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The General Board of Education in Western Australia 1847-1871: Its establishment and performance

Derek Jowle
Edith Cowan University

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The General Board Of Education In Western Australia

1847 – 1871 : Its Establishment And Performance

DEREK JOWLE

Bachelor of Arts and Graduate Diploma in Education Studies (Murdoch)

Degree : Master of Arts (History)

Institution : Edith Cowan University

**Faculty : Community Services, Education and Social
Sciences**

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Abstract

This thesis is a history of the politics of education in nineteenth century Western Australia with a particular focus on educational administration. It traces the activities of the educational pioneers in Western Australia and in particular synthesises research material from a wide variety of sources to demonstrate and explain :

- How and why these pioneers established an education system in Western Australia.
- The difficulties faced by the pioneers and how they overcame those difficulties.
- Why the General Board of Education ("the Board"), which was formed by the early pioneers, was established in 1847.
- How and why the Board was terminated in 1871.

To properly explain these issues it has been necessary to research the general conditions faced by the early settlers in Western Australia. Chapters one and two of the thesis provide an overview of the circumstances faced by the pioneers in Western Australia both generally and specifically with regard to education. Chapter three of the thesis is unique in that it dwells upon the major internal and external challenges posed by the Catholic Church's opposition to the Protestant makeup and ethos of the General Board that significantly affected church/state relations and the performance of the General Board in a politically and religiously

turbulent era. Chapters four through to seven deal mainly with the development of educational administration in light of the General Board's overall performance.

In order to adequately trace its establishment and performance during its twenty-four years of existence 1847 - 1871, the development of the General Board from a mediatory body of clergy and lawyers, to its incorporation in 1856, into the Colonial Secretary's Office, is imperative. This singular event was to eventually lead, to the gradual erosion of the decentralised structures of educational administration, and the translation of the Board into a civil service agency. This 'developmental' theme coincides with its establishment and, along with its performance, traces the achievements and failures of the General Board from two perspectives : the level of success achieved by the Board in relation to its original intentions; and secondly; the influence that external factors, such as the Colony's extreme isolation and poverty and the secular and sectarian nature of society had on the eventual policy outcomes of the Board. An exposition of these extrinsic factors emerges from an analysis of the interactions of the General Board and its members with those of governors and prominent clergy, and moreover, from an assessment of its pragmatic and altruistic aims.

This thesis will not only attempt to provide a history of the politics of education in nineteenth century Western Australia, but would also serve two other purposes. Firstly, the role and influence of the general Board in determining the fate of educational administration and education generally, is to be conveyed. And secondly, its chief purpose or utility would be to provide the background or

precursory information to policy initiatives that acted as harbingers of centralised control. Awareness of the importance of the latter is significant, once it is understood, that the General Board, worked in an era when decentralised control, for both political and philanthropic reasons, was much in vogue. The General Board's avid quest to maintain a system of decentralisation, along with public style education, was examined in terms of the struggle to overcome the autocratic and populist excesses of governors and some clergy, who attempted the thwart, the altruistic aims of the original Committee. It is in the struggle that the dichotomy between public and elementary education, becomes synonymous, with that of a sectarian and secular system and hence society.

Throughout the thesis a comparative approach was adopted with the educational systems and developments in Great Britain and the Colony of New South Wales with those of nineteenth century Western Australia. From the comparative analysis it was concluded that both the centralization of education and its compulsory status by law were global trends that lay beyond the power of the General Board to arrest. As a consequence this educational apparatus of the State could no longer function as intermediary between the competing and complementary interests of governors, clergy and the general populace. This was made poignantly clear with the abolition of the General Board upon the passing of the Elementary Education Act 1871(W.A).

As an assessment of the formative years in Western Australia of State controlled education, the thesis attempts to fill the void left behind in past and present

literature on educational history in Western Australia. In relation to the General Board, such literature fails to adequately examine its role and significance, in providing the impetus for the system of education in vogue today. The research is entirely feasible, easy to manage within the constraints of the word limit and time frame for submission. It is made all the more easier with the ready availability of primary and secondary material. It is hoped, that in filling the void, by way of providing a small history of the politics of education in nineteenth century Western Australia, an original contribution to the current stock of knowledge will be achieved.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief :
incorporate without acknowledgements any material previously submitted for a
degree or diploma in any institution of higher education : nor contains any
material previously published or written by another person except where due
reference is made in the text.

DEREK JOWLE

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In terms of information pertaining to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches of Western Australia, my thanks are extended to a number of people. The Development Office at Hale School for the article by Edith Cowan is to be thanked. Reverend Hawley of the Anglican Church working in the Perth Diocesan Office deserves special thanks, for lending me a copy of A.E. Williams' book on the history of the Anglican Church in Western Australia. And the Anglican Institute of Theology in Nedlands is to be thanked for procuring information pertaining to Anglican history and doctrine. Sister Francis Stibi and her colleagues at Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Perth have my heartfelt gratitude for going beyond the initial request concerning information about Bishop Serra by way of supplying valuable primary material.

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CHAPTER ONE

Early Settlement and Educational Foundations of Western Australia

This chapter is designed to focus upon the peculiar or unique sets of circumstances surrounding the settlement of Western Australia and how they relate to its early educational development. It pays particular attention to the socio-economic and environmental problems faced by the educational progenitors whether they be political or religious leaders. As such the chapter seeks to explain why the humble origins of the settlement and the development of education were interrelated with its administration namely the control or oversight of education being vested in the political and religious elite. This chapter briefly touches upon the religious animosity between Protestants and Catholics over their respective educational systems and how the achievements of the latter fuelled the kind of sectarian rivalry that led to the inauguration of an Education Committee (later General Board) in 1847. More than anything the chapter seeks to identify who the early educational leaders and teachers were and how they attempted to adapt their own educational philosophies to a poverty-stricken and isolated colony of the British Empire. The failure to fully implement their ideas provided the justification for the emergence of the General Board of Education.

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the continent that was to be known as Australia was discovered, firstly, by the Portuguese and many decades later by the Dutch. Both were en-route to the East Indies to conduct the spice trade. Yet it

was the States General in Holland, who in 1665, ordered that Western Australia should be called New Holland.¹ Nearly two hundred years were to lapse before the western half of the continent could be fully colonised. The colony's early foundation under the British, according to Nathaniel Ogle, was not only based upon 'erroneous principles', but, 'rather on no principles and suffered great privations'.² Extreme isolation and poverty coupled with the need to establish a settlement in a hitherto harsh environment left no scope for any formal settlement plan. As a consequence, provision for schooling in the early years of the Colony was almost non-existent, as colonists were compelled to provide their own means for educating their children.³ The Colony's humble origins are best epitomised in the protracted struggle to secure a more congenial settlement on the banks of the Swan River. This proposed arrangement according to Under Secretary of the Colonies, Lord Stanley, was "not the intention of His Majesty's Government" and therefore, it was "not in his power to comply" with Captain James Stirling's wishes, "in the manner to which" he alluded.⁴ However, a dispatch dated a year earlier, from Governor Darling of New South Wales to Earl Bathurst in London, recommends that Captain James Stirling as Commander of the *Success*, establish a settlement on Melville Island to act as a trade route to Timor, before proceeding to overtake or oust the French from the proposed settlement of the Swan River.⁵

Shortly after securing a trade route with the East Indies, Major Lockyer on Christmas Day, 1826, arriving in the brig Amity, occupied King George Sound and laid the foundation of Albany, to counter French designs for a colonial outpost. This was shortly followed in March, 1827, by an inspection of the Swan

River by Captain Stirling.⁶ The site at Albany was not intended to be a permanent settlement and the troops and convicts that were initially sent there, were dispatched to Sydney in 1831.⁷ The final approval, for the Swan River settlement to be established, was in 1829. However, it was Captain Fremantle, who on the 2nd of May 1829, first laid claim to securing a settlement on the south western coast of New Holland (Western Australia), erecting a small fort;⁸ in what would later be a port town named in his honour. For the township of Perth, the future capital of the colony, a site at the foot of Mt Eliza was chosen.⁹ In an era before the acceptance of compulsory education in England, the settlement infrastructure included no formal commitment to educational matters. All of the events mentioned preceded any formal commitments to education.

On arrival to the colony in June 1829, aboard the Parmelia, Captain James Stirling was accompanied by the botanist Charles Frazier along with a small detachment of troops that were sent to protect the early settlers and officials.¹⁰ The decision to inaugurate the new colony was, however, made with some reluctance.¹¹ Yet the decision by Under Secretary Hay to appoint Captain Stirling as "Common Law Parliament Head who will have the direction of the colony as Civil Superintendent",¹² was deemed to be an apt choice. Not so aptly chosen was the head of the Swan River Company, (designed to promote emigration to the colony), a Mr. Thomas Peel Esquire;¹³ whose administrative incompetence led to a civil court case against him for the recovery of wages for labour wrought; and for one family forever associated with the wreck of the Rockingham; inadequate provisions of food, clothing, lodgings and sleeping.¹⁴ The scant supply of

provisions was a noteworthy feature, not only of Mr. Peel's lack of foresight and managerial skills¹⁵, but of the colony itself. This sense of dire poverty combined with the extreme isolation of the colony, makes the words of notable educational historian Donald Rankin appear somewhat apt, when he notes, that 'the History of Education in Western Australia differs from the history of most other states in this, that it began in a small way and continued in a small way, for a long period'¹⁶.

The unique status of education with regard to its development in the fledgling colony of Western Australia also, may, along with its poverty and isolation, be attributed to lack of formal direction and guidance. Thus it is noted in the writings of Stirling himself that he sincerely believed that he was "the first Governor who ever formed a settlement without commission, laws, instructions and salary"¹⁷. With regard to the provision of schools and churches, Stirling's intentions were not altogether serious, except for the matter of paying the Colonial Chaplain his small stipend; despite being warned by Secretary of State Sir George Murray to set aside money for the building of educational and religious establishments¹⁸. This *laissez-faire* approach to education, which was the hallmark of early times, was caused by Stirling's own very limited education. For in 1803, at the age of twelve, the First Lieutenant-Governor of Western Australia entered the Royal Navy and fought against the French in the West Indies, and was, by the age of 21, Commander of a warship¹⁹. Despite the mistakes that he made when in office, Stirling was noted for his 'quiet courage', 'tenacity of purpose' and 'evenness of temper'²⁰. It is also noted of him, by J. S. Battye, that

he was, 'noble-hearted, kind and liberal ... as true as steel' and 'was an excellent type of the British naval officer at his best.'²¹

Mention has already been made of the Colonial Chaplain whose income was derived from the Office of the Governor. His name was John Burdett Wittenoom, who due to the nature of his vocation or calling could be considered one of the educational elite in the colony. He was noted for being a Tractarian, who was one that adhered more to the Sacramentalist or Catholic side of Anglicanism. The Tractarian Movement, which emanated from Oxford University, was characterized by the twin adjectives 'high' and 'dry'. The former because it was noted, for its, '...ecclesiastical sympathies and antique learning' and the latter for its, '...unemotional quality, its apparent aridity, its failure to make the dry bones live'.²² With regard to his educational credentials, Wittenoom received his schooling at an elite public school in England, namely, Winchester, where he matriculated in March 1807. From Winchester he went on to Oxford, achieved a Bachelor of Arts in 1810 and some years later an M.A. and in subsequent years returned to Oxford to lecture at Brasenose College.²³ He is often regarded as the founding father of education in Western Australia.²⁴

The extreme isolation and poverty of the colony combined with the lack of administrative guidance and the conservatism of its early founders, all conspired to slow the growth of the colony. Each factor had a decidedly negative impact upon the growth of schools and the status of education. Even though the 1830's was a period when schooling for poor children was placed squarely upon the

shoulders of churches and charity groups, in the colony of Western Australia at the time, the private and voluntary organisations that were to assume responsibility for educating the poorer classes were sadly lacking.²⁵ Another constraining factor that was to prove to be problematic over the years, due to the unique demographic and economic composition of the colony, was the maintenance of the English class system. The first settlers to the colony maintained the same social divisions to which they were accustomed to causing the emergence of an elite or class based system of education. Thus it is found, that first colonial Chaplain J. B. Wittenoom as the colony's educational progenitor, in a letter to Stirling, requests that two types of schools be opened. These were to consist of a classical or grammar school for 'the Higher Orders' and an English School 'for the inferior classes'; both of which were to be placed under his direction with classes being conducted under the same roof, namely, the Court House.²⁶

Although Wittenoom's request to Stirling was written in 1838, a few months before the Governor's formal resignation, it nevertheless conveyed the extent of conservative belief and opinion. Not only was the English class system with its nuances and traditions to be upheld, but this was meant to denote to pupils what the status quo in a socio-economic sense meant. This two-tiered system was designed to replace the former Colonial School, which, with Wittenoom as the main teacher, working under the guidance of headmaster Mr. Spencer, received scant financial support.²⁷ The earliest form of schooling in the colony conducted by Wittenoom in the Rush Church was entirely restricted to instructing the

'gentlemanly class' in the rudiments of : Latin, Greek, Reading, Mathematics, Moral Instruction and Divinity.²⁸ As a high churchman and 'die-hard Tory' who had a 'sheltered academic background,'²⁹ Wittenoom it seemed was not the best person to bring about substantive change in education.

Governor Stirling, however, did accede to Wittenoom's request. By August of 1838 the Classical Grammar and English Schools were established at junior and senior levels for boys, with scholarships being made available for the Grammar School. However, due to financial problems the school was forced to close after only one year and its first principal Henry Spencer left the colony to return to England.³⁰ What the colony desperately needed was a visionary figure who could steer the course of educational developments towards their desired objective. In Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott, the right man it was felt, had fortuitously landed on Western Australia's shores. It was in November of 1829, on his return to England that Scott found himself shipwrecked and marooned off the Western Australian coast.³¹ He had a strong vision for the educational development and status in both colonies offering up suggestions for public grammar schools, schools for young mechanics, schools for Aboriginal children and a Colonial University, which, 'were not typical among his contemporaries'.³² Scott it is noted, worked amicably with first Colonial Chaplain J. B. Wittenoom, assisting him in his ecclesiastical duties.³³

However, the controversial departure of Scott from the Colony of New South Wales was generally attributed to the opposition in that colony to a Church and

Schools Corporation as envisaged by him. This Corporation, which was designed to provide for an Anglican monopoly on education, was closely related to an attempt to establish a State or National religion. It is interesting to note the thoughts of Burns concerning its failure and how they pertain to the situation in Western Australia :

The failure of the Corporation effectively demonstrated that, whatever the ultimate relationship between public education and religion in Australia, it would never be based on the monopolistic control of education by any single denomination.³⁴

While Burn's analysis is also applicable to Western Australia, there are factors peculiar to its early foundation, climate, demographic composition and geographical isolation, that sets it apart from the eastern seaboard neighbours. Such features lend credence to Rankin's claim, mentioned earlier, that the history of education in Western Australia 'began in a small way'.

Apart from the obvious lack of administrative guidance and the conservatism of its founding fathers, the original conditions of settlement are also to blame for the colony's slow growth. These conditions clearly stipulated, that it was not in the best interests of the British Government to incur any expense in conveying settlers, preferring instead to organise a private enterprise endeavour for settlers, rather than a penal outpost.³⁵ And furthermore, allowing a twenty one year period for assessing land which was to be continually improved upon; failure to do so

meant that land could be reclaimed by the Crown.³⁶ The system, whereby, land had to be continually improved upon before titles could be granted meant that more land than usual was alienated, thus hampering the colony's development.³⁷ Furthermore, the acute loneliness and desolation and for one observer, 'the horrid screech' of the great black or white cockatoo;³⁸ combined with the 'extreme aridity' were not pleasing features to the eyes and ears of some Englishmen.³⁹

The hardships endured by the early settlers, although temporarily assuaged by moments of seclusion and solitude, did, however, in comparison with the electrified atmosphere of English life prove to be almost unbearable.⁴⁰ This all meant that 'the struggling settler tended to become a complete materialist, obsessed with the sheer necessity to survive.'⁴¹ It also meant that schooling was often neglected in favour of household labour. Expressions of disapproval of Western Australia from settlers arriving back in England,⁴² sullied its reputation, contributing in large measure to its slow growth. Furthermore, in matters pertaining to education, this materialistic or excessive form of pragmatism on the part of the early colonists generated a groundswell of apathy. So much so, that a number of decades beyond the first settlement, the First Bishop of the Church of England in Perth, Matthew Hale, writing to his daughter Mary, bemoans this sad feature of colonial life :

It has been terrible uphill work. The people don't care for education at all. We have, as it were, to force it upon their families or I do not know what we should come to.⁴³

The incessant apathy of the populace toward education combined with the tardy growth of the colony meant that standards of education, along with enrolments remained low. This was best epitomised early on, as the first teacher to work alongside Reverend Wittenoom and Mr. Spencer, a Mr. John Cleland, had no professional status as a teacher, but rather, was more qualified in his trade of carpentry.⁴⁴

With the abrupt departure of Archdeacon Scott, the colony of Western Australia lost its only truly visionary 'educational' figure. Although, by the early 1840's, a number of notable private schools were founded, such as an institution for young ladies in Fremantle, which eventually moved to Hay Street in Perth; and a Grammar School in Perth was opened by William Copeland with a curriculum including : English Language, Classics, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arithmetic, with Dancing and Fencing included as extras;⁴⁵ the social proclivity of its early white inhabitants stymied the growth of schools. The early colonists to Western Australia were not from the industrial classes, but were, rather, middle class gentlemen from impoverished and overcrowded agricultural districts of England, the younger sons of gentry; who as Phillips notes, '...came from an era of increasing materialism and where a spirit of moralising prevailed.'⁴⁶ Such people were not averse to the idea that the poor were to remain subordinate to the rich.⁴⁷

Moreover in matters that were to define the essential characteristics of education

and society in the Swan River colony, early colonists suffered :

The evils of the schools of their own class : moral earnestness degenerating into self-righteousness, snobbery, an insistence on commercial education (stemming from emphasis on education for a living rather than for life), a machine-like technique of teaching, and an absence of the light that emotional education and sport given to children. Life was real, life was earnest in schools, and the guiding spirit behind the education was the same as that behind society.⁴⁸

The moralistic overtones to both education and society, a characteristic feature of late eighteenth and nineteenth century English life, ensured that the early colonists were to make '...valiant efforts to maintain the social graces, despite the unaccustomed labouring chores to which both gentlemen and their ladies were compelled to stoop.'⁴⁹ In 1839 Governor John Hutt succeeded Stirling at a time of social and economic change that was to have a profound effect upon education. Unlike many of the colonists Hutt was 'gifted with the truest spirit of liberality and tolerance' and possessed 'zeal, industry and integrity.'⁵⁰ According to J.S. Battye, Hutt 'performed the functions of his onerous office with honesty, sincerity and thorough consistency of purpose,' even when his views were mistaken, which 'earned him the gratitude and affection of the colonists.'⁵¹

However, unlike his predecessor, Hutt did not share the same level of popularity

amongst colonists. Noted for being a colonial theorist and zealous land reformer, he alienated his subjects by the austere measures imposed upon them through policies of land regulation.⁵² His 'theoretical' position was closely attuned to that of the proponent of systematic colonisation, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and was deeply influenced by the economic progress that erupted in the 'Wakefeldian colony' of South Australia.⁵³ The central thrust to Wakefield's vision was the '... application of the principle laid down by him of keeping a constant balance between capital, land and labour,' which was deemed to 'have a future beneficial effect on colonisation.'⁵⁴ Yet the same levels of economic success failed to materialize in the colony of Western Australia, because the augmentation of the labour supply proved to be both impracticable and costly when weighed against the size of the initial land grants.⁵⁵

As a consequence, the vast bulk of the early colonists, almost invariably, teetered on the brink of poverty and starvation. Yet despite the impoverished circumstances, Governor Hutt, unlike his predecessor, was more of a visionary. Although eager to pursue the economic vision of Wakefield, his views in terms of the education of the masses were remarkably similar. Education was considered the chief means of improving the morals of society and was almost without exception, the main vehicle for providing religious instruction.⁵⁶ For Hutt, this meant the avid pursuit of moral instruction that was befitting for any civilized society. His educational policy was interrelated with his views concerning religion.

Hutt espoused a policy of multi-establishment in religion,⁵⁷ which in practice meant that religious instruction should be liberally afforded based on the tenets of the Christian faith, given to children of all sects, with the same object in mind -- 'the worship and reverence of the creator, self-restraint, rules of conduct, -- the attainment of the greatest degree of happiness here, and the hope of heavenly immortality.'⁵⁸ Yet in order for the policy to be successfully extended to include education, social barriers had to be bridged. Thus Rankin notes, that 'the gentry were unwilling to have their children associate with those of shopkeepers.'⁵⁹

Hutt's successor, Governor Clarke, did not have the physical verve or vigour to carry through the policy of multi-establishment. He eventually fell ill and died in office.⁶⁰ Governor Frederick Irwin took over the role of Queen's representative from Clarke, an army lieutenant, noted for being 'stern and uncompromising in regard to all matters of morality', but was, however, 'merciful and just in all his pronouncements.'⁶¹ Irwin helped form missionary societies which fostered the growth of churches, while at the same time legislating for the colony's welfare, particularly in the case of children, by creating and then authorizing, an Education Committee in 1847.⁶² This important Committee was designed to counter the denominational or sectarian bias to Catholic education, which had gained the ascendancy over all the religious denominations, in terms of the quantity and quality of schooling. Irwin's plan, which was meant to be an extension of Hutt's policy, envisaged the creation of Colonial Schools that would be open to all Christian denominations, and where, 'the general principles of Christianity,' were to be inculcated, 'by the reading of the Scriptures without note or comment.'⁶³

In order to successfully achieve his aims for education, in an isolated and poverty-stricken colony, beset by a modicum of social division, the authorization of an Education Committee was imperative. There were practical, as well as altruistic reasons for establishing a form of State controlled education. For as late as 1849 only half the children in the colony were receiving any form of education, and even that was in an elementary form, with the numbers of children from rural areas receiving a formal education being few and far between.⁶⁴ The authorization of a committee to oversee the educational affairs of the colony was designed 'to instill a single state system' in contrast to the dual systems of education operative in the eastern colonies.⁶⁵ The primary aims were twofold, namely : to improve school enrolments through a religiously non-discriminatory policy, i.e. opening schools for children of all Christian persuasions, and by fostering a morally just and responsible society via the dissemination of Christian teaching in schools.

However, this single state system was chiefly designed to allow the voluntary system of education to flourish and, under the initial guidance of prominent clergymen, lawyers and Anglican laypersons to remain decentralised. This seemed to be best achieved by the Education Committee (General Board), acting as mediator between the competing and complimentary interests of governors and the general populace. This mediatory role was to change once the General Board became heavily bureaucratized, during the mid 1850's and 1860's. While State controlled education under the aegis of a General Board is the central topic of this

thesis, it is written from the period of its establishment in 1847, when it was briefly referred to as the Committee, to its termination in 1871, after the promulgation of the Elementary Education Act. The twin themes of its establishment and performance, as conveyed by the subtitle, are often interrelated. For example, the reason for the eventual acceptance of the 'plain' and 'practical' education imbued into the Irish National System (discussed in chapters four and five), is due to the bureaucratic control of State education, eight years after the General Board of Education, earlier known as the Committee, was formed in September 1847.⁶⁶ The translation of the Committee into a General Board, followed in 1856, by incorporation into the Colonial Office,⁶⁷ enabled the Governor to have more of a direct influence over the implementation of educational policy initiatives. The major policy initiative at the time, opposed by the Board, was the introduction of the Irish National System of Education for the colony.

It appears that in order to adequately trace the establishment and performance of the General Board of Education during its twenty-four years of existence, an understanding of its development from an intellectual to a political apparatus of the State is essential. Such understanding is best derived once the political, economic, social and religious underpinnings are carefully teased out. What is intended to be written hereafter, and is the primary focus of the research, is the performance of the General Board during a highly charged and turbulent era, politically and religiously. Its performance is assessed in light of its original objectives and intentions, spanning all the years of its existence. Providing an

adequate assessment of the Board's performance is possible, once the original intentions, aspirations and visions, are categorized as being both pragmatic and altruistic. In practical terms the original Committee and later, General Board, aimed to improve school enrolments, foster growth of schools while at the same time it attempted to ensure, that educational administration in the colony remained decentralised. These themes are dealt with in greater detail in chapters four through to seven which focus upon the political transformation of the General Board.

The altruistic aims of the General Board can from scrutiny of the primary evidence be considered 'visionary' in emphasis and touch upon : the goal of achieving a unified and non-sectarian society; respect for Protestant moral and spiritual values by allowing scope for the Bible to be taught in schools without note and comment; vision for a morally just and responsible society; and a system of liberally based education modelled on the English public schools to be maintained. How the General Board went about achieving its aims are examined in light of external factors that impinged upon their work. While the most obvious factor that determined the outcome of the Board's policy initiatives is the economic status of the colony, other factors relate to the social status of the colonists, the autocratic nature of many of the governors and the Catholic challenge to a Board deemed to be staunchly Protestant and anti-Catholic in both word and deed.

The remainder of the thesis, will therefore, deal with the performance of the

General Board of Education in light of the impact it had on the future decision-making of governors and clergy as they pertained to Western Australia's educational history. It is a modest attempt to provide a history of the politics of education in Western Australia during an era when decentralised structures were gradually being eroded. This thesis is not intended to be a history of teacher education, or the history of specific schools, nor does it deal specifically with school curricula, but is as the title suggests, a history of educational administration. It examines the role and influence of a loyal coterie of men charged with the task of improving the educational status of the colony and its children. The thesis will attempt to fill the void left behind in past and present literature on educational history in Western Australia, which in relation to the General Board downplays its role and significance in providing the impetus for the system of education in vogue today.

While A.G. Austin's book titled, : Australian Education 1788-1900 Church, State and Public Education in Colonial Australia and David Mossenson's work, State Education in Western Australia 1829-1960, make mention of the General Board and its members; their role along with their achievements and failures are treated in an inconsequential manner. They are never seriously considered as being influential in terms of the future direction of education and its administration. If there is one lesson to be gleaned from this thesis, it is, that the Education Committee and later General Board, had a significant role to play in shaping the future foundations of Western Australian education; which in turn determined the kind of society that evolved in the colony.

For purposes of clarification and historical validity, the activities and policies of the Board when it was briefly referred to as the Education Committee, at the time of its authorization in 1847, will, in keeping with the historical record, be ascribed to the General Board.⁶⁸ At every juncture, an attempt will be made, to at least address the following sets of questions : (i) How effective was the General Board of Education in carrying out its original intentions when faced with (a) the autocratic and populist excesses of governors and some clergy; and (b) factors extrinsic to the Board's work of a socio-economic nature that impinged upon its progress? And; (ii) in what sense could the General Board's promotion of public style education to achieve its ultimate vision or utopia : a unified society founded on Christian principles; be partly responsible for the administrative changes leading to Governor Weld's compromise, the Elementary Education Act 1871; given the fact that colonial society was by its very nature, strongly secular and sectarian?

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CHAPTER TWO

The Reasons for the 1847 Committee and the Establishment of the General Board of Education

Following on from the previous chapter this one seeks to account for the reasons or justifications for the establishment of a General Board of Education in nineteenth century Western Australia. As such the chapter is not only an extension of the first but is specifically designed, to explain the preconditions that set the tone for the politico-religious struggles encountered by the Board. These themes are expanded upon in the subsequent chapters and are integral to the General Board's demise along with its achievements and failures. The chapter serves as a prelude to the political and religious tensions that impacted upon the Board's performance. It does so by attempting to convey why the unique socio-economic, demographic, religious and political circumstances in the fledgling colony of Western Australia determined the overall shape and scope of education. An attempt is made throughout to convey how early developments in Western Australian education or schooling equated with similar advancements made by educationalists in both England and the colony of New South Wales. The pressing need to improve school enrolments along with the curriculum is viewed in terms of the moral crusade that not only underpinned the Victorian ideal, but was an integral part of the vision shared by each member of the General Board.

According to educational historian John K. Ewers the early history of education in

Western Australia is deemed to be interesting from two perspectives; firstly, historically, 'because it shows that one hundred years ago in this State a daring experiment in equal educational opportunities for all classes was launched'; and secondly, sociological, in that, it 'showed how and why that experiment was brought to an abrupt end'.¹ The experiment that Ewers is referring to occurred one hundred years prior to his lecture having been presented at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society. It was an experiment in State controlled education under the auspices of an Education Committee, which was shortly translated into a General Board of Education. However, the abrupt demise of the Committee came General Board, after almost twenty-four years of existence, is equally, if not in some instances, political in nature. Faced with having to balance the competing interests of the populace with those of governors and clergy, the General Board lost its role as mediator or spokesperson once the Elementary Education Act of 1871 was passed by the new Legislative Council. This in effect abolished the General Board replacing it with a Central Board of Education, charged with the oversight of Government and Assisted (denominational) Schools. Yet the period from the inauguration of the Committee or General Board to its termination in 1871, provides unique insights into the reasons for its establishment, as well as, accounting for its successes and failures and hence performance.

Factors Contributing to the Apathy of the Populace Toward Education

Before delving into the reasons why the establishment and performance of the General Board was more of a politico-historical rather than sociological

phenomenon, it is important to discuss what the preconditions were which allowed those imbued with populist sentiment namely governors and clergy to determine policy outcomes in education. These range in scope from the slow population growth of the Colony resulting in low school enrolments, lack of educational resources, inexperience and incompetence of colonists to farm the land, economic hardships, starvation, shortages of labour, class-based nature of colonial society, materialism and apathy of the populace, and sectarian rivalry. Each needs to be examined in three ways using a comparative approach. Firstly, as events that are germane to the Colony of Western Australia, secondly how the inter-relation of education along with socio-economic and cultural phenomenon compare with the British dimension to educational policy; and finally comparisons with the Colony of New South Wales need to be made. These comparisons are essential for highlighting the fact, that educational decision-making, in a colony as remote as Western Australia, was never given serious consideration, by the Imperial or Colonial Governments.

Beginning with population and school enrolment statistics it is possible to gauge the nub of the problem that faced governors, clergy and the General Board when devising policy initiatives in education. From the Western Australian State Register or Blue Book for the year 1847, the population figures for the Colony as determined by each county was as follows: Perthshire 1,493 males and 1,231 females, Yorkshire 298 males and 123 females, Toodyay 120 males and 99 females, Jursey 104 males and 86 females, Wellington 247 males and 150 females and Murray 102 males and 44 females.² In terms of school enrolments the Perth

Free School for Boys and Girls under the guardianship of Mr. Darce Williams had 15 boys and 35 girls in attendance, the Fremantle General Free School conducted by Mr. Owen had 24 boys and 16 girls in attendance and the Albany Free School had 10 boys and 18 girls in regular attendance.³ Figures for the following year contain vital information on the status of Catholic education in the colony. The Roman Catholic Church in both Perth and Fremantle housed Free Boys and Girls Schools that were administered clerically, by the Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy respectively.⁴ Furthermore, these religious orders not only pooled their resources and educational expertise, but allowed the children of Protestant parents to attend the schools.⁵ Thus Catholic education in the early life of the colony was operating on a far greater level of sophistication than its Protestant counterparts.

The burgeoning growth of Catholic education in a predominantly Anglican and Protestant colony was a major or decisive factor for the inauguration of an Education Committee. Yet the Anglican and Protestant churches failure with the exception of the Methodists, in the early years of the colony, to adequately respond to the intellectual needs of the colonists' children, may be due in part to the types of schools established by them and their clientele. For the schools that were established in the early days of the colony were not practically oriented enough to attract a sizeable number of male scholars. What the Blue Books reveal is that, despite the disproportionate number of males to females, enrolments of girls in Free Schools was in percentage terms higher than that for their male counterparts. This statistic alone is proof that the largely 'academic' nature or curriculum of the schools acted as a deterrent for the commercially or practically

minded colonists. Thus household chores and farm labouring took precedence over booklore. This is further compounded during Western Australia's era of convictism as population figures for 1850 reveal. Out of a population of 4,654 more than 50% were living in Perth, Fremantle and environs with the rest scattered to the east and south on farms or in very small rural communities.⁶ The gradual dispersal of the population made it even harder for the General Board to both police and initiate the changes required in education. Thus as Rankin notes, 'an inadequate population militated against any pronounced progress'⁷ Furthermore, the dispersal of the population of the colony was considered a factor that made it difficult to 'utilise the channels that have assisted the educational development of other countries'.⁸

Added to this sense of frustration borne out of extreme isolation and loneliness, was an acute shortage of educational resources along with slow and unreliable communication, which is strikingly conveyed by Rankin:

Books were few, communication was unreliable and many of the early settlers were isolated and illiterate. They were content to make their experiences of an intense life, their substitute for education.⁹

The excessive pragmatism displayed by most of the early Colonists, as evidenced by placing household labour above scholarly attainments was in a sense justifiable. A chronic shortage of schoolbooks in the form of spellers and

copybooks, meant that such vital educational material had to be imported into the colony by those parents who planned to have their children instructed in the skills of reading and writing.¹⁰ And furthermore, despite the early efforts of the Education Committee in attempting to import schoolbooks, children attending schools, were often required to bring books from home.¹¹ Only children of the well-to-do could procure such material, thus highlighting the elite nature of schooling in the early years of the colony. This genuine lack of educational material deterred many parents from allowing their children to be absolved of their labouring chores to attend school.

Furthermore, elite or middle class schooling that was established although largely undenominational in emphasis, contained a number of schoolmasters 'of poor quality', who like Mr. John Gibson B.A. 'possessed the highest academic qualification', but appeared 'also to have been one of the least competent'.¹² This lack of competent teachers found in the most elite of schools, namely, the Colonial, was failing to attract male scholars. As a consequence enrolments in such public style schools were very meagre indeed. Yet it was felt that a lack of an education system would have a negative effect on emigration.¹³ As such attempts were made however sporadic to provide schooling for young Colonists. Yet such attempts could not deter the general populace from their agricultural pursuits, despite the fact that many of the early immigrants to Western Australia were lacking in the requisite farming skills.¹⁴ Governor Stirling's dispatch to Sir George Murray aptly sums up the situation:

Among the settlers who have since arrived some disappointment has arisen in consequence of their being in general little accustomed to encounter hardships and in all cases too sanguine in the expectations they have entertained respecting the country.¹⁵

However, despite the somber reflections of the first governor he is notorious for having 'met and conquered the difficulties', while preparing 'a path in the wilderness, which those who now follow will find leading to a promised land'.¹⁶

The pursuit of the materialistic dream, buoyed by the early optimism of the colonists over the colony's agricultural potential, was at the expense of education or intellectual attainments. However, the dream was soon to be shattered when it was realized that most land was suited to stock-grazing rather than agriculture and that the physical degradation of the soil, traceable to natural physical conditions, coupled with generous land grants and faulty human material, meant that the threat of famine was an ever present reality.¹⁷ Also the hardwood forests were extremely difficult to clear.¹⁸ Yet the slow growth of the colony resulting in meagre school enrolments may be attributed to a myriad of reasons, as Kimberley outlines :

The enormous size of some grants, the want of cooperation between settlers and their friends at home, the absence of the true colonising spirit, the inability of many to apply their capital and labour to the right channels, the speculative instinct which was so predominant,

the lack of ready money, the injurious reports circulated far and wide, and the sins of many of the servants themselves, combined to retard progression and to precipitate distress.¹⁹

And yet the privations suffered by the early colonists were further compounded by their lack of knowledge or comprehension of when to sow harvests as seasons occurred in opposite months to England.²⁰

Moreover, the most productive land for agricultural purposes was to be found in the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's land²¹ and not as it was originally supposed, in Western Australia. To further complicate matters, an acute labour shortage, had a detrimental effect on the economy, which only improved once convicts were shipped out to the colony in 1849.²² Thus as Powell notes:

Many gave themselves up to despair and left the settlement without ascertaining its resources, or attempting to overcome these difficulties, which are the invariable attendants upon the establishment of a new colony.²³

This lack of a pioneering or colonizing spirit among many due to the poverty of the environment and its people, who toiled with it, had a negative impact upon education. It clearly meant that colonists had to provide their own means for educating their children.²⁴ It also denoted that the obsession with the economic

exigencies of life to the expense of scholarly attainments was proving to be detrimental to the colony morally. Though in relation to the education of girls, the moral dimension was imparted. To cite one example, those girls receiving education in dame schools, were taught 'manners, morals and plain religious education, in preference to great accomplishment.'²⁵ However the quest of imparting morality to young Colonists was further compounded as already mentioned by inadequate or scant educational material. To further complicate matters, it was only social elites such as the Tanner family who were best able to acquire suitable reading material for their children and thus provide them with a decent education.²⁶

The Class-based Nature of Early Schooling and the Need for Moral Reform

The quest to improve school enrolments while at the same time ensuring that education had a moral as well as an intellectual foundation was a venture targeted toward the children of the middle-classes. When the gentry or press discussed the need for schools in Perth, they, according to Stannage, 'thought primarily of the children of the investing class'.²⁷ These children enjoyed the benefits of a classical education, whilst the so-called 'inferior classes', under the initial guardianship of Reverend Wittenoom, were taught only the three R's.²⁸ Thus an education in Latin, Grammar, Mathematics, Languages, Music, Drawing, Dancing and Needlework, was only suitable for well-to-do children and deemed to be inappropriate for other children.²⁹ This class-based nature of education meant that it was to be entirely funded by parents and not the State and that the Colonial

Schools were not to teach too much, in order, that there be plenty of scope for private education later on.³⁰

However, private schools such as the one run by Dr. Shipton and his wife for young ladies at Fremantle, which offered free medical attention for pupils,³¹ were few and far between. The poverty-stricken nature of the colony and most of its inhabitants militated against any pronounced change in the area of privately funded education. This is borne out by the historical records themselves, which invariably presents public-style education as being the sole preserve of the upper classes. This is classically illustrated in part of a letter written by fourteen year old Anne Leake, in which she writes, 'I do not quite neglect my studies as papa and I devote an hour or two almost every day to reading French.'³² Thus the luxury of learning the most popular foreign language for girls, was equally matched, by some wealthy families sending their boys 'home' to Britain to be educated in the finest public schools.³³

Despite the appearance of "free schools" and a "military school" for soldiers' children,³⁴ they could not match the early success of the Wesleyan schools that were first established in 1841.³⁵ These consisted of Day Schools for both sexes, along with Day and Boarding Schools and several native Mission Schools that promoted a practical and religiously-based curriculum.³⁶ A strong feature of these schools and of Wesleyan-style Methodism in general, was the infusion of religion and education in an evangelical sense, to bring about the conversion of the poor and indigenes. This was deemed to be essential as many clergy had witnessed the

'lowering of the moral barometer'.³⁷ What little "moral and religious instruction" there was, occurred under the tutorship of Reverend J.B. Wittenoom, who taught from a curriculum enlivened by the classics and divinity, but totally devoid of history, geography, art, music and manual training.³⁸

The obsession with the moral status of the colony from educationalists and the press, was designed to stir the populace out of a state of lethargy with regard to education. One concerned journalist felt it worthwhile to encourage families to consider the value of a specific type of education:

We observe with some concern, that many parents deny their children this opportunity of furthering their future advancement in life, and sincerely regret to find that there are persons amongst us influenced by insensibility to avarice to this disregard for mental improvement. The few remarks we have felt ourselves called upon to make we trust will cause the heads of families to reflect upon the consequences of their indifference to so vital an object, and lead to their entertaining a livelier sense of the necessity of, as well as the advantages to be derived from, --- a Christian education.³⁹

Other journalists were not so explicit in their convictions, preferring instead to trumpet the moral advantages of public-style education. But nearly all believed that lack of a suitable education system would produce '...lawless, ungovernable,

mischievous men'.⁴⁰ Thus education was perceived by many as improving the moral and virtuous condition of Western Australia.⁴¹

This moral 'crusade' was not helped by the lack of clergy and places of worship,⁴² nor by the Church's inability to provide for the educational needs⁴³ of a young population. However, by the early 1840's, it was felt, that a Board of Education with an Anglican composition would be a rich boon to the colony, and that:

Under such a board, we should entertain fervent hopes of seeing our plans crowned with success, and favoured with the richest blessing of Heaven. Let the effort be made without delay, and we may live to see an enlightened colony in the benighted regions of Western Australia.⁴⁴

Yet despite all the various platitudes, a morally sound education system that was to be viable had to attract a sufficient number of scholars. Thus we find, that after the resignation of Mr. Cleland, the first colonial teacher, to the appointment of Mr. T. Walsh as successor, not only had the numbers of pupils dwindled to vanishing point at the Colonial School, but it also meant that the teacher's allowance was discontinued.⁴⁵

Schools in the early days of the colony were often housed in poor premises that had a somewhat claustrophobic ambience. This was certainly the case early on for the Perth Boys School as it met in the Court House:

The arrangement so far as the school was concerned, was not a satisfactory one, for while what we call police court cases were apparently mostly disposed of on the Saturdays, the holding of quarterly sessions by Judge Mackie entailed the school's being relegated during these breaks to a small attic-like gallery upstairs, where it must be presumed silence was enjoined.⁴⁶

The meagre numbers of pupils enrolled in the various schools, combined with poorly-trained teachers, inadequate teaching facilities and resources, along with the moral laxity of many; necessitated the kind of change envisaged in a General Board of Education.

However, it was the perceptions of the leading and most influential of colonists, that determined the kind of changes required for a successful education system. Perceptions that revolved around the 'peculiar' or 'unseemly' behaviour of the colonists themselves, such as the "smart" conduct displayed by many, 'which, without being criminal according to law, is very much objected to by the better sort of people in this country'.⁴⁷ Conduct which it was supposed, negated the successful cultivation of knowledge; and where it was 'common to meet with people of the greatest mark in the colony, who are ignorant of everything but the art of getting money'.⁴⁸ Yet commonplace in many parts of the colonies is the want of religion which results in that 'state of barbarism', from which 'men with that sense of honour which amounts to goodness' are a rarity.⁴⁹ It was through a

religious or spiritually based education system that an enlightened society was to emerge.

Such perceptions of colonial morals were part and parcel of the vision that early educators, along with educational policy-makers, governors, clergy and the press had, in terms of their improvement. And, as earlier stated, education was the way and means of improving colonial morals. This improvement could only come to pass by pursuing the centuries old vision of a society founded on Christian principles. It was such a vision that was to guide the decision and policy making of the General Board. A society that in social and religious terms commands mutual respect and tolerance. In other words it seemed that a utopian ideal was envisaged. This is made clear through the early readings of the General Board's Minutes and Correspondences.

According to George Frederick Moore, chief magistrate and lay preacher in the early days of the colony, the new settlers retained, "... all their old manners, habits, prejudices, and notions of a sturdy, free, commercial, litigious people",⁵⁰ E.W. Landor also of the legal fraternity, not only bemoaned the fact that "the moral thermometer in the colony" was, "lamentably low";⁵¹ but was also able to observe that the time of colonists was mostly spent in idleness, excessive drinking and riotous living.⁵² So unlike his legal colleagues objective assessment, Landor's is not only highly subjectivised, but is one, it would seem, based on experience. Archdeacon Wollaston, a prominent religious figure in rural Western Australia was also appalled at the apathy of most colonists toward religion, and deeply

mortified by drunkenness that occurred on the Sabbath.⁵³ He was quick to point out, that religion had “sunk to a miserably low ebb in the colony”.⁵⁴ A journal entry for Saturday the 19th of November 1842 aptly sums up the moral status of the colony and its inhabitants:

The utter ungodliness of the people here, generally speaking, is more apparent, although perhaps, not greater proportion, to numbers, than in England; but to the single-handed minister in a remote and extensive district of a new country. It is a source of mournful anxiety and distress the quiet routine of duties in a country parish cannot be followed here. Here all is disorder and irregularity. The Sabbath is selected as the day of pre-eminent drunkenness and profligacy.⁵⁵

The greatest challenge for the Committee come General Board of Education, was to provide a system of education that would meet the needs of most colonists and their progeny; while also looking ahead to the future society that was envisioned by them.

The Need for an Interventionist Approach to Education

Matching the needs of the general populace with that of their own vision of a morally just and responsible society founded on Christian principles, was a mean feat for the General Board. It proved almost insurmountable prior to the

inauguration of the Board, largely due to the avaricious nature of most colonists;⁵⁶ and because a 'spirit of materialism and selfishness in the colony'⁵⁷ fueled the apathy toward public-style education. Yet improving the numbers of scholars in schools was a matter of extreme importance. In order for the status of education and hence school enrolments to be improved, schools for Aborigines and white children had to be established by Governor Hutt.⁵⁸ Similarly, the maintenance of the socio-economic ordering of society and hence status-quo, was possible, through the reading of the Bible, which would teach all children to accept their 'pre-determined social place' and for children of the never-do-wells, 'to be satisfied with a lowly station in life'.⁵⁹

However, in order for a suitable education system that would enable Christian ideals to permeate colonial society, a proposed Board of Education had to thread through the mire of political autocracy and a fair degree of sectarian rivalry. For as Landor notes, the early colonists in Western Australia were, 'governed by a power altogether distinct from that which rules over Englishmen in their native land, they will continue to be helpless, oppressed and poverty-stricken'.⁶⁰ And moreover, they alone among British subjects were living under an absolute monarchy.⁶¹ Religious animosity was also a disturbing feature as evidenced in the writings of Reverend John Wollaston. After only eight and a half months of the Board's work it is found that the august clergyman could write disparagingly of some members of his flock:

Sectarian party spirit is very strong and there are members of

various denominations dispersed all over the colony. Presbyterians are very numerous, but generally attend my church, and several are communicants. But there is among them a strong anti-episcopal feeling, which it is very difficult to allay.⁶²

In a similar vein, any favourable remarks made toward Christian brethren of non-Anglican persuasion such as referring to Wesleyans as a “numerous and respectable body”⁶³ could be misconstrued as patronizing in the extreme.

Yet for a suitable education system to be guaranteed some modicum of success, political autocracy, populism and religious bigotry, had to be jettisoned. Thus the decision by governors to allow children of all Christian sects to be educated together, ‘for the sake of Christian charity and social unity’⁶⁴ appeared to be a good starting-point in the quest toward State-controlled education. The eventual authorisation of an Education Committee by Governor Irwin in August 1847, was perceived as a ‘departure from the old order’, which, ‘marked the first real advance in the colony’s educational organisation.’⁶⁵ However, the success of this ‘interventionist’ approach was largely predicated upon the philanthropic endeavours prevalent in British education, during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In order to fully comprehend the situation that unfurled in the colony of Western Australia with regard to education, it is imperative to understand its genesis. Like its eastern seaboard neighbours, the fledgling western colony of Australia was

strongly influenced by the English heritage:

So closely did the Australian colonies follow the mother [sic] country that there was a transplantation of the traditions, policies, and practices of the old world to the new, sometimes inappropriately and often irrationally.⁶⁶

This 'irrationality' was carried over into the 'civilizing' process of the working classes, whereby, literacy was a requirement in this endeavour, in order to bring to bear among the 'lower orders', 'a fuller appreciation of the and civic virtues of acceptance of one's station in life and respect for property and for established political authority'.⁶⁷ Similarly, the public schooling of the upper classes that focused heavily upon mathematics and classical studies, was designed', to cultivate the minds of the privileged sectors of the community and suitably prepare them for a life of leisure and for high offices of Church and State.'⁶⁸

This class-based nature of British-style education was more pronounced in the colony of New South Wales than Western Australia. However, it surfaced over the centuries in Britain because of the policy of laissez-faire that was vigorously pursued by both Tory and Whig governments. The non-interference in civil matters on the part of these governments and the State apparatus, ensured that, in education, children were taught indiscriminately without any attempt to grade them.⁶⁹ Proponents for a system of universal or elementary education such as prominent Scottish economist Adam Smith (an advocate of the policy of laissez-

faire) and Lord Kay-Shuttleworth, a Whig politician and chief educational policy-maker, ... 'insisted on the duties of property in succoring a dependant population', which would be 'a duty akin to that of a parent'.⁷⁰

Proposals for State as opposed to privately controlled education, were meant to extol the virtues of a dependant population immured in the vice and squalor of industrial life. This interventionist approach to educational reform was designed to avoid where possible:

An appalling concatenation of evils that would reduce the working population to utter debasement, destroying the very structure of society by the "explosive violence" of "volcanic elements".⁷¹

The 'moralizing' tendency was to be extended to the leisure hours of the working-classes, whose abuse of spirituous and fermented liquors occurred in the cosy confines, of 'the local hubs of working-class economic and political organisation',⁷² namely, the public houses.

Keeping the working-classes and lower orders poor, humble and respectful of authority, including their 'social superiors', meant maintaining the status quo by keeping them in ignorance.⁷³ The way out of this state of ignorance was engendered by the philanthropic endeavours of Christian churches and organisations who attempted to promote 'an ordered Christian society in which a

pious and hardworking labouring class was content with its lot.⁷⁴ This form of christian charity became synonymous with the Charity School Movement which fostered the moral discipline of the poor, while at the same time raising 'bulwarks against Popery' and getting the poor to obey what has been called 'the great law of subordination'.⁷⁵ This was aptly expressed in the phrase 'bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations'.⁷⁶ It was the early action of the Church in pioneering elementary education that 'gave them a decisive grip which has never been shaken'.⁷⁷ The Church, in conjunction with the State, became an agent of social control in the sphere of education.

However, the laissez-faire approach adopted by British educators and policymakers, guaranteeing that education be made voluntary with minimal government interference, was designed to avoid 'infringements of liberty'.⁷⁸ Even though this policy was vigorously pursued by educators in colonial Western Australia prior to the inauguration of the Committee come General Board of Education, it was to prove unfeasible. A small and widely dispersed population, excessive materialism and apathy toward public-style education combined with a high degree of sectarian rivalry; meant that a non-interventionist and class-based system of education was simply unworkable. Similarly, an agrarian, as opposed to an industrially based economy, was one not conducive to engendering class distinctions to the same degree as in England.

Furthermore, the economic hardships and privations suffered by the early white inhabitants of Western Australia were somewhat foreign to them. As already

mentioned, the early British immigrants to the colony were largely well-to-do gentlemen from rural areas in England. The heart-wrenching poverty endured by these upper and middle-classes, over time, tended to mollify concerns equated with class distinctions. This occurred, even though the social graces and middle-class etiquette of the time was assiduously maintained by many of the first generation of immigrants. A less class-conscious society was one amenable to the idea of an education open to children of all Christian persuasions. However, the remarkable similarity with its British foundations was the role of the Church, or rather, the Sunday School Movement, in instilling in children middle class virtues popularly associated with the typical 'Victorian'. These virtues which characterised the evangelicals, were noted for, '... a rather ostentatious piety, a strong social conscience, extreme respectability, and a somewhat humourless disapproval of entertainment and pleasure'.⁷⁹ They were also meant to 'innoculate' children 'against the habits of sloth, debauchery and beggary' which supposedly, 'characterised the lower orders of society'.⁸⁰

The inculcation of middle class virtues in children of all class backgrounds is a feature that even in the contemporary world typifies education and its philosophy. Yet when equated with removing the poor from a state of ignorance, in intellectual and spiritual terms, the work of evangelical Christians of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be underestimated. It was the Methodist revival spearheaded by the Reverend John Wesley, that 'was profoundly important as an intellectual force', which, 'contributed to make parents and children desirous of education'.⁸¹ This was certainly the case in the

early life of the colony of Western Australia, as Methodist ministers and teachers were highly regarded for their ability to teach both the poor and indigenous children. It may also account, in part, for the reason why Western Australia in particular, was, not only more thoroughly Anglicised, but more deeply influenced by Protestant evangelicalism than its eastern seaboard neighbours. Though this could also be attributed to the low numbers of Irish Catholics, in the early days of the colony.

Similarities and Differences With New South Wales and the Non-Anglican Hegemony in Western Australian Education

This over-emphasis on moral training and self-discipline was not always easy to fathom in a colony, which began as a free enterprise endeavour as opposed to a penal outpost. Yet its origin, laying aside the British heritage, can be attributed in large measure to the autocratic nature of many of its governors. This is best examined by way of comparison with New South Wales. Even though this colony began its European existence in a state of turpitude, by having notorious felons transported to its shores its governors like those of its western neighbour issued all daily orders; scrutinized criminal and magistrates' proceedings; fixed rations and prices; granted permission to marry; controlled the disposition of labour; directed finance and commerce; and appointed chaplains and schoolmasters.⁸² Central to their absolutist regimes, was the notion of the Church as 'an appendage of their military-style administrations'.⁸³

These views were not dissimilar to those of E.W. Landor in relation to Western Australia's system of governance, mentioned earlier, particularly in reference to it being an 'absolute monarchy'. However, laying aside the historical debates as to whether New South Wales was a dumping ground for convicts, it is possible to ascertain, that it 'carried the seeds of something more than a jail'.⁸⁴ In a much deeper sense, given the nature of the colony, where education was the sole responsibility of the Church, it also was perceived as an aspect of moral training.⁸⁵ Thus the moral reformation of its inhabitants, made it imperative for religion and education to be united.⁸⁶ This awesome responsibility was placed squarely upon the shoulders of first Colonial Chaplain the Reverend Richard Johnson, renowned for being the father of Australian education.⁸⁷ As regards the importance attached to education, this was quickly spelt out in an article in the *Sydney Gazette* dated the 14th of October 1815:

Education is conducive to morality, and morality influences the prosperity of a country, gives comfort to its inhabitants, encourages them to industry, supports their toil and makes happy their repose.⁸⁸

These thoughts were also echoed, by the General Board of Education in Western Australia, (without reference to the article), which became the touchstones of their policies and vision.

Despite the many similarities with the politico-religious and educational make-up

of New South Wales, there were subtle differences. In Western Australia, a form of non-denominationally based education, following on from Governor Hutt's policy of "multi-establishment", existed side by side with the denominational. And moreover, was not solely linked to undenominational education provided by the British and Foreign Bible Society, where scripture was read without note and comment.⁸⁹ But an ecumenically based education system was part and parcel of the future vision of governors, clergy and educational policy-makers. Indeed the very policy itself, as will be discussed a little later, was at the very heart of the General Board's foundation. However, the greater level of State intervention to foster the growth of education in New South Wales, may be largely attributed to a burgeoning economy and birthrate, a weakening of the social base of the private schools and a form of social mobility not linked to class distinctions.⁹⁰

In terms of the sectarian nature of society in New South Wales, it is clear that the Anglican hegemony, due to its association with the State as an agent of punishment, was much detested. Similarly, the Anglican Church's association with the upper classes and failure to arrest the spread of drunkenness and debauchery, meant that their reputation was severely tarnished.⁹¹ Even though the majority of governors, along with civil and military officials were of Anglican persuasion,⁹² they were not held with the same esteem as those in the western half of the continent. A greater proliferation of Scottish Presbyterians and Irish Catholics in New South Wales, meant that sectarian squabbles over educational issues transcended mere pecuniary concerns. In contrast to this, the relatively high level of popularity of most early governors in Western Australia, who were also

mostly Anglican, proved a boon to the General Board of Education. For it enabled the Board, which consisted of Anglican laypersons and clergy, to act in a mediatory capacity. This was made possible by the 'middle-way' of Anglicanism itself, namely its Protestant and Catholic heritage and its infusion. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

However, all was not smooth sailing for the Board, as it was often compelled to accept policies based on the predilections of certain governors. While this was most pronounced under the regimes of Fitzgerald, Kennedy, Hampton and Weld, both Governors Hutt and Clarke, who preceded Fitzgerald; also stamped their authority or approval on educational policy. Both advocated the need for children to be educated without respect for religious differences. Yet they were treading a very fine line, because the burgeoning growth of Catholic education as a result of the tireless efforts of Bishop Brady and the Sisters of Mercy, in a colony where the major religious affiliation was the Church of England, engendered sectarian rivalry.⁹³ Unlike the situation in New South Wales where such rivalry was over doctrinal issues or the fear of 'Popery', in Western Australia, it arose out of intense jealousy amidst the success of Catholics over Protestants in the provision of 'free' education.

While Catholics were numerically inferior to Anglicans in the early days of the colony of Western Australia, their continued successes in the educational sphere brought latent forms of religious bigotry to the surface. To ensure that a suitable system of education for the majority of the colonist's children was to be

established, both the pragmatic and altruistic aims to secure this achievement, had to be pursued with some vigour. Thus improvements in school enrolments and the creation of a morally just and responsible society were considered to be imperative. The major difficulty or barrier to those noble aims being achieved, as stated earlier, was getting enough pupils enrolled in the various schools. By 1836, out of a total of 600 children of school-age, less than 100 were being educated in a school.⁹⁴ With regard to the education of Aboriginal children, the only worthwhile efforts to educate them in matters of religion came from the Roman Catholics and Wesleyans.⁹⁵ However, on the part of the latter, it seemed designed to 'save the children from going to the Romanist School.'⁹⁶

It was the Reverend John Smithies, a Wesleyan Minister, who arrived in the colony in 1841, who attempted through his Native Mission School to improve the lot of the Aboriginal children who were not only converted to Christianity but also managed to learn their three Rs.⁹⁷ Described as '... a short, portly person', who, 'proved to be a cheerful and jolly fellow, both in appearance and manner,'⁹⁸ he was, however, one at constant loggerheads with his Christian brethren of Anglican and Catholic persuasion. Smithies was quick to criticize the colonial chaplain and the military chaplain the Reverend Harper, because he felt they only read prayers and sermons, failed to preach or traverse the scattered settlement, and likened the colonial chaplain "to that great foe, Satan".⁹⁹ Similarly, he was harsh upon the Sisters of Mercy for their non-evangelical approach to educating their charges.¹⁰⁰

While the Roman Catholics and Wesleyans were achieving some modicum of

educational success, in a predominantly Anglicised colony, the majority of young boys and men were left uneducated. Steering them away from the life of a ploughman or herdsman, by making them socially and morally responsible people, whose minds are open to learning virtue and religion,¹⁰¹ was a task assigned to the General Board of Education. Known for a brief period as the Education Committee, it was authorized in 1847, by Governor Irwin. Its first three members were the Colonial Chaplain the Reverend J.B. Wittenoom, Francis Lochee and R.W. Nash.¹⁰² This bold experiment in State controlled education was uniquely Protestant in emphasis, which raised the ire of the Roman Catholics.¹⁰³ According to David Mossenson, this desire to instill a single State system, in contrast to the dual systems operative in the eastern colonies, 'was the principal outcome to frustrate', Bishop Brady (first Catholic Bishop of Perth) and his activities.¹⁰⁴

However, the abrupt termination of the General Board after only twenty-four years of existence, cannot solely in the second instance be sociological, as earlier mentioned by Ewers, but rather, political. There are two underlying reasons for this view, that revolve around the close co-operation between Church and State in educational policy debates and by the simple fact that educational decision-making leading to policy outcomes, was decided for the majority, by an elite few. Moreover, the autocratic and populist tendencies of governors and some clergy and the external factors of a socio-economic nature that impinged upon the progress of the General Board hardened the resolve of each Board member. The result, as will be made clear throughout the remainder of the thesis, was the

emergence of a heavily bureaucratized State apparatus that took charge of educational policy. It was the incessant apathy of the populace toward public-style education and the overtly secular nature of society that led to this state of affairs.

Authorization, Composition and Vision of the Original Education Committee

Nevertheless, the mutual co-operation between Church and State in the endeavour to provide for State controlled education was epitomised in the appointment of Reverend J.B. Wittenoom as Chairperson of the General Board. The Colonial Chaplain's fealty to the State was further emphasized, by his generous and hospitable nature, by allowing the first meeting of the newly formed Education Committee to be conducted in the study of his colonial home, situated on Barrack Street.¹⁰⁵ This meeting was significant in that it gathered vital statistics on the numbers of school-age children in the colony and their attendance at various schools; and also for the formation of two sub committees, one of ladies the other of gentlemen, by which means girls' and boys' schools were to be administered.¹⁰⁶ At the subsequent meeting where the Wesleyan Minister, John Smithies was invited to attend, a favourable response to the principles and general plan of the Committee for the conduct of the Government School, from Smithies, led to an offer to lend premises in which the Wesleyan School was held.¹⁰⁷

So apart from the Reverend J.B. Wittenoom, who and what were the credentials of the Committee and General Board members? To start with, Francis Lochee was a

barrister and successful share-farmer at York; editor of The Inquirer and co-proprietor; cashier and manager of W.A. Bank; committee member of the Hale School; member of Choral Society and Botanical Gardens; first initiate of St John Lodge and hence a Freemason; treasurer of Perth Volunteers and J.P.¹⁰⁸

Richard West Nash was also a barrister and farmer at Swan; served briefly as Acting Advocate General; Secretary of Agricultural Society and Vineyard Society; and on returning to England promoted emigration to the colony.¹⁰⁹

George Frederick Stone was Sheriff of Perth and Registrar General of Western Australia; Vice President of Swan River Mechanics' Institute; Director of W.A. Bank; and President of Perth Building Fund.¹¹⁰ Along with Francis Lochee, the Reverend Wittenoom was also a Freemason.¹¹¹ The significance of this single fact, is best appreciated, through an examination of the altruistic aims of the General Board as gleaned from their minutes and correspondence and is briefly touched upon in the following chapter.

Apart from being authorized with the task of improving school enrolments and providing a suitable system of education for the colonist's children, the General Board of Education as it became known in September 1847, gave much thought to the kind of society they would like to have seen emerge. At the first meeting of the then, Education Committee on the 31st of August 1847, it was resolved that a Perth Public School open to children of all denominations be established, that was to conform to a general colonial system; to be free to all, to be non-sectarian in nature; and was to provide secular and scriptural education for all.¹¹² A few years

later, the reasons for making education non-sectarian, came to light, which was to be based on what kind of community would be created. For the then Committee members, their ideal was not a divisive community based on religious lines, as this was not considered the aim of education, as it would 'pour into the social mechanism sand instead of oil.'¹¹³ Yet the freedom from religious intolerance in these Public Schools would be matched, by children learning to read, write and know their sums, completely free of any charge.¹¹⁴ In addition to this, moral or religious instruction was to be derived from the reading of the Bible without note or comment.¹¹⁵

A general system of education that was to be non-sectarian meant that a form of religious equanimity ought to prevail. The role of teachers in these colonial schools, was therefore, to:

Order the course of religious instruction so general as to be common to all, not militating against the scruples of any religious sect, and thus to render our Colonial Schools accessible to all, and therefore fit objects of public expenditure.¹¹⁶

Although, educational administrators in the early days of the colony, had a clear vision of a harmonious society founded on Christian principles, they were still largely influenced by the middle class virtues of Victorian Britain. While education in these new Colonial Schools was to remain free of charge, the proposed system of education to be divided up into two principal divisions was

distinctly class-based in nature. The first division was to comprise of reading, writing and arithmetic and in the Girls' School, plain needlework, with the second division containing 'such branches of general education as are required for the class of yeomen, shopkeepers, tradespeople'.¹¹⁷ In addition to maintaining the socio-economic ordering of society, pupils were enjoined to cultivate the principal habits of: truth, order, modesty, obedience, attention, punctuality, decorum, cleanliness and neatness, self-control, manners and respect to age and station.¹¹⁸

This vision for a well-ordered Christian society was deeply influenced by the moral campaign infused into Protestant evangelicalism of the nineteenth century. The major problem with this in terms of a strategy for educational reform was with the type of education that such a campaign engendered. More often than not, it was public-style education with a large smattering of the classics and divinity that lent itself to this form of education. And as already stated, it proved somewhat impractical for a colony that was largely engaged in an often gargantuan struggle, to overcome the ravages of a harsh and inhospitable environment. For the General Board of Education charged with the task of improving the status of education in the colony, this fatalism and apathy engendered by the privations endured by the early Colonists served to embolden certain governors who, as a result, became that much more autocratic in their decision-making. As a consequence many of the Committee's and General Board's decisions and policies were overturned.

It was Governor Fitzgerald, who succeeded Irwin that set this train of events in

motion. Noted for being 'wise and forthright', Fitzgerald was also considered to be a 'man of matured judgment, with an autocratic temperament'.¹¹⁹ Seeking to provide a compromise between the introduction of the Irish National System to the colony and a separate financial grant to the Roman Catholic educational sector, Fitzgerald chose the latter,¹²⁰ following instructions from the Education Committee. In so doing, Fitzgerald, had:

Anticipated by over twenty years the divorce of the Catholic Schools from the national system, and in doing so he had created the precedent of a separate grant to any organisation which chose to reject the national system. But for the common sense of his Education Committee he would have committed the colony least able to afford it to a fragmentary, denominational system.¹²¹

In following the Committee's instructions to the letter, Governor Fitzgerald had created a dual system of education that while in theoretical terms was supposedly undenominational, in practice however, it remained highly sectarian. This was to prove to be problematic for the Committee and General Board of Education, for it cast doubts upon the relative merits and future success of its pragmatic and altruistic ideals. Under Fitzgerald, however, the General Board of Education, could at least, operate as mediator. The case was not so clear-cut under the regimes of subsequent governors through to Weld. Thus the creation of a dual system of education set a dangerous precedent, for it not only antagonised and cajoled Protestants into claiming the same benefits as their Catholic counterparts

but gave Catholic clergy the chance to put up some stout resistance toward the twin policies of secular and sectarian education.

While the excessive apathy of the populace, coupled with the moral declension of colonial society, was largely to blame for the paucity of school enrolments, the lack of children or scholars in the various schools, presented a potentially grave problem for the future destiny of Western Australia. In order to overcome the class-based or elitist nature of early schooling, an Education Committee had to be authorized. However, such a Committee had to have a vision that would unite the community, in such a way, as to see its major ideal: a morally just and responsible society founded on Christian principles, come to fruition. The staunchly Anglican composition of the Committee that strove against the Catholic hegemony in education militated against this ideal. Yet it was on account of the apathy, the moral laxity, the class-based nature of society and the 'exclusive' nature of schooling, that such a Committee (later to be known as the General Board), came into being. However, its highly secular and sectarian policies not only alienated Roman Catholics but caused them to directly challenge the Committee's pragmatic and altruistic ideals.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Catholic Challenge

Improvements in school enrolments and the provision for a 'morally' sound education system as touched upon in the previous chapter, were bound up in the pragmatic and altruistic ideals of the General Board. In both practical and idealistic terms the Board sought to increase the numbers of scholars in schools while at the same time [maintaining the need to] impart, traditional religious values to the Colony's children. These aims it was felt were best achieved through a broadly based system of public style education common in England and also by continuing the English tradition of decentralised administrative control. Both these elite and voluntary systems of education were considered the best means of ensuring that none of the political elite were to have sole control of educational policy. To offset this potential problem while remaining true to its ideals the General Board acted as mediator between the competing and complementary interests of the learned elite and the general populace. The Board's role as intermediary would make possible the conveyance of spiritual values in education, which when acquired, would lead to the moral reform of colonial society. One major obstacle to overcome in this noble quest was the high degree of sectarian rivalry, which militated against the idealistic goal of translating educational reform into moral reform. As this chapter goes on to highlight the Protestant/Catholic animosity over educational policy was not only fuelled by the General Board, but served to undermine its whole vision or reason

for existence.

The General Board's ultimate vision for a well-ordered Christian society was deemed to be achievable through a wholesale acceptance of public-style education. This elaborate scheme for the educational reform and moral improvement of the colony was at once, highly commendable, but seemingly unrealistic. It was a goal that proved to be unrealizable given the very nature of the colonists and their material preoccupations. What was required, in order to add impetus to the whole scheme, was a level of optimism in relation to the intellectual and moral destiny of the colony. As this was not forthcoming amongst colonists, due to the enormous privations suffered by them, this optimism had to be generated from the State apparatus (including the General Board of Education), and the traditional purveyors of education, the various churches and their clergy. For traditionally education belonged to the Church.¹ Moreover, from Tudor times to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the spiritual emphasis to education, meant that schools were wholly regarded as ecclesiastical institutions with teachers subject to ecclesiastical law and no other.² The Church, working in conjunction with the State, along with philanthropic organisations, was the most appropriate institution, for imparting to the masses, the intellectual and moral benefits to be gleaned from public-style education.

Challenges to the Protestant and Anglican Hegemony

The difference, by the time of the inauguration of the General Board of Education

in Western Australia, was that, the message of the worthiness of education came from organisations allied with the State and not solely from clergy. This transition from Church to State-controlled education, replacing the *laissez-faire* approach favoured over the centuries, was accompanied by a high degree of sectarian rivalry and the secularization of societal structures and norms. In the Colony of Western Australia, during the Victorian era, this secular trend was best epitomised in the apathy displayed by the general populace toward all activities involving a level of intellectual rigour. To fill the void, the Church took it upon itself to fulfill its God-given duty as the main provider of education.

Prior to and after the inauguration of the General Board of Education, the Catholic Church in Western Australia spearheaded a growth in education that no Protestant denomination could hope to match. Its achievements in the educational sphere without reliance upon the State coffers eclipsed those of their Protestant counterparts. As a consequence, it became imperative that the colonial government, in consent with the State and its elites, form an alliance that would counter this Catholic hegemony. The urgency with which this endeavour was pursued provided enough inspiration for Governor Irwin to authorize a Committee of Education, that was to be distinctly Protestant in emphasis. As it was largely composed of Anglican laypersons, it could not satisfy the intellectual requirements of its more 'extreme' Protestant brethren, nor cater to those of the Roman Catholic minority in the colony.

The Roman Catholic Church in the period of the General Board's tenure,

vigorously challenged the one-dimensional or theological position held in the Protestant make-up of the Board. In so doing, it aimed to protect or safeguard Catholic heritage and tradition, in order to allow freedom of religion or belief to prevail in the various schools. While already mentioned, the General Board following on from Governor Hutt's policy of 'multi-establishment' in religion, aimed to provide a system of education that was free and open to children of all religious persuasions, it could not satisfy the requirements of the Catholic minority, who were not spared the indignity of having to 'beg' for financial assistance. Also, for a considerably long period of the General Board's tenure, Catholics were denied access to the Board as members and thus did not prominently feature in the educational decision-making of the General Board.

Attacks upon the credibility of the Board from Catholic clergy were matched by a fair degree of vitriol from both the press, and in the initial phases prominent members of the General Board. These attacks from without and within had a profound effect on the Board's ability to fulfill its original intentions, as well as, the ability of the Board to sustain its vision for a well-ordered Christian society. The result was that the Board became ever more conciliatory in its approach, as evidenced by the separate grant issue. It also meant that much of its autonomous decision-making was jettisoned, in favour of an approach that linked educational policy to overall colonial policy. This may also be largely due to the socio-economic factors that impinged upon the work of the General Board.

According to T.L. Suttor the Roman Catholic Church was 'a church trained in

democracy, independent of the State.³ In other words a State within a State, that has the capacity to shape the very religious, cultural, social and economic fabric of society. In reference to Australian history:

What so sharply differentiated the Australian Church in the beginning was the presence of two features all but impossible to reconcile with each other: cultural dependence on Ireland, political dependence on a professedly Protestant Crown.⁴

While this rings true for the experience of the Church in Western Australia, there is one additional feature that sets it apart from its eastern seaboard neighbours. The original Church in the western colony was more missionary, rather than pastoral in emphasis. This no doubt is attributed to the very nature of the colony, as a free enterprise endeavour rather than a penal outpost. It also accounts for the fact that Roman Catholic clergy appeared, to governors and the State coterie, to be somewhat aloof from the mainstream of society. Yet religious education remained, 'the very platform of Roman Catholicism in the intellectual world'.⁵

Yet 'every appeal for religious aid was made in vain'⁶ by Australia's Vicar-General Dr. Ullathorne. Such aid also comprised the educational expenditure of the Church. To further compound matters, a blatant form of 'religio-cultural' assimilation was taking place, which had pervaded the area of education. The Orphan School in Parramatta, established by Governor King in 1801, made it obligatory for all children to be brought up as Protestants.⁷ A sense of spiritual

desolation hung over the Australian Catholic Church in its infant years, epitomised by the merger of Catholics in one or more of the Protestant sects.⁸ Also, due to the Anglican monopoly on education all inmates of the orphanages were to be brought up in the tenets of the Church of England.⁹ Even though Catholics comprised one third of the population of New South Wales in 1828,¹⁰ it was not considered sufficient reason to warrant special financial treatment when it pertained to education.

Protestants did outnumber Catholics on ships sent out from England and Scotland by a ratio of twenty to one.¹¹ However, on board ships sailing from Ireland the ratio was twenty-three to one in favour of Catholics.¹² In Western Australia, the ratio was twelve to one in favour of Protestants, yet the grant to Roman Catholic schools, was instituted in proportion to their numbers.¹³ Despite this form of tokenism, early forms of schooling, both Catholic and Protestant, was overtly denominational in emphasis, operated from a system condoning religious difference; and one which posed a real threat to the on-going success of the re-established Colonial School 'and to the hopes of those controlling State education in the new colony'.¹⁴ The Education Committee formed in response to this trend toward denominationalism, favoured a system that was not only non-sectarian, but one which would provide a good secular education.¹⁵

Moreover, the core belief of the Committee, authorized by Governor Irwin, as clearly outlined by Eagleton, was:

That no system should be instructed which should have an exclusive tendency in favour of the Church of England or any other denomination, and that their duty was to maintain a system suited to all whose education was committed to them.¹⁶

Where this differed from the National and Denominational system operative in New South Wales, was in its tendency toward religious eclecticism or pluralism. The most obvious result was that the decentralized structures of educational administration remained in place for a considerably longer period, and the absence of a religious monopoly on education meant; that the early educational administrators acted more as intermediaries rather than bureaucrats. However, this did not stop Governor Irwin from withholding State-aid to Catholic Schools,¹⁷ nor in allowing the Church of England sole charge of the Colonial Schools.¹⁸

This apparent lack of provision for the spiritual welfare of the Roman Catholics,¹⁹ on the part of the Colonial administration, was equated with an autocracy which 'emphasized Protestant power versus Catholic insignificance'.²⁰ Not until Governor Fitzgerald, who in 1848 acting at the behest of Lord Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies), could financial grants be given to support Roman Catholic teachers and for the repairs of Roman Catholic schools, along with an annual grant for the building and repairing of churches; all made achievable by the policy of non-partiality toward the various religious groups advocated by Grey.²¹ Indeed, it was assumed that Governor Fitzgerald, along with the newly appointed Colonial Secretary R.R. Madden (a Roman Catholic),

could best ameliorate or settle the education dispute.²²

However, Roman Catholic clergy who had the oversight of Catholic education, were not warmly disposed, towards the staunchly Protestant Board of Education authorized by Governor Irwin. They strongly objected to any system that was to be set in place other than the Irish National System of education, the reading of the Bible without note or comment and to the over-reliance on private funding for educational expenditure.²³ Furthermore Catholic clergy vigorously opposed the general system of education to be set in place by the General Board, for allowing the option of individual clergy to instruct children in all matters pertaining to religion.²⁴

Throughout much of the nineteenth century and particularly during the period under investigation, religion was subsidized by the State, 'as an essential defence of public morality'.²⁵ In colonial Western Australia, this quest for moral reform, by religious means, was considered to be best accomplished through education. While this was one of the major aspirations of the General Board, its Anglican composition along with the elite status of the Church of England in the colony guaranteed that close cooperation between Church and State ensued.²⁶ The result, as was evident after Kennedy's governorship, was an attenuation of educational policy that became closely circumscribed. In other words the policies eventually adopted were made in conjunction with the General Board and the Colonial Secretary's Office. Yet throughout the Irwin and Fitzgerald regimes, the willingness, in cooperation with the General Board (formerly Committee) to give

Roman Catholics a separate grant for educational purposes, was a blot on the character of the then governor. For he (Fitzgerald) was credited with 'an ultra-liberalism which his friends at home would have denounced as far worse than popery'.²⁷

Factors Precipitating the Challenge

This token form of rapprochement or generosity toward Catholics,²⁸ best epitomised the mediatory role of the General Board. However, in comparison with New South Wales where the Anglican monopoly on education was made more conspicuous through the Church and Schools Corporation, which was finally dissolved in 1833 after much opposition from Catholic, Dissenting and liberal groups;²⁹ in Western Australia by contrast the cultural dimension to Anglican ecclesiastical rule was maintained.³⁰ Yet in New South Wales, no special grant existed for Catholic schools, despite the remonstrations of Bishop Polding and Vicar-General Ulathorne.³¹ What was commonplace in that colony throughout the 1820's and early 1830's, was a system of education overly concerned with its moral dimension and where church attendances became obligatory for pupils.³² This 'innovation' when controlled from one vantage point, namely, the Church of England; engendered strong non-Anglican sentiment in the form of Father Joseph Therry (Roman Catholic) and Dr. John Dunmore Lang (Presbyterian).³³

The Church and Schools Corporation in New South Wales, was considered a

grandiose plan for a comprehensive system of education, which ended up as a mere pipe-dream.³⁴ Yet the overriding importance of religious education in the moral reform of the Colony,³⁵ was a theme long drawn out. Its only problem was in the form it would take given the Anglican monopoly. In a similar vein, Western Australia's educational progenitors echoed the same concerns as their eastern counterparts. They too voiced the need for a comprehensive system of education, with the exception of not allowing any denomination sole control over its administration despite the Anglican make-up to the original Committee of General Board. Moral reform too was high on the agenda though this was to be extended beyond the purview of religious instruction. Thus, the whole system both religious and secular was a tool for moral reform.

In terms of the future vision for both education and society, the experiment in State-controlled education in Western Australia, required a climate of religious tolerance for its ultimate success. As will become evident throughout the remainder of this thesis, such a climate did not prevail despite the 'diplomatic' efforts of the General Board. The challenge to the Board, from the Catholic sector, bears remarkable similarities with the contention of their Catholic brethren in New South Wales. While Roman Catholic educationalists believed that, 'religion must entwine and mix itself up with education,' they also, firmly believed, that moral reform was achievable 'by a thoroughgoing religious education'.³⁶ This presented an ecclesiastical view of a comprehensive education system which in the opinion of the General Board characterized public-style education. Yet the General Board's conformity to the views of Catholic clergy was at the expense of them,

countenancing the idea that secular elements should be infused into a seemingly non-sectarian education system.

All aspects of education along with the Catholic religion were considered to be sacrosanct. However, as O'Farrell notes, concerning the early European settlement of Australia, 'there were two essential conditions of civilisation: the Protestant religion and British political and social institutions'.³⁷ Both conspired to halt any progress made by Catholics in the educational sphere, which in Western Australia, meant that a challenge to the denominational emphasis to Catholic education, could be used as a pretext for withholding aid. But in Western Australia, popular sentiment was in favour of the view, that all classes, 'of whatever creed, should be educated', and that this 'is one of first rate importance', which received 'the warm support of the colonists', especially amongst the ladies of the Benevolent Societies.³⁸

British-style Protestantism counterpoised with Irish-style Catholicism was a volatile mixture in the most divisive of issues, in the Nineteenth Century, namely education. Normally, educational decision or policy-making was countersigned by governors and colonial officials, who leaned toward the Protestant side of Anglicanism. Most governors were Anglican in their religious affiliations, which helped them buttress their power and social prestige. The ultra-conservatism of many was often construed as a form of authoritarianism,³⁹ from which the authoritarian person construed 'things in line with their personality dispositions'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the beliefs of such people are 'isolationist' and 'imperialistic'.⁴¹ The

“isolationist” and “imperialistic” connotations, feature prominently in the ability of governors to snuff out any vestiges of Irish or Catholic influence.

These authoritarian tendencies of Anglican governors, allowed them in the initial phase of educational development, to transfer control of education over to the Church of England.⁴² When this was objected to on conscionable grounds, a more general, less denominationally based system of education was imposed from ‘on high’, whereby:

The Bible was read daily without note or comment, no catechisms were allowed, and in every way an attempt was made to make the religious instruction so general as to be acceptable to people of all denominations.⁴³

However, this system was still unashamedly Protestant, which failed to provide enough inspiration for Catholic clergy and parents to fully endorse. Thus Catholic children failed to participate in such a scheme, and indeed, along with the rest of the Catholic population, remained on the periphery of society. So much so, that a scheme to increase the intake of Catholic immigrants into Australia, was frowned upon by Presbyterian minister the Reverend Lang, being dubbed “a Popish plot”.⁴⁴

Catholic hostility was not confined to clerical outbursts in New South Wales, but the General Board of Education in Western Australia, composed entirely of

Protestants was not favourably disposed to Dr. Brady, the first Bishop of Perth, nor to his claims.⁴⁵ His fervid appeals for financial aid to assist in the building of Catholic schools, were always rejected by Governor Irwin, on the spurious grounds, that the Protestant population far outweighed that of Catholics. It took a petition to Queen Victoria to rectify the situation, where the 'unlawful' and 'unconstitutional' actions of the Colonial Government were cited, which deprived Catholic children of their rights. What soon followed, was the appointment of a new Colonial Secretary, R. R. Madden, who corrected abuses that had crept into the government administration, and a restoration of the grant to Catholic schools.⁴⁶ Having secured what was rightfully theirs, the Catholic education sector could continue to plot its own course of action, without any feelings of religious rancour.

Schools that were established during the early life of the General Board could be categorized as: rectory schools, private academies, church schools, Government assisted schools and private schools, and as such were regarded as 'superior schools'.⁴⁷ Private arrangements for schooling that existed prior to the General Board, included the 'front parlour' schools kept by women for elementary tuition and the establishment for 'young ladies'.⁴⁸ These varied and elite systems of instruction, maintained by annual subscription payments, existed alongside the more religiously and practically oriented Catholic schools. Yet the excessive apathy towards religion and education, over time, transcended class barriers. So that, even upper-class landowners, no longer felt the need for their children to receive a classical education, for 'they deemed it more important that their

children be well equipped for the material life of the Colony'.⁴⁹

Hostility toward Catholics, coupled with a myriad of schools, operating in a decentralised system, were classic features of English civil life. Indeed, the western colony was often described as 'an outpost of English middle-class society'.⁵⁰ There was however, a tendency in the Colony, toward a style of European autocracy that belied its Protestant heritage. It was this sense of authoritarianism that raised the ire of Catholics and the general populace. This was most pronounced in the character of many of the Colony's governors during the tenure of the General Board. The most obvious result, due to the Anglican composition of the Board, was that a delicate balancing act had to be negotiated. Not only did concessions for Catholics become commonplace, but this was essential, in order for the pragmatic and altruistic aims of the Board to be fully realised. The general apathy of the populace toward education guaranteed this.

Yet it was the religious component to education or the school curriculum that generated the greatest level of controversy, which as Wellock notes, 'provided to a large extent the philosophical framework out of which the present State system of education grew'.⁵¹ Religious instruction for many Protestant children was already taking place in the confines of Catholic schools. This situation alarmed many of the governors especially Governor Clarke who prompted by this circumstance formulated his own scheme of providing National Schools for the Colony's children.⁵² However, as Wellock further notes, the problem of religion in such a system still remained:

After noting rather smugly that not even the Mother Country [sic] had been able to overcome successfully the problem of religion in a national system, the Committee went on to give a rationale for its principles. They could not recommend the total absence of all religious instruction, "since education without religion serves only to bestow power on depravity".⁵³

Religion it was felt had to be taught in schools for the moral good of the Colony. The problem for Anglican governors was that most organized religious instruction in Perth lay in the grasp of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁴ A temporary solution to this problem, came in the form of the newly established Colonial School, which opened up its doors in March of 1846.⁵⁵ This was the year in which R.W. Nash, a member of the original General Board, was heard exclaiming, that, "education without religion is utterly worthless".⁵⁶

However, unbeknown to the General Board, their recommendation, that the Bible be read without note or comment in schools, occurred at a time when biblical criticism was much in vogue in England and Germany, and when Darwin's Origin of Species was being researched.⁵⁷ It was a time when the Protestant 'agenda' in education succumbed to these liberal ideas. The Board's pro-Protestant emphasis became more glaringly obvious once Government or Colonial Schools became known as Protestant Schools.⁵⁸ In addition to this, the Church of England's catechism was to be learnt and recited.⁵⁹ These plans of the General Board for the

moral improvement of children, were very much those of Governor Irwin's as well, however:

Irwin's labours on behalf of Protestant Christianity and primary education in the Colony were commendable at a time when official interest was rather tepid, but it seems to have provoked more Roman Catholic hostility than was necessary to safeguard the Protestant hegemony.⁶⁰

The immediate response of Catholic clergy to this "Protestant hegemony," was to discourage children of their own flock from attending any schools except those, which had been established by themselves. To add insult to injury, Catholic priests, along with the laity, were aggrieved at the prospect of paying taxes to maintain these Protestant schools, while at the same time having to shoulder the burden of their own⁶¹ (refer to Appendix 1 on the Governors).

As a means of obviating the tenuous relations between a staunchly Protestant State apparatus and the Catholic Church, Dr. Brady as Bishop of Perth, advocated in favour of the need for a National system of education.⁶² Such a system was roundly condemned by the General Board for being considered sectarian in nature. Yet such hostility toward Catholic proposals was traceable to events preceding the inauguration of the General Board. For in 1844, the Catholic Church began a mission to the Aborigines, which proved to be much more durable and as Aveling notes, was:

In some senses more successful than the Protestant efforts. It was premised on an almost total separation from white society, a condition which only the Catholics had sufficient manpower and motivation to achieve.⁶³

The bitter jealousy and antagonisms engendered by these Catholic successes, brought into sharper focus, the political controversy surrounding the issue of State aid to religious education.⁶⁴

Financial assistance for the Catholic educational sector was well nigh impossible to obtain, as newspaper reports attest. The Inquirer, which was owned and managed by Francis Lochee, a prominent member of the General Board, reports on the 4th of March 1846, that a scheme devised by Dr. Brady to bring Roman Catholic catechists to Fremantle "for the purpose of affording instruction to the rising generation", was strenuously objected to, on the grounds that the Catholic population there, was considered too small in number for such a purpose.⁶⁵ A logical rationale for this response could be found in attacks on the Roman Catholic faith and religion⁶⁶ by the Protestant paper. So that, even the mere suggestion of a Catholic free school in Fremantle was "uncalled for".⁶⁷ Catholic opponents did not have it their own way, for in a letter written in defence of Dr. Brady and signed: "A friend of education", the opposition of "the bigots in this colony", which had "been exceedingly fierce and unmanly",⁶⁸ did not go unnoticed.

Moreover, these “bigoted” elements, by obstructing the normal course of events for Catholics were stultifying the progress of education by their opposition. Thus as our learned gentleman further notes:

Anathemas from the pulpit have been thundered against it; at the prayer meetings and tea parties in the town the same system is kept up against that unoffending class of the Queen’s subjects; and no engine is left untried, no foul accusation forgotten to seduce scholars from their tuition. In this Colony, at least, Catholicism and liberality go hand in hand, and this is the true secret of the opposition of the Government to the further progress of education.⁶⁹

The conservative position adopted by the Government, working in tandem with the General Board, failed to endear them to the cause of the Catholic sympathisers. Its Anglican proclivities were put under intense scrutiny, as its “zealots”, who “ostensibly belonged to the Church of England”, allowed Catholic children, “to be educated in sectarian principles inimical to her establishment.”⁷⁰

This situation was not dissimilar to that which emerged in New South Wales, where Bishop Broughton firmly believed that the Church of England was ‘the repository of all truths both human and divine.’⁷¹ Yet the same denominational emphasis to education, with the exception of Western Australia and South

Australia, was highly favoured.⁷² Not only did the Church of England succumb to religious bigotry, but as Fogarty notes, "the Romanish element" was 'everywhere held in wide distrust', and was considered a 'jesuitical device' for 'undermining Protestantism and preparing the way for the ultimate establishment of Popery.'⁷³ Also, by some clergy in New South Wales, most notably the reverend Samuel Marsden, Catholicism was identified as the chief source of rebellion.⁷⁴ It was for this reason, that Marsden advocated the need for one religion, so as to 'stabilise the State and eliminate internal divisions.'⁷⁵

While the Catholicism in the eastern seaboard colonies was linked culturally to Ireland, a long-time enemy of England, the revulsion of the Catholic Church there had political connotations. That is, everything considered to be Irish, was antipathetic to the dominant English culture. As such, any attempts at "innovation" by the Catholic Church, such as the notion of there being books in orphanages conforming to Catholic belief for its children, was objected to by the Church of England. The reason being, that '... the spirit no less than the letter of the law required all the inmates of the orphanages to be brought up in the tenets of the Church of England'⁷⁶ Similarly, attempts to introduce the Irish National System of education into the Colony, was also objected to, on the grounds 'that it would be subversive of the fundamental principles of Protestantism.'⁷⁷ However, the same denominational emphasis with regard to religious instruction prevailed in the Anglican monopoly, causing Bishop Broughton to exclaim, 'that education without doctrine would lead to a permissiveness in moral behaviour, and a republicanism in politics, which would bring ship-wreck to Christian

civilization.’⁷⁸

These alarmist tendencies on the part of Anglican clergy in New South Wales, were also commonplace amongst prominent politicians who had an ‘abiding horror of Roman Catholicism.’⁷⁹ Their revulsion of Catholic belief, centered upon the fear attached to a future society devoid of Christian knowledge and moral decency. In Western Australia, where a pro-Anglican, General Board of Education had been inaugurated, the hostility that existed toward Roman Catholics did encompass the same concerns as their eastern neighbours. However, there was never any thought given to the role that Catholics would play in the political machinery of the future. The western colony was to remain more staunchly English and “monarchical” in cultural and political terms. Yet the autocratic tendencies of governors, and for a time, the State apparatus, ensured that Catholic challenges to colonial administration, were centered more on the impediments to their progress.

The missionary, as opposed to pastoral emphasis to Roman Catholic evangelism in the western colony, diverted attention away from doctrinal to pecuniary concerns. Thus the endeavour to secure financial aid for the building of churches and schools, superseded issues surrounding the wholesale acceptance of ‘popish’ ideas. There were two valid reasons for this: lack of a strong Scottish Presbyterian and Irish Catholic influence, and the avowedly English nature of the Colony. It was the latter that was the most concern for Catholic clergy in their early dealings with the General Board. However, over the passage of time, the

Anglicised nature of colonial society and Anglican proclivities of most Board members, proved a boon to the Catholic Church. Challenges to the overly Protestant composition of the Board and its members, did largely occur from Bishop Brady. This served to galvanize the Anglican-dominated machinery of the Board into action; especially in the need to fulfill its original aims of improving school enrolments and providing for a suitable system of education.

However, it is made unclear from the historical records on Western Australia, as to why there was such bitter hatred of all things Catholic. The clue may have lay in the previous century, where Catholicism and Catholic regimes, especially in Europe, repressed the freedom of the masses and as such were dubbed as 'absolutist'. Yet in response to a comment made in the previous chapter, the Colonial Government of Western Australia was itself absolutist. Governors in particular, seemed to have a firm hold on power, to the point of swaying decisions of the State apparatus to conform with their own. This system was much akin to that of the monarchical one operative in the Catholic Church, and for reasons largely theological, was amenable to the decision-making of the Anglican elite.

The Catholic challenge to the newly appointed General Board was one that, in the long run, proved to be beneficial for Church/State relations and for educational development in the Colony. For it enabled the Board to channel its energies into fulfilling its ultimate ideal, namely, to see emerge a morally just and responsible society founded on Christian principles. In order to achieve this altruistic aim, a fair degree of religious equanimity and tolerance had to prevail. Thus concessions

to Catholics were essential in order for this to transpire. Had the Board been composed of members from the dissenting Protestant denominations, then these conciliatory gestures would not have been forthcoming. They were made possible by the "middle way" of Anglicanism, described by Stephen Neill, as being 'suspended on the perfect point of balance'.⁸⁰ It was best clarified in the Elizabethan settlement of the late sixteenth century where many aspects of Catholic doctrine and dogma that conformed to the Scriptural Warrant were retained, but where, scholastic philosophy and late medieval tradition masquerading as theological truth were discarded.⁸¹

Moreover, due to its retention of Catholic and Reformist theology, the Anglican Church, 'appeals to sound learning, and its practices a wide and charitable toleration.'⁸² And, according to Garbett, 'in no other church are present all four-Catholic, Reformed, Sound Learning and Toleration.'⁸³ Despite these commendable attributes, the General Board and its members were quick to respond to the challenge meted out to them from Dr. Brady. Not only did they consider his letters to be composed of a 'vague nature and style', but took offense at the charges made by the Bishop, that the original Committee was founded upon "illiberal", "exclusive" and "intolerable" principles. In their defense, the General Board cited the advantages to be derived from a more general or public-style education, which included the need for a more cohesive and harmonious society, which was not deemed possible under the Irish National System of education advocated by Brady.⁸⁴

Indeed, the only system that the Roman Catholic Church favoured, for the education of the Colony's children was the one emanating from Ireland.⁸⁵ Yet despite the trenchant opposition to the General Board's plan for a comprehensive system of education, all attempts were made by Governor Irwin, at least, to convey the concerns of the Roman Catholic clergy to the Imperial Government. The Governor, in a dispatch to Earl Grey, dated the 25th of January 1848, not only outlines the plight of the Catholics in their quest for financial aid, but rejects the notion that they have been unfairly treated by not being given a special grant; while also disputing false claims that Roman Catholics constitute half of the population; and that there were two million Aborigines; claims which placed Dr. Brady's character "in a questionable light". Nevertheless, it was also noted, that Roman Catholics "appeared to live in harmony with other denominations", and that their teachers were renowned for their "zealous and benevolent efforts".⁸⁶

However, the same could not be said about Mr. Wittenoom's Colonial School, as complaints to the General Board made by several parents attests, 'to the want of progress of the children.'⁸⁷ The progress made by the Catholic schools which eclipsed that of the Colonial School, caused the General Board to frankly admit, that it has been a 'lamentable failure'.⁸⁸ This apparent lack of progress, was not helpful once national schools became known as Protestant Schools, where 'teachers were allowed to expound the Scriptures, though not to introduce controversial doctrinal issues.'⁸⁹ To devout Catholic parents, this 'non-sectarian education or religion', could never, 'furnish their children with the spirit as well as the letter of personal holiness.'⁹⁰ And for this valid reason, parents no less than

clergy, were opposed to any system of comprehensive and ecumenically-based education, thus even further hampering the progress and ability of the General Board to fulfill its original aims and ideals.

Catholic Educational Successes Acting as a Challenge to the Board's Secular and Sectarian System

At this juncture it becomes somewhat imperative to briefly trace the early history of the Catholic Church in Western Australia. This historical record, it is hoped, would shed light on the Catholic Church's stance toward education. Its first Bishop, Father Brady, arrived in Perth on the 13th day of December 1843 accompanied by a Belgian priest of sixty years, Father Joostens who had served in the armies of Napoleon and an Irish Catechist, Patrick O'Reiley. At the behest and magnanimity of Governor Hutt, land at Church Hill (Victoria Avenue) was granted, from where, the first foundation of the Catholic Church was laid on January 16th 1844.⁹¹ Dr. Brady, who was initially sent out from Ireland to fulfill his ecclesiastical duties on Norfolk Island, also ended up officiating at Windsor in the fledgling colony of New South Wales.⁹² He was appointed to the See of Perth and consecrated as Bishop in Rome in 1845, returning to Western Australia with two missionaries, Dom Serra and Dom Salvado, who fled to Italy from their native Spain that was convulsed in revolution. Both these missionaries expressed their desire to Monsignor Brunelli, the Prefect of the Propaganda in Rome, to further their calling in the Swan River District.⁹³

Not long after their arrival, a journey to a place called Baggi-Baggi some seventy miles north of Perth, with an English monk, French novice Brother Leander Fontaine and Irish Catechist John Gorman took place. Their success in establishing a rapport with the local inhabitants is graphically illustrated by Birt:

The night passed without much sleep for them; and the following day, understanding from the looks of the savages [sic], that they were about to attack them with their spears, they anticipated the movement and advanced towards them, making signs that they meant only peace, and offering sugar and rice cakes. This completely disarmed the savages [sic], and by these little presents they succeeded in making them friends.⁹⁴

This level of success was soon to be extended toward the children of the indigenous population, who encountered this newfound benevolence, in the Mission School, attached to the monastery founded by Dom Salvado. Known as New Norcia, a Spanish variant of the Italian Nurcia, where the rule of Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine Order was enunciated; the new ecclesiastical and spiritual retreat housed both boys and girls schools. Its sole purpose was to bring 'Christianity and civilisation' to indigenous children, by instruction in religion, the three R's and in practical accomplishments such as gardening and domestic chores.⁹⁵ In their endeavours, the Benedictine monks, succeeded in what was considered at the time, to be impossible, namely, in 'civilizing' the indigenous scholars and making them 'useful' Christian citizens'.⁹⁶

This momentous achievement could not hoped to be matched by their Protestant counterparts, nor by the Anglican dominated General Board. In the case of the latter, it constituted a challenge to their authoritative position as the guardians of educational policy. This stewardship was under threat, if the Board's performance was not satisfactory. The way out of the malaise for the General Board, apart from barring Roman Catholics from becoming members of the Board, was to collude with governors, by adopting their views and summations of certain Catholic clergy. A favourite target was first Bishop Dr. Brady, who, although commended for his work in relieving the poor and education the children on the island of Mauritius;⁹⁷ was considered to be somewhat austere and aloof; a lifestyle in which he attempted to encourage fellow clergy to adopt,⁹⁸ which witnessed Brady, 'trained in the hard school of a French mission', living in the belfry of the cathedral.⁹⁹

To further challenge or antagonize the Board, Dr. Brady made it possible for the Sisters of Mercy, a group of nuns from Ireland, to arrive in the Colony and begin the process of educating girls.¹⁰⁰ While Bishop Salvado is often eulogized as having 'the greatest regard and esteem' amongst the indigenous population, as 'their guardian and protector' and 'their best friend' and 'most ardent supporter';¹⁰¹ the same could not be recorded of Brady. According to Reilly, the first Bishop of Perth 'had many excellent qualities, but lacked firmness', and moreover, 'was greatly wanting in those necessary business qualifications, so essential in the head of the Church in a young and struggling community'.¹⁰² The

financial extravagancies of Brady, along with the rift with Dom Serra, are best left to the following chapters. It will suffice to note, that Brady's lack of pragmatism, although much maligned, was the catalyst, which spurred the General Board into prompt action.

Bishop Brady and his colleagues' achievements in the educational sphere enabled the General Board to devise its own alternative strategy. This revolved around infusing the secular and sacred elements of instruction into a seemingly non-sectarian form of education. As evidenced by the dismal failure of the Colonial School, such a system proved to be its own undoing. The Catholic challenge to such a system and the relative merits of their own, as earlier evidenced by the inclusion of Protestant children in their schools served as a means of reevaluating what was meant by a comprehensive system of education. Thus the quantity rather than the quality of the schooling ended up being the order of the day for the General Board. To put it simply, the Board could not keep pace with the successes of the Roman Catholic educational sector, all of which constituted a direct challenge to the secular and non-sectarian system, brought into being as a result of the separate grant issue.

In addition to the achievements of Brady and Salvado, the Board had to contend with those of the Sisters of Mercy in their provision for girls' schooling. The order was originally founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin, and aptly named for the charitable acts of mercy bestowed upon the poor.¹⁰³ Their major source of success in colonial Western Australia, was in attracting a sizeable number of

Protestant children to their newly formed school, 'whose parents often valued education more than the mainly working class Catholic parents'.¹⁰⁴ And as the minutes of the General Board of Education attest, the school run by the Sisters in Victoria Avenue (now Mercedes College), had 60 pupils. Along with the Perth Catholic Boy's College, they were educating close to 40% of the 168 children at school in the colony, which as Newbold notes, 'that fact alone makes their presence historically important in this State'.¹⁰⁵ Mother Ursula Frayne was superioress of the pioneer group in Perth.¹⁰⁶ Under her guidance, the Sisters fulfilled their mission and calling, by performing benevolent acts of charity to the poor, sick and needy and to prisoners. It was for such Christ-like acts that 'the Sisters were well and truly accepted in mainly Protestant Perth'.¹⁰⁷

Although, the general populace were endeared toward those Catholics that reached out a warm hand to minorities within the community, media pundits did not share the same sense of admiration. Their task as committed Protestants was to counter "Romanish errors", in order:

To preserve the rising generation from moral corruption in possession of reason and common sense, and to save them from idolatry, purgatory and death.¹⁰⁸

Weaning the "leaven of idolatry" from the minds of children, so as not to educate them in "Popery,"¹⁰⁹ proved an effective smokescreen, for masking the paltry achievements in education, of the Protestants. Furthermore, the "heathen forms of

morality”, objected to in the Irish National System of education,¹¹⁰ advocated by Bishop Brady, was another vain attempt, to steer Protestant children away from the Catholic schools.

What was wholeheartedly objected to, by many in the Colony of Western Australia and resonated with the sentiments expressed by elite figures in New South Wales, was the supposedly divine status of Roman Catholicism and Catholic tradition, masquerading as authentic Christian doctrine. In terms of the former, Nichols notes, that it was an institution that claimed, ‘... to possess the full truth about man’s relationship with the divine.’¹¹¹ However, biblical interpretation and scholarship in Roman Catholicism, was to have an ancillary status. By contrast, Protestantism regarded the Bible as the divinely inspired Word of God and Protestants themselves aimed, to return to the simplicity of the Bible,¹¹² both in corporate worship and communal practice. Even the Church of England, in its Reformist and Catholic theological stance, tested and proved the latter, ‘against the reading of Scripture’.¹¹³

As so much of education and its policy-making were intertwined with religion, the correct Christological interpretation of the Divine was used by educators to test the relative merits of a particular educational system and its institutions. A lack of conformity to the Scriptural Warrant in the minds of Protestants, usually indicated, that such a system was corrupt. For Catholics, the infusion of secular elements into religious instruction and the general curriculum, denoted whether a system was corrupt or not. In most instances, the level and type of religious

instruction in schools, was used by educational administrators, including the General Board, as the benchmark for the formulation of policy. Instruction in religion was deemed to be the major priority of educators and was the chief means of hastening the process toward a morally just and responsible society. As this was the major altruistic ideal of the General Board, its success had to be gauged in response to its logical outcome, namely, religious tolerance. But how could this be achieved, when there was so much contention over doctrinal issues?

Word constraints do not permit a discussion of the various scriptural and doctrinal interpretations of the Protestant denominations. For this reason, the following analysis is confined to those aspects of Catholic tradition or dogma that are germane to its institution. These are related to the afterlife, the Sacrament of Holy Communion and Church governance. To begin with, the eschatological stance of the Catholic Church, from the perspective of the individual believer, is somewhat more ambiguous than the final destiny of Heaven or Hell in Protestant religion. According to Catholic tradition of the medieval period, individual believers after their departure from earthly existence, go through what is known as 'purgatory'. This is a 'transcendental condition of all eschatological phenomena', where a believer's works are tried by fire and where all sin is purged by fire, until Divine grace has been completed. All souls under this belief go through their 'purgatory' in Hades or Sheol and are distinguished by merit, i.e. good persons spend less time in purgatory than bad ones. It is a purging of the Soul, which requires the prayers of the faithful on behalf of the dead. Once purged, the individual Soul transcends the dark abyss into the eternal light of Heaven.¹¹⁴

Similarly, the position with regard to the sacred elements of bread and wine in Holy Communion is as equally ambiguous. The doctrine known as 'transubstantiation', enunciated by the Council of Trent, lays claim to a change of the whole substance of bread (*totus substantiae panis*) into the body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine (*totus substantiae vini*) into the bloody of Christ, the species of bread and wine remaining unchanged.¹¹⁵ This 'magical' element to the Eucharist was considered as equally repugnant by Protestants, as the notion of 'Papal infallibility', whereby, the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church its Vicar-General the Pope, can utter the oracles of God as if they actually were the very words of God Himself; and thus are 'infallible'.¹¹⁶ As already mentioned, the Church of England at the time of the Elizabethan Settlement rejected this non-biblical interpretation to Christian doctrine and Church governance. This rejection of authentic Catholic tradition never waned. It meant, that in terms of educational administration in a predominantly Anglicised Colony, where the vast majority of administrators were Anglican laypersons and clergy, Catholic pleas for financial assistance were frowned upon.

What it all mounted to was that the Catholic educational sector, controlled by its top clergy, in light of their theological stance, had to justify the reasons why aid was sought. Given the trenchant criticism to their proposal to introduce the Irish National System into schools and the General Board's opposition to teachers usurping the role of ministers in religious instruction,¹¹⁷ Roman Catholic educational proponents could not hope to force the pace. For once Government or

Colonial Schools become known as Protestant Schools;¹¹⁸ from where the Church of England's catechism was recited;¹¹⁹ the Roman Catholics were forced to go it alone. They succeeded in their lone endeavours, by developing a system of education diametrically opposed to the overly secular one favoured by the General Board.¹²⁰ A system that was to leave out all distinctive religious instruction in the general course of education, was one, which, 'met with a cold reception abroad as it has done at home for those it was intended to please'.¹²¹ This was the system vehemently opposed by Catholic clergy.

Along with their brethren in New South Wales, the Roman Catholic fraternity suffered many prejudices, in an era when religious bigotry thrived. For in Protestant eyes:

Dependence of the Catholic on the priest tended to perpetuate that ignorance, superstition, priest craft, servility, poverty, filth, disease, drunkenness and lying which in Protestant eyes followed Catholicism as night followed day.¹²²

Yet these stereotypical depictions of Catholics when combined with opposition toward their educational proposals, stymied the growth of schools, especially those catering for children from poorer families. Given the undue hostility toward Catholics in both New South Wales and Western Australia, the only way forward in educational development, was to be swept along by the tide of popular sentiment. Thus a populism conceived as a fraternity based on locality and a form

of primitivism, whereby, '...it is an easy step to intolerance, suspicion, fear of betrayal, and xenophobia',¹²³ prevailed. Moreover, given the colonists apathy towards public-style education, it was both anti-intellectual and anti-establishment.¹²⁴ Similarly, 'being traditional, populism is religious, but it opposed the religious establishment. It tends strongly to sectarianisms'¹²⁵ These localised affiliations and mutual suspicion combined with the excessive apathy of the populace, were brought into sharper focus for the General Board, in their relations with the Catholic Church.

In order to succeed with their original aims and ideals the populist sentiment had to be jettisoned. However, this proved a difficult task in fledgling colonies, such as Western Australia and is best illustrated by populism's theory of personality, as defined by MacRae:

The theory that concerns us runs as follows: in simple societies there is a paucity and a uniformity of institutions. Individuals in such societies are competent to fill many roles: they are 'many faceted' and therefore various, realised integral personalities.¹²⁶

In terms of the composition of the General Board and the intellectual quality of its members, the multi-faceted roles that each played in colonial society, did not endear them to the vast bulk of the population. Once again, the economic hardships and privations suffered by many on the land, combined with the increasingly secular nature of society, caused this state of affairs to prevail.

These socio-economic factors did impinge upon the progress or performance of the General Board, being ever present in many of the minutes and outward correspondences. Given the extreme poverty of many, including institutions, in the early days of colonial rule, the catch-phrase 'to go to the people'¹²⁷ and to learn everything from them;¹²⁸ was as equally valid for the General Board as it was for all intelligentsia. Legislating on behalf of a poverty-stricken society meant equating with the 'interests created by the people, interests which were inherent in its life and which it recognized'¹²⁹ Also while the Anglican composition of the General Board was best able to negotiate with Catholic clergy, the adherence of some Board members to the 'tenets' of Freemasonry, was meant to have a much broader appeal.

The central ideals of Freemasonry such as brotherly love, truth and charitable acts underpinned those of the altruistic ideals of the General Board. What these central facets of freemasonry denoted, was mutual respect and tolerance for the beliefs and ideas of others; charitable giving of money, time and effort, and the quest for high moral standards.¹³⁰ In short, 'the promotion of toleration and the consequent creation of a better society'.¹³¹ All of which could have been made possible, by a wholesale acceptance of public-style education promoted by the Board. Indeed, the very ideal of educating children of all Christian sects together, could only have eventuated, if it had been predicated upon 'brotherly love' and 'tolerance'. However, the fraternal nature of Freemasonry was one akin to the public school spirit and as such, '... was a flourishing Empire of its own'.¹³² It

also had imperialistic overtones,¹³³ serving to buttress British social, political, religious and intellectual institutions. And as such was inimical to Irish-style Catholicism of the several Australian colonies and to the denominational or sectarian influences in Catholic opposition to the Board's proposals.

However, in the case of the Colony of New South Wales, the Catholic inspired Denominational System of education, left the majority largely uneducated.¹³⁴ It also fostered a form of sectarianism that was to be eschewed.¹³⁵ Also, the moral decline in the colony, that was largely attributed to the material aggrandisement and hedonistic nature of society,¹³⁶ had to be arrested. Similar concerns were echoed in the Colony of Western Australia, though the form of education designed to ameliorate these problems, was not only rejected by the vast majority of Catholics, but the general populace as a whole.

During the year 1852, the General Board of Education become subject to the control of local authorities, in that year there were 340 pupils in attendance in schools at Perth and Fremantle.¹³⁷ The following year, it is noted in the Blue Books that the Sisters of Mercy took the leading role in educating young ladies including Aboriginal girls. In terms of school attendances, there were 289 pupils at schools in Perth and Fremantle.¹³⁸ In 1854, this figure had fallen to 249.¹³⁹ This inability on the part of the General Board to fulfill its pragmatic ideal, of improving school enrolments could be attributed to three factors. Two of these are directly mentioned in the figures found in the Blue Books. The first of which, pertains to the English practice of devolving control of education by removing it

temporarily from the hands of 'governmental' authorities, to be placed in the care of local councils. Secondly, the lack of resolve shown on the part of the General Board, to counter the Catholic hegemony in education in a predominantly Protestant colony. And thirdly, although unmentioned in the figures, was the financial crisis that erupted during the Fitzgerald era, which witnessed a debt of some 15,000 pounds, bringing the Colony to the verge of bankruptcy.¹⁴⁰

The maintenance of the decentralised structures, in a small and widely scattered population, coupled with the Catholic hegemony in a predominantly Anglican Colony, did not augur well for the General Board. This state of affairs was not helped, by the governor lacking in the requisite entrepreneurial skills. For as Reilly notes of Fitzgerald, he was a:

Generous kind-hearted sailor who knew more of the quarterdeck, and of nautical matters generally, than of directing and guiding a Colony at a period of grave difficulty, and when the services of a practical, thorough going business man was pressingly required.¹⁴¹

Having to work alongside an impractically minded governor, made the task of the General Board that much harder. It was further compounded once a solution to the financial crisis, in the form of convict labour, was agreed upon. The transportation of convicts which took place in 1850, witnessed a sizeable influx of Irish Catholics into the Colony of Western Australia, many of whom were

affiliated with the Irish Republican Brotherhood (the Fenians).¹⁴² Thus further concessions to the Catholic educational sector, it was thought had to be given. However, the Board had the vexed problem of improving the status of the Colonial Schools given the want of progress of the pupils in them.¹⁴³

Improvements to school enrolments and the fulfillment of moral ideals were noble aims. However, as will become apparent in the subsequent chapter, they could not be achieved without a system of education accessible to children from poorer families. This in a sense was what the Roman Catholic educational sector had achieved and accounts for the continued successes over Protestant counterparts. It also constituted a challenge to the General Board's religious and secular emphasis to education. However, this proved somewhat beneficial, in that it enabled the Board to focus more closely on working to achieve its original aims and ideals. But despite the socio-economic factors that impinged upon its progress, the General Board had to strive to overcome the authoritarian and populist tendencies of governors.

While a knowledge of the history, tradition and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church is a complex and fascinating subject in itself its particular importance in the historical, social and educational development of Western Australia is significant for understanding exactly why, the shift in focus from 'elite' to 'ccmmon' schooling took place. The high degree of sectarian rivalry and the ability of the General Board to smooth over concerns of the Catholic hierarchy were pivotal to the latter success of Governor Kennedy in securing a form of

'elementary' education for the poorer classes. This delicate balancing act of the General Board was mediated, during a time when it was facing a hostile challenge from Roman Catholic clergy over its staunchly Protestant emphasis to its compositional makeup and proposed policy initiatives. Strong opposition on the part of laity and clergy profoundly affected the General Board's ability to negotiate with both the general populace and the Governor, when attempting to secure change. This is the crux of the whole chapter.

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127. Franco Venturi, Roots of Revolution : A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia, translated from the Italian by Francis Haskell, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1960, p.75.
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135. D. Morris, 'Henry Parkes-Publicist and Legislator', in Pioneers of Australian Education : A Study of the Development of Education in New South Wales in the Nineteenth Century, edited by C. Turney, Sydney University Press, 1969, pp.159-161.
136. Ibid pp.162-163.
137. Blue Book for the Year 1852.
138. Blue Book for the Year 1853.
139. Blue Book for the Year 1854
140. Austin (1971) Op Cit p.151.

141. Reilly Op Cit p.71.
142. F.K. Crowley, Australia's Western Third : A History of Western Australia from the first settlements to modern time, MacMillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1960, p.36. The Irish Brotherhood, which was the forerunner of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), was a political movement whose sole aim was to rid Ireland of the social and economic dominance enjoyed by English immigrants, many of whom were landed gentry.
143. Minutes and Correspondence of the General Board of Education Op Cit, 5 May 1855.

CHAPTER FOUR

An Era of Mutual Distrust and Suspicion Under Governor Kennedy (1855-1862) : The General Board's Visionary Ideals Challenged

After weathering the challenge mounted to it by the Roman Catholic clergy, the General Board could concentrate all of its efforts on achieving its practical and altruistic aims. This situation was made somewhat easier, during a period of economic stringency and transformation that characterised the Kennedy regime or era. The arrival of this Irish born governor to the colony at a time of heightened religious and socio-economic turmoil and the introduction of the Irish National System of education are two of the most pivotal and controversial events in Western Australia's educational history. Kennedy not only attempted to ameliorate the fiscal crisis in the colony, but boldly instituted a system of education that was both cost-effective and successful in providing for the educational needs of the poorer class of children. Yet the system of education envisaged, coupled with the autocratic and populist excesses of Governors Kennedy and Hampton, thwarted the altruistic ideals of the General Board.

Not only were the elitist notions of public-style education to be jettisoned, but the administration of education in the colony and of educational decision-making, was to be closely attuned to the prerogatives of the Governor and his loyal deputy the Colonial Secretary. It all meant, that the members of the General Board of Education could no longer govern as mere intermediaries, acting on behalf of the

teaching fraternity. Their mediatory role, which disappeared upon the incorporation of the General Board into the Colonial Secretary's Office, preceded the bureaucratization of educational administration. The most potent result of this administrative shake-up, was the extremely high turnover rate of its members. Yet all these educational 'imperatives' could not have eventuated had the colony not suffered the perennial problem of economic deterioration and the fallout resulting from religious sectarianism. This chapter serves to highlight the problems encountered by the General Board with the loss of relative autonomy in its decision-making and the impact that political autocracy in a period of economic transition had on the Board's ability to effect change in educational policy.

The Economic and Spiritual Malaise in the Colony and the Governor's Response

The financial and economic status of the colony prior to Kennedy's arrival left a lot to be desired. This meant that in education a more cost-effective system had to be implemented. A debt of some £14,205 was incurred by his predecessor, which was largely attributed, from 1850 onwards, to a substantial growth in imports that far outweighed those of exports. In the three years after 1850, imports were valued at £126,735 up from £52,351 and most production seemed to cater for home consumption due to the fall in the world price of the colony's major export - wool. There was little consequent development of agriculture and the industrial output in the copper mine at Champion Bay was meagre.¹ To make matters

worse, the Secretary of State for the colonies, Earl Grey, in a cost-cutting measure, reduced the Imperial Parliamentary Grant used to pay Colonial Officials including the Governor and the Colonial Secretary.² It was felt that colonial expenditure used to pay salaries was to be derived from convict funds.³

Furthermore, depressed prices for sandalwood the only remittance for tea, sugar and other goods from Singapore; coupled with the high cost of shearing and freight and lack of financial incentives for farmers; gave impetus to the need to establish a penal settlement.⁴ Thus the first batch of convicts arrived in Western Australia on the first day of June 1850 on the Scindian. The financial crisis in the colony was largely attributed to the low levels of productivity that caused the prices for domestic products to remain inordinably high.⁵ However, it was felt that the crisis would soon be abated, due to “the buoyancy of the affairs of the colony”⁶, despite the fact that many of the ‘lower classes’ were in beggary.⁷

In matters pertaining to education, the financial crisis of the early to mid 1850s, caused austerity measures to be put in place that impacted upon the moral objectives of its progenitors. The General Board of Education, as earlier stated, held firm to the belief, that the reading of the Bible in schools without note or comment was imperative for the moral transformation of colonial society. Its free use amongst the young would inculcate those time honoured Christian principles leading to moral regeneration. With the advent of a strong-minded governor given over to the pursuit of financial rectitude, these principles remained in abeyance. Not only was the Bible replaced with Scripture extracts; in the quest to

secure elementary education; but the Separate Grant to Roman Catholic Schools was abolished. In abolishing State aid for Church schools, Kennedy went against the wishes of Bishop Serra and the Spanish monks.⁹ For it was the Spanish contingent that were most vehemently opposed to the abolition of the Separate or Special Grant.

Similarly, the policy of retrenchment to overhaul the public debt and maintain solvency, was as equally controversial as the system of transportation. Meetings in protest over these policies occurred throughout the colony, with a memorial or list of complaints being reluctantly forwarded by the Governor to the British Government.¹⁰ Yet the colony, could at least, breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that the convict system was not harsh or brutal in its initial phases.¹¹ Nevertheless, the regimen of discipline for ticket-of-leave men was maintained,¹² becoming more severer during the latter half of Kennedy's governorship, with floggings commonplace.¹³ Under his successor, Governor Hampton, floggings increased to a nauseating extent usually combined with solitary confinement.¹⁴

While the majority of Western Australia's early inhabitants were staunchly opposed to the idea of the colony being transformed from a free enterprise to a penal settlement; popular sentiment was inclined to concur with the Governor's view, that, schools should confine themselves to "a plain and practical education".¹⁵ Furthermore, it was felt, that an academically oriented education was unsuitable for colonists engaged in agricultural pursuits, where practical experience and shrewdness were the necessary requisites.¹⁶ Accordingly,

education was to be designed for the lower classes of society, a fact that made parents of middle class children reluctant to send their sons to schools where they were to be taught alongside children of convicts.¹⁷ These sets of circumstances were to prove to be problematic for the General Board. Not only had they countenanced the idea of a comprehensive system of education targeted toward middle class children but their agenda for moral reform in light of the fact that the free use of the Bible in schools had been curtailed was to be drastically altered.

A similar situation occurred in New South Wales, two decades earlier, with the first introduction into Australia of the Irish National System of Education, by Governor Richard Bourke, in 1833. Although a general system of education was fostered, in that colony, the opposition to such a scheme, was intensely vigorous, with its only source of support coming from the non-conformists.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it provided impetus, some decades later, for the State control of education.¹⁹ Its abolition in 1836 after the promulgation of the Church Act,²⁰ led to the securing of Government aid for a Denominational as opposed to a National System of Education.²¹ This situation differed somewhat in Western Australia, where the widespread acceptance of the Irish National System, was equated with an overly secular system of education, that flourished in the colony for many decades.

A general as opposed to a comprehensive system of education, which was tailored to suit the needs of the majority of school-age children, lent itself to an overhaul of existing administrative arrangements. As will become apparent later in the chapter, both the adjective and noun used to describe the Board was taken to its

chapter, both the adjective and noun used to describe the Board was taken to its literal extreme. The most discernible feature of this administrative overhaul, as already noted in the preamble of this chapter, was the altered role and status of the Board. No longer, (after its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office), could it function as efficiently in its semi-autonomous role, as mediator, between the competing and complimentary interests of the populace and educational fraternity. Also, due to the secular nature of the education system, which mirrored that of colonial society, altruistic ideals based on Christian principles, took a back seat to the pragmatic aims of school growth and development; in terms of increased enrolments and buildings.

The decision, by the end of 1849, to transport convicts to the colony, as a means of obviating the economic and fiscal crisis, was a hidden moral agenda of the Government's that met with much opposition. Not only was the general populace opposed to the notion of the colony being transformed into a penal settlement, but clergy too were concerned enough to advocate in favour of the colony becoming a reformist settlement. Archdeacon Wollaston, in a memorial to Earl Grey, dated the 25th of October 1850, aptly conveys the concerns shared by his diocese:

The introduction of convicts into Western Australia, while tending greatly to its wealth and prosperity, may be followed by consequences detrimental to the moral character and social condition of the colonists generally is a probability which we humbly conceive ought to be well considered and duly provided

against, and we trust that our own exertions to meet and counter-act the evils we foresee with apprehension may be effectuated by the powerful co-operation of Her Majesty's Government, and that our thanks for its timely succour in temporary adversity may be united with heartfelt gratitude for the subsequent benefit of a far higher, holier, and more durable nature.²²

Wollaston and his fellow clerics were not the only intelligentsia to be aggrieved at the prospect of the colony being turned into a dumping ground for convicts. The press too shared their sense of apprehension. One lugubrious journalist likened the situation to the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum, exclaiming that it was a "... monstrous, insane and outrageous act on the rights and liberties of a free people".²³ Thus the moral status of the colony was seen to be in jeopardy, which in part, could be ameliorated through instruction given to convict children.

This temporary transition from a free enterprise to a penal settlement placed an added burden upon the General Board's administration. Not only had they the oversight of education for free settlers, but instruction for convict children also came into their purview. Considering the fact that a sizeable proportion of these children were of Irish-Catholic background and the Governor himself was Irish; the General Board could not refuse the wishes of parents and the Government by denying their children elementary instruction. Furthermore, the expansion of the population and economy during the Kennedy and Hampton eras, boosted by

convict labour and immigration; precipitated the high turnover rate of membership of the General Board.

Effective cost-cutting measures combined with excessive pragmatism were features germane to the Kennedy and Hampton eras. However, in the case of the former, such economic medicine was dispensed by one who could easily equate with hardship. Arthur Edward Kennedy, who was descended from the Ancient Scottish family of Kennedy, was born in Cutra, County Down, on April the 9th 1809. Although educated privately, prior to entering Trinity College Dublin and serving in India as an army lieutenant in the 11th (North Devonshire) Regiment, Kennedy also supervised relief efforts during the Irish potato famine in County Meath; inspected the new Poor Law Commission there; and was temporary inspector in charge of the Kilrush Poor Law Union in County Clare from which he won 'great respect for the humane way in which he performed his duties'²⁴. Apart from obtaining the Governorship of Western Australia, Kennedy was Commander-in-Chief of Vancouver Island, a Judge at Sierra Leone in the Courts of Mixed Commission with Foreign Powers for the Suppression of the Slave Trade; Governor of Hong Kong and Queensland.²⁵

According to one retrospective view of the Governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy inspired "a kindly feeling", "without the slightest vestige of humbug", "a kindly gentleman of large experience", one who "has proved himself so good and so faithful a servant of the Queen and of her subjects".²⁶ He was, according to Battye, a 'remarkable man of commanding presence' with a 'strong personality'

who had 'a large sense of the dignity of the position; and this together with his autocratic demeanour, did much to render an otherwise fine character unpopular amongst the settlers'.²⁷ He was 'intellectual, extremely cultured and of perfect address'.²⁸ He was also noted for being a 'zealous temperance governor'.²⁹ Yet despite having a short temper and insisting on having his own way,³⁰ Kennedy was more professional than his predecessors.³¹

It was this professionalism and overwhelming sense of dignity that alienated many of the Governor's subjects. For the General Board, this alienation, was most acutely felt, not long after Kennedy's arrival to Western Australia in 1855. Replacing an elitist system of public-style education with that of general instruction in the three Rs and a compromised version of religious instruction; meant that relations between the Board and the Governor for the first year of his tenure were severely strained. Even the offer of allowing the Roman Catholic Bishop a seat on the General Board, after the abolition of the Serparate Grant, was politely rejected. For in the words of Bishop Serra, it was "circumstances beyond his control which deprived him of the pleasure of accepting the offered seat".³² Furthermore, as the Irish System of education was perceived as a means of incorporation of Roman Catholic children into interdenominational schools,³² the alienation had sectarian undertones.

Similarly, the introduction of this 'new' system of education to the colony, combined with the overbearing and authoritarian manner of the Governor, was chiefly designed to make the General Board a mere appendage of the Colonial

Secretary's Office.³³ It also guaranteed a substandard level of education which in Reverend Wollaston's view "would not satisfy the colonists".³⁴ Yet by the time of Kennedy's arrival, half the children in the colony were receiving no form of education.³⁵ Improvements to this unsatisfactory state of affairs were sought during Kennedy's governorship, by increasing the numbers of private schools. Between the years 1855-1862 the number of private schools in Perth and Fremantle, rose from a combined total of 0 to 7, however the number of scholars in Government Schools for the same area, peaked in 1861 at 446 and fell the following year to 346.³⁶ What these figures tended to suggest was that the increase in population, due the large influx of convicts into the colony led to a demographic shift away from urban to rural areas.

Moreover, while improvements to rural education remained the most significant achievement in education during the Kennedy and Hampton eras, the same could not be noted of the school curriculum. The General Board's earlier notion of education in Government Schools being "limited only by means of obtaining instructors" and providing for a system of education "equal to that at a good English Grammar School for boys" and "such a respectable middle class person would endeavour to secure for his daughter in England",³⁷ was duly dispensed with. This elaborate and extravagant scheme was deemed to be unbecoming for the economic circumstances of the colony, and moreover, went against the grain of popular sentiment.

Pandering to popular opinion whilst remaining autocratic, placed the Governor in

the invidious position of being the chief powerbroker. This situation flourished, during his tenure as Queen's Representative, largely because of the persona of the man, but also, because of the high degree of sectarian rivalry. All of which emboldened or toughened the resolve of the Governor. It meant that the agenda in educational policy was firmly etched upon the minds of the Governor and his loyal deputy, the Colonial Secretary. A classic example of this heightened sense of sectarianism, are Wollaston's remarks in relation to Bishop Serra's request to the Acting Comptroller General, that Catholic children absent themselves from the largely Protestant school at the Mandurah convict depot:

These Papists are ever trying to get up an agitation and I always try to baulk them. Whether the Comptroller will allow two schools, I know not, but the Protestants are not to be thus thrown overboard by the Bishop. The school is rigidly secular. What unchristian bigotry Popery fosters.³⁸

Without this ill feeling amongst the Christian denominations there would have been little justification for the overriding of the General Board's policy initiatives. It was given added impetus during a period of religious strife in the Roman Catholic Church.

Governor Kennedy, who was an adherent of the Church of Ireland (Anglican), held views toward Catholics that were not dissimilar to those shared by Archdeacon Wollaston. He had a particular loathing for Bishop Serra whom he

considered to be 'estranged from his flock', who in turn was distrusted by Catholic clergy who perceived him to be unreasonable, untrustworthy and a man of intrigues.³⁹ The frequent clashes with Dr. Brady left behind a litany of mistrust and suspicion, accounting for the reason why the Separate Grant to the Roman Catholic educational sector was abolished. It was Serra himself, who sent word back to Rome, to Franzoni (the Prefect of Propaganda), informing him of Brady's financial ineptitude, from which he was appointed coadjutor of the First Bishop's monetary affairs.⁴⁰ This action prompted Brady to change 'his tactics in favour of litigation and intimidation through the press.'⁴¹

The first Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth was indebted to the tune of some £9,954. In order to stave off his massive debt and avoid bankruptcy, much of his personal property had to be sold.⁴² It was Father Donovan, the Catholic Chaplain to the convicts, who retained the deeds for mission properties in Brady's name and that of his heirs. This in turn split the Catholic community into two opposing forces, variously duded, "Serraites" and "Bradyites".⁴³ What was most unwelcome for Catholic clergy, apart from the internal bickering, was the introduction of the Irish National System of education to the colony in 1855. For as McCarthy notes:

It as unacceptable to Catholics because it refused to recognize the guardianship of their Bishops over the education of Catholic children; to the security of such guardianship, the ownership of their schools, control over the lecturing, and the power to appoint

and dismiss teachers, were essential.⁴⁴

Moreover, the wresting of control over the educational welfare from the hands of clergy, was perceived by some as a 'persecuting sectarianism', because it, 'compelled acceptance of a defective system against conscience'.⁴⁵

Internal dissension in the Catholic Church combined with the rejection of the Irish National System of education, were circumstances, in which the General Board took pains to distance itself from. Indeed, from the time of its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office, the General Board steered clear of religious squabbles, to concentrate all of its efforts on securing its pragmatic aims. The autocratic temperaments of Governors Kennedy and Hampton and the administrative burden that convict children posed, diverted attention away from visionary ideals. Moreover, the financial crisis that gripped the colony provided ample justification for the focus on practical solutions. In education, this meant improving its status, in those areas where convict depots were set up. These establishments were usually located in rural districts.

By May of 1856, Governor Kennedy could be reasonably satisfied and hopefully optimistic at witnessing improvements to the financial condition of the colony.⁴⁶ His shrewdness in regard to the effective economic management of the colony won more the respect of colonists, rather than their admiration. This is borne out by the fact, that on the 6th of August, in the same year as his financial achievement, a public meeting was held in Perth, to protest against the "arbitrary

methods of His Excellency".⁴⁷ Yet despite the forces that were arrayed against him, Kennedy's power was seemingly unassailable. The financial crisis, rift and animosity in the Catholic Church, suspicion of clergy and the overriding of the General Board's policies; augmented rather than weakened his hold on power. In matters pertaining to education, this overwhelming sense of authority, afforded the Governor, a free hand in determining how education was to be administered and what policies were likely to be implemented.

The Administrative Shake-up of the General Board and the Notion of "Pauper" Schools

Governor Kennedy was not warmly disposed to the General Board. His lack of concurrence with their views, led to the resignation of Reverend G.P. Pownall (Chairperson), Reverend J. Leonard and Francis Lochee, while the Reverend Samuel Hardy was not long a member of the Board and for this reason did not resign.⁴⁸ Yet it was Mr. Lochee, an original member of the Board and editor of The Inquirer, who wrote most scathingly of the Governor. Who by noting the fact that Kennedy was degrading the scale of education, was also endeavouring to convert the national seminaries into mere pauper schools.⁴⁹ This fact was quickly seized upon by the newspaper, which claimed, that this class-based system of education, would lead to disharmony in the community, generating a rebellious spirit among many.⁵⁰ The reason for the resignations of these prominent Board members became blatantly obvious, being expressed in the fears of Reverend Wollaston, that the Governor, wished to make the General Board a mere

appendage of the Colonial Secretary's Department and such, required pliant, easily managed members.⁵¹ These fears of Wollaston's did come to fruition, as the Board was eventually incorporated into the Colonial Office.

Moreover, the appointment of Frederick Palgrave Barlee as the new Colonial Secretary further dampened the spirits of educational reformers. In his dutiful career, Barlee became employed as Private Secretary to the Governor Arthur Kennedy in September 1852, in the African Colony of Sierra Leone, working among freed slaves.⁵² In Western Australia, during Kennedy's governorship, Barlee was not only the Governor's loyal deputy, but also acted (after the resignation of the three most prominent members), as Chairperson of the General Board of Education. This choice of Kennedy's, for the position of Colonial Secretary, combined with his disdain for any opposition or unpopularity in executing policies,⁵³ meant that the Governor's entourage, which included the General Board, was composed of mere sycophants, pandering to his every wish.

However, while Kennedy was successful in introducing the Irish National System of education into the colony in 1855, gaining widespread popular support; the system suffered from the same problems posed by the one in New South Wales. Namely, that it was both a class-based and dual system, from which the latter was held responsible for the deplorably inadequate standards of education.⁵⁴ In terms of the administration of education, given the high degree of sectarian rivalry in both colonies, a gradual undermining or erosion of decentralized structures was taking place. This gradual transition along the path toward centralized control of

education, was aided and abetted, by the gradual dispersal of the population, and the autocratic nature of many of the governors. Yet it was the religious sectarianism that had the most profound effect in relation to this transition.

More than any other institution the Church, as the traditional purveyors of education, knew the value of decentralized control in providing for adequate religious instruction. With the switch to state-controlled education, instruction in religion would become so compromised as to cease to be an integral part of a child's development. And, as already stated, the General Board of Education made provision for the reading of the Bible in schools without note or comment. In other words, they promoted an uncompromised view of religious instruction, as a central tenet, in their vision for a morally just and responsible society. However, as this was an era characterised by mutual distrust and suspicion and dominated by the dogmatic persona of a steely-minded Governor, it is little wonder that events transpired in a manner contrary to the General Board's original vision. Thus religious and communal harmony, were sacrificed on the altar of political expediency, in favour of the pragmatic rather than visionary ideal.

This pragmatic approach to educational reform was to lead to the early beginnings of bureaucratization of administrative structures. It was helped along the way, by the insistence that all National Schools should be Protestant seminaries. Resistance to this "Protestantisation" of education was most acutely manifested from Catholic clergy. It came in the form of dispatches to the Colonial Secretary (acting as Chairperson of the General Board), requesting that a second

schoolmaster of Roman Catholic persuasion be appointed to teach convict children of Irish-Catholic background.⁵⁵ And moreover, in requests to the Governor, that Catholic children be dissuaded from attending classes in the largely Protestant schools.⁵⁶ The Governor was compelled to honour earlier commitments made between his predecessor and the Roman Catholic Church; to maintain financial aid to Catholic schools in proportion to their numbers; and to allow the principles of tolerance proposed by Earl Grey to be upheld.⁵⁷

However, these noble aims were given no chance to flourish, because the dual system of State provided education common to other countries, 'followed quickly in Kennedy's wake.'⁵⁸ Despite this, the last vestiges of decentralization remained in place. Rich settlers were advised to provide their own educational facilities for their children, while the Government restricted its attention to the education of the poor.⁵⁹ These actions went against the grain of thought of the General Board, who advocated the need for a comprehensive system of education, commonplace in the English public schools. The Board's failure to see its vision come to fruition was made poignantly clear, after the resignations of the three most prominent members and once the General Board had been incorporated into the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1856. Both the resignation and administrative shake-up of the General Board, afforded Kennedy the opportunity, to lay forward his plans for education. These were duly recorded in his twelve suggestions.

In a nutshell, the suggestions put forward by the Governor allowed scope for the Government to concentrate its efforts on providing elementary and non-sectarian

education for children of the lower classes; through instruction in the three Rs and Geography and religious instruction emanating from Scripture extracts rather than the Bible. But they also outlined the new responsibilities enjoined upon each member of the General Board. Each had responsibility for the financial purse strings of schools including funding arrangements; were given control over rural education; were to conduct annual inspections of schools and to appoint inspectors answerable to the Board; and they were to report annually to His Excellency.⁶⁰ This plan of the Governors which was adopted by local committees in England with favourable success, was also adhered to by the newly formed General Board.⁶¹ However, according to Lochee's Inquirer, the concurrence with the Governor was uncalled for in regard to a layperson taking over as Chairperson of the General Board. For "the Board have sacrificed their logic to their subserviency".⁶²

Moreover, the class-based system of education engendered by the acceptance of the Governor's twelve suggestions, could not be endorsed. And as The Inquirer further notes, too much control over the educational affairs of the colony, lay in the hands of the Government

With a Board, packed like the present, with a system of education such as that adopted, we regret it is not in our power to recommend to the confidence of parents the Government Schools of this colony, and we fear that, until by means of representative institutions we possess proper control over our education

arrangements, we shall have to submit to the presence of an objectionable Board, of a scheme of education which fosters class distinction among all.⁶³

Such control was mandatory, extending to the General Board and some of its members, acting as invigilators in annual examinations.⁶⁴ But the most discernible outcome arising from the compliance with the twelve suggestions, was in the matter of appointing local committees to oversee regional and rural education, and to be made answerable to the General Board. This was a characteristic feature, not only of educational administration in England, but was also common to New South Wales. The perpetuation of an English administrative system with that of Irish-style education was chiefly designed to unite the two opposing cultural forces. It was made possible in Western Australia, because as earlier noted, the Governor was not only Irish, but was an adherent of the Church of Ireland or Anglican Church.

However, in the total scheme of things, given the fact that the Board's new principles arising from the twelve suggestions, were full of sycophantic compliments and contradictory statements;⁶⁵ the new administrative arrangements; were part and parcel of the quest toward the secularization of society. Yet the attempt, by turning Government Schools into "pauper institutions" was not entirely successful.⁶⁶ Many including the Reverend Innes, bemoaned the fact, that "the modicum of moral instruction" was not only small, but "was badly taught" and was more glaringly obvious in rural district schools.⁶⁷

The “low standard of education amongst the humbler classes” was a fact, “too palpably evident to admit of contradiction”.⁶⁸ It was deficient from both an intellectual and moral standpoint and as such, was diametrically opposed, to the pragmatic and altruistic ideals of the inaugural Committee (later General Board) of Education. This turn of events, left scope for clergy to act as moral surrogates, by pursuing a modified version of the General Board’s original aims and ideals.

The New Moral Agenda and the Anglican Challenge

While much of the mutual distrust and suspicion that epitomized the Kennedy era, was engaged between Church and State; the media disapproval of the way in which education was administered, also placed the spotlight on the General Board. Although Bishop Hale as First Bishop of the Church of England in Perth was more conciliatory than fellow clergy the General Board, mainly, because of its compromise over the Governor’s twelve suggestions, were appalled, at what they perceived, to be the acceptance of a deficient system of education. In an administrative sense it meant that the General Board, actually started to live up to its name. For by early March in 1855, new names or persons were added to the list of members, which included W.A. Sandford Esquire, the Reverend G.P. Percival and the Reverend Levenall.⁶⁹ By January of the following year, each of these members, maintained the view, that the Colonial schools should “be available for all denominations of Christians without giving offense with conscientious scruples of any”.⁷⁰ However, this also meant, that Catholic children were to be incorporated into these Protestant schools. Thus adding a new and

unwelcome dimension to the Board's original vision, of non-discriminatory and non-sectarian education.

Catholic opposition to the introduction of the Irish National System and the abolition of the Special or Separate Grant was most keenly felt by Bishop Serra. In a letter to Governor Kennedy and the Legislative Council, written in 1858, Serra makes particular mention of the fact that under the present system, children of the lower and middle classes were deprived of religious education, and that a grant in proportion to their (Roman Catholic) numbers should be maintained, because its abolition was "a source of public discontent in the colony".⁷¹ Similar avenues of discontent also erupted in the Anglican Church spearheaded by Bishop Hale. The cleric whose full name was Matthew Blagden Hale, was born on the 18th of June 1811, in Alderley, Gloucestershire and was the ancestor of Sir Matthew Hale, who defended Archbishop Laud during his impeachment in 1643.⁷² He was educated at his village school at Wotton – under-Edge, Gloucester School and Trinity College Cambridge.⁷³

The Bishop from the outset was motivated by practical considerations and strong Christian idealism in his quest to change the existing status of the colony, from that of a penal to a reformist settlement.⁷⁴ His endeavours in this area were to prove to be somewhat fruitless. Even though the weight of public opinion was strongly opposed to the idea of the colony, being transformed from a free enterprise to a penal settlement, both the Government and General Board of Education saw the transition as a necessary one. This humane quality was the

defining characteristic of Hale's personality and mission and is accurately conveyed by Austin.

Hale's concern for the public good, for the welfare of the State before that of his own Church, gives a distinctive quality to Church State relations in Western Australia. Whereas the other colonial bishops of the Anglican Church had to be driven to this position by their laity, Hale, coming to his diocese after the issue had been settled in the eastern colonies, adopted the credo of liberalism from the outset.⁷⁵

Furthermore, in terms of the educational welfare of the colony, in light of the exclusion of the Bible from the curriculum and the moral problems this would pose; Hale developed a classical English School in Perth for boys in 1858 known as the Bishop's School. This later became known as the Church of England Collegiate School which taught Latin, Greek and Religion along with Mathematics.⁷⁶ However, subjects such as Latin, French, Algebra and Euclidian theory, were also being taught by private arrangement with parents; and as such, prompted the closure of ,the later Hale School in 1872.⁷⁷

It was not long after Hale's consecration as First Anglican Bishop of Perth, in 1858,that the Classical Grammar School was opened with a Mr. George H. Sweeting as Headmaster. The lack of financial assistance from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.),⁷⁸ was a significant factor in the school's

demise. Yet the school could at least lay claim to fostering the strength of character necessary to achieve moral reform. For as Williams notes of the institution, 'school spirit and sport were to be fostered at every opportunity. Indeed there was a conscious effort to follow the traditions of the great public schools of England'.⁷⁹ Central to these traditions was Christianity, which as Hale notes, was a preparation for both life and death:

Our purpose, the burden of our never ceasing prayers, is this that by means of this school, with the help of God's grace, you may become day by day better Christians, more, meet for the Kingdom of Heaven, and better prepared for death whenever it may please God to call you out of this mortal life.⁸⁰

This temporary achievement of Hale's constituted a direct challenge toward the secularization of education and society that the Irish National System engendered.

While the General Board of Education was forced to lay aside its earlier altruism to concentrate on the nuts and bolts of educational administration, its 'visionary' ideal was continued by proxy. Bishop Hale's attempts to carry through with the Board's vision of a hearty promotion of Christianity in schools occurred in miniature. As Edith Cowan notes, in her address to the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in 1930; the qualities "so essential to the making of a gentleman", such as, "self sacrifice", "truthfulness", "honesty" and "religious purpose" had produced "good results"⁸¹ Indeed, what lay at the heart of good

general apathy of the populace toward any form of comprehensive education,⁸³ meant that only an elite few could attain the lofty heights of a 'gentleman'. One of these, Sir John Forrest, who was educated at Hale's school (now the Cloisters in Saint George's Terrace Perth),⁸⁴ became the first Premier of Western Australia in 1870.

However, the General Board of Education, which concentrated most of its efforts on the more prosaic duties of its office, did, however, provide financial aid at a time of crisis for Hale. Former members of the Board, the Reverend Wittenoom and Francis Lochee, gave subscriptions amounting to £10 and £2.20 respectively; while Messrs Lefroy, Barlee and Knight gave a combined total of £120 to pay for the £550 owing to the Society for the Promotion of Christian knowledge (S.P.C.K.).⁸⁵ These subscriptions, were paid in the knowledge, that both Oxford University and the S.P.C.K., would only fund Colonial Schools in proportion to the population and economic growth of each colony.⁸⁶ As voluntary subscriptions from the General Board could not cover the debts incurred from money borrowed from British religious and educational sources; the Bishop himself ended up being the sole benefactor of his own school. This state of affairs, quashed any idea of a similar arrangement for the schooling of girls' in the colony.⁸⁷ Yet even this small amount of financial assistance from the General Board was indicative of the conformity to their original ideals.

Despite these unfortunate circumstances, Hale maintained the public peace and welfare by agreeing to the 'Irish System' and helping to administer it in schools.⁸⁸

welfare by agreeing to the 'Irish System' and helping to administer it in schools.⁸⁸ However, the incessant apathy of the populace toward education, nullified all the good intentions and labour wrought, leaving Hale at the point of despair. For in the words of this benevolent cleric, 'there is no such thing as convincing the people that education pays'.⁸⁹ His efforts, however fruitless, did earn him the respect and admiration from fellow Anglicans in the colony, who in their affection, likened him to a 'gentle shepherd' and 'a kind and generous friend.'⁹⁰ Yet it was the populist sentiment adhered to by the Governor and General Board that fuelled the apathy and indifference. It led to a widespread acceptance of a defective system of education that only dealt with the superficialities, and where moral instruction was so compromised as to be ineffectual.

This state of affairs transpired, not only because the General Board's decision-making processes had been enfeebled, by its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office; but also; because the mutual distrust and suspicion between Church and State buttressed the power and autocratic persona of the Governor. Which in turn, given the economic circumstances of the colony, heralded a new era of educational administration. No longer, could the General Board, operate from an ivory tower perspective, but was compelled to comply with the wishes of the Governor and the general populace. This also led to a gradual eroding away of decentralised administrative structures, in an increasingly secular era.

The arrival of Governor Kennedy to the Colony of Western Australia in 1855 and the full implementation of the Irish National System of education heralded a new

era of schooling for children of the 'lower classes'. No longer could the colony perceive itself to be a bastion of middle-class Victorian virtues when they pertained to education. Yet full implementation of a 'revamped' General Board into the Colonial Secretary's Office meant not only that the Board Members compliance to the Governor's wishes were guaranteed but also, that a vastly inferior system of education was decided upon. Widespread acceptance from the general populace was no doubt the result of excessive authoritarianism on the part of the Governor and apathy coupled with secular values being made paramount in the community. Both of which as this chapter outlines severely hampered the decision-making processes of the General Board while at the same time undermined much of its earlier altruism.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Expansion of Rural Education Under the Irish National System

Following on from its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office, the General Board of Education vigorously pursued its newly defined goal; the growth or development of education as envisaged by the Governor and in compliance to wishes of the general populace. For the General Board and its members who had hitherto enjoyed a sense of intellectual freedom in its decision making a new and more restrictive system of educational administration was set in place known as the Irish National. It was a system whereby all powers in the control and implementation of educational policy and administration were vested in the government. Which in turn led to the enfeeblement of the Board's auxiliary powers and with it the gradual abandonment of its visionary ideal that is to see emerge the Christian society, best secured by the broadly based system of public education, considered by the Board as morally advantageous and the one most likely to bring to pass its chief altruistic aim.

However, the system inherited from Ireland, while successful in terms of securing a 'general' or remedial education for the poorer classes, was nonetheless, of the utmost practical relevance and utility for both parents and children in rural areas. Indeed, the very success of the system can be gauged in terms of the expansion of rural schooling and education. Yet this would not have materialized had the Board of Education not been pliant and submissive. It is noted that the fatalistic

approach to its communal duty, in an era of enforced convictism, contributed in small measure, to the secularization and moral decline of colonial society. Combined with the growing bureaucratization of educational administration, and the gradual drift toward centralization; the Board's earlier vision of a morally just and responsible society founded on Christian principles; was being increasingly consigned to the realm of fantasy. In light of these revelations this chapter seeks to highlight the fact that the expansion of rural education under the Irish National System, significantly undermined the General Board's original intentions both in a pragmatic and idealistic sense.

Background to the Irish National System and Comparisons with New South Wales

At the behest of Governor Arthur Kennedy, the Irish National System of Education was introduced into the colony in 1855. Its implementation, followed a year later, with the administrative overhaul of the General Board, undermined much of the earlier idealism shared by these educational progenitors. Two opposing forces were arraigned against them that militated unfavourably in the quest for a comprehensive system of education, the autocratic natures of Governors Kennedy and Hampton and the appeal to popular sentiment. It was the latter, combined with the authoritarian tendencies of both Governors that witnessed the safe passage and implementation, of a 'general', as opposed to comprehensive system of education. Yet in an era, when the economy benefited from the servile labour of convicts, the General Board became part of a system

that for all practical intents and purposes was diametrically opposed to their original aims and ideals.

Furthermore, it was the Board and its members, acting on behalf of the Colonial Secretary's Office that guaranteed this relatively 'smooth' transition to a much simpler and cost-effective means of educating colonial children. It was not without its critics, as the only Protestant cleric acting on the Board as a Commissioner, Dr. Whately, was well placed to claim, that, 'the system was well calculated to subvert a teaching which he believed in his mind to be erroneous'.¹ These fears were consonant with the removal of the free use of the Bible from the curriculum. Yet such a system, that was amenable to the humbler classes, not only made good economic sense for a debt-ridden economy, but was one designed to counteract the claim, that the future governors of the colony were to be solely derived from the ruling classes.² Thus merit took precedence over social privilege. Indeed the system originally touted by the General Board, was not only regarded by Kennedy as being exclusive, but was a system that benefitted the wealthy class of children to the neglect of the poor.³

State control of education for the poorer classes, meant that in the context of a colony with a small and widely dispersed population, with an aversion to book-lore, a tightly controlled administrative structure prevailed. The newly reformed General Board of 1856, was so strictly controlled, that its members, who previously had the right of selecting its own Chairperson, were denied this privilege; which made the Board feel as if the governor was overstepping his

authority.⁴ Yet this authoritarian intrusiveness on the part of the governor gained the desired result: the compliance to his twelve suggestions that formed the basis of a modified version of the Irish National System.⁵ But it was also to guarantee a poor standard of education for the working classes, contributing to a widening gulf between the rich and poor on the basis of education⁶ (refer to Chapter Four pages 133 – 135 and Appendix 2).

Moreover, it was Governor Kennedy who insisted that State controlled education was not for all, 'even if the Colony's needs would seem to suggest it was possibly a worthwhile investment.'⁷ The General Board's scheme of opening education up to children of diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds, was considered by the governor, to be, 'far too grand and beyond what the public are called on to provide.'⁸ Kennedy could not concur with the Board's views seeing no practical good in them.⁹ As a consequence, once the Board had been fully incorporated into the Colonial Secretary's Office, its revised set of rules, derived from the governor's twelve suggestions, were almost apologetic and servile in tone¹⁰.

At the same time as Western Australia was embarking upon its experiment with State controlled education, the colony of New South Wales had taken the stage a step further. In that colony, which had previously spurned the system of education so widely accepted in Western Australia, a two-tiered system prevailed. Both National and Denominational Boards were set up, the former to control education in Government Schools the latter in those run by churches. It was the former, which had a profound impact upon the growth and development of

schools in rural areas.¹¹ While this equates well with the situation that unfurled in Western Australia, it differed somewhat, in terms of the educational management of schools and the content of both secular and religious instruction. The system in the western half of the continent was more closely attuned to the prerogatives of the governor and his loyal coterie, which included the General Board. As such, less power and intellectual influence was ascribed to the Board, which meant that their decision-making processes leading to policy outcomes were severely constrained.

However, both the General Board in Western Australia and the two-tiered system in New South Wales, comprised of members from the various Christian Denominations.¹² Though in the case of the eastern seaboard neighbour, the Board of Education established there, had less authority to appoint and dismiss teachers, had no power to interfere in the internal management of schools, and could not even pay teachers salaries without the consent of the clergyman acting as superintendent of schools.¹³ Yet this two-tiered system widely adopted in New South Wales, was the precursor to a public system that was controlled by a Minister of the Crown, who was responsible for the work of a Department of Education and for accelerating the process of centralization.¹⁴

In Western Australia by contrast, the push toward centralized control of education was a gradual and systemic process. The widespread acceptance of a system of education that allowed Local Committees the luxury of lobbying to secure change meant that the last vestiges of decentralization remained in place. However, due

to the autocratic nature of the governors who had oversight over the implementation of the Irish National System, combined with the servile manner in which the General Board undertook its duties, the same political intrusiveness took place. In New South Wales, as well as the western colony, such political interference was consonant with the growing secularization of colonial society. Which in turn, was consonant with the increasing centralization of administrative structures. It was the removal of the free use of the Bible from the school curriculum, dubbed by many clergy as a "Romanish plot",¹⁵ that provided the catalyst for these events to transpire.

Removing the Bible from religious instruction and replacing it with scripture extracts, meant undermining the moral ideal of education. For clergy in both colonies, morality could only be achieved by 'a thoroughgoing religious education'.¹⁶ Yet Christian instruction it was felt, was best imparted to children under a comprehensive or classically based education, rather than the 'general' or 'Irish' system. And moreover, in a system void of governmental interference, namely, one that was heavily decentralized. These fears of clergy were shared by the General Board, prior to Kennedy's arrival and the ensuing administrative overhaul. Yet the State could fervidly justify its reasons, as to why it should channel all of its financial resources for education on the poor; and also why scripture lessons in schools were critically read with note and comment. Its argument became a plausible one for the newly 'reformed' General Board. Namely, that education involving instruction in religion, should be non-sectarian in emphasis.¹⁷

This focus on social and religious equanimity was one that fully equated with the Board's earlier vision of witnessing, through non-sectarian education, the emergence of a socially cohesive society. Indeed, the very reason for the inauguration of the General Board, was predicated upon the belief, that their eventual policies, would best impart religion and morality to the forthcoming generation, by way of providing 'more exalted ideas to the youthful mind.'¹⁸ However, the apparent neglect of moral teaching, the 'unfitness and inefficiency of teachers' and the dreaded Conscience Clause, which allowed the right of parents to dissent from teachings of the Established Church,¹⁹ followed quickly in the wake of the Irish National System.

The failings of this system soon became apparent, in the immense ignorance of religious truths, as exemplified, by both student and teacher, and by the simple fact that Christianity was not being taught in Kennedy's 'pauper' schools.²⁰ Yet this sudden transition, from Church or privately controlled, to State education, is best understood from its historical and philosophical roots. Historically, the Irish National System had its genesis, in the infusion of ideas emanating from both the British and European inspired Enlightenment. The former rational dimension, equated education with a form of moral training and social discipline;²¹ while the latter humanist dimension, placed great emphasis on the democratisation of education, stressing equality of opportunity for all.²²

Philosophically, the Irish system of education was deeply influenced, by the educational ideas of British empiricist philosopher John Locke and French philosophe Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Locke, who held to the *tabula rasa* theory, which stressed that children's minds are a blank sheet needing to be filled, education, or rather, a specific type of instruction, was to be disseminated along class lines. Thus children of the working classes were to receive a practically based education in industrial style schools; children of the middle classes to receive a classical education; while children of the upper classes were to be taught privately by tutors.²³ For Rousseau, who expounded his theory on education in the classic work Emile, a child's development, along with its reasoning, should occur naturally or according to 'nature'; and that the education of girls was to be designed to please men -- so as to endure restraint and acquire docility.²⁴

Both these liberal views on education existed alongside the ones held by conservatives who stressed that too much education:

Would be contrary to the interests of the poor and society would prove to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness and might make them despair of their lot in life.²⁵

According to Neuburg, these philosophical ramifications, had, by the turn of the Nineteenth Century, resulted in the key issue of the struggle for the control of education, 'in a discussion which became increasingly complex, and not seldom acrimonious.'²⁶ By the end of the century a view was held, that Church control of

elementary schools was not necessary.²⁷ And moreover, to an atomized view of civil society, that laid great stress on individual freedom and personal responsibility.²⁸ A view which in educational circles, was to lead to the infusion of secular elements into the school curriculum.

While the General Board of Education in Western Australia was swept along by these intellectual and political currents, it could not countenance the idea of the Irish system of education. Indeed, the system founded in 1831 by Lord Stanley, was, according to Akenson, 'highly controversial, widely denounced, and imperfectly understood.'²⁹ It had three underlying assumptions: (i) that attention should be focused upon the 'top' of the National System, namely, that the system's political and administrative arrangements were to take precedence over classroom activity; (ii) considerable attention was to be given to ecclesiastical history, due to the clergy's earlier custodianship of education; and (iii) attention was to be focused upon the idea of the system being made a 'national' one along with its development.³⁰

In terms of the 'top' down approach and clerical management of education, the system adhered to by the revamped General Board, conformed admirably. Indeed many of the original aims and objectives of the 'Irish' system, were comparable to those of the original Board of 1847, without them being made aware of this Nationalist scheme. The notion that there be no established State religion and that public education should not be converted into a monopoly for any particular class or sect,³¹ accorded well with the General Board's altruistic ideals. However, on

the question of mixed religious education as a means of securing social and communal harmony or unity,³² Western Australia's early educational administrators were at best ambivalent. They did, however, agree upon the requirement that each Board member engaged in ecclesiastical duties, should be derived from the various Christian denominations, as well as the need to control the source of reading material in schools.³³

However, the General Board of Western Australia stopped short of allowing proscribed scripture extracts for various religious denominations.³⁴ It also did not take charge of educating teachers and providing them with houses, nor in acting as publishers of school material.³⁵ Unlike its Irish precedent, the system administered by the General Board, after Kennedy's arrival in 1855, led to a circumscription of their powers and intellectual autonomy. Nevertheless, it paved the way forward for the widespread acceptance of the view, that general or elementary education ought to be controlled by the State. Which culminated in 1866, in New South Wales, with the Public Schools Act, from which it became incumbent upon the State to educate its citizens.³⁶ Yet this National System as it became known, with its own Board, was often described as 'godless and infidel'.³⁷ It also provided for a deplorably inadequate standard of education, with many children barely able to read "easy narrative" and still less able to master difficult prose.³⁸

This National System in New South Wales existed alongside the Denominational. Both were particularly notorious, for being unnecessarily expensive and for

engendering sectarian jealousies.³⁹ But unlike the 'general' system so widely adopted in the western colony, the two-tiered system did not have to be foisted upon an apathetic public. It was this excessive apathy that fuelled the authoritarian tendencies of Governors Kennedy and Hampton. These were manifested in their apparent aggression, toughness of mind, mutual suspicion, cynicism and obsessive quest to stamp out any alleged evils. This system so religiously adhered to by these governors was somewhat inferior to the one originally envisaged by the General Board. For according to John Ewers:

Untrammelled, the education provided by the Board might have continued to expand into something without parallel anywhere in the world. The ambitions of the Board, were no doubt, far in advance of their times.⁴¹

It was Governor Kennedy's legacy of providing for the short-term educational needs of the colony that nullified all the previous efforts and visions of the General Board. Which leads to this apt summary of his educational policies, from Ewers, that he 'served his own time well, and the future badly.'⁴² However, the expansion of rural education under Kennedy's tutelage was an achievement only made possible by the administrative overhaul of the General Board and full implementation of the Irish National System.

The Bureaucratisation of the General Board and Implementation of the Irish National System

From the outset, the General Board concentrated its administrative duties on the Colonial and Government schools. In their Second Report written in 1850, each member of the Board, advised against the admission of Aboriginal children to the Colonial schools, for in their words, 'to open the schools now to such natives would be inexpedient and detrimental to their success'.⁴³ Education for the indigenous children was to be found in private or church-based schooling, and therefore, did not come under the purview of the General Board's administration. With one less responsibility, these educational administrators could target all of their intellectual energies toward improving the lot of colonial children of non-indigenous origin.

However, the expansion and gradual dispersal of the population from the late 1840s, witnessed a period of increased responsibility for the General Board. From 1849, schools at Toodyay, Busselton, the Vasse and Bunbury, were quickly followed, by schools emerging in Champion Bay (Geraldton), Pinjarrah, Murray and Northam.⁴⁴ These additional, but welcome responsibilities, were to be conducted in a period when the founding father and leading educationalist in the colony, the Reverend John Wittenoom had quietly passed away.⁴⁵ The death of Wittenoom in 1854 could not have occurred at a more auspicious time. With the colony riddled by debt and sectarian rivalry, the death of the one time chaplain and teacher, seemed to herald a new era of educational management. It was

during this period, prior to the inauguration of the Irish System, that Aboriginal children, were being successfully educated in Fremantle at Reverend George King's Native School; a mission that was favourably endorsed by Archdeacon Wollaston.⁴⁶ Yet the British emphasis to education was upheld, namely that it should remain a form of moral training and discipline, and that for this reason alone; a strong aversion to the incumbency of convict teachers was in order.⁴⁷

Furthermore, this moral dimension was to be infused with the newly adopted 'General' system. This was best exemplified in the General Board being authorised to impart Special Religious Instruction to children in Government schools, according to an arrangement made between members of the Local Committee, from which parents who were most likely to object to such teaching, were required to be present when it was being given.⁴⁸ Despite this major drawback, the full implementation of the Irish National System, by the 1860's, was responsible for the increase of both scholars and schools in rural Western Australia. Thus schools in Beverley, York, Rockingham, Australind, North Greenhough, Gingin, Picton and Katanning emerged.⁴⁹ These developments proved to be a welcome addition to the schools in the major regional centres.

The quest to expand education and schools in Western Australia's interior was aided in part, by Reverend John Wollaston. As Archdeacon of the Vasse and Avon Valley regions, Wollaston was able to present a memorial to Earl Grey that not only requested aid for the establishing of schools, but expressed the need for "the prevention of crime, the establishment and maintenance of social order, and

the advancement of moral and intellectual culture.”⁵⁰ All of which, could be undermined, with the transportation of convicts to the colony. It is apt that Wollaston was in a position to ably assist the General Board, by drawing up a Report of the Fremantle schools, while at the same time advocating in favour of the need for Government Inspectors in schools.⁵¹ The cause of rural education and its development was further assisted by the friendship established with the new Colonial Chaplain, the Reverend G. P. Pownall, who replaced Wittenoom.⁵² For this new chaplain, eventually became Chairperson of the General Board.

However, it was the General Board who were best able to lobby on behalf of teachers and the general populace, to procure financial aid for fledgling schools.⁵³ This was largely due to the vast array of prominent clergy and laypersons that were admitted as members on the Board.⁵⁴ The five most notable, during the heady days of administrative restructuring, were; W.A. Sandford, G.P. Pownall, Darces Williams, Anthony Lefroy and William Adkinson. To begin with, Sandford was Colonial Secretary for the years 1852-1857, was Chairperson of the General Board of Education, Architect of Perth Boys School and built Guidford Town Lot in 1853.⁵⁵ George Purvis Pownall was not only Colonial Chaplain after the death of Wittenoom, but was Church Minister at York and Berverley, Vice President of the Swan River Mechanics Institute in 1856, Dean of St George’s Cathedral Perth in 1862, Member and eventual Chairperson of the General Board of Education; and known for being a dissenting member in many of their discussions.⁵⁶ The chief source of dissent was over the initial incorporation of the

General Board into the Colonial Secretary's Office, resulting in a temporary resignation from the Board.⁵⁷

William Darces Williams was a teacher of some note, who rose to prominence, during his years as Headmaster of Perth Boys' School in 1847, from which he was transferred to Guildford in 1853 where he was an Anglican Minister until 1862. He became a Member of the General Board in 1856.⁵⁸ Yet another member was Anthony O'Grady Lefroy who was Private Secretary to Governor Fitzgerald, built Perth Town Lots in 1850 and 1853; was Colonial Treasurer and Clerk of Council in the years 1856 to 1890; J.P. in 1876; and a Member of the General Board of Education in 1858.⁵⁹ And finally William D. Adkinson was Head Teacher at Perth Boys' School for the years 1862 to 1872; Inspector of Schools from 1863 to 1868 on a part-time basis and full time until 1890; and Secretary of Roebuck Bay Pastoralist and Agricultural Company.⁶⁰

It was Mr. William Adkinson, who as a Member of the General Board, working during Governor Hampton's term of office, helped in the development of rural education. Trained at St Mark's College Chelsea,⁶¹ he eventually gained notoriety for being regarded as the most outstanding schoolmaster of his time.⁶² He conducted his first tours and inspections of schools in 1863 and 1864, firstly in the regional towns of Northam, York and Beverley in the Avon Valley, and then in the southern districts at Rockingham, Pinjarra, Australind, Picton, Bunbury and Busselton.⁶³ He was successful in pioneering improvements to rural education. Of particular note, was his concern over the unsuitability of 'the rush hut', that

was the humble school dwelling at Beverley, especially during wet weather.⁶⁴ But the most pressing concern to the Inspector of Schools, was the method by which teachers obtained their salaries. By the end of Hampton's tenure as Governor he had implemented the same system operative in Britain and Victoria, namely, a payment by results scheme.⁶⁵ Although seen as the most efficient scheme for the provision of teachers salaries the system adopted by Adkinson, was subject to the Governor's approval before it could be put into operation which denoted, that the General Board was forced to comply with the Governor's decisions.

The scheme that became fully operative during the later years of the General Board was beset by its own strictures. Payments or increased increments to teachers, were assessed on the basis of criteria involving the average daily attendance of pupils, the ability to read, write and know one's sums and ability of the teacher's charges in geography. What prompted the implementation of a payment by results system was Adkinson's Annual Report to the General Board in 1867. From his inspections of that year, Adkinson was able to conclude, that the majority of pupils, were able to read and write, though the most proficient readers were in schools conducted by female teachers; while the most unsatisfactory results were in arithmetic which was poorly taught by most teachers; geography according to Adkinson was an added luxury which ought not to have been assessed.⁶⁶

Although the General Board adhered to the same criteria for assessing the performance of teachers, as those adopted by Great Britain and the Colony of

Victoria; the implementation of the payments by results system, worked in conjunction with the 'general' system of education. The General Board was given a degree of latitude or autonomy for carrying through with the scheme, despite the fact that the Governor had the final say in matters pertaining to policy decisions. Even though Kennedy and Hampton were considered to be the most authoritarian of Western Australia's Governors, they nevertheless, maintained the decentralized structures of educational administration. Local Committees were established to lobby on behalf of the educational interests of their respective communities. However, the fact that administrative personnel were accorded such titles as: Chairperson, Commissioner, Inspector of Schools; meant that the decentralized features of administration were gradually being eroded. Yet despite the role played by William Adkinson, it is unclear from the historical records as to what responsibilities the Chairperson and Commissioner were supposed to uphold.

Nevertheless, it could be safely noted that the most able of schoolmasters, was in turn, the most competent of administrators. Adkinson's success led him to:

Be remembered by old boys as a dark and dour and beetle-browed
Englishman and a stern but just teacher, a man of equable temper,
high scholarly attainments and of moral force.⁶⁷

Adkinson appeared to be the perfect embodiment of the pragmatic idealist that almost eluded the General Board. In his latter years as Chief Administrative Officer to Director, he was also noted, with an air of presumption, to be the chief

personifier of the Education Department.⁶⁸ Yet Adkinson worked with like-minded colleagues, in a period of rapid educational change that was consonant with the spread of the population into the hinterland. A period, when the more prosaic matters of requests to the Home Government for increased reading material;⁶⁹ and the question of school buildings and furniture⁷⁰ came to the fore. And also, this was a period that witnessed a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the secular and non-scriptural nature of instruction under the Irish National System; resentment over the failure of the General Board to meet particular wishes and circumstances; and where schools in rural districts opened and closed with regular monotony.⁷¹ And furthermore, a period that witnessed the moral decline of colonial society.

Governor Hampton's Economic Priorities and Educational Change

Apart from the lack of popular and governmental consensus on the need for a comprehensive and religiously based education, the General Board secured most of its pragmatic aims. The decentralized structures of educational administration were not significantly tampered with, and school enrolments, despite some fluctuations, did eventually increase. However, the same could not be noted of the lack of social and moral cohesiveness of colonial society. Thus the altruistic aim of witnessing the emergence of a Christianised society, proved to be nothing more than sheer idealism. It remained locked in the realms of fantasy, due to a system of education, that had coalesced around the humanist and rationalist conceptions of God. It has been said that what emerged was a compromised view

of the Divine and of social and ethical morality.⁷² A system emerged which had no future answer, to the consequent increase in crime, that accompanied the 'newly' introduced convict system in Western Australia.⁷³

The Christian ideal of the General Board was not aided by the replacement of Kennedy with Governor John Stephen Hampton. The latter, although noted for his barbarity and harsh tyranny toward convicts, was also considered to be a 'genius for practical progression.'⁷⁴ It was under Hampton's tutelage, that a massive public works program was undertaken, procuring the labour of the colony's felons. This witnessed the construction of Government House, the Town Hall, the Pensioners' Barracks, as well as roads and bridges; and where the size of the workforce was increased and the means of communication and administration improved.⁷⁵ It was an era, due to the assiduous labour of convicts, of increased economic prosperity.

For these reasons alone, it was safe to maintain the existing system of education, as this conformed well to the Governor's practical and business-like manner.⁷⁶ This non-interference in educational administration, meant, that his public works philosophy continued unabated. It also signified, that the State-control of education and its decision-making processes leading to policy outcomes, were no longer the sole preserve of the Governor and his loyal deputy the Colonial Secretary. This meant that the General Board was given a free hand to determine and implement policy initiatives. However, due to the inordinately high turnover

rate of members of the General Board, largely due to their multi-faceted roles in colonial society;⁷⁷ educational change was slow and incremental.

Whether or not the majority of Board members enjoyed serving as educational administrators, is not made clear in the primary evidence. The problem is further compounded, by the apparent lack of biographical information on key clerical and lay figures. One can only infer, that the General Board and its members, worked under a system that was at best mildly tolerable. The incessant apathy of the populace toward education and governmental authoritarianism was responsible for the sense of fatalism that overtook the Board. It was generated, by the growing secularization of colonial society and the nepotism that characterized the Hampton regime.⁷⁸ The Board's fatalism, as exemplified, in its inability to replace the Irish National System with a credible alternative, was responsible in small measure, for the moral decline of colonial society, along with its eventual centralization. It was also a portent for the emergence of representative government. For the Board's fatalistic approach to its duty, ensured, that it conformed to the autocratic decision-making of the Governor and his officials.

In addition to this, the excessive moralism of Kennedy and Hampton, as denoted in the Licensing Act of 1856,⁷⁹ led according to Boyce, to the acceleration of 'the public drive for representative government.'⁸⁰ However, this could not fully materialize during the Hampton Governorship, due to an aversion to the democratic process,⁸¹ which in part explains, why he was content to leave unchanged the existing administrative arrangements. Yet the growing public

pressure for change, in the domains of politics and education, equated well with the original aims and ideals of the General Board, as Rankin notes, prior to its demise:

The old General Board of Education had done its work conscientiously, but the development of public opinion and those hard to define causes, that seemed to be responsible for our political movements and that innate love for experience that exists in most breasts, seemed to require change. A New Education Act was now wanted that would shelve religious differences and raise the status of education to be in keeping with the needs of the community and the ideals of the country.⁸²

This provision, for a system of education designed to promote religious and communal harmony, was in keeping with the earlier thoughts of the original Committee, prior to its translation into a General Board. The key underlying notions of a morally and socially cohesive society, which envisaged freedom from sectarian strife, also pointed to one that was to be well educated. Indeed as Guthrie notes, 'the education system had adapted itself to meet local conditions, but English ideas were still the basis of educational thought.'⁸³

Western Australia was unique in this respect, of having an English mindset, but being fully enamoured with an Irish system of educational administration, which conformed admirably to the cultural and intellectual developments underpinning

educational policy in New South Wales. The winds of change dictated, to both the populace and purveyors of education, that a 'broadly' based system of education ought to reflect the values inherent within the community. Thus the way was being paved for the secular "compromise" of the 1870's. This situation was no doubt, fuelled, by populist pressure and authoritarian intrusiveness, as well as the growing secularization of colonial society.

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binding and incumbent upon publicans, making them liable for crimes committed. This authoritarian intrusiveness and excessive moralism on the part of the governor, became the catalyst, in the minds of many, for the push toward representative government.

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CHAPTER SIX

Governor Weld's Compromise: The Elementary Education Act 1871 and Abolition of the General Board of Education

The bureaucratization of the General Board, as evidenced, by the creation of the offices of Commissioner and Inspector of Schools and the spread of education in the hinterland, was a global trend that served two purposes. Firstly, to ensure that all children of school age, irrespective of their socio-economic status and religious affiliations were to receive some form of education. And secondly, that the effective control and dispensation of education required it to be wrested from the hands of clergy. An increasingly literate and materially minded populace, no doubt, necessitated these changes. However, despite these common reasons or justifications for the emergence of a free compulsory and secular education system, factors germane to a particular cultural milieu help define the nature and scope of education. In an administrative sense, the Colony of Western Australia, prior to the promulgation of the Elementary Education Act and from its earliest beginnings, maintained the decentralized structures common to Victorian England. In doing so, the early purveyors of education sought to maintain their cultural links with England.

However, by the time Arthur Edward Kennedy's arrival to the colony in 1855 and the full implementation of his modified version of the National System of Education, common to his native Ireland, the largely sectarian and elitist nature of

schooling in Western Australia was soon, but not entirely, to be dispensed with. Kennedy's arrival, coupled with the changes wrought in education and its administration, pointed to an array of external factors that impinged upon the progress of the General Board. The ability to secure its pragmatic and altruistic aims was becoming increasingly difficult due to the excessive authoritarianism and over-weening pride of Governors Kennedy and Hampton, public apathy on the education issue, moral declension of colonial society, sectarian squabbles and financial woes. And furthermore, by the pandering to popular sentiment on the part of governors and colonial officials. Which in matters pertaining to education ran counter to the General Board's visionary ideal.

The sense of fatalism that engulfed the General Board and its members, during the time of enforced convictism and public works expansion could be viewed as a period of transition in the State's quest to make education compulsory. It signaled that the Board's days were numbered. With the arrival of Western Australia's first Catholic Governor in 1869, followed two years later by the passing of the Education Bill in the newly formed Legislative Council and parliament, making education compulsory by law the abolition of the General Board was complete. Its replacement by a Central Board of Education that had the oversight of Government and Assisted (denominational) Schools and the newly formed Local and District Boards, pointed the way forward to the mass bureaucratization of education and society in general. This chapter seeks to account for the abolition of the General Board and the early beginnings of centralized control during Governor Weld's tutelage. It does so by analyzing the processes leading to the

centralization of educational administration in Western Australia and how this was predetermined by the political elite and general populace.

Factors Leading to the “Compromise”

In order for the success of the General Board to be guaranteed, by way of securing its aims, of improving school enrolments and providing a morally-based education centered on the uncritical reading of the Bible; a consensus between the Colonial Government and general populace had to be reached. In the case of the former, a combination of arbitrary decision-making, coupled with financial constraints and the demographic shift from urban to rural districts led to the most cost-effective and “morally unsound” system of education. For the latter, a continuous struggle to subdue a harsh and alien environment, led to excessive apathy in matters deemed to be idealistic such as education. The result, was that the population at large, were more than willing to allow political leaders and colonial officials (which included the General Board), to determine matters too weighty for them; ironically, for the sole purpose of avoiding any form of interference in their domestic affairs.

However, the intrusiveness on the part of the Colonial Government, which was most acute during Kennedy’s tenure of office, led to a general compliance to his short-term vision of patching up the economy and ameliorating sectarian differences. In education it led to the introduction of the Irish National System with its emphasis on a ‘general’ as opposed to comprehensive system of

education, where Scripture extracts had replaced the free use of the Bible. While this system was to be beneficial for improving school enrolments in rural and remote areas, it could not adequately impart morality to the colony's children. Yet the Reverend Joseph Johnston Congregational Minister at Fremantle and member of the General Board of Education, felt that the Scripture lessons under the Irish National System were 'helping children to inculcate morality'.¹

Despite the views of this Scottish cleric, which were clearly in the minority amongst fellow clergy, they did not stop Church of England Bishop Matthew Hale from seeking requests for Bibles in schools. These were only supplied when ministers cooperated with the General Board, prompting Hale to forfeit his membership on the Board; and to exclaim that its members were nothing more than mere officials that allowed the Government to determine the scope and type of education.² Forbidding Protestants to teach directly from Scripture did not augur well for a colony in the grip of the baleful excesses of convict licentiousness. Where drunkenness was rife³ amongst convicts, as some of their savings were spent on consuming liquor. A situation that was ameliorated somewhat during Hampton's tenure as Governor, by establishing a savings bank for convicts.⁴ Yet drunkenness amongst convicts was punishable by severe whippings, hard labour and solitary confinement.⁵ Floggings were usually reserved for more serious offenses.⁶

As if the convict system and influence was not bad enough, for the moral welfare of the colony, the General Board, in consort with the Colonial Government, began

appointing convicts to supervise and instruct pupils. These so-called "lighter" offenders performed their dubious roles as teachers during a time when the Government sought to cut down on unnecessary expenses.⁷ This instigated a direct challenge to both the convict system and tyrannical leadership of Governor Hampton. It came primarily from Bishop Hale, who agitated for a reformist rather than penal colony, in the vain hope that transported felons would not be treated as hardened criminals, but be given the chance to repent of their sins and thus be absolved of all guilt.⁸ Catholics no more than Anglicans were also concerned about the General Board's compliance to the strictures of Governor Kennedy's twelve suggestions, even during the early phases of Weld's governorship. They sought an increase in financial aid to assist in what they perceived, was an apparent lack of private education that was religiously oriented.⁹

However, in the matter of State aid to denominational schools and especially those run by Catholics, the old sectarian animosity flared up once more. For it was the press who were the most savage opponents of Colonial Secretary Frederick Barlee, when it concerned the "need" to grant a subsidy to Catholic schools.¹⁰ This agitation on the part of the Catholics was maintained with some vigour from the churches spokesperson for the secular affairs during the 1860s, Marin Griver.¹¹ These fulminations, which were aimed at subverting the then current secular education system, culminated in June of 1871, in a meeting of Protestants at Guildford. Each resolved to uphold the national or 'general' system of education; and concluded that no separate grant could be given to any religious body who refused adherence to that scheme; they also denounced the

denominational system for being 'unsuitable or undesirable in the present state of the colony.'¹²

Similar sentiments were echoed in New South Wales during the 1850s and 60s, where the National or 'general' system of education was gaining precedence over the Denominational. Its expansion was due to the efforts of William Wilkins, Inspector and later Chief Inspector of Schools and Secretary of the Council of Education. And also, by Sir Henry Parkes, the founding father of State-controlled education in Australia. The chief aim of the system was to encourage greater efficiency within the schools.¹³ In doing so it aimed to ensure that education and schooling in the frontier where the population was thinly scattered, continued to expand exponentially.¹⁴ Even if this meant that many children of the 'lower classes' were compelled to sit in lessons conducted in decrepit buildings; and where indigenous children were to be taught gratuitously.¹⁵

This quest for greater efficiency and ad hoc expansion of schooling for working class children, was an integral development of a growing secular feeling that was not only peculiar to New South Wales. The western colony was even more ashamedly secular. Yet in both colonies, the conclusion had been reached, that it was the duty of the State to provide and encourage education, but most of the liberally minded were cautious in their assessment of the States role in directing or controlling education.¹⁶ However, it soon became apparent, due to the malevolent and pernicious influence wrought by the convict system, that the chief purpose of State controlled education was to acquaint the masses with their rights and civic

obligations.¹⁷ It was felt that this was the best achieved by centralizing the administration of education, consequent upon the passing of the Public Schools Act of 1866 (New South Wales); and the reduction of denominational schools to a subsidiary status.¹⁸

Yet the inculcation of civic virtues had to be predicated upon certain maxims only found in the Scriptures. This pragmatic and altruistic ideal could not be effected without a conscientious attempt to convey the import of religious instruction in education. The replacement of the free use of the Bible with Scripture extracts and in Western Australia the appropriation of a conscience clause, quashed this idea. It meant that the feeling among many was that Christianity could be banished altogether and that religion would be perceived as no more enchanting and awe-inspiring as music or astronomy, 'a beautiful accomplishment but unnecessary'.¹⁹ This separation of religious from secular education was deemed to be morally destructive. But it was, nevertheless, the only practical means of securing a national system of education designed to make schooling both compulsory and largely secular.

Following on from developments in British education, where it was stressed, that a national system of education could not be constructed by voluntary enterprise, even when subsidized by the State;²⁰ school boards as distinct from local committees were being touted. Which, unlike those in England, where parish schools were supplemented by 'board schools' run by local authorities which constituted school boards;²¹ those favoured by educationalists and policy-makers

in Western Australia were more ad hoc in nature. There was no concept of an autonomous local body of bureaucrats controlling educational affairs, but rather, as will become apparent later, a two-tiered system where local and district boards answerable to a central board prevailed. But the consensus that was reached in both Britain and Australia, was that the most effective means of administering education, was through State rather than ecclesiastical control. This was a view advocated by philosopher John Stuart Mill; though his contemporary Matthew Arnold headmaster of Rugby school in Warwickshire took the issue one stage further, in his quest to secure a compulsory system of education. Making schooling compulsory, would, it was felt, evoke the appreciation of parents.²²

It was not until 1870 that Mr. Forster, Education Minister under William Gladstone's Whig Government, passed the famous Act bearing his name. This not only made schooling compulsory by law, but oversaw the creation of School Boards that were elected by town councils and vestries in rural areas; free tickets supplied to the poor; religious instruction to be provided subject to a conscience clause and Boards given the power to frame laws making provision for compulsory attendance in schools.²³ The Elementary Education Act of 1870 in England was essentially a compromise, which did not entirely abolish the voluntary system, but furnished it with the appropriate financial aid, alongside schools developed by the School Boards.²⁴

This transition from religious to secular or State controlled education, has often been viewed by many educational historians in a positive light. To cite one

example, A.G. Austin contends, that the State was not anti-religious not even irreligious,

But simply committed to the liberal belief that progress and perfectibility are to be achieved by human endeavour acting under the sanction and legal and parliamentary institutions.²⁵

It appeared that human endeavour and progress could only be expanded once the requisite knowledge had been disseminated amongst the rising generations. For a colony whose European origins were only some forty years old, this consequent spread of knowledge and the greater efficiency in its purveyance, did indeed require the legal sanctioning of parliamentary institutions. Thus representative democracy was an essential ingredient in this endeavour. What was also essential was that the delineation or circumscription of administrative duties in education were to be clearly defined. It was for this vital reason that the translation, (and thus abolition of the General Board), into a Central Board of Education took place.

The Elementary Education Act (WA) 1871 and Abolition of the General Board

According to J.T. Reilly, the Elementary Education Act of 1871, was an open secret prior to Governor Weld's arrival, whereupon, he was instructed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to safeguard the religious peace, by way of

provision being allotted to the Roman Catholics for their educational purposes. It was an Act that engendered a system of education that was felt to be, '... admirably suited to the requirements of a mixed community'.²⁶ This stress on religious equanimity was further borne out, by the fact, that once the General Board was replaced by a Central Board of Education, four of its eight members were to be laypersons with the Colonial Secretary as Chairperson, its remaining four members were to be drawn from the various religious persuasions.²⁷ Despite these attempts to ameliorate the sectarian strife so commonplace in the colony, the system to be set in train, could not countenance the idea that more voluntary effort should be encouraged to provide for public elementary education. Hence the compromise between Colonial Secretary Barlee and the Catholic Bishop of Perth, Matthew Gibney, was flatly rejected.²⁸

What this foreshadowed for the future development of education was cause of much consternation, from the 'doughtiest champion of the State schools, when they were threatened', namely, Anglican Bishop Matthew Hale.²⁹ Of major concern, was that the proposed Education Bill was entirely designed to placate Roman Catholics, while at the same time insisting, that denominationally based religious instruction was to be confined to one period only at the beginning and end of each day.³⁰ This state of affairs soured relations between the Anglican Bishop, the Governor and Colonial Secretary, especially, once the Church of England's financial estimates were placed in a different light.³¹ However, it was largely due to Hale's timely intervention during the debate on the Elementary Education Act, that a workable compromise of a dual system of government

assisted education emerged which remained in force, until 1895.³²

Hale's intermediary role in the education debate occurred at the time that the Barlee-Gibney compromise was being worked out, where a level of confusion ensued over which system ought to prevail in the colony. It was Hale who sought a general consensus on the most appropriate education system, which was eventually influenced by Forster's Elementary Education Act of 1870 promulgated in England.³³ This turn of events as conveyed by Austin, underlined the conservative and unimaginative nature of most colonists:

The real direction of society in the west, as in the east, was secular, but the conjunction of a Catholic governor and an immature community which had not learnt to question English precedents had succeeded in diverting Western Australian society from its goal. It was to take another twenty years before the community was free to pursue its own course.³⁴

It was this ultra-conservatism, almost anti-intellectualism, that caused the general populace to reject out of hand, the comprehensive scheme of education envisaged by the General Board; that in the opinion of educational historian John Ewers; would have been unsurpassed in the world at that time.

Although the excessive apathy and conservatism of the general populace in matters of a pragmatic and altruistic nature, hastened the demise of the General

Board; it was the 'complicity' of these educational administrators that added to the public's cynicism of its role in the political machinery. Its compliant and submissive attitude toward the authoritarian practices of many of the governors; coupled with its feeble criticism of the convict system, drove a wedge between itself and the general populace. This left the General Board and its members with little room to manoeuvre, by the time of Governor Weld's arrival. Yet this sense of fatalism that overshadowed the earlier optimism of the General Board was set in motion, by Kennedy's decision to incorporate it within the Colonial Secretary's Office. Although economic exigencies to a large degree determined the nature and scope of education, by the time of the early 1870's, it became apparent, that the practical and idealistic aims of education were to be coalesced. A situation made possible in an increasingly secular and materially minded society.

Fusing both the pragmatic and altruistic aims of the General Board into one coherent whole was the task appointed to Western Australia's first Catholic Governor. Frederick Aloysius Weld was born on the 9th day of May 1823³⁵ in the village of Chideock in the Southern English county of Dorset, and was the third son of Humphrey Weld of Chideock Manor.³⁶ His wife was Christina Maria daughter of Lord Clifford of Chudleigh in neighboring Devon.³⁷ They were one of the most aristocratic of English Catholics, who could afford the luxury of sending young Frederick to the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, from where he studied Philosophy, Chemistry and Law.³⁹ These aristocratic leanings and broadly based education, served the Governor well, when having to mediate between the competing interests of the general populace and colonial officials.

Apart from his impressive academic credentials, Weld's use of his aristocratic and intellectual attainments to better his own and his fellow citizens welfare, were legendary. Emigrating from England to New Zealand in his early twenties, Weld initially worked as a pioneer sheep farmer near Wellington, became a Member of the House of Representatives in 1854 and ten years later was appointed Premier. He helped pacify the two 'warring' factions, namely Maoris and the Governor, but eventually lost support through his financial measures and resigned from office.⁴⁰ In Western Australia, Weld is remembered for stimulating the growth of private enterprise and industry, encouraging further immigration to the colony and for improving postal, telegraphic and steam communication with its neighbours.⁴¹ His achievements were not just confined to New Zealand and Western Australia. In Malaysia his 'diplomatic' skills were brought to the fore in the dispute between British authorities and the Manangabakabu people in the Straights of Malacca. These immigrants from Sumatra, were responsible for instigating wars between opposing chieftains, which emboldened the leading Maharajah to formulate plans for a new empire, which ceased once chiefs agreed to unit in once close confederation.⁴²

This role as the consummate diplomat or intermediary was one akin to that played by clergy, who sought to fulfill the altruistic ideals of the General Board by proxy. It was a role that gradually disappeared for each Board member once the functions of some became clearly circumscribed. Faced with the daunting task of improving school enrolments via a compulsory system of education, while at the

same time providing some modicum of religious or moral instruction; Weld pursued the challenge with his characteristic energy and determination. He was considered to be a 'man of ability and culture, straight forward and chivalrous both as a Minister and a Governor, but sometimes autocratic and wanting in tact'.⁴³ Nevertheless, his genuine affection for Western Australia which witnessed it moving out of a state of torpor, won Weld the gratitude of many in the colony. For he was most fondly remembered for being 'liberal in the best sense of the word' and 'a Christian gentleman for the poor, the lowly and the suffering'.⁴⁴

In the matter of compulsory schooling, Weld was able to assert that 'the Education Question is one of very great importance, which you will doubtless take into your serious and impartial consideration'.⁴⁵ He was of course addressing the new Legislative Council brought into being as a result of his penchant for representative government. Yet the background to the bill leading to the Elementary Education Act (1871) and the events leading up to its debate in parliament, in July of the year in which it was promulgated, convey the growing disenchantment of the Catholic community over the annual grant in education. Claims that such a grant was disproportionate, led to Catholics clamouring for a separate grant that was to be commensurate with their numbers. The voices of despair became so acute that they prompted the passing of the Education Bill in August of 1871.⁴⁶

Yet as was the case with Bishop Hale of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth Matthew Gibney, was willing to arrive at some form of

compromise, despite his deeply held views:

The recent elections would appear to show that the feeling of the majority of the colony is adverse to a change in the present education system. Under these circumstances, I am willing to raise or continue an agitation which might not be justified by results, and which, therefore, may be avoided without sacrifice of principle. On these grounds, still retaining my opinion and principles regarding education, and what is due to minorities, and trusting that at some future time such views may be those of the colony generally, irrespective of creed, I feel myself justified in accepting the proposition contained in Mr. Barlee's memo, in the conciliating spirit in which it is made; and I trust the legislature will see, in such frank acceptance, and earnest of my desire to obviate difficulties, and to promote the public interest.⁴⁷

However, the granting of financial or State aid to Catholic schools which was essential for the compromise (Elementary Education Act) to be passed, was compounded by Governor Weld's adherence to the advice of Earl Granville, that the Colonial Episcopal Church be disestablished.⁴⁸ Despite this temporary setback, there was a groundswell of opinion, that concurred with the view, that the present system of education in both Catholic and Protestant schools was defective; and that Roman Catholics should be relieved of the burden of 'contributing to pay for a teaching they believed to be erroneous'.⁴⁹ But the system that was to later

emerge, was compelled to accept a conscience clause which was inserted into the Act, for the sole purpose of avoiding any form of proselytizing.⁵⁰ And furthermore, the proposed Special Grant to Catholic schools, would it was felt, be a boon to Protestant unity and thus be “a consummation most devoutly to be wished”.⁵¹

However, this sense of Protestant solidarity was, according to Roman Catholic clergy, already evident in the Irish National System of Education, which appeared to cater more for the needs of Protestant children. The General Board’s compliance to this scheme as a means of proselytism prompted the swift resignation from the Board of Dr. Whately, who could not countenance the idea of the Education Board being used as an instrument of conversion.⁵² Yet press coverage of the issue, from staunchly Protestant papers, such as The Fremantle Herald, favoured the free use of the Bible in schools at the expense of the timetable or conscience clause.⁵³ This increasingly secular trend in education, witnessed the creation of a Select Committee in 1870, derived from clergy of various persuasions, charged with the task of investigation into the future scope of education; in light of the proposed Education Bill. From such a Committee, it was suggested, that not only Catholic, but all denominational schools should be integrated into the general scheme as ‘Assisted Schools’, the suggestion was finally accepted and incorporated in the Act of 1871.⁵⁴

Once the Elementary Education Act was eventually promulgated on the 17th of August 1871; schooling was made compulsory for all children between the ages

of six and fourteen years.⁵⁵ It was essentially a compromise measure, providing a per capita grant for government schools and half that grant for Assisted Schools; provided that they had 20 pupils or more and submitted to certain regulations.⁵⁶ The grant was also contingent upon schools attaining a certain standard of secular instruction.⁵⁷ However, 'it was determined to resist to the utmost the attempt made by the Government to grant State assistance towards the inculcation of sectarian dogmas, and in aid of proselytism'; and for these reasons alone a time table and a conscience clause was deemed essential.⁵⁸ This transition from voluntary to State controlled education, which witnessed the translation and abolition of the General Board and creation of a Central Board of Education; meant that educational policy was becoming increasingly politicised; while educational administration remained in the hands of a select few.

A New "Politicisation" of Educational Policy

Beginning as a semi-autonomous group of elite individuals acting as intermediaries between the competing and complementary interests of the general populace and those of governors, the General Board, by the time of the Elementary Education Act, had degenerated into a pliant group of civil servants, pandering to the government's every whim. This largely amorphous body of well-endowed and educated gentlemen had a future vision of colonial education and society that was far too ethereal for it to be made a reality. Their quest, to fully Christianize the colony, by way of allowing scope for the Bible to be read without note or comment in schools, and by their initial championing of a broadly

based education system, took little account of events that lay beyond their control. Thus the physical, social and economic plight of many on the land, coupled with the autocratic nature of many of the governors and the secularization of colonial society, were factors not given due consideration. As a consequence, they could be considered as a doddering group of charming intellectuals, who possessed ideas that were somewhat inimical to commonsense realities.

Despite their success in extending education and schooling beyond the borders of the major towns, their *modus operandi*, was heavily fixated upon fostering a sense of social cohesion or homogeneity through Christian teaching. These noble aims could not account for the ignoble ones that were gaining momentum on a global scale. Thus the burgeoning growth of bureaucracies and civil service departments, was consonant with the advent of State controlled education and the rising meritocracy. In the sphere of educational administration in Western Australia in the 1870s, this led to the insatiable quest to centralise all authority and decision-making leading to policy outcomes. Thus a Central Board replaces a General Board of Education and with it, a set of regulations for the conduct and management of District Boards of Education in the Several Districts of the Colony are drawn up. Such regulations stipulate how members are to be elected on the Boards, who constitutes a member, the number of permitted members, the need to chronicle or compile lists of voters, the time of polling, years of tenure for those elected and the status of women in positions of educational leadership.⁵⁹

The system that is fashioned from these sets of regulations conforms nicely to the

English precedent. Thus Central Boards, District Boards and an Inspectorate become commonplace.⁶⁰ The latter being given the power to enact by-laws, determine grants, fix and collect school fees, and in conjunction with the District Boards, supervise all Government and Assisted schools, appoint and dismiss Government teachers, forward suggestions to the Central Board and examine schools. Annual reports too were to be compiled and dispatched to the Central Board.⁶¹ However, unlike the system operative in England, the Central Board's decision-making was somewhat arbitrary. Their ability to over-rule decisions made by the District Boards, prompted Colonial Secretary Barlee, to advocate in favour of an administrative rather than executive function for the Central Board, and to suggest that they, should only exercise a general supervision in secular matters over all schools receiving government grants.⁶² Yet this sound advice was ignored, as the Central Board had arrogated to itself too much power, by restricting the authority of the local boards and interfering into their affairs. Furthermore they were not cognisant of local conditions and consistently over-ruled District Boards in matters pertaining to fees, admission of free schools and appointments of teachers; which all eventually led to them being granted authority to dismiss District Boards.⁶³

These disturbing trends in educational administration in Western Australia, left no room for an amorphous body of individuals imbued with the niceties of genteel Christian living. A much 'tougher' and greedier world was emerging that had less regard for the spiritual and eternal verities of life. It was a world that not only relegated the role of the Church in educational affairs to one of caretaker, but had

compelled Christians everywhere to accept the secular compromise that compulsory elementary education represented. It was an increase in ideologies and technical competence that spurred on these trends.⁶⁴ But it was also, in a post-Christian or Weberian sense, due to the replacement of the traditional forms of domination (the Monarchy and the Church), with the legal, in the forms of the government, civil service, judiciary and the police.⁶⁵

This legitimate means of domination over the masses was contingent upon two factors: the rise and prominence of charismatic leaders, and a secular form of social change referred to as rationalisation. The emotional appeal and effective leadership of politicians or governors is counterpoised, by the tendency, to maximise formal efficiency, so as to stabilise existing administrative arrangements, making any substantive social change difficult to achieve.⁶⁶ Thus the autocratic eras of Kennedy, Hampton and the a lesser extent, Weld, coincide with this one-dimensional view of secular authority. To put it plainly, the paucity of multiple interest groups within communities and societies, tends toward the centralisation of power in the hands of government officials.⁶⁷ When combined with blatant apathy on the part of the general populace, the result, is that civil service agencies or communal institutions, become controlled by the few people possessing the same autocratic tendencies as their predecessors. For instance, the powers invested in the Central Board, giving it the authority to dismiss District Boards are akin to those exercised by the Governor, despite them being answerable to him.

Similarly the perceived 'incompetence' of the masses, furnishes leaders with a practical and to some extent a moral justification for rule by the technocratic elite.⁶⁸ With the unqualified support of the press, which bolsters the prestige of leaders,⁶⁹ the legitimacy of State control and domination is ensured. Yet this bureaucratic spirit which corrupts and engenders moral poverty,⁷⁰ and tends toward centralization is the rallying cry of the majority, while that of the minority is for autonomy (decentralization).⁷¹ According to German sociologist Robert Michels, 'centralization is the best way of giving incontestable validity to the will of the masses'.⁷² Thus the rise of the bureaucracy is 'compatible with, or even necessary to, democracy'.⁷³ Though decentralization, which is contingent upon a level of mutual trust⁷⁴ between the ruler and the ruled; was sorely absent during the General Board's term of administration in Western Australia.

Governor Weld's compromise known as the Elementary Education Act of August 1871, was simply a variation on the English precedent of a year earlier. It came into force because of the declining religious or moral status of society, which prompted government officials, clergy, educational practitioners and intellectuals, to espouse the need for a compulsory system of education for the poor. While this was commendable in terms of equity and fairness, its method of administration and dispensation in Western Australia, continued along the same arbitrary lines employed by some of the governors and colonial officials. As a consequence, once the abolition of the General Board was made complete, by the passing of the Education Bill in the new parliament, new and more 'aggressive' administrative structures emerged. The translation of the General Board into a Central Board of

Education charged with the task of overseeing the affairs of the District and Local Boards of Education, was a trend, that in global terms, witnessed the emergence of State controlled education; of which the General Board was only a precursor to its more elaborate and systematic form.

In this sense, the General Board, was extremely influential in conforming to the wishes of the government and the general populace, even if this meant that a radical overhaul of its administration was required. Thus the 'general' system (Irish National) of education, favoured by the practically minded colonists, replaces the comprehensive one fashioned for children of the well-to-do. And in its wake the decentralized structures of administration are gradually eroded. Yet external factors that impinged upon the progress of the General Board, such as the colony's financial position, sectarian rivalry, authoritarianism of governors and populist sentiment, are only part of the equation when accounting for the Board's demise. Factors of a global nature that lay beyond the control of the General Board to arrest, such as the bureaucratization of education and society, and the declining influence of the Church in educational matters, played a more prominent role in the Board's abolition.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Assessment of the General Board's Achievements and Failures

Information and research pertaining to the educational history of Western Australia in the Nineteenth Century is heavily concentrated upon the efforts of churches and private individuals in securing a form of elementary schooling for the young. There is some justification for this, in that the extensive research in educational history, particularly from Great Britain, stresses the overriding importance of churches and charity groups to the development of education in the Western world. Thus Christian and philanthropic endeavours, are regarded by many historians as the bedrock, upon which, lay all the philosophical, political, social, economic and religious underpinnings of modern and contemporary education. While this is true for the foundational structures of education, the development of State bureaucracies and the 'managerial' emphasis to educational administration, pointed the way forward, to the mass politicization of society. This was consonant with the rise of the technocratic elite, which was predicated upon the secularization of society.

The General Board of Education in Western Australia, which was authorised, by Governor Frederick Irwin and inaugurated in August of 1847, worked during the transitional phase from Church to State control of education. Indeed, its unique role as mediator between the competing and complimentary interests of the general populace and Governor was designed to instill a 'Single State System'.

This was in fulfilment of Governors Hutt and Clarke's policy of 'multi-establishment' in religion. Namely, that all children, irrespective of their religious affiliations, were to be educated together, without compromising the scruples of any. While this system was unique to Western Australia garnering support from Protestant nonconformists, it could not countenance the growing criticism waged against it by the Catholic Church for its pro-Protestant and seemingly 'secular' emphasis; nor could it cope with the pressures brought to bear upon its *modus operandi* from the general populace and the colony's governors. Both of which, for pragmatic reasons, rejected the General Board's comprehensive scheme of education for being highly elitist.

Faced with having to fulfil its pragmatic aims of improving school enrolments and retaining the decentralised structures of educational administration; along with providing a comprehensive system of education amenable to the vast bulk of the population; the General Board pursued its duties with alacrity despite the difficulties encountered. The high degree of sectarian rivalry, public apathy toward education, financial stringencies and the autocratic tendencies of many of the governors conspired, to not only halt the progress of the General Board, but to alter its composition and its original aims. Thus any attempt to assess their achievements and failures, must take into account these extrinsic factors that impinged upon the Board's progress. However, as the penultimate chapter clearly outlines, global trends of a political, social, economic and moral nature, also cannot be overlooked. Similarly in light of the chapter dealing with the Catholic

challenge to the General Board, the religious bias of many Board members has also to be taken into consideration.

However, problems still abound when an attempt is made to provide a definitive assessment of the Board's achievements and failures. The problems that exist in the way of this endeavour are twofold. Namely the relative lack of importance shown from educational historians such as David Mossenson and Donald Rankin, of the role played by the General Board in determining the overall shape and destiny of education in Western Australia. And secondly, the lack of biographical information on key lay and clerical figures of the General Board. Quite often, educational history, as it pertains to administration or its political dimension, is confined to the margins; while the few biographical sketches of Board members present their work and achievements in education as being fairly minor; with the exception of the first Inspector of Schools Mr. William Adkinson.

The question remains as to why the General Board of Education in Western Australia is a worthy topic for extensive research. An obvious answer and one overlooked by most educational historians, is that, the General Board was influential in bringing to pass the system of education in vogue today. That is, the highly centralised structures of educational administration, common in the politics of education in contemporary Western Australia, owe a great debt to the work and vision of these educational progenitors. Another more interesting revelation, is that the vision for a 'Single State System' of education, when combined with the General Board's dream of witnessing a socially cohesive and morally responsible

society founded on Christian principles, at the time, was unique to no other place on earth but Western Australia. This is borne out by the fact, that in the eastern seaboard colonies, particularly New South Wales, both a National and Denominational system held sway. And in light of the political, social, economic and religious machinations, in the period under discussion, it was apt to concentrate upon its establishment and performance.

With regard to its establishment, the research took into account, the General Board's development from a group of elite individuals imbued with Victorian ideals and the vision of a Christian society, to its more elaborate form as a civil service agency. This transition from an intellectual to a political appendage of government was accounted for in the same reasons that underpinned its performance. Namely, that the socio-economic, political and religious factors that impinged upon its progress, eventually led to its earlier optimism being overshadowed by a fatalistic approach to its communal duty, which led to its demise, after only twenty four years of operation. The inauguration and implementation of the convict system, combined with global trends of a socio-political and moral nature, also had much bearing upon the Board's performance. Though in the case of the latter, the General Board's demise, along with the centralization of educational administration and society, seemed to be events that were either pre-ordained or predetermined.

In relation to the General Board's performance, care was taken to distinguish between the achievements and failures of a practical and idealistic nature. These

were variously categorised in the pragmatic and altruistic aims held by the inaugural Committee (later General Board of Education). Though an assessment of the latter had to first rely on inferences gleaned from comments made by prominent Board members in their Minutes and Correspondences. And subsequently, on events surrounding the development of the curriculum and the moral declension of colonial society. As both these aims and ideals have been clearly outlined, it is now possible to provide an assessment of the General Board's achievements and failures. In a practical sense, the General Board, as noted in the statistical figures recorded in *the State Registers* or Blue Books, helped improve the numbers of school enrolments, despite some fluctuations, in both urban and rural schools. The numbers of private schools in Perth and Fremantle gradually rose, with the biggest expansion of schools occurring in rural areas, which consisted of Free and Mixed Schools that educated both boys and girls together. In addition to this, convict depots in country towns also provided an elementary education for the colony's felons. Local Committees of Education were fostered that addressed their concerns to the General Board, to be relayed to the Colonial Secretary and the Governor. Thus the decentralised structures were not easily tampered with. A comprehensive system of annual examinations in schools was set in place; and a method of assessing the performance of teachers, via a payments by results scheme was adopted.

Despite these practical achievements, it was difficult to ascertain whether the improvement in school enrolments and the growth of rural education, were attributed to the Board's efforts, or to the expansion and improvement of the

economy wrought by convict labour. This was due to such improvements occurring during Governor Hampton's tenure as Queen's representative, whose practical and business-like manner was a catalyst to further growth. And moreover, his non-interference in the affairs of the General Board allowed such expansion to continue apace. The establishment of Local Committees of Education along with the comprehensive system of annual examinations in schools and payments by results scheme for teachers were genuine initiatives of the General Board, even though they had already been adopted in Great Britain and the Colony of Victoria. A case though could be made, for arguing in favour of the convict system, being an immense boon to the General Board's pragmatic aims.

While the development of schools was eagerly fostered by the General Board, the provision of private schools for girls remained the sole preserve of the Roman Catholic Church, with its purveyance being granted to the Sisters of Mercy. Similarly schooling for indigenous children became a private matter, as missionary style schools controlled by the Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Anglican Churches were quickly established in Perth, Fremantle and the Avon Valley. The abrogation of this important responsibility on the part of the General Board meant that their overall agenda in terms of the educational reforms and administration, had to conform, not only to their own Protestant values, but to those of the Governor's and colonial officials. This of course impacted upon the General Board's decision-making processes, which were enfeebled once the Board had become incorporated into the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1856. This

resulted in the gradual erosion of the decentralised structures of administration and the transition from a mediatory or semi-autonomous body of elite individuals to a civil service agency. Also the lack of financial provision, during the Kennedy and Hampton eras, for the Roman Catholic educational sector and the Board's compliance with these arrangements, contributed to the challenge mounted against the Board's pro-Protestant agenda. And although the growth of rural education continued unabated, it was largely *ad hoc*. Pupils were still receiving and learning their lessons in decrepit buildings and the apparent lack of books and adequate furniture, meant that they continued to be high on the list of the Board's financial priorities.

It appears that the General Board's failures in these areas can be attributed to three factors that were intrinsic to their work. Firstly, the change in composition of the General Board in terms of its religious makeup; and secondly the close attenuation of policy that conformed to the ideals held by the Governor and his colonial officials. And extrinsic factors associated with the Colonial Government's economic priorities, in light of the convict system. The representation of various clerical and lay figures on the General Board from the different Christian Denominations, did not aid its cause. For this situation, failed to provide a united force that was essential for the original policy of 'multi-establishment' to be effectively translated to education. This was due to a high degree of sectarian rivalry even amongst Protestants, who had sharp differences of opinion as to the perceived merits of the Irish National System of Education. Furthermore the staunchly Protestant emphasis that was infused into the school curriculum,

witnessed, on the part of Catholic clergy, rejection of seats on the Board. To further compound their problems, the General Board in consort with the Colonial Government, (during the period of transportation), began appointing convicts to be teachers, as part of a cost-cutting measure. Thus the General Board, failed in its duty, to adequately provide for trained teachers to be sent to the colony.

The penal system and the scandal associated with the employment of convicts as teachers; coupled with the Catholic challenge to the pro-Protestant Board; undermined its pragmatic and altruistic aims. From the perspective of the Colonial Government, this emphasis on the material imperative of economic expansion, through the labour of convicts, determined where their priorities lay. For practical reasons, seemed to favour the *ad hoc* expansion of schools on the frontier, or in country towns. This haphazard expansion of rural education denoted that schooling, was a peripheral concern to the Government. This was best exemplified, in the lack of financial expenditure in education and the small monies doled out to the General Board; even during a period of heightened economic prosperity.

What this lack of awareness for the educational welfare of the colony's children engendered, was a willingness on the part of the General Board to maintain a comprehensive system of education. Even though this was mainly targeted for children of the wealthier classes. This minor altruistic achievement was accompanied by one that was more substantial in scope. Namely, the translation of a non-sectarian education system into a socially cohesive and homogenous

society. Although a broadly based system of education was maintained, it became the sole preserve of the wealthy class of children. Its continuance, during the Kennedy and Hampton eras, was mainly due to the assiduous efforts of Church of England Bishop Matthew Hale. The non-sectarian nature of schooling, could in the main, be attributed to the close co-operation between Governor Kennedy and the General Board, especially after its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office. And moreover, by the introduction of the Irish National System of education to the colony in 1855; which witnessed the emergence of a 'general' system of education that was more cost-efficient; suited to the needs of the general populace; and one, which provided scope for the poor to receive a remedial education.

The system of education that did emerge under Kennedy, while of practical relevance to the majority of impoverished colonists, allowed the 'pauperisation' of schooling to continue unabated. Yet the comprehensive system of education, which was tailored for children of the well-to-do, was far too ethereal to be of any practical use for the materially minded populace. This was supposedly a non-sectarian and morally based system of education. Yet the use of Scripture extracts rather than the Bible along with the enforced recitation of the Church of England's catechism, clearly indicated that sectarian tendencies in education remained. Similarly, by employing convicts as teachers, Christian principles were being flouted. The society that did emerge, while being socially cohesive or homogeneous, was highly secular, with an aversion to intellectual rigour and

booklore. As a consequence, any substantive change in education was difficult to achieve.

The failure of the General Board to achieve its altruistic or 'visionary' ideals was largely due to factors of an internal and external nature that impinged upon its progress. These range in scope, from: the composition of the General Board after its incorporation into the Colonial Secretary's Office; sectarian rivalry that resulted in the Catholic challenge to its pro-Protestant emphasis; failure to assess the character and requirements of the general populace in light of its apathy toward education; the economic status of the colony and the reduction of education to a subsidiary status in policy matters; the autocratic natures of many of the colony's governors; and the baleful excesses of the convict system. As an adjunct to these valid justifications must be the evolutionary process of State bureaucracies, which unlike those operative in Great Britain, were pushing the colony toward the centralisation of administrative structures, of which, those in education, played an integral part.

Victorian ideals, which were more suited to the class-based society of Nineteenth Century England, were adopted by elite figures (including the General Board), in the Colony of Western Australia. This was a peculiar state of affairs, as the vast majority of the populace, was engaged in a gargantuan struggle to overcome the ravages of a harsh and inhospitable environment. The fact that a rigid class society failed to materialize in Western Australia, due to the extreme poverty and social deprivation endured by most of the populace, meant that any idealized

notions of a future society founded on principles shared by only a small majority of people in the colony, were to be discarded, in favour of those that were to conform to the material instincts and proclivities of its practically minded inhabitants. This was in keeping with trends that had witnessed the emergence of an infusion of secular and 'sacred' teachings in school lessons; charismatic leaders that could easily sway and manipulate the opinions, beliefs and visions of a learned elite; and trends in the global body politic that gave rise to mass bureaucracies or civil service agencies. In this climate, where the secular and religious coalesced, the General Board, strove with some vigour, to overcome the forces that were mounted against it. In so doing, they were able to forge ahead with a bold plan, of converting education into societal change, economically, politically, socially and morally. The General Board of Education were not only responsible for enhancing the system of education in the colony, but their achievements have been of sufficient magnitude to be worthy of analysis in this thesis.

APPENDIX 1 : The Governors of Western Australia from the Earliest Settlement to the Termination of the General Board of Education : Their Educational Endeavours or Policies

1. Governor James Stirling (1829 – 1838) was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Swan River Colony in 1829, by the Secretary of State for the Colonies Earl Grey, after a formal inspection of the colony in March 1827. He was responsible for establishing the first settlement on the banks of the Swan River and for promoting immigration to the ailing colony during his time spent in England between 1832 – 1834. In matters pertaining to education, the Governor was not given any formal instructions. As a consequence of this, Stirling entrusted the instruction and schooling of pupils to the first Colonial Chaplain John Wittenoom, who received a fixed stipend from the Office of the Governor for his teaching and ecclesiastical duties.

2. Governor John Hutt (1838 – 1846) was regarded as a colonial theorist, who sought to expand upon the ideas espoused by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, namely in regard to systematic colonization. His policies of land regulation alienated many of his subjects. Central to the Wakefeldian ideas was the moral reform of the colonies, which was best achieved according to Hutt through education. His policy of multi-establishment in religion was extended to education. The central thrust of the policy was that children of all the Christian denominations were to be educated together to avoid any sectarian tendencies from erupting. This shortsighted policy for a time alienated the

Roman Catholic educational sector. Despite this drawback, Hutt promoted the establishment of schools for Aboriginal children, though as a Protestant, he remained abhorred by the continued successes of Roman Catholic clergy in educating a significant percentage of colonial children.

3. Governor Andrew Clarke (1846 – February 1847) was Captain of Hobart and Governor of St. Lucia in the West Indies (1839 – 1844) before being appointed Governor of Western Australia. His most noteworthy achievement in the colony was in initiating school development in reaction to the work of Catholic teaching orders. He died prematurely while in office.
4. Governor Frederick Chidley Irwin (1847 – 1848) who was Captain of the 63rd regiment after served in the Legislative Council in 1831, and was acting Lieutenant Governor in the years 1832 – 1833 during Stirling's temporary absence. He not only fostered the growth of missionary societies, but was responsible for inaugurating the Education Committee (later General Board of Education) in August 1847.
5. Governor Charles Fitzgerald (1848 – 1855) served as a Captain in the Royal Navy from 1809 to 1840 and was appointed Governor of Gambia in 1844 to 1847, before being appointed as Queen's representative in Western Australia in 1848. Although notorious for racking up a huge debt that almost brought the colony to the verge of bankruptcy, Fitzgerald was known for his compliance with the orders of the Imperial Government. Following orders

from Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies), a separate or special grant was bestowed upon the Catholic educational sector, in lieu of an Irish National System of education being adopted. In following the Secretary's plans, Fitzgerald also conformed to the views held by the newly formed General Board of Education, which were the same as those of Earl Grey. Yet the separate grant issue was notorious for promoting a fragmentary denominational system.

6. Governor Arthur Edward Kennedy (1855 – 1862) was a poor law inspector in his native Ireland between the years 1827 to 1861, Governor of Gambia in 1851, and Sierra Leone in 1852 before being appointed Governor of Western Australia. His regal bearing and dignified manner added a sense of professionalism to the office of Governor that had previously not been self-evident. He presided over the extension of the convict system in Western Australia and sought to redress the financial extravagancies of his predecessor. In so doing, he pursued a policy of retrenchment to cut back on costs as a means to roll back the public debt. The policy was to witness the incorporation of the General Board of Education into the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1856, abolition of the separate financial grant to the Roman Catholic educational sector and the introduction of the Irish National system of education to the colony.

It was the latter that was to have the most profound effect not only upon the reshaping and reorganisation of the General Board, but of educational

administration in general. It was considered to be the most cost effective means of educating children as well as the one least likely to foster sectarian strife. However, despite these advantages, it was notorious for providing a poor standard of education and was seen to be contributing to the “pauperization” of education through its promotion of state pauper schools. Kennedy firmly believed that it was the State’s role to educate only the poor and that the wealthy should provide their own means for educating their children. The system inaugurated by Kennedy although class-based was anti-elitist.

7. Governor John Stephen Hampton (1862 – 1868) served as a surgeon in the Royal Navy between the years 1829 to 1846 before being appointed as Comptroller General of the Convict establishment in Tasmania until 1857. Five years later he was appointed Governor of Western Australia, being charged with the oversight of convicts in the colony. He was particularly notorious for the brutal treatment and harsh tyranny meted out to convicts, even for minor offences, and for gross nepotism, by way of allowing his son to be Comptroller General at Fremantle. Hampton’s reign witnessed a massive public works expansion which took pride of place over educational issues. As a consequence, the Governor sought to maintain the system inaugurated by his predecessor, even though, both the convict system and the elementary style education were a source of angst to the first Anglican Bishop of Perth, Matthew Hale.

8. Governor Frederick Aloysius Weld (1869 – 1877) emigrated from his native England to New Zealand in 1843 from where he became a successful sheep farmer, politician and eventually Premier. He is fondly remembered for his successful diplomacy by way of pacifying the competing interests between the coloniser and colonised in New Zealand and during his time as a Governor in Malaysia. This role as the consummate diplomat was brought to the fore when he became Governor of Western Australia in 1869. It was most acutely manifested during the time of the debate over the proposed Education Bill, which was eventually passed by the new parliament in August 1871 and enshrined in law as the Elementary Education Act. It not only made schooling compulsory for children between the ages of six to fourteen, but was instrumental in the further erosion of the decentralized structures of educational administration. This was made possible by the termination of the General Board of Education that took effect upon the passing of the Act, and its translation into a Central Board of Education charged with the oversight of Government and Assisted (denominational) schools. The passing of the Education Bill enabled the differences between Protestants and Catholics over educational matters to be fully reconciled, especially once the latter had State funding restored to them. It must also be noted that Governor Weld was Western Australia's first Catholic Governor.

APPENDIX 2 : Governor Kennedy's Twelve Suggestions in Relation to Educational Reform and Administration

1. That all schools payable by the public should be open to children of all Christian sects – without giving offense to the scruples of any.
2. The Roman Catholic Bishop should be offered a seat on the General Board of Education in conjunction with a minister from other denominations.
3. Scripture lessons of the Irish National System should be used in lieu of the whole Bible.
4. A layman to be appointed as Chairman of the Board who would remain impartial.
5. Education at the public expense should be set aside for those unable to pay, namely the poorer classes who were to be instructed in the three Rs and Geography.
6. The establishment of a good mercantile and classical school by private enterprise is rendered impossible in such a small community.
7. Masters and mistresses of schools should be paid a fixed and liberal salary.
8. Scholars in government schools to be divided into three classes according to several means of payment, with the amounts credited to a fund for the provision of school necessities and that attendance at schools should be less than 6 hours daily.
9. The amount annually voted by the Legislative Council for education should be placed at the disposal of the General Board of Education, to be upheld as they

see fit, subject, however, to the confirmation of His Excellency of all changes and new appointments.

10. Schools in rural districts to be controlled and administered by the General Board of Education, with each being entitled to an annual grant, the amount of which to be decided by the Board.
11. One or more members of the Board should appoint persons to conduct annual inspections of schools and examinations, who are to report to the Board. All expenses for such inspections should be defrayed by the Education Grant.
12. That the Board report annually to His Excellency.

Source: The Inquirer, 12 December 1855.

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