R.H. TAWNEY: THE INTEGRATED LIFE AND
THE REFORM OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND 1905-1944

by

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ABSTRACT

Reform of state education in England, which began seriously with the Education Act of 1870, and continued with the Education Act of 1902 failed to give the reform movement the secular system and equality of access and provision it desired for all students. The system was far from the democratic entity that enfranchised citizens deserved. After the First World War, the reform movement’s advance toward full educational democracy gained impetus, culminating in the Education Act of 1944, which some believed had solved most of the educational problems perceived by the reformers.

Yet in the 1980’s, scholars like Kevin Jefferys and Brian Simon concluded that this 1944 Act was conservative, and that it failed to give the reform movement much of what it had advocated. To examine the reform movement from 1905 to 1944 and to consider the Jefferys/Simon challenge, I focus on R.H. Tawney, one of the great social democrats and educational reform leaders of the time. By examining his whole career including his Workers’ Educational Association work, his First World War experiences, his contributions to the Church of England, government, and the Labour Party as well as his academic life, I believe that a thematic approach enables me to probe and link the various aspects of his life and educational crusade in greater depth. At the heart of his integrated life was his unshakeable belief in equal rights for all and his conviction that educational provision was the essential foundation for achieving this. Of great assistance were the Tawney papers, among them the Tawney/Vyvyan collection, released to the public at the London School of Economics in 2005. Drawing on these and a myriad of Tawney books, articles and reviews as well as the vast literature written about him and the context in which he operated, I argue that for decades Tawney led the educational reform movement that reached its climax in 1944, a measure that, unfortunately for Tawney and his fellow reformers, did not meet all their objectives. In the end, their reform efforts failed to produce a 1944 Education Act that was a major step forward for English children. Although there was limited progress towards educational equality, the system of privilege, successfully
deflecting the efforts of Tawney and the reform lobby, continued to dominate the state school system.

**Keywords:** educational reform in England, equality of educational provision, Christian Socialism, the integrated life, Workers’ Educational Association
In memory of my parents, Mary and Anthony McNally

and

my friend Dale Graham
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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In Britain, librarians and archivists were especially helpful to me: Sue Donnelly and the staff of the London School of Economics Archives; Christine Coates of the WEA Collection at Metropolitan University; and Steven Byrd and Darren Treadwell at the Labour History Archives and Study Centre in Manchester.

Most important, has been the support of my family and friends: my father Anthony McNally who died in December 2004, my brother and sister-in-law, James McArthur and Barbara Diggins, and my friends Merle Herbert Panico, Melody Sawkins and Ann Sutherland.
R. H. Tawney, President of the Workers' Educational Association 1928-1944

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SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Richard Henry Tawney was born in 1880, to an English family stationed in India. His mother was Catherine Fox and his father Charles Tawney, Sanskrit scholar and principal of Presidency College in Calcutta. When Tawney was a young boy, the family of five sisters and three brothers moved back to England settling in Weybridge, Surrey where they moved in upper middle class circles. Charles Tawney obtained a position with the British Museum where he worked in the oriental collections until his retirement, which coincided with his son’s graduation from Oxford.¹

Tawney, or ‘Harry’ as he was known to his family and best friends, had the education typical of the upper middle classes. He attended Rugby, one of the great public schools, where he established what became a life-long friendship with William Temple, future Archbishop of Canterbury. He was highly regarded by his teachers there. One of them, Frank Fletcher, said that R.H. Tawney and R.L. Nettleship were ‘the two finest minds I encountered’.² When he went up to Oxford in 1899 to attend Balliol College, he established another of his great life-long friendships, with William Beveridge, son of another English family with a career history in India. There, he came under the influence of notable figures with reform opinions, interested in the ‘social question’, that of elevating the lives of the urban poor, an ever-growing class.

Edward Caird, the student of T.H. Green, moralist and philosopher, and Master of Balliol when Tawney was there, urged his students to work with the poor in cities. Charles Gore, an Anglican theologian and later Bishop of Oxford was a mentor to Tawney in those university years. He was one of the founders of a Christian Socialist group which Tawney joined and to whose moral principles he long subscribed.

¹ Extract from India Office Library on death of Charles Tawney, 29 July 1922, Tawney/Vyvyan 5, British Library of Political and Economic Science, [henceforth BLPES].
Not surprisingly, Tawney went to live and work at Toynbee Hall when he graduated from Oxford in 1903. The Hall was an institution set up under Canon Barnett in the east end of London to carry out the kind of social work recommended by Caird and others reformers. There, Tawney and other like-minded young university graduates taught ‘social’ subjects to working people and carried out various forms of social work in the community.

During this time, he met Jeanette Beveridge, sister of William. He actually employed her in the Children’s Country Holiday Fund, a social project he ran for Toynbee Hall. They were acquainted for several years before becoming engaged in 1908 and marrying in 1909. These years were seminal for Tawney in his professional life as well as his personal one. As early as 1903, he began to contribute articles to newspapers such as the *Westminster Gazette*, journalism becoming a part-time career for the remainder of his life. He left Toynbee Hall for Glasgow University in 1906 to work as an assistant to economics professor William Smart. There, he worked with another assistant, Tom Jones, who would later be a private secretary to prime ministers and a highly influential figure in Whitehall. Before his departure for Glasgow, Tawney joined the Workers’ Educational Association in 1905. This new group held its first meetings at Toynbee Hall, and, as its name suggests, it had an overlapping mission with the earlier institution. Its founder, Albert Mansbridge, became one of Tawney’s close associates in the subsequent years and was certainly responsible for Tawney becoming the first tutor in the pioneering tutorial classes which began in 1908. He left his Glasgow position to teach workers in Rochdale, Longton, and other northern towns. His interaction with workers there convinced him that he had found his true calling, continuing this work until the beginning of the war in 1914. The year before, however, he had taken a part-time position with the Ratan Tata Foundation, a London School of Economics affiliate set up to study poverty under the direction of Leonard Hobhouse.

Shortly after the war began, Tawney volunteered, joining the Manchester Regiment at the end of 1914. His letters to his wife and family from the western front reveal the conditions of the
ordinary soldier in a completely unromantic way. He fought until seriously wounded in the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, when he was invalided home. The articles that he wrote about the war are among the most moving and analytical literature of their kind. He became convinced that the WEA endeavours that he had been involved in as well as a general expansion of democratic education were future solutions to a stable and peaceful world. He dedicated himself to this purpose even before the war had ended, becoming engaged in government reconstruction committees, and the Labour Party Education Advisory Committee.

Tawney accepted a position as Reader in Economic History at the London School of Economics in 1920. This was to be his academic home until he retired thirty years later. Already a member of the WEA executive from pre-war days, Tawney also continued with the administration of this expanding organization for the next thirty years, for sixteen of those years, 1928-1944, as President. Using his positions within the Labour Party and the WEA, he pursued a career-long crusade to reform state education. His views, expressed in articles and leaders in the Manchester Guardian, were always coloured by his moral position, often said to be that of the Christian Socialists.

He wrote four famous books in the twenties, one a pioneering work on seventeenth century history, one a plea for secondary education for all, and the other two, social commentary stressing the need for reform in values so as to achieve full democracy. Meantime, he played his part in improving the position of the Labour Party in parliamentary life though active committee work and drafting of party policy.

The second minority Labour Government, in office for two years, from 1929 to 1931, was a disappointment to Tawney because it failed to guide a successful education act through parliament. Nevertheless, he continued to work for educational reform through the 1930s when a

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3 War letters, Tawney/Vyyan 1, BLPE.
conservative-dominated national government also failed to provide the democratic educational system Tawney advocated. Although a somewhat restrictive education bill was passed in 1936, it was never enacted as its implementation date coincided with the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939.

Throughout the war, Tawney continued to advocate educational reform, this time as head of the Council for Educational Advance, a powerful educational lobby that represented four national organizations: the WEA, the NUT, the TUC, and the Co-operative Association. A coalition government oversaw the process which resulted in the Education Act of 1944, its reforms being a partial solution to the problems Tawney had long pointed out.

After the war, Tawney gradually reduced his WEA work, his academic work, and his journalism, spending more time with Jeanette at a country cottage in Stroud. Jeanette, a strong support to Tawney through their long marriage, died in 1958, leaving Tawney feeling much diminished. In 1960, many of his friends, led by Arthur Creech-Jones, held a celebratory dinner at Westminster Hall to honour Tawney and his many achievements. He died in January 1962 much lauded by the nation whose newspapers highly praised his long public life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABBREVIATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<td>BLPES</td>
<td>British Library of Political and Economic Science</td>
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<td>CEA</td>
<td>Council of Educational Advance</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Central Labour College</td>
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<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
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<td>ILP</td>
<td>Independent Labour Party</td>
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<td>LHASC</td>
<td>Labour History Archive and Study Centre</td>
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<td>LPACE</td>
<td>Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education</td>
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<td>LPEC</td>
<td>Labour Party Executive Committee</td>
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<td>LRC</td>
<td>Labour Representation Committee</td>
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<td>MLLSU</td>
<td>Manchester Library Local Studies Unit</td>
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<td>NCLC</td>
<td>National Council of Labour Colleges</td>
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<td>NIACE</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Continuing Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIAE</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUT</td>
<td>National Union of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>*PRO (National Archives)</td>
<td>Public Records Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUC</td>
<td>Trade Union Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCAE</td>
<td>University Council on Adult Education</td>
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<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers' Educational Association</td>
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<td>WETUC</td>
<td>Workers Educational Trade Union Committee</td>
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*As of 2000, the Public Records Office became the National Archives. In this thesis the term PRO is used.
<table>
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<th>GLOSSARY OF ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL TERMS</th>
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<td>Central schools</td>
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<td>Direct grant schools</td>
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<td>Voluntary schools</td>
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Most of these definitions have been adapted from Brian Simon’s two works *Education and the Labour Movement: 1870-1920* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1965) and *The Politics of Educational Reform: 1920-1940* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974). They may be used in conjunction with Appendix I to read the Education Chapters.
INTRODUCTION

Since I had been a career secondary school teacher, it was natural for me to be attracted to research in the field of education. At first, my interest was taken by the advance of secondary education in England as legislated by the Education Act of 1944. On the surface, it seemed to be the successful climax of a long campaign waged by the educational reform lobby. However, historians like Brian Simon, Kevin Jefferys, and R.G. Wallace argued that, despite appearances, in reality the Act was a conservative measure. To understand what they meant, I began to explore the forces for and against educational reform in twentieth century England. During this exploration, the discovery, mainly through Brian Simon, that R.H Tawney was involved in the reform campaign over a long period, made me decide to look at the issue through the lens of Tawney, a prolific journalist and writer on the topic of education, and to assess the degree of influence Tawney had on the course of educational reform.

Tawney was a polymath who, in addition to state education, affected several aspects of English life. He made considerable contributions as a pioneer in the Workers' Educational Association, as an activist within the Church of England, as an historian and university teacher and as an advisor to the Labour Party. Without some consideration of each of these areas, a full understanding of Tawney's influence on the reform of state education would be difficult. My study of Tawney and the reform of education is at once broader and narrower than that of J.R. Brooks, broader, in that it considers Tawney's religious, political, and academic life in some

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depth, and narrower in that it centres educationally on the tutorial system of the WEA and on the elementary and secondary levels of the state education system. Unlike the Brooks thesis, mine does not examine either the nursery schools or the universities, nor is its main aim to ‘explain the consistency evident in [Tawney’s] writing and activities in terms of a theory of equality.’ To achieve both breadth and depth, I chose a thematic approach to my subject, although within themes there is usually an evident chronology. Writing thirty years after Brooks, I had the advantage of the considerable amount of research done in that period. Two biographies, many general works and innumerable articles aided my own research which was given an additional boost in 2005 by the release of the personal files of Tawney, designated the Tawney/Vyvyan collection, Vyvyan being the name of his nephew and literary executor.7

Drawing on material from archival sources in England, Tawney’s published works, many of which Brooks used, and the great amount of literature written about both Tawney and educational reform in the last thirty years I drew up my plans. In the end, I arranged my thesis into three distinct parts: I: The Workers’ Educational Association, II: Religion, Politics, Academic Career, and III: State Education. The first part examines how Tawney became involved with teaching workers and how the First World War affected him; the second explores the diversity of his religious and academic activism as well as his career; the third investigates the growth of public education, its class foundation, and the attempts by the educational lobby to bring equality to education.

Chapter 1 examines the formation of the Workers’ Educational Association, an attempt by its devout Anglican founder, Albert Mansbridge, to bring university level, liberal education to working people. His experience of adult extension lectures at Toynbee Hall University

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Settlement in the east end of London and his contacts at Oxford convinced him that the university tutorial system was the best method of delivery. Although this did not yet exist as part of the early twentieth century adult education movement, his genius lay in the belief that it could be implemented for workers. The founding meeting of the WEA occurred at Toynbee Hall in 1903, the year when the young Tawney came down from Oxford to live and work at the Settlement House among workers. Not surprisingly, he became a member of Mansbridge’s new organization in 1905, and was a member of its executive for nearly fifty years. Although Tawney taught at the University of Glasgow for a short time, it was his appointment as the first tutor of the WEA in December 1907 that confirmed his more unorthodox career. He wanted to teach workers in industrial towns and said so to William Beveridge, his future brother-in-law.\footnote{Tawney to Beveridge, The Beveridge Papers, BLPES, 11a 106, 20 September 1905.} His teaching in Rochdale, Longton and other industrial towns made him a legendary figure, but his exalted reputation was later challenged by historians like R.A. Lowe and Linden R. West who argued in the 1970s that the stature of Tawney was surely exaggerated.\footnote{R.A. Lowe, ‘Some Forerunners of Tawney’s Tutorial Class’, History of Education, vol. 1, (January 1972), and Linden R. West, ‘The Tawney Legend Re-examined’, Studies in Adult Education, vol. 4, no.2, (October 1972), 117.} Yet, the legend still persisted in Britain more than thirty years later. The memory of his dedication and teaching ability lived on in the many surviving letters of his worker-students.

Chapter 2 reveals Tawney at war. By 1914, Tawney’s only remaining tutorial class was the one at Longton, his career having already broadened to include a part-time position researching the problem of poverty for the Ratan Tata Foundation, part of the London School of Economics. In the Commonplace Book\footnote{R.H. Tawney, Journal, Tawney/Vyvyan 28, BLPES, published later as R.H. Tawney’s Commonplace Book, ed. J.M. Winter and D.M. Joslin, (Cambridge, The University Press, 1972).} he pondered the problem of volunteering for the army, finally resolving as a matter of principle to sign up as an ordinary soldier with the Manchester Regiment. During his training he began to write articles about war issues as he personally experienced them. After recovering from a serious injury at the Battle of the Somme, he wrote...
some of the most trenchant and honest accounts of the war,\textsuperscript{11} stressing the need for the
reformation of society and a new world of equality for citizens, all of whom had shared the
burdens of war. One of his major recommendations was a reformed system of education which
would treat all children of the working classes as generously as those of the middle and upper
classes.\textsuperscript{12} After his recovery, he didn’t return to the front but instead engaged in reform work
with committees of the Anglican Church, the government, and the Labour Party, thus beginning
in earnest the moral crusade for the reform of society that he pursued over the next three decades.

Chapter 3 considers the great projects in which Tawney was engaged as the First World
War was ending, his day-to-day work as an administrator of the WEA from 1928 to 1944, the
rivalry between the WEA and the National Council of Labour Colleges, the Marxist-oriented
educational organization, and the WEA during the Second World War. In 1918, he was one of
the editors of the WEA Year Book, an extensive publication which brought together articles on
education by many socialist thinkers and educators of the time. More importantly, he was a
member of the committee which wrote The 1919 Report, The Final and Interim Reports of the
Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-1919. As one of its four chief
writers, all of whom were connected with the WEA, his influence in adult education was realized
as most of the Report’s recommendations were implemented during the interwar period.\textsuperscript{13} As a
WEA administrator, Tawney playing a leading role in the organization’s crusade for the advance
of state education, thus intertwining the fortunes of the WEA and the school children of
England.\textsuperscript{14} The central issue was Tawney’s belief that education would help to bring about

\textsuperscript{11} Fritz Stern, ‘Historians and the Great War: Private Experience and Public Explication’, \textit{The Yale Review},
vol. 82, (January 1994), 40.
\textsuperscript{12} R.H. Tawney, ‘Reflections of a Soldier’, originally published in the \textit{Nation}, (October 1916), and later
\textsuperscript{13} Thomas Kelly, \textit{A History of Adult Education in Great Britain}, Third Edition, (Liverpool, The University
\textsuperscript{14} Executive Committee Minutes, 1914-1935, WEA Central, /1/2/1/4/ to /1/2/1/29.
equality for all citizens. The reputation of Tawney as President of the WEA was enhanced by his work on behalf of public education.

Another issue of importance for the WEA was its increasing rivalry with the NCLC for adult students as controversy about the type of educational curriculum arose. Supported by government grants, the WEA tutorials offered a liberal education, stressing the formation of opinion based on reading a variety of points of view. Financed by its membership, the NCLC taught a strictly Marxist curriculum, of some appeal among British workers after the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and of greater appeal as fascism increasingly threatened Europe in the 1930s. With the coming of the Second World War, the WEA worked with other educational organizations in the war effort. It tailored its courses so that the curriculum examined the breakdown of peace, causes of war, methods of future prevention and countries involved in war. Its expansion evident since its foundation, the growth of the WEA continued throughout the war.

Part II of this thesis looks at Tawney’s Christian Socialism, his academic career, and his work in the Labour Party. These chapters, providing an ambience and context for Tawney’s educational work, reveal that the desire for reform in education was one of the roots of all his other work. Chapter 4 shows that Tawney’s Christianity was at the heart of his life as a public intellectual. His formal involvement in Christian Socialism began at Oxford when he joined the Christian Social Union under the guidance of his mentor, Bishop Charles Gore. Subsequently, he belonged to several other such groups, some of them formed by his friend and Anglican cleric, William Temple, all of them of reform persuasion. After being invalided out of active service in 1916, Tawney became part of the Church of England Committee that wrote The Report of the Archbishops Fifth Committee of Inquiry, a reform document containing a chapter on education that made recommendations very similar to those that Tawney advocated throughout the whole

interwar period. Its stress on education as a spiritual activity with equality for all\textsuperscript{16} was his subsequent, continuing message at conferences and in articles.

Chapter 5 demonstrates the variety of Tawney’s academic career: his writing of several great books and articles including \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}, his teaching at the LSE, his collaboration with colleagues, and his influence on students. The great books were written from a consciousness of present day problems and reflected a desire for moral improvement,\textsuperscript{17} qualities sharply challenged by critics like G.R. Elton.\textsuperscript{18} Tawney worked and collaborated with outstanding LSE teachers such as Eileen Powell, Harold Laski, T.S. Ashton and F.J. Fisher.\textsuperscript{19} When Powell died in 1940, Tawney wrote a tribute to her.\textsuperscript{20} When he died in 1962, Ashton\textsuperscript{21} and Fisher\textsuperscript{22} wrote in tribute to him. Later, some of Tawney’s students who achieved eminence also wrote about Tawney, remembering him as a great, moral sage.\textsuperscript{23}

Chapter 6 explores the history of Tawney’s political affiliation with the Labour Party in the first half of the twentieth century. Educated in the atmosphere of reform liberalism at Balliol at the time when ‘New’ Liberalism was just emerging, Tawney’s earliest political heritage was derived from these two sources. By 1939, he regarded the Liberal Government of 1906 as the greatest of the preceding century.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, his first formal political ties were with the

\textsuperscript{17} R.H. Tawney, Lecture I on Seventeenth Century History, circa 1930-1940, Tawney I, BLPES, 5/2.
\textsuperscript{20} Neilson to Tawney, 21 March 1940, Tawney I, BLPES, 11/1.
\textsuperscript{22} F.J. Fisher, \textit{R.H. Tawney, A Portrait by Several Hands}, (London, published privately, 1960 in honour of Tawney's eightieth birthday) Fisher was identified as one of the authors by Arthur Creech Jones in a note at the end of the publication.
\textsuperscript{24} Lecture on Democracy, 1939, Tawney I, BLPES, 15/1, 23.
Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party, both of them founders of the Labour Representation committee of 1900. Although he severed his ILP connection over Britain’s entry into the war, he was an active participant in the restructuring of the Labour Party in 1918, becoming a moving force on one of its new committees, the Advisory Committee on Education (henceforth referred to as LPACE). He generated much of the Labour Party’s educational policy in the 1920’s, becoming the principal writer of *Secondary Education for All*. Later, he participated in developing the campaign document for the 1929 election *Labour and the Nation*. Encouraged by the formation of Labour’s second minority Government in 1929, he looked forward to an education bill which would raise the school leaving age to fifteen, one of the recommended reforms of *Secondary Education for All*. His disappointment at Labour’s inability to govern effectively and to deliver the promised education bill led him to give up active participation in the party for a number of years, expressing his feelings in the article ‘The Choice before the Labour Party’. When the Second World War began, his active participation in the party resumed. His one-year posting to the British Embassy in Washington as a labour attaché was the result of Labour requesting his appointment. Articles he wrote during the war reflected both his patriotism and his partisanship. The heavy load of educational reform work that he undertook during the war is examined elsewhere in this thesis.

The four chapters of Part III discuss reform in the state education system and Tawney’s influence on it. Chapter 7 offers background on the formal beginnings of state education in the

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25 Snowden to Tawney, 16 November 1918. Tawney/Vyvyan 41, BLPES.  
26 Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education Minutes, [henceforth LPACE] 25 January to 22 November 1921, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, [henceforth LHASC], Manchester.  
30 Tawney to Creech Jones, 15 July 1940 and 16 August 1941, The Creech Jones Papers, Rhodes House Library, Box 2.  
31 See Chapter 10.
nineteenth century, including the Forster Education Act of 1870 and the Education Act of 1902. These were the laws that put in place the elementary education system and the separate secondary system that Tawney observed and critiqued prior to the First World War when he began to submit articles on education to the London newspapers. The failed education bills of 1906 and 1908 were the subject of some of his early writing. When Tawney was at war, the educational lobby, including the WEA, continued to advocate the reform of the Education Act of 1902 which, among other things, had eliminated the democratically-elected School Boards, and established the Local Educational Authorities and the Dual System. It provided for a leaving age of twelve or thirteen, students sometimes being permitted to leave at the earlier age for a job. With the able leadership of H.A.L. Fisher at the Board of Education, the Coalition government of Lloyd George introduced an education bill to the House of Commons in 1917. Tawney, replying to the opposition by British industry, alarmed at losing its cheap, youngest workers to a higher school leaving age, answered their objections in several satirical articles. When the bill had been revised and passed as the Education Act of 1918, its main reforms were raising the leaving age to fourteen and the establishment of the continuation schools, a step towards equality in education. Tawney, back on the home front after being wounded in 1916, engaged in both government and Labour Party educational committees that would launch his mission of educational crusader. He was not the only one disappointed at the failure of the Coalition Government, when faced with the reluctance of many conservatives and the post-war recession, to implement the new Education Act.

Chapter 8 outlines Tawney’s great decade of reform advocacy, which sprang from the failure of the Education Act of 1918 and was facilitated by his active participation on both the LPACE and the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education. He made ideas about reform public through the *Manchester Guardian* for which he became the chief writer for education issues after the First World War. Many of his articles were published as leaders. In 1921, Tawney produced for the LPACE the original memorandum which, with amendment and expansion, eventually became *Secondary Education for All*. This book, a clever restatement of the educational reform ideas of the previous thirty years was a powerful influence on educational thinking over the next two decades.35 In 1924, when the Consultative Committee of the Board was about to consider a new reference on education of adolescents, Tawney was reappointed to the committee to help in preparing for the *Hadow Report*.36 This appointment suggested the prominence he had gained as an educational specialist. The committee, given the reference in February 1924, began to meet in April of that year and completed its task late in 1926, the *Report* being published in December. The reference had gone forward under the first Labour minority Government but the *Report* was received by Lord Eustace Percy, the Conservative President of the Board of Education, who rejected the its recommendations almost immediately.37 Its major premise was that all children should receive a secondary education in a four-year programme at one of several types of schools, all of whose facilities and resources would be equal. At the centre of this concept was raising the leaving age to fifteen, thus enabling the students to receive their secondary education between the ages of eleven when they entered secondary school and fifteen when they left it. Percy’s quick reaction to this recommendation was swiftly attacked by Tawney in his *Manchester Guardian* articles.38 Later, although the upper end of the elementary

35 LPACE Minutes, January-November, 1921. LHASC.
37 ‘Lord Percy on the School Age’, *The Times*, 1 January 1927, 12.
school system was ‘reorganized’, the Hadow Report was mostly ignored by the Board of Education in the interwar years. Furthermore, the church section of the Dual System\(^3\) could not afford to implement the so-called Hadow ‘reorganization’.\(^4\) In the post-Hadow years, when the Board attempted to implement the provisions of some administrative circulars intended to restrict the spending of the LEAs, Tawney led the opposition to the Board tactic in his newspaper articles. With the election of the second Labour minority Government in 1929, Tawney and the educational reform lobby were at first convinced that a bill raising the leaving age to fifteen could be enacted. Although three bills were subsequently introduced in Parliament, none were successful. The Labour Party leadership was not supportive enough of President of the Board, Charles Trevelyan; the issue of maintenance grants erected a psychological obstacle; and a major international financial crisis intervened in ordinary parliamentary business.\(^41\) Tawney, blaming the Labour Party for its timidity, withdrew his active participation.

Chapter 9 shows that Tawney did not withdraw his support from educational reform. He continued to exert pressure for it as the President of the WEA and as the leading educational journalist of the Manchester Guardian. Educational advocacy for reform was more difficult in the crises-ridden atmosphere of the 1930’s. Solving the problems of the financial crisis of 1929–1931, for instance, superseded the needs of children for education. The crisis led to a new coalition arrangement, the National Government, which included all parties, but was dominated by the Conservatives.\(^42\) The educational result was that the two appointed cost-cutting committees, the May Committee\(^43\) and the Ray Committee,\(^44\) recommended education cuts which

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\(^3\) Both the state schools and the voluntary schools were run by the Board of Education as a Dual System as a result of the Education Act of 1902.

\(^4\) R.H. Tawney, Sidney Ball Lecture, Tawney I, BLPES, 17/2, 19-20.


\(^42\) C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940, (London, Methuen, 1955) 411-12.

hit the public system hard. By June 1932, Lord Irwin, the next long-term President of the Board of Education, was appointed but was not especially interested in his post.\(^{45}\) Even he, however, warned the government in the mid-1930s that if it did nothing positive about education, it could lose the next election. Part of the National Government’s 1935 election campaign, was, therefore, a promise to raise the school leaving age, long the centre-piece of reform demands. When it became the Education Act of 1936, however, the raised leaving age was so hedged with exemptions that the measure seemed futile.\(^{46}\) Furthermore, the Act was not to be implemented until 1 September 1939, to give all schools the time to prepare for changes. This Act was destined to be ineffective if the majority of fourteen year olds could opt out to get work, as Tawney was quick to point out.\(^{47}\) Meanwhile, from 1933, the Consultative Committee was at work once more on a report for the Board of Education, this one on the needs of students in schools other than elementary.\(^{48}\) Although Tawney was no longer on the committee, he exerted influence through his friend and committee replacement, Lady Shena Simon. Throughout the five-year deliberation period of the committee, the two exchanged a series of letters in which Lady Simon sought advice about how to act effectively as a member and in which Tawney responded with expert advice based on his own vast experience of committee work.\(^{49}\) By the time the Spens Report was published in December 1938, international tensions were deepening, the Munich crisis having just occurred that fall. The importance of the forward-looking recommendations of the Report, including use of a single code, raising the leaving age to fifteen and later to sixteen, and mandatory education for citizenship, was almost lost in the anxiety over

\(^{45}\) Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax: the life of Lord Halifax*, (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1965), 147. Others who held the post of President between Trevelyan and Irwin were H. Lees Smith and Sir D. MacLean.
\(^{49}\) Simon-Tawney Letters, December 1934 to January 1939, Shena Simon Papers, Manchester Library Local Studies Unit, M14/2/2/4.
international events. So concerned was the Treasury that it issued spending restrictions for all
government departments including the Board of Education. The Board thus rejected the *Spens Report* as too expensive.50 As the war loomed, Tawney was still warning of the importance of a
well-educated citizenry to protect democracy. As Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, the Education Act of 1936, due for implementation on that day, was suspended.

Chapter 10 describes Tawney and the educational system during the Second World War. Even before Britain declared war on 3 September, the evacuation plans for school children, in the
making for much of the 1930s, were carried out. Children and teachers from the English and
Scottish areas most threatened by air raids were moved in school groups to areas considered safer.
It was expected that the children of the evacuation zones would stay in reception zones for some
considerable time.51 Under the pressure of this exodus, the school system began to falter
dramatically creating a focus for educational reformers to renew their demands.52 Tawney and
the WEA wrote articles and successfully lobbied the Board of Education for meetings.53 By
1940, the Board of Education, in response to the pressures of a deteriorating school system,
established a Committee of Senior Officials for Reconstruction to examine the options for
change, now looking seriously for the first time at many of the recommendations of reformers and
of the *Hadow* and *Spens Reports*.54 These officials might also have been looking to the future as
the Coalition Government of 1940 had a strong Labour Party element which might eventually
form a government. With these past and present factors as a motivation, they produced the *Green
Book*, their version of the interwar reform recommendations.

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50 Form 231, Ed 136/131, Letter and attachments on *The Spens Report* sent to the Deputy Secretary, 9
January 1939, PRO [NA], 14.
53 WEA Central, 3/3/1, 8 February 1940 and 20 February 1941.
What reformers most desired in a wartime education act, according to Brian Simon's checklist were: abolition of public schools, abolition of the Dual System, raising the school leaving age to 16, free secondary education for all, a single code, and multilateralism at the secondary level. How many of these items would a conservative-dominated coalition permit?

Immediately after the Green Book's selected release in 1941, a new minister, Richard Butler, was appointed to the Board. Intelligent, experienced in government and education, he believed that he could deliver an education act despite the misgivings of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. With the able assistance of his Labour Parliamentary Secretary, James Chuter Ede, Butler evolved plans, central to which was reconciliation with the Churches, which had such a strong stake in the already-existing Dual System. Their support was crucial to developing and implementing a new act.

Under Tawney's leadership, the WEA continued its task of cajoling, persuading, and urging the Board of Education to stay the course, reform the system, and bring equality of opportunity and provision for all children. After his year of government work at the British Embassy in America, Tawney returned to lead the Council for Educational Advance, an organization determined to deliver a democratic education bill as quickly as possible. Educational reform was becoming popular, assuring support for such a bill. A White Paper introducing the main lines of the bill in July 1943, was followed by its introduction in December. The bill became the Education Act of 1944 providing for some of the recommendations that had long been advocated, and omitting some others. Tawney and the reform lobby were not able to achieve all that they sought. The new system was to continue as a Dual System but to operate under a single code as long desired. The secondary part of the system

56 Anthony Howard, Rab, the life of R.A. Butler, (London, Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1987), 129.
57 Council for Educational Advance, 18 September 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
58 Miscellaneous folder, circa 16 July 1943, Ed. 138/14, PRO.
59 'The Education Bill', TES, 18 December 1943, 601-2.
was to have a leaving age of fifteen, but was to be organized according to a tripartite system of modern schools, technical schools, and grammar schools in which it was unlikely that the first two would ever be equal to the third. Public schools would stay utterly independent, and direct-grant schools would continue to pay fees.\textsuperscript{60} Had Richard Butler, the Conservative President of the Board succeeded in outmanoeuvring the experienced educational reform lobby and its leading spokesman, R.H. Tawney? Had the class foundation of the system remained intact? Just what was Tawney's educational influence?

\textsuperscript{60} Simon, 'The 1944 Education Act', \textit{History of Education}, 38-41.
PART I
THE WEA YEARS
Chapter 1

The WEA: teaching to 1914

Delivering a lecture in May 1953, R.H. Tawney reflected on his own education received long before the First World War. He declared that the most important part of it occurred 'when as a young, inexperienced and conceited teacher of Tutorial Classes...I underwent, week by week, a series of friendly, but effective, deflations at the hands of the students composing them.' This memory was a snapshot of his earliest experiences in the Workers' Educational Association, an organization only five years old when he became its first tutor in 1908. Little did he know that he was to become one of the most influential persons in the history of that organization, an inheritor of a commitment to equality in education for all people in Britain. This trend, vigorously promoted by Tawney, continued to accelerate throughout most of the chosen period of this thesis, 1905 to 1944, despite being partially blocked, slowed and deflected by opposition from segments of society which dominated or influenced parliament and the bureaucracy.

Educational expansion was at first preceded and then accompanied by the movement towards extending the franchise begun by the Reform Act of 1832. This combined movement accelerated throughout the nineteenth century providing the vote for many men, even those of the working classes in the Acts of 1867 and 1884. Beginning in 1833, it involved Parliament in education, previously a private matter. By 1870, the Forster Education Act which established state education and enabled working class children to attend school was the law of the land.

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Naturally, the burgeoning education sector included adult education. Had not Robert Lowe stated rather ironically ‘We must educate our masters’?²

Although the state became a provider of education for children in the nineteenth century, it left the delivery of adult education to the voluntary sector. Among the contributing groups were the Mechanics Institutes, Working Men’s Club and Institute Union, Working Men’s College (founded in 1854 by the Christian Socialists), the Public School Mission Movement, the related Settlement Movement, and the Extension Movement.³ The last two were particularly significant as predecessors of the Workers’ Educational Association.

Toynbee Hall was the first University Settlement formed as a result of a registered joint stock undertaking in July 1884 by the Settlement Association. Its backers, an influential group of politicians and university educators who ensured its financial stability, included the Duke of Westminster and A.J. Balfour, as well as A.L. Smith from Balliol, James Stuart from Cambridge, A.H. D. Acland, C.S. Loch of the Charity Organization Society, and Alfred Milner, friend of Arnold Toynbee. The Association declared its aims to be providing education and recreation for the poor; inquiring into their welfare and providing solutions for their relief; acquiring and maintaining property as a residence for those engaged in this philanthropic or educational work; providing their salaries and maintenance; seeking donations and other support from those willing to help.⁴

When Tawney, and his future brother-in-law, William Beveridge, arrived at Toynbee Hall in 1903, it was already a successful institution of nineteen years standing. Preceding them

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² Robert Lowe speaking in Parliament about the passing of the Reform Bill in 1867. He actually said ‘I believe it will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters’. (Hansard 3, 188, 15 July 1867 col 549). This has been remembered as ‘We must educate our masters’ in Jonathan Parry, ‘Robert Lowe, first Viscount Sherbrooke’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).
³ Brian Simon, Education and the Labour Movement, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), Ch. 2.
there were a whole generation of idealistic young university men who had helped establish the inquiries, the classes, the cultural events, and working class participation in local government. The ethos of this institution, that of teaching ‘the virtues of self-reliance, industriousness and an appreciation of “higher” things, would help working-class men and women realize their “best selves” and would remain with Tawney permanently’. Eventually, he tired of the prevailing paternalism at the Hall, longing for a more democratic approach. When he left in 1906, it was for a post at Glasgow University. He had yet to find the career that consisted of teaching democratic principles to the working class.

He was welcomed to Glasgow by his new supervisor, Professor William Smart, an economist working on the Poor Laws Royal Commission, who wrote that ‘I am delighted to hear from Mr. Jones that you are coming to be one of us. In view of the overwhelming place that Poor Law is taking in the affections of two of us, I am glad to think that the students will get some attention from one comparatively “unattached”’. In Glasgow for a year and a half, Tawney supplemented his teaching income by working part-time for the Glasgow Herald as an editorial writer. After a few months, the newspaper, disliking his ‘deflating irony’ reduced his work to signed contributions. When he left Glasgow to take up his first WEA position, Smart wrote: ‘I am sorry we have not been able to keep you in Glasgow....Thank you for the lift you gave the cause of humanity generally by your investigations into Boy Labour’. Here was an early indication of Tawney’s interest in child labour, an abuse he would work to eradicate over the course of his career. This cause led him into an abiding interest in state education.

Standish Meacham, Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880-1914, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987), Introduction, x.


Smart to Tawney, 21 October 1906, Tawney/Vyvyan 34, British Library of Political and Economic Science, [henceforth BLPES].

Smart to Tawney, 8 May 1908, Tawney/Vyvyan 34, BLPES.

See chapters 7-10.
The Workers' Educational Association was founded by Albert Mansbridge at Toynbee Hall in 1903, the year Tawney arrived to work for Canon Barnett. Tawney joined this organization in 1905, even before he went to Glasgow. By then, his link with Mansbridge was fixed, a connection that lasted until the death of the latter in 1952. It was an especially close link in those years before the First World War.

In a 1920 retrospective on the genesis of the WEA supported by a later Tawney article, Albert Mansbridge traced a short adult education history that provided the lineage for his own organization: Charles Kingsley and Arnold Toynbee; the Chartists with their demands for political rights; the Co-operative Movement with its economic empowerment of some working people; and the People's College and the Working Men's Colleges with their emphasis on educational empowerment as a means to political and social progress. Although all of these influenced him in the founding of the WEA, Mansbridge was especially impressed with the

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10 Albert Mansbridge (1876-1952) was born in Gloucester, the youngest of four sons, to a carpenter and an active member of the Women's Co-operative Guild. Raised as a Congregationalist, he became an active Anglican as a teenager and later a licensed lay reader. While working at various jobs after leaving school, he pursued an education through the university extension programme, and the Co-operative Movement. In the 1890's, Mansbridge articles suggesting tying the movement and extension together for purposes of workers' education began to appear, reflecting what the leadership had been saying for years. By 1898, he had begun to teach industrial history for the Battersea Co-operative Society. The following year, he acquired part-time evening continuation work with the London School Board. His relentless attempts to bring Co-operators, Trade Unionists and universities together for the purpose of workers' education through articles, conferences, and networking eventually produced the founding of the WEA in 1903. Bernard Jennings, Albert Mansbridge, The Life and Work of the Founder of the WEA, (University of Leeds, 2002), Chapters 1 and 2.


13 Originating in the New Lanark socialist concepts of the English Prophet of socialism, Robert Owen, the Co-operative Movement was established on a permanent basis in Rochdale as a society devoted to industrial freedom for workers. In the constitution of the Rochdale pioneers was the following definition: 'This society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education and government; or, in other words to establish a self-supporting home colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies.' Of the two types of co-operative, the producers and the consumers, it was the latter that survived and spread throughout Britain. Eventually, most branches put aside two and one half percent of their surplus for educational purposes. Hence, they were involved in extension work from the early days. Beatrice Potter (Webb), The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain, (London, Swan Sonnenschein, and Co.; Ltd., 1904), 15-16, and 61-72.

14 Mansbridge, Adventure, 2-4.
concept underlying the founding of the People’s College, that of equality between the teachers and the students. The Co-operative Movement, too, was a ‘platform for the operation of University Extension’ when it asked Professor Stuart to lecture in Rochdale, resulting in the formation of a regular class which would attend a series of his lectures. Mansbridge noted that the class and others like it attracted a cross-section of people, but concluded that the extension movement declined eventually because it allowed the students no part in the management.15

Mansbridge observed that the Co-operative Movement and university scholars had a successful relationship especially during the closing years of the nineteenth century. Evidently, the renowned history lecturer, Hudson Shaw, considered the assistance of the movement essential to the success of his lectures in industrial towns. In addition, at most Oxford University Extension Summer meetings, there was a contingent of Co-operative students in attendance under the direction of Robert Halstead. In 1897, Mansbridge himself, trying to bring about an educational alliance between the universities and the people, was at first unsuccessful. Later, in 1902, however, following the publication of a series of articles, the first of which was ‘Democracy and Education’,16 his ideas gained credibility so that he was able, by the following year, to found the ‘Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men’. Later, the name was changed to the Workers Educational Association. On 14 July 1903, at Toynbee Hall, the original Provisional Committee consisting of Co-operators17 and Trade Unionists held their first meeting.

Mansbridge believed that education for workers had a spiritual purpose, that of uplifting the mind and providing intellectual stimulation and pleasure. To him, ‘spiritual’ meant a ‘non-

15 Ibid., 7.
16 Ibid., 11. The article was published on 8 January 1902 in the University Extension Journal.
17 Co-operators were members of the Co-operative Movement.
materialistic, apolitical form of education which he equated with university scholarship'.

Rowbotham commented that

The Workers' Educational Association, founded in 1903, was an explicit attempt to connect University Extension to the organized labour movement, and it found support both in the trade unions and among co-operators. It represented a recognition of the working class as an increasingly independent class, but educationally it kept close to the original ideals of Extension.

This seemed to support the idealism of Mansbridge as well as suggesting something further. Was the 'increasingly independent' working class a source of anxiety to those in authority? Were the universities instruments of government in curtailing working class power? Fieldhouse believed this to be the case. Reformers at Oxford welcomed the WEA; they were anxious to influence a rising class 'without risking any social upheavals'.

Geoff Brown looked at the argument that the WEA was a tool of the state which itself was an organ of class rule and oppression. He rejected it for two reasons: the WEA students possessed democratic rights in choice of both teacher and curricula, and WEA branches did not share ruling class aspirations. G.D.W. Cole refuted another charge that the WEA was in thrall to the government because of state financial aid. Accepting that argument meant that government financing of Workers' Compensation, as well as Housing and Factory Acts would be suspect.
At the centre of these arguments was curriculum. Militant workers, often members of the Social Democratic Federation,\(^{24}\) favoured a course dominated by Marxism. The WEA, however, aimed at a broad view of the world looking at the works of a variety of thinkers. Rose, in his important study of the British working classes, approved this approach. "The authentic value of liberal education lies not so much in acquiring facts or absorbing "eternal truths" but in discovering new ways to interpret the world."\(^{25}\) When Tawney first taught tutorial classes, he tried to suggest alternative points of view and to defuse confrontation.\(^{26}\)

In August 1907, a conference considering links between Oxford and working class education was held at the university.\(^{27}\) Canon Barnett who was on the Advisory Council of the WEA, wrote in May 1905 that "Oxford and Cambridge need what workmen can give and workmen have no less need of the Universities."\(^{28}\) Tawney claimed Barnett had influenced his articles in the *Westminster Gazette*. He argued that

\[\text{The just boast of Oxford is that she provides a humane education, and if a humane education is one which aims not so much at sharpening the dexterity of the specialist as at implanting initiative, tact, and a sense of proportion, then it becomes plainer every day that those who are qualified to receive it, in virtue both of their previous training and their future responsibilities, are to be found in places where at the date of the last Commission no one dreamed that they could exist.}\(^{29}\)

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\(^{24}\) A British Marxist Party founded in 1884 as an outgrowth of the Democratic Federation established by H.M. Hyndman. It advocated "the social ownership of the means of production and the winning of power by the working class as the essential means to achieving this end." Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), 18.


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 266.


Barnett, of course, had designed programmes at Toynbee Hall based on a humane education for workers taught by university graduates. Although Tawney always advocated a broad liberal education, he was still under the spell of both Toynbee Hall and Oxford when writing his ‘Lambda’ articles. His work in WEA tutorials, shortly thereafter, fitted well with this philosophy.

Alfred Zimmern, a classics don at Oxford and a later treasurer of the WEA, reasoned in his article that ‘[i]t is not easy to exaggerate the mischief we have done to English life by allowing the Universities to be regarded as finishing schools for the well-to-do’. Such views, written only a little later, supported those of Tawney.

‘The Oxford Tutors’, in agreement with Tawney and Zimmern, also asserted in The Times that Oxford ought to make changes for the benefit of the nation. In the tutors’ first article, they stated their main objective:

The educational ideals of the country are in a course of rapid growth. It is in essence a movement towards completer employment of human gifts and natural resources for national well-being, and it involves profound changes of method and organization. In this movement Oxford should have a share worthy of her best past...as things stand now, Oxford is very far indeed from exercising either the kind or the degree of influence upon English education which its history, and its resources demand of it. We propose to inquire what are its main shortcomings; what remedies are possible for them; what obstacles prevent these remedies from being applied now; and what forces, originating either within or without, are needed to remove those obstacles.

The apex of the reform campaign was reached when Bishop Gore, speaking in the House of Lords, asked the government to establish a royal commission ‘to inquire into administration, endowments, and teaching of Oxford and Cambridge’. One can see that in the months prior to the conference, the reformers were preparing participants intellectually and psychologically for the decision they would take on the WEA idea of tutorial classes for workers. Moreover, their

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urgings had reached the level of the national government which decided to postpone the possibility of a royal commission to give the universities time to consider whether they could make reforms without legislation. The opportunity for this postponement came from the possibility of establishing the tutorial classes under Oxford auspices, a clear reform of the existing system.

When the conference convened on 19 August, two papers were presented, the first by Walter Nield of Oldham, president of the North Western Co-operative Education Committees Association whose topic was 'What Workpeople want Oxford to do' and the second by Sidney Ball, fellow of St. John's College, whose topic was the reverse 'What Oxford can do for Workpeople'. Tawney made a strong contribution to drafting both papers. Perhaps the most dramatic moment of the conference came when J. M. Mactavish, a shipwright and Labour councillor from Portsmouth, made a speech in which he claimed 'for my class all the best that Oxford has to give. I claim it as a right wrongfully withheld.' Less spectacular but perhaps more important was a speech by Sir Robert Morant, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, who offered the 'golden stream' to partially fund the tutorial concept.

The WEA had won the day with its tutorial class concept. Oxford agreed to join with the Association in sponsoring and providing intellectual advice for the newly-created system. A Joint Committee was set up consisting of seven members nominated by the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and seven by the WEA to work out the recommendations. Dr. Strong was elected Chairman and David Shackleton, Vice-Chairman. Zimmern and Mansbridge became the secretaries. Committee discussions resulted in consensus for the tutorial principle and for sending successful...
students to Oxford. There was some difference over the idea of an end-of-course examination but a compromise was reached by which the final assessment would be based on essays written.\(^{35}\)

Although Tawney taught the first tutorial classes in Rochdale and Longton in January 1908 while committee discussions were still taking place, the final report officially setting up the tutorial system was not published until December 1908. Therefore, the committee whose final draft was created by Dr. Strong, was able to include information about these two classes in the report itself. Terrill claims that "it was in large part written by Tawney, though as with half of what he wrote, he did not put his name to it."\(^{36}\)

In the first chapter, the purposes for the founding of the WEA were stated.

There has till recently been no regular machinery for enabling Universities to ascertain the special needs of the working classes as voiced by their representatives and little organized effort on the part of workpeople to claim the Universities as a common national possession. This state of things has been changed by the formation of the Workers’ Educational Association.\(^{37}\)

Although the debt owed to the University extension programme was acknowledged, the committee considered it to be inadequate for the purposes of giving workers a broad education. To begin with, the numbers attending the extension lectures were so large that tutorial instruction was almost impossible. The individual and personal guidance enjoyed by undergraduates at Oxford could not be offered. Second, the subjects were often chosen for their popularity rather

\(^{35}\)Ibid., The WEA members were David Shackleton and C.W. Bowerman from the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC; W.H. Berry from the Co-operative Union; Richard Campbell of the national conference of Friendly Societies; Albert Mansbridge, J.M Mactavish, and Philip Snowden, a Labour MP (he was soon replaced by Alfred Wilkinson, a Labour Councillor from Rochfield). The university members were T.B. Strong, Dean of Christchurch, Chair of the Extension Delegacy; J.A.R. Marriott, secretary of the Delegacy; Professor H.H. Turner of New College; A.L. Smith of Balliol, Sydney Ball of St. John’s, Alfred Zimmern of New College, and H.B. Lees Smith, Vice-Principal of Ruskin College. (For a note on Ruskin college, see p. 72, footnote 27.)

\(^{36}\)Terrill, Tawney; 38.

than educative value, since the programme was dependent on those in attendance paying fees.\footnote{Ibid., 130.}

Therefore, another system of supplying education to the serious worker students was required. The need was urgent for two reasons. Many workers who had experienced some education through the state elementary system wanted to go further. As well, their ‘increased interest in the problems of society and government which is so marked a feature of modern English life’ needed to be nurtured.\footnote{Ibid., 139.}

In the Committee’s opinion, since the demand could not be deferred, the immediate ‘establishment in industrial towns of classes specially adapted to the needs of workpeople’\footnote{Ibid., 149.} was necessary. It proposed that in certain selected towns, classes of not more than thirty students be formed. They would devise a curriculum in consultation with the University that would be taught by a lecturer appointed in consultation with Oxford which would pay half his salary.\footnote{Ibid., 150.} If a local WEA branch existed, it would undertake the organization. If none existed, then help would be sought from other working class associations. In any case, the control should be exerted by the workers themselves because of ‘the great impetus which such a step would give to the dissemination of a desire for education among the working classes’.\footnote{Ibid., 152.}

The Report dealt with finances,\footnote{The Report recommended that Oxford pay half the cost of the £80 per course tutor salary. Ibid., 182. Legislation already existed that provided government grants of 17s per student. Ibid., 191 Together these two made up more than three-quarters of the tutor’s salary. A possible additional source of funding was the Gilchrist Trust, which was willing to make a grant of 10s per student, if certain conditions were met. Ibid., 197.} class size, personal relationships between student and teacher, continuity of study as well as career options for students who completed the courses. Tawney and his students at Rochdale and Longton had been utilizing the tutorial class system for
almost a year when the *Report* was published. For that reason, Appendix VI of the *Report* assessed these early experiments in working class education.  

Meanwhile, behind the scenes of the Oxford Conference and during the early months of Tawney’s tenure at Rochdale and Longton, the negotiations to appoint Tawney to an official, permanent status as tutor played out in a series of letters among Tawney, Mansbridge, J.A. R. Marriott, secretary of the University Extension Delegacy, and L.V. Gill, secretary of the Rochdale branch of the WEA. The heart of the problem was that the official offer could not be made until the *Report* was completed, and meanwhile, Tawney had other teaching opportunities which he was at least considering. These potential positions had deadlines which came before the Delegacy offer could possibly be made. Tawney’s first preference was for the tutorial position, but when would a formal offer ever be made?

Marriott began the correspondence with Tawney in November: ‘I write to ask a question which is at present purely tentative, namely, whether if invited, you would be free to undertake a tutorial class for this Delegacy at Rochdale?’ It was this very tentativeness that worried Tawney for months. Shortly thereafter, Mansbridge conveyed the enthusiasm of the Rochdale branch for their new tutor: ‘The Rochdale people are in a state of extreme delight at the thought of you going there’. By 30 November Tawney had been formally invited to teach Section I of the course, consisting of twelve classes at Rochdale from January to Easter 1908. It was made clear, however, that the tutor for the subsequent two sections had by no means yet been determined. The delight of the Rochdale branch was now expressed personally by L.V. Gill. ‘I have learned with the greatest possible pleasure from Mr. Marriott that you are to be so kind as to take charge

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44 See below on p. 38.
45 Marriott to Tawney, 18 November 1907, WEA Central, /3/6/1.
of our Tutorial Class. We were hoping – but hardly expecting – that you would be able to do so. Marriott was rather more prescriptive than Tawney liked. He wrote:

We quite understand, of course, that in a course of Economic History, you cannot be bound by precise dates with the same rigidity as in the case of Political History...[we know you will] clearly understand and proceed on the understanding that two-thirds of the course is still to be done and that the teachers of the remaining courses whether yourself or another, cannot indefinitely extend their inferior limit. Marriott to Tawney, 3 December 1907, Ibid.

Before Christmas, the other famous pioneering tutorial class at Longton was also offered to Tawney. ‘They want 12 weekly lectures on Economic history on Friday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 pm and they are exceedingly anxious to obtain your services for that purpose. Is it at all possible that you would be able and willing to go?’ Here is an early indication that the students participated in choosing the subject and the tutor, a clear demonstration of the democratic approach promised in the Oxford Report. This approach continued to be used according to Tawney writing six years later: ‘[t]he subjects of study are chosen by the classes themselves after consultation with the tutor.’

How original were the WEA tutorial classes in Rochdale and Longton? Mansbridge liked to claim that they were the original ones in adult education, and J.A.R. Marriot agreed. He observed in 1907 that ‘the whole thing is a new experiment which will be watched with very great interest by the Delegacy, and I have no doubt by centres in other parts of England.’

R.A. Lowe subsequently disagreed. He argued that the field at Longton had already been ploughed and even seeded by a number of ‘forerunners’. The London Extension Board had tried

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48 Gill to Tawney, 12 December 1907, Ibid.
49 Marriott to Tawney, 3 December 1907, Ibid. ‘Inferior limit’ appears to refer to the ‘earliest date’.
50 Marriott to Tawney, December 20, 1907, Ibid.
52 Marriott to Tawney, 30 November 1907, WEA Central, 3/6/1.
a several experiments in adult education which at least somewhat resembled Tawney’s later work. In Longton itself, Oxford lecturers had been struggling with ‘difficult audiences’ since at least 1901. Although the lecturers even reported a growing interest in classwork and essay writing by 1902, they were still experiencing difficulties.53

Linden West concurred with Lowe. He argued that in attributing the great tutorial success at Longton to Tawney, insufficient credit has been paid to the improvement of extension classes before 1904 and of ‘the role of the Social Democratic Federation’. An extension lecturer, Hardcastle, commented that by 1902, he ‘was already detecting an improvement in the quality of work’. Evidently, this improvement so influenced the Local Education Authority that it began to finance and organize the lectures.54 West claimed that the experienced group of SDF members who had attended the extension lectures formed the nucleus of the first Longton tutorial class.55 Many of them performed well because they had background. He believed, however, that the WEA pioneers exaggerated the importance of education, even if such exaggeration must be understood in ‘a context of cultural deprivation’. His article whose purpose was to inquire into what the adult education experience of the founding WEA classes had to teach society in 1972 about attracting contemporary adults to a liberal education, concluded that there was little to be learned. ‘Tawney’s ideas were the product of an age very different from the Britain of 1972. It is time people ceased to cling so uncritically to what he stood for and the movement he helped shape.’56 Although Tawney’s legend may have been at its lowest point in the 1970’s, interest in his teaching, writing, and general influence which revived in the 1980’s still flourishes today.

55 Ibid., 108.
56 Ibid., 117.
Awaiting the final report of *Oxford and Working Class Education*, Tawney's 1908 experimental classes at Rochdale and Longton were made possible by a grant to the WEA from New College, Oxford.\(^{57}\) L.V. Gill, the Rochdale branch secretary and a member of the first tutorial class, sent to other prospective students an application form which they were asked to sign, indicating a willingness to attend regularly, 'to write the fortnightly essays set by the tutor', and to write an examination at the end of the course. They were also asked to indicate their occupations and any previous attendance at extension lectures.\(^{58}\) By this method, 43 students were enrolled at Rochdale and, using a similar process, 40 at Longton.

Tawney began his course of twelve tutorials in English Economic History of the Seventeenth Century on 24 January 1908 at Longton and the next day at Rochdale. There were written student responses to the classes right from the first day. L.V. Gill wrote on 26 January that 'we made a magnificient (sic) start: all there but Wilkinson and one ill. Tawney captured them right away. He is splendid.'\(^{59}\) In February, his enthusiasm intensified:

> About the class and Tawney. It is a case of love at first sight on both sides. His lectures are brilliant, illuminating, simple, lucid, eloquent—just the very thing, something between a lesson and a lecture. He obviously has a big grasp of his subject, and yet a penetrating knowledge of his audience. He lectured each time for an hour, then an hour's sustained, unflagging question and discussion. He is perfectly happy - in every sense - here: a most winning patience.\(^{60}\)

If this was an indication of class response, it is easy to see why Tawney enjoyed teaching the tutorial class. Another student who warmed to Tawney immediately was T.W. Price, a worker in the bleaching works, who wrote to Mansbridge in February that '[i]n the first place we have the right man for a teacher - this is a great thing. Mr. Tawney gained the entire confidence of the members in the first five minutes, and his grip of the subject and his audience was the first thing

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\(^{57}\) Mansbridge, *Adventure*, 37.

\(^{58}\) Application Form, Rochdale Education Guild, University Tutorial Class in History, 1 December 1907, WEA Central, /3/6/11.

\(^{59}\) Gill to Mansbridge, 26 January 1908, WEA Central, /3/6/4.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 2 February 1908.
which struck me.\textsuperscript{61} Mr. Henighan, a general labourer, expressed the surprise he felt during the first lecture, about Tawney's 'youth', and 'sweet affable charm'. He was delighted to discover that the teacher was a man with 'soul'.\textsuperscript{62}

Another quite different sort of student was Fred Hall who later earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Victoria University in Manchester. Much of his letter to Mansbridge was devoted to the importance of studying industrial history, of having in the class a number of 'purely working men', and of speculating on the demand for frequent essays. Might this cause some to drop the course? He, too, admired Tawney whom he thought 'deals with his subject admirably'.\textsuperscript{63} This letter revealed an interesting point. One wonders why so many tutorial students wrote to Mansbridge, and Hall provided the answer. His letter opens with 'Please accept my thanks for your letter and the receipt duly to hand. You ask me for my opinion of Tawney’s class'.\textsuperscript{64} Thanks to Mansbridge's efforts, the responses to Tawney are known and preserved. On the other hand, the fact that Mansbridge requested them could mean that they were especially complimentary.

Tawney's first tutorial class in Longton was also highly appreciated. Of the students, 'sixteen...sat for the examination, five passing with distinction, and eleven satisfying the examiners.' The results were 'so encouraging' that the Education Committee decided to engage Tawney for the coming term so that 'by Easter 1909, a full university course of thirty-six lectures in Economic history will have been delivered at Longton.'\textsuperscript{65} The piece-meal fashion by which Tawney acquired his early classes didn't diminish his enthusiasm although the process caused him much anxiety.

\textsuperscript{61} Price to Mansbridge, February 2, 1908, \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{62} Henighan to Mansbridge, February 2, 1908, \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{63} Hall to Mansbridge, March 7, 1908, \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{65} Borough of Longton Education Committee, \textit{Annual Report of Secretary for the year 1907-08}, WEA Central, /3/6/1. After one year of instruction, these class results were likely considered good.
When the Report on Oxford and Working Class Education was published in December, it echoed the kind of complimentary tone that the tutorial students had written to Mansbridge earlier in the year. Appendix VII on the Longton class glows with praise: ‘the lecturer was the right man at the right time’; ‘this was an ideal University class, being representative of all sections of what are known as the middle and working classes’; ‘the elementary school teachers especially seem to have derived much benefit from their subject.’ Several people, among them Mansbridge, Tawney, and the Mayor of Longton arranged scholarships for some of the deserving students to enable them to attend the Cambridge or the Oxford Summer Meeting, a type of short summer school.

Similar news of success at Rochdale rounded out Appendix VI: ‘The papers written have been of great excellence. There have been several visitors to the class, and all, like Mr. A.E. Zimmern, of New College, were impressed by the high level of the discussion and the remarkable acumen displayed in the asking of questions.’ Another comment echoed the student letters: ‘The lecturer won the affection and confidence of his class from the outset, and has retained it all along.’ A more unusual point was that ‘[t]he difficulty of individual attention has been surmounted to some extent by the lecturer, because of his willingness to stay in the locality, and to visit the students in their homes.’ Here, surely was the heart of Tawney’s popularity. He went beyond what was required to ensure the success of his students. Perhaps this was the explanation for the staying power of his students in a three-year course, despite the rigours of their working lives. Certainly, Tawney made his name as a teacher with these experimental classes, and they shaped his future as a historian, a socialist, and an educationalist.

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66 Oxford and Working Class Education, Appendix VI, 199.
67 Ibid., 200.
68 Ibid., 201-202.
He was obviously not undertaking the WEA tutorial work simply for the money. He made barely enough to cover his expenses.\textsuperscript{69} His motivation was his desire to teach workers in towns and to determine why poverty existed there. That, after all, had been one of Caird's charges to his pupils at Balliol. Tawney mentioned to Beveridge in a 1905 letter that 'teaching economics in an industrial town is just what I ultimately want to do.'\textsuperscript{70} His message in these classes on industrial history was that students must learn 'the conception which men take of themselves and of their place in society. It is the expansion of this conception which is the creative force in working-class education today.'\textsuperscript{71} The classes themselves were the stuff of legend and Tawney's work with his students made him a legend, too.\textsuperscript{72} These classes allowed him to situate himself in the borderland between the ideal and the practical, a combination he so admired in an early mentor, George Unwin.\textsuperscript{73} He could teach men about society, politics, and economics so that they could help themselves. He could research the roots of the economic problems that beset these workers; emphasize moral choices in both his writing and teaching; and carry out the 'social obligation' taught by Green and inherited by Caird and Unwin.

Clearly Tawney was a man who chose his career according to his principles. His idealism was revealed in the belief that through education people ought to be 'partners in a universe of interest which we share with our fellowmen, living and dead alike.'\textsuperscript{74} He thought the primary purpose of the WEA was 'as an instrument of social improvement'.\textsuperscript{75} The organization would act as a social dynamic, motivating and energizing workers to participate in their society.

\textsuperscript{69} Marriott offered Tawney £20 per twelve sessions for a class. Twenty-four sessions would constitute an academic year. A year later, \textit{The Oxford Report} recommended £80 per unit of twenty-four classes, 160.
\textsuperscript{70} Tawney to Beveridge, 20 September 1905, \textit{The Beveridge Papers}, BLPE, IIa 106.
\textsuperscript{71} R.H. Tawney, 'An Experiment in Democratic Education', \textit{The Political Quarterly}, vol. 1, no. 2, 14 May 1914.
\textsuperscript{72} Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 40.
\textsuperscript{74} Tawney, 'Adult Education', \textit{Tradition}, 83-84.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
They, in turn, believed that in studying economics, history, and politics they were finding solutions that would help in ‘laying the foundations of a better social order’. So strong was their belief, that with the assistance of Tawney and Secretary E.S. Cartwright, some of the workers in Tawney’s Longton class formed the North Staffordshire Miners’ Higher Education Movement in which they themselves taught the classes. Years later, this North Staffordshire WEA branch became the foundation for the University of North Staffordshire.

Tawney and his students put an enormous amount of trust in the power of education to change society. Despite progress in the tutorial classes, however, both Tawney and his students experienced difficulties. To begin with, J.A.R. Marriott, Secretary of the Oxford delegacy, was very hesitant about both the tutorial classes and Tawney as a tutor. He had been reluctant to appoint Tawney for more than one term. Mansbridge had to reassure Tawney constantly that he was the right man for the job. As the classes progressed, the pioneer tutor complained about having insufficient time to mark papers and give personal attention to his students. In March 1909, he wrote that ‘I cannot face another winter like the last.’ Evidently, the workload, which was by now eight classes, was unbearable. Tawney threatened to resign. Further, it was difficult for him to find a place to hold the class at Longton where some were suspicious of his political motives. SDF members with their Marxist philosophy thought he might be trying to divert them from a study of class war.

Was such study to be allowed or encouraged? To answer this, an examination of Appendix VII of the Report on Oxford and the Working Class is helpful. It offered several examples of courses of study which it said ‘are in no way intended to be binding on either

77 Terrill, Tawney, 45-6. This is now Keele University.
78 Ibid., 38-9.
79 Ibid., 43.
The first sample curriculum was for 'Economics', which was supposed to begin with the general and lead to the theoretical. When the class was already 'in the middle of an economic textbook', such as Marshall's *Economics of Industry*, it might begin the theoretical study. If any of the class were socialists, then it might be suitable to study Marx's *Capital*. If the style of this work was too difficult, the students might use Hyndman's *Economics of Socialism* instead. 'The teacher who adopts this course must, however, be very sure that the criticism of Marx, implicit in the ordinary textbook, was equally carefully explained.' Of the other possible textbooks described, none received the careful instruction that *Capital* did. Clearly, the committee was wary of Marx, and warned the teachers to be cautious. According to Terrill, Tawney dealt with his Marxist students 'coolly and with argument. He spelled out his reasoning in comments on their essays'. Tawney's SDF students retained their core beliefs, however, even after years of study with him. Terrill says that Tawney must have been pleased to get the report in a 1913 letter, 'I may say that the members of your class, those with whom it was said you were sent to sidetrack etc., are still the staunchest socialists in Rochdale.'

Despite the obvious difficulties of 1908-09, Tawney was full of praise for Rochdale at the 1909 prize-giving ceremonies. 'There were not too many towns, unfortunately, in industrial England of which it could be said that their names suggested intellectual effort and aspiration.' Many towns of the mediaeval period such as Oxford, York and Canterbury reflected those characteristics. Few modern towns did so '[b]ut among those few Rochdale held an honourable position.' At this point, the tenure of Tawney's position was somewhat more settled. He was

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80 *Oxford and Working Class Education*, 203.
82 Terrill, *Tawney*, 43.
83 J. Warburton to Tawney, 31 October 1913, WEA Archive cited in Terrill, *Tawney*, 43.
again ‘to take charge of the Oxford University Tutorial Class, arranged by the Education Guild to study social economics.’

As for student difficulties, Tawney mentioned unemployment, ‘scandalous abuse of overtime’ and insecurity which many had to overcome in order to attend classes and to be successful. Once in attendance, some found that their previous educational background left them unable to understand the subject material. Since Tawney knew that it was difficult for some students to write essays, he did not press them overly much that first year. By 1909, to remedy the situation, a class was established to help students in essay writing. External examiners Headlam and Hobhouse reported that one student ‘in order to get a time when the house was quiet for working in ...went to bed at seven, got up at midnight, worked for two hours and then went to bed again.’ In the session of 1908-1909, four students had to leave to look for work elsewhere, thus sadly ending their own participation and adversely affecting the morale of the rest of the class.

This last point raises the interesting question of whether the class perceived itself as individuals who happened to be taking the same class or as a collective in which the fortunes of the various individuals depended on the achievement of the group as a whole. An answer may be found in examining attitudes about whether individual members of the class at Rochdale might receive scholarships to Oxford. ‘In 1910, the class rejected the idea that three of its members [go] to University’. The Longton class had also at first rejected the suggestion but in 1913, it endorsed the idea under certain conditions. It would not object to some members of the class going to

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Oxford to learn to be WEA tutors, and in fact three of them did so that year.\textsuperscript{91} This seeming about-face was to benefit their own working class educational group which would grow stronger with additional, qualified tutors.

In April 1914, the subject of tutorial students’ attendance at universities was still of concern to the WEA. Tawney, responding to a request by the executive to clarify some aspects of this matter for the Annual General Meeting in 1914, replied that, of course, ‘[t]utorial classes do not exist to prepare men for a University’ but that does not mean ‘that no student who has been in a tutorial class’ should be prevented from attending.\textsuperscript{92}

The North Staffordshire Miners’ Higher Education Movement was another example of the collective spirit of the Longton class. It began in May 1911 at the Stoke School of Mining where representatives of the Longton tutorial class met with representatives from many neighbouring mining villages to hear Tawney’s address on ‘Higher Education Considered Apart from Industrial Education’. It resulted in the establishment of tutorials in many of the small remote villages, taught by some of the class leaders of the original Longton tutorial.\textsuperscript{93} Tawney must have been proud to see his students becoming teachers of a liberal education.

Yet another innovative example of the collective spirit of education in the workers was the establishment of a summer school session held at Oxford in 1910 especially for their benefit. The one week session was for all WEA students who could attend. They did so free of charge although they had to pay for their travel and accommodation. It was hoped that the instructors could lead the worker-students into a plan for suggested study in a particular subject to be followed during the next year. Some of the instructors of that first summer included F.W. Kolthammer, R.H. Tawney, L.V. Lennard and A.D. Lindsay, the future Master of Balliol.

In 1912, \textit{The Report on the Working of the Summer Classes} stated that the summer classes ‘were

\textsuperscript{91} Goldman, \textit{Dons and Workers}, 139-140.
\textsuperscript{92} R.H. Tawney, Notes, April 1914, WEA Central, /3/6/2.
\textsuperscript{93} Goldman, \textit{Dons and Workers}, 142-3.
necessarily in their inception very experimental in methods and organization, but the very striking appreciation which the students showed of these classes convinced the committee that they would form in the future one of its most important activities.' That year Tawney’s contribution was two lectures on sixteenth century enclosures.\(^{94}\) By 1914, the annual Summer School included instruction by G.D.H. Cole, Lewis Namier, A.L. Smith, Keith Feiling, Ernest Barker and R.W. Seton-Watson, a notable list of future prominent historians. A syllabus remains of the Tawney summer tutorial of 1914 entitled ‘The French Revolution from the beginning of the War to the Second Peace of Paris’. It contains summaries and books to be read for twelve lectures.\(^{95}\) The students who attended these sessions offered reactions that were favourable, grateful, and appreciative. ‘The responses of working class students to Oxford were varied. Some simply revelled at being at the University; more made appreciative comments about the lasting effects of the academic work on them.’\(^{96}\) They saw Oxford in a way that most typical undergraduates never could.

It is clear that Tawney shared the collective spirit prevailing in his classes. In remarks very reminiscent of the 1953 speech referred to in the opening paragraph of this chapter, he acknowledged in the preface of his 1912 book *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, ‘over the last four years, it has been my privilege to be a fellow-worker. The friendly smittings of weavers, potters, miners, and engineers have taught me much about problems of political and economic science which cannot easily be learned from books.’\(^{97}\) Although these comments are somewhat romantic, it is clear that Tawney’s personal experiences with workers lingered with him throughout his life.

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\(^{95}\) R.H. Tawney, Syllabus of a Course of Classes on The French Revolution from the beginning of the War to the Second Peace of Paris, July 1914, BLPES, Tawney 1, 9/3.

\(^{96}\) Goldman, *Dons and Workers*, 144.

Why has Tawney’s experience with the Rochdale and Longton tutorial classes been the subject of so much subsequent commentary and scholarship? Indeed, why has it achieved legendary status? There are undoubtedly many answers to these questions. First of all, the classes have entered mythology as consisting primarily of workers, especially manual workers. Mansbridge, in speaking of tutorial class establishment, recalled that ‘a pioneer experiment was initiated, of far-reaching consequence for the education of the workers’. Tawney’s biographer suggested that the classes were ‘in a way, an elite’. West’s list of occupations of the original class suggests, strikingly, that only about half could be described as manual workers, and the rest seemed a broad array of persons with an emphasis on artisans and elementary school teachers. A list of occupations was attached to Tawney’s essay in the 1914 Political Quarterly, but these applied to all of the WEA classes that made a return in 1913-1914. This list, too, revealed a broad array of occupations. Yet, in this same article he said ‘The students themselves are drawn from almost every occupation, but the majority of them are manual workers’. How does one reconcile these apparent contradictions?

Evidently Tawney could, by noting that the local elementary and secondary teachers who were class participants were usually children of the workers and often married to workers. Was Tawney exaggerating or did he think these students would still have the attitudes of their parental generation? Secondly, Tawney wrote about his classes in those years before the First World War when he was actively teaching them. He idealized them. Rusoff remarked that these classes were ‘an unrepresentative group of students

98 Mansbridge, Adventure, 37.
99 Terrill, Tawney, 47.
101 The Central Joint Committee of the Oxford Delegacy in its Occupational Analysis of Students in Tutorial Classes (May 5, 1937), lists the percentage of manual workers in all classes in 1909-10 as 74, but since the first Tawney class was held in 1908, it is not reflected in the analysis.
102 Tawney, ‘Democratic Education’, PQ, 76. West somewhat agrees with Tawney’s point but still thinks he doesn’t explain why he thought the majority of the workers were ‘manual’.
from the working class' and that they were 'idealized figures'. Thirdly, the amount of literature that recorded the Tawney WEA achievement is extensive and is built upon a commonly accepted and often cited foundation. Certainly, it was full of praise until the 1970's when writers like Lowe and West began to challenge it. Even they, however, acknowledged Tawney's success although their acknowledgements were tempered by some criticism.

The question of legendary status may also be considered by recalling the recorded successes of the students themselves. Mansbridge noted that despite difficulties, nineteen of the tutorial students had attended Tawney's classes for the full three years, sixteen of them since the very first meeting. He also spoke of the 'freshness and joy in [student] work' mentioned by the Board of Education Examiners, Headlam and Hobhouse in an official report. Tawney included comments from the same report which indicated that student work was 'in some respects better and in others not so good, as that of an Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate', and that the classes 'tend to accustom the student to the ideal of work familiar at a University'. Goldman, too, quotes from this report that students produced 'essays [which] compared favourably with the best academic work'. He, however, questions these favourable assessments. By pointing out that the examiners, most of whom had long-standing connections with the adult education movement were often extension lecturers themselves, he suggested the possibility of biased evaluation, reasoning that their claims were exaggerated. Along with Lowe and West, he made a new analysis of the Tawney legend.

The personal attributes of Tawney had much to do with the legend. He was extremely enthusiastic about his tasks right from the beginning. The tutorial work in industrial towns,

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105 Mansbridge, Adventure, 41.
107 Goldman, Dons and Workers, 134.
despite its tough challenges, suited him exactly. It called for a kind of commitment that he never
felt at Toynbee Hall. It was a commitment that he was to feel throughout the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{108}
The degree of loyalty he bestowed on his students was heartfelt and was returned by them with an
unswerving devotion. The written tributes of many of his early students such as E.S. Cartwright
confirm this. Perhaps his most outstanding quality was the high standard of his teaching. He
understood the importance of such a standard. The pioneer would be the prototype for those who
followed. Unfortunately, according to A.D. Lindsey, the students of North Staffordshire tended
to judge all who did follow Tawney by his ‘impossible standards’.\textsuperscript{109} Rusoff, too, remarked on
what a hard act Tawney was to follow.\textsuperscript{110}

Meanwhile, behind the scenes of the WEA, was ‘the impatient radical of the Edwardian
period.’ His later genial, ‘father figure’ image tended to dim the earlier one. For Tawney in these
eyears, the main goal was lifting up the workers he taught by offering them the joys of a
liberal education. In 1907, a major concern was opening Oxford to qualified working men. His
April Notes of 1914, based on the WEA tutorial experience, suggested a somewhat more nuanced
attitude to Oxford for working men. Perhaps, his tutorial experiences made him realize that it
should not necessarily be the final educational goal for all clever working men. There were other
possibilities open to them such as education at one of the newer universities, new positions within
their own working establishment or in union organizations.

By the summer of 1914, Tawney had experienced and accomplished some of the things
that would shape his life until the end. He developed into an outstanding teacher of worker
students whom he taught at Rochdale until 1912 and at Longton until 1914. He wrote his first
major book The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century for these students. Simultaneously,

and Meacham, Toynbee Hall, 161.


\textsuperscript{110} Rusoff, ‘Tawney’, Centenary Essays, 72.
he discovered that history was a powerful tool for solving the social problems of the working
class. It became 'a perfect springboard for his social criticism'.

His reflections and observation while teaching and writing convinced him that '[modern society is sick through the absence of a moral ideal]'. This subject was one that he would deal with in his later writing.

111 Ibid., 63.
Chapter 2

Combat: the catalyst 1914-1918

When R.H. Tawney was hit by what felt like ‘a tremendous iron hammer’ during the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, he thought that ‘‘This is death’ and hoped it wouldn’t take too long.’ Tawney did recover from his serious injuries and went on to live a highly productive life during which he influenced various aspects of national life and public policy. There seems no doubt, however, that much of his later thinking was coloured by his war experiences, since he wrote so much about them both during the war and after. J.M. Winter suggested that ‘Tawney’s deepest beliefs were unshaken by the war ...but his political thought had changed.’ Ross Terrill believed that the war toughened Tawney and expanded his ‘moral fibre’. Tawney himself indicated that his former idealized notion of the workers, formed through tutorials with the WEA, was subtly altered. But, of course, he was simply one of a whole generation of Englishmen changed by the Great War, its catastrophic nature suggested by the title of Arthur Marwick’s pioneering study of the impact of war on British Society, The Deluge.

Writing about that generation in A War Imagined in 1990, Samuel Hynes proposed the idea that World War I altered the imagination; it altered the way people thought about the war itself and the world in general. He was concerned with the ‘myth’ of the Great War, by which many people supposed that honourable young men who wanted to save the world for democracy were betrayed by leaders who safely planned war schemes far behind the lines, careless of the

lives of the young soldiers who regarded, not the Germans, but their own leaders as the cause of the carnage of war. Consequently, these young men rejected the values of their society and accepted the concept that they were quite separated from their whole cultural inheritance. For them, there was a ‘gap in history’.

Certainly, during the war, Tawney thought so. In discussing the relationship of the soldiers to the people at home, he said during his period of recovery in October 1916, ‘[w]e have drifted apart partly because we have changed and you have not; partly, and that in the most important matters, because we have not changed and you have.’ Newspapers, in his opinion, conveyed to the public at home a misleading idea of conditions at the front and of the motivations and actions of the men. The doctrine of attrition which awarded the victory to the ‘numerically preponderant side’ was abhorrent. There was a veil between the home front perceptions of war and the combatants’ perception. ‘[Y]ou have chosen to make to yourselves an image of war, not as it is, but of a kind which, being picturesque, flatters your appetite for novelty, for excitement, for easy admiration, without troubling you with masterful emotions.’ This might be the origin of the ‘gap’ to which Hynes referred. The soldiers knew what was happening and how they felt but the people at home could never really know the true conditions of the front because not only did their own experience prevent their imaginations from encompassing its horrors but also censorship restrictions prevented them from acquiring complete and accurate information about the war.

Soldiers were unique within their whole society since ‘[i]t is what the soldier has seen, sensed and felt that marks him out. He has passed through a liminal state in a strange landscape

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7 Ibid., 22.
and become initiated in esoteric mysteries.' This could be perceived as a 'Rite of Passage', which civilian contemporaries had not shared. These soldiers were also experiencing a bonding, a forming of solidarity. This sense of fellowship noticed by Tawney and previously experienced with his WEA classes was one that he hoped could be recreated in peacetime society by civilian workers.  

A major psychological influence was the enduring literature of England. Soldiers had copies of great poetry and prose at the front with them. *Pilgrim's Progress* provided significant imagery to express their feelings about war. Tawney's account of trying to come to grips with his fears just before attacking on the first day of the Battle of the Somme illustrates this theme.

I hadn't gone ten yards before I felt a load fall from me. There's a sentence at the end of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* which has always struck me as one of the most awful things imagined by man: “then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of destruction”. To have gone so far and be rejected at last...Now I knew it was all right. I shouldn’t be frightened and I shouldn’t lose my head. Imagine the joy of that discovery!

Tawney and others seeking for inspiration in the great works of past literature found solace, hope and confidence. Tawney surmounted the obstacle of his fear head on as he would surmount the difficult educational obstacles of the 1920s and 1930s.

Paul Fussell stressed a ‘breaking in the cultural traditions of the pre-war period’, whereas Samuel Hynes ‘stresses both continuity and change’. Both of these assessments of the effects of the Great War apply to Tawney. Certainly, as already noted, Tawney felt quite separated from the main stream, from the cultural tradition to which he had been a contributing member. After

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the war, however, he would go on with his pre-war interests but with a new attitude, a new zeal for reform\textsuperscript{14} which will be seen later in the chapter.

But what of the events of 1914? What transformed Tawney, the WEA lecturer, into the private volunteer soldier before the end of that year? He was, after all, thirty-four years old when he volunteered. Even when conscription came, he might easily have served in essential government service at home. His \textit{Commonplace Book} revealed him considering aspects of war in December 1914. He had by then already volunteered but was waiting to be called up. He mused about the tendency of capitalism in western society ‘to exalt the combative qualities, and to undervalue those of the humble and meek’. He reasoned that the Prussian state with its power to determine the fate of weaker nations was simply that set of capitalistic qualities writ large. Both capitalists and Prussians acted like conquerors. ‘[T]hey confer benefits...system and organization, facilities for accumulating vast material resources... a field for splendid careers for the bold, the energetic, the unscrupulous. Like other conquerors they leave a trail of wreckage.’ As long as society accepted that the strong should win power over the weak, wars would occur. Tawney concluded that in order to end the horror of war, the horror of peace must first be eliminated.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, eliminating or ameliorating the effects of capitalism was what he bent his energies to in the two decades after the war. Winter believed that Tawney’s ‘philosophical approach to the war added depth and coherence to his views on its significance and consequences.’\textsuperscript{16}

These views had weighed heavily with him when he decided to volunteer. His circle of friends held a variety of opinions about the war and volunteering. P.A. Brown, who had been a fellow WEA lecturer and a co-author with Tawney of \textit{English Economic History: Select Documents}, also volunteered in 1914, but was later killed. Richard Denman, Tawney’s Balliol

\textsuperscript{14} Winter, ‘Tawney and War’, \textit{Change}, 150.
contemporary and friend, did not think Britain was obliged to enter the war for the sake of Belgium. He deplored the ‘hypocrisy of the Churches’ with their ‘militarist passion’. Nevertheless, he, too, joined up. Beveridge, his brother-in-law, supported the war, but his attitudes were quite different from those of Tawney. Since he believed in the ‘unlimited capacities of rational bureaucracy’, he had few reservations about the extension of state power. He declined to join up; his enlarged heart would put him behind a desk for the duration.

Tawney’s friend and mentor, George Unwin, thought the war ‘an unspeakable crime’. He wished to serve the ‘spiritual values’ which all the belligerents were destroying and believed this could be done through intellectual labour and through faith. Tawney, sympathetic to the idea of spiritual values, didn’t see how these could survive without the defeat of Germany. According to Winter, Tawney regarded Germany not only as a ‘political entity’ but also as a ‘state of mind… a way of approaching human affairs in both war and peace’. This interpretation accords with the Tawney Commonplace Book comments of December 1914.

Clearly, Tawney did not volunteer for war service because he was seeking glory; nor did he do so for the military experience or for the chance of military advancement. In fact, he chose to be a private, even though he was offered officer training. Principle was his reason for going to war. He saw the war, and thus the need to defeat Germany, as a chance to improve British society internally, and possibly improve the societies of other belligerents, too. Terrill asserted that Tawney viewed fighting and winning the war was for ‘principles that went beyond her [Britain’s] national self’. Winning should mean ‘replacing acquisitiveness with fellowship’, a theme he would emphasize repeatedly after the war.

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18 Ibid.
21 Terrill, Tawney, 49.
His official career as a soldier lasted from November 1914 when he volunteered with the Manchester Regiment to September 1917 when Beveridge, who believed Tawney was needed for important educational work, intervened to have him officially discharged. In between, he proceeded, during the training period on Salisbury Plain, to move through the ranks from lance corporal to corporal and then to sergeant. By July 1915 he was in Belgium. On 1 July 1916, the Manchester Regiment took part in the Battle of the Somme during which Tawney was seriously wounded. He spent two weeks on the critical list in France, after which he returned to England where he spent his initial recuperation period with Bishop Gore.  

He tells the story of his own war in several articles and letters briefly discussed here.

An early war article on ‘The Personnel of the New Armies’ revealed Tawney’s state of mind during his training period in England in early 1915. He concerned himself with both practical and psychological matters. The teaching and preparation of the new army was weak because ‘there were hardly any competent instructors and we had virtually to teach ourselves. Even now there are not enough officers; those we have do their best but they are too few, and, probably, too inexperienced, to prevent constant hitches in the upper ranges of the organization.’ For one who was an expert in both teaching and organizing, it would have been alarming to experience the negative results of the weakness in both of these. The lack of equipment was another difficulty. To train properly required rifles but there were too few of them even for the NCOs.

Why did men go to war? He believed ‘that the majority did so...for what may fairly be called conscientious reasons’. They made a free choice to join up and, therefore, could never be regarded as ‘a hireling army’. They were in the army for a ‘definite and limited purpose’; a

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situation making them desire to get into active service and get the job done. Since their army, 'Kitchener's Army', was a new one, with no established tradition, the spirit of the men was self-made. Discipline grew slowly, the men being 'by no means clay in the hands of the potter'.

Tawney compared the making of the army 'to the process of organizing an unorganized body of workers'. Developing sections was instrumental in enabling the men to work together. He observed that selection of section commanders ought to be left in the hands of the men themselves, as they seemed to have considerable acumen in judging who was up to a job and who was not. Was this an echo of WEA idealism?

In November, he sent a postcard to Mansbridge describing his arrival in France. 'After a pretty bad few days of wet camps and heavy wading...am now billeted in a small French village and looking on to another seven. I can hear guns barking a way off.' In a letter to his sister Mildred, he elaborated on the comments made to Mansbridge. He described '2 rather bad days' following their arrival. They slept under canvas in a rainstorm that lasted twenty-four hours, thus creating a swamp. They then continued towards the front via 'four hours in cattle trucks, a march of some 15 miles, in which we continued to lose our way.' Tawney revealed more about his arrival in a letter to Jeanette which she published in the Manchester Guardian. He and his men were billeted in the barn of a French peasant 'which is all right but only a thin partition separates it from the pigs, which grunt horribly but seem fairly clean.' Tawney became friendly with his hosts who related events of the German occupation of 1870, part of the Franco-Prussian War. The Germans occupied the farm for four months during which 'we lived with them like brothers', according to the wife. This remark made Tawney realize once more 'how monstrous war is'. He developed a really personal relationship with these French people who wanted to see Jeanette's

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 678.
28 Tawney to Mildred, 22 November 1915, BLPES, Tawney/Vyvyan 45.
photograph, and who wondered why Tawney and others had volunteered. ‘We must be a little mad, they think.’

The following month, Tawney’s letter from France to his brother-in-law expressed thoughts on daily routine, staff incompetence, and the class system. ‘I’m afraid I haven’t much military news, none of the adventures which make such good reading in the extracts from letters which appear in the paper’, an ironical comment reflecting his feelings about the press, a familiar theme of his war writing. He narrated the routine nature of the danger: ‘the Boches made a good deal of sniping but they seem to drop into a settled routine – so many shots at certain points at certain times.’ A soldier learned to be careful but took the sniping in his stride. Tawney regarded the total incompetence of the authorities on practical matters as ‘astonishing’. The soldiers were given greatcoats made of a spongy material which soaked up the mud and water. They had to carry their equipment in ‘an evil thing’ like a lady’s hat-box instead of a rucksack to sit in the middle of the back. He knew such matters of equipment could be much better decided by a committee of civilians.

He lamented that discipline was a euphemism for ‘a code of rules for preventing any sort of new idea struggling into the august presence of the Authorities’. After some experience at the front, almost all soldiers ‘damned the staff’. He ended his letter by noting that ‘I am the only sober sergeant in my company this Xmas Eve.’ The others, including the sergeant major and a young lad lying near him in the attic, were intoxicated.

The evolution in Tawney’s later war attitudes was expressed in the several articles he wrote just after he was invalided from active service. ‘The Attack’, written only a month after

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29 Tawney to Jeanette, Tawney/Vyvyan 2, BLPES, and ‘First Impressions of Active Service’, *Manchester Guardian*, circa November-December 1915.

30 Tawney’s wartime letters and articles in the *Manchester Guardian* were likely meant to present a more realistic view of the war front than much of the press was able to do. The anecdote about the Franco-Prussian War suggests that even in war ‘enemies’ can find fellowship, a favourite Tawney belief.

Tawney’s serious injuries at the Somme, presented a moving account which began with the clerical duties of a priest distributing communion before the Manchester Regiment attacked, and ended with Tawney’s delivery by a doctor from a long period lying near death in ‘No Man’s Land’. The heart of the narrative described the events and feelings of Tawney and his fellow soldiers as they attempted to follow orders in the Battle of the Somme, famous for its sixty thousand British casualties suffered on this first day of battle. He described a barrage of sound of an almost impossible magnitude. ‘It was not a noise; it was a symphony. It did not move; it hung over us. It was as though the air were full of a vast and agonised passion.’ Its effect on him was surprising, filling him with ‘triumphant exultation’, such as might occur when trying to overcome forces of nature like mountains or rapids. Then, his burden of fear fell away. His portrayal of the chaos of battle, filled with the injuries and deaths of his friends and acquaintances, as they struggled to fulfill ever-changing orders was poignant. An addendum provided the startling casualty figures of his regiment which before the attack numbered 852 and after a few days in the battle had declined to 54. One feels a sense of shock at this terrible attrition. Tawney must have felt it too, or why else would he have added this information?

‘Some Reflections of a Soldier’ considered the two different wars the British were fighting, the soldiers’ war and the civilians’ war. Tawney became aware once back in England, that civilians talked and wrote of a war different from the one soldiers actually experienced. For civilians the ‘war was always beneath your eyes’, that is, seen in print. For soldiers, it was a huge venture that they were caught up in. They took action and were the recipients, often fatally, of the actions of the enemy. Civilian newspapers invented a ‘conventional soldier’, cheerful, and ‘revelling in the “excitement”’. They were ‘merry assassins’. As Fussell tellingly remarked ‘[a] lifelong suspicion of the press was one lasting result of the ordinary man’s experience of the

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33 Ibid., 20.
The inventive newspaper narrative was in direct contrast to the endless ‘loathsome physical exhaustion’ and ‘constant collision of contradictory moral standards’ the soldiers experienced. Tawney found absolutely disconcerting the suggestion that war was ‘ennobling’; that soldiers at war were more truly men than when working in the offices or factories at home. After a winter in the trenches, soldiers could hardly regard war as ‘sport’. Possibly, the men living in the trenches among rats as they did, realized their animal nature more than they ever did at home. As for the enemy, whom civilians assumed their soldiers hated, the British soldiers often had a high opinion of them, reasoning that on both sides soldiers were doing their duty.

Tawney might have been psychologically too caught up in the war front to consider the effects of The Defence of the Realm Act on British newspapers and the public. This 1914 Act placed restraints on the press, cable, and telegraph messages. Sir Edward Cook, the chief British censor during the First World War, reflected on the duty of ‘[t]he Press to carry the whole front forward and to keep it staunch’. It had to do this under the restraints of the Act which included: no release of military information, and movements; no false reports, no reports prejudicing those working for the forces; no spreading of reports likely to undermine public confidence. There were serious penalties for infringement of the regulations including court martial resulting in six months imprisonment and possible fines. The government could also seize the means of infringement. This Act may partly explain the nature of what Tawney complained about in the papers.

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37 Ibid., 26-27
39 Ibid., 5.
40 Ibid., 25-7.
At the end of 1916, Tawney was taking the necessary steps to be discharged from the army, but had to go through the usual bureaucratic process. He wrote to Jeanette from the Manchester Regiment's South Camp at Ripon:

Today, a Medical Board was held – they take place every three months I believe – and I was given C.3.X (C 3 meaning employment only, and X meaning “not subject to revision” – at least that’s what one’s told). So the previous decision is confirmed and made more definite. That ought to facilitate getting out.

He went on to indicate that he probably wouldn’t hear officially for some time, at least so Will believed.41 His official discharge would, in fact, come in late 1917.

In January 1917 Tawney published one of his most moving articles on the war, ‘Democracy or Defeat’ which argued that only for the principle of democracy could the war be won since 'single-minded acceptance of a principle is the most powerful force in the world.'42 He hoped that in the future, Britain would be remembered as having fought the war ‘for what was kindly and humane, and akin to the common sympathies of men’ and not for ‘the class of divisions within Great Britain [which] had proceeded too far for them to be united by service to any common principle’.43

The following month, drawing on the memory of the founding of All Souls College, Oxford, by Archbishop Henry Chichele in 1438 to honour the souls of the dead who had fallen in the wars between the French and the English, Tawney proposed in ‘A National College of All Souls’ that England could do no less in the twentieth century:

A reconstruction of Education in a generous, humane and liberal spirit would be the noblest memorial to those who have fallen, because, though many of them

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41 Tawney to Jeanette, 15 November 1916, Tawney/Vyvyan 1, BLPES. Will refers to William Beveridge.
43 Ibid., 12.
were but little 'educated', it would be the most formal and public recognition of the world of the spirit for which they felt.\textsuperscript{44}

He believed that the English did not value the spiritual. Their failure to do so meant that gifts of the intellect were hardly recognized. Among these were 'insight, respect for the truth and contempt for charlatanism, a lucid and piercing intelligence which appraises facts for what they are.'\textsuperscript{45} What did receive recognition was possession of material goods, especially capital. The upper and middle classes, moreover, had a near monopoly on these. The resulting inequality of power deprived a nation of the moral strength necessary to ensure justice and fairness of treatment for all individuals. Instead, such dominating material influence led to competition and greed. A just society required a well-rounded education for everyone. Only the privileged received this in 1917 England. Tawney concluded, therefore, that the grip on education by the privileged was wrong. What should be done? Educationalists must persuade those in power that education 'must be practised, like other spiritual activities, for itself, "for the glory of God and the relief of man's state"'.\textsuperscript{46} This became the aim towards which he directed much of his attention in the post-war world. He posed equality of educational opportunity as a standard by which Britain, which claimed to be fighting a war for civilization, for 'the higher possibilities of the human spirit', should be judged.

Were these possibilities reflected in British social institutions? Were they, for instance, reflected in the educational system? Was the country ready to change the educational system?\textsuperscript{47}

In 1917, the answer to this last question seemed uncertain. Yet, in the final years of the war after his discharge from the army, there was some reason to suppose that Tawney was optimistic. 'He

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 31-2.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 34.
saw’, Winter has argued, ‘in the national mobilization for war the faint outline of a future stable society in which men were bound together for the moral and physical betterment of all’.48

An article written in December 1917, a few months after his formal discharge from the army, revealed a deep-seated fear about the justice of allied war aims.49 He believed that over time, the moral principles for which the Allies went to war had eroded. There had been a ‘degeneration of national purpose’.50 To stay on the right path, a nation at war ought regularly to redefine its object, to convince allies and citizens that original purpose was unchanged. The purpose in his view ‘was a world set free and united’.51 What might be eroding the original purpose were secret arrangements made among the allies reflecting the onset of greed. What was needed was a statement of ‘provisional terms on which the Entente is prepared to begin the discussion of a settlement’.52 Such a statement could convince the citizens of allied countries that their governments were not obstacles to peace. The motives for which soldiers fight should always be kept in mind. ‘They are fighting to resist the extension by force of a more than usually immoral political system.’53 They were ‘fighting against the German idea’.54 What encouraged them most was the idea of peace. ‘They endure for the sake of a just and lasting peace.’55

Recently, Fritz Stern has attempted to probe how ‘historians respond[ed] to the totally unanticipated destruction that swept across Europe’ in 1914. He decided to analyze the work of the few historians of that era who were fighting and yet practising their craft and he chose

49 This article was consistent in tone with the Lansdowne letter published on November 29, 1917 in The Daily Telegraph. Although it is not clear if the article was a direct response, it was symptomatic of widespread war weariness and deadlock by the end of 1917. The letter argued that ‘the war could not be won without ruining civilization; therefore negotiations should be opened for a compromise peace’. A.J.P. Taylor, The First World War, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1966, originally published by Hamish Hamilton 1963), 202-3.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 699.
53 Ibid., 702.
54 Ibid., 703.
55 Ibid., 704.
Tawney as one of his major examples. To Stern, Tawney was among the few in the academic elite who did not share 'the comfortable outlook, which very much included the implicit belief in permanence; the very people whose work dealt with the great upheavals of the past believed that their world would remain predictably unchanged'. Historians steeped in the classics often were cut off from the mainstream of society, unlike artists and writers who 'did sense the shakiness and hypocrisy of the established, repressive order'.

How did Tawney experience war? Stern believed that in war Tawney realized three things, the discovery of 'self' when engaged in battle; the cleavage between the front and home; and the subtle nuances of the class system. While actually attacking in the Battle of the Somme, he observed that everything but the sight of the Germans was driven from his mind. Only then was he aware that 'most men have a palaeolithic savage somewhere in them, a beast that occasionally shouts to be given a chance of showing his joyful cunning in destruction. I have, anyway.' Tawney became aware that he was more than the civilized, educated person with whom he had always been comfortable. Dangerous situations brought out the primitive qualities in him. Tawney experienced the class system differently at the front than he had in England, where the workers he met were sincere persons desirous of achieving an education and assisting their fellow workers. When Tawney began active service in 1914, he believed that the workers were superior in character to the upper classes, an opinion re-enforced by the workers he taught in Rochdale and Longton. He believed them to be endowed with qualities that represented the greatness of the working classes. The war modified that set of feelings. True, he shared the contempt of the enlisted men for the staff officers. He commented on the Army's preference for

57 Ibid., 37.
58 Ibid., 39-41.
commissioned officers from the upper classes in his 1931 book, *Equality*, but he also noted a certain kind of proletarian snobbery among the lower classes with their great interest and pride in the doings of the upper classes. By this time, he saw both classes 'warts and all'.

When did he first acknowledge the weaknesses of the working classes? In a 1915 letter to Beveridge, he mentioned that

[the] problem of making the [British] Workman and Employer decently public-spirited and less totally selfish can't, I fancy, be handled under a generation or two. A year with the former has taught me a good deal – among other things that his philosophy, as much as that of his master, is “Get as much and give as little as you can”.  

Sharing daily life with the workers taught him that the working classes contained a cross-section of persons with various character traits both good and bad. ‘He saw that being exploited was no guarantee of virtue.’ Moral values were not the exclusive property of the working classes.

Therefore, when he began his crusade to improve the lives of the working classes in the post-war world, it was with a more rational spirit than formerly, and lacked the excessive admiration which he felt for workers in the pre-1914 days.

A writer and reformer like Tawney was bound to reassess his own theoretical and social positions in the light of his war experiences. The war threw together men of many classes into an army to fight against an enemy army similarly constructed. These men acted together under ever-changing conditions and orders in an environment of unutterable devastation to preserve their lives and the values of home. Tawney was most impressed with this collective spirit. It was one which he was confident could be recreated to construct a better post-war society. This unified response to conditions of war contributed to his desire to acquire an individual membership in the

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62 Terrill, *Tawney*, 50.
Labour Party in 1918. Of course, the party itself, in moving left may have become more attractive to socialist theoreticians. Tawney was in the beginning stages of becoming such a theoretician. Already a socialist, he became more committed to a world of equality, one which he believed was now possible. Workers would yet achieve social dignity and respect. He became involved in reconstruction committees for the government, for the Labour Party and for the Anglican Church. His forceful presence in these circles gradually made his views known nationally. He had begun to mold public opinion. He had assumed a tougher moral fibre, as Terrill commented. The subtle change in his attitude towards workers made him more realistic and consequently more effective. His evolved views were presented relentlessly in the ‘next decade...his most vigorous in public activity and political writing’.  

63 Tawney joined both the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party before the war. Therefore, he was already in the Labour Party as part of both these groups. His 1918 membership was an individual one, made possible only with the development of a new constitution. This will be dealt with further in chapter 6.  
64 Terrill, Tawney, 52.
Chapter 3

The WEA: administration and propaganda 1914-1945

Tawney began his multi-faceted approach to improving the lot of the working classes even before the war had ended. Working inside the government on powerful reconstruction committees, his unique influence began to develop. As the war ended, he returned once more to teaching, first for two years at Oxford as a fellow of Balliol and then at the London School of Economics where he remained for the rest of his career. Articles he wrote for the Hibbert Journal became his first well-known book, The Acquisitive Society, written in the tradition of social criticism and moralism, a method he was to use in much of his later writing. He continued to act throughout the next two decades in a variety of public and educational roles. All the while, however, he retained an executive position with the Workers Educational Association, in 1920 becoming in 1920 a vice-president, and in 1928 president, a role he did not relinquish until 1944. He was its most important president.

The WEA itself continued its programmes during the First World War. Even as Tawney was preparing to volunteer for the army, William Temple, the president from 1908 to 1924, was stressing the need 'to create “a fully informed democracy” during the war'. Tutorial content was gradually adapted to encompass the war. As tutors finished their current courses, they began others inspired by the war. G.D.H. Cole, in 1916, for example, fashioned a two-part course in which the students studied ‘Comparative Institutions’ addressing immediate issues and concerns by examining the political systems and recent history of the main belligerents and by suggesting means of keeping the peace in the future. Simultaneously, ‘reconstruction’ thinking was occurring in the WEA even in the midst of war. Tawney evidently engaged in reconstruction

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thinking at the front, one charming story being that he talked over the main themes of his later policy proposals with Clement Attlee behind hedgerows in France. Once home in England, he engaged in reconstruction thinking and planning through official committees.

Tawney's influence and reputation were greatly enhanced between the years 1916 and 1919. In this period, he engaged in a number of activities that would help to shape the future of education. These included membership on an ad hoc committee set up by Munitions Minister David Lloyd George to provide advice about the war effort, the co-editorship of the 1918 WEA Education Year Book, membership on the education sub-committee of the Reconstruction Committee, membership on the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, and co-authorship of The 1919 Report, The Final and Interim Reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-1919 which was published in November 1919. One of the astonishing things about these committees was the number of WEA people who were members. Arguably, this was the high point of WEA influence in the twentieth century. Participation in these committees and activities made Tawney a significant educational reformer and force to be reckoned with even before the 1920s began.

As a prelude to much of this committee work, however, in November 1916 he contributed to the creation of a memorandum 'on the need for a new spirit in government and the conduct of the war' at the invitation of Tom Jones, who had been summoned to London that month. This initiative was part of the Lloyd George effort to emphasize the need for new, dynamic leadership 'that only he could provide'. Lloyd George requested the memo shortly before he replaced Asquith as Prime Minister, thus reviving the British war effort. Others who helped with this project included J.J. Mallon, a WEA tutor and later Warden of Toynbee Hall,

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3 Jones was incorporated into the War Cabinet Secretariat in December. He became first an Assistant Secretary and then Deputy Secretary under Hankey. Tom Jones, Whitehall Diary: 1916-1925, vol. I, ed. Keith Middlemas, (London, Oxford University Press), 1.
A.E. Zimmern, a classical scholar and WEA supporter, and Lionel Hichens, the industrialist. The memorandum emphasized a national pulling together for the good of all and for the achievement of victory, suggesting that an increased concentration of effort at democratization was a way to achieve these objectives. The extinguishing of social prejudice was advocated so that ordinary citizens would feel their society was one for which it was worth fighting. Citizens were to be ready to make sacrifices just as soldiers at the front did. Further observing '[w]e believe that when every circumstance of the War should fire us to rise to the height of our endeavour, we still allow ourselves to be hampered in matters military, economic, and financial by the surviving poison of social prejudice and class interests', the memo urged changes in social attitudes if victory in war were to be achieved.

In letters to Jones, Tawney stressed the need to make Labour leaders feel that their leadership in the working movement was crucial to the war effort. Indeed, the war could not be won without the whole-hearted support of Labour. He argued that the workforce, in making this effort, was investing in a newer, better post-war world. If these steps were not taken, Tawney feared the war would continue from 'sheer inertia'. It would have 'exemplified the wasted potential of the nation'.

Shortly after his contribution to the Lloyd George memo, Tawney wrote a previously-referred-to article for the Welsh Outlook entitled 'Democracy or Defeat' in which he insisted that Britain could not be a moral leader in a war for freedom if all the conditions for freedom were not met within its own society. War profiteering, economic privilege, and other abuses must be eliminated. 'It is only by means of something like an internal revolution that a war of

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7 Goldman, Dons and Workers, 199.
principles' could be won. These ideas were consistent with other 1916 articles in emphasizing the concepts of equality and morality.

Amongst other notable achievements later in the war, Tawney's 1918 co-editorship of the *WEA Education Year Book 1918* stands out. Working with Cole, Mactavish, Temple and Zimmern, he produced a 'compendious manifest for change in every area of education', an achievement of which he was rather proud. He wrote in a review of it for the WEA journal, *The Highway*, that it was a 'restorative... an intoxicant'. He was certain that a mild form of exhilaration may be derived from a symposium to which Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Clutton Brock, Mr. J.A. Hobson, Miss Margaret McMillan, Mr. J.L. Paton, Mr. Sidney Webb, as well as a host of less well-known writers contribute.\(^\text{10}\)

Tawney pointed out that the WEA deserved higher regard for its humanistic standard of 'the opportunity for joy and self-expression which they offer the human being'. He recommended this volume to everyone who wished to democratize education.\(^\text{11}\) His recommendation of a volume which he helped edit suggested that he was willing to go to unusual lengths to make plain his strong belief in the ideas of the various contributing authors, all of whom reflected some aspect of WEA thinking.

In what became the final year of the war, the WEA looked toward the end of conflict as providing 'the greatest educational opportunity in its history'.\(^\text{12}\) With the confidence that the organization had a great role to play in the post-war society, the WEA produced 'this ambitious Year Book' which recent scholarship has noted, 'seems to combine the functions now performed

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8 R.H. Tawney, 'Democracy or Defeat', *Welsh Outlook*, (January 1917), 9, 11.
9 Goldman, *Dons and Workers*, 201.
10 R.H. Tawney, 'The WEA Education Year Book', *The Highway*, (September, 1918), 155.
11 Ibid.
by the National Institute of Adult Education Report and Journal, UCAE and DES statistical reports, and other educational publications all rolled into one.\textsuperscript{14}

The variety of articles was impressive but the most prescient article was that on 'Educational Reconstruction' which offered WEA resolutions for the advance of public education. These had originated in the 'central body of the association' and had been agreed upon at a series of WEA meetings, in local branches, at regional conferences and then in the Central Council of the WEA, this final step occurring on 18 November 1916. Tawney had been consulted on the first draft in September 1916 while he was still convalescing in Oxford.\textsuperscript{15} Some clauses were inserted after the introduction of the Education Bill in April 1917.\textsuperscript{16} These resolutions were to influence the Education Act of August 1918 as well as educational reports of the interwar period. Among the twelve resolutions were recommendations for education of young children, a leaving age of fourteen to be raised later, first to fifteen and then to sixteen, part-time education for those fourteen to eighteen, full secondary education, physical education, public libraries, and distribution of cost. The first resolution encapsulated all the rest. It desired '[t]hat the broad principle of free education through all its stages, including that of the University be accepted.'\textsuperscript{17}

When one examines the 1918 Education Act, it is possible to see the connections between the WEA resolutions and the Act itself. Although this Act will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 7, it is worth noting here that the leaving age was raised to fourteen, compulsory continuation schooling was mandated, and Local Authorities were encouraged to develop nursery schools. With its Reconstruction recommendations, The \textit{Year Book} seemed to reflect the mood of

\textsuperscript{13} University Council on Adult Education and Department of Education and Science
\textsuperscript{14} Hughes, 'Introduction', \textit{WEA Yearbook}, 8. Hughes points out that the \textit{Year Book} was a response to 'the greatest educational opportunity in history', that of passing the Education Act of 1918 which early in the year was not a certainty.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
the times. Interest in educational matters was accelerating. There was a feeling of euphoria and expectation as the war was potentially drawing to a close that many exciting possibilities lay immediately ahead, and that education would help to bring them about. In some circles, educational reform was in the air. Even among the working classes the concept of educational advance was ‘catching fire’.

The government, too, was affected by the trend towards educational reform, both within the Board of Education which was developing the new Education Act and in the Reconstruction Committee as reconstituted by Lloyd George in March 1917. The original committee, established by Asquith in March 1916 as a ministerial committee under the direction of Vice Chairman Edwin Montagu, included non-ministerial sub-committees partially manned by regular department civil servants. The Review of Education sub-committee set up by Viscount Haldane partly reflected public discussion with such groups as the WEA, and the National Union of Teachers. This original committee had no mandate to do anything; the practical work was to be done in particular departments. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916, he appointed a new cabinet among whom was H.A.L. Fisher at the Board of Education. A popular choice, he had been Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University.

Within the larger, reconstituted Reconstruction Committee was an education panel whose membership included a number of people sympathetic to adult education. Among them were Professor W.S.G. Adams, a teacher of tutorial classes both at Oxford and Manchester; Tom

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18 *The Times* called the Bill the “Children’s Charter”; the *Manchester Guardian* emphasized the important principle of ‘the sacred right of individuality, of personality'; in Geoffrey Sherington, *English education, social change and war, 1911-1920*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1981, 108) and ‘[T]here was a growing feeling of “social solidarity”: the “same logic” which was leading to the extension of the franchise pointed to an extension of education’, *Hansard, Commons, 5th ser.*, XCVII, 10th August 1917, cols., 795-6, in *Ibid*. In addition, in 1918 the WEA convened 69 conferences on educational reconstruction. Hughes, ‘Introduction’, *WEA Year Book, 7*.


21 See Chapter 7 for details.
Jones, a member of the Fabian Society and advisor to Prime Ministers; Arthur Greenwood, a longtime WEA worker and executive member; and Beatrice Webb, Fabian and writer of the minority report of the Poor Law Commission of 1909.

Given the background of its members, it seemed natural that this panel was much interested in the advance of adult education. The members suggested a further sub-committee to 'enquire into the provision for the possibility of adult education among working men and women and to make recommendations'. The Board of Education, however, was anxious about the wide terms of reference of this sub-committee and its potential bureaucratic threat to the Board. To control this matter, R.H. Tawney and J.L. Hammond joined the panel as representatives of the Board of Education for which, at that time, they were acting as advisors. It was decided to add the words 'other than technical and vocational' after the words 'adult education' and eliminate the phrase 'among working men and women'. These changes which seemed to narrow the scope of the sub-committee and to please the Board of Education, accorded with the general thinking of the period that it was 'liberal education' for adults which was of most importance.

The sub-committee with its new adult education remit became a fully-fledged Ministerial Committee only days after its first meeting on 11 July 1917, the Reconstruction Committee having been transformed into the Ministry of Reconstruction under Christopher Addison on 17 July. The Committee acquired its members through invitation. There were nineteen members who accepted. Serving as chair was A.L. Smith, Master of Balliol, and as secretaries Arthur Greenwood and E.S. Cartwright. The actual operations worked on the

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22 Ibid., 366. Adams was head of Lloyd George's private secretariat and Jones was an assistant cabinet secretary.
24 Ibid. Both Tawney and Hammond were advisers to the Board 'in preparation for drafting the 1917 education bill'.
25 Ibid., 30.
principle of inner and outer circles. The inner group had the most influence and did most of the writing.26

In the outer circle were Ernest Bevin who attended no meetings, Frank Hodges who had once been at Ruskin College,27 and Sir Henry Miers, Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University, an interested but not especially active participant. In the inner circle were A.L. Smith, R.H. Tawney, E.S. Cartwright, and Arthur Greenwood, all experienced leaders of the WEA. It is apparent why the Year Book and The 1919 Report, the Final and Interim Reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, 1918-1919 seemed similar in tone.28 Both of these publications with their confident tone about the future help explain why Tawney himself, as an editor of the Year Book and a writer of the Report, looked towards the next decade with such optimism. Taylor remarked on the bonds that connected this inner circle. Tawney had been a student of Smith at Balliol, and a close friend of Smith’s son. Cartwright had been a student of Tawney’s in the first class at Longton. During this period, Tawney was a member of the Board of Education’s Consultative Committee and, therefore, an advisor on the Education Bills of 1917 and 1918. He was teaching at the London School of Economics a little later where he and Greenwood often held informal discussions. ‘Tawney took on a considerable amount of writing for the Report including the whole of the important Chapter XII on “Organisation and Finance” and Chapter IX on “The Supply of Teachers.’’29

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 32. Hodges was a dissident student who broke away from Ruskin College at Oxford to found the Central Labour College. Ruskin College was founded in 1899 by two Americans, Walter Vrooman and Charles Beard. The college ‘was intended to be the headquarters of a nationwide system of workers’ education, involving branch halls, local lecture courses and learning by correspondence.’ Bernard Jennings, ‘Friends and Enemies of the WEA’, A Ministry of Enthusiasm: Centenary Essays on the Workers’ Educational Association, ed. Stephen K. Roberts, (London, Pluto Press, 2003), 100.
28 Ibid., 30-5.
29 Ibid., 34.
To appreciate fully the Final Report, it is necessary to understand something of the Interim Report which was completed in March 1918 and published that year. It was preceded by a covering letter to the Minister of Reconstruction from A.L. Smith who wrote that it was impossible to consider adult education apart from those social and industrial conditions which determine to a large degree the educational opportunities, the interests and the general outlook of men and women. In the course of our inquiries it has been forced upon our attention that education is hampered in many divisions by economic obstacles, that industrial and social reform are indispensable, if the just claims of education are to be met and that the full results of these reforms will be reaped only as education becomes more widespread. The quality of an educational system must always depend to a large extent upon the economic framework of the society in which it is placed.30

He continued by outlining the abuses existing in the hours of labour demanded, the overtime put in, and the shift work endured, offering suggestions for rectifying these bleak conditions. Touching on other matters, too, such as the amount of exhausting work, unemployment and necessary holidays, he offered appropriate recommendations for improvement.

The 1919 Final Report was preceded not only by the First Interim Report but also by a Second Interim Report on ‘Education in the Army’ as well as a Third Interim Report on ‘Libraries and Museums’. The final document encompassed all three interim reports, although the first one was by far the most influential. This document, published in November 1919, was also preceded by a covering letter, this one to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. In it, A.L. Smith first outlined the history of the Adult Education Committee, and its context rooted in the history of the growth of the labour movement and of political democracy, and indicated why the creation of such a committee was necessary. He argued that the various social and political problems present at the end of the war made an enlightened public a necessity. How could problems stemming from industrial stresses, women’s evolving roles, the emergence of a huge and increasingly united working class, even those of drink and prostitution be solved without an educated society? There

was much to be learned about how workers with only elementary education to the age of fourteen might learn effectively by considering the early Army experiments in education. The young recruits were 'eager for education'. Many of them had the ability to be teachers themselves given suitable education and conditions. Some classes showed observers the benefits of a well-planned question and answer session. Most of these young adult soldiers learned best by proceeding from the concrete to the abstract, by starting from what they already knew to learning new and more difficult concepts. Smith noted that the committee based its conclusions on several propositions, the most important of which was '[t]hat the main purpose of education is to fit a man for life, and therefore, in a civilised community to fit him for his place as a member of that community.' Adult Education, in the view of the committee, must be available to all. It should not be regarded as a short-term process, but rather as a life-long one.

Throughout The 1919 Report there was a certain ambiguity about what was meant by the term 'adult education'. This can be seen in the 'Organisation and Finance' chapter of the Report, written by Tawney, which urged state funding, but through the 'voluntary bodies' rather than the LEAs some of which, until this point, had shown little interest in adult education. Specifically, it recommended that Adult Education Joint Committees be funded by the Board or the LEAs, or alternatively, through funding to the LEAs ear-marked for adult education. The 'voluntary bodies' of which the WEA was one, wanted to retain control over the 'civic' portion of adult education ('important field of public issues and controversial subjects'). This proposal naturally aroused the opposition of the LEAs who had welcomed the February 1917 'Draft of

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31 The 1919 Report, 3.
32 Ibid., 4.
33 Ibid., 5.
34 The 1919 Report recommended financing the tutorial classes primarily by the Board of Education which should pay 50% of the tutor's salary as well as a block grant amounting to 25% 'of the total cost of the salary of tutors employed by the university'. The 1919 Report, 175. Further, the Report urged Local Education Authorities to 'give substantial assistance to university tutorial classes, courses of extension lectures and to the salaries and expenses of resident tutors.' Ibid., 170.
35 Ibid., 176.
Proposed Revised Regulations for Continuation, Technical and Art Classes in England and Wales' that suggested all adult education except for University tutorial classes should fall under LEA control. This suggestion would have given the LEAs a block grant to be distributed to adult education groups based on local criteria. The WEA, which had shown much of the leadership in adult education until this time, viewed this 1917 proposal as a threat to control over its own non-tutorial classes. In this recommendation was the hand of Tawney, as a defender and member of the executive of the WEA. This funding controversy suggests that the LEAs and WEA were at loggerheads. Yet, at the same time, the Report saw the LEAs as essential providers in the whole field of humane education.

The 1919 Report also urged that universities should set up extramural adult education departments. This suggestion followed naturally from the emphasis on university and working class connections so emphasized in the 1908 report, Oxford and Working-class Education, and so encouraged thereafter by the WEA.

According to Thomas Kelly, The 1919 Report 'was the first and is still the most comprehensive survey of the history and organization of adult education in this country.' It concluded in a similar way to that in which the First Interim Report began. It reiterated that this immediate post-war period provided a great opportunity to assist adult education to 'fulfil its possibilities', that a new national effort 'using the resources of the State, the Universities, the Local Education Authorities and the voluntary agencies' would reap untold benefits for society.

But how was The 1919 Report received when first published in 1919? To begin with, the wartime Government, despite appointing Reconstruction Committees, never established a real Reconstruction programme. By the time The Report came out in November 1919, parliament was

39 The 1919 Report, 177-8.
in the middle of discussing the special ‘dole’ for unemployed ex-servicemen. In the House of Commons, Andrew Bonar Law, Lord Privy Seal and Leader in the Commons, replied to a question about *The Report* with this comment:

*The Report* covers a wide field and makes a number of interesting recommendations of a very far-reaching character, which will no doubt receive the careful consideration of the various educational authorities concerned. I am afraid that the pressure of Parliamentary business makes it difficult to find time for a debate upon *The Report* in the House. 40

Although there had been impetus to reform education in 1917 and 1918, it seemed clear that a year after the war, education was no longer a government priority. Relegation of educational policy to the bureaucracy was a tactic to do nothing, or at least to do nothing important. Yet, by 1921, most educational funding was to be seriously affected by a cost-cutting measure usually known as the ‘Geddes Axe’ but adult education funding was not affected. The press response, too, was often one of relegation. Most articles on the subject appeared on the back pages. ‘Even the Labour press seems to have ignored it altogether’. Jennings considered the best summary to be that of Arthur Greenwood in *The Observer*. The article regarded it as remarkable that ‘despite the controversial nature of many of the questions discussed and the ideological differences between the Labour Colleges41 and WEA factions, “four reports had been presented without a single note of reservation or dissent”’.42

Goldman observed that the ‘spirit and ethos of the joint tutorial was always uppermost in the committee’s collective outlook.’43 But this was not surprising, considering the makeup of the committee and the experience and philosophy of the main writers. Kelly noted that most of these

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41 The Central Labour College, the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges were institutions founded before the First World War to educate workers. Their members were socialists, including some Marxists. Their funding was provided by membership and some unions for whom they provided education. They received no government funding. Brian Simon, ‘The Struggle for Hegemony’, *The Search for Enlightenment: The Working Class and Adult Education in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Simon, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 19-20.
43 Goldman, *Dons and Workers*, 204.
recommendations were eventually implemented in the inter-war period.\textsuperscript{44} \textit{The 1919 Report} and its gradual implementation help to explain why the WEA played such as prominent part in education until the beginning of the Second World War.

Despite the lukewarm support of the government and the weak coverage in the press, \textit{The Report} did have important consequences shortly after its publication. Its ideas assisted Lord Haldane and Albert Mansbridge to found the British Institute of Adult Education in 1921. This was the culmination of a three-year campaign by Haldane to expand the adult sector of higher education. In addition, \textit{The 1919 Report} influenced the \textit{Report of the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge} of 1922 to endorse the proposal for the establishment of extra-mural departments in the universities.\textsuperscript{45} This was a recommendation about which Tawney was to express some regret later.\textsuperscript{46} He found that university extra-mural departments ‘declined to accept the special authority of the WEA’ and that the university authorities left the new departments to run themselves.\textsuperscript{47} In the end \textit{The Report}, having made little public impression, contained a strength that would outlast the government of the day. Not only was it ‘informative and inspiring’ but was also ‘a work of reference and an ideological tract. \textit{The 1919 Report} became, in short, an instant classic without ever becoming news.’\textsuperscript{48}

The WEA itself fared better during the war than some other adult education institutions, likely because of its strong national organization. In August 1914, the Executive Committee of which Tawney had been a member since 1905, made decisions about reducing the size of its main publication, \textit{The Highway} and raising a guaranteed fund to cover salaries of the staff of the central and district offices.\textsuperscript{49} On 21 October, it decided to consult the War Office about offering

\textsuperscript{44} Kelly, \textit{Adult Education}, 268.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{46} Stuart Marriott, \textit{Extramural Empires. Service and Self-Interest in English University Adult Education}, (Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1984), 97.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{49} Executive Committee and Council 1913-1920, 15 August 1914, WEA Central, 1/2/1/3, 76.
programmes in the army camps.\textsuperscript{50} By December, the work in camps had begun but no compensation had yet been given, although lectures such as ‘Belgium and Belgian Life’ by Professor Dejonghs of Ostend and ‘The Franco-Belgian Theatre of War’ by R.P. Farley had already occurred.\textsuperscript{51}

At the beginning of the war, ‘the WEA had 179 branches, over 2500 affiliated societies, and nearly 11,500 individual members.’\textsuperscript{52} Naturally, the WEA lost its share of tutors and students to the war effort, but by 1917, there were signs of recovery. In 1918-1919, there were 12,438 students in 557 classes (153 of which were tutorial) at 219 branches. The greatest change during the war was in the proportion of women students which rose from 16.5% in 1912-1913 to 39% in 1917-1918. The growth of the female segment proved to be a permanent trend.\textsuperscript{53}

Tawney was not on the sign-in list at any WEA meetings between October 1914 and January 1918. His absence for war service did not prevent the Central Council, however, from reappointing him in October 1915.\textsuperscript{54} He attended most meetings in 1918 but only a few in 1919. He appeared on the executive list of 1920 as one of two vice-presidents, the other being Arthur Greenwood.\textsuperscript{55}

WEA executive and council meetings in the interwar period were held monthly, always on a Friday night and all day Saturday. The Friday evening was generally limited to the executive committee, a small group fluctuating in numbers through the years but averaging about ten members. The Saturday meeting included the Council, which enabled representatives from the regions and branches to join the executive for extensive discussions. Again the numbers fluctuated but could be as high as two to three dozen representatives. Within both groups many

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Kelly, Adult Education, 257-58.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Executive and Council, October 1915, WEA Central, /1/2/1/3, 145.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Executive and Council, circa November 1922, WEA Central, /1/2/1/5. (page numbers not always available).
\end{itemize}

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of the same names appeared year after year, only gradually changing. Temple, Tawney, Cole, and Greenwood were prominent for years, the last three from before the First World War until the end of the Second World War. Usually, the president chaired meetings, but sometimes the vice-presidents and other executive members did so. Most meetings were held in London, but occasionally, when the Annual General Meeting and Conference occurred in other parts of the country, the meetings of the executive and council would occur in the chosen sites as well.

The meetings reflected concern with the educational issues of the day. On 28 January 1922, for instance, the Central Council condemned the *Geddes Report* \(^{56}\) by protesting against any proposals which by restricting educational expenditure from national funds will impair the efficiency of education as any such restrictions must postpone the full operation of the Education Act of 1918 - which was generally welcomed as a step toward the development of the democratic system of education - must inevitably degrade education below the inadequate standards prevailing before the war.\(^{57}\)

At this point, the implementation of the act had ground to a halt for economic reasons and the WEA was anxious to see the implementation process reinvigorated.\(^{58}\) At the 25 March meeting, it was agreed that a Tawney motion be sent to the President of the Board of Education suggesting that in its *Annual Report* it publish complete information about costs of educating each child both in private and in public schools in England and in other countries.\(^{59}\) This was clearly a follow-up to the actions of the Geddes cost-cutting committee seeking to determine whether its decisions were based on real educational facts.

The trio of Temple, Tawney and Greenwood continued to be elected to their positions each year until Temple resigned when he became the Bishop of Manchester. The 1924/25 slate

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\(^{56}\) To be discussed fully in Chapter 8

\(^{57}\) Executive and Council, 28 January 1922, WEA Central, /1/2/1/5, 3.

\(^{58}\) To be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 25 March 1922, 2.
of officers consisted of Fred Bramley as president, with Tawney, Greenwood, and A.D. Lindsay as vice-presidents. Bramley’s election may have been connected to the founding of the Workers Educational Trades Union Committee and the increasing union militancy of the early 1920’s. In 1919, this committee had been founded as a result of negotiations between Mactavish of the WEA and Arthur Pugh of the new Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. An attractive possibility was that the new organization might acquire a grant from the Board of Education if it operated through the WEA. Shortly thereafter, a number of unions joined including the Post Office Workers, the Railway Clerks, and the Amalgamated Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen.

The National Council of Labour Colleges entered the field of union education in 1922 in an arrangement with the Building Trade Workers. The TUC then considered taking over the educational union work of both the WEA and the NCLC but Congress rejected this proposal in 1926. The WEA records showed that a special executive meeting was chaired by Tawney on 14 June 1924 to discuss the ‘increasing interest in education within the TUC’ which had just formed its own Advisory Committee on Working Class Education. The TUC tried to bring about a ‘cooling’ of the WEA-NCLC struggle for the hearts and minds of workers by establishing this committee. It invited its ‘various constituent bodies’ to submit proposals for ‘a co-operative trade union education scheme’. Therefore, in July 1924, the WEA offered a submission which, while reiterating its traditional position on ‘non-doctrinaire education’, suggested a willingness to ‘put

60 Bramley was an important union figure, having been the Assistant Secretary of the General Council of the TUC from 1917 to 1923.
61 WETUC was founded ‘to give cohesion to ...educational work with trade unions. The WEA provided the secretariat at both district and national levels. Trade Union representatives formed the majority of committees.’ WEA Archive Catalogue, 70.
62 The NCLC and its associated bodies had been established before the First World War, only three years after the founding of the WEA. Its aim was independent education for workers, based on Marxist analysis. Completely worker-financed, the NCLC regarded the WEA as a subversive organization, funded by the government, whose intention was the integration of workers into middle class society and values. Brian Simon, ‘The Struggle for Hegemony’, The Search for Enlightenment, ed Brian Simon, 20, 23-4. Also see p.76, footnote 41.
64 Executive and Council, 14 June 1924. WEA Central, /1/2/1/5.
its policy under the control of direct representatives of the working class movement’. This radical proposal caused much public reaction and consternation. Was the WEA giving up its non-partisan approach? Was it becoming Marxist? With the sort of ambiguity identified by Fieldhouse as typical, the WEA responded that nothing had changed. After Congress rejected the whole scheme in 1926, the TUC continued to support both groups, but the NCLC had to mute its Marxist tendencies ‘to suit their trade union paymasters’.

As already suggested, in the mid-twenties the WEA was beginning to lean left. Fred Bramley, the new president was known for his support of militant left policies. G.D.H. Cole supported this move left, hoping that it would truly reflect the educational wing of the labour movement. The culmination of this leftward trend may have been the appointment of John Muir, a leader of the ‘Red Clydeside’ shop stewards during the First World War, as the WEA’s national trade union education organizer.

Bramley, re-elected to his position for the 1925-1926 year, died in the Fall of his new term, the rest of the year’s presidential commitments being carried out by the three vice-presidents, Tawney, Greenwood and Lindsay. Tawney was at various meetings in 1926 occasionally chairing them, and reporting to the executive and council on matters of current importance. For example, at the September meeting, he reported on the question of the future of the one year classes and tutorial courses. A sub-committee was then set up to deal with this question. All districts were instructed to discuss the matter with the LEAs with a view to the ‘right of independent access to the Board for grant aid’ being safeguarded, and to the

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66 Clegg, Trade Unions, 361.
establishment, under the LEAs using ‘the new Adult education Regulations’, of suitable classes including ‘One-Year classes and Terminal courses’.68

Along with his regular vice-presidential duties for the WEA, in the 1920s Tawney continued a busy round of activities on the organization’s behalf. He wrote numerous articles for *Highway* and other publications and was a featured speaker at educational meetings and conferences throughout the country. In 1926, for example, he delivered a paper on the meaning of adult education and in 1927, he spoke to the Imperial Education Conference about the WEA.69 Once he became President in 1928, he wrote even more articles for *Highway* than previously. Usually, his addresses to the annual conferences were published, revealing topics of crucial importance to the WEA, to education in general, and to the survival of freedom and democracy.

That the WEA of the interwar years had many challenges to meet is made clear by Tawney and other writers, both contemporary and recent. An understanding of those years can best be gained by considering the rivalry with the National Council of Labour Colleges, and its associated bodies; internationalism within the educational sphere; and the impact of the Second World War on the WEA.

The stormy opposition of the National Council of Labour Colleges provided a strong counterpoint to any goals the WEA set or action that it took during the interwar period. The NCLC would continually argue that the WEA was attempting to integrate the workers into the establishment and that only the independent NCLC could truly represent the workers and provide them with the kind of Marxist-oriented education they would need to run the country. The WEA response tended to emphasize that the NCLC couldn’t distinguish education from propaganda. The WEA believed that a liberal education in which all ideologies were examined allowed an individual worker to choose his own ideas and enabled him to become a more effective citizen.

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68 Central Executive and Council, 17 September 1926, WEA Central, /1/2/1/6, 2.
69 Terrill, *Tawney*, 6
This concept was supported by Ernest Bevin who in an article for *Highway* stated strongly that 'I am convinced by my daily experience that a doctrinaire habit of mind will not make for the best work so essential for the success of labour effort...it is vitally important that there should be no rigid views or theories imposed on the student'.

The WEA took advantage of the government preference for the WEA over the NCLC to solicit further funds during the 1920s. Temple, Tawney, and Lindsay warned the Board of Education and the LEAs that without such funding and a respect for WEA academic freedom, the workers might fall to the NCLC. In seeking to have the WEA’s academic freedom to be funded by the government, this powerful trio insinuated a situation of possible peril.

Tawney found himself in July 1925 having to explain to leaders of the County Councils Association that the WEA did not really like the scheme of the TUC Education Advisory Committee of putting the Association directly under workers’ control but felt obliged to agree to it in order to have the TUC recognize the WEA classes. Alderman Percy Jackson of the West Riding Education Committee objected to most aspects of the new WEA agreement, fearing that the organisation would be captured by ‘the Marxian wing of the labour movement’.

Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education in the Conservative government, made it clear that ‘courses of study assisted out of public funds must have no connection with the tenets of any political party’. A.D. Lindsay, responding to Percy for the WEA, stated that teaching with absolutely no reference to any political system was impossible. No tutor, no matter how adept, could possibly be completely impartial. Eventually, the two reached a compromise: ‘that teaching must aim at freedom from party bias and from any flavour of political

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72 Ibid., 155.
73 Ibid., 156.
propaganda. Yet Percy was worried. In the autumn of 1925, he was encouraging the LEAs to check into the nature of the WEA classes and to consider replacing them if necessary. What might have happened had the WEA agreement with the TUC been implemented is a matter of speculation. The scheme never did come to fruition as the TUC was caught up in the various events leading to the General Strike of 1926.

During this period of intense rivalry, the business of WEA teaching and learning not only carried on but also accelerated, grew and changed. In 1924-25, the numbers in short and terminal courses were 17,131 students in 682 classes. The close connection between the WEA and the universities gradually weakened as Extra-mural Departments were set up in accordance with The 1919 Report. These departments offered more and more classes not under WEA auspices. They had broken the 'spell of Albert Mansbridge'. Moreover, the universities became less concerned with classes for workers and more concerned with classes for adults in general. Tawney was always opposed to this trend in adult education. In the mid-thirties, for example, he 'forestalled Richard Livingstone's plan 'to build an adult education group which would not be specifically working class.' Yet, although the trend to subsuming workers' education within adult education continued, it was not so marked within the WEA as in many other organizations.

Tawney as a Vice-President of the WEA was involved in the decision-making on most of the major controversies with the NCLC. His high profile and his powers of articulation lent credibility to the arguments that his organization mustered against the NCLC. His own pioneering experiences with tutorial classes added extra weight to these arguments. His influential presence on committees, both governmental and non-governmental, provided him with the knowledge of how best to wage the arguments. Certainly, his active participation in the

74 Ibid.
75 Kelly, Adult Education, 273-4.
76 Terrill, Tawney, 85.
77 Kelly, Adult Education, 274.
The creation of The 1919 Report made him an respected authority on adult education, and provided a clear advantage in the struggle against the NCLC.

Although he was teaching at the London School of Economics, involved in a variety of committees, and engaged in academic writing, when the WEA called on him to become President in 1928, Tawney accepted the position. Tawney was, in some ways, an unusual choice. He was an academic, of the upper middle class, and with no experience in the trade union movement. On the other hand, his pioneering work in tutorial classes, his ability to participate in those classes on a democratic basis, his ready acceptance by almost all working people, his unrelenting campaign to gain educational rights for the working classes, and his twenty-three years on the executive of the organization made him uniquely qualified for the job.

Presiding over the monthly meeting of the WEA Executive Committee on 6 July 1929, Tawney moved from the chair an expression of regret that no mention of raising of the school leaving age had been made within the King’s speech. The WEA was surprised that the newly-elected Labour minority Government would omit reference to an initiative that its own education advisory committee and its campaign platform had emphasized. Over the next months, Tawney continued to be involved with pressing the government to introduce educational legislation. At the March 1930 meeting, Tawney reported that an emergency meeting of officers had been held which called for immediate action for the speeding up of legislation on the education bill, whose main intent was to raise the leaving age to fifteen. Resolutions passed at committees were to be sent to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, the President of the Board, Charles Trevelyan, as well as to local MPs. Members of the education sub-committee

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78 Central Executive Committee and Council, 6 July 1929, WEA Central, /1/2/1/9.
79 Tawney was the principal writer of Secondary Education for All, a major focus of which was raising the secondary leaving age, for the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education in 1922, and had advocated it in the 1928 Labour Party Campaign platform, ‘Labour and the Nation’. Each of these Tawney works will be investigated in chapter 8.
reported that they had taken action in approaching people to sign the latest memo on the subject of the education bill. The President felt that this action had contributed to the government's decision to introduce the bill during the current session.\textsuperscript{81}

Tawney and the WEA were not giving up on the education bill. Despite the fact that the government was withdrawing the bill in favour of presenting it later, at the WEA Executive July meeting Tawney reported that a WEA pamphlet on raising the leaving age had been published. He also revealed that, as he was going to China for a year, he wished to step down from the Presidency. The WEA wished to retain him, however, and he was urged not to resign, providing the Districts would agree. It was then determined that while Tawney was away, the acting president would be G.D.H. Cole. This snapshot of Tawney as President of the WEA at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s shows how he and the organization were concerned with the major issue of reform of state education.\textsuperscript{82}

Looking back from 1928, he concluded that

The distinctive achievement of the Association has not been merely to establish classes and to multiply students. It has been to reveal a new conception of the place of education in the life of society and to create an organ through which that conception could find living expression. Against the placid acceptance of a system of educational privilege tempered by competition, which was the principle of English education when the century began, and which still continues to be its practice, it stood for the universal provision of educational facilities to which all whatever their economic position should have an equal right.\textsuperscript{83}

To a great extent, this excerpt from Tawney's maiden article as President sums up the main achievements of the WEA, Tawney and the rest of the leadership from 1903 to 1928. The organization had begun as an attempt to educate workers most of whom had been able to attend school only until the age of twelve or thirteen. Those workers were eager to participate more fully in the burgeoning democracy of the early twentieth century. They began to fulfill the goal

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 24 May 1930.
\textsuperscript{82} See chapter 8.
of the early WEA for informed citizenship, a new project in education. An additional goal was to achieve better education for all working class children. Hence the association began a campaign of advocacy first for a leaving age of fourteen, then fifteen, and later, for full secondary education for all. It struggled to overcome the tradition of educational privilege and certainly by 1928, it had eroded some of that firmly entrenched bastion.84

The WEA prided itself on its principles. Tawney was pleased that, by 1929, they had been generally accepted. There were three to which he referred. First, in a democracy, education must be available to all who desired it whatever their status or occupation. Second, the education provided must be not only technical but also humane, that is concerned with cultivating ‘the powers and appeal to the interest which because they are the attribute of man, are not the monopoly of any class or section.’ Third, the students must have an effective voice in the organization of their education so that it became the ‘living expression of their own experience and idealism, their own outlook on society and their own hope for its improvement.’85

Eventually, these principles came to be accepted by most of society.

As for the future of the WEA, Tawney saw in it certain tasks that needed to be performed. The association was a ‘missionary body which exists to carry on educational propaganda with a view to arousing a demand for educational facilities among adult men and women’. He thought that the WEA created its own future through its missionary efforts, which, having succeeded, must then organize to meet the demand for education. Further, it must be a body for promoting discussion and, if necessary, agitation on matters of educational policy.86

This concern with educational policy could certainly be seen in the WEA Central documents.

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84 See chapter 8 for details.
86 Ibid., 4.
Partly through the regular articles for *Highway*, and by regular leaders in the *Manchester Guardian*, Tawney himself led this missionary effort.

According to Terrill, Tawney was 'more than any president in its history...a working president of the WEA', a very hands-on executive who took part in many committees and was concerned with detailed work. Therefore, 'in the WEA, the 1930s was Tawney's decade'. The series of illuminating articles he wrote for *Highway* during this time attest to his work in the WEA. In these, he touches on a number of important themes: achievements, principles, and future of the organization, preserving democracy, public opinion, and the dynamic of social change.

The preservation of democracy, always a significant theme in Tawney's writing, became increasingly more urgent as the 1930s progressed. In 1934 he worried about the 'cause of the collapse of democracy over a great part of Europe', the result not only of violence and economic decline, but also of the 'moral uncertainty' of those who said they believed in democracy but displayed insufficient 'realism of thought and tenacity of will'. He further argued that 'you cannot have democracy without convictions and that you cannot have convictions sufficiently tough to stand the strain of a crumbling world and with the creative power to rebuild it except by education'. He had been expressing similar sentiments since he had assumed the Presidency. His sense of urgency deepened with the accession of Hitler and the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Democracy would crumble without education and educational advance in Britain was at the mercy of the Treasury which had made numerous cuts during the 1920s and 1930s. Tawney tried to point the government to a more generous concept of funding as may be seen in

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87 Terrill, *Tawney*, 85.
88 Ibid., 84.
89 R.H. Tawney, 'Retrospect and Renewal', *The Highway*, vol. 27, (December 1934), 70.
Secondary Education for All and in the Hadow Report, both of which advocated educational expansion. In his analysis, the links between domestic and external policy were clear.

Annual Conference minutes reveal the ongoing administrative work of the WEA during this tense decade. Tawney was proclaimed President year after year. At the 1933 conference in Bristol, the 'conference put on record its hearty appreciation of the enormous amount of work which the President has put in, day after day throughout the year for the Association.' The 1934 conference at Manchester put forward a resolution supporting Tawney's long-time demand to raise the school leaving age by resolving that 'it should be raised immediately to fifteen plus and sixteen plus as soon as practicable.' It noted that the LEAs and general public were becoming ever more supportive. It regretted the Government's decision as announced by Lord Halifax in the House of Lords on July 11th, not to raise the school-leaving age, and in view of the grave injury done to the rising generation by the premature withdrawal of children from school it urges the Government to reconsider its decision and introduce necessary legislation without further delay.

The next year, the conference welcomed the government's pledge to extend the leaving age in the following year but regretted that it was 'accompanied by proposals as to exemptions which are likely to deprive that essential reform of the greater part of its value.'

Although education was so central to the functioning of the modern state in Tawney's view, a great many people had insufficient knowledge of the educational system, its philosophies, its organization or its funding. Therefore, he determined to 'create an alert and informed public opinion'. He wanted the public to know that although the WEA might be non-partisan, yet it was deeply immersed in politics.

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90 To be discussed in chapter 8.
91 Annual conference minutes, 4-5 November 1933, WEA Central, /1/2/3/1.
92 Ibid., 17-18 November 1934.
93 Ibid., 14-15 December 1935. A detailed discussion of the leaving age occurs in Part III in all four chapters. Here, it is interesting to see how this Adult Education organization was concerned with the education of children, often their own.
Politics in the larger sense, however, are not a vice to be repudiated, but a virtue to be practised. They are the art of mobilizing intelligence and goodwill to remove by collective action evils against which we are powerless as individuals, and to win in association victories for civilization which, as isolated units, we cannot hope to achieve. They consist, in short of humble, but indispensable, work as I have already suggested. Thus conceived, politics have always been the constant concern of our Association.94

This excerpt reveals to what degree Tawney’s perception of the WEA was intertwined with democracy and its expression through politics. His desire to alert the public had as much to do with participatory citizenship as it did with information about education. The collective action of the WEA had produced tutorial classes, a campaign for educational equality for all members of society, and a portion of the Labour Party’s intellectual leadership that might yet transform society. More could be done.

The conference that year stressed the same democratic theme as well as a related one reflected in Resolution 21 that more emphasis be placed in WEA classes, on the history and actual problems of the localities in which the classes were conducted. As far as possible, students should be shown the value of social research and given some practical experience in the collection of illustrative material of existing social conditions.95 Clearly, gaining local knowledge was the beginning of an informed citizenship, a characteristic Tawney thought so indispensable to democracy.

Tawney hoped that public opinion would come to ‘regard educational inequalities as the odious barbarity which they are, and will insist on such a reconstruction of the education system as will convert it from an obstacle to effective democracy into its strongest buttress and most faithful ally.’96 This is yet another variation on the theme of democracy. ‘Reconstruction’,

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95 Annual conference minutes, November-December 1936, WEA Central, 1/2/3/1.
employed with such hope and optimism during and just after the First World War still remained part of Tawney’s vocabulary.

Considering his decades of educational advocacy, it is no surprise that Tawney believed education to be ‘a Dynamic of Social Change’. In his perception

almost all educational institutions, from universities to elementary schools, have had their origin, not merely in zeal to pursue or disseminate knowledge, but in the desire of particular social groups to do so in the light of some distinctive conception of society and human life.97

Tawney, long a member of the Labour Party, wanted to change his society to a social democracy. Britain, theoretically a functioning democracy, was without the full equality among classes he believed to be essential to a full democracy. Since this class-based system was reflected in educational institutions, it was difficult to bring about educational equality without legislation. Although Tawney was disappointed by the failure of the education bills of the second Labour minority Government, he still thought workers might best achieve this more equal world with a Labour Party in power.

Mary Stocks, who became the editor of Highway beginning in 1941, interpreted many of the Tawney articles of the thirties as warnings: ‘[l]ook to your standard; look to your class composition; put not your trust in statistics...look to the quality of your students.’ She commented that such exhortations prompted the editor of The Highway, W.E. Williams, to write that ‘Mr. Tawney’s pronouncements have the qualities of St. Paul’s Epistles to his errant flocks.’98 Tawney, however, was not worried about ‘unspecified warnings’ but instead about more tangible problems. He suspected that the proportion of manual workers was falling and that the qualifications of tutors were declining.99

97 Tawney, ‘Retrospect’, Highway, 68.
John Atkins also commented on the contents of the *Highway* articles of the 1930s, especially those of Tawney. Atkins examined the attitudes of the WEA to international affairs. His comment that ‘it is hard to find a presidential address to a national WEA conference – most of which were given by R.H. Tawney - that contains any reference to an international issue’ is hard to understand. A close reading of these addresses reveals that the opposite is true. In many of them, he tackled issues of democracy usually with reference to what was happening in Europe. In the 1933 address, for example, Tawney stated that ‘whatever verdict may be passed on the recent history of Europe,...democracy is impossible without democrats’. Men must trust their own judgment and make their own decisions. If they were without intellectual independence and individual decision making, they would lose their democracy. The 1934 speech also addressed the need to preserve democracy and laments its collapse in ‘a great part of Europe’. In 1937, Tawney asked ‘How exactly we are to interpret the reversion of a considerable part of the Continent to different forms of tyranny?’ In 1938, he pointed out that

[...democracy held the initiative; it has been thrown on the defensive. It was thought to be master of the future; for nearly two decades it has lost ground. Statesmen and theorists accepted it as an axiom; today the profession of an attachment to it is in some countries an offence punishable with imprisonment or death.]

In each of these examples, Tawney was referring to the major problem *at the root* of all the European crises of the 1930s, that is, the weakening and loss of democracy and the advance of totalitarianism.

Clearly, through the *Highway* articles, he was revealed as a leader conscious of both national and international affairs and their importance to education. His continuing pressure for educational transformation showed how his powers of articulation were put at the service of

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100 Ibid., 125.
102 Tawney, ‘Retrospect’, *Highway*, 70.
ordinary workers and students of the WEA. His insistence on the need for equality and collective action in order to produce the desired transformation never wavered. His tenacity in waging an educational campaign over so long a period against governments so reluctant to provide funding for educational equality, revealed an enormous strength of will. Tawney was, as Terrill suggests, a ‘hands on’ president, not merely a high profile figurehead putting in appearances on important public occasions.

As Tawney provided his purposeful leadership, what was happening in the WEA as a whole during this decade? It continued to grow despite reductions in government grants. In 1928 when Tawney became President, there were 459 branches in sixteen districts with more than 11,000 students enrolled in tutorial classes and 19,000 students in one-year and shorter courses. The numbers in these non-tutorial courses was 40,000 by 1939. The total number in 3,511 WEA classes in 1938-39 was 61,719. Perhaps the ability of the WEA to survive and grow in the ‘extreme Tory atmosphere’ of the 1930s might be regarded as ‘heroic’.

Goldman’s analysis of the WEA in the 1930s indicates fewer worker students, perhaps because of unemployment and its often consequent psychological depression. The response of the WEA, Oxford, and other universities to the depression of this decade was to organize short courses or conferences to explain the economic collapse. Tutors like Cole, Durbin, Gaitskell, and Wooton offered their services freely. Students paid nothing for their classes. By the mid-1930s, because of international events, the trend in student interest began to change from economics and history to current and international affairs. A.L Rowse gave lectures in Maidstone on ‘Fascism’ in 1933-34. Evan Durbin and Richard Crossman led conferences on ‘The New Deal in America’ and ‘The Inner Conflict in Germany since the Nazi Revolution’. To Goldman, this signalled a

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105 There is a fuller discussion of this in Part III on State Education.
106 Details of this appear in all the chapters of Part III.
watershed in the WEA approach. ‘Understanding the flow of events, an essentially reactive process began to take the place of the analysis of the interconnection between the individual, the community, the nation and the state’. It marked a trend which would not completely reverse itself even after the Second World War. This shift of student interest along with the shorter courses and conferences was to be a permanent feature.

As Tawney was urging his Association to continue teaching and learning about democracy and to act democratically, it became increasingly difficult to do so. The WEA fear that unemployment and depression might prevent some workers from taking classes and hearing the message led to the admission of unemployed workers into courses for no fees. During this time, Tawney himself worried that the WEA was losing its working class foundation. He feared that it might become yet another provider of general adult education. It was also becoming more difficult for tutors to continue in the democratic spirit because conservative-thinking persons, both inside and outside of government, complained about and sometimes interfered with the teaching-learning process.

When Britain declared war in September 1939, it entered into a struggle unlike any in previous national experience, one not simply of armies, but of entire nations, where bombing could inflict damage on large portions of the civilian population and infrastructure. It was to be a

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10 Goldman, Dons and Workers, 227-231.
13 For example, in 1933 the class of H.L. Beales, later a prominent economic historian, was visited by a representative of the Conservative party who was shocked because the tutor was defending Russia from attacks in certain newspapers. The representative who considered Beales a socialist and a communist ‘not afraid of airing his views’ reported the tutor and class to the Conservative Party’s South-Eastern Area Agents’ Association. Later, the matter was raised in the House of Commons. Fieldhouse offers a number of other examples of this sort. He believed that the HMI (His Majesty’s Inspectors) who reported ‘suspicious’ working class teaching were affected by the turn to the left in the WEA in the middle 1920s. Fieldhouse, ‘Bouts of Suspicion: Political controversies in Adult Education 1925-1944’, Enlightenment, 159-162.
‘total war’, or as Angus Calder labelled it, *The People’s War*. It brought changes to education in general and to adult education in particular. The WEA was a central participant with other voluntary bodies and educational organizations in waging war on the educational home front. Tawney continued his active presidency until almost the end of the war when he returned to being a Vice-President. The war quickly turned into a struggle for democracy and freedom as well as fellowship, and equality, all values advocated by the WEA. This national commonality of purpose made it easier for the WEA to contribute to the war effort. Until 1939, the Association had been focussed on peace and avoidance of another brutal struggle, very much in keeping with the appeasement thinking of the age. By 1939, however, it began to prepare for war by setting up an emergency committee that could act should war suddenly occur.

The WEA responded with vigour and innovation to the challenges of war. It persisted with the new types of short courses, but these were not at first funded by grant, with government assistance covering only the sort of classes closely defined by legislation. The government finally agreed to fund these new courses calling them ‘informal activities’.116

Yet another result of the war for the WEA was the partial feminization of its administration. Ivy Cooper-March, for instance, became acting district secretary of the South Eastern District in June 1941 replacing a male who had moved away. Mary Stocks replaced W.E. Williams117 as editor of *The Highway* in 1941. Therefore, whereas in the First World War, the number of women in the WEA increased, in the Second World War, the power of women in the Association increased.

115 These included the extra mural departments of the universities as well as the YMCA.
What was actually taught in the tutorials and other classes? Explaining the immediate circumstances of the conflict was the central theme of adult education throughout the war. In 1940, Tawney himself gave a description of possible course content:

A demand for lectures, study circles and conferences on the causes of the breakdown; the countries most directly concerned in it; the nature of the settlement by which it should be followed; the possibility and methods of averting a similar catastrophe in future, will inevitably develop.

At the same time, he acknowledged that changing courses and content was by no means necessary. ‘What matters is the knowledge and inspiration which a man gets from study, not the particular means by which he gets it.” He never lost sight of the conditions in which educational work should occur. It was to be based on freedom of thought and expression for both teacher and students. The students were still to be able to choose their subject of study and both the tutor and class were to ensure that they did not use classes for purposes of propaganda. The democratic spirit was not to be lost, especially during a war for the survival of democracy. This course content contributed to the greater interest in ‘broad social issues’ among the people of Britain. Certainly, by 1942 when the Beveridge Plan was published, people embraced its suggestions for social security whole-heartedly.

Tawney had a busy war, one part of which was a stint in Washington as a labour advisor to the British Embassy. He remained there from October 1941 to September 1942. Before he left home, however, he wrote to the editor of Highway with a message for the WEA. Concerned with the future both of adult working class education and public education, he warned that the Association must be prepared with plans which would preserve the essential principle of ‘educational aspirations of ordinary men and women’. As to public education, he was distrustful of the proposals for reform that had so far come from the government. It was important to create

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119 Ibid.
120 Goldman, Dons and Workers, 234.
121 A fuller discussion of Tawney’s trip to America occurs in chapter 6.
"an educational system which shall be free throughout from the odious taint of class privilege which poisons English education and English social life."

Back in England by late 1942, Tawney continued his considerable efforts to influence plans for reform of public education. The Times Educational Supplement noted the nature of Tawney's WEA leadership in the educational reform campaign. The editor observed that, in responding to the disintegration of the school system in 1940 and beyond,

"[t]he WEA with Dr. Tawney in the van was indefatigable in urging upon the Government the necessity for strong action and leadership; and later from the moment when education reconstruction became an issue of practical politics, it has been equally indefatigable in preparing, presenting, and campaigning on behalf of the cause of educational advance."

These were among the efforts which culminated in the passing of Education Act of 1944, legislation that changed the whole system of education and included provision for Adult Education. In his final address to the WEA in November 1944, he lauded the achievement of the Association during the war. Referring to the Annual Report, he offered a partial summary of its contents:

- Its salient features - a continuous growth in the number of our students, which has raised it - an astonishing fact - in the fifth winter of the war to nearly one-third above that of the last pre-war year; an increase in membership, individual and affiliated, which has brought both the highest figure yet reached; the new contacts established with groups previously little influenced by our work; the expansion in the activities of the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee; the long struggle for the reform of Public Education...[is] at least, some steps nearer the goal...the progress of the Association, if in some respects gravely hampered by the special circumstances of the moment, has in others been aided by them.

His pride in WEA growth and in the Association's ability to work with other organizations was clear. His concerns about the true nature of the Education Act of 1944 were

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123 See chapter 10.
124 Editorial, 'The WEA', Times Educational Supplement, 9 October 1943, 487.
hinted at. The WEA tutorial classes remained a matter of 'grave' concern. They had not
maintained the growth of the interwar period. Ground must be recovered. He advised the WEA
to adapt to new conditions created by the Act especially since the LEAs had been given a much
greater role in adult education, while the Board of Education had become a Ministry, hence a
stronger government entity. The Association must demonstrate much flexibility in the post-war
world. Believing that the WEA had made a strong contribution to raising the national
consciousness about the importance of education, Tawney was optimistic about the future.
Predicting a Labour victory in a post-war election, he saw before him the 'ranks of future Cabinet
Ministers' [who] 'have not yet assumed office'. Still, there remained a very serious problem, 'the
gross and obvious insufficiency of our teaching power to cope with the work which requires to be
done'. Tutors were urgently needed! He urged the new Ministry to take steps to solve this issue,
without whose resolution the WEA could not advance.

When he gave this last presidential address, it was fairly certain that the war would end
soon. The tone of his speech reflected this certainty. He encouraged the WEA to act with '[w]hat
the world needs – what democratic movements need above all others...energy, force, and good
sense combined.' He knew that '[i]ts greatest opportunities are still before it' and that the
Association would rise to the challenge of society's expectations in a world of peace.126

An overview of the whole period 1918 to 1945 shows that both Tawney and the WEA
played a crucial educational role throughout. His work on the Ministry of Reconstruction Adult
Education Committee and on *The 1919 Report* gave him a position of influence in shaping adult
educational policy. His editorship of the 1918 *WEA Education Year Book* provided him with a
broad picture of both his own organization and of adult education in general. The achievements
and philosophy of the WEA reflected in the numerous *Year Book* articles by both the great and
the obscure, gave him hope for the future of education. The ideological struggle with the

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126 Ibid., 'Presidential Address', *Highway*, 7.
Marxist-oriented independent workers movement which took on new life after the First World War probably benefitted the WEA in the long run. A similar struggle with the Tory-dominated governments of this period also put the WEA on its mettle. Tawney was forced to defend its position from both sides, a task he fulfilled admirably. Although these two struggles seemed to position the Association in the political centre, in 1925 it attempted a leftward move in its effort to retain TUC support. The Second World involved Tawney and the WEA in 'The People’s War' by branching into classes whose students and subject matter did not fit the old tradition of working class tutorials. Throughout this era, Tawney demonstrated a remarkable tenacity in demanding democracy in general and educational democracy in particular.

Tawney was the most important President of the WEA. His forty years on the executive, sixteen as President, was a remarkable achievement. His ability to maintain the tutorial system, copied by the extra-mural departments of universities, ensured that generations of workers were educated for citizenship and for leadership. His advocacy for a ‘liberal’ education for these workers gave them a philosophical base with which they could attempt to bring about a more democratic society. Part of his strategy lay in acquiring posts inside government committees whose reports he greatly influenced. Never did he lose sight of democracy and the efforts it took to maintain. A model of such effort, he undoubtedly made a significant contribution to adult education of workers.

127 These were rather like Continuing Education Departments of modern universities.
PART II

THE INTEGRATED LIFE
Chapter 4

Christian Socialism

It is difficult to assess the impact of R.H. Tawney on education or, indeed, on anything else without considering his Christianity. Born and raised in an upper middle class Anglican family and educated accordingly, he attended Rugby when the Christian influence of Thomas Arnold was still prevalent. His subsequent years at Balliol College exposed him to the direct influence of Edward Caird, the pupil of T.H. Green, both of whom were Christians and social reformers. Tawney’s first experience of the larger world was at Toynbee Hall in the east end of London, an institution which dedicated itself to alleviating conditions for the poor in the name of Christianity.

It was there that he became interested in the Workers’ Educational Association, which, as seen above, was founded by the devout Anglican, Albert Mansbridge, and whose first president was William Temple, later the Archbishop of Canterbury. Temple and Tawney had been friends since their days at Rugby and remained so until the death of Temple in 1944. Some of Tawney’s dedication to the Church of England undoubtedly stemmed from this close friendship with Temple whose major biographer made many references to Tawney as part of the Archbishop’s life.1 Certainly, one can trace the activism of Tawney in church affairs throughout this period in writers who concern themselves with church history and social problems. Most importantly, however, it is possible to follow Tawney’s Christian Socialism in his own writings, in both Church of England committee reports in which his was usually the strongest voice, and in articles that he wrote on Christian connections to social problems. Most historians who write about any aspect of Tawney deal briefly with his Christian activism. Two of them are Ross

Terrill and Anthony Wright. Several historians whose subject is Christian Socialism devote chapters to the place of Tawney in this movement. Some like Norman Dennis and A.H. Halsey, in their history of English Ethical Socialism, Thomas More to R.H. Tawney, allocate seven of the book's thirteen chapters to Tawney, subsuming Christian Socialism under the larger heading of the title. Two Church historians, R.H. Preston and Alan Wilkinson, deal with Tawney's Christian Socialism in some depth questioning his reform accomplishments.

Of great importance in evaluating Tawney's place in English social history is the link between his Christianity and his socialism. He was, first of all, a Christian. His socialism was a direct result of his Christianity. He evolved into a socialist because, in his view, the practice of socialist philosophy was the best way to be a good Christian. He believed that one should lead a holistic life with religion integrated into all other aspects: 'man is an amphibious animal. He belongs to two world and leads in them not successively but simultaneously, a life which is one.' A central argument in his Religion and the Rise of Capitalism was that in England the Reformation produced a severance of religion from economic life, with a consequent emphasis on individualism and a loss of the collective attitudes of the medieval society. In the same way that he believed in an integrated individual life, he also believed in an integrated society, one in which all persons no matter what their background would have equal chances for successful lives. Such a belief was based on the concept that all are children of God, all 'equally small' in God's

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universe. His work in the WEA was a prime example of Tawney applying the Christian concept of all men being equal before God. Giving people opportunities to fulfill their potential was one of the most Christian acts.

Modern Christian Socialism had its roots in the nineteenth century as a set of attitudes which took "exception to the conventional separation of religion and politics". Much of Tawney's writing, including *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, attempted to explain the origins of this separation as part of the Reformation process of seventeenth century England. Christian Socialism flourished in a variety of forms with the growth of socialism and the expansion of working class rights and power. Wilkinson believed that its adherents were "Christians, who having thought about the political implication of their faith, have concluded that the good of individuals cannot be realized in isolation...but only through promoting the common good of all."

There were two waves of Christian Socialism in Britain in the nineteenth century, one arising in the aftermath of the Revolutions of 1848 under the leadership of Frederick Denison Maurice who was especially opposed to laissez-faire ideology with its philosophy of "possessive individualism". Although the legacy of this first wave seemed to wane by the early 1870s, it re-emerged later in the decade, as a part of a general socialist revival and as a response to the great depression of that decade. A variety of revival groups were established, three of which were the Guild of St. Matthew (1877), the Christian Social Union (1889), and the Church Socialist League (1906), all part of a strand Jones called sacramental socialism. Tawney belonged to both the Christian Social Union and the Church Socialist League, the former being co-founded by his

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12 Ibid., 31-3.
13 Ibid., 88. Sacramental socialism was characterized by the belief that the modern church exhibits a socialist faith as seen in its worship, symbol and ritual, 86.
friend and mentor Charles Gore, later Bishop of Oxford. According to Preston, the CSU was not socialist, but did believe in social reform.\textsuperscript{14} The Church Socialist League, founded just after the formation of the Labour Party, advocated economic socialism. Not surprisingly, several of these pioneer League members were also early members of the Labour Party. The First World War split the League as it did the Labour Party, some members like George Lansbury taking a pacifist stance and some like R.H. Tawney supporting the war. These splits simply echoed the plight of socialists throughout Europe with many of their groups fragmenting for the same reasons over the war.

As noted in the First World War chapter, Tawney began to play an active role in government committees, the Labour Party and the Church of England when he returned to civilian life after being invalided out of the British Army in 1916. ‘He was the Anglican layman who most influenced academic opinion within the Church in the years between the wars’,\textsuperscript{15} according to E.R. Norman. Tawney’s work for the Anglican Church came at a time when it felt the need for reform. Discontent over state control of the church led to the establishment of the ‘Life and Liberty Movement’ under William Temple, who determined that the Church needed autonomy and possibly disestablishment. So strongly did Temple feel about this that, in late 1917, he gave up his lucrative living at St. James to take a precarious one with the ‘Life and Liberty Movement’.\textsuperscript{16} Tawney joined the movement, supporting it with published articles such as one responding to questioning and critical comment of the proposed Enabling legislation to give greater freedom to the Church. He stressed that it was a measure to empower the Church of England to legislate upon matters concerning itself subject to a report on all proposed legislation being made by a Committee of the Privy Council and the veto of Parliament upon any measure which it disapproves....If the Enabling Bill is passed, measures carried by the

\textsuperscript{15} Norman, \textit{Church and State}, 317.
\textsuperscript{16} Iremonger, \textit{William Temple}, 239.
Church Council and approved the by Ecclesiastical Committee of the Privy Council will become law, unless Parliament directs to the contrary.  

Tawney regarded this Bill as a step towards the democratization of the Church since the Church Council would include laymen whose voices were formerly not influential. Tawney and the WEA were concurrently stressing democracy within that organization.

Even before Tawney was involved with the ‘Life and Liberty Movement’, he began working on the Report of the Archbishops Fifth Committee of Inquiry, one of five such reports that were an outcome of the ‘National Mission of Repentance and Hope’ of the Church of England. According to Bishop Talbot’s introduction to this Report, ‘[t]he matter for repentance has been in part an undue subservience of the Church to the possessing, employing, and governing classes of the past.’ One can sense a note of democracy in this declaration, too. The Committee, appointed in December 1916, included Tawney and a number of notable figures.

In Chapter I, the committee declared that it was its ‘desire that a call as of a trumpet should go forth to the Church to reconsider the moral and social meaning and bearings of its faith.’ It hoped to keep an open mind and a continuing awareness of the reality of sacrifice, an indication of the stark realities of the war. Concurrently, Tawney was writing some of his stirring articles about his own war experiences. He remarked in ‘A National College of All Souls that ‘[w]e ought to perpetuate in peace the idealism of war, because that alone can deliver us from the

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19 Under the Chairmanship of Bishop Talbot, its membership included A.L Smith, Master of Balliol, Rev. G.K.A. Bell, Mr. W.L. Hichens, a noted businessman, Mr. George Lansbury, Mr. Albert Mansbridge, as well as several others. This partial list included the names of people who worked with Tawney on other notable reform endeavours.
20 Christianity and Industrial Problems, 1.
selfish appetites that lie in wait for us in both.\textsuperscript{21} There was a similar tone throughout this Report, but especially in Chapter V on ‘Education’.

The committee requested unity in moral and social questions, wanting ‘all Christians to begin at once to act together as if they were one body, in one visible fellowship.’ This concept of ‘fellowship’ is one that Tawney would pursue in much of his future writing. To achieve such unity, people must feel themselves to be bound in their social relations and individual conduct by ‘Christian Ethics’.\textsuperscript{22} But a new spirit was needed in economic life as the existing industrial system was ‘gravely defective’.\textsuperscript{23} In its principle of ‘the living wage’, the Committee was reaching back to the ideas of many Christian Socialists of the past. Not surprisingly, some of the members of the committee, like Tawney, were members of organized Christian Socialist groups. Of special concern was the protection of children and young people from the exigencies of the industrial system. Some children who received partial exemption from attendance at school were working in mills at the age of twelve and others at the age of fourteen were working the full legal working week of fifty-five to sixty hours. The committee warned against impairing the health of such young persons.\textsuperscript{24} The desire of much of the population for an improved life was not only the wish for material progress but also for ‘the gradual displacement, through some form of representative and responsible government, of the industrial autocracy’.\textsuperscript{25}

The ‘Education’ chapter was clearly the precursor to much of what Tawney argued in \textit{Secondary Education for All} and the \textit{Hadow Report}.\textsuperscript{26} The authors said that the object of education was ‘to assist human beings to become themselves’. It was ‘in short, the organized aid

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Christianity and Industrial Problems}, 9.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, 51-2.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, 84-5.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, 89.
\textsuperscript{26} See chapter 8.
to the development of human beings in a society'. Spiritual insight and the devotion to apply it depended on the sharpening of the intelligence made possible through education. The Church had made a great contribution to education in the nineteenth century. However, others like Condorcet and Huxley had made great contributions to education without the religious impulse. This acknowledgement of secular contributions reflected the sort of attitude that would later enable the Church to work with the state education authorities towards the success of the Education Act of 1944. The Christian was, in fact, bound to assist the cause of educational advance because ‘after the Church, education is the most formal and public recognition of the claims of the spirit which the world has allowed.’ The Church itself, now that the state had taken over so much of education, must in addition to making itself responsible for religious instruction, ensure that the type of education offered ‘shall be as generous... as the resources of the state can make it.

The emphasis of this Report on education as a spiritual activity with a central place for liberal education rather than narrow technical training seemed so much like the Tawney of future articles and books that it is clear he must have written this chapter. The section on the ‘Educational Ladder and the Educational Highway’ certainly echoed ideas of the WEA such as the suggestion that ‘all children should have the degree of education needed for full personal development and for good citizenship’, the foundation of the metaphor for the educational highway. The Board of Education at this time was adhering to the concept of ‘special opportunities’ for the ‘specially gifted’, the metaphor here being the educational ladder, a less

27 Christianity and Industrial Problems, 110.
28 Thomas Huxley 1825-1895 was a scientist, a defender of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, a popularizer of science, the creator of the term ‘agnostic’, a member of ten Royal Commissions, and a member of the London School Board. The Marquis of Condorcet (Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat) was a French philosopher, mathematician, and politician, as well as advocate of educational reform. He wrote A Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind.
29 Christianity and Industrial Problems, 111.
30 Ibid., 113
democratic principle. This struggle between meritocracy and democracy in education continued through much of the twentieth century.

The Report promoted a leaving age of fourteen, a principle to be fully supported by the Fisher Education Act of 1918, and raised the possibility, in the near future, of extending it to fifteen and then sixteen. Unlike the labour movement, the Church was not the initiator of such reforms but certainly an early advocate for them. In this educational chapter, Tawney touched on almost all the main elements of educational advance of the interwar period, early evidence of what he was to become over the next twenty-five years: the leading voice of the educational reform movement. His participation in the writing of this Report reflected the way in which his religious and educational commitments were linked.

His church activities of the late war years revealed that Tawney was a dedicated Christian with a strong social conscience. However, two Church historians, R.H. Preston and Alan Wilkinson, insisted that Tawney failed to realize that the Church was part of the problem in society and not part of the cure for social ills. It seems doubtful, however, that Tawney could be so naive about the history and ministry of the Church. There are strong reasons for Tawney’s attitudes that these scholars did not take into account. Both Preston and Wilkinson refer to Tawney’s disillusionment with the church in the late 1930s, coinciding with the Oxford Conference where he wondered if the churches could truly acknowledge that they prevaricated ‘on the un-Christian nature of capitalism’. This assessment goes too far, overlooking a spirit of hope that emerged after the First World War that much could be achieved to improve life for all citizens. The Report of the Archbishops Fifth Committee of Inquiry, the Enabling Act, and the Education Act of 1918 were all proof of such hope of change. Even the government was

31 Ibid., 124-25
34 Preston, ‘Tawney as Moralist’, Theology, 159.
promising ‘homes for heroes’. *The Report*, reflecting the opinions of both clerical and lay leaders, suggested church attitudes could change to assist people at all levels of society. An institution which admits its own faults and attempts in a variety of ways to remedy them is surely moving away from being part of the problem. Tawney as a leading lay intellectual was assisting with this change. In an article written in 1921, he remarked that

> There are several ways in which a church acts upon the social life of a community. It is a teaching body. It occupies a status of public influence and weight, and by conferences and manifestoes can help to mould public opinion. In both capacities it can contribute a stream of thought and inspiration, the effect of which may be slow but can hardly help, in the long run, to be considerable. It would be more considerable if the Churches were better equipped for their task.  

Tawney showed *how* the Church could affect change but realized that it would take time. It needed a """"thinking department", a staff of officers whose duty it was to collect and systematize information and to supply the leaders of the Church with the knowledge needed if they are to speak with effect."" He further recommended that the church train its clerics ‘to regard economic and social conduct part of its regular teaching.’ This is yet another instance of Tawney intertwining education and religion. The remedy for the religious problem is education.

In the Preston-Wilkinson argument, there is no real evidence to support their claim that Tawney failed to realize that the church was part of the problem instead of part of the cure of social ills. Tawney’s great thesis, after all, was that the Church had been deprived of its social and economic roles from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. He tried to be part of the recovery of those roles in the interwar period. The reports and conferences, increasingly ecumenical, certainly offered hope of action. The education portion of the *Report of the Fifth*

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37 R.H. Tawney, ‘Speeches on Various Occasions’, undated, ( sometime in the interwar period, but probably the mid-1920's), Tawney I, BLPES, 20/7.
Committee was one of the documents influencing the reform of education over the next twenty or so years. Educational reform was finally realized in the Education Act of 1944.38

In the interwar period, Tawney participated in three major church conferences devoted to social reform and ecumenism. These were held in Birmingham in 1924, in Jerusalem in 1928 and in Oxford in 1937. The first one, the COPEC (Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship), a product of the fertile mind of William Temple, was four years in the preparation. Emphasizing Christian unity, it affected much of Temple’s future work, and also held much broader implications for the future as it influenced ‘the whole Ecumenical Movement in the Churches, and gave to international Christian thinking and planning a sense of direction which was to prove of first-rate importance in the subsequent history of that Movement.’39

Writing just after the conference, Tawney considered its importance to lie ‘in the body of conviction behind it’.40 It revealed that opinion in the sphere of religion was beginning to change. Even ten years before, it was believed that government and the economy were entirely different fields from that of religion. They were separate paths that could never cross or meet. Yet, the institutional framework of society ‘expresses men’s moral values and determines their opportunities for spiritual growth.’41 Clearly, such separation was not conducive to the integrated life. The church was recovering its ancient role by asserting that all of life was its sphere, that social issues were not only economic but also ethical. In an interwar speech, he described the Christian Social movement as having done two things in the last fifteen years; ‘It has demolished the idea that the economic world is a closed compartment: with laws of its own with which

38 See Chapter 10.
39 Iremonger, William Temple, 335.
41 Ibid.
religion has nothing to do. And it has recovered the fundamental conception of earlier thought
that Christian teaching is the master of conduct."  

In the fall of 1924 Tawney, writing yet another article on the 'Industry and Property'
section of the COPEC conference, described the Church as having gained new ground in its
'perpetual struggle to hold the citadel of the spirit or to enlarge its territory'. The conference
Commission's Report began with the statement '[w]e approach the consideration of industry and
property with the definite spiritual conviction that the sovereignty of God is supreme over all
human life'. Therefore, economics must satisfy religious criteria. Critics often failed to
discriminate between two broad aspects of the issue; that of 'maximizing productive efficiency',
an economic matter, and that of 'securing that economic organization' may be 'approved by the
consciences of men', a moral or political matter. Should increased productivity occur at the risk
of moral injury to the members of an industry? Such a choice faced English society (in 1924)
'between education and employment for young persons'. It was one with which society wrestled
throughout the entire period from the Forster Education Act of 1870 to the Education Act of
1944, many employers arguing that they could not afford to lose young people (at twelve, at
thirteen, and then at fourteen), yet an increasing number of workers advocating full-time
attendance in school for young people of these ages. This was an issue in which economics and
morals collided.

One of the problems of this collision during the twenties was that 'the justification of a
method is the results which it yields' but it was not always possible to quantify certain data
having to do with issues arising from 'moral or psychological reactions of men to the economic

42 R.H. Tawney, 'Speeches on Various Occasions', undated, (sometime in the interwar period), Tawney I,
BLPES, 20/7,
43 R.H. Tawney, 'Industry and Property II', The Pilgrim, (October 1924), 72.
44 Ibid., 73.
environment'. More research was done on economics, which was quantifiable, than on psychology which was far less so. Nevertheless, 'a reasonable estimate of economic organization must take account of the fact that, if that organization is to be adequate to human needs, it must satisfy other than economic criteria'.

Tawney believed the Church had a very important role to play in this moral realm. He argued:

There is...a large and important field of social thought which the Christian churches can explore without laying themselves open to the criticism that they are meddling with matters for which they have no special competence. It consists in the examination of social institutions and economic organization in the light of the knowledge which they possess, or the opinions which they hold, as to the requirements of man as a spiritual being, and in the formulation of the changes needed in order that those requirements may be more adequately satisfied.

In Tawney’s view, the churches were expert in the assessment of character and of conduct, and since social institutions reflected these very things, obviously the churches could speak authoritatively. They had special insight into the ‘moral nature of beings who are the children of God and the heirs of eternity.’ Therefore, church opinion ought to be taken into account when large economic decisions were being taken. Tawney was confident that the churches could improve all aspects of life including economic matters because ‘[t]hey inherit,...a social philosophy which remains an arsenal of ideas and inspiration.’

At the same time, he believed that laymen ought to assist in this process. For instance, in 1919, when Albert Mansbridge was looking for something important to do with his life, Tawney urged him to consider 'the need of relating industry and economic life to religion, and the

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45 Ibid., 79.  
46 Ibid., 80.  
47 Ibid., 81.  
48 Ibid., 82.  
49 Ibid., 84.
possibility of finding in the principles of Christianity the foundations of a better society'.

Here is Tawney advising someone else to help bring about the integrated life in society.

An important facet of Temple’s work in the interwar period was the ecumenical movement in which he was one of the key players and Tawney an able assistant. Temple had attended the very first conference of this movement sponsored by the International Missionary Council in Edinburgh in 1910 as a steward for the Student Christian Movement. An important result of this conference was the Continuation Committee intended to develop the work and carry out the resolutions of the Conference. This led to the next conference held eighteen years later in Jerusalem where the major topics were to be ‘Race, Industry, Religious Education and the Christian Message’. By then, Temple was Bishop of Manchester and Tawney was about to become President of the WEA. They were among the delegates at this ecumenical conference, Temple being attached to the section on the Christian message and Tawney to the section on industry. They kept records of their experiences there, Temple recording that one of the main subjects of the conference was the ‘Christian Message in relation to other religions’. Tawney gave a paper on ‘industry’ on 26 March. In looking back on the events of the day, Temple noted ‘the most impressive people (I think) have been Oliver Quick this morning, and Harry Tawney this afternoon.’ Temple also recorded an anecdote in which he, Tawney and Dr. Wey, one of the Chinese delegates, conversed about diversity versus unity. Dr. Wey felt it much more important to have national unity on religion even if there were no international connections, but Temple and Tawney supported the opposite point of view. Tawney lamented ‘all you Orientals

50 Tawney to Mansbridge, 1919, (date supplied by someone other than Tawney), The Mansbridge Papers, British Library, 65257A (877D).
52 *Ibid.*, 398
seem determined to go the European way to Hell’. Tawney’s view stemmed from a purpose of the conference, that of creating unity among Christian groups as a road to ecumenism.

Tawney’s records of the conference are of two kinds: the personal letters he wrote to his wife who was unable to attend the conference due to illness, and an article he wrote for the *Manchester Guardian* about the conference. His general impression of the speakers at the conference was that they were a complacent lot. They took too much for granted. However, a ‘South African, and Indian and a Chinaman have spoken sensibly. Of course, it’s overrun with Americans.’ He expressed anxiety about speaking to so unfamiliar an audience on the coming Thursday. Three days later, he gave a brief description of conference procedure:

This conference makes its way along. The procedure is 9:30 to 12:30, addresses on various problems interspersed with hymns and an unnecessarily large number of prayers. 4:15 to 6:15, small group meetings, 8-9:30 pm, arguments on various subjects. The interesting people are mature Europeans, enough of them are quite agreeable...the Indians and Chinese are in a violent nationalist excitement.

Evidently, an Indian national, once a member of the ‘Indian National Assembly’, delivered an hour-long denunciation of British policy. Tawney commented that it was ‘evident that the Indian situation is far worse than is generally realized in England.’ Later, he described the end of the conference with everyone busily preparing committee reports for a plenary session of the Council. He wryly admitted that even though he ‘refused to be secretary of the industrial group, the drafting of the Report fell mainly upon me’ and he expected it to be ‘torn to pieces by the full Council’. The material in these letters showed a very personal point of view about attending a conference, quite different from the usual formal record or article.

54 Ibid., 396.
55 Tawney to Jeanette, 26 March 1928, Tawney/Vyvyan 12, BLPES
56 Ibid., 29 March 1928.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 3 April 1928.
Tawney provided further details of the conference in his March 31 article for the *Manchester Guardian*. Two hundred and forty delegates from fifty-one countries together with some expert advisors were in attendance. Harold Grimshaw from the International Labour Office, Canon Raven from the COPEC Movement, Professor Eberhard of Berlin and Professor Hocking of Harvard were among them. About half of the delegates were from the 'younger' Christian churches in India, China, Africa and elsewhere. 'Individually their spokesmen include the ablest men in the gathering.'

They had little patience with the denominational differences among the Europeans and were critical of their economic policies. They argued with the Western attitude to non-European Christianity. National aspirations and problems stemming from contact with European and American civilizations dominated the speeches of this group from the 'younger' Christian churches. Tawney commented that whereas in the West Christianity was viewed as 'soporific', in the East it was viewed as an 'explosive' force. Clearly, in the developing countries, there was less separation of religion from politics and society than in Britain.

The Jerusalem conference recommendations published in *The World Mission of Christianity* hoped to overcome 'considerable controversy...within the missionary movement over the approach to other religious traditions.' Although there was the concern that ecumenism might occur at the expense of the unique qualities of Christianity, the main issue at the conference was the growth of secularism throughout the world. Therefore, the recommendations affirmed the importance of the Christian gospel but also ‘values’ in other religions. All were urged to unite to fight the growth of secular culture.

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60 Ibid.
There is no personal view of the Oxford Conference of 1937, probably because it took place in England where Tawney could regularly be in touch with Jeanette. From 12 July to 26 July, 425 delegates, including some of the great figures in twentieth century Christian scholarship, gathered in the spirit of ecumenism, for discussions on how ‘to clarify and crystallize Christian thought and strategy in regard to the burning issues of human society’. In the section on the ‘Economic Order’, the Conference Report is firm about a central belief: ‘all men are children of one Father, and compared with that primary and overwhelming fact, the differences between the races, nationalities, and classes of men, though important on their own plane, are external and trivial.’ This idea was, of course, the foundation of Tawney’s moral principles. In the section on ‘Education’, its statements are reminiscent of Tawney’s own. The church ‘cannot commit herself to the interests of any one class. So where a state is dominated...by one or more economic groups, and is attempting in its education to perpetuate an aristocratic or a bourgeois or a proletarian culture, there will be differences between church and state’.

Regarding his own contribution ‘A Note on Christianity and the Social Order’, Tawney commented that it was to be part of a discussion that the Church ‘should adopt on matters of economic and social ethics’, and was influenced by two great men, Bishop Gore and Archbishop Temple. His paper began by posing three questions: was there such a thing as a distinctively Christian way of life? If so, was capitalism compatible with Christianity or antithetical to it? If

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63 Ibid., xiii.
64 Ibid., 45.
65 Ibid., 73.
the latter, should the Church judge capitalist institutions by Christian standards, or should it be content to exhort and instruct individuals and remain indifferent to capitalist institutions? 67

His first question was the most basic one. Christianity had a set of spiritual values that were extremely paradoxical. It 'bears witness against the failures and vices of conventional morality.' It rejected the standards of conventional morality, the 'kingdoms of this world and the glory of them'. As Christianity was a 'dynamic and revolutionary force' many of those who had most deeply represented these characteristics had been rejected by society. 68 To leaders of civilization, Christianity could be seen as a menace. To leaders of a capitalist civilization, this might be especially the case.

Modern capitalism did not 'foster relations between human beings', or 'aid the growth of human character, of a kind which the Christian would desire to see encouraged.' Its emphasis on 'the supreme importance of material riches' with its 'appeal to the acquisitive appetites', its emphasis on property rights, and property in general, and its creation of 'divisions within the human family ...based on income and economic circumstances made it anti-Christian.' In capitalism, these characteristics were considered to be virtues but in Christianity, they were deemed to be vices. Moreover, in Christianity, if authority (capitalist or any other ideology) and conscience collide, a Christian should choose God rather than man. 69

How should Christians act in the current society? Tawney suggested four matters on which they might take a definite stand: providing good conditions of life for the rising generation, refusing to pay homage to the idea of social class, putting the common good above private interests and ambitions, and discriminating between property for 'use' and property for 'exploitation'. 70

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 168.
69 Ibid., 170-1.
70 Ibid., 179-188.
Providing for the rising generation was a goal to which he had devoted much of his time in the preceding twenty years. As an advocate for children and young people, he had railed against childhood disease and malnutrition, the inadequacies of school buildings, the poor staffing of primary schools, the neglect of ‘reorganization’, the failure to deliver ‘secondary education for all’, and the existence of two separate education systems based on wealth or lack of it.71

The second item, that of social class, was anti-Christian. To begin with, man’s relationship to his fellows was based on their common relationship to God. Secondly, man was an animal but also something more, a human. His humanity gave him dignity. An institution that denigrated man’s common humanity by emphasizing such distinctions as birth, wealth, or social position was not compatible with Christianity. According to the Christian view, all men were equal before God. Yet for three centuries, the Church of England, seeming to favour the upper classes, was viewed as a class institution, dedicated to the hierarchical social order. The Church was now reforming, under such notable leaders as Temple. It would take time, however, for the practice of equality within the Church to take hold.

A third factor, that of the ‘common good’, could not be implemented while excessive power was wielded by a small group. The working classes felt this power to a far greater degree than the middle classes. For example, a group of mine owners could prevent changes ‘vital to the welfare of a large number of people’. Here, the heart of the problem was not so much that a few exercised power but rather the sort of power which they exercised. Tawney believed that ‘encouraging dictatorial habits in its possessors, and servility in those submitted to it...is spiritually injurious to both.’72 Clearly the common good should take precedence.

Equality of opportunity, a key to reaching the dignity of man, could ‘express either of two distinct ideals’. The first was the opportunity to ‘rise’, meaning gain social mobility. The

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71 See all the Chapters of Part III.
72 Ibid., 186.
second was the opportunity for individual advancement resulting in solidarity. The first would afford the individual an improved economic and social position whereas the second would enable him to remain within his own sphere while pursuing intellectual interests and enjoying culture. Tawney particularly favoured the second type. It fitted closely with his Christian 'belief in the high moral value of fraternity'.

No one knew what the future held for Christianity. Yet, Tawney, despite noting the sway of the two great ‘apostacies’, the ‘idolatry of riches’ and the ‘idolatry of power’, was optimistic that man would continue to rise to the challenge using the ‘unbeatable spirit of comradeship’ found in popular movements.

In a 1935 review, Tawney suggested that history had dealt a double blow to all creeds: dilution and petrifaction. The processes began as the ideas began to circulate, changing quickly within a generation or two. He observed that ‘[i]t is a wise prophet who knows his own gospel by the time that his disciples have shown their devotion by defending it.’ Both Christianity, an old creed, and socialism, a new creed, have experienced this ‘degeneration’. Yet, no creed should be judged on the basis of the actions of its ‘camp-followers’ nor on the nonsense some of them speak. Tawney found the essays of this book quite free from such ‘inanities’. He took the opportunity to re-iterate from much of his writing of the 1920s that, although in previous ages there had been some anti-capitalist and quasi-communist elements in Christian teaching of earlier epochs, in the modern era, beginning in the seventeenth century, the Church was brought ‘to heel’. It abdicated its role as an arbiter for all of life and settled into a situation in which religion

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73 Ibid., 190-1.
74 Dennis and Halsey, Ethical Socialism, 175.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 159.
occupied a quite separate category from economics and politics. The church leadership was
especially servile to 'property and gentility'. He noted that although the authors dealing with this
material made the relevant critical points, they were not hard enough on the leadership of the
Church. To the reviewer, 'Christianity which resigns the economic world to the devil appears to
me, in short, not Christianity at all.'

After Tawney's death, perhaps the earliest assessment of his Christian Socialism was
R.H. Preston's 1966 article 'R.H. Tawney as a Christian Moralist'. Preston's views, because he
was former pupil of Tawney, and an Anglican clergyman who was familiar with Tawney as a
Church activist, provide a sense of authenticity. Preston admired Tawney the man but took issue
with 'his moral condemnation of capitalism' and his belief that progress was inevitable and
would result eventually in a 'morally better society' which would take a socialist form. This was
a Utopian view. Preston argued that the Labour Party, itself becoming more pragmatic, did not
carry through the complete centralization of all the means of production, but instead restricted
itself to the 'commanding heights', a policy with which Tawney agreed but, according to Preston,
designated a 'serviceable drudge'. Preston felt that the planning concept was too important to
be so viewed. Finally, he was especially critical of Tawney's belief that society could not resign
itself to the 'forces of self interest and greed' since that would de-Christianize it. The idea 'that
socialism is not about immediate issues of public policy but basic moral or Christian issues is to
imply that non-socialists are in important respects immoral or unchristian' was one Preston
considered to be seriously at fault.

79 Ibid., 163.
80 Ibid., 165. Here is evidence that Tawney was not naive about the Church.
81 Preston, 'Christian Moralist', Theology, 263.
82 R.H. Tawney, 'We Mean Freedom', Tawney I, BLPES, 19/1, (originally a lecture delivered in 1944 to
the Fabian Society and published in 1945 in What Labour Could Do) and eventually in The Attack and
Theology, 264.
83 Tawney, 'Social Order', The Oxford Conference and The Attack, 176.
84 Preston, 'Christian Moralist', Theology, 267.
To deal with the Preston criticisms more than forty years after the death of Tawney means less immediacy but perhaps more objectivity. Possibly, Tawney’s failure to appreciate ‘welfare capitalism’ was because he did not see the political-economic situation from a capitalist viewpoint. To begin with, Tawney’s condemnation was made during the Depression and Second World War when capitalism seemed to be failing. He did not foresee the stability that ‘welfare capitalism’ would bring to Britain in the years after the war. He had been working towards a socialist society since joining the Labour Party in 1918. His analysis of capitalism concluded that it was not ethical. Not only had it failed to provide equality of educational opportunity and provision, but it had also made children of a young age work in poor conditions for long hours in dead end jobs. Where was the ‘welfare’ in such treatment of the younger generation?

As for the ‘morally better society’, a Utopian concept to which Tawney supposedly looked forward, Dennis and Halsey argue that Utopianism (in the pejorative sense of false hope of heaven on earth for human beings assumed perfectible) was for Tawney, after fighting in the First World War, ‘as much an emotional as an intellectual impossibility’.\(^\text{85}\) Revolution did not cleanse hearts nor did socialism produce Utopia. Socialism was always in a state of transformation towards the good society, a state that was never achieved and was always ‘becoming’. Every day was a time for every family, factory, and committee to choose the socialist principles by which to live. Clearly, Tawney believed that social conditions could be improved.\(^\text{86}\)

Tawney ‘dismisses the planning process as a serviceable drudge’, noted Preston who inquired if politics should be ‘at the level of the serviceable drudge’, or at ‘a quasi religious level’?\(^\text{87}\) But the suggestion and the question confuse what Tawney said and meant. Tawney was

\(^{85}\) Dennis and Halsey, *Ethical Socialism*, 163.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 240.
\(^{87}\) Preston, ‘Christian Moralist’, *Theology*, 264.
actually replying to the ideas of Professor Hayek\textsuperscript{88} who argued that planning encompassed the 'whole range of economic activities' which would necessitate that they be 'prescribed years in advance'; that such planning would be carried out by an authority with no consultation of consumers, producers, or representative assembly; and that this whole process would result in a totalitarianism reminiscent of Communist Russia and Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{89} Tawney then responded that 'if only the transference of the higher ranges of economic strategy...to a national authority' was the planning model used 'his (Hayek's) mystery of iniquity is attenuated to a mare's-nest, and his bloodthirsty Leviathan becomes a serviceable drudge'.\textsuperscript{90} Here were contrasting images: the Leviathan or autocrat controlling all, against the 'serviceable drudge' or hard-working government carrying out particular tasks. Tawney regarded the state and its processes, including planning, as 'tools' meant continually to improve the lives of citizens.\textsuperscript{91}

The allusion to the 'quasi-religious level' refers to Tawney's belief in the moral or Christian basis of society. This was certainly at the heart of much of his writing including the great work, \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}. As previously mentioned, he argued that religion should not be a part of life separated from all others. All aspects of life ought to be integrated. If that argument is kept in mind, then, yes, Tawney saw Christian morality at the centre of everything including politics.

Preston's final point was that those who were not socialists might feel themselves perceived as immoral or unchristian. This perception suggested that Tawney was exclusive in writing about Christian society. Yet, he doesn't say, for example, that only Christian society could be moral. In fact, he states that '[i]t ought to be possible for civilised people – let alone Christians - to insist that the young' should be treated equally, even generously, and that society

\textsuperscript{88} Friedrich Hayek, a colleague of Tawney, was an Austrian economist who held the Tooke Chair of Economic Sciences and Statistics at the London School of Economics from 1931 to 1950.

\textsuperscript{89} Tawney, 'Freedom', Tawney I, BLPES 19/1, and \textit{The Attack}, 94.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}, 95.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, 97.
should ‘refrain from crippling their development by allowing the vulgar irrelevances of class and income to distort it’.\textsuperscript{92} He simply doesn’t treat other religions as the basis for English society, or even suggest an ecumenical approach, because in the 1930s such an approach seemed irrelevant in Britain. This was a pre-multicultural era. But he seemed to approve of ecumenism as shown by his attendance at ecumenical conferences where he made presentations.

In considering the place of Tawney in the 1970s, Terrill put the great scholar in the last years of his life within the tradition of a Christianity ‘of shrunken vision and narrowing influence’. Yet, Tawney hoped that it might ‘recover its mission by reformulating and implementing the social-political dimension of its creed’.\textsuperscript{93} It was clear that he saw himself as part of such a process. Since it was possible to interpret the Christian Social message as one with strong socialist implications, Tawney managed to convey this in many of the Church Committee Reports which he helped write, much to the distaste of the conservative bishops. Tawney saw the Church as a society ‘capable of affecting political attitudes and choices’. It was ‘a possible force for social justice’.\textsuperscript{94}

Tawney always believed that only if men lived their lives according to Christian principles, could they reach their highest potential and find fulfillment in the fellowship thus created. Fellowship, referring to a group of people with a common interest, is a concept running through the history of Christian Socialism often invoked by both Tawney and Temple. To them, however, it meant more than just a group; it meant the masses, at that time, primarily the working classes.

Tawney assumed that in England those who were not actually practising Christians must at least have a residue of Christian morality since English society had strong Christian roots. It was reasonable to suppose that most English people also had some knowledge of Christianity.

\textsuperscript{92} Tawney, ‘Social Order’, the Oxford Conference, and The Attack, 180.
\textsuperscript{93} Terrill, Tawney, 246.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 246-7.
Hence, he framed his socialist ideas with this in mind. He ‘poured the new wine of socialism into the existing bottles of Christian conscience.’ The principles of socialism ought to strike a note of familiarity with the populace. He reminded them that although the most recent centuries of Church history did not reflect the social philosophy that he urged, the mediaeval Church had possessed this very social philosophy. The Church, whose leadership in the intervening centuries had acquiesced to the emerging ‘acquisitive society’, had lost its way. Christian Socialism which had emerged in the late nineteenth century and was gathering strength in the early twentieth century hoped to return the Church to its earlier heritage.

Terrill pointed out that Tawney’s desire to win people to socialism through Christianity was no longer relevant because Christians were no longer so obedient to Church authority, and the number of Christians had declined. The biographer asked how a minority of Christians could follow Tawney’s injunction to replace ‘forms of organization which hinder the Christian life’. As a minority in a democracy, Christians had no such power. Terrill failed to mention, however, the immediately preceding idea that Christians must ‘affirm openly and ceaselessly that men can fulfill the purpose of God only in so far as they follow what has been called above the distinctively Christian way of life.’ In a democracy, Christians can certainly speak out. Terrill simply did not acknowledge the ability of minority groups to lobby and influence and to find common ground with those of a different but sympathetic persuasion. Tawney, in discussing totalitarian regimes and the restrictions they put on Christians indicated they must ‘learn what they can from neighbours whose religious and political principles are repugnant to them.’ This suggested that in an impossible situation, Christians could quietly learn from others of completely different convictions. Terrill’s response to Tawney’s injunction was, therefore, too simplistic.

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95 Ibid., 247.
96 Ibid., 248.
98 Ibid., 172.
In the late 1980s, Anthony Wright published *R.H. Tawney* as part of a series called *Lives of the Left*. He did so because he was persuaded that after a period of twenty years in which Tawney’s influence was dormant, it had experienced a revival as result of the secession of some members of the Labour Party in order to form the new Social Democratic Party. This new party claimed that its philosophy was derived from Tawney, a position which the original Labour Party strongly disputed. Wright indicated that ‘there might be some timely merit in undertaking a fresh examination of Tawney’s ideas’. The author presented Tawney as ‘having the mind of a Christian’, but one uninterested in theological matters. It was difficult to decide if his views were those of a Christian or secular moralist. In her diary, Beatrice Webb mentioned being puzzled by Tawney’s religious opinions. His *Commonplace Book*, not published until 1972, indicated that he was a strong Christian Socialist who believed men were not much lower than the angels, but who suffered the consequences of original sin. Therefore, his views of men were realistic, forever urging the great effort they must make in order to achieve social advance.

Tawney’s views were always expressed in terms of the moral codes of his own society and its religious institutions. To him, a moral consensus based on these codes was a key ingredient for a ‘socialist society of common ends’. Would such a society be possible, however, in a country increasingly reflecting a democratic pluralism? Were not the codes of conduct of the institutions eroding? Were they as vital as Tawney always believed? By the eighties, secularism had advanced strongly and Tawney’s ‘Church Militant’ had become the ‘Church Moribund’. In the end, Wright concluded that Tawney’s original arguments could be resurrected

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99 Anthony Wright, *R.H. Tawney*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987), viii. Tony Wright, formerly a lecturer in politics at the University of Birmingham, is currently a Labour MP.


in an analysis of the consequences for social life of an acquisitive capitalism."  
What Tawney said in 1918 seemed appropriate again (in the 1980's):

As are the qualities which men covet, so are the defects which they must endure, for the defects are part of the qualities. If men are fascinated, as they may well be, by the brilliant prizes of plutocracy, they must bear the burden of its limitations. Poverty, economic oppression, and industrial strife are no superficial and transitory incidents of the present industrial order. They are an expression of its essential nature as fundamental as its mechanical perfection and imposing material prizes.  

Two other students of R.H. Tawney, Dennis Norman and A.H. Halsey, were in the post-Second World War classes of the great socialist. 'We were members of a group of students of sociology at “the School” who became the first generation of professional sociologists in Britain.' Hence, they had a different perspective from R.H. Preston, the earlier Tawney student who became a lecturer in Christian Ethics. They scrutinized Tawney as an ethical socialist with some regard to his Christian socialism. They acknowledged that 'our political and social outlook was heavily stamped' by Tawney and his teaching. In their book, they asked

[w]hat ends were sought as possible and desirable, what the actor (Tawney) took to be true about the circumstances in which he lived, what means he proposed as effective to move his country from its past and present to or towards the preferred future, and what state of affairs ensued when his efforts had been exhausted.  

It is clear that a 'preferred' Tawney 'means' of moving his society towards a future of equality was reconstruction of the education system. A young generation treated equally and generously would thrive and in doing so would improve all of society.

Dennis and Halsey identified six characteristics of ethical socialism: that it abhorred idleness, was suspicious of intellectuals, had a marked bias towards individual autonomy, had an

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102 Ibid., 152.
104 Dennis and Halsey, Ethical Socialism, 'Preface', vii.
105 Ibid., 4.
anti-historicist slant, was against totalitarianism of Left or Right, and emphasized through dignity
and respect the quality of egalitarianism.\textsuperscript{106} In addition, they identified six common factors;
fraternity, liberty, equality, rejection of historicism,\textsuperscript{107} belief that the past made a significant
contribution to the morality of the present, and a shared belief that moral character could perfect a
person and ennoble a nation.\textsuperscript{108} In their view, Tawney’s life and writing reflected these
characteristics and factors.

Tawney ‘had a vision of society embodying a set of ideals’ which he pursued throughout
his life. The Christian Socialism of Oxford and of Toynbee Hall remained with him always
although it was transmuted by the experiences of the First World War. He spurned materialism
and Marxism, convinced that democratic socialism was the way to attain the fellowship of an
equal society. Dennis and Halsey traced his socialism through four ethical socialist movements;
the WEA, Christian Socialism, ‘New’ Liberalism, and the Labour Party. His WEA aims and
activities were considered previously. His Christian Socialism was examined in this chapter. As
to ‘New’ Liberalism, he was not an official member of the Liberal Party but was influenced by its
espousal of moral judgments based on the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, and by Liberal
theoreticians such as Hobson who (like Marx) denigrated the parasitic upper class and the
proletarian under-class, and who promoted ‘a standard of living that was not contaminated by
waste.’\textsuperscript{109}

Looking at Tawney’s involvement with these four ethical socialist movements revealed
that the main inspiration for all his ideas was established in that pre-First World War era before
he was thirty. He remained actively involved with three of the four until his death and, although

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Historicism is the belief that historical events are determined by laws.
\textsuperscript{108} Dennis and Halsey, \textit{English Ethical Socialism}, 5.
he was not a member of the Liberal Party, he continued to be the heir of its ideas throughout his life.\textsuperscript{110}

Tawney’s social theory stemmed from these ethical socialist movements. At the heart of it was the concept that people needed reasonable material circumstances and a reasonable moral environment to evolve a good code of conduct. Despite a difficult environment, people could still rise above impeding circumstances to make good moral choices.\textsuperscript{111} His adherence to human choice or free will made him highly critical of Marxist determinism. The First World War was of great social significance because it altered people’s values and this alteration enabled choices to be made to improve social institutions and even personal conduct.\textsuperscript{112}

It was obvious that a strong economic foundation was necessary for a strong political culture and since ‘political ideas and values normally did dominate economic organizations’, eventually ‘collective control’ would replace free enterprise, whose economic forces currently dominated the political culture.\textsuperscript{113}

The good socialist life of liberty, equality and fraternity could be best lived if everyone was making a decent living. Hence, Tawney approved of insurance to provide family income if difficulties of employment, health or old age occurred. He abhorred ‘the idolatry of riches and neglect of fraternal duty’ resulting from capitalism. The economic strategy of fair distribution was to be preferred over a surplus of material possessions.\textsuperscript{114}

Tawney had an admiration for England which he inherited from a long line of eminent Englishmen. He believed that there was a great supply ‘of intellectual and moral material out of which a better world not just a better England can be constructed’. Milton, too, had considered England especially blessed by God who conveyed his intention for mankind first to Englishmen.

\textsuperscript{110} See Chapter 6 below.
\textsuperscript{111} Dennis and Halsey, \textit{Ethical Socialism}, 186.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, 188.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, 194.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}, 219-20.
England had a tradition of liberty. The notion of serfs in England emerging from bondage in the middle of the fourteenth century to a favourable life was a view Tawney acquired from Hobhouse. Limiting an Englishman's liberty was looked on as an 'aberration' by writers such as Shelley. Even Marx viewed the English as being thrust into the Age of Iron from a Golden Age.\(^\text{115}\)

England also had a tradition of fraternity. It had devised successful institutions especially designed for co-operation. It had a history of skill in government and administration going back centuries. Moreover, it was a 'repository...of traditions of equality'. It was especially well qualified by its parliamentary experience to solve the problems of the equalization of economic power. The consensus of public opinion on providing health care and public education was emerging even before the Second World War. After the war, Tawney saw the nationalization of industry as further evidence of accelerating equality.\(^\text{116}\)

Dennis and Halsey, concluding with two chapters entitled 'Ground Gained and 'Ground Lost', believed that Tawney's ethical socialism was rooted in the concept of 'fellowship', declaring it to be 'at once a demanding code of personal conduct and of social organization'.

Raphael Samuel showed why Tawney's ethical socialism was so distinctive:

Tawney's Christianity makes his socialism different from a Marxist-derived socialism, and his idealized workman, Henry Dubb, was very different from the Marxian Prometheus – a captive giant - or that latter-day figure of socialist rhetoric, 'the militant'. But his Christianity gave him a sense of the totality of social relations – including their psychic roots – which a Marxist might well envy; and it saved him from triumphalism.\(^\text{117}\)

Tawney was convinced that moral definitions rather than mechanical laws of motion ruled history. His critique of capitalism became the 'most widely influential modern statement of

\(^\text{115}\) Ibid., 233-4.


democratic socialism. Much of his influence was felt in two institutions which mattered a great deal to him – the Church of England and the Labour Party. In the 1980s, Tawney still had an influence in Church circles, evident from a report of the Archbishop of Canterbury of that era stressing the social responsibilities of which Tawney had made so much. His influence on the Labour Party was felt as early as the reforms of 1918 when Tawney became an important member of the Education Advisory Committee. Later, such eminent Labour politicians as Richard Crossman who sang the praises of *The Acquisitive Society* and Tony Benn who lauded Tawney’s writing as a model for socialist writers testified to his enduring appeal. Academics such as T.H. Marshall and R.M. Titmuss continued to express views of social solidarity as reflected in the welfare state in the third quarter of the twentieth century. In his declining years, Tawney himself was pleased that parliamentary democracy proved an effective vehicle for establishing a socialist state, and that the Labour Party proved a fit instrument to change relations of power and to direct resources to raising the quality of life of the whole population.

Dennis and Halsey in ‘Ground Lost’ concluded that Tawney knew that Christianity was losing its ‘grip’ on the English. Was not his biblically-laced prose becoming more inaccessible to a decreasingly religious population? Had not a ‘quasi-Marxism’ taken hold in the universities? The result was that for the next generation Tawney’s vision of democratic socialism was neglected.

Martin Wiener’s *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (1981) attacked the public service and state action that Tawney always encouraged. This work, influential during the era of Thatcher’s ‘popular capitalism’, epitomized the problems that the

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119 Ibid., 243.
120 Ibid., 248.
121 Ibid., 250-1.
122 Ibid., 253. The authors state that Tawney realized by 1960 that Christianity was in decline. In the Tawney material of the interwar period, Tawney was still optimistic about the influence of the church. My arguments are based on the time period of this thesis, 1905-1944.
Labour Party was having in appealing to the public. The party of ethical socialism was in disarray, having lost much of its working class base. The sporting and cultural activities in which Tawney so encouraged the workers to participate were becoming commercialized, economic interests trumping cultural ones. Voluntarism was being replaced by sponsorship.123

Was Tawney becoming obsolete? His assumptions ‘about family, gender, and domestic division of labour now seemed remote and outmoded. He ignored domestic life.’124 Even his confidence in parliamentary and local government institutions seemed misplaced as officials at all levels, closely scrutinized, seemed not to measure up. Moreover, the Labour Party, always Tawney’s chosen vehicle, was not the only one claiming an ethical socialist inheritance; Liberals and the new Social Democrats also claimed it. The divided parties on the left with some of the same agenda enabled the Conservative Party to be successful at the polls for seventeen years.

Christian Socialism and interest in Tawney are still part of the Labour Party. Recently, for example, Tony Blair expressed the view ‘that Christian faith and belief is all to do with personal morality and nothing to do with the needs of society as a whole is too partial a perspective’.125 A postscript to Possible Dreams by Chris Bryant MP revealed that in the late 1990s, there were four thousand members in the Christian Socialist Movement, 42 of them MPs.126 More recently, the Rt. Honourable Chris Smith MP, in the Tawney Memorial Lecture of 2004, remarked that ‘I am proud to be part of the Christian Socialist Movement... [it is] an integral part of the Labour movement, exercising that influence and persuasiveness that come from being part of something rather than an outsider looking in.’ To him, Tawney’s perception

123 Ibid., 258.
124 Ibid., 259.
125 Wilkinson, ‘Forward’ by Tony Blair, Christian Socialism, x.
that the needs of the individual and those of society at large were interdependent were an ‘inalienable’ belief of the Labour Party.127

'It is a harsh, but none the less necessary task to drive home the truth that human society and human life can never reach a state of repose...that life is a perpetual and never resolved crisis.'128 Tawney’s life-long attitude to both democracy and ethical socialism reflected the personal vigilance and struggle that he never ceased to wage.

The variety of people who have written about Tawney’s Christian socialism may say something about his broad appeal. Preston was a Christian Ethicist, Terrill a noted historian and sinologist, Wright a historian, and Dennis and Halsey both sociologists. Of these five, three were his students, Preston in the thirties and Dennis and Halsey in the late forties. Terrill recorded that attending the Tawney lectures at LSE in the thirties converted Preston to Christianity.129 Preston’s critique of Tawney’s Christian Socialist writing are the reflections of someone peculiarly knowledgeable about his subject. Preston wondered what the ‘master’ would think of these remarks: ‘I wonder what he would make of them. Would he dazzle me with an aphorism to which I could find no immediate reply?’130 Clearly, this was spoken by an admirer of a great mind. Terrill who did not know Tawney personally had, nevertheless, access to a wide array of Tawney friends and colleagues both by letter and by personal interview. This access and the encouragement of Richard Titmuss, a major Tawney disciple contributed to the familiarity the author seems to have with his subject. Wright’s work, intended to illuminate British socialism in his own day (1987), identified three ‘domestic intellectuals’...the ‘Red Professors’ Cole, Laski, and Tawney who dominated socialist thought in the first half of the century.131 ‘Red professor’ is

129 Terrill, Tawney, 322, note 46.
131 Wright, Tawney, vii.
an odd appellation for Tawney who was always so careful to distinguish himself from any form of Marxism. Wright’s work is perhaps the first important book to remark on a revival of Tawneyism. Finally, Dennis and Halsey, acknowledged Tawney acolytes, found joy in placing Tawney in a long line of great Englishmen of whom they considered their teacher the apex. They argued primarily for his Ethical Socialism, with Christian Socialism carefully subsumed by the larger category. They, too, noted Tawney’s resurrected relevance despite the decline of Christianity. In this context the emphasis on Ethical Socialism was important.
Chapter 5

Tawney’s Academic Life

I

Throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century, R.H. Tawney was a formidable figure in British intellectual life. With the encouragement of fine teachers and mentors such as Edward Caird, Charles Gore and Canon Samuel Barnett, he turned to the investigation of the ‘social question’ immediately after his university graduation. His stay at Toynbee Hall and his early connections with the WEA convinced him of the importance of educating the working classes. His earliest important academic work, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, was written specifically to address economic questions raised by the adult students in his WEA classes who, he mentioned in the Preface, ‘have taught me much about problems of political and economic science which cannot easily be learned from books’. This work, an economic history of the sixteenth century, focused on agrarian conditions and provided ‘a clue...to those dimly perceived presuppositions as to social expediency which influence the actions not only of statesmen, but of humble individuals and classes, and influence, perhaps most decisively those who are least conscious of any theoretical bias.’ Much of Tawney’s academic career path was forged by this book. It was meant for his working class students whose lives he hoped to improve by an education that he desired to make meaningful by creating a work from original sources based on their interests. It also dug deeply into the economic history of the sixteenth century, which together with the seventeenth century, was a chosen field of study in the subsequent years.

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2 Ibid.
In these pre-war years, Tawney for two years kept a diary published only in 1972 under the title of *R.H. Tawney’s Commonplace Book*. Never intended for publication, it offers insight into the religious, intellectual and social cast of his mind. It contains possible ideas for further writing, including the ‘seeds of his three greatest works, *The Acquisitive Society, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, and *Equality*’.

A prolific writer, Tawney produced many other significant shorter works during the course of his half century career. Amongst these, the 1941 article on ‘The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640’ published in the *Economic History Review*, and the 1943 article, ‘The Abolition of Economic Controls, 1918-1921’ written for the government and also published in the *Economic History Review* are considered in this chapter. The first caused a considerable agitation among academics and the second was regarded as belonging to his structural rather than his moral phase.

It is impossible to appraise the influence of Tawney without taking into account the unique greatness of his style, his outstanding reputation as a teacher, and his fruitful collaboration with his colleagues. The criticisms of his work also have importance, highlighting Tawney’s philosophy of history that so disturbed G.R. Elton.

The purpose of this chapter is, then, to show Tawney in all his academic diversity; to feature the academic works both sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and contemporary as well as the original style in which his ideas were so deeply embedded; and also to demonstrate that as teacher and scholar, Tawney had a great and lasting influence on the academic world. The subject of many of his books was equality and educational reform, a crucial social issue which was never far from his mind.

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A reading of Tawney’s *Commonplace Book* reveals that most of the principles and ideas which he wrote about and later sought to implement were already present in his thinking prior to the First World War. To Winter, the book’s editor, this document was ‘a unique record of the assumptions which supported Tawney’s lifelong work as a socialist and as a scholar.’\(^4\) It was intended to be ‘a private document, a record of the personal concerns which Tawney rarely, if ever, confided or shared with his contemporaries in his correspondence and other writings.’\(^5\) It began on 19 April 1912, just after the publication of *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* at a point when he was considering what ought to be the major focus of his future research. This was a time, moreover, when the society around him was experiencing serious political, social and industrial unrest. A fiscal crisis was resolved by the Parliament Act of 1911 which reduced the power of the House of Lords. The government was beset by the difficulties of the Home Rule Bill, solutions for which did not occur until after the war. Activities of the suffragettes further complicated matters. Finally, a series of strikes took place in 1912 highlighted by increasing militancy of the strikers and the consequent repression by the government. These issues were part of the context of Tawney’s diary.

His own socialist position was not yet completely formed. He was critical of the Parliamentary Labour Party and indeed the Labour movement as a whole for failing to generate a coherent philosophy. He also disagreed with the Fabian and Guild approaches as being too structural and administrative.\(^6\) He believed that socialism ought to stress the moral and spiritual assumptions that all men possessed, and that historians should reflect these. His future writing certainly would. On 20 April he recorded some of the discussion of his Longton WEA class on

\(^4\) Journal, 1912-1914, Tawney/Vyvyan 28, BPLES, and *Commonplace Book*, ed. Winter and Joslin
\(^5\) *Introduction*, xiii.

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the causes of labour unrest. Much of it centred round inequities in the workplace.\textsuperscript{7} The following day, he contrasted the views on social reform of the middle and upper classes with those of the workers. The former believed that reform should 'regulate the worker's life in order that he may \textit{work} better' and the latter that reform should 'regulate his \textit{work} in order that he may have a better chance of living.'\textsuperscript{8} Here may be a partial genesis of the 1931 work \textit{Equality}.

He asserted 'there is no reason why the community, by public provision, should not make the life of the ordinary workman as rich and interesting as that of the fellow of an Oxford college: put the heritage of all the ages in his hands.'\textsuperscript{9} This comment reflected what he was teaching and learning in his tutorial classes and would have a bearing on all the future work he would do to reform education.

Later, he made a list under a heading 'The following books want writing.' Included was 'The rise and development of the idea of "Laissez-faire" and the movement away from state policy of the sixteenth century. I wonder if Puritanism produced any special attitude towards economic matters.'\textsuperscript{10} This is one of the seeds to which Winter alludes. Certainly, Tawney advanced this matter in \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}.

As part of a brief consideration of Bentham's concept of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', he claimed that '[t]here is a law higher than the well-being of the majority, and that law is the supreme value of every human personality as such...no convenience can justify any oppression as such.'\textsuperscript{11} One sees this idea as a concern of the author in \textit{The Acquisitive Society}.

As there is much else in the \textit{Commonplace Book} that was mirrored in his three great works, it is worth reading prior to and subsequent to a study of any one of them. Such a reading

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{Ibid.}, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{8} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.}, 31 July-1 August 1912, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, 4 September 1912, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, 29 July 1913, 63.
\end{itemize}
will affirm the genesis and the long maturation process of great ideas which were timely to the social conditions of the early twentieth century.

In the tradition of a long line of moralists, Tawney, in his 1921 publication *The Acquisitive Society*, examined his society and found it deficient. In the tradition of Ruskin and Morris, Tawney assumed that economics and ethics, although often treated separately by intellectuals, were in practice inseparable. He asked on what moral principles the economic order was established? Having reflected for years on ‘the problem of the relations between economic practice and moral principle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’ and having returned from war to a society he had helped defend, he had a vested interest in inquiring into its nature. He strongly advocated the replacement of economic self-interest with collective moral interest as a proper basis for social reconstruction. He insisted that

> [a]n appeal to principles is the basis of any considerable reconstruction of society, because social institutions are the visible expression of the scale of moral values which rules the minds of individuals, and it is impossible to alter institutions without altering that valuation.

Viewing his function as the ‘demythologizing [of] the worship of wealth’, he set out to suggest an alternative set of values. The opening sentence set the tone. ‘It is a commonplace that the characteristic virtue of Englishmen is their power of sustained practical activity, and their characteristic vice a reluctance to test the quality of that activity by reference to principles.’ It is aphoristic, it catches the attention. It seems almost a principle in its own right.

Tawney’s remedy for the acquisitive society was ‘function’. Unlike the use of ‘function’ employed by previous scholars, Tawney’s version was derived from ‘medieval conceptions of a

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social unity grounded in common moral purpose', rather in the tradition of Ruskin whose concept of 'there is no wealth but life', influenced Tawney.  

He believed that if industry was based on social purpose, with production and accumulation as means, then the society was a 'functional society'. Tawney applied social function to property, as well. It was functionless if it did not serve society. For example, as capitalism developed, ownership and management were severed. The wealth derived from the ownership would be 'functionless' because the owner rendered no service to society. Coal mine owners were a good example. Managers supervised the operations and owners simply collected royalties.

Stefan Collini, reading The Acquisitive Society in the late 1990s, offered a quite different analysis of the work. He claimed, partly because he was too young and partly because he might not be responsive enough, never to have come under the 'spell' of Tawney. This scholar realized it would be difficult to reappraise the work of a man whom so many regarded as a secular saint for 'anything short of hagiography is bound to seem debunking or merely negative.'

He found Tawney's language obsolete. 'No modern reader, I imagine, can fail to be struck by the period flavour the book now gives off.' Tawney's idea that the acquisitive society was 'a temporary aberration in a longer history of societies that have subordinated the production of wealth to larger social purposes' was perplexing in view of the 'forms of oppression and exploitation inherent in the economic relationships of early modern England', the ideal time to which he wished society to return. The moral basis of society was always superior to economic

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19 Ibid, 163.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 94.
forces. Tawney wanted the Church, once disestablished, to take on the role of assisting society in determining its scale of values. Collini suggested that since Tawney failed to mention the particular Christian doctrine that might be used in the process, ‘the overriding importance of Christianity for Tawney at this point is simply that it out-trumps economic criteria.’

Collini wondered if what drew Tawney to Christian Socialism was ‘a language with which to censure the unfettered pursuit of material gain; one doesn’t get the sense that it was his belief in Christian principles that led him to become such a severe critic of economic self-interest.’

Collini posited that the weakest aspect of *The Acquisitive Society* was its central premise of functionalism. ‘Tawney simply ducks the hard questions about the authoritarianism involved in deciding which activities constitute desirable “functions” and which do not.’ Collini proposed that the problem with *The Acquisitive Society* and, indeed, of much of Tawney’s work was ‘high-mindedness for its own sake’. His advocacy of moral principle became merely moralistic and ultimately discrediting to ‘the critical case against unfettered capitalism’. The author then asked why Tawney had retained his stature despite the obsolescence of his message. Taking the larger view, he suggested that ‘[p]erhaps no purposeful large-scale changes in society are brought about unless preceded and accompanied by a considerable amount of what may properly be called moral emotion. Tawney was a virtuoso of moral emotion.’

Collini’s interpretation is a fresh one, acknowledging the greatness of Tawney, suggesting the perceived weaknesses of his work, and offering the concept of moral emotion as the reason for his enduring fame. Although this concept is interesting, it is certainly not the only

24 Ibid., 95.
25 Ibid., 96.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 97.
28 Ibid., 99.
29 In a review of *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture*, by Stefan Collini, Chris Waters of Williams College, says that it includes ‘a superb article on the thought of R.H. Tawney – he traces the sense of moral duty and ethical obligation shared by many public intellectuals in the twentieth century to the “very particular political and intellectual milieu of late Victorian and Edwardian social reform.”’ *Victorian Studies*, 43.1 (2002), 153-55.
reason for the importance of *The Acquisitive Society*. Tawney's statement of principles is not moralistic but moral and accompanies his search for equality and social justice.\(^{30}\) This search is significant in every time period. It is never obsolete.

Tawney's second important didactic work, *Equality*, was regarded by the writers of *A Portrait by Several Hands* as 'implicit in all that went before'.\(^{31}\) Undoubtedly, his participation on the Sankey Coal Commission,\(^{32}\) and the Hadow Committee\(^{33}\) helped him come to the conclusions about the nature of inequality in the workplace and in the education system beyond where his investigations for *The Acquisitive Society* led him. This inequity was 'ruthlessly laid bare'.\(^{34}\) So imbedded was it that it was called a 'Religion of Inequality' by Matthew Arnold,\(^{35}\) a phrase Tawney borrowed for the title of his first chapter.

For Tawney, equality was somewhat like fairness. He thought equality of opportunity was no longer enough. Although theoretically, legal and political equality had been won, the struggle for economic and social equality still remained. Equality of opportunity simply meant that the law could confer neither advantages nor disadvantages on those engaged in the competition for education and position. Yet clearly, those who started with the advantages of a rich family which could supply pre-requisites to the competition would gain the opportunities. Equality of opportunity was therefore a dead-end for most people of the working classes. What he advocated instead was equality of provision.\(^{36}\) For children wishing a secondary education, for instance, it could mean that parents who needed their fourteen-year old child's wages would be

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30 This is a reply to Collini's idea in fn. 27. Moralistic used here means 'showing definite but narrow beliefs about what is right and wrong', *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, ed. Katherine Barber, (Don Mills Ontario, Oxford University Press, 1998), 942.
32 See Chapter 6.
33 See Chapter 8.
34 *Hands*, 16.
subsidized by the state so that the child could proceed on a more equal footing with other secondary children. It could also proceed through the actions of ‘collective movements to narrow the space between valley and peak’.\(^{37}\) Here one sees the possibility of strengthened unions negotiating working conditions as well as fair wages to assist working class families to emerge from the edge of poverty.

Tawney was, of course, very indignant about the inequities in education, as will be seen in the section of the thesis on State Education. In *Equality*, he raged that

> The sanction given by the Board of Education to lower standards of school accommodation and staffing in elementary than in secondary schools—as though pupils in the former were endowed with smaller lungs, fewer and less mobile arms and legs, and greater capacity to dispense with individual attention from those of the same age in the latter—was a legacy from an evil past for which a later generation of officials could hardly be blamed; but its long continuance was a disaster.\(^{38}\)

Here he cited a few shocking examples. The number of square feet per room was much less for the elementary school than the secondary school and the number of pupils per teacher was much more for the former than the latter. He argued that, since in English society ‘character and intelligence count for less than money’, the majority of children would be educated as ‘second-class citizens’.\(^{39}\) In short, elementary education was education ‘on the cheap’ intended for a class considered inferior. For the elementary school child, these conditions ‘poison the soul’.\(^{40}\)

In the 1951 edition of *Equality*, Tawney noted in the section ‘The Expansion of Collective Provision’ that a modification of conditions, some of which are cited above, had been accompanied by an ‘enlargement in the scale of activities’ of social services, education being

\(^{37}\) *Ibid.*, 105..


\(^{39}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*, 142.
subsumed in the collective rubric. The time period to which he alluded was that of 1936-1947 which included the war and the Education Act of 1944. Things had improved in this period.41

It was clear that Tawney became an educational reformer because he believed the education system existing when he first became a proponent of reform was one of the chief propagators of inequality. He, therefore, concluded that reforming the system would increase equality for young people and eventually for all society.

Tawney's best known work, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, first published in 1926, still receives attention in academic circles. It was, for instance, reprinted as recently as 1998 with a new introduction by the religious scholar, Adam B. Seligman. A Portrait by Several Hands labelled the origin of this work 'a curious one'. Friends of Canon Henry Scott Holland who endowed a triennial lecture series in his memory, requested in 1922 that Tawney offer the first lecture. Their chosen subject was 'the religion of the Incarnation in its bearing on the social and economic life of man'.42 Tawney, himself a friend of the canon and a known church activist was a suitable person for the task. 'After the usual agonies', according to Terrill, 'a treatise of sustained eloquence' was created and delivered.43

Despite the fact that the first publisher approached rejected the book, when it was finally published in 1926, it was not only quickly recognized as a classic but also quickly became an international bestseller.44 Yet, the first publisher, John Murray, was cautious about its possible success suggesting that 'I do not think we ought to venture on more than 2000 copies.'45 More than twenty years later, Murray sang a different tune. In referring to recently increased sales of

41 See Chapter 10 for events leading to the Education Act of 1944.
42 Fisher, Hands, 13.
43 Terrill, Tawney, This book 'quickly won sales into six figures', 59.
44 Ibid. and Ashton, 'Tawney', British Academy, 470.
45 Murray to Tawney, 24 July 1925, Tawney/Nyvyan 12, BLPES.
the work, he was delighted that 'so excellent a book will continue on the same scale....the longer the book remains in full life the better.'

American university professors, always enthusiastic Tawney supporters, had a chance to read the final chapter of the work in two May issues of the New Republic, thanks to the assistance of Harold Laski's many American connections. Perhaps it was such a popular work because it was, according to the authors of A Portrait by Several Hands, 'different'. It revealed that Tawney's 'passion was for social justice' and gave him 'an opportunity for a historical meditation on a still-living theme'. The contemporary cast of his historical books set his work apart.

To J.M. Winter, this book belonged to a group of works which 'approached economic history as the study of the resistance of groups and individuals to the imposition on them of capitalist modes of thought and behaviour.' Tawney saw them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries engaged in the clash of ideas 'between traditional views on social justice and newer notions of economic expediency'.

In the introduction to his book, Tawney indicated that

the object of this book is to trace some strands in the development of religious thought on social and economic questions in the period which saw the transition from medieval to modern theories of social organization. It does not carry the subject beyond the beginning of the eighteenth century.

He believed that in the period prior to the Reformation, the philosophy of the Church was that moral matters superseded all others matters including economics. It attempted over the centuries

46 Ibid., Murray to Tawney, 13 February, 1946.
47 Terrill, Tawney, 57.
48 Dennis and Halsey, Ethical Socialism, 159.
49 Fisher, Hands, 14.
50 Wright, Tawney, 50.
52 Ibid.
to integrate economics into the life of the Church in a fair way. Although the intention was admirable the practice was not. It often deviated from the ideal.\(^5^3\) In the twentieth century, it was no longer believed that there was any connection between the Church and economic life. To Tawney, this significant change required explanation.

Religion, it is said, is a thing of the spirit. To attempt to externalize it degrades it. Politics and business – the whole structure and apparatus of organized society – are separate and self-contained departments of existence, whose necessary autonomy makes the aspiration expressed in the oft-repeated ‘Christian social order’ a contradiction in terms.\(^5^4\)

Before the Reformation, economics was a branch of ethics but by the time of the Restoration, religion itself was considered simply one department of social life, and a quite separate one at that.\(^5^5\) What had happened in that hundred year period to so transform social life? Some leading religious figures of the period clearly had a hand in this change. Luther's contribution resulted from his combination of ‘religious radicalism and economic conservatism’. His philosophy drew a sharp separation between external life, which was to be ruled by secular authorities in an absolute manner, and the inner life of the spirit. Since his conception of society was hierarchical and fully in keeping with the medieval mind, he was outraged at the rising of the peasants.\(^5^6\) His economic views did not accord with the prevailing practice of his time, either. Whereas the Church allowed a carefully regulated rate of interest, Luther denounced all interest as usurious. He had ‘as little mercy for the slow poison of commerce and finance as for the bludgeon of revolt’.\(^5^7\)

His religious radicalism shattered the church as a mediator of the Christian life, and as a concrete expression of that life. He taught that the individual was saved by grace alone and not

\(^{54}\) Address to the William Temple Society, 5 May 1949, Tawney I, BLPES, 17/9.
\(^{57}\) *Ibid.*, 94.
by works. This doctrine loosened the hold of the Church on many of its adherents who perceived the old doctrines as based on works, and therefore, of no great importance.  

Tawney saw that Luther produced a Protestant dualism which ‘emptied religion of its social content and society of its soul’. He paved the way for the absolutism to come, whose authority could not be exerted without blood. The altar was to be replaced by the throne.

A further step towards the separation of religious and economic matters was the rise of Calvinism. It was an active and radical force, intent on reconstructing both Church and State as well as purifying the individual. Calvinism took the commercial nature of the world for granted. It did not distrust economic life as ‘alien to the spirit’ or regard poverty as especially praiseworthy. Its body of principles actually applauded the economic virtues.

A major difference between Lutheranism and Calvinism was the treatment of capital. Far from regarding it as evil, Calvin took its use as a matter of course. ‘He assumes credit to be a normal and inevitable incident in the life of society’. For him, the amount of interest ought to have been based on natural justice and the golden rule.

In England, meanwhile, in the Elizabethan era, the government found itself unable to enact stringent laws to restrict commercial interests as the church divines desired. Instead, it chose to control all financial affairs so as to yield agreeable returns for the monarchy. By then, since the church was subservient to the state, one could see both religion and economics as branches of the government.

Usury was, of course, the subject of much contention in England during ‘Tawney’s Century’ (1540-1640). There was endless debate about what constituted usury, and what, if any,

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58 Ibid., 97.
59 Ibid., 102.
60 Ibid., 105.
61 Ibid., 107.
62 Ibid., 165.
amount of it was permissible. Yet, according to Tawney, the debate itself flourished on the assumption that economic matters were a branch of ethics to be judged by spiritual criteria. On the fringes of the debate, however, were those who proclaimed that 'economics were one thing and ethics another'. Obviously the existence of the debate represented a clash between a mediaeval and a more modern world of economic thinking. Those in the centre represented the long tradition based on the Bible and the Church Fathers, but those on the fringes represented a whole new environment and set of circumstances produced by the changed moral climate resulting from the Reformation with its accompanying commercial changes. Calvinism was on the side of the changes.

What actions did the churches take to reassert the social obligation of religion? Unfortunately, the leadership of the Church of England threw in its lot with the aristocracy and the powers of the commercial revolution. It silently consented to an economic system in which its institutions were unencumbered by moral authority. From their foundation, the Nonconformist churches were aligned with commercial interests. The field of the spirit was exclusively inner and quite separate from economic matters and this idea offered a challenge to Christian adherents. Yet, success in business or in any life endeavour was a proof of salvation, of being among the 'elect'.

If the Tawney logic is applied, these new attitudes paved the way for the acceptance of the 'laissez faire' doctrine of the eighteenth century which eventually led to its application not only to business but to other fields as well. The nineteenth century poor law, for instance, was an obvious example of such application. The poor were responsible for their own plight. They must be made to work hard in difficult circumstances for their survival. The Calvinist conception that the outer success reveals the inner grace partially explains this attitude to the poor.

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63 Ibid., 182-3.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 281.
It would be unwise to evaluate the importance of *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* without considering Max Weber's 1905 work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Tawney himself considered Weber's work important and related to his own as indicated in his 1930 article 'Max Weber and the Spirit of Capitalism'.⁶⁶ Weber dealt with the psychological conditions that made possible the development of capitalist civilization. Like Tawney, he recognized that 'originally capitalism was at odds with the national laws and with Christian ethics',⁶⁷ arguing that the roots of change lay in the religious revolution of the sixteenth century. He saw the 'parvenus' of the new economic order elbowing out the 'aristocracy of land and commerce' armed with a 'new conception of religion'. Labour 'is a spiritual end'; profit more 'meritorious' than poverty; the pursuit of riches now a welcome ally to salvation.⁶⁸ Moreover, most of Weber's sources were English, another similarity to the Tawney work.

Yet, for all their similarities, the work of Weber and Tawney differed in intent and emphasis. To begin with, Weber considered his studies to be non-judgmental with no lessons for contemporary society. He asserted

He who yearns for seeing should go to the cinema, though it will be offered to him copiously today in literary form in the present field of investigation also. Nothing is farther from the intent of these thoroughly serious studies than such an attitude.... [The student] will do well to keep his small personal commentaries to himself as one does at the sight of the sea or of majestic mountains, unless he knows himself to be called and gifted to give them expression in artistic or prophetic form.⁶⁹

Tawney, on the other hand, made no secret of the contemporary relevance of his historical work, an approach that led to later criticism. There was no doubt, for instance, that he measured the value of capitalism against a Christian standard.⁷⁰

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Furthermore, according to Seligman, Weber emphasized the character traits of the Calvinists. They were desperate to prove their salvation by their earthly success. Tawney’s stress was different. It focussed on the ‘uncoupling’ of divine grace and social institutions and the ‘ultimate irrelevance of the laws of grace from the organization of this-worldly activities’. This uncoupling produced a ‘dualism’ in society grappled with by theologians both in Europe and the New World.\footnote{Tawney, ‘Introduction’, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, xxxii-xxxiv.}

Tawney, by showing that the church once governed the field of ethics, hoped to persuade his readers that it was possible for it once more to recover this authority, to eliminate the ‘dualism’. It could only do so, of course, with updated views on all social and economic matters, which he considered possible. This book and its genesis reflected the period when Temple assisted by Tawney and others was attempting to resurrect the social role of the Church of England and so to recover the ‘lost’ authority.

Tawney’s book originating in such a ‘curious’ way had an impact probably unrealized by his original audience. It raised the question: ‘Does the idea of a Church involve the acceptance of any particular standard of social ethics, and, if so, ought a Church to endeavour to enforce it as among the obligations incumbent on its members?’\footnote{Fisher, Hands, 14.} The Church of England would certainly grapple with these questions in its various conferences of the 1920s and 1930s. Tawney, as noted in the Christian Socialism Chapter, attended most of these conferences, usually delivering papers.

To the academic world, Tawney’s work came to mean several things. Ashton applauded ‘its learning and devoutness, together with its vivid imagery and grave irony’. He considered it ‘the rare phenomenon of a work of scholarship that was also a best-seller’.\footnote{Ibid.} To Dennis and Halsey it revealed that within the realm ‘of religious theory itself a new system of ideas was
being matured which was destined to revolutionize all traditional values.74 Winter categorizes it as belonging to a structural phase,75 defined by Dennis and Halsey as 'an emphasis on the causative strength of the individual's environment rather than his or her personal way of handling it, and also a stress on the non-moral aspects of circumstances.'76 Terrill observed that, despite its critics, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism 'set an agenda for a generation of historical research.'77

On its original publication in 1926, it was greeted by the Times Literary Supplement as a work which studied the 'changes in the standard of values in the criteria of conduct and the relations between the spiritual and secular elements in human nature.'78 In many ways, according to the reviewer, it was a brilliant work. Yet, he was disturbed by Tawney's use of the word 'capitalism'. There were so many uses of the word, but the author failed to make clear until page 84 his own particular use. Although he approved of Tawney's insight into the Reformation, during which leaders tried to reconstruct not only doctrine but also institutions, he disagreed with what he perceived as the work's conclusion, that a modern society is bent on the accumulation of wealth, believing instead that society's concentration was on the diffusion of wealth.79 This review was not really a major critique. Its primary focus was summarizing the text while attempting to present a balanced point of view.

Two other contemporary critiques were more analytical. Preserved Smith believed Tawney had written with 'exhaustive thoroughness' and remodelled the Weber thesis 'into the most tenable form' so far. Smith noted that a moral purpose 'runs like a current of electricity though his whole discussion, heating it white hot. The sputtering brilliance of the style, like an

74 Dennis and Halsey, Ethical Socialism, 187.
76 Dennis and Halsey, Ethical Socialism, 186.
77 Terrill, Tawney, 60.
79 Ibid.
arc lamp, sometimes illuminates the landscape and sometimes dazzles the eye-balls.\textsuperscript{80} He suggested that this approach created a problem. Tawney's moral purpose deprecated the modern and exalted the mediaeval but '[t]o assume that, by some transcendental standard, one ethic is eternally right and the other perversely wrong is unhistorical.'\textsuperscript{81} Christians believe, however, that their ethics have remained the same since the foundation of Christianity. Religion or the lack of it can colour a historian's point of view.

Paul Douglas in his \textit{New Republic} review agreed with some of what Tawney argued but thought that he 'failed to point out with equal emphasis the contributions which Protestantism also made to that democratic way of life which he so evidently desires.' He used the example of the 'one price policy of retail merchants', Quakers who thought it immoral to force an individual into bargaining so that he paid a higher price than someone else.\textsuperscript{82} He disputed what he perceived to be the Tawney suggestion that the Catholic Church and the Church of England really laid the basis for modern humanitarianism, an achievement he attributed to 'the gentle successors to Calvin'.\textsuperscript{83} This critic takes a religious point of view but one somewhat different from Tawney's.

Other major critiques occurred a generation or more later, with G.R. Elton writing in both 1963 and 1968, and J.H Hexter writing in 1975. Elton condemned both the Weber and the Tawney theses in his 1963 work. He saw Weber's view as one 'that enabled the Protestant to see in his ordinary daily work an activity pleasing to God and therefore to be pursued as actively and profitably as possible.' Elton alleged that Weber's thesis 'is characterized by vagueness' and that his starting point, "the capitalist spirit" was contrary to human nature'. Elton supposed that the actions of men in history disproved the Weber approach. As for Tawney, he 'attacked not only

\textsuperscript{80} Preserved Smith, review of \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}, \textit{American Historical Review}, vol. 32, January 1927, 309.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 311.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 74.
capitalism for its failure to provide social justice, but also Protestantism for perverting the
Christian message of poverty and charity into a gospel in which success sanctified the work and
profit equalled godliness.’ Elton worried about the influence of this thesis in both England and
America where he believed some still accepted that there was an essential connection between
capitalism and Protestantism. These two eminent writers of the early twentieth century had,
according to Elton, got the facts wrong! Capitalism long pre-dated Luther. Calvin gave only a
guarded assent to an interest rate of 5%. Calvin and his followers ‘violently attacked all forms of
greed’. Of course, Tawney had plenty of evidence in seventeenth century pamphlets on which to
base his conclusions, but the problem was that Tawney used them ‘in the light of the
preconceived theory that these expressions assume the character of a body of doctrine favourable
to the capitalistic spirit and thus become a reasonable explanation of the attraction which
Protestantism and Calvinism in particular, is supposed to have had for the middle classes.’

The problem with this particular criticism of Religion and the Rise of Capitalism was that
Tawney did what all historians do: ask questions about a subject, engage in research, posit a
tentative thesis, find as much material as possible to support it, revise the thesis if necessary, and
do further research, always keeping in mind that the thesis was open to challenge.

Elton, however, had not yet finished with his criticism of Tawney. In his Inaugural
Lecture, ‘The Future of the Past’, he commented that when historians intended to be
‘instructive’ they were often ‘disastrous’. Tawney was such a historian. ‘Religion and the Rise of
Capitalism demonstrated Tawney’s fatal propensity to fit a selection from a great mass of
material into a predetermined framework.’ Elton was vitriolic. ‘I can’t think there has been a

85 See p.155 for further commentary on the Tawney-Elton differences.
86 Here, ‘inaugural’ refers to the establishment at Cambridge in 1968 of a new Chair in English
Constitutional History occupied by Elton himself.
1968), 15.
historian at work in this country who has had a worse, more disastrous effect upon what I may call the national self-consciousness than that very good man Richard Tawney. Elton continued ‘there is not a single work Tawney wrote which can be trusted’ and continued for two pages remarking along the way that ‘his [Tawney’s] history was not good, not sound, not right, not true.’ Since Elton singled out no other historian for such severe rebuke in his lecture, it was clear that the Tawney influence rankled with this Cambridge historian. Yet, it also said something about the degree to which Tawney was influential in writing history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.88

In reflecting on Tawney’s Religion and the Rise of Capitalism in 1984, Ormrod belittled Elton’s challenge. He compared Tawney to E.P. Thompson, remarking that with both ‘explicit theorizing is rejected, and this rejection is justified as respect for the subjective experience of people in history, who should not have thrust upon them a strait-jacket of pre-conceived theory.’89 He also rejected Elton’s dramatic claim that Tawney had a subversive effect on history. This claim was highly exaggerated.90

A further criticism, but milder and more dispassionate in tone, was that of J.H. Hexter in a review of Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England by Christopher Hill. Hexter said that the Weber and Tawney works had received two major criticisms over the years. The first was similar to one of Elton’s, that Calvinism attracted groups in several countries other than ‘the mercantile and industrial agents of capitalist development’ and the second was that linking the Reformed Church to the ‘unlimited rational pursuit’ was going too far since such a Reformation doctrine was too peripheral to have had a strong influence.91

88 Ibid., 14-7.
90 Ibid.
Many of Tawney's articles written between 1940 and his death in 1962 reveal the enduring survival of his intellectual powers. One such article, 'The Rise of the Gentry', (1941), argued that the gentry came to be the most influential dominating class in English society during the period 1540 to 1640 because its members, ranging from yeomen to the upper layer of commoners, were able to take advantage of an economy of rising prices to buy up a large share of the estates of the nobility as well as Crown property that was put on the market. The consequences of the rising prices for the nobility were described by Tawney this way: '[t]he wave of rising prices struck the dyke of customary obligations, static burden, customary dues; rebounded; struck again; and then either broke it or carved new channels which turned its flank'.

Finances were, of course, at the centre of the problem. The value of all customary payments dropped. Noble families felt strapped by this decline as well as by their burden of costly public duties. Many had heavily mortgaged properties. To stay afloat they sold portions of their estates.92

The buyers were often small landholders, and even yeomen (upper strata of the farmers). Other professional groups such as lawyers took advantage of the situation to avail themselves of landed estates. In fact, the amount of conveyancing caused the growth of law as a profession, many lawyers making their fortunes as facilitators of changes of land title. Many of those who acquired land began to work it as a commercial undertaking. They were going into the land business as entrepreneurs. By the time of the Stuarts, this included 'marketing, management, tenure, the arrangement of holdings and reclamation'.93 Yet as with many societies, this land in England was a source of immense prestige. Therefore, the newly-rich bought land both as investment and as social value.94

93 Ibid., 95.
94 Ibid., 99.
Naturally, there were survivors among the nobility. In fact, those that adapted made the
greatest individual gains in this period of transition. But it was the gentry who made the greatest
aggregate gains. Moreover, their primarily entrepreneurial orientation and success gave them a
power which enabled them to become a strong influence in Parliament. They determined to have
a say in policy. With their consequent influence, they resisted anything not in their interests such
as petitions from peasants urging the redress of agrarian grievances.

Ashton remarked that since the thesis ‘that it was not the Civil War that had destroyed the
old regime, but the dissolution of the foundation of the old regime that had caused the Civil War’
could not be handled in a single lecture, Tawney wrote this ‘brilliant article’. Dennis and
Halsey saw the theme of the Tawney article as ‘[t]he English gentry was rapidly accumulating
wealth and economic influence through its superior capacity to adapt to tensions and
opportunities as rising prices struck the dyke of customary obligations.’ Tawney himself called
the gentry a ‘tenacious class’. That tenacity together with adaptability was likely responsible
for the success of the gentry.

This ‘brilliant article’ attracted criticism, too, but not for several years. In 1953, Hugh
Trevor-Roper challenged the Tawney thesis by attacking the evidence. He stated that the ‘rise of
the gentry’ and parallel ‘decline of the aristocracy’ were ‘indeed not incorrect but wrongly
formulated, and I believe that the faulty formulation of them seriously affects our understanding
of political as well as of economic history.’ He argued that not only was there just as much
evidence of economic difficulties among the gentry as among the peerage, but also there was
much evidence of economic success among both groups. But, according to Trevor-Roper,

95 Ibid., 105.
96 Ibid., 112.
97 Ashton, ‘Tawney’, British Academy, 474.
100 Ibid., 6-7.
there was a rise, not so much of the gentry, but of groups within both the gentry and the peerage.\textsuperscript{101}

In 1956, J.P. Cooper argued that Tawney failed to recognize 'that changes of ownership and even sales of land were not necessarily and invariably symptoms of economic decline, extravagance, and mismanagement'.\textsuperscript{102} Further, the gentry was recruited from above as well as below, younger sons of peers usually sinking into that lower class. Cooper thought the two classes were not really comparable as the peerage had legal status and the gentry did not.\textsuperscript{103} This latter point seems a little weak when obviously comparisons can be made on grounds other than legal status. The Cooper argument supports Trevor-Roper.

It seems quite clear that Religion and the Rise of Capitalism and the 'Rise of the Gentry' were works that were complementary. In the 1926 book, the theme was centred on separation of religion from economics and other parts of life. The Reformation was seen as instrumental in bringing this separation about. The article focused more narrowly to reveal the gentry, many of them of the Calvinist branch of the reformed religion, as that class which was central to implementing the commercial revolution, so recently freed from the moral control of the Church. Most interesting was the amount of criticism these works generated. The chief critics, Elton and Trevor-Roper differed in the tone of their critiques. Elton's ironical and personal comments, his suggestion that anything Tawney wrote could not be trusted are a marked contrast to those of Trevor-Roper who stated '[p]erhaps no man has stimulated the study of English history in the sixteenth century more effectively than Professor Tawney.'\textsuperscript{104} The origin of the Elton rancour may lie in the view of history he espoused. He believed that history should be studied and written

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{102} J.P. Cooper, 'The Counting of Manors', The Economic History Review, 2\textsuperscript{nd} series, vol. VIII, numbers 1, 2 and 3, (1956), 381.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Trevor-Roper, The Gentry, 1.
for its own sake and that any other purpose was secondary. Tawney's view, which will be discussed at some length in subsequent pages, was that history was a tool which should be used 'as a means of exploring fundamental truths'. He believed that 'all history is the history of the present; and for this reason each generation must write its history for itself. That of its predecessors may be true, but its truth may not be relevant.' Clearly, by arguing in the broad sweeping way that he did, Tawney was founding a whole new genre of sixteenth century historical literature.

A second of Tawney's articles, 'The Abolition of Economic controls, 1918-1921', was written at the request of Sir George Crystal of the Cabinet Office. It was one of a series of six articles commissioned in February 1941 to assist the Reconstruction Committee. Tawney wrote an essay on the first topic and managed to complete this second article on the fourth topic by August, but thereafter had no time for the remainder. In the fall, he went to the United States to carry out an assignment as Labour Attaché at the British Embassy in Washington where he remained for a year.

Tawney pointed out that prior to the First World War, the government confined its intervention in economic affairs to three areas: social policy, finance and commercial relations with foreign powers. 'The policy generally accepted, with differences of detail, by most sections of opinion as a combination of cautious interference, on grounds of social expediency, at one end of the economic scale with a deliberate abstention from interference, except by way of taxation, at

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107 R.H. Tawney, Lectures on Seventeenth Century English History, c. 1930-1940, Tawney I, BLPES, 5/2.
108 Crystal to Tawney, 12 February 1941, PRO, Cab 117.40, in Winter, 'Intro.', *Essays of R.H. Tawney*, 29. The six matters on which he was asked to concentrate were 1) the technological and economic problems of industrial transfer; 2) the effect of financial policy on the rate of industrial transfer; 3) the interaction between demobilization and the rehabilitation of the economic system; 4) the relaxation of economic controls 5) the scope and nature of emergency relief measure; 6) the disposal of surplus stores.
This policy changed during the war because it had to. Scarcity, a problem unknown for two generations, arose again. What resources there were had to be mobilized for the war effort. These conditions required increasing government control. Most of the controls exerted resulted from improvisation, unlike the control structure of the Second World War. At the end of the war, de-control began in earnest: a few of the controls ended in early 1919, most of them later that year, and a couple in 1920. Lloyd George’s Reconstruction Committee operating from March 1917, and turned into a Ministry in July, did not report on the economic controls set up during the war, although such a report might have been a logical mandate for this committee. At this point, the Cabinet had not yet decided how to frame a policy of de-control. Yet, for some economic intervention, the future had been preordained by the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). It provided for the cessation ‘within a fixed period after the termination of the war, of the novel types of economic intervention practised.’ In a sense, de-control was the easiest course for the government since it required no real action. DORA did its work.

The idea of de-control was based on the assumption that there was a sharp difference between the war era of 1918 and the immediate post-war era of 1919. No real thought was given to the fact that conditions in 1919 resulted from five years of war in which misery and deprivation combined with massive expenditure and state intervention were common. The 1919 economy could not replicate that of 1914. It might be argued, moreover, that the government was merely following the American example of terminating its commitments to inter-allied economic control. In addition, the industrialists argued that demobilization, which would release millions of soldiers into the workforce, required de-control, so that industry would be better able to revive and to provide jobs.

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110 Ibid., 2.

111 Ibid., 4.

112 Ibid., 9.
The Treasury, long quiet during the war, became more active afterwards but was not watchful enough to take steps to control inflation in 1919-1920. This was followed by the Depression of 1921, an alarming event for the government.\textsuperscript{113} Tawney concluded that much could be learned from the circumstances surrounding de-control following the First World War. Clearly, a war required greater range and intensity of control by the government than peace did. At the end of conflict, the government was faced with three de-control policy possibilities. First, rapid de-control, although its actual implementation might not have been as rapid as anticipated; second, lengthy de-control so that the government might assess evolving economic conditions and be better able to judge the appropriateness of particular economic de-control at any given time; third, gradually to sort out from among the various controls those that might have permanent utility in the post-war set of circumstances. After this analysis, Tawney warned that the government should be cautious about a repetition of the previous post-war attitudes. He compared Britain in that era to a convalescing patient who was asked to walk despite being too weak and debilitated. The message was clear. Post-war Britain needed to give its ‘economic patient’ time to recover. Tawney recommended the third option: ‘the case for believing it would have been prudent, when the last war concluded, to sort out those features of the War-Control system which could with advantage be perpetuated, is unquestionably strong’. He believed that controls ‘[e]stablished during the war...[were] swept aside wholesale on the return of peace, instead of being reconstructed. It would be unpardonable if a similar error were made a second time.’\textsuperscript{114} The Labour government of 1945-1951 preferred the third option, as well. It went further with government control than the wartime coalition government. For example, it nationalized some industries and regulated others. De-control was not heavily emphasized in 1945 as it had been in 1918-1919.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 21.
Was there some consideration for educational reform in this article? It is possible that retention of some controls might have helped to avoid the inflation followed by depression that undermined the funding and implementation of the Education Act of 1918.

Tawney's books and articles reveal a wide range of strong convictions. It would be impossible to consider them fully, however, without acknowledging that he was a master of English style. Some have even suggested that he might have been a literary figure if he could have 'stooped from his greater task' of trying to bring about equality for working class people. Chambers suggested that Tawney made literature despite not being in the field of English.

Certainly, Tawney's language confirmed his literary bent. He used 'coruscations of language that dazzle'. Asa Briggs mentioned another powerful quality of the Tawney language, that of being fierce and judgmental. This was a weapon in his arsenal of controversy, waged so consistently on behalf of the working class, and especially of its schoolchildren. His friends referred to his 'positive vivacity of controversial style' in the chapter of Equality on 'The Religion of Inequality'. Perhaps, this might have been the result of what Kingsley Martin called 'his boiling point' for evidently, Tawney told Martin that 'he could not write at all until he reached "boiling point"'.

His language and sentence structures clearly owed something to his classical education as so many authors referred to his Latinate, Miltonic style with its Biblical allusions and rolling cascade of sentences. Ashton assessed Tawney the stylist, noting '[t]he complicated structure of his prose recalls that of Milton and Meredith...His sentences are studded with figures of speech, ranging from the statuesque phrase...to the quip.' The Manchester Guardian commented in Tawney's obituary that his style in historical works was 'Miltonic'. They used the language of

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115 Fisher, Hands, 17.
118 Kingsley Martin, Father Figures, Volume 1, (London, Hutchinson, 1966), 156.
119 Ashton, 'Tawney', British Academy, 478.
the Authorized Version and the Book of Common Prayer, from which ‘he had resources of
invective and exhortation denied to his adversaries’.\footnote{120} More than forty years later, even Collini,
the contemporary Tawney critic, paid homage to his great style.

That one’s response is ambivalent rather than merely critical is also partly due to
the force of Tawney’s style – the barbed ironies at the expense of the rich, the
almost Miltonic cadences of his Latinate sentence structure, the fine preacherly
fire. That eloquence can still, intermittently, do its work, and even the politically
skeptical or agnostic modern reader can be seduced into a sense of belonging, if
not quite of belief.\footnote{121}

The Tawney prose was clearly meant to be alluring so as to draw the reader in. Allure was a
technique of persuasion at which Tawney was outstanding. Many of his works, after all, were
intended to persuade, to convert the reader to a different point of view.

By no means the least important aspect of the Tawney style was its moral quality. He
was a moral man whose intellectual preoccupation throughout his life was morality. Tawney’s
style, according to Terrill, reflected ‘the dignity of man, the moral unity of things, the seriousness
of man’s condition and his relationships, the hollowness of privilege and pomposity.’\footnote{122} In other
words, his style reflected the ‘integrated man’. The authors of \textit{A Portrait by Several Hands} saw
the moral convictions expressed ‘in great language...[that]could not have appeared as grand
conceptions otherwise’.\footnote{123}

The Tawney style was an integral part of his message that would not have been so
effective in a lesser style. It presented enticing moral convictions which influenced other
academics as well as a wider audience. Some of his phrases even found their way into the
speeches of Stanley Baldwin via his advisor Tom Jones, once a Tawney colleague at the

\footnote{120} ‘R.H. Tawney – an essentially English Socialist and Churchman’, \textit{The Manchester Guardian},
17 January 1962.
\footnote{121} Collini, ‘Acquisitive Society’, \textit{Dissent}, 98.
\footnote{122} Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 12.
\footnote{123} Fisher, \textit{Hands}, 17.
University of Glasgow. The secret of Tawney’s ‘charm’ is complex but certainly a large portion of it is style, which contains ‘aphorism, whimsical analogies, classical and biblical allusions, and surprising metaphors’ all of them giving ‘a never-sleeping life to his pages’.

The great writer was also a great teacher. As previously indicated, his earliest WEA students found him highly appealing, partly because he was so sympathetic to the problems of their lives and work, and partly because much of the material he used in his lectures and discussion was taken from the history of their own particular corners of England. Chambers avowed that Tawney

won the affection and the gratitude of undergraduates as well as of adult students. He infected them with his own zest for the adventure of learning, and was especially encouraging to those who showed a bent for independent sallies into unexplored country.

He kept the flame of his vision of society burning brightly throughout his whole teaching life. His convictions about the need for a moral society full of individuals committed to equality never wavered. Conviction, intensity, and energy are almost always attractive to students who tend to believe that if the teacher is energetic about a topic, it may be worthwhile considering or investigating. In these qualities lie the secret of Tawney’s successful teaching life.

Terrill believed that ‘the decade of Tawney as teacher’ was the 1930s, during which he taught waves of students in his famous seminar, ‘Economic and Social England 1558-1640’.

‘Armed with Tawney’s question, they took up his historian’s torch and lit new corners of Tudor and Stuart times.’ Preston, whose conversion to Christianity he attributed to taking the Tawney seminar during this decade, was strongly affected by the master’s teaching (although Tawney

124 Wright, Tawney, 5.
125 Fisher, Hands, 19.
127 Terrill, Tawney, 79.
seminars were never intended as a vehicle of Christian conversion).¹²⁸ Tawney’s students of the 1940s, Dennis and Halsey, for example, writing in the late 1980s mentioned that the LSE, with its ‘tradition of first-year undergraduate lectures given by the most eminent professors’ was ‘a political Mecca to them’. They listened to the words of ‘Robbins, Popper, Tawney, Laski, and Ginsberg, and absorbed the excitement of the social sciences.’¹²⁹ Later still, in 1996, Halsey’s biography revealed that the author felt himself to be ‘a pilgrim on the road to the New Jerusalem marching with Temple and Tawney’. Gracious words of tribute, indeed, coming from another great teacher and scholar near the end of the twentieth century. Halsey saw himself even then as following Tawney ‘in the great and ancient moral tradition which he then applied with vigour and persistence to British public life in the twentieth century’.¹³⁰

Tawney’s reputation as great teacher is a long-lasting one, dating from his own early pioneering days as a WEA tutor to nearly the end of the twentieth century in the autobiography of A.H. Halsey, his famous student. Although it is not difficult to find materials challenging the ideas and opinions of Tawney, it is very difficult to find anything that views his teaching in a pejorative light. In some ways, perhaps the personal influence of the master teacher was stronger than his message.

Although Tawney was a man of many parts, his colleagues regarded him as ‘first and foremost a scholar’.¹³¹ As a historian, he was a generalist, doing much of his academic work in two specific periods, the century 1540-1640 and the twentieth century. In these periods, he ranged widely over such topics as politics, economics, religion, education, health, labour relations, statistics, and literature, demonstrating that they created a social unity.

History was simply one branch of the study of society. To practise it what you needed was a mind schooled in the liberal arts, and a spirit sensitive to the social

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¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 322, footnote 46.
¹²⁹ Dennis and Halsey, ‘Preface’ Ethical Socialism, ix.
¹³¹ Fisher, Hands, 21.
currents of your own day. Richly endowed as he was, with both, he strode across the fields of scholarships caring little for the fences erected by smaller men...society must be looked at from many different points of view and at many different points of its life.132

To his inquiring mind, scholarship had no borders. The only limits were those of investigation and imagination. His scholarship was always a social instrument, probing the society, revealing its strengths and weaknesses, and advising its leaders and citizens at large, but especially the working classes.133 As has been made clear already, he was ‘above all a moralist, deeply concerned with understanding, in full historical depth, what he felt to be the moral problems of his time, and, within his capacity, to make a personal contribution to their solution.’134 He was, moreover, unafraid to look searchingly at the great crises of his time and to write about them as truthfully as he could. The distinguished German historian, Fritz Stern, identified approvingly with Tawney’s writings about the First World War. Stern suggested that ‘R.H. Tawney, who once said what Mr. Dooley had said before him – that his task was not so much to comfort the afflicted as to afflict the comfortable (actually, Tawney did both, which I find altogether admirable).’135

Tawney’s comments on the exams of his first students are instructive, too. On a paper of E.S. Cartwright, a subsequent figure of importance in the WEA, Tawney wrote

Our problem at the present day is to put economic activity in proper relation to the other elements of human life. But, if we forget the economic motive altogether and overlook the material conditions on which the production of wealth depends, we become mere sentimentalists and dreamers.136

133 Workers were reading Tawney’s material up to the end of the First World War, but afterwards, it was likely that Tawney’s working class readership consisted of leaders in positions of authority in the TUC and WEA.
One can see almost from the beginning of his career that Tawney believed the study of the past was meant to illuminate the present.

Tawney was a respected figure with his colleagues as well as with his students. A very collegial member of LSE, he co-operated with others in both formal and informal ways. In 1926, for instance, he joined with Sir William Ashley, Professor J.R. Scott, Dr. Eileen Power and others to found the Economic History Society. T.C. Barker observed that Tawney, through teaching economic history to his original tutorial classes in 1908, played a part in creating a need for such a society. More and more interest was created through the tutorials, through books written by the Hammonds and others, and through the establishment of chairs in this subject in several universities. Two years prior to its founding, Tawney discussed with Professor Michael Postan the need for a journal to provide wider access to this scholarship. Tawney had just published his previous article in a German journal and had a desire for a journal closer to home. Many others played even more significant roles in founding the society and journal. Ephraim Lipsom, an Oxford historian originally trained at Cambridge, worked tirelessly to acquire support, funding, and co-operation from printers and other academics. The society was launched at the 14 July 1926 meeting of the Anglo-American Historical Conference, so as to get as much American support as possible. Lipsom and Tawney signed the original contract with the printer Adam Black and subsequently acted as joint editors. Tawney’s main function in this capacity was to interest international institutions and academics in membership in the society. Although he succeeded admirably with this task, he evidently did little else as co-editor, leaving the rest of the work to Lipsom. This is not quite the usual picture of Tawney who worked so vigorously in many committees and organizations, often taking the active lead. Undoubtedly, Tawney’s

138 For example, The Village Labourer (1911) and The Town Labourer (1917).
140 Ibid., 9.
141 Ibid., 9-10.
increasing reputation made his presence on a committee or board a valuable asset, even if his contribution was minor.

Throughout this interwar period, he and his wife Jeanette hosted regular, informal evenings at their house in Mecklenburg Square. To Terrill, Jeanette was not always a suitable partner for the intellectual Tawney, and to Maxine Berg, Tawney may have been in love with Eileen Power, his brilliant colleague at LSE. A reading of his continual correspondence with Jeanette tells a different story. The passion of his early courtship letters is, of course, to be expected. But twenty years later, Tawney was still writing to Jeanette about how bored he felt when away from her, and how he wished she were with him. The Power letters to Tawney are full of affection, but do not really exceed the bounds of propriety. These various letters do not reveal any rupture or significant difficulties in the relationship of Tawney and Jeanette.

Friends who gathered at Mecklenburg Square included Hugh Gaitskell, Evan Durbin, Eileen Power, Patrick Gordon Walker and Michael Postan. Like Tawney, many of these friends were social democrats some of whom went on to become Labour politicians and ministers. To them, Tawney was the epitome of social democracy. The talk was never intimate, but rather about ‘history, economics, and how to change England without wrecking it’. It was as if there was an understood agenda, that of social tasks. All discussion flowed from this concept.

In 1939, the LSE decided to honour Tawney with the hanging of a commissioned portrait. In a speech given on the occasion, Tawney began in his usual diffident way: ‘I have been, I’m afraid, an unsociable and, often, doubtless, an awkward colleague. In spite of my frivolous

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142 Terrill, Tawney, 108-110.
143 Maxine Berg, A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889-1940, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150-51. Her conclusions were based on comments by Barbara Wooton and H.L. Beales, both of whom had worked with Tawney.
144 Tawney to Jeanette, 1908-1909, Tawney/Vyvyan 1, BLPES.
145 Tawney to Jeanette, March and April 1928, Ibid.
146 Power to Tawney, March 1938, Tawney I, BLPES, 11/1.
147 Terrill, Tawney, 79.
148 Ibid., 80
words, we are profoundly touched by the thought that so many old friends should have shown by their presence that they pardon my offences." In general, the speech dealt with the astonishing revolution which the last thirty years have seen in university education. He believed the LSE’s possession of an ‘exciting intellectual atmosphere’ and ‘freedom from formality and inhibitions’ was responsible for its continuing success. These, together with a ‘wide diffusion of spirit of intelligent public service’, would ensure its future.

An enjoyable facet of Tawney’s academic career was that of the travelling scholar. He made many academic trips abroad at the invitation of particular scholars, university departments, or sometimes university administrations. Of these trips, the earliest as well as the most frequent were to the United States. In 1920, at the request of President Alexander Meiklejohn, Tawney visited Amherst where he gave the famous Beecher series of lectures ‘on industrial, educational, and religious issues in Britain at that time’. In 1924, again in the United States, he delivered lectures for the Williams Institute later published by Yale as The British Labour Movement. Undoubtedly, Tawney was carrying his moral message of democratic socialism to the United States where there were men ‘profoundly and permanently influenced’ by him.

The international academic connections Tawney acquired with these and similar journeys put him in a unique position to help other scholars. His assistance to the later famous Leo Strauss is a case in point. In 1934, Strauss, a German-Jewish refugee scholar living in England, sought Tawney’s help in finding employment. Tawney, using his own reputation and connections to ensure that Strauss would find a position in which he could best use his considerable intellectual

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149 R.H. Tawney, ‘Presenting of Portrait’, c. 1939, Tawney I, BLPES, 18/10, 2. The portrait was painted by Claude Rogers.
150 Ibid., 4.
151 Ibid., 6.
152 Ibid., 8.
153 Ibid., 10.
154 Terrill, Tawney, 57, Meiklejohn was originally from Rochdale where his parents were active in the Co-operative Society. An admirer of Tawney, the President thought Tawney’s influence would be good for the College’s students.
155 Ibid.
talents, found him a temporary post at Cambridge. When no further British offers came, Tawney made use of his American friend, John Nef, a Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, to secure a chair for Strauss. Although these efforts at first did not succeed, Strauss was in the meantime able to secure a temporary post at the New School for Social Research in New York. Eventually, however, Strauss did receive a University of Chicago professorship for which the Tawney reference had some influence. However, at the heart of the University of Chicago’s willingness to listen to Tawney on the value of hiring Leo Strauss was President Robert M. Hutchins’ strong desire to obtain Tawney himself for the university. Tawney’s ambiguous attitude to the Hutchins’ overtures resulted from his wish to refrain from antagonizing anyone so as to bring about a successful result for Strauss. Tawney never really wanted to work anywhere but England. Over the next decade and a half, Hutchins continued his attempts to persuade Tawney to come to the United States. In 1948, during a visit to England, Hutchins was still hopeful. He wrote to John Nef: ‘I had the Tawneys to dinner at Claridge’s. The old man was as grand as ever; but she is as crazy as a bedbug. I think they will come to Chicago but only in a year from now....’ This anecdote reveals not only that Tawney was at pains to help Strauss, but also that Tawney himself was so highly revered in the United States, that a major university was still trying to entice him when he was sixty-eight years old.

Looking back from the death of Tawney in 1962, it is clear that he had cast a large intellectual shadow. Even today, though paler, it may still be seen. Consider the lectures made into books that are still read: the Scott Holland lectures which became Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, the Halley-Stewart lecture that became Equality, and the Williams Institute lectures which became the British Labour Movement. Moreover, few people in British academia were

unaware of the ‘Rise of the Gentry’ and its subsequent challenges. The lectures, books and articles were both lauded and challenged but the attention they received showed how significant the ideas of Tawney were to other scholars. That the academic world considered him a ‘lion’ is clear from the honours it showered upon him. Of all the honours, it was the Fellowship of the British Academy that meant the most to him. Today, however, the academic world is less concerned with the honours bestowed on Tawney than in examining the moral society based on social democracy that he strove throughout his life to establish. The relatively recent interest of both Collini and Green affirm this enduring concern.

Tawney’s philosophy of history, the foundation of his academic career, was quite evident in his conception of the universe and the certainty of his Christian beliefs. It was a moral conception. His Commonplace Book entry of 13 August 1913 puts his view succinctly:

The essence of all morality is this: to believe that every human being is of infinite importance, and therefore that no consideration of expediency can justify the oppression of one by another. But to believe this it is necessary to believe in God. To estimate men simply by their place in a social order is to sanction the sacrifice of man to that order. It is only when we realize that each individual soul is related to a power above other men, that we are able to regard each as an end in itself.

Although Tawney was born into the upper middle classes and received the elite education that his birthright seemed to entitle him to, and although he worked much of his life in the university system, an institution of ancient foundation, he was by no means an ‘establishment man’. He was, in fact, a ‘philosophic radical’, according to Green who believed that ‘his radicalism, even his socialism, is misunderstood if it is perceived as an essentially progressive interpretation of modernity.’ In Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Tawney considered his socialism to be part

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159 Ashton, ‘Tawney’, British Academy, 481 and Hands, 32.
of the long tradition of Western Civilization. The period of aberration from this ideal was the eighteenth to twentieth centuries with the ‘new’ but entrenched capitalist society.

His radicalism was noted by Stern, when he placed Tawney among a small group of historians who did not believe in the permanence of a golden Edwardian age, a belief which Stern ascribed to the majority. This small group that actually participated in the war was not among those who were ‘very parochial and specialized’. Tawney was, of course, actively engaged in teaching working people in the WEA prior to the war. His life was not completely immersed in books but in teaching ideas to those that thirsted for them, and who, therefore, provided the inspiration for his early academic career. This important activity must have been what he meant when he noted in his June 1914 diary entry that society itself needed a philosophy. No machinery of state can supply ideas ‘which do not exist in society...they must always be fed from without.’ Consequently, a Parliament can act only when there is a general body of ideas in society which can be used. Tawney was helping his worker students generate such a body of ideas which could later be transformed into societal actions and eventually even into laws. Teaching can be a subversive activity.

An earlier 1912 entry revealed the disappointment he felt with the existing political situation: ‘[m]odern politics are concerned with the manipulation of forces and interest. Modern society is sick through the absence of a moral ideal. To try to cure this by politics is like mak [sic] surgical experiment on a man who is dying of starvation or who is poisoned by foul air.’ This pejorative view of politics was what led him to join the Labour Party in 1918 and to join in its transformation into a more effective parliamentary force that might become the political entity which could eventually change all of society.

163 Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, 284-5.
166 Ibid., 9.
Later, in his preparations for his 1930’s seminar ‘Economic and Social England, (1558-1640)’, he observed that history was concerned ‘not with a series of past events, but with the life of society and with the records of the past as a means to that end.’ Again, his focus was on all persons of all classes and all economic conditions. His history was not simply an account of the ‘great’. Indeed Green suggested

his socialism...[was] engaged in a self-conscious mission of philosophical restoration – that is, as being an attempt to reclaim for the modern world a superior wisdom in matters of understanding and regulating the conduct of human beings in society which its premodern precursors had once possessed and enjoyed.

Tawney clearly saw history as a branch of moral philosophy. Throughout its course, society struggled with ethical problems often created by ‘the attempts men have made to organize the production of wealth’. In a pre-Reformation era, the Church which helped to wrestle with such problems was regarded as a moral guide to the solutions. In a post-Reformation era, the Church appeared to lose that function, and became largely separated from the social problems of its people. Tawney sought to assist the Church to bridge the gap between these two eras.

The method he chose to pursue his philosophy of history was clear: he conveyed ideas to his students which he hoped they would use to bring about a new society. Ideas are powerful. They influence the whole political process all the way from voting, running for office, providing political platforms, and making laws. They alone change society. Tawney’s ideas helped to shape both the Labour Party after 1918 in its second guise, and to shape the Church of England towards a social reform orientation. Tawney’s life and career charted a moral course which others responded to with admiration, emulation and even irritation.

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167 Lectures on Seventeenth Century English History, c.1930-1940. Tawney I, BLPES, 5/2.
168 Ashton, ‘Tawney’, British Academy, 471.
169 Green, ‘the Tawney-Strauss Connection’, JMH, 272-3
171 See Chapter 4.
Tawney’s academic life was the microcosm of Tawney, the integrated man. As a teacher, he regarded expansion of knowledge and stretching of the human mind as a Christian project. As a writer and scholar, his works focussed on church recovery of its ancient social mission, on educational advance with its consequent growth of equality, and on the development of democracy, so inter-related to his educational mission. These concepts were at the heart of his life’s work.

Tawney’s academic legacy still survives today. Its creation began with the works he wrote for his early WEA tutorial students during a time when he began to keep a diary published in 1972 as *R.H. Tawney’s Commonplace Book*. His entries in the diary revealed some of the ideas he was later to develop both for ‘his century’ (1540-1640) and the twentieth century. His *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, following partially the approach of Weber, argued that the 1540-1640 period, with its transforming religious reformation, was a watershed in the relationship between morals and economics in English history. This thesis, well-accepted by historians both in England and abroad, was not strongly challenged until Elton condemned it in the 1960s in a highly personal, offensive tone. The other contentious work, ‘The Rise of the Gentry, 1540-1640’, also attracted criticism which led those noting the controversy to suggest that Tawney had not completely proven his case. Ashton concluded that ‘Tawney’s essay stands as a valiant endeavour rather than a fully-convincing achievement.’

Tawney as a stylist was exceedingly accomplished. Even those who took exception to his historical arguments acknowledged the beauty and vividness of his style. Elton and Collini both acknowledged its greatness. As a historian of thought, Collini, covering some new ground, attempted to discover why Tawney continued to have such a tenacious hold on Christians and people of the left. Perhaps, the very fact that this historian of a later generation had made such an

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effort to analyze Tawney’s work was an affirmation of the enduring reputation of this great advocate for the working classes.

Tawney’s friends, as part of a tribute to him on his eightieth birthday, suggested that ‘[h]e is the greatest of modern economic historians partly because, by some definitions he is not an economic historian at all.’ He pursued economic ideas but cast his net wide so that it included his entire society, including politics and education. In a sense, Tawney’s academic life stemmed from his attempts to teach WEA students. It was for them that his first sixteenth century book was written. In another sense, it was on behalf of the working classes in general that he wrote *The Acquisitive Society and Equality*. The need for workers to be treated equally deserved support. That is the reason Tawney became an educational reform advocate. His academic life and the educational provision for all of English society were intertwined.

Admired by colleagues at home and abroad, and revered by students, some of whom became prominent persons in their own right, such as A.P Wadsworth and A.H. Halsey, Tawney was showered with academic honours by institutions throughout the world. But despite the efforts of Americans to lure him to the University of Chicago, he preferred to stay in England. It was his home and academic milieu.

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174 One of his pre-war WEA students, Wadsworth, went on to become editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. 
Chapter 6
Politics: the Labour Party

When Tawney's life is examined, it becomes clear that it was a political life based on socialist ideology.1 Tawney's involvement in the Workers' Educational Association and in the campaign to reform state education were certainly political and ideological in nature. The chapter on his Christian Socialism traces a certain type of political idea to which Tawney was long committed. What then is left to consider? Quite a number of things which fill in gaps remain: his dual heritage from liberalism and socialism, his gradual embrace of the fledgling Labour Party, his contribution to government activities other than those covered by his WEA work and his state educational work, his personal means of influencing government, and a firm belief in democracy which did not waver when many of his colleagues and contemporaries were turning to communism in the 1930's, and his continuing role as a party intellectual.

The chapter follows Tawney's evolving ideology by first considering his inheritance from Liberalism, and his growing attachment to Socialism and the Labour Party; the twists and turns of the Labour Party's fortunes and Tawney's ongoing contribution to them; of his government work as a member of the Sankey Coal Commission in 1919 and finally his Second World War defence of Britain and democracy.

In 1925, Tawney wrote that the rise to prominence of a third party within little more than a generation was truly a phenomenon. Until this point, British society complacently regarded the two-party system as sacred and somehow immutable.2 Despite its origins in the working classes,

1 Ideology is 'a system of ideas or a way of thinking, usually relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions, especially one that is held implicitly or adopted as a whole and maintained regardless of the course of events'. Canadian Oxford Dictionary, ed. Katherine Barber, (Oxford University Press, Don Mills Ontario, 1998), 702.
the Labour Party 'never was revolutionary in method: it is, and will continue to be, revolutionary in aim.' Tawney speculated that the rise of this new Labour Party created a watershed by which new streams of social interests would shape the English political scene. Certainly, the attainment of political power by the working classes was a difficult breakthrough to achieve because of the stratification of English society. Although the party's formal establishment in 1900 began with the Labour Representation Committee, its replacement by the more politically-oriented Labour Party in 1906, and its reconstruction and move left in 1918, appeared to happen very quickly. In reality, however, the party had its roots in a broader labour movement of the nineteenth century.

Between 1867 and 1884, dates of reform bills according workers more voting rights, the working classes became conscious of themselves 'as a new order of society...having organized themselves for defence against the ruthless economic pressure involved in large scale industry before employers had admitted its evils or Parliament had blunted them by social legislation.' Workers who organized the Trades Union Congress in 1868 did not hesitate to run under the banner of the Liberals who were more compatible than the Conservatives. By the 1880s, the Liberal-working class arrangement was well-established, giving way to the unique Labour Party only at the beginning to the twentieth century. One issue that might have held back the formation of the new working class party was whether the Trades Union Congress ought to be political. Some of its members were convinced that it should not. Yet, since it was trade unions whose members would make up the majority ranks of a new party, the issue had to be settled. Socialist leaders needed to persuade workers to adopt the labour 'cause'. The 1901 Taff Vale decision of the House of Lords held that a 'trade union could be sued in its corporate entity', although that

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3 Ibid., 5.
4 Ibid., 17.
had never been the intention of the Act of 1871 which gave unions a secure legal position.\textsuperscript{6}

Workers saw that they must have their own political party to protect themselves from such decisions and interpretations.

Meanwhile, under the influence of such notable Liberal thinkers as Graham Wallis, L.W. Hobhouse, J.A. Hobson, and J.L. Hammond, the Liberal Party was injected with a new spirit which manifested itself in a group called the ‘New’ Liberals who upheld an emphasis on social legislation. The great pre-war bills were a consequence of their new advocacy and enthusiasm as well as of the rise of the labour movement. Under the Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, cabinet ministers Lloyd George and Churchill provided parliamentary leadership on social legislation that began to transform British society. Lloyd George with his ‘intuitive flair’ and support from influential ‘New’ Liberals such as C.P. Scott, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, Seebohm Rowntree, the great social surveyor, and Hobhouse himself, succeeded admirably. ‘His methods had the unanswerable virtue of success, sometimes under conditions which needed drastic remedies.’\textsuperscript{7}

According to Tawney, writing in 1939, the new Liberal government of 1906 was ‘the ablest of the last hundred years’, despite the fact that Liberals had been out of office for twelve years and were ‘commonly thought at the time to be so lacking in leading personalities and so divided in doctrine.’ These facts about the Liberal Government of 1906 made Tawney hopeful about the possibility of the Labour Party forming a government despite its factions and lack of well-known leaders.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{6} Tawney, Labour Movement, 27.
\textsuperscript{8} Lecture on democracy, 1939, Tawney I, British Library of Political and Economic Science, [henceforth BLPES], 15/1, 23.
In many ways, the ‘New’ Liberals and the Labour Party were similar. Clarke suggested the two groups were united by progressivism. Indeed, in the early years, it might have been difficult to distinguish between them because both were strongly in support of social legislation. Further, Gaus commented that ‘[t]he difference between “egalitarian liberal” and socialist theories of justice is often impossible to discern.’ The two drew up a pact in 1903. During an election, it would limit Labour intervention in some Liberal strongholds; and would ensure that Liberals did not run at all in constituencies where they historically failed. This arrangement worked well in the 1906 election which produced 29 seats for Labour and swept the Liberals to a majority government. The victorious Liberals had a new attitude toward finance, advocating the redistribution of wealth, a goal shared with both Fabians and moderate socialists. Of particular importance was taxing unearned income. Certainly, Tawney believed in these principles throughout his life. The conservatives of this era, on the other hand, wanted taxation based on benefit received, a policy not in keeping with the new spirit of reform.

Tawney entered into the reform debate in 1908 writing educational articles promoting child health and supporting some of the religious positions behind the Education Act of 1902. He was a reformer in transition, his position on religion being somewhat conservative but that on child health and welfare being more radical. He had, however, been educated in the tradition of liberalism under the tutelage of professors who had been students of T.H. Green, regarded in recent analysis as a reconciler between moral individualism and collective liberalism.

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9 The ‘New’ Liberals were a reform group within the Liberal Party which, like most parties, consisted of many factions.
12 Tanner, Political Change, 19.
13 Tawney, Labor Movement, 28.
15 See Chapter 7.
Certainly, Tawney's philosophy seemed to be based on this reconciling position. As Green wrote,

"To say that a 'right is a power claimed and recognized as contributory to the common good' is not to deny that it is crucial to an individual's development; rather it is to call attention to the fact that 'the perfection of human character' is 'also that of society'."

He advocated all his life that each worker was entitled to all democratic rights but also that all workers should act fraternally for the benefit of all.

Why did Tawney not become a member of the Liberal Party acting in concert with the 'New' Liberals? Were not their theorists the progressive thinkers inspiring social legislation? Did not the Liberals take the initiative on most social legislation in this pre-war period? Did not the few Labour Party members in parliament often follow the Liberal lead? Perhaps he was influenced by Tom Jones, a member of the Independent Labour Party with whom he worked under Professor William Smart in Glasgow from late 1906 to early 1908. Perhaps Tawney was perturbed by the inability of the Liberals to deliver a new education bill despite all their promises and efforts. More likely, he leaned towards the new party because it was dedicated exclusively to the betterment of the working classes whereas the Liberals drew strength from a much broader section of society. The workers were an important Liberal constituency but by no means the only one. Consequently, the political organizations he joined before the war were the Fabians in 1906 and the ILP in 1909. The Fabians were attractive because they had been for twenty years a social research group of great distinction. G.B. Shaw, Sidney Webb, and Graham Wallas had all been members from the mid 1880s. 'What gave it intellectual primacy among British socialist groups was the publication in 1889 of Fabian Essays in Socialism, edited by Shaw, with contributions by

17 T.H. Green, Lectures on the principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings, 19, in Gaus, 'Liberalism', Freedon, Ideologies, 20.
Shaw, Webb, Olivier, Wallas, William Clarke, Annie Besant and Hubert Bland.\textsuperscript{20} The Fabians supported the concept of graduated democratic permeation of party elites, bureaucratic planning and state paternalism. Although Tawney became a member of this prestigious group, his wider, more democratic view of society made him feel quite free to critique many of its main positions. He thought their concept of institutional socialism quite inadequate to deal with the great social conflicts in contemporary Britain. They were mistaken in prescribing ‘administrative remedies for moral disorders’.\textsuperscript{21} For him, the ‘key to social change lay in ideas’ rather than in organization. The Fabians ‘are inclined to go wrong’ by assuming that ‘you can trick statesmen into a good course of action, without changing their principles, and that by taking sufficient thought society can add several cubits to its stature. It can’t as long as it lives on the same spiritual diet.’\textsuperscript{22} It appeared to Tawney that the Fabians were addressing symptoms of social ills rather than root causes.

In 1909 when he joined the ILP, he described himself as a socialist in a letter to Mansbridge about the problem of admitting Richard Acland to the WEA executive committee. He argued that Acland as a well-known Liberal would come to dominate the committee and, thereby, interfere with the non-partisan approach Tawney believed the executive should follow. As a socialist himself, he was privy to many comments from WEA members of which Mansbridge was unaware. It was a worry that the influential socialists who made them might withdraw sympathy and support from the WEA.\textsuperscript{23} Was Tawney objecting to the intrusion of Liberalism but at the same time trying to defend socialism within the WEA? Was not he himself partisan?

\textsuperscript{23} Tawney to Mansbridge, 23 February 1909 (Rewley House Collection) in Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 45.
The socialism to which Tawney subscribed as a member of the ILP was of a very moderate kind. Martin Pugh, in describing the 1893 origins of the party, remarked that it displayed a certain flexibility absent from the SDF [Social Democratic Federation]; for it espoused a shrewd mixture of radical Liberal causes and current trade union demands. Also its members reflected much more closely the working class of provincial England, and its leaders, especially Keir Hardie, spoke a socialism of a moralistic, humanitarian, revivalist kind.24

This was an attractive formulation for Tawney. He was already a year into his WEA teaching which, as noted in earlier chapters, profoundly influenced his idea of the working man. This party that had a moral point of view and that dedicated itself entirely to improving the opportunities and conditions of the working class suited Tawney’s own views. These he emphasized in his pre-war diary.

What is needed for the improvement of society is not so much that men should have profound information as to the possible result of their actions, but that they should have a keen sense of right and wrong, that they should realize that the conceptions ‘right and wrong’ apply to all relations of life including those where their application is most inconvenient such as those of business, and that they should act on their knowledge.25

Even with this moderate programme the ILP, which succeeded in gaining representation in local politics, had difficulty replicating that success at the national level. Its subsequent inclusion in the Labour Representation Committee established in 1900 provided a new vehicle to achieve electoral success. As part of the LRC, it had mild but increasing success at the polls during the decade before the First World War. In 1895, just two years after its foundation, the twenty-eight ILP candidates won no seats but, in the General Election of 1906, seven of the ten ILP sponsored candidates won seats and eleven other newly-elected MPs were members of the

Some of this success may be attributed to the ever larger number of workers joining first the LRC and then its successor, the Labour Party. For Tawney, joining the ILP must have been a natural choice, since the working men with whom he so closely identified were doing the same. His socialism might be seen as part of a trend that was accelerating across Europe just as he was graduating from university and developing his own political and philosophical powers. Donald Sassoon has pointed out that 'socialism attracted all those who wanted to change the world and who refused to accept distress as the fated condition of human beings. This moral appeal was its strongest point.'

His trips to Germany between 1908 and 1910 influenced Tawney’s views on social legislation. There he saw a system in which the workhouse did not exist, in which money for the unemployed was paid to trade unions who distributed it to their unemployed workers, and in which no blame was attached to the character of the unemployed workers. This system also included ‘mandatory trade school attendance’, a provision he thought ought to be implemented in England. He concluded that it would be difficult to implement a similar system in Britain because systems were based on ideas, many of which were fixed in the British national consciousness from the previous hundred years. The conception of the poor as a duality consisting of the deserving and the undeserving, the latter being subject to the regulations of the Poor Law, a harsh penalizing system from which it was hard to escape, precluded the enlightened thinking so evident in Germany. Tawney’s submission to the Poor Law Commission in March 1908 reflected the favourable impressions made on him by the German system.

The Commonplace Book best reveals Tawney’s evolving socialism in the period 1912 to 1914. It began with a discussion between Tawney and his students. On 20 April 1912, Tawney

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28 He had an idealized view of what was extensive social control in the German system.
29 Winter, ‘Political Thought’, *Socialism*, 73.
asked ‘What’s the cause of labour unrest?’ There were varied responses including wages not keeping up with prices, the influence of Tom Mann on the workers, and the lack of equality in bargaining between employer and employees. The interaction showed the confidence of the workers in Tawney as well as his own interest in the details of their lives and reinforced his claim that he received his most important education from his worker-students. In the May entries of the diary, he asked if man’s increasing command over nature resulted in benefits for all classes equally? Here were to be found some of the seeds of his later inquiries into equality. He noted later in the month that a miner could not see why social institutions should not be adapted to the desires of workers. Here, his long campaign to open the benefits of the state school system at the secondary level might have been one response to this question. In short, his students, who kept him in touch with current social problems, caused him to reflect on his own position on the recent issues.

Tawney gave up most of his WEA tutorial work when he was appointed a director of the Ratan Tata Foundation, then under the leadership of Leonard Hobhouse. In 1913, Tawney left the north and moved to London, living for the first few months once again at Toynbee Hall. Later, he and Jeanette settled in Bloomsbury where they resided off and on for the next forty or so years. His inaugural lecture at the Foundation considered the modern problem of poverty. In it, he stressed that not only was the plight of the individual falling into poverty significant but also that the economic status of the whole group was important. He suggested that the only effective way to alleviate the misfortune of individuals was to improve the conditions for all workers within an industry. More attention needed to be paid to ‘large groups among them [who] derive a meagre, laborious, and highly precarious living from industries from which smaller groups appear to derive considerable affluence.’

part, for the entire society as well as each person in it. Deploring the Benthamite idea of the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' he asked if brutalizing working conditions for a small group to produce goods for a larger group would be acceptable? It was obviously a rhetorical question for 'no convenience can justify any oppression.' Tawney was working toward a 'Green-like' position in which he prized the economic rights of the individual but knew they could only be truly realized by raising the standards of the whole working class.

In June 1914, Tawney observed that a society must create a philosophy of life which in turn must be reflected in parliament. He hoped that the fledgling Labour Party might bring that idealistic approach to parliament. Yet, at this point he was not a member of the party proper, but only of one of its component groups, the ILP, individual membership not being possible until the reworking of the party constitution in 1918. However, he withdrew from the ILP in 1914 over its disapproval of British entry into the war. In November 1914, he lamented that the workers were settling for comfort instead of for their rights. In such an atmosphere, he believed that labour could be 'bought off by instalments of social reform'. His partial disillusion with the working class was becoming evident, a state of mind that would only be exacerbated during the war.

In August 1914, when the government declared war, Arthur Henderson and the Labour Party supported the Liberals in their stand against the invasion of Belgium. Ramsay MacDonald and the ILP, on the other hand, did not, thus forcing the party into the position of principal parliamentary opposition to the government throughout the war. Henderson actually joined the coalition government in June 1915, remaining until the Stockholm conference incident in August

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33 Ibid., and Snowden to Tawney, 16 November 1918, Tawney/Vyvyan 48, BPLES.
34 Ibid., and Journal, Tawney/Vyvyan 28, and Commonplace Book, 80. Here Tawney has been discussing the way in which cheaper municipal services might lull the workers into complacence.
35 Dowse, Left in the Centre, 20.
1917. Tawney’s war position here was clear. He sided with the bulk of the Labour Party, volunteering for service himself.

Although much of Tawney’s wartime assessment of society has already been discussed, his political ideas and actions of that era need additional attention. He fully supported the work being done in 1917 by Webb and Henderson to reform the structure of the Labour Party. By October, he determined that he and his friends ought to stand for parliament. Soon enough, he was a member of several new Labour Party committees. Having written movingly about the war during his active service, he afterwards reflected and wrote of its possible impact on the life of his society. He belonged with a large group of writers and intellectuals who believed that ‘[t]he war contributed to the growth of the socialist parties. Change and innovation – as so often happens – were immeasurably accelerated by the war... [t]he new situation favoured “new” political parties.’ In the 1918 election, the Labour Party had begun to benefit from this developing trend.

Why did Tawney now become so active in the Labour Party? Before the war, he had certainly belonged to both the Fabian Society and the ILP, but took no leading part in their decision-making processes. Donald Sassoon has suggested that socialist parties had emerged from the war as ‘legitimate’ national forces. The working man proved his patriotism and worth by fighting for his country. He felt more entitled to have his say in things. Tawney, a great champion of the workers, was clearly of that cast of mind. As well, he felt more in tune with the

36 Henderson decided to attend the international conference of socialists at Stockholm when he concluded that its discussions might be the only chance to keep Russia in the war. He resigned when the British cabinet disapproved of his decision. Winter, ‘Socialism and Political Independence: the Formulation of the 1918 Labour Party Constitution and Programme’, Socialism, 254.
37 See Chapter 2.
39 Ibid., 30 October 1917, 38.
40 Sasson, One Hundred Years, 42.
41 Labour went from 6.4% of the vote and 42 seats in 1910 to 20.8% of the vote and 57 seats in 1918. Peter Clarke, Appendix, ‘Government and elections, 1895-1990’, Hope and Glory, 406.
42 Sassoon, One Hundred years, 42.
Labour Party since its 1918 renaissance which he had helped shape. The party, once more unified, accepted a new constitution in September 1918, which featured an espousal of socialism, a doctrine which set it apart from all other parties and which proposed to mitigate the inequities that capitalism often produced. Clause Four stated it was essential

[t]o secure for the producers by hand or brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of Common Ownership of the Means of Production and the best possible system of popular administration and control of each industry or service;...  

Tawney, for whom equality and the rights of the working man were primary, felt encouraged by the new party stand.  

This appeared to be an opportune moment for Labour to distinguish itself politically. The Liberals had split into two main camps during the war, thus dangerously eroding both their electoral chances and their party organization. Henderson and MacDonald saw the deteriorating Liberal position as a unique opportunity to acquire new recruits. Labour was beginning to be the stronger party on social reform because Lloyd George's reform efforts were hampered by the strong conservative component of his wartime coalition. Conditions were allowing Labour to begin to supplant the Liberals as the progressive party. Subsequent elections would confirm this newly-emerging Labour status.

Another condition that made Tawney feel more at home within the restructured Labour party was the new respect manifested for intellectuals. Before the war, even the concept of 'intellectual' was regarded as a pejorative term within labour circles. The war situation and the need to create a successful socialist party convinced the Labour leadership that the intellectuals

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43 LPEC minutes, July 1917, draft constitution, in J.M. Winter, 'Socialism and Political Independence', Socialism, 259-60. This clause was included verbatim in the final draft of the constitution.
45 Dowse, Left in the Centre, 32-34. In 1918, the ILP and the Labour Party came together again when the new constitution was being drafted, but the ILP remained an uneasy partner because it had lost much of its power on the National Executive Committee as a result of constitutional changes.
46 Pugh, British Politics, 160.
47 Winter, 'Impact', Socialism, 272.
must be consulted and their views incorporated into the new constitution. While in cabinet, Henderson saw the importance of specialists offering advice.48 Sydney Webb, R.H. Tawney, and G.D.H. Cole emerged from this process as the chief party advisors, the dominating influences on the new committees, and the principal figures in British socialist writing in the following decade.49

The year 1918 was politically exhilarating for those on the left. The Liberal decline set the stage for Labour to chart its own course. The expanded union movement and the possibilities of support from an increased electorate offered the Labour Party the promise of an increased number of MPs in the next election. No doubt, this improving climate for socialism influenced Tawney to run in the constituency of Rochdale, an area strongly connected with his WEA work. He was not elected in the December General Election but friends like Arthur Greenwood were.50

Even before the war ended, Tawney, was doing significant government work as a member of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction.51 Its Final and Interim Reports were published in 1919 in what some have seen as a pivotal year in Tawney’s career as a public figure. Terrill believed that Tawney’s position on the Coal Commission led to his emergence into the national consciousness.52 The commission was Lloyd George’s method of deflecting a threatened strike of the miners, who promised to remain at work while the commission sat. C.L. Mowat suggested that Lloyd George was playing for time and that he hoped to dampen the popularity of ‘the postwar tendencies towards collectivism’ by so doing.53

When the Prime Minister held a private meeting in February at Lord Haldane’s house54 to discuss

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49 Ibid., 270.
50 Further discussion of Tawney and elections occurs on 188-9.
51 See Chapters 1 and 8.
52 Terrill, Tawney, 53.
53 C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940, (London Methuen and company Ltd, 1955), 30.
the membership of the commission with Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Sidney mentioned G.D.H. Cole several times as a prospective member but secretly hoped that he himself would also be selected. In the end, Webb, Chiozza Money and Tawney were chosen to represent the miners who regarded them as acceptable. Tawney had worked with miners in the Midlands before the war. At the time, he corresponded with several miners about working conditions. More importantly, he and Cartwright had founded the North Stafford Miners Higher Education Movement that enabled miners to be educated by students from Tawney's Longton class. Hence, he was in a position to represent them with confidence and authority.

Beatrice Webb became convinced of his talents when, after a March visit to the proceedings, she remarked: 'Tawney raises the whole discussion to the highest planes of moral rectitude and sweet reasonableness.' This remark was one of a series of observations in which she noted that representatives of the miners had more intellectual ability and power of argument than the representatives of the owners. Later, in June, she concluded that Judge Sankey came to rely more and more on Sidney Webb and Tawney as the lack of proper preparation and arguments by the owners and their representatives made the final days of the hearings exasperating and exhausting. When they were finished, Beatrice reported that 'Sidney has come out of the

55 The Webbs were Britain's most famous socialist couple. Sidney was an early leading light of the Fabian Society and a chief formulator of the new Labour Party constitution of 1918, *Labour and the New Social Order*. Beatrice was a leading figure of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, writing its *Minority Report* in 1909.
57 Sir Leo George Chiozza Money (1870-1944), was a 'New' Liberal MP who even before the First World War was advocating nationalization for some industries. He held a number of minor posts in the government of Lloyd George during the war. In 1918, he became a Labour Party member, but failed to be elected under his new allegiance.
59 Terrill, *Tawney*, 54.
60 *Ibid.*, 45-6. Cartwright was the secretary of the WEA Longton tutorial class.
61 *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, 22 February 1919, 337.
Commission with a great admiration for Tawney, for his personal charm, his quiet wisdom, and his rapier-like intellect. Tawney has, in fact been the great success of the Commission.  

Tawney wrote two pieces about the commission, the first in 1919 as a pamphlet for the Labour Party, and the second, in 1924, as a lecture delivered to an American audience. These works made the case for nationalization of the coal mining industry on the basis of justice and of the miners' health, for consumers' benefit and for efficiency via economies of scale. Tawney in the 1924 lecture, asserted that

the Labour Movement is committed to considering at least the policy of nationalization. As we stand today, we have to conserve our resources, to eliminate waste, and to draw the public spirit and professional pride of the workmen into the development of the industry. We can do that only on the ground that their industry is a public service, and that, in the conduct of it, they stand in a position of responsible partnership with the community.

Although Justice Sankey recommended nationalization, which included centralization of administration and production within a region, transparency of finances, collective ownership of equipment, and distribution of coal by Local Authorities, the government chose not to implement the Report. These recommendations were accepted by only seven out of thirteen members on the Commission, this close vote being the government's excuse for rejecting implementation. Yet, even in early 1920, Lloyd George still seemed to be considering nationalization of the mines. Tom Jones recorded that the Prime Minister 'asked to see Sankey with a view to his producing a report which left the door open for nationalization.' Discussion followed in cabinet but no action in favour of nationalization occurred. Not until the Attlee government of the post Second World War era, were most of these Sankey Report suggestions implemented. Tawney learned that socialist intellectual victories were hollow in matters of

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63 Ibid., 344.
64 Tawney, Labour Movement, 93.
66 C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 34.
economic and social justice. He came to believe that only a socialist party with a majority would really change conditions for his society.\textsuperscript{68}

Tawney did considerable education work for the Labour Party in the 1920s. His book, *Secondary Education for All*, which had been commissioned by the party’s Advisory Committee on Education,\textsuperscript{69} played its part in the election campaign of 1923 and might have been instrumental in the electoral results\textsuperscript{70} which allowed the Labour Party to form its first government, albeit a minority and a short-lived one. His contributions to the Labour Party continued throughout the 1920s. He persevered in standing for parliament, twice in 1922 at Tottenham and once in 1924 at Swindon, but failed to be elected each time. Undeterred, he continued his intellectual and propaganda work for the party.

Why did Tawney stand for Parliament so many times and why did he fail? His first attempt was made at Rochdale, a town where he was remembered for his WEA tutorial classes. His candidacy there was recommended by the local ILP and was encouraged by W.A. Firth, an active member of the local branch of the party.\textsuperscript{71} Yet, Tawney’s actions in the campaign did not entirely please the party executive. Philip Snowden of the NAC\textsuperscript{72} of the ILP wrote on 16 November that Tawney’s failure to attend a meeting suggested that

you do not attach much importance to your candidature for Rochdale or to the necessity of satisfactory arrangement with the organization which nominated you, or you would not have considered a committee meeting of the Ministry of Reconstruction of more importance\textsuperscript{73}

Tawney’s campaign was off to a rocky start. Further, in his election speech on 8 December, he asserted that ‘I am in favour of making Germany pay full reparation to the countries she has

\textsuperscript{68} Terrill, *Tawney*, 56.
\textsuperscript{69} See Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{70} See Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{71} Firth to Tawney, 16 November 1918, Tawney/Vyvyan 41, BLPES.
\textsuperscript{72} National Administrative Committee
\textsuperscript{73} Snowden to Tawney, 16 November 1918. Tawney/Vyvyan 48, BLPES.
ravaged. I am not in favour of imposing on Germany the cost of the war.\textsuperscript{74} This was an unpopular view in the aftermath of the war. During that 1918 campaign, Tawney did not have the advantage of being part of the Lloyd George Coalition\textsuperscript{75} which swept to victory with 523 seats and 53.2\% of the votes. Although Labour received 20.8\% of the popular vote, a marked increase over 1910, only 57 Labour MPs were returned.\textsuperscript{76}

He stood for Tottenham twice in 1922, once in a by-election and once in the General Election,\textsuperscript{77} but by the time of the second candidacy he was extremely ill. In late September, he was in the hospital where he underwent an operation. Letters of shock and offers of assistance poured into Jeanette Tawney’s home from all over. His friends and colleagues at LSE, Lillian Knowles and Eileen Power, assured Jeanette that they would cover Tawney’s classes and would ensure that he continued to be paid as well.\textsuperscript{78} Harold Laski wrote to a friend that he feared Tawney might die.\textsuperscript{79} Therefore, he had little opportunity for campaigning. But in 1924, a somewhat more favourable time for Labour, he again failed to win a seat. Was his campaigning style at fault? Opinions varied on this question.\textsuperscript{80} His position as an academic, or the incongruity of being from the upper middle class elite and yet standing for the Labour Party, primarily a working class party, might have worked against him in all four of these elections.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Rochdale Observer}, 11 December 1918, in Winter, ‘The Impact of the First World War’, \textit{Socialism}, 177. Tawney’s declaration was in keeping with the policy of the Labour Party which didn’t wish to inflict undue punishment on Germany. MacDonald had said of the Treaty of Versailles with its reparations clause that ‘We are beholding an act of madness unparalleled in history.’ \textit{The Labour Leader}, May 1919 in David Marquand, \textit{Ramsay MacDonald}, (London, Jonathan Cape 1977), 250.
\textsuperscript{77} Tawney did rather better in the election of November 1922 standing second with 8241 votes, just 1600 votes behind the winning Unionist candidate. ‘Election Results’, \textit{The Times}, November 17, 1922.
\textsuperscript{78} Knowles and Power to Jeanette Tawney, 25 September 1922, Tawney/Vyvyan 3, BLPES.
\textsuperscript{80} He told friends who asked him to speak on their behalf that he was an ‘electoral jonah’, yet ‘a Tory agent told his faithful not to ask questions at his campaign meetings, so effective were his replies.’ Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 63.
Meantime, Tawney began working on the Hadow Commission of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education in 1924 and continued as a principal writer of its recommendations which were published in December 1926.\textsuperscript{81} By then, much Labour policy so confidently offered in \textit{Labour and the New Social Order} in 1918 was out of date, partly because of deteriorating economic conditions. New policies were necessary. The party leadership invited the intellectuals to play a co-operative role in shaping them.\textsuperscript{82} By 1924, the TUC leadership had ensured that the power of advisory committees, staffed mostly by intellectuals from the ILP, was much diminished.\textsuperscript{83} Tawney, however, remained in favour with the Labour leadership. After MacDonald had prepared a campaign document, he asked Tawney to redraft it. This second draft was circulated, amended and accepted by the NEC by a vote of 10 to 8.\textsuperscript{84} What is interesting is how many historians ascribe the draft to Tawney, overlooking its more intricate origin.\textsuperscript{85}

Approved by the Labour conference at Birmingham in October 1928 as \textit{Labour and the Nation}, it thereafter became an influential part of the Labour election campaign in the spring of 1929, an election which resulted in Labour’s second minority Government. Ramsay MacDonald introduced the policy statement as a ‘survey of wrongs to be righted’, thus producing a ‘formidable list’ of tasks ‘both weighty and numerous’ which a Labour government would undertake once in office.\textsuperscript{86} Tanner regarded the document as partly based on the experiences of minority government in 1924 and partly on growing success in running local governments which successful Labour candidates had increasingly come to control.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{81} See Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{83} McKibbin, \textit{Labour Party}, 221.
\textsuperscript{84} David Marquand, \textit{Ramsay MacDonald}, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1977), 479.
It was at once idealistic and pragmatic. On the one hand, '[i]t speaks, not as the agent of this class or that, but as the political organ created to express the needs and voice the aspirations of all who share in the labour which is the lot of mankind'.88 One must be idealistic to be so confident of representing all of labour, surely a very diverse group. On the other hand, it wished to 'reduce the supply of workers competing for jobs in an overcrowded labour market by the withdrawal of those whose services can best be spared.'89 This was an obvious reference to the raising of the school age to fifteen, and later to sixteen, a quite practical aim for a government of firm resolve which was aware of the trends in public opinion towards further schooling for teenagers. This was also a clear reflection of the views of Tawney, a prominent drafter of the platform, and a leading member of the LPACE which advocated educational reform. The major tasks were discussed under the following headings: Industrial Legislation, Unemployment, the Development of Industry and Trade, Agriculture and Rural Life, the Development of the Social Services, Education and the Care of Childhood, Financial Policy, International Peace and Co-operation, The British Commonwealth of Nations, and Political Democracy. A reading of the document reveals further echoes of Tawney's convictions and those of the LPACE in its emphasis on government 'Betrayal of the Children' on whom the nation's future depended and on whom very little of the national wealth was spent90 and government 'Betrayal of the Ratepayer' on whom the government had been downloading its financial burdens. In 1925, the Unemployment Insurance Act, for instance, allowed the cost of maintaining unemployed workers to be foisted onto the local rates.91

The Labour platform denounced the Liberal Party as well as the governing Conservatives. 'It was a Coalition of Liberals and Conservatives with a Liberal Prime Minister at its head, which made the disastrous Treaties of Peace....It was a Coalition of Liberals and

88 Labour and the Nation, 5.
89 Ibid., 19.
90 Ibid., 8.
91 Ibid., 9.
Conservatives which betrayed the Miners in 1919. The document reasserted Labour principles established in the 1918 restructuring, among which were protection for workers and consumers, the increase in national wealth through science and technology, use of surplus wealth to enrich the whole society and not just the small already rich minority, ‘the extension of common provision for the common requirements of a civilized existence’ and the constant pursuit of peace and international co-operation.

Andrew Chadwick’s opinion of Labour and the Nation, that it was ‘a curious combination of comprehensive, but vague, long-term socialist goals and short term pragmatism’ that ‘reflected internal divisions between the moderate leadership and the ILP’ seems reasonable. He believed that it ‘further tightened’ the ‘leadership’s hold’ over the difficult to manage ILP. He saw it also as ‘reflecting confusion of socialist intellectuals such as R.H. Tawney, its principal author’ because although the party had somewhat departed from ‘the heady optimism of 1918’ he still wanted ‘to retain its core emphasis on state action to promote equality’. This criticism should have been aimed at the Party leadership rather than Tawney whose role, according to Marquand, was to produce a second draft which was then redrafted by MacDonald and Henderson. Obviously one purpose of Labour and the Nation was to put the ILP in its place. It was too left wing for the moderate Party leadership.

The Labour Party increasingly supported educational reform after the Education Act of 1918 failed, and the hopes of working class parents for the education of their children were dashed. Tawney’s Manchester Guardian articles played a part in keeping the failure of the implementation of the Act and its subsequent consequences before the public. Since Tawney had

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92 Ibid., 11.
93 Described as education, public health, housing, pensions, and unemployment maintenance.
94 Labour and the Nation, 14.
96 Ibid.
97 Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, 479.
also contributed to the progressive *Labour and the Nation*, it is easy to understand the optimism with which he greeted the Labour electoral victory of 1929. He, Charles Trevelyan, the President of the Board of Education, and other stakeholders were confident of a successful education bill. While the matter of the failed education bills is covered in some detail elsewhere,\(^98\) it is worth looking at the total context of the Labour Party victory, its short period of government and its eventual demise in 1931 to weigh fully the disappointment of Tawney and other educational reformers.

After the failure of the General Strike of 1926, the party moved more to the right and more firmly behind the leadership of MacDonald. Even his disparagement of the ILP programme caused no serious trouble in the party as a whole, perhaps because there was a firm determination to win the next election and eradicate the punitive legislation against strikes implemented by the Conservatives. When the conference approved *Labour and the Nation*, there was little thought that its economic ideas might not be innovative enough to deal with a serious crisis. Its 1928 publication coincided with the publication of the Liberal Party’s Yellow Book, *Britain’s Industrial Future*, a document that contained just such economic innovation. The brains behind this Lloyd George-sponsored plan were Keynes, Beveridge, and Hobson, as well as Manchester radicals like E.D. Simon and Ramsay Muir.\(^99\)

The need for the government to have expert economic advice was clear during the First World War, when an eminent economist like J.M Keynes was seconded to the Treasury where he became the head of a division ‘concerned with external finance and subsequently became the principal Treasury adviser at the Peace Conference at Versailles.’\(^100\) Until 1930, however, the government’s methods of acquiring economic expert advice was either through a Royal

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\(^{98}\) See Chapter 8.


Commission or by some 'ad hoc' means. During the twenties, the idea of instituting within the government an economic staff and of bringing together in one permanent body representatives of both capital and labour was increasingly discussed. The campaigns of the parties in the general elections echoed ideas of this sort. Ramsay MacDonald as the new Prime Minister in 1929 was the receptive heir to these ideas. He established the Economic Advisory Council in February 1930 to provide ongoing expert advice to the government. Its members fell into three categories, consisting of first, the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Privy Seal, President of the Board of Trade, and Minister of Agriculture; second, any other ministers the Prime Minister required; and third, persons with 'special knowledge and experience of industry and economics.'

Under this third category fifteen persons were appointed falling roughly into three groupings: industrialists and bankers, trade union officials, economists and a historian. Among eminent persons in this third category were Sir Arthur Balfour, Ernest Bevin, Walter Citrine, G.D.H. Cole, J.M. Keynes, Sir Josiah Stamp and R.H. Tawney. This Council was supposed to 'make continuous study of developments in trade and industry and in the use of national and imperial resources, of the effect of legislation and fiscal policy at home and abroad, and of all aspects of national imperial and international economy with a bearing on the prosperity of the country.'

Tawney's record at the early EAC meetings was two-fold. At the second meeting of the Council, he moved that 'the exclusion of the currency issue (at least in so far as it referred to schemes of capital development) was removed' from the deliberations. Moggridge said that no one knows whether or not this was done at the instigation of the Labour Party. He also believed

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101 Ibid., 24.
102 Ibid.
103 Treasury minute relating to the establishment of the Economic Advisory Council CMD., 3478, 27 January 1930, Ibid., 1.
that Tawney was on the Council ‘for his political rather than his academic role’. His second contribution was as a member of one of the committees set up by the Council. This was the Committee on Agricultural Policy chaired by E.D. Simon. It held 9 meetings between the 13 May and 7 July 1930 and issued a report on this latter date. During its meetings, the matter of protective tariffs was contentious. The Committee said that ‘it could not recommend a policy which would place agriculture on a peculiar footing and extend to it state assistance which is denied to other depressed basic industries’. Keynes criticized the report for failing to include what Howson and Winch called ‘the long-run trend for agricultural prices and the future prospects of British agriculture.’

Although Terrill dismissed the EAC as ‘star-studded’ but ‘ineffective’, Howson and Winch concluded that it had been under-estimated. They believed that although its reports did not influence in the short run, they did so in the long run, and proved an instrument for conveying the views of Keynes and others to the politicians and civil servants.

The economic and fiscal crises that confronted the Labour government in its short tenure were so severe, that the rigid economic orthodoxy of Chancellor Snowden had failed to provide solutions. He was never open to the innovative ideas of the EAC. MacDonald’s insistence on backing the Chancellor completely made Labour’s downfall inevitable. In addition, the government’s gradualist approach to solving problems could never master a catastrophe of this magnitude. It was as if the leadership was unable ‘to think on its feet’, or to rise to the calamitous

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104 The original topics of discussion for the Council, prepared by the Committee on Economic Outlook (1930), excluded issues connected with currency. Therefore, the quote means that currency issues were included in the discussion. Donald Moggridge, *Maynard Keynes: An Economist’s Biography*, (London, Routledge, 1992), fn. ‘r’, 495.
106 Ibid.
107 Terrill, *Tawney*, 72.

occasion. The unity so evident in 1929 had fractured by 1931, the labour unions considering the leadership as having betrayed the workers, and part of the left despairing of party principles ever being pursued. Failing to follow either socialist ideas or the new Keynesian economics, the second Labour Government behaved economically very much like its predecessor in office. The summer of 1931 saw the government responding to the fragile international banking situation with budget balancing measures that, among a series of measures, called for a ten per cent cut in unemployment benefits, a change rejected by the TUC. The consequent fall of the Labour Government, the formation of the National Government, and the split in the Labour Party are well known. In 1939, Tawney would declare that the crisis of 1931 had little to do with ‘the reckless expenditure of the Labour Government’ and more to do with the business world wishing ‘to ascribe to the extravagance of a Government....embarrassments arising from the blunders of that world itself.’

The fall of the Labour Government caused Tawney to consider his options. It was clear that the government, even if it had been enthusiastic about the educational bills, was submerged by economic matters which quickly turned into a political deluge. He felt strongly enough about the course the Labour Party should follow in the future, to argue eloquently for reform and a return to acting on principles in his 1932 article ‘The Choice Before the Labour Party’.

After the fall of the second Labour Government and the establishment of the National Government under Ramsay MacDonald, the remainder of the Labour Party under George Lansbury was determined to act decisively. It intended never to suffer another such devastating blow and took several steps to prevent such a repetition. First, a number of think-tanks and research groups were created, among them the New Fabian Research Bureau founded

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110 Lecture on Democracy, 1939, Tawney I, BPLES, 15/1.
111 Only fifteen Labour MPs left the Party with MacDonald. This left 272 Labour MPs in opposition but those numbers were dramatically reduced to 52 in the October 1931 General Election.
by G.D.H. Cole to supplement the sluggish Fabian society while in the trades union movement, Citrine and Bevan made plans to make the unions even more central to the party. Finally, the party launched major membership recruitment and propaganda drives.\textsuperscript{112}

One can see from these post-1931 plans a strategy to produce ideas regularly, to disseminate them through a variety of media, and to increase a receptive grassroots membership. By the end of the decade, this strategy proved reasonably successful. But all was not smooth sailing. Arthur Henderson who had replaced MacDonald as leader was succeeded after the Fall election by George Lansbury. He was in turn replaced by Clement Attlee at the Brighton conference in 1935. Lansbury’s pacifism had put him in conflict with some of the TUC leaders who were increasingly concerned with the rise of fascism in Europe.\textsuperscript{113}

In addition, Labour’s various factions continued to be especially divisive during the 1930s. The ILP had become more radical than the party leadership in the late 1920s, when its proposed policies clashed with those of the leadership at the 1928 party conference. Other major left-wing groups that emerged in the depression era to challenge the mainstream of the party were the constituencies movement, the Socialist League,\textsuperscript{114} and the Left Book Club. The constituencies movement succeeded eventually in acquiring more representation on the NEC for local Labour parties.\textsuperscript{115} The Socialist League devoted much of its energy to establishing a ‘united front’ with other groups on the left in order to fight fascism. Unfortunately, it began to identify too closely with the British Communist Party to suit the NEC. It ultimately dissolved when faced with a choice of doing so or jeopardizing the party membership of League activists. The Left Book Club was astonishingly successful in publishing and selling many books expressing various

\textsuperscript{112} Tanner, ‘Labour Movement’, \textit{Early Twentieth Century Britain}, 49.
\textsuperscript{114} Ben Pimlott, \textit{Labour and the Left in the 1930s}, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), 42.
\textsuperscript{115} Pimlott, \textit{Labour and the Left}, 112.
ideas on the left, some of them communistic. The Labour Party found that in the first year of club books, fifteen out of twenty-seven books were written by communists. In fact, Gollancz, the principal founder wrote in July 1936 that he intended to ‘win the maximum number of members and frighten the minimum’.\textsuperscript{116} The Party’s hostility to communism appeared vindicated in 1939 with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The positive side of the club was, according to John Strachey, another of its founders, that a more informed political readership was evolving. Such informed citizens had long been a goal of Tawney and the WEA. With a more enlightened view of the left, these readers might influence others to reconsider electoral choices. Strachey later claimed that the club paved the way for the Labour victory of 1945.\textsuperscript{117}

By the middle 1930s, the Parliamentary Labour Party had begun to consider seriously the economic ideas of Keynes. TUC leaders also found these attractive especially when they saw how the New Deal under Roosevelt was transforming America. Moreover, some of these ideas had appeared in the \textit{Liberal Yellow Book}, a document which failed to regenerate the electoral hopes of the Liberals, but subsequently influenced economic thinking and planning both at home and abroad. Within the TUC, there was a strong desire to boost employment and demand.\textsuperscript{118} British workers suffering from government policy of the 1920s and from the breakdown of international trade were weary of unemployment. The TUC was anxious to implement policy that would improve opportunities for its membership. Keynes, however, in devising his policies was not interested in promoting socialism. His ideas were ‘intended to revitalize capitalism not to replace it’; they weren’t intended as the road to socialism.\textsuperscript{119} He ignored the moral claims of socialism, so dear to the heart of Tawney. To Keynes, inequality must be reduced because it was inefficient. He favoured the free market but accepted government intervention in serious circumstances. Labour, on the other hand, promoted a centrally-controlled economy so as to

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, 155.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}, 161.
\textsuperscript{118} Pugh, \textit{British Politics}, 234.
\textsuperscript{119} Pimlott, \textit{Labour and the Left}, 39.
distribute wealth equally. At this time, however, the Labour leadership hopes and Keynes' ideas seemed to coincide. The idea of a large programme of public works suited Labour's desire for full employment and Keynes' desire for reduced inequality.

Tawney, in accord with the Labour leadership at the time of the 1929 election, was disillusioned with the debacle of 1931 and its consequences for the Labour Party. He therefore urged the party to make a 'more speedy transition to socialism' in 1932.\textsuperscript{120} This message was at the heart of his article, 'The Choice before the Labour Party', alluded to above.\textsuperscript{121} It was published first by the Socialist League in 1933, and the following year printed by the Political Quarterly. He was a member of the League along with many other intellectual leaders of the time.\textsuperscript{122} Terrill, however, claimed that '[i]f he joined the Socialist League, he was hardly, like Stafford Cripps, a crusader for it.'\textsuperscript{123} What does the article actually reveal about Tawney's views?

He chastised the Labour government of 1929-1931 for failing to live dangerously. It played the 'role of the obsequious apprentice'.\textsuperscript{124} Its problem was 'lack of creed'; it was 'hesitant in action because divided in mind.'\textsuperscript{125} Since it had spent so much effort aping capitalism, too little had been done to persuade ordinary citizens of the benefits of socialism. Most party support came from the mass support of societies and constituencies, neither of which were genuinely devoted to socialist principles. Furthermore, most programmes were not programmes at all but a collection of 'miscellaneities'.\textsuperscript{126} How could supporters advocate socialism when the party's priorities were not sorted out? Yes, this was a Labour Party but not yet a socialist party.

\textsuperscript{121} See Chapter 9 for a fuller discussion.
\textsuperscript{122} Pimlott, \textit{Labour and the Left}, 42.
\textsuperscript{123} Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 78.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 57.
To become one, it needed to agree to three kinds of things: the type of society to be established, the nature of the obstacles to be overcome, and the methods to do the first two things. Tawney believed that Labour had concentrated on the third to the neglect of the first and second. A socialist party must have socialist goals in mind which once in power, it was willing to implement. Fear of the opposition must be cast aside. Naturally, there would be opposition, but it could generally be dealt with if there was the will. Undoubtedly, Tawney was annoyed with a government that failed to live up to its campaign document to which he had so strongly contributed. The failure of the education bills in which he had a decade-long vested interest was particularly disappointing.

When Steven Lukes examined this article in 1984, he believed it contained a message for the Labour Party of the eighties but his analysis could equally well apply to Tawney’s own time. Lukes believed Tawney’s lessons were threefold: antifatalism, or the confidence that society could be changed; the spirit of socialism, or the ‘body of convictions as resolute and informed as the opposition in front of it’; and the socialist objective itself, that is the ‘coherent and compelling statement of essentials that still captures much of what distinguishes a socialist from a liberal perspective.’ Wright commented on this very distinction in his Fabian essay of 1984. ‘Tawney’s discussion of equality in terms of equal worth and social solidarity has different foundations from a liberal approach concerned with identifying the criteria of fairness and social justice.... Tawney’s approach to equality is (to use Terrill’s terms) relational not calculative, “algebraic” not “arithmetical”’. This article, therefore, pointed to the fact that Tawney was to the left of the party leadership, primarily because it had not implemented any of the major promises of its platform. In 1932, Tawney was in accord with the left wing segments of the party challenging the leadership.

127 Ibid., 58-9.
In 1934, Tawney once more helped to draft a party policy paper, the 1935 election manifesto, *For Socialism and Peace*[^10] on which Hugh Dalton is said to have exerted a considerable influence. Dalton, in fact, examined the elements of the policy paper in his 1935 work, *Practical Socialism for Britain* which argued that ‘planning under capitalism was possible and...could speed up the transition to socialism’.[^11] In the policy document ‘an ambitious list’ of sectors were proposed for nationalization including coal, gas, electricity, water, transport, agriculture, iron and steel, shipping and shipbuilding, engineering, textiles, chemicals, insurance, and banking. Later, this list was reduced to ‘a more limited selection of public utilities and ailing industries where opposition to public ownership from vested interests was likely to be slight.’[^12]

Tawney, once more advocating implementation of socialism in keeping with his 1932 article, must have been hopeful that the party would indeed be courageous enough to fulfil its electoral promises should it once more be elected to power. In the 1935 election, the National Government retained its majority, but the Labour Party won 154 seats, up 102 over the 1931 election. Was the party’s revised policy becoming more believable, or even appealing? Or, since the worst of the depression had peaked by 1935, was the electorate simply returning to a more balanced view of who should govern?[^13]

Many historians present the events of the early 1930s as a difficult and depressing experience for the Labour Party, as in some ways it doubtless was. Pugh, however, saw the germs of a brighter future in some of these events. The defeat of many of the old leadership and the defections of MacDonald and his coterie made room for a new leadership. Lansbury, the only surviving Labour MP to have been a cabinet minister, soon became the leader, a position he retained for four years, and Attlee became the deputy-leader. With this changing of the guard,

[^10]: Terrill, Tawney, 122.
[^12]: Pugh, *British Politics*, 234.
[^13]: See Chapter 9 for more about the election of 1935 and its issues.
rising stars such as Morrison, Dalton, and Aneuran Bevan emerged. Union membership, so critical to the health of the party, revived from its period of decline. These factors eventually strengthened the party sufficiently to deal with the challenge of the left wing factions.

By then, Tawney had been a socialist for over twenty-five years, since his WEA teaching days before the First World War. His writing reflected views to the left of the party leadership and yet he worked with the leaders to produce party platforms in both the 1920s and 1930s. Was he inconsistent or was there an explanation? The documents which he drafted were moderately left and the party conferences espoused them. Yet, the leadership tended not to promote them. For that matter, many parties in power don’t follow their campaign platforms. A logical conclusion is that both Tawney and the conferences were to the left of the Labour leadership. Did the leadership use his services because of his writing abilities or because of his record of service to the party? Whatever their reasons, Tawney was respected by most elements of the party, either left or right. Much of the right was the TUC leadership with its strong presence on the NEC. Tawney had worked through the WEA with trade unionists for thirty years. Therefore, to some extent the trade union movement regarded him as one of their own. Nevertheless, significant TUC figures like Citrine have little to say about Tawney. In his autobiography, Citrine mentions that he met Halifax and Tawney, ‘the well-known sociologist and educationist’ in Washington D.C. in 1942 where the three of them discussed American, British, and Soviet labour networking for war purposes. Bevin’s biographer, Alan Bullock mentions Tawney as a writer of Labour and the Nation, and as a participant in the Economic Advisory Council. Tawney is mentioned peripherally in the biographies and autobiographies of many powerful figures of the interwar period. Only in books about the WEA or state education is he dealt with in depth. The fact that

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134 Ibid., 235.
his name comes up so often suggests that he had some importance among the Labour governing elites.

How may Tawney’s approach to communism and the events of the 1930s be judged?

When others were vacillating and defecting from their political positions, Tawney remained a fixed star in the firmament of democratic socialism. The Webbs favoured Stalinism; Strachey did so as well but in the next decade changed his mind; Laski and Cripps flirted with communism; Mosley soon took up fascism when his ideas to solve the 1931 crisis were rejected. Democratic socialism seemed squeezed between fascism and Stalinism. Left wing intellectuals joined the communist side in significant numbers, especially to support the republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. Yet, to Terrill ‘Tawney seems for all his faults a granite monument’ never wavering to either side in the political squeeze play. That didn’t mean that he was uncritical of his own party. In late 1935, Beatrice Webb recorded that ‘Tawney is critical about the state of the Labour Party; chaos of opinion and professional jealousy on the one hand and steam-rolling of all opposition to the official propaganda by Transport House on the other.’ But his opinion of the British Communist Party was scornful, promoting as it did a ‘drawing-room cult of violence’.

Mrs. Webb saw that his conscience was troubled. Should he be entering politics? Would being part of the Parliamentary party enable him to shoulder more of the load of socialist reform? She assured him that ‘his gift for thought and expression ought to be used to think out the broad lines of Labour policy during the next decade.’ Wisely, Tawney didn’t run for office again, but the stream of articles on education and equality that he continued to produce suggested that he followed the advice of Mrs. Webb. Of course, she had sagely suggested nothing new to him. She

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137 Terrill, Tawney, 5.
138 This steering to the middle course was echoed in his leadership of the WEA in the 1930s when its teaching was caught between Marxism and ‘extreme’ Toryism. See 93.
realized the course of action he was already pursuing, that of the public intellectual attempting to build a body of socialist convictions in British society, was the right one for him.

As the Second World War approached in the late 1930s, the Labour Party under the moderate leadership of Attlee, shocked by Hitler's menace to Europe, left pacifism behind and became strong anti-appeasers. They were, of course, not the only ones. Some significant elements of the Conservative Party gathered round Churchill in this anti-appeasement camp. The coalition government under Churchill established in May 1940 after Dunkirk, was drawn primarily from this group of anti-appeasers, including a number of leading Labour figures; the latter were responsible for domestic policy and Conservative leaders for foreign policy. Much has been written about the consensus of the war coalition and the swing to the left suggested by historians such as Addison. Certainly, more was done on reconstruction during this war than during the previous one. Most of this was under the control of Labour, although the advances in education were made under Richard Butler, a Conservative minister of progressive leanings.

Only a few months after the formation of the coalition government, Tawney, at the urging of Tom Jones, sent an article, on 'Why Britain Fights', to the New York Times, which published it as a letter on 21 July 1940. It was written after Dunkirk, at a time of extreme peril for Britain, by then so susceptible to Nazi invasion. Just two days before, Hitler had delivered a speech to the Reichstag in which he offered peace or annihilation to Britain. Although Lend-lease had been agreed upon in March, America was a long way from entering the war as a support to vulnerable Britain. This Tawney piece may be regarded as one of the many enticements Britain offered to prompt American entry. Chief among these were the brilliant speeches of Churchill, so full of emotion and hope. Tawney's piece was an impassioned defence of democracy and declaration of

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141 The WEA and state education sections of this thesis thoroughly explore the role of Tawney in educational advance, stressing his WEA and CEA work. Butler's role is dealt with in chapter 10.
142 Terrill, Tawney, 87.
opposition to tyranny. He knew that the British fought to save their way of life, and to hand it on to their children. He asked what was the nature of that way of life and suggested it might be

Good faith; tolerance; respect for opinions which we do not share; loyalty to comrades; mercy to the weak; consideration for the unfortunate; equal justice for all—the ordinary decencies and humanities of intercourse between neighbours—these things are clearly part of it.\textsuperscript{143}

He subsumed it into the fight that he had been waging all his life, that of equal rights for all. He saw that the enemy recognized no rights of any kind for common men, and Hitler had said so in \textit{Mein Kampf}. The war was a continuation of a system ‘imposed by a combination of violence and treachery on seven different peoples with long and famous histories, which have enriched mankind.’\textsuperscript{144} Tawney perceived this conflict to be about saving civilization in the west.

He wrote with pride about the part that the Labour Party played in the change of government that had occurred three months previously. Although he noted that on ‘the immediate occasion this was a revolt in Parliament led by the Labour Party, but supported both by the independent Liberals and a group of Tories’, he believed that the ‘the major part in the whole business was played by the Labour Party’ which led the way in debate, refused to participate in a Chamberlain government, and rallied the workers behind Churchill.\textsuperscript{145} Tawney’s view was at once partisan and patriotic. He strongly supported the Labour Party’s participation in the war cabinet which he described as ‘the organising of the war effort on the domestic and economic fronts’. Yet, Tawney was not one of those who approved of his party right or wrong.

\textsuperscript{143} R.H. Tawney, ‘Why Britain Fights’, 1940, Tawney I, BPLES, 19/1, and published as ‘Why the British People Fight’ (Workers Education Bureau Press, 1940), and eventually in \textit{The Attack}, 73.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid.}, 75. The conquered countries referred to were Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Northern France.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid.}, 77. Kevin Jefferys’ view of this transition, writing more than half a century later, was somewhat different. He remarked that ‘historians are divided over the importance of Labour’s role in the downfall of Chamberlain....On the one hand, party leaders took the critical step of choosing to divide the House....On the other hand, the key players were Conservative MPs who either voted against the Prime Minister or abstained.’ Kevin Jefferys, ‘The Attlee years, 1935-55’, \textit{The Labour Party: A Centenary History}, ed. Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), 71.
The literary reprimand he gave the Labour minority Government over its 1931 failure confirms this.146

Tawney respected Churchill and approved his truth telling about catastrophe. Of the Prime Minister’s 14 July speech,147 he remarked that it ‘seems to have said almost everything I wanted said and to have done so superlatively well.’148 Whereas Chamberlain was the ‘master of soothing words, Mr. Churchill states bluntly—what is obviously true—that the events which culminated in the evacuation of Dunkerque were “a colossal military disaster”’.149 Writing in the 1990s, Peter Clarke confirmed this assessment of Churchill’s speeches. ‘It was Churchill’s best-remembered speeches which focused these images of 1940 and invested them with his own thrilling sense of history in the making. Rather than minimizing the threat of invasion, he had dramatized it, talking of fighting on the beaches.’150 A man of eloquence and influence with words himself, Tawney recognized this same characteristic in Churchill.

The response to the Tawney letter among American academics was very positive. Joseph Johnson of Williams College, for example, believed that ‘[t]he Americans who agree with you, and want to give you ever more help in your struggle, are many, as I believe you will soon learn.’151 I. Kandel of Teachers College at Columbia University stated that ‘I doubt whether you can realize at your end the incalculable service which this letter will perform in clearing up a tremendous amount of muddied thinking about the British position on the war.’152 Clearly, Tawney had some influence with American college professors.

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146 Another view of this dramatic episode is that of Martin Pugh who saw that Churchill needed Labour support, at least morally, since, at first, his own Conservatives were rather half-hearted towards him. Pugh, British Politics, 245.
147 Called the ‘War of the Unknown Warriors’.
148 Tawney to Creech Jones, 15 July 1940, Rhodes House Library.
149 Tawney ‘Why Britain Fights’, 1940, Tawney I, BLPES, 19/1 and in The Attack, 78.
150 Clarke, Hope and Glory, 197.
151 Johnson to Tawney, 21 July 1940, Tawney II, BPLES, 87/1.
152 Kandel to Tawney, 24 July 1940, Ibid.
Another aspect of his influence was his close personal relationship with some British politicians and civil servants. Letters between Tawney and Arthur Creech Jones, during the war were an example of how Tawney tried to influence government policy both in foreign affairs and in education. Creech Jones, as a Labour MP from 1935, had an insider's view of parliamentary affairs. From 1940, as a parliamentary private secretary to Bevin, the Minister of Labour, Creech Jones was a person of some importance. Before the Churchill coalition was formed, Tawney suggested to Creech Jones that Labour should continue supporting the government only if 'a small war cabinet composed of men without departmental responsibilities' could be established. This was clearly an idea that was 'in the air', for when the coalition was formed it was set up with just such a small cabinet.

Tawney, longing to be of service to the war effort, applied to Bevin at the Ministry of Labour for a post. It was his brother-in-law, William Beveridge, however, who first acquired such a post. Bevin had recruited him 'to carry out a survey of the government's manpower requirements'. Tawney, immediately offering to help Beveridge, was told that he might be consulted from time to time. He never was.

Creech Jones, in response to a Tawney letter, agreed with points he had made on the importance of psychological warfare and public opinion on the home front. Aware that the public was anxious about 'the handling of the Burma road issue, Home Office Courts Bill, our Spanish policy, the Refugees problems', he noted that W. Adamson was now appointed to the Ministry of Information to advise on the views of workers on all types of propaganda and war information. He was also gratified that Tawney's suggestion of 'more public declarations of determination of

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153 Arthur Creech Jones and Tawney were longtime colleagues on the WEA administration.
155 Ibid., 4 July 1940.
our purposes had just been implemented with speeches by both Churchill and Bevin. Clearly, some of the Tawney ideas accorded with those of key members of the government. Tawney’s request for government work to help the war effort was eventually granted when he was appointed as the labour attaché to the British Embassy in Washington. He responded to Creech Jones

[many thanks for your letter. I am grateful to you for speaking to Bevin about me. It would be very kind if he would give me some introductions for the USA, and something in the nature of a general credential saying that I am reasonably sound from the Labour point of view’.

Grateful ‘for the opportunity which you secured me to see people and papers at the Ministry of Labour’, he mentioned that Sir George Crystal of the War Cabinet secretariat agreed to send him memoranda and, therefore, wondered if the Ministry of Labour could do the same. Tawney, a persuasive correspondent full of suggestions, was rewarded with information and war work. His trip to America is well-known. He was appointed as a labour attaché to the British Embassy in Washington where Halifax was the ambassador. The embassy, not knowing what to do with Tawney, categorized him as a typist and gave him ‘office space’ in a shed on the grounds. In an ironical letter to Frank Hardie, Tawney proclaimed

[y]es, I am an adviser... though I have not yet given any advice nor do I suppose that it would be taken if I did give it. I am told that the real reason for our being despatched here is that the British Authorities were told that the Embassy was out of touch with common persons, and on scanning the horizon for someone to redress the balance, pitched on my wife and myself as the commonest they could find. If so, we regard it as the most overwhelming compliment ever paid mortal man.

Despite his supposed commonality, however, he was feted at Harvard before travelling the country speaking to unions, colleges, and the Union for Democratic Action. While he sojourned

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156 Creech Jones to Tawney, 23 July 1940. Ibid.
157 Ibid., Tawney to Creech Jones, 16 August 1941.
158 Ibid., 13 September 1941.
159 Terrill, Tawney, 88.
160 Tawney to Hardie M 1037 – M 1043, March 1942, Tawney I, BLPES, 26/2.
in the United States for almost a year, from October 1941 to September 1942, during the first six months of his stay he felt that he had accomplished little, a feeling shared by the Ambassador, Lord Halifax, who complained of Tawney's presence to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary. Then, trade union negotiations essential to the war effort,\(^{161}\) held in Washington between Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States faltered because Walter Citrine, the British representative, was unable to handle the differences between the long established A.F. of L. and the new C.I.O.\(^{162}\) These American labour intricacies puzzled the British diplomatic staff. Therefore, Halifax commissioned Tawney to write some memoranda on the American labour movement. He produced four papers before returning to Britain in September 1942. Altogether 110 pages in length, they proved to be exactly what British diplomats posted to Washington needed to know about American labour.\(^{163}\)

Tawney delivered a second wartime article, 'We Mean Freedom', as a lecture to the Fabian Society in 1944. It was published by the Labour Book Service in 1945 under the title 'What Labour Could Do',\(^{164}\) an alternative title which suggested the purpose of the article, that of encouraging the party to stick to its own ideas, with the possibility of implementing them in the future. The party knew by this time that the country's sentiments were with them. Although the war was still raging, it was clear that it would end soon and that an election would undoubtedly follow. Labour had to be ready and Tawney's exhortations contributed to the process of becoming ready. This article was Tawney in full flight, reminiscent of many of his other articles and books on equality. In a discussion of rights, he emphasized the concept of equal rights.

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\(^{161}\) After Pearl Harbour, the British and the Russians were increasingly reliant on American industrial production and 'the diplomacy of labour became a subject of undeniable importance'. Winter, 'Introduction', Essays by R.H. Tawney, 30.

\(^{162}\) American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Unions


\(^{164}\) Gollancz to Tawney, 20 December 1944, Tawney I, BPLES, 19/1. Oliver Gollancz, the organizing secretary of the Fabian Society, wrote that he had enjoyed the lecture but it would be some time before the proofs of the lecture were ready for publication.
person might have rights in theory, but if the circumstances of his society did not permit him to exercise these rights, then the theory was meaningless.\textsuperscript{165} The privileged classes assumed that if the government refrained from intervening in economic and social affairs, the effect was liberty. For the masses, however, this might mean tyranny, for if government makes no rules for them, then a private power will certainly do so.\textsuperscript{166} The economic system was a system of power. ‘It is a hierarchy of authority; and those who can manipulate the more important levers are, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, the real rulers of their fellows.’\textsuperscript{167} The privileged minority would control the workers by dominating the economic system. These were, of course, the kinds of ideas he had been emphasizing for years in his struggle for educational advance.

To put Tawney’s views on ‘freedom’ in a historical context, it might be helpful to look at some ideas from Donald Sassoon’s essay published in 2001. He asserted that at the beginning of the twentieth century, socialists had an end goal, that of the socialist society and a medium term goal consisting of democratization of capitalist society, regulation of the labour market, and the implementation of the welfare state.\textsuperscript{168}

Some of Tawney’s tone in his ‘freedom’ article came from the determination to bring to fruition what Sassoon has identified as aims two and three. The less than satisfactory conditions for some workers accounted for Tawney’s plain speaking on what men desire; ‘not paragraphs in constitutions, but results, in the form of arrangements which ensure them the essentials of a civilised existence and show proper respect for their dignity as human beings’.\textsuperscript{169} They deserved results simply because they were humans. In this ‘people’s war’, their contribution meant that equality could not be delayed.

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Ibid.}, 87.
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Ibid.}, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{169} Tawney, ‘We Mean Freedom’, Tawney I, BLPES, 19/1, and \textit{The Attack}, 90.
What do the two articles reveal about Tawney’s relationship during the war to the government and to the Labour Party? ‘Why Britain Fights’ with its publication in the *New York Times* was clearly meant for an American audience. It intended to rally sympathy and support for Britain at a time of danger. ‘We Mean Freedom’ with its delivery to a Fabian audience was designed to ‘rally the troops’ and to urge the Labour Party to stay the course with policies to which it had long been committed. As a pair, they show Tawney’s powers of persuasion and exhortation were still strong. He knew his mastery of language could be used as an effective device to defend his country and to promote his party.

Tawney’s ideas were on the left from an early age. His university education produced in him a progressive view of society and the world. He believed that things could be changed for the better and that he ought to be involved in creating the changes. His early adult life made him a likely fit for either the ‘New’ Liberals or the new Labour Party. Both of these parties had reform platforms which could facilitate his moral and educational mission. His championing of the workers, whom he came to know as a teacher with the WEA, and his concern for the education of their children turned him towards the Labour Party which regarded workers as its main constituency. Although this was his party for the rest of his life, at times it was an irritating commitment when the party leadership failed to implement the policies that he and other intellectuals helped develop. The NEC needed the intellectuals but was fearful of taking unorthodox steps to reach agreed-upon idealistic goals. Therefore, a major role for Tawney was that of exhortation and encouragement. The message to his party was ‘Don’t be afraid. We will succeed.’ The message to his country during war was ‘we shall not be defeated’.\(^{170}\) A strong optimistic streak underpinned his belief in his party and his country.

PART III

THE STATE EDUCATION COMMITMENT
Chapter 7

Evolving attitudes to 1918

When Tawney began to write about the education debate in the Morning Post, it was 1908. The battle for educational reform had been in progress since at least 1870 with the enactment of the Forster Education Act. Hostilities amongst the various political, religious, and educational factions were particularly bitter. However, with the passing of the Education Act of 1902, legislation seemed to favour the Church of England, the Unionist Party, and the continued class segregation of education.

This legislation was in part responsible for the defeat of the Unionists in the election of 1906. The Liberals came to power with promises to amend the hated Act and to bring a ‘fairer’ schools settlement to all parties, especially the Nonconformists and those desiring a secular education system. The new government introduced one education bill in 1906, and two different bills in 1908. All of them failed. Tawney’s Morning Post articles began to appear at this point. They show him as a moderate but with little of the challenging attitude that he would later acquire.

The Liberals learned that in order to have education bills succeed, they needed to have a better relationship with all the major religions. Further, without reform of the House of Lords, educational reform was never assured. The Upper House was dominated by the Conservatives who tended to support the Church of England’s positions.

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To appreciate the positions taken by Tawney from 1908 onwards, it is first necessary to understand the main elements of educational reform from 1870. Brian Simon sees education during this period as 'a Site of Struggle'. Workers and capitalists confronted the aristocracy in the early nineteenth century but by mid-century, with the growing strength of the working class, the severance of that original alliance and its replacement with the capitalist–aristocratic fusion occurred. This produced the hierarchical system of public schools, endowed schools, and elementary schools. Simon believed that the class nature of the educational struggle ensured that progress was not linear. It was a pattern consisting of the occasional periods of general progress accompanied by generous funding, alternating with periods of reaction in which there was a move to new forms of control and financial restraint.

The legislation creating this hierarchy consisted of the Public Schools Act of 1868 which sought to regulate Public Schools, the Endowed Schools Act of 1869 which established secondary schools for the middle classes, and the Forster Education Act of 1870 which mandated education for working class children not currently being educated. This third Act was supposed to provide an educational place for every child in areas where the voluntary societies had no schools. It ensured that religious freedom would be available through the Cowper-Temple clause which

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2 See Appendix I, 'Restructuring of the Schools in England, 1870-1902', a valuable tool to use in reading this Chapter.


4 The kind of curriculum pursued in both the public and endowed schools was inherited from the sixteenth century grammar schools founded to teach Latin and Greek. By the twentieth century, the curriculum had broadened to include other academic subjects. Two ‘sides’ were then offered: the classical, centred on Latin, Mathematics and French; and the modern, centred on French, German, Mathematics and Natural Science. Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools: Report of the Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council, (London, HMSO, 1943), 8.

5 The curriculum taught in elementary schools was rudimentary, stressing reading, writing, and arithmetic that were taught under a system of iron discipline so as to yield the results required by the education department, which used ‘payment by results’ as its financial method. Simon, Education and the Labour Movement, 115.


8 Ibid., 60.
allowed for non-denominational teaching only and for the possible withdrawal of a student from all religious instruction if the parents so wished.\textsuperscript{9} Local authorities could, in fact, choose either a religious or a secular approach for the schools.\textsuperscript{10}

Lawson and Silver viewed the Education Act of 1870 as the most 'workable piece of compromise legislation of nineteenth century English history' because it paved the way for free and compulsory education, supplemented the voluntary schools, and created the democratic school boards without eliminating their private voluntary school opposition.\textsuperscript{11} Consequently, an awkward Dual System consisting of elected School Boards running state schools and the Churches continuing to run their voluntary schools was put in place. The Act also resulted, inadvertently, in the founding of the National Union of Elementary Teachers (later the National Union of Teachers) in 1870, the year of its proclamation.\textsuperscript{12} Among the founders of this organization and its journal later called the Schoolmaster was George Collins, an ardent defender of teacher rights until his death in 1890.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite what seemed the success of the Forster Education Act, problems gradually emerged which made some in the Education Department realize that new legislation would be necessary to supersede the 1870 law. The most significant issues were the financial difficulties of the voluntary sector, the growth of the School Boards and their higher grade schools, and the lack of educational unity within the central government.

Both sectors of the Dual System grew in the two decades after 1870, but by the late 1880s, the voluntary sector was experiencing financial decline, although it received a 50% grant from the national government. Denominational levies, however, could not come near to making

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{10} Marjorie Cruickshank, Church and State in English Education, (London, Macmillan, 1963), 30.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 328.
up the other 50%. In 1880, for example, the National Society, the Church of England’s central educational institution, could afford to spend only £1 14s 10d per pupil per annum, whereas the Boards could spend £2 1s 11d per pupil. This differential contributed to the government’s decision to appoint the Cross Commission to inquire into the circumstances of the voluntary schools. It recommended in 1888 that the School Boards ‘be empowered to provide rate-aid in limited amounts calculated not to diminish voluntary effort.’ Non-conformists denounced the suggestion of the local governments providing rate aid for denominational purposes.14 Yet another problem created by the energetic School Boards was the flourishing higher grade elementary component that eventually evolved in many industrial cities, especially those of the north like Manchester and of the midlands like Birmingham. These areas were, of course, bastions of the Nonconformists, many of whom were Liberal supporters. They campaigned in the local democratic elections for School Boards many of which they came to dominate. With the strength of their popular elections, they began pushing for alternative ‘secondary’ education of a scientific and commercial nature, goals which they accomplished by adding higher grades to elementary schools that offered courses financed by the Science and Art Department to children of the lower and lower middle classes. Sometimes the Boards organized their older children into centralized schools which seemed rather like secondary schools. Unlike the grammar schools for the middle classes, however, they emphasized a scientific instead of a classical curriculum. So lively and vital were such schools that they drew many pupils from the middle classes who would normally have gone to the middle class grammar schools.15 Needless to say, this unlooked-for competition was of great concern to the grammar schools. By 1897, the representatives of the higher grade and grammar schools headmasters’ associations were meeting to sort out the roles of their respective schools. ‘The need for this arose from the fears of some secondary schools that

14 Cruickshank, Church and State, 49.
their role was being usurped, despite the findings and assurance of the Bryce Report, the 1895 Royal Commission on Secondary Education.\textsuperscript{16}

To help solve the problem of three overlapping authorities controlling education,\textsuperscript{17} one notable provision of the Act of 1899 was the establishment of an Educational Council originally recommended by the Bryce Report. It was to consist of notable persons representing all levels of education to advise the minister on 'judicial' and 'professional' matters. It would later be called the Educational Consultative Committee, best known for its prominent work on the Hadow Report on elementary education published in 1926.\textsuperscript{18} Tawney, a student at Oxford beginning in 1899, was a member of this committee from 1912 to 1931.

In 1901 there appeared to the Conservative Government to be three possibilities for educational reform: first, to do nothing; second, to establish secondary authorities for secondary schools and allow the elementary system to remain as it was; and finally to abolish the School Boards, replace them with county authorities and give these new authorities control over the secondary and elementary systems.\textsuperscript{19} This third possibility fitted with Robert Morant's long-held views of creating a national system of secondary schools, whose inspection had already been provided for in the Board of Education Act of 1899. As well, it fitted with the Morant\textsuperscript{20} argument that 'ad hoc' authorities like the School Boards were extravagant and ought to be done away with.\textsuperscript{21} In an undated memo he alleged that

\begin{quote}
[a]n ad hoc authority in itself [is] a mistake. By making education a separate claim on the town purse it becomes in the eyes of the town councillors, a rival, a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} The Charity Commission, the Department of Science and Art and the Education Department.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{20} At first, a minor Board of Education functionary and later, Permanent Secretary of the Board.
greedy swallow of the funds which the town councillor feels ought to be at his
disposal for all the needs of the town.\textsuperscript{22}

Two other views favouring significant change illuminate the issues surrounding the
Education Bill that the Conservative introduced in 1901. The Fabian Society in considering 'ad hoc' authorities for all grades of education (as opposed to the elementary grades only) suggested
that such a body would 'enlarge and perpetuate the religious animosities that now dominate
School Board elections.'\textsuperscript{23} The second view was that of the Church of England issued by the
Joint Conference of the Convocation of Canterbury and York on July 4, 1901. In dealing with the
crucial matter of finance it said

[t]hat all schools be financed as far as the cost of maintenance, exclusive of
repairs of the structure in voluntary schools, is concerned, out of public funds
whether Imperial or local, and that it be no condition of participation in these
funds by voluntary schools whether any form of religious instruction be or be not
taught in those schools.\textsuperscript{24}

The question of 'one paramount education authority' in a district was urged by Prime
Minister Balfour in parliamentary debate. This was to be the rating authority which would
finance all elementary schools, both voluntary and state. The strategy for aiding voluntary
schools could be seen in the creation of this 'paramount' authority. But, this very strategy of
putting voluntary schools 'on the rates' led to such a rallying of Liberals,\textsuperscript{25} Nonconformists, and
educational secularists, that although the Act was passed, it became a chief issue in the election
campaign of 1906 which led to the defeat of the Conservatives and the victory of the Liberals
determined to change the hated Act. Russell commented that 'by making ratepayers responsible

\textsuperscript{22} Robert Morant, 'Points Against Ad Hoc', undated, PRO, Ed 24/14, 12a 4.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 12 3 'Arguments against not setting up a directly elected Authority for all grades of education'.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., Ed 24/14, 23a, 137, 'Expressions of opinion by the Church of England and Roman Catholics in
favour of appointment of Managers by Local Authorities'.
\textsuperscript{25} Eaglesham, Foundations, 44-6. The argument against funding voluntary schools 'on the rates' was that
the lower classes bore the brunt of the burden. The former arrangements enabled the schools to be partially
funded by government grant, a method by which the financial burden was more evenly distributed among
all tax payers.
for the support of the 83% Anglican voluntary schools without giving them any choice in the type of religious education to be provided, it rode roughshod over dissenting opinion. 26

In short, in this pre-war era, although the Education Act of 1902 supplied the ground work for the developments in local administration, for the expansion of secondary education and for the growth of a dual religious and secular system, this last provision, the support of religious schools, created real anger. As noted above, it was also a long-range factor in bringing about a change in government.

In anticipation of a new education bill, the Trades Union Congress had in the fall of 1905 proposed its own bill, one which would make the educational system entirely secular. Will Thorne 27 introduced this bill into the Commons on April 2, 1906; the Government followed with its own bill on April 9, 1906. Augustine Birrell, the new President of the Board of Education, introduced his 1906 bill designed to appeal to the Nonconformists, many of whom were Liberal supporters. Hence, it was sectarian rather than secular. It was a secular system, however, that most of the leading sections of the Labour movement advocated. The TUC, SDF, and ILP had long supported secularism in education. 28 Asquith described the main objects of this bill as


to put an end to the dual system created by the Act of 1902: to secure that every school maintained out of rates and taxes should be under the exclusive management and control of the representative local Authority; to abolish religious tests and obligation to give denominational teaching, in the case of all teachers appointed by the Authority and paid out of public funds; to permit 'Cowper-Temple' teaching in the 'provided' school; and in the transferred schools to give facilities for special denominational instruction, but not by the regular teachers. 29

27 Will Thorne (b. 1857) was a member of the Social Democratic Federation. A founder of the Gasworkers' Union, at this time he was also an MP and President of the TUC.
The bill aroused the fears of all parties and groups. Amendment followed amendment in the Commons. In the Lords, Anglicans sought to mold the bill to their own interests. What emerged from the Upper House was exactly the opposite of the government's intentions. Two other bills were attempted in 1908, one under McKenna as President of the Board and one under Runciman. They, too, failed in the House of Lords. Its power would have to be curtailed. The religious schools, a part of the new Dual System, were a subject of some of Tawney's pre-war articles for the *Morning Post* as well as 1920's articles for the *Manchester Guardian*. The religious schools controversy was a long-enduring problem.

Why would a reformer like Tawney choose to write for such a conservative paper as the *Morning Post*? The origins of this seemingly peculiar choice dated back to three years before. This newspaper, along with most 'serious' newspapers, intended 'to instruct and reform rather than to entertain'. The owner of *The Morning Post*, Lord Glenesk, who wished to 'develop conservative opinion on social reform', asked William Beveridge, who had been recommended by Edward Caird, to write leaders on social policy. The editor, Fabian Ware, was a social imperialist who believed that imperial reconstruction was dependent on social reconstruction in Britain. Beveridge was the first of a group of young progressive writers employed by Ware to rival the influence of C.P. Scott's the *Manchester Guardian*. Another of these progressive writers was Tawney who succeeded Beveridge as leader writer for a short period in 1908.

In a series of articles for the *Morning Post* entitled 'Schools and Scholars', Tawney entered the education debate on 3 January 1908. In reviewing the *Annual Report of the Board of Education for 1907*, Tawney touched on a number of issues most of which were not completely

34 Terrill, *Tawney*, 39.
solved until the Education Act of 1944. These included the need to improve student health (to be discussed later), to provide for bursaries and scholarships, to maintain elementary children older that twelve so that they could remain in school until the leaving age (at that time thirteen), to remedy the great shortage of qualified teachers, and to reduce class size from the current sixty to fifty. He expressed particular concern about teacher recruitment and teacher education. If greater numbers of children were to receive secondary education, they would require more, qualified teachers. Clearly, many of these would come from the elementary school ranks. These prospective teachers would require completion of secondary and then university education. A secondary system could not long survive without properly qualified teachers who were granted 'security of tenure' and 'and income sufficient to maintain [them] in a social status as good as that of other comparable professions.'

His 24 February article covered the introduction of the McKenna bill that afternoon. Friends of education knew how damaging previous religious controversies over the 1902 Act and the failed 1906 Bill had been to 'the spirit of religious tolerance and national unity'. The Act of 1902 had worked well 'so far as education is concerned'. Schools had been built and others modernized. Teacher qualifications and student-teacher ratios had improved. A system had been established to enable students of ability from all over the country 'to have full opportunity of developing their capacities for the common weal'. Tawney's view was that 'with the single exception of the religious grievance, the Act of 1902 has been of great service to the nation.' His views on this Act would, however, change over the next decade. He would become a strong advocate of 'secondary education for all', a great leap from the 'special places' structure for 'able' students of this pre-war era.

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The Liberal government wished to reduce religious grievances with the 1908 Bill. Tawney warned, however, that McKenna ‘has to conciliate and not to harass three sections of public opinion – the Roman Catholics, the Church of England, and the Protestant Non-conformists.’ Each of these represented a different point of view. The Catholics wanted their own schools under their own sole management. The Church of England saw its mission as being responsible to the whole nation. It could not agree to a settlement that deprived sectors of the community of their own distinct Christian teaching. The Non-conformists had no real policy, merely slogans such as ‘Popular control’ (elected school boards restored), and ‘No tests for teachers’ (religious requirements). 37

Tawney was an Anglican of Christian Socialist persuasion. Always a participant in his church, in this article he took a position supportive of the churches. He urged the government to behave with caution. Continuing support for the religious position was demonstrated in his March 31 article on the Bishop of St. Asaph’s Education Bill. Dr. Edwards, the Bishop of St. Asaph, offered a bill seeking ‘broad lines of compromise’ in order

[t]o secure... for the parents of all children in all schools freedom of choice as to the denomination religious teaching which may be given in school hours and for the teacher, freedom to give such instruction, if he is able to do so conscientiously, is a solution of the religious difficulty which must commend itself to every thoughtful citizen who realizes the need of religion in life. 38

Tawney approved of this solution. He saw it as giving ‘every child in every elementary school simple Christian teaching, but, in addition, freedom of choice both for parents and teachers as regards particular religious instruction.’ 39 Again, in this article, Tawney stressed responsibilities of the National Church 40 to support not only its own religious educational needs but also those of

37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 A term sometimes used for the Church of England.
other denominations in England. Clearly, he had a position sympathetic to the provision of some religious education.

Two years later, Tawney was still examining educational issues in the series ‘Schools and Scholars’. In ‘Voluntaryism v. Compulsion in Continued Education’, he reported on the North of England Education Conference where this issue was debated. On the one hand, Dr. Reynolds of Manchester suggested that no compulsion of attendance was needed as the gradual introduction of the voluntary system would make compulsion legislation unnecessary. Michael Sadler believed, however, that compulsion was essential. The voluntary system might work for apprentices whose employers encouraged them and for whom additional education would allow them to advance in their jobs, but for those who were employed ‘for their immediate commercial utility’, the voluntary system would not work. Tawney agreed with Sadler that all boys and girls ought to receive during the years of adolescence some form of education to develop their physique, ‘widen their mental outlook, [c]ultivate their sympathies...and fit them for duties of citizenship.’ He had reservations about making evening classes compulsory, however. In a 1909 article in The Highway, he asserted ‘[c]ompulsory evening education, while the hours of work remain as they are, is out of the question.’ In the Morning Post article he was equally clear. ‘It would...be necessary in any legislation introduced to empower local education authorities to arrange with employers for a reduction of the hours of labour on the days on which attendance at a continuation school is made compulsory.’ Tawney would echo these opinions in many of his articles and books of the twenties. As well, in this same article, he showed an early recognition of the opposition of industry to continuation schooling.

41 Professor of Education at the University of Manchester and a member of the Education Consultative Committee of the Board of Education.
The idea of a universal system is attractive, but in view of the great differences which exist between the industrial position and administrative development of different areas, an attempt to impose on all authorities alike the obligation to ensure compulsory attendance would probably result in a reaction.\(^{45}\)

What was the educational philosophy of Tawney at this time? His approval of the Education Act of 1902 suggests a rather conservative position. That Act set up a fee-paying secondary system modelled on public schools, a far cry from ‘secondary education for all’. The Liberal Party and the Labour movement did not support the Act. Moreover, Tawney’s sympathy with the religious position during the 1908 Education Bill’s debate does not accord with the Liberals’ Nonconformist position or the Labour movement’s long-held advocacy of a secular system of education. Yet, he joined the Independent Labour Party in 1909, a group supporting the secular policy since 1897.

His editorial sympathizing with the religious positions on education had come only two months after he began work as a WEA tutor at Rochdale and Longton in January 1908, and only one month after the introduction of the McKenna education bill. It is possible that by the time he joined the ILP a year later his views on religious positions in education had been modified by the workers he taught. He did confirm that the ‘best part of my own education’ was received ‘in the days when as a young, inexperienced and conceited teacher of Tutorial classes, I underwent week by week, a series of friendly, but effective, deflations at the hands of the students composing them.’\(^{46}\)

Certainly, incremental advances were made on a wide range of educational issues in this period. In 1906, after years of pressure from Labour and Socialist groups, the government enacted a School Meals provision, albeit a somewhat restricted one.\(^{47}\) In 1907, it legislated the twenty-five per cent ‘free place’ system which enabled elementary school children of ability to

\(^{45}\) Ibid.


\(^{47}\) Simon, Education and Labour, 285.
compete for scholarships to the secondary schools. Thus began a small trickle of working class children into the upper educational institutions. In addition, the Education Act of 1907 set up, within the Board of Education, a Medical Branch under George Newman, thereby mandating medical inspections for school children. This was a real step forward for an elementary school population afflicted with many minor ailments that hindered learning.

It was a step much approved by Tawney. In reviewing the *Annual Report of the Board of Education for 1907*, he applauded ‘the group of measures which, by empowering or directing the Local Education Authority to make provision of one kind or another for the health of the children, go far to make the elementary schools centres not only of mental but of physical culture’.

In February 1910 he reviewed Dr. Newman’s first report. Its significance lay in the fact that ‘the individual, and his environment, Public Education and one aspect of Public Health, are set for the first time in relation with each other’. Its duty of inspection was delegated to 328 local educational areas. By 1908-09, 307 of these had appointed school medical officers who received recognition from the department. The inspections revealed preventable disease on a mass scale among the children whose conditions would ‘deprive their attendance at school of much of its value.’ Inspection must lead to treatment. ‘[I]nquiry is not much use unless it leads to practical action’. The Board of Education was prepared to establish school clinics if LEAs could supply ‘proof of need’.

A few months later, Tawney wrote a more reflective article about the repercussions of Newman’s first report. He assumed it would cause widespread dismay. It was not pleasant to contemplate the physical misery of so many children.

48 Ibid., 270.
49 Ibid., 288.
Many thousands are fretted with disease and wasted with malnutrition; many thousands are less clean than well-groomed animals; many thousands, through bodily ailments, can do little more than bruise their poor minds against the barriers of knowledge. Of gaiety, of spontaneity, of fire and imagination there are indeed among even the poorest and most neglected infinite possibilities. But how cruelly those possibilities are wasted.

To support these generalizations with facts, he referred to the report of Dr. Thresh, School Medical Officer of the Essex Education Committee. This report showed that of 18,000 children examined in the district, just under one in three needed treatment. In the worst area, the number needing treatment rose to eight out of ten. Dr. Jones, one of the inspectors asserted that ‘not ten per cent of the boys, when they attained the age of twenty-one would be fit to defend their country.’\footnote{Ibid., ‘A School Medical Officer’s Report’, The Morning Post, 6 May 1910, 5. The poor fitness of young people was a big issue in the years preceding the First World War.}

Tawney was quite passionate about the subject of child health, but still managed to give it an economic slant, an approach to which government usually paid attention. Every year the nation spends many millions on elementary education. Yet it must clearly be the case that, if the example of Essex is at all typical, a great deal of that money must be spent upon educating children who are living at a physical level on which active participation in real education must be almost impossible. Government must obviously put money into child health so as not to lose its investment in elementary education.\footnote{Ibid.}

In November, Tawney wrote yet another article on the medical problems of poor children. This one was devoted to how to supply treatment. He suggested the need to experiment with a variety of methods. School clinics, connection with local hospitals and dispensaries were possibilities. Education itself ought to be a leading method. ‘[S]ystematic instruction on personal
hygiene' should be combined with treatment. Parents needed to be instructed, encouraged, and reassured. Many of them knew little of personal hygiene and preventative techniques.\textsuperscript{54}

Not long after his first students were finishing their three-year tutorial courses in Rochdale and Longton, Tawney, by this time a well-known speaker, delivered an address to the Co-operative Congress in Portsmouth.\textsuperscript{55} Here he spoke of education not merely as the perfecting of the individual, but also as the 'uplifting of a society through the inspiration of a common ideal'.\textsuperscript{56} These were socialist sentiments, very much in keeping with Tawney's membership in both the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party. He cautioned the working class audience that the tolerance of working class parents for the half-time system of education to which their children were subjected was 'one of the most disgraceful things in the educational and social life of the country'. Parents themselves had the power to put an end to it and they must do so.\textsuperscript{57} He urged them to stand for education that would 'make free men and women', reminding them that a major step towards democratic education was the 'abolition of privilege in education'. They must strive to eliminate the monopoly that a small class held on education.\textsuperscript{58}

Although the next piece of major educational reform legislation was the Education Act of 1918, there were attempts by the Liberal government to prepare such legislation before the war. Some of these proposals certainly influenced the Act which was finally passed. Most of them, like the bills of 1906 and 1908, were further attempts to change or at least improve the deficiencies of the 1902 Act. Sherington believed that the origin of most of these attempts 'must be sought in the years 1911-14'.\textsuperscript{59} These immediate pre-war years were important for a renewal of educational reform for two reasons. First, in 1911, Robert Morant was dismissed from his

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, 'Medical Treatment - A Problem', \textit{The Morning Post}, 25 November 1910, 10.
\textsuperscript{55} R.H. Tawney, 'Education and Social Progress', (Manchester, The Co-operative Union, May 1912), copy in WEA Central /4/2/2/12.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.}, 3.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.
position as Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education. With his elitist attitude so well reflected in the Education Act of 1902, he inspired the animosity of the NUT without whom it was difficult to implement any policy in the elementary school system. The new permanent secretary, Lewis Selby-Bigge, and his minister, J.A. Pease, wished to usher in an era of harmonious relations amongst all educational stakeholders. In addition, these two set themselves the task of devising a new bill that was deemed necessary to retain the support of the Nonconformists which the Liberals needed to stay in power.\(^{60}\)

The interest in educational reform did not die when the war began. In considering the relationship between education and war, Akenson theorized that 'the dislocation of the educational structure resulted not in its collapse but in its revitalization.' Educational research continued in the bureaucracy of government throughout the war. By 1916, the Board of Education was reporting that '[i]mprovement and development of our existing system are essential to our national welfare.'\(^{61}\) The Board set up the Lewis Committee of Inquiry that same year to look into juvenile employment and special training. Concern had emerged about the evils of employing children at a young age in the war industries.\(^{62}\) Eventually, the Report of this committee would influence the Education Act of 1918.\(^{63}\) The Consultative Committee of the Board of Education also issued a Report. It advocated the expansion of the scholarship system so as to make use of the talents of all citizens, thereby resulting in economic gain for the state.\(^{64}\)

Another Cabinet Committee followed in which several ministers, including Haldane and Pease from the pre-war Committee, were involved. They were to review the alleged neglect of science, and modern languages as well as to pry money from the Treasury for educational purposes.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 68.


\(^{64}\) Sherington, English education, 52.
When the Lewis Committee was conducting its investigations in 1916 it was, as already discussed, the time of Tawney's injury on the Somme and his period of recovery at home. There, he was considering the events of the war and their possible consequences for English society. As noted in the second chapter, he published a powerful article 'The National College of All Souls' a few months later in February 1917. Even the title brings together the ideas of nation, education and spirit. His advocacy for '[a]reconstruction of Education in a generous, humane and liberal spirit'\(^65\) suggested that he wished to honour his soldier comrades by recommending a new attitude to reconstructing the system of education. He was confident that the 'comparative indifference of the English Governments to education' could be reversed by a changed attitude to things of the spirit. If society could learn to respect courage, truth and insight, positive changes would occur.\(^66\)

Seminal events in preparation for the Education Act of 1918 were the formation of the Reconstruction Committee in March 1916 by Asquith followed by that of the new government under Lloyd George in late 1916.\(^67\) He chose some members for his cabinet who were not politicians, but instead, experts in their fields. One such choice was H.A.L. Fisher, a professional historian and, in 1916, the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University. He came from a well-connected upper-middle class family, his cousins being Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. His education at Winchester and Oxford made him a very acceptable choice to the bureaucracy at the Board of Education. Selby-Bigge had been senior boy when Fisher was at Winchester. He was a friend of Gilbert Murray from Oxford days, and a follower of the ideas of T.H. Green, the philosopher who had influenced so many intellectuals of the early twentieth century, including Tawney. When the new Prime Minister approached him, Fisher agreed only on condition that he would have support for an education reform bill and suitable financial backing to implement it.

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\(^66\) Ibid., 30-31.

\(^67\) See Chapter 3 for further information on the Reconstruction Committee and its education sub-committee.
His willingness to take advice from the officials of the Board meant that continuity with pre-war ideas was assured. Others in public life strongly supported him as well. Geoffrey Dawson of *The Times* welcomed his appointment and Will Thorne of the TUC thought him a good choice, a ‘practical educationalist’. To Herbert Lewis, the Parliamentary Secretary, the selection of Fisher marked a new era, signalling increased prestige for the Board.

The personality of Fisher, inspiring so many different groups with confidence was partly responsible for the success of the Act that followed. Advised by his friend Henry Hadow, the Principal of Armstrong College in Newcastle, to tour the country presenting the proposals of the bill, he won the hearts of many and gained popular approval for the bill. Herbert Lewis wrote to Lloyd George that ‘Fisher is not an exciting speaker and never plays to the gallery but the audience jumped to its feet frequently cheering him enthusiastically.’ Some critics presented a negative reason for the success of the bill. They suggested that the bill’s deliberations and plans would have been rejected ‘if Parliament had not been distracted by events on the Western Front.’

Why was the Act so acceptable? It embraced pre-war suggestions from the Board and other educational groups. It mandated a leaving age of fourteen, compulsory continuation school of 320 hours annually for young people from fourteen to eighteen, and abolition of fees for elementary and continuation schools. It encouraged local authorities to develop nursery schools and central schools. Employers were forbidden to employ those under twelve, while employment for those from twelve to eighteen was carefully regulated. Further, as noted above, the wide process of consultation helped to make the Act popular. Helping Fisher contact the public was

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69 Dean, ‘Fisher’, *BJES*, 269-270.  
70 Herbert Lewis MP to Lloyd George, 17 October 1917, Ms. Lloyd George, F32/1/19, in Dean ‘Fisher’, *BJES*, 270.  
Gilbert Murray, his old friend and classics scholar from Oxford. He had been appointed as a part-time staffer at the Board in January 1917. It was he who interviewed Tawney and Mactavish of the WEA in the spring of 1917 ‘to impress on them that the proposed legislation would be a great step forward even if it did not meet all their demands.’

The more innovative sections of the Act were the new leaving age and the continuation schools. Yet, the raising of the leaving age had been TUC policy as early as the 1890s when resolutions supported fifteen and sixteen as the recommended ages. The Consultative Committee, too, had urged the leaving age of fourteen in its 1909 Report. In that same Report, it also strongly suggested continuation schools for those from fourteen to seventeen.

Fisher was disappointed that Labour did not back his bill strongly. With more support from Labour in the House, he might have made fewer concessions. If some Labour MPs had made strong supportive speeches, they might have been more pleased with the final bill. Labour, however, although acknowledging that this bill was somewhat progressive, was alarmed that continuation schools would simply continue the practice of separating the classes and relegating working class children to an inferior education. Workers wanted secondary education for their children. It was difficult to convince them that continuation schools might be a step in the right direction.

As noted in the second WEA chapter, recommendations of November 1916 to the Reconstruction Committee included support for the continuation schools if students were required to attend them at least twenty hours a week. By September 1917, responding to the draft of the education bill tabled in the House of Commons the previous month, the Association added an

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73 Gilbert Murray, 'A conversation with the WEA about the bill', 28 April 1917, PRO, Ed 24/1911 in Sherington, English education, 103.
additional provision to its recommendations entitled 'Full Secondary Education'. Item (d) suggests 'that facilities should be provided for the transfer from part-time to full-time secondary education'. Why was there a change of heart here? There may have been two reasons. First, the WEA was disappointed that the bill contained no measure of advance for secondary education, indeed no mention of it at all. Second, the continuation school section of the bill provided for eight hours a week of schooling for those between fourteen and eighteen, far less than the twenty hours per week supported by the WEA.

The WEA was only one of many groups trying to influence the education bill between its first appearance in August 1917, its reappearance in a slightly modified form in the spring of 1918 and its final passage in August 1918. In attempts to counter the efforts of the Master Cotton Spinners to reject the education bill, the WEA Northwestern District led by its secretary E.H. Hookway, held a 'Conference on the Education Bill' on 17 November 1917 at Bolton. In Hookway's conference invitations to prominent people, he announced that 'Mr. Tawney of London, who is well-known to Lancashire people will attend and address the Conference'.

Tawney's response to the objections of the Master Cotton Spinners that 'the industry as a whole will be crippled by the shortage of workers and by the increased costs of production' and that 'workers will suffer because their earnings will be reduced' was skillfully argued in the fall of 1917. Using similar arguments, the cotton industry had objected to every factory act and education bill enacted throughout the previous hundred years. For example, a century before, the cotton trade had argued that its industry would be ruined if children under nine worked fewer than twelve hours a day. In 1918, it argued that helping to educate young people from fourteen to

76 J.M. Mactavish, 'Educational Reconstruction', WEA Education Year Book 1918, (reprinted by the University of Nottingham 1981), 345.
77 Ibid., 344 and Simon, Education and Labour, 352.
78 Conference advertisement, 17 November 1917, WEA Central, 3/2.
79 Ibid., Conference invitation, circa November, 1917.
80 R.H. Tawney, 'Will Continued Education Ruin the Cotton Industry?' unrevised proof, circa Autumn 1917, WEA Central, 3/2,
eighteen in the continuation school provision of the bill would deprive industry of needed labour and would cost so much that the wages of all remaining workers would have to be reduced. Yet, during the war, loss of young men to the army had no disastrous effect. Furthermore, the return of many of those young men would offset the loss of the fourteen to eighteen year old group to their half-time continuation schools.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Federation of British Industries believed that it, too, had a stake in the educational legislation. This body founded in 1916 by the efforts of businessman Dudley Docker and Hugo Hirst of the General Electric Corporation, quickly subsumed the ‘Central Association of Employers Associations’ and in January 1917 the ‘Employers Parliamentary Association’.\footnote{Ibid., 344.} The purpose of the group was to influence government policy-making.\footnote{Ibid., 340.} In January 1918, the FBI issued a memorandum opposing the clause in the education bill compelling children from sixteen to eighteen to attend continuation school. It feared that the lack of cheap juvenile labour would adversely affect British business.\footnote{Simon, Education and Labour, 355.}

Tawney responded to the FBI’s opposition in a \textit{Daily News} article called ‘Keep the Workers Children in Their Place’. He observed that ‘there are those to whom the subordination of education to economic exigencies is still, apparently, an indubitable axiom.’\footnote{R.H. Tawney, ‘Keep the Workers Children in Their Place’, \textit{Radical Tradition}, ed. Rita Hinden, (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1964, originally published in \textit{The Daily News}, 14 February 1918), 47.} He argued that the root of their economic position was really class. They did not desire higher education for all young people. Indeed they believed that only a small minority were capable of benefitting from education beyond fourteen. The memorandum stated in what Tawney called a ‘charming sentence’

\begin{quote}
They would very strongly advise that in selecting children for higher education care should be taken to avoid creating, as was done, for example, in India, a large
\end{quote}
class of persons whose education is unsuitable for the employment which they eventually enter.\textsuperscript{86}

He called this a theory of ‘Master Class’, one which was based on the creation of a new ‘commercial aristocracy’. It would keep society divided rather than bringing it together democratically.\textsuperscript{87} Winter has suggested that Tawney’s development of a ‘link between adolescent labour and the inadequacies of the state educational system’ was at the root of his advocacy of secondary education for all.\textsuperscript{88}

Sherington argued that the intention of the bill was conservative. It did not really try to redesign education. Workers probably saw this. Lack of whole-hearted support from the left made it difficult to defend against allegations from the right that the Education Act would be too expensive. Fisher’s financial arrangements provided that the Board would pay half the costs of the new measure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, however, objecting to the percentage method of Board support, met a vigorous defence from Fisher asserting that such a system would encourage LEAs to improve standards and enable them to pay teachers well.\textsuperscript{89} In the 1920s and 1930s, Conservative governments would attack the percentage grant repeatedly and would eventually replace it with a block grant.

As the education bill progressed through parliament the Labour Party was reconstructed under the supervision of Arthur Henderson.\textsuperscript{90} Its new constitution, providing for several specialty committees, gave some of the Party’s intellectuals a chance to contribute in their areas of expertise. Tawney, a member of the new Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education was an

\textsuperscript{86} Tawney, ‘Workers’ Children’, \textit{Radical Tradition}, 50. The italics are Tawney’s.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, 51.
\textsuperscript{89} Dean, ‘Fisher’, \textit{BJES}, 265-6. \textit{Secondary Education for All} is discussed in Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{90} Discussion of the reform of the Labour Party occurs in Chapter 6.
active participant, attending almost all meetings from April 1918 to November 1919.\footnote{Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education Minutes, [henceforth LPACE], 1919-1920, (the file actually runs from April 1918 to November 1919), Labour History Archive and Study Centre, [henceforth LHASC], Manchester.} When the committee was first established, the officially-elected chairman of the committee was Frank Goldstone, MP, an educationalist and representative of the NUT. Since Goldstone was rarely able to be present at meetings because of his parliamentary duties, Tawney often acted as chairperson.\footnote{Ibid., 15 May 1918.} Meetings were held every second Monday at 5:30 PM and, as a matter of urgency, the first item requiring the committee’s attention was the education bill proposals dealing with continuation schools. Tawney was to draft a position statement on this matter. It echoed his articles of the previous year. Businessmen...‘do not regard as practicable, at present, Mr. Fisher’s proposal to institute compulsory part-time education for all children up to the age of 18.’ They were unwilling to abolish ‘boy labour’ without making it clear that such action would result in ‘industrial chaos and ruin’.\footnote{‘The Education Bill in Parliament’, circa spring 1918, WEA Central, /3/2. It isn’t clear if this was written by Tawney for the WEA or the LPACE but it corresponds in time and sentiment to Tawney’s position on the bill.}

In June, the Labour Party special conference on reconstruction adopted a programme, ‘Labour and Social Order’, which contained a resolution on education:

> [t]hat the conference holds that the most important of all measures of social reconstruction must be a genuine nationalization of education, which shall get rid of all class privileges, and bring within the reach, not only of every boy and girl, but also of every adult citizen, all the training, physical, mental and moral, literary, technical and artistic of which he is capable.

The party couldn’t agree to a system which consigned the bulk of children to elementary schools while the privileged minority enjoyed the advantages of the better-funded secondary system.\footnote{Labour Party Conference Report, June 1918, in Sherington, English education, 118.} At this late stage in the passage of the bill, there was little possibility of changing it to reflect these Labour principles.
Although the bill became law on August 8, 1918, it did not develop along its intended lines. Most historians have attributed its failure on the pressure for economic restraint caused by the post-war depression. However, it may be argued that its failure was the result of the limitations of the Act and of the attitudes of those charged with implementing it. Sectarianism, too, once more emerged. The executive of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation passed a resolution in September 1918 asserting that the grievances of the 1902 Act should be rectified. Nonconformists still wanted to eliminate the Dual System with its religious teaching. Fisher then tried in the spring of 1919 to take up the religious question once more, but to no avail. The Anglicans and moderate Nonconformists were onside but the radical Nonconformists were not. Fisher and the Board, therefore, gave up on the possibility of religious reform in the schools and decided to live with the Dual System.\(^95\)

As for the continuation schools, the failure to establish them lay with ‘the lack of firm central direction’.\(^96\) One problem was that the implementation date was never understood clearly by the LEAs as the phrase used to describe the date was ‘the end of the war’. This was open to some interpretation. To some it meant as soon as possible and to others it meant after all the treaties had been signed. A contributing factor to the failure to implement was teacher supply. From where could the teachers for the new schools be drawn? There weren’t enough for the existing school system. It would take some time to train the needed supply. Besides, there was too little popular support for continuation schools, since many parents wanted their children to receive secondary education, not continuation schooling.\(^97\)

The LPACE continued its work beyond the passing of the Education Act. At the 11 October meeting, Tawney reported that since Sidney Webb had been asked to join the committee

\(^{95}\) Sherington, ‘Education Act of 1918’, Bjes, 78-80.
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 80.
\(^{97}\) Ibid., 82.
that he also be invited to chair it in the absence of Mr. Goldstone.\textsuperscript{98} Tawney also submitted his draft of 'The Juvenile Worker After the War', a statement requested at the 11 June meeting of the committee.\textsuperscript{99} Later, this memorandum would become part of a booklet in which articles on continued education and nursery schools would be included. At the final meeting of 1919, the committee resolved that the Labour Party send witnesses to the Departmental Committee on Scholarships.\textsuperscript{100}

Perhaps the public was losing its enthusiasm for educational expansion, or at least so one might suppose from newspaper articles attacking the costs of the new plans in 1920. The Times Educational Supplement of 29 July 1920 noted 'the growing concern about the education rates'.\textsuperscript{101} At the same time, the government established a new policy of restraint ultimately resulting in the 'Geddes Axe', the government's cost-cutting programme to deal with the depression of 1920.\textsuperscript{102} Headed by businessman Sir Eric Geddes, the committee's mandate was to 'investigate the nature and scale of government expenditure'.\textsuperscript{103} The businessmen committee members recommended cuts of £100 million primarily out of social programmes. 'Addison's houses and Fisher's day-continuation schools were largely swept aside.'\textsuperscript{104} More specifically for education,

[the immediate effect of the economy drive was to reduce grants, stop all new buildings, and cut salaries. The long run effect was to guarantee that continuation schools would not be developed, that the leaving age would remain at fourteen and that endeavors to establish nursery schools would be stifled.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{98} LPACE minutes, 11 October 1918, LHASC.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} The Departmental Committee on Scholarships is discussed in Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{101} Akenson, 'Patterns', H. of Ed. Quarterly, 149.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Kenneth O. Morgan, The Age of Lloyd George, (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), 89.
\textsuperscript{105} Akenson, 'Patterns', H. of Ed. Quarterly. 150.
When Fisher discovered the recommendations of the Geddes Committee for education, he was shocked. Its attacks on the percentage grant, on staffing intentions, and on efforts to establish smaller classes\textsuperscript{106} could nullify the intentions of the Act. Clearly, the prognosis for the implementation of the Act after 1920 was much diminished.\textsuperscript{107}

Tawney, who was closely involved in educational matters by the time Fisher was working on his bill,\textsuperscript{108} was part of Lloyd George’s 1916 panel of advisors; he was a member of the Education Panel of the Reconstruction Committee, and of course, an active member of the WEA executive, and of the LPACE. As such, he was part of a progressive, left wing group of thinkers who told the Board of Education that its bill didn’t go far enough, and that its provision for school-leaving teenagers was inadequate. It didn’t provide a change in the ‘moral notions, the standards of conduct which...guided the actions of men in their daily lives.’\textsuperscript{109} Privilege still outranked the needs of ordinary people. Fisher and the Board replied to this charge that it was unrealistic to go further. There were too few teachers and no likelihood of training large numbers in the near future. Moreover, it was necessary to adapt ‘the system to the conditions of industrial employment’\textsuperscript{110} then existing. One can see a conservative philosophy at work here.

By 1920, going beyond the arrangements of the Act of 1902 had been made very difficult if not impossible. The 1918 Act was never to be what was intended. The leadership of Fisher and the commitment of the Board of Education officials to the reforms they had prepared after 1911 are a partial explanation for its successful enactment. The slowing economy and the coalition government ‘in which the majority party had many lingering doubts about the value of

\textsuperscript{106} Dean, ‘Fisher’, {	extit{BJES}}, 274.

\textsuperscript{107} There is further discussion of the ‘Geddes Axe’ in Chapter 8.

\textsuperscript{108} See Chapters 1 and 3.


\textsuperscript{110} War Cabinet Paper G.T. 1305, May 1917, PRO, Cab 24/19, in Sherington, \textit{English education}, 104.
popular education’ caused the failure of its implementation.\textsuperscript{111} This very failure, however, was one of the major factors which spurred Tawney and other progressive educational leaders to continue vigorously the campaign for reform in the following decade.

\textsuperscript{111} Dean, Fisher, 276.
Chapter 8

Tawney's Decade: 1918-1931

The 1920s was one of the most significant decades for Tawney and educational reform. His strategic position on government committees and the WEA as well as his publication of numerous educational articles, made him a power to be reckoned with in educational circles. In the early 1920s, he produced pamphlets for the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Education that played a part in the elections of those years and that influenced the thinking of educationalists. He was one of the most active participants on the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education which received a reference from Lewis Selby-Bigge\(^1\) to look at elementary education in 1924. Tawney was one of the principal thinkers and writers of the subsequent report, whose official title was *Report of the Consultative Committee on The Education of the Adolescent*, usually referred to as the *Hadow Report*, the committee chair being Sir Henry Hadow. Throughout this whole decade Tawney was writing articles for the *Manchester Guardian* responding to all educational matters: the impact of the government's economy drive on education, educational issues in electoral campaigns, the strange response of the Conservative government to the *Hadow Report*, and the failure of the educational bills of 1929-1931.

Tawney was aware of his own role and determined to carry it out. Later, he expressed this succinctly in a lecture to the New Education Fellowship in 1934:

I should be lacking in candour if I did not state my conviction that the only basis of educational policy worthy of a civilized nation is one which accepts as its objective, unpopular though such a view is in England, the establishment of the completest possible educational equality and that it is the duty of such

\(^1\) The Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education 1911-1925.
educationalists as agree with that view to make it clear by definite, explicit and repeated statements that that and nothing less, is what they mean.²

Although written in the following decade, it nevertheless sums up what he was doing in the 1920s.

As the great hopes generated by the 1918 Education Act faded, it became clear by 1921 that a recession was in full swing and educational spending would be restricted. Yet, H. A. L. Fisher was of the opinion that only if the grant to Local Authorities was based on a percentage system, would there be enough money to pay teachers properly and to run the system effectively. This percentage arrangement was built into the Act in such a way as to provide 56% from Treasury instead of the 46.9% from the pre-1918 arrangement.³

Further, expansion of the system was necessary according to the 1920 Report of the Departmental Committee on Scholarships and Free Places⁴ showing that 21,000 potential candidates for secondary school had been denied entry due to lack of space. Other evidence showed that almost all children could profit by staying in school until the age of sixteen. The Committee asserted

[w]e are of the opinion, therefore, that sooner or later the State should be prepared to recognize the essential continuity of education by accepting the same financial responsibility in respect of secondary education that it has already accepted in respect of other and no more necessary stages and forms...⁵

It concluded that secondary education should be free and, as a first step, free places should be raised from 25% to 40%.⁶ This Report received a warm reception from the public, according to

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² Lecture to the New Educational Fellowship, 1934, Tawney I, British Library of Political and Economic Science, [henceforth BPLES], 17/1, 21.
⁴ Ibid., 23-24. The Committee appointed by H.A.L. Fisher consisted of members from all parties including F.W. Goldstone, the chairman of the Education Advisory Committee of the Labour Party.
⁶ Ibid., 23.
Brian Simon citing Tawney’s *Manchester Guardian* article ‘A Valuable Report’. Stating that it was ‘a document of the first importance’, Tawney observed that the committee recommended the elimination of all secondary fees as soon as possible and approved of the interim measure to raise the number of free places at grant-aided secondary schools hoping that, eventually, there would be secondary education for all children up to sixteen, ‘with maintenance allowances for those who need them’.

In early 1921 the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education issued a Tawney memo about educational costs, defending them against cuts, and reminding his party that educational spending was not keeping up with the devaluation of currency. In his opinion,

> Expenditure (national and local) on Public Education rose from £52,000,000 odd in 1913 to £97,208,518 during the current year or by 86 per cent. The general price level has risen in the same time by over 150 per cent. Hence, when account is taken of the devaluation of money, we are spending less on education — not more — in 1921 than in 1913.

It was already noted that Conservative educational philosophy seemed restrictive rather than progressive. The Liberal Party and the Labour Party were calling the progressive tune to which many workers were attracted. In March 1923, the Liberal MP, Sir John Simon, in a speech to the House of Commons, said ‘[e]ducation is the main element in the strength and the influence of our country throughout the world, and it calls for the urgent attention of the House and of the public.’

Beginning to replace the Liberals with success at the polls, the Labour Party was increasingly taking the lead on educational reform issues. Looking at the philosophies of the Conservative and Labour parties before analyzing particular events is instructive.

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In the immediate post-war period, there were numerous factions within the Conservative Party holding differing educational views. There was a ‘diehard’ group, one of whose members was Sir John Rees, which wished no further education acts. In 1918, he commented ‘Public funds are to be spent upon youths and girls until they reach the age of eighteen: really, at this rate the State will soon be doing something or other for them in the intervals between that age and the receipt of an old age pension’. There was a second group which promoted vocational education; cooking for girls, useful trades for boys. Within this group, it was believed that a more academic education was ‘unsuitable for the mass of the population’, and that ‘secondary education for all’ was profligate and useless. Its members were, therefore, strongly opposed to unifying the elementary and secondary systems. Lord Eustace Percy argued that a common education would harm higher education. These positions brought the opposition of the teachers’ unions which supported ‘secondary education for all’. Many Conservatives found it difficult to relate to elementary teachers who made up most of the teaching profession. Major E. Wood, MP (later Lord Irwin and then Lord Halifax and a sometime President of the Board of Education), wrote that ‘[t]he fact is I am afraid that a good many of our teacher friends are out for all they can get, and naturally, like the people who accept their claims in full better than those who subject them to criticism.’

Yet, in 1913, F.E. Smith, a prominent Conservative and later cabinet member, wrote of the importance of educational reform in a pamphlet emphasizing principles not unlike those of the later Fisher Education Act of 1918. From 1911 to 1914, Smith was the chairman of the

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11 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 151.
Unionist Social Reform Committee. The education sub-committee, one of six established, was headed by Samuel Hoare. Its 1914 Report, *The schools and social reform*, favoured compulsory school meals and medical treatment by local authorities, education to fit children for later jobs and a leaving age of fourteen outside rural areas. These ideas reflected the general progressive trends in education at the time. Since many of its members went to war in 1914, this forward-thinking committee was disbanded, never to be re-established. Its progressive voice was almost lost as that of more traditional views prevailed. That progressive voice would re-emerge and become more significant during the Second World War.

The Labour educational tradition had been inherited partly from groups of the labour movement and partly from the ‘New’ Liberals of the immediate pre-war era. The Trades Union Congress began to discuss educational resolutions as early as 1868. It urged free education for all children in elementary schools in 1885; free continuation schools in 1889; and raising of the school leaving age to sixteen in 1897. The previous chapter dealt with the achievements of the Liberal government of the pre-war period, and the coalition Liberal-dominated government of the war itself. Its educational advances culminated in the Fisher Education Act of 1918. All of these progressive measures on free places, school meals and a educational medical branch were supported by the Labour Party although many in the movement had reservations about the continuation schools and restricted secondary access reflected in the Act.

The Labour Party’s early post-war educational position was probably best expressed in the book, *Secondary Education for All* written by Tawney in 1921. An expansion of his 1921 pamphlet inspired by the Departmental Report on Scholarship and Free Places, it was produced for the Labour Party’s Advisory Committee on Education as a preparation for an election.

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15 Ibid., 401.
expected any time in the winter of 1921-1922. This particular committee, formed in 1918, was an excellent platform from which Tawney, who was its Vice-Chairman through much of the 1920s, could deliver his ideas on educational advance to a wider public.

Brooks maintains that the significance of Tawney’s book lay in its ‘historic timing’ rather than in the ‘novelty of its ideas’. Since it was a response to the politics and economic policies of the Coalition Government, with its Conservative majority and its Liberal Prime Minister, it had a dynamism and immediacy lacking in other educational works of the period. Tawney had particular abilities and experience well-suited to writing such a work. His journalistic experiences as a leader writer and education correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and as a contributor to the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Morning Post* gave him the ability to respond quickly, often with creativity, to recent events. As Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee, he was also the recipient of educational research as well as local and regional surveys. Therefore, he had the expertise and the necessary information to write a relevant book on the topic of secondary education. Tawney now took the opportunity to cast doubt on continuation schools which for reasons of economy had never been implemented. He insisted that such a halfway measure was not what was required, anyway. All children needed secondary education

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17 LPACE, LHASC. In the minutes of 1921, the process by which this idea of ‘secondary education for all’ became a brochure and then a book can be followed. Tawney agreed to draft a pamphlet in 25 January 1921; this was submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 20 September 1921 at which members were asked to submit additions and amendments. By 18 October, it was resolved to notify the Executive that the Tawney memorandum was nearly complete and would soon be ready for publication. On 8 November 1921, a sub-committee to revise the draft was established, and revisions were to be circulated to the committee. On 22 November, the process was complete and ready for the Executive Committee and publication.


19 Ibid., x.

20 Tawney was approached in January 1908 by C.P. Scott, Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* to join the staff. Tawney was interested but declined because he was just starting his WEA tutorial classes and would not have time for journalistic work. Later, in 1912, he did begin to provide articles and after the war, he became the regular writer on educational matters.


22 Ibid., 16. Tawney’s view had changed since the war.
and their parents knew it. Realistically, all children would not receive secondary education immediately. The expansion of the 'free places' system was a first step towards the larger goal. Despite the increasing support of working class parents for the concept, however, 'secondary education [was] still regarded as a "privilege" to be conceded only to the exceptionally brilliant or fortunate'.

The task of the Labour Party was, therefore, to voice 'the demands of nearly all enlightened educationalists' and to work for 'the only organisation of education which will enable the community to make the best use of the most precious of its natural resources – the endowments of its children.' Tawney believed that the cost of education of all children from eleven to sixteen would be great but could be borne because not all the required changes would be introduced at once. He suggested that

[s]uch facts should remind us that talk about the cost of education which ignores the effect of it on character and intelligence and physical well-being, on the output of industry and the amenity of social life, is as rational as a discussion of one side of a balance sheet without reference to the other.

One of the problems in trying to persuade government and society of the actual economic benefits of education to the nation was that 'its most sensational improvements and most disastrous deteriorations, produce results visible to the majority of the adults who determine both – only after an interval so long as to conceal the connections between the cause and effect.' It was much easier to budget for educational or other items which could show progress quickly.

The contents of *Secondary Education for All* summed up progressive ideas of the previous twenty or thirty years. It 'squarely challenged the concept of elementary schooling as
the proper education for the working class, calling for obliteration of "the vulgar irrelevancies of class inequality and economic pressure in a new educational synthesis".\(^\text{27}\) It advocated a system of education from elementary through to secondary school for all children rather than the two currently existing systems, divided by class. Middleton believed "its importance is in being a statement of a single coherent system in a simple language which led to the ideas being widely read and discussed."\(^\text{28}\) Barker identified two qualities of this work which he says illustrated perfectly the character of the Labour Party at this time. First, it emphasized citizenship, equality and social justice, central to which was the educational system. Second, its proposals for improving education were the best ones of the time and at a more generous level of financing than currently existed.\(^\text{29}\) According to Parkinson, the idea of *Secondary Education for All* epitomized the thrust of educational aspirations from 1918 to 1944.\(^\text{30}\) A number of these aspirations were realized in the Education Act of 1944. This is one argument for the influence of Tawney on that Act.

Ross McKibbon, however, has pointed out that not everyone in the Labour Party agreed with Tawney's arguments. Although none would deny the concept of having for each child a kind of secondary education to which he was most suited, some disputed Tawney's acquiescence to the secondary system continuing to be organized around the grammar school system, thus ensuring 'selection' rather than the 'broad highway' approach.\(^\text{31}\) Later, Tawney commented that '[s]election is necessary; provided the penalties are not excessive....But it should be selection


between alternative educational paths, not, as in the past, between educational opportunity and the absence of it. It should proceed by differentiation, not by elimination.32

One of Tawney’s roles in this interwar period, was, as Terrill so aptly put it, that of ‘watchdog of education’.33 He was already showing this in 1921 when, in an article for the Manchester Guardian, he castigated the government for its suspension of the Education Act of 1918.

The suspension of the Education Act is ostensibly temporary. But no time limit has been fixed at the end of which this ‘temporary’ suspension is to end. The opponents of education have tasted blood and are not likely to be less exacting in the future. Only a strong and persistent demonstration that public opinion does not appreciate the ‘economy’ which takes the form of defrauding children of education will prevent the most important parts of the Act from being suspended altogether.34

Tawney was referring to the drive in place from 1920 to reduce government expenses in many Ministries. Yet, in the election campaign of 1918, Lloyd George had spent more time campaigning on reform issues than on the issue of making Germany pay. Why were the hopes of Liberal reformers dashed within the next two years? Morgan believed that there were two reasons: inability to carry through on reform measures because of the recession of 1920, and the natural affinity of Lloyd George for the businessmen with whom he surrounded himself.35 His dependence on the Conservatives to stay in power must also have influenced Lloyd George’s actions. In criticizing the government, Tawney naturally focussed on educational matters, his area of specialty. Evidently, since the Education Act of 1918 was considered to be very expensive to implement, the government felt it ought to be ‘suspended’. For some, this was a euphemism for ‘eliminated’. Tawney wryly pointed out that the same government seemed not to hesitate in the least to launch ‘military adventures in Russia, Mesopotamia, and Ireland’.

32 R.H. Tawney, Lecture II on Education, Tawney I, circa 1935, BLPES, 17/6, 44.
33 Terrill, Tawney, 79.
Expense seemed no object when it came to these military expeditions.\textsuperscript{36} He mocked the Select Committee on National Expenditure when it categorized the educational spending of that year as one of ‘alarming increase’. It had neglected to take into account that the 160% rise in prices meant that the real cost of education in goods and services actually fell. He warned in the article’s conclusion that the suspension of the Act ‘has done a grave wrong to the higher interests of the nation’.\textsuperscript{37}

Even within the government itself, however, not every minister approved of the Geddes committee or its mandate to recommend economies. H.A.L. Fisher noted in his diary that he opposed this committee and so did Churchill. The former commented, ‘The point is, the P.M. is dead tired and wants to throw a sop to Anti-Waste before recess.’\textsuperscript{38}

The cost-cutting Geddes Committee on National Expenditure Report of early 1922 was challenged by Tawney in a withering two-part article in the Manchester Guardian in February of that year. This article used arguments similar to those made in Secondary Education for All. He observed that the Report was written in such a way as ‘to create the impression that it is an authoritative pronouncement’. Facts and opinions alike were treated as having equal weight. He remarked on a series of obiter dicta (mere opinion) such as ‘children whose mental capabilities do not justify their higher and much more costly education (evidently referring to secondary education) are receiving it’ and ‘the cost of elementary and secondary education for pupils has increased unreasonably.’\textsuperscript{39} The committee, he asserted, offered no evidence to support such statements. Administrators, teachers and students all contradicted such views. Further, since the

committee members had no experience in education (Geddes and his colleagues were businessmen), their views were without credence.40

Tawney was also concerned about the financial matters raised in the Report. The proposal to eliminate Fisher's percentage grant was questionable, with its transference of expenditure 'from the income tax payer to the rate payer'. Again, since Geddes and his colleagues had no special knowledge of local government and its financial affairs, Tawney believed their views were of little consequence. He suggested that a Royal Commission to look into local government and its finances was warranted. Even more serious was the Report's suggestion to LEAs that they reduce teacher salaries at a time when teachers had only recently had their salaries raised to above the penury level characteristic of the war, by the introduction of the Burnham scales.41 How could these reduced salaries attract the extra teachers needed to preside over post-war classrooms?

In Part II of his Guardian commentary on the Report, Tawney primarily examined finances. Using figures offered by the government, he calculated that 'the proportion of the national expenditure devoted to education in England and Wales had fallen from 7.28 per cent in 1913-14 to 4.9 per cent in 1921-22. The main cause of the increase in education costs was teacher salaries. Yet in showing the £53,070,000 increase, the Report failed to mention the devaluation of money which had occurred since pre-war times. The average cost of living figure 'of 1921 was 114 percent above the pre-war level'. Therefore, the perception presented by the Report that education costs had increased enormously was wrong.42

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41 Ibid.
42 R.H. Tawney, 'The Geddes Report and Education II', The Manchester Guardian, 22 February 1922, 4. Three times in 1921-2 articles quoted in this chapter, Tawney refers to rising prices using different figures: over 150%, 160%, and the one in this quote, 114%. It is not clear with respect to these figures if all the same items are being used to calculate the final percentages.
Tawney's conclusions were both moral and economic. He believed that 'ill health and ignorance are an economic burden which no society can afford to carry once it has learned how to lighten it.' Failure of the government to act on these fronts would be 'the most cruel of extravagances'. A nation which invested in its children actually 'saves' in the strictest economic sense. What's more, if a parent who neglected his children might be held criminally responsible, how much more must the state representing millions of parents be held responsible for massive neglect. Hence, the argument was an intertwining of moral and economic motives. The parents/state were responsible for the welfare of children. In carrying out this task to the best of their ability, they were also making an investment in the family's/nation's future.

Reflecting later on the government practice of appointing inquiries to recommend solutions to problems, Tawney tartly observed that the habit of entrusting inquiries into educational policy to committees of educationalists, who if they understand finance, are too modest to reveal the fact, and inquiries into educational finance to committees of business who if ignorant of education, are not restrained by similar inhibitions from expressing opinions on it, has doubtless some advantages. Instead of combining the two types of expertise into one committee, separate committees had run on parallel strands, influencing the government at different times. The government ought to have given more thought to appointing appropriate committees to solve a whole problem and not simply part of it. One can see here clear reference to the Geddes Report and the Hadow Report.

The frequently-changing governments of the early 1920s affected, and were affected by, educational expectations and policies. The failure of the Education Act of 1918 led the Labour Party to formulate policies under R.H. Tawney that were to affect the nation for twenty years. *Secondary Education for All* was a direct outcome of this failure. Most of the educational

43 Ibid.
44 Tawney I, Lecture III, circa 1930s, BPLES, 17/9, 2.
45 The Geddes Committee of businessmen tried to cut educational costs and the Hadow Committee of educators made recommendations that would increase educational costs.
policies advocated in this document represented a broad spectrum of opinion based on hearings at which the groups like the WEA and the NUT made presentations.\textsuperscript{46} It reflected, too, the views of ordinary working people who for years had desired secondary education for their children, as may be seen partly in the deliberations of the Trades Union Congress. Had the Act succeeded, Continuation Schools might have satisfied the wishes of workers to some degree. Since these schools were not established, workers' educational ambitions for their children were thwarted. Teachers, too, were angry over the treatment of elementary education in general and their salaries in particular. Yet, the Conservatives won the October 1922 general election handily, the education issue being obscured by the dramatic disintegration of the Coalition Government throughout 1922, and an election campaign in which, for the first time in years, the Liberals and Conservatives ran as separate parties.\textsuperscript{47}

But when Prime Minister Baldwin called the General Election of 1923 to acquire his own mandate from the people, the results delivered only plurality status for his party. Labour became the minority Government with the support of the Liberals. Some Conservative candidates blamed their losses on government speeches advocating teacher salary reduction. Edward Cadogan, an incumbent who lost his seat in this election, stated '[i]n my humble opinion, there is no more dangerous economy than cutting down teachers' salaries'.\textsuperscript{48} Others pointed to the way in which many teachers had become socialists, some of them actually forming the Teachers' Labour League just about the time Baldwin called the election.\textsuperscript{49} Tawney's continuing advocacy of 'secondary education for all' was partly responsible for teacher conversions.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{46} Barker, \textit{Education and Politics}, 36-7.  
\textsuperscript{47} Morgan, \textit{Lloyd George}, 92-3.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ed 24/1757, PRO, in Simon, \textit{Politics}, 74.  
\textsuperscript{49} Simon, \textit{Politics}, 72.  
During the months that Labour was in office, Tawney continued to emphasize his reform themes in the *Manchester Guardian*. Writing on 16 February 1924 when the Labour Government was just over three months old, he observed that more will be required of it than ‘the mere repudiation of the more conspicuous of the follies of its predecessors’. It would have to turn its attention ‘to the grave social and economic evils resulting from the neglect of the adolescent’. He regarded the situation after the war as more serious than before because of the decline of education during the war itself and because of the disastrous effects of the 1921 depression on average families. Often the children leaving school who could get jobs replaced older adults, thus increasing family distress.\(^5\)

The new Labour minority Government of Ramsay MacDonald had as its President of the Board of Education, C.P. Trevelyan, a former Liberal.\(^3\) His former party seemed to have lost its moral purpose as champion of the people.\(^5\) He tried to ‘reverse the engines’\(^4\) of education by revoking the economic regulations of 1922 (the ‘Geddes Axe’) and by encouraging LEAs to raise the leaving age to fifteen, a power they possessed under the Education Act of 1918. He said ‘he was endeavouring to eliminate classes of sixty pupils and over, and then to reduce to fifty. He hoped this would lead to improvement to the position of unemployed trained teachers.’\(^5\) Beatrice Webb’s January 1924 *Diary* assertion that Trevelyan’s educational policy was made by Tawney

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\(^3\) A.J.A. Morris, *C.P. Trevelyan, 1870-1958*, (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1977). Charles Trevelyan (1870-1958) was educated at Harrow and Oxford, eventually becoming a Liberal MP for Elland. He continued in a political career much of his adult life. At the beginning of the First World War, he resigned from his junior cabinet post as Under Secretary at the Board of Education because he disapproved of Britain’s entry into the war. He helped found the Union for Democratic Control, ‘the single most important agency of opposition to Government during the war’. (121) The small radical group he was working with included the prominent ILP figure, Ramsay MacDonald. Running in the 1918 election as an independent, Trevelyan lost his seat. In September 1919, he was nominated as a Labour Party candidate for Newcastle Central. He once more became an MP when he won in his new constituency in 1922. The following year he became the President of the Board of Education in the minority Labour Government.

\(^4\) Simon, *Politics*, 78


\(^5\) ‘New Education Schemes’, *The Daily Herald*, (February 11, 1924), copy in LHASC, Manchester.

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cannot be proven. According to Trevelyan’s biographer, the President’s actions were derived primarily from the Education Act of 1918, whose provisions had been halted but not eliminated by the ‘Geddes Axe’. On the other hand, as soon as Trevelyan was in office, Tawney immediately sent him a ‘memo from the advisory committee offering detailed advice on priorities’. The new President ‘fudged the distinction between secondary education and senior elementary schools in a way that might have threatened the clear-cut policy of “secondary education for all”’. A clash between Trevelyan and the advisory committee was avoided when the President encouraged LEAs to increase secondary places. When his party ended its first experience in office, Trevelyan joined the LPACE where his name appears in the minutes attendance list from 1925 to 1927.

Trevelyan’s most significant contribution while in office was the forwarding of a reference to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education prepared under his predecessor in office, Edward Wood (later Lord Irwin, and then Lord Halifax). This reference was sent on 1 February 1924 by the Permanent Secretary Lewis Selby-Bigge, to Sir Henry Hadow, Chair of the Committee. It asked the Committee to

[consider and report upon the organization, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than Secondary Schools, up to the age of 15+, regard being had on the one hand to the requirement of a good general education and the desirability of providing a reasonable variety of curriculum, so far as is practicable, for children of varying tastes and abilities, and on the other to the probable occupations of the pupils in commerce, industry, and agriculture.]

The original reference was devised as a Conservative suggestion to provide an alternative to ‘secondary education for all’, an irony when one considers that Tawney was on the Committee.

To make matters more complex, Selby-Bigge made sure Tawney was reappointed in 1924 when

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57 Morris, Trevelyan, 157.
59 LHASC, LPACE minutes, 1925-27.
60 Ed 10/147, PRO, 1.
his term was up.61 This reference was accompanied by a letter Selby-Bigge wrote to Hadow in which the Secretary passed on the views of Trevelyan to whom the subject of unemployed children between fourteen and sixteen was of current interest. It was hoped the committee might devise ways for such children to be in school and to improve their qualifications for employment.62

The reference’s origin the previous year lay in the proposal of a committee member, J.A. White ‘headmaster of a London central school, and a leading figure in the organization of history teachers.’ He proposed an investigation of curricula suitable to children between the ages of eleven and sixteen together with how such curricula could be most effectively delivered. Although Selby-Bigge wanted a more mundane proposal on commercial education to be considered, those consulted favoured the White proposal. Ernest Barker, Principal of King’s College, London was especially keen on the idea since he himself had been an elementary school boy who advanced by means of the scholarship system. The result was the reference quoted above.63

At the committee’s first meeting held on 25 April 1924, discussions about the fourteen to sixteen year age group and unemployment were the primary topics. Its conclusions suggested that there was a connection between unemployment at that stage and unemployment at the sixteen to eighteen year stage. When it was high in the first category, it was low in the second and vice versa. If no children under sixteen were employed, then the unemployment in the older age group might be reduced by half. The Committee believed that children under sixteen should not to be working. It recorded that ‘[w]e think it possible that when our enquiry into the present Reference is completed, we shall recommend the extension of the school age up to fifteen and ultimately to

62 Ed 10/147, PRO, 2.
63 Simon, Politics, 74-6.
sixteen, as the best means of dealing satisfactorily with the problem of juvenile unemployment.64 Children up to sixteen should be in school receiving some form of education and those who had lost employment should receive some form of aid to help them to attend evening school where a system of courses ought to be studied rather than single unrelated ones.65

Two prominent people giving evidence to the Hadow Committee were Percy Nunn and Cyril Burt. Dr. Nunn was a Professor of Education and a later director of the Institute of Education at the University of London.66 In a summary of his evidence, it was made clear that the post-primary or secondary education of young people should be a unitary process with its own distinctive character, planned, in its several varieties as a whole. In saying this, he meant that at about 11+ all pupils should be transferred from the primary school to another institution with a distinct staff and organized definitely for post-primary education.67

Dr. Burt, the educational psychologist to the London County Council was of the opinion that ‘[o]ne outstanding fact...established by recent psychological investigation’ was ‘the vast range of mental variation discernible among young children.... Converging lines of recent research have amply shown that such differences are due, not so much to opportunity or education, as to inborn mental constitution.’68 His ideas led to the concepts of homogeneous classes, of streaming for ability rather than attainment. Later, the Board concluded that these concepts came from the Hadow Report.69 Such was not the case.

64 Ed 10/147, PRO, 9.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 13.
68 Ibid. Burt believed that since students in elementary schools scored so poorly on IQ tests compared with their age groups in preparatory and secondary schools, that these elementary students must be inferior by inheritance. He therefore concluded ‘that social inequality had a biological basis’. Burt’s ideas were contrary to the concept of inequality based on social class. Later, his ideas were discredited. Pauline M.H. Mazumdar, ‘Cyril Burt’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004.
69 Simon, Politics, 230-1.
The *Hadow Report*, drafted by an eight person sub-committee of the Consultative Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Ernest Barker, included both Tawney\(^{70}\) and Nunn. The *Report* recommended that the elementary system be eliminated and replaced by a system of primary and post-primary categories which would be divided at the eleven plus student age. It suggested five types of post-primary schooling: the existing secondary schools with their literary and scientific basis; existing central schools offering a minimum of four years of post-eleven teaching the last two of which were to be of a practical bent; existing non-selective schools where 'conditions precluded any other form of post-primary education; junior technical and trade schools'.\(^{71}\) But the main point was that all children who left primary school should be able to attend another school with a trained staff organized for post-primary purposes. All such schools should have a similar curriculum until the last two years so as to encourage movement from school to school.\(^{72}\)

The *Report* was also concerned with names for different types of schools. It suggested 'grammar schools' for all secondary institutions, 'modern schools' for all central schools, and 'senior classes' for all other post-primary departments. Evidently, the Committee wished to preserve the grammar school from being obscured by other types. Further, it did not wish competition to emerge between the secondary schools and the other post-primary types of schools.\(^{73}\) Tawney, too, stressed the importance of terminology for schools. Of the types of schools giving post-primary education such as that given in central schools, he insisted that '[w]hether these should be regarded as a continuation of elementary education, as administratively they are today, or as one or more species of secondary education, is an important

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\(^{70}\) Tawney wrote chapter III, 'Lines of Advance', and Chapter VIII, 'The Lengthening of School Life', according to Brooks in *Secondary Education for All*, xxxiv.


\(^{72}\) *Education of the Adolescent*, 174-5, and McKibbon, *Classes and Cultures*, 211-2.

\(^{73}\) *Education of the Adolescent*, 99, and McKibbon, *Classes and Cultures*, 212.
question: it is a mistake to think that nomenclature is without consequence'. The consequence lay in the different funding formulas, secondary schools being funded much more richly.

The committee's recommendations for curriculum included courses planned for three or four years, 'simpler and more limited than those in the Grammar Schools' while the subjects taught were to be 'much the same' as those of the Grammar Schools, but with 'more time and attention [to] be devoted to handwork'. This partial convergence in the curriculum of grammar schools and modern schools shows the trend towards equality pursued by Tawney and the rest of the Hadow Committee.

Meanwhile, in late 1924, once the first Labour Government had been defeated in the election, and well before the Hadow Report had been submitted to the new President of the Board of Education, Lord Eustace Percy, Tawney was giving journalistic advice urging the new President to consider 'what exactly his office exists to do'. Tawney carried on his campaign of criticism against government education policy, much of it now directed at Lord Eustace Percy. In his 20 November Manchester Guardian article, Tawney identified three functions of the Board: to administer money granted by Parliament; to maintain standards of education through regulations and issuance of circulars; and to act as a clearing house of educational information and a centre of educational thought and policy. The first function was, in Tawney's view, submerging the other two, with the consequence of the Board becoming 'a gigantic audit

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74 Memoranda on the abolition of fees in municipal secondary schools, (1924?) Tawney I, BLPES, 22/9, 15-16. The title and date may be wrong as internal evidence suggests different material and a different date.
75 Education of the Adolescent, 175.
76 Percy was born in 1887 'with the biggest of all silver spoons in my mouth', a gently ironic reference to his privileged life. Educated at Oxford, he served at the British Embassy in Washington under James Bryce whom he revered as 'very like an Oxford tutor'. As an assistant to Lord Robert Cecil in 1919, he helped draft the Covenant of the League of Nations. After gaining a seat as an MP from Hastings in 1921, he served briefly as the parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education in 1923. When Baldwin won the election of 1924, Percy was named President of the Board of Education, a post which he held until 1929. He believed education to be 'my main work in life'. His continuing educational service subsequent to 1929 might entitle him to be considered an educationalist. Eustace Percy, Some Memories, (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958), 9, 23, 92.
77 R.H. Tawney, 'Staff work in Education', The Manchester Guardian, 20 November 1924, 8.
These ideas were similar to those in a ‘Memoranda on the Board of Education’, produced mainly by Tawney as a member of the Consultative Committee. In this document, he was considering the reform of the structure and functions of the Board of Education. In the conclusion, he asserted:

[a] new minister ought not simply to step into the established routine. He ought not even merely to reverse certain mistaken steps recently taken or to initiate certain reforms. He should reconsider the functions and organization of the Department with which all Ministers work, and which exercises enormous powers for good or for evil. It ought to be a powerful thinking organ, meeting emergencies before they arise. It ought to be educating the public as to what is and can be done in the world of education. It ought to be on friendly terms with Local Education Authorities. And teachers. At present it is neither. There is no way of aiding education at once more effective and less expensive than to turn the Board into an effective Department.

It is clear that work Tawney did for the Consultative Committee and Manchester Guardian articles he wrote probably had the same genesis. This document also reflects the concern of the Consultative Committee with widespread reform throughout the educational system, not only within the schools but also at the top, within the central administration.

All the while that he was working on the Hadow Report, Tawney was also regularly lobbying Percy by leading WEA deputations to the Board, primarily to argue for raising the school leaving age, the major focus of all the leading labour advocacy organizations. Percy soon grew ‘tired of receiving deputations on the matter.’80 One such Tawney-led deputation occurred on 21 May 1925 when ‘Tawney presented the Association’s argument, and he was unimpressed with Percy’s counter-arguments that public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to the

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78 Ibid.
79 Memoranda on the Board of Education, c. 1920’s, Tawney I, BLPES, 22/1, 16-17.
compulsory raising of the school leaving age, and that there were insufficient teachers and buildings.\(^8\)

Over the next two years, Tawney ranged over a variety of educational issues in his *Manchester Guardian* articles. Some articles were the issues being addressed in the *Hadow Report* and others concerned the economic problems resulting in the reduction of funds to education. On 6 January 1926, for example, he noted that despite the withdrawal of the contentious Circular 1371 (a document issued to LEAs ‘proposing a series of drastic checks on expansion’),\(^8\) a dark cloud still lay over the LEAs who were expected to revise their 1926-27 estimates downwards to escape detailed scrutiny from the Board of Education. In addition, starting in April 1927, LEAs were to expect the imposition of block grants for a three year period. Basically, according to Tawney, the Board was reverting to the ‘economy policy’ of 1921.\(^3\)

\(^8\) Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 30 April 1925 and 28 May 1925, WEA Central /1/2/1/8, in Brooks, ‘Hadow Report’, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 57-8.

\(^8\) Eustace Percy, *Some Memories*, 97. Brian Simon, *The Politics of Educational Reform*, points out that Percy’s memory is somewhat hazy on the subject of Circular 1371 and its proposed cuts. Simon offers some background for Percy’s alarming recommendations. Apparently, the new permanent secretary of the Board of Education, Aubrey Symonds, hadn’t the experience of the Fisher years to inform his advice to Percy. All he could come up with was the concept of economy on the Geddes model. (PRO Ed 24/1198) There was the suggestion that the 50% minimum from Treasury should be abolished, thus eliminating the chief achievement of Fisher. There was another that the entry age of children to the school system be raised to seven. Percy offered numerous proposals to cabinet without consulting Board officials. E.K. Chambers, the second secretary, recalling a time when he was consulted, said he ‘tactfully listed a series of objections to Percy propositions he evidently could not imagine were serious in a minute dated 30 October 1925.’ (Simon, 290) The intricacies of the President’s interaction with the cabinet on the one hand and his Board officials on the other hand are discussed in detail (Simon, 88-103).

There are several problems comparing the Tawney articles with the Percy autobiography, *Some Memories*. The articles were written as commentary and analysis as educational events were happening in the 1920’s by someone active in educational affairs. The Percy book, written some thirty years later, is filled with general nostalgic reminiscence not always accurate. For example, on p. 97 he records spring 1926 cabinet meetings which almost caused him to resign followed by the issuance of circular 1371 which aroused so much opposition. In reality, the circular was issued on 25 November 1925, the opposition followed and the cabinet meetings to discuss matters occurred in October 1926. His surprise at ‘immoderate expectations’ of the public is odd given the strong public support for the Education Act of 1918 with its percentage funding formula. Years later, Sir Robert Wood, the Deputy Secretary, in a letter to Permanent Secretary Holmes, commented that ‘the influence of the Board diminished under regime of Lord Eustace Percy, whose general policy was to belittle powers and position of Department; and to circumscribe their control’. He thought the Department had not fully recovered from that period but had a chance once more to re-establish its competence. Wood to Holmes, Winter 1940-41 (exact date missing from file), PRO, Ed 138/18, 4.


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On 18 January, Tawney commented that Percy's intention was to create a 'complete revolution in the financial basis of education'. This announcement, predictably, 'raises a storm'.

Even within the Board itself, arguments had been made by some that the percentage grant system was a sound one. Memoranda 44, recently issued, put a stop to new capital expenditure. Tawney irately concluded that 'education is being bled to death by its official defender'. 84 He did not reserve his accusations to Percy only, however, and suggested that

[the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having stumbled on the profound truth that educational progress is not necessarily and invariably in direct proportion to educational expenditure, has brandished it aloft with the glee of a discoverer, under the impression, apparently, that it proves that the less educational expenditure the swifter and more inevitable the progress in education. 85

Churchill, the Chancellor in question, was no particular friend to education. In his period at the Exchequer, he was more than a match for Percy and the whole Board of Education, whose views Percy was able to defend only weakly. Later, it was only with the greatest delicacy and caution that the Board of Education was able to devise and push through the Education Act of 1944 under a suspicious Prime Minister Churchill. Fortunately, at that time, the President of the Board of Education, R.A. Butler, demonstrated exceptional skill in leading the Board and in managing Churchill.

In early 1926, however, Churchill was promoting the 'block grant'. He was recorded as saying to the Leeds Chamber of Commerce on 20 January 1926: "You will get", he said, "far more real economy in local government when the local authorities know....that they receive a lump sum from the Government - with the knowledge that they will bear the whole burden of any excess." Tawney commented that '[i]ts aim is to penalize the progressive authority and therefore to discourage educational progress.' 86

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84 Ibid., 'A Circular and a Memorandum', The Manchester Guardian, 18 January 1926, 6.
86 Ibid.
Section 14(1) of the Economy Bill which had just been tabled in early March, swept away the old guarantees from the Acts of 1918 and 1921 that LEAs should have 50% of their costs defrayed by the Board of Education. Any cost considered ‘excessive’ would not be covered by the Board, which had the power to decide just what that meant. The LEAs’s financial powers were to be reduced to a mere fiction. Tawney asserted that since the Chancellor could resist a particular educational expenditure, Percy could more or less coerce an offending LEA into compliance by not providing funding for the item.87

In the release of the education estimates in July 1926 and Percy’s accompanying speech, Tawney saw a continued pressure on an education authority like Hornsey which had previously staffed its schools on an exceptionally generous basis. He worried about the lowering of standards if the funding were reduced by the above method.88 Looking at educational expenditure as a percentage of national expenditure in this time period is useful. From the 1913-1914 figure of 8.84, it dipped to 4.52 in 1920-1921, and rose in the subsequent two years to 6.06 in 1921-1922, and to 10.84 in 1922-1923. Thereafter, it fell to 6.00 in 1923-1924 and remained in the range of 5 until 1936-1937.89 Only in 1925-1926 did it sink below this figure to 5.80. By way of comparison, in the same time period, defence expenditure fell from 39.09 in 1913-1914 gradually sinking to a low of 11.98 in 1932-33 and rising again to 20.32 in 1936-1937.90 The educational figures revealed a government trying to hold the line against an educational reform movement urging expansion, and therefore, greater expenditure.

A follow-up to the question of economy and the idea of ‘excess’ occurred in February 1927 with the issuance of Circular 1388. Tawney noted that the circular laid ‘down

89 The education estimates for 1926 were £40 million, for 1927 £39.9, and £40.2 in both 1928 and 1929 in Simon, ‘Statistical Tables’, Politics of Educational Reform, 379.
certain standards of expenditure’ and informed LEAs ‘that they will be expected “to justify in advance any expenditure in excess” of them.’ He feared certain standards would ‘seriously cripple education’; for example, the figure of 45s per head was supposed to cover the administration and expenses of each student at public elementary schools. Yet, the Board’s own statistics showed that the figure of 47s seemed to be the average in 1924-25. Here was an instance of Percy once again ‘cramping the spirit of local initiative’. Tawney knew that the LEAs gave in to this new way of financing with the President of the Board having the final say, but he wondered if they approved of this decision in principle.91

In a further article on the same theme in March, Tawney complained of ‘educational stagnation’ resulting from Circular 1388 which must ‘check the provision of free places and of scholarships to universities’. He believed that ‘[e]conomy campaigns are no longer launched with a flourish of trumpets, but, are veiled behind the discreet technicalities of circulars which are read by few and understood by still fewer.’92 In the memo on reform of the Board alluded to previously, he observed that ‘[t]he Board does far less than it ought to do.’ For example, it did too little to enlighten the public and issued too few quality publications.93

What was the importance of the Tawney articles? Certainly, he read the circulars and through the Manchester Guardian was able to make known to its readers the substance and implications of such documents. Tawney was, of course, always trying to educate the reading public on educational issues. Reform was not possible, obviously, if people were unaware of the power of the educational bureaucracy’s impact on educational issues.94 According to Brooks, Tawney wanted ‘to create a sufficiently strong body of opinion throughout the country in favour

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93 Memo on Board, Tawney I, BLPES, 22/1, 5.
94 His reading audience would likely consist of left of centre intellectuals, academics, teachers, MPs, civil servants, and other reform-minded middle class groups. He hoped they would influence educational reform.
of educational reform so that even the least sympathetic of Conservative MPs could not withstand the pressure.' The articles were part of a strategy of pressure.95

In early 1927, The Report on the Education of the Adolescent (the Hadow Report) which had just been published, was occupying the attention of the educational/academic community. On 1 January 1927, The Times published a factual article, summarizing the main ideas of the Report. Accompanying it was an open letter to Sir Henry Hadow from Lord Eustace Percy, in which the President congratulated the Hadow committee for its work but also explained regretfully that there could be no legislation to raise the school leaving age, since the authority for doing so lay with the LEAs, only two of whom had chosen so far to raise the leaving age.96

As already noted, Tawney was one of the principal writers of the Report. He rapidly became one of the principal critics of the Board of Education’s response to the Report. In January 1927, he wrote two articles on the Report, the first summarizing its main points and emphasizing its importance, and the second satirizing Percy’s initial reception of the Report. The first article, ‘Grading English Education’, referred to material mentioned earlier, the concept of a unified system containing a variety of school types97 in which all the students should have equality of esteem98 and parity of facilities,99 as well as selection by differentiation instead of by elimination,100 the current method of selecting students for secondary schooling.101

The second article, ‘Lord Eustace Percy Again’, chided the President of the Board of Education for his speedy and intemperate response to the Report. Delivered after three years of deliberation and writing, the Report recommended among other things a new leaving age of

96 ‘Lord Percy on the School Age’, The Times, 1 January 1927, 12.
97 Education of the Adolescent, 79-80.
99 Ibid., 177-178.
100 Ibid., 78.
fifteen to be implemented in 1932, thus giving the LEAs a full five years to make their plans.

This recommendation had also been made by others such as Sir Percy Jackson\(^{102}\) in his presidential address to a conference of education authorities. According to Tawney, most common men would study the evidence, and even—the poor, shallow creatures!—think once again and yet again before they reach a decision which will affect for good or evil large numbers of humble lives. Our sprightly President is not tied to so pedestrian a procedure. He is not embarrassed by the difficulty of assessing the value of conflicting evidence, for he has found a way of overcoming it is to decide before the evidence has been examined. “I have not yet had time” he writes to the chairman of the Consultative Committee (whose Report, by the way, appeared only last Saturday, “to study the Report, but I have read it sufficiently to be able to express most sincerely to you and your colleagues my thanks....Even had I been able to study the Report fully, it would be out of place for me now to comment on it, but there is one recommendation on which it seems desirable that I should say something at once”.

Of course, the recommendation in question was that of raising the leaving age to fifteen by 1932. Percy rejected this suggestion on the very day the Report was released. Tawney was cuttingly ironic, referring to the ‘resources of that nimble intellect’ [Percy’s], which had an ability to pronounce on a lengthy, serious report without having read it. One thing is certain, maintained Tawney: ‘[i]t is that to prejudge the issue is wrong, and that Lord Eustace Percy’s letter is a deplorable example of frivolity in a President of the Board of Education.'\(^{103}\) One can merely imagine the dismay of educationalists and all those hoping for reform at the nature of this pre-emptive strike by Percy.

Three days later, The Spectator ran an article ‘The Education of the Adolescent’ which ended with reference to the Percy letter. It defended the President from critics like Tawney, observing that

\[\text{[h]e has been loosely thought by some critics to want to torpedo the whole Report. Really he only means that the existing system (confirmed by}\]

\(\text{\footnotesize \(^{102}\) Sir Percy Jackson was Chairman of the West Riding Education Committee 1917-1937, Chairman of the County Councils Association 1929-1935, and member of the Educational Consultative Committee 1922-1938.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize \(^{103}\) R.H. Tawney, ‘Lord Percy Rides Again’, The Manchester Guardian, 5 January 1927, 8.}\)
Mr. Trevelyan when the Labour government was in power), under which the Local Authorities have discretion as to the leaving age, must be maintained.\(^{104}\)

In his memoir, Percy says of his initial response ‘I publicly rejected it almost immediately after I received the report. This was probably unnecessary; it could have been allowed to remain, what it had long been in the teaching profession, a cherished aspiration, the attainment of which must be postponed for several practical reasons’.\(^{105}\) This response, delivered thirty years later, looks like the realization of an old public relations gaffe rather than an apology for not seriously considering a much discussed recommendation of a significant government committee.

That same day, *The Times Educational Supplement* said of the publication of the Report, in what must have been an ironical comment: ‘Rarely in the history of English education have the problems of the future been so clearly defined....at last we know where we are.’ Sir Henry Hadow recommended education as the path for the future and Lord Eustace Percy indicated he was not prepared to raise the compulsory school age.\(^{106}\) ‘Where we are’ surely meant an impasse.

A year later, the National Union of Teachers published *The Hadow Report and After*, a document which lauded the Report ‘as worthy to rank with the most famous of those official documents which have served as milestones to the progress of national education.’ Although not agreeing with every aspect of the Report, teachers believed that ‘it provides a basis from which a further and outstanding advance may be made.’\(^{107}\)

J.R. Brooks, in assessing Tawney’s interwar educational work, suggested that its thrust gradually changed, away from membership on important committees and writing significant long

\(^{104}\) ‘The Education of the Adolescent’, *The Spectator*, (8 January 1927), 32. It was possible for LEAs to move unilaterally on the matter of raising the age to fifteen under the provisions of the Education Act of 1921, but few authorities could afford it. Brian Simon, *The Politics of Educational Reform*, 80. Moreover, there was the danger that if a single authority mandated fifteen, students might be drawn to schools run by adjacent LEAs so as to leave at fourteen for a job.


works to pressure group tactics. By 1931, he had ceased active work with the Labour Party altogether. Only with the Second World War did he resume this work. Brooks thinks this change can be understood particularly well in the period 1927-1931. Tawney in this post-Hadow phase focussed on his desire to have the Report implemented. He prepared for a conference devoted to it. He continued the cut and thrust debate with Percy, often through the Manchester Guardian and stressed educational electoral issues as the election of 1929 approached. When the second Labour minority Government was elected on a platform that he had strongly influenced, he encouraged it to keep its election promises on education, to stiffen its resolve, and to meet the opposition head on. The Labour Party in office was, however, much more timid than in opposition. Later, when Labour was no longer in power, Tawney analyzed the reasons for the failure of the Educational bills of 1929-1931, insisting that the Party had choices which it decided not to make.\(^{108}\)

Tawney was an acknowledged leader of educational reform. He had been a principal writer of the influential work Secondary Education for All, which ‘was seen as the creed of the reform movement and his service on Hadow as clear proof of his leadership of it.’\(^{109}\) He had been reappointed to the Consultative Committee at a crucial time in 1924. His reform campaign now focussed on attempts to persuade the Board of Education to adopt the Hadow Report, a major theme in Tawney’s writing until 1931. Looking back in amazement and irritation in 1934, he observed

\[\text{The proposal of the Consultative Committee of the Board to raise the school age to 15, was advanced not as an after thought, but as an essential element in its scheme of reorganization. Its object was not merely to add twelve months to the existing school life, but to secure that all children should begin, between 11 and 12, a course of secondary education lasting for, as nearly as possible, four years. As long as four-fifths of them leave school at, or shortly after 14, organization}\]


must remain a torso, since they have under three years in their new surroundings.\textsuperscript{110}

Perhaps realizing how popular most of the recommendations of the Report were, Percy and the Board officials feared simply ignoring the Hadow Report. They wanted to be seen acting in accordance with its main principles by taking a small part of the recommended reorganization and applying it to upper elementary school. Clearly, the intention of the Report, however, was to shift children of upper elementary age into the secondary system where, with the richer resources allocated, they might have a chance at better buildings, supplies, and most importantly, teachers with university training. Lawton believed that Percy ‘preferred to spend the limited resources available on an able minority.’\textsuperscript{111} Tawney remarked that

[w]hat happened in this case was that the policy advance was greeted with enthusiasm and that then a different policy, described perhaps as a tribute of respect or consolation to the authors of the Report – by the same name, was quietly substituted for it...that aspect of the committee’s proposals to which the break at 11 was merely a means, has almost entirely been ignored.\textsuperscript{112}

In his memoir, Percy insisted that ‘I have never been sure of the origins of what came to be known as “Hadow reorganization”': the splitting of elementary schools into two stages, junior and senior, with a ‘break at about the age of eleven.’ He observed that it did not originate with the Hadow Report and felt that he had first proposed it to a group of Conservative MPs as a suggestion for the party platform for the 1924 General Election.\textsuperscript{113} Here, Percy seemed to refute the Tawney suggestion of ‘tribute’. Whether the former President was implying that the notion of the split into junior and senior elementary sections was his idea or not is debatable. The fact

\textsuperscript{110} Sidney Ball Lecture on Secondary Education, 1934, Tawney I, BLPES, 17/2, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{111} Lawton, Labour Party Ideologies, 31.
\textsuperscript{112} ‘Sidney Ball Lecture’, Tawney I, 17/2, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{113} Percy, Some Memories, 99.
remains that such a concept was part of the school system in the latter part of the 19th century when the elected School Boards ran 'senior schools' and 'higher tops'.

What was the Board reference to the Hadow Committee originally intended to mean? The committee was supposed to make recommendations about reform in schools other than secondary, in other words, the existing elementary system. Simon observed that Tawney was very 'adept at drawing attention to intricacies in educational organisation which the public normally does not understand,' but 'a good deal less adept at recognising the function of the state machine as opposed to denouncing Conservative policies'. The Consultative Committee had pushed an agenda that was not quite in keeping with the reference, promoting instead what the labour movement and educational lobby had been seeking for so many years.

Nevertheless, Percy often seemed out of his depth in dealing with LEAs as well as in replying to the criticism of educationalists like Tawney. We have already seen this difficulty in the Manchester Guardian articles of 1925 to 1927. In 1925, Percy admitted that

I had at the time of the Circular and had for some time previously, have now, the very discouraging feeling that for the last year I have been at cross purposes with local authorities and local authorities with me, entirely due no doubt to my own, fault, and not having explained myself sufficiently clearly.

In 1927 he was very concerned with a conference held in October on 'The Education of the Adolescent'. Early that year, Tawney argued that '[w]hat is needed is to demonstrate to the President of the Board and to the Cabinet that public opinion demands that legislation shall be introduced on the lines proposed by the Consultative Committee.' If Sir Percy Jackson, a strong

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115 See p. 254 for the original reference.
116 Simon, Politics, 146.
Conservative, could be persuaded to support this effort, then Tawney was prepared to press ahead with certain steps such as a conference of church representatives at which well-known educationalists would speak, a letter to the press by church leaders supporting legislation, and deputations to the Prime Minister and President of the Board. This was the genesis of the 1927 conference jointly sponsored by the NUT and the WEA. The NUT was worried about possible loss of teaching positions in the aftermath of the Conservative restraint policy and the circulars by Percy announcing education cutbacks. Sir Henry Hadow and Professor Percy Nunn both of whom worked on the Hadow Report; Sir Benjamin Gott, Secretary to the Middlesex Education Committee; Sir Fred Mander, President of the National Union of Teachers; Sir Percy Jackson, Chairman of the West Riding Education Committee; Mr. H.W. Finny, secretary to the Surrey Education Committee, and Mr. T. Boyce, Director of Education, Bradford were the principal conference speakers. All of them made presentations supporting reform in education and especially the recommendations of the Hadow Committee. Tawney made ‘his contribution not from the stage but from the floor in the form of a pamphlet entitled The Possible Cost of Raising the School Leaving Age.’ This was the item from the conference that caused anxiety for Percy. Tawney argued that ‘no great financial burden’ would accrue to the nation from raising the school leaving age to fifteen starting in 1932. He believed that the jobs left vacant by the fifteen year olds and acquired by adults would mean a substantial saving in unemployment insurance, thus offsetting the cost of this educational reform.

Percy referred Tawney’s argument to the Department of Labour whose Minister, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, was an old Rugby boy like Tawney, but the civil servants of this Department concluded it was not worth offering a public reply. Tawney was ready to take on the

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119 Memoranda on the Raising of the School Leaving Age, Tawney I, BLPES, 22/6, 5-6.
120 ‘Education of the Adolescent’, The Times, (17 October 1927), 11.
Board officials or Percy anytime. Was Percy afraid of a public debate with Tawney or of the public finding out even more about the decisions of the Board of Education which, as already seen, were sometimes carried out almost surreptitiously? In the end, the Percy response was to indicate that he was willing to consider the issue again in ‘five, seven, or ten years’.  

The Labour Party, meantime, was able to make the failure of the government to raise the leaving age the centre of its own educational policy, using the issue as part of its campaign leading up to the general election of 1929. Then, some Labour MPs ‘who had previously shown no interest in educational reform suddenly became enamoured of a higher leaving age as a weapon against unemployment.’ Tawney had long included this idea in his advocacy for the higher leaving age. In addition, the party rather relished the idea that it would be ‘within the mainstream of educational reform, in company with the NUT and the Association of Education Committees.’ Yet, a party leader like Herbert Morrison warned delegates to the party conference of 1928 that although parental attitudes to this reform had improved, some parents were still reluctant to support it.

Throughout 1928, Tawney continued to hammer Board of Education cutbacks to education and unwillingness to implement the Hadow Report recommendations. In January, he denounced the Board’s pressure on progressive authorities who tried to implement some measures of reform. In October, he deplored the use of the term ‘intermediate education’, the phrase the Board now used to apply to its upper elementary reorganization. This was used as if it had come from the Hadow Report, which was certainly not the case. In early April 1929, he scorned an education system that educated the public school boy for leadership and the

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123 Ibid.
elementary school boy for subservience. Finally, in late April, he questioned a government whose main priority was now declared to be technical education. Yes, that was important, but not nearly so important as four other reforms: nursery schools, reduced class sizes, raising the school leaving age to fifteen, and removing fees to grant-aided secondary schools.

Subsequent educational articles by Tawney before his 1930 trip to China were written during the tenure of the newly-elected Labour Government. The Labour Party had won a plurality in June 1929 using Labour and the Nation, a document partially drafted by Tawney, as its campaign platform. Central to this were educational promises reflecting Secondary Education for All and the Hadow Report. Raising the school leaving age to fifteen was prominent among them. Tawney’s June article was full of optimism, reflecting his confidence that this government and its new and returning President of the Board of Education, Charles Trevelyan, would keep their campaign promises. He also expressed the hope that the new president would not be encumbered by religious controversy, suggesting that such controversy was just what many educationalists feared.

The 9 July article expressed concern about the omission of educational reform from the King’s Speech at the opening of Parliament. Considering the election campaign promises, Tawney wondered why the government hesitated. Three days previously, he had written to his old Balliol friend and long-time Liberal MP, Richard Denman, to seek his help.

The matter is urgent....what is needed is not a new discussion of a subject which is perfectly threadbare but a strong protest against the Government’s failure to promise early action....Such a protest can only come with effect from the party in the House. I do hope you will do your best to stir up a united expression of opinion in favour of an immediate promise to legislate.

130 Tawney to Denman, 6 July 1929, Henry and Annette Beveridge Collection, British Library, 193a.
Only the day before his article, the LPACE sent a memo about this omission to the National Executive of the Labour Party 'expressing the views of the Committee and urging the Executive at once to make representations to the Government.' The cabinet, however, decided that there was not enough time to introduce educational legislation in the current session. Later, 'it was decided to eliminate all reference to the government’s intention even to examine the question of raising the leaving age.' Prior to the parliamentary session 'on a subject for which he had the support of the greater part of the Labour Party, Trevelyan had been forced to concede defeat'. Later, he would say that MacDonald was against raising the leaving age on tactical grounds. Tawney could think of only two things that stood in the way at that time: the industrial interest and the Treasury. He reminded the readers that ‘finance must be the servant of policy, not policy of finance, and it is more economical to spend money on the education of children than on unemployment pay to adults.'

On 18 July however, Trevelyan announced that he would introduce a bill for raising the school leaving age by December 1929. According to Hugh Dalton, back-bench pressure had caused the government to change its mind. The terms of the bill were duly announced in December, including raising the leaving age by April 1931 and introducing maintenance allowances. Further discussion of the bill was delayed because of a crowded schedule.

Tawney then prepared to lead a delegation to MacDonald on this matter but the Prime Minister

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131 LPACE Minutes, 8 July 1929, LHASC.
132 Riddell argues that there were many factors, in addition to the financial crisis of 1931, leading to the failure of the Government and that they existed from its election in 1929. The party itself was a federal system to which MacDonald paid too little attention. The TUC, the local Labour Parties, and the PLP felt they had too little influence on the Government. Intellectuals were insufficiently consulted. Too little planning and prioritizing especially of a financial kind had been done in advance. These factors as well as the international situation were a background to the failure of the education bill. Neil Riddell, ‘Conclusion’, Labour In Crisis, The Second Labour Government, 1929-1931, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), 221-231.
133 Simon, Politics, 156.
134 Morris, Trevelyan, 175.
136 Diary, 29 July 1929, Dalton Papers, BLPES, in Riddell, Labour in Crisis, 157.
137 Simon, Politics, 162
would not receive it. Nor would Chancellor of the Exchequer Snowden. Both had financial reservations about the bill. Only Trevelyan would receive the delegation. On 4 March, a meeting of 100 MPs had passed a resolution calling for early progress. Macdonald finally had to give way. A reworked second bill was then introduced in May 1930.

Meanwhile, Trevelyan was burdened by the religious problem, the issues of which were almost the same as those preceding the Education Act of 1902. Church Schools could not afford the money necessary to implement reforms, and at the same time, were unwilling to give up any of their control over teacher appointment and dismissal to the LEAs in exchange for additional government funding. Trevelyan sought help with the 'voluntary schools' from Tawney who claimed that he had no special knowledge of this issue, but did, nevertheless, publish an article in April called 'Denominational Schools'. It summed up the history of the problem and suggested that giving up some Church control over teachers could be ameliorated through the provision that there had always to be some staff available 'willing and competent' to teach religion. If the Churches did not compromise, then the possibility of reforming education would be lost. In the end, this is just what happened. The Churches refused to bend, and three different versions of the bill failed, the last one introduced in October 1930 and finally defeated in January 1931. This anecdote reveals that although the religious view of education was still of importance to Tawney, educational advance for all children was more important.

D.W. Dean attributed the Labour Government's failure between 1929 and 1931 to apply successfully its educational policy to many factors: Trevelyan's mistaken belief that he could

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142 Dean, 'The Difficulties of a Labour Educational Policy', *BJES*, 294-7. Although the positions of the Anglicans had ameliorated since 1902, the Nonconformists were angry about the continuation of the Dual System and the Catholics were adamant about not supporting a bill that would offer too few financial provisions to their schools.
count on Conservative support for raising the school leaving age, waning Liberal support for Trelvelyan’s bill, dissension over the maintenance grant recommendation which lacked cabinet support, and powerful opposition from the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.\textsuperscript{143} The list of reasons for failure offered by Morris was much the same, but with the addition of the Depression.\textsuperscript{144} The precarious political situation of a minority government exacerbated all the other reasons.

Certainly, Trelvelyan’s reading of the Conservative Party mood on educational reform in 1929-1931 was incorrect. Yes, there were some supporters such as John Buchan,\textsuperscript{145} but the majority were ‘solidly hostile’. Some were swayed by the reservations of Percy and others were of the traditional party belief that more compulsory education was ‘unwanted and unnecessary’.\textsuperscript{146}

Liberal Party support waned as the bill was debated. Some Liberal MPs, such as John Simon, wanted to work with the Conservatives on this matter. Others disapproved of the concession being made to the non-provided (voluntary) schools. Perhaps, Trelvelyan was not an altogether suitable person to deal with his former colleagues in the Liberal Party. He had, after all defected from the Liberal Party\textsuperscript{147} because of its decision to enter the First World War. Later, when he joined the Labour Party, he considered that it offered ‘hope and a new social spirit, which will be far stronger than the ruling guides of today.’\textsuperscript{148}

Dean suggested that Trelvelyan’s ‘most difficult task’ was in securing Labour Party unity over the question of maintenance grants. These were to be paid for the fourteen to fifteen year old group who were to stay on for an extra year at school after the bill was passed and

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 288.
\textsuperscript{144} Morris, \textit{Trelvelyan}, 181-2.
\textsuperscript{145} John Buchan was a Conservative politician, popular novelist, and later, as Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada from 1935-40.
\textsuperscript{146} Morris, \textit{Trelvelyan}, 288.
\textsuperscript{147} The Liberal Party was experiencing severe strains that would lead to another split.
implemented. Most Conservatives and Liberals disapproved, considering such allowances bribes. Within the Labour Party, the Chancellor, Snowden, feared the grants would be too costly. On the other hand, a large component of the party, primarily the left wing, thought that these grants should be as easy as possible to obtain. The LPACE sent a resolution to the National Executive of the Party on June 2, 1930 ‘that this Committee reaffirm their view that in the award of maintenance there should be no means test other than the income limit under the National Insurance Acts.’ The subsequent vote at a party meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution that there be no means test. LEAs, however, informed Trevelyan that a means test should be applied. From their point of view, all children didn’t need such a grant. Trevelyan wanted a compromise approach, but he was strongly pressured by the left wing of his party to adhere to the resolution passed earlier. It was at this point that Tawney and his delegation arrived to bolster the Minister’s position ‘that the Bill should not be set aside’.

As for the Roman Catholic Church, it totally opposed the compromise of the second version of the bill so succinctly outlined in Tawney’s article on ‘Denominational Schools’. It charged that it would be obliged to make permanent concessions in return for temporary financial help. The third version of the bill introduced in October 1930 had no special provision for non-provided schools. It, too, was immediately targeted for amendment to suit the Catholic authorities. In this version, ‘[v]oluntary schools were to be aided for the purposes of reorganization without any definite period being stipulated for the alterations to take place.’ The complication for the party was that a significant number of its members and MPs were working class Roman Catholics of Irish background. One of them, John Scurr, the Labour MP for Mile End, Stepney from 1923 to 1931, gave notice that if a settlement with the churches could not be reached, he would move an amendment to postpone the implementation of the bill until such a

149 LPACE minutes, 2 June 1930, LHASC.  
settlement was secured. At this point, the Nonconformists made it clear that they would not support a bill that seemed to establish the Dual System permanently. Scurr then successfully moved his amendment. In February 1931, Trevelyan resigned. In his view, he had made too many concessions and had too little support. When the bill, complete with the Scurr amendment, was sent to the Lords, predictably, it was defeated by an overwhelming group of Conservative peers. It seemed incredible that an idea for which there was such strong national support should fail so utterly.151

'That the economic climate could not have been worse' was a factor in the failure of the bill. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, felt he had to be extremely frugal with the budget, at first, Trevelyan had been satisfied with the Board's share of declining revenues. Only with the last estimates that he would handle as President, did he feel 'he had already made enough sacrifices.'152

Tawney was in China from before the introduction of Trevelyan's Third Bill in October 1930 until after his resignation in March 1931. Riddell suggested that Tawney, with few solutions to offer Labour, found the trip to China 'a convenient opportunity to distance himself both physically and ideologically from this struggling government'.153 This is a debatable conclusion to draw. Tawney was making a research trip at the request of The International Research Committee of the Institute of Pacific Relations in order 'to make a study of China's agriculture and industry as a preparation for its Shanghai conference in 1931.'154 He had made previous academic trips and would make others throughout the remainder of his life, almost always because he was invited by educational institutions.155 To suggest that he was shirking or evading a responsibility is surprising, and most certainly uncharacteristic of Tawney. Running

151 Ibid., 297-9.
152 Morris, Trevelyan, 183.
153 Riddell, Labour in Crisis, 183.
154 Terrill, Tawney, 67-8.
155 There is a discussion of his academic trips in chapter 5.
away was not in his nature. He went to war in his mid-thirties when others didn’t. He confronted mining owners at the Sankey Commission in 1919. He resolutely led delegations to the Board of Education and government officials not always eager to receive him. He could not have gone to China to ‘distance’ himself from responsibilities to his party.

On Tawney’s return, Ramsay MacDonald offered him a peerage which the long-time promoter of equality scornfully declined. Later, in a letter to the editor of the New Statesman with reference to the 1935 Honours List that included a number of Labour MPs, he remarked that the public saw

Labour politicians denounce the social system in one breath, and in the next behave as though they were on their knees before it. The conclusion it draws from the spectacle, and quite inevitably draws, is that Labour politicians are on the make to the same degree as other politicians, and that their full-mouthed indignation at social inequalities is vociferous cant.156

It is clear why Tawney became less active within the Labour Party at this point. It had failed to pursue the recommendations of the Hadow Report, to support Trevelyan who was set on raising the school leaving age, and to support its major principle of equality.

Commenting on the second Labour minority Government in 1934, Tawney insisted that instead of choosing to live dangerously and honestly by strongly supporting its principles and the bills that reflected them, it chose instead to live safely as if its main duty was to stay in power as long as possible no matter what the cost. As to its Education Bill, the government was reluctant to introduce it to begin with, and when it did so, it was already too late.157 He asserted that ‘the only sound policy for a minority government is to act like a majority government.’ It was to fight on large issues, and to fight at once. It is to introduce in the first three months, while its prestige is high and its morale unimpaired, the measures of economic reconstruction which it regards as essential. It will, of course, be defeated; if it is in a minority, in the Commons, if it is in a majority, in the Lords,

unless its majority is such as to convince the latter that discretion is the better part of valour. 

Clearly, Tawney believed the Labour Government of 1929-1931 to be the author of its own misfortunes. It lacked the courage to achieve its programme. It was as if party strategists had not clearly planned before being elected what they would do if they formed another minority government. Why had they not learned from their 1924 experience?

An Education Bill should have passed. It was the culmination of almost a decade of reform campaigning by a very large and vocal educational lobby which included the LEAs, the NUT, the TUC, the WEA, and the Labour Party. Among its leadership was Tawney, long associated with the WEA and the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education. His relentless opposition to Conservative cutbacks and encouragement of Labour educational policy, his ability to outclass Percy, President of the Board of Education, in debate, his background work on many committees such as the one that sponsored the ‘Education of the Adolescent’ conference in 1927 as well as his longer written pieces testify to his optimism and tenacity. A lesser man might have felt defeated when the Education Bill failed in 1931. He, however, although no longer active in the Labour Party, continued the politics of small pressure groups through to the advent of the Second World War. The main group from which he launched and continued these tactics was the WEA of which, as was seen in a previous chapter, he was Vice President from 1920 and President from 1928.

It could be said that the 1920s were Tawney’s decade, so great was his impact. It was felt through his leadership on the Educational Advisory Council of the Labour Party particularly his authorship of *Secondary Education for All* which some felt provided many of the basic ideas for the Hadow Report. It was felt through his active participation on the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education especially when it published the *Hadow Report*, which became a rallying

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point for educational reform in the late 1920s. It was felt through his matchless series of articles for the *Manchester Guardian* which kept educational reform constantly in the public eye, and which challenged the Board of Education under its President, Eustace Percy, when they tried to undo the spirit of reform through the device of the administrative circular. It was felt in the election campaign of 1929 when he ensured that education remained a significant issue for the major political parties. Finally, it was felt during the lacklustre efforts of the second Labour minority Government, encouraging and cajoling it to fulfill the educational promises of the campaign. The measure of the man was in this long campaign of pressure which he did not relax even after the Labour Education Bill was lost.
Chapter 9
Propaganda: tenacity and purpose 1931-1939

I

The 1930s were a decade in which Tawney continued to exert pressure on conservative-leaning ‘national’ governments that seemed bent on cutting educational funding in a time of crises and reluctant to release their hold on the educational purse strings when the economy improved by mid-decade. This reluctance was an economic matter that had the social consequence of holding back the improvement of education for the working classes. Tawney always saw educational policy as social policy.¹ Through education ‘men transcend the limitations of their individual [perspective] and become partners in a world of interests which they can share with their fellows.’² Parsimonious financing of education severely limited working class people from their rightful places as ‘partners’. The lean funding formula was not a new technique, however, having been considered in the 1920s and earlier. Even so, by 1934, Lord Halifax, the President of the Board of Education was informing the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, that it was not possible to continue cutting the Board of Education budget. An election was coming up which he feared the government might lose if it presented no encouraging educational news.³

Tawney continued to advocate educational reform through his WEA platform, planning strategies which resulted in public meetings and protests, these constant challenges articulated through the Manchester Guardian. WEA actions were partly responsible for the decision of the

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² WEA Notes, Speeches on Various Occasions, BLPES in Terrill, *Tawney*, 182.
Board of Education finally to consider legislation. It began to plan an educational bill, partly on the strength of which the government was able to win the election campaign of 1935. Afterward, when the bill was presented to parliament, its contents aroused fury in the educational community. Of its five parts, only one was devoted to raising the school leaving age while the others were devoted to exemptions. Some believed this arrangement would result in up to ninety per cent of the fourteen-year-olds leaving school under exemption status. Tawney was scornful of such a bill. It was clear to him that the government simply wanted to avoid maintenance allowances for children staying in school until the age of fifteen. The bill passed but was not to come into effect until 1 September 1939. The intervening three years were supposed to enable the LEAs to prepare for the many changes required by the new act. With increasing international tension, however, 'came the first of a series of clashes between educational policies agreed in 1935 and the claims of the rearmament programme which was being anxiously pushed forward.'

The question of educational policy in the scheme of government spending was considered by Tawney in 1935 in a lecture at Cambridge.

Educational Policy since the war has reflected the instability of economic and political conditions. Hot and cold fits have alternated; and, while the tendency of Local Education Authorities has, on the whole, been towards expansion, the State has oscillated between encouragement and restriction. When the latter mood predominated the principal target of criticism has been the percentage grant system. The Geddes Report of 1922 denounced it as a money-spending device, and a decade later the May and Ray Reports repeated the same verdict in different languages.

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Meanwhile, the Educational Consultative Committee, soon to be called the Spens Committee after its newly appointed chairman, Will Spens, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, was occupied with yet another reference from the Board, this one pertaining to 'the organization and interrelation of schools, other than those administered under the elementary code'. Tawney was an unofficial consultant to Lady Shena Simon, a member he had suggested as his own replacement on the committee when he retired from it in 1931. The Report of The Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools, published on 30 December 1938, was hailed by the reform lobby as a great step forward. Endorsing many Hadow recommendations, the Spens Committee went still further than its predecessor by recommending a single code for all secondary schools. Tawney wrote an enthusiastic article about it that very day.

Shortly thereafter, in 1939, he began to warn that educational promises must be kept despite the ominous clouds of war. He pointed to the near collapse of education during the First World War and the enduring consequences. Already, however, the new Permanent Secretary of the Board, Maurice Holmes, had rejected the Spens Report as too expensive. Further, since the war actually started on the implementation date of the Education Act of 1936, the government announced that it would be suspended but not repealed. Nigel Middleton remarked that 'the abandonment of the 1936 Act must be reckoned one of the troughs in British education.' It certainly appeared at that point as if the unrelenting pressure of Tawney and others had ended in failure.

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8 Sir Will Spens had been educated at Rugby and King's College, Cambridge. By 1931, he was the Vice-Chancellor of the University. As an academic, much of his work was in the fields of theology and religion. During the Second World War, he worked in the Foreign Office.


12 Middleton and Weitman, A Place for Everyone, 191.
The second Labour minority Government, having failed to pass an Education Act in early 1931, was to suffer greater losses shortly thereafter. Amid the international financial crisis of 1931, the crisis in confidence of the Labour Party, and burgeoning unemployment, the Labour Government resigned on 24 August 1931. It was followed immediately by a National Government formed under the leadership of Ramsay MacDonald, until then the leader of the Labour Party. The new government passed an Economy Bill on 19 September 1931 to deal with the financial crisis. According to Keynes,

[the objects of national policy, so as to meet the emergency, should be primarily to improve our balance of trade, and secondarily to equalise the yield of taxation with the normal recurrent expenditure of the Budget by methods which would increase, rather than diminish, output and hence increase the national income and the yield of the revenue, whilst respecting the principles of social justice.]

He believed that this bill would leave the balance of trade largely unaffected, that it would increase unemployment and diminish revenues, and that it would outrage social justice. His example in regard to the latter point showed that although well-to-do people had their incomes cut by 2.5% to 3.5%, school teachers had theirs cut by 15%. He considered this ‘monstrous’ and ‘discriminatory’, yielding a savings of only £6 million. The government’s scheme wouldn’t work. Reduction in the spending capacity of most consumers would result in business losses and unemployment. Nevertheless, many in government now regarded the crisis as being over. But this view was an illusion. The crisis had barely begun. Within days, despite a now-balanced budget, ‘Britain was forced off the gold standard.’

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 166.
16 C.L. Mowat, Britain between the Wars 1918-1940, (London, Methuen, 1955), 399. The gold standard is 'a system in which the value of the currency is defined in terms of gold for which the currency may be exchanged.' Canadian Oxford Dictionary, (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1998), 601.
The ‘new’ National Government was composed of a few Labour cabinet members, a few key Liberals and an overwhelming majority of Conservatives, chief among whom were Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. MacDonald was still Prime Minister but very much at the mercy of the Conservatives for whom the coalition was highly convenient. It provided a semblance of all-party unity, a psychological advantage which still ensured the Conservatives of power. Meanwhile, the Labour Party, having lost its leader and a few other key figures to the National Government, was in disarray. It expelled these ‘traitors’ and began to rebuild. This rebuilding process was one reason why the party did little that was creative in educational reform until the late 1930s. In October 1931, the National Government won 470 out of 540 seats in a general election. The battered Labour Party won 50 seats. The National Government weakened Labour in the short run, seriously weakened the Liberals and strengthened the Conservatives. The years ahead would be dominated by depression and military aggression, neither of which ‘was opposed with strength’ by the governments of the 1930s. If the people had elected smaller majorities and larger oppositions, government might have acted more firmly.

Tawney and the WEA continued to criticize the seemingly unending cuts to education that continued, this time under the impetus of the May Committee formed in February 1931 by the Labour government under pressure from the Conservatives and Liberals. According to Peter Clarke, it was ‘the Geddes Axe all over again....the committee under Sir George May of the Prudential Assurance Company took a stern auditor’s view of its responsibilities. It opened the government’s books, briskly insisting they should balance, just like any responsible firm.’ It reported to the government on 30 July 1931, just as parliament was adjourning for the summer. The next day, the May Report was published, accompanied by headlines in all the leading

17 Barker, Education and Politics, 71.
18 Mowat, Britain between the Wars, 411-2.
19 Ibid., 400.
newspapers. It reported a deficit of £120 million, an amount Peter Clarke regarded as inflated.\textsuperscript{21} The British public now became much more aware of the great budgetary crisis.\textsuperscript{22} If the ‘Geddes Axe’ had helped to prolong a government, the \textit{May Report} helped to bring one down.\textsuperscript{23} When Neville Chamberlain was informed that the Labour Government was actually willing to accept the proposals of the Economy Committee established to consider the \textit{May Report}, he was astonished. It meant reducing the budget by £100 million a year. He wrote to his sister Hilda, ‘[t]o secure such a measure of relief and to do it through a Socialist Government seems to me so important in the national interest that we must give it our support.’\textsuperscript{24} It was a wonderful stroke of luck. If the Conservatives came to form a government in the near future, they would be unencumbered by responsibility for this financial sacrifice demanded of the British people.

In retrospect, Tawney was critical of the way the May Committee was used and its \textit{Report} implemented. He reflected that

educationalists like other persons should bow to the considered judgment of Parliament and the Cabinet. But it is all the more important for that reason that their judgment should not be given until the views of educationalists have been expressed and weighed and the proper organ to express them consists of the Associations of Teachers.\textsuperscript{25}

The cost-cutting measures of the \textit{May Report} embodied in the Labour Government budget proposed the largest cut affecting unemployment benefits\textsuperscript{26} and the second largest the education system. It recommended that the government replace a percentage grant with a block grant, cut salaries of teachers by 20%, raise secondary school fees, and abolish free places. Most of the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{21 \textit{Ibid.}}\footnote{22 The multi-faceted crisis of 1931 included such factors as increasing lack of confidence in the British government’s ability to handle the financial crisis, a consequent ‘run’ on the pound, and rising unemployment increasing to more than 2.7 million in June 1931. Mowat, \textit{Britain Between the Wars}, 379.} \footnote{23 \textit{Ibid.}, 381-82.} \footnote{24 Neville to Hilda, 16 August 1931, \textit{The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume Three, The Heir Apparent, 1928-33}, ed. Robert Self, (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), 274.} \footnote{25 R.H. Tawney, \textit{Speeches on Various Occasions, pre-1939}, Tawney I, BLPES, 18/1, 13.} \footnote{26 Of the £66.5 million to be cut, 2/3 was to come from these benefits. Mowat, \textit{Britain Between the Wars}, 382.}
\end{footnotes}
May Committee looked on the education system as 'outsiders since they were products of the rival public school system'. Their idea of the national interest was preserving the existing class system. In any event, the recommendations were modified by cabinet so that the cut to the grant to Local Authorities was reduced from 60% to 50%. These more moderate cuts may have been influenced by the Invergordon naval riots. There was indeed a revolutionary mood in the nation, which may be partly attributed to the May Committee's recommendations. Thereafter, the government wished to find a slower way of reducing cuts by administrative means. This began with the education estimates of 1931-32 being reduced by £5 million from the original figure of £45,667,442.

The reductions continued in 1932, when Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax) issued Circular 1421 which abolished the free places in secondary schools and replaced them with 'special places' based on a means test. Irwin held the position of President of the Board twice, the first time from October 1922 to January 1924, and the second time from July 1932 to June 1935. One of his biographers remarked that '[i]t was unfortunate for him that on both occasions he took office shortly after a financial crisis, when economies of almost hysterical severity were being pursued in every department of government.' Birkenhead believed the President had no option but to 'refrigerate' Fisher's Education Act of 1918. He acknowledged, however, that Trevelyan in difficult circumstances behaved like a true reformer, using his administrative powers to enable local authorities to ease educational circumstances. Further, he admitted that Wood's imagination was not 'stirred' by public education. In his second term of office, under the constraints of the budgets inspired by the May Report, he behaved much the same way, showing little interest. As mentioned previously, he became concerned with the continuous cuts to education, only when he

28 Ibid., 379.
feared for the government’s success in the 1935 election. Nothing of great educational note was achieved in this period.

Tawney considered circular 1421 to be ‘among the more sensational educational documents of the present century’. He derided the ‘special places’ and the imposition of fees in grant-aided secondary schools. He referred to the circular as part of the ‘counter-revolution’ by which the modest gains made in the 1920s have been ‘violently reversed’. Much of the educational lobby was astounded at these retrograde steps. The TUC sent a resolution to the President of the Board announcing

[their most emphatic protest against the proposal of the Government [for] if confirmed [they would] seriously increase the financial burden borne by working-class parents sending their children to secondary schools ... in many cases [this] will result in the exclusion from these schools of children who, on account of their educational fitness, would otherwise attend them.]

Another government cost-cutting weapon of 1932 was the Ray Committee, established by order of a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain, consisting of representatives of Local Authorities and headed by a Conservative MP, Sir William Ray, long a London City Councillor. Its recommendations were published in November of that year. Tawney interpreted this Report as a reflection of a Board of Education without any authority. To him

the reaction of the last twelve months, which has not only paralyzed development, from nursery schools to reorganization, but has resulted in many areas in actual retrogression, represents the views not of the Board but of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is for the time being the real Minister of Education.

33 Brian Simon, Politics, 179.
Shena Simon, writing the following month, deplored the committee of experienced local government men who seemed to regard education as a luxury 'which can be indefinitely cut down'. She noted that of the thirty-eight recommendations, twenty-five reduced education services and only twelve or thirteen reduced all other local government services.\textsuperscript{35} Education seemed of little importance to this committee. Its main reason for recommending the block grant funding rather than the percentage system was the greater economy provided by the former.

Tawney noted four major sorts of recommendations other than the block grant: those reducing teaching staffs; those reducing the scale of increments to salaries of teachers to biennially instead of annually as was customary; those suggesting fees for children in central schools whose parents could afford it, as well as fees for evening and day classes; and those with the suggestions that special services should be investigated with a review to cutting costs.

Tawney concluded that the nation which 'shows signs of recovering from the hysterics of last year' should resist attempts by the government 'to throw its financial burdens on to the shoulders of children.'\textsuperscript{36} In a lecture at Cambridge in 1935, he made it clear that the children who suffered were those in the elementary system, a category still haunted by 'the ghost of its disreputable past' when the system was created for the instruction of the 'labouring poor'. Was this past now being recreated by the 'Geddes Axe', the \textit{May Report} and the \textit{Ray Report}?\textsuperscript{37}

Two more unusual articles that revealed Tawney's gift for satire and his ability to forecast an educational future stand out. In the first article, as he had previously satirized Percy, he now used his gifts to do the same to Irwin. At the North of England Education Conference, Lord Irwin sketched a history of education in England from 1902 noting the expansion of the educational service. 'He saw in it a movement comparable in importance with that which achieved the abolition of slavery.' He stressed that economic efficiency should be subordinated

\textsuperscript{36} Tawney, 'Economy', \textit{Manchester Guardian}, 8.
\textsuperscript{37} Tawney I, BLPES, 17/3, 5.
to ‘more humane ends’, that students should become good citizens, that “the future of our race depends upon recognition of the moral and ethical side of life, and to this recognition all our planning and administration must be directed’.” Implicit in these words was approval of all the great advances in educational conditions for the working class devised by educationists, often with little encouragement from politicians. Tawney asked ‘can it be seriously argued that the Government of which he is an ornament has acted on them during the past fifteen months or is acting on them today?’ Clearly, this President of the Board was more articulate than Percy but no more progressive than his predecessor. Both of them reflected the wishes of the cabinet, especially the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in educational policy."38

In the second article, as Tawney looked to the future, he commented that the consequences of the educational reverses wouldn’t be truly known for at least five years. He wondered if it were possible for education and politics to be separated, suggesting that it might be time for governments to heed advice from educational bodies before deciding policy which should be ‘instructed’. Perhaps an ‘advisory council with larger powers than any such body possesses today would be beneficial to the policy-making process.”39 Ironically, before the end of the 1930s, the National Government was thinking of means to be rid of its already-existing consultative committee. The opportunity to eliminate it would come with the Education Act of 1944.

A decade previous to the Act of 1944, a significant, official investigative process which would eventually influence the Act, was set in motion by the Board of Education. In the autumn of 1933, the Educational Consultative Committee began to work on a new reference. Originally,

the remit was framed by Sir Percy Jackson who declared that the wording meant that the committee ought not to cover the same ground as the *Hadow Report*, but

[to consider and report upon the organisation and interrelation of schools, other than those administered under the Elementary Code, which provide education for pupils beyond the age of 11+; regard being had in particular to the framework and content of the education of pupils who do not remain at school beyond the age of about 16.]

The process would continue for five years, resulting in the *Spens Report* published only nine months before the beginning of the Second World War. During this time, the Full Committee met on 74 days and examined 150 witnesses. It established a Curriculum Sub-Committee in March 1935 which met 25 times, and a Drafting Sub-Committee in February 1936 which met 28 times. When the process began, Sir Henry Hadow, Chairman of the Consultative Committee since 1920 was still in his position. In January 1934, however, he resigned 'owing to failing health'. As already mentioned, he was then replaced by Mr. Will Spens, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Among those seconded to the Committee was Sir Percy Nunn, one of the chief writers of the *Hadow Report*, and acknowledged by Spens as invaluable on the principles of curriculum.

To gain some insight into the initial investigations of the Spens Committee, it is useful to look briefly at some of the submissions of the witnesses of 1934 and 1935. Lord Eustace Percy offered his submission on 17 May 1934.

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40 Joan Simon, 'The Shaping of the Spens Report, Part I', *BJES*, 73. The remit for the *Hadow Report* originally came from J.A. White and that for the *Spens Report* from Jackson as mentioned here. Both were members of the Consultative Committee which established its right to make proposals to the Board in 1923.


42 *Ibid.* Members of the Committee were Mr. Will Spens, Dr. M. Dorothy Brock, Mr. W.A. Brockington, Dr. H.W. Cousins, Miss Lynda Grier, Sir Percy Jackson, Professor Joseph Jones, Mr. Hugh Lyon, Dr. A Mansbridge, Mr. H.J. R. Murray, Mr. J. Paley-Yorke, Miss A.E. Phillips, Mr. T.J. Rees, Mr. R.L. Roberts, Alderman E.G. Rowlinson, Dr. H. Schofield, Lady Simon, Mr. J.H. Simpson, Mr. J.A. White, Dr. R.F. Young (Secretary).


As a general rule, all children to pass from the primary school at eleven plus into a four-year intermediate school. Whether or not the school leaving age is raised to fifteen, all intermediate schools to be bound to provide accommodation for a full four-year course. All these schools to be of equal status, but this should not prevent certain schools specializing in particular directions.  

His heart seemed to be in the right place but, at the same time, he was 'hedging his bets' on the leaving age. He caused further confusion with remarks on salary scales of teachers, saying that 'there is no justification for the present difference in salary scales of teachers of secondary schools and those of other post-primary institutions; nor would there be any justification for raising the salary scales of post-primary teachers generally to the secondary level.' One wonders what the committee thought of such contradictory comments.

The submission of the Directors and Secretaries of Education after dealing with the curriculum matters of the reference, chose to challenge the actual reference of the Committee. They believed

[after careful consideration of the problems presented...in spite of the limitation in the terms of reference of the Consultative Committee, it is neither possible nor desirable to exclude from consideration those institutions which are at present administered under the Elementary Code.

They wanted a 'reconsideration of principles by which administrative areas' of education grant formulae and salary scales of teachers were determined, regarding the mandate of the committee as too narrow for the educational circumstances of the 1930s. They thought it desirable, for instance, to have a variety of post-primary schools including multilaterals. Such an idea was on the leading edge of educational thinking at this time. Contrary to the merit-driven ethos of the post 1902 Education Act, they suggested that with the raising of the school leaving age, pupils

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46 Supplementary Memorandum of the Right Hon. The Lord Eustace Percy, 17 May 1934, PRO, Ed 10/151, U 6 (20a).
47 Ibid.
48 Administrators of the LEAs.
50 Ibid.
should ‘be able to enter post-primary schools which were more appropriate to their particular aptitudes without regard to their several grades of ability.’ 52

A number of other submissions shared common goals. The Trades Union General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the WEA, and the New Education Fellowship all reiterated support for the Hadow Report and the mandatory secondary school age grouping of eleven plus to fifteen plus or sixteen. An emphasis on education for citizenship through the study of geography, history and politics was emphasized by the National Union of Woman Teachers, the WEA and the Association of Education in Citizenship. Of all of these submissions which were representative of the general educational reform lobby of the period, Tawney was involved with two: the WEA and the NEF. 53

A behind the scenes look at the making of the Spens Report, may be found in the correspondence between Lady Shena Simon and R.H. Tawney. In referring to an initial 1934 meeting with Spens, Brockington and Young she said ‘I am afraid that I was rather rude. I felt that the whole procedure was wrong’. She described her impression that before meeting her, the others had prepared a ‘tendentious’ draft which they proceeded to read to her. She was alarmed by her colleagues’ insistence on considering issues already decided by the Hadow Report. Their reasoning was that by the time they reported, ten years would have elapsed since the Hadow Report. Therefore, they thought a fresh approach was required. Although she thought that they

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52 Ed 10/151, PRO, Paper U. 5 (35).
53 Ed. 10/ 151, PRO, U 5 (24), Memorandum of Evidence by the Trades Union General Council, 19 July 1934, 1; U 5 (29), Precis of Evidence by the representatives of the National Union of Woman Teachers, 26 October 1934; U 5 (38), Summary of Evidence submitted 1934 (no specific date listed), 11; WEA Central /3/3/1, synopsis of WEA Evidence to the Spens Committee, 1939; PRO 10/152 ,V 5 (57), Memorandum submitted by the New Education Fellowship to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education, 29 November 1934. The New Education Fellowship grew out of a meeting of the Montessorian Society with other progressive education groups in 1914. It quickly became a world movement. PRO 10/152, U 5 (50), Association for Education in Citizenship, Evidence to be given to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education, 18 July 1935. The Association, founded in 1934, grew out of the desire of Ernest and Shena Simon to promote the study of democracy in schools and universities.
were 'sound' on raising the leaving age, she was not altogether sure. She urged Tawney to talk to Brockington to determine his views.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1936, Tawney wrote, 'I'm very glad you're on the subcommittee dealing with the establishment of equality of conditions in all post-primary schools. The Board will fight this on a) cost and b) the real issue which won't be stated – principle'. He advised Lady Simon to make it clear that the report must be made on grounds that were 'educationally desirable' and not on those of financial or political considerations.\textsuperscript{55} He suggested that to facilitate procedures, Young, the Secretary, could bring together in a single document all the evidence which could be mustered for a unified post-primary system.\textsuperscript{56}

In response to Lady Simon's concern that administrative matters might be relegated to a place of minor importance, Tawney suggested 'if the Chairman omits or touches lightly on the administrative aspects,\textsuperscript{57} which are fundamental, it may be possible to get him to accept an addition written by you'. The real problem, however, was one of balance and emphasis in the 'Introduction' which might be difficult to amend.\textsuperscript{58} This should contain a reasonable amount of material about equality because there was such weight of evidence given by experienced witnesses supporting the issue. Arguably, the failure to reflect this evidence would be unfair.\textsuperscript{59} He reminded her, too, that the committee, in order to show commitment to the school age, needed to say 'something strong' about it.

Later in the summer, Lady Simon reported of the 'Introduction' that 'I managed to get one or two of your alterations put in, and the technical people helped clarify certain paragraphs.' She still despaired, however, 'of making anything good out of it'. The chairman, despite his clear

\textsuperscript{54} Shena Simon to R.H. Tawney, 19 December 1934, Manchester Library Local Studies Unit, [henceforth MLLSU], M14/2/2/4.
\textsuperscript{55} Tawney to Lady Simon, 26 February 1936, MLLSU.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Of which Lady Simon's sub-committee on 'equality of conditions' was part.
\textsuperscript{58} Tawney to Lady Simon, 2 January 1937, MLLSU, M 14/2/2/4.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
brain, seemed inadequate in expressing himself on paper. Lady Simon concluded that the whole
'Introduction' was 'woolly'.

The culmination of drafting problems came in the spring of 1938 when the administrative
chapter was written. It was so late in the Committee's schedule of drafting that there seemed no
time for revision. In this case, Tawney suggested the following guide:

I think the best course is to fasten on certain central issues e.g. 1) fees 2) 100% 3) the raising of the school age 4) a common code of regulations. Then draft sentences making definite recommendations, and indicate that your ability to sign will depend on those or the equivalent recommendations being inserted.

That Lady Simon took this advice may be seen in several paragraphs on page xxxvi of the Report

We attach great importance to all these recommendations. We believe that no satisfactory solution can be secured for the educational problems of the country until they are carried out. How quickly this could be done is not for us to say. We feel bound, however, to make clear that in our judgment such reforms as we have indicated, and any legislation necessary to secure these are essential to the future well-being of education, and we recommend that action should be taken with the least possible delay.

In these letters, one can see the relationship of Tawney to the Spens Report. He was the wise
counsellor, the experienced committee member, the practical advisor. He believed in principles
but knew how important it was to give them a practical context. Shena Simon, and through her,
the Spens Committee received benefit from the Tawney relationship. In Manchester Guardian
articles he wrote both before and after the publication of the Report, Tawney gave the committee
further support.

A turning point in educational politics occurred in 1934. Tawney noted that there was a
'spontaneous and widespread movement of educational authorities' for raising the school leaving

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60 Ibid., 19 July 1937.
61 Ibid., 29 April 1938.
63 The Shena Simon-R.H. Tawney relationship was not conducted entirely by letter. Both were active
members of various committees of the WEA and both attended party conferences. Clearly, they would
have met and conferred regularly.
age. One can see something of this from the submissions to the Spens Committee during 1934. In addition, LEAs such as Lancashire and London were taking the lead in this trend.\textsuperscript{64} Such a move was, of course, in opposition to government policy. In London, the Labour Party won the London County Council elections for the first time ever, and also managed to win some ‘parliamentary seats well outside the deprived core of the East End that had withstood even the 1931 debacle.’\textsuperscript{65} Irwin had already warned the Chancellor in January about making any further educational cuts. Despite this anxiety and the submissions to the Spens Committee supporting raising the leaving age, in July 1934, Irwin still insisted there would be no funding available for doing so.\textsuperscript{66} Nevertheless, the cabinet had been discussing educational policy since January in light of a coming election. Part of the discussion concerned making a link between aiding voluntary schools and raising the school leaving age. Perhaps the opponents of capital expenditure grants to voluntary schools could be persuaded to accept them if raising the leaving age were part of the reform package.\textsuperscript{67} At the very least, these various events revealed that the government, concerned about the steady stream of by-election victories of the Labour Party, hoped to reverse the trend toward Labour by implementing a modified version of the educational reform policy of Labour and other educational reform groups.

A steady under-current to domestic politics and to educational reform was the march of fascism across Europe. Tawney warned the WEA Conference in December 1934 that the collapse of democracy had produced a ‘moral uncertainty’ and that without educational advance, such a collapse might occur in Britain also. The situation was urgent.\textsuperscript{68}

The election, considered imminent from January 1934, was actually held on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Clarke, \textit{Hope and Glory}, 179.
\item Middleton and Weitzman, \textit{A Place for Everyone}, 168.
\item See Chapter 3.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
14 November 1935. Clearly, among other issues, educational policy in this period had to be made to support the government's plans for re-election. Tawney pointed out as early as 1933 that the worst of the economic crisis seemed to be over, yet the educational economic stringency continued. Finally, in an anticipatory mode, the government withdrew circular 1413, the original cost-cutting document of the Board of Education which had responded to the May Committee's recommendations in September 1931. Tawney lamented how pitiable a state much of the infrastructure was in: buildings were in shocking condition and forty per cent of children were in classes with more than forty children. Speed was necessary if real progress was to be made.

To show how the momentum was building towards reform, one need only look at two deputations to the government in early 1935. The first one, which met Prime Minister MacDonald, represented the School Age Council, an organization founded in the summer of 1934 to promote the long-advocated desire of raising the school leaving age to fifteen. It included a broad array of persons and groups including 79 chairmen of education committees and 81 directors of education. Also in the deputation were the 'Archbishop of York, and Doctor Scott Lidgett, a leading Nonconformist, Sir Percy Jackson, the Chairman of the County Councils Association, and Mr. Catlow the President of the Association of Education Committees' and a 'long list of distinguished men and women, well known for their work in different departments of public life.' Similarly, a TUC delegation met Lord Halifax in April with the same demand. The first group was told that the 'question of the school leaving age would be reviewed,' and given other reassurances which did not commit the government to anything definite. The TUC group

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69 Tawney, 'Whither Education?', Manchester Guardian, 10 July 1933, 8.
70 R.H. Tawney, 'Policy in Education', The Manchester Guardian, 19 June 1935, 10. Tawney referred to class sizes of 40% of children rather than the average class size which was 29.2 by 1931. Brian Simon, The Politics of Educational Reform, Table 7: Pupil-Teacher Ratio: Public Elementary Schools (England and Wales), 369, in Board of Education Annual Reports - Tables 5 and 8, 'Education in 1938'.
71 Brian Simon, Politics, 199-200.
73 Griggs, The TUC and Education Reform, 29.
were told that 'raising the school leaving age was both too complex and expensive to introduce at present and that maintenance grants were out of the question.' Yet, behind closed doors, a secret office committee of the Board of Education had recommended raising the school leaving age with exemptions.

By the summer, the Board began to sound out various groups about the 'new' Board thinking. Halifax spent time interviewing the various educational stakeholders. Meantime, during this interviewing process, a cabinet shuffle in June 1935 resulted in Halifax moving to the War Office and Oliver Stanley to the Board of Education. Although continuing his emphasis on the importance of education as domestic social policy, by August, Tawney’s articles were also beginning to link education to international events. The World Federation of Education Associations was holding its conference at Oxford that month and Tawney used that event to make the link. M. Dumas, the secretary of the International Federation of Teachers’ Associations, ‘had a good deal to say on the question of education and nationalism and of the menace to intellectual liberty, of which nationalism is one, though by no means the only source’. Tawney commented on how this nationalism might be affecting teachers. He believed that

\[\text{educationists are confronted by the onward march in Europe and parts of the East of a nationalism more fanatical than mankind has yet known. Dedicated to the service of individual freedom, each encroachment on which strikes a fresh blow at their work, they are menaced not so much by new creeds as by the re-emergence from its cave of the old bloodstained religion, once thought to be finally defeated, which makes an idol of Authority.}\]

In England, teachers felt the economic foundations of education ‘crumbling beneath their feet’. They needed not only economic stability but also the assurance that ‘politics are so conducted as to enable educationists to get on with their work. But such stability and assurance are not the

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74 Ibid.
76 Oliver Stanley, son of the 17th Earl of Derby, was a Conservative MP from 1924. In the 1930s, he held a variety of ministerial posts including that of the presidency of the Board of Education from 1935 to 1937.
case in England.\textsuperscript{77} Yet they needed to be if the nation was to fight the kind of nationalism now evident in Germany and Italy.

The government’s proposals for a new education bill were introduced that Fall. Tawney noted that they were packaged in ‘a golden haze of generalities’ and an ‘iridescent cloud of virtuous sentiments’ and warned readers not to be ‘dazzled’. To what, in fact, did the actual programme amount? Some of the items were not really reforms but rather restored former grants for building and other services. References to technical education were vague and needed to be elucidated. Emphasis on physical training was fine but would need ‘extensive rebuilding of schools’ to be workable. The government promised to legislate the raising of the leaving age to fifteen, but the conditions attached to this promise ‘must deprive that measure of a large part of its value’. These conditions related to exemptions for ‘beneficial employment’ and ‘home duties’. Exactly what was meant by ‘beneficial employment’? Tawney worried that a majority of children would work, perhaps in collieries or cotton mills. He believed that ‘all the special pleading about exemptions is fudge’.\textsuperscript{78} The government simply wanted to avoid maintenance allowances that the Education Act of 1921\textsuperscript{79} allowed local authorities to extend when need was determined.

Perhaps the high-flown rhetoric persuaded some people that the government was serious about educational reform. In any case, in the election campaign of 1935, the issue of education was by no means as significant as the issues of the League of Nations, disarmament, or employment/unemployment, but it was not ignored. It was mentioned in the election speeches of 61\% of National Government candidates, 76\% of Labour candidates, and 33\% of Liberal candidates. That of the school-leaving age, in particular, was only a little less discussed: 47\% of

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, ‘A Question of Brass Tacks’, \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, 31 October 1935, 10.
\textsuperscript{79} This was a consolidating Act which received royal assent on 19 August 1921 and ‘which brought together former measures relating both to education and the employment of children and young persons.’ It included raising the leaving age to fourteen. Brian Simon, \textit{The Politics of Educational Reform}, 68.
National Government candidates, 62% of Labour candidates, and 23% of Liberal candidates included this specific topic.\textsuperscript{80} The government was returned on 14 November 1935, this time under Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister. The government majority, reduced from 521 to 429 seats,\textsuperscript{81} was nevertheless, substantial. It could go ahead with equanimity to legislate for the programme on which it had campaigned. According to Stannage:

the result of the 1935 general election disguised the growth of class politics. The 1929 general election had shown the unacceptability of the Conservative Party in areas where working-class Toryism had long been a fact of political life. The elections of 1931 and 1935 cut through this development by making it possible for electors to vote for a National Government rather than a Conservative one.\textsuperscript{82}

Clearly, a Conservative-dominated coalition suited the party very well. This arrangement enabled it to be the strongest influence in government well into the Second World War.

The Education Act of 1936 reflected the campaign promises of the Government.

Middleton observed that

\begin{quote}
\textit{[it] was brief. It raised the school-leaving age to fifteen, with children in beneficial employment exempted. It permitted local authorities to make grants to voluntary schools of not less than half and not more than 75\% of the sum spent by them on improving the accommodation. In return, managers of all schools in receipt of such grants were to surrender to their local authorities the right to appoint and dismiss teachers.... The Act was not to come into effect until... September 1939, despite its limited nature.}\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

The potential problems which Tawney feared and complained of in the fall of 1935 had now been legislated.

After the election and before the bill was introduced, Tawney still continued to describe the exemptions with contempt. They were a 'discreditable subterfuge'. How could raising the leaving age be effective if a majority of the fourteen-year-old students were able to opt out to get

\textsuperscript{81} Clarke, \textit{Hope and Glory}, 179.
\textsuperscript{82} Stannage, \textit{Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition}, 245.
work? If only a minority stayed on at school, how could the leaving age be properly described as being fifteen? Moreover, how could Local Authorities be compelled to grant exemptions even if they did not wish to do so? Tawney continued trying to influence the Education Bill as late as January when he wrote about the introduction of Circular 1444 which dealt primarily with administrative matters. He welcomed this document as enlightened in comparison to those of the previous few years. Four of its recommendations concerned provision for children under five, the medical services, school buildings and 'special places'. LEAs were instructed to review their provision for nursery schools. Provision was made for expansion of medical services. Grants to secondary schools were to be restored from their current 20% to the 50% of former years. Repairs could begin again and new buildings could be started. There was no longer to be a maximum limit on 'special places', thus encouraging local authorities to expand this programme. The problem was that most schools had only a limited number of places, not enough to accommodate all who desired them. Tawney encouraged authorities to have an equal access system which enabled children to be judged on their merits rather than their parents' finances.

When the bill was introduced, Oliver Stanley, President of the Board, announced that because of the necessity of training additional teachers and providing more school buildings, it would take the voluntary schools at least three years to prepare. ‘Therefore, although the school leaving age would be raised to 15, this would not take effect until 1 of September 1939 and there would be exemptions for children who entered "beneficial employment".’

A few days after the bill’s introduction, even a right of centre journal such as The Spectator noted that, not surprisingly, it ‘had received a very bad reception from those interested in education’. What else could be expected?

The Government's election manifesto spoke of raising the school-leaving age to fifteen. Could any voter to whom it was addressed have supposed from its terms that the raising would not begin to operate for another four years, and even then would be subject to such broad exceptions that some good judges do not expect more than 15 per cent of the children to be affected by it?\(^{87}\)

It recommended to parliamentarians that the bill should come into effect in 1937 and that there should be very few exemptions from the leaving age of fifteen. This was a flawed bill.\(^{88}\)

Once the proposed legislation became public, numerous groups and individuals expressed strong opposition to it. The NUT, the National Educational Institute of Scotland, the General Council of the TUC, the Education Committee of the London County Council and those of Lancashire and the West Riding, and the Archbishop of York (William Temple) were among the opposition. The Government was not to be moved. Had it not just won an election using these very proposals as part of its platform? On 29 February, the Association of Education Committees, the NUT, the School Age Council and the WEA held a demonstration at Central Hall, Westminster. Chaired by Walter Citrine of the TUC, its speakers included Lady Simon and H.B. Lees-Smith, MP, a former President of the Board who had succeeded Charles Trevelyan in 1931.\(^{89}\) This event was attended by 1805 individuals representing 353 different societies. In addition to those sponsoring the event, there was representation from the Labour Party, Co-operative Societies, and ‘miscellaneous organisations’.\(^{90}\) It adopted the following resolution:

[i]his demonstration affirms its conviction that the Education Bill will be ineffective for its main purpose unless it provides for the raising of the school leaving age without exemptions, to 15 years, and further that due provision should be made for the payments of maintenance allowances recognized for grant purposes to enable necessitous children to remain at school to that higher age.\(^{91}\)

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\(^{87}\) ‘The School Leaving Age’, The Spectator, no. 5, 615, (February 7, 1936), 20.

\(^{88}\) Ibid.

\(^{89}\) Griggs, The TUC and Educational Reform, 32.


\(^{91}\) Simon, Politics, 219-20.
Tawney’s contribution was a pamphlet entitled ‘The School Age and Exemptions’, reiterating all that he had previously written about the Education Bill.

The education bill became the Education Act of 1936 in July 1936. Amendments were proposed including ensuring that no exemptions would occur until the students were at least fourteen and a half, and that the implementation date be brought forward by one year, but all amendments failed. Thus, ‘that poor little pennyworth of half-baked compromise’ awaited its implementation date, 1 September 1939.

In response to all criticism, Stanley said in the House of Commons that the government had issued a well-received manifesto detailing all the plans for the education bill. Those in charge of administration throughout the country ‘welcomed and accepted’ these plans. He assured parliamentarians that

\[\text{[t]he principles which governed the first part of this Bill were set forward not only in the Government's programme but in the educational manifesto which accompanied it with the utmost detail and the utmost clarity...it was idle for people to say that the Government were not carrying out their pledge both in the letter and the spirit.}\]

Lees-Smith of Labour moved ‘that this House declines to assent to the second reading of this Bill...which will be rendered substantially inoperative by its provisions for exemptions.’ This was not a surprising Labour response. But a Unionist member, William Duckworth of Shrewsbury also ‘regretted and deplored’ that many benefits would not be received by children because of exemptions. The Editor of TES remarked that ‘the opposition to the Bill in its present form arises mainly from the provisions for exemption.’

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92 Ibid., 221.
95 Ibid., 54.
In November 1937, Tawney published an article in *Highway* on the Education Act of 1936. With a longer time to consider this legislation and its implications, he still believed ‘the value of the Act [to be] negligible’; that the whole purpose of the Act was to seem to be raising the leaving age without actually doing so, insisting that avoidance of maintenance allowances as permitted by the Education Act of 1921 was the reason for all the exemptions. To the National Government, money was more important than educating the next generation. Yet, this niggardly attitude was somewhat unnecessary in an era of improving economic conditions.

Tawney returned to the matter of the Education Act of 1936 in his revised version of *Equality*, commenting that

the recommendation that all children should be retained in school till fifteen, which formed an essential part of the Committee’s (Hadow Committee) policy,... has now been summarily rejected by the Government. ‘The small fingers’ of children of fourteen, we were told by a speaker in the House of Commons on the Bill of 1936, are indispensable to the survival of Yorkshire textile industry. The children of the rich in addition to their other advantages, are apparently blessed by Providence with fingers plumper and more elongated than those bestowed on the wretched brats whose parents happen to be poor.

His savage irony after so long a time suggested that not only had he not lost his gift for satire, but also he had not forgiven those whom he thought deprived the children of workers.

As Tawney’s inexorable crusade for educational reform continued throughout 1937 with the same vigour and the same themes, he was clearly concerned about the international situation which was growing ever more alarming. He feared it would seriously undermine British democracy which was only ‘skin deep’, society having carried into the democratic era ‘the social habits and mentality of the oldest and toughest plutocracy in the world.’

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97 Tawney wrote six articles in the *Manchester Guardian* on the Education Bill and Act of 1936, four prior to the legislation being enacted in July, 1936; two about implementation, one in 1937 and one in 1938.
Baldwin retired as Prime Minister in May 1937, aggression in world affairs was a source of anxiety to the British government and the British people. Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931; Mussolini had invaded Abyssinia in 1935; Hitler had remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936; and Germany was rearming. Neville Chamberlain, the new Prime Minister, would be preoccupied with foreign affairs during his time in office.

He distrusted officials of the Foreign Office and was ready to circumvent them by his personal diplomacy intervening not only more than Baldwin, whose indifference to foreign affairs was abnormal, but more than the usual and natural concern of the Prime Minister with foreign affairs would justify.\textsuperscript{101}

His policy of appeasement would be a factor in leading Britain into the Second World War.

Against this ominous international background, Tawney continued his campaign for reform, giving a voice to much of what the reform movement was thinking. Often he attended, participated in and/or reported on education and church conferences. His 1937 presentation to the Oxford Conference on how a Christian should act is revealing of his own actions in this decade.\textsuperscript{102} Of his \textit{Manchester Guardian} education articles, Terrill commented ‘many helped sway public opinion on their theme; some had the impact of a grenade in the packed trenches of the educational establishment’.\textsuperscript{103} Tawney’s articles on Lord Percy’s response to the \textit{Hadow Report} are a good example of this impact.\textsuperscript{104}

A week before one of Tawney’s retrospective articles appeared, Neville Chamberlain returned from Germany having signed an agreement at Munich to hand over the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, and declaring ‘peace in our time’. Shortly thereafter, on 30 December 1938, the long awaited \textit{Spens Report} was published accompanied by hopeful expectations from many

\textsuperscript{101} Mowat, \textit{Britain Between the Wars}, 593.
\textsuperscript{102} He believed a person could contribute to moral progress within society by taking a stand on providing good conditions of life for the rising generation, refusing to pay homage to the idea of social class, putting the common good above private interests and ambitions and discriminating between property for ‘use’ and property for ‘exploitation’. See p. 117. Clearly he took such stands himself, defending them in his academic writing and in his journalism.
\textsuperscript{103} Terrill, \textit{Tawney}, 84.
\textsuperscript{104} See Chapter 8.
educational groups, but by administrative coolness from the Board of Education. Maurice Holmes, the Permanent Secretary, wished the public to know that ‘publication should not be regarded as committing the Board to acceptance of the conclusions, but the report was commended to the careful consideration of all interested in the educational system.’

In the Introduction, the Committee described itself as linked to the Hadow Report, although using different nomenclature for varying types of secondary schools. These consisted of ‘Grammar Schools’ instead of ‘Secondary Schools’ (the academic curriculum), ‘Modern Schools’ instead of ‘Senior Schools’ (a grouping meant to include ‘non-selective Central Schools and ‘selective Central Schools’). Modern Schools were not in their mandate but they had to be considered to some extent, because ‘[r]eform in any type of school inevitably raises problems in relation to every other type of school which affords an alternative education to that in question.’

Multilateral schools had been considered and their benefits weighed. The interaction of a variety of pupils and abilities was an attractive proposition. Switching from one stream to another would also be much easier within a school than from one school to another. A multilateral school would require at least 800 pupils, however, to function properly, a number considered too high for an effective school. It would be difficult, moreover, to establish a Sixth Form without a sufficient number of academic pupils in the lower forms.

On the other hand, it was believed in some circles that the demand for more technical and vocational education, a major purpose of the Report, could have been met by reorganizing and

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107 Ibid., xix.
108 Ibid., ‘We use the term “multilateral” to describe a school which, by means of separate “streams” would provide for all types of secondary education, with the exception of that provided by Junior Technical School in so far as these depend on their association with a Technical College and the equipment there available.’
modifying the curriculum of the established secondary schools. Such a reorganization would have created multilaterals, with a technical side, a modern side and an academic side.\textsuperscript{110}

Clearly, more than just the sixth form and university entrance had to be kept in mind when planning a grammar school curriculum. It was expected that 85\% of pupils would not proceed beyond age sixteen. The grammar school must safeguard the interests of these pupils as well as those seeking university entrance. The prime duty of the secondary school was to provide for the needs of the adolescent. ‘[I]t is useless, if not harmful, to try to inculcate ideas, however valuable they may be at a later stage of growth, which have at the time no bearing on a child’s natural activities of mind and body, and do nothing to guide his experience.’\textsuperscript{111} Although no revolutionary change in the curriculum of the grammar school was contemplated, it was, nevertheless, important to emphasize a core around which the students’ studies would centre. In the past, that core had been classics, but in modern times it ought to be the English subjects, including History, Geography, English Literature and Scripture. At the heart of this programme was the mastery of comprehension and composition.\textsuperscript{112}

The committee felt unable to make recommendations about curriculum for Technical Schools but thought that two entry ages should be considered, eleven plus in the case of some schools and thirteen plus in the more vocationally oriented schools. Technical High Schools, mostly converted from the old Junior Technical Schools, must be regarded as equal in status to Grammar Schools.\textsuperscript{113} That this needed to be said indicated something of the reverence felt for the existing academic secondary schools.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education}, xxxiii. This sort of child-centred approach as opposed to subject-centred one was strongly supported by Tawney.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, xxiv.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, xxvii.
The eleven plus examination as a method of determining who could benefit from an academic secondary education was fine for those who had an obvious aptitude, but for a great many 'middle' students, it was not discriminating enough. Examinations could not fully test for those student qualities which revealed who would benefit most from a grammar school education. For this group, selection was a better method than testing. Those admitted to grammar schools would represent 15% of the post-elementary school children and 3% of those other than post-elementary, these figures being based on the provision available for grammar school 'places'.

In considering parental preference for secondary education, it was clear that grammar schools were considered more prestigious and, therefore, more preferred. For that reason, it was imperative that all three types of school, grammar, modern, and technical, should be given parity of status and administered under the same code, thus giving them access to the same financial arrangements. All schools as soon as possible should cease to charge fees, and should have a policy of 100% special places.

The importance of 'education for citizenship' could not be exaggerated. 'All teaching should contribute to this end.' In all courses, but especially in civics and recent history, the 'serious character of the social and other problems which have to be faced' must be emphasized. The Spectator focused on this point in its critique of the Report. 'If its recommendations are accepted, a revolution will be made in the system of popular education in this country; and, as its authors emphasise, the future of democracy may depend on the results of that revolution.'

Consideration for the future, both immediate and long-term should affect the school leaving age. It remained to be seen how the Education Act of 1936, which legislated fifteen as
the school leaving age, would work out, its 1939 implementation stage yet to be experienced.
Nevertheless, the Committee felt obliged to look beyond even that stage. ‘The adoption of a
minimum leaving-age of sixteen years may not be immediately attainable, but in our judgment
must even now be envisaged as inevitable.’

On the day of the Report's publication, Tawney responded to it with enthusiasm. The
Report looked at stages of life of the children in the education system, making it clear that the
secondary system needed to cope with the adolescent stage. Therefore, although technically
speaking, it ought not to have considered elementary education, it did so because the senior
departments and central schools were concerned with adolescent students. One can see why the
activities of the Consultative Committee were regarded as difficult by the Board of Education.
According to Tawney, the Spens Committee ‘endorses both the scheme of organization and the
nomenclature recommended twelve years ago in the Hadow Report’. All schools educating
adolescent students were to be ‘secondary schools’. The three recommended types of schools,
grammar, modern and technical were to have parity of status and the same maximum class sizes.
All places were to be ‘special places’. There were to be no fees for any child in any school. A
minimum leaving age of sixteen was to be implemented as soon as possible. The same code was
to apply to all schools. This Report was the logical culmination of the reform movement of the
previous twenty years. Even before the Board responded, Tawney predicted how it would do so.
He satirically declared that

**By the time a Report has passed from the tranquil atmosphere of a committee of
educationists into the hands of the politicians it is a wise parent who knows his
own child, and the great game of explaining that the Consultative Committee did
not mean what it says will, doubtless, now begin.**

His years of experience with the Board had rendered him skeptical if not cynical.

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120 Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education, 311.
Much of the press across the political spectrum received the Report favourably, approving this positive response to educational advance with *The Times* saying it was a goal at which to aim. Percival Sharp of the Association of Education Committees lauded it as 'an educational Magna Carta for all normal children between the ages of 11 and 16.'

On January 9 1939, the Permanent Secretary, Sir Maurice Holmes, wrote to the President of the Board, Lord de la Warr, to inform him of Departmental arrangements for examining the *Spens Report*. He warned the President that

> in regard to some of the recommendations, we shall find it necessary, without consultation with LEAs or anybody else, to reach the conclusion that for financial or other reasons the recommendations are unacceptable, and in that event it would be desirable to make an early announcement to that effect.

In an attached note to a January 14th letter, he provided a response to Chapter IX, the portion of the Report he had personally scrutinized. He recognized the injustice of the fact that the 'particular form of post-primary education enjoyed by a child depends not wholly on its capacity and promise, but also of the means of its parents.' Board financing was, however, subject to restrictions from the Treasury and he cited the Estimates Circular that was distributed in October 1938:

> My Lords must emphasize the need for the strictest control of all expenditure. The heavy cost of rearmament renders it imperative that the estimates for the coming years should be framed with the closest regard for economy, and there will be a prime need for arresting the growth in civil expenditure. It is the duty of every department both to exercise the closest scrutiny of every item of sanctioned expenditure with a view to the avoidance of waste, and also to refrain from putting forward proposals for expenditure on new services unless they are of a character which could not be abandoned or postponed without the gravest detriment to the public good.

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122 Simon, *Politics*, 266.
123 Form 231, Letter and attachments on the *Spens Report* sent to the Deputy Secretary, 9 January 1939, PRO, Ed 136/131, 14.
124 Ibid., 14 January 1939, 17.
In the paragraphs which followed, the Committee’s recommendations were examined in the order in which they appeared in Chapter IX of the Report. The conclusions reached were to reject the recommendations in the present circumstances. Thus, it may be seen that Tawney’s comments were not far off the mark.

On 2 February in Parliament, Kenneth Lindsay, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board, in response to a query from Labour MP, James Chuter Ede, announced that because of expense, the Board could not accept the administrative proposals of Chapter IX. Although a few remarks were made ‘there was no effective discussion of the Report, in an uninterested House, though a spokesman of the teachers, W.G. Cove, was critical of the Report in not going far enough to recommend a national education system.”

Tawney’s follow-up article on the Spens Report appearing in January 1939 dealt with the curriculum recommendations. These seemed to be the apex of a decade-long criticism of traditional grammar school curricula, a product of an obsolete conception of ‘liberal’ or ‘general’ education. He supported the idea that the curriculum should be designed for the special needs of the adolescent. In its early stages, it should be regarded as experiential and activity-oriented and in its later stages should be unified by principles found in English, History, and Geography as well as a foreign language and aesthetic and artistic subjects. The students at a technical high school should have, on the other hand, ‘a liberal education with science and its application as the core and inspiration’.

Approaching the end of the decade, Tawney wrote two works assessing the education system. The first, a paper on ‘Some Thoughts on the Economics of Public Education’ was delivered on 12 May 1938 at Bedford College, London. It offered a retrospective view with an

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125 Brian Simon, Politics, 268.
eye on financial matters. The second, published in *Highway* in April 1939, ‘The Scope of the Subject’, looking at the various levels of education, attempted to evaluate the achievement of each and suggest a direction for the future.

In the Bedford Address, after his usual self-deprecating remarks about his amateur status in educational theory and practice and in economics, Tawney proceeded to discuss these matters in some detail. He asked what proportion of the country’s resources ought to be invested in education. He pointed out that educational investment in students was a slow maturing process. Society itself might not reap the benefits for a generation. The investment included buildings, facilities, and teachers. An advantage of this investment was the opportunity for those students who did well to go to university. This process, when applied to working class students, might be called vertical mobility. Those who did go on currently constituted only 10% of the student population. He cautioned that

> [u]nless society is to utilize only a fraction of the intelligence at its disposal, it must obviously, in one way or another, make sufficient provision for vertical mobility to ensure that capacity passes unimpeded by vulgar irrelevancies of class and income, to the type of education best fitted to develop it.\(^{127}\)

As well as summing up his usual educational concerns, he also proffered some new ideas such as the distinguishing characteristics of public education,\(^{128}\) and the inequity of the distribution of income between the young and the old. He argued that the old had already reached maximum productivity but the young had yet to reach that stage. Therefore, more investment was needed in this younger age group so that it would achieve optimum productivity in the future.\(^{129}\) The investment must include health care and nutritional assistance. He acknowledged that although there had been advances in this regard over the previous two decades, there were still ‘astonishing

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\(^{128}\) Ibid., These include ‘extension to all normal persons of a positive good’, supplying ‘of specific services [which] while widening opportunities, imposes obligations, and supplying of services at a time when ‘provision offered will produce the maximum result for the maximum period’, 30.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 31.
differences' in height, weight and nutritional conditions between the children of the working classes and those of other classes. The correlation of educational opportunity with wealth and social status had been long understood. The ability of middle class parents with children of mediocre ability to purchase places for their children in secondary schools, while bright working class students found no places available, demonstrated this correlation.

Tawney warned that the British economic advantages of early development of industrialism combined with a fast-growing population had all but vanished. The nation must now rely on the 'mental resources' and 'technical knowledge' of its people. What then, would the nation receive in return for its educational investment in all its young people?

It gets for its money a healthier, better-mannered, and more self-respecting population, whose younger members are somewhat larger and better-grown than they were; are less afflicted by preventible ailments, and are mentally more alert; start wage-earning employment much later in life; remain somewhat longer at school under better qualified teachers using less stereotyped methods; have somewhat larger opportunities of access to a wider range of occupations; read—to judge by the returns of public libraries and the output of publishers—on a scale unknown in any previous period of history; amuse themselves more sensibly; are more capable, on reaching maturity, of organization and collective action; and play, when their chance comes, an incomparably large part in public affairs.

Tawney was making an economic argument about the need for education. It is clear however, that this argument had strong social implications. If, for example there was a fair degree of 'vertical mobility', not only would society be economically better off, but also the so-called 'educational ladder' would have widened to the 'broad highway' that the WEA was always advocating, thus resulting in a more democratic society.

The second article 'The Scope of the Subject' was an introduction to an issue of *Highway* devoted to the educational system as it was in 1939. Tawney argued that for the vast number of the population under twenty 'education, which is primarily the art of aiding their growth, is the..."
most powerful of the instruments by which justice can be done.' To support this contention, he discussed ‘Nature and Nurture’, ‘Health Before and in School’, ‘Primary Education’, and ‘the Class-Basis of the System’. He did not accept the ‘nature’ argument for providing higher education only to the intellectually gifted; instead, he suggested that only with education could a person reach his full potential whatever the limitations of heredity, and only with good health could the primary school child benefit from his education which was now less knowledge-based and more activity-oriented.\textsuperscript{132} Still, the matter of class size continued to be a problem. The education lobby sought class size for elementary schools equal to that of secondary schools, meaning the elementary pupil-teacher ratio would be much reduced. Such equality was ‘the last thing that powerful classes in England desire’,\textsuperscript{133} however. He reiterated once more that the Hadow recommendations were not yet fully implemented. Tawney was ironic when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board commented, that the President ‘is not in the position at present to adopt those administrative proposals contained in chapter IX of the [Spens] Report.’ To all educational advances, Tawney declared that ‘finance is the lion in the path.’\textsuperscript{134} This idea ties these two end-of-decade articles together. Educational investment was necessary if the system was to succeed and the economy to reach new heights. Such investment, however, was obstructed by the barriers of social class. Perhaps the real ‘lion’ was social class hiding behind the mask of economy.

Although the government was concerned with balancing the budget, and generating a recovery from the depression, international affairs were beginning to overshadow domestic affairs by the Spring of 1939. Germany seized the rest of Czechoslovakia, and Britain, emerging from its appeasement policy, guaranteed Polish borders in March. Tawney had warned the government a year earlier, that ‘if the government persists in its present attitude (appeasement), all policies

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}, 166.
will come too late. As things are, it is making the dictators a present of the next half-century of European history.  

On 6 May, the Ministry of Health published a memorandum as to how children could be evacuated. It was now clear that education and a possible war might soon intersect. The outline of the Memo included ‘Preparatory Work by the Evacuating Authority; Transport; Reception; Arrangements for Food and Allowances; Preparatory Action by Local Authority in Reception Area’. Parents would be informed through the LEAs what steps to take.

Tawney’s last pre-war article conveyed a sense of urgency. He wanted vigilance to ensure that policies for educational improvement would not be abandoned, that children would not be released for war work, that school meals, medical services and staffing would be maintained, and that the Spens recommendations would be considered. The defence of democracy lay in preserving and advancing education. ‘What nobler symbol of a common citizenship can be found than a policy designed to make the spiritual heritage of our age equally accessible to all?’ This theme was one he had written about often in his First World War articles. Tawney, right to the end of the interwar period continued to defend equality.

III

The 1930s were a difficult time for educational advance in England. Many of the achievements of the 1920s seemed to be lost amid the economic crisis beginning in 1929 and climaxing in 1931. Even when the economy improved, the government was reluctant to restore much of the pre-crisis funding. Mowat maintained that there was little change in the educational system in the 1930s. Inequality between private and public systems still persisted. Economy

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136 There is a discussion of the origins and events of the evacuations in Chapter 10.
137 ‘How Children Will Be Evacuated, Points from the Plans’, *TES*, 6 May 1939, 168.
campaigns reduced teachers’s salaries in the early years of the decade and delayed school building until the later years. Raising the school age should have occurred but was thwarted.\textsuperscript{139}

Yet, it was clear that in 1934-35, the public supported educational advance, as the Tawney articles continually argued. This support and the possibility of losing the mid-decade election influenced the government’s decision to provide legislation to raise the school leaving age. After winning the election, the National Government introduced a bill so hedged around with exemptions that the supposedly central concept of children staying in school until fifteen seemed a mere ploy. The bill passed in 1936 but was not to come into effect until 1 September 1939, by which time the war was starting and the government was planning suspension of the Act. Although the \textit{Spens Report} recommended many of the concepts that Tawney and the educational lobby had been promoting for years, the government rejected it as too expensive. The interwar years had been a time of missed opportunities and educational drought.

Of great importance during the 1930s, spurred on by Tawney and other reform leaders, was the gradual growth of opinion in the wider educational sector supporting educational advance. His importance was in keeping the cause of reform always before the eyes of the public. At the same time, the Depression and the accelerating threat from Germany made officials cautious about committing money to education, as noted in the memo cited by Maurice Holmes. Therefore, though the government was very reluctant to legislate for improvement in education, the educational sector was nevertheless ready for such legislation. During the Second World War, that support would extend to the public at large, a probable factor in bringing about the Education Act of 1944.

\textsuperscript{139} Mowat, \textit{Britain between the Wars}, 498.
Chapter 10

Towards a new education act: 1939-1945

I

The Second World War caused many positive changes in British society, or so historians such as Richard Titmuss and Peter Gosden have suggested.\(^1\) Ordinary people, anticipating a greater share of power at war's end, participated as never before to defeat the enemy. They fought a ‘People’s War’,\(^2\) encouraged by their exceptional leaders to great feats of sacrifice and production. They persisted against great odds inspired by Churchill’s gifted rhetoric. They believed their government was serious about a better post-war life when the Beveridge Report was delivered in late 1942 and when the White Paper on education was introduced into the House of Commons in the summer of 1943. They were gratified with what seemed like an equalitarian Education Act in the summer of 1944. They hoped that this legislation would be implemented according to the timetable voted upon by the House and that it would deliver the democratic education for their children that had been urged by the educational lobby since before the First World War. Yet, historians such as Addison and Jefferys have a less positive view of the war’s effect arguing that too much has been made of the influence of the war on creating progressive social policy and consequent social solidarity. In his work, Travis Crosby has gone so far as to say that the evacuations of urban centres created hostility\(^3\) rather than promoted a sense of unity amongst the members of all social classes.

As the war began, an evacuation of schoolchildren planned for in the 1930s began its momentous movement. Consequently, ‘by November 1939, much of the state educational

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1 See footnotes 7 and 8, p. 321.
3 See footnotes 9-11, p. 321.
system had collapsed. The interwar years ended as they had begun, with the schools closed.4 The Board of Education realized that it must begin to plan for a much improved educational system if it were to regain the confidence of the people. This realization meant that many of the Board officials who had long opposed the changes urged by the educational lobby and supported by Consultative Committee Reports, now embraced the formerly rejected recommendations. The June 1941 result of this planning was the so-called Green Book containing the seeds of a reformed educational system.

Naturally, the educational lobby continued its work of urging, persuading, and at times, applauding the great project of educational transformation. The WEA, still led by Tawney, continued within this lobby as a major creator of suggestions for policy and implementation, never wavering from the goal of ‘Secondary Education for All’, as proclaimed in the 1921 book. Tawney himself, in his sixties during the war, had begun to think of retiring from his long educational struggle. In the 1941-1942 period when he was in the United States, he wrote to the WEA executive offering his resignation,5 but his colleagues wouldn’t hear of such a thing. They needed him in this national emergency and he must stay on as President. Similarly, when the Council for Educational Advance was founded by the TUC, the NUT, the Cooperative Union, and the WEA in the late summer of 1942, the initial individual founders agreed to ask him to be the Chairman.6 Recently returned from America, he agreed to the request, presiding over his first meeting on November 10, 1942. Obviously, although Tawney considered curtailing his educational lobbying activities, his colleagues would not allow him to do so, and even requested that he shoulder an additional burden.

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5 Central Executive Committee Minutes, 11 July 1942, WEA Central, 1/2/1/21.
6 CEA Minutes, 23 October 1942, WEA Central, 1/2/2/2.
Historians have advanced a variety of arguments about the genesis of the Education Act of 1944. It can certainly be argued that its origins lay in the interwar period, which was characterized by a clash between the conservative forces of government and the progressive educational lobby; or that it began with the Board of Education think tank in Bournemouth headed by Maurice Holmes, Permanent Secretary to the Board; or that its birth was really the work of a clever Conservative politician, R.A. Butler, newly-appointed President of the Board of Education in the summer of 1941. Within these broad headings, other arguments may be made about the motivations of the groups and individuals connected to educational reform. Clearly, however, no matter what arguments are made, the Education Act of 1944 had both long-range and short-range influences. Tawney was a part of both of these pressures. As seen in earlier parts of the thesis, he was a leading educational spokesman throughout the interwar period. He continued this important role during the war leading the WEA, writing for the *Manchester Guardian*, participating in deputations to the Board, and guiding the new Council for Educational Advance, all the while continuing with his teaching duties, located in Cambridge where the LSE had been relocated for the duration of the war.

II

In his *Problems of Social Policy* (1950), Richard Titmuss formulated a general interpretation of wartime social policy which influenced the work of many social historians for twenty-five years or more. He argued that the war affected the history of welfare in shifting popular attitudes on social problems to which the government had to respond. He believed that an unprecedented social solidarity promoted an increase in willingness to support egalitarian
policies and government intervention. The evils of poverty, malnutrition and ill health could, therefore, be eliminated with the consent of the people.7

Peter Gosden's great standard 1976 work, *Education in the Second World War* supported the Titmuss thesis.8 Others departed from it somewhat. Paul Addison (1975) felt that Titmuss went too far with his ideas of solidarity. He suggested that the real story was a dilution of conservatism, not its embracing of other ideologies.9 Jefferys argued that the changes in policy caused by the war were far less progressive than people had previously supposed.10 Travis Crosby, writing in 1986 about the experience of evacuation, compared contemporary accounts with those written later. He took a quite opposite view to Titmuss, based on the hostility experienced by so many of the working class evacuees from their rural, middle class countrymen and reluctant hosts. He concluded that this working class experience of evacuation was partly responsible for the leftward shift which led to the election of the Labour government in 1945 and that it increased hostilities between the classes.11 Arguably, it is clear that a leftward move occurred partly because, in the case of education, of a long campaign of reform and partly because a Coalition Government in which the Labour Party controlled much of the domestic agenda, paved the way for the Labour victory of 1945.

Once the evacuations began, they included children and their teachers, civil servants, prisoners, hospital staffs and patients. The government evacuations accounted for 1,750,000 people and private evacuations for an additional 2,000,000. The total was similar to the government's pre-war estimate of 4,000,000.12 Eventually, many of the evacuees trickled back to

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12 Ibid., 102.
their homes when the ‘phony’ war proved harmless to the civilian population. Later, other evacuations would occur when the enemy began to bomb British urban centres on a continual basis.

The government was insistent that Local Education Authorities should continue educational services in as normal a manner as possible. But financing the haphazardly reorganized education system proved to be both trying and complicated. Reception areas needed extra money for the evacuated children. Evacuated areas were uncertain what their financial obligation were; the Board of Education sorted out problems between the authorities as best it could but sometimes financial solutions took years.

As the war progressed, chronic troubles emerged for the education system. Loss of school buildings to bombing and to requisitioning by government for war purposes exacerbated the already-poor situation of school premises. Even in repairing damaged buildings, restrictions on building materials caused serious delays. The impact on the students was two-fold. As well as receiving fewer hours of instruction, they now had fewer permanent safe places in which to receive it. Some students responded by attending on an occasional basis only, or not at all.

Kenneth Lindsay, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board, in answer to a question in Parliament, disclosed that of the 5 million children in elementary schools, about a quarter of them ‘are losing more or less of the schooling which they would have had in normal times. Later in the year, James Chuter Ede, the successor to Lindsay at the Board, told the National Association of Labour Teachers that ‘[i]n the London area, over three weeks, 34% of school time was lost as a result of “alerts”.' Butler remembered that ‘the evacuation of the school children threw the educational system in Brief, The Times Educational Supplement, (18 May 1940), 185.

13 Gosden, Education in the Second World War, 14.
14 Ibid., 16, 32-33.
15 Ibid., 49-51, 64. In 1941, the worst school attendance situation was that of Portsmouth where 3,715 students were attending full-time, 6,528 part-time, and 5,300 not attending at all. In London, the figures were 85,970 full-time, 7,700 part-time and 11,460 not attending at all.
16 ‘Comment in Brief’, The Times Educational Supplement, (18 May 1940), 185.
17 ‘Breakdown of Education, Labour Teachers Meet Mr. Ede’, TES, 7 December 1940, 486.
system into serious disorder, and thoughts of reform were put aside. There were considerable doubts whether the structure itself could be held together.\(^{18}\) Clearly, 'evacuation had made education a burning political issue.\(^{19}\)

Possibly the most pressing aspect of education during the war was the staffing shortage. Conscription claimed more and more of the male teachers, from the youngest to those of middle age. Further, some of the female teachers departed for the military and essential war services on the home front. The teacher shortage became acute, leaving the school system dependent primarily on older staff, usually women, often called out of retirement. Even at the end of the war when the Board of Education was urgently asking that teachers be demobilized first, the army chose to keep many of the teachers to train soldiers who were to remain as part of a peacetime army. Clearly, it was difficult to maintain the 'normal' quality of education that the government said it desired.\(^{20}\)

The breakdown of the education system was of great concern to the educational lobby and to prominent educationalists. In 1939, the WEA Central Executive committee adopted resolutions in response to recent government circulars and speeches. Provision of milk and meals should be extended; continuation day schools should not be substituted for raising the school leaving age; and all places in secondary schools should be special places.\(^{21}\)

In another response to war and evacuation, Shena Simon wrote a pamphlet published by the WEA on 30 December 1939. She remarked on the gradual slipping back of students to evacuation areas where schools tended to be closed, adding that in some areas where by-laws permitted, children of twelve could be employed 'for five hours on any day they are not required to attend school and for two hours on Sundays, and they are not now required in evacuation areas

\(^{19}\) Calder, *People's War*, 542.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 93.
\(^{21}\) 'WEA Resolutions', *TES*, 14 December 1940, 496.
to attend school on any day, so that there is nothing to prevent a child of twelve from being employed for thirty-two hours a week.' As to the re-opening of some schools in evacuation areas, a 'lower standard of protection is demanded for these schools than for those in neutral areas, because the latter are intended to remain open throughout the war.'

She ended her assessment of the situation by making twelve recommendations. These included calling for a small commission to look into the problems countrywide to be established, and recommending that the problems of evacuation and billeting be put under the jurisdiction of the Board. She also advocated that compulsory education be enforced starting 1 April 1940, that all buildings not absolutely indispensable to the war be returned to the education system, that the education authorities be given permission to requisition buildings of other kinds where schools were not available, and that the Education Act of 1936 be proclaimed and enforced from 1 September 1940.

In co-ordination with Shena Simon's pamphlet, Tawney, as President of the WEA, as friend and mentor to Simon, and as an educational leader, began to promote her ideas in the Manchester Guardian. In 'The Problem of the Children', he wrote of the 900,000 children or more away from home and under no compulsion to attend school. Worrying that the children had no proper access to health care and that their teachers were bearing too heavy a load, he urged that action be taken on compulsory attendance, restoration of all schools not essential to the war effort, and assistance for evacuation centres. He also reiterated the Simon recommendation of appointing a commission to survey the situation.

Later, a month after the Simon pamphlet was published, Tawney led a WEA deputation to Lord de la Warr, President of the Board of Education. This was his first wartime meeting with the Minister. The deputation included an array of notables such as Dr. J.J. Mallon of Toynbee

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23 Ibid., 13-4.
Hall and the WEA as well as Lester Smith and Mrs. E.V. Parker both of the WEA Central Committee. Other members were J.A. Nicholson, head of the Educational Advisory Committee of the WEA, Harold Clay, a later President of the organization, Councillor Hargrave of the York Education Committee, Lady Simon and the General Secretary and Education Officer. In general, the deputation stressed Lady Simon’s recommendations. Tawney said that the partial paralysis of the education system was regarded by some parents as a disaster. Mrs. Parker pressed for more buildings both for teaching and for billeting. With Tawney she advocated that children without boots and shoes be given them.25

In parliament the following week, the President, Lord De la Warr signalled that he would restore compulsory education, but he rejected the idea of an independent survey. The WEA judged that he did not appreciate fully the problems of reception areas.26 He had responded, nevertheless, to some of their pressures.

Clearly, the faltering educational system27 which was closer to collapse than at any time since its inception in 1870, needed a transfusion of political will. Several factors in 1940 provided this and set the Board Officials into planning for the reforms that they had been evading for years. Tawney, like other educationalists, continued his tenacious reform articles, always emphasizing the theme of equality. His withering comment that young people were segregated in different schools not according to ‘their needs and capacities but [instead] with their parents’ bank accounts’ in mind is evidence of this single-mindedness. In the same article, he wrote of the necessity to make plans in light of the type of counter-blockade war then being waged. He pointed to four issues: that children must be in school full-time, that officials must improve the

25 Notes, 8 February 1940, WEA Central, /3/3/1.
26 Ibid.
evacuation process, that the Board must not neglect the adolescent and the raising of the school leaving age, and that the problem of financing public schools must be addressed.\textsuperscript{28} 

In April 1940, the President of the Board, Lord De La Warr resigned 'after much complaint of maladministration'.\textsuperscript{29} He was replaced by a politician more experienced in educational matters, Herwald Ramsbotham, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{30} The following month, Churchill established his coalition government with the Labour Party which agreed to participate only on condition that the Prime Minister 'guaranteed attention to plans for post-war reconstruction.'\textsuperscript{31} A number of historians have argued that this was the beginning of a wartime consensus, but Jefferys opposes this argument suggesting that 'consensus – defined here as a historically unusual degree of agreement over a broad range of economic and social policies – did not...embrace the opposing front-benches [or] the constituencies.'\textsuperscript{32} The coalition was not reforming and radical, and the major reform that did occur in education was rather conservative in nature.

Shortly afterwards, a new voice for educational reform emerged at Printing House Square when, in July, Harold Dent was appointed editor at the \textit{Times Educational Supplement} to replace Donald McLachlan who had joined the navy. In his subsequent book, \textit{Education in Transition}, Dent pointed to the autumn of 1940 as the time when educationalists began to believe that Ramsbotham was going to renege on the government’s pledge to implement the Education Act of 1936 at the end of the war. The Parliamentary Secretary appointed at the time of the formation of the coalition, James Chuter Ede, had to issue a 'categoric denial' of the allegation.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} Ramsbotham held this post from April 1940 until July 1941.  
\textsuperscript{32} Kevin Jefferys, \textit{The Churchill coalition and wartime politics, 1940-1945}, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991), 5.  
In October 1940 Tawney directed his readers to the need for the government to consider post-war educational policy. He condemned the class division reflected in the separate elementary and secondary systems. He warned, too, that physical training and continuation schools currently being debated in the House of Commons, as important as they were, must be part of a general educational reform. Continuation schools must not be thought of as a replacement for secondary education but must instead be a supplement for sixteen-year-old students who had completed the secondary phase of their education.34

These and other factors accelerated public criticism of the Board of Education leading to a crisis of public confidence. An early example of such criticism was the ‘Manifesto by the WEA’ in TES, the first sentence of which stated that ‘[p]ublic anxiety concerning the present state of education is reflected in a manifesto published this week by the WEA.’35 Under pressure, the Board’s civil servants began active planning for educational reconstruction after the war. Its ‘Committee of Senior Officials on Post-war Reconstruction’, formed in November 1940, was determined to offer leadership in educational thinking dormant since the pre-First World War days of Robert Morant. This committee, including five permanent assistant secretaries, three chief inspectors and the senior woman inspector under the guidance of the Permanent Secretary, Sir Maurice Holmes, worked as a think tank at Bournemouth through much of the war. The only major official who remained in London to act as a link with government was R.S. Wood, the Deputy Secretary. All these officials wrote papers which they circulated to one another. One submitted by the Deputy Secretary discussed raising the leaving age to fifteen without exception, replacing elementary and secondary with primary and secondary, and replacing all titles of

35 ‘Manifesto by the Workers’ Educational Association’, Public Education and the War, TES, 14 December 1940, 496. In another example, C. Day Lewis remarked a few months later that ‘there exists between teachers, parents, and educational theorists a lively and growing body of interest in problems of education; ...more and more people in this country are realizing that unless we create a new order out of our present chaos, we shall have fought this war in vain.’ ‘Three Basic Aims’, Education series, TES, 8 February 1941, 60.
differentiation in the secondary system ('senior, central, junior technical, technical high school, grammar school') with just plain secondary. This paper was exceptionally influential.\textsuperscript{36}

As one might expect, in light of the educational debate of the interwar years, the organization of secondary education received much attention from the permanent assistant secretaries (PAS). Of these, however, only William Cleary, head of the elementary branch supported the idea of the multilateral school. The others favoured the tripartite system suggested by the \textit{Spens Report}.\textsuperscript{37} Yet another contentious issue was that of the 'breaking point' between primary and secondary. The PAS could not reach consensus, thereby leaving the decision to Holmes who chose eleven plus.\textsuperscript{38}

From the papers of the PAS and its sub-committees a \textit{Green Book} was created and, indeed, completed before R.A. Butler became President of the Board in the summer of 1941. At the time of publication in June 1941, the Permanent Secretary commented

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\textit{[t]he Memorandum must not be taken as embodying the Board's considered conclusions...the memorandum has been prepared by some officers of the Board. It represents nothing more than their personal views of the directions in which the educational system stands in need of reform and their suggestions as to ways in which such reform might be effected.}\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Since it was supposed to be a confidential document, he sent it to particular groups to solicit their views on reform. However, as Butler noted 'in Lester Smith’s splendid phrase, it was distributed in such a blaze of secrecy that it achieved an unusual degree of publicity.'\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} Gosden, \textit{Education}, 238-243. Board officials rather than the President took the lead in this process according to Gosden, ‘From Board to Ministry: the impact of the War on the education department', \textit{History of Education}, vol. 18, no. 3, 1989, 188. In Dent’s opinion, what ‘the President had in mind at that time amounted to nothing more than the statutory enforcement of reforms already enacted but inoperative'. Dent, \textit{Education in Transition}, 201.

\textsuperscript{37} Gosden, \textit{Education}, 247.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, 249.


\textsuperscript{40} Butler, \textit{Art of the Possible}, 93.
Meanwhile, after the Green Book process had begun, but before it was completed, Tawney on 20 February 1941 led yet another deputation to the Board, which, as noted, was now led by Conservative MP and former parliamentary secretary to the Board, Henvald Ramsbotham. This deputation included representation from the TUC, the Cooperative Union, the WEA and the British Association for Labour Legislation. In the WEA summary of his remarks, Tawney warned of ‘the danger that the educational system might run down or stagnate at an unreasonably low level’. Concerns were expressed about the difference between the number of students on the rolls and those actually attending classes. Surely no group of children should be allowed to run wild. The decline in numbers of children in Secondary Schools was alarming. The drop from 470,000 in 1938 to 413,000 in 1940 was a steep one. He wanted to highlight yet again that ‘the WEA wished to see it (secondary education) organized on a basis of complete equality of status for all children in school in that stage. In order to achieve this, fees must be abolished...and Secondary education put on the basis of 100 per cent special places.’

Almost twenty years after writing ‘Secondary Education for All’, Tawney was still demanding equality for all children. During his long period of advocacy, another complete generation of children had been educated in the old, two-tier manner.

Shortly after this meeting, speaking to the Lancashire branch of the NUT, Ramsbotham affirmed that his officials were ‘devoting a great deal of time to the ideal lay-out of education in the post-war world, and were forming provisional views on the changes, legislative and otherwise, which would be needed to put the educational system on the soundest and most enlightened and most democratic lines.’ By May, he was assuring London teachers that the three lines of advance being planned were the raising of the school leaving age, the establishment of day continuation schools, and the reform and expansion of secondary education.

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41 Notes, 20 February 1941, WEA Central, /3/3/1.
42 Dent, Transition, 203.
months of 1941, the President of the Board was finally responding to the pressures of the educational lobby. Gosden, for example, noted that the TES had been reflecting public pressure for reform of the educational system since the summer of 1940. Would such a response from the President have been possible without the flagging state of the educational system exacerbated by the evacuations?

The publication of the Green Book in June 1941 and its restricted circulation to selected groups and individuals was a matter of controversy. Those who had not received it complained about secrecy and lack of consultation. Gosden referred to the ‘hammering’ that the President and the Permanent Secretary had to endure as a result of the insistence on secrecy and regarded such insistence as illogical since Holmes made it clear that the contents of the Green Book were simply proposals. Why should it matter if they were widely known? The political fall-out from this secrecy issue was borne first by Ramsbotham and then by R.A. Butler who succeeded to the Presidency on July 21, 1941. Tawney had access to the Green Book because the WEA was one of the organizations to which it was sent. However, during the period from October 1941 to November 1942, he wrote no articles about it for the Manchester Guardian as this was the time in which he was serving as a Labour attaché in Washington.

In the days leading up to the change, Chuter Ede said that Ramsbotham was very upset. When rumours of the change at the Board began to circulate, Ramsbotham asked Chuter Ede, the long-time Labour MP and current Parliamentary Secretary to the Board, whether Labour was dissatisfied with him. He had heard that Brendan Bracken, a Conservative MP, and confidant of Churchill, had been saying that the President ought to go. A few months later, the announcement of Butler as his replacement was made. This new Minister acquired his position in

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43 Gosden, Education, 237.
44 Ibid., 265-6.
45 See Chapter 6.
46 Chuter-Ede Diaries, 21 July 1941, British Library, [henceforth BL], 59690. This anecdote is actually a retrospective look at the change of Ministers, the events taking place over the previous months.
a Churchill shuffle possibly intended to disperse the old appeasement group. Halifax had been sent as ambassador to Washington, and Hoare as ambassador to Madrid.\(^{47}\) Butler, who had served as Halifax’s Under Secretary from 1939 to 1940, was despatched to Education, presumably a place where he could do no harm. In fact, the ‘Board of Education, such were the values of society, was regarded as a political backwater.'\(^{48}\) At the same time, it was thought that Ramsbotham had offended Churchill in some way, perhaps because he had launched the *Green Book* with its promises of reform. With the exception of the Tory Reform Committee, the Conservatives were not particularly keen on domestic reform. Therefore, ‘the coalition was characterized by prevarication in domestic policy.'\(^{49}\) The Prime Minister, immersed in the war, was reluctant to attempt educational reform because of the religious squabbles that had occurred in the period before the First World War when the Liberal administration had tried to amend the Education Act of 1902. Butler himself suggested that Ramsbotham had said things for which his colleagues in peacetime would have rebuked him.\(^{50}\)

In many ways, Butler was an excellent choice for his new department. Not only was he young and energetic, but he also came from a family with a long line of educators, some of them headmasters of public schools and some of them university dons. He himself had been a don for three years before entering politics. He also knew that as long as he was careful to avoid religious controversy, he could quietly carry out plans for educational reforms. His new department was one of great political potential.\(^{51}\) Moreover, it was ready for such a change in attitude as its officials had been planning reform for more than a year. Yet, Butler was reliant on Chuter Ede and other officials for the most fundamental information. During an afternoon


\(^{48}\) Calder, *People’s War*, 541-2.


\(^{50}\) Chuter-Ede Diaries, 8 August 1941, BL, 59690.

meeting in August, for example, he asked what was meant by an ‘elementary school’. He seemed not to know the difference between ‘elementary’ and ‘secondary’. On another occasion, Chuter Ede had to explain that if post-primary education were placed under secondary regulations, then it would become a duty of the LEAs to provide secondary education. Students could not be compelled to attend until the age of fifteen if the LEAs did not provide the schools. Clearly, there was a steep learning curve for Butler, who along with most of the Board officials had been educated at the great public schools and the ancient universities. He had no experience whatever of the state education system. Butler was aware from the beginning of his tenure at the Board that ‘I was very lucky to have this consistently loyal and wise friend [Chuter Ede] as my chief lieutenant.’

As well, he knew enough about the recent history of the Board of Education to be aware of the significance of R.H. Tawney. His continuing reputation as Board critic was further exacerbated when, in January 1941, he led a WEA delegation to see Arthur Greenwood who was a Minister without Portfolio and a strong Labour man with equally strong and long WEA connections. Greenwood correctly passed on a report of this meeting to the President of the Board. The holding of this meeting enraged Holmes whose memories of Tawney included experiencing his dominating influence on the consultative committee since the 1920’s, and as a ‘virtual arbiter of policy even if that policy remained largely unfulfilled.’

It was, therefore, not surprising that one of the people with whom Butler held an early interview was Tawney. In early September, Butler provided Chuter Ede with his notes of interviews with Tawney at the Board. Evidently, Tawney had been eloquent in his usual way on the themes he had been expounding for years. A classic comment that England was the ‘only

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52 Chuter-Ede Diaries, 15 August 1941, BL, 59690.
53 Ibid., 8 August 1941.
54 Butler, Art of the Possible, 93.
country to fabricate through the education system the class struggle' was recorded. Tawney praised the *Green Book* for suggesting that post-primary be accorded secondary status. But he challenged the proposals on the leaving age and fees. He believed that new legislation should mandate sixteen as the leaving age and should abolish all fees in direct grant-aided schools. Tawney still supported percentage grants and Fisher's concept of continuation schools. He strongly regretted that at such a crucial time for education, he was obliged to go to America. While he was away, the impetus for educational reform was quickening in England. Butler and Chuter Ede were determined to be the dominant figures at the Board, leading the officials in making major decisions rather than rubber-stamping the recommendations of those officials.

Meanwhile, Tawney followed events from afar. However, readers of the *TES* were reminded of him when a book by Barbara Drake, *Education for Democracy*, for which Tawney had provided an 'impressive introduction' was reviewed in November by the *TES*. He took the opportunity to press for all the major reforms that the educational lobby had been demanding. His major thrust that 'the hereditary curse of English education is the association of educational opportunity with the vulgar irrelevancies of class and income’ highlighted the need for a more democratic society.

Among a number of public intellectuals engaged in writing a series of articles about education, the contribution of Julian Huxley, the distinguished biologist and writer, is especially notable. In a wide-ranging article published in three parts in November and December 1941, he discussed history, the elites, established interests, the environment, ethics and science, religion

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56 Secondary schools run by voluntary bodies after 1902 were able to obtain grants from both the LEAs and the Board of Education. Following 1919, however, the schools were obliged to choose between these two sources of funding. The schools choosing Board funding were called Direct Grant Schools, and often developed with a more exclusive social composition rather like independent schools.

57 Chuter-Ede Diaries, September 8, 1941, BL, 59690. A fuller discussion of Tawney's trip to America occurs in chapter 6. It is important to keep in mind that Tawney sought this assignment and made great efforts to acquire it.


and community life. He defined education as 'the function by virtue of which the social tradition, both in general and in its specialized aspects, is reproduced and enabled to evolve'. He believed that the phase from which the western world was then emerging possessed a striking double duality. The class system in education was a duality, consisting of education for the masses and education for the elites. The ideological duality could be seen in the religious schools which had provided the original education for the masses and the state schools which had more recently begun to do the same. If both dualities changed, society could enter a new democratic phase.60

The quickening pace of educational reform was also reflected in the conferences held by educational and other interested stakeholders in 1942. Between 11 April and 11 July the NUT, the Labour Party, the Association of Education Committees, the Association of Directors and Secretaries of Education, and the WEA all featured educational advance in their discussions, highlighting the usual demands of the interwar period. Addressing the NUT conference, Richard Butler said that 'all my ideas flow from two major convictions; first, that we shall with your help and mine and of all good Britishers, emerge from this war a single society or community – not the two nations so eloquently described by Disraeli in Sybil' and we 'should find the training suited to the talents of all our children'.61

The Labour Party conference suggested that multilateralism ought to be part of a new code. Alderman Cropper, the new president of the Association of Education Committees, stated that four needs of children had to be met before proceeding to development of educational equality: 'freedom from economic insecurity; adequate nutrition; good physical and mental

60 Julian Huxley, 'Education as a Social Function, From One Era to Another', TES, 29 November 1941, 567.
61 'A New Education Bill, A Suggested Outline', TES, 30 May 1942, 257.
health; and freedom from aggression’. As well as emphasis on its usual demands, the WEA stated that one of its principles was a ‘common school’ system.

Clearly Tawney’s colleagues in the WEA and other educational groups, taking a lively interest in the activities of the Board, were stating and restating their positions. This interest was triggered partly by the ‘Board’s action in circulating the proposals of its officers to interested organizations and consulting the organizations concerned separately’ thus inhibiting ‘the kind of joint action’ that might have proved more effective in responding to educational proposals.

Consequently, at a meeting on 18 September 1942, in response to the divide and conquer tactics of the Board, representatives from four groups, the WEA, the Cooperative Union, the NUT, and TUC founded the Council of Educational Advance to exert concerted and continuous pressure on the Board to work unremittingly towards legislation. Fourteen meetings occurred between then and 29 October 1945. Although J.J. Mallon chaired the first three meetings, and Harold Clay the fourth one, it was agreed by the second one that R.H. Tawney be asked to take the Chair. By 10 November, at the fifth meeting, Tawney was in the Chair and from then on he functioned in a direct and active capacity. Of importance for the success of the CEA was its ability to make its campaign widely known, thanks to the NUT whose President put ‘its headquarters with its publishing and distribution facilities at the service of the Council which at the height of the educational campaign meant publishing and circularising some quarter million leaflets.’

The CEA was regarded as a natural outcome of the wartime movement for educational reform Dent argued in 1943. He considered it ‘spontaneous and universal’. A study of reports and memoranda gave an inadequate picture of the great reform movement which had not been

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62 'Association of Education Committees, Annual General Meeting', TES, 13 June 1942.
64 Central Executive Committee Minutes, 24 October 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/1/21.
65 See Appendix II for the aims of the CEA.
66 CEA Minutes, 10 November 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
‘led’ by anyone, but had been pursued by groups all over the country, often inspired by teachers.

‘I believe that there exists today a far greater unanimity of opinion of a much more radical nature than is to be found in the official published programmes.’

Butler seemed to have believed this as well. Even after the King’s Speech of 11 November 1942 which included only a vague, general reference to education, his mood was far from downcast. He realized that the Prime Minister doubted the Board’s ability to secure the understanding of the denominations on educational reform, but he also knew that ‘the feeling outside Westminster in favour of educational reform was “massive”.’ He was confident about success in passing an education bill.

The great, broadly-based educational lobby of the interwar years had transformed itself into this new focussed organization to ensure the best possible educational bill for the country’s children. The new pressure group did not want to repeat the failures of the Education Act of 1918 and the Education Act of 1936, as well as the three educational bills at the end of the twenties. It wanted a bill that would become a successful act which would then be implemented. The Butler bill did become an Act and was implemented after the war. Why did it succeed after the long educational drought?

One obvious issue is the role of Butler. Dean has argued that R.A. Butler, who took over reconstruction planning for the Conservative Party when he became President of the Board, set up the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education to challenge the various ideas coming from the Left. The author believed that the war ‘gave the party a unique opportunity to put its house in

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68 Dent, *Transition*, 220.
order before it faced the challenge of the Left’ in a subsequent election.\textsuperscript{70} R.A. Butler and his progressive stance toward education was part of the conservative arsenal to meet that challenge. In extending the Dean argument, Middleton posits that Butler tried to win over the old Tories of his party who failed to realize the importance of moderate change. Many Conservatives, however, couldn’t understand the idea that if moderate legislation were not passed then, more expensive and less moderate legislation would eventually prevail.\textsuperscript{71}

In the early 1980s, both Wallace and Jefferys argued a contrary position that Butler was given too much credit by previous historians. Wallace supported the position that the civil servants supplied the ideas. The \textit{Green Book} had been written by them before Butler’s arrival at the Board. Undoubtedly, the skill of the new President in the political and diplomatic fields and in the handling of Churchill as well as the religious question played a part.\textsuperscript{72} But the part was that of a mid-wife whose role was not conception but delivery after a ‘prolonged and difficult labour’.\textsuperscript{73}

To Jefferys, much of the credit belonged to Chuter-Ede who was really the originator of the method to deal with the religious groups,\textsuperscript{74} but Butler’s skill in reconciling points of view was ‘brilliant’. Butler also played the dominant role in transforming the Board to a Ministry with considerably more power. The question was how were the various parties and factions won over? The Prime Minister was less hostile than formerly, perhaps because the tide of war had turned in favour of the Allies. Butler hoped to win Conservative support with the religious settlement, a strategy the progressive educational lobby opposed. He had a fair amount of support from Labour’s Education Sub-Committee as represented by Cole and Laski who were tolerant or

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{70} D.W. Dean, ‘Problems of the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education 1941-1945’, \textit{Journal of Educational Administration and History}, vol. 3, (December 1970), 35. \\
\textsuperscript{71} Middleton, ‘Butler’, \textit{British Journal of Educational Studies}, 188. \\
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.}, 290. \\
\textsuperscript{74} Jefferys, ‘Butler’, \textit{History}, 420.
\end{footnotesize}
sympathetic. In the end, Jefferys evaluated the Act ‘not as a triumph of progressive reform’ but as one bent on reducing radical reform by the Left.  

When Brian Simon was examining the literature in 1986, he scrutinized the reform platform. What were its main demands? In a nutshell, they consisted of abolition of public schools, abolition of the dual system, raising of the school leaving age to sixteen, free secondary education for all, a single code, and multilateralism at the secondary level. To what degree was this platform achieved? Arguing that the reformers had achieved little of what they advocated, Simon noted Gosden’s position that the Board felt the need to have pre-emptive progressive policies ready for possible new masters. Labour would otherwise implement much more radical policies when it achieved office. The establishment by the Board in 1941 of the Norwood Committee on Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools was also a master stroke for the conservative position, Simon believed. It took for granted the tripartite system in the secondary schools and reserved most of its investigation and conclusions for the question of grammar schools which it thought should be selective, thus maintaining this form of secondary education for the privileged few. The Norwood Report

[w]as clearly intended to settle the question of the organization of secondary education following the concession of the single code and ‘secondary education for all’. The multilateral school had been given its quietus; selection and elitist structure was not only to be maintained, but strengthened. In particular, the grammar school would remain inviolate, catering for a reduced proportion of the child population.

As to the public schools, Butler dealt with them by setting up the Fleming Committee which did not report until a few weeks after the Education Bill had been given its third reading.

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75 Ibid., 430.

76 Abolition of both the Public Schools and the Dual System referred to their integration into one common system and their abolition as separate systems.


As Butler himself so aptly said, 'the first class carriage had been shunted on to an immense siding', leaving its position quite undisturbed. The actual Report itself which will be considered a little later, was first denigrated by Butler and then ignored. The argument that the 'white paper provided a diversion from the Beveridge Report whose recommendations for reform were both radical and expensive was persuasive for Tories who came to regard the Education Bill as more moderate and less expensive. Simon pointed also to Cruickshank’s argument that the negotiations with the churches were a necessary prelude to the possibility of creating an Act. He could only deduce that the 1944 Act was 'the old order in a new disguise'.

Reiterating the position of his 1976 book, in 1989 Gosden dwelt on ways in which the Board of Education became the Ministry of Education, thus becoming a far more powerful department with more control over the LEAs. The Consultative Committee, those experts who had produced brilliant reports and in the process alienated the civil servants at the Board, was to be replaced by two less significant advisory committees. These views of educational reform during the Second World War written from a much later perspective tend to be less nuanced and immediate than those of the educational lobby of the time.

By late summer of 1942, Tawney had returned from the United States to resume his positions as Professor of Economic History at LSE, writer of educational leaders at the Manchester Guardian and President of the WEA, as well as Chair of the Council for Educational Advance. How did he and his colleagues respond as the White Paper was published and the bill presented before the House of Commons? How did they assess the bill once it became law?

From its first meeting in September 1942, the Council of Educational Advance was determined to influence the drafting of, and debate on, the new education bill. It was equally

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80 Addison, *Road to War*, 237.
determined to have Tawney as its chair. The minutes of the second meeting reveal no reason for this decision but one may imagine a number of factors. Tawney was by this time the doyen of the educational reform movement. Calder considered him the most eminent of all the progressive educationalists. He had credentials as an academic, journalist, and activist. He was known and perhaps even a little feared by Board of Education Officials. His moral stance of equality for all students was above reproach. He was the ideal person to lead this new body. The aims of this joint group were the familiar ones promoted through the previous decades. Among them were, of course, ‘[t]he raising of the school leaving age to fifteen without exemption by the end of the war, and to sixteen not more than three years later’, ‘Free education under a single secondary code for all children after the primary stage’ and ‘A unified system of administration to replace the dual control of schools.’ At the fourth meeting on 23 October 1942, under the heading ‘Activities of the Council’, the minutes revealed that as a result of a discussion about how to announce the formation of the new council, it was decided to draft a letter signed by the heads of its various constituent parts which should then be issued as a press release.

In his diary entry of 26 October, James Chuter Ede attached a newspaper clipping to his daily remarks. From that day’s edition of Reynolds News, it was entitled ‘Education Obstacles’ by Harold Laski. The author greeted with approval the news of the new council and its aim to support new educational legislation. He mentioned that Mr. Bevin was a strong supporter and that ‘it [education] is one of the aspects of social change that has caught the imagination of the Prime Minister.’ This is an interesting and overly optimistic comment as Butler himself, in the

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83 Calder, People's War, 542.
84 See Appendix II.
85 CEA Minutes, 12 October 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
86 At this fourth meeting it was decided to print leaflets of the aims of the Council and ‘to encourage the holding of local and district meetings and conferences by the branches of the four organization.’ CEA Minutes, 10 November 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2. Shortly thereafter, a report on the ‘Progress of the Educational Campaign’ stated that there had been eighty meetings known to have been held, and that there had been word from fifty organizations offering their support. CEA Minutes, 16 February 1943.
87 Could such public labelling be a way of putting pressure on the Prime Minister?
summer of 1941, realized that the Prime Minister was not at all enthusiastic about educational reform, his recall of the debacle of the pre-First World War House of Commons debates on education evidently seared into his memory.\(^8\) Laski further speculated that although Mr. Butler ‘would like to stand up’ to the Churches, ‘I do not think he will be allowed by his master to fight’. There is a sense of a Prime Minister gradually softening towards educational reform, as is suggested by Jefferys in his article.\(^8\) Laski is full of expectation as he writes

> I hope Mr. Tawney and his colleagues will be adamant on this issue. The school leaving age must be named in the Bill as 16 on an appointed day. That is the spinal column of a decent post-war system, and anything else compared to it is merely a trimming on education – few people ever get the chance to make up for those lost two years.

This column shows that a prominent socialist thinker and fellow LSE professor much applauded the Tawney efforts at educational reform by labelling him a ‘stalwart’, clearly a tribute to his long years of work on behalf of the nation’s children.

The CEA letter appeared in *The Times* on 31 October. Chuter-Ede remarked that ‘we may take [the letter] as the first fruits of R.H. Tawney’s return from the USA.’\(^9\) The published letter was signed by W. Griffith, President National Union of Teachers, Fred Hayward, Chairman, Cooperative Union, Anne Loughlin, Chairman, Trades Union Congress, and R.H. Tawney, President, Workers Educational Association. Most likely written by Tawney as Chuter-Ede implied and as the content and style suggested, the letter referred to the eighteen months of discussion on possible ideas for a bill and urged that reference to its impending introduction be included in the King’s speech. Suggesting that ‘[s]o far as the home front is concerned, the Government will be judged in the next few months less by the eloquence of its pronouncement on reconstruction than by practical proofs it gives of their sincerity’, the article reiterated the long-held Tawney belief that ‘[o]f all forms of privilege, educational privilege is at once the most

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\(^8\) Middleton, ‘Butler’, *BJES*, 186.


\(^9\) Chuter-Ede Diaries, 31 October 1942, BL, 59695.
invidious and the most harmful to the nation.' The government was reminded that there was 'an impressive measure of unanimity' on the question of educational reform. Its 'democratization of the educational system' would convince our allies of the 'strength of our democratic purpose'.

This letter was a clever piece of promotional literature, tying as it did the need for educational reform to the war effort and the allies so necessary for Britain to achieve victory. It was intended to encourage the government which might possibly be hesitating to act; it assured the government that action on education was the right thing and that it would be inextricably entwined with victory. The 'people's war' might actually achieve a 'people's peace', one in which all members of society felt themselves to be full participants in a functioning democracy.

Tawney used his first *Manchester Guardian* article to replicate the ideas expressed in the letter to *The Times*. An education bill should immediately be introduced affirming its importance in the life of the nation. Many segments of society were demanding it, including the Association of the Directors and the Secretaries of Education who stressed provision based on the principles of the needs of the individual and of the community. To support properly such needs, improvements must be made to the supply of staff, and of suitable buildings. In addition, religious authorities must assure that denominational schools attain the same physical standards as other schools.

At Tawney's first meeting as the Chair of the CEA, five activities were planned for the near future. These included wide press coverage of the formation and aims of the council, local conferences sponsored by the four organizations, and a national conference in London at an appropriate time. Having launched its campaign as publicly as possible, the CEA then decided to seek a meeting with the President of the Board of Education as soon as possible to discuss the main questions of educational advance, as well as to encourage other bodies such as the TUC and

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91 Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 31 October 1942.  
93 CEA Minutes, 10 November 1942, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
the Labour Party to seek similar meetings with the President. Harold Shearman, the Secretary, reported that there was already evidence of support from a number of other bodies, including the National Association of Head Teachers, the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, the Association of Scientific Workers and the New Education Fellowship.94

‘Further Activities’ revealed the intentions of the council to promote national support for their campaign. Suggestions included supplying information to Members of Parliament, to Local Education Authorities, to other educational and social organizations; the organization of a meeting for all Members of Parliament; interviews with the press by leading members of all four constituent bodies; and the holding of a public demonstration in London at a suitable moment.95 Not surprisingly, the council grew quickly throughout Britain. Educational reform issues had been widely reported for years and the four organizations within the Council were national groups with long experience and strong support. The publishing and distribution capacities of the NUT were also instrumental in this growth. More importantly, the Chair, R.H. Tawney, had as much knowledge about education as anyone at the Board, or for that matter, in the country. The entire arc of his career from the beginning of the century gave him this clear advantage.

Writing the following week in the Manchester Guardian, Tawney continued his insistent recapitulation of demands for educational reform by reporting on the ‘four pillars’ of a ‘new edifice’ for education demanded by the Association of Education Committees (an amalgam of LEAs). Their demands were straightforward and complimentary to those of the CEA. All schools for children over eleven should be regarded as secondary; all inequities in staffing and facilities should be ended; all children should be required to be in school until the age of fifteen; and continuation schools should be established for those between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. These four demands had become the chorus for the larger song of democratic education for all the

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
children of England. Tawney ended the article with a denunciation of the separation of schools into fee-paying and free, a small portion of society believing that fee-paying was in some way superior.  

The much sought-after meeting of the CEA and the President of the Board of Education was held on 22 January 1943. In a sense, the Beveridge Report with its wide-ranging, radical recommendations for reform of society, which had just been published in December, improved Butler’s hand in dealing with the CEA deputation, and indeed, with all subsequent delegations. Although this Report rattled the Conservative Party considerably, it gave impetus to educational reform. It forced Churchill into a speech he made in March 1943 suggesting a four year plan of general social reform and strengthened Butler’s intended education bill, with its moderate reform and cost. Jefferys calls it ‘the first installment of a reconstruction programme gradually unfolded by the government in the eighteen months after the Beveridge Report.’ The Government response to the Beveridge Report was that it agreed with most of the provisions but saw them as concepts to consider after the war. This education bill was the concession necessary to avoid Beveridge’s proposals in the short term. The Board needed to be seen actively pursuing the bill, however, as the Beveridge proposals were very popular. A poll in March 1943 suggested that the people had not yet been won over to the new strategy.

Although each member of the CEA delegation spoke to his particular interests, Tawney spoke for the entire group in the meeting with Butler. Pointing to the wide and ever-increasing

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97 I have found no evidence of Beveridge discussing his Report with Tawney. Tawney was, of course, away in the United States during most of the period of Beveridge’s preparation.
100 The Gallup question was ‘On the Beveridge Report, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government’s attitude as explained by the government’s ministers in Parliament? The respondents answered 29% satisfied, 47% dissatisfied and 24% no opinion. The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937-1975, vol. 1, (New York, Random House, 1976), March 1943, 73.
public support for the Council, he suggested that the public of 1943 was different from that of 1918. At once a larger and more informed group, it expressed anxiety about the timing of the bill, considering it necessary for the proposed legislation to become law during the war; and about the danger of giving in to opposition groups that did not represent the wider society. Tired of schools which educated children on the basis of social distinction and critical at the lack of movement on well-supported professional reports which basically reflected the desires of the public at large, it was dismayed by the possibility that some schools might remain fee-paying. It favoured, along with the Association of Education Committees and the Directors of Education, the extension of the school leaving age to sixteen after an increase to fifteen. Tawney further supported provision of nursery schools and classes as a statutory obligation of the LEAs, this provision being as significant as those for older children. He urged the extension of Adult Education with scholarships to universities included.

By the time of this meeting, Butler, who has been in his position for eighteen months and who had become familiar with educational matters was now in serious discussion with religious groups, many of whom were not enthusiastic about educational reform. It is curious that the matter of the voluntary schools and the teaching of religion were not an issue at this meeting and yet the NUT and the TUC had long been against religion in state schools. The tenth aim of the CEA was, after all, 'a unified system of administration to replace the dual control of schools'.

Butler’s reply to the deputation was the usual soothing, innocuous political oration. He felt some sympathy for most of the proposals and was glad to receive them. He reminded the deputation, however, that ‘the date of any Bill and the extent of what could be achieved directly

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101 Tawney said that ‘the Council representing the TUC, the Co-operative Union, the NUT, and the WEA was in touch with those sections of the public most likely to be affected, and was profoundly impressed by the widespread interest’. Attachment to the CEA Minutes, 22 January 1943, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.

102 Ibid.

103 That same month the Gallup Poll asked a question about education and religion: ‘[s]ome people say that all elementary schools should be taken over by local authorities. Others say the Churches should continue to manage some of them as they do now. Which do you think?’ 61% of respondents chose Local Authorities and only 21% favoured the church schools. The Gallup Polls, January 1943, 71.
after the war would have to be related to other measures of social reform. The government was at that very time examining the Beveridge Report with its recommendations for such reform.

III

With much of the planning for educational reform almost completed, the White Paper and the subsequent legislation were ready to be introduced. Before considering these, it would be helpful first, to examine the main issues of the reform debate as identified by Simon in his 1986 article on the 1944 Education Act and Tawney's positions on these same issues as the reform debate was occurring.

The first of the great issues on the Simon list was the future of the public schools. Operating successfully from the sixteenth century and reformed in the nineteenth by Thomas Arnold, they had educated almost all the leadership in government, the civil service, the law and other professions. Although they catered to the children of the wealthy elite, application numbers for these schools by the late 1930s had begun to decline. Brian Simon has argued that their abolition or assimilation was part of the great reforming consensus of the early war years.

In early 1943, Tawney addressed this particular issue. In his Manchester Guardian article, he stated that the term 'public' was ambiguous because this type of school had social characteristics, including the exclusion of 90 per cent of the nation’s students which separated it from the ‘real’ public education system. The selection system of these schools was flawed, based as it was on wealth. When the ‘public’ schools were assimilated into the state system, they ought to be open to a wide array of students. In his Political Quarterly article of that spring, Tawney made the case for reform of public schools because their exclusiveness and social segregation were a divisive force in society and particularly inappropriate to a democracy. Contact between children

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104 Ibid.
105 See p. 338 above, footnote 77.
106 Simon, Education and the Social Order, 55.
of varying backgrounds was a valuable tool of democracy and an important part of education. Furthermore, the modern world was one in which the skill of understanding others, resulting in co-operation, was in high demand. 'A common education fosters such understanding.' How, in fact, did this exclusive education prepare potential future leaders for decision-making on behalf of the majority of people of whom they had no experience and knew nothing? How could a country be well served if its leadership was chosen from about two per cent of the population? The British elite had a greater monopoly of power than was the case in either the United States or the Dominions. Because public schools were an exclusive group of schools catering only to the rich, the best interests of the nation could not be served.108

In these articles, Tawney was in the mainstream of the reform movement on this issue. All the major labour groups advocated assimilation/abolition of public schools. However, as Brian Simon demonstrated, Butler was able first, to dodge the issue and then to ignore it, a policy designed to appeal to his own Conservative party.

As already noted, the question of religion was a potent force in English education. The Church schools had come first, and the state system was created simply to supplement the religious one. From 1870, the religious schools received some government funding, increased and stabilized by the Education Act of 1902. The question of religious schools and religion in the schools was still percolating as the great reform debate raged in the early years of the Second World War.109 The CEA wanted the abolition of the Dual System as denominational schools were seen as a fundamental obstacle to educational reform. The New Education Fellowship considered deplorable the 'tendency to subordinate the interests of the child to...institutions' (the

109 The Gallup Poll of January 1943 revealed a public which was 61% in favour of more control by LEAs over religious schools, this concept of who should control the schools being a contentious one in the educational reform debate. The Gallup International Polls, vol.1, 71.
churches).\textsuperscript{110} The Labour Party Education Sub-Committee believed that the churches must recognize ‘the time has now come when their task can more properly be performed by the local education authority’.\textsuperscript{111} Therefore, to a great many educationalists, abolition of the system was the only answer. To Butler, however, abolition was not an option.\textsuperscript{112} The strongly-rooted religious schools which comprised more than half of those in England, exhibited clear convictions, in contrast to a general attitude of apathy in society. Religious convictions and principles had strong roots in English history which could not be ignored.\textsuperscript{113} On the other hand, there was some reason to believe that the Church of England was ready to compromise. The numbers of children in the church system were declining, the ‘schools were being closed at the rate of over a hundred a year’, and the condition of many more of them was appalling. Some control by LEAs would clearly improve these conditions.\textsuperscript{114}

The delicacy of this issue meant that it needed careful handling as the religious denominations had staked out positions before the completion of the \textit{Green Book} and the appointment of Butler to the Board. Concerned about their inability to finance the new schools which would probably be required by educational reform legislation, the Catholic Education Council emphasized that the system should not be changed without their ‘knowledge, advice and consent’. Ramsbotham assured them of such consultation.\textsuperscript{115} The Church of England and the Free Churches wanted a more central place for religious teaching in the new system. When the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}, Labour Party Education Sub-Committee, \textit{The Dual System}, November 1942.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} The Conservative Sub-committee on Education strongly supported religious education. Its willingness to support a leaving age of fifteen and to approve more money for the developing mass educational system was partly based on leaving the religious influence intact. D.W. Dean, ‘Problems of the Conservative Sub-committee on Education 1941-1945’, \textit{Journal of Educational Administration and History}, vol. 3, December 1970, 31-5.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Cruickshank, \textit{Church and State in English Education}, (London, Macmillan, 1963), 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Dent, \textit{Transition}, 191-2.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Gosden, \textit{Education in the Second World War}, 272. A list of the points and some analysis may be found in \textit{TES}, 22 February 1941.
\end{itemize}

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Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, and the Archbishop of York, William Temple, issued their statement of 12 February 1941 with concrete proposals for education, they inflamed passions that had been dying over the previous decade. They wanted Christian education to be given to all children in all schools by teachers with the appropriate qualifications in religious instruction. This did not suit some important groups in society. Moreover, both the Free Churches and the Roman Catholic Church then joined the debate partly to disagree with the Archbishops and partly to push their own desires. Temple didn’t back down from this demand even when he became Archbishop of Canterbury. To him, ‘education is only adequate and worthy when it is itself religious.’

Clearly, the component groups of the CEA were against religion in the schools and said so. In a ‘Progress Report’ at the ninth meeting of the Council on 8 June 1943, the secretary noted that 200 to 250 meetings had already taken place and ‘in some places there had been a certain amount of organized opposition on the question of dual control, but generally speaking the vote in favour of the Council’s policy had been overwhelming even on this issue.’ But what about Tawney? How did he personally respond to the religious question? His idea of religion in education differed somewhat from orthodox religious adherents. On 11 November 1942, just a week after he first presided over a CEA meeting, he mentioned the so-called religious question. Whatever view may be taken of that hoary problem, one fact seems certain. It is that few things bring religion into greater disrepute among ordinary people than the continued existence of denominational schools which are not fit for children to be educated in, and whatever other steps may be taken, one step is essential. It is the establishment by the Board of a high minimum standard of staffing accommodation and amenities, and the compulsory closing of all schools, whether provided or non-provided which fail to comply with it.

118 CEA Minutes, 8 June 1943, WEA Central, /1/2/2/.
Here, he was arguing that the material conditions of education were the first requirement, not an argument most religious authorities would make.

In reviewing ‘To whom do the Schools Belong?’ Tawney took the opportunity to remind his readers that despite the fact that religion had historically taken the lead in education in England, this had been by no means the case with France and Germany where in modern times, the lead had been taken by the state. Now, however, England was in a position in which the lead had to be taken by the state by legislating for all, and not simply for a particular group. It must harness ‘different varieties of cultural effort to the common good.’\textsuperscript{120} This was clearly an admonition to the religious denominations to consider the good of all children in society, and not to erect unnecessary obstacles to the educational changes that were now establishing a consensus within society. He did not hesitate to report, however, that

\begin{quote}
[\textit{t}he leaders of the Anglican and Free Churches, once depicted as the lions in the path have issued a joint manifesto declaring that “they look forward eagerly to the new Education Bill” and that they agree in holding that “one of the primary requirements of social justice is an effective move in the direction of full educational opportunity for all”].\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

Tawney was quite even-handed in reporting on the Churches. He offered a reasonably impartial point of view. He did not give an impression of being an implacable enemy of religion\textsuperscript{122} in the 11 August article in which he noted the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords.

\begin{quote}
It would be most calamitous if it were supposed that Christian people care so much about their own particular conception of the relation of education to the denominational principle that they were willing for the sake of it to risk the whole great enterprise on which the nation was now invited to embark.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, ‘The Schools’, \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, 8 December 1942, 4.  
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}, ‘Time for Action’ \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, 11 June, 1943, 4.  
\textsuperscript{122} His support for the religious position was less whole-hearted than it had been in the educational debates preceding the First World War.
Reminding his readers that in the past religion had made England one of the most divided countries in Europe, Tawney urged everyone to take a cue from the Archbishop to ensure that children did not continue to be victims.\(^{123}\) In November, he applauded the Churches for supporting the educational enterprise. He noted that even \[t]\(he\) Archbishop of Liverpool had stated that ‘Catholics welcome the general constructive proposals.’\(^{124}\) He struck a note of admonition again in December when he warned that ‘small minorities who hold that they are wronged unless while they control education, public funds pay the whole cost of it, will continue, no doubt, to protest that they are wronged.’ In his view, they had no right to hold up the bill, which was introduced the previous day.\(^{125}\)

Over all, Tawney exhibited a mixture of impatience and tolerance towards the religious authorities and their aims. If they could not adhere to standards and keep the welfare of all children in mind, he would not support them.\(^{126}\) On the other hand, if they worked towards standards and were willing to be conciliatory, he would support them. Dent observed at the time that the National Union of Teachers was ready to compromise on ‘dual control’ as were most of the political parties.\(^{127}\) Clearly, Tawney fits this conciliatory approach. One factor in Tawney’s attitude was the influential leadership of William Temple as Archbishop of Canterbury, a position to which he was elevated in 1942. He and Tawney, friends at school and university, and colleagues in the great educational enterprise of the WEA were of the same progressive attitude. At a gathering of 600 London teachers to whom Temple spoke in 1943, Tawney later remembered the profound influence of his friend: ‘\[t]\(he\) effect of his speech on the audience was due to his transparent sincerity and to the fervour of moral conviction with which he spoke’.\(^{128}\)

\(^{126}\) This fitted with the idea of the ‘common good’ which he had discussed at the Oxford Conference in 1937.
\(^{127}\) Dent, *Transition*, 213.
\(^{128}\) Iremonger, *Temple*, 575.
Without the Primate’s progressive collaboration, a religious settlement would have been impossible.

A third item of the great educational debate from Simon’s list, that of raising the school leaving age, was the one with the most potent impact on society. An issue of continuing debate from the nineteenth century, it was continually promoted by the educational lobby. By 1938, the *Spens Report* had recommended sixteen as the leaving age. In the early years of the war, educational groups were promoting a two-tier raising of the age: to fifteen by the end of the war and to sixteen three years thereafter. This was the CEA demand.

Further, raising the age seemed a significant step to equality of status for all schools, since middle class students tended to remain in secondary school until fifteen or sixteen and those wishing to go to university remained until eighteen. The leaving age at the ‘public’ schools tended to be about eighteen, also. After the relentless advocacy of the educational lobby, parents were increasingly convinced that raising the leaving age was imperative. The results of a Gallup Poll of August 1944 asking which leaving age was best showed that more than half of the respondents chose the ages sixteen, seventeen or eighteen.\(^{129}\) An inquiry into public attitudes carried out by the Ministry of Education in 1945 revealed that people wanted to avoid the ‘evils of the interwar years’. They thought change in the education system was important and hoped that raising the school leaving age would result in everyone having an equal chance.\(^{130}\)

Accelerating democracy demanded improvement of opportunity for all citizens. The enfranchisement of all citizens, completed in 1928, enabled them to demand equal treatment. The government, however reluctant, had to respond. This was especially true in the middle of a war. If people were truly to wage a ‘people’s war’, then a ‘people’s peace’ with equal treatment for all must be planned.

\(^{129}\) *The Gallup Polls*, Great Britain, 94.

\(^{130}\) Gosden, *Education in the Second World War*, 431.
There was no doubt where Tawney stood on the school-leaving age issue. He was, after all, a principal writer of Secondary Education for All. He was an advocate for this leaving age during the twenties and during the debates of the aborted Labour Education Bills at the end of the decade. As already noted, he was an influence behind the Spens Report with its call for a leaving age of sixteen. During the war, he wrote continually to promote the concept. Finally, he naturally backed the CEA demand, according to his 11 June Manchester Guardian article ‘Time for Action’, in which he urged ‘the prolongation of the school life to fifteen from the close of the war, and to sixteen within a specified period after that’.  

The fourth and final reform issue on the Simon list was a multifaceted and, therefore, complex one. It was secondary education for all over eleven. It included abolition of fees in all secondary schools, a common code of regulations for all secondary schools, or ‘in a more advanced form, the establishment of the single, common or multilateral secondary school’. This issue certainly overlapped with that of raising the school leaving age, since the groups and persons who advocated the first issue also tended to advocate the second. It first became a compelling political issue with the increasing strength of the Labour Party after the First World War and the writing of Secondary Education for All in 1921. Tawney didn’t originate the idea, but certainly his book helped to popularize it. Naturally, throughout the Second World War, Tawney’s leader articles on education were dotted with demands that the government implement ‘secondary education for all’. It was a reform that the Green Book suggested, that the White Paper followed up on, and that the Education Act of 1944 delivered. That said, perhaps the way in which it was implemented was not quite what the education lobby had had in mind. To see how Butler and the Board of Education prepared for the future implementation of this concept, it

is fundamental to examine the establishment of the Norwood Committee, its *Report*, and its application.

While Board officials were preparing for an overhaul in the system of education, they saw a need to do the same with curriculum and examinations. The system in place resulted from the widespread founding of secondary schools in the wake of the Education Act of 1902. In that era, it seemed to Board officials that the curriculum ought to be that of the traditional endowed grammar schools and ought to have an appropriate examination. Accordingly, the School Certificate Examination of 1917 was established.\(^{133}\) Closely related to grammar school curriculum, it was narrow in focus, primarily centred on classical studies. Subsequently, the *Hadow* and *Spens Reports*, with both of which Tawney was associated, had recommended greater variety, but neither of them had been implemented.

A December 1940 meeting of the Secondary Schools Examination Council sought permission to set up a committee to ‘review the existing system of school examinations and to submit a report to the Board through the Council’.\(^{134}\) Sir Cyril Norwood, Chairman of the Council and the proposed chairman of the new committee, and G.G. Williams, who was Principal Assistant Secretary in charge of Secondary Education for the Board, were to select the small committee which did not begin to work until October 1941, its early existence kept very quiet, even secret.\(^{135}\) The illness of its proposed secretary, R.H. Barrow, a member of His Majesty’s Inspectorate, was probably one reason for the delay. Another was the aversion of the Prime Minister to new committees. In the original minutes discussing its formation, it was suggested that the committee should not be restricted by formal terms of reference. Certainly, however, it was to review

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\(^{133}\) Gosden, *Education in the Second World War*, 367.

\(^{134}\) Minutes No. 99 – 102, Meeting, 17 December 1940, PRO, Ed 138/16.

\(^{135}\) Simon, *Education and Social Order*, 60-1.
a) Relations between Board as co-ordinating Agency, the Secondary Schools Exams Council, and the Examining Bodies, b) the number and distribution of examining Bodies, c) the machinery for the award of State Scholarships and d) the relations between School Exams and University Exams, such as Matric and First Degree Exams.

The committee also might consider some broader questions such as content of syllabuses and the possibility of a single agreed syllabus. In a letter to the President the next day, Holmes, the Permanent Secretary, noted the prospect of a creeping agenda: '[i]t would be a question how far the Committee should travel outside the scope of Secondary Schools....But it might be that they should take into consideration any plans which might be made and accepted for the future organization of post primary schools as a whole.'

At a meeting in November, Butler warned Norwood that if he were promoting boarding schools for the system, he must be careful not to mention the public schools. Here is another instance of manipulation by Butler and the Board. Yet a further one occurred in December when Williams wrote to the Secretary and President: ‘[Norwood] regarded himself as entrusted with task of charting the scope of Grammar Schools in the wider field of Secondary Education.’

Shortly thereafter, a letter from Butler to the Secretary and others, revealed that Sir Will Spens had, at a recent meeting, ‘expressed alarm at the activities of the Norwood Committee’. To him, it seemed to be going over the same ground as the Spens Report. Had the Consultative Committee not done its work? Butler replied that he didn’t wish to limit Norwood’s powers, although he had instructed him not to cover all the same ground. There seemed to be a political purpose as well as an educational purpose behind the Norwood Committee.

When the Norwood Committee reported, it assumed, as Simon has noted, a tripartite system for secondary schools: ‘[t]he reorganization implies the raising of the school-leaving age,

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136 Ibid. The Committee consulted educational stakeholders by means of a questionnaire which is provided in Appendix III.
137 Holmes to President, 18 December 1940, PRO, Ed 138/16.
138 Williams to Holmes and Butler, 23 December, 1941, Ibid.
139 Butler to Holmes and the Principal and Deputy Secretaries, 3 March 1942, PRO, Ed 136/131, 86.
the expansion of technical education and the enhanced importance of the modern school. To the three types of school, parity of conditions should be accorded.\textsuperscript{140} The central recommendation of its \textit{Report} was the replacement of the external examination, the School Certificate, with the internal school examination, an interim period of seven years being provided in which to make the transition:

\begin{quote}
In the interest of the individual child and of the increased freedom and responsibility of the teaching profession change in the School Certificate Examination should be in the direction of making the examination entirely internal that is to say conducted by the teachers at the school on syllabuses and papers framed by themselves.\textsuperscript{141}
\end{quote}

Other major recommendations for 'the School Certificate at sixteen being converted to a subject examination, and the establishment of examinations at eighteen' the latter to be used to award scholarships and 'provide professional entry requirements' were to be implemented in 1946.\textsuperscript{142}

At the end of the seven year period, the subject examination should enable pupils to take 'whatever subjects they wish to take. A certificate stating the performance of the pupil should be given to each candidate; to this statement should be added by the school authorities an account of the pupil's school record.'\textsuperscript{143}

The recommendations for grammar school curriculum included physical education, religious instruction, English, history, geography, mathematics, natural science, art, handicrafts, music and one or two foreign languages, but excluded economics, social studies, and citizenship. This curriculum was supposed 'to provide the nurture and the environment which will enable the child to grow aright'.\textsuperscript{144} In these recommendations, curriculum for grammar schools had moved considerably from the Latin base of the early twentieth century, and partially overlapped the

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid.}, 140.
\textsuperscript{142} Gosden, \textit{Education in the Second World War}, 380-1.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Report of the Committee of Secondary School Examinations}, 140.
recommendations of the *Hadow Report* for modern Schools. This may be a reason why Tawney approved of the *Norwood Report*.

The immediate response to the *Norwood Report* was relatively enthusiastic. Major newspapers like *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* applauded it. The *Times Educational Supplement* and *Schoolmaster* both commended it. In the *Manchester Guardian*, Tawney’s August article on the *Norwood Report* was quite laudatory, calling its investigations ‘[t]he illuminating study of questions relating to curricula and examinations in secondary schools.’ He judged that it was time for the old external School Certificate to yield to the new internal examination, and wondered if the seven year transition was overly-long. It might be ‘criticized as erring on the side of caution.’ As to recommendations about subjects studied, Tawney was less concerned. He believed that there was little to be said for the approach to problems of curricula in terms primarily of the desirability or undesirability of particular subjects. ‘What matters is less the name by which it is called than the spirit in which it is taught.’

There was also opposition to the *Norwood Report*, a good deal of it, in fact. Julian Huxley, for example, offered a ‘penetrating’ criticism at the end of August. He questioned the omission of the scientific method and its applications. Although he thought that what was recommended was reasonable enough, the omission of and even ‘denial of social relevance and of the social function of education’ made it necessary to reformulate the recommendations so that ‘they will facilitate social change instead of resisting it.’

Clearly, both the Board and Norwood were aware of the political delicacy of what they were doing. Simon has maintained that one of the problems with the *Report* was the assumption that the new legislation would use the tripartite model, yet that the investigation of the committee

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147 Ibid.
was primarily concerned with the grammar school. 'Only two short sections are devoted to the future secondary modern and technical schools.' In the Spens Report, however, much had been made of the equality which ought to obtain between all three types of school. Yet, the Norwood Report did not deign to deal with curricula for the other types of schools. This was certainly not an 'equal' approach. As well, the White Paper which came out just before the July release of the Norwood Report, used this 'tripartite' model. It must have been influenced by the Norwood Committee which had been hard at work for eighteen months. It becomes clear that the organizing approach to the new secondary system was one in which provision for the grammar school was clearly thought out, thus allowing its dominance to be preserved in a newly configured hierarchical system.

The Norwood committee and its Report were contentious and remained so. To Calder it was the 'notorious Norwood committee', while Curtis judged that '[s]eldom has a more unscientific or more unscholarly attitude disgraced the report of a public committee.'

How does Tawney fit into the educational reform lobby on the issue of the grammar school? There was no absolute consensus on this matter. The continuation of such schools certainly had strong support within the WEA, NUT, and CEA, most of whose members supported a gradualist attitude to reform. Yet, some within the Labour Party and within the teachers' groups had long supported the multilateral school. It had been discussed within the Party's Educational Advisory Committee as early as 1925. Its possibilities were promoted through the ensuing years by such groups as the National Association of Labour Teachers, the London Labour Party and the Trades Union Council. Tawney, of course, was of the gradualist persuasion. In Stephen

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149 B. Simon, Education and Social Order, 62.
150 Calder, People's War, 542.
Brooke’s opinion, Tawney saw no incompatibility between the elitist aspects of the grammar school tradition and arguments for social equality. There was some truth to this idea as, over the years in arguing for ‘secondary education for all’, he had also supported an increase in ‘special places’ so that more working class children could attend the secondary schools (or grammar schools, as they were to be known in the new Act). On the other hand, he believed that Part II, Section 8 of the Act legislating equality of provision would lift the quality of all schools in the system, including the modern schools.

A final aspect of the fourth item on Simon’s educational reforms list was that of fee-paying in schools. This issue was a contentious one striking at the heart of privilege in education. Its existence within the established system ensured that wealthy parents could have their children educated with others of similar social position, thus providing social and economic advantages for the future. Tawney was a confirmed believer in free secondary education. It was integral to his concept of ‘secondary education for all’. It was also one of the twelve principles of the CEA. At the end of December 1942, Tawney, in keeping with previous articles, had written that

[t]he effect of the present division of schools into free and fee-paying is to create a mistaken impression that the latter are in some sense superior, and thus to encourage a social snobbery which it should be one of the functions of education to discredit.

In a ‘Letter to the Editor’ in February 1943 he answered the charges of a previous writer, Mr. Graham, whose letter claimed that there were three reasons for retaining fee-paying schools: people value only what they pay for, independence of schools will be lost without fees being paid, and the cost will be prohibitive for the government. Tawney disposed of these arguments easily, reminding Graham that the elementary schools which became free in 1902 were greatly

153 Ibid., 117.
appreciated by the parents whose children attended them; that so-called independent schools were already supported primarily by the government and yet retained their independence; and that the government cost of complete subsidization of the independent schools was not merely a financial matter. 'The question is whether, when due account is taken of other claims, the educational advantage of the reform are worth the expenditure.' Then, in August, he noted that a speech of Arthur Creech Jones suggested that the interim Report of the Fleming Committee had recommended the ‘abolition of fees in all schools, including the direct grants schools’. Why, Tawney wondered, had this Report not yet been published? In an article later that month, he reviewed the by-then published Report. A majority report advocated abolition of fees and a minority report advocated their retention in grant-aided secondary schools. As noted above, the publication of this Report came after the White Paper, thus helping Butler to evade the issue of public schools as well as direct-grant schools.

Of the four great reform issues identified, Tawney was very firm on two of them, abolition of the public school and raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen/sixteen. He was more inclined to compromise on the issue of the Dual System. As for ‘secondary education for all’ taken to its logical outcome of the multilateral approach, he saw less need for multilateralism than some other reformers did. He seemed to believe that the tripartite organization could lead to a good education for all students, providing equality of provision was ensured.

158 The final draft of the Fleming Report was issued in July 1944 just as the Education Act of 1944 was in its final stage. The Report recommended two sets of proposals, Scheme A to cover Direct Grant Schools, and Scheme B to cover Boarding Schools. Scheme A would eliminate fees for pupils, one third of whom would be nominated by LEAs, obviously a costly undertaking. Scheme B would reserve 25% of places for primary school pupils whose fees were to be decided on an income scale. The principle of free choice on which the Fleming Report was based was never accepted by the government because ‘the Local Education authorities were unable to reconcile the big difference between the cost of educating a pupil at a maintained secondary school and a public boarding school. No less formidable were the difficulties of selection.’ J. Stuart Maclure, Educational Document: England and Wales: 1816 to the present day, (London, Methuen, 1986, originally published in 1965), 211-2.
The spring of 1943 was one of tension and pressure for those desiring educational reform as evidenced in the correspondence of Tawney and Arthur Creech Jones as the wait for an education bill seemed interminable. In February 1943, once more renewing the quest for educational reform, Tawney asked ‘Don’t you think that it would be a good thing if Bevin made a speech about education? Butler, when we saw him, gave a fairly encouraging account of his prospective bill, but was vague and unsatisfactory about the date when it will be introduced.’\(^{159}\)

The public would like a ‘bold measure which will establish some measure of equality of educational opportunity’. No one could convey this principle better than Bevin.\(^{160}\) In another exchange of letters, Tawney responded warmly ‘I am very glad to hear of the action you’ve taken to ensure that some pressure is put on Butler about the Education Bill. I think he can at present expect a favourable reception for a bold measure.’\(^{161}\) As no government response was forthcoming by mid-May, Tawney’s anxiety and that of the educational lobby was revealed in yet another letter. ‘All the reactionaries take heart, and the reformers who are anxious to help Butler if only he will give them a chance, are ceasing to believe that his words and the Government’s pledge mean anything.’\(^{162}\)

Throughout that spring, the CEA continued its campaign. At its ninth meeting, the secretary declared that between 200 and 250 meetings had been held to discuss educational advance and that ‘interest was considerable’.\(^{163}\) A typical example reported in the TES was the formation of the Ipswich branch in March on which occasion Harold Shearman addressed the

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\(^{159}\) Tawney to Creech-Jones, 17 February 1942, Rhodes House Library, The Creech Jones Papers, \(^{160}\) Ibid. \(^{161}\) Ibid., 15 April 1943 \(^{162}\) Ibid., 18 May, 1943. \(^{163}\) CEA Minutes, 8 June 1943, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2. The number of meetings had been held since the formation of the CEA was announced in the press in early December 1942.
meeting on the theme of ‘Education for Everyman’. By the time of the June meeting of the central body, it was expected that the ‘text of the Bill is available’ (Educational White Paper). The CEA, therefore, planned for further press releases to coincide with the introduction of the White Paper in Parliament. Tickets were to be requested for members of the council to obtain admission to the House of Commons Gallery for its introduction.

On 16 July 1943, Butler introduced the motion ‘that this House welcomes the intention of the government to proceed with educational reform, as evidenced in the White Paper on Educational Reconstruction’. So important was it considered that two days of debate had been set aside, 29 and 30 July. The government’s intention was stated in the introduction:

[The Government’s purpose in putting forward the reforms described in this Paper is to secure for children a happier childhood and a better start in life; to ensure a fuller measure of education and opportunity for young people and to provide means for all, of developing the various talents with which they are endowed and so enriching the inheritance of the country whose citizens they are. The new educational opportunities must not, therefore, be of a single pattern. It is just as important to achieve diversity as it is to ensure equality of educational opportunity. But such diversity must not impair the social unity within the educational system which will open the way to a more closely knit society and give us strength to face the tasks ahead....It is the object of the present proposals to strengthen and inspire the younger generation. For it is as true today, as when it was first said, that ‘the bulwarks of a city are its men’.]

There were no surprises. The paper’s ideas followed the course suggested by the educational lobby since the First World War and by Board officials since 1940. There were to be two types of reform, those effected by legislative change and those effected by administrative action. In the first category, improvement of facilities, raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, completion of elementary reorganization, religious instruction, compulsory part-time education

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164 ‘Education for Everyman’, TES, 13 March 1943, 125.
165 CEA Minutes, 8 June 1943, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
166 ‘Mr. Butler’s Statement’, TES, 24 July 1943.
167 Miscellaneous, circa 16 July 1943, PRO, Ed 138/14. This document says that this was an unusual step. Butler says in the Art of the Possible that ’the Bill proved so complicated to draft that it was decided to issue the White Paper separately’, 116.
for those up to eighteen, provision for technical and adult education, extension of facilities to secure health and physical well-being, compulsory inspection for independent schools, and adjustment of local educational administration were to be included. In the second category, smaller class sizes, abolition of Special Places and their replacement with other arrangements, a common Code, ‘remodelling’ the curriculum, expansion of the Youth Service, facilitating poor students to attend university, and reform of teacher recruitment and training were to be the focus.169

Tawney’s immediate impression of the White Paper was recorded in an article, ‘A Great Advance’ written the next day. The Government had finally shown some leadership – ‘the reign of torpor masquerading as statesmanship shows signs of ending...it has submitted...a memorable State paper...its strength is two-fold...it is realistic’ and ‘[i]t is, in short, a plan’. Although he believed it was too early to judge the whole plan, he appreciated its ‘breadth and comprehensiveness’.170 Privately, however, he wrote to Creech-Jones, ‘the abolition of fees in maintained secondary schools is satisfactory, but the failure to state that they will be abolished in all schools in receipt of public money is bad.’ He stressed that something might yet be done since no final decision on this matter had yet been made.171

Dent’s estimation of the White Paper was that it went beyond what anyone expected, not in its proposals but in the way in which they ‘were built round a central and fundamental proposal which involved a complete recasting of the entire educational set-up, gave unity to the educational system and an enhanced value to all the other proposals.’172 Of course, such a recasting was essential to the merging of the elementary and the secondary systems, for so long such separate entities.

172 Dent, Transition, 223.
At the tenth meeting of the CEA, on 28 July, the day before the House of Commons debates, there was discussion about acquiring tickets to this event and about criticism of the White Paper. The meeting urged that ‘the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen and sixteen should be regarded as two stages of a single reform, and that experience with reorganization in the past showed the necessity of fixing a date if the age of sixteen was to become effective.’ The abolition of fees in all schools should be included in the legislation. Wray of the TUC objected to the projected timetable, the settlement with voluntary schools, ‘the loophole with regard to fees in direct grant schools’ and ‘the failure to deal with independent schools’. Tawney pointed out that failure to ensure that milk and school meals would be free ought to be on the list of objections. The meeting decided to issue press releases to state the position of the CEA on the White Paper.173

Of the introduction of the White Paper on 29 July, Chuter Ede recorded ‘The P. had a great cheer on rising, spoke easily and clearly, held the House easily and had a great ovation on sitting down.’ It was a good day for the Board. The following Tuesday, the diarist wrote that the newspapers had reported favourably.174 The Board, so long an obstacle to educational reform, was now deemed to be a facilitator of it.

The CEA met immediately after the debate days in Parliament, a summary of their meeting appearing in the TES on 31 July: ‘The Council for Educational Advance has considered the White Paper at a special meeting presided over by Professor Tawney’, it began. The Paper was criticized as ‘vague’ and ‘the suggested procedure dilatory’. The proposals for the deferring the leaving age of sixteen and the hesitance on the abolition of school fees suggested a ‘lack of urgency’.175 Later, in an official publication, the CEA ‘noted that no clue is given to the date at

173 CEA Minutes, 28 July 1943, WEA Central, 1/2/2/2.
174 From the Diary of James Chuter Ede, ed. Kevin Jefferys, 144-5.
which certain reforms of vital importance...are to be carried out.' These included the introduction of the common code to secondary schools and the reduction of class size in primary schools.176

In a letter of 2 August, Tawney congratulated Creech-Jones for having become his party’s chief spokesman on colonial matters, and urged him to make education another of his ‘specialisms’. Tawney also mentioned that Butler had sent him a copy of the Norwood Report together with a personal note. Tawney then took the opportunity to let the President know that his statement on raising the leaving age to sixteen had been ‘much too vague’.177

On 11 August, Tawney’s regular education article in the Manchester Guardian evaluated the debates, now concluded, of both Houses of Parliament on ‘Educational Reconstruction’. He warned readers, that although the House of Commons seemed to favour reform, to beware of obstructionist tactics from both Houses where there were many members skilled in killing legislation, by destroying the details while ‘applauding’ the principle. ‘The necessity for sustained pressure to secure a good Education Act remains, therefore, unaltered.’178 Here, then, was the essential Tawney, with as many skills as his long-time opponents, with capacity for instilling in the educational lobby both vigilance and endurance. He warned that the goal had not yet been achieved and that much remained to be done.

In a letter to Sir John Anderson on 13 August 1943, commenting on the progress of the White Paper, Butler observed that

[i]n general, there is nothing about which the Government need be particularly anxious — and indeed we should be thankful that there has been so broad a measure of acceptance, and that critics — for example in the Manchester Guardian — can find no other ground upon which to stand than to press us ever forward.179

177 Tawney to Creech-Jones, 2 August 1943, Rhodes House Library, The Creech-Jones Papers, Box 2. In this letter, Tawney suggests in detail how the leaving age to sixteen might be included in the bill.
179 Butler to Anderson, 13 August 1943, PRO, Ed136/377, 2170, 1.
This was surely a reference to Tawney, suggesting that his influence remained strong.

Butler was fairly sure, in fact, that he had the backing of public opinion on educational reform. The Ministry of Information’s survey ‘Public feeling about education and educational reform’ reported that ‘public interest and approval centred on the White Paper’s proposals to raise the leaving age to sixteen and to abolish fees in the state sector.’

As a manifestation of that public interest, the TES reported ‘the largest annual conference in the history of the WEA [was] held at Toynbee Hall’ in early October. More than 400 delegates from 200 branches and 50 affiliated trade unions participated. In addressing this conference, Tawney stated that ‘Reconstruction...must be based on a broad foundation of informed conviction among ordinary men and women, who knew what they wanted and the way to obtain it.’ He believed that all men and women must cultivate ‘intellectual vitality’ in order to have their voices heard and their ideas transformed into legislation. Conference emergency resolutions stated that, despite approval of much of the White Paper, the WEA deplored the lack of government commitment to an early date for raising the leaving age to sixteen, to abolishing secondary school fees, to providing free school meals and milk to all students, and to abolishing the Dual System. Dent commented in the same edition of TES that Tawney ‘had been to the WEA a veritable tower of intellectual strength, and to education in general an outstanding pioneer, leader and wise counsellor.’

At the eleventh meeting of the CEA, plans were made to circulate the now-amended statement on the White Paper to MPs, LEAs and the press. The council set up a sub-committee to watch for developments in the House of Commons and to take any emergency action required.

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180 Addison, The Road to 1945, 238.
183 See footnote 187 on p. 367, below.
It also discussed the possibility of having a conference of the four national organizations at some suitable time.\textsuperscript{184}

Tawney again urged in his 4 November \textit{Manchester Guardian} article, that the government, which had been weak on new domestic policy, steel itself to introduce, discuss and defend an educational reform bill.\textsuperscript{185} The 30 November article observed that the Cabinet had announced that an education bill would be part of the next session. ‘It needed a world war to move that mountain of majestic torpor’ Tawney sharply observed. The programme of the White Paper had strengths as well as weaknesses but ‘it forms, on the whole, the best statement on educational policy which has emanated from the Board in the course of its history.’\textsuperscript{186}

A ‘Statement by Council for Educational Advance’ published in early November, was the long-promised press release on the White Paper. It urged no delay in the introduction of an education bill. As well as a reaffirmation of the usual demands about raising the school leaving age and abolition of fees, it cautioned that ‘[m]uch will depend on what assurances are given in the bill that effective powers will be given to local education authorities and by the Board’s insistence on sufficiently high standards of building to make equality of opportunity a reality’. Further, proposals put to the non-provided schools must be such that they really would settle this vexatious matter of religion in schools.\textsuperscript{187}

The long-awaited day of the introduction of the Education Bill arrived on 15 December. The bill was divided into five sections: Part I, Central Administration; Part II, The Statutory System; Part III, Independent Schools: Part IV, General; Part V, Supplemental. Under Part I, the Ministry of Education was to replace the Board of Education.\textsuperscript{188} With this change, the Minister was to have more power than that which had been held by the President of the Board of

\textsuperscript{184} CEA Minutes, 18 October 1943, WEA Central, /1/2/2/2.
\textsuperscript{188} For further information, see Appendix IV.
Education. Under Part II, the system was to be unified in successive stages—primary, secondary, and further. The Dual System was established by which voluntary schools would have two choices—either to acquire 'aided' status by which the school would 'continue to appoint their own teachers and have the teachers' salaries and other maintenance charges paid by the local education authority' and receive a fifty per cent grant towards the alterations of buildings, or to controlled status by which the school would pass to the LEA all financial responsibility enabling the LEA to take charge of the appointment and dismissal of teachers. Non-denominational religious instruction according to an agreed syllabus would be taught in all schools.189

In his article of the following day, Tawney expressed approval: 'its grand merit is its comprehensiveness', very much what Dent had said about the White Paper. Indeed, the structure of the new bill was similar to that of the White Paper.190 The core of the entire bill remained:

[the relations between primary and secondary education which was the kernel of this programme stands unaltered, so that well designed and equipped primary schools and secondary schools of a variety of types will be available without tuition fees to all children.191

Approval by Tawney reflected the general approval in the press. The TES called the bill 'a landmark in the history of education and a corner-stone of social reconstruction' and quoted degrees of approval from several other newspapers. The Times regarded it as 'a masterpiece of compromise and an inspiring embodiment of educational advance.' The Daily Telegraph characterized it as 'a highly complex measure' which 'in general represents the winnowing of wisdom from a great deal of past educational chaff.' The Yorkshire Post considered it to be 'not extravagantly described as the most comprehensive measure in the history of education.'192

189 'The Education Bill', TES, (18 December 1943), 601-2. For a further short summary of the sections, see Appendix IV
191 Ibid.
192 'The Education Bill, Warm Welcome from the Press', TES, 25 December 1943, 618.

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In a hopeful tone, Butler introduced the debate on Second Reading on 19 January 1944: ‘[a]n educational system by itself, cannot fashion the whole future structure of a country, but it can make better citizens’. The principal parts of the bill were familiar, having been seen in the White Paper in July, and the first reading in December. Yet, one item would be a disappointment to many reformers. Secondary school fees were abolished except those in direct grant schools, just what Tawney and other reformers had rallied against. Much of the debate was about the Dual System, religion being still a contentious issue. Winding up for the government, James Chuter Ede wished to assure the members of the ‘two great denominations’ that the bill was generous to them. He commented on the general decline of religion accompanied by the desire of many parents still to have their children versed in ‘the teachings of the Hebrew prophets and the lessons...of the New Testament.’ He suggested that the Catholics consider seriously the proposals of the Coalition Government, a single party government in the future being unlikely to secure better educational conditions for them. He maintained

[w]e have for good or for ill attempted to survey the whole field, educational administrative and religious, and we believe that our measure is such that we shall be able, when it gets on the State-book, to proceed with diligence in our endeavour to make this Act of Parliament a living reality.

Another matter of some contention was clause 1, which expanded the powers of the Minister of Education, formerly the President of the Board. These powers described as ‘under his control and direction’ were felt by some MPs to be too authoritarian. In Committee, Sir Joseph Lamb expressed concern about this phrase: ‘there is a widespread feeling of apprehension among the public that those powers which have been granted to various Departments during the war, for

194 ‘Second Reading of the Bill’, TES, (22 January 1944), 37.
195 Ibid., 13.
196 Hansard, Commons vol. 395-7, 8 February 1944, col. 1647. Legislation prior to 1944 enabled the President of the Board to exercise ‘superintendence of certain matters relating to education in England and Wales’. The Education Act of 1944 however, enabled the Minister to ‘promote the education of the people of England and Wales’ a change which increased power at the Ministry and reduced it in the LEAs. Dent, The Education Act, 1944, 5.
war purposes, may be retained after the war. That would be very undemocratic'. Kenneth Lindsay responded with ‘is control a good thing? Direction is absolutely vital...’. The committee debated the matter of where authority should lie. Should it be at the centre or in the LEAs? William Cove suggested that the centre needed more authority: ‘[a] balanced view, a national view, is needed in order to get a real national system of education’. This was a key question since there had not previously been a single unified system of education in England. When the bill was enacted, this phrase remained.198

Problems and challenges occurred in Committee stage in mid-March. Tory Reform Committee member, Thelma Cazalet Keir and Labour MP, Moelwyn Hughes, asked some members of the Labour Party’s Committee on Education to frame an amendment on raising the school leaving age to 16, one that Tory reformers could support. The result was an amendment which was moved by Mrs. Cazalet-Keir. In the Parliamentary discussion, Butler ‘tried to bring the movers up against hard facts, mentioning that 80% of the rural schools are unreorganized’ as one part of an argument that expense precluded early raising of the leaving age to sixteen. There was a fair amount of support for the amendment but in the division, the amendment garnered 137 votes whereas the Government garnered 172.199

Mrs. Cazalet Keir initiated another amendment on 28 March that provided the most dramatic episode in the passage of the education bill. This amendment ‘made the abolition of differential scales for men and women a direction to future Burnham Committees’. Butler’s view was that this issue should not arise in the education bill. It was ‘a stalking horse for people’s political views’.200 But equal pay for men and women was Labour Party policy and in the division that followed, Labour MPs supported the amendment along with Tory Reform MPs. The

197 Hansard, Commons, vol. 395-397, 8 February 1944, cols. 1648-49.
198 Dent, The Education Act, 1944, 5.
200 Ibid., 178.
result was a vote of 117-116 in favour of the amendment. The Prime Minister was so infuriated that he decided to make this vote a matter of confidence. The next day he announced that the offending amendment must be struck from the bill or the government would resign. Behind the scenes on March 30, Attlee and Bevin spoke to the party meeting ordering all members to support the government on striking the amendment. Attlee had mentioned the day before that without this support, he would step down. That day, after the Butler asked the Commons to delete the clause, despite a subsequent provocative speech by Aneuran Bevan, the House divided with a result of 425-23 in the Government's favour.

Although most of the bill was similar to the White Paper, some additions were made to the bill which were ‘welcomed’. The timetable was speeded up so that the new administrative structure would be ready by 1 April 1945. Concurrently, the leaving age would be raised to fifteen, although the Minister had the power to delay this for two years if he judged it necessary. LEAs were required to submit their plans for implementation of the Act within twelve months of that date. In addition, some further aid had been granted to the denominations in the form of ‘a 50 per cent grant aid of capital expenditure’. It was to be hoped that small minorities would not hold up the bill, desiring further concessions. The general public, Tawney warned, would not tolerate delay caused by ‘sectional interests’.

The Education Bill was the subject of a mere nineteen days of debate in the House of Commons. The third reading of the bill was completed on 12 May 1944, and it was enacted on

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201 Churchill’s strong support for Butler compares interestingly with the episode in June 1940 when Butler was suspected of appeasement activity in a meeting with the Swedish ambassador. As Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he offered the Minister, Lord Halifax, his resignation but he did not accept it. Later, Churchill appointed Butler President of the Board of Education. This old incident may have been an additional reason why Butler was so determined to make good in his new position. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, May 1940 to December 1940, The Churchill War Papers* vol. II, (London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1994), 420.


203 R.H. Tawney, ‘A Great Bill’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 December 1943, 4. The day before, the Education Bill was published.

204 Cruickshank, *Church and State*, 168.
3 August 1944. If one considers the White Paper as the prelude to the bill, then Parliament was concerned with it for just over a year. Tawney offered his readers an analysis of the way the public received a parliamentary reform measure. It passed through three stages, he believed. The first was 'astonished enthusiasm', the second was 'the cold fit which succeeds the hot', and the third was the 'acceptance of the benefits proffered' with the view that this was only the beginning of yet-to-be won necessary reform.\textsuperscript{205} This was the psychological process through which Tawney himself, and the organizations he led, passed. His first stage probably encompassed the introduction of the White Paper which he dealt with in his article 'A Great Advance' as well as the introduction of the bill in December. The Second Stage was the one experienced in the debating stages of the winter and spring, and the third stage likely began after the third reading of the bill in May.

Tawney's reaction to the second stage, with its anxieties and fears, may be seen in his articles of that winter and spring as well as in his speech to the Conference of National Organizations, held in accordance with the CEA suggestion of October 1943. The anxieties were primarily those often expressed before, ensuring the raising of the leaving age to sixteen within a reasonable, specified time; 'the Minister's insistence on retaining fees' in direct-grant schools contrary to Fleming Report; the inadequacy of the Exchequer's contributions to the LEAs in order to carry out the new programme.\textsuperscript{206}

These same points were reflected at the Conference of National Organizations meeting of 12 February 1944. Tawney moved the following resolution for the Council.

This Conference, representing over 200 national, social and educational organizations, records its satisfaction that the Education Bill was given a second reading in the House of Commons without a dissenting vote. It urges that the Bill shall be strengthened by providing for the raising of the school leaving age to 16 within a specified period from the age of 15 becoming operative; that education shall be free in all schools aided from public funds, and that the

\textsuperscript{205} R.H. Tawney, 'The Education Bill', \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, 22 January 1944, 4.  
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
proportion of the expenditure of Local Education Authorities to be borne by the Exchequer shall be substantially increased. It calls for the passage of the Bill into law without delay, and for speedy action by the Board to make all necessary preparations for bringing the Act into effect at the earliest possible moment.

He defended the right to be critical even at this late stage: 'the higher the opinion held as to the general plan of a measure, the greater the obligation to remove inconsistencies and hesitations likely to cripple its applications'. A leaving age of sixteen ought to be included in the bill, a lack of buildings, supplies and teachers being no reason for its omission. A definite proposal for the age of sixteen provision would promote the speedy planning for these very necessities. Moreover, the threat that direct grant schools might withdraw from the system if their grants were removed should be disregarded by the Board since educational policy could not be subject to threat. As to LEA grants, 55% was simply insufficient. It would supply only £900,000 to be divided among the poorer Authorities and therefore, would 'trifle with a problem on whose solution the whole future of education depends.'

During this second stage of 'reception', the NUT held its annual meeting in April just as the committee stage of the bill was winding down. Tawney noted that while one of the notes struck was that of welcome to the reform measure, the other was of 'regret that opportunities which, to all appearances were well within our grasp should have been allowed to slip'. He concluded that '[o]nce the Act is on the Statute book everything will depend on the energy and wisdom which are brought to its administration.'

His May Manchester Guardian article on teachers assumed that the bill which stressed recruitment and improved training contained the seeds of a more vibrant teaching profession. He remarked, however, that '[n]o profession can hope to attract recruits of the right quality and in sufficient numbers unless the career which it offers is itself attractive.' There must be sufficient

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207 Dr. R.H. Tawney's Speech at the Conference of National Organizations, Saturday 12 February 1944, Tawney I, BLPES, 18/4.
remuneration and fewer disparities\textsuperscript{209} among the teachers. By this time, Tawney was certainly reaching the third stage of ‘reception’, that of ‘acceptance’. His last words in this article urged that changes in the bill must be acted upon.\textsuperscript{210} He had begun to consider implementation the chief focus rather than changes to the bill itself. Similarly, at the 5 May meeting of the CEA, it was decided to send a draft statement to the House of Lords presenting the position of the CEA ‘and to guard against the danger of wrecking amendments’\textsuperscript{211}

The work of Tawney, the WEA, and the CEA to promote an Education Act was essentially done. Tawney continued to lead the WEA, and the CEA in the short term. Gradually, he withdrew from educational tasks. He was finally able to leave the presidency of the WEA at the end of 1944, although he continued with the executive for some additional years. He was transforming himself from activist to senior advisor as the war was ending.

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The passing of the Education Act of 1944 was the culmination of Tawney’s role as an educational activist and lobbyist. For thirty-five years, he had been engaged in educational work, twenty-five of those in active leadership of educational reform. The authors of \textit{A Portrait by Several Hands} written for Tawney’s eightieth birthday celebration commented that

\textit{[t]hose who accompanied him on the deputations waiting on the Rt. Hon. R.A. Butler during the discussions leading to the 1944 Education Act, speak of the evident respect Butler had for his views. What part Tawney played in the shaping of the Act through his work for educational reform for almost forty years will never be measured. It was certainly a large one; and it culminated in his chairmanship of the Council for Educational Advance which, toward the end of the second war, did so much to prepare public opinion for the new Act.}\textsuperscript{212}

\textsuperscript{209} The disparities referred to were those of salary and working conditions.
\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Ibid.}, ‘The Teachers’, \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, 4 May 1944.
\textsuperscript{211} CEA Minutes, 5 May 1944, WEA Central, /1/2/2/.
The period 1939 to 1944 had particular significance because only during this time did the Board of Education experience the 'change of heart' necessary to persuade the government that educational reform legislation must be passed. The story of this 'change of heart' and of Tawney's part in it can be traced back to the end of the First World War, but it certainly reached a high point as his country underwent the horror of yet another war, one in which the whole society had to co-operate if there was to be victory. The actual promise of full democracy was integral to such a 'total war'. Tawney firmly believed that equality of opportunity in education should be a major component of full democracy and that the promise of it should be realized by legislation before the war ended. Board officials seemed partly to concur with the idea of reform legislation, fearing that if they failed to provide it, more radical legislation might be enacted after the war, perhaps sweeping away the whole existing system. Naturally, they were familiar with the claims of the Labour movement, and were anxious about the increasing popularity of these claims. The Labour Party might form the next government after the war.

As the war began, the great evacuations of schoolchildren brought discredit to a Board of Education that seemed unable to control the events or results of the exodus. The school system appeared, for a time, to falter dramatically. At this point, a WEA delegation led by Tawney began to press the Board for substantial changes to the education system. As the Labour Party entered Churchill's Coalition in May 1940, the pressure for change accelerated. Labour acceptance was contingent on the promise of reconstruction. A number of White Papers on reform were generated by the coalition, but only that on education became legislation during the war. James Chuter Ede, a new Labour parliamentary secretary to the Board from 1940 onwards, played a considerable role in the formulation of the White Paper and the Education Bill. In particular, he established the successful methods of negotiating with the religious denominations. Three men successively occupied the Presidency of the Board but only the third, Richard Butler, was to have a significant impact on the recasting of the educational system. He was particularly
adroit at skillfully negotiating thorny problems and subsequently reconciling various points of view. He and James Chuter Ede, who often did not receive the credit he deserved, worked smoothly together in discussions with the LEAs and the religious denominations. From the first, Butler recognized in Tawney a formidable educational spokesman to whom attention must be paid. Clearly, this is why he granted Tawney an interview at the Board in September 1941.

Tawney played a role different from but equally important to that of Board officials and their political masters. He continued as commentator and critic primarily through the *Manchester Guardian*. He led the WEA in its long campaign on behalf of public education, a campaign rooted in the Christian moral principles which he had always held. He guided the joint Council for Educational Advance in its aim to build up a constituency demanding immediate educational reform. His reception as leader of deputations to the Board suggests how important the officials there knew him to be. In a sense, he was the ‘People’s Tribune’. His themes of equality of opportunity and equality of esteem resulting from educational reform were well-known to the reading public and to educational groups throughout the country at whose conferences he often spoke. Key factors in the success of Tawney’s leadership of educational reform were his moral constancy and enduring dedication.

Questions have to be raised about the real changes that occurred as a result of the work of Tawney and the educational lobby. Were all these advocated changes actually in the 1944 Act? Were they implemented? The reform list of Brian Simon provides a useful checklist. It has already been seen that public schools were not abolished or integrated into the system; that the Dual System was not abolished, although some voluntary schools came under more government control; that fees in direct-grant schools were retained; and that multilateral schools were not to be the secondary method of implementation. Tawney was, of course, ‘softer’ on both the dual system and the multilateral method of organization than some of the other reformers. But, clearly

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213 See p. 338, footnote 77.
he did not achieve for education some of the major ‘improvements’ he had advocated. Simon argued that the late timing of the Fleming Report on independent schools and its subsequent dismissal by Butler, the application of the tripartite system to secondary schools assumed by the Norwood Report with its ‘grammar school’ obsession and its neglect of ‘technical’ and ‘modern schools’ defused ‘two of the four basic issues in the radical programme’. He believed this accomplished ‘a clever exercise in manipulative politics by a past master of the “art of the possible”, with the aid of a state bureaucracy devoted to highly conservative objectives.’

This conclusion reached by Simon in 1986 suggested that the desires of the educational lobby had been thwarted by Butler and the Board. His article also reflected the views of several other historians writing in the seventies and eighties. Writing a little later, Jefferys ‘doubted whether the end result represented a radical departure in policy.’ Yet, their views do not fully reflect the reality of the period 1944-1947 during which the Act was not only passed but also partially implemented. Tawney, on the eve of the implementation of Part II and IV of the Act, regarded it as ‘a high landmark in educational history’. Harold Dent called it a ‘very great Act’. Shena Simon seemed satisfied with the Act, ‘the child of the coalition government’, but believed that it was really the implementation of the Act which was to be carried out by the new Labour Government that mattered. Did these three reformers really believe that the new Act would bring about equality in the school system? Or, were they simply making the most of the smaller victories achieved in the Act?

Although Tawney’s educational articles from the proclaiming of the Act in August 1944 to the implementation of the leaving age of fifteen in April 1947 were dominated by practical matters such as the supply of teachers, the building of new schools and the repairing of old ones,

217 Dent, The Education Act, 1944, 1.
he also offered hopeful commentary on aspects of the new system relating to equality. The creation of a single set of regulations for all schools to replace the separate regulations of the past was a historical step forward. Moreover, in spite of the fact that he had long opposed fee-paying direct-grant schools, Tawney felt encouraged that those that retained the status had to offer equal access through an exam system and provide a limited number of ‘free places’. This, too, was a step in the right direction.\(^{219}\) His response to those concerned about the education of the majority of working class students was that ‘the vital point is not what schools are called but what happens in them. The most crucial problem here is the future of the modern school.’\(^{220}\) If the authorities lived up to the terms of the Act which legislated equality of provision including good facilities, good buildings, and staff of excellent quality, these schools could be exciting, effective places. Despite these hopeful interpretations of the Act, did Tawney, deep in his heart, know that the Act had not delivered and would not deliver equality?

The urgency of implementation remained a theme, however, Tawney recalling the Act of 1918 which was not implemented supposedly because of economic conditions. He entreated the new Labour government to carry out the Act ‘with something of the energy and drive which snatched victory from defeat.’\(^{221}\) When the official leaving age was finally raised to fifteen, he concluded that ‘the first chapter of the new order opens to-day.’ Both Ellen Wilkinson and her successor, George Tomlinson, the two successive Labour Ministers of Education, refused to allow opponents further to delay the implementation day. Tawney felt certain that ‘when the whole additional age group will be in school, the teaching force will be forthcoming.’\(^{222}\) Emergency provisions for training teachers quickly were working. This was another practical problem solved.

\(^{221}\) Ibid., ‘A Case for Drive’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 September 1945, 4.
\(^{222}\) Ibid., ‘New Order’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 April 1947, 4.
Gosden believed that the educational contrast between the interwar and postwar years lay chiefly in the ‘greater willingness of central and local authorities to spend far more on education in real terms’,\textsuperscript{223} a change for which Tawney had always worked. Despite Gosden’s belief, however, it was clear that too much of the spirit of the old system still remained. For Tawney, the reality of the new system, imperfectly conceived and implemented, was a cause merely for satisfaction, but certainly not for triumph or exhilaration.

In the subsequent years, other assessments were even less favourable. Calder believed that although the Education Act of 1944 was ‘potentially the most important gesture towards democracy made in the twentieth century, a fitting product of the Peoples War, \textit{in practice...it confirmed and legitimized the existence of class distinction in education.}’\textsuperscript{224} Writing sixty years after the event Lawton suggested that the Education Act of 1944 ‘was essentially a Conservative reform making the existing system more efficient without disturbing the public school privileges and without encouraging people to think of education in a genuinely democratic way’.\textsuperscript{225}

It is easy in hindsight to condemn the Education Act of 1944. Yet there was every reason why Tawney and other reformers were optimistic about it in 1944. A passage from Section 7 reveals the original intention of the legislation:

\begin{quote}
and the schools available for an area shall not be deemed to be sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character, and equipment to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities, and aptitudes, and of the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their respective needs.\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{223} Gosden, \textit{Education in the Second World War}, 433.
\textsuperscript{224} Calder, \textit{People’s War}, 545.
\textsuperscript{226} Dent, \textit{The Education Act, 1944}, 13.
Here was the spirit of the *Hadow Report* in modern dress but bureaucratically qualified to deal with an unknown educational future. As the war ended, there was both hope and concern about the prospects for true equality of education for all young members of English society.
CONCLUSION

From the Fisher Act of 1918 to the Butler Act of 1944 Tawney’s influence is writ large over the history of educational thought and policy in Britain. A. Wright, *R.H. Tawney*, 1987.

In the Labour movement, R.H. Tawney’s role was critical. Peter Hennessy describes him operating as ‘a kind of tweedy one man pressure group, producing ideas through a haze of herbal tobacco smoke pushing them gently in one forum after another until they caught on’. Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*, 1995.¹

To assess Tawney’s influence on educational reform, it is necessary to look at his whole career, and not just the end of it. The reforms of the Education Act of 1944 cannot be the only standard of measurement. Tawney cast his net wide when writing economic history, much as Marc Bloch did. I, too, tried to cast my own net wide by examining his entire career: immersion in the Workers’ Educational Association, journalism, academic life, Labour Party work, as well as leadership in the movement for reform of state education. Yet, all of these life strands cannot be understood without a realization that the foundation for all of them was the Christian concept that all men are equal before God.

His education at Oxford, in the hands of social reformers, some of them Christian Socialists, pointed Tawney to the life path of social reform beginning first at the London East End University Settlement of Toynbee Hall under the guidance of the progressive warden, Canon Barnett. There, his interaction with workers to whom he taught classes on a variety of historical and economic topics gave him a sincere admiration for workers and a taste for what he wanted to do with his life. This Toynbee Hall experience led to his teaching tutorial classes with the Workers’ Educational Association in Longton and Rochdale in early 1908. The success of his

pioneer work there was the seed for the great expansion of the tutorial movement over the next decades.  

He left tutorial work when he volunteered to serve as an ordinary soldier in the Manchester Regiment during the First World War. Before his serious injury on the Somme, he came to a clearer understanding of workers, realizing that, far from having the monopoly on virtue, they were as flawed as everyone else.  Yet, as he wrote in many articles of the time, they deserved an equal share in the society for which they fought, and could best obtain that through equal education. 

After the war, he continued with the WEA as an administrator, Vice President from 1920 to 1928 and President from 1928 to 1944. Early in this period, Tawney served on the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction which issued a famous Report that he helped to draft. All four members of the drafting committee were members of the WEA, which had become influential in the short time since its establishment. This organization did not confine itself to adult education only, but also provided a voice for reform of state education, most of the children in schools being from workers' families. Tawney's own voice manifested itself in regular articles and leaders in the Manchester Guardian, a newspaper for which he was the education specialist for decades starting in 1918. By the early 1920s, Tawney as a tutor had shown how much workers could benefit from a liberal education, had helped to develop the 1919

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Report which was gradually implemented,\(^5\) had adopted the cause of equality of education for workers' children and had acquired a journalistic platform to make his ideas known.

Tawney's work for the WEA and the Manchester Guardian, important as they were, did not constitute his entire career. Concurrently, he was a social activist in the Church of England, a Reader at the London School of Economics, an activist for the Labour Party and a member of the Consultative Committee for the Board of Education. The breadth of his pursuits and activities was one reason for his influence on society. In a less than ten-year period, he participated in writing Christianity and Industrial Problems, Report of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Inquiry for the Church of England, in researching and writing both The Acquisitive Society and Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, leading the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Education in writing Secondary Education for All, and participating in the drafting of the Hadow Report for the Board of Education. All of this creative activity was in addition to his teaching load at LSE and two academic trips to the United States. Clearly, this array of activities required immense energy, not always easy for someone experiencing the repercussions of war injury from which he suffered recurring bouts of illness throughout the remainder of his life. In 1922, for example, he underwent a serious operation from which some people felt he would not recover. Nevertheless, shortly thereafter, he stood for Parliament. A tremendous amount of will and determination were essential for this extraordinary expenditure of energy in spite of physical difficulties, an indication of Tawney's ability to surmount challenging obstacles.

Reform of state education as a major path to equality for all was Tawney's chief passion. Involved from before the First World War in the lives of workers, he adopted the cause of their children during the war. He wrote several scornful articles disparaging the opposition of the

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Federation of British Industry to the Education Bill of 1918. In his *Manchester Guardian* articles, he criticized the government for its various attempts to reduce education budgets by means of the *Geddes Report*, the administrative circulars of the Board of Education, the *May Report*, the *Ray Report* and the Treasury budget decisions. He believed that education was a national investment as well as a moral imperative and tried to convey this belief to governments of the interwar period. His criticism of the Labour minority Government was stinging when it failed to pass educational bills in its 1929-1931 term of office. He chastised it severely for its failure in ‘The Choice Before the Labour Party’ in 1932. He was just as severe with the Conservative-dominated National Governments for refusing to implement the recommendations of their own Consultative Committee when it produced the *Hadow Report* of the 1920s and the *Spens Report* of the 1930s.

The flaws of the one Education Act that the National Government produced in 1936 were so apparent that Tawney wrote six critical articles about it. Even *The Spectator* doubted its value. In any case, its implementation on 1 September 1939 was pre-empted by the war and the great evacuations of school children. Parliament suspended the Act in mid-October. The disarray of the education system under the pressure of the great exodus was soon evident. This failure caused not only critics like Tawney and the WEA to take aim at the Board of Education, but also stimulated officials within the Board of Education to begin planning for a reform of the system. They worried that if they did not produce a moderate reform bill in education, a later Labour

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11 ‘The School leaving Age’, *The Spectator*, (7 February 1936), 8. *The Spectator* was a conservative journal dating back to the nineteenth century.
Government might produce a radical bill. With the Board production of the reform-influenced *Green Book*, and the appointment of the clever, moderate Conservative politician, Richard Butler, as the new President of the Board of Education, the process towards a new education act began. The role of Tawney and the WEA continued to be that of providing the moral compass, of criticizing and exhorting, advising and encouraging. So admired was Tawney and his continuing struggle for reform that when a joint group, the Council of Educational Advance,\(^{13}\) formed in 1942, it asked him to be the president. In that role, he led the organizations of the Council in promoting meetings throughout the country to inform the public about the need for educational reform, so as to empower it to exert pressure locally and nationally to obtain this goal.\(^{14}\)

When the Education Act was enacted in 1944, the reform movement achieved less than it hoped for. The goals of a leaving age of sixteen, elimination of the Dual System and of fees in direct grant schools, and assimilation of the public schools were not achieved. What had been accomplished? Much more money was now committed to education, a goal towards which Tawney had long worked. The single code in a unified system, 'secondary education for all' by means of a tripartite system, and a leaving age of fifteen were also legislated. Yet, in that two to three year period following the passage of the Act, Tawney tried to make the best of things by urging speedy implementation of provisions that he admired, such as the new leaving age. After all, the Education Act of 1918 had not been implemented. Therefore, when the leaving age of fifteen was actually put into effect in 1947, he regarded this as a practical step forward.

Was the Education Act of 1944 a conservative measure? Certainly, Jefferys, Simon and others have argued persuasively that it was. In the end, the Act did not deliver the equal society that the reform lobby sought. Key goals of the reformers had been thwarted by Butler and the

\[^{13}\] The four organizations which made up the Council of Educational Advance were: the Workers Educational Association, the National Union of Teachers, the Trades Union Congress, and the Cooperative Union.

\[^{14}\] See Appendix V for a sample of the advertising of some of these meetings in 1942-3.
Board of Education’s civil servants. In 1944, although the hope that the new act might improve the chances of working class children seemed possible, the prestige of the grammar school, the continued existence of the public school system and the entrenchment of the Dual System made real equality unlikely. Why? As Peter Clark has pointed out that from a purely socialist point of view, any reform of the system in place would be considered a failure. A whole new system would be needed to satisfy socialist criteria. To present a more nuanced argument, however, he suggested that ‘all prospective reform is radical and all achieved reform is conservative’. This explains why Tawney, the democratic socialist reformer, participated in a measure that to later socialist historians seemed conservative.  

Is it possible to assess the influence of Tawney on educational reform? Who else of stature had taught students at various levels, written unceasingly on reform, lobbied politicians and led educational organizations over so long a period? He started his advocacy as an eager young man of strong moral persuasion before he went to war in 1915, continued it afterwards as he approached middle age, and carried it on into the Second World War as he was approaching old age. He was the integrated man pouring all his resources into a moral campaign in which he strongly believed. It was not just his democratic message that counted. It was the energy, passion and moral commitment with which he presented it. It was the long time span over which it was presented. He had influenced the educational climate of society and helped to raise the national consciousness to the importance of educational equality during the whole interwar period and beyond. Although many of his goals were not achieved in the Education Act of 1944, yet they remain as ideals towards which society ought to strive. Equality is as important now as it was during Tawney’s lifetime.

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APPENDICES
Appendix I

Restructuring of the Schools in England: 1870-1902

Independent Schools

Public schools
- Public Schools Act 1868
- Independence of old established schools (Eton, Harrow etc.)
- Use of ancient endowments intended for the poor
- Fee-paying
- Intended for the upper and upper middle classes

Grammar schools
- Endowed Schools Act 1869
- Legalization of endowments for uses other than the poor
- New secondary schools
- Firm re-establishment of already existing schools on a sounder financial basis
- Fee-paying
- Intended for the middle classes

State Schools

Elementary schools
- Forster Education Act 1870
- To supplement the voluntary schools of the British and Foreign School Society (Nonconformists) and the National Society for the Education of the Poor (Church of England)
- A place for every child not already attending school
- Intended for working classes
- Establishment of locally-elected Boards of Education
- Attendance compulsory starting in 1880; education free starting only in 1891
- Development of 'higher grade' schools

2 Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 98-9
Centralized single authority

- Board of Education Act 1899
- Combined powers of three previous authorities: Charity Commissioners, Science and Art Department and Education Department
- Inspectorate established
- Three branches provided for: elementary, secondary and technical; later, two more added: medical and university

Reform of the state schools

- Education Act of 1902
- School Boards eliminated and replaced with County and County Borough Councils
- Voluntary schools to go 'on the rates' (50% funding)
- Councils to set up secondary education with rate aid; fee-paying
- Elementary and secondary education to be run as two different, parallel strands
- Secondary schools to be preceded by fee-paying preparatory schools
- The secondary schools intended for the lower middle classes
- Scholarships to be a bridge between the elementary and secondary systems

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Appendix II

Aims of the CEA

♦ The raising of the school leaving age to 15 without exemption by the end of the war, and to 16 not more than three years later
♦ Free education under a single secondary code for all children after the primary stage
♦ Common standards of staffing, equipment and amenities in all schools
♦ Adequate provision of nursery schools and classes
♦ Free medical services and school meals
♦ Maintenance allowances for children in all post-primary schools
♦ Day continuation education for all between 16 and 18
♦ Prohibition of employment below the school leaving age, and its control by the education authorities up to the age of 18
♦ The licensing and inspection of any school outside the national system
♦ A unified system of administration to replace the dual control of schools
♦ Free access to Universities and Higher Technical Colleges for all who can benefit thereby
♦ Ample provision for adult education

Extracted from WEA Central 1/2/2, 1/10/42.
Appendix III

Norwood Questionnaire

1. Is it desirable that the term secondary education should be enlarged in scope to include three main types of education, namely, the Grammar School type, the Modern School type, and the Technical School type, it being understood that the Grammar School has as its main objective the preparation of pupils for University, professional and business careers?

2. At what age should secondary education in this sense begin?

3. What conditions must be satisfied if transfer from one type of school to another is to be made a reality?

4. Assuming that the different types of secondary education will enjoy similar advantages as regards buildings and amenities, size of classes, etc., and that transfer from one type of school to another is made a reality, at what age should the first selection of pupils be made for each type of school, and at what age should transfer as a rule take place?

5. If all pupils pass on to some form of secondary education, do you consider it best that selection for a particular form of education should be made by an a) external written examination of the conventional type, or b) intelligence test, or c) the teacher’s recommendation and school records, or d) a combination of all or any of a), b) and c)?

What should be the policy in regard to the charging of fees in the various types of schools of secondary education?

6. Do you consider that enough assistance is already available in the form of State Scholarships, Local Education Authority awards and University Scholarships to enable all pupils who can derive full benefit from University Education to receive it?
8. Are you satisfied that the present system affords equality of opportunity as between one and another?

9. Do you suggest changes in the methods by which such assistance is now made available?

10. If you consider that enough assistance is not available, would you enlarge it generally or in any special direction, as for example, in the direction of technical studies at Universities and major Technical Colleges?

11. Should any shortage of provision be made good by an extension of awards made by the Board of Education or by placing a special obligation on Local Education Authorities to provide adequate opportunities for University Education?

Note:
In the questions which follow (12-35) the terms ‘Secondary Education’ and ‘Secondary School’ are used in their present sense, meaning Secondary Education and Secondary Schools as they now exist, that is to say, education and schools of a ‘Grammar School’ nature.

12. In order to provide equality of opportunity for the able pupil living in a country area, are you in favour of transferring him to a Secondary School in another area and providing boarding accommodation?

13. In what ways can secondary education in a Secondary School in a rural area be brought into closer relationship with the environment of the school and the background of the pupils’ lives?

14. In what ways can education in Secondary Schools in rural areas help to solve the problem of retaining a sufficient number of men and women on the land engaged in agricultural and allied work?
15. a) Are multilateral schools desirable in such areas as they are practicable and on what grounds? b) Can vocational work in direct preparation for industry and commerce be suitably undertaken in a multilateral school?

16. What do you consider to be the distinctive aims of the Secondary School (understood in the sense of the above note)?

17. What are the distinctive qualities which mark out a boy or girl as one likely to benefit by a Secondary School education? By what means can the presence of these qualities be discovered?

18. In view of the aims of the Secondary School, do you consider that certain subjects or groups of subjects are of special importance? If so, how is this special importance to be marked? Are there any subjects which sometimes have a place in the curriculum or the main school and which you consider unsuitable there?

19. Are you in favour of a larger place being given in the curriculum of Secondary Schools to art, music, handicrafts, domestic subjects and physical education (taken primarily from a non-vocational point of view)?

20. What, in your opinion, has hitherto hampered such development of these subjects as you would wish to see in secondary schools?

21. Is it desirable and practicable to introduce any preparation for industrial careers by bias in the curriculum or otherwise? If so, at what age should this begin?

22. Is there a place in the Secondary School curriculum for preparation for commerce and certain professional occupations? If so, what should be the character of the instruction and at what age should it begin?

23. General impressions apart, is there any evidence that pupils in Secondary Schools are being subjected to an injurious strain? Is this evidence confirmed by medical opinion?
24. It has been said that 'A University objective is tacitly assumed throughout the course in Secondary Schools'. Do you agree with this criticism? If so, can you specify the particular manner in which this University influence declares itself, more especially before the School Certificate stage?

25. Are there any grounds for the criticism that the Secondary Schools with which you are familiar 'stand too much upon the ancient ways'? If this is a source of weakness, is the weakness to be attributed to the scope of the instruction or to the treatment of subject matter?

26. What does a Secondary School gain by the existence of a Sixth Form or lose by its absence? If, in your opinion, certain schools must be deprived of their Sixth Forms, what provision can be made to meet the needs of those pupils who wish to continue their Secondary School Education up to the age of eighteen?

27. Do you agree in general with the Recommendations made in the Pamphlet on Home Work prepared by the Board of Education in 1931 (Educational Pamphlet 110)?

28. Do you consider that the abolition of external examinations for the majority of pupils in Secondary Schools is:

   a) practicable

   b) to the advantage of Secondary Education as a whole, it being understood that the object of the change is to give greater freedom to schools and to the Local Education Authorities, and that the needs of pupils entering the professions and Universities would be met by the continuance of an External examination?

29. Could the place of external examinations in Secondary Schools be taken by

   a) a Head Master's or Head Mistress's certificate of attendance at the school and of subjects studied and/or
b) internal examinations arranged by the teachers themselves with or without the assistance of external assessors

30. Can an external examination play any useful part in the development of art, music, handicrafts and domestic subjects in school?

31. What constructive proposals would you make for the better training of teachers in Secondary Schools?

32. Would you advocate the institution of ‘General Courses’ at the University, comprising two or more subjects, as being more suitable education for many Secondary School teachers than the present specialized Honours Courses?

33. Would you prefer professional training to follow immediately after the University course or after a year or two of teaching? Is this practicable?

34. What do you consider to be the main defects of secondary School education as shown by your experience of intending teachers? What reforms can you suggest which would remove these defects?

35. Do you wish to make further observations relating to the curriculum and examinations of Secondary Schools?

Extracted from PRO Ed 12/479, ‘Education’, July 1943 S 788/7
Appendix IV

The Education Bill

I Central Administration
II Raising of the School Leaving Age
III The Dual System
IV Technical and Adult Education
V Units of Local Administration
VI School Attendance
VII Children Suffering from Mental or Physical Disability
VIII Training of Teachers
IX Secondary School Government and Finance
X School Meals
XI Scholarships and Maintenance Allowances
XII Educational Research
XIII Summary of Time-Table
XIV Finance

Adapted from 'The Education Bill in Summary' The Manchester Guardian, 17 December 1943, 6.
Appendix V

Advertising and Information for CEA meetings 1942-3

Workers' Educational Association
Dunstable Branch, Eastern District
Forum Meeting 7:45 PM, Wednesday October 28, 1942
Speaker: H.C. Shearman, M.A.
'The Postwar Educational Programme'

Conference on Educational Reconstruction, WEA, RDTA
Hall of Reading University
Saturday January 16, 1943

Programme:
Speaker: Professor R.H. Tawney, President WEA
Chairman: The Archbishop of Canterbury
Meeting arranged by the WEA, NUT, and Co-operative Education Committee
Old Dover Road, Canterbury

An Open Conference on THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION
Organized by the WEA and the NUT
Rhodes House, South Parks Road, Oxford
Saturday, February 13, 1943
Speakers: Mary Stocks, Editor of The Highway, J. Wickham Murray, NUT,
H.C. Dent, editor TES
Chairman: Harold Clay, WEA
NUT, Acton Local Association and WEA London District
An Educational Conference
Town Hall Acton, (High Street)
Saturday, March 13, 1943, 2:30–5:30
Chairman: The Mayor, J.A. Welch
Speakers: H.C. Dent, Editor TES, Professor R.H. Tawney, President
WEA and Chairman CEA

South Suburban Co-operative Society and WEA. London District
PLAN FOR EDUCATION
Saturday March 20, 1943
Worcester Park, 3:15 and 5:30 PM
Speaker: Harold Shearman, M.A.
Chairman: Mrs. K. Hagger, Co-operative Society Education Committee

NUT, Sutton and District Association
A CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION
West Central School for Girls
Clyde Road, Sutton
Saturday, April 10 1943, 3 PM
Speakers: J. Chuter Ede, MP, Ronald Gould, JP, Vice-President NUT
Chairman: J.N.B. Williams, President, Sutton NUT Association

Dagenham Council for Educational Advance
A Public Meeting, County High School, Parsloes Avenue
Monday, April 19, 1943, 7:45 PM
Speaker: Professor R.H. Tawney
‘The Essentials of Educational Reconstruction’
Chairman: John Parker, MP
Educational Conference, Midland Institute, Birmingham
Chairman: H.G. Wood, M.A. D.D.
May 10, 1943, 7 PM
Speakers, Professor R.H. Tawney, President WEA, G.T. Giles Vice-President NUT,
H. Baker, President, Birmingham Trades Council, H.R. Barker JP, President
Birmingham NUT, C.A.W. Thorne, Chairman, Birmingham Co-operative Society

Council for Educational Advance (TUC, NUT, WEA, Co-operative Union)
THE NEW ORDER IN EDUCATION
We invite H. Shearman to attend a Public Meeting
Croydon Repertory Theatre
Thursday, May 13, 1943 7 PM
Speakers: Chairman: J.A. Mansfield, NUT, W. Stewart, CEA
Chairman: Frank Mitchell JP Croydon Education Committee

Committee for Educational Advance, Barnsley
Educational Conference, Town Hall, Barnsley
Sunday, May 23, 1943 2:30 PM
Resolution: That this Conference representing Educational, Trade Union and Co-operative Organization in Barnsley and District, urges Government to introduce immediate legislation to provide equality of educational opportunity for all children, irrespective of their social or economic condition, in order to equip them for a full life and for democratic citizenship.

Adapted from materials in WEA Central /3/2/1-5