of settlement.

Another feature of population in Western Australia in the earlier years of the Education Department was, as might be expected at a time of rapid econimic expansion, high mobility. It created severe logistical problems for the Department, and was reflected in the remarkable number of schools opened and closed each year. The number closed during, or at the end of, each year is as significant as the number opened. Schools were closed where the attendance fell below a required number or where there was no teacher available. This instability was most apparent on the Goldfields. In 1901 Inspector Hope-Robertson commented on the extreme difficulty of effectively administering the Goldfield districts owing to abnormal conditions of mining camps 'of mushroom growth . . . clamouring for schools'. (5) The Department responded by opening schools, the camps would disappear, and the schools had to be closed.

In 1903 the Education Department undertook to authorize the establishment of *provisional schools* where an average attendance of ten, but less than twenty, could be guaranteed. The Department would provide books, furniture, apparatus and a grant of £4/10/- per head of average attendance. Parents were to provide a room and to make the teacher's salary up to £60 per annum. This meant that where two or three families had settled in an outback district with homes within two or three miles of each other, schooling could be provided for a minimum of financial effort on the part of the parents. Throughout the next decade most of the new schools opened were provisional schools. In the fluctuating economic conditions of the times with alluvial gold-mining camps appearing and disappearing, timber mills moving with the clearing of all commercially saleable timber in a given area and selectors taking up and walking

off farms, it is not surprising that many provisional schools were opened and closed several times in the space of three or four years.

2. The hey-day of the bush schools

In those early years the provisional one-teacher schools were a large segment of the state education system. In 1908, for example, they constituted one-third of all schools. By 1910 they had risen for the first time to fifty percent of all government schools (234 out of a total of 468). It cannot too often be stressed that the over-riding factor at work was the expansion of agriculture with the consequent continued movement of farmers into new areas. By 1910 there were 117 small schools in the Great Southern alone. In 1912 Inspector Miles commented, 'Our schools are a perfect barometer of the rise and fall of centres of population', having in mind at the time, the great rise in the number of schools in the Great Southern and in the eastern Wheat Belt. (6) In 1913 the Education Department made a change in the classification of schools, indicative of the consolidation of many new areas into regular settlements. Schools with an average attendance of from ten to nineteen pupils became 'State Schools', Class VIII, thus eliminating the concept 'provisional school'.

The Great War influenced the pattern of school development, fostering the growth of city and suburban schools at the expense of the country. As fathers of families enlisted for service there was a movement of population from the bush to large towns and to the Perth area with a consequent growth in the size of larger schools and a closure of a number of small bush schools. In 1915 and again in 1916 there was, for the first time in history of the Education Department, a fall in the number of new pupils enrolled, attributable to the war and to a bad harvest (1915), the cessation of immigration, and (in 1916) the exclusion of children under six. (7) The war led to a shortage of male teachers for tough outback areas and, owing to their unsuitability for the appointment of women, a more than usual number of bush schools were closed through lack of a teacher. However, the opening of new one-teacher schools continued, albeit at a somewhat lower rate.

The problems associated with the maintenance of schooling in the outback brought about a change in the regulations governing the establishment of small schools. Up to 1916 the Education Department was prepared to establish a classified school where an average attendance of ten children could be guaranteed, the building, furniture and equipment being provided, as well as the teacher. A new regulation gazetted in that year reduced the attendance requirement to eight, opening the way for a new category of school to be known as *assisted school*. The onus was on the parents to secure a suitable teacher and building, the Department paying a grant of ten pounds per annum per pupil, and providing furniture, equipment and books. Selection of the teacher was left to the parents subject to the minimum qualification of a Junior Certificate. (8) This was in some ways a recreation of the 'provisional school' but with a lower number of pupils permitted. Even a single family could now become an assisted school. This regulation enabled the Department to keep

4. Group Settlement one-teacher school 1920s

5. Group Settlement one-teacher school 1920's. Teacher: John Tonkin.

open many small schools that would otherwise have been closed due to the movement of soldiers' families into the towns.

In the 1920s another great expansion of the wheat industry occurred, stimulated by an expanding world market, by improvements in farm machinery and by the Soldier Settlement Scheme. Discharged soldiers were given special concessions by way of sustenance allowances, low land prices and low interest rates on loans. By 1929, no less than 5,200 settlers had taken advantage of the scheme, of whom 3,000 went on to wheat and sheep farms. The Group Settlement Scheme, which was planned to develop dairy farming in the south-west, created pockets of settlement in that area and brought about 'an unprecedented demand for new small schools'. (9) In 1922 the Education Department reported that:

> The Group Settlements are adding a number of small schools which are at first necessarily worked under somewhat unusual conditions. When the preliminary camp has been formed, a temporary school is provided by the Land Settlement Authorities as early as possible. When the clearing work of the group has been done, and the families moved away from the camp into the homes that they have built, the permanent school is provided. Some of the groups are sufficiently close together for a larger school to serve two groups. (10)

The number of group settlement schools opened ranged from four or five in some years to twenty-six in the year 1925. In 1926 the total number of such schools peaked at fifty-eight.

The expansion of settlement into ever new areas of the State created a renewed burst of school building throughout the 1920s, rising to a level surpassing that of the immediate pre-war years. The number of small schools (those with less than twenty pupils), taken as a percentage of all the government schools of the state, rose in 1929 to a peak of sixty-two percent. They were, as in the earlier period, overwhelmingly in the agricultural areas. A spin-off from this expanded land settlement was that it made possible the absorption of a number of half-time and assisted schools into classified state schools. A slow but steady decline in the number of the former types of schools began. Accommodation and living conditions for teachers at such schools were more often than not unsatisfactory and they remained at their posts only a short time. Increasingly the Department had doubts about the usefulness of the non-classified schools, and about the quality of the teaching provided. An official statement in 1937 declared bluntly, 'It is doubtful if the Department receives value for the money spent'. (11) Teaching by correspondence, launched in 1918, was now able to take care of the education of children not able to attend a classified school.

3. Decline of the one-teacher school

In 1930 the percentage of schools with less than twenty pupils peaked at sixty-two percent where it remained till 1932, after which it began to show

a steady and continuous fall. A new pattern of rural education began to emerge which led eventually to the elimination of most of the one-teacher schools. This was a product of the consolidation movement whereby small bush schools were closed and the children transported daily to larger schools in nearby country towns. The process was facilitated by a redistribution of population which took place in the thirties — a decline in the outer areas of settlement and an increase in the metropolitan area and in the larger country towns. There was little or no new settlement in agricultural and timber areas, and some migration from country to city brought out by bankruptcy and failure of small farms. In the late thirties drought in marginal farming areas caused a number of settlers to abandon their holdings, and some small schools in these areas were closed.

Thus the number of small schools, especially those with less than twenty pupils, declined slowly throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, with a significant drop of six percent in 1946 to forty-five percent of the total. This was the first time such schools had been below fifty percent since 1909. The total number of schools in the State declined from a peak of 910 in 1934 to a low of 442 in 1955, after which the number rose again under the impact of population increase and large scale immigration. The new schools then built were not however small schools, but larger classified schools in the Perth metropolitan area and in large country towns.

So the consolidation movement had its tentative beginnings in the 1920s and progressed slowly during the 1930s. Following the end of the World War the policy was developed with energy, and accelerated a fall in the number of small schools to a point where in 1962, of 493 state primary schools, only forty-seven had an enrolment of less than twenty-one (9.5 percent of all schools). In this connection it is important to recognize that the post-war agricultural boom, with the clearing, cropping and pasturing of 400,000 hectares of land per year, did not bring with it an expansion of the number of schools. Nothing illustrates more clearly the changed economy of the countryside than this fact. It was not a 'land settlement' movement as were those of the 1900s and 1920s. It was not a movement of small family units onto blocks of three to four thousand acres*, but company farming and the investment of big capital with mechanised equipment on tens of thousands of hectares. The possibility of gathering together of eight or ten children all living within three miles or so of an agreed central spot where a building could be erected for a school, was a thing of the past. The era of the one-teacher bush school was at an end, surviving only here and there where special circumstances prevailed or where there was strong parental resistance to consolidation.

* 1200 to 1600 hectares.

CHAPTER 2
Ideals and realities

1. Equality of opportunity?

In Australia the school system was structured to consolidate in the countryside the trend to social uniformity which the economic and governmental systems had already shaped. The whole character of economic and political development was one of centralized control and from the very beginnings of European settlement, there operated a policy of government assistance to all forms of development. How could the school system run counter to this historical centralizing tradition? There was no differentiation of areas as urban and rural for governmental administrative purposes, and in conformity with this, there never was any system of local taxation for educational purposes. The small local population could never have sustained the cost, as the chequered history of the 'provisional schools' demonstrate. So there was no basis for substantial local control over schools. (1) In Europe and North America the one-teacher school was usually in a village situation, which is conducive to some degree of local finance and control. This was not so in Australia. In Western Australia there was the exception of the schools established where the population of timber mills and some smaller mining areas lived together in small hamlets. These were, however, quite a small proportion of the totality of one-teacher schools.

Although, in the various land divisions of Western Australia, there were considerable differences in economic life, and to a lesser degree in social life, at no time was there a differentiation in the aims of education as between urban and rural areas. The government-financed education system was uniform throughout the State, and was founded solidly on the assumption that the rural population must have an equal standard of education to that provided for the population of the capital city and country towns. There was no special curriculum for rural schools. There were, of course, a number of modifications in certain subject areas for the small schools, inspired more by inadequacy of equipment and texts and the complexities of grouped classes, than by perceived differing needs of a rural population. From time to time the 'problem' of rural

education was raised by departmental inspectors, members of parliament representing rural constituencies and by the Teachers' Union, but parents in the country tended to demand an education for their children uniform with that of city children. The most serious attempt made to develop a 'rural curriculum', that inspired and directed by Senior Inspector Miles — the so-called *Special Rural Schools Movement* of the 1920s — failed in the face of developing economic and social realities. (2)

The first extensive exposition of Education Department policy in relation to rural education is set out in the Department's Report for 1909 in a statement entitled 'The Country School'. At this time those one-teacher schools with an enrolment of less than twenty pupils, constituted 47.9 percent of all government schools. After noting the special difficulties of the teacher's work in country schools, and after comparing the one-teacher schools of the USA and of Germany unfavourably with those of Western Australia, the statement went on to say:

> It is sometimes urged that the small country school ought to have its curriculum more sharply divided from that of the town school, and to give much of its attention to teaching systematic agriculture.
>
> Such arguments are apparently founded upon a misconception of the functions of a primary school. The primary school aims at giving a general elementary training and of turning out children of intelligence and mental alertness. Such a training will form a good foundation for any subsequent career, and such children will be ready to grapple with the particular problems that their particular circumstances may call upon them to face. But the rural primary school cannot attempt to turn out the complete farmer any more than the town primary school can attempt to turn out the complete carpenter or plumber, the complete commercial clerk or accountant. Nor must the curriculum of the country school be so narrowed and specialised that its scholars are unnecessarily handicapped in adopting other than agricultural careers. It would be a great mistake to neglect general education for empirical teaching in the science of agriculture: to neglect the child's general intellectual development in order to instruct him in such subjects as the care and feeding of livestock, which he cannot properly understand and appreciate at this stage. (3)

In 1917 the Director-General, Cecil Andrews, warned that:

> It is possible to go too far in connecting school work with the ordinary life of the child. The proposal that is sometimes made that the reading-books for the country school should be concerned only with farming and allied subjects is clearly a mistaken one. The country child needs to be introduced to good literature as much as the town child: he needs to have his mental outlook widened by imagination and by the picture of what is outside his own experience, just as much, if not more, than the town child. (4)

Again, in 1931, when the small schools constituted the highest proportion ever of all the State's schools, the Minister for Education, Norbert Keenan wrote that the government's policy was to provide the children of the State, no matter in what part of the State they lived, with 'a sound primary education . . . and to render this simple service to the children of the parents living outback, involves a large expenditure per head, but of all the children of the State, in my estimation, they are the most deserving'. (13) His point was that education would be placed before all other needs except the requirement that no one should starve. He stressed *the primacy of primary education*, especially in the outback. This principle derived in his judgment from the importance of primary education in the economy of the state, and from a calculated decision that education had to be uniform throughout the whole state.

It can be seen that here was an underlying philosophy of equal opportunity for all. Uniformity was the key and the educational structure was so arranged as hopefully to provide the same facilities for all. The one-teacher schools covered the full primary course on a state-wide uniform curriculum, in the same number of years of compulsory schooling as all other schools. They were open for the same hours per day for the same school year (except that in the north-west and in the eastern goldfields the schools had one week's additional summer holiday on account of exceptional heat); there were no special texts for rural schools; teachers' salaries were the same for equivalent certification and work (with an additional allowance for head-teacher duties, and in some remote areas a special allowance for the disabilities of extreme isolation); there was no special staff, and transfer to and from multi-teacher schools was, at least theoretically, operative. It is noteworthy that during the difficult depression years of the early 1930s the small rural schools were not closed, though they cost more per head to run than schools in the city or in large country towns.

In the mid 1930s a visiting American educational administrator was struck by what he saw as the vigorous efforts made by Australian education authorities to ensure that country schools met the same standard as the city schools.

> The general excellence of rural education is one of the greatest achievements of the Australian system. Regardless of the wealth or poverty of the local community, the same type of building is provided, the same equipment is furnished, and the same type of teacher is employed. Every effort has been made to give the rural child equal opportunity. (5)

This superficial generalisation presented an over-rosy view even for the period of the 1930s and would have been more untrue of earlier decades. Although the aim of equality was well to the fore throughout the whole of the period under review, the practical performance seldom lived up to expectations, not in the standard of buildings and equipment, nor in the quality of teachers. A great deal of the story of education in the countryside of Western Australia, especially in the small schools, is concerned with a prolonged effort on the part of the Directors-General, departmental heads, teachers and parents to make the reality approximate the ideal.

2. Cost disabilities of bush schools

Throughout the whole period of their existence the cost of running the small one-teacher schools was consistently higher than that of larger schools. Cost per head was obviously affected by the number of pupils per teacher. Reference was made to this matter in almost every Annual Report in the first couple of decades. The problem is well illustrated by the following extract from the Annual Report of 1907.

> The total school population is spread considerably over the country. A reduction of ten or twelve in the numbers of a large town school means practically no reduction in expenditure; but the establishment of a country school of ten or twelve children means a very considerable additional expenditure. The cost per head in the state schools i.e. schools with an average attendance of twenty is £4/19/9 on the average attendance; in the provisional schools i.e. the schools with an average attendance of less than twenty, the cost per head amounted to £8/11/6. The multiplication of small schools is therefore bound to increase the cost per head. (6)

It was obvious that, with an ever expanding economy, and with concurrent increasing population, there would be a continuous rise in the cost of education. There would be more schools, more teachers, more equipment and higher administrative costs. When it is realised that for thirty-five years the one-teacher schools amounted to over half the total number of schools it can be seen that they were a significant factor in the total cost of education.

The Departmental Report for 1917 listed six factors as being responsible for rising costs — the greater number of small schools, the reduction from ten to eight in the numbers necessary for the continued maintenance of a small school, the increase in the proportion of classified teachers (who were entitled to higher salaries), an increase in the numbers of older children in the upper classes, a rise in the cost of books, stationery and materials, and an increase in the number of children receiving driving allowances. (7) This last item, introduced in 1910, authorized payment of sixpence per child per day for those who travelled any distance exceeding three miles to school. By 1917 such allowances were being received by nearly 3,000 children and were adding four shillings-and-sixpence per head to annual costs. In 1921 the very smallest schools were stated to be costing nearly £ 30 per head when the average cost per head for all schools was £ 9/1/3. (8) In 1933-34 their cost was still almost three times that of the average. This pattern was maintained right through to 1947-48, after which an alteration in the method of presentation of statistics does not make comparisons with the earlier period possible. But the same general relationship of costs remained a consistent feature into the sixties and beyond. This cost factor was the decisive one when the State's economic development and technical changes in transport made it possible to move towards a policy of large-scale closure of one-teacher and two-teacher schools and their consolidation into larger schools in nearby towns.

'Not a fair deal'

As we have seen it was a declared aim of the Education Department to provide equal educational opportunity for all the children of the State wherever they lived. Thirty years after the establishment of the Department, however, the ideal was far from being realised. It became the rationale of a campaign for Federal funding for state education which the Australian Teachers' Federation generated in the early 1920s. At the Federation conference in Adelaide in 1924 West Australian delegate A.D. Hill presented a paper entitled 'The rural school problem — a plea for the outback settler and his child'. (9) Hill set out to show that outback children did not receive the same education as urban children.

He instanced the shorter period of training for country teachers, one year as against the normal two years, the waiving of the requirement of the Leaving Certificate for entry to the teaching service, the lack of help in the first year out, the absence of contact with colleagues and the modified small school's curriculum.

In 1925 the W.A. Teachers' Union presented evidence on the same subject to the Financial Disabilities Commission. (10) T.J. Milligan read a statement, giving figures for the relative cost of large and small schools, and showing how the higher cost of small schools led to the adoption of economies, such as a lesser period of training for the teachers and a reduced level of school equipment. He drew the conclusion that 'the complaint therefore that the country child does not educationally get a fair deal is solidly based'. Western Australia had bigger distances than other states. Railway mileage per 1,000 of Australia's population was 4.99 while in Western Australia it was 12.7. This added to costs of all kinds. This State had suitable land to attract immigrants but they would not settle on the land if no education was available for their children. He told the story of how, as head of the Claremont Practising School, he had recently admitted children from a family that had left a group settlement in the south-west. The mother 'declared, with tears in her eyes, that she would not see her children grow up without adequate education'. (11) The remedy for the disabilities of small schools was for the Federal Government to provide special financial help. It should 'set apart an annual sum for the purpose of assisting states, Western Australia being by far the greatest sufferer, which are handicapped by the expensive pioneer work of rendering large expanses of bush land suitable for agriculture'. This sum should 'be devoted to maintaining an equally high standard of education throughout the states — that is for the express purpose of equalising educational opportunities'. (12)

It is clear that for several decades the higher costs of running the small bush schools was a powerful factor working against equality of opportunity for country children in the less settled and remote areas. The consequences could be seen in the inadequately trained and poorly qualified teachers, the paucity of school equipment and in the inferior nature of the school buildings.

CHAPTER 3
The fundamental school arts

1. Recruiting the country teacher

As long as the supply of qualified teachers did not keep pace with the demand brought about by the explosion of out-back settlement the educational opportunities of children in bush schools remained inferior to those of children in the schools of the city and the larger country towns. In the first two decades of the century the Education Department had great difficulty in recruiting enough people willing to take on the job of teaching in the small isolated bush schools. As early as 1904 Inspector Clubb saw the problem in these terms:

> The task of finding teachers willing to go to these outback schools, at salaries in many cases not equal to those paid to labourers in the city, is not an easy one, and it is therefore the more satisfactory to think that . . . the rudiments of education are being placed within the reach of children even in the very remote districts. (1)

The great increase in the number of small schools was such that the Department, in selecting teachers, could insist on only a very elementary test of their knowledge and teaching capacity.

> It is almost impossible here [in W.A.] to keep pace with the demand. It is very disappointing to those settlers who have long been struggling to obtain a school building, that when their efforts are at last successful they should be kept waiting because no teacher can be found. (2)

The greatest area of difficulty in the early years was finding staff for the many provisional schools in remote areas of the goldfields and at timber mills. By 1912 *Teachers' Journal*, the official organ of the Teachers' Union, saw the staffing of the small schools as

> One of the most difficult problems with which our Education Department is confronted, for owing to the very great increase in the number of country schools established during the past five years — the result of vigorous policy of land development — the utmost difficulty has been experienced in obtaining teachers for such schools (3)

The salaries for such positions were 'miserably inadequate and the life one of isolation'. The Teachers' Union in 1914 calculated that the salary of the lowest paid teachers was £2/2/3 per week when £2/14/- was the wage of 'an average porter or roadmaker'. Hardly an encouragement to recruitment of staff of bush schools!

It can be readily understood why for many years the one-teacher schools were staffed overwhelmingly by unclassified teachers. Classification depended firstly on scholarship as exhibited in the passing of examinations in the various subjects of the C certificate and secondly on skill in teaching and school management, as determined by the results of an annual inspection of the school by a district inspector. An unclassified teacher was defined as 'one who passed an entrance examination and has satisfied an inspector of his ability to teach a small number of children'. (4) In the early 1900s unclassified teachers constituted about twenty-five per cent of the teaching service, rising to a peak of 38.4 per cent in 1913, the great majority of these being in one-teacher schools.

Inspector Gladman in 1915 painted a grim picture for his inspectorial district — wheat areas east and north of Northam — for which he gave a ratio of fully classified to unclassified as less than one to nine. (5) The Department put pressure on teachers to become qualified by requiring them to present themselves for the C Certificate examination within a 'reasonable time' after appointment, but in the prevailing circumstances, failure to sit or pass did not and could not lead to dismissal.

The position of teachers in small country schools with their hardships of isolation, inadequate accommodation, lack of social amenities, high cost of living and poor pay was certainly not an attractive one. Most of the applicants were women, (6) but in many of the areas of new settlement conditions were unsuitable for women. However the number of male applicants was small and many of them were 'not suitable for the work'.

The earlier policy of recruitment from the eastern states was no longer viable since rapid population increase and a high demand for teachers was, in this period, an Australia-wide phenomenon.

By the beginning of the second decade of the century the need for vigorous action on teacher recruitment could not be ignored. Departmental officials became acutely conscious of the outback demand for schools. Something of a crisis had developed and this was reflected in the reports of district inspectors which drew attention to the difficulty, firstly of obtaining teachers for appointment to bush schools, and secondly of improving the work of those who were already in the schools. Inspector Wallace Clubb in a remarkably forthright statement put the searchlight on reasons for lack of efficiency in small schools. (7) It showed great understanding of the problems of the teacher who was 'willing to face the hard work, the oft-times dreary isolation, and the poor pay' to carry on the work of elementary education in the outback.

> What is needed, I think, is to improve the conditions, and be honest to the extent of 'footing the bill' which a radical improvement of these conditions entails. We should honestly look the matter in the face, see

what we ought to demand in the way of educational qualifications and training in the man to whom we entrust the great national work of education, see what we ask in the shape of heavy mental work, skill and character, see what we deprive him of in the way of comfort and social enjoyment in many isolated places, and then ask what remuneration we in equity should give him. The State must conduct education on business principles, and in our present conditions where our demand is much in excess of our supply, only two courses are open — to adequately compensate the teacher and then demand efficiently, or to pay less than many unskilled workers receive and — in that case as in every other business or profession — get exactly what we pay for. Some men and women — our very best in many ways — enter this exacting and poorly paid profession from altruistic motives. They feel a distinct 'call' for the work: but that is no reason why their pecuniary reward should not be larger. The State demands efficiency in Education: it must be prepared to pay for it. (8)

Professional training for teachers of small schools was for some time a haphazard business. It was handled in three ways simultaneously — formal training (for a small minority) in an institution in the metropolitan area established for the purpose, ad hoc schools of instruction in country centres, and the appointment of travelling advisory teachers. These three will be examined in turn.

2. First Steps in Formal Training

A supply of suitable candidates for training as teachers was at first inhibited by the lack of facilities for more than a handful of children each year to continue their education beyond the primary stage. An entrance examination for intending applicants was held monthly, the standard being only slightly above the level of the primary school curriculum. Successful candidates undertook a period of observation and practice in selected schools for one month. They then gave test lessons in the presence of an inspector and, if approved, were appointed promptly to a small school.

The first systematic attempt at providing teacher training was the pupil-teacher scheme whereby head-teachers of schools selected suitably 'bright' pupils from the top primary class to be appointed at the age of fourteen for a three-year programme in which they worked half-time in the schools and half-time on self-education. Those in the Perth area attended central classes; in the country they took correspondence tuition provided by the staff of the central classes, studying under the supervision of their head-teachers. In 1907 a 'normal school' was organized to provide free tuition in secondary education for sixty students for two years, after which they spent a year attached to a school and were then admitted to the Teachers' College.

Claremont Teachers College had been established in 1902 but for some years it was concerned exclusively with training for assistantships in large schools. The first tentative steps to provide some professional training specifically for

teachers of small schools were taken in 1906 when a Model small school was established at Gosnells. Here a number of inexperienced beginners (in groups of about twenty at a time) were sent to gain familiarity with the operation of a small school, before being sent out to take charge of one themselves. (9) Some small school teachers already in the service, but with no training, were granted a week's leave to attend a similar observation and instruction course at Gosnells. (10) From this small beginning developed a 'three months probationary course'. (11)

A move towards providing a proper formal course for country teachers was taken in 1908 and 1909. An alteration to the starting date of the Teachers' College year, from September to January, made possible the induction of about twenty for a three months' course in the final months of the calendar year. An artificial small school of about eighteen pupils, from Infants and Standard 1 to Standard 5, was formed within the Claremont Practising School. It was 'a school within a school' and its rationale was 'to typify in size, control and conditions a small country school'. Here the trainee teachers were to learn class management, grouping of classes, and the framing of time-tables. (12) The course members were however raw recruits, mostly with little or no secondary education. So the bulk of the time was taken up in preparing them for the Teachers Certificate examinations. (13)

3. Schools of Instruction

Meanwhile efforts were being made in country centres per medium of in-service Schools of Instruction. These had their origin in a special course set up to coach teachers in 'physical work' and woodwork at Kalgoorlie and at Karrakatta in 1905. The first recorded full-scale School of Instruction for general teaching was introduced by Inspector Clubb in 1906. Inspired by what was already happening in Victoria and New South Wales he held in his inspectorial district two Method Schools at Katanning and at York respectively. (14) They were attended by 100 teachers in all and ran for a full week each for seven to eight hours a day. Clubb saw that such Method Schools would 'constitute the only definite attempts at training' that a large percentage of teachers were likely to receive.

In the following year further such schools were held in two inspectorial districts where 'lectures on method were delivered, lessons given to illustrate such methods, and the working of a small school thoroughly investigated'. (15) Thus the pattern was set and in subsequent years schools were held in sizeable country towns centrally located in settled districts where up to twenty or more teachers could be got together for a week or a fortnight, places like York, Brunswick, Toodyay, Pingelly, Beverley, Wickepin, Woodanilling, Busselton, Moora, Pinjarra, Bridgetown, Kalgoorlie, Moora, Collie, Narrogin and Bunbury. In urging the need for such schools, Inspector Klein castigated the self-satisfied teacher 'who thinks he is good enough to give any lesson without preparation', but, indicative of the real desire among country teachers for professional help, found this type of teacher more frequently among assistants in larger schools

than in the teachers in the 'way-back, one-man schools, (16)

Schools of instruction became a regular feature of in-service training right through to the late 1930s. They grew into quite formidable affairs with demonstrations by departmental specialists as well as by experts in general teaching. A very typical school of this character was held at Greenbushes in 1915 over four intensive days in the month of June. (17) The programme consisted of lessons in needlework taught by Miss Nisbet to a group of selected girls representing a small school, in the presence of twenty-five women teachers; nature study tuition by Charlie Hamilton to sixty-one teachers, with special reference to the problems in the small schools; manual training instruction by R. Wallace to a group of twenty-two men; coaching in drawing by Bob Hetherington to a group of seventy-two teachers; and Mr Murdock conducted a simulated small school of twenty-three children divided up into eight classes, before a group of thirty-two teachers. Schools of instruction were often the only professional training experienced by teachers of the bush schools. It was a rare opportunity to mix with intellectual equals and the social aspect was also important. Many a teacher-to-teacher marriage was hatched in the breaks between sessions.

This comment from an unknown participant in one of the early schools of instruction held at York is worth noting.

> At such a gathering there is an opportunity to hear the newest ideas of teaching that the scholastic world has produced. There is also the opportunity to see specimen lessons of the best kind given by the highest authority the teacher knows. There is further the possibility of comparing methods of one's own with those of others. Another feature is that the best literature on the theory and practice of teaching is brought under notice; a further one, that the teacher and inspector learn what sort of being each actually is; and still another that the social benefit to the teacher in the back blocks is of a very high kind. All the teachers gain immensely in power and knowledge, but the unfortunate resident in the country school-house, who is miles away from all social life, and whose visitors can be counted on his fingers when he reckons them up for half a year, feels the inspiration of such a school for a long time, and is the better in every way. (18)

In the late 1940s and in the decades that followed, in-service courses were mainly for teachers in high schools, the area where the main educational explosion was then taking place and where many problems abounded. Moreover the small schools of the country areas were being phased out by consolidation and all but disappeared by 1960.

4. Advisory Teachers

The third main way in which the Education Department attempted to help the country teacher was by the system of travelling advisory teachers. As early as 1907 Inspector Gamble had noted the use of such help given in South

Australia to the outback teacher in the one-teacher school.(19) It was not till the middle of 1910 that itinerant teachers to the number of two were appointed specifically to visit and advise in small schools. 'Mr. Advisory teacher Murdock' (sic) described his duties as 'giving the teachers a helping hand'. His reports suggest that such help was much needed and 'the spirit in which the assistance was accepted clearly indicated a true appreciation of the friendly spirit in which it was given'. (20) Additional advisory teachers were appointed in specialist areas, such as sewing and drawing. Charlie Hamilton in particular did sterling work as advisory teacher in nature study, which was for some decades a very important part of the curriculum of bush schools. Commencing in 1908 he spent several years visiting many country schools, giving practical lessons to individual teachers, and often calling teachers together on Saturdays for practical outdoor study and lesson preparation. In the 1920s, however, the Teachers' Union had reason to complain that advisory teachers were being used as 'cheap labour' inspectors, which was 'not a legitimate duty of their office'. Union Secretary Martin Darcey made a slashing attack on this practice. The advisory teacher, he said, 'is selected for conspicuous ability in the management of a small school', but is consistently used as 'a sweated inspector' and his function was being lost. (21)

Outback teachers expected to get help from inspectors who were obliged to make two visits per year to all schools in their districts, the first to be of a purely advisory nature. Many of the remote bush schools, however, missed out on this first visit due to sheer pressure of travel time involved in covering a far-flung inspectorial district.

5. Other Aids to Professionalism

The three-fold approach to professional training outlined above was supplemented by written instructions and by teacher self-help. Notes and suggestions were published month by month in the *Education Circular*, written by inspectors and subject specialists, and occasionally by the Director-General himself. Charlie Hamilton's notes on Nature Study were a regular feature for many years. When a revised curriculum for small schools was introduced in 1912 continuous 'notes and suggestions' appeared in the *Education Circular* throughout the whole of 1913, and sporadically for some time. The July 1913 issue carried a full page 'Time table for a one-teacher school', together with an analysis of time allotment. Writers to the *Teachers' Journal* identified only as 'Granite' and 'Crayon' presented helpful material respectively on Nature Study and the teaching of Drawing. The journal had been launched as the official organ of the Country Teacher's Association, and the very first issue, which appeared in 1908, stated its objective as 'to assist in arriving at the most practicable basis of education, the best method of imparting instruction (especially in country schools) and *incidentally* [author's emphasis] to endeavour to improve the conditions of teachers generally'.(22) Over the years since then the educational objectives were upheld, though they ceased to be considered as of first importance.

6. Self-help

In the early years of the century, teachers in various country areas got together and organized Teachers' Associations, partly for social activity, but primarily for exchange of information and ideas on teaching methods, and for practical help to each other in matters of class organization and school management. Meetings were well attended with reports of some participants travelling up to eighty miles. The 'giving and criticising of lessons on the various subjects of the curriculum' became a feature of these gatherings, and Perth booksellers E.S. Wigg and J. Dwyer at times arranged displays of educational books. (23)

7. Teachers' College

A further important step towards improving the quality of teachers for small schools was taken in December 1911 when the Department announced the setting up of two six-months courses of training specifically designed for country teachers, to be taken at Claremont Teachers' College in 1912. Trainees were to be given a meagre allowance of £20 and 'during week days dinner will be provided free'. (24) Entrance was to be by competitive examination in reading, writing, spelling, English, grammar, composition, arithmetic, English history and geography. An examination at the close of the course would rank the students in order of merit from which appointments would be made, at a commencing salary of £110 per annum, which was a considerable improvement on the previous figure of £80.

The first 'short course' of training, as it was called, began in February 1912 with twenty-five recruits selected by examination and with twenty-five in-service teachers who attended on half-pay. The raw recruits of the first group were young men and women aged not less than seventeen and not more than thirty, who had had for the most part primary education only. It was noted that the women tended to be more able than the men. (25) The most obvious weakness among all students was the lack of reading ability and consequent lack of acquaintance with literature, and inability to express thought. Fortunately the number of applicants for each new intake was large so that the examination tended to select those who gave the most promise. However too much of the training time had to be spent in acquiring knowledge of subject matter of the curriculum, which reduced the time available for training in methodology. After 1914 the supply of teachers greatly improved due partly to the fall-off in the number of new schools established, and partly to the number of applications greatly exceeding vacancies. Moreover the adoption of a new service policy meant that 'all who enter the service must be prepared to go to the more sparsely populated parts of the country'. (26) This policy stemmed from the exigencies of the war. So many men teachers joined the forces that the percentage of male teachers active in the schools dropped from 35 percent in 1914 to 30 percent in 1918. War-service affected the intake to the teaching profession. In 1915, for example, 70 percent of all male graduates from the college enlisted. In these circumstances teachers had to be prepared to go to whatever part of the State

had school vacancies. The feeling prevailed that if the men at the war fronts were undergoing the rigours of trench warfare, the teacher at home must be prepared to face some degree of hardship in the remote outback.

In the first post-war year the college six-months course was extended to twelve months (the 'normal course' now being for two years). By this time increased facilities for secondary education had resulted in a supply of better educated candidates for teaching. Government district high schools had been established in 1918 and 1919 at Geraldton, Albany, Northam and Bunbury, and in 1922 the Eastern Goldfields High School opened. Applicants were now expected to have a good secondary education before appointment as monitors, and the Department began to look forward to the time when it would be able to exclude anyone from appointment to the teaching service who had not gone through a course of training. These developments brought about a distinct improvement in the quality of teachers in one-teacher schools and more of them were now being staffed by classified teachers, though the policy of sending the unclassified to such schools remained.

The improvements in the preparation of teachers was well timed, since the immigration and land settlement programmes of the 1920s again increased the need for country teachers in small schools. Preference in appointments to the permanent staff was given to those who had been through a course of professional training, but the college could not yet turn out enough qualified teachers to fill all vacancies. The deficiency was made up from those who had served as monitors and had shown aptitute for teaching. (27)

8. Teachers' Union Dissatisfaction

Though department heads felt a deal of satisfaction that staffing had improved markedly over the pre-war period, there were others who were not happy. At the 1923 May conference of the Country Teachers Branch of the Teachers' Union the most important item of business concerned the training of teachers for work in country schools. It should be remembered that at this time the majority of such schools were still one-teacher schools. The sponsors of the item, Frank Wallace and Herb Feilman, saw as a profound weakness of the existing scheme of training that the students did the course in an urban environment. All of them, from the age of thirteen when they entered high school, and many of them from birth, had lived in either the Perth metropolitan area or in large country towns, 'tending to make them dissatisfied with country conditions'. (28) The conference made four suggestions. First, that at the beginning of the school year following their fourteenth birthday, students should be appointed to a local school as probationers for a period of three years, during which time they could study for the Junior Certificate by correspondence. Secondly, they should then be appointed as monitors and should likewise receive instruction by correspondence to pass the Leaving Certificate. Thirdly, they should enter the Teachers College for a two year course of training, and fourthly be appointed in their home districts. The overall aim was to see that they did not lose touch with the rural community.

The Country Teachers conference in 1924 again took up this question, stressing the need for equality of training for country teachers and urging that inspectors should have had experience in small country schools to qualify for their high office. The Education Department did not respond to this agitation from the Union. However, faced with the real need to increase sharply the number of country teachers to staff the greatly increased number of schools being demanded by the new settlers of the eastern wheatbelt, it began in 1924 a policy of inducting three groups per year into the college. Short course were begun in February, in June and in September. By 1926 the situation had improved to the extent that of the 207 students in college, 119 were taking the one-year course for rural schools. At the end of 1930, under the impact of the Great Depression, the government closed down the Teachers' College as an economy measure. The Department justified it on the grounds that there was a surplus of trained teachers and that it was advisable to call a halt to training. When the college was re-opened on 1st July 1934 with sixty students, the educationally backward step was taken of reducing the short course once again to six months, as it had been before 1919. At this time 58 percent of the Department's schools were of the one-teacher type.

The re-opened course was highly unsatisfactory and was compared unfavourably with the immediate pre-depression course. The greatest cause of complaint was that there had been no re-appointment of a lecturer in small schools method. Over the next few years the annual intake to the short course was less than forty students. In 1937 a burst of correspondence appeared in the Teachers Journal on the difficulties of small school teachers, laying the blame mainly at the door of lack of training. The President of the Union, Ted Huck, led a deputation to the Director of Education, presenting a case for the appointment to the college staff of a lecturer in small school method and for the setting up of an additional one-teacher practising school. He complained that, students of the six months course, when appointed to their schools 'discovered it was taking them several months to acquire some insight into the organisation of small country schools. During that time they were floundering about instead of giving of their best to the children'. (29)

The Department's response was to separate an artificial grouping of children at a city school to simulate a small school. Some teachers complained that while in college they had had in the whole of their course only half-an-hour's practice in a one-teacher-school situation. (30)

In 1938 an editorial in the *Teachers' Journal* pointed out that approximately sixty percent of all schools were one-teacher schools with enrolments of from nine to forty children. The teachers in charge were mostly young, bred and educated in a city environment, and sent out to remote schools with little advice and instruction from their time in the
college. (31)

At the Teachers' Union conference that year the problems faced by these teachers loomed large in the discussions. Once again the need for a tutor in rural school method was raised and there were complaints that the one-teacher

school attached to the college presented an artificial situation of little help to the trainee.

A Union deputation took a conference resolution on this matter to the Director-General, Charles Hadley, who agreed that the situation ought to be improved, and proposed the setting up of additional 'one-teacher schools' at Swanbourne, East Claremont Demonstration School, and at Jolimont. The deputation protested at the artificiality of this kind of set-up, arguing that a genuine one-teacher school, that is a classified school with one-teacher only, should be used, and suggested that trainees should be sent to Innaloo and Canning Bridge. The Director admitted that his proposal was a 'makeshift', but would not alter it. (32)

In the first war year, 1940, there were further complaints of the inadequacy of the training, demands for a two year course, for refresher courses from time to time, and for adequate practice while in college under normal rural school conditions. The effect of the war was to postpone all thought or hopes of improvements for some time to come. In the 1950s the commencement of the great post-war immigration scheme made great changes in teacher training inevitable. The abolition of the monitorship system opened up the way for a rapid immediate increase in the number of teachers recruited. Students in high schools were encouraged by the introduction of the teaching bursary to see teaching as a good career opportunity. However the massive problems which faced the Education Department from the enormous expansion of the child population and from the decision to extend secondary education to all, swamped the lesser question of training for small rural schools. Moreover a vigorous programme of consolidation of small schools into larger units, worked increasingly towards abolishing the problem of the isolated teacher coping on his own with grouped classes and with school administration and organisation. The problem of adequate training for service in the one-teacher school was never in a sense 'solved'. It disappeared under the impact of events.

6. Teacher and children of Dulbelling school 1917.

CHAPTER 4
The Bush Chalkie in his school

1. School routine

One is familiar with tales of the hardships of pioneer farmers, miners and timber getters, the difficulties they faced in their struggles to make a living in uncomfortable and unfamiliar surroundings. Much less is known of the physical and mental sufferings of teachers in the small schools of the outback, with the added problems of relating to an often alien social milieu. Moreover the country teacher suffered much from a feeling of being ill-prepared for his job. The day to day problems of running lessons in anything up to seven different grades and the complexities of the grouped classes for a number of subjects, left many of them floundering for a long time. Most had had only a brief and perfunctory training in how to teach children, and their own standard of education was inadequate for the role they had to play in the school and in the local community. Many were quite young and their immaturity added to their difficulties. For such of them as were city-bred it was invariably their first time away from home and their first acquaintance with country life. Moreover the work of teachers in Western Australia presented peculiar difficulties owing to the isolation of many schools. It was impossible most of the time for bush teachers to obtain help and guidance. Not till the once-a-year visit of the district inspector could they obtain some appraisal of how well they were doing their job.

In addition to the difficulties with developing teaching skills, many of these ill-prepared teachers showed abysmal lack of ability to keep records and to compile simple returns. Many had great difficulty with the organization of a time-table of lessons ranging over several grades. Inspector Wheeler complained of instances

> where little or nothing was known of the methods of registration and record in use in our schools. In one case it was found necessary to devote a whole morning to instructing a teacher how to keep his books — even his class register was all wrong. This teacher had spent a month in a city school, and left it, knowing nothing of the routine work of a school. (1)

Even those who were able to cope tended to make heavy weather of school administration. During a debate in State Parliament on the education estimates for 1912 a member referred to complaints he had received from country teachers as to the amount of clerical work they had to perform. 'The teacher of a one-man school had to spend between four and five hours a day in clerical work'. (2)

Keeping of school records was an onerous duty. First there were the daily and weekly tasks. The attendance roll had to be marked twice a day and the attendance record sent to the Department weekly. Roll-keeping involved also the admission of new pupils, the striking off of school leavers and transferees and the writing of transfer notes, and the writing of notes to parents about absentees. The school journal had to be written up once a week, recording any significant or unusual event. The programmes of work for all classes had to be set out on the correct forms well in advance of the actual teaching.

Secondly, there were events or situations occurring at regular, but longer intervals, which occasioned further clerical work. At the beginning of the year there was the preparation of a time-table for classes which might range from First Infants to standard VI, a task which new teachers found very difficult and which required many changes and re-arrangements till it became workable. The conduct of half-yearly and end-of-the-year examinations involved a great deal of time in preparation, marking and recording of the results of each child in the examination book. After the inspector's visit his report on the school had to be written into the inspector's book. Then there was the annual stock-taking and requisition of new stock. The teacher had also to arrange contracts for various essential services and this required form-filling and reports. To obtain firewood for the winter the teacher sent in an application to the Public Works Department and a contract had to be made with a local supplier who was paid at the rate of 25/- per cord per month — in really cold areas this was always an inadequate supply. The sanitary contract had to be renewed each year at 1/6 per pan per week (the ruling rate in the 1920s), the task often being carried out by a couple of the older boys, but the father had to guarantee its performance. For school cleaning the head teacher was given an allowance of 6/- to 9/- per week on an area basis. He could do it himself or farm it out to a pupil or parent. If the teacher was a woman she gave instruction in sewing to the girls herself, but if a man, a contract had to be arranged with a local woman to do the job — the qualifications were to be over sixteen years of age and able to sew. Instructions were provided and specimen materials and cotton supplied.

A third group of records was occasioned by irregular and unusual events. These might include the exclusion of children on account of infectious diseases which had to be reported, the entering of details in the punishment book when a child had to be caned for a serious offence, and the reporting of damage to, or wear and tear on, buildings, furniture and equipment. The latter might require the arranging of a contract with a local tradesman or handyman.

All these duties made for a great deal of correspondence with officers of the Education Department. In the early years of the century letters were

addressed to the 'Secretary for Education', later to the 'Inspector-General of Schools', then to the 'Director of Education' and finally to the impersonal 'Education Department'. The form of conclusion of letters laid down in regulations during much of the time with which this history is concerned, was

I, Sir, have the honour to be,
Your obedient servant.

Lest it be thought that this was an enforcement of subservience, it may be noted that the same form of address was used by the Inspector-General in his reply to the teacher. (see appendix 4)

It will readily be seen that clerical duties, together with the preparation of lessons and teaching aids, and the marking of script books added several hours a week to the teacher's work load well over and above official school hours. In addition he had to find time to study for certificate examination, act in a voluntary capacity as secretary and or treasurer of local social and sporting clubs and operate the school as a social and sporting centre. The school building could, under certain conditions, be hired for social functions, and school sporting facilities such as tennis courts were often used by local residents at the weekends. Meeting the wishes of parents in these matters was important if the teacher was to keep on good terms with them and ensure their co-operation in school ventures. While dealing with all these matters the teacher had to uphold the dignity of the profession and the authority of the Education Department. For all this the incumbent of a one-teacher school was dignified by the title of 'head-teacher', and paid a very modest salary for which he had to apply each time by due date, once a month or twice a month if he so elected. He was paid by cheque and, as there was usually no local bank, he had to pass it to his landlady to take to town for cashing. Is it any wonder that many bush teachers, especially those in the very isolated areas, looked upon their years of country service as a kind of penal servitude and looked forward eagerly to the emancipation of a city appointment? However, there is no doubt that, for he who was able to cope, the manifold duties of a one-teacher school equipped him to play a useful and often necessary role in the local community as organizer and leader of social and sporting activities. If he survived he developed competence in handling people, especially difficult people, and was well prepared to take on the duties of a head of a larger school later on.

2. First Day Experiences

A teacher's first day of duty in a one-teacher bush school could be a trying and challenging experience, especially for the city-bred tyro for whom it might also be his or her first acquaintance with country life. Preserving anonymity as to author and place 'Maybeth' described her introduction to her first school as follows:

> My school proved to be an abandoned dwelling made of bricks crudely fashioned from the red soil of Goolguddering. Quantities of the same good earth had been used to plug the wide cracks in the floor. After

dismissing the children on my first afternoon, I set to work to chip out the unsightly plugs. A loitering youngster warned me to desist. 'There's plenty snakes under the school, y'know, Miss,' he said, 'and when you open up them cracks, sure as eggs they'll come inside'. Next morning a bronzed young farmer shyly offered me a gift — a wicked-looking weapon, curved like a hockey stick, with which he suggested I might defend myself and the children against reptiles. In the afternoon a snake came out and laid its head on a mud brick awaiting execution. When I had stood over it for ten minutes and praying for courage to strike, a little lad appeared, calmly despatched the snake and then, producing a rabbit from his bosom, wrung its neck. 'When you see their eyes go pink you know they're prop'ly dead', he told me. (3)

Maybeth goes on to describe how she learned to slither in at doors without admitting blow-flies, how to dodge the attention of pet lambs and tame kangaroos, and how to cope with the habits of cockatoos which friendly neighbours insisted on bringing in as gifts. She does not tell us if she made further acquaintance with the bronzed young farmer.

Anne Murray wrote of her experience on arrival at 'Goannerup' situated beyond the lower Great Southern. She was met by 'the largest welcome reception ever held at the [railway] station; literally every man and his dog! The reason? A new chalkie . . . female, single, and 21 . . . an admirable catch'. (4) It was not uncommon for a short career in a one-teacher school to be brought to an end by marriage to a local farmer. In those days a female teacher who married had to resign.

Claire Bancroft in 1932 was appointed to a school near Gate 89 on the rabbit proof fence. The Teachers' College had been closed on account of the financial stringencies of the Great Depression. Claire was one of a group of ex-students of the college who counted themselves lucky to have a job as a monitor on a salary of one pound per week.

What a shock it was to receive an appointment as Head Mistress to a school called Elsinore. At the time I was a monitor but no one on the staff had heard of Elsinore. After a lot of enquiries it was finally worked out that I should proceed to Narrogin, thence by train to Dundinin and from there it was in the lap of the gods . . .

The school was on a cleared barren stony block on the corner of Elsinore farm. It was a one room, corrugated iron building with a half round tank roof, and like all small schools [had] a tiny porch with hat pegs and hand basin. Of course there was a galvanised iron loo in the usual spot in the far corner of the yard . . . Inside, the building was decorated with pictures pasted on the walls and [there were] very old-time long desks which would seat four or five children, plus some smaller ones . . . The big day arrived and so did the children by various means — some came by sulky — some on horse back and some just walked. Getting down to school work was quite a business at the

beginning with all the various age grades . . . but we soon developed a routine with the older children helping the little ones.

Freda Easthorpe was also appointed to Elsinore. She took the train which got her as far as Dudinin where she found that 'no one was there to meet me'. The school and the farming family with whom she was to board were several miles from the siding. For a city-bred girl, Dudinin was something of a shock. It consisted of 'one small store, a hotel, a post office, a bank, a small draper's shop and the baker's shop'. Fortunately a farmer arrived who could give her a lift but she had to wait several hours before he had transacted his business.

Shortly after taking over her school, Freda also had an encounter with a snake.

> Apparently the school previously was connected to water as about a foot above the floor in the wall was a hole about the same size as the circumference of a water pipe. While we were having a singing lesson one afternoon I noticed a snake coming in the hole. I quietely marched the children out. So as not to upset the younger children I asked the two biggest boys to get a strong stick each and wait by the hole. Then we went on with our singing lesson. Sure enough the snake responded to the music and came out to be quickly despatched by the two boys.

Esther Gallop was first appointed to Gillimanning, an Assisted School 27 miles from Pingelly. School was held in a back room (the kitchen) of the district hall. 'As this was my first school I had to wait for the District Inspector's visit and his approval of me, before I received any salary. In my case it was two months.'

Gretta Nottle also began in an Assisted School. She had gained the Junior Certificate with passes in ten subjects at Bunbury High School, after which

> I returned to the farm [as] my parents no longer could afford to keep me at school. The next year when I was fifteen-and-a-half years old, I was offered the position of assisted teacher at Milton, a small centre between Pingelly and Yearlering . . . In Assisted Schools the Education Department paid thirty shillings per child per month on an average attendance. The parents were responsible for providing the deficit if the average attendance fell below eight. This they did by providing me with free board . . . I rode my bike to and from school each day ... The children ranged from infants to one girl in standard eight [first year high].
>
> It was a lonely life for one so young, being war time and petrol rationing I could only go out when a parent was going to Yearlering to shop and they would pick me up at the school or I sometimes went with a kindly family to the local dance or the pictures. When holidays came I rode my bike fifteen miles to Bulyee where my father met me in his old Ford car to take me home.

Myrtle Walker's first appointment was to Beacon School in 1932. Her experience paralleled those of most teachers of small bush schools.

> Discipline was a breeze. The children were keen to learn and were naturally amenable to discipline in the good old days. Furniture was minimal, the long desks seating four or five, rejects from city schools I imagine. Teacher's table, chair, cupboard, bell. The building was of weatherboard with iron roof. There was no heating or light. I did the cleaning and the only water at the school was in a rain water tank . . . I boarded at a private home made of bag, white washed, a dirt floor with lino on it. A galvanised tub was carried into my bedroom every day for my bath. Ironing was done with flat irons heated on the kitchen stove . . . I know I was unworldly, but the garage man came over to the house one day and said to my landlady, 'I'd like to take Miss Walker out into the bush and give her a nature-study lesson.' When my landlady repeated this to me laughingly, I said, 'B. H. wants his tongue cut'. This was on the spur of the moment of course and it was taken straight back.

Myrtle Walker subsequently found out that B. H. had a fiance in Perth and she was happy on a number of occasions to accept lifts in his car to return home.

Mavis Eastlake was appointed to North Kununoppin in 1929. She found that the school was

> a single room with a crude dirt-floored outside porch long enough to hold the children's cases and a small stand with its enamel hand basin . . . the yard was partitioned off into three sections, one a games area that had a bush shed for hot days, one for the actual school, the third a sheltered tree-covered paddock for the children's horses, sulkies and open carts . . .
>
> There were fourteen children, ranging from five years to fourteen years . . . [They were] exceptionally shy and many had never been to school before. Some had been so isolated that they did not know how to cope with, or converse with, strangers . . . Their shyness was unbelievably intense. On every occasion that the visiting minister came to give a religious talk, nearly all of the children would quickly and silently slide under the long forms and he would find himself preaching to bare wooden desk tops . . . The children of the poorer farmers were under-clothed. The lack of protective boots and shoes was obvious . . . One family was housed in a hut built of kerosene tins cut and flattened, and pinewood from kerosene cases. (5)

Miss A. Thackrah took up her first appointment at North Mount Marshal in 1924. She encountered conditions that were common in newly settled areas.

> I travelled all night by train arriving at Welbungin (the siding for the family I boarded with) at about 9 a.m. I was met by one of the family in a masher cart. The journey across rugged tracks is never to be forgotten, as I was informed the horse was prone to bolting and the nervous driver kept repeating 'Whoa Tom'. At one stage I was holding on to the railing of the seat and when we went over a hidden root the whole seat lifted up dumping me unceremoniously among my

luggage. I shared a room with the two daughters in the family and as water was a problem one bath per week only. If popular, the teacher had first, if not, then third, and the dam water curdled with soap with rather horrifying results. I had to travel with the two school-age boys about four miles to the school. (6)

Veteran country teacher George Forster, who entered the Western Australian Education Department in 1921 as a mature aged migrant from Britain, describes how he and his wife coped with his first appointment.

I was appointed to Mandogalup School as head teacher on supply, unclassified, at a salary of £192 per annum . . . We bought a minimum of furniture, kitchen and bedroom only, and set out. I had no idea where Mandogalup was and neither had the booking clerk on Perth station. I showed him the warrant for two first-class fares to Mandogalup via Jandakot. He laughed, 'change trains at Fremantle', he said.

On arrival at Jandakot I learned that neither school furniture nor our effects had arrived. We stayed the night at Bibra Lake Hotel. Next morning, no furniture yet. The engineer in charge, Mr R. J. Ankertell, offered us his tent for the weekend, and there we remained, very comfortably and extremely well looked after by his cook.

All the baggage arrived on the Monday, and we entrained for Mandogalup. Seated on bags of chaff on the table-top truck, we travelled the remaining six miles. The school was in the first settler's hut to be erected for group settlement. The front two rooms were knocked into one and became the classroom; the teacher's family occupied the remaining room, 12ft by 10ft, with window 2ft square. The back verandah was enclosed with hessian, with a window and a door, and provided with a stove to serve as a kitchen. The building was of weatherboard and unlined. A tank alongside the railway was kept filled with water to supply school and house . . . We bathed in a tub in front of the fire, and boiled the washing in kerosene tins in the open . . . There were no roads and not a house of any kind within miles. The settlers and workers whose children I had to teach lived in tents . . .

I opened school with about 25 children who had missed quite a deal of schooling. I had one blackboard, the Swan series of history and geography readers — one per two children, no library books, and an adequate supply of writing materials. The desks were mostly the long pine desks of the 1890s, the same as I had occupied as a boy. (7)

In the hey-day of the one-teacher schools, the decades from 1900 to 1950, schools in the bush and in mining areas were opened and closed with such rapidity in accordance with population movements that only the staffing clerk at Education Department headquarters could tell what the situation was at any one time. Kathleen Danahy tells a story which illustrates this point. She was stationed at North Kellerberrin. Owing to population changes the school venue became inconvenient for the children then attending. While in Perth during

a holiday break she rang the Director and asked permission to shift the school back to the hall in which it had first opened.

> He asked who I was and I told him. After some hesitation he said, 'what do you do there?' and I replied that I was the teacher there. He then said, 'We don't have a school at North Kellerberrin', and I replied, 'Then I wonder where I've been teaching these last three years'. (8)

The Director said he would look into the matter and a week later she received a letter giving her permission to hold the school in the hall, as requested.

W. James tells of his arrival at a typically ill-equipped one-teacher school on the first day of the school year, a hot summer morning, coming early to be ready to 'greet the foe'. Not a child appeared till almost nine o'clock.

> Then the gate banged and, almost as one, children, dogs, parents and a cat burst onto the verandah. The dogs were promptly dispersed by some well-aimed kicks and curses from an enormous man dressed solely in a pair of black shorts and red thongs. The cat averted the melee and sat by the door quietly. 'Ken Daly's the name, stated the massive man bluntly as he extended a large paw for a perfunctory handshake. 'This is Andy and Paula. Seeya'. And he was gone . . . The two children slipped inside to put books, rulers, and lunches in their desks. The cat followed them in and began to preen itself on my table. In a bewildering procession children trooped into the classroom, deposited sundries and delightedly ran out to the playground area.
>
> Parents introduced themselves and quickly disappeared. They were neither awed nor curious. Little wonder, I was the third teacher in three years. Our breed weren't any novelty. (9)

There were fifteen children in all shapes and sizes, 'literally black, white and brindle, dressed in everything from the latest beach gear to what resembled a cut-down sugar bag. On closer examination later it did, in fact, turn out to be the remnants of a sugar bag'. There were three in grade one, two in grade three, three in grade four and two in each of the other grades except year eight. Most were farmers' children, a few were from settlers' families and the rest were from the Doyles who ran the general store. The year was 1962 but James could well have been describing the initial experience of almost any bush teacher over the past sixty years.

3. The Social and Physical Environment

James' account of the activities and atmosphere of a bush school is told from the teacher's point of view. The pupils' viewpoint is admirably presented by Kathleen Anderson.

> Every morning we'd arrive panting — usually at the death-knock. An envied older pupil would hang through a window to ring the bell. This was the signal for us to queue up at the enamel basins on the tank stands and slap a few drops of water on hands and faces, accompanied

by cries of 'Hurry up there: don't take all day!' We were then ready for the bell that summoned us to form two lines at the foot of the school steps, on the top of which teacher would appear. After her bright, 'Good morning children', she'd descend the half dozen steps to make an inspection of teeth, nails, hankies and hair . . .

It always fascinated me how our teacher managed to be everywhere at once, to take seven different classes for seven different lessons — all at the same time (or so it seemed to us). However, so magical was she, that by the time we were dismissed at ten thirty for our morning break, most of us had acquired at least some part of the skills necessary if we were not to remain completely illiterate. Except for one or two who may have been playing up while the teacher was busy with another class, we'd all troop out to recess. Then the lucky ones produced play lunch. The rest of us either stamped on the ants' nest under the huge York gum growing in the yard, smoked behind the shed (for the older classes only), picked a good fight, or simply feuded with the boys. Never a day passed without a skirmish of some sort, but, loyal to our own code, none of us ever considered splitting to the teacher. This was rigidly adhered to by young and old alike. We never indulged in tale-telling or regrets.

Lunch time was a repeat performance of our recess time activities, though on a larger scale, with perhaps a walk in the bush thrown in. Or we went bird-nesting, or had a game of rounders, or started an even bigger and better fight, just for a change! And the littlies were led by their noses in the violent ambitions of the older children. (10)

How typical was Kathleen Anderson's experience it is difficult to say. Certainly in many schools, out-of-school activities were less combative and more edifying. If the school had a modicum of sporting equipment, organized games were played during recess and lunch breaks. Boys played cricket, or kick-for-kick with a football, and local rules prevailed.

Tops and marbles appeared in the season which began according to some mysterious rhythms known only to schoolboys. Most had a small collection of 'alleys', 'dakes' or 'doogs', consisting of a real or two, bots and stonkers. Rules were fiercely enforced by the strong over the weak and many a quarrel developed over alleged cheating or fudging. The king of the playground was the boy who possessed a 'blood real' whether his possession was derived from purchase or winnings. Girls played skipping games keeping time with songs preserved in a folk tradition handed down over many generations. Action songs persisted in small country schools long after they had disappeared from the more sophisticated milieu of city schools. 'Oranges and lemons' is well known, but the following lesser known snippets sung as accompaniments to skipping games seem to have an equally honourable descent:

Uncle Dick is very sick
And what shall we send him?

A piece of cake and a hunk of pie
And a slice of apple pudding.
Who shall we send it by?
By the governor's daughter.
If the governor's daughter is not there
We'll send it by the water.

My mother said, I never should
Play with the gypsies in the wood.
If I did she would say,
Naughty girl to disobey.
Disobey one, disobey two,
three, four, five, six, seven!
(speeding up the skipping)
Salt — mustard — cayenne — pepper!

An action song, popular because it presented the opportunity to show strong personal attachments, ran as follows —

See this pretty little girl of mine,
She bought me many a bottle of wine.
She bought me one, she bought me two,
See what my little girl can do.

Down on the carpet she shall kneel,
While the grass grown high and green.
Stand up straight upon your feet,
And choose the very one you love so sweet.

Now you're married and I wish you joy
First a girl and then a boy.
Seven years old, and seven years young,
Kiss together and away you run!

In small country schools, unisex games were important since the participation of everyone was needed to make up the numbers. These were usually organized by the teacher in formal sessions, and were of the chasing and catching variety: French and English, What's the time Mr Wolf, Red rover all over, Tiggy tiggy touchwood, and of course, Hidey. These organized games were part of the physical exercise syllabus and were a welcome break from indoor subjects since they were taken during school hours. The routine of school work was also broken by special activities such as half-day nature study excursions, school picnics, a one-day-of-the-year sporting event with a neighbouring school, or attending the local Agricultural Show which provided the opportunity for display of needlework, drawing, painting, hand-writing, mapping and manual models. There was the end-of-the-year concert with its days of preparation, the inevitable christmas tree, the fancy-dress ball with its accompanying dancing lessons and the annual prize-giving by some prominent local worthy. Commemorative days included Arbor Day, Anzac Day and Armistice Day, Empire Day, Goodwill Day. Occasional visitors appeared such

7. School garden Boyanup one-teacher school 1911.

as members of the School Board, the local Member of Parliament or the once-a-month clergyman arriving with horse-and-buggy or 'tin lizzie'.

In the sunshiny days of spring and early winter, individuals or a very small group might be sent outside for reciting of tables, reading aloud, chanting over spelling or for play acting. The one-teacher school at its best had an atmosphere to a high degree free and co-operative, rather more difficult to achieve when schools became larger and more complex.

The social atmosphere of the school was influenced by the physical surroundings, the latter being also to some extent a product of the former. The cleanliness, care and development of school premises including the grounds were part of the teacher's duties. A prolonged drive was made by district inspectors to encourage the cultivation of school gardens and the planting of ornamental shade trees. Praise was lavished on those who did well.

> In many of the little bush schools one cannot help being struck by the care and attention which our earnest teachers have devoted towards beautifying the scho ol internally and externally.

Blame was heaped on those who attempted 'little more than a scratching of the earth and the planting of a few ill-assorted shoots and roots', and on 'teachers of the old school' who 'looked with dubious eyes upon the school garden as an inspector's fad'. Inspector Wheeler poured scorn on the neglectful ones who 'remind the observer of the sluggard's garden, and the poet's words:

> I passed by his garden and saw the wild briar.
> The thorn and the thistle grew broader and higher'. (11)

Some of the earliest schools singled out for praise were Momberkine, Mingenew, Moonyanooka, Mogumber, Bindoon, Strawberry, Gingin and Mullalayup. The garden of the Wannamal school was 'often the subject of complimentary remarks from passengers on the Midland train'. Obviously some areas of the state were better suited by climate to this type of activity than others. The south-west district was pointed to in 1907 as 'the best in the State for school gardens and ornamental tree planting'. On the goldfields and the eastern wheatbelt water was a problem. Usually the school rainwater tank was the only source, though some had wells.

Frugality with water was advised. Some teachers 'were careful to utilise all waste water from lavatories [i.e. washbasins] for the purpose of watering the trees during the summer months'. (12) From 1906 for a few years the Education Department awarded a prize of £5 for the best kept school grounds in the State. The initial winner was Boyanup, and Quindalup was highly praised. Practical assistance was given to schools in the form of supplies of seeds, manures and gardening tools, and arrangements were made for the Forestry Department to supply young trees.

Gardens were 'not expected' on the goldfields, but tree planting was encouraged. Inspector Wheeler in 1906 was 'exceedingly pleased to find a number of pepper trees and gums at the little school of Murrin . . . They were in a remarkably healthy condition and . . . had been watered with the waste

water from the lavatory without encroaching upon the school supply'. Schools in dry areas, especially on the goldfields, were advised to create verandah gardens 'after the manner of the Norseman school'. This school was for many years famous for its flowers and shrubs in tubs and pots set upon the school verandahs, away from the main heat of the day. (13)

Inspector Gamble advocated the observation of 'Arbor Day' as was done in South Australia. This proposal was adopted and within two years was an annual event in many country schools. In view of the Department's policy of refusing to build shelter sheds for small schools, the planting of a grove of pepper trees or other hardy species for shade during recess times and lunch times had great practical value. (14)

Trees and gardens were justified on aesthetic grounds. Inspector Gladman claimed that 'their value is especially greater in the remoter schools, where often very little opportunity otherwise exists for the creation of standards of aesthetic taste'. Inspector Klein waxed even more eloquent.

> These gardens are not judged by the number and beauty of the blooms, or by the amount of produce raised. Their value lies deeper . . . Educationally, garden work forms a break in the ordinary school routine. It is popular with the scholars. It is also closely associated with their studies — Nature Study, Composition, Drawing and Literature. Our ability to appreciate the charm of many of our best poems depends not a little on our ability to form correct visual images of nature objects. (15)

The drive on the beautification of school grounds was so successful that by 1907 it was stated that 'it will soon be the exception to see a school anywhere in the State in which no attempt has been made to improve the grounds by tree-planting and gardening'. However in the opinion of some the cultivation of gardens had gone too far. Inspector Wheeler complained of 'over-enthusiasm' by some teacher's. He referred to the school garden

> which is fair to look upon, modelled on fine lines, and worked upon sound bases, but which has been brought to this stage of perfection at the expense of the indoor work of the school . . . the school has been looked upon as an adjunct of the garden rather than the garden as an adjunct of the school. (16)

Such departmental emphasis had been given to this form of activity that it became part of the folk-lore of the outback teacher that the way to promotion was to have a good school garden. By the end of the 1900s, either the desired end had been achieved or the enthusiasm of teachers had declined. In 1913, still maintaining his interest in what was happening to school gardens, Wheeler noted a decline in the southern districts of 'the tree-planting movement so popular only a year or two ago' and wrote that 'gardens are only a memory of what they were'.

In the 1920s under the impact of the Rural Schools Movement inspired and organized by Senior Inspector Miles, many school gardens changed their

ornamental character to become agricultural experimental plots, as explained at length in Chapter 6.

The foregoing indicates that teachers were under considerable pressure to keep school grounds and surroundings generally in good order and to make them as pleasant as possible. Cleanliness of the grounds was insisted on by inspectors, which could be a bugbear to the teacher and in some cases lead to unfortunate consequences. There was a case at the Minding school where, at the end of the year, the teacher ordered the children to clear up all rubbish in the yard. The grounds had been excised from a farmer's paddock which surrounded it on three sides and at the time was golden with wheat ripe unto the harvest. Despite protests from the olderboys who were farmers' sons, the teacher, a city bred girl, ordered them to remove dry grass by setting it alight. The only concession she made to safety was that all were to arm themselves with green boughs to beat out unwanted flames. Of course, the inevitable happened. A puff of wind, the fire got away beyond the school boundaries and set the whole paddock of wheat ablaze in a matter of minutes. Whether the crop was insured is not known. The terror and chagrin of the girl, the reaction of local farmers and the remarks bandied about in the local community can well be imagined. Her successor told how it took her six months to live down the hostility in the local community.

4. Getting to School — The Teacher

For many teachers living in isolated country areas before the advent of good roads and the motor car, the daily task of getting to school was irksome and often difficult. Teachers who did not have quarters attached, and this was the case with the great majority of one-teacher schools, sometimes had quite considerable distances to travel. Few had their own means of transport and had to rely on their landlord or on the parents of a nearby pupil. Travel might be by horse and trap, supplied by the landlord and perhaps driven by an older child, by bicycle, or, in the 1930s increasingly but still far from generally, by car. Roads were rough gravel or perhaps merely dirt tracks liable to bogging in winter. Even in the late 1920s to achieve a speed of 25 miles per hour by car on a long journey in the country was something to boast about. The teacher almost always drove to school, by whatever means, with several children, those of the landlady and some picked up on the way. Nora Shier, head-teacher of Minding, tells of travelling in the mid 1930s in an Austen 7 car belonging to her landlord. She took his children and picked up others along the road. The car was driven by one of the older boys, illegally but capably. This luxury ended one afternoon when, on the way home, the car bounced off the rough road, overturned and spilled all passengers into the bush. The car was wrecked but teacher and children relatively unhurt.

In the same period Miss Doris Newland had three-and-a-half miles to go to teach at the Haynesdale School and at North Woolundra 'drove 3 miles with old horse and cart. Horse died in April. Result walking 3 miles to and from school. Department refused allowance'. (17)

Freda Easthorpe describes her experience in getting daily to Elsinore school on the eastern wheatbelt.

> I boarded with Mrs Forsyth on the property 'Elsinore' (hence the name of the school). Being three miles from the house to the school was an awesome experience at first as I had never been close to a horse in my life. One wet morning being frightened the horse bolted and we hit a tree breaking one shaft. I had the youngest daughter with me so we took the horse out of the sulky and walked back home. Much to the delight of the children [who] had a holiday that day.

Vera Davidson taught later at the same school.

> In order to cover the distance to school I bought a horse and saddle and bridle etc. I wore riding breeches which I changed on arrival at school. Dresses were worn above the knee in those days [the year was 1933] occasioning the school inspector, Mr. Blair, to ask on entering the classroom, 'Who is the teacher?' (18)

Teachers in isolated one-teacher schools had great difficulty getting to a township for shopping, and special arrangements had to be made with a compliant parent to get transport to a railway station to catch a train home for the holidays. In some cases the teacher only went 'to town' three or four times a year. Others were more fortunate. Mr. Lucas of Wagin tells how his weekly job when a schoolboy at Wedgecarrup (1913-16) was to drive the teacher to Wagin in a horse and cart at the week-end when there was late night shopping to 9 p.m.

In schools which had bachelor quarters attached and where the population was widely scattered, the teacher's life could be a lonely one. There were a few schools in the south western forests where, between the departure of the children on the Friday afternoon and their return on Monday morning, the teacher saw nobody. Special arrangements would be made with an accommodating parent to have stores delivered from time to time. In the days before the World War, when the May and August holiday break for primary schools consisted of one week, there were some schools so isolated from public transport that the teacher had to spend the break at his school. If his home was in Perth or in another part of the State, the time involved in reaching a railway station, and the exigencies of the railway timetable, would give the teacher the possibility of little more than one day at home. He had to endure his lonely exile till the Christmas holidays. To many a country teacher the advent of the motor car was a boon indeed.

Difficulties of travel also affected those who had to visit schools in the course of official duties. District inspectors had great distances to cover from school to school. Building inspectors and workmen sent to do repairs were reluctant travellers. Ministers of religion came when it was possible by horse and trap, often without notice, being dependent often on the state of the roads. The same applied to members of the School Board who saw it as their obligation to visit the school to welcome the new teacher, sometimes to pay an official

8. Transport to school — horse and cart — Wagrakine one-teacher school 1914.

9. Transport to school (Minding) mid 1930s.

visit of inspection, or to attend the end of year concert, Christmas tree or prize-giving, towards the cost of which they may have contributed.

5. Getting to School — The Children

For the children, travel to and from school was often unpleasant, sometimes a hardship and occasionally dangerous. Those who had furthest to go, or whose parents were more affluent or more solicitous, arrived with horse, spring cart or sulky. On arrival horses had to be unsaddled, or uncoupled from the cart and tethered with feed bag. In winter children would arrive with hands blue with the cold which made this task doubly difficult. Sometimes quite small children would have the responsibility of driving and had to be helped by older boys to unharness the horse. Tarwonga was unique in the number of children driving to school by horse and cart or sulky. Inspector Thomas made reference in 1927 to the stabling of eight horses in the school grounds and the use of the old school building as a storehouse for harness and chaff. (19) This mode of travel was not without its dangers in winter, when river crossings were flooded, there being few bridges and a 'stoney crossing' the only facility, or in summer, when sudden bush fires erupted.

Kathleen Anderson recalls the rivalry over skills of horsemanship with horse and cart outfits.

> Neighbours still tell of races reminiscent of Roman charioteers, of the day the horse bolted, of the time we breasted the creek in full flood with the whole complement of the schools' pupils on board, of the swinging on the steps, of a hundred and one daredevil acts. (20)

Children who walked to school on foot also had their problems. Some had to go through virgin bush along a pad blazed by the axe, with hazards such as snakes, bull-ants and swooping magpies in the springtime. In winter flooded creeks had to be crossed by fallen logs, or waded through, boots off and carried or thrown over with school bag. There were plenty of excuses for arriving late. The teacher would have the school stove going to dry boots and coats, ready for the walk home at the end of the day. Some teachers, sticklers for etiquette, insisted on boots being worn in school, which induced many children in wet weather to walk to school barefoot, and don boots on arrival, to avoid the discomfort of sitting in wet boots all day.

Many children were inadequately clothed for travelling or for walking to school in wet and cold weather. Mary Nicolson recalls that in group settlement schools in the south-west:

> Bare feet were common. If children had footgear it tended to be sandshoes. Some mothers made rain-proof coats of gaberdine. Some children used pieces of water-proofing that had been wrapped around gelignite to secure it from damp. Others donned wheat or sugar bags with an inverted corner placed over the head.

The difficulties of travel were alleviated when a third generation of farmers, miners or timber getters, inherited from the hard work of their forebears

affluence enough to afford the newly imported motor car, when the techniques of road-making had improved and were extended to secondary roads, and when Education Department policy in relation to country schools underwent a change.

6. Attendance

The Public Education Act of 1899 required children to attend school from the age of six to the age of fourteen if they lived within a specified distance from a school; those under nine if they lived within two miles, and those over nine if within three miles. In the early years departmental officers were as concerned with poor attendance in the towns as in the country. It was noted in 1896 that 'truancy is frequent' in the larger towns. There was opportunity for boys to earn money by selling newspapers and they 'can find other ways of making a living'. Some of the blame was placed on the 'high wages which children can at present obtain'. (21)

Many factors contributed to irregularity of attendance or prolonged absence. In 1901 the over-all state average attendance of enrolled children was only 80.91 per cent, rising to 84.61 per cent in 1910. The figures did not reach 90 per cent till 1930 and at the end of the period under review (1961) was only 94.15 per cent. This did not mean that there was a steady continuous improvement. The records show that there were many fluctuations due to epidemics of disease, especially the terrible trio of measles, mumps and whooping cough. There were widespread attacks of whooping cough in 1907, of influenza in the winter and spring of 1919 when 95 schools were closed between August 1st and November 26th, and of measles in 1929 when contacts as well as patients were excluded from school. (22) The early years of settlement on the goldfields and on the wheatbelt every summer saw an epidemic of sore eyes, brought on no doubt by primitive living conditions and lack of personal hygiene. (23) Attendance always declined in winter, especially in country schools, caused largely by the poor state of the roads and extensive flooding, which made many roads or rivers impassable. In 1905 it was affected by 'the heat of the summer, especially in the interior, the scattered nature of the settlement in many parts, and the migratory character of a considerable proportion of the population, especially on the goldfields'.

Attendance in that year was 84.75 per cent which was declared to be 'very satisfactory'. This was an acceptable level in view of the large number of schools in sparsely populated areas where many children had to walk or ride several miles to school. 'It compares favourably with that in other parts of the world where the population is far less scattered, the conditions of life more settled and the climate less severe'. (24)

The Minister for Education had power to exempt children because of poverty or sickness of parents, or in farming areas where boys were often required to assist their fathers at seeding and harvest times. Many farmers availed themselves of this opportunity, and the Department accepted that 'new farmers have need of all possible labour'. (25) Girls too were sometimes exempted to

become the family housekeeper in exceptional circumstances such as the death of the mother.

The onus was thrown on the teacher to ensure a high level of attendance and the proper keeping of the roll was a serious obligation. Inspector Wheeler made this clear.

> Speaking generally the attendance is good. Instances have been noted where children regularly attend school, although living three, four, and even five miles therefrom. I have in my mind an instance of a little girl who walked five miles through rough wet country barefooted. Another instance was that of a lame girl who walked three miles each way to school daily. Where irregularity and unpunctuality are recorded, it invariably happens that the teacher's influence has not been properly exerted. There are very few instances (none so far as I know) where pupils are habitually irregular and unpunctual if the teacher himself by example, and by steady insistence develops habits of regularity and punctuality. (26)

In order to help raise the attendance level, the Department instituted a combination of threats and inducements. 'Compulsory officers' were used in the city and they also visited country schools where the attendance was not up to the state average. District Boards of Education had the duty of trying to ensure good attendance in view of 'the danger of an ignorant population and this is more especially the case in a democratic country'. In many country areas police were required to visit the parents of absent children to remind them of the attendance regulation. For a time persistent truants and delinquents were sent to an industrial school and maintained there at the expense of the parents. (27) Fines were imposed for non-attendance but at one shilling a time were considered by most teachers and inspectors as too small to be effective. Inspector Klein quoted a case where a father had been fined and ordered to pay eighteen shillings costs.

> A man has been known to boast almost within the precincts of the Court that 'it paid him to be fined for his two boys when they did £14 worth of ploughing for him during their absence from school' (28)

Obviously this father had not bothered to apply for official permission for his boys to be absent during seeding time. In 1905 there was one prosecution for every eighty-six children on roll. This had improved by 1921 to the extent that there was one for every 362 on roll.

Rewards were given for good attendance. Any child who was at school every day for a whole quarter and was not late once was given a certificate of merit. If he did this for a full year he was awarded a silver medal inscribed with his name. This could be quite an achievement in some country areas, yet many children did win these awards. (29) If the good attendance extended over three years a gold medal would be awarded. There is no record of such a medal having been won. An additional inducement for those less assiduous than the medal winners were departmental book prizes. In some small schools, however, where

something had to be given to every child at the year's end, a prize for attendance took on the nature of a sop to a child whose achievement in subject areas or in conduct did not merit recognition. Departmental book prizes were discontinued at the end of 1913. A notice in the Education Circular of that year has an interesting list of surplus prizes available for purchase by teachers, indicative of what was at the time considered 'good reading' for children. (See appendix 3).

Cyril Thompson, who did his primary schooling at Kununoppin has recorded some thoughts about attendance in one-teacher bush schools.

> It still amazes me the attendance records wet or fine, of the kids who drove up to eight miles in carts and sulkies — there were sometimes ten horses in the school stables, and I can remember Mr Hughes, our inspector, presenting a certificate to one family of five for not missing a single day in five years. (30)

Though children beyond the compulsory distance were not required to attend, efforts were made to induce their parents to enroll them, if the children were of good conduct and showed promise. Reference has already been made to driving allowances, which had 'assisted struggling settlers who live five or six miles from a school'. Free passes were issued to children who were able to use the railways. Much depended on the teacher as Inspector Gamble explained:

> Enthusiastic and thoughtful teachers visit the parents of such children . . . and by judicious advice often induce neglectful parents to send their children to school . . . I have noticed cases of this nature, and also instances directly opposite. Parents as a rule, are only too pleased to send their children to a school where the teacher has a high sense of duty, is conscientious and of good character. (31)

John Rous, a government official travelling on a spur line from Amery to Kalarnie noticed the difference made to a school by the quality of the teacher. A one-teacher school under his notice had 'gone to the dogs', but a new girl teacher had pulled it together. A parent had stated that 'Now we can't even get the kids to stay away to help with the harvesting', which Rous remarked was 'just about the highest compliment he could give'.

Though the stick-and-carrot policy was effective in many cases, the real improvement in attendance in country areas came when the pioneering stage of settlement was over, when motor cars became plentiful and when roads improved.

CHAPTER 5
Teachers' Living Conditions

1. Accommodation In Private Homes

One of the essential arrangements before a school could be opened was the provision of satisfactory accommodation for the teacher. It was a case of 'no board, no teacher'. Sharp differences often occurred between what the teacher on the one hand, and the Education Department and the parents on the other, considered 'satisfactory'. Great debate went on among parents in country areas as to 'who will board the teacher?' In the early part of the century accommodation in the homes of local residents was often less than satisfactory to the teacher on account of the living conditions, the distance from the school, or the mode of travel. The problem was most pressing in the remote districts. The *Teachers' Journal* explained:

> In such places the teacher as a rule is obliged to board with one of the settlers; and the only accommodation obtainable is, in some instances, such as no teacher can be expected to accept. The permanence of such schools is often doubtful, so that, even if money were available, the Department would not be justified in building quarters. Not even if quarters existed would it be right to ask young women — to live by themselves in such lonely situations. (1)

Inspector Klein, whose inspectorial duties required him to travel widely, ably summed up the teacher's predicament in remote newly settled districts.

> They have to live under very unpleasant conditions with the pioneering settler, who is just making a living on his farm, and who cannot afford to spend anything on comforts. A few supports and a dozen sheets of iron constitute his house, and he has no opportunity of offering a satisfactory home to young women who have been accustomed to comfortable family circles. Others are by circumstances forced to live with the squatter or well-to-do farmer, whose good wife will at times venture to suggest that the teacher might assist in the house duties seeing that 'she has little else to do'. Young women will of course not tolerate such treatment, and I have in my mind more than one school

that has been temporarily closed owing to one or other of the causes above mentioned. Male teachers are in most cases able to batch for themselves, and fare better. (2)

The fact that, in Western Australia, male teachers right up to the 1950s constituted a higher percentage of the teaching staff than in most other countries, is an indication of the late persistence of the frontier situation of this State. (3) A teacher's life in the outback in the early decades of the present century was lonely, ill-paid and lacked the society of professional equals. Women teachers frequently refused to board with large families of farmers in houses little better than 'humpies' or to live in quarters attached to a school that might be situated several miles from the nearest settler's house. Many put up with bad conditions for the sake of holding the job and in the hopes of a better future. There was the case of the farmer and his wife blocking off with hessian a part of a verandah and sleeping on the floor, so that the teacher could have their bedroom and the only bed. She was more fortunate than some. An elderly retired teacher, Mabel McKenzie, tells of how she studied for her 'C' Certificate examination in a curtained off part-room, kneeling on a pillow on the floor and using the bed as a table with one candle as the only source of light. Bathing and toilet facilities could be the most elementary. Mrs Broome, retired teacher, tells of the parent who sent her child to ask a lady teacher, 'Please Miss, hurry up and get washed so that Mum can have the dish to put the milk in!' Seldom would there be a bathroom. A luxury might be a 'bush shower' made from a perforated kerosene tin suspended overhead.

The accommodation of teachers in remote country areas was the single most persistent question that plagued the relationships between teachers and the administration of the Education Department. At conferences of the Teachers' Union, year after year, for almost half a century, motions concerning this question appeared on the agenda papers, and it was one of the most persistent subjects of teacher correspondence to the Teacher's Journal, and of its editorial comment. In 1914 a teacher correspondent wrote:

> The teacher who makes good in spite of badly-cooked food, poor company, dirty surroundings and general discomfort, does wonders, and deserves our warmest praise . . . I have heard of a male teacher who went to a place where the people wished to have a lady teacher. He was boarded at a place where he was not welcome, and at last was turned out because it was hoped that when he had gone a lady would be sent there. The lady who should be so honoured as to have the privilege of living in the house open to her would not be welcomed for her refining influence, but because she would be expected to help in the housework and washing! Mark that the hostess did not propose having her as a guest; she would be expected to pay £1 per week board and work as well . . . There are several cases of the kind known: some not quite as bad in one way, worse in another. A lady teacher may not be expected to assist in the housework, but to sleep with the girls of the family, and have no privacy. (4)

A woman correspondent wrote:

> A sister of mine some years ago was accommodated with a floorless hessian room — at least three walls were hessian, the fourth was built of bags of super, which when seeding time came, were gradually taken down and replaced by nothing! (5)

Referring to conditions like these the *Teachers' Journal* commented:

> A lady teacher must have a heart as big as an ox's to take a position in some of these parts . . . Some of the young men who have finished their courses in our Teacher's College might be thoroughly tested in some of the country schools. (6)

There is no doubt at all that in the isolated conditions of the outback, numbers of young women were subjected to sexual harrassment, and this is probably referred to in a departmental statement that women teachers could make complaints about accommodation to the Inspectress of Sewing, 'since in some instances women teachers had complaints to make which they did not like to bring before a man'. (7)

It was often the case that protests were presented incognito by suffering teachers, per medium of resolutions carried at teachers' meetings and conferences. Individual teachers were understandably reluctant to complain officially since subsequent enquiries could lead to ill-feeling and the making of enemies in the district in which the teacher had to continue to work. The power of local hostility in outback areas was something that many teachers came to experience and to fear.

In 1912 the Teachers' Union expressed concern at the number of cases of nervous breakdown among women teachers in the schools of the goldfields, ascribed among other things to problems associated with accommodation, and specifically to —

> Inability of women to secure a proper week-end rest owing to the fact that they must give a considerable portion of that time to laundry work, and attention to their wardrobes. Men have not this to face, and it is probable that many of the break-downs and absences for sickness is [sic] not necessarily because they are women, but because of this enforced labour under trying conditions. They cannot out of their salaries pay heavy laundry bills, i.e. 15s. to 20s., which would not on the Goldfields be looked upon as excessive.

Another contributory factor was:

> the difficulty of obtaining quiet comfortable lodging at a reasonable rate, with some degree of privacy for facility for study. (8)

One of the most extensive exposes of accommodation problems is contained in the records of a deputation from representatives of the Teachers' Union to the Minister for Education in 1914. As was customary the Director was also present. Martin Darcey, presenting the case on behalf on the Union, acknowledged that living conditions in the country were not excessively difficult for male teachers for whom 'a little hardship would not matter'. But there was

a great need for a real improvement in the case of lady teachers. Mr. Hill, supporting Mr. Darcey, quoted the example of a lady teacher in a small school not far from one of the coastal towns who —

> was living in a tent surrounded by dense forests and cut off by almost impassable roads from the town. Although the Department had taken action in this particular case, it was one in which publicity might do good in the direction of opening the eyes of the settlers to their responsibilities. Young men were in the habit of lounging about the place smoking and spitting and swearing, and she seemed to have no privacy at all. She decided that she could not stay, and at present was living in a tent and paying 17/6 per week for her meals at a neighbouring house. The teacher who had formerly lived at the house which this teacher left said that settlers in that locality seemed to conspire to make a teacher's life a misery, and that no self-respecting lady could live there. Another case was that of a girl of 19 who took charge of a school in an outback place, and the only available accommodation was at a house where there were six sons whose ages ranged from youth to manhood. The father was an old-time convict, and the environment was such that the girl's life was made a misery. Things got so bad that she left the house and moved further from the school. She bought a bicycle, and one morning as she was passing her former lodgings on her way to school the tyres were punctured in eight or nine places. The sons were lined up at the fence with broad grins on their faces, and the girl found that they had strewn tacks all over the road. (9)

Mr Hill suggested that it should be a requirement that a lady teacher should have a room to herself.

> One case had come under his notice of a lady teacher who had to share a small room 10ft. x 8ft. with an old lady of 60 years of age and a girl of 16. There were only two beds, and the teacher had to sleep with the girl. In the summer time the conditions were unbearable and the teacher slept on the floor.

In reply the Director protested that it was departmental policy that a lady teacher must be provided with a separate bedroom. Breaches of this 'understanding' should be reported. The Minister frankly acknowledged that bad conditions existed and himself quoted examples.

> He had seen men having to live more like savages. In one of the far-off mining towns he had met a man who could not get his linen cleaned unless he washed it himself, and he had to listen to drunken brawls half through the night. The room he had to occupy was badly ventilated and his environment was anything but inspiring.

He went on to state that he did not need to be convinced by further details. He pointed to the explosion of settlement as the cause, and seemed to suggest that it would be solved by time.

New districts were springing up. Within the past five years forests had been cut down and townships had come into existence. There were, however, no places which they could really call homes for the teachers, and unless the department decided to run boarding houses of its own in some places he (the Minister) did not know what could be done. When the settlers wished to take advantage of the teacher what could be done? They could not make people kind who were hard by nature, and they could not make people who were suspicious by nature trustful by decree of the department . . . There were many districts just reaching what they might call the school stage, where the settlers did not have homes in the real sense of the word, and they could not give the teacher the nutriment that was necessary for health or provide proper sleeping accommodation. He had noticed with pleasure the cheerful manner in which the teachers in such places submitted to inconveniences. Of course, there were exceptional cases, but the teachers realised that this was only a new country and it was surprising how they were prepared to make the best of conditions.

Small comfort for the teachers! The deputation got little beyond vague promises that extreme cases would be looked at. Throughout 1914 much attention was given to this question by the Teachers' Union. In the November issue of the *Teachers' Journal* the Secretary, Martin Darcey, devoted several pages to it under the heading '*Our outback schools*'. He began by pointing to hard demographic facts of spatial distribution of Western Australia's 300,000 people over the one million square miles of the State.

With the great bulk of population clustered into two main centres, it will be seen that outside these centres matters resolve themselves into problems of magnificent distances and lonely vacancies, and if the educational lamp burns low in many isolated places, consolation and pride may well be felt that, nevertheless, it burns . . . The Union appreciates fully the heroism displayed by these bush fathers and mothers in their perennial struggle with primeval nature, involving as it does much that goes to make life enjoyable. To ask that luxuries, or even many of the conveniences of life should be provided for those of our number who follow their work in these remote parts would often be to ask what is unreasonable. Our teachers cheerfully accept what is inevitable, and do not insist on a higher standard of living than the locality can, in reason, afford for its own family folk. Yet, whatever the hardships entailed by scanty fare and the makeshifts of pioneering, there should not intrude any suspicion of boorishness or of deliberate conspiracy to add to the teacher's discomfort.

Unfortunately, evidence is being gradually gathered, pointing to the conclusion that some of our country cousins altogether fail to realise that a teacher is entitled to humane consideration. Once some offence, real or imagined is given, the unhappy victim undergoes trial by torture

— his school work is scarcely less dangerous than handling dynamite: his private hours, made intolerable — and in the end comes the 'petition' with the inevitable enquiry. (10)

Even in districts where proper houses were available it was often difficult to find settlers who were willing to provide accommodation at a reasonable cost. In order to assist newly appointed teachers to find suitable accommodation head-teachers of Class VII and Class VIII schools were required to furnish a return naming a person in the district who would be willing to provide accommodation, indicating whether a separate room would be provided, the distance of the residence from the school, the cost per week and whether it was suitable for a male teacher only, a female only or for either. (11)

The expansion of settlement into the eastern wheatbelt in the 1920s and the difficult economic and social conditions engendered by the economic depression of the 1930s, meant that problems of accommodation for the single teacher persisted throughout those two decades. In 1934 the Teachers' Union gave publicity to the following case:

A girl fresh from the teachers' college was sent out to a country school situated about twelve miles from a siding. There was only one house in the neighbourhood at which she could board. Her bedroom was separated from the living room by a canvas partition. There were several children in the family who attended the school. The meals were served up anyhow. And the parents were disposed to grumble at the teacher whenever she had found it necessary to check the misbehaviour of their offspring during school hours. That young teacher, who was studying for her 'B' certificate, found it absolutely impossible to concentrate owing to the noise in the living room. She tried working at night in the school — a one-roomed erection at a considerable distance from any other building. But an [unspecified] incident occurred which disinclined her from continuing the practice. (12)

In 1939 'High Horse' (a woman teacher) expressed in the *Teachers' Journal* her indignation at the sufferings of women teachers in the country, where many still had to share rooms with members of the family and to pay 25 shillings and upwards for the privilege. In some areas, she complained, the teacher's board was thought of as paying for 'the upkeep of the entire family'. Many women teachers not only paid highly for their accommodation, but did their own laundry, cleaned the room in which they slept, and occasionally lent a helping hand in the general household chores. Local people thought the teacher well paid for little work.

One farmer remarked to me in sarcastic tones, 'It's a pity your work cuts into your holidays so much' . . . I have had to submit my not inconsiderable length to a bath in an inch of water in a wash tub in a draughty verandah room, on a very cold bleak winter night. (13)

Doris Newland, teaching at Borlup in 1927 cryptically recorded her situation in her diary as follows:

Boarding with Mr. B. once Postmaster-General of Bombay result spent time being waited on and has little idea of house-keeping. Room built on to back of house — no wardrobe, 30 shillings. (14)

In 1939 the Teachers' Union sent out accommodation questionnaires to 182 women teachers of whom 136 replied. They revealed that twenty-two were living at home or in single quarters, ninety-seven were 'completely satisfied', six were dissatisfied but not because of the nature of their accommodation, and eleven had what was judged to be 'reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction' (five were sharing bedrooms). One cannot know what was the situation of the forty-six who did not reply, but the results suggested that the problem had ceased to be a major one. (15)

Some discontent persisted however into the 1950s, perhaps because once again a post-war land settlement scheme opened up new areas of the State. The Department reported that 'teacher accommodation continues to be a serious problem in this country', and 'many young teachers were resigning because of unsatisfactory living conditions'. (16) But these remarks were directed rather more at the absence of, or unsatisfactory nature of, school quarters, and the lack of housing for married teachers in country towns.

2. Teachers' Quarters

A solution to teachers' accommodation that seems in the early years to have been determined by local circumstances rather than by settled policy was to establish a school with 'attached quarters'. This initiative arose from a situation where accommodation with a local settler was not available or was deemed 'unsatisfactory'. The smallest of the one-teacher schools, the Class VII school, sometimes had two-roomed 'bachelor quarters', or not infrequently a mere skillion-roof lean-to, attached to the school building, with the barest necessities provided. Such quarters were considered not suitable for the Class VI school, as the majority of teachers in them were married men, or perhaps widows with children. Where rental houses or other 'suitable lodgings' could not be obtained for married teachers, the policy arose of erecting separate residences which it was compulsory for the teacher to occupy. A rental was deducted from the teacher's salary, the amount being related to the size of that salary. If, for example, the size of the school increased, the size of the salary increased, and the rental was increased despite the fact that there was no alteration in the building, except deterioration by age. In the early 1900s when the problem of accommodation began to arise in an acute form, many teachers living in country communities had reason to feel that 'quarters allotted to head-teachers are in many cases inadequate and can hardly bear comparison to that provided for the police, for station-masters and for post-masters' . . . 'A number of married teachers still have to be content with two small rooms and part of the school verandah (often quite exposed) as a kitchen'. (17)

District inspectors, who collectively visited all the schools of the State annually, and who had often in isolated areas to share a teacher's

accommodation, were in a position to know their inadequacies. There were frequent reports of small draughty rooms, leaking roofs, defective doors and windows, and the absence of bathrooms and washhouses, even in the hottest districts. Small unlined iron houses existed in the heat and dust of the goldfields. In 1906 Inspector Clubb reported:

> The plan of dividing three small rooms for the teachers quarters from the schoolroom by a partition — in some cases merely an iron one — may be economical but certainly is unsatisfactory from a hygienic point of view, and is not conductive to a teacher's dignity and comfort. The conditions of life in very many country places are hard and dreary enough without the additional unpleasantness of bad quarters. In some places the teacher has also to find accommodation for three or more children in the three small rooms provided. Ordinary conveniences are quite often absent. The teacher's wife in such cases has a very bad time. (18)

The following year Inspector Clubb noted some increase in the provision of detached houses in his district, except where schools were very small or of doubtful permanence.

By the end of the decade some kind of established policy had been developed. In small country towns detached residences were erected as a matter of course. In isolated districts where the schools were very small, they were built only where no suitable lodgings could be obtained, especially in scattered farming districts where the school had been erected in a central position remote from any settlers' house. Most of the teachers available for such schools were young women, who could not be asked to live alone in quarters. As Inspector Klein explained:

> The difficulty of 'putting up' the teacher has frequently been the cause of schools being closed. Lady teachers refuse to 'rough it' with the farmer and his large family in their little 'humpy', and just as reasonably object to batch in the lonely quarters provided. To overcome this trouble the Department is now building temporary quarters close beside the nearest farmer's homestead, where the teacher may comfortably batch, and not think that she is alone in the bush. (19)

Schools at the State's many small mining centres where often the only accommodation was a hotel, were staffed by male teachers. Hotel board was, however, expensive and 'not the most desirable residence for a young man'. The alternative might be a very uncomfortable boarding house, lacking privacy or facilities for study. In such cases temporary quarters were erected. (20)

Climatic conditions in the eastern Goldfields gave rise to special problems of housing as illustrated by the following 1907 Report:

> Something has been done during the past year to improve the residences in the Kalgoorlie district by the provision of additional verandahs and the removal of the linings of small fluted iron. Linings of this kind are very trying to the eyes: they are peculiarly unsuitable

for the Kalgoorlie district, as they admit the dust very freely. The substitution of linings of flat iron covered with paper has made the interiors much more habitable. A great deal remains to be done in connection with many of the older quarters in other parts of the State before they can be considered to be really suitable for their purpose. (21)

In the forests of the south-west housing for the teacher was often provided by a timber company. Inspector McCollum reported in 1903:

> The accommodation provided for teachers at a number of mill schools is very little better than that given to ordinary labourers, and much inferior to residences erected for the Post Office and Police officials. The effects of this course are only too obvious. Perhaps this is scarcely a matter for wonder that the majority of residences erected by the Department are not nearly so good as the residences of the officials in question. (22)

Departmental files for outback schools are replete with complaints by teachers of harsh, uncomfortable or sordid living conditions, and with repeated requests for the upgrading of quarters and their facilities. From school after school over several decades the story is the same.

> The difficulty of extracting a response to appeals for repairs and additions did not inspire occupants to exercise care and cleanliness. Many teachers tended to accept the conditions as irreparable and to wait and hope for a better appointment, rather than to battle for improvements. At the beginning of each year the Department was met with a burst of requests for repairs and upgrading of facilities, when new teachers took over schools in remote areas. In 1912 Inspector Wheeler complained of quarters being left in unsatisfactory conditions by out-going teachers. (23) He advocated an inspection of quarters as a required part of regular school inspections, and their conditions to be a factor in the teacher's efficiency mark. It was all too plainly a matter of basic inadequacy in the buildings themselves for such a policy to be adopted. Rent was charged on quarters at Parkerville, described by Inspector Riley as 'unfit for human habitation'. There were no projecting eaves so that the bedrooms were wet and miserable in winter. He found the walls and the fireplaces damp, with wall paper peeling off. The condition was aggravated by the fact that the floor had been laid too close to the ground. (24)

In the 1920s an increasing amount of correspondence to the Teachers Journal concerned the State of country quarters. Robdor Finde gave this account of his experience.

> I lived in quarters lined with asbestos. The asbestos had been painted when first put up, but owing to chemicals in the new asbestos the paint would not dry and the sap from jarrah laths discoloured the sheets to a great extent. The paint was afterwards scraped off and the walls calsomined, but the stains of jarrah showed through the calsomine . . .

the kitchen fireplace smoked and the walls became smoke stained and specked with bees and flies. I applied for flyproof doors and windows, but could not get them'. (25)

Housing of teachers was a prominent issue at almost all Teachers' Union conferences throughout the 1920s. The 1927 conference instructed its executive to examine the question of quarters and to submit proposals to the next conference.

At the annual conference of the Country Teachers Branch of the Union, held in May of 1928, Gilbert Foxcroft, a veteran member of the buildings committee, presented a report in which he gave details of a questionnaire that had been forwarded to all teachers occupying quarters. The replies staggered even so old a campaigner as Gilbert Foxcroft. He remarked:

I thought I knew something about teachers' quarters — I knew there were some bad ones — but like yourselves, I was under the delusion that there were some good ones. When we receive a transfer to a school with bad quarters, we blame our luck — we think there are good quarters, and perhaps next time we'll get them. That delusion has gone — the chances of getting good ones are very remote.

Foxcroft did not wax emotive. He presented the facts revealed by the questionnaire, facts which 'spoke for themselves'. Of the 300 questionnaires sent out, 131 had been returned. Of these, twenty-two were from occupiers of bachelor quarters. Nineteen of these were without bath or bathroom, six without a verandah, one without a privy, twenty-one without fly-screens to doors or windows. Much the same picture emerged from the replies on married quarters. Here in addition the small size of rooms was a major cause of complaint, the size occurring most often being 12ft x 12ft, some even 12ft x 9ft.

Forty are without washhouses, coppers or troughs, and of the sixty-nine which possess these conveniences, nineteen have them built on the back verandah, many combining washhouse and bathroom. Two have washhouses but no copper, while nineteen of those with washhouses have no troughs. Forty-five of the sixty-nine, or sixty-five percent, have no water laid on to the copper . . . the majority are of weatherboard, only seventeen being brick; while six are of corrugated iron, and four wood and iron — one is mud brick . . . Seventy or nearly seventy percent, have no water to the kitchen, the water having to be carried various distances to the house. (26)

The questionnaire had posed the question, 'In the event of better accommodation being provided would you be prepared to pay more rent?' The majority had replied in the negative. This attitude on the part of those suffering from inadequate housing became a bone of contention within the Union over the next few years, some contending that such teachers were their own worst enemy. Those involved, however, seemed to take the view that they needed to save for the day when they might hope to obtain a permanent appointment to a city school and would want to invest in a permanent home.

The Teachers Journal ran a campaign of publicity, typical of which was an anonymous article entitled 'A teacher's residence' which commented on quarters attached to a small country school in an old established district. In the course of detailing the facilities it referred to —

> . . .Another so-called bedroom, which would with difficulty accommodate a full-sized bed, though it might a stretcher . . .Three grave and learned pundits of the Education Department had a pleasant cup of tea in the dining room. As all three ran to length if not to breadth, the room was taxed to its utmost capacity. In spite of the fact that the table was necessarily small, the longest member of our party had to curl up his legs considerably to allow room for our hostess to move about as she waited on us . . . bathroom and washhouse there were none — possibly due to the consideration that there was no lack of moisture on the premises. (27)

In September 1929 there appeared a thirty-two page special issue of the Teachers Journal devoted exclusively to housing. (28) A basic Union principle was stated that 'there should be a relation between the conditions under which a teacher lives and the position he is expected to fill in the eyes of the community'.

Many teachers' houses were beneath the standard of those occupied by the station-master, the policeman and the more comfortably off settlers. The issue gave several specific examples of defective quarters, including one for L--N where 'the house is lined with tin and is very hot in summer. The privy needs to be stayed or it will blow over. The fence is eaten by white ants'. Highlight was given to a house attached to a Class V school, the details of which were —

no washing troughs	no shed of any kind
no fly-doors	no water to kitchen
no fly-windows	no lining to bathroom
no wash-house	no wood shed

There was an extensive analysis of two separate questionnaires from teachers renting houses, a report of a Union deputation to the Minister for Works, and three pages of photographs, plans and description of country quarters at Barton's Mill, Flat Rocks, Moonyoonooka, Kundip, Ballaying, Nangeenan and Morwonga. Martin Darcey, the Union's representative on the Public Service Appeal Board, is reported as saying, 'I insist that the questionnaire has revealed conditions that should never have been permitted in these official quarters and should now be promptly and systematically remedied'.

Yet another questionnaire to all teachers occupying school houses was sent out by the Union in March 1934, followed later in the year by a request for particulars of repairs effected. The response was disappointing. No doubt teachers had lost hope for any benefit from the Union's many representations to government. (29)

The matter of quarters was beginning to be a cause of dissension within the Union itself. Some members of the Executive, who had by effluxion of time

and promotion, escaped the squalors and rigours of country quarters, began to lose patience with many of those still in the outback who, as it appeared to them, would not fight for improvements. Matters came to a head at the 1936 Conference. E.A. Charlton moved 'that teachers who accept transfers under Regulation 47(c) be guilty of unprofessional conduct'. Under this regulation, if a teacher applied for a transfer (which might be for reasons of getting to a more favoured locality) to an equal position, he paid his own cost of removal. If he were promoted the Department paid his costs. Charlton argued this was an injustice and teachers ought not to countenance it. There was a lengthy debate and the motion was lost. Many agreed with W. Longman that Regulation 47(c) was 'one of the few ways of escape from damnable conditions that an outback teacher has to face'. (30)

Though government quarters were the main concern, attention was also given by the Union to the housing of teachers working in schools in special areas. In the timber forests of the south-west for example the Department did not build quarters. The teacher rented a timber worker's home from the timber company. Most of them were 'draughty and dilapidated shanties'. The teacher and his family lived in a

> down-and-out shanty which the average respectable citizen would be ashamed to let his friends see him enter. With groaning and weariness of spirit, he mutters, with the psalmist, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' (31)

The Education Department's only response to complaints was to write to the timber company, with no result.

Throughout the thirties teachers' letters continued to flow into the Union office with complaints about the state of houses provided, or in quite a few cases, the absence of houses altogether, especially for head-teachers of Class VI and VII schools. Some disgruntled ones even burst into verse. An anonymous bard, calling himself 'Potato' began his contribution with these lines:

> Experience proves, a married man
> — that is, of course, a teacher —
> Has far more tribulation than
> A policeman or a preacher.
> I don't refer to minor woes —
> Such trials as sons and daughters —
> I would not waste your time with those:
> I write of teachers' quarters. (32)

Another was entitled 'Song of the quarters dwellers', a title no doubt inspired by the then well-known school poem 'Song of the shingle-splitters'.

> When the summer sun gleams, and the winter wind screams,
> Pen in hand in his quarters he squats;
> 'I'm badgered with fly, and the window's awry,
> The walls are all covered with spots.
> Could you send up some paint? Fix the fly doors that ain't'.

Can you guess what reply he was sent?
We've no money to spare
Our exchequer's quite bare —
We'll just knock a bob off your rent! (33)

This last doggerel was inspired by the results of yet another Union questionnaire which revealed an extra-ordinary range of rents paid by teachers, suggesting that 'bargaining for reduction of rent in lieu of effecting needed repairs is becoming a recognized practice'. Of 880 questionnaires sent out on this occasion, 665 were returned (77 percent). It was evident from these that teachers in the country still (the year was 1940) suffered from sub-standard housing. Thirty-two teachers stated that they had refused promotion because there was no house provided with the school. The February 1940 issue of the *Teachers' Journal* which carried a report on the results of the above questionnaire, also put forward details of a 'New Housing Scheme' which it was suggested should apply to all future housing. It was based on the principle of 'one class of house at one rent for all classes of schools'. They should all be five-roomed and built to Workers' Homes Board standards. (34)

However, and herein lay the snag, teachers must be prepared to pay a reasonable rent. Many preferred to sweat it out in difficult conditions, awaiting a transfer to a happier location, and to save as much money as possible with a view to being able to put down a substantial deposit on a city home at some future date when they would have worked their way up the promotion ladder to a city appointment.

Poor housing was responsible not only for problems of squalid living but also for some situations that could be quite dangerous. Mrs. Aileen Mouritz, a middle-aged teacher supporting two children and an aged mother, stationed in 1939 at Yerbillan school near No. 5 Pumping Station, attached a ten page letter to her response to a Teachers' Union questionnaire, in which she set out some of her troubles in detail.

> The quarters should be condemned as a residence for a teacher. No shelter or verandah of any description is provided. There is only one door to the outside world. The temperature during daylight hours is practically unbearable and at 9 p.m. varies from 92 deg. to 80 deg. . . Snakes are my greatest worry. They have invaded the quarters on several occasions . . . A three foot long brown snake wriggled from under my bedroom. It had evidently been in residence during my absence on holidays and my coming back had disturbed it . . . The first snake I encountered was in the kitchen a few days after I arrived here. It was black and the largest snake I have ever seen outside a zoo. It made two savage attacks on me as I unknowingly stood between it and its way of escape. Unfortunately no weapon was handy and it escaped. My nerves suffered as a result of this experience. The next one I found in my bedroom in the middle of the day. It too, was a large one. I managed to wound it, but it also got away through one of the numerous ventilators of the bathroom . . . I had visions of it at any time finding

me in my bed or among clothing in drawers and cases and as a consequence could neither sleep nor rest owing to the unsettled state of my nerves. (35)

Mrs Mouritz told how she had applied for a close-fitting wire door or failing this, a transfer. She was refused both and was told to 'take the same precautions as other people living in country areas'. The building inspector, Mr. Lynas, had proposed improvements, but all had been vetoed. She then goes on to describe the fly nuisance, the building having no fly-wire door or screen. She concluded her letter by complaining bitterly:

I suppose I must thank the powers that be that I have a job, collect a fortnightly salary, get periodical holidays and £12 per year deducted for a building that would, if it were not a government building, be condemned by the existing Health Authorities. I have seen outbuildings provided on State farms for animals that could outdo in comfort many of the 'quarters' provided by the Education Department for its teachers and their families.

In the post-war years school quarters changed from being a concern solely of head-teachers of country schools to one also of assistant teachers of country primary and secondary schools. Consolidation of the small schools began to create a severe housing problem for teachers in the larger country towns. To meet this new situation a proportion of Housing Commission homes was allocated for such teachers. The optimism created by this change of policy was short-lived. In 1950 house building for teachers reverted to the Public Works Department. The government view remained that better housing for teachers depended on them accepting realistic rentals commensurate with contemporary economic standards. (36) The stumbling block to Teachers' Union acceptance of this view was not the rental but the lack of equity, since the right of purchase was denied. Nevertheless some improvements in teachers' living conditions did take place. Boarding subsidies paid to teachers living away from home were increased in cases where their weekly costs were in excess of £5. In 1960 a scale of remote allowances was established, the amount depending on a number of factors — distance of the school from Perth, location on a main trunk railway, adequacies of shopping and other facilities, distance from shopping centres, location north of Latitude 26 degrees south, or location on a regular shipping route.

An important new development in the Teachers' Union long campaign on housing came from those most affected, teachers' wives. The initiative was taken by Mrs Yvonne Wignall and Mrs Winnie James, who called a meeting of wives for August 25th 1960 at which it was decided to form a Teachers' Wives Association. The meeting expressed 'resentment and dissatisfaction with the miserable standard of housing offered to the families of teachers in the country . . . the cumulative effect of years of government indifference and neglect' (37) The Association circulated a questionnaire among teachers' wives which produced an excellent response. The information gathered was put before the

Director-General. It listed such complaints as 'defective stoves, poor water supplies, leaking roofs, uneven floors, ill-fitting doors and windows'. Teachers had fallen behind community standard which had improved greatly in the past twenty years.

> Country teachers must rank as under-privileged unless their houses have such provisions as fly-proof screening, blinds, modern plumbing, kitchen sinks, hot water systems, suitable laundry facilities, adequate water supplies, paths, garages and where-ever possible, electricity and septic systems.

The work of the Teachers' Wives Association led to a Union decision to send two of its officials, Rob Darragh and John Jones on a country tour to examine housing at first hand. (38) Their report was published in the Journal in July 1961 and confirmed the complaints of the teachers' wives.

Meanwhile negotiations had been going on with the Education Department and the government, and had actually resulted in the production of a draft plan. (39) On the basis of this plan the Teachers' Union conference of 1961 called for the establishment of a separate authority to have control over the building, renovation and rental of all school quarters.

Despite Union complaints it remains a fact that the consolidation of small schools, going on apace throughout the fifties and sixties, had removed most of the worst houses from occupancy by teachers and had also overcome the problems of accommodation in remote and isolated areas. By the early 1960s all but a handful of small schools had been eliminated. Finally the establishment of the Government Employees Housing Authority, G.E.H.A., on the lines of a separate body as desired by the Union, went a long way towards solving the housing problems of teachers in the country.

CHAPTER 6
The teacher as social pioneer

1. Teacher status in the community

At the annual meeting of the Country Teachers Association in 1913 the president in his opening address eulogised 'the men and women who blazed the track in the days when the State was wide; who suffered the privations and rude surroundings of the young agricultural settlements, the primitive conditions of the woodline and the semi-civilisation of the timber mill'. (1) Dave Mossenson commented in his history of Western Australian education that 'those who remained in charge of remote schools for any length of time pioneered the wheatbelt in perhaps as true a sense as the parents of the children they taught'. (2)

'Rustic', writing in the *Teachers' Journal* in 1912 depicted the country teachers' role and his social situation as follows:

> A country teacher in W.A. at the present time has a unique position. He is the chief authority, yet he must be prepared to play second fiddle to the newly-rich settler of some years' residence. Upon the newly rich ones depends whether his life is endurable or not; generally it is not, unless he is a man of considerable powers and well able to hold his own. In the new settler he has to contend with poverty of a sort, and for every service rendered for him or his school he has to pay toll in money or kind. He is the cynosure of all eyes in the district and of the fervid, imaginary and descriptive powers of the children. They may not imagine much in their lessons, but when they apply their powers to a description of their teacher, his words and actions, those same powers are little short of marvellous. And why is the teacher so much more a large quantity in the country than in town? Because there is no one greater. No English squire or parish clergyman — only the teacher to play the part of leader. And truly it is a great part. For that reason, if no other, the best teachers are required in the country . . . I read once that animals' chief characteristics are jealousy and inquisitiveness. Now, those same characteristics are the ones with which

the country teacher has to contend more than any others. He must show no favor, or his life will not be a happy one. He must judge impartially in 101 small matters that in town would not come within his jurisdiction. (3)

Experienced teacher Roy Grace saw the country teacher's role in much the same terms.

The head teacher of a small country school stands tall in the district and is expected to play an active, leading role. He inherits or accepts all sorts of jobs. I know of one head, for example, who was registrar of births and deaths; and certainly it is quite common for him to be at various times legal adviser, taxation expert, marriage guidance counsellor, news reporter, investment expert and general consultant on a multitude of other matters as well as an active member of every type of club and movement. He must lead a model life, beyond reproach for his every action in a small community is given wide and speedy publicity. The average head teacher accepts and tries to live up to his responsibilities. They identify him in the community; they engender goodwill and, in so doing, help him in his work as a teacher; and they give him a feeling of being important in the community, which pleases his ego.

There was one role that some parents in various towns have expected me to accept and that I resented — acting as a policeman at community functions; preventing children from sliding all over the dance floor and generally being a nuisance while their parents completely ignored their misbehaviour. I refused to accept responsibility for the behaviour of children at any function other than school functions. (4)

There was material a-plenty for parents to quarrel with the teacher if mutual dislike arose — child absences or lack of punctuality, child behaviour in school or playground, the parent's opinion of the character and conduct of the teacher, or the quality of the teaching — to name but a few. At Augusta in 1914 some parents were upset by a departmental decision that the school there must become a part-time one with nearby Karridale, which they saw arising from the personal wishes of the teacher, Joseph Tucker. The situation quickly developed into a vendetta against the teacher. Mrs Ellis wrote to the Department:

When I first sent in my complaint I thought the half-school was more the wish of the teacher than the Department, since he likes holidays and change of scenery. He has asked me several times if I would like him to take the children out somewhere, instead of going to school. Also the children say they have never been taught either Geography or Grammar since Mr. Harrison, and only one sum per day, and once he let them play all the afternoon and when I enquired the reason of the half-holiday he told me [he] left them out as a punishment for not coming when the bell rang.

In accordance with usual departmental practice, Tucker was asked for his comments. He wrote:

> Mrs. Ellis is wrong about my craving for holidays; so far here they have been devoted to preparing 'Busy Work' and to the school interests. Geography and Grammar as taught to Mrs. Ellis 40 years ago have assumed in the meantime so changed a form that her mistake is pardonable. 'Only one sum a day' is pure fiction.

In due course Inspector Wheeler was sent down to inspect the school and to try to sort out the truth of the matter. He reported to the Acting Chief Inspector that the school was being well run and the children making satisfactory progress.

> I cannot find any justification for Mrs. Ellis' letter. Geography and Grammar are being taught according to the curriculum. Regarding the alleged half-holiday, it appears that some of the children went out of bounds one afternoon down to the estuary fore-shore and did not return. School was conducted as usual. (5)

Augusta school also provides an example of the dangers of a new teacher being unduly influenced by a disgruntled parent. Attendance had been low in the first half on 1919 and the school was in danger of closure. A new teacher Aileen Lesley came in August and seems to have pulled the school together. She got attendance up, and expressed the opinion that the parents had been keeping the children at home to show disapproval of the previous teacher, Mr. T. Biggins. However she contradicted herself by stating that 'Children would be at school for two or three hours, and they would be sent home again, while the teacher went off to the Leeuwin or to the beach'. She added that parents have corroborated this statement. Biggins was asked for an explanation. He called the allegation 'a damnable lie' and declared that an outbreak of scarlatine had been the cause of low attendance. A statement on behalf of the parents denied that any allegation had been made against Biggins. The matter was closed when the Department warned Miss Lesley 'to be careful in future not to make charges unless you have facts to substantiate them'.

Cyril Thompson, one-time pupil of early one-teacher schools, records that

> Teachers we had were varied, but mostly pretty good blokes. Two I did not care for: one, a book-throwing lunatic whose hair fell over his face when he became upset, which was often, and a propensity for cuffing kids over the ears, a practice which almost earned him a hiding from one parent who had a delirious child . . .
>
> There was a family of thirteen (at North Bencubbin) half of whom were pupils at the school. One day after caning one of the tribe she [the teacher] found herself barricaded inside the school, the irate family marching up and down outside with sticks and daring her to come out. She was forced to wait until nightfall when the kids went home and made her escape, never to return. (7)

Conflict with parents was, however, the exception rather than the rule. A

capable and humane bush teacher became a valued member of the community and often developed close relationships with the children and their parents. Roy Grace, writing of Broome, a two-teacher school, stated:

> From the teacher's point of view, the small school is where he really learns to know his children. Indeed, they tend to become part of his personal life. I well remember, for example, a Grade 7 girl, bright, a natural leader and full of life and good spirits. She had been absent from school for two days when, meeting her father in the street, I learnt that she was expected to die within two weeks of pernicious anaemia. She died a week later. The shock was acute, the grief personal. All the children in my room attended her funeral. They mourned her, as did I, as if she were one of the family. (8)

Despite all problems and difficulties the bush chalkie, if he had the personality and the will, was in a position to exercise a great influence on the community in which he worked, indirectly through the children, directly in his relations with the parents. Cole, writing in 1937 suggested that 'the contact which the typical rural school in Australia has with the local community is in the main of the indirect type which is achieved through the studies and activities of the pupils'. He contrasted this with a number of other countries where the school catered also for adults interests. He further suggested that the Australian teacher, had prestige as a government official and might, as well as being a teacher, be a Justice of the Peace, a returning officer for elections, a secretary and or treasurer of local clubs. Because he was centrally appointed and paid he had the advantage of being independent of the local community. (9) This latter judgement does not square with the experience of teachers of small schools who found that a degree of integration with the local community was necessary to survival. F. Tate, in the same volume, presents a rather more perceptive view:

> The most impressive educational work I have seen during a long experience in Australian schools, the nearest approach to realisation of educational ideals, has been in rural districts where the alliance between school, home and farm has been a reality. For, after all, the school is but one of the many forces which are shaping a child's intellectual, moral and physical character. The home, the general social environment, the Nature life of the countryside, and many other influences play their part. In these respects the rural school has an advantage over the city school, and an able teacher makes use of it. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that such a school as I have just indicated has a powerful influence upon the adult population of the district. The school becomes a genuine community centre, enriching the social life of both old and young. (10)

Often, indeed, the teacher was valued in his local community more for the contribution he made to the social life of the adults than for education of the children. Certainly the skill in the former was one of the ingredients

of being a successful teacher in a remote country area. The 1910 Report of the Education Department referred to the 'civilising' role of the country teacher.

> Many of these teachers are doing most valuable work in difficult and unattractive surroundings. Where a refined and capable teacher can be secured, the school becomes a centre of brightness and civilisation that makes a wonderful change in the lives not only of the scholars but of all the residents of the neighbourhood! (11)

Inspector Klein praised those teachers who took the trouble to organize a 'parents day' where the school worked as usual and the parents took the opportunity of coming to visit the school to see their children at work and to discuss their progress with the teacher. He commended those teachers who frequently visited the homes of the settlers and made efforts to interest the parents in the school.

> Successful country teachers all realise how much depends upon establishing right relationships with parents. They admit perhaps that the uplifting of the local educational ideal is not of a volcanic nature, but they will also admit that when uplifted the results fully recompensed the pains taken. (12)

The role of the outback teacher as a social pioneer was of particular importance in the areas of new settlement where the settlers lived rough and tough and there was little opportunity for the niceties of life. As late as 1937 an educational writer felt impelled to declare:

> Australian country towns are culturally further removed from urban life than the relative uniformity of educational facilities would suggest. (13)

In 1914 Inspector H. J. Hughes saw this as a characteristic of outback families living in relative isolation from each other.

> A good teacher has a great influence on the general bearing of the child particularly in districts where the child's environment does not tend to refinement. I have sometimes observed that people when living at a distance from towns are apt to be less careful in their observations of the amenities [sic] than they might be. Very often, too, in the hard struggle for existence people are so much engrossed in the thought of material progress that they give little thought to the higher aspects of life. A child brought up in such surroundings must have a warped vision. A good teacher can do work of far greater value in cultivating the mind of such a child than obtaining a fine examination result. I can bear testimony to the fact that many of our teachers from the lowest grade upwards are unobtrusively engaged to a greater or lesser extent in lifting the child to a higher plane. (14)

In 1918 the Director of Education, Cecil Andrews, made an important statement of the country teacher's obligations to the local community in which he placed the finding of solutions to the problems of rural education squarely on the shoulders of the teachers in the country school. He saw this as being

done by development of close links between the school and the local environment and between the teacher and the parents. The teacher would be judged to have succeeded or failed by the extent to which the school was used by the children and the parents and by the co-operation of teacher, parents and pupils in the work of education. Teachers were to 'begin by making your school more attractive to the children' and pointed out that unfortunately 'many schools are good places to get out of'. Teachers should aim at the improvement of local conditions in school and home life. They should talk things over with neighbours and parents and 'assist young people to make country life what it should be'. The school could be a centre for recreation, education, and social intercourse for the locality. He posed the challenge — 'how much use is made of your school?' and after praising those teachers who have left their mark for good in every district they have lived in, asked — 'are you one of them?'. (15)

The Department's 1919 Report stated:

> The [country] schools are being brought more fully into touch with the problems of country life and are becoming in an increased degree civilising influences and centres of social life. (16)

In the days of low mechanisation of the farm and before the widespread ownership of motor cars, the school was often the only building in the district other than the settler's homes. Horse-drawn transport was slow and inefficient, and in this respect the school was a convenient meeting place since it was, as a rule, centrally placed among the settlers' homes. The school building was therefore often the only social centre and was used for dances, social evenings, meetings and church services. Departmental regulations allowed the teacher, at his discretion, to give permission for the school to be used for such purposes for a small charge, provided no other buildings were available.

In remote bush areas the school was the medium of communication of official and unofficial news. Information about local activities was circulated through the school by the children to the parents. A city-bred correspondent to the *Teachers' Journal*, a new-comer to Western Australia, appointed to teach in the country, saw this as having an undesirable side.

> To supply the lack of a daily newspaper, the children are the carriers of all the news. Whether it is an accident, a concert, an elopement or wife desertion; the information is conveyed by the children. A shocking state of affairs, but, nevertheless, perfectly true in my district, and doubtless in many others . . . I was astonished at the precocity of the country children in all that pertains to their parents' life and business. (17)

2. Case Studies

The country teacher's role in the small schools is illustrated by reference to two case studies done by teachers who worked in such schools. The first (18) is a comparison of two schools located in contrasting economic and social settings. One school was located in the mill town of Quininup

in the forests of the south-west. The town had a shifting population but at the time of the study consisted of eleven families. Of these, four families had had four shifts each, one had had three shifts, three had experienced two shifts, one had had one shift, and the remaining two had been more or less permanently in the town. In those days the housing and all facilities of a milltown were the responsibility of the timber company. The work force had been attracted by the unlimited work opportunities, the low housing rental of one pound per week, free and unlimited water, free firewood and sanitary disposal, the absence of land rates or house maintenance costs. Light and power were always available, as essential to mill production. The men were mostly on the basic wage, augmented by overtime. The only recreational facility provided was a licensed club, considered by the mill owners as necessary to retain the workforce. This was the venue for dances, darts, and billiards in addition to drinking. There was low civic pride, arising from lack of Shire Council financial assistance for amenities. The itinerant nature of the population made for an absence of natural leaders. Even the teacher and the mill manager were part of the floating population. The teacher had to create the social opportunities for the children and through them for the parents. Amid the drab uniformity of the jarrah-weatherboard houses, the school was the most attractive building in the town, beautified as it was by gardens and trees. School functions included parents' days, concerts, Arbor and Anzac day celebrations, and educational and sporting visits to neighbouring centres. It was, however, an uphill battle for the teacher. The morals of the adults left a great deal to be desired. Infidelity, dishonesty and stealing were rampant, and 'excessive drinking was a way of life'. Only one family was churchgoing. In the holidays the school children 'came under the influence of teenagers' and vandalism was frequent. The teacher had to contend with the existence of 'two moral codes', that of the school and that of the home. There was little parental control and little respect for authority or for such public property as existed. The obvious diversion of sport presented difficulties in the winter because of the very heavy and consistent rainfall. Clearing and maintaining sporting fields was a problem because of the steep terrain and the presence of large stumps, and there was a continual need to clear away fast growing ferns and weeds. It was not easy to interest parents in the raising of money for sporting equipment. The low numbers of the school enrolment and the varying ages of the children made participation in the larger team games, such as cricket, football, basket ball and hockey rather unsatisfactory, especially on a competitive basis.

The problems of the teacher in this study of a mill town are contrasted with the happier situation of a school in the south-west hamlet of Duranillan where the population was stable, the families comfortably well-off and parental influence strong. There was a high level of church-going, and an absence of town life to breed social evils. Here the teacher's task was made easier by the willing co-operation and keen interest of the parents in the

progress of the children in their schooling.

Most teachers who served in one-teacher schools learned that involvement of the parents in the life of the school was a big factor in developing an effective all-round educational programme. A detailed study of Gillingara by Hardwick examplifies this aspect of schooling in remote areas. (19) In his study of a small wheat-belt community he presents an example of a one-teacher school that was so effective in its social and educational role that the parents fought strongly and successfully to prevent its consolidation into a larger town unit. Despite the existence of a grade 3 school at Mogumber eight miles to the south, and of a Junior High School at Moora twenty miles north, they were successful in maintaining the continued existence of their school at a time when nearly all other one-teacher schools in the State had been consolidated. The study suggests that parents in nearby districts, resentful of Gillingara having avoided being swallowed up in a larger unit, 'continually probed to sound out weaknesses in the school and the teacher'.

Gillingara was opened in 1908 after land had been opened up for sale in the area by the Midland Railway Company. Several of the original families were still in the area at the time of the study and they 'tended to be content with less education for their children'. By contrast, the newer settlers and farm labourers placed a higher value on education and assisted the school in a number of ways. There were fifteen farms spread over an area of ten square miles, a floating population of labourers, no township but a siding on the town site two miles south of the school. The school itself had an enrolment of twenty children spread from grade I to grade VIII.

In earlier times at Gillingara the teacher had provided, as was usual in such situations, strong social leadership, but in more recent times he was expected 'to do well with the children but to leave the local business to assigned committees'. There was active community life exemplified by the existence of a Parents and Citizens Association, a Progress Association, a Pasture Improvement group, and branches of the Farmers' Union, the Country Women's Association and the R.S.L. The district had an active summer sporting life centering on tennis, cricket and swimming in the local pool, and there was a regular programme of dances. The school benefitted from these activities of the parents. The school was a member of the Victoria Plains Sporting Association, and there were fixtures which involved competitions with other schools. Regular features were the Easter play and a Christmas Tree and children had attended the Education Department's Camp School at Point Peron. Through money-raising activities such as socials, collection cards and a 'wheat and wool collection', the parents had helped provide the school with a number of modern amenities — a projector, a record player, a duplicator, library supplies, a refrigerator and sporting equipment.

Hardwick's study concludes that the isolation of the school created a good working atmosphere. The children were well-behaved and courteous. The isolation of the farms made for a strong parental influence. The children

developed a high sense of responsibility.

> They could be depended upon to remain unsupervised for long periods, completing any unfinished programme . . . The writer can state an instance where he had to rush a dangerously ill child to Moora at a moment's notice. A senior boy conducted the school for two hours while the teacher was absent, teaching and marking.

In the school situation of classes extending from Grade I to Grade VIII, the force of example of the older children was an important feature of the school. This was especially noted during recess periods and lunch times where socialising activities were highly developed.

The degree of difficulty arising from the teacher's role in the local community depended on the geographic location which conditioned the economic and social setting of the local community. Timber and mining towns, small outports and newly opened up farming areas, presented greater challenges than more settled agricultural districts. In these areas the 'civilising' role of the teacher was more needed, but correspondingly more difficult to perform.

3. Social pioneering through the children

In addition to the general social role of the teacher in the local community, a fair proportion of the curriculum he was required to teach had a distinct bearing on the 'civilising role' referred to in the Department's 1910 Report. The prevailing educational philosophy applied value judgements to a number of subjects in the curriculum. The importance of 'character-building' was frequently stressed and there were no doubts or beg-your-pardons with regard to the teacher's right to inculcate morals and manners, directly as well as indirectly. It was part of the teacher's duty to give instruction in behavioural values, upholding respect for teachers, parents and other adults, respect for authority and loyalty to King and country. The more practical virtues of correct speech, hygienic habits and protection of public property were daily taught.

In 1900 the *Education Circular* carried a lengthy article by Jane Nisbet, inspectress of sewing, on 'Manners in Government Schools', in which she stated:

> Manners had to be taught them [the children] in the same way as reading and arithmetic. Their parents have very often neither time nor knowledge to impart them so the task of refining and civilising falls on the school, and has to be carried out by the teacher. (20)

Instilling grammatical speech and improving enunciation was very much to the fore in the syllabus which applied to all the schools of the State, but some saw it as having particular importance in country areas. Inspector Hughes drew attention to this after his 1914 tour of inspection.

> In regard to spoken language, however, one does not find in the city schools those shortcomings that are so pronounced a feature of many of our small schools. In these the teacher has to wage a persistent warfare against ingrained habits of speech, with the knowledge, too, that much of the work is undone when the child is outside the radius

of influence of the school. (21)

This was particularly a problem in newly settled areas where it was not uncommon for children to attend school for the first time at the age of seven, eight or even nine years of age. Many of the parent-settlers were migrants who had gone straight from ship to farm, mine or mill. Their children did not experience the tempering influence of peer groups in large numbers such as was provided by city schools or those in large country towns. Much of the emphasis on recitation of poetry and passages from the Bible, the chanting of 'spellings' and reading aloud from prescribed reading books, was related to training in correct pronunciation and the improvement of enunciation. There was some hope, largely a mistaken one, that this would rub off on the parents.

Much the same considerations applied to the syllabus for health and hygiene. All teachers were required to police elementary habits of hygiene and to inculcate 'the laws of health'. This involved cleanliness of the body and clothes, the condition of the toilets, eating and drinking habits, the detection of disease among the children and the temporary exclusion of those who might infect others.

In a letter to the *Teachers' Journal* 'Outback Lady' referred to the difficulty of cultivating habits of hygiene in country children and cited as an example the absence of use of the toothbrush. She went on to explain ways in which the teacher took practical steps to improve the children's health and their attitude to personal hygiene, and added for good measure that in outback schools in the winter

> The teacher's daily task is to dry the children's stockings and pour water from their boots — a practical application of the laws of health not arranged for in the time-table. (22)

Mavis Eastlake, who taught for a time at North Kununoppin, remembers how she found that she

> had to try to inculcate elementary hygiene — the need for regular bathing or washing and the necessity of cleaning the teeth. The latter must have made a deep impression as after a rare visit to the distant township, the four school children of one under-privileged family came rushing excitedly towards me as I watched their arrival at the school horse yard. 'We have one! We have one!' they yelled.
> 'Have what?' I asked.
> 'A toothbrush! A toothbrush!'
> Later I found that indeed they had. They shared it!

Inculcating hygiene was not only a battle against ingrained bad habits, but also against intractable problems of lack of amenities, as the story of the toothbrush illustrates. Pioneering in the outback did not make for hygienic habits, let alone refinement and social grace. Many a bush teacher learned by experience that cleanliness was largely a matter of convenience. Mavis Eastlake boarded with a family whose income compelled them to live at a very basic level.

> In all the years I was at that homestead I never remember the farmer and his wife taking a bath in the roughly built bathroom. But, of course, they did use the wash basin. (23)

Information connected with good health habits was fed back directly and indirectly to parents. Success did not come easily. As late as 1928 Dr Roberta Jull, medical officer of schools, found it necessary to remind teachers of their duty to conduct a daily inspection of heads ('use a pencil or ruler to lift the hair') teeth, nails and clothing, and to teach children to blow their noses. 'Handkerchief drill' had to be conducted at regular intervals, especially in winter. Every child was required to bring to school and to exhibit for inspection, a mug, a piece of towelling and a handkerchief. The washing of hands before entering the school in the morning and after recess and lunch periods had to be enforced. In health lessons the teacher gave advice not only on correct eating habits but also on what to eat. Quizzing children about their lunches might lead to advice on 'nutritive filling for sandwiches', or the dangers of eating unripe or over-ripe fruit. (24)

In handling formal curriculum subjects the teacher was required to have regard to morals, good conduct and citizenship. The choice of literature, for example, was governed by the need to present examples of human conduct depicting loyalty to authority and unstinting devotion to the good of society and the nation. Inspector McCollum believed that History

> should materially assist in making a strong self-reliant nation — a people able and willing to hold Australia against all possible enemies, eager to advance their country to a foremost position amongst the nations, whilst at the same time realizing that self-restraint and self-effort are essential to the fulfilment of this high aim. (25)

Departmental curriculum notes issued in 1941 advised that 'The earnest teacher will find numerous opportunities for moral instruction in almost every subject of the curriculum'. (26) This philosophy prevailed and was overtly expressed right through to the 1920s and 1930s. Preliminary statements leading up to curriculum revision of 1926 emphasized the need for greater attention to training the child as a future citizen, the importance of training in 'hygienic habits, of developing social instincts, appreciation of the beautiful and high ideals of morality. (27) E.C. Green, reporting to the Department in 1922, after an educational tour of England, strongly upheld this aim.

> No type of rational and sane being would trample each other down in a mad scramble for material wealth in a world where there was enough for all, yet that is precisely what is going on, and will go on until humanistic teaching holds firmer sway in our schools. Moral efficiency must be our aim. Material efficiency is of very minor importance in the great scheme of things. (28)

A 1924 departmental statement decried the idea of education as a mere preparation for 'labour-fodder' and declared that 'education of children should aim at the development of all sides of their nature'. (29)

The 'wise men from the East' who formed the core of the inspectorial staff had long upheld this view. Hope-Robertson in 1904, after inspecting schools in the goldfields bemoaned the environment which left a large gap in the children's education.

> They are perpetually surrounded in their daily life with an atmosphere of red dirt, accentuated from time to time by the pestilential 'willy-willy', and the deadly monotony of their environment is incapable of inspiring them with the ideas which have been the formation of so much healthy work in the development of man. They have their mineral specimens, and they have the sun by day, and at night the 'wondrous glory of the everlasting stars', but they are denied the beauty of green meadows, of growing trees, the running stream, the graceful landscape and the limpid brook, the singing bird, and the many forms of animal life, nor can they be inspired by the 'heroics of the mountains and the majesty of the ocean surf'. (30)

The onus was therefore on the teachers to 'fill the classrooms with pictures of art, artistic decorations, curios, and if possible flowers . . . when the pictures are well chosen, and the subjects are such which appeal to the better instincts of children in any way, the children themselves must be greatly benefited by them'. For the same reasons Cecil Andrews stressed the value of school gardens which 'may be of great value in the child's education on the aesthetic side, leading to the appreciation of beauty and order. Children who learn to take a pride in beautifying their surroundings are learning a valuable lesson that may have a great influence on their homes, and may be a source of permanent pleasure and interest in their lives'. (31)

4. Developing practical and social skills

For country schools, and especially for one-teacher schools, perhaps no subject of the curriculum was given greater prominence for several decades than Nature Study, which replaced the Object Lesson in about the year 1908. The latter had its origin in the study of plant species in England where boxed specimens were available to concretize the lesson. The method was extended to man-made objects and text-books were published as teachers' guides. The object was displayed, observed, described and explained. In the hands of a capable teacher knowledge could be expanded outwards by relating the object to its economic and social milieu. But all too often it was presented as a boring and sterile recital of facts. Nature Study went back to the origins of the Object Lesson, and great things were expected of it. Inspector McCollum, for instance, quoted with approval Professor Thomson of Aberdeen University, that 'Nature study is a fundamental discipline' (32) and Inspector McClintock saw it as 'one of the essential factors in the education of the country child'. (33) Its inclusion in the curriculum was justified by appeal to the writings of Froebel, Pestalozzi and Rousseau. (34) Inspector Clubb saw its virtues in these terms:

Nature Study means exercise in observation, in deduction, in

experiment; the knowledge gained is real knowledge; it comes first hand to the child and from that knowledge he can gain an intelligent appreciation of the phenomena of life and of scientific method'. (35)

Charles Hamilton, newly appointed Advisory teacher of Nature Study in 1908, posed the question, 'Why has Nature Study assumed such importance?' and replied:

> In the first place it gives a point of view and an attitude of mind which no other subject taught in schools can give. It serves as a foundation for science studies in the highest classes by teaching pupils to observe and express clearly; to weight evidence, and to come to definite conclusions as to the meaning of related facts. The teacher is enabled to meet his pupils as a fellow learner . . . the pupil gets a new attitude towards and interest in the wonderful plexus of phenomena and related activities which forms his environment. (36)

Its aim, thought Hamilton, was for children to 'acquire a knowledge of the conditions and potentialities of their surroundings'. It was largely the study of life and development, and one of its spin-off benefits for the teacher was its close correlation with drawing and with geography. (37)

Inspector H.J. Hughes, however, seemed to consider either that the subject itself did not have the virtues ascribed to it by his enthusiastic colleagues, or that it was not being well handled by teachers in the field. 'This subject', he said, 'does not appear to be fulfilling the high expectations that were formed some time ago'. (38)

An indication of the importance accorded the subject by the Education Department can be seen in the large amount of space allocated to it in departmental publications in the decades of the teens and the twenties. Supplements to the Education Circular were devoted entirely to syllabus detail and advice to teachers, and the subject was reported on at length in inspectors' annual reports.

Hamilton observed that country schools were doing better at the subject than town schools, and indeed by the 1920s it had become almost exclusively a feature of rural schools. Its persistence for so long in the small country schools was due not so much to the aesthetic, educational and character-building qualities ascribed to it, as to the close link that developed between 'nature study' activities and the predominant industry of the countryside, namely farming. By 1918 the Department was urging on teachers that the subject should have 'a direct bearing upon the occupation of the district'. It should be connected with agriculture and 'should enable children to gain some idea of the principles that underlie the chief agricultural operations'. (39)

School gardens were regarded as an integral part of nature study as were also experimental plots of wheat and other cereals and tree planting. Nurseries, especially Roselea, did a thriving business supplying schools through the Education Department, with seeds, and trees were supplied by the Forests Department.

Enthusiasm for nature study did not always take desirable forms and led to activities which would today be roundly condemned and would in some cases be illegal. Country agricultural shows offered prizes for the child who collected the biggest bunch of spider orchids. This was specially appealing to pupils of one-teacher schools, many of whom lived close to large areas of bush land. In the 1920s this species still grew in such abundance that it was possible for scores of children in some districts to present large bunches, some so large as scarcely to be held with the fingers of both hands. During the Great War a Wildflower Show organized in aid of the Victoria League Trench Comforts Fund ran a competition for the best collections of everlastings, orchids or mixed wildflowers. Large bunches of wildflowers were also brought as presents to teachers in bush schools and were commonly used as decorations on public social occasions, not to mention in private homes. In the spring of 1929 the Education Department alarmed at the destruction of wildflowers brought about by such activities combined with the extension of agriculture and the depredations of livestock, asked teachers to impress on their pupils the need for preservation. (40) This was the beginning of a concern which became so widespread that in 1935 the Parliament of WA passed the Native Flora Protection Act. Teachers were asked to assist in the implementation of the Act by making children aware of its provisions and by giving lessons on the consequences of wanton destruction of wildflowers. (41) In 1937 country schools were asked to assist the King's Park Board by forwarding seed collections for the work of propagation of wildflowers. The same concern was applied to the native bird life. The Gould League of Bird-lovers had its beginnings in WA in the early 1920s. Its aims were 'the protection and closer study of our native Australian birdlife' and schools were encouraged to enrol members. In this way teachers could educate youth to help ensure preservation of some fast disappearing native species. Support was looked for mainly from country schools. (42) The Forests Department was given space in the Education Circular for articles designed to educate teachers and through them the children in the conservation of timbers. In 1923 a Junior Branch of the League of Tree-lovers was established for schools, to encourage 'arboriculture' defined as 'tree-planting and care'. This, however did not mean necessarily the conservation and propagation of native species. In fact in the mid-twenties the Forests Department, with the full approval of the Education Department, sponsored 'Endowment Plantations' for schools. The plan was for softwoods to be grown on school grounds or on reserves near schools. In time the timber would be sold and the proceeds added to school funds. There was a further objective. 'If a vigorous and enlightened opinion is to be built up regarding forestry in our Commonwealth, the right place to begin is in our schools. (43)

In the 1950s Education Department Reports noted that tree planting was being accepted as 'a social responsibility by an increasing number of schools'. It was stated that during the past three years thousands of dry area trees, reared at the Kalgoorlie Nursery, had been planted in the wheat belt, trees such as Dundas mahogany, Dundas black gum, river gum, the coral-flowered gum and

silver gimlet. The school example led many farmers and others to follow suit. These salt-tolerant species were considered to be more suitable than the sugar gum which had hitherto been widely adopted as an ornamental and shade tree, but was subject to attack from termites and borers. In many areas parents took part in or took note of school Arbor Days which had been observed by the holding of tree planting ceremonies since the early 1900s.

Throughout the whole period of their existence many small schools were centres of skill development in a variety of handicrafts. In the pioneering stages of the wheat belt areas and in the group settlement areas of the south-west, many of the new farmers were migrants who had been city dwellers in the United Kingdom, lacking the most elementary skills connected with living and working in an isolated country environment, a deficiency compoulded by the fact that they were in what was to them an alien land. In the 1920s in particular the curriculum of the small country schools was modified to incorporate an extensive range of handicrafts, gardening and fruit and vegetable preservation. Handicrafts considered suitable for such schools were — clay and paper modelling, wood carving coloured woodwork, repousse metalwork, tin work, book-binding, bent-iron work, stencil work, canework, raffia weaving and basketry, pottery, rope-making, knotting and netting, fretwork, printing, leather work and box making. As early as 1903 'manual training', by which was meant elementary carpentry, was introduced into a number of schools and was regarded as being of value for boys living in the south-west who would inevitably become 'artisans and farmers'.

Schools in the wheat belt were used by the Agriculture Department as experimental centres for trying out new types of seed wheats and other cereals to determine those most suitable for the locality, and for determining the best methods of cultivation. For example, in 1919 the Commissioner for the wheat belt, G. L. Sutton, enlisted the aid of teachers for a series of experiments in pickling wheat, using bluestone and limestone, as a preventative against smut. A few years earlier Dr Ellis of Coolgardie, 'in order to encourage the children of our schools in the cultivation of wheat', offered prizes for the largest number of grains from a single ear of wheat, planted and cared for by children. The results had to be certified by teachers and records were checked by Dr Ellis and by Charles Hamilton, the advisory teacher of nature study. On the first occasion of this offer, in the year 1913, the award went to Norman Oliver of Jennapullin with 2,049 grains from 64 heads of *Turvey* wheat. (44)

Children also learnt how to grow vegetables, shade trees and flowers and were encouraged to develop home gardens to interest their parents in improving both their diet and the appearance of their homes. As early as 1898 the departmental annual report held up as an example to other teachers the Meckering school for its flower beds, agricultural experimental plots, tree planting and the keeping of careful records of all this activity. In 1902 Inspector Rooney commended Moonyanooka and Bridgetown for their work in experimental plots.

I understand that more than one farmer was interested in the results of the experiments in wheat growing and the use of manures at the former of these schools. (45)

In the early part of the century district inspectors commented on the dreariness of the settlers' homes. Clubb remarked:

One is very much struck in the country by the absence of efforts to beautify the homes by gardens and shade trees. (46)

At best the typical outback home might sport a fig tree or a mulberry tree, a scraggy peppercorn or two or a lucerne tree in the 'chook yard'. Outback teachers were urged to make the school a pleasant environment as an example to the settlers.

The value of the school garden is very great, not only in providing opportunities for observation and study of plant life, and arousing interest in agriculture and horticulture, but also in encouraging a taste for beautifying the surroundings of the home. No-one who has travelled through the country districts can have failed to be struck by the absence of any attempt to make many of the homes attractive by even the smallest garden. Anything that tends to render country life more attractive is most valuable to the State in assisting to counteract the flow of population towards the towns. (47)

A large claim indeed! But it demonstrates the importance this kind of school activity had in educational policy at the time, in which there was more than a touch of the concept of the moral good of country life in contradistinction to the evils of city life.

Great social benefits were held to derive from the co-operative efforts of teachers, children and parents.

The Departmental Annual Report of 1906 stated:

The parents and the children are led to take a pride in the school and to look upon it not merely as the State School, but as 'Our School'. The garden often forms a model to the neighbourhood of what can be done with a home, and the results are becoming apparent in many cases where children have acquired the taste for gardening at school, and keep it up in their own homes when their school days are over. In some cases, as a result of the example of the school garden, vegetables are now being grown in neighbourhoods where none were to be seen before. (48)

The following year the annual report returned to the same theme:

Children who have seen what can be done in the way of improving waste ground are not likely to be content to leave the surroundings of their homes unimproved. If the school can in this way assist in making the homes of the community more attractive and more highly valued, it is rendering a great social service. (49)

Again, in 1910 Inspectors Clubb and Klein both continued to exhort teachers in the countryside to persist with this aspect of the school programme. The

former proclaimed that 'if education is a preparation for life . . . then the school garden in agricultural districts should be a very important branch of the school work', and the latter credited schools with influencing the development of home gardens, especially with the growing of vegetables, which provided 'a pleasant break from the pig and potato diet of many of our farming districts'. (50) In the same year the first syllabus of Nature Study, Garden work and experimental plots was produced by Charles Hamilton and issued to teachers.

In 1923 an 'Education Week' was held at Dongara in the course of which public evening gatherings were held to hear lectures from the Director of Agriculture, and Plant pathologist, the government poultry expert, the Director of Education and Senior Inspector Miles. A report of these events contains a reference to the work of the school.

> The experimental plots at the school aroused so much interest and admiration that the whole crop was purchased for seed purposes by a prominent farmer, and next year's crop was purchased in advance. The school has succeeded in becoming a live centre of interest in the district and is evidently exercising a very real influence upon the life of the community. (51)

This aspect of the schools programme co-incided with the decades of the pioneering of the wheat belt from 1900 to 1930. It drew its inspiration from the needs of the farms and the farming populations and in this way played a not unimportant role in the economic and social life of the outback.

Though girls were not excluded from these activities, programmes of practical skills for girls were not as vigorously developed as for boys. In some schools, fruit and vegetable preservation was carried out, and some attention paid to preparation and cooking of food, and the elements of good diet. More notable was needlework, which was part of the curriculum, but in some remote country schools inoperative owing to lack of a suitable instructress. Where the head-teacher of a small school was a woman, needlework was taught as a matter of course. Where the sole teacher was a male and where there were eight girls above the Infants class, a sewing mistress would be appointed if a suitable person could be found among the local women.

For over half a century needlework was compulsory in government schools and for good reason. Especially in the early decades the skills of designing, cutting out, making up and general sewing were of great practical importance to girls who would later become managers of households and mothers of children. The ready-made clothing industry had not developed to the point where bought clothes were cheap enough to supply all the clothing needs of families living on labourer's wages or battling to carve out farms in new areas, nor were they readily available in the outback. Mothers had as often as not to make clothes, not only for their children but also for their husbands and themselves. Moreover clothes had to be made to last, by patching and repairing. Sewing skills taught in the schools were related to these needs as an examination of the syllabus will show. In very remote areas it was a case of waiting for the Afghan trader to arrive, when mother would buy a bolt of cloth and from this

make father's trousers, her own skirt and everything needed by the children.

Mary Nicolson, who lived as a school girl on several of the group settlements, remembers how poorly clothed everyone was at that time, especially the children. Girls wore print cotton frocks. Some 'lucky ones' had two ribbons on their hair — 'very stylish for group kids at that time'. Many families relied on charity, receiving clothes parcels from relatives back in the U.K. Mothers remodelled the clothes for Australian conditions. Bags of clothes were also sent down from Perth by charitable organizations. Some mothers made clothes for their own children. The ability to sew as well as to cook was held up to girls as an asset in the marriage market. Sewing remained a compulsory subject in the curriculum of primary schools till well after the Second World War.

Another development of the 1920s which helped to tie the school to the local community was the organization of school clubs. 'Project Clubs' in handicrafts and 'agricultural work' operated during after school leisure hours. Schools at Yanmah, Bally Bally, Northcliffe and Toodyay were commended by departmental officials for good work in this area. An enthusiast for their development was Mr. Rogers, departmental advisory teacher, who helped teachers to organize programmes of calf, pig and poultry rearing, bee keeping, fruit and tobacco growing, and to hold school field days where parents and others were invited to inspect the work done and the records kept by the children.

It was significant that the most successful club life in schools was to be found in country districts. Departmental records show that there were bird, debating, dramatic, health, radio, nature study, philatelic, garden and magazine clubs, branches of the Junior Red Cross and the Junior League of Nations, and foreign correspondence clubs. (52) In 1938 there were thirty-three Junior Farmers Clubs for children who had left school, in the development of which the local teacher had played a leading part. The Department encouraged country teachers to stimulate club activities of all kinds, stressing particularly their value to the local community. Inspectors reported that the majority of schools in their districts had functioning clubs, and brought pressure to bear on those that were lagging.

This form of school activity was raised to a high level in 1929 when the first one hundred years of the State's history of European development was celebrated at the Centenary Show at Claremont. A new pavilion, known as the Centenary Hall, was erected to house 'district exhibits' to which rural schools sent in displays of cereals, fodder-grasses and manual work, competing for the Cockram Shield. In the 1930s the Rural Schools Display became one of the main attractions of the Royal Show.

About this time a teacher bard calling himself 'Bidgeri', expressed in verse his opinion on the official enthusiasm for cultivating a rural bias in schools. Two of the stanzas ran as follows:

The cockies come from far and near,
When I exhibit every year:
It fills my heart with joy to hear

Them cry aloud, Oh my! as
They see my wheat and pigs and rope,
My home-made jams and mats and soap.
My lino-cuts and other dope
That go with rural bias.

Cows I have kept and birds and bees,
I've carrots grown and double-gees,
Dandelions, beans and peas
and got a yield as high as
Any farmer in the land
From my little patch of schoolyard sand,
And so I think you'll understand
I've a truly rural bias.

The emphasis given to the foregoing types of activities had tended to create a somewhat utilitarian practice of education in country schools. The earlier ideals of inculcating good character and cultural refinement (albeit rather didactically through subject teaching) had dropped into the background. The 1936 revision of the curriculum brought this aspect once more strongly to the fore. It was pointed out that, as important as were the three R's, they should be complemented by the three C's — citizenship, character and culture, taught 'not as special subjects...but as part of every lesson every moment of the day'. Each child should be encouraged to develop into 'a good Australian citizen of a fine upright character, with enough culture to make his life interesting, happy and useful'. The good school was one where,

> neatness, courtesy, simplicity obtain where enthusiasm goes with mental exactitude, thoroughness of work with interest, and absence of artificiality with refinement, where loafers and pretenders are despised. . . .The school offers many opportunities for building character, not through the dull moralizing lessons, but through activities and projects that interest the child. For example, a special assembly on kindness to animals, on Safety First, a pageant portraying episodes in the life of Lord Forrest, Burke and Wills, Florence Nightingale etc., lessons in Geography, History, Nature Study, and English furnish similar opportunities. . .Every child should grow in his enjoyment of music, and art, and literature. . .developing a taste for beauty and the refinements of better living, so that children may enjoy life more abundantly. (54)

In the one-teacher schools the development of this aspect of education had for a long time been handicapped by the very poor educational level of most of the teachers who staffed these schools. The result was that too much effort in this direction was on the didactive moralizing kind, which was encouraged, it must be admitted, by the directional material issued by the department and by the influence of inspectors. There was history presented as 'Brave deeds of Empire' and poetry in the form of the balladry of the 'burning deck'

(*Cassabianca* becoming the source of much ribald schoolboy parody) and the '*Private of the Buffs*' ('Let dusky Indians whine and kneel, an English lad must die'), which all too often inculcated the worst kind of ethnocentrism and zenophobia.

In the period after the end of the second World War, changes in the nature of farming and in the character of rural life in Western Australia led to a decline of the extra-curricula activities described in this chapter. The process was hastened by the consolidation movement which by 1960 had eliminated most of the small schools. In the consolidated schools a more rigid application of a state-wide curriculum tied to the public examination system created an atmosphere where activities by students or teachers outside strictly 'school' subjects were much curtailed. The teacher's role as social pioneer in the countryside had come to an end.

CHAPTER 7
District Inspectors

In the formative years of the state's educational system, the role of inspector of schools was a decisive one. A centralised system of appointment and promotion of staff made it necessary to have regular inspection of schools in order to ensure equality of opportunity for teachers. Of greater importance, however, was equality of education opportunity for the children. One thing that stands out clearly year after year in the annual report of inspectors is their concern for efficiency in teaching and for uniformity in the application of the curriculum over the whole state. One cannot fail to be impressed with the calibre of the men who comprised the inspectorial staff of the Education Department in those early decades. Their erudition, the energy and the self-discipline with which they travelled the land in the course of their examination of schools, the thoroughness of their work in the schools, their knowledge of human nature, their skill in pedagogics, come through in the records they have left behind them. Very important also was their role in morale-building among the raw recruits in the one-teacher schools and in cross-fertilisation of ideas and methods from one school to another.

All the early district inspectors in Western Australia belonged to a group of educators popularly known as 'the wise men from the east'. They were experienced teachers from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and were recruited to the teaching service in the West soon after the establishment of the Education Department in 1893. They came to fill the top educational and administrative posts for many years. Three of them held the office of Director-General, in succession to each other, Wallace Clubb (1930-35), James Klein (1935-38), and Charles Hadley (1938-40)

Rankin has argued that the high quality of the Inspectorial staff in Western Australia was 'due to the fact that the seniors have come from outside the Department'. (1) It can with confidence be said that the 'wise men' supervised the creation of a primary school system that educated the children of the state for over fifty years. In the development of this system Rankin suggests that 'the West utilised the best that could be gleaned from the educational systems of

N.S.W., Victoria and South Australia', and that the West Australian curriculum 'selected what was best in the syllabuses of the several Australian states'. (2) However, he also quotes Senior Inspector Hope Robertson, one of the 'wise men', who contended that in Western Australia a 'new and original system was evolved'. Any suggestion that the educational system here was modelled on that of another state was 'absolutely without foundation'. (3) Nevertheless there can be no doubt that those teachers recruited from the east who became inspectors brought to bear on the organisation of the schools, the content of the curriculum and the methodology of teaching practice, the weight of their own training and experience in their states of origin. The greatest impact of this influence would have been on the one-teacher schools of the outback, since here were the teachers with the poorest educational backgrounds and the least expertise in methodology. To them the inspector's word, to a much greater degree than for the town or city teacher, would have been law.

The life of a district inspector in the first three or four decades was one requiring great physical endurance, organisational ability, and moral toughness. Physical strength was needed to cope with the demands of travel and continual change of living conditions; organizing ability to get through a programme of inspections covering a great number of schools spread over a vast area; and moral toughness to handle problems arising from teachers' relationships with the local community and to pull demoralized teachers into line.

District inspectors were required to make two visits a year to every school; the first in the advisory capacity to help the teacher sort out problems of classroom organisation, to make suggestion for improvements in methods and to deal with other aspects of school routine; the second to assess the efficiency of the teacher as measured by the progress of the children.

The bugbear of the inspector's life was the spread of the inspectorial district over wide areas of the state. James Miles, in his first year as inspector, had a quota of schools from each of the north-west, the south-west, the goldfields north of Kalgoorlie, and the sub-metropolitan area. Travel in the early days was by horse-drawn coach, sulky or cart, on rough outback corrugated and rutted roads, by horseback, train, shank's pony, or in the case of the north-west outports by the comparative comfort of coastal steamer. The first recorded use of a motor car by an inspector was in 1911. (4) An added hardship was the limitations of accommodation, which in remote areas was often quite primitive. Altogether the physical demands made the office of inspector no sinecure. A few examples will demonstrate the problems involved.

In 1902 Inspector Hope-Robertson reported that time spent in getting to remote localities in his district prevented him from visiting some of his schools more than once in the year. To inspect Wiluna he took a coach journey of 560 miles from Leonora, to inspect Euro a journey of 190 miles from Malcolm, and to get to Princess Royal from Coolgardie 252 miles. (5) In 1904 he found that to visit the four small schools at Shark's Bay, Carnarvon, Roebourne and Broome, took two months, occasioned by the waste of time waiting for the next boat. Some further idea of his problem can be gathered by pointing to some other

schools on his list — Peak Hill, Lake Way, Mount St. Samuel, Lawlers, Norseman, Esperance and Ravensthorpe.

Inspector Clubb explained that in 1903 he had been unable to inspect Shark's Bay and Carnarvon because he had been delayed for a month in Broome by the disablement of the steamers *Sultan* and *Bullara*. Some other schools could not be given a second visit owing to their being scattered over an immense area. He had nevertheless covered, in the course of his duties, a total distance of 10,000 miles. (6).

James Klein travelled 14,500 miles to inspect schools in the Midland, Northern and Newcastle districts. A visit to Peak Hill involved a week's travel time from Nannine and the visit to Carnarvon took ten days from Geraldton, presumably travelling by land. (7)

Inspector Wheeler travelled in 1907 a distance of 11,537 miles by train and 2,434 miles by coach or other vehicle. He too found the time factor a galling problem.

> 'It sometimes happens that in order to ensure a full day's work it is necessary to travel by trains leaving a terminal point at say 6 a.m. and after leaving the train to walk perhaps two or three miles. The school is inspected and the return walk negotiated, after which there is a wait, perhaps of hours, at a railway siding for the return train. Finally the inspector arrives at his centre at midnight — possibly at 2 a.m. The day's work has necessitated his carrying certainly two, and sometimes three, meals with him. Cases such as these are certainly exceptional, but they nevertheless occur when the locality visited is one where accommodation is absolutely unobtainable, or where it is such that one would prefer to travel even the whole 24 hours of the day rather than avail himself of what is considered good enough for the casual traveller. There are still places in the State where sleeping in the open is immeasureably preferable to the occupancy of rooms in so-called hotels.' (8).

Inspector Wheeler, in his 1909 report, set out in very great detail the particulars of his travels that year. He had covered 11,659 miles by train at an average speed of 16 miles-per-hour, making a total time of 729 hours; vehicle travel amounted to 2,339 miles at an average speed of 8 miles-per-hour, totalling 292 hours; a grand total of 1021 hours of travel. Assuming a twenty-four hour day this amounted to forty-two days spent just in getting to and from schools visited. (9) The following year Wheeler travelled 19,000 miles (in sixty days) by road, rail and sea — the highest ever recorded.

Joe Parsons made the first use of a motor car hired for the purpose and drove 1000 miles in the Great Southern area. The convenience pleased him greatly. 'Unfortunately', he remarked, 'cars are not yet available in all large towns at reasonable rates of hire'. (10) Following this experience other inspectors began to clamour for the right to use cars. Wheeler, in support of this claim, quoted a journey he had undertaken to an (un-named) agricultural area to meet settlers to verify the facts relating to their application for the establishment of a school.

It 'entailed travelling continuously from 6 a.m. on one day until 12.30 p.m. the next day and this for a distance of 40 miles'. (11) Unfortunately he gave no details of this extraordinary state of affairs. Inspector McLintock pointed to the situation in his south-eastern district where 15 small schools were over 20 miles distant from the nearest hiring centre (for transport), 5 were over 30 miles, one 40 miles, and one over 50 miles. (12) The advantages of car hire were apparent and soon came into regular use.

As indicated above, the inspector was obligated, if it was physically possible, to make two visits per year to each school. The first visit, early in the school year, took place usually without notice, though intelligence might reach the teacher by way of bush telegraph. The organisation of the school was enquired into in great detail, registers, and the records, time-table and programme of work examined, the teacher instructed how to remedy faults; the classification of the children was noted and where necessary amended; the discipline and order was noted and the tone carefully summed up. The condition of the buildings, furniture, fences and grounds examined and noted. Finally the teaching of the children was taken over by the inspector for the remainder of the day, and by means of practical lessons, an estimate was obtained of their intellectual calibre and attainments, and above all the teacher gained from this by his observance of methods other than his own. This was an advisory visit and no formal assessment of the teacher made, though he was admonished if found seriously lacking. (13)

The second visit, usually with notice, was made towards the end of the year — a one-day or perhaps half-day affair, depending on the exigencies of the inspector's itinerary or the availability of means of transport. The inspector would try to board at a good hotel centrally situated, and radiate daily to the schools within convenient driving distance. Although formal examination of the children for promotional purposes was left to the teacher, the inspector had to probe sufficiently into the pupils' attainments in order to achieve the main purpose of this visit — an estimate of the teacher's methods and ability in order to allot him a teaching mark. He had to look closely at the progress of each class in the basic subjects of English and Arithmetic, and take some random samples of work in other subjects whether by questioning the children himself or requiring the teacher to do so. His examination of script work was thorough — pads and exercise books were looked through — since this helped him to arrive at an idea of teacher's efficiency.

Inspector Clubb once quoted with approval the remark of a colleague who said, 'show me the script work of a school and I'll tell you the character of the teacher and the tone of his school'. Clubb went on:

> How well the undated books, the absence of proper corrections, the good work of one day and the bad work of the next day, all proclaim the lack of enthusiasm and care in the teacher. How well the weak disciplinarian, the poor supervisor, stands forth branded by the slovenly careless books of the scholars'. (14).

After the checking of the essential subjects the inspection usually ended in a hoped-for-lighter vein when the children were asked to recite and sing. Recitation of poetry was a required part of the curriculum, regarded as having the practical outcome of improving the quality of speech as well as having aesthetic value. Teachers with deficient literary background, and they were the majority of bush teachers in the early days, selected their examples from the same sources, school reading books, especially Victorian Readers and the department School Papers. In the course of his travels the unfortunate inspector had to listen to endless repetition of *The Slave's Dream*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and other woeful ballads of a similar genre. He would have read with an approving smile *The Inspector's Lament* which appeared in the Teacher's Journal. (15)

'It was the schooner Hesperus'
So Longfellow doth say;
It is the same perfidious barque
I hear of day by day.

'Week in, week out,' is Bruce' flung down
In lonely mood to think',
By Standard 111, while Standard 1.
Says 'Twinkle, twinkle, twink'.

'With gurgling sound', they murmur forth,
How sank 'the Inchcape Bell';
In weary dreams I nightly hear
'Poor Gelert's dying yell.'
'The boy stood on the burning deck',
Is more than I can stand;
'Tis worse and worse the way they speak
About the 'Better Land'.

I've met 'the little cottage girl'
More times than I can say;
And far too often, I am sure,
I've 'heard of Lucy Gray'.

With weary, panting gasps, on high
They drag poor 'Daisy Dill';
They clip their words, although they try
To say 'Bite bigger, Bill'.

'Sweet was the sound at evening's close'
In Auburn long ago;
'Tis not so sad when boys repeat'
'With careless voice and slow'.

They drawl, 'in beauty side by side',
The hackneyed rhymes to me;
And were this all, and naught beyond.
O, earth! 'twould glorious be'.

But if I reach 'the happy shore',
— Of which my hopes are dim —
Confound it! there I'll meet once more
The eternal 'Little Jim'.

Inspector McClintock remarked that an improvement in Literature in school required 'a wider knowledge of the subject than is possessed by the average unclassified teacher'. (16)

The teaching of singing was a real problem for many teachers in small schools. Though music was for long a compulsory subject in Teachers' College the majority of bush teachers had not had the advantage of a college course. The gift of a musical ear is not common and many teachers in town schools felt inadequate to the task. But they had the advantage of there being at least one staff member with whom classes could be exchanged for the purposes of singing. Such schools also would very likely have a piano which helped a great deal. The small school teacher struggled with the tuning fork and with his own, and perhaps also the children's untuneful voices. An inspector complained that 'one sees some astonishing methods of teaching singing.' He quotes an example where the teacher proceeded thus:

> Children, we'll sing 'A Mighty Captain — one, two' and the children commenced in half a dozen different keys, and at various rates of speed, until at length one child with a stronger voice than the others took command and led the rest through the song.

He commented wryly 'There is no doubt that our country music is very bad'. He could not see any way of improving it except to suggest that the various teachers' associations in the country take the matter up. 'There are generally one or two members who understand the theory sufficiently well to given specimen lessons. Will those members please lay aside their bashfulness and help the others?' As a further piece of advice he asked,

> Will teachers also please give *The Mighty Captain* a well-earned rest? I heard some charming little songs of Scott Garry's the other day — just the thing for children in Std. 1 and 11 and Infants. Very different was the selection in another school, where the whole school, including quite half a dozen big boys over 13 years old, sang solemnly, 'For Dolly is my darling, I nurse her all the day'. The teacher who could see these big boys stolidly singing such stuff was absolutely lacking in a sense of the humorous. (17)

In addition to estimating the teacher's efficiency in the school the inspector had to make an appraisal of the relationship of the school to the local community, gathered largely from the degree of interest of the parents in the school. His last duty before leaving was to enter his comments into the Head Teacher's Suggestion Book and to write out his report on the school, which would be copied by the teacher into the Inspector's Book as a permanent record and the original sent to the Department. He might then be entertained by the teacher to afternoon tea, the water being boiled on a primus or a spirit stove.

Obviously the degree to which the inspector could assist the teacher, and the manner in which he was received, depended greatly on his personality and the sincerity of his approach to his duties. There is agreement amongst older teachers that most of them were helpful and understanding of the teacher's difficulties and problems and the handicaps under which they laboured. But it is also widely agreed that there were some who were abrupt, tyrannical and out to catch the teacher in a breach of the regulations. Two or three indulged in petty practices that earned for them a name for meanness, such as loitering out of sight to observe if the children were brought into school on time or if recess periods were over-extended, or dropping into a school late on the last day of term to see if the children had been dismissed early for the holidays. Several inspectors, not in this category, were known as 'hard men' who carried out very thorough inspections on every aspect of school life, and reported on faults and inefficiencies. Nevertheless they were respected as being tough but fair. Of course there were teachers who deserved to have the rod run over them for gross neglect of duties, laziness or incompetence. The following sketch supplied by a former pupil suggests the kind of problem that inspectors sometimes had to deal with.

> The first teacher of Group School 89/90, known locally as 'Woop Woop', lived at the school, but had a habit of disappearing from time to time. Pupils attended, played around for a while then went home. At other times he stood in the door way of his cottage in pyjamas, called the pupils into two lines then ordered them to march into school. Later the teacher appeared dressed and ready to start lessons. A short time later his brother's head would appear in through a window reminding him that breakfast was ready. (18)

There were matters other than school inspection that frequently brought inspectors to remote areas. In the period of great expansion of settlement much time was spent with on-the-spot investigation of claims for the establishment of a school which involved deciding whether there were in fact sufficient children of school age in the locality, was there a prospect of the settlement being permanent, and what was the most suitable site, this latter not an easy matter to decide in those days of scattered settlement. This question is dealt with at length in chapter 8.

Another matter requiring inspectorial attention was the need from time to time for adjudication of the right to driving allowances. Attendance was compulsory if a child lived within three miles from a school. In order to encourage parents living in outback areas to enroll their children, the Department inaugurated a driving allowance (later also applied to bicycles) of sixpence per day per child (subject to an incomes test), provided the distance from home to school exceeded the three miles. In 1949 a grant of one shilling-and-sixpence per day was provided for conveyance by motor vehicle a distance of over five miles. Application for allowances was made by the parent through the teacher, and the parent had to certify the distance as correct, but the onus was on the teacher to verify this. If there was doubt or dispute the district

inspector was sent to check, which he sometimes did by physically driving over the road or track to the child's home. The story is told of one inspector, in checking what he felt to be a very deserving case, manoeuvering his car over a bush track, taking every bend as widely as he could and moving round trees and stumps to increase the registration on his speedometer. A refusal by a conscientious teacher to approve an application could lead to bitter recriminations against him not only by the aggrieved party but by the local community generally. The intervention of the inspector was at times very necessary. Teachers naturally resented having the responsibility thrust upon them. There were troubles enough in coping with parents in some remote areas without this added burden to create more bad blood. This question was taken up from time to time by the Country Teachers Branch of the Teacher Union. A spokesman for the branch sent the following ironic suggestion to the Teacher's Journal.

> The writer has never been under the painful necessity of doubting a neighbour's reckoning, but if he had, he would have made it a part of the Arithmetic lesson, and, on one fine spring morning, taken the whole school for a route march, arriving at his neighbour's gate at 12 p.m. Lunch, rest, and a march back to school would, he thinks, just about have completed a day's useful work; for besides measuring the distance from gate to gate, he would have been able to give all the children a useful tough monotonous exercise in counting aloud, and this counting, as you know, is a very important part of the Arithmetic curriculum as set out for small schools. (19)

The department eventually agreed to throw the full responsibility on the parents.

Where a serious situation arose in a country school either as a result of reprehensible conduct by the teacher or perhaps resentment of a teacher's action taken as part of his lawful duty (as in corporal punishment of a delinquent child), an inspector was sent down to sort things out. It was not a job that any of them relished. There were times when he needed to be an arch-diplomat and have the wisdom of Solomon to reach a decision that would be accepted with good grace by all concerned.

The inspector wielded considerable power to make or break the career of a teacher, and no doubt some of them were feared by the struggling teacher in the outback. Some were high-handed and rather intolerant of the real difficulties of the job while others were extremely understanding and helpful. To fulfill the role satisfactorily required exceptional ability and some had it. Others were less than adequate, either because of personality or because of lack of experience. Few teachers would go along with Rankin's eulogy of West Australian inspectors.

> They represent to the teachers and children the highest authority, the best illustration of what is highest, noblest and most authoritative in the teaching profession. (20)

The quality of the inspectorial staff, particularly as it affected teachers in the country area, was questioned at the 1918 conference of the Country Teachers Branch of the Teachers' Union. A resolution was carried 'that the present system of the appointment of inspectors is not in the best interests of rural education'. In a report of the conference discussion the *Teachers' Journal* picked up the point that the small school presented difficulties that could only be understood by men who had worked through the system, including service in the one-teacher schools.

> The whole weight of evidence among teachers in small schools was that they received their most practical help from those inspectors who had once been masters of rural schools, and from advisory teachers. . . . Scarcely any of the inspectorial staff had even been in charge of a small school. (21)

The 1919 Conference came back to the same question, with a resolution 'that success as a teacher in a small school should be made an absolute condition in the appointment of a due proportion of inspectors'. (22) A subsequent approach by the Union to the Minister for Education was unsuccessful.

In 1923 an article in the Journal by the editor, the redoubtable Martin Darcey, entitled 'Inspection of schools', sparked off a spate of correspondence that lasted for some months. Darcey referred to the great number of officials (ten district inspectors and eight specialists) all involved in inspecting, reporting and assessing of teachers. Their annual reports indicated the competence of the teachers. The great majority of teachers were classified, 40 percent having the B or A Certificate. Why so much inspection? He proposed that they exempt 20 percent of schools from inspection and devote the time saved to helping the weaker schools.

> The weak or inexperienced teacher in the isolation and silence of the bush has to fight her battle with assistance so slight as to be almost valueless. (23)

Over the next few issues of the Journal Darcey kept up the campaign. He published a report of a presidential address by J.T. Saxton M.A. to the Australian Conference of Inspectors of Schools, critical of lack of example given by inspectors.

> Too many inspectors are repositories of out of date ideas. . . routine men pure and simple they act as dead weights on the enthusiasm of teachers and cling with frantic tenacity to curricula and regulations. (24)

A good response came from teachers in the country. 'Bush Boy' wrote:

> I cannot recall having received a useful hint from an inspector in this State. The best that can be said for most of them is that they do little harm. (25)

Other correspondents wrote in similar vein, all tending to the view that inspectors were chosen from the most successful city teachers with little or no knowledge of rural conditions. When the 'financial emergency' occasioned by the Great Depression led to cuts in government expenditure, inspectorial

visits to country schools remote from a railway were reduced to one per year. The advisory visit was scrapped, but the assessment visit retained. This was a 'going back to the bad old days when the outback teacher looked forward with dread to the day when the inspector arrived to dishearten and condemn'. (26)

The problem as it affected the small schools, was, however already on the way to being solved. The consolidation of schools which began in the early 1920s and continued at accelerating pace through to the early 1960s, eliminated all but a few of the one-teacher schools and teacher isolation became almost entirely a thing of the past.

CHAPTER 8
Sites, buildings, furniture and equipment

1. Establishing a school

An important aspect of the story of the one-teacher schools concerns the prolonged efforts made by outback settlers to have a government school established for the primary education of their children. Success was contingent on certain conditions being fulfilled.

Education Department Form M2 'Application for establishment of a school' required such information to be supplied as the position of the proposed school, whether land was available, whether a building was available and if so, whether the settlers were willing to undertake to pay the rent; further, what accommodation was there for the teacher and was a separate room provided; what provision would be made for sanitary service at a 'reasonable cost'. The central piece of information required was, of course, the number and ages of the children, aged between six and fourteen, living within a radius of three miles of the proposed school (1). Form M2, in effect, set out the basic conditions that had to be met before the Department would authorize the establishment of a school.

The first step — a petition for a school — was usually taken by one of the local settlers who constituted himself spokesman for the parents of the area and who sometimes enlisted the support of a local Justice of the Peace, or the member of Parliament for the district. Such a petition was usually followed by the despatch of an inspector of schools to the area to verify the claims set out in the petition, and to prepare a detailed report on prospective scholars, distances from existing schools, and the proposed site of the new school.

The type of school the Department was prepared to authorize depended on the expected reliability of attendance, which in turn depended on the stability of settlement. If the required minimum was not achievable, the only type of school the Department would agree to was a provisional school, later called an assisted school, where responsibilities were shared by the local residents and the department.

The onus was on the parents to secure an approved teacher and provide the building, which might be a wood-and-iron structure, materials and labour being supplied by the settlers. The Department, for its part, paid a grant in accordance with average attendance, which in the early 1900s was £7 per head per annum. (2) The settlers had to supplement this with an amount sufficient to give the teacher at least £2/10/- per month above the cost of board and lodging. Furniture and books (for the school) were provided by the Department. The teacher was not considered to be in the service of the Department. Thus the 'provisional' or 'assisted' school is to be seen in contradistinction to the 'classified' school where all the responsibility lay with the government and where the building was usually of a more permanent nature.

There were many cases of long delays between the first petition and the eventual opening of a Government school. The school at Dardadine, for example, was opened by teacher Mrs. Daisy Palm on 8th April 1935 exactly ten years after the first request! The question arises, what was done about the education of the children during such prolonged delays? After 1918 they could be enrolled with the Claremont Correspondence School, and do lessons at home under parental supervision. But in the early years when a government school was refused, and parents could not organize the necessary amount of financial support for an 'assisted' or 'provisional' school, the children either had no schooling at all, or the parents in a few cases hired a private tutor. A small country school at its first opening might therefore have several children well above the official starting age who had had no schooling at all.

Half-time schools, where a teacher was shared between two schools, were sometimes resorted to as one way of overcoming the lack of sufficient pupils, and to provide education at a reduced cost. A notable example, which operated for a short time, was Arthur River School, which opened as a half-time school with Tarwonga on 3rd December 1906, with an enrolment of thirteen, under teacher Herbert Speers. The Tarwonga school had opened half-time on November 26th with an enrolment of eleven. (3)

Thus the business of getting a school established proceeded through the stages of petition, formal application, inspectorial visit to verify information supplied, argument and the bringing to bear of such limited pressure as was available to isolated settlers of those days, negotiation as to the relative responsibilities of parents and the Education Department, and final compliance by the education authorities and approval by the Minister. The dominating hard fact throughout was *distance* arising from the scattered nature of settlement, in turn conditioned by the prevailing Australian characteristic of comparative infertility of soil and the large size of farm holdings.

2. Determining a site

One of the important items of information required to be supplied when applying for a school was a suggested site for the school building. It was necessary for this to be so located that the places of residence of the statutory minimum number of children would be within the three-mile limit. Where a

permanent school was established the Lands and Survey Department had to be involved in the arrangements for the site, whether it was on Crown Land or excised from private property. Minding school provides an example of the latter. (4) The site recommended by Inspector Gladman was on land belonging to Mr Hubert Hamersley, who was prepared to surrender two acres situated at the 13 mile peg on the Arthur-Wagin road. This was an area considerably less than that usually considered necessary for an efficient school. At Wedgecarrup, for example, a government reserve of five acres was declared. At West Dardadine, Mr. A. McWhinney, who had offered both land for the school and board for the teacher, was required to surrender five acres, and this area was gazetted by the Lands & Survey Department as a reserve in December 1945. Not all settlers were prepared to surrender land gratis. In the case of Arthur River, Mr. W. Spratt sold the site of five acres to the Government at a price which seems to have been between £3 and £5 per acre. (5)

In general the eagerness of parents to have a school established for the education of their children ensured that there were no prolonged disputes either among themselves, or with the department as to an acceptable site or the conditions on which it would be surrendered.

3. School Buildings

In newly settled districts the school was often among the first buildings to be erected. It was often the only place available for community gatherings. In a great many cases, especially in provisional schools, where the parents had to provide the buildings, they were to say the least, unsatisfactory. There were regulations setting minimum standards: floor space had to be 11 square feet per child, windows should provide cross-ventilation, light must come from the left-hand side, there should be some source of heating for the winter. In the case of classified schools the Public Works Department drew up the plans and specifications, called tenders from local builders, and supervised the construction.

An early departmental report (1897) showed a dismal state of affairs in many bush schools. Rooms were too small, lighting badly placed, coming from the back or shining in the children's faces, verandahs (where they existed) were on the southern side, ventilation inadequate, steps insufficient, 'out-offices' (a quaint 19th century term for toilets) did not provide enough urinal accommodation, and playground shade was scanty. Some schools were built of unsuitable materials. Quindanning, Glencoe and Ornabellup were composed entirely of iron with rounded roof, 'unbearably hot in summer and miserably cold in winter'. This is a gloomy picture. Inspector Clubb in 1904 must have been fortunate in his inspectorate which covered the northern districts and the Blackwood. 'The lighting, ventilation and equipment are exceedingly good in even the smallest bush schools', he reported. (6)

The contradictory picture painted above is explainable by reference to the types of buildings about which generalisations were made. During the first four decades of the Education Department there were three types of school buildings

provided for small schools in the country — the tent school, the weatherboard school and the lightwood school. The 'Standard Tent School' was erected in areas where the Department estimated there would not be maintenance of a satisfactory attendance for more than a few short years. The dimensions were 18 ft x 14 ft with or without a 'shelter' 18 ft long running along the length of the main building at a width of 6 ft. It was timber framed with walls of canvas treated with a special preparation to make it rain-proof. It was floored, and covered with an iron fly roof. One large enough to hold twenty-five children (and therefore sometimes known as the 'twenty-five school') could be provided at a total cost of £80, about one-third of the cost of a permanent building. (7) One of its advantages was that it could be quickly dismantled and removed to other sites as required, though when this happened the canvas usually had to be renewed. It was considered satisfactory for summer, but could be uncomfortably cold in winter, though equipped with a small wood stove. The 'worst example' of this type of school in Inspector Klein's experience was at Petercarring. Where population remained adequate and tent schools persisted for some time the walls were eventually boarded when the canvas wore out. By 1914 very few remained.

In areas where it was reasonably certain that an adequate child population would be maintained for many years, the Department authorized the erection of a 'Standard Country School', 24ft. x 18 ft. timber framed, with jarrah weather-board exterior walls and corrugated iron roof. It was lined, usually with asbestos.

The third type was walled with lightwood boards, tongued and grooved and fitted together in panels which could be readily screwed onto the joists. The junctions were then protected by covering boards. No lining was necessary. Their great advantages was their lightness for transport, and the speed with which they could be erected and dismantled. They were equipped with fireplace and chimney. Inspector Miles considered them 'a model school in every respect'.

The jarrah-weather-board type of school became the basic type for one-teacher schools. They became known as the 'Standard Portable School', and in them many thousands of West Australians did the whole of their schooling. With their unmistakable type of architecture they were readily identifiable in any landscape. They consisted of one classroom, 18 ft x 14 ft. with a ceiling height of 8 ft. Set on wooden stumps they had a high pitched roof topped by an iron chimney, a 6 ft. wide walled verandah equipped with iron pegs for 'hats and cloaks', and two long sash windows each subdivided into six panels and set high enough in the wall to prevent children being able to see outside when seated. At one corner stood a 1000 gallon tank to trap rainwater from the roof. From about 1909 in particularly dry areas an additional tank of smaller capacity might be installed. Pan-type wood-and-iron toilets stood on the boundaries of the site remote from the school itself. The school grounds might be surrounded by a fence of jarrah posts and a toprail, or more often by jam wood posts looped with galvanised fencing wire.

In the early days of settlement on the Goldfields and on the wheat belt the school stood out as a solid substantial structure.

The Department congratulated itself that —

> In most cases the schools are the airiest, coolest and the most comfortable buildings in the district. The houses of most of the children are small and far hotter than the schools . . . it is questionable whether the children can spend time under better conditions anywhere else'. (8)

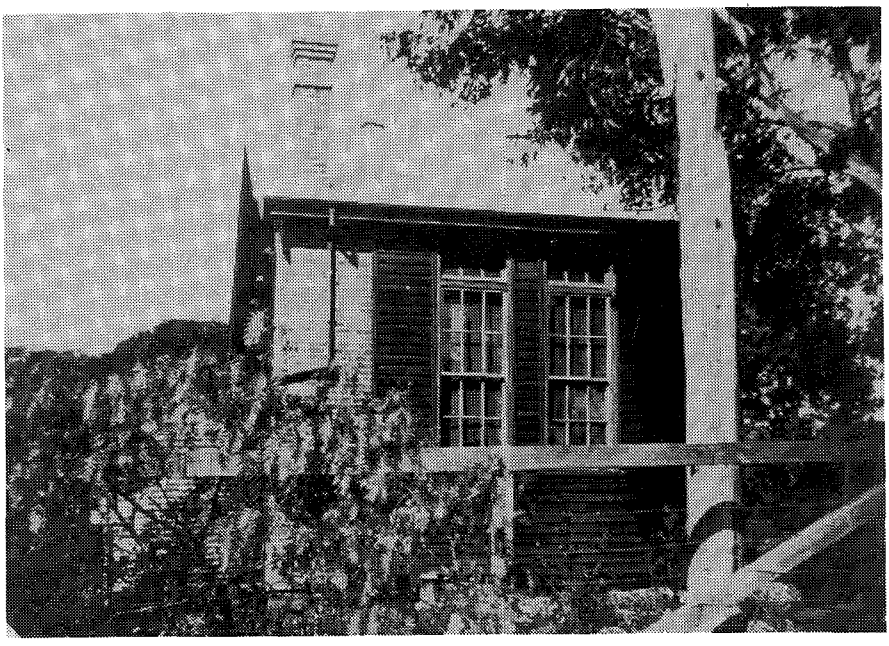
Living quarters for teachers were (as shown in Chapter 5) in many cases less comfortable than the schools in which they taught.

In some cases where agreement could not be reached on sites, or where alternative accommodation was available, the Department made use of local Church buildings and agricultural halls, but this was disliked by teachers' as it was difficult to safeguard school stock and displays from public vandalism. In the north-west of the state school buildings were adapted to the climate. At Port Hedland and Marble Bar, for example, the walls were so constructed that the lower part could be raised for ventilation. There were exceptionally big verandahs, wide enough to accommodate a whole class.

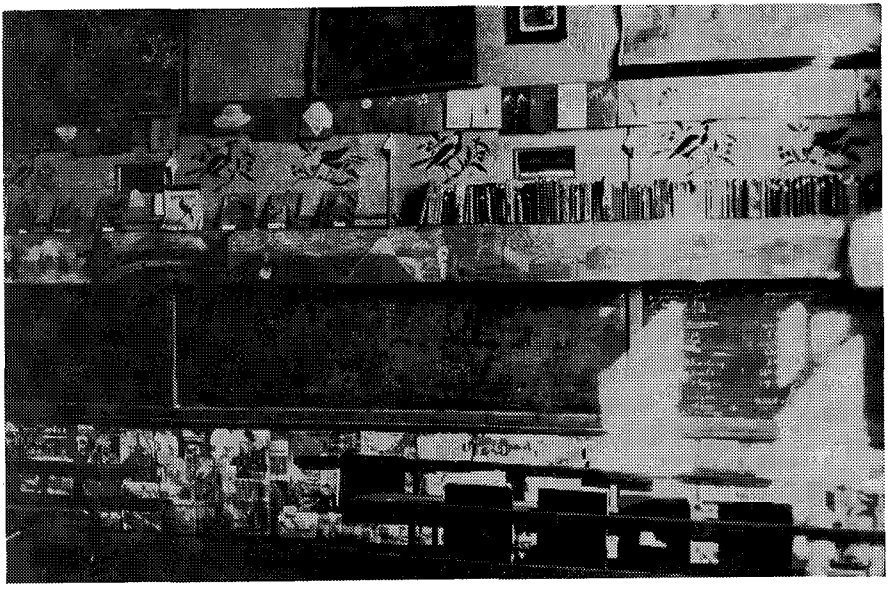
Government policy remained one of providing buildings where eight children could be daily got together. As late as 1914, however, it was seen as a difficult problem on the eastern wheat belt, the latest area of new settlement.

> The size of farm, the intervening sand plains and the (from a school establishment point of view) useless bachelor contributes to accentuate the difficulty. (9)

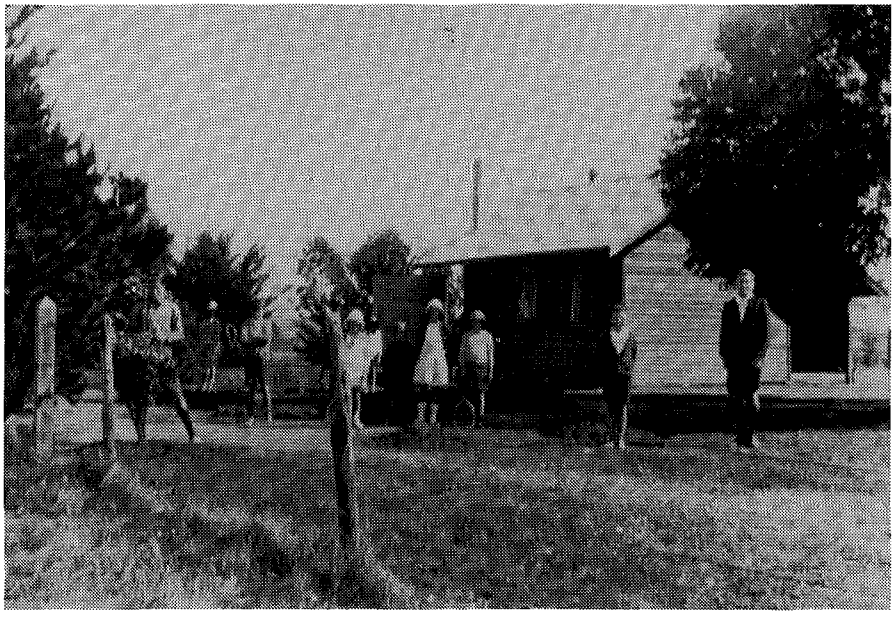
Sufficient finance for the upgrading and maintenance of school buildings to make them attractive as 'the only bright spot in many children's lives' remained a problem until well after the World War. To some extent difficulties arose from the nature of government funding and the cumbersome procedures that had to be gone through before building operations could commence. Each year in the budgetary estimates laid before Parliament a lump sum was allotted to the Public Works Department for new buildings, repairs and renovations. This grant had to cover all State public buildings; no specific amount was allocated to any particular government department. The Education Department, therefore, could never plan ahead or prepare a schedule of repairs, since they could not be sure of how much money would be available. The initiative for repair and renovations, and sometimes for new schools, came from the district inspectors who were in daily contact with school accommodation problems. The Director made recommendations to his minister who sent them to the Public Works Department and the final decision came from the Treasury. Before any building could be occupied by the children, and the school officially opened, it had to be inspected and passed as adequate by a Public Works Department Officer. This applied equally to government buildings as to those provided by the settlers (in the case of provisional schools), since it was necessary for there to be some check on the efficiency of the contractor. Just as living quarters were a cause of prolonged conflict between teachers and the department, so the inadequacies of school buildings generated disputes sometimes extending over many years between parents and the department, with repeated agitation from the former for more commodious and weather proof accommodation for their children.



10. Arthur River one-teacher school 1923.



11. Interior of Arthur River School 1923.



12. Minding one-teacher school, mid 1930s.

13. School excursion, Minding. Visit to W.A. wireless station, mid 1930s.

The circumstances surrounding the opening of the Minding school are illustrative of the cost consideration that weighed with the Education Department in arriving at decisions about new schools. The cost of arranging for the children of the Minding area to attend the nearest school, Arthur River, was estimated to a total of £255, comprising the provision of a car 'at a cost of about £130, payment of a driver £180, upkeep and depreciation of car £25, salary of a monitor (for Arthur River) £50', plus a possible enlargement of the Arthur River School. The cost of a new school at Minding would be £300, but by contrast the annual expenditure would be only £212, comprising the teacher's salary of £156, maintenance and interest on capital £36, and driving allowance for children £20. (10) The decision was made to provide a new school which would be a 'standard portable school', an early type of pre-fabrication consisting of a bolted framework, jarrah-weather board walls unlined, a sectioned floor, a lined ceiling with two high ceiling vents, a stove backed with asbestos sheeting and laid on an iron sheeting on the floor, two water tanks of 1000 gallons and 850 gallons respectively. This building was framed at the State saw milling yards at Carlisle and was ready for occupation at Minding in April 1921, at a total cost of £350, rather more than had at first been estimated. The Minding one-teacher school is one of the very few early school buildings for which full and accurate details are extant. (11) It might also be noted that the costings set out for the alternative ways of providing education for the children of this area give us what must be the first recorded case where the use of a motor vehicle for the transport of children to school by the department was considered.

Costs were sometimes reduced by removal of already established buildings where the school had been closed to a new site. When the school at Tarwonga closed in 1944 the building was removed to Culbin by the parents of that area. When a new school was eventually built at Culbin, the residents of West Dardadine tried to have the old building removed to a site eight to twelve miles distant from Darkan. The Glenside school (also known as West Arthur school) closed at the end of 1935 and that building was moved to Duranillan where it still stands. (12)

In new areas of settlement the setting up of schools went broadly through two phases: Firstly, a temporary building provided by the settlers, then a government building of a more permanent nature, though built on the principle of portability. The governing factor in this transition was the emergence of a sufficient average attendance which was likely to last for some years.

4. Sanitation

An essential requirement for the conclusion of an agreement to open a school was the signing of a contract for sanitation with the Department of Public Health. Information had to be supplied with the first formal application, in answer to the question, 'Will the applicants undertake to arrange for the performance of the sanitary service as often as may be required and at a

reasonable cost?' The ruling rate for many years was one shilling per pan per month. (13)

The difficulty of policing the contract often led to the provision of facilities of the most primitive kind. What might be considered a classic case of the disgusting sanitation arrangements developed at Wedgecarrup. Because no one could be got 'to empty the buckets', pits were dug and caused endless trouble, especially in winter because of the soft soil. The Wagin district board took up the problem, proposing the setting in of cement pits to avoid seepage of rain. A controversy as to the suitability and technical feasibility raged from June 1902 to October 1903, even involving Cecil Andrews, the Inspector-General. In November 1903 a contract was let for cleaning the pits. In March 1905 the objectionable state of the cesspits was referred to by the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department. Action was finally taken in August of that year when cement pits, as originally proposed by the Wagin Board, were completed. This did not end the matter. One can imagine the situation in the heat of summer! In October 1911 the then head-teacher Charles Griese, wrote to the Inspector-General a strongly worded letter on the general deficiencies of the school building and quarters.

> The present pit system is most revolting and dangerous. The pit covering is of badly warped and loosened matchboard which has been exposed for many years. The stench and flies on hot days are unbearable. The time is now ready for the pan system.

There is no further reference in the records to sanitation till 1944 when Inspector Thornbury reported the boy's lavatory eaten by white ants to the point where 'only the shell of the framework remains'. However nothing was done about it since the continued life of the school was in doubt because of low attendance. Thornbury reported that 'the children are all half-castes'. The 'white' children had left and termites appear to have given the school the coup de grace as it was closed shortly after. What happened about the education of the 'half-caste' children is not known. (14)

All one-teacher schools had problems with sanitation, if one can judge by the voluminous correspondence on the subject that developed between teachers and the department. Frustrating delays were the rule. Repairs to a urinal because of a defective drain were requested by the head-teacher of Minding in September 1923 and not attended to till the heat of early December, and a blocked outlet in the boys' urinal, reported by the medial officer of schools in May 1931 was not repaired till September 1932. (15)

By the late 1940s departmental policy was to install septic tanks in schools where adequate water was available and the soil suitable for disposal of effluent. The prevailing standard of equipment (which hardly seems adequate) was one convenience for every 25 girls and one for 33 boys plus one stall (two feet wide) of urinal space.

Stories told by teachers concerning the deficiencies of sanitation and health in far-flung country schools are legion. Some no doubt are apocryphal and some have merely grown in the telling. Two examples must suffice. One is of a city-

bred teacher who was horrified to find that the schoolroom was infested by fleas from which she seemed to suffer far more than the children. Close investigation revealed that the infestation was located in the area where stood the teacher's table. Some of the children volunteered to have their desk moved to the spot in place of the table commenting that 'we wouldn't mind so much'. The second tale concerned the emptying of sanitary pans. A retired teacher writes as follows:

> Water closets and rolls of toilet paper were unknown to children of the bush schools. Instead, there were two small galvanised buildings of normal size and shape in the far corners of the school yard, when it boasted a yard! Usually a man living near the school, or one of the older boys, had a contract to empty the pans weekly, first digging a hole nearby and then sprinkling half a spadeful of earth into the emptied pan.
>
> Payment was made by the Department quarterly, the teacher filling in an application form and vouching for the service and then it was signed by the applicant.
>
> The thoroughness of this service, of course, depended on the individuals. At one school, whilst their brother dug the holes, etc. his sisters cut newspaper into small squares which they threaded on to pieces of wire hung in convenient reach. Once when they neglected to do this, a mother wrote and told the Chief Inspector that no toilet paper had been provided — no thanks for the times it was! In other cases, the time-honoured use of old school pads was observed.
>
> At Malya school near Brookton in 1924 the contract was in the name of a boy at whose home I boarded. Once he was kept home for a week or two — first with a cold and then to help with seeding, so the pans became fuller. (This is one of the times when the inspector can be expected to call. He lived up to expectation, and duly mentioned it in the school report). I drew the boy's attention to the matter, including the fact that the contract application-for-payment was worded 'number of services', not 'number of weeks', so that if we were honest the pay cheque would be less. He mentioned the matter to his father as they washed on the bench outside my bedroom window, and father replied in this wise. 'Did she indeed! Well if she wants to cut the money down she can damn well do the job herself!'
>
> Need I add that the job was done and the 'blackmail' paid. (16)

Sanitation arrangements and un-hygienic conditions generally, which teachers and visiting inspectors found revolting were, in the words of a retired teacher, 'not noticed by the children as it was comparable with what they had at home'. To some extent it was a matter of the difference between city and country living in the first third of the century.

14. Teacher and children of Wedgie-carrup school, early 1900s.

5. Weather Problems

After sanitation, problems arising from adverse weather was the most mentioned item in school reports and correspondence - in winter, the provision of adequate heating and shelter from rain for children and horses, and in summer ventilation and shade. The department showed great reluctance to put in stoves or fireplaces or to repair existing ones, conscious no doubt of the need to live within a restricted budget.

There was prolonged resistance to requests for shelter sheds for the children, which might be regarded as a necessity in winter and a convenience in summer. There might be a small porch open to the weather on one side and containing a wash basin, a hat rack and a long bench for seating, but where these did exist they were small and inadequate. The parents of Wedgecarrup seem to have put up with lack of this facility for their children from the opening of the school in 1900 till 1914, when the first official request was made, addressed by letter to the Committee of School Management. The Committee Chairman, Rev. E.J.T. Atwell, in correspondence with the Department, quoted their complaint that 'the schoolroom is very small and lined with galvanised iron. It is like an oven in summer and ice-house in winter...there is no shelter for the children on wet days and some of them drive six or seven miles, summer and winter, and there is not even a water bag supplied to the school'. The cloak room was open to the rain and the verandah had no floor. The Department took a firm stand on the regulations. 'It is not usual to erect shelter sheds for schools the size of Wedgecarrup'. For this amenity to be provided an average daily attendance of fifty was required. Wedgecarrup had an average attendance of twenty-four. In 1916 Sydney Stubbs M.L.A. with members of the School Board visited the school on Empire Day. Rain fell and flooded the small verandah and came in at the door of the classroom. This experience of the dignatories had its effect, for when the Rev. Atwell returned to the attack, the Minister approved a grant of £10 to the school committee to erect a proper verandah. (17)

Schools were mostly built unlined and elementary comfort had to be battled for. Shortly after the opening of the Minding school, G. Piesse and T.E. Brewis paid a visit on behalf of the Wagin District School Board. They found the building unlined and draughty, damp and cold, letting in wind and rain. The Public Works Department had an inspection done and reported that the fault lay in the angle of the stove-pipe. Inspector Blair insisted that the school required lining. The Acting Principal Architect ordered a report to be prepared by A. Robertson, P.W.D. Albany District officer, on the requirements of the school. Robertson's report dealt at length with this type of school which was lined externally with jarrah-weatherboard. 'Weather-boards shrink and buckle so much, forming gaping spaces all round the walls through which the rain and cold winds drive, rendering the room during the winter very unpleasant for the occupants'. He recommended that such buildings be double-lined with 6ft x 3 ft ceilyte, and in addition have a jarrah dado to height of windowsill. Surprisingly speedy action followed and the lining of Minding was done during August 1923 at a cost of £30. (18)

6. Additions, Modifications, Repairs

Departmental records of efforts by teachers and parents to get renovations and additions to school buildings demonstrate that the official procedures were frustratingly involved and calculated to bring about long delays. Application went from the teacher or the district Board of Education to the Director of Education, and if approved, from the Director to the Department of Public Works. If the cost was more than a trifling amount, the Public Works Department sent an inspector to the school to prepare a report, after which action might or might not be taken.

A source of constant irritation to teachers, giving rise to voluminous correspondence, was the difficulty of having simple repairs done locally — such as the mending of leaking tanks, repairs to chimneys, replacing broken windows and door locks, fixing defective urinals, fencing of school property, cleaning tanks and gutters, planting and pruning of trees and a hundred other such matters. Departmental resistance to authorisation of repairs is partly explained by the cost of local labour, especially if the school was located in so-called 'out-of-the-way' places. At Wedgecarrup, in 1899, the cost of replacing a broken pane of glass in the teacher's quarters was stated to be twelve to fourteen shillings, it being a day's work for a man to be got out from Wagin — 'a ridiculous price to pay' in the opinion of the Hon. Secretary of the District Board of Education. Consequently the pane remained unreplaced for four months. The aforementioned secretary explained that 'we really have great difficulty to get anything done in the country, labour is so scarce and independent' (19) The Board's view can be appreciated when it is noted that a week's wages for a skilled man at the time was about forty shillings. Urgent repairs often had to be done without permission, because of the long delays in authorisation. At Minding school the replacement of a cracked pane of glass was first raised by teacher Kathleen Coleman in February 1923 and authorisation was given to have the job done, at a cost of six shillings and sixpence, in June 1925! (20) Often when repairs were done with permission, payment to the unfortunate suppliers of material of labour was held up because the account had not been submitted on the official form.

The fencing of school grounds was necessary to exclude wandering stock and to define the school boundaries to prevent unauthorised entry. Arthur River School was sited on five acres of reserve and three-quarters of an acre was fenced by Piesse Brothers, at a cost of £3, but a dispute ensued with the Department as to the quality of the fence — a not uncommon source of argument. (21) A feature of nearly all country schools was the school garden, regarded as a vital part of the Nature Study course. Gardens needed to be fenced to keep out pests of all kinds. At Tarwonga head-teacher Constance Knable requested repairs to the fence to keep out pigs which were destroying the plants and vegetables and at Glenside the teacher begged for a coil of wire netting 'to keep the rabbits out of our school garden'. Often, in such cases, the Department might agree to supply the material but suggest that the teacher organize voluntary labour to get the job done. (22)

Leaking water tanks were endemic to small schools. Endless references are made to them in official correspondence, and when it was not leaking tanks it was lack of water due to drought. The Wedgecarrup School files reveal nine official tank complaints between 1909 and 1926, and Tarwonga five between 1938 and 1947. Massive correspondence built up over defective downpipes, leaking roofs, white ants in school buildings and furniture, defective door locks, unauthorized removal of equipment from schools and many similar problems. One of the most irritating factors was the damage done by theft and vandalism during school holidays. Sheila McKay, head-teacher of Minding, complained of the school being used as a camp by passing motorists, and of their gaining access by the breaking of a window. Later head-teacher Nora Shier reported truck drivers breaking locks on school tanks and taking water for radiators. On one occasion she gave information against the driver of truck L.G. 290 who was seen taking water and who was spoken to. The Transport Board was asked by the Director of Education to take action against the driver. There is no evidence of whether the Board caught up with the culprit. Locks on tanks were obviously no deterrent to motorists with thirsty radiators, though we find head-teacher Gussie Bently of Tarwonga demanding padlocks as 'water is being used by the travelling public'. (23)

Head-teacher Fitzgerald, re-opening the Tarwonga School on 1st February 1934 after the Christmas holidays found the door open. The school, he complained, is on a main road and 'often used as a camping place by travellers'. Vera Barker of the same school wrote to the Chief Inspector in September 1935 reporting damage to water tanks, 'damage must have been done by a passing motorist. This school is quite a popular stopping place for the travelling public. Even though the gates are locked every night, empty tins, papers, grease and crumbs are to be found in the school porch quite often in the morning'. Again in 1947 we find the head-teacher reporting motorists camping in the school grounds during summer vacation and using up all the water. Miss Shier tells of arriving at the Minding school one morning to find 'a tramp' asleep in the porch. With some trepidation she ordered him off, and to her surprise he humbly obeyed. She remembers that there were in those days 'a fair number of tramps on the roads'. (24)

Some teacher's complaints are amusing to the reader of records, but were no joke to the teacher who had to make them. Head-teacher Kim Beasley, of Arthur River, referred to damage during vacation. 'A possum in an advanced state of decomposition was put into one of the tanks, polluting the water and rendering it unfit for drinking'. Head-teacher Burnett of Tarwonga wanted permission to buy a lock as 'the lock at present on the school door is the property of one of the residents and its return is requested'. (25)

Irritating though it was for the teacher to be refused what seemed reasonable claims for additions such as shelter sheds, the enclosure of verandahs and the like, the conditions of the times help to explain the departmental view. A great deal of uncertainty hovered over many small schools, with their low and erratic average attendance, apparent especially during the opening stages of settlement

of new districts. However, it is difficult to excuse departmental procrastination over sanitation inadequacies and weather problems. Early settlers in the Great Southern suffered from extremes of hot and cold weather to an extent not easy to realise in these more comfortable times. Houses and buildings generally were inadequately equipped, with only primitive devices for heating and cooling. Small schools especially were isolated from shops and centres of settlement where comforts could be purchased; roads were rough and vehicles used by pupils and teachers mostly open to the weather and most families too poor to afford such protective clothing as was commercially available. Delays in general repairs affecting such things as tanks, leaking roofs, defective locks and furniture, were part of the rough and tumble of administration at a distance in those days of slow communications and inefficient transport. Persistence seemed to be the key to success. Valuable assistance also was given to many teachers by district Boards of Education, members of parliament and secretaries or chairmen of local settler organizations.

7. Furniture, Equipment and Stock

For a long time, right up to the 1970s, one of the prevailing problems for teachers, not only in small schools, but generally, was paucity of equipment and stock. In 1937 Cole estimated that supplies in Australia were meagre compared with England and the U.S.A. Certainly the furniture and fittings of the one-teacher were sparse and uniform. There were the bare essentials — a teacher's pine table with central drawer, a teacher's chair of beautiful light Austrian bentwood (today a collector's item), a pine cupboard 4 ft x 2 ft x 7 ft, blackboards according to the number of children (not classes), usually only one — a portable board suspended on an easel. Some more favoured schools might have a fixed blackboard on the front wall and a shelf or ledge to hold library books. The first school desks were of pine, 7ft 7 ins long capable of seating five children and consisting of a form and bench attached as one unit. They were made in two sizes only and had no support for the children's backs, presumably in the belief that children had to 'sit up straight'. Infants (as the very first grade was called) might sit together on a long form at a broad detached table, both of suitable size for six year olds. From about 1911 dual iron-framed desks were being introduced into city schools and became the main feature of school seating for the next fifty years. Their superiority over the long desks was that they were made in five sizes and had proper support for the children's backs. Their introduction into country schools, especially into the one-teacher schools, went on at a slow pace. In 1926 the Country Teachers Branch of the Teachers' Union complained at their annual conference of 'these lengthy contraptions called desks' which were still to be found in country schools, and asked that dual desks be provided for all schools. In the mid 1930s the Department moved into an energetic programme of replacing obsolete desks in small schools with the dual type, but as late as 1940 the Union reported that there were still a large number of long desks in use in small country schools. (26)

Not long after this, city schools were being equipped with single tubular steel chairs and locker desks, justified partly on hygienic grounds, and as ever, on educational grounds. Teachers saw a value in separating children to discourage cheating and to encourage individual effort and self-help, and to minimise control problems. An anonymous bard, calling himself 'Chalkie', sent a set of critical verses on 'Dual Desks' to the *Teachers' Journal*. It ran in part as follows:

When teachers open up their doors,
The day's work to begin,
They see those sullen, wooden desks
Set rigidly within.

When writing lesson comes around,
Young Johnny's pencil breaks,
He sharpens it, returns to class,
And *both* the desks he shakes.

So, Mary sitting right behind,
Lifts up a hostile foot,
Retaliates between the gap,
Where Johnny's sitting put!

When Test-day comes and Johnny earns
A seat in Honour-Row,
He finds his mate, with equal marks,
Is little midget, Joe.

The desk is far too big for Joe,
And far too small for John;
And how to cope with Johnny's legs,
I hate to dwell upon.

For John sits sideways half the time —
His feet sprawled in the aisle;
When someone trips right over them,
They think it's Johnny's guile.

Then Doug and David come to you
Their troubles to assuage,
For left-hand Doug has swiped his sleeve
O'er David's *right-hand* page.

Short-sighted James, who needs must sit
The closest to the board.
Obscures the other fellow's view
With shoulders big and broad. (27)

These verses amply convey the problems associated with dual desks. The 1960s saw a swing back to the practice of seating children together to encourage relationships and co-operation in learning, a virtue which the by then phased-out one-teacher schools had had in abundance.

Until the advent of 'discovery learning', teaching methods relied heavily on 'talk and chalk', basically a product of lack of the necessary facilities for any other type of learning programme, and the black-board was in constant use. There was never enough black-board space and this was a particular problem in one-teacher schools where several grades had to work unsupervised at frequent intervals during the day. There were many complaints, not only by the teachers concerned but also by inspectors and advisory teachers, of the niggardliness of the Department in supply of black-boards to small schools. The ever-watchful Country Teachers Branch in 1926 declared that 'the lack of black-boards has ever been a burning question with country teachers' and so it remained till the one-teacher schools were phased out.

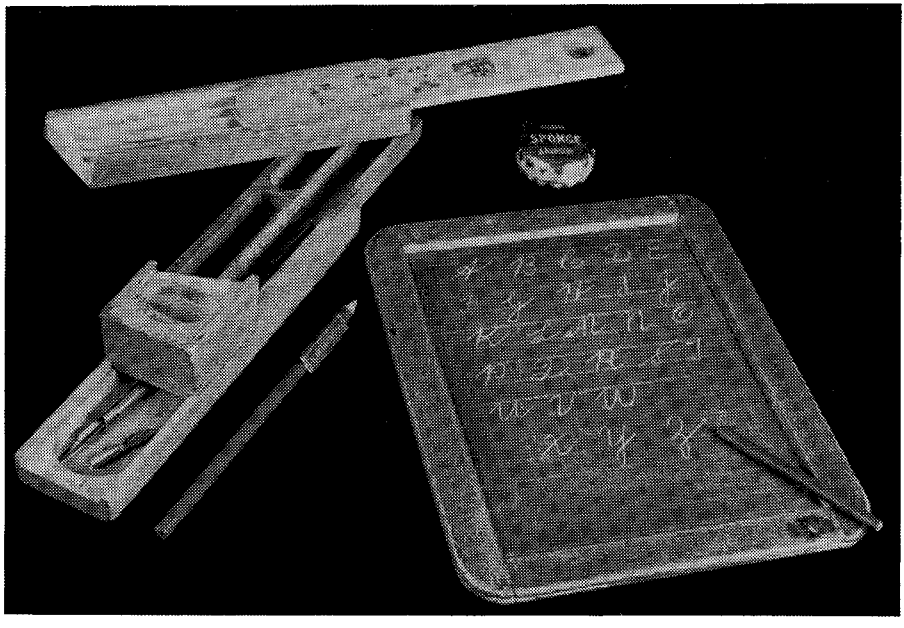
Though the content of equipment in one-teacher schools varied a little over the years, becoming somewhat more liberal as time went on, the major items remained the same. A teacher's description of his 1940 schoolroom gives a fairly accurate picture of what most schoolrooms held for the greater part of the period under review, and reflects his disgust at its paucity.

5 long desks
1 large cupboard
1 book case
Busy work cupboard
Teacher's table
8ft wall blackboard and an easel blackboard
'Fireplace of the non-heating variety'
3 tall, narrow windows
No wireless or projector
8 years *Pictorial Education, Lands and Peoples, World's Great Books*
No school funds or manual equipment
Library — 250 books well read. (28)

L. Lambert recalls the total equipment of his school at Toolibin in 1930, 'apart from what the teacher supplied, there was a black-board, chalk, a clock, dusters, pads (writing), ink powder, pens and pencils, and Oxford and Temple Readers and Blackie's primers for infants. (29)

In 1907 Inspector Wheeler had declared that schools were 'liberally supplied' with necessities and teaching apparatus. 'So well indeed are pupils catered for that many parents had come to regard the State as a universal provider'. (30) It can be assumed that very few teachers would have agreed with him if we note their continuous requests and complaints. Some people in authority reacted by throwing the blame on the teachers themselves. The Stores Branch, for example, thought that some teachers were poor stock-keepers, using up the supplies too soon. There was a need for improvement in care of school material and apparatus, especially during vacations, when they should be properly stored against depredations and deterioration. The meagre supply of consumables was a constant irritation to teachers. There was never enough paper or chalk, firewood was always short, and a departmental regulation that no

15. School bag and free, stock readers.



16. Slate and pencil case.

fresh wood was to be put on during the last hour of the afternoon school, was very often honoured in the breach and no doubt added to the shortage. In the early 1900s paper pads had been introduced as free stock, replacing the 'dirty unhygienic slate' — a reference to the common childish practice of cleaning the slate by 'spit and fist'.

In 1907 Chief Inspector Walton wrote:

> One of the improvements, from a hygienic standpoint, has been the substitution of pads for slates. The use of pads is now very general. Attention is directed to the preservation of pads. None of them should be destroyed. All should be preserved intact, shown to the inspector when he visits the school. The name of the child using the pad should be legibly written on the first page, and each page should be dated. So used and preserved they will be a valuable record of the progress of the individual scholar, and will be of great value to the inspector when estimating the efficiency of the working of the class. Their condition as to neatness will supply evidence of the general tone and discipline, as well as the supervision of the class teacher. (31)

It might be added that the inspector vetted, not only the work done, but also the economy exercised in the use of space. 'Waste not, want not' was very much the watchword where supplies were concerned. Though slates had been officially phased out, some teachers continued to use them for the lower grades, no doubt as a means of conserving scarce paper supplies. In 1917 they were ordered to discontinue their use as 'slates have been condemned on hygienic grounds'. (32)

The arrival of the box of 'free stock' was a red letter day for the school. It came always by train to the nearest station and arrangements had to be made for its forwarding to the school. The amount varied according to the number of children. Reading, history and geography books were supplied but remained the property of the school. Free and expendable were pads, chalk, blotting paper, nibs, lead pencils, and a limited supply of sewing and craft materials such as scissors, squared paper and cardboard strips. For art, craft and needlework, the Department made an initial small issue free, but replenishments had to come from sale of articles made or 'other means'. Children had to buy their own script books — copy books, transcription books, dictation books, exercise books for homework and nature study, chalkdrawing and pencil drawing books and drawing materials. Items of a more permanent nature supplied free included wall maps, black-board compass and ruler and globes. The severe limitations of free stock led the conscientious teacher to supplement supplies from his own salary, and for a time, this came to be almost expected. Extra supplies of some items could be bought from departmental stores at a reduced rate. The modern teacher would be aghast at the prospect of having to undertake the kind of 'mend and made do' measures that daily faced the departmental teacher in the first half-century. A few selections from items appearing in the Education Circular will illustrate the point.

The Department asked for information from any teacher who had perfected a method of colouring white chalk. The reply came up —

> Dip the chalk in red, green or violet ink, leave till the whole of the stick has absorbed the ink; place on a hot stove and evaporate the water. Yellow chalk may be made by mixing paint of the consistency of ink (from tubes supplied as free stock).

Teachers were informed that:

> Relief maps may be made with putty or plasticine. Zinc-lined cases are easily obtained and will supply a cheap and suitable foundation. Cost of putty 4d. per lb.

There were lengthy instructions on 'How to make a hectograph', materials required being listed as:

> Fine Russian glue, or gelatine — 2 ounces
> Water — 8 ounces
> Glycerine — 8 ounces
> Plaster of Paris, or clean whiting — 1 ounce
> Carbolic acid — 5 drops.
>
> Ink for use with the 'graph may be made by dissolving half an ounce of gum arabic in two ounces of methylated spirit, and adding sufficient violet aniline dye to give the required colour.

The need for the teacher to make school ink by dissolving ink powder in water, is well known. A great variety of teaching aids for instruction in reading and arithmetic were made by the teachers themselves. Self-help was very much the order of the day, especially for the bush teacher remote from commercial supplies. (33)

As mentioned above basic reading books were supplied free. The *New Graphic* was the first officially prescribed reader used by departmental schools. Then came the *Temple Literary Reader* and in 1910 the *Oxford Reader*. Inspector Klein declared of the latter, 'They will be hailed with delight by our teachers'. (34) Against the drabness of the earlier readers they stood out as models of the publisher's art with their good quality paper, bold printing and illustrations by outstanding artists, including the famous Arthur Rackham. With their enchanting tales of heroism, magic and adventure, their appeal was to the imagination and their emphasis on delight rather than on the mere mechanics of reading, their poetic style ensured that many a phrase was long remembered and for good reason they remained in the schools for a long time. Their chief drawback was that the content was exclusively English and a growing feeling that Australian children should be directed to look at their own environment led to the production of the West Australian Readers, beginning in 1916, and the Swan Reader in 1920. There quickly followed the Swan Geography, Swan History and Swan English Course. Though the proportion of Australian content was minimal, it was a beginning. Teachers were able to dredge further such content from *The School Paper*, *Our Rural Magazine* and the *Education Circular*. The 1920s and 1930s saw the writing of a whole series

17. Parents day at Springfield Group Settlement School, 1927.

18. Group Settlement one-teacher school, West Pemberton, known locally as WOOP WOOP. 1929.

of school texts for both primary and secondary classes by West Australian inspectors and teachers, replacing the texts of English origin which had prevailed hitherto.

For the development of reading skills, the prescription of a simple text for each grade was extremely limiting, and especially so in the one-room situation of the one-teacher school. Here the lower classes heard the children of the upper class reading their stories so often that they got to know them by heart before they were promoted to that class themselves.

This gave rise to the kind of situation illustrated in the oft repeated story of the inspector who, having heard the reading of the children in a particular class, ordered, 'Now, children, close your books and say your reading', with predictable results. The obvious answer to this ludicrous situation was the provision of supplementary readers. For some time libraries were non-existent in one-teacher schools, a situation which was described by Inspector Clubb as 'evidence of incapacity or lack of interest on the part of the teacher almost invariably'. He advised that a collection of 250 books suitable for all standards could be purchased from a Perth bookseller for about £6. (35) In many areas this was a sum beyond the capacity of the teacher to raise from parents battling to make a living from the land. More realistically Inspector Wheeler pointed to Nelson's sixpenny classics and to the abridgements produced by the same firm at fourpence per copy, though he deprecated their use 'when the exceeding cheapness of complete works is taken into consideration'. (36) In those days the onus was very much on the teacher to raise money for certain essentials, and his record in this regard was an element in assessment of his efficiency. Some recognition of the problems this created for some teachers is shown by a departmental policy decision affecting Group Settlement schools.

> Group settlers, during the first few years on their holdings, have no money to spare. Consequently the schools find it extremely difficult to secure such things as library books or pictures, or any material for needlework beyond what is provided by the Department. In a few instances a group school has been 'adopted' by a large town school, the children of the latter doing their best to supply some of the deficiencies of the less fortunate group children. (37)

The statement went on to urge other schools to follow suit as 'a fine opportunity of useful service'.

In the late 1900s school libraries were beginning to be got together. Aldinga school was held up as a model to emulate, as having the best collection of any one-teacher school. But the position remained unsatisfactory, as is well illustrated by the history of the Schools Travelling Library, launched in the early 1930s by Dr Battye of the Perth Public Library. Boxes of books were sent (free transport being provided by the Railway Department) to distributing centres in the country under the care of a local head-teacher. From this centre books were loaned to other schools in the district for periods ranging up to three months. (38)

In 1940 the scheme was expanded by the active participation of the Education Department and became known as the Charles Hadley Travelling

Library, in recognition of the contribution he made to its development. By the mid 1940s nearly one hundred boxes (made by boys of the Newcastle Street Junior Technical School) were in continuous circulation. Costs associated with the project were financed from commission paid by the Commonwealth Bank on the collection by teachers of children's weekly Savings Bank deposits in Class V, VI and VII schools. For some time, however, the travelling library was not getting to the smaller schools which so desperately needed additional reading material. Some bush teachers had developed their own system of pooling resources by exchange between schools. In time, the Hadley Library penetrated to such of these schools as were near enough to a distribution centre.

From 1951 the Education Department supplied books to the value of £15 annually to one and two-teacher schools to supplement their 'fixed library', and measures were taken to ensure the ability of these schools to participate in the Travelling Library scheme. The Public Library service to schools was taken over the the Education Department so that a uniform service then prevailed with a box for every school. By 1953 over 300 boxes were in circulation. From that year also each school was entitled to get from the Treasury up to £50 for library books on a £1 for £1 basis (that is, a grant of £1 for each £1 raised and spent on books by the school itself). These measures tended largely to overcome the small schools' library problems. One must, of course, add to this the effect of the greater affluence of farmers in the post-war years, the coming of virtual full employment and higher wages throughout the countryside, and higher public belief in the value of education as a factor making for success in life.

An aspect of school equipment that the Education Department considered important, though they threw the onus largely on the teacher to provide it, was room decoration. Free stock was confined to wall maps and diagrams. Use of pictorial wall decoration was encouraged though the most the Department did was to make suggestions for suitable purchases, such as 'Britannia Historical Pictures' and Philip's 'Empire Pictures'. Inspector Hadley suggested that 'a few pictures, neatly displayed on the walls, enlivens a dull interior besides having a silent and enlightening effect'.

The existence of sporting facilities for schools in country areas depended on the initiative of the teachers. Parents had to be inspired to provide voluntary labour to lay out and prepare tennis courts, and football and cricket grounds. Socials were run and collections made for the wherewithall to buy footballs, tennis rackets and balls, and cricket bats, though the time-honoured kerosene tin often did duty for a wicket. Where Parents and Citizens Association existed, the money could be raised for such expensive items as pianos, gramophones, wireless receiving sets and slide projectors and cinematographs. One of the earliest references to this type of equipment for schools is contained in the October 1929 issue of the Education Circular which invites teachers to a demonstration of the use of the cinematograph as an aid to teaching. (40) Lantern slides are mentioned as in use in schools in 1909. The larger schools were getting pianos during the 1900s. They could be obtained by ordering through the Department, for £40. Some schools were reprimanded for buying

pianos costing up to £65. More in line with the financial capabilities of the small schools was the gramophone which came into use in the 1920s. Records specially designed for music in schools were demonstrated by Rose Atkinson of Nicholson's, which firm had supplies of *Rexonola* gramophones at £17 each. The Department gave instructions on how to use gramophones and provided a list of suitable records.

Great hopes were pinned on the use of radio for educational purposes. It would bring children 'the things the textbook never taught'. (41) The value of broadcasting for educational purposes became immediately apparent to teachers and educational administrators in Western Australia, as elsewhere through the country. The first use for school purposes seems to have been for ceremonial occasions — Anzac Day and Armistice Day. The first programme directly related to the curriculum was Morrison's series of talks on nature study. However, very few country schools had sets in the period before the World War. An inspector reported in 1936 that there were only about a dozen sets in his whole district.

> Many teachers take children to their own houses or to a neighbour's home to listen . . . children bring the latest radio news every morning to the country school and discussions follow. To homes where the daily paper is unknown, this daily budget of news is a boon and the children are keenly interested. Teachers are taking full advantage of this new aid and use it to vitalize such subjects as Geography.

Regular school broadcasts were launched in 1937 though it is not possible to determine how many schools were able to take advantage of them. Certainly very few in country areas. After a couple of years' experience, some teachers must have been disillusioned with this new educational toy, as in 1939 inspectors reported a decrease in their use. Radios were being used mainly for the Music Through Movement's programme and for nature study talks. Some schools were known to have sold radios to buy film projectors, epidiascopes and still-projectors which could be geared more readily to the illustration of lessons at a time when it suited the teacher. However there can be no doubt of the value of broadcasting in remote areas especially for children on Correspondence. Western Australia's School of the Air became world famous.

8. Closure of Schools and Disposal of Sites and Buildings

Many one-teacher schools were closed in the late 1940s consequent upon the adoption by the government of a policy of consolidation, whereby pupils from small schools were transported by bus to schools in larger towns. The advantages and disadvantages affecting both teachers and children are discussed at length in the final chapter. Some small schools were closed owing to a fall in enrolment below the regulation average attendance, but special efforts were made to keep them open if at all possible. Regulations provided that children below the compulsory age (even as low as four years) could be admitted if the parents were willing and if this would provide the required average attendance.

Many factors affected average attendance — sickness, adverse weather, natural disasters, vehicle breakdowns, as well as the movement away of one or more local families. The school could then be in danger of closure. Where this did occur parents often made strenuous and sometimes successful efforts to have it re-opened.

Some schools opened and closed several times over a period of years before they were finally closed down.

School sites and buildings after the final closure of the school itself were disposed of in ways corresponding to the original form of their acquisition. Land ceded gratis reverted to the original owner. Crown land reserve remained as such, and purchased land was sold or handed over for community purposes. Buildings were removed or converted to other uses. A few, situated on main or important secondary roads, became Main Roads Department camps. Some were sold to private buyers for residential purposes. In other areas where there was no community hall, the settlers asked for the building to be left for church services or occasional functions for children. In such cases the site purpose was changed from 'school site' to 'Hall site' and the reserve was vested in the local Roads Board. A few remained for many years deserted and derelict, a prey to vandals and thieves.

The former sites of many old bush schools may still be distinguished by a variety of trees which outlined the original boundary. In the early years of the century the planting of pines on school sites was a widespread practice, and the location of many former bush schools may be found by the presence of one or more pines, where all else has disappeared, serving as lone reminders of the busy educational and social life that went on in the building nearby.

CHAPTER 9
The consolidation of small schools

1. Preliminary steps

The concept of consolidation — the process whereby small one-teacher country schools and some two-teacher schools were closed down and the children brought by bus to larger schools — did not originate in Western Australia nor in Australia. It was a logical development arising from advanced technology affecting rural populations in a number of countries. It is not surprising that it should have been first applied in a major way in the U.S.A. and in Canada, with their extensive areas of land settlement, and populations making a living from primary industries.

Historians of the 'frontier thesis' have made us familiar with the similarities of the impact on European peoples whenever they moved into vast unknown and untamed lands and struggled to make them productive. The circumstances of scattered population spread over vast areas in the U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand and Australia, made the creation of one-teacher schools for elementary education inevitable. As the frontier stage of settlement passed, the factors impelling authorities to phase out these schools through a policy of centralisation were similar: the mechanisation of agriculture and the adoption of scientific farming methods which brought about a decrease of rural population. The so-called 'drift to the cities' was partly a product of this factor, and partly a product of rapid growth of manufacturing industries which provided increased opportunities for employment in urban areas. The development of motorised transport and the improvement of roads that went hand-in-hand with this, facilitated all centralising tendencies.

Consolidation of schools began in the U.S.A. about 1870 and became general throughout the States in the 1920s. The thirty years between 1920 and 1950 saw the elimination of seventy percent of American rural schools. An important element in the American experience not present in Australia, was the depressed condition of many of the farms and the consequent inability of the rural population to sustain the funding of the rural schools through local taxes. The Australian system of centralised payment of teachers' salaries and government

19. Toodyay School van, operating under the consolidation programme, 1920.

funding of buildings and equipment (except in the case of the short-lived Provisional schools), meant that the cost of schooling to the local community was not a factor in consolidation.

In Australia thoughts about consolidation were present for many years before the first steps were taken. In Western Australia, as in New Zealand the idea first surfaced about 1912 in the reports of district inspectors. New Zealand, with an economy heavily based on rural industry and a high percentage of small schools scattered throughout the country, was strongly influenced by the American example. The first experiment was set up in 1924 and from then on consolidation was accepted as a desirable goal and very soon became settled policy. (1) South Australia began in 1939, but Queensland, perhaps because of enormous problems of distance and climate affecting the practicability of efficient road transport, was a late starter. Victoria had long had a policy of bringing in children at secondary level to a centre. But her first consolidated primary school was organised in 1944. Tentative steps were taken in New South Wales in the thirties, but little had been achieved by the end of the 1940s.

The A.C.E.R. in its review of Education in the period of the 1940s reported steady growth of consolidation, giving as its rationale a 'belief in educational value of the larger grouping, greater economy in the provision of specialist instruction and modern equipment, greater stability of staffing, and the possibility of a greater variety of instruction'. (2) In the mid 1950s the A.C.E.R. declared that consolidation was 'an accepted feature of Australian educational practice'. (3)

Western Australia provides the best example of consolidation in the Australian context since here the process was carried out and completed in the shortest time, taking place over four decades. The first step was made in 1920 when the West Toodyay school was closed and its twenty-six children brought by horse-drawn van into Toodyay. Within a short space of time other small schools in the neighbourhood — Norman Area, Irishtown Road, Culham and Coondle — were similarly phased out. It was the beginning of a movement which was to eliminate nearly all the one-teacher schools by the early 1960s. But it was also the culmination of ideas and developments which had their beginnings many years earlier.

The first reference to consolidation in official documents will be found in the Education Department's 1902 Report. (4) The high cost per head of country provisional schools was compared with the lower cost of town schools. The U.S.A. and Canada had dealt with this problem by 'centralisation'. This was pointed to as a possible future solution for Western Australia. The matter was again referred to in a Departmental policy statement in 1909.

> The movement for 'consolidating' rural schools has met with some success in parts of the United States and Canada. A central school is established in place of a number of small schools, and the pupils are driven in from considerable distances. Consolidation, to be a success, implies a much closer settlement than our country districts can show, or are likely to show for many years; it also implies good roads in all

directions, and the possibility of hiring horses, vehicles, and drivers at reasonable rates. The central school must be of such a size that it can offer real and substantial advantages in the way of better equipment and opportunities for more advanced work, if it is to overcome the natural opposition of parents, who generally object to sending their children to a considerable distance instead of having a school close to their homes. The system is not, therefore, likely to be of much effect in Western Australia at present. (5)

At an inspector's conference held in April 1910 Inspector Klein presented a paper on the subject which was discussed at some length. It was decided that

> Out settlements are still too scattered, the roads are bad, and hence the cost of transit [sic] would be enormous. At the same time there have been cases when centralisation might have been possible, and the Department should, when the opportunity offers, make the experiment. Larger schools would of course mean more efficient teaching and better equipment for science work. (6)

In 1911 Inspector Jas. P. Walton, Acting Director-General, was invited by the Teachers' Union to address its annual conference. He chose as his subject the consolidation of schools. He presented the advantages as better education, more economical use of teaching staff and savings in the cost of maintenance of buildings and of inspectorial travel. The prevailing difficulty of finding sufficient teachers would be reduced. He saw the obstacles as parental opposition to their children being forced to travel long distances, the absence of good roads, and the great distances between homesteads. But overall he saw consolidation as a viable and necessary policy when the country had become more closely settled. (7)

In 1912 Senior Inspector Miles had posed the question:

> Can the State afford to continue building schools where ever there is an average of ten children within a three-mile radius? With the growth of important towns the number of small schools radiating from them should, I think, be decreased. In no instance, as far as my district is concerned, has the growth of central towns resulted in the diminution of the number of schools that were established to aid the settlers when the district round these towns was first opened up.
>
> No doubt if the Department closed any of these schools there would be outcry from the settlers affected, for parents are very slow to recognise the advantages of well-equipped and well-staffed central schools. (8)

Miles saw advantages in closing small schools in old settled districts near sizeable towns in that the cost savings achieved would enable the Department to provide better educational facilities to settlers in new agricultural areas far removed from the older and more settled districts. He also suggested that the Government should adopt the English system of providing cheap railway motors on spur lines for bringing children in to a central school.

Inspector McClintock supported Miles' view and suggested that the pressure of ever increasing demand for schools in expanding areas of settlement would force the elimination of small schools near to large towns, as a necessary cost-cutting measure. (9)

In the years leading up to 1920 there was increasing discussion in educational circles about the educational advantages of larger schools over the small one-teacher schools. The social advantages for the teacher were obvious. For the children there would be opportunities to mix with peer groups and to enjoy the supposed superior efficiency of being taught in a single class situation. Certainly an undisputed advantage existed for older children looking for education beyond primary standard VII. A Departmental statement in 1917 indicates a line of thinking that led in the 1950s to the development of the Junior High School.

> The larger schools in the country towns can be made efficient centres of instruction with greater facilities for manual and experimental work. It is hoped to provide for instruction in domestic subjects for girls in more of the country towns. It would be a great advantage if the older children from the small schools could come into centres of this kind for the latter portion of their school career. (10)

Again, in 1918, a study of consolidation in the U.S.A. and Canada showed that hundreds of small schools had been closed — as many as 1,200 in a single state. The chief advantages given were the same that were to be repeated many times in the next thirty years, the provision of education beyond the primary stage, the greater efficiency of the teaching and the cost-saving arising from a smaller number of teachers covering a greater number of children. The factors limiting the application of a consolidation policy were how far the children would have to be transported each day, the state of the roads, and the availability of vehicles able to negotiate them with reasonable speed and safety.

> In America it is generally considered that 'no school wagon drawn by horses should be expected to cover a route exceeding six miles in length' or five miles if the road is a bad one. The introduction of cheap motor carriages is, however, in some cases already lengthening the routes. Large numbers of our country children have at least an hour's walk every morning to enable them to reach school, and it is difficult to see that much hardship would be entailed by the enforcement of an hour's drive. At first there would no doubt be objections to the closing of the small school, but presumably parents here, as in other countries, would soon come to appreciate the provision of better education for their children. (11)

Departmental knowledge of the consolidation movement was strengthened by a visit to the U.S.A. made by Senior Inspector Miles in 1920. The report he produced on his return was to have important consequences for rural education in Western Australia. He spent some of his time abroad in Canada, but most of it in Iowa, one of America's leading agricultural states. He was

especially impressed with the Teachers' College at Cedar Falls and with the Ames Agricultural College, where students were undergoing training as teachers, for country agricultural colleges and for work in consolidated schools. He visited many of these schools to see children receiving instruction in domestic economy and crop-raising, and went into 'many dwellings' to see students at work on home projects, an activity which he subsequently introduced to Western Australian country schools. He was very impressed with the physical condition of the American schools — the high standard of the buildings, each with its large hall for picture shows and drama, the science laboratories, the furniture, the well-stocked libraries and the abundance of teaching aids. These amenities, he felt, were made possible by the consolidation of the small schools into larger units. In a newspaper interview on his return, Miles referred to the 'almost religious fervour' for education which he had sensed in the U.S.A. He waxed euphoric on the great benefits of the consolidation of schools that was proceeding there at a great rate. 60,000 one-teacher schools had already been phased out, and incorporated into 13,000 consolidated schools.

> The consolidated school is regarded in America as a great educational reform. It has been adopted as the most effective means of uplifting rural life and checking the drift from the country to the city. These schools are real community centres reflecting what is best in country life, and contributing very largely to rural progress . . . The aim is to make country life and country surroundings so interesting that the children do not want to drift to the cities. It enables children to satisfy their own social wants, and they do not have to rush to the city for the two-step and the jazz, but are trained in country dances and folk music. (12)

The impact of this American experience explains the enthusiasm with which Miles threw himself into a programme for consolidation of schools in Western Australia.

The development of the 'Special Rural Schools', for which he was directly responsible created the conditions which made consolidation the obvious next step. Under his inspiration and guidance a special curriculum was applied to schools in carefully selected country towns. The basic curriculum remained the same as elsewhere, but the subjects were treated in a manner deemed to fit the needs of a rural community. Nature study and Elementary Agriculture formed a centre around which much of the school work was grouped. Agricultural projects were undertaken, such as vegetable growing, bee-keeping, poultry-keeping, pig-keeping, experiments with growing different types of grains. Books and periodicals relating to these activities were studied. Careful records were kept, including accounts of all expenditure and receipts. Boys were trained in woodwork, forge-work, rope making and netting and 'other useful and economical occupations'. Girls engaged in simple cookery and in drying and preserving fruits and vegetables. This practical work was linked with the local community. Children were encouraged to develop similar activities around

their own homes. In 1922 twenty-five Special Rural Schools were named where the greater part of the education was based on the life of the agricultural environment in which they were situated.

The pioneering work for this had already been done by the head-teacher and staff of the Toodyay school, under the leadership of Miles, even before his visit to Iowa. Toodyay was the centre of his inspectorial district for the ten years from 1915 to 1925. It was no accident that it became the first consolidated school in Western Australia. It was the success achieved at this school that led directly to the decision to close the outlying small schools and to give the children of these areas the opportunity of participating in the 'rural programme'. This was the catalyst that sparked off the consolidation movement in Western Australia. (13)

Consolidation was given a fillip by the findings of the Royal Commission into Education 1921-22. One of its terms of reference was — Can the schools in the rural districts be made more useful to the settlers? (14) The Commission noted that in 1921 seventy-five per cent of all schools in Western Australia had an enrolment of less than fifty children, encompassed only twenty-two percent of the school population, but absorbed thirty-three percent of government expenditure on primary schools. It saw the future of Western Australia as continuing to depend on agriculture, hence 'the need for agricultural teaching is even more pressing than for any other form of technical education'. The Commission was critical of the inadequacies of the existing curriculum for country schools. Whilst insisting that it must include all subjects as taught to town children, the Commission saw a need to add specialised instruction from the fifth class onward. The Commissioners had made a visit to the Toodyay school along with Senior Inspector Miles and were impressed with the experimental work being done there.

> No small part of the benefit that springs from school work of this kind lies in the extension of the school work into the surroundings of the home and the practical application there of what has been learnt at school.

Arguing from the Toodyay model the Commission saw the need for

> Collection of the pupils as far as possible into centres so as to produce classes of a reasonable size at the upper end of the school.

This seemed like support for consolidation, though it was not spelled out in so many words. The Commission's Report gave an analysis of four cases showing the cost of maintenance of small schools and the cost of conveyance of children by bus to a larger school, and concluded that

> The figures confirm the experience of other states that the cost of conveyance of children is equal to or somewhat in excess of the cost of educating them in the separate small schools.

However it was pointed out that the main economic gain of consolidation was in the saving of the cost of erecting a school building in an area of new settlement, and in the more efficient use of the buildings existing in the larger

country towns. Moreover, the 'one solid justification' for consolidation lay in the provision of types of instruction that could not be arranged for in small schools. The Report tended to see the question of consolidation in the light of the kind of educational opportunities that ought to be available to country children. It was a view that coincided with Education Department philosophy of 'equality of opportunity' though, as we have seen, the practice did not live up to the theory. The Report stated:

> While it is highly desirable that the education given in country schools should be adapted to the preparation of the children for the rural life that the majority of them will follow, their education should not be so far different from that received by the town children that they are prevented from seeking positions in city occupations to which they have a claim equally with town children. The movement of young people to the towns is largely governed by economic causes, and their right to the highest form of education, when they are intellectually fitted for it, should not be denied them. In this connection the disposal of State scholarships and bursaries is important' (15)

The '*West Australian*' newspaper denigrated the personnel of the Commission, denounced them as mere creatures of the government and the Education Department, and deplored what it saw as the continued influence of New South Wales on Education in this State. (The Chairman of the Commission was the Director of Education in N.S.W. and most of the inspectors of the West Australian Department were New South Welshmen). The Commission was called 'a howling farce' and it was suggested that it had been led by the nose into approval of the 'Rural Schools Programme' and the idea of consolidation. (16) It is true that, in sum, the Royal Commission's Report gave support to the system of Special Rural Schools, having been very impressed with the work at Toodyay school. Whether or not they were justified in this, it can be seen as yet another influence which pushed the Education Department into moving ahead with consolidation.

The earliest consolidated schools after Toodyay (with four vans operating) were Donnybrook, Harvey (two vans), Wanneroo, Mount Barker (2 vans), Beverley, Bruce Rock, Carnarvon, Karnup, Kulin, Ucarty Road, and Wickepin. After this initial burst of activity the movement flagged for some time. The number of small schools that could be closed, considering the road transport conditions of the 1920s, were very few. The overwhelming majority were still too far removed from conveniently located town centres. Moreover the regulation still existed whereby if in any district an average attendance of ten children could be guaranteed, the Department would build a school and supply a teacher. Where eight children could be got together an Assisted school would be approved. For the very remote areas there was the Correspondence school. The number of small schools continued to grow and in fact did not peak till 1932. The Department also acknowledged that there was parental resistance to the change. (17) The Teachers' Union also had its doubts. Its Journal in 1920 listed four objections. Firstly, the small school was not a building for purely

secular instruction, but was also a community centre and often a place of worship on Sundays. Secondly, the small country school enabled the teacher to come into very close touch with the individual pupil and his parents, which contributed greatly to character training. Thirdly, parents would lose interest in their children's education if the local school were closed. And lastly, parents thought that children run too many risks in travelling long distances daily. (18)

The movement towards consolidation was slow throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1935, for example, there were still only fifteen consolidated schools, fed by twenty-three bus services and attended by 604 children from the small schools that had been closed. By 1940 there were twenty-seven such schools and forty-three bus contracts. Growth had been influenced to some extent by improvements in motor transport and better road building. From the Department's point of view, during this depresssion period, it was motivated by the search for economy. It had no doubts about the advantages.

> It has been more than justifiable from educational and economic points of view. The larger experience and wider outlook and knowledge gained by the child through separation from small, local groups of low age, low attainments, and limited vision are advantages of vast importance. Larger grouping allows the individual child, who may be more less isolated in the small school, an opportunity of meeting on an equality those children who have come under the influence of other interests. It also affords an opportunity of working towards a definite end as a member of a group of pupils of equal age and equal mental development. This has a definite social consequence. It stimulates a greater activity, and leads to co-operative work of a higher value. The pupils thus centralized learn to think and act as a group under new circumstances, and they gain an opportunity of expressing their tendencies towards organization and leadership, which is all-important in education. (19)

Carried away with this statement of education advantages, the writer thought it strange that parents should be averse to centralization on the grounds that they would lose their 'own school', and would lose a real community centre. He grudgingly acknowledged that 'perhaps there is something in their argument'.

During the war the policy received a setback due to manpower and fuel restrictions. Transport regulations were altered to stipulate that contractors had to use gas producers which made buses less efficient, but it did enable most of them to stay on the roads. In the immediate post-war years the consolidation policy gained new strength. Over forty new bus contracts were concluded each year, and by 1950 thirty per cent of rural school children used bus transport to get to school. (20)

After some initial confusion, and arguments between contractors and officials, a set of regulations was drawn up to systemise school bus travel. It was stipulated that termini must be strictly observed, the time of travel regulated to prevent the necessity of speeding. There were to be no passengers except the children and no parcels to be carried. Buses must conform to specifications

as to size, seating and be checked regularly for efficiency as to brakes and safety of tyres. (21)

Stories concerning school bus travel in the country, whether told by teachers, bus drivers or children, are legion. Here, the memories of Kathleen Anderson must suffice.

> When our one-teacher school in the bush was pulled down we were promised a bus 'past the gate' to take us into town to school where we would imbibe some of the civilisation that had hitherto eluded us as inhabitants of the Back Blocks. We got it, the bus service I mean. That 'past the gate' meant a mile or two's walk compared to the luxury of a horse 'n cart was nothing. But bus or no bus the cows still had to be milked and the separating done. Naturally our arrival at the road gate more than once failed to coincide with the bus. Most school bus drivers are as tolerant with latecomers as they are in other respects, and if bobbing, running heads could be seen on some distant horizon they'd switch off and wait.
>
> Perhaps our parents were sterner than others, but I do remember on one occasion missing the bus and spending all day playing on the creek and hiding under the culvert when the bus came on its afternoon round. No sooner had the dust died on the road behind the vanishing bus than I emerged from cover and lit out across the paddocks to arrive home at the legitimate hour. How was I to know that Father, sewing bags on a distant hill, put two and two together as to how I managed to alight at thirty or forty miles per hour.
>
> Getting to the bus stop wasn't so bad in summer time, but winter saw the frost lying thick and white, a cruel crust on the land to bite at small bare feet; it was too early for the sun to send it on its way before our feet had to break the whiteness to leave green lines on the slope. We were allowed to wear shoes to school, yes, but not to the gate. That would wear them out too quickly, and there wasn't the money about in those days for replacements. I kept a rag under the culvert to dry my feet after washing them in the creek before putting on shoes. (22)

Kathleen Anderson goes on to tell of the time Willy busted the rear window of the bus. 'I say busted because that is roughly the sound made by heavily-studded football boots striking bus windows with force enough to shatter them. Willy paused long enough to extricate his unblemished leg before rounding off the brawl that had precipitated this window-busting accident'. Bus drivers had then and still have, a great deal to put up with from undisciplined school children.

It must not be thought that consolidation proceeded at an even pace or with the agreement of all parties. There were cases where the parents (or a party interested in getting a bus contract) requested a school to be phased out and which the Department refused.

It is not yet quite understood by residents that such consolidation is

not instituted as a substitute for driving allowances, nor to take the place of establishing small schools in scattered districts. The Department has been forced to refuse a number of applications for the establishment of bus services, where the school to which the children will be transported does not provide better means of education. Too often these applications are received when the school established in the area gives clear indication that the numbers are insufficient for it to remain in operation. The most successful amalgamations have been in the vicinity of large towns. The district inspector, when required to report on proposed services, must always be guided in recommending the contract, by the resultant benefit the pupils will receive as well as the actual cost involved. (23)

The Teachers' Union attitude to consolidation was at first ambivalent. At the Annual Conference of the Country Teachers Branch in 1938 a resolution was carried favouring consolidation in principle, but emphasizing that it should be a matter of carefully considering each individual case so that distance of travel should not be excessive and would not involve very young children.

In 1944 the Minister for Education, Hon. J. Tonkin, announced that Area Schools would be established in country districts after the war. They would gather in children of post-primary age from contributory (primary) schools round about, and the increased enrolment would enable the Department to provide 'extra facilities to include both classroom and outdoor activities with an agricultural bias'. Although all parts of the State would not lend themselves to this type of school, it was the intention of the government to establish such schools wherever practicable. (24) Inspector (later Director-General) T. L. Robertson had been impressed by Area schools he had seen in the United Kingdom in East Suffolk and Kent. He advocated an adaption of the concept as the answer to Australia's rural post-primary school problems. (25)

In Australia 'Area Schools' originated in Tasmania and quickly attracted attention on the mainland of Australia and overseas. They were a type of consolidated school which aimed to provide, in addition to normal studies, a three-year course for children aged twelve to fourteen years, based on the needs of rural life. There were varying combinations of enrolment, in some areas sweeping in all children from the surrounding small schools, in others only the senior classes. The speed with which this Tasmanian project was undertaken caught the imagination of educational administrators elsewhere, but the idea was not a new one. It had been pre-dated in Western Australia by the work of Senior Inspector Miles in his organization of the 'Special Rural Schools' in the 1920s. South Australia had established in 1938 an experimental school with a curriculum biased towards the special industries of the areas. (26) The Tasmanian innovation was to extend it to the secondary phase of education and in this respect it had some influence on the West in the shaping of the Junior High Schools which were set up after the war. The ministerial statement referred to above was made with fore-knowledge of the Tasmanian development and it was known also to the leaders of the Teachers' Union. But, in the main,

the development of Junior High Schools was a home grown product arising logically out of the movement for consolidation of small schools.

2. Consolidation proceeds apace

It was the Teachers' Union that displayed the first real understanding of the economic and social changes that were taking place in the countryside of Western Australia. Much credit goes to Executive Member Kim Beazley (who later became Federal Member of Parliament for Fremantle and Minister for Education in the Whitlam Government), who showed a realistic grasp of the situation in an article which appeared in the *Teachers' Journal* in July 1944. Entitled 'The Area School: should it have an agricultural bias?', it was written in answer to the government's plan mentioned above. He began by castigating the dogma of rural bias which was accepted by rural teachers but rejected by the parents. (27) The concept of the Area Schools had been 'romanticized' and sprang from the idea that 'life on the farm is morally better'. The facts were that agriculture in Western Australia did not offer adequate opportunities for employment of country youth, since scientific agriculture was reducing the need for labour. Many farms were saddled with heavy debt and parents wanted their children to have the opportunity of getting into the professions and other non-rural occupations. 'Rural bias' was a cheap way out, enabling the government to avoid the cost of providing schools with the necessary equipment for instruction in full secondary courses for all children. Beazley urged the Teachers' Union to formulate a policy on Area Schools.

> We should get in beforehand and instead of following behind the government with our usual futile complaints about accomplished facts. It is our job to forestall the warping of the education of thousands of country children who will not inherit farms, but who will be virtually forced into area schools with a rural bias because of the absence of rural alternatives.

The answer, as he saw it, was to establish throughout the country consolidated multi-lateral High Schools, offering a choice of professional, technical, commercial and agricultural courses. They should enable children to take their education up to matriculation standard.

At the Teachers' Union conference later that year, Beazley moved and succeeded in having carried a motion favouring the establishment of country Area schools 'providing a full High School course'. (28)

The Education Department, for its part, quickly came to recognize the realities of economic changes in the countryside and when the matter was taken up by Union deputation to the Director-General it was found that he was in agreement with the Union view. (29) Nevertheless the Union found it necessary to combat a view which still prevailed in favour of specialised education for rural children.

> Certain rural devotees . . . would have us believe that rural life is self-sufficient. Actually it is riddled with all the consequences of bus routes,

motor travel, radios and other openers of the eyes of country dwellers to the wider life of the world. To attempt to palm off on people so situated an education directed to meeting purely rural needs would be so short-sighted as to savour of insanity. (30)

Whilst the World War was still a year from its end, the Commonwealth Government had begun to plan for the changes that needed to be structured into the Australian economy and to Australian society to reshape the nation for peace. One of the areas looked at was the rural economy and the needs of rural communities. To this end, Hon. Dedman, Minister for Post-war Reconstruction, had appointed in 1944 a Rural Reconstruction Commission. Its Seventh Report, entitled 'Rural Amenities', was published in May 1945. Chapter three dealt with Rural Education wherein the Commission noted a widespread degree of 'dissatisfaction with the present educational machinery' throughout Australia and the failure to 'lay a sound basis for citizenship on an understanding of the countryside itself'. (31) Two-thirds of the primary schools of Australia were one-teacher schools. Noting moves towards consolidation in a number of states, especially in Tasmania, it set out the advantages and disadvantages in much the same terms as teachers' organizations and educational authorities saw them. The Commission came down squarely in favour of consolidation, recommending that one-teacher schools should be phased out 'wherever children can be brought to a centre within reasonable travelling time each day'. (32) Western Australia was quoted as an example which demonstrated that this was the most economical way to provide efficient education for the countryside. The Report forecast that in post-war Australia, many rural children would not find work in rural areas.

The fact is inescapable because the area of good land which would justify use is relatively limited and the prospects not favourable for great expansion in the number of workers in the farming industry.

In this the Commission was partly mistaken, certainly as it affected Western Australia, where in the first two post-war decades over 400,000 hectares per year of crown land was alienated for farming. It was, however, not old-style family farming but land exploitation by high-capital investment making small demand for labour. The Commission's forecast of a lower rural workforce was fulfilled but for reasons other than seen by them. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that this was an authoritative document that could be quoted in support of consolidation by those who favoured this development.

The classification by the Department of five Junior High Schools in 1951, combining primary and post-primary education, settled the argument about the future of education for country children. A requirement that enrolment in primary classes must reach a specified number before such a Junior High School would be created, was a powerful factor in speeding the absorption of small isolated schools into town schools. These new Junior High Schools provided the same type of education at post-primary level up to the end of the third year as did the High Schools of the city and the major country towns. James Miles, the architect of the consolidated Special Rural schools, and now

retired, was very disappointed by this development, which he saw as having three objectionable features. The curriculum followed the pattern of the city schools; the centres were often overcrowded, so that local halls were hired where teaching aids were mishandled by the general public during social activities; and the bus routes involved long hours of travel for many children. The Junior High Schools were 'city schools transported to the country'. The test of good teaching became the number of passes at the Junior Certificate. The training of teachers specifically in agricultural science and rural economics, which had been instituted to serve the Special Rural Schools, had come to an end, and instruction in the schools ceased to be based on any aspect of community life. (33)

Miles' view of the Junior High School was substantially correct. In fact, in 1950 the Education Department gave official sanction to this trend when it stated that 'no special type of consolidated school has been developed, it being considered the existing multi-purpose school is best suited to local needs'. (34) This state of affairs was the product of powerful economic and social forces at work in the country areas of Western Australia, and indeed throughout the whole continent, altering radically the patterns of rural life. The mechanization of farms which took off in a big way in the 1920s, had by the 1950s brought about a decline in rural population. The replacement of horses by tractors, the advent of bulk-handling of wheat and the development of motorised transport, all worked to reduce the demand for rural labour. Moreover farming failures during the Depression had reduced total individual farm holdings. Company farming was beginning to replace the family farm. Such farm labour as was required was increasingly supplied by town-living contractors who undertook such tasks as ploughing, seeding, harvesting and crop-spraying. The Wheat Stabilisation Scheme guaranteed steady farm incomes and provided the wherewithal to re-equip the farm with modern machinery. The increasing ownership of motor cars in country districts, accompanied by a great improvement in the quality of roads, meant that most could travel to towns for shopping, sport, concerts, films and meetings. The local school was no longer the centre of social and cultural activities.

All the foregoing factors contributed to the decline of small hamlets and the growth of larger centres where social and commercial amenities were more varied and closer to city standards. There was an increasing diversification of economic life in the countryside, partly a product of the growing size of towns, and partly a cause of it. Urbanising influences in the form of domestic electricity, clean-gas, radio and later television, changed the outlook of hitherto isolated local groups. In fact, what was taking place was an urbanisation of the countryside that began in many areas to create a social structure not greatly different from that of the city. It was this that determined to a large extent the character of the new Junior High Schools. In such circumstances the way of life for which the Special Rural Schools and the rural-based curriculum had been devised was radically altered and the schools themselves could no longer operate in this way.

These new economic and social forces operated powerfully to bring about the phasing out of the small one-teacher schools. A proportion of older families sold out to agricultural companies or to their wealthier neighbours removing themselves and their attachment to the old bush school.

Among those that remained there was an increasing realization that modern scientific farming meant that better education was needed by the farmer. Changed standards of life on the farm meant also that the farm income was not sufficient to provide a good living for all the children of the family. Some would have to look to the towns and to other occupations for employment. So a new outlook on education began to appear in the country communities where education was now seen as a lever of social advancement. Parental ambitions worked in favour of the consolidation of schools. The provision of hostels for school children and living-away-from-home allowances provided a further incentive.

3. Consolidation problems

Consolidation proceeded throughout the thirties and forties at a pace which quickly outran the availability of accommodation and supplies. A 1946 Executive report of the Teachers' Union reflected the concern of teachers caught up in this process. Attention was drawn to conditions existing in most of the consolidated schools, especially overcrowded classrooms and the use of quite unsatisfactory community and church halls, C.W.A. rest rooms and the like. Equipment provided was little better than that obtained in the phased out one-teacher schools. Roads and buses were not up to standard and there was a pressing need for housing for teachers moved in to the centres.

The Minister for Education, Arthur Watts, acknowledged that accommodation was unsatisfactory for many children at consolidated schools, but he blamed the unavailability of building materials which was a condition of the times. With the war over there was an immense demand for private housing and commercial and public building of all kinds. (35)

In 1949 the Progressive Education League, a citizen's organization which had been inspired and largely organized by the Teachers' Union, conducted an investigation to determine the effectiveness of consolidation. The results were published in the *Teachers' Journal* over the title 'Investigator'.

> Consolidation in principle is sound and perhaps the only solution to rural education in Western Australia, but the past practice of indiscriminate consolidation is to be roundly condemned.
>
> 1. Bad roads exist generally.
> 2. Unsuitable buses are too numerous.
> 3. Many routes are too long and badly planned.
> 4. Overcrowded and understaffed schools are the rule, rather than the exception.
> 5. Classes generally are too large.
> 6. In some cases inexperienced and unsuitable teachers are being appointed to consolidated schools.

7. Equipment generally is meagre and poor in quality.
8. Many schools are situated in unsatisfactory surroundings.

These points, almost word for word, were submitted by the Progressive Education League by letter to the Minister, and were used to back up a strong opposition to further consolidation, unless it was better planned and prepared. (36)

The Minister's answer was that these conditions were 'not better and no worse' than schools which were not consolidated. The schools had given 'general satisfaction and better education to many children'. The Teachers' Union went so far as to ask the Department to cease consolidation till adequate buildings could be provided and suitable teacher accommodation arranged. The Department stated firmly that it could not refuse to close a small school if requested, and if it was in the interests of the children. (37)

Consolidation continued apace and a note of self-congratulation appeared in official statements.

> Consolidation of schools is accepted realistically by the majority of parents, though some resistance is occasionally encountered and some parents mourn the passing of the district small school.

And again:

> In general, bus services are operating efficiently and the eagerness with which extensions are sought to enable children to attend school rather than to study on correspondence indicates the confidence of country people generally in the benefits of consolidation. (38)

By 1949 nearly three hundred buses were operating and a full time bus supervisor had been appointed who saw that regular inspection of buses was carried out and reports made on their mechanical condition.

The Department initiated discussions with Parents and Citizen's organizations, with local governing bodies, parents and travelling children, as to the acceptability of the new system of country education. Apart from criticism of some buses, requests for variation of some routes, and complaints about the poor state of some roads, the enquiry found that 'at no time was there organized opposition to bus services'. The policy was to establish services where ever it was possible to collect twelve or more children along a route of reasonable length. They were 'a major factor in helping to arrest the drift away from rural occupations'. (39).

By 1950 eleven thousand children, approximately thirty percent of rural school children (a higher percentage than in any other Australian state at that time), were being daily carried by bus services in country areas. Consolidation was now a well established policy and the official world of education had no doubts as to its benefits.

> There is a growing recognition that although excellent results have been achieved by correspondence education and by small country schools, there are additional social and educational benefits to be derived from education in a larger school community. In addition the larger school

has the advantage of increasing efficiency by permitting an organisation into class units composed of children at a similar scholastic level. Where enrolment is sufficient, facilities can be provided for woodwork, metal work, domestic science, commercial subjects etc. and a choice of alternative courses can be offered at secondary level. (40)

This might be compared with a New Zealand report carried out at about the same time which saw considerable disadvantages in consolidation and which recommended the disestablishment of the primary section of large consolidated schools wherever the population permitted the re-opening of local schools and the retention of existing small schools even if only to cater for the first four grades of primary education. (41)

4. The process completed.

In Western Australia the Education Department was determined to push on with consolidation.

> The policy of consolidation is now accepted and most of the early, over-publicised criticism are no longer voiced. Consolidation has involved every local government authority and led to frank and informative exchanges of views from which both the Education Department and the communities concerned have profited.

And again,

> Consolidation is now fairly complete in the wheatbelt but there is still considerable scope for the development of central schools in the South-West, where the closure of small schools has proceeded more slowly than elsewhere, due mainly to the greater difficulty of providing all-weather roads. (42)

In 1954 a departmental statement indicated that it was not expected that many more bus services would be required, since there were not many districts remaining which lent themselves to further consolidation. The number of bus services were now 522, the children carried daily numbered 14,000, total mileage daily was 34,700. The average annual cost per child was £57 (43) which justified claims of cost saving achieved by consolidation since the average annual cost per head of attendance of a one-teacher school for the financial year 1952-53 was £83/18/2.

By 1962 the process of consolidation was virtually complete. There remained only 47 schools with an enrolment of less than twenty-one pupils, which was less than ten per cent of all primary schools. Full statistical details are not available, but if we assume a full enrolment of twenty-one in each school, this would give a total of 980 children or less than one per cent of all primary enrolment. A measure of the speed of consolidation is seen by a comparison of the years 1942 and 1962. Over that twenty year period the number of one-teacher schools having less than twenty pupils dropped from 356 to 47.

It should be noted that, despite the vigorous application of the policy of consolidation, a small number of new one-teacher schools was established in

the 1950s and 1960s as vast new areas of farm lands were taken up for development in the South Stirlings, Denbarker, Esperance Plains and the sandplains of Watheroo. (The expansion of farming on this scale would, in earlier times, have led to an explosion of one-teacher schools. But in these days of highly capitalized agriculture, this experience will not be repeated). Mineral, pastoral and large-scale plantation type farming in the north-west and the Kimberleys brought new schools to places like Koolan Island, Christmas Creek, Kalumburu, Argyle Downs, Cerrabun, Kimberley Downs and Kunnunurra.

Some few long-established small schools persisted long after their contemporaries had vanished. A variety of factors were at work. There were still pockets of population in very isolated areas due to special circumstances, such as railway depots on the Trans line, Koonana, Reid, Zanthus, small gold mining ventures such as Bullfinch and Marvel Loch, small timber hamlets (Donnelly River) or small towns owing their continued existence to servicing of the travelling public (Widgiemooltha). In some few cases parental opposition had succeeded in maintaining the old school (Gillingara).

In 1975 there were less than 2,000 children in schools with less than thirty-five children out of a total primary school population in Western Australia of 132,000.

5. Consolidation — pros and cons.

The stock advantages claimed for consolidation at the time of its greatest advance were the educational value of larger groupings, the economy of specialised instruction and of modern equipment, the greater stability of staffing and the variety of courses open to the children at post-primary level. Successive governments tended to lay the main stress on the financial gains — the savings in teachers' salaries, in building maintenance and the supply of equipment. A given amount of finance could be spread over a greater number of children.

Studies done by teachers who spent time in one-teacher schools see as the main virtues, better housing of classes, better equipment, the separate classroom for each grade preventing distraction from the task in hand, the co-operation of teachers with each other to provide the best use of available skills, a greater diversity in the curriculum, more and better social and recreational activities for both children and teachers, and better value for money.

Criticism of consolidation centres round its failure to live up to the advantages claimed for it, and around the circumstances of bus travel and in losses to the local community. Not all consolidated schools were able to abolish grouped classes and the standard and quantity of equipment was in some cases no better than that of the one-teacher schools. There was, in some newly consolidated schools, the necessity to hire halls and other premises away from the school grounds. These were in all cases ill-equipped for school purposes. Bus travel was tiring to many children, especially those in the lower primary grades and some of the journeys were very long. A Progressive Education League report in 1949 referred to a daily bus run of a total of well over seventy miles and a few over eighty miles. (44) In 1955 the Public Health Department

instructed school medical officers to report on the health of 'bus children'. All reports forwarded showed detrimental effects, such as fatigue and irritability. (45) There were strong parental fears about the distances to be travelled, and the loss of the local school building as a community meeting place was a real cause of concern in some cases.

Was there a genuine saving in the overall cost of education? Certainly the first experiment created such expectations. The closing of West Toodyay and the busing of the children to Toodyay saved £200 in the first year. Mills, in *The Rural School and Consolidation*, concludes that insufficient statistics are available to make a valid generalisation. He points to variables such as the 'false economy' of higher pupil-teacher ratio in the higher grades, but with concomitant proportionate decreases in ratio in the lower grades; the difficulty of comparisons because of salary changes over the years; the absence from the statistics of such factors as the cost of bus contracts and of bus inspections. He concludes that 'the relative saving in cost of rural education may be considerably less than hitherto thought'. (46)

In the 1980s the question is being posed whether modern technological development has not invalidated the advantages hitherto claimed for consolidation. The gridding of electric power throughout the countryside has ensured that most farms and small settlements can use electronic hardware of all kinds. The same could apply to small schools in the same areas. Certainly most, if not all, country children have 'eyes and ears' geared to the outside world, equally with city children. More-over the ever-rising cost of bus transport, determined by the rising cost of fuel, makes the economic gains of consolidation ever less apparent. Nevertheless one should beware of a marked tendency of late years to romanticise life in the one-teacher schools. In the early 1960s, by which time all but a few one-teacher schools had been phased out, a spate of reminiscences from teachers began to appear in the *Teachers' Journal* and elsewhere. The writers were far enough away in time from the experience to look back on it with some nostalgia. More-over, with the great post war explosion of child population, the size of the teacher work-force had grown correspondingly, and teaching in bush schools had become a minority experience. The articles of Kathleen Anderson in the *Teachers' Journal* telling of a school that 'snuggled in a small clearing on the edge of the bush, alongside a little-used road that joined two distant towns', is fairly typical. She paints a vivid picture of activities inside and outside the schoolroom, but begins and concludes inevitably with overtones of nostalgic sadness.

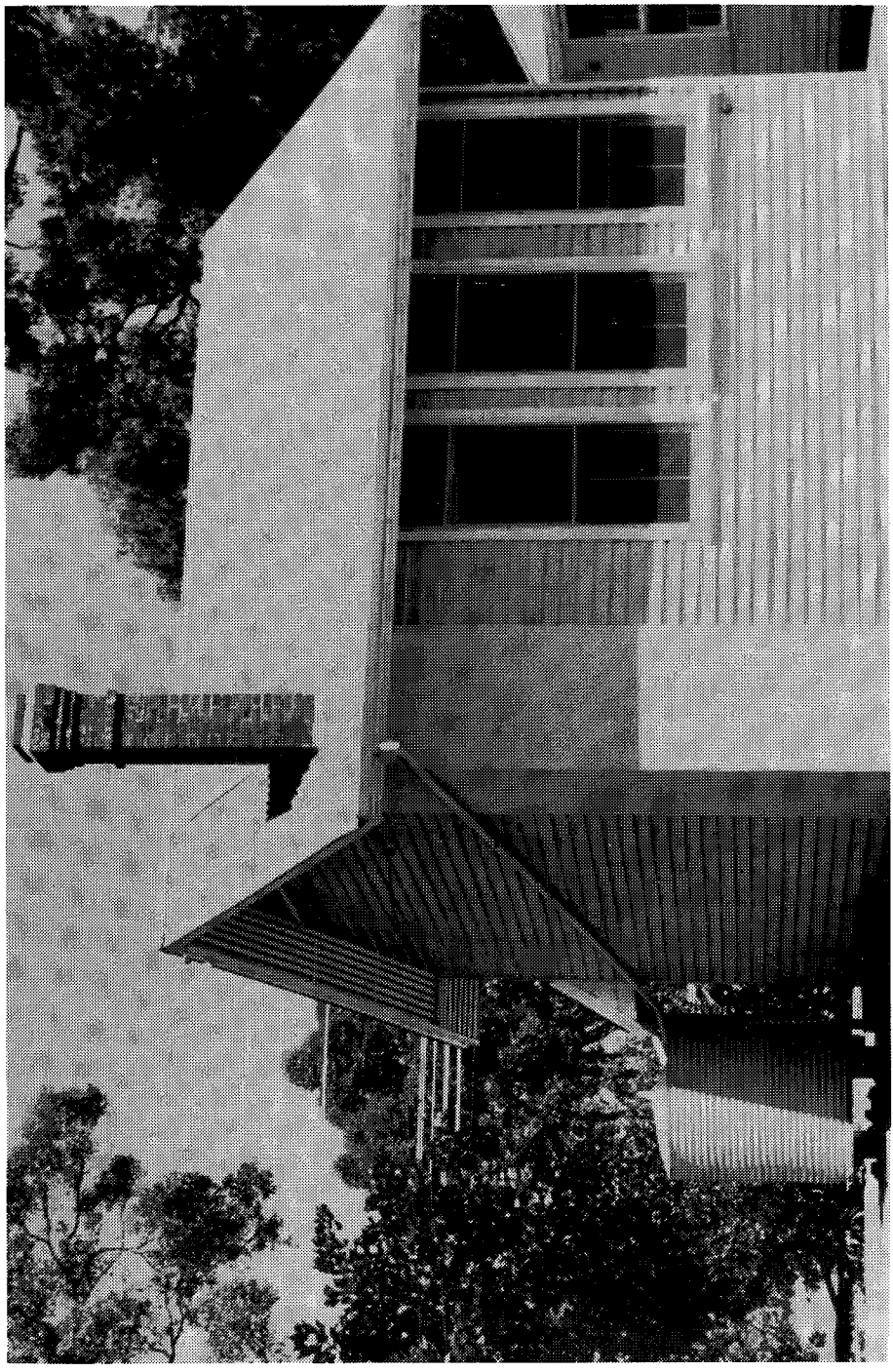
> Once an integral part of the Australian outback scene, the bush school, as we knew it so well, has gone — lost in the whirl of dust from the modern motor vehicle.
>
> The school has gone now. With the coming of the war many of these far-flung outposts of our educational empire were abandoned and closed. In most cases they were pushed down for what iron and timber they possessed. Yes, it's gone, and the lonely bush which once rang

with our laughter has spread across the little clearing where stood the Old Bush School. (47)

The theorists also have contributed their share of idealisation. P.S. Mills, discussing the virtues of the one-teacher schools, writes:

> In no other school is it possible for the teacher to have an extensive knowledge of the pupil's environment. The social and economic status of the family, the development of family and district attitudes and prejudices, the emotional security of the family unit, their hopes and aspirations are easily discerned and classified.
>
> Furthermore the teacher is a readily accepted unit of the community with a sphere of influence far greater than his city counterpart. In consequence there is practically no barrier between the home and the school and where it does occur, the means exist for its removal or isolation. The standards of behaviour engendered by Rural Schools are not confined to school activities but are manifest in social interaction within the community. (48)

This picture could be expected to prevail when the teacher was an efficient organizer and forceful personality, and where the local community was receptive to the educational role of the school, a situation far from being generally the rule, as this work has attempted to demonstrate.



20. Vasse one-teacher school building — one that survived demolition.

CHAPTER 10
Education in Bush Schools

The one-teacher bush school was something different from the country small town school despite the uniformity of routine and of the formal curriculum. The environment, and the lives of the people, inevitably influenced the teacher's work, giving the school a special flavour. Many older teachers who have been through the mill of the small schools, as well as some educational theorists, express the feeling that the one-teacher school gave something to the children and to the local community that the larger schools did not. What evidence have we that the education was in fact different in degree if not also in kind?

Enough has been said to demonstrate that the main ingredients were firstly, the character and personality of the teacher, and secondly the socio-economic background of the district. The latter determined to a large extent the attitude of the parents to the teacher and the way they perceived the relevance or otherwise of the schooling given to their children.

One of the earliest studies of the rural schools in Australia concluded that the disadvantages of the one-teacher schools were their staffing by immature teachers and the 'frequent changes of teaching personnel, which some critics regard as perhaps the chief weakness of Australian Education'.

Nevertheless it saw as the most positive feature of the small country school that it 'may and should develop a character of its own and do something that the next school does not. The individuality of the teacher is stamped upon every small school'. (1) Good education depended on having the right kind of teacher and the right kind of curriculum. West Australian experience was that the former was largely a matter of chance and the latter was for some time inhibited by the strict imposition of a state-wide uniform curriculum. For the first three decades of the Education Department small-school teachers were selected from men and women who themselves had had quite a rudimentary education and were sent into the bush after a quite short period of superficial 'training'. Moreover it was for long a standard practice that teachers in metropolitan schools who proved to be misfits, delinquents or hopeless cases

through drink or 'moral turpitude' not quite serious enough to warrant dismissal, were exiled to remote bush schools supposedly to remove them from temptation, or perhaps to teach them a lesson. In later years the less capable trainees feared such first-out-of-college appointments. Cocklebiddy and Gate 89 were proverbial symbols of being 'sent to Siberia'.

No objective evidence exists whereby the relevance of the daily teaching in the individual schools can be determined. Bruce Grant, speaking of his experience as a pupil in a one-teacher school in the late 1930s, wrote that the school work paid no heed to the Australian environment or to Australian society.

> We learned instead about the history of the English people. We learned about the Battle of Hastings and the Wars of the Roses. We studied Shakespeare and, steaming in sheepskins, performed 'Macbeth' in the school play-shed with the temperature over 100 degrees in the shade. We read poetry about the Lake District and what it felt like to die for England. We pored over visions of soft fields and rosy apples...the most likely sensation to be gained from 'flinging oneself breathless on a windy hill' would be the score of ants inside one's trousers. . .It was not surprising that the classroom became an unreality — four walls enclosing a smell of sharpened pencils, strange information, and bewildered youngsters engaged in a prestige battle of winning the most marks for meaningless work. . .the world of school and the world of life continued without touching. (2)

Though the Country Teachers' Branch of the Teachers' Union continued to advocate a full independent curriculum for country schools it had no hope of success since this did not accord with the prevailing philosophy of state education in Western Australia. The 1938 Annual Report of the Department contained an important re-statement of the long-standing aim of equality of opportunity, reaffirming the value of the uniform curriculum.

> 'Our Education Department is centrally administered and this centralized administration ensures, as far as possible, equal opportunity for city and country children. . .In this State country and city schools are similarly equipped, teachers are well qualified and paid the same salary as those of their grade in all schools, and opportunity is provided for any child with the necessary ability to secure the highest education the State can offer. There is a clear cut track from even the smallest country school and the Correspondence Classes for a pupil to reach the University, and Government aid is available to him to enable him to proceed along this course. (3)

Though the difficulties in the small country schools arising from problems associated with the curriculum occupied a great deal of the time of the Director, his inspectors and the teachers, there were other aspects of equal importance. Cecil Andrews, in 1918, stated some of these clearly when he acknowledged the inequalities inherent in the teaching conditions of the bush schools, and suggested that these arose from the very nature

of the schools themselves and their location in the physical environment.

He pointed to three disadvantages of the small school — the necessity of grouped classes, the inadequacy of equipment and the poor quality of the teachers. The view expressed by Andrews was widely shared by government and educational leaders and fuelled the drive for consolidation which began to take off in the 1920s. However, spasmodic attempts to improve education in the bush schools had been made from time to time, as we have seen in the case of teacher training and curriculum reform. Efforts had also been made to help teachers with classroom organization and teaching methodology. (4)

Inexperienced teachers found it hard to cope with the organizational problems related to the need to teach several grades simultaneously, and to operate several times a day with lessons directed to grouped classes. In 1902 Inspector McCollum reported rather acidly:

> It is possible in a mixed school of (say) 30 pupils under one teacher to keep all the classes constantly and usefully employed. Although this is one of the most severe tests of skill, it is pleasant to report that it is sometimes seen in small country schools. (5)

Inspector Klein quoted with approval a 'writer's' comment that the teacher had to 'solve the difficulty of being corporeally in two or more places at the same time; and also to impregnate the atmosphere of the school with his spiritual presence'.

Another difficulty for the teacher arose from the fact that it was not uncommon for children in remote country schools to attend for the first time at the age of seven, eight or even nine years. The inexperienced teacher was hard set to organize his teaching programme to cope with them. Inspector Clubb was highly critical of a school in which

> I found big girls of twelve years — girls of quite average intelligence — in standard 1. The teacher had given them the same work as would have been given them had they been admitted at the age of six! The injustice to such children is manifest. (6)

A case is also quoted of big boys of eleven and twelve being kept down in standards 1 and 2 with tiny children. This problem of class organization was one of the most difficult the bush teacher had to face. Fanny Dunne, reflecting back on her teaching experience held that the 'peculiar and inherent difficulties of the one-teacher school' arose from the wide range of ages and ability levels, the small size of a single grade and deficient social stimulation. She saw the answer, in part, as organizing the school in three groups rather than in eight grades. (7) An early attempt had been made to improve class organization in bush schools when an inspector was given the task of setting out a model time-table together with an outline of the general principles governing the organization of class work. In this type of school, it was stressed, the teacher

> 'should set out on the black-board, before 9 o'clock, much of the work he intends to give in such subjects as arithmetic, geography, recitation

and drawing, and that his kindergarten material, material for brushwork, specimens for object lessons etc. should be laid out ready to hand'. (8)

In one-teacher schools, the teacher's before-school time involvement was as onerous as his after-school duties relating to marking of script work, making up routine documents and reports, and attending to correspondence.

The departmental monthly *Education Circular* was for several decades an invaluable guide for teachers in bush schools remote from other forms of help. Almost every issue contained an article of methodology and directives on the content of the curriculum, especially in subjects where the country teacher's general knowledge was thought to be deficient — Geography, Nature Study, Drawing and History. Frequently there were specimen lessons, and for a time, an 'Inquiry Column' was run where the teacher could ask for advice. From about 1912 the *Teachers' Journal* also ran frequent articles on aspects of teaching. For most country teachers the only time they had the opportunity of personal assistance was when the district inspector paid the first of his two annual visits but this was all too brief owing to the extensive territory and large number of schools he had to cover. The bush teacher probably obtained his best help if he was fortunate enough to be selected to attend a school of instruction. Here he underwent an intensive course covering the curriculum and had the opportunity to exchange ideas and methods with other teachers in a like situation.

The difficult task of improving the methodology of the bush teacher was compounded in the first two decades of the century by the explosive increase in the number of small bush schools, co-incident with the first phase of expansion of the wheat belt. By the time the second phase came, in the 1920s, the staffing situation had greatly improved. Inspectors noted an improvement in the efficiency of the one-teacher schools. This was put down to the provision of wider opportunities for secondary education with the establishment of the district high schools, to the training of teachers for service in rural schools and to the help provided by the Correspondence courses. (9) However, despite the attention given to questions of organization and methodology over the years, teachers of bush schools were still judged by many to be inefficient. Inspector Coleman in 1935, in a series of lectures on the 'Organisation of a country school', at a University Summer Vacation Course, presented the view that the problem was inherent in the very nature of the one-teacher school. It had to 'dispense' three distinct types of education — kindergarten, primary and secondary. The age range was from six to fourteen with both limits frequently extended. 'This diversity of age and attainment makes individual attention a necessity'. But 'in schools where the attendance is, say, from 25 to 30, individual attention cannot be expected'. (10)

Coleman advocated the removal of the post-primary tops' from these schools and the classification of children according to 'educational capacity'.

In 1952 the Education Department launched a professional journal for teachers, entitled 'Education'. Every issue contained 'curriculum notes' and there were frequent articles written by practising teachers telling how they had tackled

the problems of organization and methodology in the small schools.

The efficiency of the teaching provided in the bush schools varied, of course, in accordance with the ability of the teacher. Not all were as incompetent as the foregoing account may suggest. Joe Parsons, after doing a stint of inspectorial duties in 1911, reported that

> 'Where the methods are intelligent and well thought out and the teacher earnest and enthusiastic, I have found the work done in the small school to be above the average of work done in the larger schools, as although the teacher of a small school has to teach several groups he is not handicapped by over large numbers as is the class teacher in a large town school. The teaching for this reason is in the former case largely individual, the child is led the more easily to resolve his own difficulties by direct reference to the teacher and to text books, and — most important advantage of all — in a small school the child has a greater chance to acquire habits of independence, as the exigencies of group teaching often leave him to his own resources for the greater part of a lesson. What is the result? In such a subject as Arithmetic the work is not stereotyped, the child has often discovered a method of solution for himself, in spelling he learns early to use a dictionary, and in history and geography acquires rapidly the fast disappearing art of reading and understanding a text book. And these remarks are, it may be seen, designed as a warning to the class teacher in a large school, ever fond of the sound of his own voice, not to try to 'teach' too much, to give the children themselves a chance to work out their own ideas under his guidance. The advice is trite, but how few young teachers are there who follow it in daily practice? (11)

Parsons was not alone in his observations on the possibilities offered by the small numbers in the bush schools for a better type of education. The more capable and conscientious of the teachers who passed through the system would agree with this view. H.T. Lovell, in Cole's text on rural education in Australia, notes perhaps a little idealistically, as the characteristic features of the rural child, work habits, knowledge of practical life, a sense of responsibility, resourcefulness and initiative.

Certainly there were aspects of the small bush school that were educationally commendable. Inspector Wheeler (1908) saw much that was good:

> 'In smaller schools, relations between teacher and pupils are of the most cordial nature, and punishments are very rare indeed. . .The school, to the country child, has become a pleasurable place, and the old order of things is entirely reversed. One never hears of the child 'creeping like snail unwillingly to school' in these latter days, but on the contrary the difficulty now sometimes arises to keep him from school. Necessity compelled me one night to 'camp' in the vicinity of a small school, and I was surprised next morning to see three children present at 6.40 am. working diligently in the school garden. They had walked three miles'. (12)

A number of teachers who went through the mill of the one-teacher schools have made professional studies of the kind of education presented and the relationship of the schools to the community. In common with all who taught in those schools they differ quite markedly in their assessment, in some areas flatly contradicting each other.

G.P. Hunt suggests that the main cause of educational deficiency lay in the fact that the schools were staffed by young and inexperienced teachers. The multi-class situation and the paucity of teaching aids drove them to an overformalism in teaching and there was little opportunity for extra-curricular activities and for 'cultural subjects'. There were psychological and social ill-effects from the isolation of the children from groups of their peers. He concluded that a full parent-teacher, home-school relationship was not possible. The one-teacher school was a suitable structure for a certain (passing) phase of economic and social development, but a stage was reached where it no longer catered for the needs of modern life. Hunt welcomed the advent of consolidation. (13)

R. Sneddon sees the one-teacher school as the only way in which education could have been provided to the widely scattered children of the agricultural and pastoral areas. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the system, consolidation was an inevitable product of powerful economic and technological forces which began to operate on the countryside from the 1920s. (14)

N.G. Johnston is a champion of the virtues of the small school. His study is a plea for future decentralization of rural education in order to regain some of the values that were lost by consolidation. The one-teacher school had a 'family' atmosphere with more friendliness than was to be found in larger schools. Teacher autocracy was broken down as children participated in decision-making in appropriate areas. The school operated as a corporate entity in relation to the community. Educationally the advantages were, for the children, self-direction, individual study habits, a high standard of responsibility; and for teachers, ease of administration, freedom to practise creative teaching, and the opportunity to become better acquainted with pupils. There were advantages in the teaching of skill subjects. Abler children could assist the less able and the older coach the younger. Without trauma a backward child could join in with a lower grade or be given individual instruction, and the brighter ones could join in with a higher grade. In social studies each child was able to contribute to a common project at his own level. Johnston sees the few remaining one-teacher schools as owing their existence to special local circumstances and he approves of their continuance. The improved economic and social conditions of today make them institutions of increasing value to their communities. (15)

G.R. Kemp sees the one-teacher school as a tremendous challenge for the teacher, who had to develop single-handed, the skills of organization, curriculum building and teaching methods. Most of the inefficient teaching that took place was occasioned by the appointment to bush schools of raw tyros who tended to be overwhelmed by the burden of lesson preparation. The great advantage

for the teacher in the long term was that it provided him per force with a complete knowledge of the whole of the primary curriculum which stood him in good stead when he graduated to headship of a larger school. Overall, Kemp concludes that the children suffered educationally. 'The efficient teacher of a single class achieves better results than the efficient teacher of the one-teacher school in skills'. The children in the upper grades were disadvantaged in the cultural subjects and all the children lacked the opportunities for activities with their peers. Whilst no other system than the centrally administered one-teacher school could have offered the outback children the same advantages as city children, uniformity of education did not alter the environment in which the children lived. By implication Kemp suggests that the consolidated school could overcome to some extent the environmental disadvantages of country children. (16)

J.R. Mews sees the teacher as the main factor determining the character of the education provided in the bush schools — his personality, his qualifications and his training. In an analysis of the training given at the Teachers' College he shows that as time went on the rural course concentrated more on details of administration, school organization and method, and very little on subject matter and cultural educational and professional studies. Teachers were not adequately prepared for the job. However he stresses the 'family' quality of the one-teacher school and points with approval to such aspects as free movement, personal attention, ease of questioning, and the appeal to personal interests. He concludes that if they had a capable teacher, the children of the one-teacher school were not greatly disadvantaged, thanks to the system of centralized control, with its equality of material, uniform curriculum and close standardized supervision. (17)

E.C. Miller's study comes out clearly on the side of the merits of consolidation of the small schools. The policy could be well justified on both educational and social grounds. The larger school had better amenities in such areas as arts and crafts, music, physical education and sport. With its larger peer groups it gave a better social atmosphere than the one-teacher school, which might have as few as eight or ten children, who could come from only two or three families. The one positive value he sees in the small school is as a training ground for the teacher in preparation for the running of a large school, giving him a knowledge of the work of all grades and the basics of school administration. (18)

Although J.V. Needham states that the end of the one-teacher school spelt the 'death of the local community' and the loss of parent-teacher relationship, he sheds no tears over it. With Sneddon he sees consolidation as the product of irreversible economic forces that did nothing but good for the children of the outback. It made available post-primary education at a time when 'every rural child cannot (and does not wish to) be a farmer'. The one-teacher school was no longer a satisfactory framework within which a modern education could be provided. Its greatest disadvantage was the lack of professional contacts for the teacher. In the immediate post-war period of shortage of building materials

and of manpower, it was time to utilize available teachers to more advantage by doing away with the economically inefficient small schools with their low pupil-teacher ratio. (19)

In June 1938 an article appeared in the *Teachers' Journal* which painted a romantic picture of the values and atmosphere of the country school.

> The fortunate child in the country school, though deprived to some extent of the advantages of higher education, has the undoubted privilege of being brought up in natural, healthy surroundings, free from the bustle and nerve-racking noise of the city life. Living closer to nature, he or she has a true sense of the realities of life, and finds it less necessary to indulge those moral and social self-deceptions necessary to the artificiality of urban existence. The time may arrive when it will be realised that the very finest type of our Australian nation is bred in the country districts and spends those important formative years in the calmer natural atmosphere of the rural school. (20)

A scathing attack on this idealistic view appeared in the next issue, the writer declaring inter alia:

> The self-deception and artificiality of social life in the urban district is distinctly less pronounced than the open enmity and pettiness of the small rural community. . .What can be worse than the small farm complex — conversation ranges over 'cows, butterfat and fleas'. (21)

George Forster, whose career took him through the headship of all grades of primary schools, in his presidential address of the Country Teachers' Conference in May 1946 upheld the positive qualities of the one-teacher school.

> To justify consolidation an attack amounting almost to slander has been levelled at the teacher of the small school. It has been claimed that in such schools children cannot receive a sound primary education. We teachers know that such is not the case. Children of country schools who have the opportunity of attending central and high schools more than hold their own with the children of the larger primary schools. I will go further and say that in that all important but elusive factor in education, character building, the country school is much more successful than that of the city. Qualities of self-reliance and industry are developed which city children are often without and even despise. (22)

A sober appraisal of the values of a one-teacher school has been made by Roy Grace, a teacher well-known to all who taught in the period of the 1950s and 1960s. This Roy Grace bore the sobriquet Mr 'English Grace', to distinguish him from a colleague and name-sake whose speciality was science.

> This type of school tended to foster self-reliance as well as group co-operation. The teacher in the one-teacher school might have only 12 to 20 children, but they were spread through the seven grades of primary school and often included post-primary children. He could not effectively teach more than two grades at a time (except in such

subjects as art, literature and physical education). During such time, the children in other grades had their learning so organized that they worked independently, or in a group, or under the guidance of a senior girl or boy. Inevitably, the responsibility thrown upon the children, big and small, helped to develop in them on the one hand self-reliance, initiative and independence and on the other hand a helpful attitude to others. These are wholly admirable characteristics commonly found in the one-teacher school: they are not commonly found in larger schools. I know that for many reasons the one-teacher school had to be replaced — high administrative costs, social inadequacies (there might be only one twelve-year old boy in attendance and he suffered seriously from not mixing with boys of his own age), lack of educational opportunities (the post-primary student in the small country school suffered markedly by comparison with the student in a large city school). Nevertheless, the one-teacher school served a great need and, particularly in the primary grades, developed a type of education combining self-help and group methods of learning, that is basic to the very best type of school in the 1970s (23)

Though many old hands who went through the mill of the one-teacher schools speak highly of their value as educational media, others strongly disagree and see the consolidation of schools as an educational improvement and above all as a social advance for the teacher. Attitudes are no doubt coloured by the area in which the teacher was located and the extent to which parents were willing to accept the teacher and to help the school. This latter could depend on the presence or otherwise of a forceful community leader. Inevitably a subjective element enters into any judgement on this question. Whilst the advantages of consolidated schools can be clearly demonstrated from an examination of their role today, it is not easy to grasp the significance of schools which have vanished and which, moreover, served small communities in a socio-economic setting that is no longer with us. A definitive assessment is impossible. The essential quality of an institution cannot with certainty be judged by the records, objective and subjective, which have come down to us from the past.

NOTES

Chapter 1

(1) W. Catton Grasby was the first to draw attention to the close relationship between the mineral industry and agricultural development. See Battye J.S.: *Cyclopaedia of Western Australia.* Vol. 2. p. 138

(2) E.C. October 1914 p. 140

(3) E.D.A.R. 1909 p. 73

(4) Cole P.R. (Ed.): *The Rural School in Australia* (MUP 1937)

(5) E.D.A.R. 1901 p. 51

(6) Ibid 1912 p. 63

(7) In 1917 they were again admitted if over 5 years and in 1919 admitted if aged 6 before the end of each half-year.

(8) Later the Department provided the teacher if the parents made a suitable room available.

(9) E.D.A.R. 1923 p. 10

(10) Ibid 1922 p. 10

(11) Ibid 1937 p. 5

Chapter 2.

(1) This is strongly argued in Hirst J.B: *Adelaide and the Country, 1870-1917: their social and political relationship.* (MUP 1973) Vide Ch. 3 esp. pp. 144-147

(2) For details of the movement vide McKenzie, John A: *Wise Man from the East* in *Early Days* Vol 8 pt. 3 (Royal W.A. Historical Society, Perth).

(3) E.D.A.R. 1909 p. 9

(4) E.C. March Supplement 1917 p. 3

(5) J.F. Cramer: Australian schools through American eyes. (A.C.E.R. Educational Research Series No. 42) Quoted in Cole: *Rural Schools of Australia* p. 71

(6) E.D.A.R. 1907 p. 7
(7) Ibid 1921 p. 14
(8) Ibid 1921 p. 14
(9) T.J. May 1924 pp. 59-64
(10) Ibid April 1925 p. 36
(11) Ibid p. 39
(12) Ibid

Chapter 3

(1) E.D.A.R. 1904 p. 61
(2) Ibid 1905 p. 9
(3) T.J. April 1912 p. 33
(4) E.D.A.R. 1913 p. 7
(5) Ibid 1915 p. 81
(6) Ibid 1911 p. 40
(7) Ibid p. 56
(8) Ibid p. 57
(9) Ibid 1907 p. 7
(10) Ibid 1909 p. 7
(11) Ibid 1910 p. 67
(12) E.C. July 1908 p. 7
(13) E.D.A.R. 1909 p. 76
(14) Ibid 1906 p. 51
(15) Ibid 1907 p. 62
(16) Ibid p. 62
(17) E.C. July 1915 p. 8
(18) Ibid February 1907 p. 193
(19) E.D.A.R. 1907 p. 55
(20) Ibid 1914
(21) T.J. February 1923 p. 203-5
(22) Ibid December 1908 p. 8
(23) E.D.A.R. 1906 p. 7, 1907 p. 7
(24) E.C. 1911 p. 160
(25) E.D.A.R. 1916 p. 100 Report of College Principal
(26) Ibid 1918 p. 9
(27) Ibid 1921 p. 9
(28) T.J. May 1923 p. 64-5
(29) T.J. February 1937 p. 283
(30) Ibid October 1937 p. 201

(31) Ibid June 1938 p. 91-2
(32) Ibid December 1938 p. 225-6

Chapter 4

(1) E.D.A.R. 1906 p. 62
(2) T.J. August 1912 p. 108
(3) T.J. September 1947, p. 181 'The real Australia' by Maybeth
(4) Ibid April 1961, p. 71
(5) R.I.S.P. Files of Elsinore, Gillimanning, Milton, Beacon, North Kununoppin
(6) R.I.S.P. Mt. Marshal file
(7) T.J. October 1979, p. 71.
(8) R.I.S.P. North Kellerberrin file
(9) W. James: *A place of smokey parrots*, pp 28-29
(10) T.J. June 1961, p. 137 'Bush School' by Kathleen Anderson
(11) E.D.A.R. 1903, p. 57, 1909, p. 62, 1907, p. 67
(12) Ibid 1912, p. 80, 1907, p. 53, 1904, p. 55
(13) Ibid 1914 Hadley's report, p. 68
(14) Ibid 1904 Gamble's report, p. 55
(15) Ibid 1912 Gladman's report, p. 77, 1909 Klein's report, p. 72
(16) Ibid 1910, p. 71
(17) Recollections of Mrs Abbott (nee Shier) of Wagin and Doris Newland of North Beach
(18) R.I.S.P. Elsinore file
(19) E.D.F. 3792/14, p. 141.
(20) T.J. February 1961, p. 16
(21) E.D.A.R. 1896
(22) Ibid 1919, p. 5
(23) Ibid 1897, p. 58
(24) Ibid 1905, p. 3, 1906, p. 5
(25) Ibid 1907, p. 82
(26) Ibid 1906, p. 62
(27) Ibid 1897 and 1906. Also L. Fletcher (Ed.) *Pioneers of Education in Western Australia*, p. 173-6 (G. Partington).
(28) E.D.A.R. 1910, p. 67.
(29) Museum of Childhood, Subiaco: education museum records and medals
(30) R.I.S.P. Kununoppin file
(31) E.D.A.R. 1910, p. 17; 1907, p. 53

Chapter 5

(1) E.D.A.R. 1907, p. 7
(2) Ibid, 1908, p. 70
(3) Ibid, 1924, p. 8 e.g. England 22 percent
Western Australia 34. 16 percent
(for the year 1924)
(4) T.J. November 1914, p. 156
(5) Ibid August 1930, p. 128
(6) Ibid June 1912 'Great Southern Notes'
(7) Ibid June 1925 p. 84
(8) Ibid February 1912, p. 7
(9) Ibid February 1914, pp. 3 & 4
(10) Ibid November 1914 p. 154 et. seq
(11) E.C. November 1918 p. 89
(12) Ibid. March 1934
(13) Ibid May 1939 p. 62
(14) Diary of D.V. Newland
(15) E.C. June 1939 p. 75
(16) E.D.A.R. 1951, p. 9 and E.C. August 1952 p. 4
(17) E.D.A.R. 1901 p. 53; 1904, p. 60
(18) Ibid 1906 p. 50
(19) Ibid 1910 p. 67
(20) Ibid 1910 p. 7
(21) Ibid 1907, p. 6
(22) Ibid 1903, p. 42
(23) Ibid 1912, p. 68
(24) T.J. October 1919, p. 124-5
(25) Ibid October 1926, p. 190
(26) Ibid June 1928, pp. 98-9
(27) Ibid August 1929, p. 129-30
(28) Ibid September 1929
(29) Ibid March 1935 p. 7
(30) Ibid 1936, p. 188-204
(31) Ibid July 1936, pp. 105-6
(32) Ibid June 1937, p. 80
(33) Ibid March 1940, p. 23
(34) Ibid February 1940, pp. 241 and 247
(35) Battye Library File 1541A No. 10
(36) T.J. December 1951, p. 226

(37) Ibid October 1960, p. 166
(38) Ibid March 1961, p. 43
(39) Ibid July 1961, p. 143
August 1961, p. 201

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(1) T.J. May 1913 p. 64
(2) Mossenson D. Op. cit. p. 125
(3) T.J. April 1912 p. 43
(4) Grace Roy: *In and out of School* (Carroll's, Perth. 1974.) p. 48
(5) E.D.F. 2089/14 p. 36, 38
(6) Ibid pp. 62, 64
(7) R.I.S.P. Kununoppin file
(8) Grace Roy: op. cit. p. 36
(9) Cole P.R. op cit. p. 105
(10) Ibid F. Tate: 'Rural school administration' pp. 73-4
(11) E.D.A.R. 1910 p. 8
(12) Ibid 1909 p. 75
(13) Cole op. cit. H.S. Wyndham p. 210
(14) E.D.A.R. 1914 p. 75-6
(15) E.C. Supplement September 1918 p. 1-2
(16) E.D.A.R. 1919 p. 13
(17) T.J. April 1912 p. 43 Correspondent 'Rustic'.
(18) Godley S.F. 'Social, moral and physical development of children in rural schools. (T.H.C. thesis 1968)
(19) Hardwick: 'The role of the teacher in helping overcome the educational and cultural needs of a small wheat belt community'. (T.H.C. thesis 1968)
(20) E.C. April 1900 pp. 113-114
(21) E.D.A.R. 1914 p. 76
(22) T.J. September 1913 p. 123
(23) R.I.S.P. North Kununoppin file
(24) E.C. February 1928, Dr. Jull pp. 165-7; October/November 1943 pp. 199, 53
(25) E.D.A.R. 1909 p. 52
(26) E.C. February 1914 p. 326
(27) E.D.A.R. 1921 p. 9
(28) E.C. September 1922 p. 28
(29) E.C. November 1924 p. 75-6

(30) E.D.A.R. 1904
(31) E.C. March 1917 p. 2
(32) E.D.A.R. 1909 p. 50
(33) Ibid 1906 p. 90
(34) E.C. February 1908 p. 171
(35) E.D.A.R. 1904 p. 62
(36) E.C. 1908 p. 171-2
(37) E.D.A.R. 1910 p. 92
(38) Ibid 1913 p. 74
(39) E.C. February 1918 p. 177
(40) Ibid August 1929
(41) Ibid February 1940
(42) Ibid December 1920 p. 91
(43) Ibid August 1925 p. 16
(44) E.C. April 1913, p. 420; July 1913, p. 16
(45) E.D.A.R. 1902 p. 84
(46) Ibid 1906 p. 50
(47) Ibid 1905 p. 5
(48) Ibid 1906 p. 6
(49) Ibid 1907 p. 6
(50) Ibid 1910 pp, 60, 66
(51) E.C. December 1923 p. 110
(52) E.D.A.R. 1936, 1937 and 1938
(53) T.J. December 1936: 'Song of the Country Teacher'. p. 250
(54) E.D.A.R. 1935 p. 14-15

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(1) Rankin: *History of. . .education in Western Australia* p. 160
(2) Rankin: op. cit. p. 129-30
(3) Rankin op. cit. p. 131
(4) E.D.A.R. 1911 p. 77
(5) Ibid 1902 p. 53
(6) Ibid 1903 p. 67
(7) Ibid 1905 p. 64
(8) Ibid 1907 p. 64
(9) Ibid 1909 p. 80
(10) Ibid 1911 p. 77
(11) Ibid p. 74
(12) Ibid 1914 p. 72

(13) Fletcher: op. cit. 178-81
(14) E.C. May 1907 p. 252
(15) T.J. November 1912 p. 161
(16) E.D.A.R. 1916 p. 90
(17) E.C. November 1906 p. 146
(18) Recollections of Mary Nicolson
(19) T.J. April 1927 p. 29
(20) Rankin: Op. Cit. p. 156
(21) T.J. May 1918 p. 58
(22) Ibid September 1919 p. 105
(23) Ibid February 1923 p. 203-5
(24) Ibid April 1923 p. 38-9
(25) Ibid p. 38
(26) Ibid 1934 p. 1

Chapter 8

(1) See appendix. Education Dept. Form M2
(2) E.D.F. 3522/13 Amount quoted for the year 1913
(3) Tarwonga became a full-time school in 1909.
(4) E.D.F. 1172/21. Minding was 'the native name of the best known property in the district concerned'. Ed. Dept. correspondence dated 4.10.20
(5) E.D.F. 172/44. Correspondence dated 30.11.43, also E.D.F. 1639/15
(6) E.D.A.R. 1904 p. 6
(7) Ibid p. 72
(8) Ibid 1907 p. 8
(9) Ibid 1914 p. 72
(10) E.D.F. 1172/21
(11) E.D.F. 1053/30. Correspondence dated 13.12.20. See also appendices
(12) E.D.F. 172/44. S. Duffield. Govt. Gazette 30.10.36
(13) See appendix Form M2 and E.D.F. 874/35 dated 23.4.45
(14) E.D.F. 1126/99, 1726/99. Correspondence dated 31.3.1905, 5039/1911. Correspondence dated 13.10.1911, and 439/30. Correspondence dated 6.7.1944
(15) E.D.F. 1172/21. Correspondence dated 6.8.25, 28.5.31 and 14.9.32
(16) Recollections of Eulie Broome, late of Darkan
(17) E.D.F. 5039/11. Correspondence dated 10.4.1914, 15.5.1914 and 16.6.1916
(18) E.D.F. 1172/21. Correspondence dated 12.12.1922, 15.4.1923 and 2.5.1923

(19) E.D.F. 1726/99
(20) E.D.F. 618/25. Correspondence dated 12.2.1923 and 3.6.1925
(21) E.D.F. 1639/15
(22) E.D.F. 3792/14 pp. 64, 67
(23) E.D.F. 618/25. Correspondence dated 1.2.1923 and 3.12.1934, 1888/31. Correspondence dated 31.11.1931
(24) E.D.F. 1888/31. Correspondence dated 1.2.1934
(25) E.D.F. 1519/27. Correspondence dated 6.2.1940, 1888/31. Correspondence dated 17.11.1942
(26) T.J. October 1926 p. 173 and June 1940 p. 74
(27) Ibid November 1958 p. 195
(28) Ibid March 1940 p. 17
(29) R.I.S.P. Toolibin file
(30) E.D.A.R. 1907 p. 66
(31) Ibid p. 51
(32) Ibid 1917 p. 64
(33) Information from resources of the Museum of Childhood, Subiaco
(34) E.D.A.R. 1910 p. 68
(35) E.C. March 1907 p. 209, 252
(36) E.D.A.R. 1907 p. 67
(37) E.C. January 1926 p. 115
(38) E.D.A.R. 1935 p. 24
(39) Ibid 1913 p. 69
(40) E.C. October 1929 p. 65
(41) E.C. September/October 1939 p. 140

Chapter 9

(1) Parkyn: *The Consolidation of Rural Schools*, Ch. 1
(2) A.C.E.R. Review 1940-48, p. 43 et seq
(3) Ibid 1948-54, pp. 63-66
(4) E.D.A.R. 1902, p. 4
(5) Ibid 1909, p. 9
(6) Ibid 1910, p. 67
(7) E.C. October 1911, p. 92
(8) E.D.A.R. 1912, p. 64-5
(9) Ibid 1913, p. 71
(10) Ibid 1917, p. 14
(11) Ibid 1918, p. 12
(12) '*West Australian*' 24 September. p. 120

(13) *Toodyay School Journal*, Miles: *Our Rural Schools*, E.D.A.R. 1920, pp. 19-11 and 1921, p. 54

(14) Royal Commission into Education, Vol. 1, Section 'Rural Schools', pp. 20-25

(15) Ibid p. 22

(16) '*West Australian*', May 27th 1921 and May 29th 1921

(17) E.D.A.R. 1923 p. 10

(18) T.J. June 1920

(19) E.D.A.R. 1925 p. 7

(20) Ibid 1950 p. 6

(21) Ibid 1937 p. 7

(22) T.J. October 1961 p. 270

(23) E.D.A.R. 1939 p. 8

(24) Ibid 1943 pp. 7-8

(25) T.J. February 1939 pp. 287-8

(26) A.C.E.R. *Review of Education in Australia* 1938 p. 89 and pp. 136-7

(27) T.J. July 1944 p. 77

(28) Ibid September 1944 pp. 120-1 and February 1945 pp. 189-90

(29) Ibid August 1945, Teachers' Union Annual Report, p. 155

(30) Ibid March 1947 p. 1

(31) *Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission 1945-46, Seventh Report*, Ch. 3, 'Rural Amenities'.

(32) Ibid p. 21

(33) Miles: Op. cit. See also J.A. McKenzie: 'Wise man from the East' in *Early Days*, Vol. 8, pt 3, 1979 and Fletcher: *Pioneers of Education in Western Australia*, ch. 11

(34) E.D.A.R. 1950, p. 6

(35) T.J. August 1946, pp. 112-13 and October 1946, p. 176

(36) Ibid September 149, p. 185

(37) Ibid October 1949, p. 211 and August 1950, p. 161

(38) E.D.A.R. 1948, p. 5 and 1949, p. 21

(39) Ibid 1949, p. 6, p. 21 and 1950, p. 6

(40) Ibid 1950, p. 6

(41) Parkyn: op. cit

(42) E.D.A.R. 1951, p. 9 and 1953, p. 10

(43) Ibid 1954, p. 8

(44) T.J. 1949, p. 13, Mills, P.S.: *The rural school and consolidation*

(45) Mills, P.S., Public Health Dept. Buildings and Grounds Report 1955, p. 31

(46) E.D.F. 6381/14, Mills: op. cit. p. 6 and pp. 42-44
(47) T.J. June 1961, p. 737 and February 1961, p. 16
(48) Mills op. cit. p. 18

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(1) Cole: op. cit. P. 106 and p. 11
(2) *Manchester Guardian*: August 23, 1956 p. 5 'Life and letters'. Battye Acc. No. PR 1401
(3) E.D.A.R. 1938 p. 12
(4) Ibid 1918 p. 11-12
(5) Ibid 1902 p. 48
(6) Ibid 1911 p. 59
(7) T.J. May 1938 p. 62-3
(8) E.C. July 1905 p. 25-8
(9) Reasons for improvements are fully set out in E.D.A.R. 1921 p. 1 et. seq and E.D.A.R. 1922 p. 10
(10) T.J. March 1935 p. 8-10 and April 1935 p. 38-40. University summer vacation course
(11) E.D.A.R. 1911 p. 78
(12) Ibid 1908 p. 76
(13) G.F. Hunt: *Factors affecting. . . . .education in rural schools.* (E.D. 1963)
(14) R. Sneddon: *History of one teacher rural schools.* (E.D. 1963)
(15) N.G. Johnston: *Organisation. . . . .of subject matter in one and two-teacher schools.* (E.D. 1960)
(16) G.R. Kemp: *Place of the small country school in rural education.* (E.D. 1957)
(17) J.R. Mews: *Organisation of the small rural school.* (E.D. 1965)
(18) E.C. Miller: *The primary school in the small rural communities.* (E.D. 1961)
(19) J.V. Needham: *Rural education.* (E.D. 1959)
(20) T.J. June 1938 p. 91
(21) Ibid p. 121-2
(22) Ibid June 1946 p. 68
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STATISTICAL APPENDIX

relating to expansion and decline
of small schools in Western Australia.

Source:
Annual Reports of Education Department of Western Australia
1902 - 1962.

Year	New Schools opened	Schools re-opened	Schools closed	Total of all schools open	Schools with less than 20 pupils	Small Schools as % of all schools
1902	18	2	5	245	87 =	35%
1903	19	8		262	98 =	37%
1904	24	4	6	284	100 =	35%
1905	43	8	6	329	130 =	39%
1906	42	6	10	367	155 =	42%
1907	29	2	17	381	162 =	42%
1908	35	10	11	413	184 =	44%
1909	33	4	15	434	208 =	47%
1910	40	2	21	468	234 =	50%
1911	42	9	11	504	270 =	53%
1912	53	6	18	549	290 =	52%
1913	53	4	27			
1914	43	10	18			
1915	35	10	19	622	320 =	51%
1916	19	9	19	623	312 =	50%
1917	35	11	7	646	341 =	52%
1918	27	7	17	667	373 =	55%

1919	29	10	17	680	364 =	53%
1920	28	10	34	695	393 =	56.5%
1921	35	14	35	708	401 =	56.6%
1922	47	16	19	744	432 =	58%
1923	45	9	15	770	437 =	57%
1924	38	10	42	793	456 =	58%
1925	50	14	36	816	477 =	58%
1926	38	9	44	822	469 =	57%
1927	27	15	43	826	487 =	59%
1928	34	13	45	825	490 =	59%
1929	33	19	36	834	512 =	61%
1930	44	19	36	868	542 =	62% *
1931	19	23	17	871	**	62% *
1932	24	13		893	**	61%
1933	30		24	895	**	59%
1934	31	13	28	910		58%
1935	24	13	33	900		58%
1936*	35		37	795*	426 =	53%
1937	41		41	781	414 =	53%
1938	29		34	774	420 =	54%
1939	27		29	761	417 =	55%
1940	29		33	789	426 =	56%
1941	15		53	716	399 =	56%
1942	40		48			
1943	18		38	652	356 =	55%
1944	30		27	645	350 =	54%
1945	27		35	615	314 =	51%
1946**				553	247 =	45%
1947				544	222 =	42%
1948				519	188 =	36%
1949				503	173 =	35%
1950				500	160 =	32%
1951				483	140 =	29%
1952				471	122 =	25%
1953				449	105 =	23%

* Peak percentage of one teacher schools with less than 20 pupils

** Figures not available.

Total of all schools open means open at any period during the year, even if closed for part of that year.

	Total enrolment all government schools	Total enrolment of schools with less than 30	Total of all schools open	Schools with less than 20 pupils	Small schools as % of all schools
1954***	74,958	3237	437	105 =	24%
1955	79,140	3173	440	135 =	30%
1956	83,063	2930	440	122 =	27%
1957	88,706	2404	477	114 =	23%
1958	91,631	2383	478	113 =	23%
1959	93,130	2197	485	109 =	22%
1960	95,522	2356	494	112 =	22%
1961	97,901	2436	496	107 =	21%
1962	47 Schools with less than 21 pupils = 9.5% of all schools 43 Schools with 21 to 35 pupils.				

Explanatory notes:

* From 1936

(1) Figures for new schools and for schools re-opened are combined.

(2) Total of all schools and total of small schools are for classified schools only and apply to such schools open at the *end* of the year.

** From 1946 figures for schools opened and closed are unavailable.

*** From 1954 schools were reclassified so that Class V schools covered all schools with less than 30 pupils.

APPENDICES

1. Book prizes and school library books: list of authors.
2. Examples of book prizes awarded.
3. List of discontinued attendance prizes.
4. Departmental correspondence to a teacher.
5. Plan of Arthur River one-teacher school.
6. 1926 Curriculum for small schools.

APPENDIX 1

BOOK PRIZES AND SCHOOL LIBRARY BOOKS

Among approved authors were the following: (It should be noted that the period from the 1890s through to the 1940s was a time of clear definition of the respective social roles of men and women.

BOYS' AUTHORS	GIRLS' AUTHORS
R M Ballantyne	Louisa Alcott
E S Ellis	Deborah Alcock
John Finnemore	Mrs F H Burnett
G A Henty	Susan Coolidge
W H Kingston	Ethel M Dell
D H Parry	Evelyn Everett-Green
Capt. Mayne Reid	Amy le Feuvre
Talbot Baines Reid	Bessie Marchant
Gordon Stables	L T Meade
Grace Stebbing	L M Montgomery
R L Stevenson	Mrs Molesworth
Herbert Strang	Eleanor H Porter
Jules Verne	Gene Stratton Porter
John F C Westerman	Ethel Talbot
Percy F Westerman	

Information supplied by the Museum of Childhood, Subiaco.

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL BOOK PRIZES

AUTHOR	TITLE	DATE OF AWARD
	Travels of Baron Munchausen (for drawing).	1901
Frank Cowper	*The Forgotten Door* To Maud Crofts (for general progress).	1907
Geraldine Glasgow	*True to the Flag* To Alec Buck (for general improvement).	1908
Isabel Robson	*The Girl Without Ambition* To Clara Gunson (for answering home questions).	1908
Mrs Craig	*A Noble Life* (for attendance and punctuality).	1909
Major Charles Gilson	*The Society of the Tortoise Mark* To S Kelly (for high jump).	1909
W H Kingston	*The Three Midshipmen.* (for arithmetic) East Denmark School.	1920
Frederick Watson	*The Ghost Rock* To E Stockwell (for 11 year championship — swimming carnival).	1922
R M Ballantyne	*The World of Ice* To Hugh Jones (for arithmetic competition).	1925

Thomas Carter	*Shakespeare's Stories of the English Kings.* To June Davis (for elocution)	1928
E S Ellis	*Two Boys in Wyoming* To Murray Norton (Chorkerup School).	1938
M G Bruce	*A Little Bush Maid* To Maxine Kimber (for regular attendance).	1945

APPENDIX 3

Discontinued attendance prizes offered for sale to teachers:
Advertised in the *Education Circular* May 1906 p. 275

In The King's Name: (Henty)	1s.3d
The Lion of St. Mark: (Henty)	1s.3d
For The Temple: (Henty)	1s.3d
By Pike and Dike: (Henty)	1s.3d
Through the Fray: (Henty)	1s.3d
Olivia: (Molesworth)	1s.10d
Heidie: (Molesworth)	1s.3d
The Cuckoo Clock: (Molesworth)	1s
Queechy: (Wetherall)	9d
Ivanhoe: (Scott)	9d

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLE OF DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE TO A TEACHER

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.
7494 — 13 EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PERTH.
30th October, 1918.

To Miss M.F. McKenzie
Government School
ARTHUR RIVER.

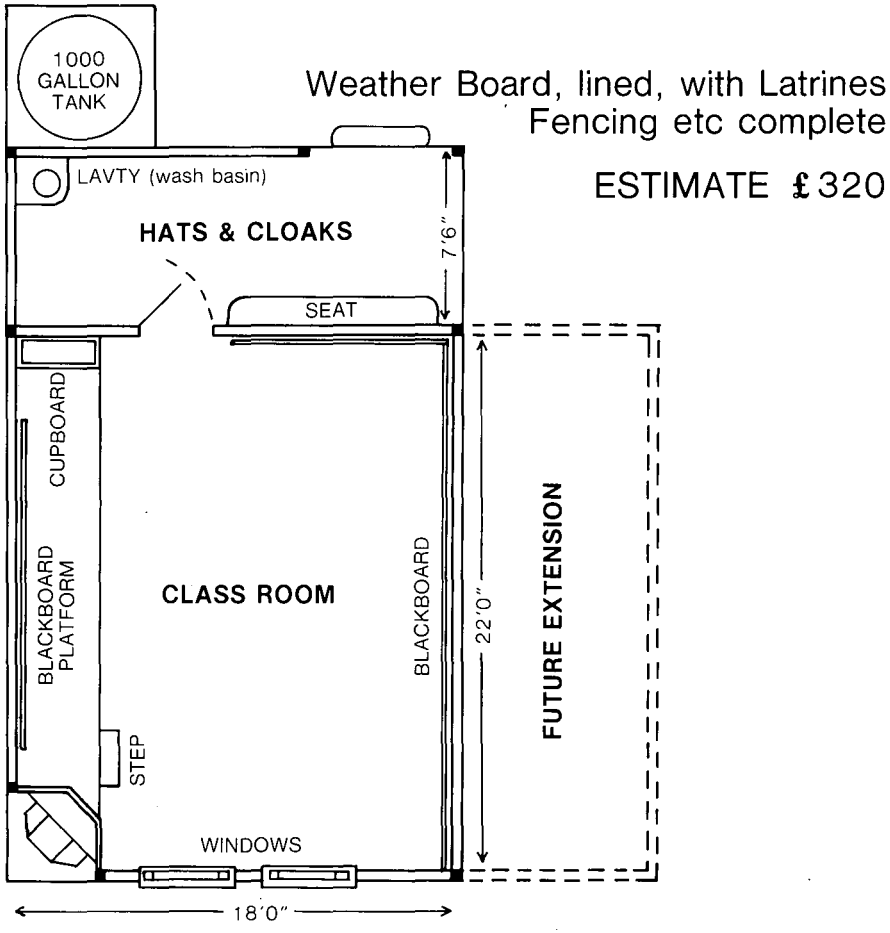
Madam,
I have read the report on the work of your school with pleasure, and must congratulate you on the good work you have done.

I have the honour to be,
Madam,
Your obedient servant.

(signed) R. Hope-Robertson.
CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

APPENDIX 5

FOUNDATION PLAN: ARTHUR RIVER SCHOOL



GROUND PLAN

Public Works Department plan of Arthur River School

APPENDIX 6

1926 CURRICULUM FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

Introduction

In spite of the immense area, Western Australia has at present only a small population. Consequently the small school is a very prominent feature in our educational system. Much of our land is suited for large holdings, and the population of many parts of the State will remain sparse. Out of 816 primary schools that were open in 1925, 477 had average attendances below 20, while 150 had attendances between 20 and 50, and 69 had attendances between 50 and 85. This makes a total of 696 schools, almost all of which were taught by single teachers or by staffs of two teachers each. About one-third of our children are being taught in such schools.

The work of a teacher in a small school differs very widely from that of a class teacher in a large school. In schools of the smallest type there is a great deal of individual teaching. As the numbers increase, groups of classes must be dealt with. The efficiency of the school will depend very largely upon the organisation. Proper arrangements must be made for keeping fully occupied those children who are not being directly taught. Where a group of classes is taken together the subject-matter must be so arranged in cycles of years, that whichever yearly portion is taken first, the child suffers no disadvantage. The special problems of the small school therefore justify a special arrangement of the curriculum.

In more populous countries it is possible for many children who have completed the purely primary course in a small country school to proceed to a higher school without travelling any great distance from their homes. Here this is quite impossible for the great majority of the children. A few may receive scholarships which will enable them to board in towns where High Schools have been established, but all except a very few will finish their school life in the small country school. We have therefore to endeavour to make the small school do for the country child not only what the primary school does for the town child, but also what the central schools or continuation classes do for him. Here the special staff of the correspondence branch comes to the aid of the small school teacher, assisting him in organising the work of his upper primary classes, and providing courses for those who have completed the

primary work. For most of the children the higher courses will be directed especially to the needs of those living in a rural environment. Others, who are aiming at the University and at professional careers, will be assisted in work of a High School nature. Such facilities for the scattered country population are essential, not only for the welfare of the rural districts, but for the interests of the State. Few things will tend to promote country settlement more than the knowledge that even the centres most distant from large towns will not fail to provide advanced education.

This new addition of the curriculum has been carefully drawn up with the idea of furnishing guidance and help to the teacher of the small school. The increased efficiency of the small schools has been a marked feature of the last ten years, but there is still room for much further improvement. It is hoped that this little book, supplemented, as it will be, by articles in the "Circular" and by papers from the Correspondence Classes, will assist many teachers to bring their schools nearer to their ideals.

CECIL ANDREWS
Director of Education

Organisation

Success in the management of a small school demands that each day's work be thoroughly prepared. The teacher must decide beforehand what subjects will claim his attention for oral instruction, and what for silent work. His time-table will never show more than three different programme-subjects in operation at any given period throughout the day; there will frequently be but two, and occasionally only one. He must, therefore, so plan his day's work that, while he is engaged with one section of his school, the remaining two sections will be employed on silent work. Suppose, for example, his time-table shows reading for the junior section, and arithmetic for the intermediate and senior sections from 9 to 9.30 daily: On the first day he may elect to spend the first lesson period on oral work with the junior, and on silent arithmetic with the remaining sections. The following is one of several plans he may construct:

The Junior Section — 9 to 9.30 am

Minutes	Fluent Readers of Classes I-II	The Slow Section of Classes I-II	The Infants
15	(i) Read aloud and in turn some interesting lesson previously prepared (ii) Read aloud and in turn the lesson assigned for the slow section	Listen to fluent readers and follow their reading	Read aloud under teacher's supervision
10	Silent reading from supplementary readers	Read aloud under teacher's supervision the assigned lesson	Upper Infants look on books of Slow Section (Classes I & II) and follow the reading
5	Answer questions on subject matter of the reading lesson (written work)	Answer questions set to test comprehension of matter read	Lower Infants Busy Work

Minutes	The Intermediate Section	Minutes	The Senior Section
10	Speed and Accuracy Tests	25	Study and practice on work set out for
15	Practice on work specified on programme		Classes V-VI in Correspondence Class pamphlets
5	Correction of sums	5	Correction of sums

The teacher's plan for the first lesson period of the second day would, of course, be constructed to accord with the special needs of the various sections. Suppose he wished to be free to devote special attention to arithmetic in the

intermediate and senior classes: the following is one of several different plans he might construct:

The Junior Section

Minutes	Fluent Readers of Classes I-II	Slow Readers of Classes I-II	Infants
20	(i) silent reading from class reading books (ii) silent reading from supplementary reading books	Silent reading from lessons previously treated Busy-work. Reconstruction of dissected paragraphs etc.	Silent reading from lessons previously read and from specially prepared reading sheets
10	A written account of the story read	Answer questions set to test comprehension	Busy-work

To carry out this plan effectively the teacher will be careful to place a weak reader in a seat occupied by a fluent reader, and to encourage the former to consult the latter when in difficulties.

Classes I-II (slow section) and Upper Infants may be combined for busy-work. This work can be closely associated with many other lessons. For example, a box containing leaves studied during the nature-study period may also contain a simple description of each kind of leaf. The pupil's task will be to fit the paragraph to the leaf described. Numerous other examples will suggest themselves to the thoughtful teacher:

Minutes	The Intermediate Section	Minutes	The Senior Class
15	Test in Mental Arithmetic from specially prepared examples. Answers written out by children	15	An oral test on the subject subject matter studied during the previous lesson
15	Oral discussion on difficulties experienced in in previous lesson Teacher's aim: to note	15	Written practice on work in which difficulties have been experienced

individual difficulties, with a view to afford the practice necessary to overcome them

From what has been said it follows that a teacher should have a definite aim, not only in planning oral lessons, but also in directing silent work, otherwise there will be much waste of time. For example, in a silent lesson in arithmetic on speed and accuracy based on simple and compound operations, he will know from his record what pupils need drill in specific operations, and he will have the necessary practice-exercises written out on cards and placed in a box (a chalk box is very convenient) properly labelled: Subtraction of Money, Long Division, etc. In each box there will also be placed an answer-paper so that children's work may be rapidly corrected. Written tests on the subject-matter of a silent reading lesson may be similarly prepared. The results may be checked in a succeeding lesson on English, or reserved for discussion during the next oral lesson on reading.

In all classes where text-books are used, children should be taught how to study, and all study-lessons should be followed by review questions. The great importance of concentration of attention should be pointed out to the children. When attention is not concentrated on the subject-matter of the study-lesson the pupil must go back over the matter read in order to gather up the lost threads of the discourse. This practice, if continued, will grow into a habit, resulting in a very great loss of time. If the children know that review questions will follow every study-period they will have a motive for concentrating their attention on the subject-matter of the silent lesson. Review questions need not involve much correction by the teacher. The children may be trained to correct their own work. An example of such questions is given in the notes on geography. The teacher is referred to Ballard's "New Examiner" for further information on this subject.

Programmes of work are very important: they are the teacher's plan of work, and, consequently, should be carefully prepared. The teacher's programme unmistakably reveals the amount of study he devotes to the curriculum and, consequently, indicates fairly accurately the quality of the work of the school. In making out his programmes the teacher will find it helpful to divide the year's work into two half-year periods and to subdivide each of these into five montly assignments. This plan provides for the long vacation at the beginning of the year and for a rull review of the year's work. In all subjects the matter selected should show a well-ordered progression. For example, the development of the decimal-fraction-concept will lead to its application to percentages; then will follow discount (simple), simple interest, and profit and loss. Examples of progression will be found in the notes on the Curriculum, and in model programmes published in the Education Circular.

A complete review of the work of every section of the school must be made at the close of each half-year, and the results recorded in the "Half-yearly Examination Book". These records should be supplemented by the written observations of the teacher on any matter affecting the child's school work. If, for example, the teacher notes that a pupil's work is much behind that of his class-mates in any subject, he will endeavour to ascertain the cause; and having discovered it, he will record the facts for his future guidance. A pupil's failure in division may be due to the fact that he is not sure of his tables. The teacher, having noted the fact, is able to give the pupil special attention: he can show him the need of learning his tables for homework, or when he has any spare time during the day. A pupil may also fail in a subject because he is weak in reading, especially in the comprehension of the subject-matter of the printed page. When the teacher finds that such is the case he is able to provide for the special needs of the pupil. The teacher will also note the pupils whose learning-rate in any given subject is not as rapid as that of their fellows. Some pupils proceed quickly from the concrete to the abstract, others must remain long on the concrete stage. If the latter are to progress satisfactorily the teacher must provide for their special needs. He must know his pupils thoroughly, and he will not trust to his memory: he will be careful to record all significant facts regarding the reactions of his pupils to the whole school environment — rate and method of learning, physical conditions, etc.

From what has been said above it follows that effective teaching consists mainly in noting and providing for individual needs, and not merely in the presentation of the same subject-matter by means of mass instruction. It is surely a waste of time to subject all members of a class to the same drill-work on the multiplication tables day after day. Repetition is for the purpose of fixing a reaction, that is, of forming a habit. In his tests the teacher should note those who have mastered the tables: they do not require further repetition, and, consequently, should be employed in higher grade work involving the application of the tables learnt. The number of children needing continued daily drills on any subject should gradually decrease. These remarks apply equally to drill-work in spelling, reading, and writing. Once the habit is mastered it should be applied on a higher learning stage.

In drawing up the rules and regulations for conducting his school and in organising the subject-matter of instruction, the teacher must ever keep in mind the four basic life values — the health value, the social value, the economic value, and the culture value. Much has been said about the first of these values in the notes on hygiene. The social values may be most effectively realised if the teacher will regard his school as a little community. He should explain the aim of community-life within the school, so that the pupils may feel it incumbent on them to contribute as fully as they are able to the common good. In their ordinary class-work they should feel that they are called upon to contribute their share to the common fund of knowledge. Even in a recitation lesson the social value may be emphasised if the pupils recite to the class and not merely to the teacher, and if discussions are carried on by the children

without the constant interference of the teacher.

One of the most important aims of the school should be to train its pupils to work efficiently. This is the economic aspect of the work of the school. Every pupil should be led to realise the importance of increasing his output and of improving the quality of his work. It is not difficult to induce the child to keep a record of his school work, and to note whether he is improving or falling behind in his work. How many pages of reading matter did you cover this week? How many last week? What is the rate of your improvement? What mark was awarded you last week for quality? What this week? Are you improving?

A similar procedure may be adopted for other subjects. The pupil should be encouraged to keep a daily record of his school work, and to make a weekly summary, which he should compare with the summary for the preceding week. It will be observed that the pupil is not set the task of beating a record established by someone else: he merely endeavours to beat his own record. The teacher should be careful to point out individually to his pupils the mistakes they have made and the successes they have achieved, because, as Thorndike says, the one essential element for progress in the learning process is for the learner to see the results of his efforts. It follows too that the learner should see some success as the results of his efforts in order that he may be encouraged to persevere. The teacher will, therefore, take pains, in setting a test in any subject, to include a number of questions so simple that they can be answered by the duller members of a class.

Little need be said of the cultural value of education, because this point is emphasised by all writers on education. It is possible to treat all subjects in such a way that the children will enjoy and appreciate them — a true test of culture in the school. But enrichment and broadening of experience are essential for true culture, and these processes involve work. Culture is, therefore, not synonymous with entertainment: it cannot be conferred on the pupils; it must be won by them, and the function of the school is to supply a favourable environment.

Two factors that make for success in realising the values above referred to are cooperation and conservation. The school must train its pupils to cooperate in the carrying out of the work of the school as a preparation for cooperation in carrying out the world's work, and they must be taught to seek true happiness by doing good work. The training of the children in the conservation of all that is best in school life will also serve as a valuable preparation for the conservation of all that is best in the life of the nation. In almost every lesson the teacher has an opportunity of emphasising the value of conservation. Lessons in citizenship will serve to emphasise the need for conserving public property, and hygiene will serve to call attention to the folly of wasting our best heritage — health. The teacher will also impress upon his pupils the necessity for eliminating all wasteful methods in the learning process. In history the importance of conserving values that make for human progress will be stressed rather than those that retard the march of civilisation. Geography too

will emphasize the importance of the conservation of the natural resources of the country studied, rather than the importance of learning mere place names. Cooperation and conservation are the hopes of those who wish to make th world a safer and happier place for democracy than it has ever been before. The opportunities of the school are, therefore, great. May they be realised wherever a few children are gathered together in its name!

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT FORM M2

(Example)

APPLICATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL

Application for the Establishment of a ..... School

at .....

.....

To the Education Department, Perth

Post Town .....

Date .....

Sir,

We, the undersigned, on behalf of the residents at .....

hereby request that a ..... School may be established under the provisions of the Education Act, 1928, and Regulations thereto.

.....

.....

Signed on behalf of the Residents

.....

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INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED

Position of Proposed School	On or about Wellington Lot 267A
State name and distance of nearest Railway Station or Siding. State best means of reaching proposed School.	Dardadine Siding 5 miles by road (Darkan-Williams)
What other Schools are within a distance of four miles from proposed School	None
What is nearest School, and how far is it from proposed site?	Dardadine about 6 miles Darkan about 8 miles
State number of children between the ages of 6 and 14 living within a radius of three miles of the proposed School by the nearest practicable road	Boys -4- 3 younger ones (3 yrs coming on) Girls -8-
1. Is there a building available in which the School can be opened? Describe it fully. 2. Is it obtainable free? 3. Will the settlers undertake to pay the rent if necessary? 4. Will the applicants undertake to arrange for the performance of the sanitary service as often as may be required and at a reasonable cost? 5. If so state cost per pan per service and names of 3 residents prepared to make themselves responsible for satisfactory performance of same.	Not at present but parents prepared to provide one free of cost to Education Dept. It is suggested that disused School at Culbin be made available. Will be attended free of cost.
What land is suitable for a School site if necessary? If possible, give plan of the ground	Exact location to be fixed Land is available
1. What accommodation is there for a teacher in the district? State cost of same, and distance from proposed School. 2. Is separate room provided?	Accommodation available at usual rate of Board, within a mile of proposed school

(Example)

NAME OF SCHOOL TO BE INSERTED

Proposed School at .....

FURTHER PARTICULARS REQUIRED TO BE SUPPLIED

Name of the Parent or Guardian * (to be written by himself)	Distance from existing School	Distance from proposed School by the nearest practicable road	Name of Child	Age	Religious Denomination	Location and Section on which Parents reside
W J Steddy	7 miles	3 miles	Fay Steddy	6½	C of E	Own farm
			Wally Steddy	5		
G Smyth	7 miles	3 miles	Vivienne Smyth	14	C of E	Own farm
A M South	6 miles	3 miles	David South	8	C of E	Own farm
			Cynthia South	7		
S Duffield	7 miles	2 miles	Kay Duffield	5	C of E	Own farm
H H Fleay	7 miles	2 miles	Albert Fleay	14		
			Betty Fleay	10	C of E	Own farm
			Barbara Fleay	6		

We have been unable to see Whites and Strickland who have 3 children aged 8 — 10 and live within 2 miles of proposed site.

Jim White	10
Strickland	8
Strickland	9

If a Parent or Guardian cannot write, his mark must be witnessed.

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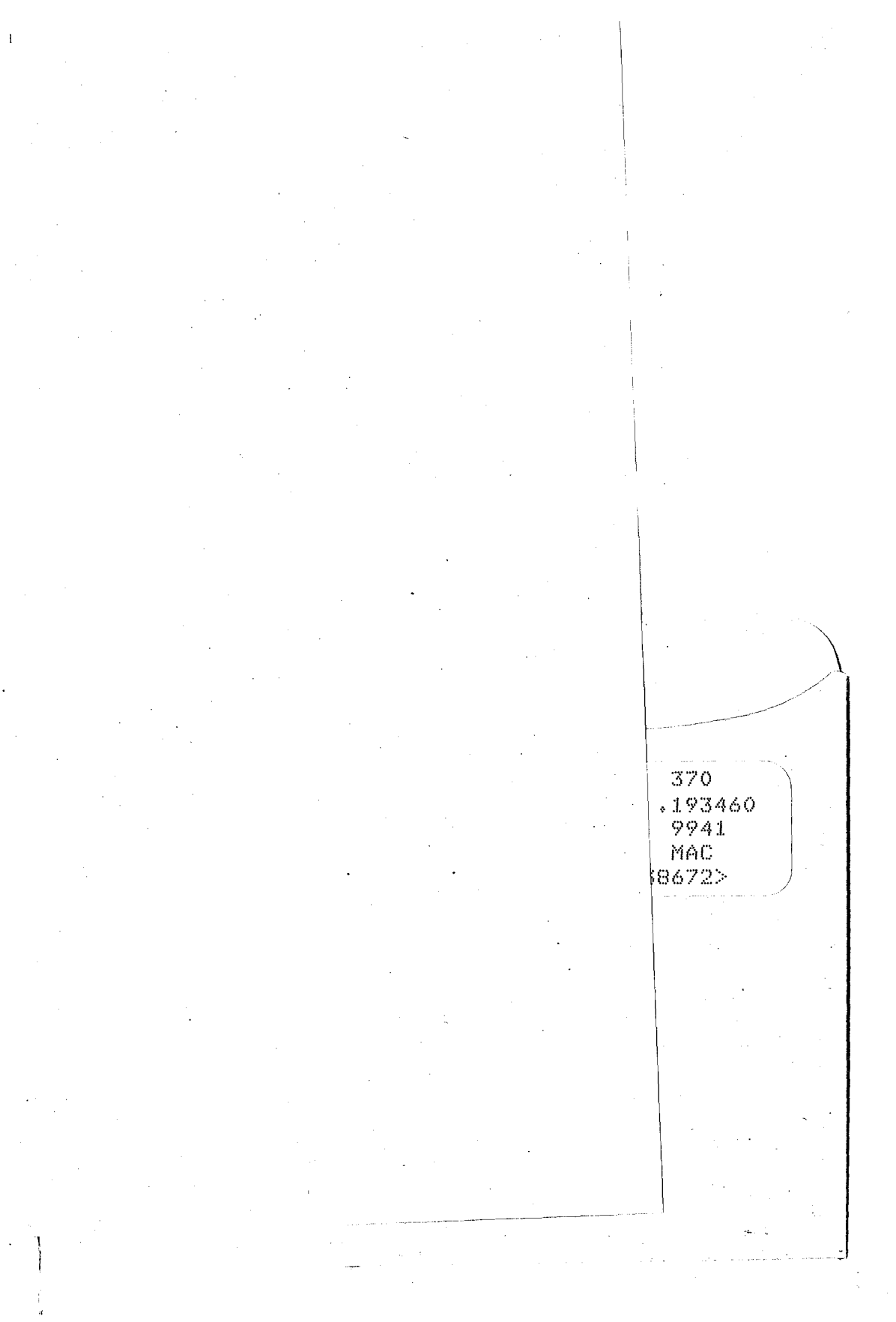
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