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**"The Treasury and Irish Education 1850- 1922: The Myth and the Reality"**

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**Abstract:**

Some historians of Irish education have created an image of the 19th and early 20th century Treasury (in London) as a body antagonistic to Irish education, intent on preventing reform, cutting back on public expenditure and generally frustrating any efforts to improve Irish education. This paper draws on original documents in government archives in Dublin and London to challenge and disprove this myth.

# THE TREASURY AND IRISH EDUCTION: 1850-1922: THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

Aine Hyland

A number of historians of Irish education have created an image of the 19th and early 20th century Treasury as a body antagonistic to Irish eduction, intent on preventing reform, cutting back on public expenditure on education and generally frustrating any efforts to improve Irish eduction.

T.J. McElligott, describing the power structure of Irish eduction wrote:

> Nominally, at least, supreme authority lay with the Lord Lieutenant who stood at the apex of the educational pyramid, but real power resided with the Lords of the Treasury and their concern with education was slight. [1]

D.H. Akenson seemed to infer in the following sentence that the power of the Treasury was arbitrary:

> The Treasury authorities in London could divert Irish educational funds to pay for some other imperial venture any time they wished. [2]

This view of the Treasury is a reflection of widely held and disseminated contemporary attitudes. Baron Palles, a member of both the National and the Intermediate Boards, complained to the Lord Lieutenant in 1896, about the 'stranglehold the Treasury held upon the throat of Irish eduction'.[3] Archbishop Walsh reflected in 1900 that

> it is a very discouraging thing and it necessarily has a very deterrent effect to feel beforehand that one can do nothing unless he can succeed in first instructing and then converting to his views a number of people whose very identity is unknown to him; who live, in fact, during official hours in London, like the judges we read of in the tribunals of the old Venetian Republic. [4]

Padraig Pearse stated in 1907 that

> As surely as one of our Education Boards exhibits an all too rare gleam of intelligence, as surely as one of them proposes to do something useful and progressive, so surely does the British Treasury step in with its 'I forbid'. At every point and in every department of Irish education, that impressive and relentless tyranny bars the path to reform.[5]

Other contemporary personnages also projected a negative image of the Treasury. Sir Henry Robinson, Vice-President of the Local Government Board wrote in 1902:

> The permanent officials of the Treasury have always hated the name of Ireland .... the young watch-puppies of the Treasury would start up like fretful porcupines when schemes from Irish departments came before them.

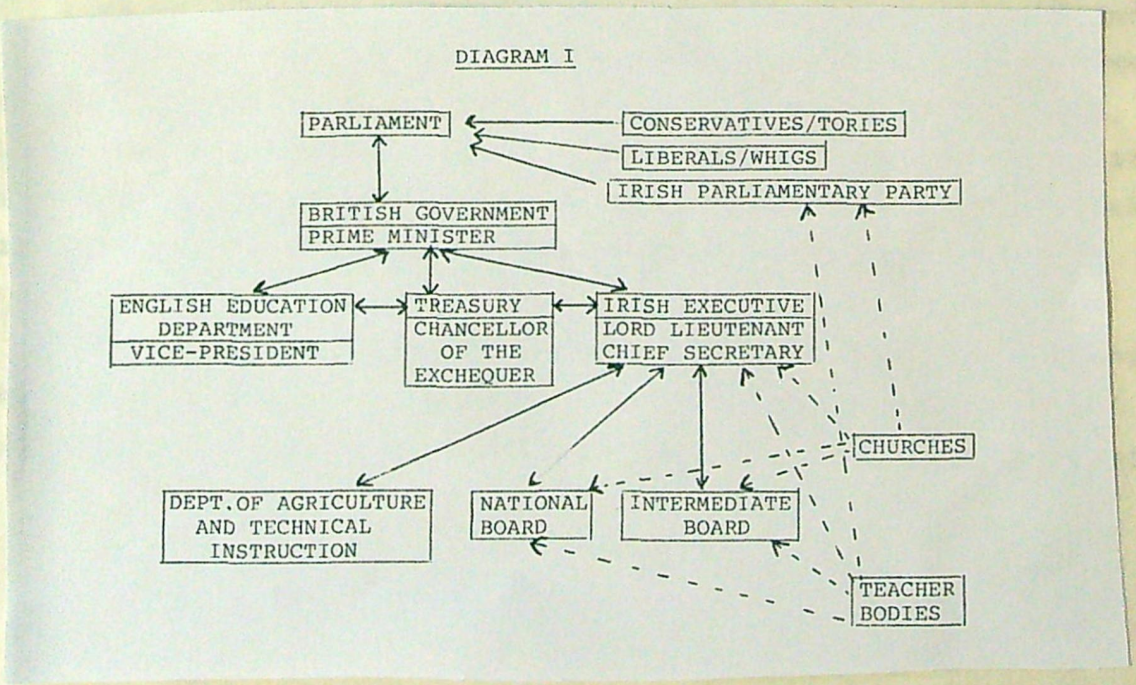
And in 1918, Major Dease, a member of the National Board wrote:

> Treasury minutes lay down, with calmest impertinence, their views as to what should or should not be done with eduction by so-called independent boards in Ireland who are there responsible for it .....

This paper attempts to provide an alternative interpretation of the Treasury's attitude to Irish education. Its role in the monitoring of public funds will be seen in a broader perspective and education will emerge as one of many departments which experienced tensions with the Treasury.

In an effort to gain a more comprehensive overview of the situation, the following diagram showing the complex inter-relationship of the different bodies involved in decision-making in Irish education is presented:

DIAGRAM I



The ultimate decisions in relation to education as in other areas of government were a matter for Parliament. The attitudes of a strong government would be a decisive factor in the outcome of parliamentary decisions but during periods when Irish members held the balance of power in Westminster or when government was anxious to propitiate the Irish representatives, the attitudes of the Irish M.Ps. could be a major determinant of Irish policy. The decisions of government were implemented by administrative departments or boards. But the powers of the administrative departments were limited by a body which occupied an important position between them and Parliament - i.e. the Treasury. Basil Chubb has written:

> The fact that Parliament usually defines only ends does not imply that departments are therefore free to choose their means. The Treasury holds a central supervisory position, difficult to define but clearly recognised and fostered by Parliament. And since efficiency in the nation's affairs cannot normally be measured in terms of profits gained, but is seen in welfare which is wellnigh impossible to measure or define, the complicated business of the state is done according to rules. It falls to the Treasury to make many of these rules which are of a super-departmental level. 6

The Treasury's role might be summarised as one of reassuring parliament that its wishes in relation to public expenditure were being carried out. In this context, it is significant to note that the position of First Lord of the Treasury was almost invariably held by the Prime Minister himself. The Treasury was also formally charged with the co-ordination of the different branches of the civil service. With a view to achieving this, the 19th century Treasury attempted to impose a degree of uniformity on various branches of the civil service, particularly on those involved in similar areas of administration. To this extent, the Treasury drew parallels between the departments which administered public funds for education in Gt. Britain and the boards which were involved in educational administration in Ireland.

An outline of the growth of Treasury power in the period under review will serve as a backdrop for an analysis of public expenditure on education. The appointment of W.E.Gladstone as

Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852 was a milestone in the history of the Treasury. Gladstone was concerned with the need for efficiency and economy in the public service and said:

> Economy is the first and great article in my financial creed.[7]

He was closely associated with the creation of Treasury procedures which would help to bring about this economy and efficiency. He set up the Civil Service Commission which laid down recruitment standards and procedures and this eventually led to greater co-ordination between different branches of the civil service. Treasury ministers were answerable to parliament for the work of the Civil Service Commissioners and the approval of the Treasury was required for regulations drawn up by the Commissioners.

In 1861, an Order in Council strengthened the power of the Treasury. This Order laid down that the estimates of all government departments had to be approved by the Treasury before being presented to Parliament; a Public Accounts Committee was also set up to monitor public expenditure.

Five years later, in 1866, the Exchequer and Audit Act required the Treasury to ensure that all payments made out of public money conformed to proper official authority; that they were in accordance with the purposes of the parliamentary votes to which they were chargeable and that the total of these votes was not exceeded. It firmly established the concept that money would be annually voted for each department under specific heads for clearly defined purposes. Money voted by parliament would have to be used for these purposes within a given year. Any sums not expended within the year would have to be surrendered to the Treasury. The provisions of the Exchequer and Audit Act gave the Treasury power to intervene in the details of spending of the votes of the different departments and by implication to involve itself in the interpretation of policy.

Gladstone was succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1868 by Robert Lowe. This appointment ensured that Gladstone's policies

of economy would continue. Lowe was 'orthodox in his financial principles and severe in his parsimony'.[8] He appointed R.R.W. Lingen as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury in 1870 - a post which he held until 1885. Lingen was also a strict economist

> resolutely determined that the expenditure of public money should be severely checked, and his temptation was to look with a suspicious and grudging eye upon every claim involving an increase of outlay.

A government committee in 1875 (the Playfair Committee) supported the role of the Treasury as an arbiter of departmental expenditure. This committee felt that

> the position of the Treasury in relation to other departments should be as strong as possible ..... that it should be able to exercise an efficient and intelligent control (over other departments).[10]

During the years of Lingen's reign as Permanent Secretary, other departments of the public service grew to resent what they saw as undue interference by the Treasury. Lingen was harsh and unsympathetic and this was ultimately counterproductive. By the time he retired in 1885, the Treasury had become very unpopular with the other heads of departments and efforts were successfully made to reduce its power. Referring to this in 1902, Lord Welby said:

> .... by the eighties public opinion has changed and it no longer puts much stress on economy; that change at once finds its reflection in the House of Commons and I should say that from that time the wind was in the sails of the spending departments and the effective power of control in the Chancellor of the Exchequer proportionately diminished.[11]

George Goschen, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1887 to 1892, was closely associated with the change in attitude to Treasury control. Goschen was well-disposed to the spending departments and he was fortunate that during his term of office, revenue to the Exchequer showed an upward rise following a steady decline during the previous ten years. Three legislative measures passed during Goschen's chancellorship benefitted education in Britain and Ireland.

Lord Salisbury, who became Prime Minister in 1892, found the fiscal duties of First Lord of the Treasury distasteful and he choose to delegate this responsibility to one of his Cabinet. (One of those who held the post of First Lord during Salisbury's premiership was A.J. Balfour.) Salisbury was overtly critical of the Treasury and accused it of thwarting development schemes in the Empire. In 1895, he stated that

> when the Treasury lays its hands on any matter connected with the future development of the British Empire, the chances of our Imperial policy are small. [12]

Four years later, he criticised

> the very peculiar position given by our system to the Treasury, which is very galling to other departments, [13]

and he alleged that "in small matters the Treasury interferes too much". From these quotations, one can see that criticism of the Treasury was an acceptable pastime around 1900 and the quotations in the earlier part of this paper by Baron Palles, Archbishop Walsh, Padraig Pearse *et al* might be seen in this context.

The Boer War caused severe economic problems for the government and increased military spending was counterbalanced by cut-backs in the 'spending departments'. The early years of the twentieth century saw a return to the economic buoyancy of the late nineteenth century but in 1906, Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer Asquith, announced that he would return to a "more thrifty and economical administration, the first and paramount duty of the government". Two years later, Lloyd-George replaced him and immediately adopted a different approach when he declared:

> I am the only Chancellor who ever began by saying and meaning to spend money.

The great social reforms of the Liberal Government in the period 1908-1914, such as old-age pensions, unemployment, and health insurance, medical inspection of children etc. were all passed during Lloyd-George's chancellorship. The First World War brought severe financial problems in its train. The period 1914-1918 was

characterised by an unprecedented level of inflation and public spending (other than spending on defence) was kept to a minimum. Post-war reconstruction saw a significant growth in public funding in areas such as education and Ireland benefitted from the extra funds which were made available, as we will see later in the paper.

English Education

In the last section, the development of Treasury control of public expenditure was outlined. It was shown that legislation from 1861 onwards, required the Treasury to involve itself in the detailed spending patterns of government departments and that the Treasury was also empowered to bring the experience of one administrative department to bear on another related department. Treasury papers make it quite clear that from an early stage the Treasury compared the educational situation in Ireland with that of the rest of the United Kingdom. In order to facilitate a discussion of the relevance of such comparisons, a brief summary of educational developments in Gt. Britain is given here.

In 1839, government grants were first voted for elementary education in England. These grants were administered by the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, and were distributed to educational establishments under private management. No attempt was made by the government in the early years to interfere with the ethos of the schools in receipt of aid. The administration which evolved under the Committee of the Privy Council not only recognised but supported the denominational concept. As a result, the period 1839 to 1870 saw a considerable increase in the number of schools under denominational management, and a consequent increase in the amount of the annual vote for elementary education. The growth of state aid was halted by the introduction of payment by results in 1862. Under the new system, the various educational grants were superseded by a single payment to schools - this payment was based on the results of the pupils at an annual examination. Payment by Results brought about a significant decrease in the government grant for education - from £840,000 in 1862 to £705,000 in 1864. The Education Act of 1870 resulted in

further economies for the central government. This act brought an end to the proliferation of denominational schools and from 1870, problems of inadequate educational provision were solved by the setting up of religiously-integrated Board schools - schools which were financed equally by government funds, local rates and parental contributions. Thus, educational needs throughout the country were satisfied without imposing undue pressure on the central exchequer. One might mention that Lingen, who was Permanent Secretary to the Treasury from 1870 to 1885, had been secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council in the period when the system of payment by results was being devised and when the 1870 Act was being drafted and that he and Lowe, who was Vice-President of the Committee, played a very significant part in these two developments.

Although the removal of school fees in 1891 (with the introduction of compulsory education) inevitably increased the public cost of education, funds from local rates continued to provide a significant proportion of educational costs during the period of the Board schools. The Education Act of 1899 resulted in a rationalisation of educational administration in England. Under this act, a single board of Education was set up and this Board took over responsibility from the different committees, boards and departments which had administered the various education votes before that. Three years later, the 1902 Act produced a further administrative simplification; responsibility for all schools at all levels of education in each local area was taken over by Local Education Authorities and these L.E.As. were required to ensure that not less than 50% of educational costs would be met from local rates. It was only after the First World War, with the passing of the Fisher Act in 1918, that the proportion of educational costs borne by the central exchequer was increased. From 1902 to 1918 local rates covered at least 50% of educational costs in their area; after 1918 rates accounted for not more than 50% of these costs.

Irish National Education

The setting up of the national school system in 1831, marked the

beginning of state intervention in Irish elementary education. Responsibility for administering the state grant lay with the National Board and under the terms of the Stanley letter, the Board had 'complete control' over the funds at its disposal. This letter pre-dated the formalisation of Treasury control over all funds voted by parliament. During the first 20 years of the Board's existence, state grants grew rapidly and decisions on the allocation of the grant were largely a matter for the Board. With the growth of Treasury control generally after 1852, came a gradual erosion of the autonomy of the National Board in relation to expenditure on national education and the reduction of the power of the Board in this regard became more marked after the passing of the Exchequer and Audit Act in 1866. After the passing of this act, the National Board, like all other administrative departments were subject to its provisions, i.e. the Board's annual estimates were submitted to the Treasury in November for the following financial year (April-March); estimated expenditure was set out under heads and sub-heads; savings in one area could not be transferred to another and all unexpended balances had to be relinquished to the Exchequer at the end of the year. The expenditure of the National Board was also monitored by the Accountant and Auditor General to ensure that it was in keeping with the purposes for which it was voted.

During the 1850s and 1860s there was little or no tension between the National Board and the Treasury because the Treasury believed that expenditure on elementary education was in line with that in Britain and they perceived that the system of administration was more efficient here than in Britain. Following the introduction of payment by results in Britain in 1864, pressure began to build up from the Treasury for greater economy in the Irish system. The cost per pupil in elementary education in England fell as a result of payment by results but the costs in Ireland continued to rise. When payment by results was introduced in Ireland in 1872, results fees were paid in addition to staff salaries not in lieu as had happened in Britain. Consequently the new system resulted in an increase of 30% in the exchequer contribution to Irish education.

The 1870 Education Act in England had further reduced the

financial pressure on the central exchequer. With the introduction of a local rate for Board schools in England, a predictable and significant proportion of educational costs would be met locally. Efforts under the 1875 Act in Ireland to levy rates through the Poor Law Unions were unsuccessful and the amount collected in this way in Ireland never exceeded 4% of total current expenditure on national education. In 1883 it was estimated by the National Board that the total local contribution towards Irish national education (including subscriptions, endowments, rates, fees and contributions) was less than 22%; in England, the comparable proportion was 55%. The cost to the state for every pupil attending an elementary school in England was £0.92p; in Ireland, it was £1.53 or 66% more than England.[14]

If Gladstone's efforts in the early 1880s to introduce Provincial Councils and/or a Central Board in Ireland had been successful, the problem of an inadequate local contribution for education might well have been solved but these efforts failed and when the Conservative government came to power in 1886, the situation in relation to Irish education was unchanged from the previous decade.

Efforts by the Treasury to impose a degree of uniformity on the Irish and British systems of education had been successfully resisted in the 1870s and 1880s when the result would have meant a decrease in public funding for Irish education but when it meant an increase in public funding an element of uniformity was accepted without any protest. Such an example was the introduction in the early 1890s of the "school grant" in lieu of fees by Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Goschen. With the introduction of compulsory and free elementary education in England 1891, the government made arrangements to indemnify the schools there for loss of income from parental contributions or fees. Extra grants "in lieu of local taxation" were paid from central funds to English elementary schools and Goschen proposed that pro rata grants should be paid to Scotland and Ireland in a proportion of 80:11:9. The annual grant to Irish national education from this source (called the school grant) was in the region of £250,000 per annum. A

further annual grant of £78,000 was also paid to Irish national education during Goschen's chancellorship; this grant became popularly known as the "whiskey money" and was the excise revenue from sales of alcohol on which a new excise duty had been imposed. Thus, while the systems of education in Ireland and the rest of the U.K. had evolved along significantly different lines after 1870, Irish education benefitted from additional grants given to England and Scotland. During the period 1870-1900 there is evidence that Treasury officials were irritated by the failure of the government to insist on a uniform system of administration of education in Ireland and the rest of the U.K. but political considerations had outweighed financial expediency and the government had refused to bow to Treasury pressure for reform. By the end of the nineteenth century, the parliamentary grant per pupil in attendance in Irish national schools was £2.50. In England the comparable figure was £1.80.[15]

Matters came to a head at the turn of the century. The Acts of 1899 and 1902 in England had rationalised the administration of education there; had simplified the task of the Treasury in the allocation of public funds, and had resulted in a much more efficient system of administering education. In Ireland the Local Government Act of 1898 had set up a framework which would enable a similar system of administration in this country. There is evidence that even before 1900 government and Treasury officials were discussing the possibility of a radical reform of educational administration in Ireland.[16] Coupled with this, the Treasury coffers were being depleted by military spending on the Boer War, and it seemed a suitable time to cut back on Irish educational expenditure. A committee on school buildings which included representatives of the Treasury, the National Board and the Board of Works, reported in 1902 and recommended that a system of local rating be introduced in support of Irish national education.[17] A letter from Chief Secretary Wyndham to the Treasury in December 1902, supported such a move and the Dale report of 1904 contained the same proposal. Wyndham floated the proposal in parliament in spring 1904 but it soon became clear that Catholic Church interests in Ireland were vehemently opposed to any change in the national school system. The Irish Parliamentary Party supported the Church

in the matter and the government conceded defeat within a year. In 1905, Wyndham wrote to the Treasury asking for additional funding from the Exchequer for Irish national education. The frustration of the Treasury at the government's failure to insist on reform is evident in a letter from Victor Cavendish, Financial Secretary to the Treasury to Dublin Castle on 14 March 1905:

> His Excellency (i.e. Wyndham) states that he has arrived at the conclusion that there is no immediate prospect of eliciting any material amount out of the rates .... the proper remedy for the default of localities in respect of the upkeep of schools vested in trustees is to take steps by legislation to impose this charge upon the rates; and My Lords (of the Treasury) cannot regard the fact that circumstances are unfavourable for making this charge as a reason for accentuating further the existing inequality between Ireland and the rest of the U.K. in respect of the amount of the expenditure on national education defrayed out of votes of parliament in comparison with that contributed from local sources.[18]

It is significant to note that around this period, over 50% of current educational costs in England were paid from local sources. In Ireland, the comparable proportion was 5.5%.[19]

With the appointment of Birrell as Chief Secretary in 1907, the question of educational reform was again mooted. The Irish Council Bill of 1908 contained measures which would increase state grants for Irish education but would involve a rationalisation of the administrative system. The bill was strenuously opposed by the Catholic Church and the Irish Party refused to support the bill in Parliament. Birrell was forced to abandon the bill and the experience brought home to the government the realisation that any attempt to interfere with Irish education could be political suicide. The defeat of the bill co-incided with Lloyd-George's appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Birrell used the opportunity to gain an increase in government grants for national education.

In spite of the problems experienced by the National Board during the first decade of the century, the per capita grant from the state for national education increased from £2.83 per pupil in 1900/01 to £3.00 in 1909/10 - an increase of 20% in the 10-year

period. The cost of living had increased by 4% in the same period. Seen in this context, State expenditure on Irish national education in the first decade of the century was not as unsatisfactory as many of the Treasury's critics would have one believe. By the end of the decade, the total cost to the Exchequer for every pupil attending an Irish national school was £3.60; the comparable amount in England was £2.22. The proportion of the total cost of elementary education paid from state funds in England was 46%; in Ireland it was 92%.[20]

During the second decade of the 20th century, the government contribution to national education began to show a decline in real terms. Even before the outbreak of the First World War, inflation had begun to erode the value of grants and this inflation escalated rapidly during and immediately after the war. As a result, the value of government grants to national education fell by almost 50% in the period from 1910 to 1918. Nevertheless, Irish education continued to be more generously financed by the Treasury than English elementary education. In 1919, in his evidence to the Vice-Regal Committee on Primary Education in Ireland (the Killanin committee), the Treasury Remembrancer, Maurice Headlam, pointed out that Irish national education received more than 60% more per pupil than elementary education in England.[21] The cost to the Exchequer for Ireland was £525 per pupil; for England it was £3.22.[22] Three years later the State paid £9.10 per pupil for Irish education; in England the equivalent amount per pupil was £6.30.[23]

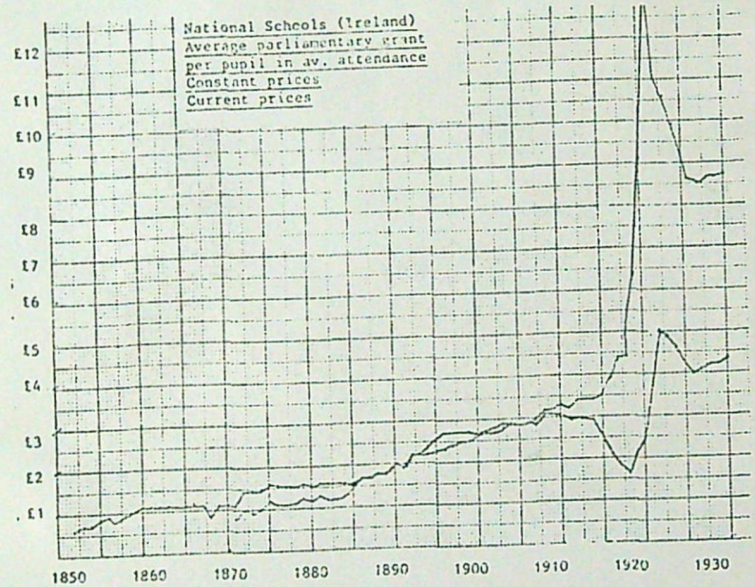
Throughout the 50-year period from 1870 to 1920, the average government expenditure per pupil in attendance in elementary education in Ireland was consistently higher than in England; on average, the per capita grant was 60% greater in Ireland than in England. Many educationalists would reject this admittedly simplistic comparison of educational expenditure in Ireland and England and would argue that such comparison ignored the essential differences between the two countries - differences of population distribution, of denominational affiliation and of educational structure. The point being made in this paper is that since Ireland belonged to the legislative Union, the Treasury was required to

co-ordinate as far as possible, the different administrative systems within that Union. It was not the business of the Treasury to become involved in the political problems of Ireland; the Treasury's concern was to optimise government funds and since Irish education was costing so much more than English education, it was not surprising that the Treasury expressed continuing concern about the issue.

Summarising the situation, we have the following picture of government expenditure per pupil in average attendance in Irish national schools from 1852 to 1930.

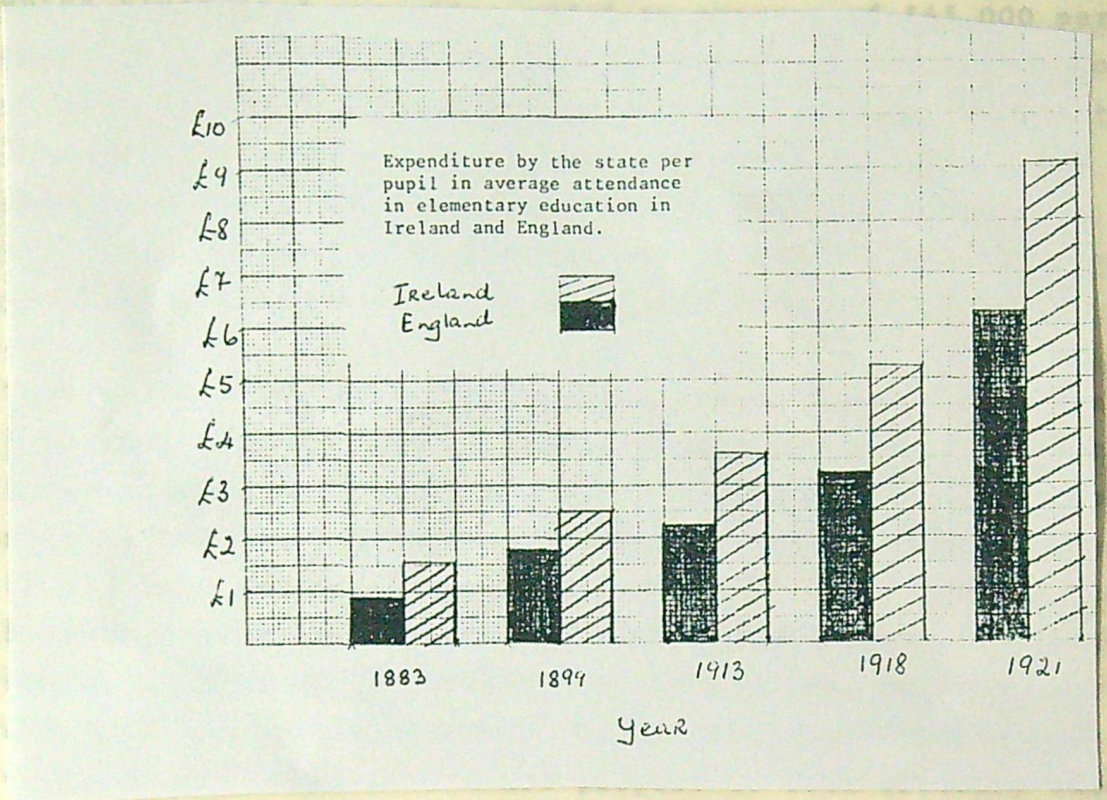
DIAGRAM II

Graph showing average parliamentary grant per pupil in national schools in constant and current prices, 1852 to 1930.



In terms of a comparison with government grants per pupil in English elementary education, the picture that emerges is that of consistently higher funding of Irish education - as the following chart shows:

DIAGRAM III




## Intermediate Education

Before concluding, brief reference should be made to the financing of intermediate education in Ireland. In this area, more than in the area of national education, a negative and sometimes inaccurate picture of the Treasury has been presented in the past. Intermediate education, unlike national education, was almost totally free from Treasury control before the First World War. Financing, in the early years, was by way of interest from a capital endowment of one million pounds transferred to the

Commissioners of Intermediate Education from the Church Temporalities Fund in 1878. This sum was invested by the Intermediate Board to yield an annual income of about £30,000. This sum was used to defray all costs incurred by the Board - results fees, prizes and exhibitions and all administrative and examination costs. In 1892, a further sum became available from the Local Taxation (Excise) Grant and this grant which fluctuated annually, added an average of £45,000 per annum to the income of the Board. The Board had almost total control of its own funds and it did not have to refer to the Treasury for approval of its spending pattern. There was ambiguity as to the status of the Intermediate Board as a department of the civil service and it was not subject to the provisions of the Exchequer and Audit Act.

The Treasury has been consistently blamed for the fact that the Intermediate Board was prevented from appointing permanent inspectors in the years 1902 to 1910. This accusation was first made by the Board itself in its annual report in 1903; repeated in the Dale and Stephens report in 1905, widely disseminated by Padraig Pearse and repeated in recent histories. An exhaustive search of Treasury records failed to find any evidence for this accusation. On the contrary, Chief Secretary Wyndham made it clear in 1902 that he did not propose to seek Treasury sanction for a permanent inspectorate, stating:

> .... the Irish government would not feel justified in recommending the present proposal (appointment of inspectors) to the Treasury unless it can be accompanied by a scheme for reducing the Board's expenditure for examination and other purposes ...[24]

During the following six years, the failure to appoint inppectors was attributed on a number of occasions to Treasury obduracy. Pearse wrote in 1907:

> The Treasury it was that by stopping supplies compelled the Board to dismiss its staff of temporary inspectors a few years ago; the Treasury it is that by refusing a grant for the purpose prevents the Board from appointing a permanent staff as it has repeatedly proposed to do.[25]

This accusation was refuted by Archbishop Walsh who pointed out

that it was not the Treasury which prevented inspectors from being appointed and "that it was not a question of funds at all".[26] A year later, Chief Secretary Birrell confirmed this in a letter to Baron Palles when he wrote:

> The Treasury, as far as I know, has never been approached upon the subject of the appointment of inspectors ....[27]

Some years later, Judge Craig, a member of the Intermediate Board, again suggested Treasury involvement when he told a conference of managers that the Intermediate Board "have been constantly representing for a series of years until we all got sick, sore and sorry that we wanted a system of inspection introduced and the constant answer was that we had no money to do it".[28] However, he afterwards clarified this statement when he admitted that the Intermediate Board had never asked either the Irish government or the Treasury for money and justified this by saying that

> in informal conversation and so forth, it was conveyed to certain members of the Board that there was no use in their doing so (i.e. asking for extra funds).[29]

Internal evidence makes it quite clear that during the years 1900-1910, the Intermediate Board deliberately refrained from requesting additional money for intermediate education and on more than one occasion reassured the Irish Executive that its funds were more than adequate. Perhaps the Board feared that such a request would be used by the government to justify administrative reform or perhaps Starkie, who was one of the most influential members of the Intermediate Board, feared that any money got for intermediate education would reduce the government grant for national education. He was aware that the Treasury would have liked to allocate a composite grant for all levels of education in Ireland as they did in England. He was also aware that national education in Ireland was in receipt of a considerably greater grant than elementary education in England. The fact that the grant for intermediate education in Ireland was nil certainly indicated that Ireland had a right to government funds for this purpose and this right was acknowledged by Chief Secretary Birrell in 1911. However, there was nothing the government could do until the Intermediate Board asked for

additional funds. It was not until considerable pressure was brought to bear by school authorities and teachers that the Intermediate Board agreed in 1912 to apply for a government grant for intermediate education.

At this point Birrell indicated that the government would be willing to allocate a grant to Irish intermediate education approximately equivalent to the grant being given to English secondary education. It was widely expected that this grant could ultimately amount to £100,000 for Ireland. But the management authorities of Catholic intermediate schools preferred that their schools be starved of funds than to submit to conditions which they regarded as unacceptable. Canon Murphy of the Catholic Headmasters Association went so far as to accuse the government of attempting to

> seize the schools built and maintained by the Bishops and Religious Orders for the Catholic people of Ireland and to turn them into Government schools. 30

He added:

> We are unable to see that such a claim differs from the claim of the governments of France and Portugal to the right of forcible confiscation.

The Catholic authorities blamed the Treasury for imposing conditions on the grant. Canon Murphy wrote:

> The Treasury in aiming at a very desirable improvement in the position of lay secondary teachers, for the first time in the history of intermediate education in Ireland, attached to a grant conditions involving a principle which in the case of Catholic schools is irreconcilable with their fundamental liberty in the selection of the best teacher for each vacancy as it arises. 31

But it was Birrell who had attached these conditions to the grant when he had presented the proposal to parliament. Moreover, this was the basis on which parliament had agreed to allocate the grant (known as the Teachers' Salaries Grant) to Irish intermediate education. The Treasury's role did not arise until the grant was paid and then the Treasury had the task of ensuring that the wishes of parliament were being honoured in the disposal of the grant. In 1914, the grant was eventually distributed to

schools - an annual grant of £40,000. Birrell had in fact conceded to the pressure of the Catholic Headmasters and the basis on which the grant was in practice distributed, took account of the reservations of the Catholic Headmasters. However, Birrell did not get the consent of parliament to the changes in the way he intended to distribute the grant and consequently the Treasury found it necessary to object to the fact that the grant was being paid on a basis that was "clearly inconsistent with the intention of the scheme" which had been presented to parliament by Birrell. The Controller and Auditor General also drew attention to this inconsistency but neither the government nor the Intermediate Board made any effort to rectify the situation before 1922.

After the war, a large increase was given to English secondary education as a result of the provisions of the Fisher Act of 1918. The government indicated its willingness to allocate an equivalent grant to Irish intermediate education and the Duke grant (named after Chief Secretary Duke) of £50,000 per annum was paid to intermediate education from 1918 to 1922. The government had hoped that this grant would be an interim measure pending the passing of legislation which would reform Irish education. But the proposed 1919 Education (Ireland) Bill suffered a fate similar to that of the Irish Council Bill of 1907 and no change was made in the administration of Irish education. Two years later, a further Interim Grant of £50,000 per annum was allocated to intermediate education, bringing the annual income of the Board to approximately £220,000 made up as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Income from original endowment + accumulated funds (1878) | £35,000 |
| Income in lieu of Local Taxation Grant (1892) | £45,000 |
| Teachers Salaries Grant (1913/14) | £40,000 |
| Duke Grant (1918) | £50,000 |
| Interim Grant (1920) | £50,000 |

These grants were paid directly and unconditionally to the school authorities in the form of a block grant which was based on the results of the pupils at the Board examinations.

In spite of the additional grants voted by parliament in 1918 and 1920, Irish intermediate education was less generously aided

from central funds than English intermediate education. In his evidence to the Vice-Regal Committee on Intermediate Education in 1919, (the Molony Committee), Headlam admitted that "the amount earmarked (by the Government) for Intermediate education" was less than the proportion to which they could regard themselves entitled under the Goschen ratio. However, he emphasised that

> the funds voted by Parliament to Irish education as a whole exceeds the recognised proportion of 9 to 80. [32]

In 1918, the government paid about 60% more for every pupil in secondary education in England than in Ireland. By 1921, with the addition of the Duke Grant and the Interim Grant the situation in relation to Irish intermediate education had improved considerably and the Intermediate Board was paying out about £7 per pupil on rolls in intermediate schools. The equivalent amount being paid from public funds in England was about £8.50.[33]

In the years 1920 and 1921, correspondence between the intermediate school authorities and the government suggests that the Treasury was being blamed for the unsatisfactory level of public funding of Irish intermediate education.[34] During these years the plight of lay teachers in intermediate schools became particularly acute. In spite of the increase in the government grant to intermediate education, many lay teachers were being paid grossly inadequate salaries and a number of these teachers made representations to members of parliament and of the government with a view to obtaining an improvement in their conditions. Among those approached was H.A.L. Fisher, President of the English Board of Education, and he supported the lay teachers who had approached him. He wrote to Chief Secretary Greenwood in 1921 and asked him:

> Are you proposing to make any suggestions to the Treasury? [35]

Greenwood's reply made it clear that he did not intend to do so. He was frustrated by the failure of his government to enact the Education Bill of 1919/20 and he reminded Fisher that

> it was intended to deal with their case (i.e. the salaries of lay teachers in intermediate schools) in the Irish Education Bill last year, but for reasons over which we have no control, it was not found possible to pass that Bill into law.[36]

He did not intend to take any action to improve the salaries of lay teachers and stated:

> ... it is not possible to exercise any firm control under the present system over the expenditure of the grants made to Secondary Education in Ireland. This would make it very difficult, I think, to increase their grant.[37]

There is no doubt that the problems of inadequate financing experienced by the Intermediate Board were caused not by the Treasury, but by the failure of the government and the school authorities to come to an acceptable agreement about the conditions of payment of grants. The government felt strongly that voted moneys for intermediate education should be conditional on an adequate salary being paid to lay teachers. The Catholic management authorities opposed this, arguing that any conditions imposed by the government represented an undermining of the autonomy of intermediate schools. The Treasury was virtually silent during the period and should not be blamed for the inadequacy of public funding of intermediate education.

## Conclusion

Overall, it is clear that the financial fortunes of education in Ireland were more closely related to the political/administrative developments of the country than to developments either in English education or in Treasury policies. The growth of government expenditure on Irish education was halted only when the Irish Executive in Dublin Castle refused to support the claims of the National Board for further funds. This happened briefly in early 1870 when Gladstone had plans to introduce reform similar to reforms implemented in England and Scotland. As soon as Gladstone abandoned his plans for Irish educational reform, government funding for national education increased. A similar picture emerged in the early 1880s with Gladstone's plans for Devolution in Ireland and again in the first decade of the century when the stop/go attitude of the Irish Executive to educational/administrative reform was clearly reflected in the pattern of government funding of national education. There is undoubted

evidence throughout the period that the Treasury attempted to halt the growth of public expenditure on Irish education and bring it into line with the situation in England but these attempts were to no avail except when the Irish government was prepared to support efforts to cut back on educational expenditure.

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