

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL.

'German Influence on Aspects of English Educational
and Social Reform, 1867-1908'

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Hull.

by

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February, 1973.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The author wishes to thank the librarian at Sheffield University Library for permission to refer to the Mundella Papers; the librarian at Birmingham University Library for permission to consult the Papers of Austen and Joseph Chamberlain; and the librarians at the Imperial College, London and the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for their permission to use the Playfair and Asquith Collections respectively. Thanks are also due to the National Library of Scotland for its permission to consult the Papers of Lord Haldane and Lord Rosebery; and to the librarian at Chatsworth House for permission to refer to the Devonshire Collection. The author is grateful to the University of Hull for its award of a research grant; to the members of the Department of History at the University for their support and encouragement; and especially to Mr J. Major whose guidance and help were invaluable.

Chapter 1: ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND GERMANY, AN INTRODUCTION

In 1907 one prominent educational reformer proclaimed that "the example of Germany and the detailed information which we have obtained as to her school organisation and methods of instruction have been serviceable to us."¹ This bald statement hardly does justice to the debt which England then owed Germany. For many decades, English reformers, admiring the achievement of Germany in raising herself to a position of military and industrial might from the ruins of the Napoleonic era, and explaining this achievement in terms of education, had made detailed studies of the entire German educational system. Armed with the results of these studies, the reformers had belaboured their fellow-countrymen with the facts and figures of German educational strength. They had warned that unless the English educational provision was brought somewhere near the level of the German in quality, England would decline in the rank of nations. These reformers had been instrumental in breaking down public apathy towards matters of education and in persuading the Government to take decisive steps - based largely on the inspirational example of German achievement - towards closing the gap which had developed between the two nations.

The tradition of looking to Germany was by no means new. During debates on national education in the 1830s in Parliament, references were often made to the German precedents for compulsory attendance. In 1838, Richard Cobden, impressed by the emphasis which the Germans were giving to popular education, warned that Englishmen of trade and

1. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts 1880-1910 (London, 1910), p.196.

commerce could hope to achieve real success and influence only "if they were possessed of a little of the mind of the merchants and manufacturers of Frankfurt, Chemnitz, Elberfeld, etc."² Carlyle helped to familiarise the mid-century English public with German ideas of greater state intervention in education and other spheres of life through such works as his Latter Day Pamphlets (1850). At about this time, too, the Prince Consort was extending German ideas of state intervention in England to official circles while, at the same time, co-operating with the German-trained chemist Lyon Playfair in the organisation of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the foundation of the Science and Art Department in 1853.³

It was in the 1860s, however, that English educationalists began seriously to take note of what was happening in Germany. It may be argued that German influence at this time was more cultural than scientific whereas thirty years later the reverse was to be true. This argument is valid to the extent that there probably was more discussion of the cultural aspects of educational reform in the 1860s than in the 1890s, particularly in the university sector. At the same time, however, it must be emphasised that the majority of reformers, even in the 1860s, were largely motivated by a determination to see that England's industrial and commercial needs were satisfied. In other words, their actions are mainly explained by an interest that was scientific and technical rather than cultural.

2. J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (London, 1920 edn.), p.134.

3. In 1852 Playfair made a thorough investigation of continental schools and his findings were incorporated as an Appendix of the report on the Great Exhibition and then published more fully as Industrial Education on the Continent (London, 1852).

England in 1851, as the Great Exhibition showed, was still a long way ahead of other industrial nations and her pre-eminence in such fields as coal and iron and steel was to be retained for several decades further. It seemed absurd for Richard Cobden to declare in 1853 that it was not safe for Englishmen to be "the most ignorant Protestant people on the face of the earth."⁴ Convinced that inherent British superiority in material resources and natural skill was all that was needed, the majority of mid-Victorians refused to listen to those who suggested that the continental, and especially German, policy of emphasising practical scientific work and research through a close connection between science and industry and of fostering trained intelligence through the provision of sound technical training based on good elementary and secondary education, might be the policy of the future.

Monopoly had dulled the edge of British competitiveness and too much reliance was being placed on traditions and practices in which the application of science to industry, the encouragement of new methods and the promotion of technical education found no place. Innovations of this kind had not proved necessary in the past, so why should the methods which had produced such a huge industrial supremacy be shelved? The discerning few alone saw that the arrangements existing in the 1860s in England were incapable of either producing any quantity of scientifically trained men for positions of importance in industry and commerce or of giving working men that sound training which was

4. A.V.Judges, Pioneers of English Education (London, 1952), p.207.

coming to be regarded as essential if England were to retain her industrial supremacy. One prominent scientist was later to recall of the England of the 1860s: "...the nation which then was renowned for its utilisation of waste material products allowed its mental products to remain undeveloped....We lacked then everything that Germany had equipped herself with in the matter of scientific industries."⁵ England was a nation whose wealth lacked firm foundations. She was bound to suffer when other countries, while short of many of her material resources, began to compete from a basis of superior education and an active application of science to industry. The result, according to the reformers, was reflected in the relative decline of the British economy; that is, its slower rate of expansion than the economies of Germany and the United States in particular. The inevitable result of these developments was the increasing pressure of demand for reform of all branches of education in England.

The new and intense interest in matters of education, and in the value of the foreign model, is illustrated by the setting in motion of several inquiries into educational matters. The Taunton Commission was set up to investigate secondary education and then, very largely as a result of the intervention of Lyon Playfair, conducted a

5. Sir Norman Lockyer, Education and National Progress (London, 1906), p.92. Lockyer was a founder of the scientific journal Nature. From its first edition Nature devoted much of its space to comparisons of English and German scientific achievement, generally favourable to the latter. It reflected, we are told, "the admiration of informed British scientists for Germany's educational system...her scientific laboratories, and for her scientific achievements." G.Haines, 'German Influences upon Scientific Instruction in England', Victorian Studies, vol.1 (March, 1958), p.219.

supplementary inquiry into technical education to follow up the lessons of the Paris Exhibition.⁶ In the same year, the Foreign Office circularised British missions abroad asking for detailed information as to the organisation of technical education in foreign countries and its effects upon trade and industry;⁷ and Bernhard Samuelson wrote to the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education relating his impressions of recent visits to English and foreign schools and industrial concerns.⁸ In 1868, Samuelson was appointed chairman of a Select Committee on Scientific Instruction. Like its immediate predecessors, this committee reported that there were serious deficiencies in English elementary and secondary education. It deplored the shortage of science teachers and the inadequacy of institutions offering technical education to working men; and it made recommendations to tackle all of these problems.⁹

In all of these preliminary investigations, full attention was

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6. Schools Inquiry Commission: Report Relative to Technical Education, 1867 (3898). Playfair's intervention took the form of a letter to Taunton which was later published in the Times, 29 May 1867, p.5, and then circularised to all the English jurors at the Paris Exhibition for their comments. Taunton thanked Playfair for his letter "on the comparative progress made by the Industry of England and other countries", Taunton to Playfair, 2 May 1867, Playfair MSS, 985a.
 7. Circular of Lord Stanley to Her Majesty's Representatives Abroad, Together with their Replies to it, 1868 (4085).
 8. Letter from B.Samuelson to the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education concerning Technical Education in Various Countries Abroad, 1867 (13).
 9. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), p.viii.

paid to foreign precedents, and we find a tendency to attach most importance to the German example. For example, Professor Lankester of the Royal School of Mines explained Germany's "intelligent and progressive industry" in terms of her first-class technical education.¹⁰ The Foreign Office was informed by its representative in Prussia that superior education there had given rise to "a very good class of workmen...which thinks and has a knowledge of the things they are required to make."¹¹ Samuelson explained the "rapid progress of many trades abroad" by pointing to the superior technical instruction of works' managers and the better elementary schooling of the labour force.¹² And so on. These statements are representative of a wide, and increasing, body of opinion in England which looked to the Continent - and to Germany in particular - with a mixture of admiration and apprehension.

It was a tendency vindicated by military as much as by economic events. Prussian victories over Austria and France took on a different importance as many observers sought to explain them by pointing to the Prussian schools. Granville, for instance, expressed the view that the Paris Exhibition, in conjunction with the Austrian defeat, brought the crucial debate on the relative value to modern states of classical and modern subjects "prominently to our minds"¹³. At the same time, Lyon Playfair, commenting on the Prussian success in

10. Schools Inquiry Commission: Report Relative to Technical Education, op.cit., p.13.

11. Stanley Circular, op.cit., p.35.

12. Samuelson Letter, op.cit., p.55.

13. The Times, 17 May 1867, p.5.

France in 1870, observed that "two countries in these days are not fairly matched in war, whatever may be the personal valour of their inhabitants, when one like France has 28 per cent of her soldiers unable to read and write, while the other, like Germany, has not 3 per cent."¹⁴

Henceforth, as the increasing economic and military strength of Germany proved that the events of 1866 - 1870 had been merely the portents of a rising Power, one of the chief foundations of which was an efficient system of state-controlled education, the attention of reformers was to be fixed upon her. German achievement became the chief criterion for determining the value of legislation introduced in England and the main stick with which the reformers beat the Government in their efforts to secure more legislation. Jesse Collings, friend of Joseph Chamberlain, in 1874 exhorted his fellow-countrymen to study closely the Prussian educational system which would "more than anything else teach us what we have yet to accomplish in that work of national education, "as well as proving by comparison "how defective and delusive is that which we have been pleased to call a 'system of education in England'."¹⁵ Official inquiries and enterprising reformers inevitably found their way to Germany, and, once there, invariably found themselves impressed with most of what they saw and hurried to set their findings and impressions down in print. Similarly the pages of both press and

14. L. Playfair, Subjects of Social Welfare (London, 1889), p.283.

15. Miscellaneous Press Cuttings, Chamberlain MSS, JC 4/2.

parliamentary debates abound with references to the progress of German education and with warnings that unless England made a serious attempt to make up the leeway she would go down in the scale of nations. Even novelists were affected, Jerome K. Jerome observing in one of his works, first published in 1900, that the Germans "in the matter of common sense, as applied to education ... can give us ninety-nine in a hundred and beat us with one hand."¹⁶ Reformers may have tended towards exaggeration at times, but it was mostly an exaggeration based on tactics. It was their intention to frighten their countrymen out of the apathy and ignorance which had long enveloped them.

The cry that England should look to Germany before embarking upon legislation in education was, therefore, a recurrent theme, a constant factor, in the development of the English system of education from the 1860s on. Reformers, convinced that each of the levels of education must make a more satisfactory contribution towards the promotion of commerce and industry, sought to impose on English education a programme of reforms, based largely on their study of German experience. Thus, elementary schools were to be freed from the deadening effects of the Revised Code which, introduced in 1862, greatly restricted their curriculum, and were to provide more and better instruction in such things as drawing, modelling, geometry and elementary science, which would better serve the child in the pursuit of his intended occupation. This

16. J.K. Jerome, Three Men on the Bummel (Bristol, 1940 edn.), p.82.

revitalised scheme of elementary education was to be supplemented by the greater provision of evening instruction enabling young adolescents to build on the foundations provided by the elementary school and become more accomplished workers. At the secondary level, there was to be a widening of the curriculum and its re-orientation away from the classical-academic tradition and towards a greater emphasis on modern subjects better suited to future holders of prominent positions in commerce and industry. There were to be more universities in England, more generously aided by the State and providing facilities for a greater degree of scientific teaching and research than hitherto.

It should be emphasised that these demands in no way represented an attempt to simply transplant the bulk of German ideas and practices into England. It is doubtful if even the most ardent of pro-Germans really believed that this was desirable or possible. Instead, reformers sought to extract from Germany those features of its educational system which not only promised the greatest benefit for England but could more easily be modified to suit English conditions.

It should also be pointed out that the Teutonic influence did not act in isolation during this period. There were, for example, other important external influences. In their anxiety for amelioration the later Victorians zealously amassed information from all quarters. Thus the educational systems of France, Switzerland, Holland and America came under close scrutiny and contributed to English development. Furthermore, there were

numerous internal reform movements which would have secured legislation anyway, and some of which owed nothing to either German or other foreign examples.

There are other points to consider. For example, we might ask how representative of reform opinion were those reformers who spoke most often of German precedents; or how important was their role in the securing of reform? We may not be able to answer these questions satisfactorily but it is only by at least bearing them in mind, as well as by placing the German example alongside the other external and indigenous influences at work, that an objective and valid evaluation of the German influence upon English educational (and social) reform from the 1860s onward can be reached.

Chapter 2: ENGLISH ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND THE GERMAN MODEL

Introduction: English Elementary Education in the 1860s, a brief survey; and some early references to the German model

The provision of elementary education in England in the 1860s was unevenly spread and highly variable in quality. The Royal Commission inquiring into the state of elementary education in England and Wales had been called into being in 1858 because of a wide belief that large numbers of the population were in a deplorable state of ignorance, and because of a knowledge that considerable sectors of the country, especially rural areas, but also some towns, either contained schools inadequate for the purpose of sound education, or had no schools at all. Educational reformers were convinced that elementary education, as it then existed, provided no adequate foundation for later work in industry and commerce, and was remarkably deficient in organisation and efficiency and fell short in universality. They deplored the situation in which elementary education was denied to the children of many poor parents by the tendency of schools to establish themselves in well-to-do areas in order to attract a greater number of subscriptions, and by the demands of factory and mill for child labour the earnings from which too many parents were unwilling, or unable, to forego.

The most important single reason for this state of affairs was the unwillingness of government to interfere too much with the activities of those bodies which maintained schools on a

voluntary basis out of local subscriptions and children's fees. There was a powerful religious motivation behind many of these arrangements and denominations vied with each other to gain influence over the minds of children. As a result, they opposed all change which might allow rivals to advance at their expense. For them, education had to be inextricably linked with religion since they regarded the leading function of education as the training of character through instruction in moral and religious principles rather than what they saw as the mere acquisition of elements of secular knowledge. The government was extremely reluctant to stir up animosity between, for instance, the Anglican National Society and the dissenting British and Foreign School Society and was, therefore, inclined to leave the voluntary system to soldier on. This is not to say, of course, that the government had done nothing. Since 1833 grants to elementary schools had been made available. In 1839 a Committee of Privy Council for Education had been set up and Kay-Shuttleworth, its first Secretary, had done much to improve the training and status of teachers. The Inspectorate, created in 1839, was doing good work in encouraging local efforts, collecting accurate information and offering advice and encouragement to the schools it examined.

Important though these improvements were, they were insufficient to bolster the voluntary system against the pressures of a rapidly increasing population and of industrialisation. Between 1801 and 1851 the population had doubled from 9 million to 18 million and

much of the new population was concentrated in industrial areas in London, Lancashire and the Midlands. Conditions had been created in which it was difficult for the traditional charity school to operate. Probably as many as 50 per cent of children in industrial cities were not receiving education. Certainly, J.L. Garvin estimated that out of a child population of 4.3 million in 1870, only 1.3 million went to adequately maintained and inspected schools, 1 million went to uninspected and inefficient schools, and 2 million went to no school at all.¹ Reformers were also disturbed by the failure to ensure regular attendance at school, in spite of the tendency for the capitation grant to encourage schools to urge their pupils to attend more regularly. The Newcastle Commission estimated that out of a possible total of 220 school days during the year, about 36 per cent of children attended on 100 days or less, and 57 per cent on 150 days or less.²

Reformers had other complaints against the existing elementary education. Many felt that the schools themselves left much to be desired, being too greatly characterised by uncertificated teaching, lack of inspection, over-crowding, and poor facilities. The system of pupil-teachers, introduced in 1846, had proved a decided improvement on the old monitorial system which it replaced, but Matthew Arnold was still obliged to tell the Newcastle Commission that, in examining pupil-teachers, he had been struck by "the low degree of mental culture and intelligence which they exhibit."³ The Commission

1. J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol.1 (London, 1932), p.103

2. Report of the Education Commission, 1861, Vol.1, p.172

3. ibid., p.106

itself found teacher-training too mechanical and burdensome,⁴ and the schools themselves incompetent "to give really useful instruction, or to have considerable influence in forming the character of those who attend them."⁵

A major criticism levelled at elementary education in the 1860s (and, indeed, in later decades) was that the instruction given was too narrow and unimaginative, especially after the introduction of the Revised Code by Robert Lowe. This Code, introduced in 1862, in accordance with the recommendations of the Newcastle Commission, instituted the system of 'payment by results', by which money was granted to a school largely according to the performance of its pupils in examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic, rather than, as hitherto, according to the needs of that school as judged by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The Revised Code was introduced for a variety of reasons, principally to economise in the increasing costs of administration, but also to improve, by the institution of a minimum standard of attainment, the teaching of the less-gifted and younger pupils who were believed to have been neglected for the sake of giving brighter and older children an education beyond what was considered necessary. Certainly the Newcastle Commission had reported that inspection tended to focus on schools rather than on pupils, and on the classes of 11- and 12-year-olds rather than on those below them. Since only a small minority of children stayed

4. Ibid., p.108

5. Ibid., p. 88

at school long enough to reach the highest classes the majority were rarely subject to inspection and tended to be ignored by the teachers.⁶ In consequence, the Commission recommended that, since the need was to guarantee the quality of the education of all pupils and not just of a select few, inducements should be given to the teachers to bring up pupils in all classes to a defined standard.⁷ Further, the Commission subscribed to the view that it was unnecessary to give the children of workers, destined to be workers themselves, any more educational equipment than the minimum necessary for their role in life. Acquiescing in a deep-rooted prejudice against educating the lower classes above their station in life, the Commission considered it quite satisfactory that 60 per cent of children attending elementary school did so sufficiently to be able to learn to read, write and do arithmetic "well enough for the purposes of their condition in life."⁸ Thus it was that the Revised Code came into force: a system which was to last, with modifications, for thirty years despite being subject

6. Ibid., p.273

7. Ibid., p.274

8. Ibid., p.225. Some years later, Mundella received a letter from an acquaintance saying precisely the same thing. "The great bulk of the Conservative Party, as you say, hate education in itself; but because they have just sense enough to see that a certain amount of education may make their serfs more useful ... they are desirous to give them just that modicum of teaching. Such teaching as would make them men and not machines our friends on the other side, and not a few of our friends on our own side, will not endure." J.W. Caldicott to Mundella, 14 July 1875, Mundella MSS. Later still, T.H. Huxley was to explain the indifference of many employers to educational advance in terms of a "miserable sort of jealous feeling about the elevation of their workmen." Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.III, Q.5,000, p.522.

to considerable criticism from reformers who argued that it had only served to produce a sterile curriculum, the mechanical and uninteresting teaching of basic subjects, and the mechanical inspection of that teaching. To them, the Revised Code was proof that the intellectual life of the elementary school and the best interests of the children were being sacrificed to the two *laissez-faire* notions of supply and demand and government economy.

Many Englishmen, therefore, were becoming increasingly concerned at the undoubted shortcomings of the elementary educational system. This growth of concern in the 1860s and early 1870s resulted from a combination of political and economic considerations. The problems of elementary education seemed to assume particular gravity at a time when the franchise was widening. It seemed to several observers that the ignorant multitudes were fast becoming the political masters of the realm. Wrote Morley: "In plain English, a majority of those who come out of the schools cannot read a newspaper. This unfortunate class is our ruling class. Their votes can carry elections, change administrations, decide policies."⁹ In similar vein, Lyon Playfair argued that the state having extended the franchise had a consequent duty to provide the new voters with education: "You cannot give political power to a people and allow them to remain ignorant. That would be the political suicide of a nation."¹⁰ Complacent Englishmen, who might laugh off such pronouncements as political rhetoric found it

9. J. Morley, The Struggle for National Education, (London, 1873), p.108.

10. Sir Lyon Playfair, Subjects of Social Welfare, (London, 1889), p.296.

harder to ignore the economic argument based on revelations of German industrial and commercial growth deriving ultimately from superior elementary education. In 1905 Sir Philip Magnus was to declare that a survey of foreign educational systems proved that " a country succeeds and prospers in proportion to the excellence of its methods and the completeness of its organisation of popular education."¹¹

In the 1860s, most reformers had few doubts that German methods and organisation in the sphere of elementary education were both excellent and complete.

Those who campaigned on behalf of compulsory attendance frequently pointed to the fact that throughout most of Germany children were required to attend on every school day for a period of up to eight years. Those who criticised the narrowness of the Revised Code quite commonly pointed to the wider range of subjects taught in German elementary schools. Many English reformers contrasted English teaching standards with those which prevailed in Germany. Mark Pattison, for instance, assistant commissioner to the Newcastle Commission, praised the thoroughness of the Germans in training and examining their teachers.¹² Bernhard Samuelson, in 1867, expressed his admiration for the methods and skill of the German elementary school teacher.¹³

11. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts, 1880-1910, (London, 1910), p.223

12. Report of the Education Commission, 1861, Vol.IV, p.244.

13. Letter from B. Samuelson to the Vice-President of the Committee or Council on Education concerning Technical Education in Various Countries Abroad, 1867 (13), p.14

In 1874, Jesse Collings, friend and associate of Joseph Chamberlain, visited Berlin and was impressed by the careful training and examining of intending teachers, and his report, included in the Chamberlain Papers, observed: "It is not sufficient that a candidate has knowledge; he must be able to impart it", and to ensure this, a trainee had to spend at least three years being instructed in the art and methods of teaching and then undergo a strict examination into his ability to teach before being allowed to become a master in a school.¹⁴ If Birmingham wished to compete with Berlin, Collings decided, steps must be taken to guarantee the supply of teachers "good in quality and abundant in quantity."¹⁵ In short, such reformers felt that if England were even to approach Germany in educational efficiency, more attention would have to be paid to the professional training of the teaching body in order to ensure a full supply of knowledgeable teachers with the ability to impart that knowledge.¹⁶

14. Miscellaneous Press Cuttings, 1874, Chamberlain MSS. JC 4/2.

15. Ibid.

16. The superiority of training and teaching methods in Germany was a subject which was to continue to attract the attention of English reformers, particularly those who despaired at the seeming inability of the English system to implement the necessary reforms as quickly as was thought necessary. In 1886, Arnold complained that not enough was being done in this direction and glowingly praised the quality of the teaching done in German elementary schools. See his Special Report on Certain Points Connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland and France, 1886 (C.4752), pp.14, 25; and his remarks on teaching to the Cross Commission, e.g. "It is getting better in France than it is here. In Germany and Switzerland it is certainly better." First Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1886 (C.4863), Q.5512, p.197.

Some reformers explained the German achievement in elementary education partly by pointing to the comparative simplicity of the German religious situation. In Germany, Protestantism had been less prone to the dissipatory tendencies which had fragmented the English religious scene, and the existence of the comprehensive Evangelical State Church minimised the sort of difficulties which the English government had to face in its dealing with the several powerful nonconformist denominations. The ensuing comparative absence of religious wrangles in Germany - where it had even been possible to attempt a solution of the Roman Catholic problem through a system of mixed schools (Simultanschulen) in which teachers from both the Evangelical and the Roman Catholic churches taught - was much envied by English reformers.

Matthew Arnold, while conceding that different circumstances prevailed in England, nevertheless, felt that the German approach "though it might be distasteful to certain parties and individuals, would on the whole recommend itself if it could be followed, to the feelings and judgement of the people of this country."¹⁷ Morley envied the German educationalists for not having to contend with "sects enough to need a little dictionary for their enumeration."¹⁸ The German schools, he continued, if they came face to face with the sort of attitudes held by the English sects, "would soon have to lower their standards of secular attainment until they reached our

17. M. Arnold, 'Special Report on Homerton College, 1868', in Board of Education, Report on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold. (London, 1910). p.257.

18. J. Morley, The Struggle for National Education, (London, 1873). p.42.

own miserable level."¹⁹ In similar vein, Jesse Collings wrote to Mundella in 1869 regarding the likely opposition of the sects to the programme of the National Education League, in which he and Chamberlain were involved: "Were we so uniform in our faith as in Germany where I think abt. 95 P. Cent are Lutherans, we should not have this difficulty."²⁰ Yet while many people sympathised with the attempt of the NEL to take religion out of education as far as possible, and to institute truly national and non-sectarian education, it was an attempt that was bound to fail and the religious problem remained to hinder progress in education for many years to come.

The decade of the 1860s was to prove to be of crucial importance in the development of elementary education in England. In that decade, the political argument in favour of extending the State's commitment to the education of the working population was greatly strengthened by the enactment of the Second Reform Act. At the same time, the implications of foreign trade competition were more fully realised. Instruction of 'the labouring poor' now becomes education 'of our masters' and the raising up of a well-educated 'industrial proletariat'. It was a decade, too, which provided evidence that a superior system of elementary education might well reap military benefits. Just as the Prussian victory at Sadowa was referred to as 'the victory of the elementary school master', the Federal triumph in America was ascribed to the efficiency of its elementary education - a reminder that it was not to Germany

19. Ibid., p.43

20. Collings to Mundella, 21 Jan. 1869, Mundella MSS.

alone that Englishmen directed their gaze. And it was certainly the decade in which the claim that England, if she were to prosper, had to act quickly on the lines suggested by German experience came increasingly to be heard.

It will be the purpose of the remainder of this chapter to try to ascertain German influence behind the growth and development of English elementary education in the late nineteenth century. To do this, it will deal with the campaign to get more children into the schools, a campaign which involved the questions of compulsory attendance and free education. It will also examine the efforts to widen and re-shape the curriculum in response to contemporary needs, involving the undermining of the philosophy of the Revised Code. An attempt to assess German influence upon the improvement of English elementary education from 1870 onwards has to proceed carefully, however. It cannot, for example, neglect the reform impetus towards a state-aided national system which was entirely English. After all, as early as 1818, Brougham had begged Parliament to act "to impart that blessing which can alone preserve the virtues of a populous, commercial and luxurious empire."²¹ The growing desire of the English working class for self-improvement; the philanthropic desire to humanise the poor; the growing realisation that social and educational reform was a small price to pay to avoid the political alienation of the industrial masses; and the new awareness of the economic benefits to be gained from a better-educated labour force, all acted upon

21. Hansard, 1st Ser., 38(1818), 590.

government. The response was slow and haphazard, it is true, but nonetheless the interventions of the state since 1833 had prepared much of the ground for later developments.

The Question of Compulsory Attendance.

In 1867 A.J. Mundella warned the Taunton Commission that German success in trade and industry, as indicated at the Paris Exhibition, was due to the superior technical education in that country and to the system of compulsory elementary education: "If we are to maintain our position in the industrial competition, we must oppose to this national organisation one equally effective and complete. If we continue the fight with our present voluntary system we shall be defeated. Generations hence we shall be struggling with ignorance, squalor, pauperism and crime."²² In effect, this was an early plea for what would later be termed 'national efficiency'. In 1869 Mundella received confirmation of the views he had expressed two years earlier. Having conducted an examination of the work of school-children in Loughborough, Stockport, Manchester and Sheffield, he was alarmed by the comparison it made with similar work done by children in Saxony. As a consequence, Mundella became one of Parliament's most fervent spokesmen in admiration of German elementary education (telling the House on one occasion that he had travelled the length and breadth of Germany "and had tried in vain to find an ignorant man or child"²³) and in August 1869 affirmed his support in public for the National Education League's programme of

22. Schools Inquiry Commission: Report Relative to Technical Education, 1867 (3898), p.10.

23. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 200 (1870), 242-4.

compulsory education.²⁴

It was with reference to compulsory attendance in elementary schools that perhaps the German example was cited most frequently and convincingly. It would not be too difficult to argue that it was in this question that the German example exerted its greatest effect upon English development in this period. Reference to the German precedent had been made as early as the 1830s by those advocating the desirability of making elementary education obligatory by law in England. The influential reformer, J.A. Roebuck had spoken of compulsion as "pure and exalted benevolence"²⁵ and had pointed out that the German states provided a worthwhile model because: "In Prussia and in Saxony a more complete system of public instruction is now in operation than has ever yet had place in any nation of the world."²⁶ In similar vein, Lord Brougham had claimed that England's continental neighbours "whom we habitually look down upon, provide a system of learning far better deserving the name", and had urged his countrymen to take a lesson from the good and regular schooling achieved by compulsion in Prussia and elsewhere.²⁷

Compulsion was well-nigh universal in Germany, although the mode of enforcement, the age of entry and the prescribed length of attendance might vary from one state to another. In Bavaria, for example, a child was subject to compulsion from his sixth birthday, while in Württemberg compulsion did not begin to operate until the age of seven.

24. W.H.G. Armytage, A.J. Mundella: The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (London, 1951), pp.73-6.

25. Hansard, 3rd. Ser., 20 (1833), 155.

26. Ibid., 20 (1833), 147.

27. Ibid., 27 (1835), 1320.



The normal length of obligatory attendance was eight years, but in parts of Prussia it was nine years and in Saxe-Coburg in 1858 it had been reduced to seven.²⁸ Defaulting parents were likely to receive severe reprimands, and if they persistently failed to send their children to school, became liable to stiff fines and even to imprisonment. Mark Pattison, assistant commissioner to the Newcastle Commission, reported that "Compulsory attendance is the corner stone of the system of primary education throughout Germany,"²⁹ and that in Prussia, in particular, it was "well and uniformly carried into effect" in spite of some evidence of irregular attendance by the poorest children of Berlin.³⁰ The statistics which Pattison presented certainly testified to the efficacy of the Prussian code:³¹

Total number of children of elementary school age	2,943,251
Number entered in the books of public elementary schools	2,758,472
Number entered in the books of licensed private elementary schools	70,220
The vast majority of the remainder (114,559) were either under private instruction at home, were the children of migrant families, or were incapable of attending school.	

28. Report of the Education Commission, 1861, Vol.IV, pp.192-3.

29. Ibid., p.192

30. Ibid., p.197

31. Ibid., p.197-8

This virtually complete acquiescence in compulsory attendance Pattison explained by a national sympathy for education in Germany. Thus he reported that the law was rarely invoked and irregular attendance was uncommon because "the school has taken so deep a root in the social habit of the German people."³²

The Newcastle Commission, itself, acknowledged that the movement aimed at compulsion owed most to the Prussian model. It observed that, in connection with the establishment of a compulsory system of education, the country "most commonly referred to is Prussia."³³

Already then, the systems of compulsory attendance operating in the various German states had attracted the attention of English reformers. As the decade of the 1860s drew to a close and provided increasing evidence of German military and growing economic efficiency, and as the expectancy of a major piece of educational legislation in England increased, German compulsory education came under even closer scrutiny and won further admirers. Recalling his 1865 visit to Germany, Arnold expressed the view that the Prussian educational system owed its superiority very largely to the practice of compulsion. As he put it: "Where popular education is most prosperous, there it is also compulsory After seeing the schools of North Germany and of German Switzerland, I am strongly of this opinion."³⁴

Mundella told the Commons that whereas in Germany the term 'education' signified that the child had probably been at school from six to

32. Ibid., p.200

33. Ibid., Vol.1, p.192

34. M. Arnold, Higher Schools and Universities in Germany (London, 1882 edn.), p.xi.

fourteen years of age, "some persons in this country seemed to imagine that it was sufficient for the child's name to have once appeared on the school books for its education to be completed."³⁵

The correspondence of Joseph Chamberlain, vice-chairman of the National Education League, reveals that he, too, was an interested admirer of German compulsory education. Writing to his friend Alfred Field, a merchant and an active member of the N.E.L., Chamberlain observed that the laws operating in Prussia were "what we understand by Compulsory Education in England." The issue of compulsory attendance was, he went on, "the great question of national education."³⁶

It would be unwise, however, to regard the legislation which brought a system of compulsory attendance to English elementary schools as springing entirely from the German example. For a start, we should not ignore the natural progress towards improvement which would have produced change regardless of foreign developments. The possibility of establishing a national system of popular education, incorporating some degree of compulsion, had been the subject of intermittent debate for several decades. There were, after all, sound educational reasons for reducing the incidence of irregular and inadequate attendance. Too many parents failed to appreciate that regular attendance at school was the best guarantee of success. This made it necessary for the state to transform the moral duty of parents, to see to the education of their children, into a legal obligation.

35. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 199(1870), 477.

36. Chamberlain to Field, 2 March 1867, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/2/12. Replied Field: "I am very strongly inclined to think we ought to adopt a compulsory system in England...with free schools", Field to Chamberlain, 29 March 1867, ibid., JC 6/3/2/15.

The intensification of this debate in the 1860s certainly owed something to revelations of German economic and military advance; but it owed at least as much to a reaction against government slowness to act in spite of decades of prompting. In 1864 the Manchester Education Aid Society was formed to assist poor parents in paying their school fees. Similar societies sprang up in Birmingham, Nottingham and Liverpool, and their agitations had a great influence upon W.E. Forster who was to be responsible for the 1870 Act.³⁷ Forster was also influenced by the radical Birmingham Education Society and its offspring, the National Education League. In both organisations the names of George Dixon, Joseph Chamberlain and Jesse Collings were prominent; and the programme was the same: free, compulsory education on unsectarian lines.³⁸ The N.E.L., in particular, did good work in educating public opinion and in persuading men of progressive ideas to work under its standard. Thus, Mundella was enlisted into the N.E.L. by Jesse Collings and W.E. Forster.

37. Forster, well-known for his progressive views on social and economic questions, ordered a statistical survey of the conditions of education in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. Its results convinced him of the urgent need for reform. He warned the House that if the English working population were left any longer "utterly uneducated" and unskilled "they will become overmatched in the competition of the world." Hansard, 3rd Ser., 199 (1870), 465.

38. In its first year of activity the Birmingham Education Society had paid the school fees of 6,000 poor children but had found that only one-third of them were still attending at the end of the year; E.E. Gulley, Joseph Chamberlain and English Social Politics, (New York, 1926), p.112. Chamberlain supplied much of the driving force behind both organisations and called upon the state to "admit the obligation on her part to teach those who are born to serve her"; J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol.1 (London, 1932), p.98.

Already convinced of the necessity for compulsion he responded to a request of Collings in October 1869 that he come to Birmingham to attend a meeting of the League. Collings outlined the aims of the League and expressed the hope that Mundella would see his way clear "to support a platform of this radical kind."³⁹ Forster, too, urged Mundella to attend the Birmingham meeting and assist in the work of rousing public opinion.⁴⁰ Although in disagreement with Collings and Chamberlain about the practicability of the related issue of free education, Mundella nevertheless became a staunch supporter of the rest of the programme of the League, and set himself the task of trying to achieve compulsory education from the age of five to thirteen years.⁴¹ While it is certainly true that men like Chamberlain, Collings and Mundella were greatly influenced by the example of German ideas and practice, it is equally true that they form part of the native reform movement. Without Germany, there would still have been a National Education League. Without Germany, Joseph Chamberlain would still have first risen to prominence as an advocate of educational reform.

Further, it must not be imagined that German-style ideas of compulsory education were accepted unquestioningly by the whole of English opinion. As with many other reform matters, there was significant resistance to anything German, and some people in the 1860s, and after, could imagine nothing so 'un-English' as compulsory attendance at school. Mundella was, therefore, showing extreme

39. Collings to Mundella, 30 October 1869, Mundella MSS.

40. Mundella to R. Leader 7 November 1869. Ibid.

41. Mundella to Swire Smith. 10 May 1872, Ibid.

naïveté in 1870 when he proclaimed that the country was entirely in favour of compulsory education because it saw "how the system worked in Germany".⁴² Certainly, compulsion worked well in Germany, but that was no passport to immediate implementation in England; nor was it necessarily indicative of widespread support for education in Germany. The Newcastle commission thought not. It said that compulsion worked in Prussia because its people were accustomed to a tradition of strict paternal government.⁴³ It, therefore, advised against the adoption of a measure "which would entail so much difficulty and danger, and give so great a shock to our educational and social system."⁴⁴

The Newcastle commission was not alone in seeing compulsory attendance as the thin end of the wedge of state interference and Prussian-style paternalism which, if succumbed to, would destroy those qualities of innovation and individualism which characterised the English people. It was not difficult in laissez-faire England to argue that compulsion was unsuited to English conditions; would require an unjustifiable intrusion of state authority into the relations between parent and child; and would represent a dangerous interference with the rights and authority of parents. Thus, John Flint (registrar to the Newcastle commission) expressed his thanks that the English had not resorted to compulsion in the style of Prussia or to the "intervention of the police to hunt out absentees."⁴⁵

42. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 200(1870), 238.

43. Report of the Education Commission, 1861, vol.I, p.300.

44. Ibid., p.200.

45. The Times, 23 April 1867, p.12.

Lord John Manners proclaimed to the London and Westminster Working Men's Constitutional Association that in Prussia "education may be said to take place, not at the point of the birch, but of the bayonet."⁴⁶ Similarly, not all of Chamberlain's correspondents supported the principle of compulsion. C.F. Adams, a leading member of the N.E.L. and author of History of the Elementary School Contest in England (London, 1882), in reply to a letter from Chamberlain requesting information on obligatory attendance,⁴⁷ expressed doubt "whether any plan of compulsion would avail, short of depriving the parents of the natural right to take care of their progeny."⁴⁸ Dr. Temple, headmaster of Rugby, felt that compulsion would involve too much interference in the relations of parent and off-spring. He told Chamberlain that while "Birmingham may be right in aiming at once at a compulsory law if I were a legislator I should call upon any Town to make a very clear case before I would consent and interfere between Parent and Child in such a matter as this."⁴⁹ In a further letter Temple argued that compulsion was not suited to the English temperament and expressed doubt "that Bureaucratic Prussia will easily be imitated in England I think a compulsory system a mistake."⁵⁰

Though the tide was gradually beginning to run in their favour, the advocates of compulsion were, therefore, generally not over-

46. Ibid., 12 November 1867, p.12.

47. Chamberlain to Adams, 15 February 1867, Chamberlain MSS., JC 6/3/2/2.

48. Adams to Chamberlain, 18 February 1867, Ibid., JC 6/3/2/4.

49. Temple to Chamberlain, 20 February 1867, Ibid., JC 6/3/2/6.

50. Temple to Chamberlain, 25 February 1867, Ibid., JC 6/3/2/11.

optimistic because they felt that public opinion might balk at the idea. Arnold considered that compulsion might not work properly until the stage was reached when "instruction is valued in this country as it is in Germany."⁵¹ Lyon Playfair told the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction that while compulsion would be beneficial to England he doubted whether "You have a public opinion ripe enough to force the children into school."⁵²

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Act of 1870 did not establish true compulsory education, but did no more than allow the new school boards to compel the attendance of children between five and thirteen years of age if the boards so wished. Furthermore, it did not repeal that legislation which allowed children to be employed at eleven years and exempt from school attendance at ten. Nor did the Act establish either free education or the non-sectarian education demanded by the N.E.L. For these reasons Chamberlain attacked the compromise nature of the government bill and the N.E.L. opposed it strenuously.⁵³ Chamberlain rapidly made a name for himself with passionate speeches attempting to force the government to reconsider its legislation in at least two respects: to delete the clause which permitted the financing of sectarian schools out of the rates, and to abandon the whole principle of permissive

51. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1867', in Board of Education, Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold (London, 1910), p.117.

52. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), Q.1,089, p.63.

53. J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol.I (London, 1932), pp.109-119. Mundella also attacked the bill and urged its supporters to go to Germany and see the value of compulsion, pointing out that "many of the things which are un-English today become English tomorrow." Hansard, 3rd Ser., 202 (1870), 1730.

compulsion. But he was doomed to failure and the legislation of 1870 survived his attack.

Chamberlain's passion over this question of elementary education was, in any case it seems, subsiding. A radical programme of social reform to deal with the 'condition of the people' question was taking shape in his mind and education had to make way for it. Even before the dissolution of 1874 he had confessed to Morley that popular apathy towards education had somewhat disheartened him. Education, he wrote, "has failed to evoke any great popular enthusiasm. Education for the Ignorant cannot have the meaning that belonged to Bread for the Starving."⁵⁴ Yet the significance of Chamberlain's educational work in this period remains. In many ways it represents the best example of the way in which the German example acted upon domestic reforms in England in this period. Here we have Chamberlain enriching the long-standing native reform movement with ideas drawn not only from Germany but from other countries as well.⁵⁵ Here we find a tendency for Chamberlain to attach the greatest importance to the suggestions offered by the example of Germany before committing himself and the N.E.L.

54. Chamberlain to Morley, 19 August 1873, cited in Garvin, vol. I, op. cit., p.146.

55. In connection with compulsory education, Chamberlain once spoke of "the evidence we receive from other countries", cited in E.E. Gullett, Joseph Chamberlain and English Social Politics (New York, 1926), p. 133. In 1867 he sent Alfred Field a copy of a report on Truancy and Compulsory Education in Boston by a J.D. Philbrick, and also referred to practice in Switzerland, Chamberlain to Field, 2 March 1867, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/2/12. Garvin tells us that Chamberlain was "seeking right and left to amass information", Garvin, vol. I, op. cit., p.90.

to a programme which included much of what was then accepted practice in many German states.⁵⁶ Here we are aware of a strong body of opinion determined to resist such encroachment of Prussian-style intervention and paternalism. Here we see, therefore, a government obliged to modify German practice to suit English conditions and to make the act of 1870 only the first of several gradual stages towards a complete system of compulsory education. It was in ways such as this that the German example made its contribution to English domestic reform legislation in the forty years after 1868.

The question of compulsory attendance continued to attract the efforts of men determined to use the act of 1870 as a foundation of much greater things. Not least of these men was Jesse Collings, Chamberlain's close friend and fellow-worker in the N.E.L. In 1874 Collings visited Berlin and brought back to England a report on Prussian elementary education which is included in the Chamberlain papers. He reported that compulsion worked most effectively and resulted in all children being brought under regular and competent instruction. He recommended that compulsory attendance be enforced throughout the city of Birmingham as quickly as new schools were provided. What particularly struck Collings was the fact that the Prussian system tended to be compulsory in name only. Like other reformers, he had made the discovery that

56. Through Russell Martineau, Chamberlain was referred to the German schools by Matthew Arnold. In his letter to Martineau, Arnold advised close study of Pattison's report on German education for the Newcastle Commission and suggested that the American schools were less interesting than the Prussian; Arnold to Martineau, 21 June 1867, Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/2/1.

Prussian parents were so aware of the value of education "that very little difficulty exists, and the exercise of the powers of compulsion is not often necessary."⁵⁷ Similarly, in 1877, Swire Smith observed that while strict supervision of attendance and harsh penalties against defaulters existed in German legislation, neither was really necessary because education was so popular there that "the people themselves having experienced its advantages are its advocates, and an evasion of the law is never attempted."⁵⁸

The next step towards a comprehensive system of compulsion was taken in 1876 with Lord Sandon's Elementary Education Act. Having created the foundations for further reform in the shape of Forster's Act, it was, of course, inevitable that later governments would move further along the path of compulsion. Very largely, the Act of 1876 was the result of domestic pressures: the continuing campaign of the N.E.L.; the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Working of the Factory Acts; and the realisation that schools in areas where no form of compulsion was practised were receiving smaller government grants than schools where by-laws enforced compulsion because their irregularly-attending children performed less well before H.M.I.s. But the awareness of the efficiency of compulsion, as practised in other countries, notably Germany, seems to have made some contribution to the Act of 1876. During its passage, reference was frequently made to these foreign precedents.

57. Miscellaneous Press Cuttings, 1874, Ibid., JC 4/2.

58. Sir Swire Smith, Educational Comparisons, or, Remarks on Industrial Schools in England, Germany and Switzerland, (London, 1877 edn.), p.46.

Mundella spoke of the "great sacrifices" of the Germans and Swiss in making compulsion universal.⁵⁹ J. Cowen considered it disgraceful that England should lag behind Saxony and Switzerland in these matters.⁶⁰ The Act of 1876 established school attendance committees in districts without school boards; required children between the ages of ten and fourteen years to attend school at least half-time; and provided that no child could be employed under the age of thirteen years unless it had met certain conditions as to length of attendance at school, or be employed at all under the age of ten years. Attempts by Mundella and Dixon to secure effective compulsion failed because opinion still shrank from the idea. Thus, the Commons defeated Mundella's motion aimed at direct compulsion, by which the school boards and attendance committees would have been given no option but to enforce compulsion. In fact, the indirect compulsion of the 1876 legislation was a compromise between Prussian-style compulsion and English individualism. Viscount Sandon, its promoter, called it "a measure which was consistent with the freedom of Englishmen, and with the freedom of individuals, out which, while consulting that freedom, would show no mercy to the wrong-doer who injured his child by depriving him of the education to which he was entitled."⁶¹

Mundella's day was to come, however. In 1880 Gladstone chose him to be the new Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. Almost inevitably, his first major achievement in this capacity was the Elementary Education Act of 1880 which ended the

59. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 228 (1876), 1273.

60. Ibid., 231 (1876), 581.

61. Ibid., 230 (1876), 95.

farce of permissive compulsion. Mundella's Act required all school boards and attendance committees to adopt bye-laws enforcing attendance at school on all children between the ages of five and ten years. Children between the ages of ten and thirteen years were to be employed only if they possessed a certificate stating that they had reached some specified standard of attainment fixed by local bye-law. While his act gave Mundella much satisfaction, he was only too aware that England still lagged far behind the German states in the matter of compulsory attendance, and he was determined to improve on it. In a speech at Huddersfield in December 1880 he praised the systems then "in operation in Germany and Switzerland, and said he hoped that they were going to do something like that in England."⁶² In 1883, while visiting Chamberlain in Birmingham, he claimed that : "If England had adopted compulsory education when Prussia, Switzerland, and Saxony did, what an England it would have been today."⁶³

The question of compulsory attendance and the obvious need to extend its scope in England continued to demand the attention of reformers and official inquiries. In 1884 the main report of the Samuelson Commission appeared and it made the significant point that the experience of the laws operating in Germany and Switzerland, which kept children at school until they were fourteen years of age, taught that the success both of technical and elementary education "depends upon the regular attendance of the children at school, and upon their remaining there sufficiently long to ensure that the knowledge acquired shall leave some lasting impression on their

62. The Times, 2 December 1880, p.10.

63. Ibid., 10 January 1883, p.6.

minds."⁶⁴ The commission recommended, in consequence, that Scottish legislation, which prescribed that children under the age of fourteen could not be employed full-time unless they had passed the Fifth Standard, should be extended to England and Wales.⁶⁵

At this time Matthew Arnold made a further contribution to the continuing debate on compulsory education. He had been commissioned by the Education Department to return to the continent and investigate certain points connected with elementary education. The prospect had delighted him because, as he wrote to his son on 19th October 1885, "on one of these official tours one has the opportunity of learning so much."⁶⁶ The visit confirmed what he had long felt about the continental schools, and about the German schools in particular. He wrote to his wife from Dresden in December 1885: "The schools here are so good that I am never tired of seeing them."⁶⁷ To a C.J. Leaf he wrote a week later: "what I have seen is most interesting and instructive, and the German schools deserve all the praise given to them."⁶⁸ He reported that compulsion was, as the reformers had long said, working effectively in Germany and that it was supported by the whole population to a far greater extent than in France. As he put it: "the children have the habit of coming to school as a

64. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884
Vol. I, p. 524.

65. Ibid., p. 537.

66. Cited in G.W.E. Russell (ed.), Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888, Vol. II (London, 1895), p. 286.

67. Ibid., p. 308.

68. Ibid., p. 310.

matter of course, and the parents have the habit of acquiescing, as a matter of course, in their children's going. This is the great matter."⁶⁹

In the same year that Arnold was assigned to Europe there had been appointed a royal commission on elementary education under the chairmanship of Lord Cross, which inevitably, had much to say on the subject of compulsory attendance. It noted considerable improvement since 1860 in such criteria of an educational system's efficacy as the proportion of pupils to total population, the number of schools and the number of pupils, and the regularity of attendance, and it explained these improvements in terms of a greater realisation among parents of the benefits of education and the gradual way in which the compulsory principle had been extended. The commission, however, still noticed a disturbing tendency for parents to remove children from school as soon as they had passed the exemption standard and recommended, in consequence, the replacement of the exemption standard based on achievement by one based on age, advocating that the minimum age for total exemption be raised from 10 to 13 years.⁷¹ In justification of such a change the commission set much store by the foreign statistics which it had collected by the circularisation of British diplomatic missions. The very detailed information which resulted was included in the final report and it showed, for instance, that in the German states compulsion

69. Special Report on Certain Points Connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland, and France, 1886 (C.4752), p.22.

70. Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888 (C.5485), pp.45-6, 104, 212.

71. Ibid., p.109.

was enforced right through a child's school career up to the age of 13 in Bavaria, 14 in Prussia and even 15 in Saxony.⁷² The recommendation to raise the age of total exemption in England to 13 years was, therefore, a moderate proposal when set beside the regulations imposed in the German states. However, in the context of existing English practice, it was drastic and injured so many susceptibilities and alarmed so many vested interests that it did not have a serious chance of immediate acceptance. It was the English way, as always, to progress by stages.

To ensure that progress, gradual though it might be, did take place the reformers were always on hand to prompt governments and people to action. To a very large extent, of course, developments after 1870 were an evolutionary process of inevitable change and a continuation of a purely indigenous reform movement. But, in addition, running like a thread through these developments we find continuous reference to the German example by many reformers. Thus Samuel Smith, on returning from a visit to Germany, repeated the time-worn formula which contrasted German prowess with English shortcomings. In Germany, he claimed, "the average attendance of those on the school books was 97 and 98 per cent, whereas our average attendance in England is about 76 per cent. In one school I found 99 per cent of the children in actual attendance. This seems to us almost a miracle."⁷³ By their persistent pressure

72. Ibid., pp.440-442.

73. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 333(1889), 1842-3. Smith also admired the greater length of the elementary school course in Germany: "It is hardly too much to say that the two years' additional training the German child receives...doubles its chance in life as compared with the English child", The Times, 10 October 1887, p.13.

the reformers, whether German-inspired or not, ensured that a system of comprehensive compulsion was erected upon the foundations already laid by legislation passed since 1870. In 1893 the Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act raised the minimum age at which children could be exempted from 10 to 11 years. In 1899 an amending act further raised this minimum exemption age to 12 years and allowed local bye-laws to set it at 13 years. Finally, in 1900 an Elementary Education Act empowered school boards and school attendance committees to raise the age of exemption by the enactment of bye-laws from 13 to 14 years; raised the standards of attendance required of children over 12 years for whom exemption was claimed; and increased the fines for defaulting parents.

Thus by 1900 England had something approaching the comprehensive system of compulsory attendance which had long existed in Germany. Attendance at school was obligatory for all children of 12 years and under, no exceptions being admitted. The age up to which the school boards and attendance committees could compel attendance stood at 14 years; and all children claiming exemption were required to have had an extremely good record of attendance. Considering the strong opposition to the very notion of compulsion which had been quite widespread thirty years before, this was a remarkable achievement. Progress had been largely due to the pressure of reformers who argued that England could not hope to maintain her industrial and commercial supremacy unless she compelled the attendance at school of those who were to be her future workers. Many of these reformers substantiated

their argument with the contention that her chief European rival - Imperial Germany - was, by its insistence on obligatory attendance, guaranteed a generally better-educated and more highly-skilled working class.

Free Education.

As with compulsory attendance, free education was seen by many in the 1860s to be absolutely contradictory to the principles of laissez-faire and a denial of English individualism which expressed itself in the right of parents to be able to pay for their children's education if they so wished. The Newcastle Commission had felt confident that free schooling would be rejected by the majority of parents who, in its view, would refuse to become dependent on a state dole.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the National Education League saw free education as the natural corollary to compulsory education. The League argued that if the state were going to compel attendance then it was obliged to provide for the education offered out of the financial resources at its disposal. Compulsion would gradually bring into the schools the children of the so-called 'submerged tenth' of very poor. Such parents, the League argued, were bound to have difficulty in finding threepence a week, the average fee, or even a penny a week, the lowest fee, for each of their children. Were those children to be turned out of school again?

The Act of 1870 had empowered school boards to open a free school in their area and to pay the fees of poor children at a school of the parents' choice. There was no mechanism, however, for action in

74. Report of the Education Commission, 1861, vol.I, p.188.

districts without boards. In 1876 these powers were transferred to the board of Guardians but this hardly improved matters since many Boards of Guardians tended to look upon applications for aid with fees as applications for poor relief. The number of children helped dropped. Meanwhile, many Anglican schools deliberately pitched their fees high in order to drive the poor payers into the board schools. These latter schools, faced with a disproportionate number of poor payers, fell back on wholesale remission of fees - a kind of de facto free education, which created problems for the poorer boards. The whole question was in need of regularisation by the mid-1880s.

It might be argued that the influence of the German example was not so pronounced in this as in other aspects of educational development. There was only a limited amount of free education in Germany, and reference was more often made to America and Switzerland.⁷⁵ More importantly, the educational shortcomings of the existing provision outlined above, formed the most compelling argument for change, and they were entirely indigenous. However, the German example did have a contribution to make to the debate on free education right up to the moment when English legislation was introduced in 1891. Those who defended the status quo, that is, the payment of fees, often referred to the more usual German practice of exacting a fee for elementary education. Of these traditionalists, Matthew Arnold was a good example. Those who, on the other hand, like Joseph Chamberlain, advocated free education, often backed up their arguments,

75. See, for example, 'Free Education', Westminster Review, Vol. CXXVIII (September 1887), pp. 733-740.

by direct reference to the free schooling existing in such German cities as Berlin, Munich, Cologne and Nuremburg as well as to the free systems of America and Switzerland.⁷⁶ They felt that the institution of free education would enable England to close the educational gap between herself and Germany.

Most of this section on free education will be devoted to an attempt to assess the manner and extent of the German influence upon three men - Arnold, Chamberlain and Mundella - and the contribution it made, through them, to English legislation. What makes these men particularly interesting is that while Arnold and Chamberlain each represented diametrically opposed viewpoints on this question, Mundella, who was an associate of both, swung from one to the other. At first a believer in the validity of Arnold's thesis, he was finally converted by Chamberlain's powerful argument and persuasive prompting. This approach has its dangers. We must guard against giving these men, and through them, the German example, an exaggerated importance in the passing of subsequent legislation. We must not assume that these men were representative of the whole of English reforming opinion. We must not forget that Chamberlain, pragmatist that he was, saw free education very largely as a political question. We must forget neither the domestic pressures for reform which owed little to foreign precedents. Nevertheless, proceeding with these reservations in mind, these men emerge as interesting examples of the working of German ideas on English thinking; and no one can deny their

76. Collings returned from a tour of these German cities in 1874 and reported that "only on the basis of the 'free' can compulsion be carried out, and a truly national system be economically and effectually worked." Miscellaneous Press Cuttings, 1874, Chamberlain MSS. JC 4/2.

central role in English educational reform in this period.

Arnold believed that the fee performed a useful function in elementary education, giving to parents a sense of pride and independence as well as serving the utilitarian purpose of contributing to funds for more and better equipment. He saw, however, that the fee must not be so high as to act as a deterrent to popular education. The Prussian precedent was just right: "The Prussian plan ... of exacting a small school fee seems to me preferable, but it should be a small one."⁷⁷ Arnold continued to substantiate his criticisms of free education by reference to the Prussian example. In 1869 he wrote: "As to gratuitous schooling, which is supposed to follow necessarily upon compulsory schooling, I will only remark that in Prussia, where schooling is compulsory, and really compulsory, there is no primary school which does not levy a school fee, though a low one."⁷⁸ In 1882 he repeated his hope that school boards would continue to charge a fee.⁷⁹ Arnold's special mission to the continent in 1885-6, during which he studied the free systems of France and Switzerland and those in being in some German cities, did nothing to alter his opinion. He announced his intended visit to the continent to Mundella who, unknown to him, was on the point of announcing his conversion to Chamberlain's position.⁸⁰ Following Mundella's announcement in his

77. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1867', in Board of Education, Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold (London, 1910), p.118.

78. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1869', *ibid.*, pp.138-9. (In 1870, however, free education was introduced into schools in Berlin.)

79. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1882', *Ibid.*, p.221.

80. M. Arnold to Mundella, 14 October 1885, Mundella MSS.

speech at Sheffield Arnold wrote to his old ally's daughter to arrange a meeting: "The Governmt. are sending me to enquire as to schools and free schooling at present in Germany, Switzerland and France - and there is no one with whom I so much wish to communicate before setting out as your father."⁸¹ Mundella obviously contacted Arnold, for there exists in the Mundella collection a letter of reply from Arnold in which his viewpoint is emphatically stated: "At the present time I am against the abolition of School fees in our Country."⁸²

When Arnold arrived in Germany, he found in progress a debate on the pros and cons of free education which closely paralleled that taking place in England. He wrote to Miss Mundella in

December 1885 from Germany that this argument, together "with the great excellence of the schools, makes it so interesting to be there on an errand like mine."⁸³ He saw and heard nothing, however, which caused him to reconsider, and in his subsequent report, where he described the limited free education existing in Germany and the free systems of France and Switzerland, he repeated that the fee ought to retain its place in English elementary education.⁸⁴ But the traditionalist view represented by Arnold was one which had come under severe attack and after only five more years it was to be decisively defeated.

81. Arnold to Miss Mundella, 2 November 1885, Mundella MSS.

82. Arnold to Miss Mundella, 6 November 1885, Mundella MSS.

83. Cited in G.W.E. Russell (ed.), Letters to Matthew Arnold 1848-1888, Vol.II, p.313.

84. Special Report on Certain Points Connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland and France, 1886 (C.4752), pp.5ff.

In stark contrast to Arnold's contention that the fee played a useful role in elementary education was Chamberlain's view that the abolition of the fee was both just and necessary. Free education was the rightful corollary to compulsory attendance and it had to be introduced if England were to make any substantial progress in educating the mass of its population. Chamberlain believed that the abolition of the fee would help greatly in promoting regular attendance and was essential if the poor were to be given a fair chance. Free schooling had, of course, formed a major part of the platform of the National Education League. In January 1877 Chamberlain recalled the campaigns and slogans of the N.E.L. and repeated that free schools were a necessary consequence of compulsion: "Free schools may exist without compulsion, but compulsion must ultimately be followed by free schools."⁸⁵ He later declared: "I claim the freedom of the schools as a great aid to the spread of education, and as a just concession to the necessities of the poor. The fee is a great bar to the regularity of attendance. It accounts for the greater part of the waste in our educational system the great majority of the empty seats in our schools."⁸⁶ Arguing that parents who had been obliged to relinquish the earnings of their children for the national good were entitled to be given gratuitous schooling, he repeated that free schools would regularise attendance and substantiated his remarks by reference to the American precedent.⁸⁷

85. J. Chamberlain, 'Free Schools', Fortnightly Review, Vol. XXI, (January 1877), p.56.

86. Cited in 'Free Education', Westminster Review, Vol. CXXVIII, (September 1887), p.746.

87. Ibid., p.58

The evolution of Mundella's attitude towards free schooling is interesting. Having for twenty years or so shared Arnold's view that it was neither a necessary nor a wise reform, he underwent a rapid change of mind in a space of weeks during 1885. In the late 1860s Mundella had been unable to accept that part of the programme of the N.E.L. which demanded free schools, in spite of the promptings of Collings who wrote to him in January 1869 saying: "It is a satisfaction to know that many of our most earnest men who objected to free educn. have after consideration seen that a national compulsory rate supported system is impossible without it. You cannot ask a man (take a working man) to pay rates for schools & to pay his children's fees as well."⁸⁸ In a further letter some months later Collings invited Mundella to speak at Birmingham on behalf of the N.E.L. and urged him to accept the League's programme in toto.⁸⁹ Mundella went to Birmingham, but with reservations. He wrote to his good friend Robert Leader: "I had doubts about going to Birmghm. as I did not agree with their programme altogether. Free Educn. is a mistake."⁹⁰ Mundella maintained his opposition to free schools for many years. He felt that it was a reform which would eventually come to pass but which, for the present, faced too many difficulties, not least of which was the state of public opinion. He wrote to Leader in 1876: "I agree ... free schools will come but the country

88. Collings to Mundella, 21 January 1869, Mundella MSS.

89. Collings to Mundella, 30 October 1869, Ibid.

90. Mundella to Leader, 7 November 1869, Ibid.

is not yet ready for them.⁹¹ He feared that to introduce free schooling would be to provoke a damaging reaction against education as a whole. As he told Leader: "I am not going ... to be carried away with the cry of Free Education etc. Free Education means a pressure upon the Rates which would make education a horror and a bugbear to the Philistines of the present generation, and education would be everywhere arrested and starved, instead of going on with the full force of public opinion behind it."⁹²

With Mundella as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, an appointment he received in 1880, the 'old firm' of Collings and Chamberlain became even more eager to recruit him to their cause. Collings, the optimist, believed that Mundella really believed in free education and that it would take only a little push to make him declare himself and dissociate himself from the conservative views of his chief, the Lord President, Earl Spencer. Collings wrote to Leader in July 1880: "Mundella will want support also on educn. matters. He must be mildly found fault with ... for not going far enough. He has a difficult job to deal with Earl Spencer & the lot whose social & political opinion are not friendly to real educn. being given to the people."⁹³ Chamberlain chose to be more direct. Thanking Mundella for coming to speak at Birmingham on education he warned him: "Free schools are coming - it is only a question of time. The opposition is from the same quarters as the

91. Mundella to Leader, 17 April 1876, Ibid.

92. Mundella to Leader, 10 December 1882, Ibid.

93. Collings to Leader, 27 July 1880, Ibid.

opposition to compulsion 15 years ago."⁹⁴ Mundella, however, was sure that Chamberlain had under-estimated the difficulty of the issue;⁹⁵ and he felt that the demands for free education, in conjunction with other radical proposals, were doing harm to the party and the nation as a whole. Thus he deemed the programme which Chamberlain was formulating at this time: "a crusade of classes, which will divide and weaken us."⁹⁶ As Vice-President, Mundella was also embarrassed by Chamberlain's demands for free schools. Soon after his appointment in 1880 Gladstone had written to him, asking him to make certain that all money voted for educational purposes was absolutely necessary and requesting that he make "vigilant enquiry, not only into augmentation, but into wasteful charges also."⁹⁷ Mundella was thus caught in political cross-fire and found it difficult to reconcile Treasury parsimony with Chamberlain's demands. He wrote to Leader in 1885: "I enclose a note from Chamberlain. While he is urging me to go in for Free Schools, the Treasury is demanding the reduction of my Estimates !! Mine is a difficult dish to carry even." He went on to repeat some of the chief objections to free education: "The Ratepayers are not willing to bear heavier burdens. The Taxpayers will have enough to bear, what with declining revenue, increased expenditure, and foreign complications."⁹⁸

94. Chamberlain to Mundella, 21 January 1882, Ibid.

95. Mundella to Leader, 23 January 1883, Ibid.

96. Mundella to Leader, 4 February 1885, Ibid.

97. Cited in W.H.G. Armytage, A.J. Mundella: The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (London, 1951), p.199.

98. Mundella to Leader, 21 January 1885, Mundella MSS.

Thus, as late as the spring of 1885, Mundella remained convinced that the fee must continue to be a feature of English elementary education for the time being. He had decided that public opinion and the shortage of money made consideration of its abolition impracticable. He was aware, also, of the social difficulties to be overcome. In a speech at Folkestone in January 1885 he spoke of the need to ensure, in any scheme of free education, that the same privileges were given to all and that the system did not become a means of taxing the wealthy to pay for the education of the poor.⁹⁹ Mundella's opposition to free education, therefore, was far from being a doctrinaire opposition. It was based on careful consideration of the facts and the obstacles to be overcome, and was, therefore, always likely to be abandoned should circumstances change, especially in view of the persistent campaign of persuasion conducted by Chamberlain. What finally led to a change of heart by Mundella in the autumn of 1885 is difficult to ascertain, but it was probably a combination of two factors: his visit to Germany in the summer, and the hope of political advantage which Chamberlain saw in the educational issue.

During his visit to Germany in the summer of 1885 Mundella undertook a study of the limited system of free education which existed in the major cities. He can only have been impressed with the exceptionally high average attendance which, for instance, the Berlin schools could boast. He saw, also, that German

99. The Times, 8 January 1885, p.7.

education was seeking to improve on its already impressive achievements. Having warned his countrymen often of the commercial and industrial implications of German educational progress, he could not, as a businessman, have failed to believe that his warnings were more valid than ever before. His German visit, in short, put Mundella in a favourable frame of mind for a serious reconsideration of free education and what it might mean for an England urgently in need of some stimulus in its struggle to close the educational gap between itself and Germany. When the pragmatic and astute Chamberlain referred Mundella to the possible political benefits which would accrue to a radical Liberal Party promising free schools, he took the plunge.

Soon after Mundella's return from Germany, Chamberlain wrote to him claiming that the working classes were determined to have free schools and warning him that "the tide sets too strongly to be resisted & I want to have you with us."¹⁰⁰ A week later Chamberlain pressed home the argument by promising Mundella that they would "sweep the country with free education and allotments, and the Tories will be smashed and the Whigs extinguished", and inviting him to Birmingham to discuss the matter.¹⁰¹ Mundella accepted and at the meeting finally gave way. He wrote to his confidant Robert Leader: "Some of my late colleagues (Chamberlain amongst the number) have been worrying my life out about the Education question I have been to Birmgm. and had it out

100. Chamberlain to Mundella, 30 September 1885, Mundella MSS.

101. Chamberlain to Mundella, 7 October 1885, Ibid.

with Chamberlain. I am quite satisfied we must go to Free Schools ..."¹⁰² A week later Mundella made public his conversion in a speech at Sheffield in which he disposed of the objections to free schools with the zeal of a convert. Making significant reference to his knowledge of continental education, he claimed that the abolition of the fee would get rid of the greatest "bane of progress" in elementary education - irregularity of attendance - and could only lead to a more efficient system of education.¹⁰³ Chamberlain was, of course, with one small reservation, delighted; "I have read your most excellent speech in the Sheffield Independent with great pleasure. Those d_____d London papers have not given a single decent report."¹⁰⁴

In the space of a few weeks Mundella's antipathy towards free education had been transformed into complete acceptance of it. Much was obviously due to the persuasive powers of Chamberlain. But the revolution in Mundella's thinking was also without much doubt, due to the example of the free education he saw in operation in the German cities he visited just before his final conversion, and to the realisation that the continuing educational and economic advance of Germany required England to do all in its power to reduce its rival's lead. He became, in consequence, one of the staunchest advocates of free education. In 1887, for instance, he told the Commons of his

102. Mundella to Leader, 14 October 1885, Ibid. Mundella's move to free education was a matter of concern to some of his more conservative associates, and both Kay-Shuttleworth (2 October 1885, Ibid.) and the Marquis of Hartington (1 November 1885, Ibid.) wrote to him expressing their reservations.

103. The Times, 22 October 1885, p.10

104. Chamberlain to Mundella, 23 October 1885, Mundella MSS.

convinced belief that "free education would be the best way of promoting good education in England; that it would be most satisfactory in its results, and that it would do more to elevate our population than we are now doing."¹⁰⁵

About this time, however, the campaign for free schools received two setbacks. The first was the failure of Chamberlain to impose his radical 'unauthorised programme' upon the Liberal Party after September 1885 and his resignation from the Government in April 1886. Free education had been an integral part of Chamberlain's programme, but he had found that public opinion had not responded to the idea in the way that he had anticipated. He wrote to Labouchere: "I put my money on free schools, but...the electors do not care much about it."¹⁰⁶ As Chamberlain's chief biographer puts it: "'Free Education' did not stir the urban masses as he had assumed."¹⁰⁷ Coming on top of this initial disappointment, Chamberlain's break with Gladstone - the withdrawal of the most fervent advocate of free education from the party considered most likely to grant it - was a blow to the supporters of that policy. A further blow was the report of the Cross Commission which decided against a comprehensive scheme of free education and considered it perfectly correct that parents who were willing and able should "contribute a substantial proportion

105. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 319 (1887), 387-8.

106. A.L.Thorold, The Life of Henry Labouchere (London, 1913), p.246.

107. J.L.Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol. II, (London, 1933), p.125. This in spite of Chamberlain's persuasive speeches on the subject such as that made at Trowbridge in October 1885, The Times, 15 October 1885, p.6.

of the education of their children in the form of school fees."¹⁰⁸ Even the Minority Report of the Commission found that, on this question at any rate, it could not disagree. It concluded that there was no good reason for abolishing the fee and, in fact, considered that its abolition would damage the voluntary schools.¹⁰⁹ The one small consolation for the advocates of free schools was the Reservation of S. Buxton, included in the Minority Report, which recommended that managers of all elementary schools - voluntary or otherwise - be allowed to demand additional grants of state aid should they wish to adopt free schooling.¹¹⁰

Yet Chamberlain did not despair of seeing this measure carried into effect. Entering upon that phase of his political career which saw the cementing of the alliance between the Liberal-Unionists and the Conservatives, he resolved to convert the Conservative Party to acceptance of free education.¹¹¹ Largely as a result of his efforts, the Salisbury Government committed itself to establishing a system of free schools. Possibly they were swayed by Chamberlain's warning that if they failed to act there would be tremendous defections of working class votes from the party.¹¹² Free education was, therefore, announced

108. Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888 (C.5485), p.223.

109. Ibid., pp.246-9.

110. Ibid., p.250.

111. See Garvin, op. cit., vol. II, pp.429-431. See The Times, 25 April 1891, p.9 for a major Chamberlain address on free education, typical of his activities at this time.

112. Chamberlain to Hartington, 21 November 1890, Devonshire MSS, 340. 2258.

in the Queen's Speech of November 1890; provided for by Goschen's budget of April 1891; and passed in August 1891.

The Conservatives' volte-face provoked differing reactions. Mundella, who had remained loyal to Gladstone, was sceptical of their motives but could not deny that their measure would confer "an enormous boon upon the parents of the country."¹¹³ Jesse Collings was delighted and deemed the measure "a great Bill, because it will remove the reproach that has been hanging over this country, that after having made education compulsory for the public good and the general safety, we nevertheless imposed fees on the parents and children whom we have compelled to enter our elementary schools."¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the staunchly-Tory Lord Norton defended the right of parents to pay for their children's schooling and condemned the measure as a dangerous step in the direction of German-style state education which had nothing to commend it in Norton's view. "State education in Germany has not produced the kind of people that our national character in England does", he said. "The habit in that country to look to the Government, and the habit in this country to look to ourselves, make all the difference."¹¹⁵ The usual points of criticism raised against the bill during the debates were that it would mean heavier taxation; that it was aimed at penalising the thrifty and hard-working for the sake of assisting the thriftless and idle; and that it would seriously undermine the financial position of the voluntary schools

113. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 354(1890-1), 1885.

114. Ibid., 355(1890-1), 645-6.

115. Ibid., 355(1890-1), 1697.

which depended on the fee.¹¹⁶

The debates on the bill, and on the amendments to it, produced references to Germany quite different from those voiced by Norton. In fact, bearing in mind that free education was only in restricted operation there, the comments expressed were sometimes overstated. But it is indicative of the way in which many late Victorians, when discussing matters of education, naturally assumed German superiority and argued, at times erroneously, from that premise. Thus, Sir A. Rollit seemed to believe that Prussia had inaugurated a system of free education at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Not only did he remind the Commons that the younger Pitt had urged free schools, but went on: "Well had it been for this country if Pitt's advice had been followed, if we had done here at the beginning of the century what Stein did for Germany."¹¹⁷ In similar vein, another member, in urging free education, directed the attention of his listeners to the example of Prussia and claimed that the extremely high rate of attendance in the elementary schools of Berlin was due to the abolition of the fees in the municipality in 1870.¹¹⁸ In fact, as Pattison, Arnold and Collings had earlier testified from first-hand experience, the real explanation of Prussian success in this respect was the system of compulsion which had proved virtually 100 per cent effective in getting children into the schools long before the fee was abolished in Berlin.

116. See the speech by Bartlett for a good survey of the main criticisms raised against the bill: Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1107-1116.

117. Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1346.

118. Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1260.

Important amendments to the government bill included those which sought to widen its scope so as to include children under the age of five and over the age of fourteen. The member for Leicester considered that the initial proposal to exclude these two categories was "mean and shortsighted" and compared unfavourably "with the very different system followed in Switzerland and Germany." He felt ashamed, he went on, that "my own country should be so far behind those nations in this matter."¹¹⁹ As for those people who opposed the bill or objected to the proposal to extend its coverage, he asked in a further speech: "Do they think that skill and knowledge is of less importance to England and Wales than it is to Switzerland and Germany?"¹²⁰ Owing to the pressure of opinion, typified by a forceful speech by Chamberlain,¹²¹ the Government accepted the extension of the age limits thus proposed. The final Act, which was passed in August 1891, brought a system of free education to England costing initially about two and a quarter million pounds. By the device of increasing the capitation grants, it provided free or assisted education for all children who had passed their third birthday and who had not reached the age of fifteen.

Alongside the campaigns to make elementary education compulsory and free, reformers were also seeking to bring about far-reaching changes in the elementary school curriculum. In this instance, too, much was owed to German methods and ideas.

119. Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1104.

120. Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1925-6.

121. Ibid., 354 (1890-1), 1932-3.

The Campaign to Extend the Curriculum

In the 1860s people began to consider seriously the signs of industrial and commercial progress by countries apparently less favourably-endowed than England in terms of skill and resources. They decided that that progress could be partly explained by the success of their rivals, and particularly the Germans, in devising elementary school curricula which cultivated intelligence and creative thought. They pointed out that in the German elementary schools the children were taught a wider range of subjects - including such things as elementary science and drawing - than in England; and they condemned that system in England which placed too much emphasis on learning by rote a restricted number of basic subjects, examination success in which determined the amount of money a school received in the form of state grants. In short, to many people real education was being effectively prevented in England. They argued that the limitations imposed by the Revised Code meant that the intellect and potential of the English child could not be developed to their full, and were being sacrificed to notions not in the least connected with education. They had obviously accepted the axiom which Morley was to state succinctly at a later time: "the wider your curriculum the more likely you are to promote not only the material interests of your people, which are large, but their moral and intellectual interests."¹²² From the beginning of their efforts to reshape the curriculum and destroy the Revised Code, many reformers drew

122. The Times, 20 November 1889, p.10.

the inevitable comparisons between English and German practice. Arnold returned from the continent in 1865 to find "a deadness, a slackness, and a discouragement which are not the signs and accompaniments of progress."¹²³ Contrasting the English schools with the Prussian he found in the former "a lack of intelligent life"¹²⁴ and decided, quite emphatically, that the limitations of the Revised Code were the prime cause.¹²⁵ Two years later he warmly praised the teaching of elementary subjects in Germany and the care taken in that country to develop "the intelligence of the children and to give them some real mental power."¹²⁶ In 1874 he was still deploring "the unawakened and uninformed minds of the majority of our school children", in contrast to the results achieved in other countries.¹²⁷

Arnold was not alone in seeing the need to enlarge the elementary school curriculum in response to modern needs.

Bernhard Samuelson ascribed much of the foreign progress in trade and industry to the "comparatively advanced elementary instruction" of their workers.¹²⁸ In reply to a circular of Lord Stanley,

J. Ward wrote from Bavaria claiming that the example of Germany

123. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1867', in Board of Education, Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold (London, 1910), pp.102-3.

124. Ibid., p.103.

125. Ibid., p.111.

126. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1869', in Ibid., pp.128-9.

127. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1874', in Ibid., p.155.

128. Letter from Bernhard Samuelson to the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education concerning Technical Education in Various Countries Abroad, 1867 (13), p.55.

taught that the success of technical and scientific education was largely due to the sound preparation in drawing and scientific principles provided in the elementary schools.¹²⁹ Mundella told the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction that elementary schools should devote more time to equipping the young for industrial and commercial pursuits, as was being done in Germany. "I should be very glad", he declared, "to see such people have a little scientific instruction in our primary schools, as it is in Germany."¹³⁰ The committee agreed that English elementary education was an inadequate preparation for later life and recommended, in consequence, that greater encouragement be given to the teaching of basic scientific principles and drawing as well as to the training of future teachers of elementary science.¹³¹ At about the same time, the Taunton Commission pointed out that the success of any later technical training depended on the possession of a sound general education and this - judging by "the inferior rate of progress said to be visible in British manufactures" - was just not being provided.¹³² Similarly, the Devonshire Commission recommended that the elementary schools undertake instruction in the elements of natural science and, significantly, justified these recommendations by making reference to the curricula to be found in German and Swiss

129. Stanley Circular, op. cit., p.20.

130. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), p.237.

131. Ibid., pp.iii-v, viii.

132. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, vol.I, p.79.

schools, saying: "there can be no good reason why such Elementary Scientific Instruction as has long been given in the Primary Schools of Germany and Switzerland should not be bestowed upon English children."¹³³

The demands to enlarge the elementary school curriculum arose very largely from a realisation, therefore, that the limitations imposed in the Revised Code were no longer justifiable. There can be no doubt that this change of mind was inevitable; that it would have taken place regardless of any foreign precedents. It is, however, permissible to argue that revelations of foreign, and especially German, practice helped along the government decision to move away from the rigid limitations of the Revised Code by the introduction of new modifying codes. For instance, the several new codes introduced between 1870 and 1875 inaugurated a scheme of 'specific', 'extra' and 'class' subjects for which grants could be earned, the new subjects including such things as geography, algebra, history, needle-work and geometry. It is important to note, however, that the '3Rs' remained obligatory and that teachers tended to concentrate on them, many of the extra subjects, in any case, being restricted to pupils in the higher forms. This was to be the way in which the curriculum was changed: by gradual moves away from the Revised Code over a period of years.¹³⁴

133. Second Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, 1872, p. XVII.

134. Matthew Arnold, while considering the code of 1871 a step in the right direction, could not help observing that what the English were pleased to call a schedule of 'extra' subjects "everywhere in the well-educated countries of the Continent form part of the regular programme of elementary schools" M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1871', in Board of Education Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold (London, 1910), p.143.

The next major change came in 1882, two years after the appointment of Mundella as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. Mundella had long been convinced, from his observations in both England, Germany and elsewhere, of the implications of the inadequate English elementary school curriculum, and he resolved to bring about some radical changes. Soon after his appointment he announced his proposals for a new schedule of subjects. He wrote to Leader: "These will make or mar me. It will be a new era in elementary education."¹³⁵ For the next year or so Mundella worked on his plan but managed to find time for a visit to Germany and Switzerland in the autumn of 1880 which enabled him to study elementary and technical education in those countries.¹³⁶ By August 1881 he had formulated his new Code. He considered it to be of great potential significance, but was also aware that not everyone would agree: "The proposals for a new Code are not only far-reaching as to the classes affected, but as to their influence on National Education. I shall have to stand the fire of criticism until next Spring, and then draft my proposals into a Code."¹³⁷ He was pleased with his efforts, quite naturally: "I have attempted, and successfully, to deal with one of the biggest problems connected with our educational system." Though aware of some pockets of opposition to this proposed Code, he remained confident of success: "nobody has dared to declare openly against my proposals, though I expect there will be some nagging and and snarling later on. I shall carry it, I am convinced."¹³⁸

135. Mundella to Leader, 1 August 1880, Mundella MSS.

136. Mundella to Leader, 20 October 1880, Ibid.

137. Mundella to Leader, 14 August 1881, Ibid.

138. Mundella to Leader, 26 August 1881, Ibid.

The Mundella Code of 1882 added a seventh standard to the elementary school and instituted new grant-earning subjects such as cooking and new 'specific' subjects such as the rudiments of physics. It stipulated that 'class' subjects might be taught throughout the school instead of being restricted to older pupils, and that English was to be a compulsory 'class' subject. In many ways the Mundella Code was an important step forward, not least in its creation of the seventh standard to meet the needs of the growing number of children who, owing to the efforts made since 1870 to expand the curriculum and regularise attendance, were staying at school after the statutory leaving age. The inauguration of Standard VII was an important factor in the emergence of the higher grade elementary schools which earned grants from the Science and Art Department by teaching older pupils a largely scientific curriculum. As for the elementary schools themselves, the new schedule of subjects was certainly an advance, though it must be remembered that until the mid-1890s schools still earned the bulk of their grants on the performance of their pupils in the obligatory '3Rs'. As a result, many schools felt unwilling to take too many of the new subjects or to devote too much time to them.

In spite of all the piecemeal improvements, therefore, the situation was still far from satisfactory and further reform was desirable. The newly-formed National Union of Elementary Teachers had set as one of its first major targets, an end to the system of payment by results which, they said, reduced them virtually to the

status of factory hands being paid at piece rates. Furthermore, the structure of payment by results itself was beginning to give way under the weight of financial and administrative complication arising from successive tinkering with the system since its inception. The consequent disputes between the Education Department and the Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury, led to demands for a radical re-structuring of the whole grants system.

A further important factor in bringing change was the continued realisation that English elementary education was not responding quickly enough to modern needs. Very largely, this arose from an awareness that elementary education in Germany was more successfully underpinning trade and industry than its English counterpart. The persistent reference to the German example after 1882 was an important factor in the extension of the elementary curriculum, giving direction and greater urgency to the native pressure for reform. It came, as always, through individual reformers. Mundella, for instance, claimed that the English had "no conception of a thorough elementary education such as was given in Germany."¹³⁹ Magnus brought to the notice of a parliamentary inquiry the failure of English schools, in contrast to the German, of meeting "the demand for a varied curriculum."¹⁴⁰ Matthew Arnold visited the Continent in 1885-6 and in his subsequent report drew attention to the great differences between the curricula of German and English elementary schools and reiterated that in Germany there was a wider variety of subjects, all of which the

139. The Times, 22 December 1885, p.7.

140. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts 1880-1910 (London, 1910), p.30.

schools were required to teach. All in all, he reported, a German child received instruction in about thirteen different subjects, while an English child was taught the three staples of reading, writing and arithmetic and perhaps three or four 'specific' or 'class' subjects in addition.¹⁴¹

Support for individual reformers came from two prestigious royal commissions. The Samuelson Commission in 1884 argued that not only were the greater diffusion of elementary education and the greater length of attendance at elementary schools in Germany and other countries making major contributions to their progress, but that their wider curricula and their far superior instruction in drawing were producing more competent workmen.¹⁴² In particular, the Commission advocated that the basic principles of science be taught in elementary schools, along with its practical applications, and that steps be taken to raise the standard of science teaching, above all by the inspection of science subjects in training colleges.¹⁴³ The later Cross Commission attached great importance to the school curriculum. The Lord President, the Earl of Cranbrook, had been advised by Mundella to ensure that the inquiry paid special attention to the

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141. Special Report on Certain Points Connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland and France, 1886 (C.4752), pp.11, 15. Arnold was not alone in conducting an investigation of German elementary education during this period. See, for example, C.C. Perry, Report on German Elementary Schools and Training Colleges, (London, 1887); and A.E. Twentymen "The Prussian Elementary School Code", in Dept. of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol.I, 1897, pp.470-480.
142. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.1, p.524.
143. Ibid., pp.517-8, 530.

question of "the adaptation of elementary to subsequent technical education", since 'bur industrial supremacy in the future largely depends on it."¹⁴⁴ The Commission not only amassed a great deal of evidence relating to the curriculum, but also compiled a comprehensive statistical report which included details of the subjects taught in schools and the amount of time each commanded in the curriculum.¹⁴⁵ As a result of its investigations the Cross Commission made recommendations of great significance for the development of English elementary education as a whole, and not least for the development of the curriculum. It agreed with the reformers that the system of 'payment by results' was too rigidly applied and adhered to and advised, therefore, that it be modified "in the interests equally of the scholars, of the teachers and of education itself."¹⁴⁶ It found that even the three basic subjects - reading, writing and arithmetic - were not being taught sufficiently well.¹⁴⁷ It advocated that drawing be made compulsory in all elementary schools because of its importance for industrial work and because "we are in England at present deficient, as compared with foreign countries, in

144. Mundella to Cranbrook, 19 December 1885, Mundella MSS. Cranbrook had been asking Mundella's advice regarding the composition of the commission. In a further letter, Mundella suggested that either Samuelson or Roscoe would be "The right man for connecting the Elementary & Technical work." (Mundella to Cranbrook, 21 December 1885, Ibid.) Cranbrook seems to have been in need of advice, for several months earlier he had written to Playfair: "I have had a thorny task in getting together the body which has so important a subject to investigate." (Cranbrook to Playfair, 5 May 1885, Playfair MSS., 285).

145. Statistical Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888 (C.5485-II), pp.27-31.

146. Ibid., Final Report, 1888 (C.5485), p.220.

147. Ibid., p.135-7.

respect to the teaching of the subject."¹⁴⁸ Further, the commission endorsed the view that the teaching of elementary science and mathematics would be of incalculable benefit in providing a sound basis for advanced technical education, and therefore recommended the inclusion of these subjects in the curriculum along with manual instruction in the use of tools.¹⁴⁹ The Minority Report agreed substantially with all that the Majority Report had to say but added the recommendation that "schools which properly take up a fuller and more thorough course of studies should receive larger grants."¹⁵⁰

The activities of individual reformers, backed up by the reports of the Samuelson and Cross commissions, thus played a decisive part in the modernisation of the curriculum. All had found against the existing system and their universal condemnation could not be ignored. The restrictive system of 'payment by results' and the old conception of elementary education as little more than the 3Rs were alike doomed. During the 1890s they were put quietly to rest by a series of new codes and by changes in the system of paying and earning grants. The code of 1890, for instance, made instruction in drawing compulsory in boys' elementary schools; recognised that courses of manual instruction had a place in the curriculum; and abolished the grant for the 3Rs, retaining only the grants for 'class' and 'specific' subjects while, at the same time, increasing those grants which were calculated on the basis

148. Ibid., p.141.

149. Ibid., pp.142-8.

150. Final Report, p.249.

of attendance. More subjects were added to the curriculum by the Codes of 1893 and 1896, and teachers were encouraged to plan class visits to museums, parks, art galleries and historic buildings.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, these years saw the replacement of the system of individual examination by Her Majesty's Inspectorate by one of visitations during which the inspectors, freed from their burdensome task of examining individual children, were able to spend more time on such matters as building improvements, teacher supply, teaching methods and the curriculum.

These improvements were rapidly consolidated by further legislation. The Code of 1898, in an effort to increase efficiency and uniformity, provided that drawing and manual instruction, hitherto supervised and examined by the Science and Art Department, should come within the purview of Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The Code also enacted that drawing instruction, already compulsory in boys' elementary schools, should become compulsory in girls' schools also. The Code of 1904 recommended that instruction in physical training and in the rules of hygiene be included in the curriculum. More significantly, in its definition of the purpose of elementary education as being to develop the character and intellect of the child, the 1904 Code made a decisive break with the official philosophy of the 1860s and gave sanction to the long-held reforming ideal that children be allowed to achieve their full potential as human beings.

151. An interesting exposition of the value of such school visits, and of the inclusion of such subjects as drawing and physical exercise in the curriculum, in relation to national well-being and efficiency is included in T.C. Horsfall, The Relation of Drawing to Healthy Life, (Manchester, 1891).

Conclusion

In the sphere of elementary education much, therefore, had been achieved by 1908. Upon a system of compulsory and free education, there had been placed a balanced and varied curriculum, permitting the more thorough development of the child's intellect and a more adequate preparation for modern life, and allowing a greater degree of freedom for the teachers. It is true that all of these improvements formed part of a natural and evolutionary process of change which was entirely native in origin. It is equally true that the example set by such countries as Switzerland and America exercised a great influence upon the reform movement. Yet it is undeniable that German precedents played a major part in all of these developments. One modern educational historian has referred to the expansion of the elementary curriculum in the late nineteenth century as "an awakening interest in the principle of 'learning by doing', an importation from German experience."¹⁵² Certainly the more varied German curriculum provided inspiration for reformers pressing for change, if not a prototype upon which a new English system, by stages if necessary, could be based. In the questions of compulsory attendance and free education, too, we find repeated expressions of admiration for German precedents. In all of these matters, esteem for German efficiency and fear of what that efficiency could mean in terms of national strength and prosperity left their mark, both upon the activities of reformers and the response of governments in England.

152. G.A.N. Lowndes, The Silent Social Revolution, (London, 1955 edn.), p.32.

Chapter 3 : EDUCATION FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.
SOME DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Introduction

Technical education, which may be regarded as education for commerce and industry, the provision of trained intelligence and of an understanding at least of the principles, and sometimes the actual practice, underlying industrial occupations, was something which involved all levels of education. The term, to the nineteenth century educationalist, meant something more than the advanced technological and scientific education provided in special colleges and classes. It had relevance, too, in elementary, secondary and university education. England had not entirely neglected the provision of technical education in the years before 1867. Since 1823 there had grown up a network of Mechanics' Institutes providing evening instruction for working men. Most important provincial towns could boast some type of Working Men's College, Trade School or Technical College. At the more advanced levels of instruction, there had been the establishment of the Royal College of Chemistry in 1845 and the Government School of Mines and Science in 1851. In 1852, a year after the Great Exhibition, a Department of Practical Art was attached to the Board of Trade, and in 1853 the Department of Science and Art was founded. This new department founded an institution of scientific instruction for working men in South Kensington, and set into operation a scheme of classes and examinations in theoretical science in provincial centres. In 1856 it was

brought under the control of the newly-established Education Department.

Against this provision of technical and scientific education, existing in 1867, the reformers had many complaints. They claimed that the instruction provided in both the Mechanics' Institutes and the Science and Art Department classes was too theoretical and ill-suited to men eager for more manipulative and practical instruction which would improve their skill as workmen. They argued that because of the emphasis on theoretical instruction in the Mechanics' Institutes, and because the courses anyway were of too high a standard for the semi-literate English workman, the Institutes, contrary to original intention, had become increasingly middle-class institutions, and were therefore failing as an effective instrument of technical education for the labour force. They further argued that great harm was being done by the failure of the state to undertake a more active role in the promotion of technical education, and that the consequent reliance on local and voluntary effort was resulting in increasing financial difficulties and deficient teaching. The shortage of really good teachers was affecting even the better colleges of advanced technology in London and the 1868 Select Committee urgently recommended the encouragement of the training of higher science teachers through the granting of degrees in science at the universities and by the opening of a larger number of fellowships in scientific subjects.¹ The

1. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (452), p.ix.

progress of Germany taught the reformers that there was, in short, more scope for practical, as opposed to theoretical, instruction, and a real need for generous state aid. This latter point was crucial. Reformers, despairing of the reliance placed upon local and voluntary energies, were convinced that only through firm government action would it be possible for England to raise up an adequate body of scientifically-trained managers and foremen and an intelligent labour force, as well as to stimulate that inventiveness which had been a foundation of past supremacy but which now appeared to have lapsed.

In drawing attention to these inadequacies in the provision of technical education in England, reformers were often motivated by the increasingly grave challenge to England's trading and industrial position, from Germany in particular.² In their continual reiteration of the value of scientific and technical training in promoting the physical well-being and occupational skill and efficiency of the individual, the reformers made repeated reference to the methods and ideas then being pursued in Germany.³

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2. For this subject, see R.J.S. Hoffman, Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry (Philadelphia, 1933); T.B. Veblen, Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution (New York, 1918); J. Saville, ed., 'Studies in the British Economy 1870-1914', Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, (Special Edition, 1965); R.A. Brady, 'The Economic Impact of Imperial Germany: Industrial Policy', Journal of Economic History, Vol.III (Dec., 1943), pp.108-123; and D.H. Aldcroft, 'The Entrepreneur and the British Economy 1870-1914', Economic History Review, Vol.XVII (August, 1964), pp.113-134.
 3. A recent study of the relationship between education and economic advance in England and Germany 1860-1964 is P.W. Musgrave, Technical Change, the Labour Force and Education (Oxford, 1967), which does not, however, assess the influence of German practice upon England.

At this point, it may be appropriate to present an outline of the German system of technical education as it existed in the later part of the nineteenth century, and to assess which of its features most attracted English reformers.

English Reformers and German Technical Education

The reformers saw, in the first place, that Germany had built up that essential pre-requisite of a sound system of technical education, a solid foundation of elementary and secondary education in schools which included a greater proportion of modern subjects in the curriculum than their English counterparts. Indeed, it was widely accepted that technical training in England suffered seriously from the restricted nature of the elementary school curriculum and from the under-estimated value of modern subjects at the secondary level. Few English children, for example, enjoyed the instruction in drawing, modelling and science which was being given as a matter of course in Germany. This had serious implications. For instance, because the secondary education of most English manufacturers had invariably been of an academic type, they had a limited conception of science and technology and their value to industry. In Germany, on the other hand, as the reformers were quick to point out, employers invariably received a good technical and scientific education based on a sound foundation of elementary and secondary education and were, as a consequence, more alive to the value and need of technical instruction for their workmen. Thus C.W. Siemens told the Samuelson Commission that the English

employer "takes less interest in the technical part of his work than either a German or a French employer. I think you find more prejudice against innovation amongst English employers." The English employer, Siemens continued, "has not, as a rule, been sufficiently trained in the technical portion of his business, and has no specific interest in the operations carried on."⁴

Upon their foundations of sound elementary and secondary schooling, the Germans had constructed a whole range of practical, as well as theoretical, instruction in special evening and Sunday classes, covering most industrial and agricultural activities. These classes were designed primarily for the working class elements and were intended to enable them to increase their skills as manual workers and artisans. The more intelligent among them could join with the middle class children and leave the elementary school at the age of 10 years and begin the education which might turn them into factory managers or commercial agents by entering a Realschule at which they would receive a thorough grounding in scientific and modern subjects. From there they would normally progress, at the age of 18 or 19 years, to a technical high school. (Technische Hochschule or Polytechnik), to receive advanced technological and scientific training.

4. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884,
Vol.III, Qs.1486-7, p.141

The German polytechnic was one of the most admired of German educational institutions.⁵ Lord Haldane, although deploring their separation from the university system, once referred to them as "those great technical schools, which in Germany turn out a stream of experts every year, sending them into the industries."⁶ The polytechnic was a recent institution. The eleven which existed in Germany in 1914 had all been founded around the middle decades of the century preceding. Their organisation was largely modelled on that of the universities and they enjoyed the status of a university with its privileges of self-government. They provided instruction of the highest order for young men who could present a certificate showing nine years' attendance at a secondary school.⁷ Generous state and municipal aid enabled the polytechnics to boast well-equipped laboratories and workshops in such departments as Civil Engineering, Building, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry and the like. Facilities were freely available for the pursuit of original research. The same generous financial support enabled the polytechnic to be quite accessible to the working class boy by way of a bursary or scholarship. Thus the Reformer, A.J. Mundella, who combined his many social and educational

5. See, A.E. Twentyman, 'The Earlier History of the Technical High Schools in Germany', Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vol.IX (1902), pp.465-485.

6. Hansard, 4th Ser., CVII (1902), 707.

7. In Munich a certificate from the Bavarian Industrie-schule was required instead. Elsewhere, those who possessed no secondary certificate could gain entrance by examination.

reforming activities with a thriving textile business with branches in both England and Saxony, appalled at the ignorance of his Midlands workmen, reported that "Some of the sons of our poorest workmen in Saxony are receiving a technical education at the Polytechnic Schools, such as the sons of our manufacturers cannot hope to obtain."⁸

The main function of the polytechnics, however, was the training of the future managers of industry and their success in ensuring a constant flow of well-trained men into the most important positions in industry was conceded by the Samuelson Commission. The Commission was told by Professor Marks of the Stuttgart Polytechnic that "the manufacturing success of the Germans, both in chemistry and in other industries, had been almost entirely due to the high scientific education which they received, principally at the polytechnic schools."⁹ The Commission itself recorded its admiration for the intelligence and technical knowledge of the masters and managers of industrial establishments in Germany, and elsewhere on the Continent, their sound knowledge of the sciences on which their particular industries were based, their familiarity with new developments in science, and their appreciation of the crucial value of the application of

8. Schools Inquiry Commission: Report Relative to Technical Education, 1867 (3898), p.29.

9. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.I, p.195.

science to industry.¹⁰ Just prior to the First World War, the eleven German polytechnics contained 16,000 students whereas in England there was only a total of 4,000 students doing comparable courses.¹¹

The results of Germany having trained such a body of men were only too evident to many observers in England. These observers claimed that the growing challenge from German manufacture of electrical machinery; the increasing German supremacy in the production of artificial fertilisers and explosives; the loss by England to Germany of predominance in the production of fine glass for optical instruments; and the severe competition to which British textiles, once considered unchallengeable, were being subjected, were all evidence of the value of advanced technical and scientific training such as that provided in the German polytechnic, and the application of that training to industry. The coal tar industry was one which attracted particular attention in England at this time, for it afforded an excellent illustration of how supremacy in an industry could pass from one country to another. The industry had been discovered in England by W.H. Perkin just after mid-century. In 1884 Perkin was obliged to tell the Samuelson Commission that while other countries had advanced, England had stood still; she now

10. Ibid., p.508

11. D.S.L. Cardwell, The Organisation of Science in England (London, 1957), p.156.

produced one-seventh of the world's total of artificial dyes while the Germans were producing two-thirds.¹² What particularly irked Perkin was that much of the German production was being imported by England after she had supplied the Germans with the raw materials, and that the imported finished product was costing three-and-a-half times the cost of the exported raw materials.¹³ Perkin attributed the German advance to the employment within the industry of well-trained chemists who had been educated in the polytechnics of Germany.

Thus England was feeling the severity of the German challenge in a wide range of industries.¹⁴ Sir Philip Magnus summed up the whole situation adequately when he declared in August 1903, at Oxford, that "we are confronted with the fact that Germany has appropriated various industries which might have been our own, that these industries depend for their successful working upon the application of the most advanced scientific knowledge, and that the German people have recognised

12. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.III, Q.134a, p.11.

13. Ibid., Qs.155-157, p.13. The German output of coal-tar colours rose from 4,646 tons in 1885 to 15,789 tons in 1895, and the six leading German companies took out 948 patents between 1886-1900 as compared with the 86 of their English counterparts. S.F. Cotgrove, Technical Education and Social Change, (London, 1958), pp.20-21. See also L.F. Haber, The Chemical Industry during the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1958); J.J. Beer, The Emergence of the German Dye Industry (Illinois, 1959), and W.M. Gardner, The British Coal-Tar Industry : Its Origin, Development and Decline (London, 1915).

14. For the German challenge in iron and steel, see F.W. Nusgrave, Technical Change, the Labour Force and Education (Oxford, 1967), pp.25-7, 71-3.

this dependence by providing, at a cost vastly exceeding any like expenditure by this country, the best possible facilities for scientific training and research."¹⁵

Many English reformers, too, admired the German trade schools which trained young men for particular industries, and the literature of the period consequently contains many references to, for instance, the Chemnitz and Krefeld Weaving Schools, the Stuttgart Building School, the Freiburg and Bochum Mining Schools, the Hohn Pottery School, the Iserlohn Metalwork School, and so on. Each of these schools provided instruction in the various branches and processes of the particular industry. Most of them were lavishly equipped as a consequence of generous financial aid from the state and municipality, and they trained their students "not up to the stage at which they are barely qualified for an appointment, but up to the limits of knowledge of the particular business.... We have nothing that can compare with them in perfection of equipment or in the high character of the work."¹⁶ The wide provision of trade instruction, such as that made available in Germany, appealed to those reformers who could not wholly accept the contention of the Science and Art Department that instruction in manipulative skill and trade practice could be properly learned only in the workshop, and that the real function of the classroom

15. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts, 1880-1910, (London, 1910), p.265.

16. C.H. Draper, 'What Different Kinds of Technical Institutions are Needed?' in R.P. Scott, (ed.), What is Secondary Education? Essays on Various Aspects of the Problem of Organisation (London, 1899), pp.291-2.

and lecture-hall was to produce an intelligent workman thoroughly conversant with the principles underlying industrial practice. On 24 January, 1868, Jacob Behrens (who, with his brother Louis, both of German origin, had established a flourishing mercantile business in Bradford and Manchester) wrote to the government recommending that in England: "Local institutions, such as weaving schools, upon the Elberfeld model, with schools of art, lessons in chemistry, mechanics, and higher mathematics, might be spread over the whole country, each adapted to the industry of the district."¹⁷ Lyon Playfair, at a later date, contemplating the results of the failure to follow Behrens's advice, claimed that while Coventry and Spitalfields were losing their silk industries, Krefeld, having spent £250,000 on its educational institutions, including £42,500 on its Weaving School, had doubled its population and quadrupled its trade "and now sends to us as imports, the silks which we have lost by a failure of our own industries."¹⁸ To what was this failure due? Thomas Wardle, engaged by the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction to present a special report on the English and continental silk industries, had no hesitation in ascribing it largely to the want of technical instruction in England. He was particularly

17. Letter of Jacob Behrens to the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, 1868 (168), p.30.

18. L. Playfair, 'Lord Armstrong and Technical Education', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXIV (Sept. 1888), p.332.

enthusiastic about the Krefeld Weaving School; recommended the creation of similar schools in England; and observed that it was perfectly logical for any interested young man "to be sent by his father to the technical school at Krefeld, to make silk finishing his chief study."¹⁹

To many Englishmen, the explanation for German success was simple. The Germans had recognised the value of intelligence and science as joint bases for industrial and commercial effort and were willing to invest heavily in their promotion. While the Germans were spending, for example, £200,000 on a new industrial museum at Stuttgart and £100,000 on extending the Stuttgart Polytechnic,²⁰ English reformers were complaining at the reluctance of their government to promote technical education in like manner. In contrast to the lavish spending of public money in Germany, the English relied too heavily on voluntary and philanthropic effort.²¹

19. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol. III, p. lxxiii.

20. Report on a Visit to Germany with a View to Ascertaining the Recent Progress of Technical Education in that Country, 1896, (C.8301), pp. 6-7. This report recommended English imitation of the German determination to build more technical schools and equip them with the most modern apparatus; Ibid., p. 16. Yet, reformers had been demanding this for decades. In 1868, for example, Matthew Arnold had reported that the main difference between England and the Continent lay "in the prominence which is now given to the idea of science there, and the neglect in which this idea still lies here." Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol. VI, p. 628

21. Examples of such effort include the first class engineering school set up for their apprentices by Mather & Platt of Salford; the award of thirty scholarships worth £100 by industrialist Sir J. Whitworth in the field of mechanical engineering; the promotion of technical education by individuals like Henry Solly and by bodies like the City & Guilds Institute; and so on. Thus, if initiative were lacking in Westminster, it could still be found elsewhere.

However, the efforts of isolated individuals and bodies, admirable though they were, were no solution to the needs of English technical education. Indeed, the total result of their efforts was to produce a provision of technical and scientific education characterised, not by organisation and efficiency, as in Germany, but rather by waste, incompleteness, and disorder. The serious industrial and commercial competition to which England was being subjected, rendered notions of self-help and individualism obsolete and necessitated a far greater degree of aid and supervision from the state. Mundella wrote to his close friend and confidant, R. Leader, in December 1882, agreeing that English self-help was better in principle than continental bureaucracy: "But do we help ourselves? We are rotting in ignorance so far as the industrial training of our people is concerned, and I am sure if you saw what I have recently seen you would wonder how long we could hold our own against the intellectual forces that will shortly be brought against us."²²

The results of the different approaches to the question of technical education as pursued respectively in England and Germany, appeared obvious to many.²³ Germany was able to guarantee a constant supply of well-trained managers of industry; a steady application of scientific research to industry; and a well-educated working class thoroughly versed in scientific and

22. Mundella to R. Leader, 10 December 1882, Mundella MSS.

23. See, for example, Sir Norman Lockyer, Education and National Progress (London, 1906), p.67.

technical principles. The prominent English scientist, E. Lankester, wrote in Nature that just as the quality of the German military machine lay in the combined intelligence of all those who served it, so did the efficiency of German industry: "It is the same with wheels and pistons, spindles, hammers, chisels and ploughs, as with guns and bayonets: the more intelligent is the man who wields or superintends them, the more successfully and prosperously will they do their work."²⁴ And reformers had no doubt that German workers were more intelligent. Magnus told the Cross Commission quite simply: "I think that in Germany the workmen generally are more intelligent than they are in England in Germany there is a much greater proportion of trained workmen and of competent foremen than in this country."²⁵

To sum up, then, English reformers in the field of technical education were accustomed to looking to Germany for ideas and to constantly referring to German industrial progress in the hope of producing action to deal with what they saw as England's chronic deficiencies. They admired that way in which the Germans, lacking both England's flying start and many of her natural resources, and unable to afford a policy of progress by trial and error, had adopted English practices as a basis for

24. Nature, 27 October 1870, p.509.

25. Second Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Elementary Education Acts, 1887, Q.28,743, p.467.

action and then proceeded to improve upon them. Samuelson, therefore, explained German advance by her "careful and intelligent improvement of processes."²⁶ That she was able to do this so successfully and so rapidly was due to her wise policy of investment in technical education. Even as early as 1884 the Samuelson Commission was forced to concede that the combination of superior technical and scientific instruction and increasing industrial power had produced a situation in which the Germans "have reached a point at which they have but little to learn from the English."²⁷ The course of action to be pursued was obvious to most reformers. As one of them put it: "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. As we have taught them to excel, we may fairly take a lesson from them in turn, and by placing within the reach of our artisans the most efficient means of technical instruction, restore to our manufactures their former supremacy and renown."²⁸

'Technical education' is an amorphous and a very large subject and one whose main lines of development have been well researched.²⁹

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26. Letter from B. Samuelson to the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education concerning Technical Education in Various Countries Abroad, 1867 (13), p.56.
27. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, p.335. See also the Commission's comments on the Rhenish cotton industry and its imitation of Lancashire methods, *ibid.*, p.296.
28. F.W.Edwards, Technical Education: Its Rise and Progress (London, 1885), p.20.
29. See, for example, J.Blanchet, Science, Craft and the State: A Study of English Technical Education and its Advocates 1867-1906, unpublished D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1953).

Being strictly confined within the limits of one chapter, and being anxious both to give that chapter some 'shape' and to avoid the relation of material readily available elsewhere, it is proposed to examine the growth of technical education after 1868, and the German influence upon it, in three particular aspects: continuation schooling; the movement towards greater practical, as against theoretical, instruction in technical institutions; and developments in commercial education,

Continuation Schooling

The campaign to provide the working classes with a sounder and more practical foundation of learning did not end with the elementary schools themselves, but ranged beyond, into the field of post-elementary education. The existing provision of such education was considered by many to be inadequate, and the state was effectively allowing a situation to develop in which the vast majority of children who left school at eleven or twelve could forget almost everything they had been taught. The reformers wanted to ensure that all school-leavers were given ample opportunity to build on the education they had acquired at day school and to be better prepared for employment more profitable to themselves and more useful to the state.

Evening classes of various kinds did exist in England but each had serious shortcomings. There were the remains of the old mechanics' institutes and there were evening classes conducted under the regulations of the Science and Art Department,

but both tended to concentrate on theoretical instruction and to neglect the more practical needs of the working classes. There were also evening classes which were closely linked to the day schools and which after 1851 had become eligible for state grants. But these classes were subject to the requirements of the Revised Code and were little more than a supplement to the day schools, providing elementary instruction for those whose earlier schooling had, for whatever reason, been deficient. The numbers attending evening classes of all kinds were not large because of these shortcomings and because of the apparent indifference of working-class youth to further education.

By the 1880's the inadequacies of the existing system of evening instruction were causing alarm among reformers who considered it scandalous that most adolescents were lacking educational discipline and guidance at a time when perhaps they needed them most. Samuel Smith felt that the great defect - "I might almost call it the fatal defect" - of English elementary education was that it stopped at the time when real education ought to begin, and allowed children to forget all the learning and discipline they had acquired.³⁰ Smith, and others, felt that the abrupt and premature end to their education doomed many adolescents to occupations far below their capacity and potential to pursue, and deprived them of the chance to pursue advanced technical training. Reformers, therefore, began to

30. The Times, 10 October 1887, p.13.

talk in terms of bridging this gap between the elementary school and either industrial work or higher technical training by special evening classes. The precedent to which they most commonly referred was the German continuation school (Fortbildungsschule).³¹

The continuation school movement in Germany began in Saxony in 1835 when local authorities were given statutory power to enforce attendance for five hours per week for a period of three years up to the age of 17. Supplementary legislation required employers to give employees such leave of absence from work as attendance at continuation school might require. The movement really came to life in the 1870s when continuation schools sprang up in all parts of Germany. Regulations as to length of attendance varied from one state to another, and while some adopted the compulsory principle immediately, others did so in stages. But all German continuation schools provided the sort of practical instruction in such subjects as science, modern languages, mathematics and geography which English reformers admired as effectively bridging the gap between the elementary school and industrial life or advanced technical training.

31. For details of the German Fortbildungsschulen see M. Sadler, Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere (Manchester, 1907); F.H. Dale, 'The Continuation Schools in Saxony', Dept. of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vol. 1, 1896-7, pp.435-469; and H. Bertram, 'The Continuation Schools in Berlin', Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vol. IX, 1902, pp.451-464.

One of the warmest admirers of the German continuation schools was Mundella. He deplored the failure of his own country to see the value of linking elementary and technical education. He felt that, in spite of England's great natural resources, "we could not afford to lose a single point, and we were losing a very important point because we did not connect technical with elementary education."³² Mundella wrote to his friend Swire Smith in 1884 and referred him to Felkin's book Technical Education in a Saxon Town. He wrote: "We want to work the children just when in other countries they are securing the most important part of their instruction."³³ Several years earlier, on his return from Germany, Smith had advocated an effective system of evening instruction to counter the tendency among young people to drift into a life of drink and vice - a tendency which had hardly existed in the German towns he had seen.³⁴ It was this social value of continuation schooling, as much as its educational value, which attracted reformers and those who recognised it used much the same language as the later campaigners for 'national efficiency'. A leading proponent of the view that continuation schools would be of immense social value was the reforming member of Parliament, Samuel Smith. Smith visited Germany in 1887 to

32. The Times, 1 December 1880, p.10.

33. Mundella to Swire Smith, 7 January 1884, Mundella MSS.

34. Sir Swire Smith, Educational Comparisons, or, Remarks on Industrial Schools in England, Germany and Switzerland, (London, 1877 edn.), pp.39-41.

glean ideas and information and he commonly referred to German practice when warning of the dangers of releasing most young people on to the streets without further provision for education. He once declared: "When the child in Germany is having its intelligence expanded, by elementary science and literature, and when the eye and hand are being trained in drawing, modelling, wood-carving &c., the English child in too many instances is becoming a proficient in the low vice of the streets and slums."³⁵ Smith, therefore, propounded the thesis that unless the state continued the education of its elementary school-leavers, they would surrender to the harmful influences of the streets and become the paupers, drunkards, criminals and harlots of the future, with harmful consequences for the efficiency and well-being of the nation. He warned that "the State should not let go its grasp of the child population without reasonable security against a lapse into pauperism, and indeed I may say in some cases into barbarism."³⁶

Smith made the inevitable references to German practice. In a letter to The Spectator he advocated the institution of a system of post-elementary technical training in evening schools modelled on those of Germany, in order to prevent the young from "corrupting and being corrupted to a degree which I have seen in no other civilised country." If the state failed to act, then

35. Cited in R. Brabazon, Prosperity or Pauperism? Physical, Industrial and Technical Training (London, 1888), p.173.

36. S. Smith, 'The Industrial Training of Destitute Children', Contemporary Review, Vol.XLVII (January 1885), p.115.

there would be perpetuated "that abnormal residuum of degraded humanity which is the shame and danger of British civilisation."³⁷

The views of Smith, and those who thought like him, had been supported by the findings of the various official inquiries of the mid-1880's. The Samuelson Commission agreed that evening continuation schools would provide an essential basis for later technical training as well as for industrial work, and it reported that of all the systems of continuation education it had studied "Foremost in importance may be noted the continuation schools, which exist in nearly all towns of Germany and Switzerland."³⁸ Arnold's special report of 1886 contrasted the English system of allowing children to stop receiving full-time education from the age of 10 with the German system of compulsory elementary education up to the ages of 13 and 14, reinforced with, in some cases, compulsory continuation schooling.³⁹ The Cross Commission agreed that evening continuation lessons would be useful in consolidating the instruction in the fundamentals of science and the use of tools which it advocated should form a larger part of the curriculum of the elementary day schools.⁴⁰ It went significantly further,

37. The Spectator, 4 February 1888, p.169.

38. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.I, p.47.

39. Special Report on Certain Points Connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland and France, 1886, (C.4752), p.13.

40. Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888 (C.5485), p.142. See also the significant evidence given by Magnus in favour of compulsory continuation schools on the German model (Second Report, *Ibid.*, 1887 (C.5056), Qs.28,596, 28,654, pp. 461, 464); and the evidence of H.E. Roscoe (*Ibid.*, Qs.55,684-5, p.512).

however, by recommending the repeal of that regulation in the existing elementary code which required all pupils in evening schools to reach a specified standard in the three basic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic as a necessary precondition to taking up additional subjects.⁴¹ The way was thus prepared for the change in status of the evening classes and the widening of their curricula which were to take place during the course of the 1890's.

In the years immediately preceding these changes several other reformers added their names to the campaign on behalf of the establishment of German-style continuation schools. Magnus followed up his evidence to the Cross Commission by repeating his demand for the setting-up of evening schools which "would take the place, to some extent, of the Fortbildungsschulen of Germany."⁴² F.W. Edwards observed that "there is much to confirm the wisdom of the following in the footsteps of our continental neighbours in the organisation of compulsory continuation schools."⁴³ W.G. Blackie praised the German schools and claimed that if only the English would undertake to establish similar schools "the fear of competition need not disturb us so far as this section of our educational system is concerned."⁴⁴ Alfred Harris deplored the gap which existed between elementary and technical instruction,

41. Final Report, Ibid., pp.218-9.

42. Sir Philip Magnus, 'Schools of Commerce', Contemporary Review, Vol.LII (December 1887), p.863.

43. F.W. Edwards, Industrial Education (Liverpool, 1888), p.24.

44. W.G. Blackie, Commercial Education: An Address (Glasgow, 1888), p.16.

a gap which did not exist in the integrated system of Germany. He felt that "in order to explain my subject, I must ask you to accompany me to Germany."⁴⁵ Referring particularly to Wurtemberg, Harris also spoke of the German continuation schools as "the nurseries of our competitors in trade."⁴⁶

The existing voluntary system of evening education in England meant that generally only those with sufficient money and educational zeal enjoyed its benefits, while the vast majority (those most in need of such education) did not. The reformers were, therefore, drawn to the logical conclusion that not only should evening continuation schools on the German model be established but also that attendance at them should be made compulsory. The views of Magnus and Edwards, in this respect, have already been mentioned. Mundella, too, was a firm believer in the need for compulsion in evening, as well as in elementary day education, and, speaking from his knowledge of German practice, he warned the Commons in 1887 that "we must, if we are to make our education thorough, adopt the Continental continuation system."⁴⁷ In March 1889 Samuel Smith attempted to translate words into action by moving a resolution in the Commons calling for the establishment of a national system of compulsory evening schools providing a

45. A. Harris, Technical Education (London, 1889), p.10.

46. Ibid., p.18.

47. Hansard, 3rd. Ser., 519 (1887), 391.

three-year course of instruction for elementary school-leavers in a wide range of subjects. He justified his demand on social as well as educational grounds and made ample reference to German practice: "So perfect is their system of education, so thoroughly are the children looked after, that such a thing as the class of squalid, neglected children we are familiar with does not exist."⁴⁸ Smith could not, however, persuade the Commons of the necessity for action. Apart from objections to the cost of his proposal, the chief criticism which it encountered came from those who opposed the extension of the compulsory principle into the evening schools. All the old arguments were raised once more: The virtue of English freedom and individualism as against continental, and particularly German, paternalism; the shortsightedness of those, who, dazzled by undoubted German efficiency under German conditions, sought to emulate that efficiency through imitation of German methods under entirely different English conditions; and so forth. One member considered it "all very well to refer us to the Continent, but I do not think we are bound slavishly to imitate Continental models when we know that their habits and character are so very different from those of our own."⁴⁹ Another opposed the idea of compulsion, in spite of its effectiveness in Germany; for "we have other ideas of freedom here than those which obtain in Germany."⁵⁰ These

48. Ibid., 333 (1889), 1837.

49. Ibid., 333 (1889), 1866.

50. Ibid., 333 (1889), 1897.

remarks provide a timely reminder that there was a good deal of opposition in England to the introduction of German practices.

In spite of this setback, the reformers continued to apply pressure. In Manchester, Smith repeated the demand for compulsory evening classes.⁵¹ Other reformers who lent their weight to the campaign included T.C. Horsfall who argued that compulsory continuation schooling was the logical complement to any system of state-aided compulsory elementary education.⁵² Lyon Playfair led a deputation to the Education Department in February 1890 demanding legislation on these lines. In response to this deputation the Government, while affirming its opposition to compulsion, hinted at the possibility of a separate code for evening schools. With the continuing pressure both of individual reformers and reforming groups such as the National Association for the Promotion of Technical Education, and with the elementary system about to undergo radical reform, it was clear that changes in evening education were imminent.

The first move came with the Elementary Education Code of 1890 which permitted evening schools to provide instruction no longer chiefly of an elementary nature and, indeed, excused their pupils from examination in the '3Rs' on condition that they had passed Standard V in those subjects at the day school. Three years later, in 1893, the first Evening Continuation School Code was

51. The Times, 10 October 1889, p. 10.

52. T.C.Horsfall, The Relation of Drawing to Healthy Life, (Manchester, 1891), p.9.

issued. Its avowed aim was to encourage expansion, variety and experimentation, and it laid down that, henceforth, evening school students could be taught what they needed, or wanted, to know and could not be prevented from taking up subjects in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic by reason of their not having passed the '3Rs' examination in Standard V at day school. The chief significance of the 1893 Code was that it allowed for both a greater variety and a larger number of subjects. With more time able to be spent on scientific and practical instruction the evening classes came to provide a better bridge between the elementary school and industrial work or advanced training. A further important feature of the Code was thought by R.L. Morant, the prominent educational reformer and administrator, to be that it "initiated the term 'Evening Continuation School' in imitation of the German term Fortbildungsschule (sic)."⁵³

The evening classes, having achieved new status, experienced a sudden popularity, marked by a large increase in the number of students and consolidated by further reform. The introduction of the group system of studies in the late 1890's enabled students to take a number of related subjects (under such designations as Industrial, Commercial, Rural, Domestic or General), in accordance with their intended occupation. All groups included English as the one compulsory subject. A report of 1909 stated that the grouped courses, which had been adopted

53. Cited in D.J.R. Eaglesham, From School Board to Local Authority (London, 1956), p.201

by a growing number of authorities, "have given increased depth and thoroughness to such evening school work."⁵⁴ A further important change took place in 1902 when, following the fusion of the Science and Art Department and the Education Department in 1899 and the decision of the 1901 Cockerton Judgement that the greater part of the evening work of the school boards was illegal, it had become necessary to determine the exact status of evening education. The Royal Commission on Secondary Education of 1895 had considered evening classes to fall within the category of secondary education and had recommended that, as such, they should be placed under the control of the new county borough and county council authorities.⁵⁵ It was on the lines of this recommendation that the solution arrived at in 1902 was conceived. All evening education, whether carried on hitherto under the auspices of school boards, technical instruction committees or the old Science and Art Department, was placed under the control of the new authorities and thereby achieved a recognised position in the national scheme of education.

In spite of these advances and the rising popularity of the evening classes, many reformers considered that those classes could not prove really effective and worthwhile unless the compulsory principle were adopted. They continued to argue with great firmness that

54. Report of the Consultative Committee on Attendance, Compulsory or Otherwise, at Continuation Schools, 1909 (Cd.4757), p.84.

55. Report of the Royal Commission Inquiring into Secondary Education 1895, vol.I, p.291.

too high a proportion of young people between the ages of 13 and 17 still remained under no educational guidance; that the voluntary system meant great difficulty in impressing on the public mind the necessity for such guidance during these years; that too many employers remained indifferent towards the educational interests of their young workers; and that the German system, in which 22 out of the 26 constituent parts of the Empire practised compulsion, proved that even the most educated people in Europe felt compulsion to be necessary. In 1897 Samuel Smith introduced a bill in Parliament providing for the adoption of the compulsory principle in evening education but strong opposition caused it to be withdrawn, a fate which befell similar bills introduced during the following years. Yet the reformers continued to press their case. In an exhaustive work on the subject published in 1907, Sadler declared that, in contrast with the German and Swiss compulsory systems, the English voluntary arrangements left "a large residue of the boy population without any educational discipline during the critical years of adolescence." They were therefore, he went on, "wasteful of human material."⁵⁶ As for the usefulness of compulsion in enabling the young to reach higher levels of skill and intelligence, "the Germans regard it as an asset of high value" he claimed.⁵⁷ The influential social

56. M.Sadler, Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere (Manchester, 1907), p.68.

57. Ibid., p.740.

reformers, Canon and Mrs. Barnett, saw in compulsory continuation schooling the solution to the problem of teenage hooliganism. They advocated that employers be forbidden to employ young people under the age of 16 years who could not furnish a certificate showing regular weekly attendance at an evening school.⁵⁸ They felt that compulsion would serve to overcome the perennial problems of ignorance and indifference and came to demand compulsory continuation schooling for all up to the age of 17 years, pointing to the examples of Germany and Switzerland.⁵⁹

The demands for compulsion, however, produced no result other than an act dealing with Scotland alone which allowed the authorities there the option to require attendance at suitable continuation schools for those up to the age of 17 years. This measure came into force in 1908. As regards England, powerful arguments continued to thwart the extension of the compulsory principle into evening education: the lack of a sufficient number of qualified teachers; the shortage of suitable buildings; the probable interference with industrial work; and the old contention that compulsion was a German import not suited to English conditions. It is fair to say that this last argument was the one most often used.

58. S.A. Barnett and H.O. Barnett, Towards Social Reform (New York, 1909), p.185.

59. S.A. Barnett and H.O. Barnett, Practicable Socialism (London, 1915), p.332.

The Times was entirely typical, in its statements upon this question, of the large body of opinion which rejected compulsion. It made no attempt to deny or belittle the achievement of German compulsory continuation schooling. Indeed, it once declared that "for compulsion to attend evening continuation schools we in England must go to Utopia - or to Germany", and conceded that the Saxon schools "represent in this matter of compulsory continuation schools a counsel of perfection."⁶⁰

The Times, however, felt that entirely different conditions prevailed in England and Saxony and that the chief reason for Saxon success was "State compulsion acquiesced in, as it never would be in England, by a people accustomed to compulsory military service."⁶¹ In short, the English could only achieve a fully comprehensive system of compulsory continuation schools if they were prepared to act as submissively as the Saxons - and this was unthinkable.⁶²

It should not be claimed, of course, that the evening classes established in England by 1908 owed everything to German precedents. England had already had evening instruction for working men before German practices attracted real attention. Even without the German example those classes would have been improved. Their shortcomings - and, in particular, their

60. The Times, 4 October 1898, p.7.

61. Ibid., 23 March 1898, p.6.

62. Ibid., 4 October 1898, p.7.

inadequacy as a bridge between the elementary schools and the more advanced technical instruction that was now being more widely provided - cried out for attention. The natural, evolutionary process of reform would have guaranteed change, especially since evening technical instruction was seen as an important link between other sectors of education which were themselves expanding.

However, the German influence was significant. It was brought to bear upon the debate surrounding evening classes by a group of energetic reformers whose names figure prominently in the development of post-elementary technical instruction. It added urgency to the question and speeded up the process of reform. It provided valuable ideas in such areas as the curriculum of evening schools. And, in the words of one official report, it showed what might be done "in the systematic organisation of Continuation Schools."⁶³ In these circumstances, the rejection of the German principle of compulsion does not radically weaken the case. It simply reminds us that, as in other areas of reform, admiration for German achievement was tempered with an acute understanding of English needs and conditions.

63. Report of the Consultative Committee on Attendance, Compulsory or Otherwise, at Continuation Schools, 1909 (Cd.4757), p.84.

The Growth of Practical Studies

The Paris Exhibition of 1867 gave clear warning of the commercial and industrial challenge with which England was going to be faced in succeeding years. In these circumstances, it was going to become increasingly important that working men should not only take an interest in the machines they operated and the industrial processes in which they were engaged, but should understand them. The trouble was that most of the technical education available to the working man was not designed to promote that understanding. Classes organised under the auspices of the Science and Art Department, for example, made little attempt to show how science might be applied to industry. Teachers tended to cram text-book information into their students so as to obtain the maximum amount of grant from the Science and Art Department, that grant being largely determined by examination success. It was possible to pass the Department's examinations without doing any practical work and many candidates obtained certificates who had never seen or handled any apparatus. The official view was that the classroom or lecture hall should be devoted to theoretical matters and that the proper place for manipulative and practical instruction was the workshop. It was maintained that only an intelligent workman conversant with the principles underlying industrial practice could properly benefit from 'technical' instruction.

Although this approach was in contrast to the work done in technical institutions in those countries which were emerging as trade rivals, there was strong resistance in England to those who advocated change. As late as 1888 both the majority and minority reports of the Cross Commission affirmed that technical instruction belonged to the factory and was not properly a part of general education.⁶⁴ Possibly there was an ingrained suspicion of technical education as something new-fangled and likely to prove expensive to promote. Lord President of the Council, Earl de Grey, having appointed the Duke of Devonshire to head a new royal commission in 1870, told the Duke that one of the main tasks of his inquiry would be to secure "increased encouragement to Science and to what is called nowadays Technical Education without adding to the public expenditure."⁶⁵ Another obstacle to change was undoubtedly the trade statistics. The initial shock of the revelations of 1867 soon passed, obscured by the continuing expansion of English commerce. 1872 was the peak year of English exports and it was easy to dismiss the warnings of the few who said that all was not well. In fact, the tide of opinion was not to turn decisively in favour of the more

64. Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888 (C.5485), pp.217, 318.

65. D. Grey to Devonshire, 14 March 1870, Devonshire MSS. 4:130.

positive promotion of 'technical' education until English trade and prestige received another, more serious, blow during the depression years of the early 1880s. Only then did reforming pressure for a more practical curriculum in technical institutions - a pressure based largely upon knowledge of continental, and especially German, practice - begin to show results.

As we have already seen, the Germans were providing a wide range of practical instruction. At the lower level, in special evening and Sunday classes, this instruction was designed to increase the skills of labouring men as manual workers, operatives and artisans. At the higher level, the trade schools provided thorough technological training for ambitious young men, equipping them for posts of responsibility in the industries of Germany. Supported by generous financial aid from the state, their well-equipped workshops gave instruction in all the processes of a particular industry. It was hardly surprising, either that English reformers studied these trade schools for ideas or that young men were sent from England to these schools for the practical training that their fathers despaired of finding for them at home. A report of 1900 insisted that the trade instruction done by the Germans and Austrians was producing workers able "to grasp every problem, to utilise every invention, to produce the subtlest work."⁶⁶ In short, this report was merely

66. Report on Technical and Commercial Education in East Prussia, Poland, Galicia, Silesia and Bohemia, 1900 (Cd.419), p. 9.

reiterating what some reformers had long felt : that the spectacular economic growth of Germany proved that the old belief that trades could not be taught in the classroom was no longer valid.

One such reformer was the Nottingham hosiery manufacturer, A.J. Mundella. He was a leading advocate of practical studies for more than twenty five years. In that time he played an important part in the movement towards greater practical instruction in technical institutions. While it should not be said that he was representative of all reforming opinion, through Mundella and his associates the example of Germany exercised a significant influence upon English developments.

Mundella was in an excellent position to study German technical education at first hand since he had strong business links with Saxony. He was president of the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce in 1867 when all chambers of commerce were asked to furnish information on questions of technical education to the Committee of Council on Education. Replying on behalf of the Nottingham Chamber, Mundella advised the creation of a thorough and well-aided system of technical education along continental lines. He pointed to the excellent trade instruction given to apprentices and artisans in Chemnitz - Nottingham's great rival in the hosiery trade - asserting that for young men in Nottingham "there is no

instruction that will at all compare."⁶⁷ Four years later, Mundella's friend, Swire Smith, was sent to Germany by the Keighley Mechanics' Institute to investigate technical education there. Mundella wrote to Smith directing him to Saxony and to the trade schools of Chemnitz and Dresden in particular. He offered to put Smith in touch with H.M. Felkin, his representative in Saxony, "who will put you in the way of obtaining the best information."⁶⁸ Later, anxious to stir up public opinion, Mundella pleaded with Smith to publish the findings of his visit to Germany. "I must again urge you to publish your report," he wrote. "Germany is a giant in his cradle. What will he be a quarter of a century hence, and where will our countrymen stand in comparison with him if we do not both make up for lost time and keep up with him in the race."⁶⁹

67. Copies of Answers from the Chambers of Commerce to Queries of the Vice-President of the Committee of Council as to Technical Education, 1868 (168), p.10.

68. Mundella to Smith, 9 April 1872, Mundella MSS. Mundella was in the habit of directing people to Germany. George Dixon of the National Education League toured the German schools in 1870 "with my introductions and accompanied by my friends", Mundella told Robert Leader, 27 August 1870, Ibid. In 1885 Matthew Arnold resolved to visit Chemnitz "because of what you have formerly said of its schools", he told Mundella, 6 November 1885, Ibid.

69. Mundella to Smith, 10 May 1872, Ibid. Later that month, Mundella told Smith that he would "sin against your country" if he did not publish his findings, 28 May 1872, Ibid. Mundella's pleadings were not in vain and in 1873 there was published Sir Swire Smith, Educational Comparisons, or, Remarks on Industrial Schools in England, Germany, and Switzerland (London).

In 1880 Mundella himself undertook a visit to the Continent for the purpose of making a detailed study of institutions of technical education. A letter which he wrote home to his friend Robert Leader in October reminds us that Mundella, like other English reformers, looked to other countries besides Germany for ideas - though they tended to place greatest importance upon that country. He wrote : "I am going to spend the rest of my time in studying the recent improvements in the Elementary and Technical Education of Germany. I did this in Switzerland on the way hither. Now I am going to work in serious earnest, and shall take a number of German States on my way home."⁷⁰

In the same year as this continental visit, Mundella was appointed Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in Gladstone's second administration. He was now in a position to carry into effect some of the reforms he had long been advocating. In the field of elementary education he extended the principle of compulsory attendance and he promoted a wider curriculum which allowed elementary schools to move some way in the direction of more practical work. In the area of technical education his main contribution was the appointment of a royal commission upon which he invited

70. Mundella to R. Leader, 20 October 1880, Mundella MSS.

men like Samuelson, Magnus, Swire Smith and Roscoe to serve.⁷¹

The royal commission was instructed "to inquire into the Instruction of the Industrial Classes of certain Foreign Countries in technical and other subjects, for the purpose of comparison with that of the corresponding classes in this country; and into the influence of such Instruction on manufacturing and other Industries at home and abroad."⁷² Magnus, a member of the commission, later claimed that an important contributory factor in its appointment was the publication of a book upon technical education in Saxony by H.M. Felkin, the business associate and German representative of Mundella.⁷³ Magnus claimed that the glowing picture Felkin painted of technical education in Chemnitz, in contrast to that of Nottingham and Leicester whose lace and hosiery industries it threatened, "undoubtedly had the effect of bringing home to the somewhat slow-working British mind, that our commercial prosperity was even then seriously threatened by German enterprise, scientifically directed."⁷⁴

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71. H.E. Roscoe to Mundella, 15 August 1881, Ibid., accepting the invitation to serve on the Royal Commission. Roscoe had written to Mundella three weeks earlier advocating that the Commission undertake a thorough investigation of the chemical trades: "The value of these trades is second to none and much might be gained by a thorough report on Continental manufactures." (Ibid., 23 July 1881, MSS.)
72. First Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1882, preface, p.3.
73. H.M. Felkin, Technical Education in a Saxon Town (London, 1881).
74. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts, 1880-1910, (London 1910), pp.91-2.

The Samuelson Commission issued its main report in 1884 following a thorough investigation of its subject both at home and abroad. Its foreign researches had left it impressed with the skill and intelligence underlying industrial applications in Germany.⁷⁵ It made recommendations bearing upon all levels and aspects of education in England. On the particular issue of trade instruction it was torn two ways. While ratifying the traditional policy of providing mainly theoretical instruction in the classroom and insisting that the workshop was the best technical school available, the Commissioners could not conceal their admiration for the German trade schools. They found the weaving schools of Germany "among the best of their kind that we have seen"; they reported that the Mulhouse school was "the best illustration that we have seen of instruction in cotton spinning"; that the Krefeld school was "the most complete and the most important" in the teaching of finishing and design;⁷⁶ and that the Chemnitz school was responsible for goods of greater variety, adaptability and excellence "than is found in similar manufacturing towns in England, where no such schools exist."⁷⁷ Yet, while greatly admiring the German model of trade and technological instruction, they were unwilling to translate

75. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.I, p.505.

76. Ibid., pp.127-128.

77. Ibid., p.323.

that admiration into outright imitation. They seemed to feel that if English elementary and secondary education could be improved, and if the increased interest in questions of technical education could be properly utilised, then Britain's problems might be solved from within, without wholesale recourse to imitations of foreign models.⁷⁸

In one area at least, however, the German model did have a more positive effect upon the Commission's findings. They had been tremendously impressed by the high standards of design and finish which the Germans gave to their goods. Training for these important skills was provided both in the trade schools and in the special schools of industrial art (Kunstgewerbeschulen) such as those of Dresden, Munich and Nuremberg. One member of the Commission later recalled his visit to Germany during its inquiries and remembered leaving with a conviction that German commercial success was largely due to "the qualities of taste and design, as shown in the attractiveness of their production in textiles, metal work, pottery, etc."⁷⁹ Another member of the Samuelson Commission was later to deem the industrial art school at Munich "a University of applied art."⁸⁰ The Samuelson

78. Ibid., pp.511-515.

79. Sir Swire Smith, Technical Education: Stands Glasgow Where it Did? (Glasgow, 1899), pp.13-14.

80. Sir P. Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts 1880-1910 (London, 1910), p.275. The lack of similar facilities in England concerned many people. In 1879, for example, the Marquis of Hartington was urged to include in a speech he was preparing on technical education a call for the promotion of higher standards of handicraft and taste in England in order to reverse the trend whereby buyers were turning to the products of other countries; R.A. Brett to Hartington, 14 September 1879, Devonshire MSS 340.831. For Hartington's subsequent speech see The Times, 19 September 1879, p.8.

Commission recommended that the Science and Art Department award grants for specimens of applied-art workmanship; that a lesson be learned from Continental countries about the advantages of a close relationship between provincial industrial art museums and local schools of art; that government grants for the erection of schools of science and art be expanded; and that School Boards be authorised to establish and conduct science and art classes for artisans.⁸¹ Unfortunately, as so often was the case, not a great deal was done to implement these proposals, although changes in the elementary curriculum greatly improved the situation at the lower level, producing more young people who had at least had a basic instruction in drawing and modelling.⁸²

To return to Mundella. His efforts on behalf of technical education did not end with the close of his tenure of office as Vice-President of the Committee of Council in 1885. Whether in opposition or serving in subsequent Liberal administrations at the Board of Trade, he retained a passionate interest in this subject. Indeed, one might safely assume that his experiences at the Board of Trade probably heightened that interest - if that were possible.

81. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.1, pp.520-522.

82. At the higher levels, however, a report of 1896 could still remark that in the matter of the finishing of goods the English had "undoubtedly much to learn" from the Germans. Report on a Visit to Germany with a View to Ascertaining the Recent Progress of Technical Education in that Country, 1896 (C.8301), p.15. In 1905 it was claimed that the only way English workers would get "more conception" into their wares was by providing the type of training available to their German counterparts; R.H. Best, W.J. Davis and C. Perks, The Brassworkers of Berlin and Birmingham: A Comparison (London, 1905), pp.16,17.

In 1887 he became a founder member of the National Association for the Promotion of Technical Education which proclaimed as its main aim the securing of such reforms "as will develop in the best way the intelligence of those of all classes upon whom our industries depend."⁸³ With leading members like Mundella, Rosebery and Roscoe, the Association could not help being fully conversant with German practices. It urged the promotion of practical studies at all levels of education and played an important part in the formulation and passage of much useful legislation including that which dealt with technical education in 1889 and 1890. In March 1887 Mundella joined a deputation waiting upon the Lord President, Viscount Cranbrook. He delivered a forceful speech contrasting the training provided in German and English technical institutions. The English industrial classes, he said, "were like badly drilled soldiers fighting a battle with antiquated weapons - it was like sending our soldiers into the field, armed with Brown Bess, to meet the best armed soldiers in Europe."⁸⁴ There is little doubt that this deputation helped to push Salisbury's Government towards making a decisive intervention on behalf of technical education. Much to the frustration of Mundella and others, however, it was to be another two and a half years before legislation was placed on the statute book.

83. National Association for the Promotion of Technical Education, First Annual Report (London, 1888), p.3.

84. The Times, 22 March, 1887, p.10.

A complex bill of 1887 encountered so much time-consuming opposition over details that eventually the pressure of other parliamentary business caused it to be withdrawn.⁸⁵ Mundella complained bitterly about the Government to Swire-Smith : "All their measures are shams", he wrote.⁸⁶ In May 1888 the measure was reintroduced for a formal first reading in the Commons but there had been no discussion on it when the Whitsuntide recess intervened, and the measure never again saw the light of day. Mundella was exasperated and wrote to Swire Smith on the day the bill was withdrawn : "The treatment of the Technical Education Bill, and of all other Educational questions by the Government is simply disgraceful. I shall have something to say on the subject in the recess."⁸⁷

85. For some details, see Hansard, 3rd Ser., 317 (1887), 1465-74; 318 (1887) 714, 1847-64.

86. Mundella to Swire Smith, 16 January 1888, Mundella MSS.

87. Mundella to Swire Smith, 16 July 1888, Ibid. Mundella had cause to complain. Chamberlain had had an assurance from Salisbury that the Government would proceed with the bill that session; Chamberlain to Dale, 29 June 1888, Chamberlain MSS. J.C.5/20/66. Yet on the same day that Chamberlain informed Dale of this assurance, the first rumours broke in the press - significantly, perhaps, in the Birmingham Daily Post - that the Government was intending to shelve the bill. On 2 July, Roscoe asked Hart Dyke if the story were true, and was blandly informed that it was not; Hansard, 3rd Ser., 528 (1888), 68. A fortnight later the bill was pronounced dead.

The action of the Government had caused a great deal of bitterness among reformers, some of whom feared the total abandonment of the whole question of technical education. In fact, the Government was intending to proceed with the question during the next parliamentary session, and it could claim that its failure in 1888 had been due to its preoccupation with the major reform of local government, a measure which, if satisfactorily implemented, would greatly increase the chances and effectiveness of any measure of educational reform and reorganisation. Indeed, it had long been acknowledged that an important factor in explaining England's educational deficiencies was her lack of effective administrative machinery at the local level. It could well be argued that it was pointless to talk in terms of a national system of education until a viable system of local administration had been established. The lack of such organisation had been one important reason for the failure to implement the recommendations of the Taunton Commission. Ironically, that Commission had been warned by Arnold that whereas on the Continent the schools systems were based on an efficient municipal organisation, in England, on the other hand, such an organisation had still to be built.⁸⁸ Michael Sadler was later to claim that the "absence of

88. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, vol.VI, p. 625.

any complete system of local government till 1888 left us without the necessary basis for educational reorganisation. In Germany, however, the structure of local government was already complete when educational reorganisation became necessary."⁸⁹

The County Councils Act of 1888 did much to remedy this state of affairs. It created elected county councils and county borough councils and, in conjunction with a later measure passed in 1894 (which created a scheme of parish and district councils), based the whole of English local government upon direct popular elections. As intended, the new authorities were soon providing increasingly efficient administration in matters of public health, roads and education. There is little doubt that technical education benefitted by the new system. Mundella was not placated, however, and complained to Swire Smith in a further letter: "They have failed two years in succession through sheer ignorance and stupidity. Never fear, we shall win. Meantime stick to your Education Guns."⁹⁰

At last, in August 1889, a new Technical Instruction bill was introduced by Hart Dyke. It empowered the new county and county borough councils to levy a rate of one penny in the pound for the

89. M.E.Sadler, 'The History of Education', in Germany in the Nineteenth Century (Manchester, 1912), p.119.

90. Mundella to Swire Smith, 31 Jan. 1889, Mundella MSS.

promotion of technical education. It was visualised that this might be done by the founding of technical schools and the appointment of teachers to them; by the granting of financial aid to existing colleges and institutions providing technical instruction; and by the establishment of schemes of exhibitions and scholarships to institutions providing such instruction. The question of technical education at the level of the elementary schools was laid aside. This was primarily on account of the contentious issues involved (which the Government feared might prevent any progress at all if an attempt were made to encompass them within the measure), but also because of a promised new code for elementary schools which would deal with the elementary school curriculum as a whole.⁹¹ The Technical Instruction Act received the royal assent on 30 August 1889. It proved to be of great benefit to education in general, and to technical education in particular; the latter for obvious reasons, and the former because it set a precedent for local administrative action which was to be used in later legislation to bring elementary and secondary education under the control of

91. The omission of elementary education prompted Mundella to intervene against the bill. Convinced that the elementary school curriculum was too "bookish", he demanded the immediate introduction of more scientific and manual subjects after the German style, Hansard, 3rd Ser., 339(1889), 991-2.

the county and county borough councils. Furthermore, the value of the Technical Instruction Act of 1889 was much increased, not only by the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act of 1890 [the so-called 'Whisky-Money Act'] which diverted further financial resources to the local authorities for the purposes of promoting technical education, but also by developments in the elementary schools' curriculum which enabled them to turn out more pupils better equipped to tackle post-elementary technical training and make a success of it.

In all of these ways, the movement towards a greater provision of practical studies as an alternative to theoretical training had taken important steps forward. Mundella had been closely involved in this movement for a quarter of a century, whether in office or out of it. We must not, of course, inflate his importance. While he undoubtedly spoke for many reformers in his repeated references to Germany he was not speaking for all. There remained a large body of opinion which distrusted ideas imported from that country, and, on more than one occasion, Mundella was accused of disparaging his own country. We must also assume that most of the changes that have been referred to in connection with technical education, would have taken place without Mundella, and without the example of Germany that so obviously inspired him throughout his career.

Yet we cannot escape the conclusion that through Mundella, and other individuals too, the German example brought urgency to an indigenous process of change. It speeded up that process; directed its attention to the most pressing areas of reform; and exercised some shaping influence on that reform.

Meanwhile, in the growth of practical studies important developments had been taking place other than those that we have dealt with in connection with the activities of Mundella. A brief examination of these will reveal the familiar pattern of German ideas and fears of German trade rivalry acting upon a native reform movement. In 1873, acting in the best English tradition of philanthropic effort in this area, Henry Solly founded the Trades Guild of Learning. In 1874 this became the Artisans' Institute and was aimed at providing trade and science instruction in a form similar to that given in the German and Swiss trade schools, rather than in the theoretical manner of the Science and Art Department. Ten years later, Solly was to point out to the Samuelson Commission that while he considered the theoretical curriculum of the Department "excellent in itself for general instruction", it needed to be supplemented by classes "in which theory shall be applied to practice for training for specific trades."⁹² He claimed that the workshop did not teach good and scientific workmanship, as could a good trade school, but only served to perpetuate the doing of things "by 'rule of thumb', 'wrinkles', and 'dodges'."⁹³

92. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol. III, p.209.

93. Ibid., pp.204-5. For Solly's views on technical education see These Eighty Years, or The Story of an Unfinished Life, Vol. II (London, 1893), pp.415ff.; Technical Education: A few Thoughts and facts About It (London, 1878); and Trades Guild of Learning: with Explanations of its Objects (London, 1873)

The success of Solly's venture helped to prompt the City Companies to found the City and Guilds Institute for the purpose of providing and encouraging education adapted to the needs of trade and industry. The Institute was to do excellent work, independently of the state, at all levels of education: in providing courses of practical instruction for elementary school teachers and examining them; in providing financial and advisory aid to provincial institutions of technical instruction, including the scientific and technological departments of universities and university colleges;⁹⁴ and in instituting and extending a scheme of technological and practical, as well as theoretical, instruction in a wide range of subjects in grant-aided evening classes throughout the country. In February 1883, at a cost of £36,000, the Institute established the Finsbury Technical College, incorporating Solly's Artisans' Institute. This was to be a real trade school, providing evening and day instruction in practical mathematics, mechanics, cabinet-making, machine-drawing, brick-laying, and so on, for those aspiring to intermediate posts in industry. This was an important development for it meant that the concept of technical education which had hitherto held sway - that it should be theoretical rather than practical - was at last being seriously challenged by the converse interpretation. In 1884 the City and Guilds Institute founded in South Kensington, London, and at a cost which approached

94. The Samuelson Commission, for example, noted that the City and Guilds Institute was providing annual subventions of £400 to University College and King's College, London, and of £300 to Firth College, Sheffield and University College, Nottingham; and that it also gave £700 towards the establishment of a technical college at Leicester, Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, vol. I, p.401.

£100,000, the Central Technical College. This was aimed at training technical teachers, works managers, engineers, architects, and industrial chemists in the manner of a German polytechnic. It was to be an institution providing practical and technical instruction and, therefore, as the Samuelson Commission observed, could be distinguished easily from other educational institutions "in which science is taught rather for its own sake than with the view to its application to any special branch of industry."⁹⁵

While only the Central Institute can be said to have corresponded, in aim and in calibre of teaching, to the German polytechnic, there were other institutions being founded in London during this period some of which adopted the title 'polytechnic' and provided trade instruction for young persons, over the age of sixteen years, who earned their livelihood during the day but whose general culture and technical training were inadequate. Notable among these were Quintin Hogg's Regent Street Polytechnic, founded in 1881, Goldsmith's Institute, Borough Road Polytechnic, and the Battersea Institute. They all provided actual workshop instruction, in the evenings, in many varied trades, as well as instruction in languages and science. They owed their foundation and support to philanthropic effort, and to the London Parochial Act of 1883 which redeployed the endowments of scores of small parishes, in order, among other things, to promote technical and secondary education.⁹⁶

95. Ibid., Vol.111, p.518.

96. For a study of the London polytechnics as they were in 1898, see S. Webb, 'The London Polytechnic Institutes', in Board of Education. Special Reports on Education Subjects, Vol.11 (1898), pp.1-17.

By the mid-1890's the salient features of technical education in England were established. There was a far greater proportion of practical and scientific subjects in the curricula of elementary and evening schools, and the secondary school curriculum had been greatly improved by the introduction of a greater number of modern subjects. These developments alone eliminated one major factor hindering the effective technical training of young people: the lack of suitable preparation. In addition, there was a considerable amount of practical and trade instruction, on the continental model, in locally-supported colleges, in the various polytechnics and in the Central Technical College - instruction which was proving remarkably popular, as the following table indicates :⁹⁷

Trade Classes	Student Hours	
	1893-4	1900-1
Mechanical Engineering	17,000	92,500
Electrical Engineering	4,100	31,300
Carpentry & Joinery	1,400	23,100
Plumbing	6,800	19,600
Building Trades	37,500	123,400

For the more traditionally-minded there was ample provision of more scientific and theoretical subjects in the classes organised and aided by the Science and Art Department, and in many of the classes organised by the City and Guilds Institute. Other improvements were to follow, in the field of practical studies. For instance, the government began to experiment with new forms of post-elementary education, such as

97. Report of the Technical Education Board of the L.C.C., 1903-4, pp.17-18.

the Junior Technical Schools which prepared school-leavers for apprenticeship by offering either specific trade instruction in the manner of a German trade school, or more general instruction relating to a type of industry. Both below this level of education and above it, there were developments which served to further the cause of technical education. Elementary education enjoyed an expansion of its curriculum; while there was a proliferation of new civic universities which greatly increased the facilities for advanced technological training. Also established, owing largely to the efforts of the German-inspired Haldane, was England's answer to the Charlottenburg Technical School- the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

It is difficult to assess the actual German contribution to these developments. To a very large extent the growth of practical studies was an inevitable reaction against the over-theoretical approach of the middle decades of the century. The institutions which were subsequently founded developed largely naturally out of earlier ventures in this field. The London 'polytechnics', for example, were very largely home-grown institutions, as much a product of the native reform movement and traditional London educational enterprise as German influence.

German influence was there, however. It made its presence felt in 1874 when a Department of Textiles was established at the Yorkshire College of Science following the visit of representatives of the London Clothworkers' Company to Germany to study trade instruction in textiles there.⁹⁸ It was evident when Henry Solly advocated to the

⁹⁸. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.1, p.465.

Samuelson Commission a system of examinations in practical work for aspiring foreman in industry similar to those in Germany.⁹⁹ It can be seen in the anxiety of Sir Sydney Waterlow, vice-president of the City and Guilds Institute, about the large numbers of young men who resorted to foreign polytechnics and trade schools for training for prominent posts in industry; and in his hope that the Central Technical College would quickly become "the substitute in this country of the Technical High Schools of Germany and of the Ecole Centrale of France."¹⁰⁰ It was to be found in the Samuelson Commission's remark that the Central Technical College would be welcomed by English manufacturers "who feel the want in London of some such institution, in which their sons who are to succeed them can obtain as good an education as at Paris, Munich, or Berlin."¹⁰¹ It can be seen in the return to Germany in 1896 of several members of the former Samuelson Commission and in the similar investigation of technical education there conducted four years later by James Baker.¹⁰² And, finally, it can be seen in the continuing pressure exerted by individual reformers like Lord Rosebery who, in 1896, confessed his fear and admiration of German achievement;¹⁰³ like

99. Ibid., Vol.111, p.210.

100. Ibid., p.518.

101. Ibid., Vol.1, p.404.

102. Report on a Visit to Germany with a View to Ascertaining the Recent Progress of Technical Education in that Country, 1896 (C.8301); and Report on Technical and Commercial Education in East Prussia, Poland, Galicia, Silesia and Bohemia, 1900 (Cd.419).

103. The Times, 21 October 1896, p.6: "Are we gaining upon the Germans? I believe, on the contrary we are losing ground", proclaimed Rosebery.

Haldane who made frequent visits to Germany to study technical achievement and who warned his fellow-countrymen that they could improve their position only "by better education, by the better training of employers and workmen alike, by having more science applied to industry";¹⁰⁴ and like Mundella who wrote, self-justifyingly, to Swire Smith in 1895:

"Thirty five years ago I told the Associate Chambers of Commerce that 'Germany was a giant in its cradle, and that some day they would realise its growth and power.' It was not a popular utterance and was very unwelcome at the time. They are now realising that I was a true prophet."¹⁰⁵

Commercial Education and Lord Rosebery, 1890-1900

Commercial education had tended to be overshadowed by the campaign on behalf of purely technical training, yet the two were complementary to each other. While technical training may be said to have reference to the work of production, commercial education relates basically to that of distribution. Reformers were, in this period, coming to see that England was as deficient in one as in the other. They argued that German experience was proving that the trade success of a nation depended on a combination of skill in the process of manufacture, and energy and competence in bringing the products of industry into the hands of the consumer. There were, therefore, many who cited the example of German practice. As far back as 1869, Alfred Field, a friend of

104. Ibid., 4 October 1902, p.10. "I have been with the Director of the local technical school getting some information", Haldane wrote to his mother from Ilmenau, 29 May 1901, Haldane MSS. 5965, ff.188-9.

105. Mundella to Swire Smith, 9 December 1895, Mundella MSS.

Joseph Chamberlain, had warned that England, to maintain her commercial supremacy, must educate her people, for "German merchants have been for years, and rapidly too, supplanting English goods the world over, with the products of the educated workmen of Rhenish Prussia, Saxony and North Germany."¹⁰⁶ That this warning was as valid in 1899 as it had been in 1869 is testimony to English procrastination and complacency.

English reformers admired, in particular, the new German institutions of advanced commercial instruction - the Commercial High Schools (or Handelschschulen) - founded about the turn of the century at Leipzig, Aachen, Cologne, and Frankfurt-on-Main. These institutions provided instruction in foreign languages, economics, statistics, law, commercial geography and various other subjects. Entrance requirements were as high as those required at the Technical High Schools, and the courses were aimed at providing a thorough training for those intending either to pursue a commercial career or to become commercial teachers, as well as for men of business eager to extend their knowledge of particular branches of commercial practice.¹⁰⁷ Reformers also admired that sound foundation for advanced commercial training provided in the elementary and secondary schools of Germany with their instruction in languages, mathematics and geography; and they never tired of pointing to the results of all this educational effort - businessmen, commercial

106. Report of the First General Meeting of the National Education League (Birmingham, 1869), p.152.

107. See M.E. Sadler, 'Recent Developments in Higher Commercial Education in Germany', in Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol.IX (1902), pp.487-525.

agents and traders of great knowledge, enterprise, and adaptability.¹⁰⁸ Nor were reformers concerned only with the evidence of Germany supplanting England in the markets of the world; they saw as a particularly alarming trend, the increasing number of German clerks and agents being employed by commercial houses and business concerns in England due to their superior commercial expertise and education.¹⁰⁹

A prominent admirer of German commercial advance through education, and one who typified the ideas and policies of many reformers, was Lord Rosebery. He had been interested in this particular subject since at least 1887 when he received a letter from a John Wallop from Japan and when he delivered a major speech on the subject at Keighley. The Wallop letter presented a contrast between the trading methods of English and German traders in the Far East. Wallop claimed that the Germans concentrated on the task of selling and were particularly well-equipped for it as regards education, for they knew the language, habits

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100. Examples of contemporary writings which made full use of the German model include: Sir Philip Magnus, 'Schools of Commerce', - Contemporary Review, Vol.LII (December, 1887), pp.847-866; F.W. Edwards, Commercial Education (Liverpool, 1889); M.E. Sadler, 'England's Need of Commercial Education', in King's Weigh House Lectures to Business Men (London, 1901); W.G. Blackie, Commercial Education, (Glasgow, 1888); and Sir Lyon Playfair, 'The Progress of Applied Science in its Effect upon Trade', Contemporary Review, Vol.III (March, 1880), pp.558-571.
109. See, for example, the evidence of Sir Philip Magnus in Second Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1887, (C.5056), Q.28,750, p.468; the address by J. Lubbock at the Conference on Commercial Education, The Times, 24 November, 1887, p.11; and Halevy's reference to the practice of London business houses in employing a large number of Germans "whose presence was unwelcome but whose industry compelled admiration". E. Halevy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Vol.V, 'Imperialism and the Rise of Labour' (London, 1961 edition), p.160.

and traditions of those with whom they dealt: "They sell anything and take any orders, they are ready to adapt their business to the requirements of the people amongst whom they live. Nothing escapes their notice, and they take unlimited pains to meet the tastes of these Eastern races." In stark contrast, "our merchants are keeping up their social positions, learning only just enough of the language as is necessary to speak to their servants."¹¹⁰ In his speech at Keighley, Rosebery urged his listeners to take note of the information contained in the consular reports on the subject of commercial competition. In particular, he directed them to study "the facts and figures with regard to German trade", and went on to assert that the proper course for England to adopt was to follow the example of Germany, its greatest rival, and attend to the intellectual improvement of the people. He recommended specifically the establishment of more institutions of technical and commercial instruction.¹¹¹ In a speech to the Leeds Chamber of Commerce in the following year, he spoke of the need for an efficient consular service as an adjunct to the promotion of commerce.¹¹² The first half of the 1890's, however, found Rosebery too engrossed in matters of foreign affairs and politics to devote much time to the

110. J. Wallop to Rosebery, 26 April 1887, Rosebery MSS. 64. See also R.J.S. Hoffman, Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry (Philadelphia, 1933), pp.36, 73-96, 305-324.

111. The Times, 15 October 1887, p.6.

112. Ibid., 11 October 1888, p.7.

problems of commercial education, although in 1892 he attended the opening of the Borough Road Polytechnic and delivered a speech on technical education in relation to trade and industry.¹¹³ Yet he retained his interest in the subject, and when he was free from the burdens of office he began to devote more time to it.

The first indication of Rosebery's renewed activity on behalf of commercial education came in July 1896 with a speech delivered at Epsom. This speech condemned the complacency and ill-advised notions of superiority nurtured by too many of his countrymen, who failed to see that Germany, having fulfilled her military aims, had embarked upon, and was winning, the war of commerce. Even in India and Egypt, claimed Rosebery, German trade was menacing the English; and this was entirely due to Germany's superior technical and commercial education. To substantiate his claims, Rosebery freely cited statistics from the recently-published book by E.E. Williams, which had had a great impact upon opinion, and he urged his listeners to read it.¹¹⁴ Rosebery's use of statistics from Williams's book seems to have prompted at least one individual to despatch him a questioning letter, for in the Rosebery collection there is a copy of an outgoing letter to a Mr. R.B. Ashton in which Rosebery's secretary writes: "With regard to the statistics of 'Made in Germany' Lord Rosebery only used them as illustration of a fact of which he had long been convinced by his official experience."¹¹⁵

113. Ibid., 1 October 1892, p.8.

114. Ibid., 25 July 1896, p.10. E.E. Williams, Made in Germany (London, 1896). Williams also wrote The German Menace and its English Apologists (London, 1897).

115. Rosebery to R.B. Ashton, 28 July 1896, Rosebery MSS. 89, Letterbook.

It is unfortunate, perhaps, that Ashton's letter is missing, although its content is probably not of vital importance; but what is significant in this brief exchange of correspondence is that Rosebery's reply affords proof that he had been taking the question of German commercial competition seriously. He had certainly read Williams's book by the time Sidney Whitman wrote to him in September 1896 recommending that he did so. The book, wrote Whitman, "gives a very significant description of the commercial competition of Germany." Whitman went on to venture an opinion of his own: "I have seen this coming for years, and my last visit to Germany has strengthened previous impressions, that Germany, notwithstanding militarism and protection is doing wonders in industry." Their commercial expertise was frightening: "it may take 50 or 100 years before they acquire 'style or taste,' but who wants these nowadays? Thirteen for a dozen and 2½ per cent for prompt cash - that is more the point nowadays."¹¹⁶ In the same month Rosebery received an invitation to speak at the London Chamber of Commerce through Sir Albert Rollit, a prominent campaigner on behalf of educational reform. Rosebery was, however, forced to reply that the pressure of other engagements meant that he could not accept the invitation: "otherwise I would gladly raise my voice once more in warning of the dangers in respect to foreign, and particularly German competition, which so many appear determined to disregard."¹¹⁷

116. Whitman to Rosebery, 4 September 1896, Rosebery MSS. 74. Whitman was the author of Imperial Germany. A Critical Study of Fact and Character (London, 1889), and numerous other books on Germany.

117. Rosebery to Rollit, 29 September 1896, Rosebery MSS. 89, Letterbook.

At least one man felt that Rosebery's campaign seemed to presage a move in the direction of "fair trade" or protection. This was Louis Davidson, who was a businessman specialising in the importation of metal goods. He wrote to Rosebery expressing his fear that this was the case. Rosebery replied that his only concern was "to arouse the attention of our commercial classes to the grave inroads which are being made on our commerce by foreign Powers, at any rate by one, owing to superior technical and commercial education." Rather than abandon free trade, there must be found "a more up-to-date system of pushing manufactured goods among foreign countries and of adapting them to the wants of those countries." Rosebery was, at this time, thinking in terms of a comprehensive inquiry into the whole subject, and he assured Davidson that this would not be a royal commission which might only "bury the question under a mass of irrelevant folios", but a small commission of inquiry which would be able to collect and present the necessary information and recommendations quickly and in compact form.¹¹⁸ In a speech at Colchester, in which he gave full expression to his admiration and his fear of the German commercial threat, Rosebery repeated his demand for an exhaustive inquiry into commercial education and its bearing upon trade.¹¹⁹

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118. Rosebery to Davidson, 29 July 1896, Rosebery MSS. 89, Letterbook. This exchange of letters was published in The Times, 7 August 1896, p.6
119. The Times, 21 October 1896, p.6. Rosebery's initiative prompted other concerned individuals to get in touch with him. Lord Farrer offered advice as to the lines upon which the sort of inquiry demanded by Rosebery might proceed, 21 October 1896, Rosebery MSS. 73; and Woodall, who was recently returned from Germany, sent Rosebery the text of a speech he had made at Leicester "on the subject of German competition and the means by which it has been chiefly furthered", 22 October 1896, Ibid., 74. For Woodall's speech, see The Times, 16 October 1896, p.8.

The unlikelihood of persuading the government to set up the sort of inquiry he felt to be necessary caused some cooling in Rosebery's passion for reform of commercial education. Events in South Africa, too, diverted his attention. He did not lose interest in the subject, however, and as the years passed he moved towards the formulation of a general programme of national reorganisation and regeneration, of which the central theme was "efficiency". In this programme, educational reform occupied pride of place,¹²⁰ and he retained a particular interest in that education aimed at furthering the interests of commerce and industry. Two developments during these years interested him in particular : the growth of the newly-established London School of Economics and Political Science; and the campaign for the creation of a university at Birmingham and of a faculty of commerce within that university.

The London School had been founded in 1895, from the proceeds of a trust fund, to provide advanced instruction in the economic and political sciences. In co-operation with the London Chamber of Commerce, it also instituted a commercial department with lectures and classes in a wide range of commercial subjects.¹²¹ The School was an immediate success, and Rosebery was as pleased as anyone. Speaking to the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce in January 1901, he suggested that

120. Rosebery's programme of national efficiency, in which educational reform played an important role, was proclaimed in such speeches as those at Chatham (The Times, 24 January 1900, p.7); Chesterfield (Ibid., 17 December 1901, p.10); and Glasgow (Ibid., 11 March 1902, p.11).

121. For a comprehensive study of the L.S.E. in its early years, see W.A.S. Hewins, 'The London School of Economics and Political Science', in Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol.II (1898), pp.1-23.

perhaps the Midlands could undertake a similar venture, for the London School, "though not on so large a scale as I could wish ... is doing work which even the Germans envy and imitate and which is, therefore, not unworthy of imitation by ourselves."¹²² It is most significant that Rosebery should consider that the LSE had proved its value as a model for other English centres by virtue of the fact that the Germans had decided that they had something to learn from it! In March 1901, Rosebery spoke at the School and praised the good work it was doing, repeating that he considered it a great compliment that "the most practical nation in Europe has though this School worthy of study and imitation."¹²³ W.A.S. Hewins, the Director of the LSE, wrote to Rosebery in November 1902 expressing the hope that the existing total of a thousand students might soon be doubled, but pointing out that the existing building was already too small and that money was short. However, he went on, such difficulties must not be allowed to stand in the way of the vital work being done by the School, not least in the training of competent teachers of commercial subjects: "The young Oxford or Cambridge man is very good for the more academic subjects which can be got up from books and documents. But business and administration are impossible subjects unless the lecturer has exper-
-ience."¹²⁴

122. The Times, 17 January 1901, p.4.

123. Ibid., 22 March 1901, p.8.

124. Hewins to Rosebery, 16 November 1902, Rosebery MSS, 77. In 1903 Hewins resigned from LSE in order to work for tariff reform. "The School is firmly established and ... has hosts of students so that my part is over", he wrote to Rosebery, 23 November 1903, ibid., 77.

The creation of a faculty of commerce at Birmingham was very largely the work of Joseph Chamberlain. The inspiration for such a faculty came not only from a realisation of the needs of Midlands industry, but from a study of the German precedents. Chamberlain, for instance, made particular reference to the Commercial High School at Leipzig; and he saw to it that the Birmingham faculty should be put under the deanship of W.J. Ashley, a noted admirer of German economic and social achievement. These developments will be dealt with fully in the appropriate chapter, but Rosebery's comments upon them are perhaps more relevant here. Rosebery received two letters of interest from another of Chamberlain's aides, Jesse Collings. The first in 1898 made no direct mention of the university campaign, then approaching its climax, but did seem to presage later developments in Birmingham. It was, in fact, an invitation for Rosebery to speak to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, but it also argued that "if our trade supremacy is to be maintained we must study more closely the requirements of the several markets and adapt our products to them & further, that more attention to Commercial Education must be given."¹²⁵ The following year, Collings again invited Rosebery to speak to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce which had, he claimed, "been very active & doing good work during the past year especially in the directions of commercial & technical education, which is our great need." The new university, Collings felt sure, would help supply that need: "Our new University will I hope assist the work. Here you could do us a great deal of good. We don't want our University to be on the lines

125. J. Collings to Rosebery, 2 October 1898, *ibid.*, 75.

of Oxford & Cambridge but to supply competent (not omitting the literary side by any means) & qualified men to supply the needs of Commerce, Engineering and manufactures generally."¹²⁶ Rosebery obviously agreed with this assessment of the desired role of the university. In his Wolverhampton speech in January 1901, he deplored the insularity of English education and its neglect of modern, especially commercial, subjects, and he expressed the belief that in these respects "we have cause to hope much from the great University which has been established in the Midlands."¹²⁷ He felt that the university of Birmingham might not only act as a precedent for other similar universities of the modern type, but might lead the older universities into modern ways.

By this time, of course, Rosebery had formulated a general reforming programme which took 'efficiency' as its theme and which was largely based on a high regard for German achievement. Rosebery spoke of "the stern concentrated systematised patriotism" which had enabled the Germans to mould a "superior race" after the debacle of Jena in 1806.¹²⁸ He praised the "scientific methods and conquering spirit" of the Germans whose concentration upon a war of commerce posed grave threats to Britain.¹²⁹ Not surprisingly, perhaps, Rosebery received

126. J. Collings to Rosebery, 2 December 1899, *Ibid.*, 75.

127. The Times, 17 January 1901, p.4.

128. Rosebery to L. Courtenay, 21 July 1901, Rosebery MSS. Letterbook, 89.

129. The Times, 17 January 1901, p.4. He was undoubtedly confirmed in this view by a letter received from Haldane just a few weeks later. Writing from Berlin, Haldane reported that that city's wonderful growth "during even the few years since I was last there has an aspect ominous for our ... manufactures", 6 April 1901, Rosebery MSS. 24.

several letters begging him to re-assume the leadership of a more progressive Liberal Party devoted to a programme of social and educational reform on the German model. One admirer wrote such a letter in July 1900, claiming that "until our Educational System is at least as thorough & comprehensive as that of America and Germany our trade is bound to slip away from us (as it is doing daily to the grief of all who have the eyes to see) & with it our national prosperity."¹⁵⁰ As with later letters of similar content, however, Rosebery replied to the effect that he had retired from active party politics and had no intention of aspiring to the Liberal leadership again.¹⁵¹

Rosebery had promised a great deal but had achieved very little. His admiration for German achievement assumed obsessive proportions and engendered a good deal of distrust and criticism. We must not, therefore, regard him as entirely typical of reformers. He did, however, make a contribution to the reforming attempt to gain general recognition of the truism that, in the increasingly competitive world conditions, success in trade depended not only upon the law of supply and demand but upon the expertise of the trader and upon his knowledge, and that these qualities could only be developed by a provision of commercial education approaching that of Germany in quality.

150. Bathurst to Rosebery, 27 July 1900, Ibid., 76.

151. Rosebery to Bathurst, 28 July 1900, Ibid., 89, Letterbook.

Conclusion.

The campaigners on behalf of technical and commercial education had had to struggle against many difficulties: the low status attached to technical education by the "educated" governmental and industrial élites; prevailing laissez-faire attitudes; Treasury parsimony; and indifference, and on some occasions downright hostility, to educational advance. Thus there was no parliamentary debate on technical education between the years 1869 and 1881. In 1876, when Playfair had the temerity to enquire what measures were contemplated as a result of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, he was returned the platitude that the matter was under consideration.¹³² Thus did the Saturday Review (perhaps a little unfairly in view of the progress that had been made) cynically express the hope in 1898 that, considering Germany's commercial and industrial advance through education, "sometime, when there is no frontier war or quarrel as to the dogma most suited to the child's mind, a Government may turn some attention to a matter that lies at the root of British prosperity."¹³³ It was a statement which adequately summed up the feelings of the reformers over the whole of the previous thirty years, and their conviction, even in 1898, that the task of creating a comprehensive system of education - technical and commercial - equal to the German in efficiency and quality had not progressed far enough.

Still, a great deal had been done, and it is remarkable to consider

132. Hansard, 3rd. Ser., 227(1876), 551.

133. Saturday Review, 8 January 1898, vol.LXXXV, p.40.

how much was owed to men who had either been partly trained in Germany (like Playfair, Magnus, Roscoe and Haldane) or who had otherwise discovered for themselves Germany's remarkable educational advance and the effect it was having upon German trade and industry (like Mundella, Rosebery, Swire Smith and Samuelson). It is to such men that the increasing attention bestowed upon, and the gradual improvement of, the system of technical and commercial education in England in the later nineteenth century must largely be attributed; and it was through them that the influence of Germany made itself felt.

CHAPTER 4 : THE INFLUENCE OF GERMANY UPON DEVELOPMENTS IN ENGLISH
SECONDARY EDUCATION

Introduction

Many English reformers - convinced of the special role of secondary education - considered that it was the shortcomings of this sector of education which posed the most serious threat to England's position. They saw the secondary schools as the early training ground for central government and for municipal and imperial administration.¹ They also believed that secondary education had an equally valuable function to perform in preparing the ground for higher academic, scientific or technological training.² The further conviction that reform of secondary education was essential for the continued growth of English commerce was one shared by all reformers. Faced with the competition of countries like Germany, it was held to be as important to educate the country's commercial agents and consular officials as to train the working classes who were to form its labour force.

In all these ways then, secondary education was seen as being of crucial importance for the well-being of the nation. Yet it was also seen that secondary education, as it stood, was ill-equipped to fulfil its special functions. Against the existing provision of secondary education reformers had many complaints. In the first place they deplored its eminent lack of system. Secondary

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1. See, for example, Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, Vol.1, p.237; R.P. Scott (ed.), What is Secondary Education? (London, 1899), pp.53,92; and Hansard, 4th Ser., 86 (1900), 817 and 107 (1902), 753-4.
 2. See, for example, Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, Vol.1, 1884, p.516.

education in the late Victorian England could mean any one of a number of things. It could mean the excellent academic education provided in the great public schools and some of the better grammar schools. It could mean the variable education given in the different types of endowed and grammar schools. It could mean the technically-biased instruction of the higher-grade elementary schools which were springing up in the 1880's. Alternatively, it could also mean the courses of study furnished by the various technical institutions and evening classes. The picture was further complicated by the fact that the bodies which exercised control over secondary education were almost as numerous as the types of secondary school. There was the Charity Commission, the Education Department, the Science and Art Department, the Department of Agriculture, and, after 1889, the new County and County Borough Councils. Any one school could fall within the jurisdiction of one or more of these bodies in some way. The Times bemoaned the multiplicity of authorities and the inevitable chaos in the schools by claiming that, while the authorities "jostle each other, and complete against each other in most admired disorder", the schools either overlapped in one area or were completely lacking in another.³ In short, the lack of co-ordination had resulted in a system in which agencies crippled each other's usefulness and produced inevitable waste. The contrast with continental, particularly German, efficiency and harmony was embarrassing but one which, as shall be seen, the reformers did not hesitate to draw.

3. The Times, 2 March 1894, p.8.

A further major cause of complaint against English secondary education was that it was not responding quickly enough to the needs of a highly competitive age. It was becoming increasingly required that a person who spent six or seven years at a secondary school should emerge with something more than a solid grounding in classical studies. Modern languages and science were now essential and the old order of things, in which men had neither a sympathy for such studies nor an appreciation of their industrial and commercial value, was increasingly brought under attack. The resultant campaign to widen the secondary curriculum was of crucial importance. Sometimes support for it came from, at first sight, surprising quarters. Cardinal Vaughan, for example, on one occasion begged Mundella to speak at an educational meeting on "the need of a modern education if we are to hold our own in trade throughout the world."⁴ This campaign gave rise, in the 1890's, to a vital debate as to what properly constituted a secondary education.

It was in these two questions of reshaping both the organisation of secondary education and the curriculum of the secondary schools, that the influence of German ideas was to be most greatly felt. The bulk of this chapter will, therefore, be given over to a discussion of these questions. Before we begin that discussion, however, we must remember that English reformers had other criticisms to level against the system of secondary education; and that English shortcomings

4. Vaughan to A.J. Mundella, 2 January 1894, Mundella MSS.

were made more glaring the more the systems of other countries, notably Germany, were scrutinised. In 1865 Matthew Arnold had told his sister that no countries were more worth studying "as regards secondary instruction, than those in which intellectual life has been carried farthest - Germany first, and in the second degree France."⁵ The reformers were convinced that Germany's secondary education was better fulfilling the special role of preparing for higher training and for work in administration and commerce than its English counterpart. Henry Roscoe, for example, claimed that the success of German higher education was based on the efficient system of secondary education in operation there.⁶ And according to Michael Sadler, the smooth-running social organisation of Germany and the intelligent handling of social problems there, were the result of "the intellectual foundation laid in the State-aided secondary schools."⁷

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5. Cited in C.W. Russel (ed.), Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888, Vol.1 (London, 1895), p.245. What most impressed Arnold was the thirst for knowledge exhibited by the Germans as a people. Discussing Arnold's thesis in a letter to Chamberlain, Martineau agreed that the craving for knowledge exhibited by the Prussians "rendered the educational problem easier of solution and the schools better", Martineau to Chamberlain, 3 July 1867, Chamberlain MSS. JC/6/3/2/21.
 6. Cited in Evidence to the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, Vol.1, 1872 (C.536), p.508.
 7. M.E. Sadler, Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere, (Manchester, 1907), p.533.

Many English reformers admired the accessibility of German secondary education; fees were reasonable, and there was generous state and municipal financial aid to provide a liberal number of scholarships for children of poorer parents. Thus secondary education in Germany reached a far greater number of children than was the case in England where it was regarded mainly as the preserve of the well-to-do. The Samuelson Commission found in Germany that "secondary instruction of a superior and systematic kind is placed within the reach of the children of parents of limited means, to an extent of which we can form no conception in this country."⁸ In contrast, English secondary education (that is to say, the education provided in the public, grammar and endowed schools) was dominated by divisive class interests. The pressure of the middle-classes for boarding schools of the public-schools type for their sons, at less expense than the public schools, had given rise to such institutions as King's College School (1829), the City of London School (1837), Cheltenham College (1841) and Wellington College (1853). Yet, although the sons of the middle classes had forced their way into the preserve of secondary education, for working class children, state elementary education, reinforced if necessary in evening classes, was considered adequate. The admirers of German education pressed for a breakdown of these class divisions, through a system of state secondary schools but their demands met with stiff resistance. Traditionalists felt that to throw open the secondary schools to the lower classes would only serve to reduce the efficiency and value of an education primarily designed for those

8. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884,
Vol.1. p.23.

destined for more responsible positions in society. John Gorst was later to declare that secondary education should continue to be restricted to the latter: "It is not the business and it is not the interest of the country to give everybody secondary education, not even to everybody who asks for it."⁹ It is easy to condemn this sort of attitude now, and difficult to believe that it was widely held by the majority of educationalists at that time. Yet it was, though not without causing concern to some reformers who felt that class played too great a part in determining who benefitted from a secondary school education. Sadler was one such reformer, and he presented the following statistics to support his case:

Year	City	Population	Number of boys in State Secondary Schools
1901	Berlin	1,750,000	17,599
	Birmingham	514,000	1,758
	London	4,546,752	13,370

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Not until the early years of the twentieth century did a democratization of secondary education take place with the institution of a quota of free school places for poorer children which thus produced a widening of the narrow educational ladder of opportunity. The debate as to whether or not secondary education ought to be extended to a wider section of society, provides us with a reminder that while the German example was freely invoked by some reformers, it was often opposed by those who felt that it would be inappropriate to English needs and conditions.

9. Hansard, 4th Ser., 107 (1902), 673.

10. H. B. Sadler, 'The Unrest in Secondary Education in Germany and Elsewhere', in Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol. IX, 1902, p. 80.

Another feature of German secondary education for which many reformers expressed admiration, was the undoubted higher standard of teaching which prevailed there. This teaching was based on a thorough training and a rigorous state examination, followed by the Probejahr, or probationary year. One periodical - with a high interest in educational matters - spoke for many reformers when acknowledging German superiority "in the amount and quality of instruction, in the methods of imparting it, and in its appropriateness to the wants of the scholar."¹¹ Haldane was to tell the Commons that the rigorous training and examination of German secondary teachers produced "a degree of efficiency, with which we have nothing to compare."¹² In this sector of secondary education significant progress was made before the end of the nineteenth century. We should be wary, however, of giving too much credit for that progress to the German influence. It is true that German standards were frequently and glowingly praised, but reform in England after 1868 owed at least as much, if not more, to a native evolutionary process. Facilities for the professional training and qualification of secondary school teachers had first been afforded by the foundation in 1846 of the College of Preceptors. In 1873 the first English chair in education was established by the College. Six years later, at Cambridge, a Teachers' Training Syndicate was established, while from

11. 'Technical Education and Foreign Competition', Westminster Review, Vol. CXXVIII (August 1887), p.561.

12. Hansard, 4th Ser., 107 (1902), 711.

1890 onwards university training departments were founded.

Closely bound up with the question of professional training was that of teacher registration. The need for some guarantee of skill and knowledge among the profession had long been felt. The Taunton Commission had recommended a system of examining and certificating of teachers and the compilation of a 'scholastic register' of those deemed competent to teach.¹³ A Scholastic Registration Association had already been founded in 1866 by the College of Preceptors. However, nothing had been achieved by 1895 until another royal commission on secondary education issued its report. It was at this juncture that the German influence became directly linked with the teachers' registration movement when the Bryce Commission warned that

England would never begin to achieve standards of secondary education comparable to Germany until a register was instituted.¹⁴ Four years later the first register of teachers was drawn up - the fruit of an indigenous process of change catalysed by reference to German methods.

Further features which attracted the attention of English reformers in this period were the various guarantees of educational efficiency which existed under the German system: notably, the quite thorough state inspection of secondary schools in Germany; and the German leaving examination, or Abiturienten Examen. The former

13. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.I, p.614.

14. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, Vol.I, pp.310-321. See G. Baron, 'The Teachers' Registration Movement', British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol.II (May, 1954), pp.133-144.

provided a continuing and effective means of guaranteeing the quality and suitability of the instruction given in the schools. The latter, as the Devonshire Commission saw, by rigorously testing older children in a wide range of subjects, was a valuable instrument for ensuring secondary school efficiency and teaching standards.¹⁵ Little wonder, then, that some English reformers should advocate imitation of the German system in these respects. Arnold, for example, had found the Prussian watchfulness over secondary education "an effective way of inspection, in real truth, as can be found", and recommended its adoption in England.¹⁶ And Michael Sadler later presented the Bryce Commission with a detailed memorandum on the Abiturienten Examen, an indication of the interest shown in this German institution.¹⁷ Any proposal for state inspection, of course, met with the opposition of those who adhered to the creed of laissez-faire. As over the question of compulsory elementary education, they expressed grave fears for the liberty of the individual, and protested further against the intrusion of continental notions which they argued were completely alien to the English character.¹⁸ Once again we are reminded that not everyone was imbued with an admiration for German antecedents. The result was, of course, (as with so many of the other reforms with which we are concerned) an adaptation of German practices to meet English conditions, rather than the direct imitation which Arnold seems to have

15. Third Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, 1873 (C.368), p.IX.

16. Report of the Schools' Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, p.631.

17. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, Vol.V, pp.27-33.

18. See, for example, the speech by Lord Norton, Hansard, 4th Ser., 86 (1900), 798.

wanted. Thus the legislation of 1899 which paved the way for a system of state inspection of secondary education was never intended to create a central supervisory authority as rigid and as omniscient as the German.

We must now turn to a discussion of the two major criticisms levelled against English secondary education from the 1860's onwards: its lack of organisation and its inadequate curriculum. Reformers believed that the English secondary schools would never fulfil their special role until these defects were rectified, and to add weight to their demands for change they made frequent reference to the German model.

The Campaign for Organisation

In 1890 the Westminster Review published an article by the educational reformer John Massie in which he advocated the imitation in England of "that organization of education from head to foot which has produced in Germany a thoroughness of teaching, and thereby a tradition of culture, a love of learning, a devotion to work, far more widely spread than in our own country."¹⁹ Such a statement was typical of many English reformers at this time. They contrasted English haphazardness with German precision and, viewing the disorder which had resulted from the untidy growth of secondary education in England, would certainly have endorsed the plea of The Times that "order be evolved

19. J. Massie, 'Middle Class Education', Westminster Review, Vol. CXXXIII (Feb. 1890), p. 150. Three years earlier the same periodical had complained that in England "between the elementary school and the University all is chaos." Ibid, Vol. CXXVIII (August 1887), p. 561.

out of chaos.²⁰

From the point of view of organisation there was much to admire in the German system, not least the planned arrangement of the secondary schools which enabled children to be educated according to their aptitudes and intended careers. The child of academic bent and with ambitions of a professional career was prepared for university in the classical-school, or Gymnasium. The future chemist, engineer or architect, was, on the other hand, prepared for the polytechnic in either a semi-classical school (probably called a Realschule, Real-gymnasium or Burgerschule depending in which of the German states it was situated) or even a non-classical school (known in Prussia as an Oberrealschule). Generally speaking, each of the types of German secondary school sought to build on the good foundation of knowledge, laid in the elementary schools, by giving as broad an education (allseitige Bildung) as their respective aims allowed. The efficient functioning of this system was ascribed by many English reformers to the close direction provided by the central government. In common with many of his continental counterparts, the German Minister of Education exercised real powers of supervision and control over the whole educational field, and education was his only responsibility. This contrasted sharply with the situation in the English Education Department which had been founded as a department of the Privy Council. For one thing, education was not the sole concern of the Department, and for another, many areas of education fell outside its scope. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the de jure head of the Department,

20. The Times, 2 March 1894, p.8.

the Lord President, to lack the educational expertise one would expect from the incumbent of that office.²¹

The first real attempt to bring to English secondary education a greater degree of cohesion came with the report of the Taunton Commission in 1868. The German influence upon the Taunton Report was sizeable. It studied the German system of state control and supervision and then recommended the creation of an 'Administrative Board' to act as a central authority operating a system of inspection.²² It scrutinised the system of graded secondary schools in operation in Prussia, and then deemed it "the most complete and the most perfectly adapted to its people, of all that now exist."²³ Much more than that, however, it went on to recommend the creation in England of a graded arrangement of schools closely akin to that of Prussia: first-grade schools would provide a classical education for children up to 18 years; second-grade schools, while teaching Latin, would lay greater emphasis on modern subjects applicable to business and professional careers; and third-grade schools would give more practical instruction to the sons of farmers, tradesmen and skilled artisans. As the Commission itself pointed out, these schools

21. During the period that Mundella was Vice-President of the Council one commentator wrote of his master, Lord Spencer: "His Lordship has no notions at all on the subject of education and merely echoes what he has been told by Mundella." Cited in W.H.G. Armytage, A.J. Mundella: The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (London, 1951), p.204.

22. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.I, p.634.

23. Ibid., p.72.

would correspond to the Gymnasien, Realschulen and Burgerschulen of Prussia.²⁴

However, the Taunton Commission was not influenced by Germany alone. Its recommendations also bore the impress of important English thinkers such as Canon Nathaniel Woodard. Long before the Taunton Commission, Woodard had conceived the idea of extending over the country a network of graded secondary schools for the middle classes, built and equipped through the generosity of wealthy benefactors. A man who was determined to translate his ideas into action, Woodard in 1849 founded Lancing, a school for the sons of the gentry. Two years later, the sons of prosperous merchants found that Hurstpierpoint school was intended primarily for them. Soon afterwards, Woodard established at Shoreham a school for the lower middle classes, which moved to Ardingly in 1870. Thus it may be seen that the later Taunton Commission had both German and English precedents to guide its work.²⁵

The truth is that both Woodard and Taunton reflected important social changes which were taking place in England; in particular, the increasing influence of the middle class and its acute awareness of the advantages of education. Schools for the middle class, as visualised by Woodard and Taunton, mirrored the divisions within that class: the wealthy financiers and

24. Ibid., p.81.

25. See K.E. Kirk, The Story of the Woodard Schools (London, 1937).

factory owners enriched by the Industrial Revolution; the smaller manufacturers and merchants and the professional men; and the shopkeepers, farmers and skilled artisans. In short, as one educational historian has justifiably observed, the recommendations of the Taunton Commission in 1868 concerning the grading of Secondary schools were "not only due to German influence, but were no doubt based on the actual structure of society at the time."²⁶

In keeping with the nature of things, however, the recommendations of the Taunton Commission that the secondary schools be made to conform to a common pattern and be brought under government supervision, were not followed up with legislation. It would be another thirty years before a new royal commission on secondary education was able to persuade the government that decisive intervention on its part was vital.

In the meantime, individual reformers kept up their war of attrition on the public mind. The particular target of many of them was the creation of a proper ministry of education on the pattern of Germany and other continental states, which would provide effective state direction. Arnold had already told the Taunton Commission that such a ministry was "a necessity for modern States."²⁷ It was not, said Arnold, "from any love of bureaucracy" that the Germans relied on their education ministers but because they

26. S.J. Curtis, History of Education in Great Britain (London, 1963 edn.), p.148.

27. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, p.575.

realised the need for an officer of state undertaking critical functions "with the keenest sense of responsibility."²⁸

Resolutions calling for the formation of a Ministry of Education in England were given a frequent airing in the House of Commons during the 1860's, although none of them came to anything.²⁹

Then in June 1874 Lyon Playfair moved that a select committee be set up to investigate how greater ministerial responsibility might be secured for education and referred, in justification, to the precedents set by foreign countries.³⁰ But nothing was done and some years later, Lockyer could still sarcastically observe, in The Education Question in 1883, that "England enjoys the proud pre-eminence of being the only country - civilised country, we know nothing of Timbuctoo - in which there is not a Minister of Public Instruction."³¹ In fact, in that year a select committee under H.C.E. Childers was set up to consider the question of ministerial responsibility in education. Vice-President Mundella was quite certain, however, that no action would be taken by the Liberal government, irrespective of what the Childers Committee might recommend. Indeed, in July 1883 he informed Robert Leader that Gladstone would refuse to create a ministry.³² Thus, even when

28. Ibid., p.638.

29. See, for example, Hansard, 3rd. Ser., 165 (1862), 1777, by Lord Lennox; ibid., 177 (1865), 849, by Sir J. Packington; and ibid., 191 (1868), 120, by the Duke of Marlborough.

30. Ibid., 219 (1874), 1601.

31. Sir Norman Lockyer, Education and National Progress (London, 1906), p.46.

32. Mundella to Leader, 19 July 1883, Mundella MSS.

the Childers Committee reported that the existing arrangements were both illogical and inconvenient and recommended the creation of a Minister, assisted by a parliamentary secretary and controlling both elementary and secondary education with some supervision over the public schools and universities,³³ nothing was done. England remained without an education minister.

The reformers continued their pressure however. In the same year that the Childers Committee reported, one of them explained the "perfection and thoroughness of the German system of education" by pointing to the part played by the German minister of state for education.³⁴ Two years later, in his retirement speech, Arnold exhorted his listeners to insist on having a minister for education - a man free to devote his entire energies to educational questions, for "so long as Lord Presidents are what they are, and education is what it is, a Lord President will not be a man who puts his mind to the subject of education."³⁵ John Massie agreed that the multifarious duties which preoccupied the chiefs of the Education Department prevented their effective supervision of education, and he argued that "A national system must have a distinguished national head. Why should we not use our Humboldts as the Prussians used theirs?"³⁶

33. Report from the Select Committee on Education, Science and Art (Administration), 1884 (312), pp.iii-iv.

34. C. Bird, Higher Education in Germany and England (London, 1884), p.92.

35. The Times, 13 November 1886, p.5.

36. J. Massie, 'Middle Class Education', Westminster Review, Vol.CXXXIII, (February 1890), p.156.

Reform and reorganisation at the centre - after the style of Germany - was, therefore, an essential need as far as some reformers were concerned. They realised also, however, that nothing effective could be done without the creation of machinery at the local level which would enable reorganisation to be implemented. Indeed, it was recognised that a chief reason for the failure to carry out the Taunton Commission's organisational recommendations had been the lack of such machinery. That commission had, itself, recommended the creation of county or provincial authorities for secondary education and had referred, in justification, to the example of foreign countries, and particularly Prussia.³⁷ The later Samuelson Commission considered that, in contrast to continental states, too few good secondary schools existed in England and recommended the formation of local authorities empowered to remedy this situation.³⁸ The Cross Commission was also in favour of a reorganisation of local government which would lead to the establishment of local education authorities.³⁹

The County Councils Act of 1888 - the work of C.T. Ritchie and Goschen - swept away the chaos of some 27,000 independent local authorities. In their stead it established 62 county councils and a new London County Council, while the sixty or so towns with more than 50,000 inhabitants received the status of county boroughs.

37. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, vol. 1, p. 638.

38. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, vol. 1, p. 538.

39. Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, 1888, p. 223.

Admiration for German systems of local government may partly explain the passing of the 1888 Act, though one leading historian of the period has discounted this.⁴⁰ But domestic political necessity was the real spur. Since the 1884 Reform Act had extended household suffrage to two million men in the counties, neither political party could oppose the demand that those who now had the vote for Parliament should also be entitled to elect their local leaders.

Further acts passed over the next six years filled in the details and completed the structure begun in 1888. The new councils, for example, were rapidly given the power to levy a rate for the promotion of technical education and to appoint technical instruction committees. There was thus called into existence the nucleus of an effective system of educational administration at the local level - the lack of which had frustrated many earlier attempts at educational reform. Because many of the new authorities interpreted the term "technical education" very widely and began aiding secondary education and becoming increasingly involved in its administration, reformers saw it as a natural step to transfer control of elementary and secondary education to them. As one historian has recently written: "The steady enlargement of the field of the county education authorities within the framework of the Technical Instruction Acts pointed towards the administrative settlement of the 1902 Act."⁴¹

40. R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (Oxford, 1960 edn.), p.295.

41. P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Development of Educational Administration in England and Wales (Oxford, 1966), p. 164.

If, at the same time, more effective machinery could be set up at the centre, it was commonly argued, England would reach that combination of competent central and local control which had accounted for the efficiency and strength of the German educational system. There were those, of course, who continued to oppose what they considered the undue interference of the state in educational affairs, while any proposal for the reorganisation at local level was bound to offend a large number of religious and political susceptibilities, but with the appointment of a further royal commission in 1894 the trend towards such intervention was carried a decisive stage further.

The Bryce Commission stemmed partly from the discussion raised by Roscoe's bill of 1892 aimed at making the county and county borough councils the authorities for secondary education. On withdrawing the bill the government promised the appointment of a royal commission to investigate the whole question fully. In inviting Playfair to be the commission's chairman, Acland defined its main task as follows: "You know generally that the object is not to cover a wide field of enquiry but to obtain specific recommendations as to methods of improved organisation."⁴² Playfair, already busy with the commission on the aged poor, was unable to accept the invitation and James Bryce was appointed instead. The Times expressed the opinion that in view of the chaos prevailing in English secondary education "the Royal

⁴². Acland to Playfair, 17 January 1894, Playfair MSS.2

Commission, just constituted, is a necessity."⁴³

The Bryce Commission itself noted the haphazard growth of secondary education and asked: "How can the sporadically created and unorganised secondary education of England be organised into an efficient and satisfactory system?"⁴⁴ Having studied the schemes operating, not only in Germany but in other European countries, Australia, Canada and the United States, the Commission came up with the answer. It saw as necessary, in the first place, the creation of competent local authorities in every county and county borough to effectively supervise secondary education;⁴⁵ and secondly, the establishment of a real central authority into which the work done by the several conflicting bodies might be merged. Such a central authority would have as its head a minister for education, and it would be aided by a permanent secretariat and an educational council of experts. Its functions would include the supervision of the work of the local authorities in the interests of uniformity and harmony.⁴⁶

The Bryce Commission report had the effect of determining the government to tackle the problems of educational organisation. What happened next is well-known and need only be related briefly here. An Education Bill of 1896, which sought to make the county councils the local authorities for all education, foundered because

43. The Times, 2 March 1894, p.8.

44. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, Vol.1, p.84.

45. Ibid., pp.266-282.

46. Ibid., pp.256-264.

it also proposed to increase rate aid to the voluntary schools. Liberals interpreted the measure as a degrading attack on the school board system⁴⁷ and Nonconformists could not allow what they considered a sectarian measure⁴⁸. The Bill's author, Vice-President of the Council, John Gorst, was consequently forced to withdraw it. The failure of the 1896 bill thus persuaded the government to tackle the problem of central control first, and then revert to the potentially more tricky question of local authority.

In order to clear the way for the organisational reforms it had seen as necessary the government wisely dealt with the question of increasing the aid to the voluntary schools in a separate bill. The Voluntary Schools Act of 1897 naturally came under fire from Liberals and Nonconformists. Mundella considered it ludicrous that sectarian and clerical arguments should be encouraged when everything warned "that the greatest danger that Englishmen have to encounter today was the tried and proved intelligence of those who had greater educational advantages."⁴⁹ By

47. See the speeches by Asquith and Mundella in Hansard, 4th Ser., 40 (1896), 598, 1035. Also Mundella at Sheffield in The Times, 28 April 1896, p.6.

48. See Hansard, 4th Ser., 40 (1896), 705, 785, 1045 for speeches by Bryce and Mundella. One of Lord Rosebery's correspondents felt that while the bill had some good points, "they are swamped by the overpowering deluge of reaction and sectarianism." Sir H. Fowler to Rosebery, 10 April 1896, Rosebery MSS. 73

49. Hansard, 4th Ser., 46 (1897), 550.

pushing through this reform, however, the government ensured that any future major organisational proposals would not be jeopardised by this particular issue, at least.

In January 1898 Devonshire drew up a memorandum on the organisation of secondary education. A copy was sent to Chamberlain and is included in the Chamberlain Papers. This memorandum laid down the lines upon which the government was committed to proceed. An effective central authority directly responsible for secondary and elementary education was to be created as "an almost indispensable preliminary to the establishment of satisfactory local authorities."⁵⁰ Such a central authority would offer advice on policy to the local authorities in which control of the system was to be vested.

The result of this government commitment was the Board of Education Act of 1899 which abolished the old Committee of the Privy Council and set up in its stead a Board headed by a President responsible to Parliament. This new central authority took over the educational work of the Charity Commissioners, the Board of Agriculture and the Science and Art Department. The 1899 Act also created that body of experts which had long been deemed

50. Devonshire Memorandum on Reform of Education, 28 January 1898, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/2/8/20. Although a Nonconformist, Chamberlain was by now converted to the view that the correct local authority for all education was the county or county borough council. He admitted this in a letter to Devonshire, 28 December 1895, Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/22/158. In 1901 Chamberlain was actually to advocate the abolition of those bastions of Nonconformist ideals, the School Boards, in a further letter to Devonshire, 14 December 1901, Devonshire MSS, 340.2878. A year later he further offended the Nonconformists by supporting Balfour's Education Act.

necessary. Since the time when Arnold had proclaimed that there was nothing more remarkable in the German educational system "than the care with which every branch is confided to experts, and experts of recognised expertness" and had recommended that England follow this example,⁵¹ reformers had pressed for greater recourse, by the state, to expert opinion. The Bryce Commission had added its weight to their efforts.⁵² To assist the Board of Education in an advisory capacity, therefore, there was established a Consultative Committee consisting of 18 members holding office for six years and having the additional duty of compiling a register of teachers.

The aim of the 1899 Act, in Devonshire's words, was "to put our own house in order before we try to introduce order and a better system into the local administration of education."⁵³ To those who attacked the bill for not doing enough for secondary education, he replied that the creation of an effective central authority was an essential pre-requisite for any broad reorganisation of secondary education.⁵⁴

51. M. Arnold, 'General Report for the Year 1867' in Board of Education Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 by Matthew Arnold, (London, 1910), p.121.

52. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, Vol.1, p.258.

53. Hansard, 4th Ser., 68 (1899), 671.

54. Ibid., 70 (1899), 352. Those who believed that secondary education was being neglected included Lord Norton. See, Ibid., 68 (1899), 678.

Although, therefore, the Act of 1899 had not created the post of Minister of Education which reformers had long demanded, it had done the next best thing and was enough to persuade reformers that the amateur and dilettante handling of educational questions, so long tolerated at Westminster, had been rejected. Accordingly, they gave the measure their blessing as a means of providing an essential foundation for further organisational reform, particularly at the local level. While it may be true that the 1899 Act had little immediate effect, under R.L. Morant a few years later the new Board of Education was turned into an effective central office for the improvement of the school system and the guidance of the local authorities.⁵⁵

Having settled the problem of the central authority, the government was now determined to deal with the question of local control and to bring to an end that multiplicity of conflicting authorities which was acting as a barrier to the growth and development of education generally, and secondary education in particular. It saw the elimination of the school boards as an important part of any settlement of this issue. Contemptuous of the higher grade schools, through which the boards had assumed some responsibility in secondary education, Gorst and Morant seized upon the Cockerton Judgement by which this responsibility was declared illegal. Following this pronouncement the days of the school boards were numbered and an act of 1901, permitting

55. See F.H.J.A. Gosden, The Development of Educational Administration in England and Wales (Oxford, 1966), pp.100-105.

them to continue their work for one more year, was no more than a temporary expedient to tide the situation over until a major measure of educational reform was carried.

This measure was, of course, the Education Act of 1902 which abolished the school boards and placed all educational work under the control of the county and county borough councils acting through education committees. The Act also provided that the authorities of non-county boroughs with populations over 10,000, and urban districts over 20,000, be given control over elementary education only. It was felt that these, being part of the regular scheme of local government, were more satisfactory than the old school boards, given the need for unity and simplification. The Act of 1902 extended to every part of the country that greater degree of order which had already been introduced at the centre. England, at last, had something approaching a national and co-ordinated system of education, administered through representative local bodies acting in co-operation with the newly-constituted central authority. Balfour had supported the bill on the grounds that the old system - in comparison with that of Germany, or even of France and Switzerland - was "the most antiquated, the most ineffectual, and the most wasteful method yet invented for providing a national education."⁵⁶ It was because many people shared his feelings that the 1902 bill escaped the fate which had befallen its predecessor of 1896 and, by being allowed to come into effect, enabled England to further reduce the educational gap which existed

56. Hansard, 4th Ser., 105 (1902), 903-4.

between itself and Germany.

What may be said of the German influence upon this course of events ? Brief allusions to it have already been made in passing: The Bryce Commission's investigation of German education; Mundella's concern that sectarian arguments might obscure the threat of German commercial competition; and Arnold's reference to the use of expertise in the administration of German education. Probably more important than these, however, was Balfour's support of the 1902 Act in the expectation that it would raise the efficiency of English educational administration to the level of that in Germany and other countries. England's backwardness in the organisation of its schooling system was constantly impressed upon the government and the invidious comparison drawn by the reformers undoubtedly played a large part in promoting action. Thus A. Rollit supported the 1896 Bill in the belief that it would enable England to catch up with the "advanced system of education" of the Germans⁵⁷. The failure of that measure prompted Bernhard Samuelson to lead a deputation to the government in November 1896 to urge the case for organisational reform by reference to Germany and Switzerland.⁵⁸ In 1900, Lord Rosebery was urged to lead the campaign for restructuring, by a correspondent who referred him to German educational advance and to Sadler's special report

57. Ibid., 4th Ser., 40 (1896), 682.

58. The Times, 26 November 1896, p.6.

of 1898 on Prussian secondary education.⁵⁹ Referring to the German example, Haldane - although a Liberal and although conscious of the measure's shortcomings - supported the 1902 Act, believing that it made "a gap in the thicket which shuts us in as a nation in educational matters."⁶⁰

Alongside the realisation of German superiority in matters of educational organisation, there was the deep-set fear of German commercial competition and this, too, added impetus to the move towards reform. In his important memorandum of 28 January 1898, Devonshire explained the vast importance attached to the question of re-organising secondary education by reference to "the increasing industrial and commercial competition with which we are threatened."⁶¹ The 1899 Act was welcomed by member of Parliament Channing, because the commercial competition to which England was subjected made it essential to "place the whole system at the earliest moment on the maximum basis of efficiency."⁶² In 1901, one commentator with a wide knowledge of education in Germany, warned that if England lost her commercial supremacy it would be "because of her inefficient and inadequate system of secondary schools."⁶³

59. R.P. Scott to Rosebery, 29 January 1900, Rosebery MSS.76.

60. Nineteenth Century, Vol.LII (October 1902), p.604. The deployment of religious arguments by members of his party irritated Haldane. "The Education Bill is really not the oppressive measure the Non-Conformists are making out", he wrote to his mother, 7 June 1902, Haldane MSS.5967, ff.188-9.

61. Devonshire Memorandum on Reform of Education, 28 January 1898, Chamberlain MSS.JC/6/2/8/20.

62. Hansard, 4th Ser., 73 (1899), 617.

63. R.E. Hughes, 'The English School and its German Rival', Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXX (July 1901), p.40.

Austen Chamberlain supported the 1902 Act on the grounds that the increase of foreign trade competition made it imperative that English children should not be left "to the miserable educational appliances ... offered in many parts of the country."⁶⁴

It is evident, then, from these remarks - so typical of many more - that a large number of reformers were spurred to action by the fact of German commercial and industrial success based, to a significant degree, on a better-organised system of secondary education. How representative these reformers were and how important they were in securing legislation, are matters difficult to gauge. It would be unwise to over-estimate their influence. Yet we cannot deny them an important place in English educational development during this period. We might best place them in perspective by briefly pointing to some of the other influences upon the movement for English educational reorganisation as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

One event, of course, overshadowed all others. In the same year as the Board of Education Act was passed, the Anglo-Boer War began. This conflict cast doubts on the efficiency of English social and political institutions and revealed serious shortcomings in military leadership and training as well as in technical equipment. England's failure to bring the war to a quick end produced a widespread mood of self-criticism among Englishmen at home. As one historian has written: "The attention of the people, especially

64. The Times, 5 November 1902, p.10.

the reformers, was almost automatically directed to those institutions which most likely would remedy the defects, namely the schools and particularly the secondary schools."⁶⁵ One such reformer was Lord Rosebery, who was at this time formulating a programme of 'national efficiency' and was naturally concerned at the implications of the military stalemate in South Africa. The secretary to the Northern Counties Education League had written to Rosebery in January 1900 suggesting that the "time when the military power and the defence of the Empire of Great Britain are matters of serious consideration and peril is eminently suitable for calling upon the country to reform its school system."⁶⁶ That Rosebery agreed with this viewpoint is obvious, for he wrote to the prominent educationalist, R.P. Scott, that "The bitter, valuable lesson which we may hope that this war will bring home to our people, is the vital necessity of searching examination and re-organisation in many departments of national life. Secondary education is certainly one of these."⁶⁷ Rosebery again referred to the lessons of the war in a speech at Chesterfield in 1901. In this speech he set forth his wide-ranging programme. "If we have not learned from this war that we have greatly lagged behind in efficiency, we have learned nothing", he declared. Of the

65. A.M. Kazamias, Politics, Society and Secondary Education in England (Philadelphia, 1966), p.112. And, as Kazamias states it was "the German example, more than that of any other country" which was seen as the model on which the necessary reforms were to be based, *ibid.*, p.111.

66. J.H. Hollowell to Rosebery, 29 January 1900, Rosebery MSS. 76.

67. Rosebery to R.P. Scott, 31 January 1900. *Ibid.*, 89 Letterbook.

various proposals which made up his programme Rosebery attached most importance to reform of education. He felt that upon the schools depended the efficiency of the nation as a whole and that unless education were made more effective "we shall have peacefully to fight other nations with weapons like the bow and arrow." Unfortunately, in education, there was "nothing like a national system, but a great chaos of almost haphazard arrangement."⁶⁸

Of course, Teutonic efficiency and Boer military resistance apart, there were pressing educational reasons why reform was necessary and why it came about. In the first place, the rivalry and overlapping functions of the various bodies associated with the administration of secondary education demanded reorganisation in the interests of economy and efficiency. The Board of Education Act (1899) had already created a single central authority; it was, therefore, logical to move on to the question of local control. In the second place, the uncertain legal status of the higher-grade work done by the elementary schools made reform desirable. The 1870 Act had given the school boards control over elementary education only. Many of the larger school boards, however, were obtaining money from the rates to provide secondary education for advanced pupils. The

68. The Times, 17 December 1901, p. 10. In the following year, Rosebery was to attack the Education Act on the grounds that it would still leave England far behind Germany "in all these education matters." Ibid., 31 May 1902, p. 9. The Times, gave its opinion that Rosebery was "too much given to cheap laudation of the German system", a reminder that the comments of the pro-Germans were not always accepted uncritically, *ibid.*, p. 11.

Cockerton Judgement that such expenditure was illegal, created an impossible situation, and the hostility of the Conservative Government towards the school boards clinched the outcome: the boards were eliminated and a paramount education authority was set up.

In our attempt to reach an assessment of the relative importance of the German influence on English legislation in this regard, we should also remember that reference was made to countries other than Germany. Reformers and official inquiries had always paid full attention to relevant developments in all countries. The Office of Special Inquiries and Reports, formed in 1895, began its work with a series of investigations into the educational systems of foreign countries. Two of the most significant of these investigations were conducted by Robert Morant who, as Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, was to play a major part in the reorganisation effected in 1902. In 1897 Morant reported on the French educational system, and in the following year contributed a survey of the devastating contrast between the illogical and confused administration of education in England and the harmony and efficiency of the Swiss system.

In discussing educational organisation it has been impossible to isolate the secondary from the other branches of education, for it was a question which bore upon them all. It is worth remembering, however, that it was out of the realisation of the shortcomings of secondary education that the whole debate

on organisation had largely arisen, and certainly the problems facing this sector of education gave added urgency to that debate. The solution of these problems was due to a variety of reform influences. Many of these were entirely native and can be attributed to the evolutionary nature of reform. Without any reference at all to foreign example the English system would have changed its shape. This process was occasionally speeded up by such events as the Boer War which, by shaking England out of its complacency, caused the legislative machine to move into a higher gear. It remains true, however, that the admirers of the German educational system added a significant impetus to the movement for change. It was inevitable that in its attempts to bring more order into its educational system England should seek a good deal of guidance from Germany. That country, more than any other, taught what needed to be done: the creation both of a more effective system of local control and of a truly competent central authority. By 1902 this had been accomplished and Germany had once again made a tangible contribution to the development of English education in this period.

The inadequate curriculum.

In his autobiography Anthony Trollope observed of his education at Harrow: "During the whole of those twelve years no attempt had been made to teach me anything but Latin and Greek, and very little attempt to teach me those languages. I do not remember any lessons either in writing or arithmetic. French or German I

certainly was not taught. The assertion will scarcely be credited, but I do assert that I have no recollection of other tuition except that in the dead languages."⁶⁹ Such reminiscences from a notable product of the English public school system would seem to confirm the oft-heard contemporary criticism that ignorance and idleness were far-too-common features of the public schools. Certainly the Clarendon Commission, set up to inquire into the revenues, management and curricula of Harrow and the other eight leading public schools, found their range of studies seriously lacking in breadth and flexibility. It reported that natural sciences were "practically excluded from the education of the higher classes"; that there was "little systematic teaching" of either history or geography; and that mathematics and modern languages were "not pursued as effectively as they might be."⁷⁰

Such criticisms were directed not only at the great public schools. The later Taunton Commission, inquiring into the secondary education of those who went to schools other than the nine great public schools, found that subjects like mathematics, drawing and the natural sciences were either suffering from indifferent teaching and poor equipment or were excluded from the curriculum altogether.⁷¹

69. A. Trollope, An Autobiography (Oxford, 1950 edn.), pp.17-18.

70. Report of the Public Schools' Commission, 1864, Vol.1, pp.16-17, 30-33.

71. Report of the Schools' Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.1, pp.30-34.

In the same year, both the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction lent their weight to the demands for a widening of the secondary school curriculum by the introduction of a greater amount of instruction in science, geography and like subjects.⁷²

In spite of the plethora of reports and recommendations produced in the 1860's, however, there is ample evidence that the majority of schools undertook the modernisation of their curricula either very slowly or not at all. The Devonshire Commission in 1875, on the basis of returns from 128 public and endowed schools, found that 13 had no school laboratory, that 30 allotted no regular time whatever to science teaching, that 63 taught science for only 2 hours or less each week, and that a mere 10 schools provided a minimum of 4 hours science instruction a week. The Commission recommended, therefore, that science be made an integral part of all secondary education.⁷³ To the arguments usually raised against such a proposed modification of the curriculum - lack of funds, uncertainty as to the value of scientific instruction, and the already overcrowded state of the curriculum - the commission retorted that the financial problem was far from insuperable; that science had great value in developing the intellect; and that a sensible re-organisation of the curriculum was within the capacity of most

72. Report of a Committee Appointed by the Council of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1868 (137), p.3; and Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), p.IX.

73. Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, 1875 (C.1279), p.1.

schools.⁷⁴ A decade later, the Samuelson Commission reported a lack of good secondary schools teaching modern subjects, and went so far as to recommend the establishment of schools, or departments of schools, in which natural science, drawing, mathematics and modern languages should take the place of Latin and Greek.⁷⁵

The curricula of the public and grammar schools of mid-nineteenth century England reflected the educational values of the classes they served. Their defenders regarded the classical-literary tradition as the cultural and moral preparation for a political and social élite. It was a tradition which, after all, had produced men like Burke, Chatham, Pitt, Peel and Gladstone. It had stood the test of many generations and, it was argued, had played a fundamental part in placing Britain first among the nations of the world.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, certain disturbing questions began to be raised. Could the classical tradition guarantee continued growth and prosperity in an increasingly complex world? Could it help society withstand the strains imposed upon it by further urban and industrial growth, and by the intrusion of the masses into politics? Could the emphasis upon the classics be justified when the frontiers of knowledge were being advanced in all directions? Questions such as these produced a movement to reform the secondary curriculum which was entirely native and which continued to make its presence felt down

74. Ibid., pp.5-8.

75. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.1, pp.516, 538.

to the end of this period, and beyond. From the early years of the century, the Edinburgh Review and the Westminster Review had called for reform of the curriculum. Radical thinkers like Bentham and James Mill were intolerant of schools which upheld a traditional curriculum. In the 1825 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Mill had condemned as "preposterous and vicious" any school which did not make reasonable progress towards embracing modern subjects. Progressive educationists like Thomas Arnold of Rugby, Samuel Butler of Shrewsbury and Butler's successor, Benjamin Kennedy, had sought to balance the classics with subjects like history, geography, French and mathematics.

An articulate and influential part in this English reform movement was played by manufacturers and business men. Highly critical of the sterile curriculum offered to their children as preparation for industry, commerce and the professions, they raised a further pertinent question. What kind of secondary education would best bolster Britain against the growing commercial and industrial threat posed by foreign countries, and especially Germany? Thus we find, in such men, indigenous pressure for reform dove-tailing with fear and admiration of German economic growth to produce a powerful stimulus for change.

The Times, was to observe in January 1874 that "whether or not Englishmen have deteriorated, Germans were not formerly our competitors at all, and have now become such."⁷⁶ Ever since the

76. The Times, 19 January 1874, p.9.

warning signals sent out at the Great Exhibition of 1851, Englishmen had become increasingly perturbed at German commercial penetration into areas previously regarded as English preserves and at reports of a growing number of Germans being employed in English commercial houses.⁷⁷ It was not long before the slow rate of English economic expansion was being partly explained in terms of the narrowness of the English secondary curriculum and the failure of the secondary schools to adapt to the modern age. It was in the decade of the 1860's, in fact, that the habit of looking to Germany in these (as in other) educational matters was established. The Earl of Clarendon visited Prussia in 1861 and returned with information about secondary education that was to be incorporated into the report of the Royal Commission he was heading.⁷⁸ In 1868 the Taunton Commission subscribed to the idea of a balanced curriculum and recommended that the schools in each of its suggested grades of secondary education should provide a wide range of studies combining modern as well as classical, and scientific as well as literary subjects.⁷⁹ There is no doubt that, while the Taunton Commission arrived at this conclusion after studying the secondary schools of

77. See, for example, *ibid.*, 13 July 1887, p.11.

78. Report of the Public Schools' Commission, 1864, Vol.II, pp.50-61. Partly as a result of that visit, the questions which the Commission put to witnesses summoned before it frequently cited German practice. Thus, Sir Charles Lyell, a geologist, agreed that the German Gymnasium had a wider curriculum than an English school with better scientific instruction; while the Astronomer Royal, G.B. Airy, praised the teaching of applied mathematics in Germany; *Ibid.*, Vol.IV, pp.373,403.

79. Report of the Schools' Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.1, pp.80-86.

France, Switzerland and Germany, it attached most importance to Germany. Schools like the Prussian Realschulen, it reported, which provided a sound general education, geared to modern requirements, "have become a positive need of modern times."⁸⁰

Arnold, in his report on continental education for the Taunton Commission, contrasted the teaching of science and modern languages in the various countries he visited with that provided in England. He thought that, as regards science teaching, there was room for improvement even in Germany - but then he was an incompetent judge, for England supplied him "with no standard of comparison, for in the English schools, when I knew them, the natural sciences were not taught at all."⁸¹ Thus, the science teaching of the German secondary schools, though by no means perfect, still gave their pupils a training for commerce and industry much superior to that available to their English counterparts.⁸² As regards instruction in foreign languages, not only did they hold a more important place in the curricula of French and German schools, but "Even in France I thought these lessons were better done - with better methods, better teachers, and more thoroughly learned - than in England. In Germany they were better

80. Ibid., p.77.

81. Ibid., Vol.VI, p.591.

82. Ibid., p.627.

than in France."⁸³ Arnold, therefore, found that in the teaching of modern subjects and in the place which they should occupy in the curriculum, the continental schools held valuable lessons for England. Though Arnold undoubtedly regarded the German example as being the most valuable, his remarks remind us that reformers like him looked elsewhere for their ideas as well.

From the late 1860's onwards, then, many people in England became convinced that the greater emphasis which the Germans were giving to modern subjects at the secondary level was a major explanation of their commercial and industrial success. By the end of the century this conviction was so well rooted that an official inquiry could confidently assert that the "difference between the methods of training and aptitudes for commerce in Germany and England are traceable to the fundamental differences in the secondary

83. Ibid., p.591. Foreign language teaching, of course, had particular relevance to commercial progress and continued to attract the attention of reformers. In 1884 T.H. Huxley condemned as totally inadequate the teaching of foreign languages in English secondary schools; Report from the Select Committee on Education, Science and Art (Administration) 1884, pp.105-8. Three years later, Mundella told the Commons that it was because "we have neglected the teaching of modern languages" that England's commerce was being overtaken by that of Germany; Hansard, 3rd Ser., 318 (1887), 1851. Later still, one writer observed that "In modern language teaching, there is no doubt whatever in my mind as to the superiority of the German school."; G.G. Coulton, Public Schools and Public Needs (London, 1901), p.46.

education of the two countries."⁸⁴ By this time, it had become a matter of such grave concern to Lord Rosebery that he castigated the better secondary schools for turning out youths of admirable character, but "equipped for the keen competition of our modern world with a thin varnish of dead languages which disappear in a very short time This sort of training is futile in view of the emulous efforts of other states - it can only end in disaster and decay."⁸⁵

There was, therefore, considerable pressure by reformers and by commerce and industry, themselves, for a distinctively modern secondary education. It derived much of its force from the persistent evidence of German commercial expansion. The result of this pressure - bearing in mind the slowness of the secondary schools themselves to take up more modern subjects - was to further the growth of purely technical education. In the 1880's the higher grade elementary schools had emerged to provide a largely technical education for older pupils. In the 1890's the technical instruction committees established by the Act of 1889 began to intervene in the secondary schools in order to promote technical and scientific education. To many reformers these developments threatened to

84. Report on a Visit to Germany, with a View to Ascertaining the Recent Progress of Technical Education in that Country, 1896 (C.8301), pp.9-10. Similarly, Bernhard Samuelson could see little hope of England making further real commercial progress until it could emulate countries like Germany and Switzerland with their abundance of good secondary schools "in which the commercial clerks and travellers receive their education", The Saturday Review, Vol.LXXXII, 10 October 1896, p.391.

85. Rosebery to R.P. Scott, 31 January 1900, Rosebery MSS. 89, Letter-book. For a further exposition of Rosebery's views see his book Miscellanies, Literary and Historical, Vol.II (London, 1922 edn.), pp.247-9; and The Times, 29 April 1896, p.13.

undermine the concept of good all-round training. They believed that there was a real danger that English secondary education, in the reaction against humanistic and classical studies, might swing too far in the opposite direction. Thus there was set in motion in the 1890's a crucial debate as to exactly what secondary education was.

Was it, for instance, the new technical education for the masses provided by the higher-grade schools? Ought, therefore, the upward development of elementary education through those schools to be encouraged? The advocates of greater emphasis on technical and commercial education were prepared to accept this definition of secondary education and this course of action. Alternatively, was secondary schooling the more traditional type of academic education given by the grammar and public schools? Most reformers agreed that the best form of secondary education lay somewhere between these two extremes. While conceding the need for the sort of instruction which would be immediately useful in maintaining England's threatened industrial supremacy they felt that academic and humanistic studies could not be ignored without producing an uncultured generation. They recognised that even the professional man of science needed to be able to express himself well in the written and spoken word. They sought, therefore, to challenge the preponderance of classical studies in the curriculum and so create a balanced range of studies after the German ideal of allseitige Bildung which they considered the only logical basis for further specialised training

and the most sensible type of education. They frequently pointed to the German Realschulen in which science was not allowed to dominate the curriculum but was treated as a constituent part of a general education along with linguistic and humanistic studies, even in some cases along with Latin. Thus, Michael Sadler, Director of the new Department of Special Inquiries and Reports, and a firm believer in the value of comparative studies, applauded the Realschulen for keeping before them "at every point of their work, the ideal of a liberal education, aimed at turning out well-educated boys."⁸⁶ Naturally enough, therefore, he decided that one of England's most pressing needs was for "first-grade non-classical schools, like the Prussian Realschulen, giving a purely modern (but not a Philistine) education of the very highest quality."⁸⁷ By the same token, reformers frequently praised the Gymnasium in which future historians, classicists and lawyers were not allowed to forego instruction in mathematical and scientific subjects. They could say also that as far back as the 1860s two royal commissions had both subscribed to the idea of a balanced curriculum based on German models, while the influential Bryce Commission of 1895 had likewise reported in favour of such a curriculum.⁸⁸

86. M.E. Sadler, 'The Realschulen in Berlin', Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol. 1 (1896-7), p.453. Harcourt urged people to read this particular report of Sadler's with care, in order "to appreciate the merits of the German system and the defects of our own." Until the English learned from the Germans the value of a liberal education, Harcourt continued, "we have no chance of competing with Germany on equal terms." The Times, 24 March 1898, p.8.

87. M.E. Sadler, Secondary Education in its Bearings on Practical Life (Newcastle, 1899), p.20.

88. Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895, vol.1, p. 134.

Within twelve years of the Bryce Commission Report, the secondary school curriculum had been given definite and balanced form by successive Board of Education directives - issued in the wake of the major organisational changes of 1899 and 1902. It is true that the first regulations under the new order of things in some ways represented a concession to that body of opinion which demanded that the major emphasis must be placed on scientific and technical education to meet the continuing commercial and industrial competition from other nations, and above all from Germany. The Regulations of 1902 made provision for two types of school: Division A schools which emphasised scientific and technical studies; and Division B schools which followed in the tradition of the endowed grammar schools and provided more literary and academic instruction. Many of the old higher grade elementary schools were transformed into Division A schools, and these schools earned higher grants than did the Division B schools.

It was felt by many people that in this way the Board was giving excessive encouragement to technical and scientific studies. This criticism was silenced by the Regulations of 1904 which re-defined secondary education as, ideally, being a general education up to the age of 16, and including instruction in English language and literature, geography, history, modern languages, mathematics, science and drawing. In short, it was to provide "instruction in a group of subjects so selected as to ensure due breadth and solidity

in the education given."⁸⁹ In subsequent years the 1904 Regulations were modified to allow the schools greater flexibility in the shaping of their curricula. The Regulations of 1905 claimed that their aim was to secure for schools "greater elasticity in the organisation and curriculum."⁹⁰ They pointed out that science students needed some training in the humanities and vice versa, and recommended that specialisation should not begin before the third year of the secondary course.⁹¹ The important 1907 Regulations abolished a regulation introduced in 1904 stipulating that specified minima of time were to be devoted to each subject. Henceforth, schools were to be free to arrange their own timetables provided that excessive time was not spent on some studies to the detriment of others.⁹² The Regulations of 1911 admitted that those intending to enter commerce and industry required a certain degree of vocational specialisation in the secondary schools. The Board was willing to allow such specialisation to take place, on condition both that it did not begin until a good foundation of general knowledge had been laid, and that pupils also continued to receive a broad general education.⁹³

89. Board of Education, Report for 1905-6 (Cd.3270), p.46

90. Ibid., Report of 1904-5 (Cd.2783), p.44.

91. Ibid., p.46.

92. Ibid., Report for 1906-7 (Cd.3862), p.68.

93. Ibid., Report for 1911-12 (Cd.6707), p.73.

What was the German influence upon these developments ? It would certainly appear that, in its handling of secondary education from 1902 onwards, the Board of Education was following that line of action which had proved so successful in Germany, and which had long attracted the attention and admiration of reformers. In spite of all the talk about the need for technical and commercial studies to counter German economic expansion, most reformers had recognised that the success of Germany was based not so much upon its admirable specialised training but upon its general, well-balanced secondary education. Michael Sadler summed up the feelings of many reformers when he said that, in using a broad-based secondary education as a foundation for later advanced training, Germany was "teaching the world lessons which cannot be too often repeated."⁹⁴

It would be unwise, however, to explain the changes of 1902 to 1907 solely in these terms. It can be argued that the Board's Regulations of these years urged secondary schools to pursue a balanced curriculum after the German model. On the other hand, it has been claimed that those Regulations were expressly designed to check all tendencies to vocational and technical bias in the secondary schools and impose on them the literary and

94. M.E. Sadler, 'Recent Developments in Higher Commercial Education in Germany', Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol.IX (1902), p.525. Examples from the multitude of similar comments include: Sir P. Magnus, 'Schools of Commerce', Contemporary Review, Vol.LII (December 1887), p.849; J. Massie, 'Middle Class Education', Westminster Review, Vol.CXXXIII (February, 1890), pp.149-150; Report on Technical and Commercial Education in East Prussia, Poland, Galicia, Silesia and Bohemia, 1900 (Cd.419), p.5; and Hansard, 4th Ser., 73 (1899), 617, 626 659-660.

classical tradition of the public schools. The man largely responsible for the Regulations was R.L. Morant, who had regarded the technically-biased higher-grade elementary schools with distaste and as dangerous competitors to the old, established grammar schools. The close co-operation of the Wykehamist Morant and the Old Etonian Balfour had resulted in the liquidation of the higher-grade schools; in the reinforcement of the distinction between elementary and secondary education; and in the establishment of a system of secondary education based on public school models. Working with the Eton-educated Greek scholar, Professor Headlam, Morant abolished the distinction made in 1902 between Division 'A' schools and Division 'B' schools and placed the secondary schools on a common footing, with Latin as an integral part of their curriculum.

There is no evidence that Morant was guided in any of this by German precedents. His inspiration came from his happy years at Winchester and his conviction that working-class children should not be given an education which might give them too ambitious an outlook. As one prominent educational historian has put it: "For the future the pattern of English culture must come not from Leeds and West Ham but from Eton and Winchester."⁹⁵ Thus working-class aspirations to secondary education were put back by several decades and whatever threat there was of that sector of education being debased by undue concentration on technical and vocational training was effectively countered.

95. E.J.R. Eaglesham, The Foundations of Twentieth Century Education in England (London, 1967), p.59.

When one looks at the reform of the secondary curriculum in retrospect, the conclusion must be that, as in other areas of reform, there is no simple explanation of how it came about. To suggest that the changes here were due entirely to the influence of German practice and ideas would be excessive. From the early years of the nineteenth century, the inadequacy of the secondary curriculum had provoked demands for reform from many quarters at home, and radical thinkers, progressive educationists, concerned businessmen and interested politicians had pressed hard for innovation. From abroad, meanwhile, ideas from France, Switzerland and elsewhere made themselves felt alongside those from Germany. The curriculum of the English secondary school, in other words, changed as a result of all these factors interacting upon each other. There can be little doubt, however, that one of the most important of them was the example of Germany, and although the German influence was not so profound as it was in other fields, nevertheless, Germany made a real contribution to the achievement of reform.

Chapter 5: ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES AND THE GERMAN MODEL

Introduction: English reformers and German universities,

1867 - 1899

In his report on continental secondary education for the Taunton Commission in 1868, Matthew Arnold included observations on university education. He expressed the opinion that the English universities were little more than high schools by continental, and especially German standards. In his view English universities did not carry education "beyond the stage of the general and school education." The young man of ambition and desire for knowledge had to go to Berlin, Heidelberg or Paris "because England cannot give him what he wants."¹ What Arnold particularly admired in the German universities was the high standard of their teaching; their pursuit of knowledge for its own sake; their faculty organisation; and their unique system of teaching assistants who were known as "Privatdocenten".² On his return to England he wrote to the Pall Mall Gazette that he had found in Germany "much that is the best of its kind in Europe, and either unique, or the model of whatever is the best of the same kind elsewhere; much, therefore, from which we may get valuable suggestions for our own use."³

Many other reformers were to agree with everything Arnold had to say, so that, in the words of one historian: "By the 90s the reputation of the German universities was at its peak throughout

1. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, pp.633-4.

2. Ibid., pp.602-5.

3. Pall Mall Gazette, 5 May 1868, p.11, 'German and English Universities'.

the world."⁴ The German universities became widely regarded as the mainspring of the intellectual life of that country, the pinnacle of the whole educational system. Receiving from the secondary schools matriculants with a thorough all-round education and broad culture (allseitige Bildung), the German universities gave an excellent academic or pure scientific training. So widely recognised was the superiority of German university organisation and instruction that Bryce considered it superfluous "to dwell on the value for other countries of the example and experience of Germany."⁵ In fact, leading English reformers constantly made reference to the German system and, by so doing, formed an understanding both of the shortcomings of English university education, and of the reforms necessary to meet those shortcomings. That is not to say that the reform of English universities in the nineteenth century owed everything to German influence. Even before that influence had been brought fully to bear, reform pressures were at work which were entirely native. Mark Pattison later recalled the "restless fever of change" of the 1840s and 1850s which produced a Royal Commission into the two senior universities.⁶ Out of that Commission was born parliamentary legislation in 1854 and 1856 which removed many ancient regulations and statutes; granted to professors a greater importance

4. P.W. Musgrave, Technical Change, the Labour Force and Education. A Study of the British and German Iron and Steel Industries 1860-1964 (Oxford, 1967), p.83

5. J. Conrad, The German Universities (Glasgow, 1885), prefatory note, p.xiii.

6. M. Pattison, Memoirs (London, 1885), p.245.

in the administration of the universities; began the process of dismantling the religious tests; and generally gave the universities a clearer field to develop along their own lines. As will be seen, this indigneous pressure for change made itself felt in other ways too. However, it cannot be denied that this internal movement towards reform, particularly from the late 1860s onwards, was both strengthened and enriched by ideas emanating from Germany.

One much-admired feature of the German universities was their emphasis upon the principle of freedom: the freedom of teachers to teach their subjects as they liked and to carry out whatever research they liked (Lehrfreiheit): and the freedom of students from prescribed courses of study, from compulsory attendance at lectures, and from the burden of too many competitive examinations (Lernfreiheit). Indeed a German student could pass freely from one university to another, attending whatever lectures he liked, and studying under whatever professor he chose. Karl Pearson considered this arrangement far better than that operating in England which tied a student to the same place for three years, and recommended its adoption in England.⁷ Haldane, while studying at Göttingen in 1874, had been struck by the lack of examinations and prizes within the university and considered this "a great improvement on us, and which I think accounts for the fact that the Germans are so much better informed, since they do not cram

7. Evidence taken by the Royal Commissioners Appointed to consider the Draft Charter for the Proposed Gresham University in London, 1894 (C.7425), Q.5786, p.218. See also R.B. Haldane, Selected Addresses and Essays (London, 1928), pp.149-150.

things like us, but actually learn them."⁸ The result of German academic freedom, according to the reformers, was that university education was seen as being the systematic pursuit of knowledge (Wissenschaft) for its own sake, rather than a preparation for employment by the provision of bread-winning studies (Brodstudien). Matthew Arnold had considered that in the twin ideals of Wissenschaft and academic freedom "we have most to borrow from the German universities".⁹ This is not to say that all reformers of university education in England subscribed to this view. The scepticism of Mark Pattison, for example, is to be seen in his influential Suggestions on Academical Organisation (1860). While seeing some value in the freedom allowed to the German student to attach himself to this or that course, Pattison still believed that it was necessary to lay down regulations to ensure that a student properly fulfilled a defined curriculum of study and gave evidence that he had benefitted from it.

This liberal atmosphere of German universities was in stark contrast to the obscurantism of the English universities, dominated by the classics and suspicious of all "new" subjects. Greater prestige and rewards fell to classicists and the advocates of modern studies had to fight every inch of the way to gain recognition. The need to rectify this situation had been apparent in England before attention was fixed upon the German example. Since the

8. Haldane to his mother, 27 April, 1874, Haldane MSS, 5927, ff.16-17. Magnus was later to recall the reaction against examinations in the English universities in which the "example of German Universities was constantly quoted", and claimed that people had perhaps underestimated the disciplinary value of examinations; Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts 1880-1910 (London, 1910), p.61.

9. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, p.607.

campaign of the Edinburgh Review for a re-orientation of the university curriculum in the early years of the century, native reform influences had been at work. For instance, Dr. William Whewell of Cambridge, in his Principles of English Education (1837), had advocated that a greater emphasis be placed upon the practical application of mathematics. The Royal Commission on Oxford University had urged in 1852 that the natural sciences be allotted a fair share of fellowships and prizes and be given greater standing.¹⁰ Such thinking reflected the growing acceptance of secular, democratic and utilitarian values which placed greater emphasis on a 'useful' rather than a traditional education, and some progress was achieved. In 1800 came the Oxford Public Examination Statute followed in 1807 by the separation of the classical and mathematical honours school at Oxford. In 1826 "that godless institution in Gower Street", University College, London, was founded, to which its opponents replied two years later with King's College. The years around mid-century saw the establishment of honours courses in natural sciences at both Oxford and Cambridge. However, advance for some reformers had come too slowly. Not until the decade of the 1860s was a science faculty instituted at London. The state in England in 1868 granted only £4,500 to the universities for scientific purposes.¹¹ In that year, Mark Pattison contrasted the twelve poorly-endowed professorships in mathematics, natural science and medicine at Oxford, with the forty at Berlin University.¹² Also in that same

10. W.H.G.Armytage, Civic Universities (London, 1955), p.199.

11. J. Blanchet, Science, Craft and the State: A Study of English Technical Education and its Advocates 1867-1906 (Oxford, D.Phil. thesis 1953), p. 17.

12. M.Pattison, Suggestions on Academical Organisation (Edinburgh,1868), pp. 188-190.

year Lord Russell was still bemoaning the fact that aspiring university teachers "are obliged to attend solely to classics, as the only mode by which they can obtain University rewards."¹³ Naturally enough, the predominance of the classical tradition in English universities meant the neglect of science teaching and research, and England contrasted unfavourably with Germany in this respect. In that country it was state policy to promote science in both the universities and technical high schools, the latter concentrating on its practical application. Lavish state aid ensured the building of fine laboratories, the provision of expensive apparatus and the maintenance of large numbers of research workers.

Inevitably, therefore, reformers interested in the promotion of science at the university level turned to the German model. In doing so, they added great impetus to the native reform movement which had laid the foundations for further advance. The Taunton Commission was told by D.S. Price that England could never hope effectively to master the techniques of applying science to industry until the teaching of science in German universities had been thoroughly investigated - not only that of Giessen but that of all "those excellent seats of learning."¹⁴ Henry Roscoe, following his tour of Germany, contributed an article to Nature praising the excellence of science teaching in that country's universities,¹⁵ and warned the select committee under Bernhard

13. The Times, 24 January 1868. p.5.

14. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission Relative to Technical Education, 1867 (3898). p.22.

15. Nature, Vol.I, 1868. pp.475-7.

Samuelson that the laboratories of the two London colleges were "very inferior in size and working power of all kinds to those of Germany."¹⁶

The 1870s did see both a good deal of improvement in the facilities for science teaching in the English universities and a more detailed articulation of reforming demands. Much undoubtedly grew out of the earlier changes which had owed little to external forces, but the German influence upon these later changes is undeniable. There was expansion at Owens College, Manchester, based largely on the information which Roscoe had gathered in Germany. In 1871 the Cavendish Physical Laboratory was opened at Cambridge, thanks to an endowment from the Duke of Devonshire. A year later its equivalent - the Clarendon Laboratory - was opened at Oxford. Important expansion also took place in the physiological department at Oxford, and in the department of biology at Cambridge. Developments such as these prompted the Duke of Devonshire to write to his son commending the universities for extending their facilities and range of subjects. As he put it: "The exertions they have for some time been making to render their great resources as useful as possible are very creditable to them."¹⁷ In spite of these improvements, however, Benjamin Brodie, the Oxford scientist who had studied at Giessen, could still claim that England was being gravely handicapped by her neglect of science teaching at university, whereas the German universities were "the very centres of intellectual

16. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), Q.5,633, p.285.

17. Devonshire to Hartington, 18 September 1875, Devonshire MSS, 4-71b.

progress."¹⁸ Yet although Devonshire might praise the efforts of the universities to expand and modernise their curricula, the royal commission of which he was chairman felt obliged to report that Oxford, for instance, fell short of the standards of excellence achieved in certain foreign countries in the realm of science teaching.¹⁹ The Devonshire Commission recommended the expansion of university teaching staffs and fellowships and the promotion of scientific teaching and research.²⁰ The German influence behind these recommendations is obvious for the commission expressed warm admiration for the largeness of German teaching staffs (allowing depth and breadth of instruction), and for the abundance and variety of science teaching given in the German universities.²¹ The commission also backed up its recommendations by recalling the evidence of Brodie and Frankland, both of whom had paid warm tributes to the German system.²² The evidence of Frankland appears to have made some impression on the Duke of Devonshire for he recorded in his diary that it was "of considerable length and of much interest."²³

18. Nature, Vol.VII, 1872, pp.97-8.

19. Third Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, 1873 (C.868), p.xli.

20. Ibid., pp.xxix-xxxii.

21. Ibid., pp.xxii-xxvi.

22. Ibid., p.lviii.

23. Diary of the Seventh Duke of Devonshire, Vol.21, 14 February 1871, Devonshire MSS.

Progress, however, came too slowly to satisfy the reformers who, in consequence, continued to voice their demands for radical change and to suggest that the German model might be the one on which to base that change. Lockyer, for instance, writing in 1877, claimed that in the question of scientific training, the example of Germany could not be "too often referred to".²⁴ In addition, there was at this time a growing concern at some of the implications of German scientific paramountcy. Not only did the greater proportion of the written work on natural science emanate from Germany, but there were a growing number of German-trained scientists rising to important positions in the English scientific world.²⁵ Henry Roscoe had told the select committee of 1868 that not only did Germany lead the world in her science teaching, but that a study of the most eminent English scientists would reveal that "they have almost all been over to Germany."²⁶ Similarly, H.E. Armstrong reported to the City and Guilds Institute that, with a few exceptions, "all the English chemists of repute have received their higher education in Germany."²⁷ This rather alarming state of affairs, a large number of reformers

24. Sir Norman Lockyer, Education and National Progress (London, 1906) p. 17.

25. See G. Haines, 'German Influence upon Scientific Instruction in England', Victorian Studies, vol. I (March 1958), pp. 228-235.

26. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), p. 284.

27. City and Guilds of London Institute, Report to the Governors, 1881, p.51.

considered, was a damning indictment of the condition of English science teaching at the universities and prompted them to press their demands for reform still more urgently. These demands received the support of the Samuelson Commission which, while praising the improvements which had taken place at Oxford and Cambridge, claimed that in the provision of facilities for advanced scientific training and in the recognition of the practical industrial value of that training both the Germans and the Swiss "have been and still are, distinctly before us."²⁸

As far as science teaching was concerned, then, reformers remained dissatisfied with the slow rate of advance in the English universities. Many undoubtedly agreed, for instance, with Lyon Playfair's contention that Oxford and Cambridge, in spite of their admirable efforts to expand their teaching staffs and facilities, were "still far behind a second-class German university."²⁹ Many also remained convinced that the German system, above all others, held important and instructive lessons for them. Though spoken only with reference to the place of science teaching in the proposed reorganisation of London University, the words of T.E. Thorpe, himself trained at two German universities, to the Cowper Commission

28. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol. I, p.225.

29. Sir Lyon Playfair, Subjects of Social Welfare (London, 1889), p.242. Playfair, prominent in organising the Great Exhibition of 1851 and professor of chemistry at Edinburgh from 1858-1869, was much influenced by German practice. Trained by Liebig he received many letters from his old mentor, including one which dealt with the relationship of university training and science, Liebig to Playfair, 8 February 1873, Playfair MSS, 446. In the same month Playfair received a letter from A.W. Hofmann describing features of Prussian university education, Hofmann to Playfair, 14 February 1873, Ibid., 353.

have a much wider relevance: "I should like to see much that there is in the German system in this new University. There are many things in the German system which, I think, might be very advantageously incorporated in the new University system."³⁰

Improvements in under-graduate teaching, however, the reformers believed, must be accompanied by a greater emphasis on scientific research in the universities. Here, too, Germany proved to have an important influence. Mark Pattison, who was more alive than most to some of the defects in the German universities, nevertheless conceded that they deserved their high reputation as centres of the pursuit of knowledge. Convinced that over-emphasis upon the dissemination of existing knowledge reduced the capacity and energy to discover new learning, he hoped to divert Oxford from what he regarded as an undue emphasis upon teaching activity.³¹ Evidence of German superiority in the provision of research facilities led the Devonshire Commission to recommend that steps be taken to promote the pursuit of research in universities by the creation of fellowships and new laboratories and by introducing under-graduates to research techniques.³² However, reforming opinion was not satisfied with the recommendations of one royal commission inadequately acted upon. Swire Smith,

30. Evidence Taken by the Royal Commission Appointed to Consider the Draft Charter for the Proposed Gresham University of London, 1894 (C.7425), Q.30, p.8.

31. M. Pattison, Suggestions on Academical Organisation (Edinburgh, 1868), pp.162-7.

32. Third Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction, 1873 (C.868), pp.xxxi, lvi-lvii.

later recalling his visit to Munich University with the Samuelson Commission, could claim that he had found there "more students taking up research and high branches of chemistry than could have been found in all the Universities and Colleges in England put together."³³ H.E. Armstrong, who had worked at Leipzig with the chemist Kolbe, urged the Cowper Commission to follow the German example closely and ensure that post-graduate research facilities at London were adequately provided.³⁴ The Commission agreed that in view of the zealous promotion of scientific research in Germany, "for the condition of things in London ... no excuse can be found."³⁵

While it is certainly true that reformers paid the greatest attention to the lessons to be learned from Germany in the field of science, many of them were fully aware that in other branches of learning too, the Germans had much to offer. Haldane, for example, had great esteem for the humanistic studies of the German universities, particularly in the field of philosophy. The Germans had pioneered a new and more scientific approach to Biblical studies. Their contribution to the study of Classics was widely acknowledged. Thomas Arnold once expressed his belief in the value of teaching a boy German rather than French so that he would later be able "to read those many German books which are so essential to his Classical studies at University."³⁶ Even today it is virtually a

33. Sir Swire Smith, The Real German Rivalry: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (London, 1916), p.25.

34. Evidence Taken by the Royal Commission Appointed to Consider the Draft Charter for the Proposed Gresham University of London, 1894 (C.7425), p.1,116.

35. Report of the Royal Commission etc., 1894 (C.7259), p.xxi.

36. A.P.Stanley, The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D. (London, 1890), p.211.

prerequisite for any serious Classical scholar that he possess a working knowledge of German in order to make use of the weighty German contribution in this area of learning. In the field of History, too, the debt to Germany was recognised. The advent in the nineteenth century of more scientific, critical and objective history with new high standards of scholarship and rigorous methods of research, owed much to German scholars like Ranke, Müller and Dollinger. Lord Acton, originator of the Cambridge Modern History, son of a German mother and apprenticed at Munich under Dollinger, always remained deeply influenced by German methods. "I am nothing but what you have made me," he once confided to Dollinger.³⁷ The Establishment of the separate School of Modern History at Oxford in 1872 and of the Historical Tripos at Cambridge in 1874, certainly arose largely out of a growing native-born belief in the value of studying history. However, it ought to be pointed out that one of the most energetic advocates of these changes had been Professor A.W. Ward who had been schooled at Leipzig and whose Suggestions Towards the Establishment of a History Tripos (1872) shows a firmly-held admiration of German historical studies.

There were many reasons for the shortcomings of English university education in the nineteenth century. Chief among them, the reformers agreed, was the state's failure to come more decisively to

37. Lord Acton, Lectures on Modern History (London, 1963 edn.), p.12.

the aid of university education. In Germany, on the other hand, state money was lavished on the universities. Bryce considered that in this matter "the example of Germany may well be quoted" for the German state paid about 75 per cent of the costs of its universities, while in England "the state has dealt with them in a hard and parsimonious spirit."³⁸

The liberal financial aid to the universities given by the state in Germany meant that not only were there more buildings, apparatus and general resources available at each individual university, but that there was a far larger number of universities than in England. Consequently, the higher aggregate of university places available in Germany, and their greater accessibility to members of the lower social classes, were constant objects of admiration for English reformers. Arnold had reported that in

England with its 20 million population there were 3,500 matriculated students, while in Prussia there were over 6,300 matriculated students out of a population of only 18½ million.³⁹

Appearing before the select committee of 1868, Roscoe praised the great number of German universities and the opportunities for the sons of even the poor to attend them.⁴⁰ T.H. Huxley,

in his evidence to the Samuelson Commission, claimed that the multiplication of German universities had been "the making of the

38. J. Conrad, The German Universities, (Glasgow, 1885), prefatory note, p.xxii.

39. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, p.054.

40. Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Instruction, 1868 (432), Q.5629, p.285.

country";⁴¹ while the commission itself expressed its admiration both for the abundance of universities in Germany and for the financial aid generously given to them.⁴²

Two of the most significant features of educational development in the last third of the nineteenth century were the foundation of new institutions of higher learning in England and the recognition by the English state of its financial obligations towards them. These developments - like many others - were the result of both native and foreign reform influences. The need for more, and cheaper, university places in order to balance the social exclusiveness and expensiveness of Oxford and Cambridge had long been apparent. With the development of secondary education and the consequent demand for more and better-qualified teachers, this need had become even more urgent. In other words, there were good reasons for university expansion which owed nothing to German influence and which would have borne fruit without that influence. Yet it is at least arguable that the rapid expansion after 1870 was due to the German influence acting as a catalyst upon a more gradual, native evolutionary process. Arnold had recommended in 1868, from his knowledge of German experience, the creation of "centres of superior instruction" in at least ten different towns, with first-rate teaching staffs organised on the model of German faculties.⁴³ The next two decades saw the establishment of advanced colleges of science at Newcastle-upon-Tyne,

41. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884
Vol.III, Q.5059, p.537.

42. Ibid., Vol.I, pp.214-5.

43. Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol.VI, p.637.

Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham, as well as university colleges at Bristol, Liverpool, Nottingham, Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Bangor. In addition, in 1880, Owens College in Manchester became the Victoria University. In giving evidence before the Samuelson Commission, Huxley expressed the hope that these developments would be continued until England could boast that she ranked with Germany in the possession of "small universities, or moderate sized universities, in the local centres of industry."⁴⁴ However, this was unlikely ever to be the case so long as the new colleges, which had owed their creation to private and local munificence and patronage, were obliged to depend for their continuing existence upon the same source of aid. Indeed, as the 1880s progressed, the new colleges found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Roscoe warned that the power of raising funds from private sources was fast becoming exhausted and that the only answer lay in a much greater provision of state assistance.⁴⁵ The state's freedom from real financial commitment in respect of university education had become impossible to justify. Oxford, Cambridge and Durham each had sizeable endowments and could continue without state aid, but the recent proliferation of institutions of higher learning made state support imperative. With private sources of money drying up the colleges at Bristol, Nottingham and elsewhere, urgently required an alternative, not only to provide for expansion projects, but to guarantee their very existence. In May 1887 a meeting of college

44. Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, 1884, Vol.III, Q.3059, p.537.

45. Cited in W.H.G. Armytage, Civic Universities, (London, 1955), pp.234-5.

representatives took place at Southampton and, referring to German commercial and industrial success based on state-aided, higher education, called upon the government to recognise its obligations.⁴⁶ A few weeks later a deputation waited upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Goschen, and urged greater state aid for higher education. Joseph Chamberlain, representing Mason College, Birmingham, demanded an annual subvention of £50,000 to university education.⁴⁷ The deputation as a whole, which was headed by Playfair and Samuelson, justified their demands by reference to the commercial and industrial progress of those countries in which university education was nourished by state financial backing. The National Association for the Promotion of Technical Education put its weight behind the campaign on behalf of the university colleges and finally, in March 1889, the government gave way and in its Treasury estimates set aside £15,000 for distribution among the colleges. This first annual grant to universities was to be allocated by an ad hoc committee which consisted of Lubbock, Roscoe and others, and was the forerunner of the later University Grants Committee (UGC). To some extent, at least, this new body owed its inauguration to the example of Germany, acting, as we have seen, through the ideas and demands of English reformers. The colleges benefited also from the Technical Instruction and 'Whisky Money' Acts of 1889 and 1890 respectively, which both diverted further financial assistance in their direction.

46. R.O. Berdahl, British Universities and the State (London, 1959), p.50.

47. The Times, 1 July 1887, p.4.

In spite of all these improvements - the gradually improving status of scientific studies and research, the establishment of several colleges of higher education, and the concession by the state, of the principle of annual grants for higher education - much remained to be done, as can be gauged by Magnus's speech to the British Association in September 1899. He claimed that, in the 20 universities and 11 technical high schools of Germany, over 40,000 students were receiving advanced education, whereas in England and Wales there were only 16,000 such students. He further claimed that Berlin was providing advanced education for 7,000 young people while London, with three times the population, was doing so for only 3,000. Statistics such as these were alarming in themselves, but Magnus found them even more disturbing when he considered it doubtful that the English students were "receiving anything like so complete an education as the University students in Germany."⁴⁸ Magnus was by no means alone in recognising the need for further advances in English university education and the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the ideas and achievements of two other reformers - Chamberlain and Haldane - whose work on behalf of the universities had still, in 1899, to bear full fruit. That the German example was an important influence on university development in England in the period from 1867 to 1899 has been shown. That influence grew still further after 1899, as can be seen from a study of these two men.

48. Ibid., 19 September 1899, p.8.

Joseph Chamberlain and Birmingham University

Joseph Chamberlain had not enjoyed the benefits of a university education. He is reputed to have said to Morley as they walked through the quad at Balliol: "Ah, how I wish that I could have had a training in this place."⁴⁹ He saw to it, however, that both his sons went to university and, perhaps significantly, he sent Austen over to Germany in order to further his university studies. And he refused to allow Austen to come home to make a speech in the Border Burghs constituency. The Liberal-Unionists there had chosen him as their candidate in the next election and in 1887 requested that Austen deliver a public address. Wrote Chamberlain: "I refused absolutely to interfere in any way with your prearranged course in Germany."⁵⁰ Chamberlain's early interest in educational reform had mainly focussed upon elementary education, but even in those early years he was connected with the Association for the Promotion of Higher Education in Birmingham; he had presented King Edward VI School, Birmingham, with a gift of £500 to found a university scholarship; and in 1872 he demanded that university education be freed from all religious tests.⁵¹ Now - through the cumulative experience gained from his own business career, from his term at the Board of Trade under Gladstone (1880-5), from his visit to Canada and America in the late 1880s, and from his close

49. Cited in J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol.I, (London, 1932), p.56.

50. Joseph Chamberlain to Austen, 16 July 1887, Chamberlain MSS. JC 5/12/1.

51. E.E. Guiley, Joseph Chamberlain and English Social Politics, (New York, 1926), pp.127-6.

involvement in Midlands politics - he began to feel as keenly as anyone the threat facing Britain's industries. He became convinced that scientific research was not being applied readily enough to industry; and he became aware of the progress being made by Germany through its lavish support of university education. He was to claim, in 1901, that "the more I study this question of higher education the more I am persuaded of its enormous importance to this country, the more I am convinced of our own deficiencies both absolutely and in comparison with those other nations which are our competitors in the struggle, I will not say for existence, but at all events for a foremost place in the rank of the nations of the world."⁵² He determined, therefore, to make a personal contribution towards easing the pressure being brought to bear upon his country. In making that contribution - the transformation of Mason College, Birmingham, into a full university on a sound financial basis - Chamberlain unconsciously channelled the various impulses for reform - both native and foreign - into a programme which brought rapid results. In that sense, the story of Chamberlain and Birmingham University is typical of the way in which other social and educational advances were made in this period. A home-grown realisation of the need for reform - given particular impetus in this case by the thrusting commercial and industrial climate of the Midlands - was allied with a conviction of the value of foreign models (notably German) in suggesting the shape that that reform might take.

52. The Times, 6 July 1901, p.7.

The first crucial question which Chamberlain had to tackle was that of money. The endowment of Mason College (founded in 1800 as an institution to concentrate on applied science) was not really large enough to justify an application for full university status. Chamberlain, therefore, in 1898, launched an ambitious appeal and for the next eighteen months or so spent a great deal of time and personal effort trying to ensure that it was successful. He evidently wrote to Hicks Beach enquiring about the possibility of a state grant, for there is a reply from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Chamberlain collection. Hicks Beach told Chamberlain that the proposed university would not be automatically entitled to a state grant and was unlikely to get one unless its sponsors could show that existing private sources were inadequate and that it was a national institution serving more than its immediate locality. He went on: "I hope you will not consider my attitude unsympathetic; but the question of State-aid to Universities is a very large and thorny one; its difficulties are always present to us at the Treasury, and I feel bound to state them fully to you."⁵³ Chamberlain was well acquainted with Treasury parsimony, however, and in obvious anticipation of such an unfavourable response from the government, had cultivated numerous other alternatives. In response to his promptings, Lord Strathcona donated £50,000 and expressed the hope that it might help in providing "a sound and efficient Commercial education and training",⁵⁴ and

53. Hicks Beach to Chamberlain, 20 March 1899, Chamberlain MSS.
JC 12/1/1/6.

54. Strathcona to Chamberlain, 16 May and 13 July 1899, Ibid.,
JC 12/1/1/9,16.

Andrew Carnegie promised an initial £25,000, saying that he was happy to be able to help Birmingham, "the Pittsburgh of my old land."⁵⁵ In a letter to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Chamberlain appealed to the council to follow the lead of Sheffield, Leeds and Liverpool in aiding their own colleges. He suggested a rate of 1/2d. in the pound (£) which would provide £5,000 per annum. This would be an important contribution towards the erection of new buildings "the necessity for which, in view of the increasing pressure of foreign competition, is daily becoming more urgent."⁵⁶

In Chamberlain's view then, money was to be no object, especially as it was not being spared in Germany, England's chief industrial rival in Europe. He was well aware of the advantages which resulted from the beneficence of the state in Germany and he wanted Birmingham to enjoy comparable advantages. He found it hard to believe that anyone could "be satisfied with a starved University."⁵⁷ Birmingham, therefore, must be in a position to provide the best working conditions and attract the best teachers, for "no University will be anything in which the teaching staff is insufficient or starved."⁵⁸ In January, 1900, therefore,

55. Carnegie to Chamberlain, 30 March 1899, Ibid., JC/12/1/1/7.

56. Chamberlain to the Lord Mayor, undated, Ibid., JC/12/1/1/40. Austen appears to have been inspired by his father's example for he, too, became an ardent fund-raiser for the university, as is shown by his letters to Mary Chamberlain, March 1909, Ibid., AC 4/1/393,394,398,400.

57. From an article written by Sonnenschein (the first Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Birmingham) and sent by his mother in January 1934 to J.L. Garvin to assist the writing of the biography of Chamberlain, Ibid., JC 12/1/1/42.

58. The Times, 19 November 1898, p.10.

he not only expressed gratitude to all those who had put Mason College in a position to apply for a charter, but warned the authorities that recent complaints by members of staff about inadequate facilities showed the danger of lapsing into complacency. They had achieved much, but "if they compared such a college as this with Universities and colleges in Germany ... they would see how much they had to do, as well as how much they had already accomplished."⁵⁹ Thus, the granting of a university charter to Birmingham in May 1900 was not a signal for Chamberlain (who had been appointed the University's first Chancellor) to cease his money-raising efforts. A new university, like any other, needs perpetually to extend and modernise its facilities and Chamberlain remained convinced that "money given for the purposes of higher education ... had an everlasting beneficial effect ... he knew of no way in which money could be bestowed with such certainty of permanent advantage."⁶⁰ He could not help contrasting the generous state aid given to German universities with the niggardly contributions of the government in England: "Here it is that I feel the great inferiority in which higher education in this country stands in comparison with higher education in Germany." The Germans, he went on, had recognised that money spent in aid of the universities was a major national investment: "I hope the time is coming when our people also recognise this fact."⁶¹

59. Ibid., 19 January 1900, p.8.

60. Ibid., 1 June 1900, p.8.

61. Ibid., 18 January 1901, p.10.

Chamberlain's achievement in securing the charter did not imply that he had completely satisfied his ambitions. From the beginning, he had held definite ideas as to what sort of university he wanted for Birmingham: on the role it was to play in Midlands and national life; on the sort of instruction it was to provide; on the kind of men who were to give that instruction; and on the principles on which the university was to be organised and governed. It is in the extent to which these ideas were realised (and in all of them German precedents exerted some influence) that the success or otherwise of Chamberlain's work for Birmingham University must be gauged.

Chamberlain was of the opinion that the proposed university should look primarily to the requirements of the area to which it belonged. He was not alone in this view. It had long been felt by advocates of university expansion - many of whom owed nothing to German influence - that institutions for higher education in the great centres of manufacturing industry should place emphasis upon those subjects which could be readily applied to the industry of the areas they served. Since Birmingham was situated in a commercial and industrial region, the university, therefore, must give particular attention "to the teaching of science in connexion with its application to local industries and manufactures."⁶² He believed that all the main trades and industries of the area should be represented in the university curriculum so that each would benefit from the influence of higher education and science.⁶³ The importance of

62. Ibid., 1 June 1900, p.8.

63. Ibid., 19 January 1900, p.8.

training those destined to hold important positions in trade and industry was, he considered, self-evident in view of the increasing competition facing England. He wrote to an anonymous acquaintance: "Other countries, and especially Germany and United States have already made provision for the contest and ... are far ahead of us in scientific training although it is still possible for us to profit by their experience."⁶⁴ Germany in particular, continued to engage his attention. In 1902 he expressed admiration for the situation in Germany where higher education was so accessible that "in every profession, in every industry, you find the places taken by men and by women who have had a University education"; and he warned that England must take steps "to supply the deficiencies which separate us from those with whom we are in the closest competition."⁶⁵

Yet, while he saw the particular role of the university as providing instruction which would be of practical use in trade and industry, he recognised also the need for "giving the general education which is calculated to train the mind and broaden the sympathies."⁶⁶ He believed that no true university should confine itself to one line of study but should be "a great school of universal instruction ... taking all knowledge as its province."⁶⁷

64. Chamberlain to unnamed correspondent, 23 May 1900, Chamberlain MSS. JC 12/1/1/27.

65. The Times, 6 November 1902, p.6.

66. Chamberlain to an unnamed correspondent, 11 December 1899, Chamberlain MSS. JC 12/1/1/25.

67. Sonnenschein, Article, op.cit., JC 12/1/1/42.

He was determined, therefore, that Birmingham University should be a place in which all subjects were taught; where the older branches of learning were not sacrificed to the new - in short, "a school of general culture!"⁶⁸ On this point, Chamberlain received the support of The Times which expressed the view that the German concept of higher education (that is, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and not for the sole purpose of acquiring bread-winning capabilities) ought to find a place in Birmingham. In short, "there seems no reason why Birmingham should not develop somewhat on German lines."⁶⁹

Chamberlain was also of the opinion that at the new university free rein must be given to research work and the application of its findings to industry. He saw as a prime task the building up of a complex of laboratories, libraries, machine halls and museums "in which our professors and teachers shall be associated with the students, and where all shall be students together, and in which ... the most important work of research shall be continuously carried on under favourable circumstances."⁷⁰

From its early years the new university developed along the lines desired by Chamberlain. Mining, metallurgy, engineering, biochemistry, and other scientific subjects were balanced by history, music, English and foreign languages. The ideal of a 'school of general culture' had, therefore, been carried into effect.

68. The Times, 1 June 1900, p.8.

69. Ibid., 31 May 1900, p.7.

70. Sonnenschein, Article, op.cit., JC 12/1/1/42.

Another of Chamberlain's ambitions was furthered by that clause of the university constitution providing for the active promotion of original research. This prompted The Times to refer to free and perpetual research as being "the life and most prominent characteristic of the great Universities of Germany", and to express the hope that perhaps England was at last waking up to the valuable lessons provided by the German example.⁷¹

Another of Chamberlain's successes - bearing in mind the fact that he played a significant part in the selection of staff for the new university - was the creation of a Faculty of Commerce at Birmingham. The idea of such a faculty was not entirely novel. There had already been several demands for something of this kind. These had stemmed not from a desire to imitate German precedents but from a wish to shore up Britain's commercial position against the challenge of other countries. Since Germany was the foremost of these countries, however, it can at least be said that German influence upon English commercial education was indirect. Thus C.E.H. Vincent, referring to consular reports which extolled German commercial expertise, had in 1886 suggested the establishment of a university of commerce.⁷² A year later, Magnus had recommended that commercial departments should be attached to the university colleges.⁷³

71. The Times, 31 May 1900, p.7.

72. Ibid., 25 August 1886, p.3.

73. Sir Philip Magnus, 'Schools of Commerce', Contemporary Review, Vol.LII (December 1887), pp.864-5.

When Chamberlain came to tackle this matter at Birmingham, he had English as well as German precedents to follow. In 1895 had come the creation of the London School of Economics, which paid a good deal of attention to aspects of higher commercial education and with whose first Director, W.A.S. Hewins, Chamberlain was on good terms. Then in 1898 a school of commerce had been founded in Liverpool, linked to the university college. In Germany, too, at about this time, the Handelshochschulen (Commercial High Schools) were being set up in several large cities.

In Birmingham the first step towards the institution of the faculty appears to have been taken by the local Chamber of Commerce, which sent a deputation to the council of Mason College (of which Chamberlain was Chairman) in December 1898, asking that attention be given to the question of advanced commercial training. Chamberlain needed little prompting. Seeing Birmingham primarily as a city of industry and commerce, he declared in a speech just one month later, that "in a University in such a district as this it would be desirable to give special attention to matters connected with the commerce of the place." Aware also of both German and the English precedents, he determined to establish a commercial faculty at Birmingham - "a real faculty of commerce, such as, I believe, exists at present only in one University in Europe - in the University of Leipzig."⁷⁴ He threw himself wholeheartedly into the scheme. Collings, a member of the Birmingham Chamber of

74. The Times, 13 January 1899, p.8. The Leipzig 'faculty of commerce' was, in fact, a commercial high school founded jointly by the University and Chamber of Commerce of Leipzig.

Commerce, wrote to Rosebery in December 1899 outlining the plans for Birmingham, especially with regard to commercial education, and remarked that "Chamberlain has worked very hard."⁷⁵ Hard work achieved its due reward, and Birmingham established the first university Faculty of Commerce in the country. Under the guidance of W.J. Ashley, pioneer courses in economic history, commercial law and practice, finance and accounting were introduced.⁷⁶

The Times, commenting on the potential of the faculty of commerce, observed that Germany, "par excellence the land of august universities, has also been coquetting with the idea of a Commercial University; and if a Commercial University is a possibility, there seems no reason why a commercial faculty of a University should not have a future before it."⁷⁷ In fact, The Times welcomed the Birmingham experiment - in conjunction with those at other centres - as indicating a change of public opinion towards this sector of education; as showing that the

75. Collings to Rosebery, 2 December 1899, Rosebery MSS. 75.

76. Ashley had many connections with German academic life which culminated, in 1910, with his award of an honorary doctorate from the University of Berlin. As author of The Tariff Problem (London, 1903) and The Progress of the German Working Classes (London, 1904), Ashley gave intellectual backing to Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign. In a later work, Commercial Education (London, 1926), he claimed that during the previous century people, when desirous of studying the very best in university education, had been "in the habit of turning to Germany" (p.vi). Meanwhile, convinced that England and Germany were natural allies, he hoped to be able to use his position at Birmingham "to make my fellow-countrymen understand better the situation and aspirations of our Teutonic neighbours"; Ashley to Brentano, 19 September 1901, cited in H.W. McCready, 'Sir William Ashley: Some Unpublished Letters', Journal of Economic History, Vol.XV (1955), p.41.

77. The Times, 31 May 1900, p.7.

English people at last were realising that their commerce was suffering from the defective education given to their clerks and commercial travellers "as compared with corresponding classes in Germany."⁷⁸ Chamberlain was, of course, delighted but made no attempt to claim the commercial faculty as a new departure. Instead, he conceded the debt England owed, not only to "the Universities of Germany", but to those of America.⁷⁹ In this he was right to acknowledge the importance of foreign models, but he should not have disregarded the native reform influences which had helped to pave the way for the various courses in advanced commercial education now established at Birmingham and elsewhere.

Chamberlain also played quite a large part in determining the type of constitution under which the new university would be governed.⁸⁰ Influenced by Scottish, as much as by German precedents, he gave his support to the idea of academic self-government. In this, he had to struggle against the forces of conservatism which sought to preserve the Mason College constitution which put the teaching staff under the jurisdiction of a non-academic Council, but with the able support of men like Kenrick and Sonnenschein, Chamberlain was able to establish the principles of academic autonomy and of security of tenure for all professors subject only to the approval of their peers on Senate. Faculty organisation,

78. Ibid., 12 September 1901, p.7.

79. Ibid., 10 January 1901, p.10.

80. Chamberlain to Professor Tilden, 30 January 1899, Chamberlain MSS.
JC 12/1/1/5.

akin to that of Germany, was set up. There was created the non-academic post of Vice-Chancellor which owed something to the German equivalent known as the Curator.⁸¹ Sonnenschein claimed that the faculties at Birmingham were "what they are in Germany - constituent bodies of the University with large powers of self-government under their elected Deans." And he further claimed that "nothing could have been done without Chamberlain."⁸²

Not long after the charter had been secured, Chamberlain began an interesting and significant correspondence with R.H. Haldane who, although politically opposed to Chamberlain, agreed with him on the importance of higher education. It seems clear that Haldane exerted some influence over Chamberlain's thinking and this is noticeable in a speech Chamberlain made in July 1901. In estimating that it would require at least half a million pounds to equip the scientific buildings at Birmingham, he observed that "half a million of money is what has been expended in Germany on one single school out of many, the Charlottenburg High Technical School."⁸³ Charlottenburg was, of course, Haldane's own particular preoccupation and his letters and speeches abound with references to it. His later proposals for the amalgamation of London University and Imperial College, Haldane dubbed his 'London Charlottenburg scheme', and in at least one letter to Chamberlain at this time he talks about "the Birmingham Charlottenburg."⁸⁴ In spite of political differences and past

81. See Arnold's comments on the German Curator in Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol. VI, pp. 602-3. Also The Times, 31 May 1900, p. 7.

82. Sonnenschein, Article, op. cit., Chamberlain MSS. JC 12/1/1/42.

83. The Times, 8 July 1901, p. 7.

84. Haldane to Chamberlain, 18 September 1902, Chamberlain MSS.
JC 11/15/3.

disagreements,⁸⁵ their correspondence, with respect to higher education, was very cordial. Haldane wrote in March 1901:

"There have been matters on which I have been unable to agree with you. But on this matter of highest Education I feel that I am wholly at one with you." He went on to stress that Birmingham should seek to serve the specific needs of its locality and develop specialised departments of engineering and mining.⁸⁶

Their correspondence is specially interesting in that it affords evidence of the German influence on their work for the English universities. In 1902 Haldane sent Chamberlain a copy of his book Education and Empire which lavished praise on German educational efficiency. Chamberlain thanked him for the book; referred to their agreement "in attaching chief importance now to the higher education"; and mentioned the problem of raising money. Wrote Chamberlain: "I should like to establish a class for millionaires who do not know how to spend their money."⁸⁷

85. Letters which Haldane wrote to his family show his earlier disagreement with Chamberlain on such issues as votes for women (to his mother, 27 July 1884, Haldane MSS. 5956, ff.80-1), and old age pensions (to Elizabeth, 15 January 1892, Ibid., 6010, ff.112-3). Then in 1900, during the unpleasant debate on Chamberlain's alleged interests in companies supplying war materials and munitions, Haldane stressed the importance of Ministers remaining free from all such suspicion; Hansard, 4th Ser., 88 (1900), 450-4. Haldane wrote to Elizabeth: "The Chamberlain debate was a horrible duty. He takes it to heart, I am told, that I spoke as I did." (18 December 1900, MSS. 6010, f.178).

86. Haldane to Chamberlain, 13 March 1901, Chamberlain MSS. JC 11/15/1.

87. Chamberlain to Haldane, 11 August 1902, Haldane MSS. 5905, f.218.

In reply, Haldane outlined his views as to the amount of state and local aid which was required, especially for "strengthening the scientific and economic sides." He believed that the state should contribute £15,000 a year to provincial colleges and £30,000 to London, and suggested that they might work together to demand a non-partisan committee to administer this aid. "As you will see from the figures in my Chapter on the subject, the German Governments pay 70% of the cost of their Universities", he wrote.⁸⁸

In a further letter Haldane pointed to the need to stress the role of the university in "the application of science to commerce and especially industry." This he thought would be the best means of attracting financial support. He felt that Chamberlain should ask for another £250,000 since this, along with the apparatus and laboratories already at Birmingham, would enable the new university to develop "on the scale of Charlottenburg." In view of his experience with the problems of London University he offered Chamberlain his personal assistance, not, he hastened to add, with a view to creating another London in

88. Haldane to Chamberlain, 14 August 1902 Chamberlain MSS. JC 11/15/2. One daily had observed in 1899 that there existed in Germany a sympathy for education "to a degree still unknown in England"; The Times, 28 January 1899, p.11. Haldane hoped that Education and Empire would help break down the apathy towards education which had long been an obstacle to advance. Morant wrote to him: "You have said what needs saying over & over again, & you have said it pointedly, & with illustrations which ought to make the Englishman listen, if anything will"; Morant to Haldane, 25 May 1902, Haldane MSS. 5905, f.175. Another correspondent doubted, however, whether there was much point in hoping that the book would "not fall on deaf ears"; Baron Davey of Fernhurst to Haldane, 1 June 1902, Ibid., 5905, f.183.

the Midlands: "The Birmingham Charlottenburg should have its own special characteristics. So at least it strikes my mind."⁸⁹ In reply Chamberlain gave details of the progress of the campaign for money, emphasising that the success of the whole venture depended "upon getting the necessary funds for the buildings" which were to be built "on the most complete scale." He welcomed Haldane's offer of help: "I shall be very glad of your co-operation, and as soon as Parliament meets we will see what can be done."⁹⁰

At this point the Haldane-Chamberlain correspondence comes to a temporary halt. A month after his letter of 18 September Chamberlain announced his forthcoming tour of South Africa. Following his return from that country in early 1903 he embarked on the campaign for tariff reform and his work on behalf of higher education inevitably suffered. Perhaps, in any case, he felt his work was done. He had secured many of the things he had hoped for: the charter; the Faculty of Commerce; a financial position of some soundness; and a constitution framed on the lines he had wished. In pursuing these aims, Chamberlain had acted in part from a basis of sound knowledge of what was being done in the universities, not only of Germany but of other countries such as Scotland and the United States. Indeed, ever since the 1860s and his campaigns over primary education, Chamberlain had been influenced by developments in America. More than that, he

89. Haldane to Chamberlain, 18 September 1902, Chamberlain MSS.
JC 11/15/3.

90. Chamberlain to Haldane, 18 September 1902, Haldane MSS.
5905, f.235.

had represented the demands and ideas of the commercial and manufacturing interests of the Midlands - strong reformist interests which were entirely native and would have achieved change of their own accord. Nevertheless, there was a palpable German influence upon Chamberlain's work at Birmingham. Although not strong enough to achieve all that was accomplished by itself, it was important enough to leave some distinctive marks upon the new university.

It was largely in response to the same strong commercial threat posed by Germany that Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign was conceived. Chamberlain's adoption of tariff reform was a cause of chagrin to Haldane, a staunch free trader. Haldane continued to press the claim that the reform and expansion of higher education was the true solution to his country's problems. In fact, he came to present his ideas as a direct alternative to those of Chamberlain. Thus in connection with his plans for London, he wrote to his mother in 1903: "The papers are full of 'Charlottenburg' It really is a great scheme & is taking hold of the public mind as an alternative to Chamberlain's."⁹¹

91. Haldane to his mother, 30 June 1903, *Ibid.*, 5969, ff.188-9. Haldane was convinced that the real threat to England lay in German permeation of her markets through the application of scientific knowledge. He agreed that W.J. Ashley's The Tariff Problem (London, 1903) was a formidable statement of the Chamberlain position, but remained convinced that, not tariff reform, but "better methods & alternative industries are the only remedies"; Haldane to P.W.L. Ashley, 20 September 1903, Haldane MSS. 5906, f.4b. Thus he opposed the call for protection and resolved to press "the counter-case for science and organisation"; R.B. Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1928), p.152.

The work of Haldane, principally for London, but also for the provincial universities, and the German influence upon it, will now be dealt with.

The university work of A.D. Haldane

Haldane once declared of the German educational system: "As a triumph of the spirit of organisation it is unrivalled, except by that wonderful outcome of scientific arrangement - the German Army."⁹² As a young man Haldane had studied philosophy at Göttingen under Lotze and became a life-long admirer of German thinking.⁹³ He became a frequent visitor to Germany and amassed extensive knowledge of German educational practice. He himself tells us that his regular visits turned his attention "to what was unique work in the world of that time, the organisation of higher education" and that he "learned much by reading about the work of Humboldt and Stein and other founders of the German system of education."⁹⁴ From the beginning, Haldane had little doubt as to German superiority in the field of higher education. He wrote to his mother from Göttingen that the German students, in their pre-university training at secondary school "learn far more than we do at our universities. Even an ordinary student laughs at 4 out of 5 of the working students who come from Oxford or Cambridge."

92. A.D. Haldane, Selected Addresses and Essays (London) 1912), p. 100.

93. See for instance, *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 185-8; An Autobiography (London, 1929), pp. 19-20; and 'Hegel', Contemporary Review, Vol. LXVII (February 1895), pp. 252-255.

94. A.D. Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1929), p. 67.

As for the professors, they might "for the most part look as if they had seen more books than soap and tailors' shops," but they were highly capable, lecturing sometimes in German, sometimes in Latin, "it being much the same to them and the students."⁹⁵

From his German experience Haldane decided that a good test of a people's civilisation was the degree to which they accepted the need for higher education. In this, Germany, with its larger number of universities had a great lead over his own country. On his return from Göttingen in 1874 he was disturbed at the impact which his experience there had had upon him. He wrote to a German friend: "Can you imagine this? I actually dislike my own country now. The people seem to think of nothing but how to make money and never how to attain a high culture I wish I had been born a German for Germany suits me far more than here, where life is literally a struggle after position etc. instead of the path to the blessed life of Culture nobody studies anything but the 'Brotwissenschaften'."⁹⁶

He believed that the efficiency of a nation depended largely on the extent to which the spirit of "organisation" and systematic thought, fostered in the universities, permeated national life. Because of Germany's superiority in higher education, that country possessed a structural coherence "the like of which the world has hardly seen elsewhere."⁹⁷ Therefore, with regard to the vital

95. Haldane to his mother, 27 April 1874, Haldane MSS. 5927, ff.16-17.

96. Haldane to Hugo Conwentz, undated 1874, Ibid., 5901, ff.29-30.

97. R.B. Haldane, Selected Addresses and Essays (London, 1928), p.20.

question of how national life should be organised "the case of Germany in the nineteenth century - is highly suggestive."⁹⁸

It was that country which had taught others "the value of organisation and the part the Universities have played in it."⁹⁹

Haldane also felt that the university had a vital role to play in the co-ordination and guidance of education as a whole. His German experience convinced him that the university should act as the intellectual centre of the nation "from which emanate light and leading in almost every walk of life, and most of all in our educational system."¹⁰⁰ He was, therefore, disturbed

both by the tendency for English universities to remain aloof from the lower levels of education and by the fact that there was so few of them. Informing the Commons in May 1902 that Germany had 22 universities for a population of 55 million (not to mention 11 polytechnics), he felt grieved "to think that England with a population of 51,000,000. has only seven. I do not wonder our educational system is in so backward a condition."¹⁰¹

Haldane, we are told "combined in marked (and, one might add, unusual) degree a love of the Humanities with a profound interest in scientific theory and achievement."¹⁰² Certainly, he often proclaimed that a university should pursue a double aim, combining

98. Ibid., p.16.

99. Ibid., p.24.

100. R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902). p.84.

101. Hansard, 4th Ser., CVII (1902), 708. See also R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902), p.57

102. D. Sommer, Haldane of Cloan: His Life and Times, 1856-1928, (London, 1960). p.102.

cultural and humanistic studies with those of a more practical and scientific nature. The needs of a competitive industrial age, he knew, required a high standard of scientific instruction. He was only too well aware of the progress of German industry especially in those areas in which science had been powerfully brought to bear - for instance, brewing and explosives.¹⁰³ He had, therefore, great admiration, both for the pure scientific teaching in the German universities and for the applied scientific and technological courses given in the German polytechnics (though he considered their separation from each other unnecessary). Having already noted his deep admiration for the German contribution to philosophy and the humanities it is not surprising that he was convinced that in both pure science and the arts the work of the German universities in the last century or so had been "of a quality as high as any that the world has seen."¹⁰⁴ Even in those universities situated in industrial cities, and, therefore, subject to intensive pressure to emphasise science in their curricula, literature and philosophy flourished. There was no reason, he claimed, why this example "should not be followed in this country."¹⁰⁵

Thus it is clear that Germany exerted a great influence on the thinking of Haldane as regards university education: it enabled him to formulate a precise conception of higher education; to

103. R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London. 1902). pp.8-19; and his essay 'The executive Brain of the British Empire', in W.T. Stead (ed.) Coming Men on Coming Questions (London, 1905). pp.127-136.

104. Ibid.. p.32.

105. R.B. Haldane. Selected Addresses and Essays. (London, 1928), p.154.

become deeply aware of English shortcomings; and to devise a programme of reforms aimed at rectifying those shortcomings. The first point in that programme was the reorganisation of London University.

The original development of university education in London had been a good illustration of the way in which indigenous and extraneous concepts of reform could be combined to produce action. The idea of founding a university in the 1820s was supported not only by the utilitarian philosophers, Bentham and Mill; not only by Joseph Hume, who took his ideas from the Scottish universities; but by Thomas Campbell, whose inspiration came from Bonn and Berlin.¹⁰⁶ The result of these diverse reforming pressures was the establishment in 1826 of University College, and in 1828 of King's College, and the granting of a charter to London University in 1836.

Since 1836, London University had served solely as a separate examining and degree-giving body for the two metropolitan colleges and for any other institutions which affiliated to it. By the 1880s, London was granting external degrees to students in a considerable number of provincial institutions but was, itself, in no sense a teaching university. The academic staff of the metropolitan colleges had, however, become increasingly irritated with the existing arrangement. They were given no preferential status within the University; they had no influence on Senate, the University's governing body; and

106. Letter to Henry Brougham in The Times, 9 February 1825.

they objected to having to accept its regulations and curricula in the framing of which they played no part. Magnus tells us that a widespread awareness of German superiority was a further cause of discontent, "for it excited in the ranks of a large number of London professors a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the conditions under which they taught, and with their relation to the university with which they were informally connected."¹⁰⁷

Thus once again we see a purely domestic pressure for reform given added impetus by the reference to German practice. The disaffected colleges petitioned the Privy Council for the power to award their own degrees as the Albert University in 1887, and this action prompted the government to set up a royal commission to investigate their claims. The Selborne Commission, however, found against the colleges and reported in favour of there being only one university in London, suggesting that the existing university develop on the lines proposed for the Albert University. Further argument obliged the government in 1892 to set up yet another royal commission this time under Lord Cowper and including such figures as Lord Reay, Playfair, Ramsay and Burdon Sanderson. This commission likewise maintained that there should be one university in London, not two, and recommended the creation of a statutory commission to effect legislation on the lines of its own organisational proposals.¹⁰⁸

107. Sir Philip Magnus, Educational Aims and Efforts 1880-1910, (London, 1910), p.54. For other references to the German influence on developments at London, Ibid., pp.237-9.

108. Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Consider the Draft Charter for the Proposed Gresham University in London, 1894 (C.7259), pp.xii-xix, liii-liv.

Playfair tells us that the Cowper Commission took as its models the Universities of Edinburgh and Berlin, reminding us that the balance sheet of reform included debts to countries other than Germany. This dual influence upon the Cowper Commission can best be seen in its proposals for an organic relationship between the teaching colleges and the examining body; in its advocacy of faculty organisation; and in its determination "to give unfettered liberty to an approved and recognised professor, that precious *Lehrfreiheit* which the Germans value so much."¹⁰⁹ Along with Magnus, Haldane, Reay and others, Playfair sought to secure the implementation of the commission's recommendations. Lockyer warned, in an address in 1898, that only when a single, unitary teaching university was set up would London be "properly organised, in the light of the latest German experience."¹¹⁰

Haldane had been interested in the problems of London University for some time. In 1889 he became a member of the council of University College "for the sake of the educational knowledge one will get & because of the useful experience."¹¹¹ He found, however, that he had no sympathy for the demands of the colleges for a second university, and felt that London could only hope to match German standards by the creation of a single teaching university. The existing arrangement, he believed "lent itself

109. Sir Lyon Playfair, 'A Great University for London', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXXVIII (October, 1895), p.701.

110. Sir Norman Lockyer, Education and National Progress, (London, 1906), p.103.

111. Haldane to his mother, 13 December 1899, Haldane MSS. 5943, f.155.

to the purposes of the "crammers" and prevented the real objective of a university training being achieved.¹¹² He thus began to work with Sidney Webb in order to draw up a private member's bill giving effect to the recommendations of the Cowper Commission and attempting to satisfy the conflicting interests.¹¹³ It had been hoped by some that the Liberals might introduce the required legislation. Reay had warned Rosebery that if the Liberals failed to act "because the obscurantists of King's Coll. have objected ... the Liberal party has reached the lowest depths of incapacity."¹¹⁴ The failure of the Liberal leadership to follow Reay's advice annoyed Haldane, but he pressed on and in 1896 his first bill was presented. It met with a quick end. He wrote: "The University Bill is, I fear, dead. The Bishops have killed it."¹¹⁵

The following year he tried again. Once more he had to write home: "The University Bill has been killed by obstruction. It is a bore but we shall try again next session &, I hope, win."¹¹⁶ He had realised that a privately-sponsored bill had little chance of overcoming the powerful vested interests involved, and so he enlisted the support of Balfour and Devonshire and in 1898 a third

112. R.B. Haldane, An Autobiography, (London, 1929), p.124.

113. Haldane was on good terms with Webb who was then head of the London Technical Education Board. Haldane preferred to work with men of different political complexion - Balfour and Chamberlain, for instance - than with his fellow Liberals whom he considered "not up to the mark about questions of higher education", *Ibid.*, p.124.

114. Reay to Rosebery, 24 November 1894, Rosebery MSS. 34.

115. Haldane to his mother, 7 August 1896, Haldane MSS. 5956, r.65.

116. Haldane to his mother, 29 July 1897, *Ibid.*, 5958, f.47.

bill was introduced. Like its predecessors the bill came under serious attack, but unlike them it was enacted. Perhaps the crucial second reading in the Commons was the decisive turning point, for, by a forceful speech, Haldane rescued it from imminent defeat. Asquith and Chamberlain considered Haldane's speech to be "almost the only case in their recollection in which a single speech had turned opinion in the House."¹¹⁷ Haldane - not averse to indulging in self-congratulation - referred to the speech as "an unexpected & exceptional effort & it seems to have left an impression."¹¹⁸ The bill was passed in August 1898 and by its terms a statutory commission was set up to formulate proposals for the reorganisation of London University. The completion of the commission's work in 1900 led to the creation of a single teaching university in London on the lines intended by Haldane's "sweet little University Bill."¹¹⁹

Haldane himself regarded the new creation as merely "a somewhat unruly infant in swaddling clothes", and saw that much was to be done before it became the educational centre of the Empire he intended it to be.¹²⁰ But, as a first stage in his ambitious programme for London, Haldane could claim the campaign of 1894-1898 as a great success, culminating as it did in the triumph of 1898. London thus owed much to Haldane; but it also owed much to Germany. That vital speech which clinched matters

117. Sir F. Maurice, Haldane, 1856-1915 (London, 1937), Vol.I, p.127.

118. Haldane to his mother, 17 June 1898, Haldane MSS. 5959, ff.138-9.

119. Haldane to his mother, 2 August 1898, Ibid., 5960, f.3.

120. R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902), p.36.

gave ample evidence of the German influence on Haldane's ideas. He promised, for instance, that if his scheme of reorganisation was effected there would be extensive opportunity to provide cheap and efficient training, enjoyed in Germany but "too little known in this England of ours."¹²¹ His aim for London was to create a university of the first rank, equal to the best of the German universitites, for which he had such tremendous admiration, and one worthy of the capital of a great Empire. His work for London was not, therefore completed and he was soon to become engrossed in his 'London Charlottenburg scheme'. In the meantime, however, two other important aspects of university reform - the civic university movement, and the question of state aid - engaged his attention, and it is chronologically appropriate to deal with his work in these areas first. In both of them, yet again, the German influence made its presence felt.

It was perhaps inevitable that the various provincial colleges, established within the preceding two or three decades, should press for full university status following the success of the London reorganisation campaign and of the Birmingham scheme. Haldane, deploring the isolation of the older universities from the mainstream of English education, was a warm advocate of the creation of universities in provincial centres, believing that they would serve to introduce a higher standard and greater co-ordination in education as a whole. Haldane denied that the proliferation of universities in Germany had resulted in any

121. The Times, 15 June, 1898, p.8.

lowering of standards but claimed that it had had precisely the opposite effect. The example of Munich, Leipzig and Breslau, for instance, he urged, proved that excellent universities could flourish in provincial cities as long as those cities were able and willing to guarantee the provision of the necessary resources.¹²² In short, as he wrote in his autobiography, the experience he gained from his numerous visits to Germany proved to him "that what we needed badly in our own country was more Universities, and Universities of the civic type, in different parts of these Islands."¹²³

He became particularly interested in the affairs of the three northern colleges grouped together as the Victoria University - Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds; but the efforts of cities like Bristol, Birmingham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne to gain full university status for their colleges also received his keen support. He felt that for these colleges "much is to be done by taking existing resources and modernising them."¹²⁴ The realisation that England lagged far behind Germany in the provision of university places was a prime factor explaining Haldane's concern for the civic universities. He wrote to Chamberlain in August 1902: "What is needed is, I think the development of centres of the highest

122. R.B. Haldane, Selected Addresses and Essays (London, 1928), pp.129-130.

123. R.B. Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1929), p.90.

124. Haldane to Chamberlain, 15 March 1901, Chamberlain MSS.
JC 11/15/1.

Education in various parts of England. What you have done single-handed in Birnmgm. should be done in Liverpool, Manchester and Yorkshire, as well as in London." He then added, significantly, "Even so ... if you have time to look at the first Chapter of the little book I sent you, Germany will still have more than double our provision."¹²⁵ The views which Haldane expressed in this letter had already been given a public airing in an address delivered by him at Liverpool the previous October. Upholding the claims of Bristol Birmingham and Leeds to their own independent universities, he argued that there was no reason why they should not "with their public spirit and rapidly increasing populations, possess, as in Germany they certainly would, their own Universities."¹²⁶

"This address played an important part in securing a university charter for Liverpool. Haldane was soon able to report that the "movement for a Liverpool University has life in it."¹²⁷ In fact, his address had the practical effect of inducing the Liverpool City Council to call a special meeting to rescind a resolution, already passed, to give nothing to the university college, and instead to grant to the college a sum of £100,000. Wrote Haldane, in characteristic self-praise: "They came to me on Wednesday morning and said: 'You have made us to this.'"¹²⁸ Soon after this a

125. Haldane to Chamberlain, 14 August 1902, Ibid., JC 11/15/2.

126. R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902), p.33.

127. Haldane to Sir J.R. Thursfield, 22 October 1901, Haldane MSS. 5905, ff.115-6.

128. Haldane to his mother, 24 October 1901, Ibid., 5966, ff.100-1.

committee of the Privy Council was set up to discuss Liverpool's application for a charter and Haldane himself appeared before it to give evidence. The favourable report produced by this committee led in 1903 to the grant of full university status, not only to Liverpool but to Manchester as well. Spurred on by the success of these two colleges, those at Leeds, Sheffield and Bristol campaigned for, and soon secured, their own charters. Haldane proclaimed to the students of Bristol in 1912 that he could see "no limit to what may be the development of the Civic University within the next hundred years." He even predicted that it would become "the dominant and shaping power in our system of national education."¹²⁹

Haldane had sufficient prescience to see, however, that England's problems would not be solved by the mere chartering of new universities. Unless the state came forward with a much larger amount of financial aid, the new institutions must remain starved and incapable of the necessary expansion. He thus deplored the fact that the annual state grant to higher education, inaugurated in 1889, had risen from its original £15,000 only to a mere £27,000 in 1904. He could not help contrasting English parsimony with German generosity. Thus he wrote to Rosebery from Königsberg in 1901: "I arrived tonight, with my brother from Oxford, & we have been contemplating the University Buildings in the moonlight & wishing that some Government in England would see to the housing of a University as is done here."¹³⁰

129. R.B. Haldane, Selected Addresses and Essays (London, 1928), p.151.

130. Haldane to Rosebery, 6 April 1901, Rosebery MSS. 24.

The government in 1904, in response to reforming pressure, doubled the grant to £54,000 and referred its allocation to an ad hoc advisory committee to which Haldane was appointed chairman. This committee reported in February 1905. It recommended the creation of a permanent committee to advise the government on the distribution of the grant. It also deplored the inadequate provision of facilities for post-graduate research in contrast with Germany and the United States.¹³¹ Haldane himself considered this report to be "a great new departure in educational policy."¹³² One result of the report was a reopening of Haldane's correspondence with Chamberlain. The latter wrote to Haldane saying: "This is one subject in which I fancy that you and I are nearer together than other men are on anything - I mean Highest Education", and suggesting that they meet to discuss and if possible to agree on details "as to OUR policy on this our subject."¹³³ In July 1905

131. Report of the University Colleges (Great Britain) (Grant in Aid) Committee, 1905 (Cd.2422), p.8.

132. Haldane to his mother, 15 March 1905, Haldane MSS. 5973, ff.100-1.

133. Chamberlain to Haldane, 12 March 1905, Chamberlain MSS. JC 11/15/4. Haldane suspected that Chamberlain "feels that he is beaten on fiscal things & wishes to try a new line", Haldane to his mother, 14 March 1905, Haldane MSS. 5973, ff.98-9. He was puzzled by Chamberlain's approach but agreed to visit him in May 1905. He was shown round the university at Birmingham and thought it "wonderful", Haldane to his mother, 13 May 1905, Ibid., 5973, ff.197-8. He believed that Chamberlain was seeking some political advantage, Haldane to his mother, 16 March 1905, Ibid., 5973, ff.102-3. Unfortunately, however, their correspondence came to an abrupt end and was followed successively by the Liberal election victory and Chamberlain's enforced withdrawal from active politics.

there was circulated a Treasury minute which agreed with the Haldane Committee on the need to establish a permanent advisory body and to promote facilities for scientific research. It also recommended that the vote-in-aid be increased to £100,000.¹³⁴

This increase was made immediately and in 1906 the first continuing advisory committee on grants to the universities was formed. The creation of the University Grants Committee was only one further step away and, in fact, took place in 1919.

By stages, then, the state in England came to support and encourage university education by substantial financial aid in the way in which men like Haldane and Chamberlain demanded, doing so as much from their experience of German state munificence as from their conviction of the value of higher education in the promotion of trade and industry. Thus Haldane justified their demands by pointing to the close contact between the academic and industrial life of Germany and to the quality and quantity of German universities and polytechnics. He pointed also to the lavish aid to higher education given by the state in Germany and warned that in England educational finance was too vital a task to be left to private or local enterprise for "it goes to nothing short of the sources to which our people have to look for the future of that commerce which is their life-blood as a nation."¹³⁵ Haldane was, therefore, pleased with the advances made in the years 1904 to 1906 in respect of state aid to the universities. That, however, he

134. Treasury Minute, 18 July 1905 (Cd.2621), pp.3-4.

135. R.B. Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902), p.38.

regarded these advances as merely transitional is obvious from his suggestion to Austen Chamberlain in February 1912 that the administration of university grants be transferred to the Board of Education "through which he urges they would obtain much larger grants than they do from the Treasury."¹³⁶ In short, Haldane typified all good reformers by refusing ever to be satisfied.

This characteristic had already shown itself in Haldane in connection with his work for London. Unable to accept the reorganisation of 1898-1900 as marking the end of his task, the fulfilment of his ambitions, he had embarked on his even more far-reaching 'Charlottenburg scheme'.

The Royal Technical High School in Charlottenburg had been formed in 1879 by the amalgamation of the Berlin Architectural and Industrial Academies. It was soon able to offer instruction in architecture, metallurgy, chemistry and civil, mechanical and marine engineering. Within twenty years the number of its students quadrupled to around 4,000 and it had achieved world fame. The Prussian state provided two-thirds of the cost of maintaining and extending the institution. As the most highly regarded of the German polytechnics, Charlottenburg became greatly admired by English reformers for the standard of its technological training and the excellence of its facilities. Those former members of the Samuelson Commission who returned to Germany in 1896 considered that "no facilities exist for original and

136. Austen Chamberlain to Mary, 27 February 1912, Chamberlain MSS.
AC 4/1/763.

independent research in physical subjects to be compared with those afforded at ... Charlottenburg."¹³⁷ James Baker reported that Charlottenburg was "the very highest type of a Technical College" and recommended that similar institutions be established in England to "train the most accomplished teachers, provide the most advanced instruction and diffuse throughout the whole decentralised aggregate of technical schools a high ideal and standard of scientific accuracy and educational thoroughness."¹³⁸ He concluded: "... how admirably this college meets the higher educational needs of the more scientific branches of modern industry."¹³⁹ Similarly, the Commons in May 1902 heard a speech by Emmott in which he disparagingly compared the technical school at Manchester and its 150 students with Charlottenburg "with its thousands, and its far higher training."¹⁴⁰

Haldane, too, as we have already remarked, was a great admirer of the Charlottenburg school. Indeed, he thought as highly of the German polytechnics as he did of the German universities. What he was not enthusiastic about, however, was their separation: the clear distinction made in Germany between the technological instruction of the polytechnics and the pure science of the universities.

137. Report on a Visit to Germany, with a view to Ascertaining the Recent Progress of Technical Education in that Country, 1896 (C.8301), p.411.

138. Report on Technical and Commercial Education in East Prussia, Poland, Galicia, Silesia and Bohemia, 1900 (Cd.419), p.8.

139. Ibid., p.14.

140. Hansard, 4th Ser., 107 (1902), 754.

Through their adherence to academic tradition the German universities had felt unable to embrace the new practical and technological studies of the nineteenth century, and their attitude had led to the establishment of the new and independent institutions typified by Charlottenburg. Haldane, however, was convinced that technology would benefit from being taught in the broader cultural atmosphere of a university. He believed that mind and hand belonged together, that theory and experimentation would each be stimulated by the close proximity of the other. When embarking, therefore, on the second stage of his programme for London - the creation of an advanced scientific and technological institution to rank with Charlottenburg - Haldane determined that it was to be set up within the wide context of London University. That is to say, he intended the proposed college to be integrated as quickly as possible into a still further reconstructed London University. It was "after studying the organisation of Charlottenburg on the spot", that he concluded that it was "only in the larger atmosphere of a University that technical education of the finest kind can be attained."¹⁴¹ In other words, Haldane's 'Charlottenburg scheme' is a good example of the way in which German ideas and practices were adapted by English reformers to meet English conditions. Rarely was it a matter of straightforward imitation, and we should not forget this.

An early indication of the new plans for London which were taking shape in Haldane's mind is afforded in two letters written to his mother in 1899. In them he lets it be known that he was

141. R.B. Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1929), pp.91-2.

thinking in terms of developing a technological school within London University. He foresaw problems, however, in "the difficult temper of the Senate of the old university."¹⁴² He had the support of the Prince of Wales but "The London people are stupid and obstinate."¹⁴³ He was not, however, easily discouraged.

From the outset, German precedents exercised a good deal of influence on Haldane. We know of his visits to technical schools in Berlin, Ilmenau and Hanover from his letters to Rosebery and his mother in 1901. And Haldane assured his mother that these visits had a particular relevance to his work "in connection with London."¹⁴⁴ The knowledge of German advanced technical instruction which he acquired by personal enquiry Haldane supplemented with information provided by other sources. He wrote to his mother in November 1901 asking her to tell his sister Elizabeth to buy for him in Edinburgh a copy of Baker's report on Technical Education in Prussia and Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁵ The following April Haldane wrote another significant letter, this time to his sister: "I have read through Russell's book on the German Higher Schools, & have profitted much by it. I shall return to the charge in the H. of C."¹⁴⁶ That Haldane was particularly interested in Charlottenburg is shown by a letter he wrote to an acquaintance asking him to try and obtain information about that institution which he and Webb could use for

142. Haldane to his mother, 13 January 1899, Haldane MSS. 5961, ff.6-7.

143. Haldane to his mother, 20 January 1899, Ibid., 5961, ff.18-19.

144. Haldane to his mother, 11 April 1901, Ibid., 5965, ff.153-4.

145. Haldane to his mother, 22 November 1901, Ibid., 5966, ff.149-150.

146. Haldane to Elizabeth, 2 April, 1902, Ibid., 6010, ff.188-9.

their London scheme.¹⁴⁷

By this time the scheme was well under way. In a letter to Rosebery, Haldane wrote that a blue-print had been drawn up and expressed his relief "that so far there is enthusiasm instead of the friction I half feared. A really big result may come of this, but it will take time."¹⁴⁸ Haldane was already well on the way to finding a solution to one of the most pressing problems - lack of money. He had fostered good relations with Wernher, Beit and Company whose directors he said he "did not know excepting as public-spirited men of German origin and as impressed with the necessity for this country of German scientific training."¹⁴⁹ From them he obtained generous financial support for his project. He wrote to his mother: "I was with the partners of Werner, Beit & Co. this afternoon in the City starting a great scheme for improving London University. I think I have got £100,000 from them."¹⁵⁰ A further letter informed Mrs. Haldane that Wernher and Beit had promised £100,000 down with the possibility of a further £300,000.¹⁵¹ Haldane's plans also benefitted from his acquaintance with Cecil Rhodes, Sir Ernest Cassel and the Rothschilds. In August 1902

147. Haldane to Sir. P. Ashley, 31 May 1902, Ibid., 5905, f.181.

148. Haldane to Rosebery, 25 May 1902, Rosebery MSS. 24.

149. R.B. Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1929), p.144.

150. Haldane to his mother, 8 May 1902, Haldane MSS. 5967, f.136.

151. Haldane to his mother, 16 May 1902, Ibid., 5967, ff.149-150. In a letter of 1909 Haldane told his mother that the company had contributed, to date, a quarter of a million pounds; Haldane to his mother, 6 July 1909, Ibid., 5982, ff.11-12.

Haldane was able to write to Professor Pringle-Pattison and define exactly what he was hoping to achieve, "the creation of a school for the Empire for the application of Science to Industry - which is to have its seat in the Metropolis."¹⁵²

Although the scheme was well under way, it ran into difficulties early in 1903. Haldane wrote to his mother in January: "The money is collected, the site got, & now the strained relations between the Govt. & the County Council are blocking me at the last moment. It is entirely the fault of the Govt."¹⁵³ A few days later he criticised the government for their lack of foresight.¹⁵⁴ By April things were looking very bad. He informed his sister: "... my Charlottenburg plans are in peril. Balfour has shown great want of grip over the whole business. It is one of his worst failures."¹⁵⁵ However, events took a turn for the better in the early summer of 1903. In May the government announced its willingness to consider the creation of a new technological institution; and in June, Lord Rosebery proved his worth as an ally by securing from the ICC a guarantee of £20,000 a year to maintain the proposed institution. In his letter to Lord Monkswell, chairman of the Council, Rosebery praised the work of Charlottenburg and appealed

152. Cited in D. Sommer, Haldane of Cloan; his Life and Times, 1856-1928 (London, 1960), p.128. Pringle-Pattison contributed to the biographical studies of Haldane with 'Richard Burdon Haldane (Viscount Haldane of Cloan), 1856-1928', in Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XIV, 1928, pp.405-444.

153. Haldane to his mother, 22 January 1903, Haldane MSS. 5969, ff.17-18.

154. Haldane to his mother, 28 January 1903, Ibid., 5969, ff.27-8.

155. Haldane to Elizabeth, 20th April 1903, Ibid., 6010, ff.200-1.

for money to cover all those expenses "which a London 'Charlottenburg' would involve."¹⁵⁶ With the government now more favourably inclined; with the site at South Kensington assured; and with the financial position healthy, Haldane allowed himself to be optimistic. "The 'Charlottenburg' scheme has, I think, crossed the final hurdle....It is the completion of a long period of anxious work."¹⁵⁷ With The Times editorial before him, Haldane expressed delight on 29 June 1903 that all the London dailies dealt fully with the 'Charlottenburg' plan "which instinctively they have set down to me."¹⁵⁸

In 1904 a departmental committee was formed which set the seal on Haldane's proposals. He was its chairman, and it included among its members Magnus, Lord Reay and Sidney Webb. Its final report, issued in 1906, included sections devoted to descriptions of the advanced technological training provided in foreign countries. Significantly, perhaps, the first country to be dealt with was Germany, and the report subscribed to the view that German trading and industrial success was the consequence of its system of higher education.¹⁵⁹ As regards the Charlottenburg polytechnic, the presence there of a large and excellent teaching staff enabled its student members "to enjoy the

156. The Times, 29 June 1903, p. 13. See also the editorial on p.11 which pressed the need for a London 'Charlottenburg'.

157. Haldane to his mother, 27 June 1903, Haldane MSS, 5969, ff.184-5.

158. Ibid., 29 June 1903, ff.186-7.

159. Final Report of the Departmental Committee on the Royal College of Science, 1906 (Cd.2872), pp.9-11.

advantage, not at present obtainable in a like degree at any school in this country of receiving the most advanced instruction."¹⁶⁰

The report was warm in its praise of Charlottenburg and the other German technical high schools but felt that they could not be imitated in England. It recommended, instead, the immediate foundation of the suggested institution of advanced technology and the setting up of a royal commission to consider the relations which should exist between that institution and London University.¹⁶¹

The result of this report was the amalgamation of the Royal College of Science and the Royal School of Mines with the Central Technical College of the City and Guilds Institute. There was thus created in South Kensington, the Imperial College of Science and Technology chartered in July 1907 - an English, rather than a German solution. Haldane's dream of a grant metropolitan school of applied science had come true. That he regarded it as a personal triumph is shown by a letter he wrote in 1909. In it he informed his mother that he had "just been present at the birth of another child of mine - the Imperial College of Science and Technology of which the king laid the foundation stone this morning."¹⁶² He could not be entirely satisfied yet, however, for the important question of the relations to exist between the new college and the university had still to be settled. The London University was pursuing a policy of

160. Ibid., p.10.

161. Ibid., p.27.

162. Haldane to his mother, 8 July 1909, Haldane MSS. 5982, fr.11-12.

incorporation; in 1905 University College was transferred to it by Act of Parliament; and in 1908 a similar Act in respect of King's College was to be passed. The University advocated the same principle of incorporation with regard to Imperial College, and with this Haldane approved. The granting of the charter to Imperial College, however, had given rise to strong demands from its teaching staff for conversion into a separate University; in spite of the fact that in 1908 it had been designated a school of the University. The government, acting upon the other main recommendation of the departmental committee, set up a royal commission to consider primarily the relations to exist between the various institutions of higher learning in London. Haldane, almost inevitably, became its chairman.

In giving evidence before the commission Haldane himself wondered whether perhaps they had "been misled by the German analogy in founding an Imperial College of Technology apart from the University?"¹⁶³ He reminded the commission that the aim was to create in London a comprehensive university in which not only pure academic training but advanced technological instruction and research went on. Therefore, he continued, "the sharp German line of demarcation" must be avoided.¹⁶⁴ The commission decided that the existing organisation was not calculated to promote the interests of true university education in London. It recommended

163. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on University Education in London, 1910 (Cd.5166), Q.1837, p.145.

164. Ibid., 1911 (Cd.5528), Q.4639, p.95.

that technology be taught within the university; that, in other words, Imperial College become a constituent part of the university.¹⁶⁵ In arriving at this decision the commission made extensive reference to the German alternative of separation and decided against it.

The result of this report was the formation of a departmental committee to consider how its recommendations might be implemented. Haldane must have considered that final success was near but the war intervened and it was not for another decade and a half that the question of the relations to exist between the London University and Imperial College was resolved.

In sending his old Göttingen friend, Hugo Conwentz, a copy of an address he had delivered at Edinburgh University in 1907, Haldane remarked: "You know how deep my respect is for your country and how much I owe to it."¹⁶⁶ The extent of Haldane's debt to Germany can be gauged from what has been written about his work for the universities. In his efforts to secure the reorganisation of London in the 1890s; in his work for the civic universities; in his correspondence with Chamberlain over Birmingham University; in his advocacy of greater state aid to universities; and in his 'Charlottenburg scheme', the German influence consistently and powerfully came to bear. Through Haldane - and reformers like him - that influence made an important

165. Final Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in London, 1913 (Cd.6717), pp.26, 32, 90-1.

166. Haldane to Conwentz, 7 January 1907, Haldane MSS. 5907, f.137.

contribution towards the re-shaping of English policy.

However, in considering the work of Haldane on behalf of the English universities we must bear several points in mind. First, we must treat his, often egocentric, correspondence with care and remember that other individuals also played their part in bringing about the various developments that have been described. And second, we must not imagine that these developments were solely German-inspired. This latter point, of course, has relevance to most of the other reforms that were achieved during this period.

The progressive interests within the university institutions in London; the hard-working royal commissioners; individual reformers like Lord Reay, Lord Rosebery and Lyon Playfair; and sympathetic politicians like Balfour and Devonshire, all made contributions towards the creation of a single teaching university in London and thus balanced Haldane's largely German-inspired ideas with distinctive concepts of their own.

We might be forgiven for thinking that the ideal of a Liverpool civic university was entirely German-, and Haldane-inspired. Certainly, Haldane's role in securing action was important, and there is no doubt that he was largely prompted by an admiration of Germany. But we must not pretend that the eventual generosity of the Liverpool Council owed nothing to pressures for change being generated by forward-looking academics and by sections of the Liverpool civic community who recognised no

debt to Germany.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, the successful establishment of Imperial College was not due only to the activities of Haldane. The London County Council; sympathetic interests in the City; and individuals like Sidney Webb, Lord Rosebery and Sir Francis Mowatt, the Permanent Head of the Treasury, all added their weight to the campaign. Furthermore, although Haldane invariably spoke of 'the London Charlottenburg', we should not forget that influences from places other than Germany also played their part. Indeed, one of the earliest suggestions for such a college came from a country far removed from Germany. Soon after the death of Queen Victoria, the Government of New Zealand suggested that, as a memorial to her, a college of advanced science be founded in London to serve the whole Empire.

We should also remember that Haldane was Edinburgh-trained as well as Göttingen-trained and, although aware of the shortcomings of the Scottish universities, he still believed that they could set a valuable example to those south of the border.¹⁶⁸ Again, the universities of the United States and their lavish support by the state in America - admired by many English reformers -

167. See S. Hodgson (ed.), Ramsay Muir, An Autobiography and some Essays (London, 1943). Muir agrees that Haldane did useful work in acting as counsel for the Liverpool petitioners before the Privy Council, but he criticises his claim to have been instrumental in convincing the leading-men of business in Liverpool. All that Muir recalls of Haldane's claimed crucial speech was "a rather dull lecture on the chemical industry." (p.48). It is not to Haldane that Muir gives credit for success, but to generous business men and academics who were genuinely inspired by an ideal.

168. The Times, 11 January 1913. p.6.

were by no means ignored by Haldane.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion.

In each of the developments with regard to university education that we have dealt with, the German influence played an important part: whether it was the improvement in the status of science or the admiration of those whose love lay with history or the Classics or Philosophy; or whether it was the rapid expansion of higher education in England after 1870 or the increasing financial commitment of the state towards it. The work of Haldane and Chamberlain, who each combined a full political career with a central role in matters of university reform, bore the impress of German ideas.

However, as we have seen, this German influence worked alongside non-German forces, both native and foreign. It may be impossible to evaluate the relative importance and strength of these different reform pressures but their presence warns us against ascribing too much credit for change to the German model. Not that the German model was always revered. To some Englishmen the universities of Germany - financed and supervised by the state - were coming to reflect the chauvinism and aggressive spirit of the Reich. Austen Chamberlain was appalled by the intolerance of Professor Heinrich von Treitschke whose lectures he attended in Berlin in 1887. The professor, he wrote from Berlin, was the "narrowest minded of Prussian Jingo." ¹⁷⁰ The frequently-held view

169. R.B.Haldane, Education and Empire (London, 1902), pp.63-4.

170. Austen to Beatrice Chamberlain, 18 November 1887, Chamberlain MSS
AC 3/2/29.

that the German professorate was the mouthpiece of state policy, the intellectual bodyguard of the House of Hohenzollern, ought to be set against the eulogies of some reformers.

Even the most pro-German of the reformers, however, were aware that certain features of the German system were unsuited to English conditions, or were simply undesirable. Their determination to make Imperial College an integral part of London University, rather than create an entirely independent institution as the German example instructed, is a good example of the way in which the German influence was tempered by native conditions. Even Haldane was fully conscious of the excessive regulation of the German university system. The Teutonic spirit is moving among us, he once proclaimed, but "in a fashion that is on the whole our own."¹⁷¹ As we shall see, this judgement - valid in matters of educational reform - also holds good when one examines the progress in certain areas of social reform.

171. R.B.Haldane, Universities and National Life (London, 1912), p.140.

Chapter 6: English Social Reform and Germany, an Introduction.

The tradition of looking to Germany, begun in the middle decades of the nineteenth century with reference to education, was later to be extended to other English domestic reform movements, notably those concerned with the improvement of the housing of the working classes; the search for an effective solution to the problem of unemployment; the provision of pensions for the aged; and the provision of compensation for those injured in the course of their employment. The culmination of these reform movements was the complicated and far-reaching Liberal legislation of 1911 which brought into being a wide scheme of national insurance, and which itself owed much to German influence. The second part of this thesis will deal with those two aspects of English domestic reform for which effective legislation was introduced before the great debates of 1911, and to which perhaps most was owed to the German example: old age pensions and workmen's compensation. German insurance legislation in these two fields, passed in the 1880s, combined with the grave inadequacies of the existing state and private welfare activity in England to encourage English reformers to expound the view that the State had a duty, by virtue of its greater resources and energies, to raise the condition of the mass of its people where voluntary effort was failing.

This view ran counter to the concept of laissez-faire which had exerted such a strong influence in earlier decades. For most people in nineteenth century England, the notion of the welfare state was anathema. State action, it was maintained, would encourage improvidence and sap independence, and it would cripple the industrial

effectiveness of the nation. In this climate of opinion, distress was regarded as the result of personal failing and human weakness, and it was commonly argued that to legislate against distress would be to pander to that weakness and further undermine the moral fibre of the individual. Thus the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 sought to give a stern and salutary lesson to those whose laziness and self-neglect had allegedly brought on their own poverty. The underlying principle of the English Poor Law in the nineteenth century was, therefore, that of deterrence. Relief was given under the harshest of terms and was accompanied by a stigma approaching criminality.

Gradually, however, a change was to come in English attitudes - a change from the dependence on laissez-faire to the acceptance of a measure of state regulation. This is not to exaggerate the break with the principle of laissez-faire. Indeed, it ought to be pointed out, that since the 1830s, the state in England had been increasingly regulating the life of the individual, both at home and at work. Although the many pieces of legislation might be criticised for their weakness and superficiality, no-one can deny their existence on the statute books. Thus in 1875 John Bright was to refer disparagingly to "the rotten legislation which has come so much into favor (sic) of late years,"¹ and to bemoan the decline of faith in libertarianism. However,

1. H. Ausubel, In Hard Times: Reformers among the Late Victorians (New York, 1960), p. 144.

it is generally agreed that, up to the 1870s, the forces of laissez-faire managed to hold in check the movement towards intervention. Not until that crucial decade did a decisive realisation of the shortcomings of traditional beliefs come about, a process undoubtedly hurried on by the economic and military emergence of Germany.

One later observer expressed the view that laissez-faire had been doomed "when Germany, in 1870, suddenly stepped into the front rank of nations."² The German abandonment of free trade in 1879 was followed in the 1880s by a programme of social reform legislation which, according to the contemporary writer, H.M.Felkin, opened a new era in European life by its acceptance of the premise "that the modern State is bound to take positive steps to secure the life of the great mass of people against the vicissitudes to which it is subject."³ Faced by an unbalanced budget, a depressed industry, a struggling agriculture, a rapidly-growing Socialist party, Bismarck embarked on an ambitious attempt to rally all sections of the German people to the national interest. Tariffs were levied in 1879 to protect agriculture and promote industry, as well as to provide revenue for his coming programme of social reforms. Industry and agriculture, won over by protectionism, would not oppose his 'socialism of the state', he argued, while the latter would win the working classes away from the dangerous Socialist doctrines. True to the tradition of Prussian

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2. C.Brereton, 'A National System of Education', Fortnightly Review, vol.LXIX (May, 1901), p.833.
 3. H.M.Felkin, 'The New National Insurance Laws of Germany', Contemporary Review, vol.LIV (August, 1888), p.279.

étatisme, Bismarck had already shown active interest in questions of labour regulations, state monopoly and railway nationalisation. Now, proclaiming the Christian duty of the state to promote the welfare of its citizens, he plunged into what one English reformer later described as "the largest and the most successful attempt made anywhere for a very long time to improve the condition of the working class."⁴ "Who", asked W.H.Dawson in 1890, "will give to the British working-man the blessing which Prince Bismarck has conferred upon his German brother?"⁵

Events in Germany had thus stimulated progressive thinkers and radical reformers in England to question the validity of the old assumptions and beliefs. They found that even the thrifty and industrious could suffer destitution, and they decided, therefore, that economic fluctuation and ill-luck might cause hardship as much as if not more than individual laziness and extravagance. They concluded that the problems of society must be tackled by society, through the medium of its representative, the state. Believing that self-interest and non-intervention had led to glaring inequalities and serious poverty, they sought to give public welfare priority over private enterprise and to bring into action, for economic and social purposes, the power of the state. They contended that to a state which cared for its weaker members and made them healthy and robust,

4. T.C.Horsfall, The Example of Germany (Manchester, 1904), p.174.

5. W.H.Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism (London, 1890), p.x.

accrued the benefits of a contented, vigorous and patriotic citizenry. Their ideal was one of service to the state, rewarded by state-directed social and educational reform. They were called 'collectivists' and 'state socialists' - the more so since they often cited the example of the state in Germany guided by Bismarck, "the greatest state socialist of his time."⁶

With the depression of the 1870s, the spread of Socialism and the emergence of a mass industrial democracy all pointing to the urgent need for reform, developments in Germany could not fail to attract favourable attention. "The various features of Bismarck's programme, became, successively, the goals of British social reformers", Semmel has written.⁷ Halévy has shown in similar fashion, that the innovations proposed by progressive members of the Conservative Party in the 1890s carefully followed German methods,⁸ while the scheme of reform - based on state action - advanced by the Fabian Society at the turn of the century "was a 'Prussian' rather than a revolutionary programme."⁹ One of the social reformers most influenced by German precedents was Joseph Chamberlain, although his chief biographer has stated that, interested though Chamberlain was in the German achievement, his policy was his very own and should not be considered "the state socialism of an imitation Bismarck."¹⁰ Nevertheless, Chamberlain

6. The Times, 11 February 1890, p.4.
7. B.Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London, 1960), p.23.
8. E.Halévy, Imperialism and the Rise of Labour 1895-1905 (London, 1961 edn.), p.227.
9. *Ibid.*, p.230.
10. J.L.Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol.II (London, 1933), p.512.

did subscribe to the principle of Bismarckian state socialism by proclaiming that the resources and energies of the state should be used to attain better educational facilities, more wholesome living and working conditions, a readjustment of the systems of taxation and land ownership, and last, but by no means least, social reform. He declared at Glasgow that politics was "the science of human happiness" and should aim at raising the general condition of the working population through the action of the state.¹¹ In an article of 1891 he appealed to the state to rise "to a true conception of its duties" towards its citizens.¹² Furthermore, Chamberlain's programme of reform did bear definite signs of a deep interest in, and knowledge of, Bismarck's legislation - an interest stimulated by his own visits to Germany, and a knowledge accumulated through acquaintance and correspondence with men whose experience of German achievements in this field exceeded even his own.

Chamberlain was not alone in proposing social reforms on the German model. In the mid-1880s, for example, he was faced with the rivalry of Lord Randolph Churchill who had himself advanced a programme which included extension of the law of employers' liability and the adoption of a graduated income tax. Chamberlain recognised the inspiration behind the Churchillian proposals. He told an audience at Hull in 1885 that "When Lord Randolph Churchill was told the other day that this was the policy of Prince Bismarck, he replied,

11. The Times, 16 September 1885, p.7.

12. J.Chamberlain, 'Favourable Aspects of State Socialism', North American Review (May, 1891), p.548.

'Why not?'" Chamberlain reminded his listeners that Churchill was not alone in advocating imitation of the German Chancellor and said that he, himself, was "flattered to see that a great and important section of the Tory Party has received and even outbid the policy which I have laid before the country."¹³

As in the sphere of educational reform, therefore, Chamberlain paid great attention to German practice. For example, his 'Unauthorised Programme' of 1885 included proposals for changes in the existing structure of land ownership and taxation on which Germany seems to have exercised a real influence. Hoping, with the help of Jesse Collings, to broaden the basis of land ownership and to give the farm labourer a real stake in the land he worked, Chamberlain advocated the creation of small-holdings and was undoubtedly interested in the land reforms of Stein and Hardenberg which had been introduced in Prussia after the triumphs of Napoleon. It is notable that Chamberlain's son, Austen, during his stay in Germany in 1887, studied not only the insurance legislation of Bismarck, but "the land laws and in particular the reforms carried out under Stein and Hardenberg."¹⁴ One may fairly assume that, given Chamberlain's keen interest in the land question, his son's findings would not have passed unscrutinised by him. Certainly, in speeches around this time, Chamberlain referred

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13. The Times, 7 August 1885, p.10. That Chamberlain was also annoyed is seen in a speech made the following month in which he accused Churchill and his followers of having "stripped me of my policy and left me bare and forlorn till I can invent another"; in *ibid.*, 9 September 1885, p.6.
14. Austen to Beatrice, 18 November 1887, Chamberlain MSS, AC 3/2/29.

to the systems of peasant ownership prevailing in Germany. For instance, at Evesham he denied that the German peasantry were in a worse condition than their English counterparts for this very reason.¹⁵

As regards reform of taxation, Chamberlain was a great believer in the principle of graduation. Direct graduated taxation, he rightly believed, was more equitable to all and less oppressive to the poor than indirect taxation. Furthermore, the principle of graduated taxation had been conceded in Germany and elsewhere. Observing that "Prince Bismarck is a man who is not afraid of Socialist legislation", Chamberlain referred to the German Chancellor's proposals for graduated income tax and deemed them "well worthy of careful consideration."¹⁶ Later that same year he maintained that Bismarck's proposals for graduated taxation were centred on "the only principle of taxation which is fair and just to all classes of the community."¹⁷

Chamberlain, however, failed to impose his 1885 programme on the Liberal Party. Members of that party less radical than he, regarded his proposals as socialism and looked upon him as a dangerous demagogue

15. The Times, 17 November 1885, p.10. See also a speech at Birmingham, *ibid.*, 6 January 1885, p.7. At a much later date Austen Chamberlain and Collings co-operated to try and commit the Unionist Party to their idea of peasant proprietorship, and again German precedents made their presence felt. But though Collings pressed Balfour with the example of Prussian abolition of "the pernicious incidents of tenure which existed" (Collings to Balfour, 22 September 1910, Chamberlain MSS, AC 8/6/13), he could not overcome the reluctance of his chief "to allow the party to slip into making pledges of a kind which it cannot fulfil" (Balfour to Austen Chamberlain, 20 September 1910, *ibid.*, AC 8/6/11).

16. The Times, 15 January 1885, p.7.

17. *Ibid.*, 6 August 1885, p.6.

who was inciting the masses to plunder the rich by talk of the obligations of property and the rights of the individual. The Whiggish Ayscough Fawkes condemned Chamberlain for seeking "to stir up strife & set Class against Class These ultra Radical notions will never be a benefit to us, but tend more than anything to demoralise us as a nation."¹⁸ Mundella, convinced that there was "abundant and noble work to be done in strengthening the national character, and raising it to the height of its duties and capabilities", felt that Chamberlain was doing the party a grave disservice by attempting to divert it from this honourable task to the destructive cause of socialism.¹⁹

Unable to convince the bulk of the Liberals of the validity and wisdom of his proposals, and at odds with the party over the Irish question, Chamberlain turned to the Conservatives and eventually succeeded in committing them to two major social reforms: the provision of pensions for the aged deserving poor; and alteration in the law relating to accidents suffered at work. Halévy tells us that if we wish to trace the origin and inspiration of the social reform programme which Chamberlain coaxed the Conservative Party into adopting during the 1890s "we must refer to the Bismarckian legislation, which provided his model."²⁰ Certainly, as we shall see later, the debates over the

18. A.Fawkes to Hartington, 24 January 1885, Devonshire MSS, 340.1645.

19. Mundella to R.Leader, 4 February 1885, Mundella MSS.

20. E.Halévy, Imperialism and the Rise of Labour 1895-1905 (London, 1961 edn.), p.231.

questions of Old Age Pensions and Employers' Liability, and the legislation eventually enacted to deal with them, derived a great deal from German precedents. And, without doubt, Chamberlain's policy with regard to these two major issues was based largely on his knowledge of those precedents.

Meanwhile, the realisation that efficiency had, in the past, been too readily sacrificed on the altar of economic individualism, brought about a change of another kind. In 1885 the prominent economist, William Cunningham, was pleased to report that "the question of the effectiveness of our population for industrial or military pursuits is once more attracting the attention it deserves."²¹ Gradually, as this question assumed greater and greater importance, there went out a call for the promotion, by the state, of organisation and discipline, intelligence and industry, vigour and health. Seeking to find solutions to the problems associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, concerned at the evidence of increasing physical deficiency among the population at large,²² and fearful for the commercial and military future of the nation, reformers developed a passion for what became known as 'national efficiency'.

Education had often been held up as the panacea for all the problems facing the nation. The argument that education was a pre-requisite of industrial and commercial advance was self-evident.

21. W.Cunningham, Politics and Economics (London, 1885), p.159.

22. See, for instance, G.F.Shee, 'The Deterioration in the National Physique', Nineteenth Century, vol.LIII (May 1903), pp.797-805.

The economic war being fought between the leading industrial nations was maintained by the school and university, the laboratory and the workshop, and in these Germany excelled. Reformers readily conceded German supremacy in matters of education. "Our people have no genius for education such as the Germans have", Haldane informed his sister.²³ The results of this German supremacy were seen to be commercial expansion, industrial growth, technological inventiveness and military prowess.²⁴ The implications of English backwardness in educational matters did not escape observers at home. "Educate, educate, educate, is the burthen of the lesson coming from Germany", declared The Spectator.²⁵ A greatly-improved system of education would, it was claimed, bring to England the same benefits it had brought to Germany, and enable it to overcome the challenge from that quarter.

Reformers also pressed the social advantages which would accrue from an improved system of education. The roots of crime, intemperance and pauperism would, it was maintained, be cut off once a well-educated generation was brought up.²⁶ An educational system made more relevant to modern needs by the inclusion of a greater amount

23. Haldane to Elizabeth, 20 April 1903, Haldane MSS, 6010, ff.200-1. Back in 1874 Haldane had been impressed to find in Germany that "everyone is well educated, even several of the soldiers having occasionally a stripe on the shoulder to indicate that they have passed an exam. in Greek & Latin" (Haldane to his mother, 24 April 1874, *ibid.*, 5927, ff.13-14).

24. See, for example, a speech by Sir Bartle Frere in The Times, 9 January 1874, p.7.

25. The Spectator, 26 June 1886.

26. Sir Lyon Playfair, Subjects of Social Welfare (London, 1889), pp.285-6; and Sir Swire Smith, Educational Comparisons, Or, Remarks on Industrial Schools in England, Germany and Switzerland (London, 1873), pp.21, 90-5.

of physical and manual training would, it was further claimed, promote the physical well-being of the individual and hence the efficiency of the nation.²⁷

But people had come to see that education alone was not enough. As a weapon for attacking the harsh consequences of industrial and city life - debility, squalor and degradation - it could achieve only limited success. Physical strength and the will to work were needed as much as knowledge and intelligence, and the 'imperial race', as reformers described it, could not be reared on improved education alone. There was, therefore, a need for educational reform to be closely linked to a comprehensive programme of social reform. Rosebery, while arguing that educational innovation was the key to all national efficiency, found it necessary to incorporate it into a wide programme of reform of housing and sanitation, improvement of working conditions, and modernisation of political and military institutions.²⁸

27. R.Brabazon, Prosperity or Pauperism? Physical, Industrial and Technical Training (London, 1888), pp.6-15, 57-8; and T.J.MacNamara, 'Physical Condition of Working Class Children', Nineteenth Century, vol.LVI (August 1904), pp.307-311.

28. The Times 17 December 1901, p.10. Rosebery was, of course, a leading spokesman of those clamouring for efficiency. He once declared that "a drink-sodden population, inhabiting fevered and contaminated slums, is not a true basis for a prosperous Empire" (The Times, 11 June 1904, p.13). It was hoped by those, contemptuous of the outmoded outlook of the Liberal Party establishment on domestic questions, that Rosebery would emerge from his self-imposed retirement and assume the leadership of a rejuvenated party pledged to a radical policy of imperialism and social reform. "In your hands lies the future efficiency of the Empire", he was assured (W.T.Stead to Rosebery, 9 October 1905, Rosebery MSS, 80). But Rosebery's intellectual eminence was not matched by either political ambition or courage. He had already told another admirer that "were he to follow his own bent and desire he would withdraw altogether and never see Parliament or platform again" (Rosebery to S.W.Potter, undated 1903, ibid., 78), and he was never to dominate Liberalism again. For the politics of national efficiency and the roles of Rosebery, Haldane and the Webbs, etc. see B.Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London, 1960), pp.53-82.

In the quest for national efficiency Germany was, almost inevitably, a source of inspiration and envy. Reformers looked with nervous admiration at an Empire which was organised and vigorous, martial and successful. Rosebery often justified his demands for a programme of efficiency by reference to the emergence in the nineteenth century of a strong and efficient Prussia at the head of a powerful Empire.²⁹ Other reformers, too, contrasted the alleged physical deterioration of the English with Germany's strong and healthy population; England's dilatory approach to questions of social reform with the swift enactment of Bismarck's comprehensive legislative code; and the continuing deficiencies in England's schools and universities with German educational prowess. W.H.Dawson in 1912 claimed that the effect of overall German supremacy in these fields had been to guarantee that country "a higher standard of civilisation and economic efficiency."³⁰ The Inter-Departmental Committee investigating the allegations of physical deterioration - a direct response to the clamour for national efficiency - heard very many references to Germany in the testimony it gathered. T.C.Horsfall, for example, described to the committee the inspection of houses and the medical examination of school-children in Germany.³¹ The committee, significantly, recommended, among other things, drastic measures to

29. See his speech at Glasgow, The Times, 17 November 1900, p.12.

30. H.W.Dawson, Social Insurance in Germany, 1883-1911 (London, 1912), p.208.

31. Evidence Taken Before the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration. 1904 (Cd.2210), Q.5580, p.223.

deal with over-crowding and smoke pollution and the medical inspection and feeding of elementary school-children.³²

Meanwhile, in 1903, when the demands for national efficiency were at their most strident, Joseph Chamberlain had opened his famous tariff reform campaign. Tariff reform was Chamberlain's own formula for efficiency and social reform. It would, he claimed, while revitalising industry and commerce and strengthening the links of the Empire, enable a solution to be found to such pressing domestic problems as unemployment and the financing of old age pensions. As his son Austen was to state in a private memorandum, the object of tariff reform was "the promotion of that imperial union & national well-being in which are centred our hopes for the future of our race."³³ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to tell the story of tariff reform. In any case, this has been recently and comprehensively done.³⁴ But in the context of this thesis it will be appropriate to deal briefly with the influence of Germany on the thinking both of the tariff reformers and of their opponents.

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32. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration, 1904 (Cd.2175), pp.84-93. The work of the committee bore fruit within a few years with the passing in 1906 of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, permitting the feeding of elementary children by local authorities, and in 1907 of the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act which inaugurated the medical inspection of school-children.
33. Memorandum on Unionist Policy, 1908, Chamberlain MSS, AC 7/7a/12.
34. J.Amery, 'Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign', The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vols. V and VI (London, 1969).

"It is not an infrequent occurrence in history that a nation prepares itself to meet its enemies by aping them", one historian has written,³⁵ and it is certainly true that the tariff reformers lived both in fear and admiration of the economic and social achievement of Imperial Germany. They feared the consequences of German industrial and trading supremacy while they admired the better housing and superior living standards of the mass of the German people and their lower levels of unemployment and emigration. Chamberlain, in a speech of London, dwelt on the decrease in the numbers of those emigrating from Germany as evidence of contentment with the prevailing system of protection;³⁶ while in a letter to a follower, he claimed that protection was "the only remedy for the want of employment."³⁷ In a similar vein, a tariff reform pamphlet observed that "in our 'Free Trade' country glaring evidences of misery and poverty are to be met with on all sides, but in German towns things are different";³⁸ while Chamberlain repeated in a further speech that "the progress of the German workmen since a tariff was adopted in that country under the strong influence of Prince Bismarck, has been much greater, quicker and more evident than the progress of the

35. B.Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London, 1960), p.118.

36. The Times, 18 May 1905, p.11.

37. J.Chamberlain to J.Boraston, 19 October 1905, Chamberlain MSS, AC 2/1/3/35.

38. Tariff Reform League, Free Traders and Germany (London, 1910), p.6. See also W.J.Ashley, The Progress of the German Working Classes in the Last Quarter of a Century (London, 1904), pp.v, 51-2.

workingmen in this country."³⁹

To justify their demands further, the tariff reformers pointed to the commercial success of Germany since the adoption of a tariff.⁴⁰ Speeches and pamphlets abounded with statistics designed to prove that industrial output and commercial activity increased manifold under a protectionist system. In 1903 Winston Churchill, a free-trader, was forced to admit in private that Chamberlain and his supporters would "derive new vigour from the increase in German exports" indicated by the latest trade figures.⁴¹ The opponents of protection, in fact, were never able to demolish the argument, contained in the statistics, that protectionist Germany was doing better than free-trade England.

Another justification of tariff reform was the one to which Chamberlain attached most importance - greater imperial unity. He could see the great potentiality of the British Empire but believed it would never achieve that potential until it were bound together by links stronger than sentiment and tradition. He was convinced that until such links were forged the British Empire would never be an empire "in the sense in which the German Empire now dominates a great portion of Europe."⁴² Believing, however, that nothing could be done without a patriotic sacrifice on the part of the people at large for the greater glory of the Empire, he strove to shame or inspire them to

39. The Times, 16 December 1904, p.8.

40. See Chamberlain's speech at Preston, The Times, 12 January 1905, p.10.

41. Churchill to Rosebery, 13 August 1903, Rosebery MSS, 8.

42. The Times, 2 February 1905, p.9.

action by holding up to them the example of "the undying resolution, the brilliant courage, and the magnificent self-sacrifice" of the German people.⁴³

Semmel has called the tariff reform campaign, in its combination of social reform and imperial consolidation, "the attempt to create a Bismarckian England."⁴⁴ In similar vein, J.L.Garvin argued that tariff reform was only the latest of a succession of "unauthorised programmes" which were, for Chamberlain, "the equivalent for this country of Prince Bismarck's economic and social legislation."⁴⁵ Semmel and Garvin have perhaps overstated the case but, nevertheless, with their continual reference to German social, economic and imperial achievements, and their persistent ascription of these achievements to protection, the tariff reformers certainly showed the high degree of importance they attached to German models. Thus, in response to a typical tariff reform speech by Bonar Law in the Commons in 1908, Lloyd George remarked with an air of exasperation: "The hon. Member who has just sat down indulged in what we always expect from hon. Gentlemen opposite - a great eulogy of Germany."⁴⁶ This from the man who was to become one of the greatest admirers and imitators of German social insurance !

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43. J.Chamberlain, 'Nelson's Year and National Duty', The Outlook, 11 March 1905, Chamberlain MSS, C 1/9/2.
44. B.Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London 1960), p.177.
45. J.L.Garvin, 'Mr Chamberlain', National Review, vol.XLIX (August, 1907), pp.850-1.
46. Hansard, 4th Ser., 189 (1908), 863.

It is interesting to note that the German model also played a large part in the propaganda of the opponents of tariff reform, though, of course, they were at pains to point to the less favourable aspects of the German way of life. They were equally eager to insist that German prosperity was due to factors which were far removed from protectionism - notably, a superior educational system. The consequence of this dual reference to Germany was the eruption of a highly contentious, often ridiculous debate, on the condition of the German working class. In the rival versions of the truth, Germany "was constantly cited ... as the country where the working class prospered or starved behind a tariff wall."⁴⁷ Free-trade allegations about the harshness of life in Germany stung the tariff reformers. Leo Amery accused the Liberals of falsely painting "grotesque travesties of the life of Germans, reduced by Protection to subsisting off black bread and horse-flesh."⁴⁸ In 1910, Austen Chamberlain appealed to Balfour to allow tariff reform to take the offensive in order "to beat down the cry of dear food, 'black bread and horseflesh' and to ... show up Lloyd George's lies about German conditions."⁴⁹ An important part of the tariff reform campaign was the despatch of observers to Germany to study conditions there. In

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47. J. Brown, Ideas Concerning Social Policy and their Influence on Legislation in Britain, 1902-1911, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (London University, 1964), p.120.
48. L.S. Amery, 'Mr Chamberlain and Fiscal Policy', essay in Life of Joseph Chamberlain, by Viscount Milner and others (London, 1914), p.308.
49. A. Chamberlain to Balfour, 29 January 1910, Chamberlain MSS, AC 8/5/2.

1905, representatives from Birmingham went to Berlin and reported favourably on the conditions of life and work in the German capital.⁵⁰ In a speech in November 1905 Chamberlain referred to this report and welcomed the proof it provided that "in spite of all that we have heard about dear food, and horseflesh, and blackbread and low wages, the general condition and welfare of the German brassworker in Berlin compares very favourably with the condition of the same worker in Birmingham."⁵¹

The visits to Germany continued with the sending over, in 1907, of six working men to study the social and industrial environment of England's great Continental rival.⁵² Then in 1910, four more workers were sent to Germany by the Tariff Reform League. From there, these four sent Lloyd George a sarcastic little message, a copy of which is contained in the Chamberlain Papers:

"We the undersigned Britishers are sitting in an Inn in a German mining village - eating black bread & German 'offal', and it's jolly good."

F.D.Marshall.
Arthur Lymm.
A.E.Barton.
Henry E.Cottrell.⁵³

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50. R.H.Best and others, The Brassworkers of Berlin and of Birmingham: A Comparison (London, 1905).
51. The Times, 4 November 1905, p.11.
52. Hansard, 4th Ser., 172 (1907), 1403-4.
53. Copy of a Post-card to Lloyd George, 10 March 1910, Chamberlain MSS, AC 4/1/506.

On their return to England, the four men described their experiences in a meeting at the House of Commons. Austen Chamberlain wrote home in triumph: "They were all enormously impressed by the prosperity and well-being of the German workman."⁵⁴ A month later, J. Boraston, convinced that the tariff reform struggle to overcome the 'lies' about German conditions was being won, assured Chamberlain that much good was being done "by sending deputations of working men to the Continent to study industrial & social conditions."⁵⁵ In 1913 Austen was able to get first-hand confirmation that the various tariff-reform deputations had not been over-stating the case for protection. Making a further visit to Germany, he found "an air of comfort & well-being that was pleasant to see."⁵⁶

In the controversy over the conditions of life in Germany both sides undoubtedly were guilty of exaggeration and of allowing rhetoric occasional precedence over objectivity and reason. There had certainly been a great improvement in the living and working conditions of the German working classes but to state categorically, as the tariff reformers did, that this was the result of protection alone was to undervalue such important considerations as the excellent education system and the high rationalisation of German society. On the other hand, to ascribe German improvement to factors completely divorced from that country's

54. A. Chamberlain to Mary, 11 April 1910, *ibid.*, AC 4/1/539.

55. J. Boraston to A. Chamberlain, 6 May 1910, *ibid.*, AC 4/11/83.

56. A. Chamberlain to Mary, 4 October 1913, *ibid.*, AC 4/1/1046.

tariff policy, or even to deny that improvement had taken place, was to foolishly ignore the benefits for industry and agriculture which a protectionist policy had undoubtedly bestowed on Germany. In short, the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes of view. The German workers' standards had been raised because of a combination of educational opportunity, wide-reaching social reform, supreme organisational ability and the protection of the home market. Perhaps then, England had no real chance of emulating German success unless it moved ahead on all fronts. But the commitment to protectionism was not decisively made until 1932, while the German power of efficient organisation seems as far out of reach in 1970 as it was sixty years ago. Yet, if England could not entirely match the broad general advance of Germany, the reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were determined to see that the German record in certain vital areas of national life should not go unchallenged. We have already dealt fully with their efforts to ensure that the educational gap existing between the two countries should be closed. Now, in two particular areas of social reform, we shall see the same deep interest in, and constant reference to, German achievement, and the same resolution to improve on the German experience.

Chapter 7: EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY AND WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION
1880 - 1906.

Introduction: the Situation before 1880.

The increasing use of power in factories and workshops had produced new problems and dangers for the working man in the nineteenth century. While steam and electricity brought with them a great speeding-up of the processes of manufacture they also caused an increasing number of accidents at work. To the victims of such accidents, the interruption of earnings which resulted meant hardship and suffering for themselves and their families. This is not to deny the existence of a considerable body of factory legislation. The state could lay down safety requirements but too much depended on the manner in which profit-seeking employers and careless and tired working men observed them. Nor is it to forget the existing agencies of private and mutual insurance available to employees. However, only a minority of workers had the foresight and the earning capacity to lay money aside for personal insurance in a benefit or a friendly society. Furthermore, only a minority of industries had developed mutual insurance funds, contributed to by employers. In short, in the true spirit of laissez-faire, the English state declined to intervene decisively in the interests of its working population. England was undoubtedly the pioneer of modern industry but to many reformers it lagged behind in seeing to the just compensation of those injured in carrying on its industrial life.

Government spokesmen could, of course, argue that the interests of the working man were protected by the common law. Certainly, in theory,

common law did enable the injured workman to claim compensation from his employer where the injury was directly attributable either to the negligence of the employer or to that of any other workman employed by him. In practice, however, employers could escape their common law liability in any one of a number of ways. They could raise the defence of volenti non fit injuria which asserted that a workman, by the act of accepting employment also accepted the hazards involved in that employment and thus absolved his employer from his common law duty. Employers could also invoke the doctrine of 'common employment' which had become firmly established in English law. This stated that if injury resulted from the carelessness of a fellow-worker, the injured party had no claim on his master. Its effect was to place the workman in a worse position vis-a-vis his employer than even a complete stranger. For instance, if the negligence of a railway guard caused a derailment, the fireman or driver, if injured, had no claim against the railway company whereas every injured passenger had. This doctrine was inevitably the cause of much bitterness and contention, but the attempt to gain acceptance for the counter-doctrine that a master was responsible for the proven negligence of his servants (Respondeat superior. Qui facit per alium facit per se) met with no success.

A further defence which employers could raise to evade their common law liability was that of 'contributory negligence.' This maintained that, in law, if the injury resulted from the combined negligence of the employer and the injured workman, the latter was considered the

author of his own injury and had no valid claim. All that the employer had to do was to show that the employee, by the exercise of reasonable care, could have avoided the consequences of his (the employer's) negligence. On the other hand, the injured workman had the much more difficult task of proving that he had not been at all negligent.

Because of the loopholes available to employers the common law was, therefore, of limited value to the workman. He could secure compensation virtually only when he was successful in the difficult task of proving the negligence of his employer and of withstanding the counter-attack of 'contributory negligence'. In any case, the costs of litigation were so great as to be prohibitive to the vast majority of workmen. They had to make the best of a bad job and received little sympathy in an England which regarded accidents as a basic occupational hazard but would place no responsibility on any but provably negligent employers; which believed that it was the personal duty of workers to provide for themselves; and which declared that to place statutory force behind claims for compensation would only make the working population careless. Not until 1880 was legislation passed which went some way towards redressing the balance more in favour of the working population.

The year 1880 saw another event of significance: a Foreign Office inquiry into the laws relating to insurance and employers'

liability in operation in France and Germany.¹ Already, parliamentary discussion on these questions in the late 1870s had been marked by particular reference to the German example, and the 1880 Inquiry confirmed the trend of looking to that country for guidance in matters of social, as much as educational, reform.

The inquiry found an interesting variety of German agencies attempting to deal with the issues of liability, insurance and compensation. On the local and parochial level there were, throughout Germany, innumerable and differing types of voluntary benefit and insurance societies (Hilfskassen). On a higher level there were the important miners' mutual aid associations (Knappschaftskassen) which had long existed in Prussia and the Rhineland. The funds of these associations - built up by the joint contributions of employers and miners - supported the latter whenever they were sick or injured, and their dependents if they should be killed. The Knappschaftskassen had attracted the attention of the English government in the late 1840s and the social and educational reformer Hugh Tremeneere had been sent to Germany to inquire into their organisation and functions.² Impressed by their humanity and efficiency Tremeneere had advocated the creation

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1. Reports on the Law in Force in France and Germany with regard to the Insurance of Persons Employed in Mines etc., And the Legal Liability of their Employers, 1880 (C.2607).
 2. Report on Mining Inspection in Germany, 1849, (C.1021).

of similar state-supervised mutual assistance associations in England.³

On the level of state action, the 1880 inquiry found that Prussia, in particular, gave much food for thought. In 1838 an Employers' Liability Act had imposed upon the Prussian railway service the duty of making compensation for injuries inflicted by anything other than the provable negligence of the injured party or by unavoidable accident. In 1849 local authorities in Prussia had been empowered to require factory owners and master craftsmen to insure their workers against sickness, and to contribute one-third of the cost themselves while deducting the men's contributions from their wages. Then in 1854 the Prussian state, acting on the precedent set by the Knappschaftskassen, had made it compulsory for provident funds to be formed in specified industrial occupations and for workers to contribute to such funds. Dawson estimated that by 1875, given the tendency for other states to follow Prussia's lead, there had been founded in Germany some 12,000 mutual aid associations with a total membership of 2 million.⁴ Meanwhile, employers' liability had, in 1871, been extended to all parts of Germany and to a larger number of industries. Employers were liable to render compensation for accidents at work except where they were due to the workman's own fault or to circumstances beyond the employer's control (höhere Gewalt). Compensation covered medical expenses and loss of earnings in case of injury, and funeral

3. A.T.Wilson and H.Levy, Workmen's Compensation, vol.I (London, 1939), p.28.

4. W.H.Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism (London, 1891), p.92.

expenses and dependents' claims in cases of death.

There existed in Germany, therefore, a large body of precedents for Bismarck's sickness and accident legislation of the mid-1880s. It was, in fact, his awareness of the inadequacies of the systems already in operation which helps to explain Bismarck's decision to embark on his comprehensive reform programme. The haphazard nature of the existing agencies, working independently of each other, was anathema to the tidy Prussian mind. The employers' liability machinery had proved cumbrous and undependable; and negligent employers often escaped retribution because of the inability of their workers to meet the high costs of litigation. In short, the very same considerations which were to force upon English legislators a realisation of the need for reform in the 1880s and 1890s, were making themselves felt in Germany a decade or so earlier. A later committee of inquiry could thus recall that: "The example of Germany, and the same causes which led to legislation there, greatly influenced all other European countries, including the United Kingdom."⁵

Meanwhile in England, in 1876, the first determined effort to deal with the unsatisfactory condition of the existing law had been made. The reforming member for Stafford, A. MacDonald, had introduced a bill to deal drastically with the defence of 'common employment'.

5. Memorandum on Foreign and Colonial Laws relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1905 (Cd.2458), p.3.

MacDonald hoped particularly to bring the law to bear on the increasing number of employers who were playing little or no direct part in the running of their concerns but were leaving them to managers or supervisors. Any attempt in the past to prove the negligence of such employers had been effectively countered by their defence that they had no responsibility for the negligence of their agents. MacDonald's bill sought to hold masters liable "for the default of their managers, and those left in charge of their works."⁶ It held out, in addition, the possibility of the nullification of 'common employment.' MacDonald agreed to withdraw his bill following a government promise to set up a select committee to deal with the question.

The subsequent inquiry reported in July 1876 that it had been unable to collect all the necessary evidence and therefore recommended "that the subject be further investigated in a future Session."⁷ Among the testimony it had received, however, was that of C.P. Ilbert, who was an expert on the subject and was to become a leading parliamentary draftsman. Ilbert described the existing German law in some detail because, he said, "it has an important bearing on the present subject." He particularly admired the German law because it greatly restricted the defence of 'common employment' which he considered unjust and anomalous.⁸ In spite of Ilbert's arguments, however, the reconstituted

6. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 229 (1876), 1158.

7. Report from the Select Committee on Employers' Liability for Injuries to their Servants, 1876, (372), p.iii.

8. Ibid., Q.315, pp.27-8.

committee a year later claimed that if 'common employment' were invalidated it would "effect a serious disturbance in the industrial arrangements of the country", leading to the discouragement of capital investment.⁹ However, the committee did agree that the growth of corporations and public companies had lead to a potentially harmful impersonalisation of industry. It proposed, therefore, that where masters had delegated their functions to others, the latter's acts or defaults "should be considered as the personal acts or defaults of the principals and employers."¹⁰

MacDonald was not, however, satisfied with this minor victory. In 1878 he introduced a further bill to abolish 'common employment', pointing out that in Germany "the law was more stringent against employers than here."¹¹ One of the bill's chief supporters, Dr Cameron, reminded the House that the German government had recently passed a measure prohibiting the defence of 'common employment' being raised by the proprietors of mines.¹² Once again MacDonald's bill was withdrawn, though this time it had the effect of forcing the government to bring in a bill of its own in 1879. This bill attempted, however, to deal with the question only on the more moderate lines suggested by the select committee. It proposed no more than to make masters liable for the negligence of their 'servants in authority'.

9. Ibid., Further Report, 1877 (285), p.iv.

10. Ibid., p.v.

11. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 239 (1878), 1046.

12. Ibid., 239 (1878), 1056.

MacDonald regarded this as being too weak and urged the government to reconsider his own more extreme measure for the complete prohibition of 'common employment', reminding them that this would bring England into line with France, Belgium and Germany.¹³ Neither the government bill of 1879, nor a private member's bill in the name of Thomas Brassey, introduced in the same year, was successful. A further Conservative bill of 1880 was similarly rejected and soon after its failure the government of Disraeli relinquished office with a blank record on this particular issue.

The significance of these early skirmishes must not, however, be lost. In the first place, they had the effect of building up a pressure for reform which enabled the Liberals to win the battle fought over the major legislation they introduced in 1880. Secondly, the debates of 1876-1879 had indicated that the whole question of employers' liability - owing to the powerful interests involved - would inevitably involve bitter argument and political manoeuvring. Certainly the issues involved were to prove highly contentious, and the failure of Asquith's bill of 1893-4 was to reflect the importance of political considerations in any discussion of the question. Finally, MacDonald's tendency to base his repeated demands for reform on foreign, and especially German precedents, served to direct attention to the

13. Ibid., 244 (1879), 1140.

more stringent regulations that were fully operative in Germany. Thus, when Bismarck introduced his more comprehensive legislation in the 1880s, the value of the German experience was already well established in English minds and thinking minds did not have to be won over to something new and unfamiliar.

Employers' Liability in England; Compulsory Insurance in Germany, 1880-1894.

Under the second Gladstone Administration the promoter of one of the unsuccessful bills of 1879, Thomas Brassey, became Civil Lord of the Admiralty and his measure was adopted and reintroduced immediately by the Liberal government. One of its chief sponsors was the new President of the Board of Trade, Joseph Chamberlain. As well as seeking to circumscribe the defence of 'common employment' by making the employer liable for the acts of those to whom he had deputed his functions, the bill sought also to make the employer responsible for accidents caused by defective plant, ways and machinery and by a workman's obedience to orders negligently given. Compensation would be given to the injured workman in cases of disablement, and to his dependents in cases of fatality. It was to be limited to the equivalent of three years' wages. The bill aimed to encompass those engaged in manual occupations, though seamen and domestic servants were excluded from its provisions. Chamberlain appealed to all members to approach the measure with goodwill so that they might remove "great

injustices and glaring irregularities, and make a real contribution to the contentment and also to the security of the working population."¹⁴ Lord Selbourne urged the Upper House to look favourably on it "because it would bring our jurisprudence more into accord with that of other civilised countries."¹⁵

The bill, however, was not to pass without much argument and amendment. Manufacturing interests, in particular, were apprehensive about the possible effects of the measure. They feared that it would throw new burdens on industry and cut down their competitiveness vis-à-vis foreign countries. By then the bill was regarded as "ruinous and almost revolutionary."¹⁶ In an attempt to allay their fears, the President of the Local Government Board, J.G. Dodson, reminded them that in Germany and other countries employers were liable to compensation for their workers "to at least the extent, if not to a greater extent, than was proposed by this Bill."¹⁷ At the other extreme - as The Times observed - the proposals were "considered timid and insufficient by representatives of workmen."¹⁸ They, too, commonly referred to the more stringent German practice - though their aim, unlike that of Dodson, was to extend the scope of the bill. MacDonald, obviously concerned that there was no provision for compensation for an accident brought about by the negligence of a man's work-mate, introduced an amendment calling

14. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 253 (1880), 1773.

15. Ibid., 255 (1880), 1972.

16. The Times, 4 June 1880, p.10.

17. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 252 (1880), 1092.

18. The Times, 4 June 1880, p.10.

for the total abolition of the defence of 'common employment'. He partly justified his demand on the grounds that the German Reichstag was at that very time considering a bill "to declare that it was no bar to the claim of a workman that he was in common employment."¹⁹ Like his earlier bills, however, MacDonald's amendment was too radical to have a serious chance of acceptance.

Workmen and their representatives were also highly suspicious of any suggestion that some scheme of insurance might be linked to the Employers' Liability Bill. They believed that insurance would lull employers into complacency about the running of their businesses and would therefore produce a decline in safety standards. In June 1880 a high-ranking deputation from the TUC waited on Gladstone and urged him to ensure that no insurance proposals would be attached to his government's bill.²⁰

Working men, therefore, looked askance at the claim of T. Knowles that no measure could hope to be really effective which did not incorporate the compulsory insurance of workmen by their masters. Knowles argued that such insurance, once put into operation, "would satisfy everybody, and be an enormous boon to workpeople injured in their employment." Perhaps inevitably, he invoked the German example in criticising the government for appearing unaware "that for many years compulsory

19. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 253 (1880), 1401.

20. The Times, 4 June 1880, p.10.

insurance has been in operation in Germany, and has worked well."²¹ A prominent Lord of Appeal, Alexander Burns Shand, who had received part of his university training at Heidelberg, supported the call for compulsory insurance. In a letter to The Times he answered those who claimed that it was too paternalistic and completely unworkable by pointing to the 'paternalistic' state regulation of factories and mines already in force and to the way compulsion operated in Germany. The joint contribution of workers and employers to an insurance fund, he went on, would promote harmonious relations in industry and protect employers from the crippling costs of a serious accident.²² The government, however, in the words of Chamberlain "did not believe in the principle advocated of compulsory insurance",²³ and so for the moment the issue lay dormant.

If compulsory insurance was out of the question what chance of success did a form of voluntary insurance have? J.H. Cross was of the opinion that the bill of 1880 ought to encourage employers to turn to industrial insurance companies to insure against their liability. He was confident that companies would spring up, "as they had done in Germany and Switzerland, which would accept these liabilities at very small sums indeed."²⁴ Other members argued that the alternative German practice of mutual insurance between employers and workers (the

21. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 253 (1880), 1758-9.

22. The Times, 24 August 1880, p.6.

23. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 253 (1880), 1771.

24. Ibid., 255 (1880), 372.

basis of the German Knappschaftskassen), already operating among the mining communities of County Durham and Northumberland, was preferable to the profit-seeking commercial insurance suggested by Cross. In fact, as things turned out, one of the most beneficial results of the 1880 Act, as a later select committee showed, was the stimulus which it gave to the establishment of mutual insurance schemes and provident funds.²⁵ Employers, uncertain as to the extent of their increased liability under the new law, began to make sizeable contributions to workers' insurance funds. As shall be seen, however, their generosity was often tempered by their insistence that, in return, workers should forego their rights under the Act.

Numerous references, then, were made in 1880 to the existing German system, and they help to explain the great interest shown in the major German reforms passed during the next few years. German arrangements in 1880 were still somewhat incomplete and haphazard, yet they had attracted much attention. How much more attention, therefore, was to be focussed on the comprehensive measures introduced in Germany within the next few years. A later departmental committee maintained with justification that, in considering the history of legislation relating to compensation for industrial accidents, it was necessary "to begin with that of Germany. The need for special legislation was first felt in that part of Europe, and the whole subject was characteristically

25. Report from the Select Committee on the Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bill, 1886 (192-Sess.1), p.iii:

dealt with in the most comprehensive manner. The example set by Germany was followed, more or less directly, by almost all other European countries, including the United Kingdom."²⁶

The German legislation which attracted the attention of English reformers eager to seek ways of improving the Act of 1880 comprised the Sickness Insurance Law (Krankenversicherungs - Gesetz) of 1883 and the Accident Insurance Laws (Unfallversicherungs-Gesetze) of 1884-1887.²⁷ The Sickness Insurance Law provided for the creation of a general fund by the compulsory contributions of employers and workers to an approved sick association. The employers contributed one-third of the total and deducted the remainder from the wages of the workers. The funds thus created would maintain a sick workman for a period of thirteen weeks; would pay for any medical treatment which he required; and would give him a money allowance of up to 50 per cent of his wage. In cases of death provision was made for all dependents. Bye-laws could be enacted which could raise the minimum benefits in one way or another. Amending laws of 1885, 1886 and 1891 brought the vast majority of the working population within the scope of the legislation. Voluntary self-insurance was permitted but not encouraged. W.H.Dawson found, at a later date, from a study of insurance in Berlin and other

26. Memorandum on Foreign and Colonial Laws relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1905, (Cd.2458), p.2.

27. For a full description of the laws by a contemporary observer see H.M.Felkin, 'The New National Insurance Laws of Germany', Contemporary Review, vol.LIV (August, 1888), pp.279-298.

German cities, that 92 per cent of the insured population were subject to compulsion.²⁸

The Accident Insurance Laws were intended to complement the sickness insurance legislation. They placed the burden of compensation decisively on the shoulders of the employers. They required employers to insure in mutual liability associations (known as Trade Corporate Unions or Berufsgenossenschaften) against the consequences of such injuries received by their workers as were not healed within thirteen weeks. The workers in no way contributed to the insurance funds. For the first thirteen weeks of disablement a case was treated as one of ordinary sickness under the Sickness Insurance Law; if it lasted beyond that period the financial burden of compensation was transferred to the funds of the appropriate Trade Corporate Union (TCU). In cases of death, burial expenses were to be covered and the widow was to be paid a sum equal to 20 per cent of her husband's wage until her death or remarriage. For every orphaned child under 15 years a further 15 per cent was to be paid until it reached that age. Where a widow remarried she would receive a lump sum equal to 60 per cent of her husband's yearly income and relinquish any further claim to benefit.

Employers were strictly forbidden to 'contract out' of the German Accident Laws. The state obliged them to associate with other employers in kindred industries to form a Trade Corporate Union,

28. W.H.Dawson, Social Insurance in Germany, 1883-1911; Its History, Operation, Results (London, 1912), p.31.

their contributions to which they were assessed in accordance with the degree of risk at which they placed the fund. This was the so-called 'danger tariff' which assessed the contributions of employers on the basis both of the number of accidents which occurred in their concerns, and of their gravity. State consent was needed for the formation of any TCU and the central government carefully gauged the likely ability of a proposed TCU to fulfil its role effectively. The amount of compensation was decided by arbitration boards at the local level, with the Imperial Insurance Bureau the final court of appeal and the watchdog of the administration of the whole system. In Germany, then, a scheme of state-directed mutual insurance, worked on the principle of reciprocity, had been considered a better guarantee of safety and goodwill than one based on independent, profit-seeking insurance companies.

The first Accident Insurance Law of 1884 dealt with workers doing manual jobs in mines, factories and quarries. In 1885, legislation was extended to postal and telegraphic workers, railway and inland waterway employees, and to administrative servants in the armed forces. In 1886 it was further extended to men and women engaged in agriculture and forestry; and in 1887 to building and construction workers and to seamen. In 1900 the laws were further amended and extended and important modifications introduced as to the amounts of compensation, the basis for assessing that compensation, and the machinery for settling disputes. Long before 1900, however, the new German legislation had attracted the attention of English reformers and legislators.

In March 1886 an important step was taken by Lord Rosebery who sent out a circular to British missions in ten foreign countries, requesting information on various aspects of the question of employers' liability. The reply from Germany was especially important, coming as it did in the middle of Bismarck's efforts to extend the initial Accident Insurance Law. It took the form of a report by A.F.G. Leveson-Gower of the Berlin Embassy and was forwarded to Rosebery by Sir E. Malet. To an interested government the report gave a full description of the German legislation so far passed, though it warned that not enough time had passed "to enable the employers to know how their organisation will work" nor to calculate "what will be the expense either of management or of compensation."²⁹

The next two years saw further attention being paid to the new German legislation by official inquiries in England. In 1887 a select committee studied it very closely and, while not recommending outright imitation of the German laws, did urge the government to maintain a close watch on their further development.³⁰ Less cautious was John Aird who, in his evidence before the same committee, declared that the German laws had given great confidence to the German working man. Aird advised the immediate adoption of German-style compulsory insurance which, he claimed, "would take the greatest possible load off

29. Reports by Her Majesty's Representatives Abroad, On the Laws Regulating the Liability of Employers in Foreign Countries, 1886 (C.4784), p.26.

30. Report from the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1887 (257), p.viii.

the minds of the working classes."³¹ In the following year, Rennell Rodd of the British embassy in Berlin sent a further report to the Foreign Office in London in which he described the German insurance laws - a further indication of the regard in which Englishmen held the work of Bismarck in this field of legislation. The Times thanked Rodd for his contribution to English understanding of the German system of industrial insurance: "It is well that Englishmen should be able to understand clearly the heroic methods by which the German Chancellor seeks to solve that great question of labour, which is presenting itself to ourselves with so much imperiousness."³²

The keen interest with which England regarded the German legislation can be explained by the growing awareness of the shortcomings of the 1880 Act. That measure had come under increasing criticism, especially following the judicial decision of 1882 which held it lawful for workmen and employers to 'contract out' of it. This precedent was strongly opposed by working men, for it enabled employers to impose on men seeking work an agreement to make contributions to a separate accident fund and to relinquish their rights under the Act of 1880, as a condition of gaining employment. It was further maintained that 'contracting out' would induce carelessness and apathy among employers. Despite the efforts of labour's representatives in the Commons - notably Burt and Broadhurst - to have 'contracting out' pronounced illegal, the Government

31. Ibid., p.43.

32. The Times, 30 October 1888, p.13.

maintained that it had a place in industrial life. Thus the select committee of 1886 recommended its retention subject to safeguards against its abuse, but safeguards that were extremely vaguely worded.³³ The Conservative Party was especially committed to the retention of 'contracting out' which, of course, gave employers a decisive advantage over their men. Thus, when in 1888 the party introduced a bill to amend the Act of 1880 it carefully preserved both what remained of the defence of 'common employment' and the system of 'contracting out'.

The chief aim of the Conservative bill of 1888 was to deal with the question of employers' liability in cases where work had been handed over to a sub-contractor; but its most interesting feature was its recommendation to create some insurance funds contributed to, and guaranteed by, employers. The measure inevitably attracted much opposition. Its maintenance of 'common employment', considering the fact that the Germans had rejected it, forced C.Kenny to express the hope that England would "follow in the steps of Continental countries who had refused to accept the doctrine."³⁴ Although the Home Secretary, Matthews, had categorically denied any intention even to consider "plans of general compulsory insurance, such as was embodied in legislation in Germany",³⁵ this assurance was obviously not enough to placate

33. Report from the Select Committee on the Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bill, 1886 (192-Sess.1), pp.iii-iv.

34. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 326 (1888), 735.

35. Ibid., 326 (1888), 639.

Broadhurst. Already enraged by the retention of 'contracting out', he now discerned an attempt "to impose on the working people of this country the German system of compulsory insurance they were not Germans; ... they did not want the German system; and - what was more - they were not to be drilled or dragooned into that system."³⁶ The Westminster Review agreed with the Broadhurst viewpoint. Seeing a devious attempt to introduce insurance into a measure allegedly dealing with the liability of employers, the Review denounced the bill as typifying the widespread ignorance of the real needs of the working population: "It may be suitable for German working men to have a certain contribution compulsorily deducted from their wages and saved for them by the State, but the working men of England have proved years ago that they do not need this grandmotherly care."³⁷ The labour leaders - like Broadhurst - claimed that working men were capable of providing for themselves in friendly and benefit societies, and subscribed to the traditional view that the true policy was to legislate against accidents by the imposition of fines on negligent employers. Almost certainly they were fearful lest compulsory insurance by employers against the risks to the working man would weaken the dependence of the working population on the trade unions.

Their rearguard action against the introduction of some general

36. Ibid., 331 (1888), 1430.

37. 'The Flaw in the Employers' Liability Bill', Westminster Review, vol.CXXXI (May, 1889), p.498.

scheme of insurance was, for the moment, successful. Bradlaugh denied that the 1888 bill was "an insidious attempt by the present Government to bring the German or any other system into this country."³⁸ That such a denial was deemed necessary reflects both the tendency for some late Victorians to consider seriously a wholesale imitation of German practices, and the apprehension of others of the implications of such a policy. The Conservative bill of 1888 wilted before the opposition it had provoked. A similar fate befell a further bill in 1890. Employers' liability was mentioned in five successive Queen's Speeches, but the Conservatives lacked the determination to force a measure through. They had, however, built up a ground-swell for reform which benefitted the Liberals when they came to office in 1892. As in 1880, the party of Gladstone were able to introduce a major measure of reform thanks to the preparation carried out during the period when their opponents were in power. The difference was that, this time, their effort was to meet with failure.

Included in the Asquith Papers is a memorandum claiming that England in 1892 was "the most behindhand of the States of Europe in the matter of provision secured by law to workmen against the result of accidents befalling them in their employment."³⁹ That the Liberal

38. Hansard, 3rd Ser., 331 (1888), 1437-8.

39. Memorandum on the Liability of Employers for Injuries to their Servants, February 1892, Asquith MSS, 69, f.56.

Party recognised the validity of this claim explains its determination - notwithstanding the preoccupation with Ireland - to introduce legislation which would radically amend its own Act of 1880. Responsibility for the measure was given to H.H.Asquith who had been given the Home Office after a mere six years in the Commons and with no experience of even a minor governmental post.⁴⁰ The Liberal bill of 1893 subscribed to the time-honoured principle that industrial accidents could be prevented by legislation. It sought to induce management to take all possible precautions against accidents by making an employer liable, not only for his own negligence but for that of any of his employees. In other words, it proposed the total abolition of the contentions defence of 'common employment'. The bill further intended to totally prohibit 'contracting out' - another drastic innovation; to allow the defence of 'contributory negligence' to remain; and to abolish the time limits in which an accident had to be reported and in which a claim had to be lodged, as well as removing the restriction on what could be claimed. To those who immediately complained that the measure would impose an intolerable financial burden on industry, Gorst

40. Asquith was, of course, a barrister and a legal training was invaluable for tackling the complex questions involved in employers' liability legislation. To strengthen his grasp of the subject Asquith was, at this time, in correspondence with A.H.Ruegg, a leading legal expert on the whole question and later author of The Employers' Liability Act 1880, and the Workmen's Compensation Acts, 1897 and 1900 (London, 1903); Ruegg to Asquith, 18 February 1893, Asquith MSS, 69, ff.124-5.

replied on behalf of the government measure. He claimed that on that point "German statistics are instructive", and showed that the burden need not be excessive.⁴¹

Immediately after Asquith's speech opening the bill's second reading, Joseph Chamberlain rose to move the important amendment that no change in the law relating to employers' liability would be final or satisfactory which did not provide compensation to workmen "for all injuries sustained in the ordinary course of their employment, and not caused by their own acts or default."⁴² Around this crucial amendment was focussed much of the discussion of the Liberal bill and it is necessary, therefore, at this juncture to trace something of its background.

Like many others, Chamberlain had come to realise the inadequacies of the Act of 1880. He had become, in consequence, an enthusiastic advocate of reform and he considered it natural to study the efforts of other countries, notably Germany, to deal with the liability problem. His speeches, articles and correspondence all indicate his close study of the German legislation and he freely used German statistics and Bismarckian arguments to substantiate his own case for reform. We know, further, that his son Austen - during his student days in Berlin - carried out his own investigation into the German insurance laws. A letter exists in the Chamberlain collection in which Austen informs his sister that he was "studying Bismarck's laws on Compulsory Insurance

41. Hansard, 4th Ser., 11 (1893), 1208.

42. Ibid., 8 (1893), 1961.

against illness, accident etc. The work is pretty stiff but interesting."⁴³

Joseph Chamberlain was particularly disturbed that the existing legislation - which he had helped guide through Parliament - placed the burden of compensation on employers only when their negligence could be proved, when in fact, the vast majority of accidents were the result of causes other than the provable negligence of employers. The Liberal bill, which obliged employers to pay compensation for injuries caused to one employee by the negligence of another, did not, therefore, go far enough to satisfy him. Statistics for England were lacking but, as Chamberlain pointed out, "the German official statistics are exceedingly complete, and ... may be relied upon as accurate." These statistics, he went on, showed that 43.4 per cent of accidents could not be attributed to the personal action either of employers or workers but were inherent in the work itself.⁴⁴ The Liberals, therefore, were proposing to leave out of consideration the victims of nearly half of the accidents which took place. On this score alone their bill was "a retrograde measure an incomplete, unsatisfactory, and, I will say further, mischievous Bill."⁴⁵

43. Austen to Beatrice, 25 October 1887, Chamberlain MSS, AC 3/2/25.

44. Hansard, 4th Ser., 8 (1893), 1965.

45. The Times, 18 May 1893, p.11. Gorst also cited German statistics to justify his support for Chamberlain's amendment, and he appealed to the Commons to look favourably on the idea of comprehensive liability on the lines practised in Germany; Hansard, 4th Ser., 11 (1893), 1207. Gorst had been advocating progressive social policies since his return in 1890 from the Berlin Congress on Labour Questions where he had become a keen admirer of German social reform achievement. Gilbert considers Gorst to have been "one of the earliest and most ardent admirers of German social welfare institutions"; B.B.Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p.180. Gorst was later to express the view that he had seen nothing more remarkable "than the system of almost universal insurance for the working-classes in Germany, planned by Bismarck"; Review of Reviews. vpl.XXXIX (January 1909), p.64.

Chamberlain was also disturbed that the existing legislation placed the burden of proof on the person asking for compensation. He had decided that a workman injured in the course of his employment had a right to compensation. In this, the German legislation had once more left its mark on his thinking. He considered the German law both logical and merciful because it granted compensation "in every instance as being a public right arising out of the natural obligation of the employer to compensate every workman injured in his service."⁴⁶ He thus pledged himself to the principle that every person injured at work "ought to be certain of a reasonable and proper compensation."⁴⁷

Out of his realisation of the serious shortcomings in the existing legislation sprang Chamberlain's idea of universal compensation for all accidents. He accepted that this would probably lead not only to a comprehensive system of insurance, but even to compulsory insurance after the model of Germany. Thus, in giving substance to his idea of compensation for all accidents, Chamberlain was, as the two leading historians of workmen's compensation say, "borrowing amply and rightly from Bismarck."⁴⁸ Chamberlain himself readily acknowledged the part played by "certain foreign countries" in the promotion of this idea in his mind;⁴⁹ and, when presenting his amendment in the Commons, he declared: "I take the

46. J. Chamberlain, 'The Labour Question', Nineteenth Century, vol. XXXII (Nov. 1892), p. 695.

47. The Times, 4 July 1892, p. 10.

48. A. T. Wilson and H. Levy, Workmen's Compensation, vol. I (London, 1939), p. xiii.

49. The Times, 3 April 1891, p. 7.

principle of the German law, and I hold that the right to compensation of any person injured in the ordinary course of his employment is a public right and a natural obligation, and, therefore, I would provide that in every case of accident, with one exception, the person injured or his representative should receive compensation. The one case excepted is the case of a man's own act or default."⁵⁰ Another feature of Chamberlain's amendment borrowed from German practice was the principle that workmen should be entitled to compensation "without their making any contribution to the same themselves."⁵¹ All in all, then, Chamberlain's amendment justified the comment by S. Wortley, one of its supporters, that it was "in harmony with the existing German law".⁵²

The question of insurance had always been one of the more contentious aspects of the whole debate on employers' liability, and the old issues were once again raised. Should it take the form of mutual insurance between employer and employed such as that already practised in certain industries; or should it be a compulsory state scheme involving state supervision and guarantees? Would it weaken the willingness of employers to promote safety measures; and would it also lull workers into complacency and carelessness? What would be its economic effects on industry? Politicians seemed loth to come to grips with these and other questions, in spite of the obvious fact that the steady extension of the

50. Hansard, 4th Ser., 8 (1893), 1969. Note that the German law deprived a workman of his right to compensation only when his injury resulted from his own wilful act.

51. Ibid., 8 (1893), 1963.

52. Ibid., 10, (1893), 1066-7.

law relating to employers' liability must inevitably lead to some general system of insurance. The Liberals, in particular, were loath to consider any comprehensive scheme of insurance, and certainly not one which involved compulsion. Among Asquith's Papers is a memorandum by Sir C.P. Ilbert arguing that it was undesirable and impracticable "to make insurance compulsory, as under the German law"; and expressing doubts "whether the German law could be made to work in England. The official interference which it involves is considerable, and both the German employer and the German workman are much more tolerant of this interference than Englishmen. Moreover, the financial effect of the German law has yet to be ascertained."⁵³ Similarly, the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, Sir Godfrey Lushington, wrote to Asquith denouncing all idea of forcing the employer to insure against accidents to his workmen: "the State cannot compel him to do so, and if the State attempts it it only leads to a corresponding reduction in wages."⁵⁴ But was compulsory insurance impracticable as Ilbert had claimed? Asquith had to admit that there was "one great European country - the Empire of Germany - in which for the last nine years such a system has been in force." He felt, however, that in view of actuarial and economic considerations, the experience gained by the German system "so far as it has yet been in operation, is certainly not of such a kind

53. Memorandum on the Liability of Employers for Injuries to their Servants Bill, 20 October 1892, Asquith MSS, 69, f.98.

54. Lushington to Asquith, 8 November 1892, *ibid.*, ff.99-101.

that any responsible politician would venture to embody it in a Bill which he would ask this House to adopt."⁵⁵ In reply, therefore, to those who demanded compulsory insurance on the German model, Asquith told the Grand Committee (called to consider the bill of 1893) that neither workers nor employers wanted it, and that, while in the future it might prove necessary to fall in line with "the tendency of industrial legislation throughout Europe", such a departure was at present inappropriate.⁵⁶ R.B.Haldane followed the Party line and argued that before any such scheme of insurance was considered much more information on the subject was required, particularly with reference "to how the laws worked in Germany."⁵⁷ From the opposite side of the House came Balfour's statement expressing doubt as to the full implications of Chamberlain's amendment and arguing that, since Germany and Austria had obligingly entered on the experiment of universal insurance, it would be wise to wait upon results there before acting.⁵⁸

There seems, therefore, little justification for the claim of Wilson and Levy that the Liberal bill "once again ... followed in general the German precedent, which required employers in certain trades to provide, by means of compulsory insurance, adequate security for

55. Hansard, 4th Ser., 8 (1893), 1958-9.

56. Minutes of Proceedings before the Standing Committee on Law and Courts of Justice and Legal Procedure, 15 May 1893, Asquith MSS, 70, f.28.

57. Hansard, 4th Ser., 10 (1893), 1072.

58. Ibid., 10 (1893), 1074.

compensation to persons injured by accidents arising out of their occupation."⁵⁹ Asquith was not legislating to provide for compensation through compulsory insurance; rather he was subscribing to the more traditional view that industrial accidents could be legislated against and reduced by placing on employers the full burden of liability. He had been advised by Lushington that insurance would lead to a decline in safety standards, and that "the only way to make an employer careful is to subject him to the full brunt of an action at law."⁶⁰ Developing this argument further, John Burns contended in the Commons that the result of German insurance legislation had been to give "an incentive to risk, personal neglect, and recklessness in the carrying out of industries" which had caused a rise in the proportion of fatalities to accidents from 20 per 10,000 in 1851 to 30 per 10,000 in 1891.⁶¹ This strongly supported the argument already raised by J.G.Brooks that the German attempt to reduce accidents by insurance "has not produced results that were expected, nor avoided evils that it was thought could be removed."⁶²

Chamberlain had probably not expected his amendment to be successful; the combined opposition of labour representatives and Liberals ensured

59. Wilson and Levy, op. cit., vol.I, p.56.

60. Lushington to Asquith, 8 November 1892, Asquith MSS, 69, ff.99-101.

61. Hansard, 4th Ser., 18 (1893), 690. In reply to this argument, Chamberlain pointed to the obvious fact that as soon as an insurance system laid down fixed rates of compensation for all accidents, however minor, hundreds of petty accidents would be reported which would have previously been ignored; ibid., 18 (1893), 1577.

62. J.G.Brooks, 'A Weakness in the German Imperial Socialism', Economic Journal, vol.II (June 1892), p.311. There was, however, a conflict of opinion on this point. The Times, for example, claimed that the German TCU, acting out of self-interest, paid great attention to the elimination of risk; The Times, 19 June 1889, p.15.

that it was not. It did, however, serve the extremely useful purpose of bringing out into the open a viable alternative to the Liberal approach of seeking to prevent accidents by punitive legislation. It presaged, not only the major legislation of 1897 but a whole new attitude to the question of industrial accidents. That is to say, the old belief that accidents could be legislated against had given way to an acceptance of the fact that they were inevitable and that, therefore, the first thing to insist upon was security for the workmen exposed to them. The Liberal bill of 1893 was the last attempt to tackle the question in the old way. Its failure left the way clear for the Conservatives to promote the alternative to which they had been committed by Chamberlain.

Meanwhile, the Liberal bill, having survived the buffeting of Chamberlain's amendment, foundered on another rock - that of 'contracting out'. The bill's proposal to abolish this was drastic. It stemmed partly from the Ilbert memorandum of October 1892 which had declared that workmen were being placed at a serious disadvantage by their employers' insistence on freedom of contract. The memorandum recommended the total abolition of the practice, no exception being allowed, since "No such exception is made by the German law which prohibits contracting out."⁶³ The labour representatives, concerned at the inequality of bargaining power as between worker and employer and disturbed by the growing de-personalisation of industry, were vehement opponents of

63. Memorandum on the Liability of Employers for Injuries to their Servants Bill, 20 October 1892, Asquith MSS, 69, f.98.

'contracting out', and maintained a firm pressure on the government which made compromise impossible. The Conservatives, on the other hand, maintained that the abolition of 'contracting out' would destroy the innumerable provident funds which had accumulated since employers, made liable to litigation under the Liberal bill, would not continue to pay large sums of money into separate insurance associations. Conservatives argued also that to abolish freedom of contract would be to deprive working men of the opportunity of negotiating a better deal from their employer than the bill would give them.

It was no surprise then, when the Lords returned the bill to the Commons with an amendment designed to preserve 'contracting out'. Chamberlain naturally supported the Lords' amendment. Obviously feeling that, in this matter, at any rate, the German law should not be imitated, he proclaimed that the Liberal proposal "threatens the vital interest of the working classes",⁶⁴ and was both "monstrously unjust [and] monstrously illiberal."⁶⁵ The Lords' amendment, he argued, would stimulate mutual provident schemes and thereby aid progress towards the system of universal compensation through insurance, which he desired to achieve.⁶⁶

The Liberals, however, would accept no such amendment. Nor

64. The Times, 3 January 1894, p.9.

65. Ibid., 30 January 1894, p.6.

66. Hansard, 4th Ser., 20 (1893-4), 27.

would they compromise on this point. Asquith deemed the Lords' proposal "mischievous in substance and impracticable in form."⁶⁷ Realising that the Lords and the Conservatives would not budge, the Liberals chose to withdraw the bill altogether. They probably had no alternative. Chamberlain was not sorry. As he said later, in a speech at Leeds: "any larger scheme such as I have been advocating would have been rendered, I will not say impossible, but very difficult of attainment. The Bill stood in the way of a complete settlement."⁶⁸ Asquith remained convinced that the solution proposed in his bill was "the only one which in the long run will be found adequate to the case."⁶⁹ He was to be proved wrong.

The debates of 1893-4 had, once again, produced interesting references to German practice. The Liberals had cited Germany to justify their prohibition of 'contracting out' and their abolition of the defence of 'common employment'. Chamberlain had based his amendment on his conviction of the logicality and humaneness of German universal compensation. Advocates and opponents of insurance, compulsory or otherwise, had made free use of the merits and demerits of the German system to back up their respective cases. That no positive result was achieved should not hide the real significance of this varied German influence. Englishmen were groping towards new ways of dealing with the

67. Ibid., 20 (1893-4), 4.

68. The Times, 26 September 1894, p.4.

69. Asquith to T.P.O'Connor, 11 March 1896, cited in 'Employer's Liability; Past and Prospective Legislation', Articles Reprinted from The Sun (London, 1896), pp.10-11.

complex questions arising from industrial accidents. The liberals had failed in their purpose; but their failure should be seen as an important stage in the search for the ultimate solution. Moreover, the references to Germany, which the Liberal attempt had so profusely thrown up, showed that it was the German example which laid down the guide-lines for the reform movement. They were followed closely in the years that lay immediately ahead.

The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897.

The choice before the Conservative Government which came to office in 1895 was stated in a letter which the new Home Secretary received in December of that year. It was to be either employers' liability for all negligence, or universal compensation for all accidents.⁷⁰ The Liberals had opted for the first of these alternatives in 1893 and had met with failure. Lord Belper, in moving the second reading in the Lords of the 1897 Workmen's Compensation Act, expressed the view that the failure of Asquith's attempt to alter the law in regard to employers' liability, obliged England to look "in the direction of methods adopted in foreign countries, Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere."⁷¹ The policy which England now embarked on was the one which had been adumbrated by Chamberlain in 1893. It presupposed that industrial accidents could not be prevented; and that, therefore, the first task was to look to

70. R.E. Webster to White Ridley, 18 December 1895, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/3.

71. Hansard, 4th Ser., 51 (1897), 521.

the well-being of those injured in such accidents. It was, said Chamberlain, "not really so important to consider the question of the liability of employers as it is to consider the question of compensation to workmen."⁷² Further, compensation must not only be given both as an absolute certainty, free from the pitfalls of litigation, and as a statutory right, but must be universal. The Liberals had proposed to compensate three accidents out of ten: "I say, if you compensate at all, compensate the whole ten."⁷³

Chamberlain's plan received the support of leading Conservatives. Gorst wrote to him saying that he was in favour of the comprehensive scheme he had outlined, and expressing the belief that Salisbury was sympathetic.⁷⁴ In fact, Salisbury had already indicated his full support in a speech in the Lords in December 1893.⁷⁵ Gorst claimed that legislation against negligence was no longer practical: "The statistics of foreign countries - we have no reliable statistics of our own" showed that only 25 per cent of industrial accidents resulted from negligence; and the Germans had long abandoned laws based on the principle of liability for those based on that of compensation.⁷⁶ A.D.Provand agreed that England should take note of the interesting fact that the

72. The Times, 8 July 1895, p.8.

73. Ibid., 23 November 1894, p.10.

74. J.Gorst to Chamberlain, 22 March 1894, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/2.

75. Hansard, 4th Ser., 19 (1893-4), 781.

76. J.Gorst, 'The Conservative Programme of Social Reform', Nineteenth Century, vol.XXXVIII (July 1895), p.9.

Germans and Austrians "have already adopted national systems of compensation for all accidents, as they have found this was the only method of permanently settling the questions."⁷⁷

It is interesting to note also, that some Liberals looked on Chamberlain's proposals favourably. Lord Farrer, for example, wrote to Lord Rosebery on the subject in April 1894, enclosing a private memorandum and expressing the hope that the Liberals "get the credit of introducing or supporting a Bill on the broadest possible lines. The Bill of last session was a very poor affair."⁷⁸ In fact, Farrer had voted against his party's measure because of its proposed abolition of 'contracting out' which, he told The Times, would unjustly deprive working men of the chance to negotiate more favourable terms with the employer.⁷⁹ Farrer's memorandum argued that universal compensation, on the lines "originally suggested in this country by Mr Chamberlain", was the only answer. It was wrong that industry should prosper "whilst those who constitute its backbone are suffering loss of life or limb or health in its service without compensation the failure to pass the Employers' Liability Bill of last session may prove in the end to be a gain rather than a loss."⁸⁰

77. A.D.Provand, 'Employers' Liability', Nineteenth Century, vol.XXXIV (Nov.1893), p.720. Provand advocated a system of universal compensation which closely resembled that in force in Germany.

78. Farrer to Rosebery, 4 April 1894, Rosebery MSS, 67.

79. The Times, 15 December 1893, p.15.

80. Memorandum on Employers' Liability, 30 March 1894, Rosebery MSS, 67.

The Liberals, however, had lost their chance. In 1895 Salisbury once more kissed hands as the head of a Conservative administration. Chamberlain was admitted to the Cabinet as Colonial Secretary. The new occupant of the Home Office was Matthew White Ridley, whom Sir Godfrey Lushington considered "a man of very considerable ability with plenty of common sense."⁸¹ Universal compensation for industrial accidents was recognised as being a policy to which the Conservatives were committed. White Ridley was ostensibly in charge of the legislation but, as Garvin wrote of Chamberlain: "Everyone knew who was the parent of the measure. In the House he was openly its manager."⁸² First of all the ground had to be prepared. Not all Conservatives were enamoured of Chamberlain's plans. The Colonial Secretary found it necessary to write to Lord James of Hereford: "For Heaven's sake stand firm! A majority of the Unionist members are pledged to the new principle of 'compensation for all accidents', and it would be fatal to us if our first social reform were clearly less favourable to the working-classes than Asquith's proposal."⁸³ The reason for Lord James's

81. Lushington to Asquith, 30 June 1895, Asquith MSS, 9, ff.71-2. It is interesting to note that White Ridley and Asquith corresponded with one another. The new Home Secretary was wise enough to seek the advice of his predecessor on questions relating to the forthcoming legislation (White Ridley to Asquith, 13, 15, 23 January 1896, *ibid.*, 9, ff.75-82).
82. J.L.Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol.III (London, 1934), p.157.
83. Chamberlain to Lord James of Hereford, 27 January 1896, Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/46/132K.

irresolution is not clear; probably it arose from apprehension of the consequences of the opposition, which would be provoked by such a proposal as Chamberlain planned.

Opposition was expected chiefly from labour leaders and from industry itself. The former, while anxious to secure a better deal for the working classes, were suspicious of anything that might reduce their own influence among them. White Ridley warned Chamberlain that in view of the likely attitude of the trade unions "we must walk very warily in pursuance of what I believe to be the sound principle which you have been the foremost to advocate."⁸⁴ The industrial lobby, with a powerful voice in Parliament, was afraid of the possible financial burdens to be placed on industry. White Ridley detected "a natural fear of putting increased burdens on trades already handicapped by our laws, and by foreign competition."⁸⁵

In order to counter all likely opposition, Chamberlain and White Ridley agreed to arm themselves with as much expertise on the subject as possible, amassing a formidable range of facts and figures on the working of foreign, and above all German, legislation. White Ridley agreed with Chamberlain on the necessity of acquiring a close knowledge of foreign statutes, for without it "we should be plunging into the dark, and running great risk of a fiasco."⁸⁶ In a further letter, White Ridley emphasised his determination "to get the best information I can of foreign

84. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 24 October 1896, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/5.

85. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 20 October 1896, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/4.

86. *Ibid.*

law up to date, especially German."⁸⁷ And this determination certainly bore fruit, for a few weeks later the Home Secretary was able to send to his colleague a detailed memorandum drawn up "with the view of bringing our knowledge as to foreign and Colonial law up to date."⁸⁸

Acting against this background, Chamberlain and White Ridley had, by early 1897, framed a draft bill. The Home Secretary, however, was having eleventh-hour doubts. He foresaw "grave difficulties" in the way of pressing on with general compensation without an administrative system such as existed in Germany. "It is not a fair burden to put on industry without providing machinery, and the examination of practice elsewhere, and our present knowledge, does not enable us at present to do this. Compulsory insurance through such organisations as in Germany is a different thing, but here we leave all to private cos. and societies."⁸⁹ Chamberlain held firm and insisted that the bill would work. If they failed to press on, he reminded White Ridley, "we have not justified the claim made for the Conservative Party that it has always been the first in social reforms. We have now a great opportunity and, if it is not taken, I confess I hardly see how I, at any rate, could shew my face on a public platform again."⁹⁰ White Ridley surrendered; he thanked Chamberlain for his tolerant attitude towards "my rather bold

87. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 24 October 1896, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/5.

88. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 20 December 1896, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/8.

89. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 11 February 1897, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/12.

90. Chamberlain to White Ridley, 11 February 1897, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/13.

criticism",⁹¹ and promised his whole-hearted support for the bill as it stood.⁹² The Conservative bill was duly presented and The Times, praising its ingenuity and conciseness, forecast that it would bestow great advantages on the working man.⁹³

The Workmen's Compensation Bill of 1897 departed from the traditional approach by giving a right of compensation to workmen injured in the course of their employment. It thus raised workmen to a favoured position: they no longer had to prove negligence in order to gain compensation; it was enough that they had been injured. Nor was moderate negligence on the part of the employee a bar to the recovery of compensation; he sacrificed his right to benefit only when the accident resulted from his own serious and wilful misconduct or negligence. The German law similarly insisted on the principle of right to compensation, and refused it only to a workman who had deliberately caused injury to himself.

In Germany, therefore, personal behaviour, whether of employer or workman, had been virtually eliminated in reference to the issue of compensation. It had been considered no longer worthwhile to attempt to differentiate between many different cases according to degrees of negligence. The Germans had opted for simplicity and uniformity - even if it meant allowing a workman to receive compensation who had been injured by his own sheer negligence. Some English observers felt that the Germans had gone too far and were determined that English legislation

91. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 12 February 1897, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/14.

92. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 21 February 1897, *ibid.*, JC 6/3/3/18.

93. The Times, 8 May 1897, p.9.

would not follow suit. J.G.Brooks pleaded that any alteration in English law rest upon "a far nicer calculation and reckoning with human nature than is the case with this German law."⁹⁴ Thus while Dilke urged the government to consider the German precedent of payment of compensation for all accidents,⁹⁵ Chamberlain assured the House that in cases of gross negligence or deliberate misconduct a man would be excluded from compensation.⁹⁶

The bill of 1897 was confined to those locations which were recognised as being the most dangerous, such as mines, quarries, railways, factories and high buildings. In fact, the bill proposed coverage almost exactly similar to that secured by the first German Accident Insurance Law of 1884. The English bill, also like the German law, sought to give not complete financial security but substantial relief in time of hardship. It did not, therefore, propose to make good the entire loss of wages. It provided that a partially incapacitated person would receive a sum not exceeding the difference between his wages before and after incapacitation. A man who was totally incapacitated would receive 50 per cent of his wages (to a maximum of £1) per week. Benefit would not begin until two weeks had elapsed from the time of injury.

The decision to limit benefit to 50 per cent of the workman's wage seems to have owed something to the German precedent. Certainly, in arriving at this decision, Chamberlain acknowledged his personal debt

94. J.G.Brooks, 'A Weakness in the German Imperial Socialism', Economic Journal, vol.II (June 1892), p.312.

95. Hansard, 4th Ser., 49 (1897), 1277.

96. Ibid., 49 (1897), 1281.

to "the German principle of giving ... a pension equal to half the wages."⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Germans operated a four-week waiting period (rather than the fortnight proposed by the 1897 bill) with benefit back-dated to the time of injury. At first Chamberlain considered such a four-week period - though not with back-dating. He wrote to Lord Stanley: "According to the German system, and the one which I should favour, the claim for compensation does not arise till 4 weeks after the accident."⁹⁸ He eventually decided, however, that a two-week waiting period was more appropriate for working men's needs; though Lord Londonderry, arguing from German statistics, was to insist that it was far too short and would encourage malingering.⁹⁹ Chamberlain, therefore, distinguished between slight injuries lasting less than two weeks (for which workmen could themselves provide through trade union or friendly society funds) and those resulting from more serious accidents, and in so doing "followed the principle of German and other foreign legislation."¹⁰⁰

In cases of fatality, the 1897 bill - like the German legislation - accepted a responsibility to the dependents and provided for the payment of a lump sum equal to the dead man's wages for 3 years, to a maximum of £300. Unlike the German law, the bill did not propose to pay either for medical expenses or funeral costs (except where no dependents were

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97. Chamberlain to Lord Stanley, 14 January 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/10.
98. Ibid.
99. Hansard, 4th Ser., 51 (1897), 535.
100. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee appointed to Inquire into the law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2334), Q.4057, p.154.

left and, in that case, to a maximum of £10). Notice of accident must be given as soon as was practicable, and claims for compensation had to be made within six months of the occurrence of the accident. Employers had the right to demand the medical inspection of any claimant.

'Contracting-out' was to be permitted on condition that the terms offered to the workman were at least as favourable as those set out in the bill. Alternative schemes could not be forced upon workers as a condition of employment, and they had to meet with the approval of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies. 'Contracting-out' was, of course, prohibited in Germany. The Liberals had attempted to follow the German lead in 1893 but the Conservatives (on this question unimpressed by the German precedent) had wrecked their bill. Now the Conservatives were determined to maintain freedom of contract.¹⁰¹ Yet the old vehement opposition on the part of working-class representatives in Parliament was not revived in 1897 when the Conservative proposal came in. Believing that the bill set down sufficient safeguards to ensure that freedom of contract would operate to the benefit of the working man, the labour interest was satisfied so that 'contracting-out' was one of the least contentious features of the bill.

One of the main hopes of the framers of the measure of 1897 was that it would reduce litigation. Chamberlain had called the Liberal proposal

101. See, for example, White Ridley's declaration of Conservative intent in his reply to a deputation from the Mining Association in The Times, 5 December 1895, p.12.

of 1893 a "Lawyer's Employment Bill" and he was determined that his scheme, by the laying down of precise regulations and the encouragement of direct negotiation, would be less likely to produce vexatious litigation. Where direct negotiation was impossible various forms of arbitration were to be made available. The Germans had set up a well-defined system of arbitration in which all interested parties, including the state, were involved. The suggestion was raised in the Commons that the English law should follow "the plan adopted in Germany", and have a Board composed equally of representatives of employers and workmen, "with an independent person appointed by the Home Office as Chairman."¹⁰² In the end, the 1897 bill called for either a joint committee representing employers and workers or a single arbitrator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a county court judge. As things turned out, the act of 1897 probably produced more litigation than Chamberlain had envisaged. Nevertheless, when compared with the large number of cases settled out of court, the number brought into court under the Act was small enough to allow Chamberlain to express his personal satisfaction.¹⁰³ And a later report agreed that, in terms of reducing litigation, the measure of 1897 was reasonably successful.¹⁰⁴

102. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1473.

103. The Times, 26 October 1901, p.9.

104. Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to Inquire into the law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2208), p.21.

The Government were immediately taken to task by the Liberals for their exclusion of the vast majority of trades.¹⁰⁵ White Ridley had forecast a bitter Parliamentary struggle over the limited nature of the bill and had warned Chamberlain of the need for "an enquiry of some sort as to the best means of effecting general insurance."¹⁰⁶ In reply, Chamberlain had admitted that "the German system is more complete", but had pointed out that an attempt to emulate the legislation of that one country entirely "would require a Bill of 200 clauses."¹⁰⁷ He told the Commons that a bill embracing all trades would never have been got through in one session and workmen would thus have been deprived of the benefits of the legislation.¹⁰⁸

The Government justified their decision to restrict the bill to specified trades by reference to foreign and mainly German precedents. White Ridley told a deputation from the Mining Association of Great Britain in July 1897 that "the experience of other countries that had legislated in a

105. See, for example, Asquith's comments in Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1435.

106. White Ridley to Chamberlain, 11 February 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/12.

107. Chamberlain to White Ridley, 11 February 1897, ibid., JC 6/3/3/13. Also included in the Chamberlain papers is a letter from a Herr Stoffers to an English newspaper. Stoffers evidently regarded himself as an expert on matters of industrial insurance. He wrote: "I must confess when I saw the handful of clauses drawn up by Mr Chamberlain to deal with this huge question I was simply startled, simply stupefied, bearing in mind the more than a hundred big clauses of our Act "(Stoffers to The Chronicle, 11 June 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/24).

108. Hansard, 4th Ser., 51 (1897), 211.

similar direction had been that the only safe and possible way was to begin by applying the principle to the more dangerous industries."¹⁰⁹ He promised the Commons, however, that the trades at first excluded would be eventually brought within the scope of the legislation.¹¹⁰ But the government would not be rushed into widening the legislation. Thus, when E.Goulding sought to extend the bill to agriculture, by means of an amendment, the Home Secretary retorted that he "did not want to quote the case of Germany too much; but it was four or five years after the initiation of legislation of this character in Germany that the agricultural labourer was included in it."¹¹¹ Dilke supported the government in this because German statistics showed that the vast majority of accidents took place in the industries specified in the bill; therefore it was logical to deal with them first.¹¹² The government thus held firm and only by later legislation were the trades excluded in 1897 brought within the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Chamberlain considered it ironical that the Liberals - whose measure of 1893 had proposed to deal with only 30 per cent of all accidents - should now condemn as insufficient a measure which would deal with up to 70 per cent of all accidents and with virtually every accident that occurred in the trades with which it was concerned.¹¹³

109. The Times, 3 July 1897, p.13.

110. Hansard, 4th Ser., 49 (1897), 696.

111. Ibid., 49 (1897), 1657.

112. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1454.

113. Ibid., 49 (1897), 1199.

One Liberal who made a constructive contribution to the proceedings was Haldane. In letters to his mother he had already indicated his support for the Conservative measure and his willingness both to cooperate with Chamberlain and to win over the Liberal front bench.¹¹⁴ On 25 May, disturbed at the wording of the bill which seemed to imply that in some circumstances workmen might lose their rights at common law and under the Act of 1880, Haldane moved an amendment seeking expressly to guarantee those rights. Although it was immediately withdrawn, Haldane's amendment obliged the government to submit a re-worded version of the offending clause, leaving workmen in indisputable possession of their common law and statutory rights.¹¹⁵ They were left, therefore, with a choice of remedies, and could enter simultaneous claims for compensation, but of course they could receive only one award. Haldane wrote to his mother: "I have been working all day at the Employers' Liability Bill, & have ... got an important change in the Bill from the Govt."¹¹⁶ A week later Haldane got through a further amendment which left the principal employer liable for all accidents caused in work sub-contracted out, but with a claim on the sub-contractor for any compensation he should have to pay.¹¹⁷ The purpose of this amendment was to force

114. Haldane to his Mother, 4, 17 May 1897, Haldane MSS, 5957, ff.129, 151-2.

115. Hansard, 4th Ser., 49 (1897), 1329-1348.

116. Haldane to his Mother, 26 May 1897 Haldane MSS, 5957, ff.165-6. It is interesting to note Haldane's use of the old terminology.

117. Hansard, 4th Ser., 50 (1897), 66-70.

employers to exercise care in choosing sub-contractors, and to compel the latter to take safety precautions while the job was in hand. Wrote Haldane: "I look back with some pleasure on the Employers' Liability Bill. I managed to bring several hundred thousand working people inside who were not within it before."¹¹⁸

The Liberals condemned the measure, not only because it applied only to certain industries but also because it did nothing positive as regards the prevention of accidents. Haldane, for instance, argued that the working classes would not be properly protected until there was created a system which effectively linked prevention with compensation - a system "such as obtained in Continental countries."¹¹⁹ The ideal system was seen by many as that in force in Germany. There the employers' mutual assurance associations not only provided adequate compensation but were empowered to inspect and enforce safety standards and to discriminate against employers with a poor record of safety (the so-called 'danger tariff'). They acted, therefore, as both a defence against the results of accidents and as an attack upon their cause. The failure of the 1897 bill to make a positive contribution to accident prevention was, to Dilke, a major drawback when it was compared with the German law, to which the Home Secretary made several friendly allusions."

118. Haldane to his mother, 6 June 1897, Haldane MSS, 5957, ff.183-4.

119. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1445.

Under the German law, Dilke continued, the workmen "had a security for safety that they would not find within the four corners of this Bill."¹²⁰ Haldane agreed, and felt that if the bill had only attempted to combine compensation with accident prevention "in some shape or form of the German system ... he should have found himself in a very different attitude towards it."¹²¹ A contemporary observer criticised the bill because "it accepts accidents as inevitable, and makes no effort to prevent them."¹²²

The whole contentious debate on the relationship between accidents and insurance had thus been reopened. Several members, opposed to the bill, made much out of statistics which purported to show an increase of accidents in Germany since insurance had been introduced on a wide scale. For example, G.Drage, who saw in the government bill "a revolution in the direction of a system which had been introduced and enforced for several years in Germany", warned that it could lead to a large increase in the number of accidents, as had happened in Germany.¹²³ Although Chamberlain and White Ridley had no intention of introducing a complete replica of the German system of insurance it was still necessary for them to refute the suggestion that schemes of insurance inevitably led to an increase of accidents. Chamberlain, therefore, denied Drage's

120. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1452-3.

121. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1448.

122. M.Wilson, 'Employers' Liability and Workmen's Compensation', Westminster Review, vol.CXLIX (Feb.1898), p.203.

123. Hansard, 4th Ser., 49 (1897), 1454-5.

claims and said that "if the German scheme were really as unsatisfactory as he had been led to believe ... there would not have been this continual pressure to extend its operation."¹²⁴ In addition, White Ridley claimed that in Germany, since the insurance legislation, there had been a more accurate notification of accidents and that this had given the appearance of an increase in the number of accidents.¹²⁵

The aim of Chamberlain and White Ridley was to place the English employer in such a position that, as a prudent man, he would insure, either by mutual arrangement with his employees or by turning to an insurance company. Chamberlain's attitude was that insurance with a company whose aim, after all, was to make profit out of the business of insuring against risks, was an adequate guarantee of safety standards. He argued that such companies, in the search for profit, would be bound to "exercise something of that supervision which is now exercised by the associations in Germany."¹²⁶ He had recognised that, in this respect, the bill would fall short of German practice. He had admitted to White Ridley: "In Germany the associations are so organised, as a process of gradual development, that they have power to enforce provisions for safety. Here there would be nothing of the kind."¹²⁷ He therefore made it the

124. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1466.

125. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1426.

126. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1467.

127. Chamberlain to White Ridley, 11 February 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/13.

individual responsibility of employers to insure against liability, rather than imposing a collective responsibility upon them. In any case, he considered that such trade insurance as Germany practised was over-elaborate and bureaucratic and thus "objectionable to English people."¹²⁸ White Ridley agreed that the German system of compulsory trade insurance was too complex and "utterly foreign" to English thinking,¹²⁹ and claimed that "Anyone who has studied the details of the German system will feel that it could never be introduced into this country."¹³⁰ Asquith, while deeming the German system "a perfectly logical attempt" to combine the two objects of compensation and accident prevention, agreed that it was unsuited to English conditions. He could not help adding, however, that the government in arriving at their decision "have been obliged to deprive the workman of a security which, under the German system, he does undoubtedly enjoy."¹³¹

Thus, although the 1904 report of the Departmental Committee could point out that the precedent of universal compensation through compulsory insurance in trade associations "set by Germany in 1884 ... had had a powerful effect throughout Europe",¹³² a still later report rightly observed that that precedent was rejected in 1897 on the grounds "that

128. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1467.

129. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1430.

130. Ibid., 48 (1897), 700

131. Ibid., 49 (1897), 748-9.

132. Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2208), p.11.

it would involve more State interference than this country would tolerate."¹³³ The Workmen's Compensation Act threw a responsibility upon each individual employer to insure against his liabilities, but it did not compel him to insure. It acted on the premise that common sense would make compulsion unnecessary. Chamberlain felt that this arrangement would be enough to secure both compensation and safety for working men. The Act, he claimed, "gives a new incentive and stimulus to care and protection for the prevention of these accidents."¹³⁴

One cause of concern to many people was the fact that the bill furnished no water-tight guarantee of compensation. Because employers were not obliged to insure, the situation could well arise where payment of compensation depended entirely on the solvency of the employer. For example, a firm which had failed to insure and had then been ruined by a serious accident might well be unable to pay compensation to its injured workers. Further, even where the employer had insured, the workman had no claim on the insurance company itself and no guarantee of the solvency of that company. The English workman was still left in a somewhat precarious position, therefore. In Germany, on the other hand, employers were compelled to insure in an insurance association supervised and guaranteed by the State. As a later report stated: "In Germany the workmen has the security of the funds of an assurance society, whose solvency is carefully secured by legislation and ... guaranteed

133. Social Insurance, Part II, Workmen's Compensation Proposals for an Industrial Injury Insurance Scheme, 1944 (Cd.6551), p.6.

134. The Times, 25 Nov. 1897, p.7.

by the State."¹³⁵ Many people in 1897 agreed, therefore, with G.Blake Walker, President of the Midland Institute of Mining Engineers, who believed that "If the compensation is to be secured absolutely the State must be responsible for the compensation fund, as in Germany."¹³⁶ Dilke felt that the failure to guarantee compensation in cases of insolvency, either of employer or of insurance company, "was another defect which arose out of not following the German system more completely."¹³⁷ The government, however, were not prepared to become involved in such potentially dangerous questions as compulsory insurance and state guarantees against insolvency. Chamberlain said that he was not alarmed by the gradual progress towards comprehensive state insurance¹³⁸, but, to help his bill through emphasised the voluntary, less paternalistic nature of its proposals.

The later departmental committee was no more decisive in its handling of this particular issue. It agreed that the English workman was in an insecure position when compared with his German counterpart who had "ample security for the payment of the compensation due to him."¹³⁹ But it was unwilling to discuss the logical solution to the problem - the compulsory

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135. Memorandum on Foreign and Colonial Laws relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1905 (Cd.2458), p.3.
136. The Times, 17 May 1897, p.9.
137. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1453.
138. Ibid., 51 (1897), 212.
139. Memorandum on Foreign and Colonial Laws relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1905 (Cd.2458), p.36.

insurance of workmen in insurance companies whose solvency was guaranteed by the state. The Committee felt that such a solution would eventually be arrived at but argued that it was outside its terms of reference to consider it.¹⁴⁰

The measure of 1897 met with opposition from those who were fearful of the burdens it might impose on industry. The Sheffield Chamber of Commerce condemned not only the haste with which they felt the bill was being pushed through Parliament, but the undue responsibilities it placed on employers.¹⁴¹ The Monmouthshire and South Wales Coal-Owners protested that the new proposals would seriously encumber industry in general, and the coal trade in particular.¹⁴² Though Chamberlain might deem the principle that accidents should be a charge on industry itself "the great, the true, and the just principle"¹⁴³, others were not so sure. The supporters of the bill, however, had one powerful argument on their side: the obvious fact that the expensive system of insurance instituted in Germany had not hampered its industrial progress. This argument was constantly raised by those seeking to counter any attack on the bill on grounds of cost. Dilke remarked that the progress of Germany "refuted the contention that the burden of such legislation was too heavy for employers."¹⁴⁴ White Ridley argued that such a law of industrial compensation as was contemplated was "well-nigh common to the whole of

140. Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2208), p.124.

141. The Times, 27 May 1897, p.9.

142. Ibid., 2 June 1897, p.13.

143. Ibid., 14 May 1898, p.12.

144. A.T.Wilson and H.Levy, Workmen's Compensation, vol.1 (London 1939), p.68.

the Continent, and is in force in most of those countries with which we enter into any severe competition."¹⁴⁵ Chamberlain was most precise and, in an attempt to dispel what he considered to be exaggerated fears, pointed out that "In Germany the liability placed upon the employers greatly exceeds the liability which is placed upon the employers in the United Kingdom."¹⁴⁶ He had written to White Ridley in February 1897 similarly remarking that in Germany and Austria a greater liability was imposed on employers than was proposed in their draft bill. "In Germany the average charge is £1.6.8. per £100 of wages - in some dangerous trades it is as high as £4 per £100. I do not believe that the charges under the draft Bill will amount to more than £1.5.0. in any case and the average will not exceed 15/-."¹⁴⁷ Chamberlain wrote to another correspondent assuring him that the extra charge which would be placed on industry would amount "really to an almost infinitesimal sum."¹⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that White Ridley in attempting to provide the House with a clearer idea of what the extra charges would amount to, used German statistics as the basis for his calculations. The figures showed, he claimed, that the proposed legislation would cost much less than had been supposed.¹⁴⁹ Atherley-Jones agreed with him that while the German

145. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1424.

146. The Times, 6 Nov. 1897, p.9.

147. Chamberlain to White Ridley, 11 February 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/13.

148. Chamberlain to Lord Stanley, 14 January 1897, ibid., JC 6/3/3/10.

149. Hansard, 4th Ser., 48 (1897), 1431.

legislation gave absolute security of compensation to working men, it did not place an undue burden on employers.¹⁵⁰ That the optimism of the sponsors of the bill was largely justified is indicated both by Chamberlain's demonstration in 1899 that its cost was proving to be but a moderate proportion of working expenses,¹⁵¹ and by the report of the departmental committee in 1904 that the financial burden placed on employers had not been excessive.¹⁵²

The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 was in many ways a revolutionary measure. It drastically changed the contractual relations between employers and employed and gave to the latter a legal right to compensation at no expense to themselves. Like the 1893 bill it sought to provide relief for the victims of industrial accidents and their dependents, but it did so in an entirely different way. It virtually abandoned considerations of negligence or fault. It accepted accidents as inevitable and established the vital principle that their cost should be regarded as an extra charge on production.

The Act of 1897 owed much to the German example. In the words of one contemporary observer, Asquith's attempt in 1893 to amend the Employers' Liability Act "ended in lamentable failure only to be followed by a more drastic measure, based upon the German system."¹⁵³ Herr Stoffers,

150. Ibid., 49 (1897), 674.

151. The Times, 1 December 1899, p.7.

152. Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Law Relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2208), p.33.

153. R.T.Thomson, 'The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897', Nineteenth Century, vol.XLIII, (June, 1898), p.900.

in his letter to The Chronicle, expressed his pride that England, "this great and free country, has adopted a great social principle from us." Stoffers added a word of thanks to Chamberlain for doing "unprejudiced and full justice to Germany in recognising her record in social legislation."¹⁵⁴ The leading historians of this branch of industrial legislation have all recognised the debt owed to Germany. Addington Willis, author of The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897 (London, 1897), claimed that an examination of the German system would indicate at once "whence the idea embodied and worked out in the Act has been borrowed."¹⁵⁵ Ruegg agreed that the Act of 1897 was "founded upon the German system of insurance against accidents, although it is by no means identical with that system."¹⁵⁶

The system established in England in 1897 was not a carbon copy of the German original. Yet, discrepancies of detail apart, it displayed a remarkable similarity in both its philosophy and practice: the amounts of compensation; the time limit to be placed on claims; the trades to be excluded; the establishment of arbitration procedures, and so on, were all determined by reference to German experience. Arthur Strauss praised the government on their skill "in picking out

154. Stoffers to The Chronicle, 11 June 1897, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/3/24.

155. Cited in R.T.Thomson, article, Nineteenth Century, op. cit., p.904.

156. A.H.Ruegg, The Employers' Liability Act 1880, and the Workmen's Compensation Acts, 1897 and 1900 (London, 1903), p.183.

the best parts of the German law and discarding the worst parts."¹⁵⁷ Chamberlain admitted that they had had "regard to the experience of Germany." The German system, while open to some criticism (and what system was not?), had given satisfaction to the Germans and therefore "justifies us in carrying out a somewhat similar experiment."¹⁵⁸

The Consolidation of Workmen's Compensation, 1900 to 1906.

The Act of 1897 could only, of course, be a beginning. Its partial and experimental nature made its extension and modification inevitable. Thus in 1900 there was introduced the Workmen's Compensation Act (1897) Extension Act which extended the legislation to more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ million agricultural labourers.¹⁵⁹ It is interesting to recall that the Germans had, within two years of the passage of their first Accident Insurance Law, extended its operation to the German farm-labouring population.

157. Hansard, 4th Ser., 49 (1897), 671.

158. Ibid., 48 (1897), 1466-7. Some of the more conservative members of the party, however, were concerned at where Chamberlain was taking them. Lord Londonderry, for example, was convinced that "no Bill like it had ever been introduced by a Government presided over by a Conservative Minister"; ibid., 51 (1897), 530. T. Ashton tried to soothe the fears of men like Londonderry and Lord Wemyss, another opponent of 'Chamberlainism'. Ashton conceded that "very many hon. Members objected to anything that came from Germany", but he begged them to recognise that often "German goods were superior to English goods." He himself "was not prepared to refuse to take a lesson from Germany"; ibid., 49 (1897) 786-7.

159. Ibid., 80 (1900), 1424. The Act of 1900 did not apply to the very small farmer who might own nothing more than an allotment and employ only casual labour.

Not everyone approved of the idea of extending the law of 1897. Alfred Osler, a Birmingham Liberal, wrote to Asquith advising that for the Liberal Party to support extension of the law of workmen's compensation was to "incur the just resentment of a dangerously numerous body of voters; farmers, householders who employ servants, shopkeepers, professional men & the host of small employers For the Liberal Party to add the opposition of these to the forces already against them on Home Rule, Local Veto, Disestablishment and House of Lords would be madness."¹⁶⁰ For his part, Lord Wemyss saw the Acts of 1897 and 1900 as "sentimental, liberty-interfering-with, and mistaken legislation", and expressed the view that both parties were "tobogganing down the Socialistic ladder."¹⁶¹

The majority in both parties, however, approved of the extension of 1900. The Liberals decided that a greater political advantage would accrue from supporting rather than resisting the enlargement of the legislation on compensation. Asquith, therefore, disregarded the advice of Osler and welcomed the Act of 1900 as a step "in the direction of removing the illogical anomalies and distinctions between different classes of our working population."¹⁶² In other words, it was not possible, out of deference to men like Wemyss, to call a halt, in spite of the loss of interest in the subject shown by the Conservative Party

160. Osler to Asquith, 10 January 1899, Asquith MSS, 19, f.50.

161. Hansard, 4th Ser., 86 (1900), 38-9.

162. Hansard, 4th Ser., 80 (1900), 1424.

after 1900. Preoccupation with the South African war and the problems it had thrown up had already diverted their attention when they were torn apart by the issue of tariff reform. The decision to set up a departmental committee to consider what amendments and extension of the existing law were necessary was probably an attempt to postpone additional reform. True, they introduced a bill in 1905 but this was a neutral measure which failed to satisfy labour and was, in any case, immediately withdrawn. Shortly afterwards the troubled and weary Conservatives surrendered office to a triumphant Liberal Party which saw as one of its first main tasks the further enlargement of the existing legislation.¹⁶³

During these years after the passing of the 1900 Act the debate on the vital question of the relationship between insurance and accidents had gone on. In this debate, German practice and ideas continued to make their presence felt. The departmental committee of 1904 noted that in the matter of compulsory insurance and accident prevention "the experience of the German law affords some valuable assistance", and it reported that the German system had led to a reduction in the number of accidents.¹⁶⁴ The supplementary memorandum on foreign and colonial laws, issued a year later, also paid great attention to the German system and commented too on the value of compulsory insurance in reducing accidents.¹⁶⁵ The committee, however, did no more than express the pious

163. H. Campbell-Bannerman to Asquith, 21 January 1906, Asquith MSS, 10, ff.200-1.

164. Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd. 2208), p.23.

165. Memorandum on Foreign and Colonial Laws relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1905 (Cd.2458), p.34.

hope that a scheme of compulsory insurance might some day come to pass in England. It suggested nothing constructive which might help to bring that scheme about.

The Liberal legislators of 1906 were not much more decisive, though Dilke urged them to remember that on the matter of insurance England was "hopelessly in the rear of every country in Europe."¹⁶⁶ The government had decided that compulsory insurance, while in the long term inevitable and probably even desirable, was not at present a practical proposition. Herbert Gladstone even doubted its suitability, in the long term, for his country: "That is a system which belongs to Germany ... you cannot expect us, with our methods and our system, to adopt the German system."¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, the Midlands industrialist, Josiah Wedgwood, expressed admiration for the German system "which he was so anxious to see introduced all over this country."¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, in spite of Wedgwood's inclinations, compulsory insurance remained a dead letter in 1906.

A cause of concern to several reformers was the situation which had arisen since 1897 in which many small employers were either falling victim to unreliable insurance companies or were not insuring at all. Thus both they and the employees were being placed in a precarious position. T.H. Cochrane sought to safeguard and encourage insurance on the part of the small employer by moving an amendment to the 1906

166. Hansard, 4th Ser., 154 (1906), 906.

167. Ibid., 155 (1906), 540.

168. Ibid., 166 (1906), 1032.

bill which empowered the Post Office to act as agent for insurance companies whose finances had been examined and considered sound by the Treasury and Friendly Societies. Cochrane was well aware of the important role which the German Post Office played in the administration of accident insurance in that country: "In Germany this matter had been dealt with by several Acts of Parliament and all he could ask ... was 'Why do we lag so far behind?'"¹⁶⁹ Cochrane received the welcome support of the former Postmaster-General, Austen Chamberlain, who argued that the small employer, being an unattractive proposition for an insurance company, should be able to call on the state to guarantee him the benefits of sound insurance.¹⁷⁰ Cochrane wrote to Mary Chamberlain expressing his appreciation of Austen's "real and very helpful interest in the subject. His experience both at the Post Office and the Treasury enabled him to convince the House that all that was necessary could be done."¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, the arguments of Cochrane and Chamberlain made no impression on the government which rejected the amendment on the grounds that it would involve the setting-up of complicated machinery

169. Ibid., 166 (1906), 324.

170. Ibid., 166 (1906), 333-4.

171. Cochrane to Mary Chamberlain, 1 December 1906, Chamberlain MSS, AC 4/11/109.

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and the furnishing of an undesirable state guarantee.¹⁷²

The extension of workmen's compensation to those trades not covered by the legislation of 1897 and 1900 was an important point of discussion in 1906. The Departmental Committee of 1904, in its cautious way, had rejected the idea of immediate and indiscriminate inclusion of all trades. It advised that the special circumstances of each trade be considered separately. "We are fortified in coming to this conclusion", the report proclaimed, "by the course which legislation has taken in other countries, especially in Germany."¹⁷³ The unsuccessful Conservative bill of 1905 had followed this course of action by proposing to extend the legislation on compensation to

172. A departmental committee of 1907 similarly argued that for the Post Office to provide facilities for insurance under the workmen's compensation laws would require the passage of special and unwelcome legislation. It felt that the Post Office lacked the elasticity in the conduct of its business which would make it a suitable instrument, and believed it undesirable for a government department to be drawn into a field which involved frequent litigation; Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to consider whether the Post Office should provide facilities for Insurance under the Workmen's Compensation Acts, 1907, (Cd.3568), p.7.

173. Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2208), p.114. The Committee had decided, in the words of Halévy, that "It would be better to follow the German precedent, followed hitherto, and gradually extend a statute originally applicable to particular categories of workers to other categories, one at a time"; E. Halévy, The Rule of Democracy 1905-1914 (London, 1961 edn.), p.99.

specific categories of workmen. The attitude of the majority of Liberal and Labour leaders, however, was that a more comprehensive measure was more appropriate.

Thus the Liberal bill of 1906 proposed to include all trades but to except businesses in which less than five workmen were employed and particular occupational groups such as domestic servants and shop assistants. Herbert Samuel claimed that the bill, if passed as it stood, "would be far more comprehensive than the law of any other country, and would place us ahead of all the other nations of the world in this part of the social reform question." Even Germany, for example, set a minimum of ten employees as a condition of inclusion within its legislation.¹⁷⁴ In the event, the government allowed its bill to be so amended that those initially omitted (shop assistants, domestic servants, and employers of fewer than five men) were brought within its scope, and only very small categories of workers left outside. In short, rejecting the cautious approach of the 1904 report, based though it was on German experience, the measure of 1906 brought a further six million working people into the system of workmen's compensation and virtually doubled the numbers covered by legislation.

Another major feature of the Act of 1906 was the changes it brought about with regard to the payment of compensation. The Act of 1897 had imposed a fortnight's waiting period before compensation became due and had not provided for any 'counting back' to the day of injury. The

174. Hansard, 4th Ser., 155 (1906), 1214.

Germans on the other hand, had prescribed a four-week waiting period but had allowed for the back-dating of benefit to the day of injury. The 1904 committee had recommended the continuation of the existing arrangements though it had been told by A.H.Ruegg - the prominent legal expert on questions of employers' liability - of his preference for the payment of compensation dated from the very first day of incapacity.¹⁷⁵

The Liberals initially proposed that the waiting period be reduced to one week, this being seen as sufficient to ease the hardship which injury could impose on the lowest-paid workers. After strong pressure from the Labour members, however, who demanded that the waiting period be cut to as little as three days, the Liberals agreed to compromise. The seven-day limit was retained but with the proviso that should the effects of an injury last beyond a fortnight then compensation would be dated back to the first day. This formula was very similar, therefore, to the system prevailing in Germany whence inspiration for the idea undoubtedly came. Joseph Chamberlain doubted the wisdom of throwing extra burdens of this kind on to employers and felt that the new arrangement would encourage malingering.¹⁷⁶ His son Austen strongly opposed the principle of 'counting back', "but there was some division of opinion among our men, and of course we could do nothing against the

175. Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee appointed to Inquire into the Law relating to Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1904 (Cd.2334), Q.916, p.31.

176. Hansard, 4th Ser., 155 (1906), 932.

combination of the Govt. and Labour."¹⁷⁷

A final important result of the 1906 Act was the decision that industrial diseases should give rise to a claim for compensation. Some of the more prevalent diseases were provided for under the Act and the Home Secretary was empowered, by the simple use of a direct order, to add to the list as he saw fit. The difficulties of determining the exact causes of such diseases had dissuaded most other countries from taking the step which England took in 1906. As Herbert Samuel claimed: "Only countries like Germany, which had a compulsory system of insurance not only for accidents but for general sickness, had been able to give compensation for trade diseases."¹⁷⁸ Chiozza Money felt glad that, in this particular question at least, "we were taking the lead in the world instead of following the example of France and Germany in these labour matters."¹⁷⁹

Conclusion.

In December 1906 the Liberal Workmen's Compensation Act received the royal assent. In terms of consolidation it was a measure of prime importance. It set the seal on the system of compensation for industrial accidents which was to exist in Britain until the passing of the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act in 1946. Up to 1946 financial responsibility for compensation rested with the employer, who generally

177. Austen to Mary Chamberlain, 30 November 1906, Chamberlain MSS, AC 4/1/122.

178. Hansard, 4th Ser., 166 (1906), 985.

179. Ibid., 167 (1906), 713.

covered his risk by means of voluntary insurance through companies conducted on a profit-seeking basis. A departmental committee set up in 1919 recommended the state supervision of rates of premiums with a view to controlling the profits of insurance companies,¹⁸⁰ though it did not go so far as to suggest the removal of workmen's compensation from the sphere of commercial insurance. In 1946, however, it was widely recognised that there were very great advantages to be had from incorporating workmen's compensation into a general state insurance fund which also dealt with such conditions as unemployment, old age and maternity. It was maintained, for example, that the elimination of insurance through commercial companies would make more money available in the form of increased benefits. Thus after 1946 the employer shared his responsibility with the worker and with the state and their joint contributions provided the fund out of which compensation was to be paid.

The passing of the 1906 Act had owed much to the Labour Party. Indeed, Cochrane had considered Herbert Gladstone "a very weak creature and thoroughly frightened by the Labour Party."¹⁸¹ Certainly the Act bore the impress of Labour's influence. The enlargement of the scope of the Act to include a far greater number of lower-status workers, and the compromise made on the questions of the waiting period and of back-dating of benefit, were important advances of which the infant Labour Party was justly proud.

180. Report of the Departmental Committee on the System of Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, 1920 (Cmd.816), p.70.

181. Cochrane to Mary Chamberlain, 1 December 1906, Chamberlain MSS, AC 4/11/109.

Finally, it must be said that much was owed once more to the German example. In 1906, German influence was most strongly felt in relation to the issues of compulsory insurance and accident prevention; but reference to Germany was also made in the arguments over the categories to which the law was intended to apply and over the proposed changes in the regulations determining when compensation should become due.

From the very beginning in the 1870s, when English reformers and legislators had first decided to tackle the problems of industrial accidents and compensation, right through to the passage of the Act of 1906, attention had been fixed on German achievement. Contemporary writings, private correspondence, official reports and parliamentary debates, all bear witness to the great influence which German practice had on English thinking in this field of social reform. Nor was that influence confined to the eulogies of the reformers and the encomiums of official reports. In more practical terms, as we have seen, it left a decisive mark on English legislation. As its main chroniclers so rightly point out, through all the struggle over employers' liability and workmen's compensation in the thirty years up to 1906 "German precedents run like a thread."¹⁸²

182. A.T.Wilson and H.Levy, Workmen's Compensation, vol.I (London 1939), p.77.

Chapter 8:

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

Introduction.

From the late 1870s onwards - when it may be said that old age pensions entered the domain of practical politics - the problem of the aged poor exercised the social conscience of England. It was never far from the forefront of debate as social reformers, working-class leaders and politicians put forward scheme after scheme in their attempt to find some permanent and satisfactory solution, among them such well-known figures as Booth, Labouchere and Broadhurst. It is not the intention of this chapter to describe each and every one of these schemes. Many of them will receive no further mention; instead attention will be drawn to those whose formulation appears to have owed something to the influence of German practice.

It was in 1889 that Bismarck introduced the last part of his insurance legislation, the Old Age and Invalidity Law. Added interest and relevance was immediately attached to the proposals for old age pensions which had already been put forward in England. Acland was of the opinion that the action of Bismarck in 1889 was vital in stimulating concern in England,¹ and certainly the government wasted little time in acquainting itself with the new German legislation. Two prominent historians of old-age pensions have written that "Bismarck's activities were being closely watched by

1. J.A.Spender, The State and Pensions in Old Age (London, 1892), introductory note, p.xvii.

forward-looking politicians in England"², and it is no coincidence that Chamberlain rapidly emerged as the leading advocate of a Bismarckian scheme. Nor was Chamberlain the only one to be inspired by the German initiative. The Blackley proposals, first advanced in 1878 but lying moribund after the unfavourable report of a select committee in 1887, were given a new lease of life; and a host of new projects began to appear. And as a leading opponent of state pensions remarked: "the fons et origo of this medley of social nostrums resides in the German Law of Insurance against Invalidity and Old Age."³

Though they had the German experience to back them up, the champions of old age pensions had to contend with fierce opposition. The opponents of pensions maintained that old age pauperism was declining as a result of the general improvement in the material condition of the working classes, as evidenced by increasing thrift and independence among working men. The corollary, as C.S.Loch saw it, was "a corresponding decrease in the alleged need of some national pension scheme."⁴ It was also argued that old age pauperism, where it still existed, was due entirely to the failings of human nature. It was not, therefore, to be tackled "by inviting large numbers of persons who are now independent of State-aid

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2. A.T.Wilson and G.S.Mackay, Old Age Pensions: an Historical and Critical Study (London, 1941), p.14.
 3. J.F.Wilkinson, Pensions and Pauperism (London 1892), note by T.E.Young, p.103.
 4. C.S.Loch, Old Age Pensions and Pauperism (London, 1892), p.23.

to become dependent upon it, but by dealing with the causes which lead to it."⁵ According to this view, a pension would serve only to bring out the worst in the individual and curb the instincts towards self-help and personal effort. A third argument raised against the provision of old age pensions was that which stated that the real way to fight old age pauperism lay through making the administration of the existing Poor Law more humane and efficient.⁶ Only wise and quick reform of the Poor Law could really protect the morals of the people and guarantee the future efficiency of the nation. To reduce the working population to the status of recipients of charitable doles, it was asserted, must have a harmful effect upon them and upon the state, destroying their self-respect and inducing national decay.

A final, powerful argument which the opponents of pensions raised was that there was already ample opportunity for any responsible workman to provide adequately for his old age. There were the flourishing friendly societies, the very embodiment of the Victorian ideals of providence and self-help, which conferred sickness benefits and paid for

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5. Sir William Chance, 'The Decrease of Old Age Pauperism', Charity Organisation Review, vol.VI (October, 1899), p.200.
 - 6.. See, for instance, Sir William Chance, Our Treatment of the Poor (London, 1899), pp.91-116. It is interesting to note that in their realisation of the need to reform the cumbersome and often degrading English Poor Law, observers closely studied and admired the so-called Elberfeld System operating in certain German towns. One reformer deemed this "a splended example for us to emulate"; Julie Sutter, Britain's Next Campaign (London, 1903), p.17. See also W.Edwards, 'The Poor Law Experiment at Elberfeld', Contemporary Review, vol.XXXII (July, 1878), pp.675-693.

medical care and funerals.⁷ Apart from the friendly societies, the trade unions operated superannuation schemes which workers might join; and certain employers also provided superannuation benefits for their workers. Then again, private insurance companies and building and co-operative societies were further agencies into which a worker could put his savings. The state, in addition, offered facilities for saving through both the Post Office Savings Bank and the purchase of deferred annuities which had absolute security and could be cashed either at death or some specified age.

The opponents of old age pensions had, therefore, many arguments at their disposal. Pensions would destroy the moral fibre of the individual and sap the efficiency of the nation. Pensions were not necessary since working men had ample opportunity to provide for themselves and were, indeed, doing so in increasing numbers. Pensions were not the answer: the real solution lay in a crusade against drink, idleness and improvidence and in a drastic reform of the Poor Law.

The supporters of pensions refused to accept these points, telling though they seemed. One crucial counter-argument which they raised in their turn was that pauperism in old age did exist on a large scale and was mainly due, not to vice, but to the fact of old age itself. Charles Booth's researches among the poor of London led him to estimate that

7. P.H.J.H.Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England 1815-1875 (Manchester, 1961).

30 per cent of persons over the age of 65 in England and Wales were in receipt of poor relief and living in a state of want. While recognising that such factors as drink and human weakness played their part in explaining this situation, Booth could not escape the conclusion that "on the whole, people are poor because they are old."⁸

Chamberlain agreed entirely with Booth's estimate both of the extent of old age pauperism and of its causes.⁹ To him, the problem was one of poverty caused by circumstances entirely beyond the individual's control. It was hardly the working man's fault that old age would bring with it the failure of physical strength and a decline in earnings. Modern industry, which was increasingly putting a premium on speed of thought and action, had little sympathy for the older workers whose failing physical and mental powers made it increasingly difficult for them to hold down regular jobs. As F.H.Stead protested: "Age, far from being revered, was despised and rejected of men."¹⁰ To those disturbed by this situation, a pension scheme would give hope where none before existed and would promote thrift, dignity and self-respect, rather than destroy them. Thus, appealing to the Aberdare Commission to support a scheme of old age pensions and condemning as

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8. C.Booth, 'Statistics of Pauperism in Old Age', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.LVII (June, 1894), p.242.
 9. The Times, 22 April 1891, p.10.
 10. F.H.Stead, How Old Age Pensions Began To Be (London, 1909), p.6.

cliches the notions that drink and idleness were the root cause of pauperism in old age, Chamberlain insisted that "the chief and predisposing cause of pauperism is old age, and consequent on old age a man's inability to work."¹¹

The second riposte made by the advocates of pensions was their claim that the value of existing alternatives had been exaggerated. They argued that England was still, in many ways, an improvident nation and that such institutions as friendly societies, trade unions, and so on, left the vast majority of working men (and therefore the problem of the aged poor) untouched. The friendly society movement, it was maintained, was restricted to the comparatively well-to-do sections of the working population and while many of the larger societies were reputable, efficient and actuarially sound, a great number of smaller societies were just the reverse. It was pointed out that the tendency for friendly societies to allow their sick benefits to slide into permanent superannuation through their reluctance to leave an old sick member destitute, resulted in a serious drain on their resources and a grave threat to their solvency. Tied by principles of brotherhood and loyalty, the friendly societies were doling out benefits to aged members which their reserve funds had never been calculated to support. This fact, coupled with the unwillingness of the societies to extend their activities to a larger section of the working population, meant to men like Blackley and

11. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895
(C.7684-II), Q.12178, p.658.

Chamberlain that the friendly societies were not making any significant impact on the problem of pauperism in old age.

The advocates of pensions had convincing arguments against the other savings media supposedly open to working men. It was, for instance, pointed out that very many workers were not members of trade unions and could not, therefore, participate in their superannuation schemes. Further, because the superannuation contributions of a trade union were invariably merged in a common fund and had to compete for priority with claims for sickness benefit, funeral expenses, and strike and unemployment pay, provision for old age was irregular and undefined. A lengthy strike could thus severely reduce the ability of a union to pay superannuation. The Aberdare Commission, not surprisingly, felt that it could not regard trade union funds "as affording a secure form of old-age provision."¹²

As regards the attempts by some employers to tackle the problem of superannuation, it was argued that only a very small number of employers were in a position to pledge distant benefits to their workers. Spender felt that the problem could be tackled effectively from the employers' side only if "the German system of mutual insurance among groups of employers could by any means be acclimatised in this country."¹³

The inadequacy of the deferred annuities offered by the Post Office was also fastened on by the adherents of old age pensions. They

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12. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684), p.lx.
 13. J.A.Spender, The State and Pensions in Old Age (London, 1892), p.57.

claimed that, in spite of the Government Annuities Act of 1882 which had sought to streamline their administration, the annuities suffered from high premiums, low rates of interest, complication of forms and a general conviction that deferred annuities were not a desirable form of investment.

Thus did the advocates of old age pensions attempt to destroy the arguments raised by their opponents. They denied that old age pauperism was declining; they insisted that old age itself was the chief cause of hardship; and they claimed that existing thrift agencies barely touched the problem. In these circumstances there could be only one answer - to introduce a well-defined system of old age pensions. The advocates of such a system might differ on matters of detail and principle but on one thing they agreed: the lasting solution to the problem of pauperism in old age depended on a radical change of approach; on the inauguration of some comprehensive scheme of pensions in the manner suggested by German experience.

Contributory Old Age Pensions in Germany.

In 1887 the select committee inquiring into the Blackley scheme of provident insurance admitted that its investigations had been "naturally directed to the recent legislation in the German Empire, by which, one after the other, various industries have been progressively brought under compulsory insurance."¹⁴ The German legislation thus

14. Report from the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1887 (257), p.vii.

referred to was, of course, the accident and sickness insurance laws. A pension law had not yet found its way on to the German statute books but the committee urged the English government to watch "with a careful eye the development of compulsory industrial assurance in Germany."¹⁵ We may thus assume that the committee of 1887 fully anticipated the introduction of old age pensions in Germany. It was not to be disappointed.

In June 1889 the Invaliditäts - und Altersversicherungsgesetz passed through the German Reichstag. It brought into operation a compulsory, contributory system of old age and invalidity pensions supplemented by state aid. Under its provisions the German population was divided into four classes according to the wage earned. Rates of contribution and benefit varied from one class to another: the higher the wage, the greater the contribution and the bigger the pension. Contributions were divided equally between worker and employer, the latter deducting the worker's share from out of his wages. For each contribution made, the employer was obliged to affix a stamp, purchased from the Post Office, to a special card. To all pensions, the state added a contribution the equivalent of 50 English shillings. Facilities were allowed for periodic adjustment of the rates of contribution and benefit.

Under the German law the old age pension was to be paid at 70 years, provided that the insurer had paid 1410 weekly contributions. Invalidity pensions were made available to those permanently unable to earn a sum

15. Ibid., p.viii.

equal to one-third of their usual wages, provided they had contributed for at least five years. The larger the number of contributions made beyond the five-year minimum, the greater the pension. In order to provide for the large number of people who would be disabled before the scheme had been in operation five years, or would reach the age of 70 before it had been in operation thirty years, it was decided that such persons would be supposed to have paid the required contributions, provided that they could show a satisfactory record of employment.

Administration of the German system was carried on through pension boards, each with executive and administrative functions and each including representatives of employers, employees and the state. The chief function of the pension board was to receive and examine pension claims. In cases of dispute there was recourse, in the first place, to a court of arbitration, and, ultimately, to the Imperial Insurance Bureau (Reichsversicherungs Amt). This was the supreme legislative, executive and arbitration authority for the German pensions system.

As soon as this comprehensive and complicated measure passed the Reichstag, The Times correspondent in Berlin sent in a full description of it. The legislation was, he claimed, "a prodigious leap" and a "great philanthropic experiment." He expressed the hope that state initiative and statesmanship of the kind just displayed in Germany "may be adapted to other circumstances and other habits."¹⁶ The editorial of the same day, while expressing relief that such socialistic and paternalistic legislation was unnecessary in England, nevertheless

16. The Times, 19 June 1889, p.15.

recorded its admiration and interest in "the enormous experiment which Germany is about to make."¹⁷

The British government, too, displayed keen interest in the new German legislation. It ordered its Berlin embassy to furnish full details of the new law. A factual report was soon despatched to London, together with a brief assessment of the implications of "the most important and extensive scheme for State insurance ever yet devised by any Government."¹⁸

Important and extensive certainly; in the words of J.L.Garvin: "Germany led the world by the legislation of 1889."¹⁹ Inevitably, therefore, the step taken by Germany in 1889 gave enormous encouragement to English reformers and administrators who were, at this very time, just beginning to take up this question seriously. The Reverend W.Ede, for example, presented for public scrutiny in 1891 (the year in which the German system came into operation) a scheme for compulsory and contributory pensions in an attempt to discover "a road out of that corner of Darkest England which is peopled by the aged and the infirm."²⁰ Ede proclaimed his great admiration for the comprehensiveness of the German system and for its adoption of the principle of employers'

17. Ibid., p.11.

18. Papers Respecting the German Law of Insurance against Old Age and Infirmary, 1889 (C.5827), p.26.

19. J.L.Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol.II (London, 1933), p.508.

20. Rev.W.Ede, 'National Pensions: One Way Out of Darkest England', Contemporary Review, vol.LIX (April, 1891), p.594.

contributions. He even praised the German practice of issuing special stamps and cards as probably being "as effective as any that can be devised."²¹.

English reformers and legislators were not slow to recognise the importance of studying the efforts by other states to tackle the problems of old age and it was clear that, in the words of J.A.Spender, "In considering the experience of other European countries, the German Empire naturally holds the first place."²² In the course of the 1890s two such investigations were ordered by the British government and both paid special attention to the lessons afforded by German practice. In April 1891, Salisbury set up an inquiry into Continental provision for old age.²³ Then in 1899, to supplement the information accumulated by the various investigating bodies set up between 1893 and 1899, the Conservatives carried out a further analysis of European schemes.²⁴

Of course, there were those in England who, in their opposition to any idea of pensions for the aged, vehemently held that the example of

21. Ibid., p.589. In general, English observers considered this aspect of the German legislation unduly complicated. H.W.Wolff, however, was to agree with Ede and stated that if the methodical Germans considered this to be the best method of collecting contributions, then a more effective way probably did not exist, 'Old Age Pensions in Practice', *ibid.*, vol.LXV (June, 1894), p.894.

22. J.A.Spender, The State and Pensions in Old Age (London, 1892), p.73.

23. Reports on Facilities Given by Foreign Governments to the Provision of the Industrial Population for Old Age, 1891 (C.6429).

24. Report on Provision for Old Age by Government Action in Certain European Countries, 1899 (C.9414).

Germany provided no useful lessons. The Quarterly Review warned England not to be in any haste "to follow the lead of Continental Governments."²⁵ J.F.Wilkinson felt that while the legislative endeavours of other countries were "of interest in the abstract", different conditions and habits made imitation impossible.²⁶ Such men as Wilkinson emphasised the shortcomings of the German legislation. They pointed to its failure to meet the needs of the extremely poor by excluding those whose earning capacity had been seriously reduced by age or infirmity, and to the difficulty of applying it to those casually employed.²⁷ They claimed that an elaborate system of administration such as Germany's would involve high costs, and they cast doubts on the actuarial soundness of the German scheme. There is an interesting letter in the Mundella Collection in which Mundella, writing to an unnamed 'uncle', recalls a conversation with T.E.Young. Young was an opponent of the state-supported contributory pensions, whether of the variety of Bismarck or of Chamberlain, and their talk had centred on the shortcomings of the German old age pension law. Wrote Mundella: "Young says it is a pyramid on its apex, every calculation imperfect, & the Kaiser is beginning to fear for the soundness of Bismarck's State socialism."²⁸

The opponents of German-style old age pensions also expressed the fear that Bismarck's proposals would create friction between employers and

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25. 'State Pensions for Old Age', Quarterly Review, vol.CLXXIV (April, 1892), p.532.
 26. J.F.Wilkinson, 'The Endowment of Old Age', Contemporary Review, vol.LXI (March, 1892), p.555.
 27. See 'State Pensions for Old Age', Quarterly Review, vol.CLXXIV (April, 1892), p.508.
 28. A.J.Mundella to his uncle, undated, Mundella MSS.

their men, and they gleefully seized upon reports such as that published in The Times in January 1892.²⁹ In addition, they questioned the value of any scheme which had to rely on the compulsory principle for its operation. They saw it in terms of an intricate system of state regulation in continuance of the German traditions of the disciplinarian state, the regulation of labour, and compulsory military service. As F.Millar wrote: "The German people are accustomed to being dragooned, and do not resent it as English people would."³⁰

The German legislation, however, had a more favourable reception from others in England. J.A.Spender agreed that it had shortcomings and crudities but urged recognition and credit for "the statesmen who found courage to take an irretrievable step, while others remained weighing difficulties and balancing probabilities."³¹ G.Drage wrote in 1895 that it was to the system of old age pensions established in Germany "that the advocates of State intervention have been accustomed to look as their model."³² Certainly, the introduction in Germany of a system of compulsory and contributory pensions gave new hope to Blackley who had, since 1878, argued that men should be saved in spite of themselves and that a case existed for forcing benefits even upon unwilling persons.

The enforcement of the contributory principle in Germany was a source of encouragement to those in England who believed that it was essential to

29. The Times, 13 January 1892, p.5. A report on agitation in Bavaria against the old age pension laws.

30. F.Rogers and F.Killar, Old Age Pensions (London, 1903), p.187.

31. J.A.Spender, The State and Pensions in Old Age, (London, 1892), p.97.

32. G.Drage, The Problem of the Aged Poor (London, 1895), p.262.

provide benefits in old age while, at the same time, preserving self-respect and independence. Chief among those who thought along these lines was Joseph Chamberlain. He was, at this time, about to embark on a campaign for contributory, state-assisted pensions. Garvin tells us that Chamberlain was very deeply influenced by "Bismarck's constructive policy" and by the "German example in practical reform."³³ Wilson and Mackay tell us that Chamberlain was kept abreast of developments in Germany by Sir Charles Dilke, "and by his own inquiries conducted on the spot." They tell us also that his knowledge of the German legislation "made him more than ever determined to press forward."³⁴

It is to the ideas of Blackley and Chamberlain, and to the German influence on their respective attempts to devise a generally acceptable scheme of contributory old age pensions, that we now turn.

Blackley, Chamberlain and Contributory Old Age Pensions 1878 to 1895.

In November 1878, the Reverend William Blackley's scheme of national insurance was presented to the public. He proposed that young persons of between 18 and 21 years of age be compelled to contribute a sum of £10 (either in the form of a lump sum or of weekly deductions from their wage packets) to a state fund. The investment at compound interest of the funds thus provided would produce sickness benefits of 8 shillings a week up to the age of 70 years, and an old age pension of

33. J.L.Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol.II (London, 1933), p.508-9.

34. A.T.Wilson and G.S.Mackay, Old Age Pensions: An Historical and Critical Study (London, 1941), p.21.

4 shillings a week from 70 onwards. Contributions would be paid into the General Post Office which would also be used for the distribution of the benefits. Blackley talked in terms of a national friendly society, a national club, which, without the spending of one shilling of public money "would necessarily abolish the improvidence which is the curse, and, unchecked, must become the ruin, of our nation."³⁵

These proposals, on Blackley's own admission owed something to his knowledge of foreign, and especially German excursions into the field of social insurance. Wilson and Mackay assure us that he "used his knowledge of foreign languages to familiarize himself with the social legislation which was beginning to take shape on the Continent."³⁶ Certainly in 1880 Blackley was to justify his scheme of compulsory contributions by reference to the fact that "The thing is done in Germany universally without difficulty."³⁷ Then again, in 1881, he was to produce an informative article describing and analysing Bismarck's proposed legislation on insurance.³⁸ Blackley was at pains, however, to point out that his scheme, while largely inspired by the German system, was manifestly free from its drawbacks. He, therefore, condemned the apparent assumption by Goschen that because Bismarck's proposals contained some shortcomings no

35. W.L.Blackley, 'National Insurance: A Cheap, Practical, and Popular Means of Abolishing Poor Rates', Nineteenth Century, vol.IV (November, 1878), p.842.

36. Wilson and Mackay, op.cit., p.15.

37. W.L.Blackley, 'The House of Lords and National Insurance', Nineteenth Century, vol.VIII (July, 1880), p.115.

38. W.L.Blackley, 'Prince Bismarck's Scheme of Compulsory Insurance', Contemporary Review, vol.XXXIX (April, 1881), pp.610-628.

other scheme of national insurance could possibly work effectively. Blackley proclaimed that this was a conclusion "exactly as logical as to resolve that because one fashionable tailor made a suit of ill-fitting and uncomfortable garments, society in general should resolve upon never wearing clothes."³⁹

Blackley justified his scheme in general terms by the argument that although all men had a personal and a national duty to be thrifty and to provide for themselves in old age, too many were neglecting it.⁴⁰ And this was in spite of the enormous wealth of the country and notwithstanding the numerous provident institutions existing in England. Too many people assumed that they would be taken care of, notably by the Poor Law. Thus they became paupers in spirit before they became paupers in fact.⁴¹ Their dependence on the Poor Law was unjust to the thrifty who were compelled to provide, through the payment of rates, for the feckless. Blackley argued that his scheme of compulsory contributions would transfer the responsibility to where it ought to lie. Insistence on the contributory principle would guarantee that the beneficiary of a pension had made some effort to help himself. It would ensure that a man did not escape his duty in this matter but took up his own share of the load of national providence rather than throw it on to the shoulders of others.

39. W.L. Blackley, 'Mr. Goschen on National Insurance', National Review, vol.V (June, 1885), p.495.

40. W.L. Blackley, Thrift and Independence, A Word for Working Men (London, 1885) pp.7-9.

41. Blackley's evidence to the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1885 (270), Q8, p.1.

Ratepayers would thus be relieved of a needless and unjust burden and self-respecting and self-provided citizens would be created out of those otherwise doomed to pauperism. Blackley was of the firm opinion, as he was to state to a later meeting of the Statistical Society, that "If Englishmen were as wise as Germans - and he was inclined to think they were becoming so - there was no impossibility in carrying out something of the sort."⁴²

Meanwhile a select committee had been set up in 1885 to consider the Blackley proposals. After two re-appointments a final report was issued in 1887. This report reiterated most of the criticisms which had already been levelled against the Blackley scheme: it was actuarially unsound and would do needless harm to the voluntary thrift organisations; it would undermine habits of economy and self-help by the exercise of compulsion; and it took no account of the inability of English working men to afford the sort of premiums contemplated. The select committee concluded by insisting on the wisdom of awaiting the further expression of public opinion before embarking on such an ambitious project.⁴³

Similarly, a few years later, the Aberdare royal commission spent a good deal of its time studying and assessing Blackley's proposals. While finding much that was attractive in the very simplicity of the Blackley scheme, the commission could still not recommend its adoption since it doubted the wisdom and the practicality of compulsion; and it was

42. The Times, 23 December 1891, p.8.

43. Report from the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1887, pp.iv-ix.

concerned that the casually-employed and the self-employed would probably be overlooked.⁴⁴ Official opinion, therefore, rejected Blackley's proposed system of old age pensions. In addition, it had already come under heavy fire from representatives of that powerful sector of opinion which opposed all suggestion of state interference and compulsion after the model of Germany.

Blackley denied that his proposals would saddle the state with additional responsibility. Its functions, he said, would not be much more than to fix the rates of contribution and benefit and to enforce the regulations necessary for the smooth running of the system. He was, he maintained, opposed to the idea that the state be called upon to guarantee the solvency of thrift agencies as it was in Germany.⁴⁵ In spite of such qualifications, however, Blackley could not escape the criticism of those who believed that his plan represented a first step towards state insurance. The friendly societies, in particular, jealous of their independence and fearful of any competitor for the savings of the working man, attacked Blackley's scheme at every opportunity and on every point. They even treated with scorn Blackley's willingness to co-operate with them by excluding sickness benefits from his scheme in order to concentrate on old age pensions and leaving provision against sickness

44. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684), pp.lxxv-lxxvi.

45. Report from the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1887 (257), Q.97, p.10.

to them, without any suggestion of state interference.⁴⁶ In discussing Blackley's scheme in 1895, G.Drage certainly spoke for a good many people when he wrote that "the experience of Germany has shown that a heavy burden is thus imposed on the State, whilst the benefit to individuals is but slight."⁴⁷

It was, however, the single issue of compulsion which drew most of the criticism and condemnation. Blackley's argument was that, given the failings of human nature, thrift and independence could only be organised on a compulsory basis. He believed that compulsion alone made his proposals practicable and he claimed that he had the support of working men in this.⁴⁸ Blackley laid much stress on the argument that, while the existing Poor Law was founded on a compulsion which was grossly unfair (the compulsory payment by the thrifty of rates and taxes to support the thriftless), his proposal was equitable because it sought to do no more than compel men to do their duty. Finally, Blackley insisted that the compulsory principle was vindicated by its successful operation in Germany, for, as he told the select committee of 1885, a system of compulsory deductions from wages had existed in that country "for many years without the least trouble at all."⁴⁹

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46. The Times, 20 April 1889, p.8. For typical friendly society objections to Blackley's proposals see the evidence taken by the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1885 (270), Qs.722-747, 884-891, 1024, pp.57-8, 64-5, 72-3.
47. G.Drage, The Problem of the Aged Poor (London, 1895), p.312.
48. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, vol.III, 1895 (C.7684-II), Q.12782, p:706.
49. Report from the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1885 (270), Q.152, p.17.

That compulsion was working effectively in Germany, however, was not fact, not argument enough to convince Englishmen in general of its practicability in their country. Blackley, therefore, while he might receive the support of progressives like John Gorst⁵⁰ was always fighting a losing battle. C.P.Tebbutt, who had family business connections in Saxony, told the select committee of 1885 that while compulsion worked well in Germany it was unsuited to English conditions. It would, he said, weaken the instincts towards thrift and was, without doubt, "opposed to the whole genius of the English people."⁵¹ J.F.Wilkinson, speaking on behalf of the friendly societies, deemed Blackley "the original importer of Bismarckian State Socialism"⁵², and warned that to any attempt to insert the thin end of the wedge of State organisation and regulation of labour, "such as exists in Germany, the firmest front would be opposed."⁵³ Wilkinson called upon the English to defend the virtues of individual effort and self-reliance against the principle of compulsion, "that god of modern German worship."⁵⁴ He found it inconceivable that a man of the Church, as Blackley was, should be earnestly recommending "the autocratic State socialism of Prince Bismarck"

50. The Times, 11 November 1891, p.7.

51. Report of the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, 1885 (270), Q.521, p.45.

52. J.F.Wilkinson, Pensions and Pauperism (London, 1892), p.12.

53. J.F.Wilkinson, The Blackley National Provident Insurance Scheme: A Protest and an Appeal (London, 1887), p.17.

54. Ibid., p.48.

and "the dead levelling and non-moral force of compulsion."⁵⁵

Reviled by the doctrinaire representatives of a still-powerful laissez-faire tradition; strenuously opposed by the influential friendly society movement which carried its suspicion of all proposals for state pensions almost to the point of paranoia; and rejected by government inquiry, the scheme of W.L.Blackley for national provident insurance for old age and sickness inevitably foundered. It was wrecked chiefly on the rock of the objections to compulsion. J.Rankin told a later government inquiry that any plan like Blackley's which closely resembled that of Germany was bound to fail because it was "a very long way off before we could get compulsion."⁵⁶

However, even in failure, the significance of the Blackley plan was considerable. It had in the first instance served to get the whole question of old age pensions off the ground. It had also precipitated government inquiry into the problems of pauperism and old age.

Finally the Blackley scheme paved the way directly for the decision by Joseph Chamberlain to take up the question of old age pensions, and was a major influence upon the formulation of Chamberlain's own programme. Chamberlain himself acknowledged the debt he owed to Blackley and insisted that the labours of Blackley and the facts he had brought to light made all subsequent

55. Ibid., pp.88-89

56. Report of the Departmental Committee on Old Age Pensions, 1898 (C.8911), Q.1554, p.81.

developments possible.⁵⁷ At the same time, the Blackloy scheme, by its use of German precedents instilled the search for a viable scheme of old age pensions in England with a continuing and instructive awareness of the German example. Chamberlain was to prove particularly aware of the value of looking to German experience.

A cardinal feature of the German system was the assistance given by the state to individual thrift, albeit a thrift forced upon the individual. Similarly, the scheme which Joseph Chamberlain formulated in the early 1890s was founded on state support. Chamberlain's contemporaries were not slow to see the German influence on his ideas. G.Drago noted that the principle of state-assisted contributions on which Chamberlain's scheme rested "also underlies the German system of old age pensions."⁵⁸ J.F.Wilkinson discerned that the German law of 1889 was "the pattern more or less closely followed by the projectors of British proposals for establishing 'Assisted' State pensions for the aged."⁵⁹ That Chamberlain was influenced by German practice is shown by a long private memorandum in the Chamberlain Collection which pays particular attention to German legislation.⁶⁰ Again, in a long article in a leading journal in 1892, Chamberlain claimed that the most

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57. J.Chamberlain, 'Old Age Pensions', National Review, vol.XVIII (February, 1892), p.721.
58. G.Drago, The Problem of the Aged Poor (London, 1892), p.312
59. J.F.Wilkinson, Pensions and Pauperism (London, 1892), p.15.
60. Memorandum on Old Age Pensions, undated, Chamberlain MSS, JC.6/3/4/7.

important foreign proposals to deal with old age "are contained in the German law of 1889, which is now in full operation throughout the Empire."⁶¹ And finally we have Chamberlain's statement to the Aberdare Commission: "Yes, I have given special attention to the scheme which ... is in operation in Germany; and I have made some enquiries on the spot there."⁶²

The adoption by Chamberlain of a scheme of old age pensions is seen by his admirers as arising out of a genuine humane concern for the welfare of the aged poor.⁶³ On the other hand, Chamberlain's critics have argued that his entry into the campaign for old age pensions stemmed mainly from political considerations. Never the man to eschew any electoral advantage and believing anyway that old age pensions were inevitable, Chamberlain, it is maintained, was impelled merely by a determination to have this particular reform attached to his name.⁶⁴ However, it is not part of the purpose of this thesis to try and ascertain the innermost motives of the man. The issue will be left with the opinion of one of Chamberlain's contemporaries. Writing to Lyon Playfair soon after Playfair had assumed the chairmanship of the Royal

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61. J. Chamberlain, 'Old Age Pensions', National Review, vol. XVIII (February, 1892), p. 722.
62. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684-II), Q.12192, p.660.
63. See J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol. II (London, 1933), pp. 509-512.
64. See B.B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain, (London, 1966), p.180.

Commission on the Aged Poor, C.S.Roundell declared of Chamberlain: "I give him credit for honest adhesion to the idea of doing something for the lower classes - even though he of course wishes to have the glory of himself doing it."⁶⁵

It is not clear exactly when Chamberlain decided to campaign on behalf of the aged poor. Perhaps it was in the summer of 1889 when a translation of the recently-enacted German law was brought before Parliament. More likely, the idea had been turning over in his mind for a number of years already. Certainly, a speech in 1885 seemed to presage his later actions. Having surveyed the problems of pauperism and under-nourishment among the aged, he concluded that there was "something rotten in our system."⁶⁶ The more he studied the situation, the more he was convinced it was inhuman. That a lifetime of honest work should be rewarded by the humiliating charities of the work-house, he came to regard as a "serious blot upon our civilisation."⁶⁷ The provision of pensions for the aged, he came to see, would be "Christian legislation in the best sense."⁶⁸ He believed that while there had been a real improvement in the condition of the working classes, the older members of society had not shared in it.⁶⁹ He saw two

65. Roundell to Playfair, 27 December 1894, Playfair MSS, 616.

66. The Times, 16 September 1885, p.7.

67. The Times, 6 September 1894, p.4.

68. Ibid., 22 October 1891, p.10.

69. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684-II), Q.12315, p.675.

main reasons for this. In the first place, the existing thrift agencies had proved totally inadequate to deal with the problem of pauperism in old age because they touched only a minority of the population. Secondly, the Poor Law, by inducing the poor to believe that others would ultimately assume responsibility for them, served only to increase pauperism rather than reduce it. Faced by this situation, and influenced as he was by the example of Germany, Chamberlain decided that the state must intervene to promote insurance against old age. Believing that the working population had a claim on the society they had served, he joined other leading reformers in urging the state "to assist the poor to do what is right in this matter."⁷⁰

In May 1891 a voluntary committee of the House of Commons was set up to consider further the Blackley proposals for national provident insurance in view of the measures taken in Germany. Out of this voluntary committee a small sub-committee, comprising Chamberlain, Hunter, R.Mallock and J.Rankin, was formed to draft a scheme for old-age pensions. It was advised that to accept Blackley's principle of compulsion was completely out of the question. From the deliberations of this sub-committee came the plan for providing old-age pensions for the 'deserving'

70. Notes of Evidence on Old Age Pensions, 1893, Chamberlain MSS, JC.6/3/4/8. Blackley's earlier proposals had included the principle of state participation. Gorst was another reformer who, following the German example, demanded the introduction of state-assisted pensions; The Times, 11 November 1891, p.7. The scheme of Dr Hunter for state-aided, contributory pensions was, as J.F.Wilkinson wrote, a "pronounced copy of the German Insurance Law"; Pensions and Pauperism (London, 1892), p.22. The Hunter scheme, in fact, became incorporated into that of Chamberlain.

poor, which Chamberlain soon adopted as his own.

The basic element of the Chamberlain scheme was the state assistance of voluntary thrift. It sought to help only those who helped themselves by appealing "to the working class while they are young and in the heyday of their strength to make a substantial beginning towards a provision for the future."⁷¹ It proposed, in fact, that where a man was willing to pay into the Post Office a lump sum of £5 at the age of 25 and a yearly contribution of £1 for the following 40 years, the state would come forward with a subsidy of £15. The total premiums, accruing at compound interest, would eventually give a pension of 5 shillings per week. Believing that the German system was mistaken in not giving the pension till the age of 70 when, in fact, incapacity began much earlier,⁷² he laid down 65 as the qualifying age. In cases of fatality before 65, benefits were to be made available to dependents, and, where none existed, for the decent burial of the deceased. Women could provide a pension for themselves in the same way but at a lower rate of contribution. The adoption of the contributory principle was based very largely on the German precedent. In stressing that a contributory system would raise the character of the English working class by giving due recognition to personal thrift, he added that there was in Germany a contributory system "which has recently been inaugurated

71. J. Chamberlain, 'The Labour Question', Nineteenth Century, vol. XXXII (November, 1892), p. 699.

72. J. Chamberlain, 'Old Age Pensions', National Review, vol. XVIII (February, 1892), p. 723.

and which is worked on a very large scale with good results."⁷³

Chamberlain believed that the state subsidy was crucial to the success of his scheme. He saw the state guarantee of £15 as necessary to tempt the young to commit themselves to provide for their old age. As Austen Chamberlain described this part of their father's scheme to Neville: "You would be able to say to a lad, 'Look! here is fifteen pounds waiting for you if you will only find five before you marry. You put £5 in the Post Office & the Government will add three times as much.'"⁷⁴ Chamberlain justified the state subsidy on the grounds that only the state could give absolute security of benefit.⁷⁵ He sought to overcome the inevitable friendly society objection by also offering it to those who chose to insure with a friendly society rather than through the Post Office.

Chamberlain defended the distinction drawn between the 'deserving' case and the wastrel and drunkard. It was not his concern, he said, to assist anyone "who has never done anything for the State and for whom the State ought to do as little as it can."⁷⁶ Furthermore, having decided that one of the chief weaknesses of the German system was its excessive cost, he was at pains to claim that his scheme would be

73. The Times, 18 March 1891, p.10.

74. Austen to Neville Chamberlain, 8 January 1892, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/3/31.

75. The Times, 3 April 1891, p.7.

76. Ibid., 4 May 1894, p.10.

exceedingly cheap and would produce an enormous saving on Poor Law expenditure.⁷⁷ He further argued that since all pensions would have to be earned, a great stimulus would be given to thrift and self-reliance.⁷⁸

The thing which immediately strikes one about Chamberlain's proposals - bearing in mind the debt he obviously owed to both Blackley and Bismarck - is the absence of the compulsory principle. The great advocate of compulsory education had decided that the English people, in this matter of old age pensions, were not prepared "for such an interference as compulsion would involve."⁷⁹ He accepted that his fellow-countrymen would not, therefore, submit "to a scheme on the German model."⁸⁰ The advocates of compulsion argued that the disturbing statistics on pauperism among the old, the shortcomings of existing thrift agencies and the unwillingness of the working population to take on the responsibility of personal insurance, rendered compulsion absolutely necessary.⁸¹ Chamberlain, on the other hand, argued that the German

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77. J. Chamberlain, 'Old Age Pensions', National Review, vol. XVIII (February, 1892), p. 723.
78. The Times, 12 October 1894, p. 8.
79. Chamberlain to The Rural World, undated, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/4/2.
80. The Times, 29 November 1894, p. 4.
81. Blackley argued that since there was compulsory vaccination against smallpox and compulsory primary schooling to combat ignorance, there was every justification for compulsory thrift to diminish pauperism; W. L. Blackley, 'Mr Chamberlain's Pension Scheme', Contemporary Review, vol. LXI (March, 1892), p. 396. Blackley was, however, willing to accept Chamberlain's proposal on the grounds that it would ease the way to the eventual adoption of compulsion, especially since "the establishment of the German State-aided system had changed many men's opinion on the subject", ibid., p. 384.

experience showed the impossibility of dealing with the casually-employed in an effective manner. They could not be included in a compulsory system because of the irregularity of their earnings, so that any scheme incorporating compulsion had to be partial in its operation. Furthermore, the example of Germany showed that compulsion involved a state interference which the friendly societies would not tolerate.⁸² Considerations such as these led Chamberlain to the conclusion that a law including the compulsory provisions adopted in Germany "could not be carried in the British Parliament nor be enforced in the United Kingdom."⁸³

Yet it is important to realise that Chamberlain did not reject compulsion out of hand from the very beginning. At first he even appears to have seriously considered it. In speeches in April 1891 he suggested that his proposals might be taken as an experiment leading eventually to compulsion.⁸⁴ In May 1891 he told a conference on old age pensions that public opinion was coming round to the idea of compulsion and pointed out that if a voluntary scheme were started, and made progress, "it could be made compulsory at some future time."⁸⁵ Later that same year, he stated that compulsion would be very simple

82. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684-II), Qs 12193-12196, pp.660-661.

83. J.Chamberlain, 'The Labour Question', Nineteenth Century, vol.XXXII (November, 1892), p.699.

84. The Times, 3 April 1891, p.7; 22 April 1891, p.10.

85. Ibid., 14 May 1891, p.11.

to operate and would guarantee "a large measure of success" to any scheme of old age pensions.⁸⁶ It is interesting to note the friendship which existed between Chamberlain's son, Austen, and the great advocate of compulsion, Blackley. Austen chaired a meeting for Blackley in May 1891,⁸⁷ and had found the discussion on compulsory insurance "interesting & on the whole favourable."⁸⁸ In a letter describing his father's scheme and referring to that operating in Germany, Austen assured his brother that their father looked upon his plan "only as a first step, feeling sure that in time a compulsory scheme will be accepted."⁸⁹

In fact, it seems that Chamberlain was fast moving to the conclusion that compulsion was impracticable. He was to tell the Aberdare Commission that though, up and down the country, resolutions were being passed in its favour, if an attempt were made to introduce compulsion "the same people who approved of it in theory would object to it very much."⁹⁰ It was probably in 1893 that Chamberlain made up his mind definitely that he could not endorse the call for compulsion. As he stated, quite categorically, in a private memorandum: "I reject

86. Ibid., 19 November 1891, p.7.

87. Austen to Neville Chamberlain, 8 May 1891, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/3/5.

88. Ibid., 17 May 1891, AC 5/3/6.

89. Ibid., 9 January 1892, AC 5/3/31.

90. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684-II), pp.660-1.

the idea of a Compulsory Provision as in Germany."⁹¹

In spite of its omission of the compulsory principle, the Chamberlain scheme still met wide and vehement opposition. Most of it was directed against the idea that people should contribute towards their pension and that the state should augment their contribution. Jesse Collings had warned Chamberlain that, in spite of the success of state-aided contributory pensions in Germany, a proposal to establish a similar system in England would not "create much enthusiasm". Collings had suggested that a start be made with non-contributory pensions.⁹² Chamberlain, however, had rejected his friend's advice and now found himself face to face with powerful arguments against contributory pensions. How could the bulk of the working classes afford the premiums involved? Why should the community as a whole be taxed in order to help those who were capable of helping themselves, leaving the very poor - whom Chamberlain had professed to be so concerned about - still at the tender mercies of the Poor Law? What about those who had passed

91. Notes of Evidence on Old Age Pensions, 1893, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/3/4/8. Yet some members of the troubled Aberdare Commission continued to doubt Chamberlain's sincerity. C.S. Roundell, for instance, wrote to Playfair mentioning "the 'Education' analogy to wh. C. has referred in our discussions." Roundell was convinced that Chamberlain hoped that opinion would develop as it had done with regard to education, and would ultimately accept compulsion; C.S. Roundell to Playfair, 27 December 1894, Playfair MSS, 616.

92. Collings to Chamberlain, 22 July 1892, Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/16/30.

the crucial age of 25 years already? Was it really necessary to wait until the present 25 year-olds reached the age of 65 before the scheme could come into operation? These were the sort of questions with which Chamberlain found himself confronted. They were posed by such staunch opponents of German-style pensions as J.F.Wilkinson who warned that if the English people "elect to sail under the flag of State endowment of old age, we are compassed about with difficulties and dangers."⁹³ But Wilkinson's main attack on the Chamberlain scheme was reserved for his book Pensions and Pauperism, written in 1892 in co-operation with T.E.Young. Mundella, another opponent of state pensions, had informed his uncle of the intention of Wilkinson and Young to produce a work the aim of which would be to "save the country from the latest phase of Chamberlainism."⁹⁴ Certainly, their book was forceful in its condemnation of Chamberlain's proposed scheme of old age pensions. It was acclaimed by other opponents of state pensions and those who questioned the wisdom of establishing a system which would impose onerous responsibilities on future governments and generations. Harmful though the rhetoric of men like Wilkinson was to Chamberlain's proposals it was not that which caused their defeat. The failure of Chamberlain

93. J.F.Wilkinson, 'The Endowment of Old Age', Contemporary Review, vol.LXI (March, 1892), p.560.

94. A.J.Mundella to his uncle, undated, Mundella MSS. Mundella had of course, been Chamberlain's ally in matters of education, and it is interesting to note that another Liberal who was later to become a firm educational ally of Chamberlain, Haldane, opposed his call for contributory pensions; Haldane to Elizabeth, 15 January 1892, Haldane MSS, 6010, ff.112-3.

to get his scheme accepted was mainly due, in the first place, to the hostility of the friendly societies, and, secondly, to the unfavourable report of the Aberdare Commission.

In spite of Chamberlain's repeated efforts to win the support of the friendly societies,⁹⁵ they remained antagonistic to any suggestion that working men should contribute to pension schemes. Such an idea they saw as being intended ultimately to bring about their destruction. Chamberlain's proposals for co-operation between the state and the friendly societies, they believed, would lead the state to interfere in their affairs with a view to supervising them. This was something which the friendly societies always dreaded and would never tolerate.⁹⁶ Thus they ignored any bait which Chamberlain offered, even ignoring perfectly valid arguments that they would be

95. For example, his speech at Halesowen in The Times, 15 July 1892, p.5; and his article 'Old Age Pensions and Friendly Societies', National Review, vol.XXIV (January 1895), pp.593-603. Chamberlain needed the co-operation of the friendly societies because of their powerful influence among the working population. Moreover, aware of the over-complication of the German system, he hoped to associate the friendly societies in the administration of his scheme. This would make his proposals appear simple and straightforward, and would "obviate the host of officials who administered the German system", P.Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain, Radicalism and Empire 1868-1914 (London, 1966), p.165.

96. For a survey of the points on which the friendly societies opposed Chamberlain, see T.Scanlon, 'Mr Chamberlain's Pension Scheme: A Friendly Society View of It', Westminster Review, vol.CXXXVII (April 1892), pp.357-363.

relieved of a serious financial burden if they concentrated on the payment of sickness benefit and allowed his scheme to take care of old age pensions.⁹⁷ Realising that a failure to win over the friendly societies would destroy his chances of success, Chamberlain was bitterly disappointed that they should continue to treat him "as though I were an intruder on their private domain, and a poacher on their preserves."⁹⁸

In 1895 the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor -after extensive and exhaustive research - came to a troubled end. It had been involved in much back-biting and wrangling almost from the beginning. F.H.Stead believed that the commission had never been intended to produce a final solution because its members "had been expressly chosen for their divergence of views."⁹⁹ The trouble seems to have stemmed from the great hopes which Chamberlain had placed in the commission. When he realised that the commission would not meekly endorse the proposals of its most prestigious member he attempted, out of his frustration, to impose his views. But this only served to increase the resistance to him. Roundell warned Playfair (who had recently replaced Aberdare as Chairman) that Chamberlain was "a difficult customer";¹⁰⁰ and Lingen foresaw "the most serious difficulties

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97. The Times, 4 June 1894, p.7.
98. Ibid., 7 December 1894, p.10.
99. F.H.Stead, How Old Age Pensions Began To Be (London, 1909), p.34. Chamberlain was of like opinion; see The Times, 1 February 1897, p.8.
100. Roundell to Playfair, 27 December 1894, Playfair MSS, 616.

if we become a kettle tied to the tail of a politician."¹⁰¹ It was at this time that Chamberlain discovered an attempt to rush things through while he was on holiday and he protested at the way he was being treated. "I cannot congratulate the Commission on the good taste and good feeling shown by some of its members",¹⁰² he wrote to Playfair. In such an atmosphere of distrust the commission drew to an unhappy close, with majority and minority reports and a plethora of memoranda and reservations. Lingen considered it a "curious result, but such as I think might have been apprehended from a Commission so numerous and so composed."¹⁰³

From early 1894 the majority opinion within the commission had been that Chamberlain, if he persisted in his views, should not be allowed to express them in the report proper. In April 1894 Aberdare told Playfair that a report which included Chamberlain's standpoint would be a "halting, unworkmanlike document which would please nobody in or out of the Commission."¹⁰⁴ Early the next year Aberdare insisted that Chamberlain be not allowed to "gain admittance in the Report" for even a modified version of his views. "Any change in his views shd. be

101. Lingen to Playfair, 1 December 1894, *ibid.*, 448.

102. Chamberlain to Playfair, 12 December 1894, *ibid.*, 1060.
Playfair was later to agree that the commission had "given me much trouble and brought me into conflict with Chamberlain"; Playfair to his son George, 31 March 1895, *ibid.*, 563.

103. Lingen to Playfair, 2 March 1895, *ibid.*, 450.

104. Aberdare to Playfair, 15 April 1894, *ibid.*, 58.

conveyed in a separate report of his own, which those can sign who approve."¹⁰⁵ Thus, Chamberlain was compelled to part company with most of his erstwhile 'colleagues' and drew up a minority report. This among other things, protested that the majority report did not truly represent public opinion on the subject; claimed that the composition of the commission had been such as to prevent worthwhile discussion and positive results; and demanded the setting-up of a non-partisan body to construct a pensions scheme.¹⁰⁶ To Lingen, Chamberlain expressed the view that the commission "had not performed its duty in properly considering the remedies for old age pauperism outside the Poor Law."¹⁰⁷

The majority report of the commission, which was effectively to destroy the Chamberlain scheme, was a conservative document. It stressed that the working classes were making steady progress towards independence and material well-being. It claimed that the real answer to pauperism among the aged lay in promoting habits of thrift among the working population through such agencies as the friendly societies. It pointed out that none of the pension schemes submitted to it was free from grave objections.¹⁰⁸ Chamberlain's scheme, in particular, was condemned on the grounds that it would undermine character and reduce

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105. Aberdare to Playfair, 1 February 1895, *ibid.*, 63.
106. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684), pp.xciii-xcvi.
107. Lingen to Playfair, 2 March 1895, Playfair MSS, 450. One of Rosebery's correspondents had in 1894 expressed the fear that the commission would prove "timorous" in its search for a solution to the questions of old age; T.Ellis to Rosebery, 20 March 1894, Rosebery MSS, 67.
108. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684), pp.x-xi.

thrift; that it involved unnecessary state intervention; that it would not come into operation for a generation and that it would involve too great an expenditure for too small a benefit.¹⁰⁹ Playfair was himself of the opinion that Chamberlain's scheme of state-aided pensions would rapidly "have degraded the working classes and taken away their motives of thrift."¹¹⁰

The result of the whole exercise of the royal commission of 1893-95 was to set back the cause of old age pensions by several years. Chamberlain had suggested in January 1894 that royal commissions were often appointed "to save the Government of the day from the necessity of dealing with a question which they think to be inconvenient."¹¹¹ Whatever the reason for appointing the Aberdare Commission the consequence of its report was to extinguish Chamberlain's proposal for old age pensions in spite of later attempts to revive it. Henceforth, the tide of opinion was to move away from contributory pensions on the German model, to free, universal pensions. Even so, the German example continued to exert its influence.

Meanwhile, although Chamberlain had failed in his attempt to secure state-assisted, contributory pensions, he had maintained the impetus to reform which was eventually to produce success. Ramsay MacDonald has written that while Chamberlain's scheme of 1892 did not bear close examination "it was a seed from which a mustard-tree of a movement grew."¹¹² Though

109. Ibid., p.lxxxix.

110. Playfair to his son George, 31 March 1895, Playfair MSS, 563.

111. The Times, 4 January 1894, p.8.

112. Lord Kilner and others, Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London, 1914), p.186.

the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 was to be based on principles completely opposed to those of Chamberlain, his name cannot be dissociated from the final victory.

The triumph of non-contributory pensions, 1895-1908.

A notable signatory of Chamberlain's minority report had been Charles Booth. His investigations among the poor of London had convinced him that a pension should be given to all persons as a right, in recognition of their services to the state. Arguing that a contributory scheme on German lines would exclude those most in need of help,¹¹³ Booth proposed a completely universal system which would be simple, would come into immediate operation, and would avoid bitterness and injustice by dealing with all alike. The money, said Booth, could be raised by an equitable system of graduated income-tax - each paying according to his means. First formulated in the years 1891-2, and given more definite shape in 1899,¹¹⁴ the Booth scheme attracted the support of influential sections of opinion in England. Between December 1898 and March 1899, for instance, representatives of the trade union, friendly society and co-operative movements met in provincial centres and passed resolutions calling for a free state pension for all. Out of these conferences arose the non-partisan National Pensions Committee (NPC),

113. C.Booth, 'Enumeration and Classification of, Paupers, and State Pensions for the Aged', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.LIV (December, 1891), p.634.

114. C.Booth, Old Age Pensions and the Aged Poor. A Proposal (London, 1899).

pledged to campaign for universal, non-contributory pensions on the lines proposed by Booth, and determined - by all the means of propaganda available to it - to press the government of the day for action.¹¹⁵

Although England was to adopt a system of non-contributory pensions in 1908, it was not, however, to be based on the propositions of Booth and the NPC. Almost as soon as it had been first devised, Booth's scheme had run into powerful opposition. In 1891 Blackley had maintained that it would seriously damage thrift and self-reliance.¹¹⁶ The Aberdare Commission had rejected it out of hand because of the huge expenditure it would undoubtedly have involved,¹¹⁷ and this had prompted Booth to sign Chamberlain's truculent minority report. But Chamberlain was no friend to Booth's scheme. He believed that Booth's proposals would be far too costly and would seriously harm the character of the people. He also looked askance at them because they made no distinction between the deserving and the undeserving.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Booth plan of universal non-contributory pensions was firmly opposed by the Charity

115. See for example, F.Rogers, Old Age Pensions: A Memorandum to the Right Hon. A.J.Balfour, M.P. (London, 1900), Rogers, although a leading advocate of non-contributory pensions, did not hesitate to acknowledge the debt he owed to Germany for having set the precedent for others to follow and for having shown "that it is the business of civilised communities to take some care of their citizens, who are past work and in need of care." F.Rogers and F.Millar, Old Age Pensions (London, 1903), p.78.

116. The Times, 25 December 1891, p.10.

117. Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895 (C.7684), pp. lxxix-lxxi.

118. The Times, 7 January 1902, p.4.

Organisation Society and other supporters of the Poor Law,¹¹⁹ was not even considered by the committee set up under Lord Rothschild in 1896;¹²⁰ and was rejected by the later committee chaired by H.Chaplin. Thus non-contributory pensions, to achieve success, had to be based on a formula other than that suggested by Booth.

"Happily, we have Colonies. Their most imperial contributions have been, not contingents to help us in the perils of war, but social experiments to guide us in the problems of peace."¹²¹ Thus did F.H. Stead describe his reaction to the news in 1898 that New Zealand had decided to give a non-contributory pension of 7 shillings a week to men and women of 65 years subject to qualifications as to residence, income and good behaviour. The Chaplin Committee, appointed in 1899, which rejected contributory pensions on the model of Germany,¹²² recognised the advantages of the New Zealand scheme. Its imposition of tests of reasonable behaviour as a condition of eligibility not only helped to maintain the distinction between deserving and undeserving (a distinction which many people involved in the question of old age pensions

119. See, for example, W.A.Bailward, 'At Three Score Years and Ten', Charity Organisation Review, vol.V (June 1899), pp.290-5.

120. The Rothschild Committee did little to advance the cause of old age pensions. It interpreted its terms of reference so as to concentrate on the already-discredited contributory pensions; and it concluded that industry and self-denial on the part of the individual were the real solutions, Report of the Departmental Committee on Old Age Pensions, 1898 (C.8911), pp.15-16.

121. F.H.Stead, How Old Age Pensions Began To Be (London, 1909), p.11

122. Report from the Select Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor, 1899 (296), p.viii.

would not consider abandoning) but greatly reduced the potential cost of a non-contributory scheme. Accordingly, the Chaplin Committee proposed that a pension of between 5 and 7 shillings a week be given to persons aged 65 who were of proven thrift and good behaviour. It recommended, in addition, reform of the existing Poor Law so that the unthrifty and undeserving would be adequately provided for outside the scheme.¹²³ Balfour considered that this scheme would not too greatly frighten those "who are inclined to dread the effect of any pension scheme upon the finances of the country and the morals of the poor."¹²⁴ The scheme of the Chaplin Committee was quickly established as the one most likely to be adopted. In 1900 a committee under Sir E. Hamilton issued a report detailing all its financial implications;¹²⁵ and in 1903 yet another select committee found in favour of it - apart from suggesting some slight modifications in the qualifications for a pension.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, the German example had been exercising its customary influence on English thinking, even though the tide of general opinion in England was fast moving away from the sort of compulsory and contributory system prevailing in Germany. In the two years 1899 and

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123. Report from the Select Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor, 1899 (296), pp.xii-xiii.
124. Balfour Memorandum, 'Pensions and Deserving Poor', 14 December 1899, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/2/8/40.
125. Report of the Departmental Committee on the Financial Aspects of the proposals of the Select Committee of 1899, 1900 (Cd.67).
126. Report from the Select Committee on the Aged Pensioners Bill, 1903 (276).

1900, for example, two further official investigations of the German old-age pensions were made. The first, although it also reported on countries other than Germany, was largely prompted by the major amendments made to the German legislation in June 1899.¹²⁷ Then, in 1900, there was a smaller inquiry devoted entirely to the German laws on old age pensions and sickness insurance.¹²⁸ These reports were intended to supplement the findings of the Chaplin Committee, and they coincided with an affirmation from several influential figures of support for German achievement. In 1899, for example, the Irish member and historian, W.E.H. Lecky, expressed the view that "no general pension scheme can work efficiently without the German system of compulsion."¹²⁹ Introducing a pensions scheme of his own in 1900, Sir J. Flannery claimed that in Germany "this question of succour to the aged and deserving poor is more or less completely solved."¹³⁰

In spite of the body of information which the many reports had built up, and in spite of the demands for the introduction of legislation, there seemed little hope that anything would be achieved as long as the Unionists were in power. They appeared to have long wearied of this particular subject and their chief spokesman on pensions, Chamberlain, seemed embarrassed by his earlier commitment. In 1897 he had tried to

127. Report on Provision for Old Age by Government Action in Certain European Countries, 1899 (C.9414)

128. Germany, Law on Sickness and Old Age Insurance, 1900
Miscellaneous Series, No. 518.

129. Hansard, 4th Ser., 70 (1899), 433.

130. Ibid., 80 (1900), 316.

shake it off by stating that both the expenditure involved and the attitude of the friendly societies made it well-nigh impossible to carry through a viable pension scheme.¹³¹ In 1898 he admitted that the government would probably be unable to take prompt action to introduce legislation.¹³² But the question was also shelved because Chamberlain was unable to accept any scheme other than his own German-style, contributory plan which, as we have seen, had been decisively rejected. In November 1899 he again raised the possibility of such a plan,¹³³ but he must have known full well that it stood no chance of being accepted. Engrossed in the problems of South Africa, and anxious to lay down the cross he had once so passionately taken up, Chamberlain was embarrassed by the agitation both in the country and in the House on behalf of pensions.¹³⁴ The South African War, while it enabled Chamberlain to argue justifiably that expenditure on a system of old age

131. The Times, 5 November 1897, p.7.

132. Ibid., 16 November 1898, p.7.

133. Memorandum on Old Age Pensions, 17 November 1899, Chamberlain MSS, JC 6/2/8/38.

134. A recent historian is of the opinion that Chamberlain "must have regarded the pension reformers as only slightly less dangerous than the South African Boers"; B.B.Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p.190. Inside the Commons, Chamberlain and the Unionists were taunted and questioned about their failure to legislate. In January 1899, Chamberlain expressed his concern to Salisbury about a potentially "awkward" debate which was scheduled; Chamberlain to Salisbury, 31 January 1899, Chamberlain MSS, JC 11/30/148. Two days later he wrote to Balfour: "I expect trouble over the Old Age Pension Question. I wish it could be kept off the Address"; Chamberlain to Balfour, 2 February 1899, ibid., JC 5/5/81.

pensions was out of the question, led nevertheless to his increased discomfiture. In 1901 William Redmond accused the government, which had repeatedly said that it could not afford pensions, of becoming involved in an extremely costly and unnecessary war.¹³⁵ In 1903, in a powerful speech, Lloyd George accused the government of embarking on "wild enterprises abroad, the squandering of £250,000,000, great armies and swaggering glory" to the neglect of great domestic reforms.¹³⁶ He went on to condemn Chamberlain's use of old age pensions to secure political advantage and then his abandonment of them in favour of promises "to the millionaires of Johannesburg."¹³⁷ It was in this same contentious debate that Chamberlain suggested that old age pensions might well be financed by a revision of the country's tariff system.¹³⁸ This was an idea which Chamberlain developed during the remainder of 1903.¹³⁹ He now claimed that while pensions had always been close to his heart, lack of money had prevented them from being introduced. Tariff reform would remove this difficulty. The profits which would flow from the small duty necessary to give the colonies preference would, as he told the Duke of Devonshire, be used "for the promotion of

135. Hansard, 4th Ser., 89 (1901), 122.

136. Ibid., 4th Ser., 122 (1903), 1542.

137. Ibid., 1549.

138. Ibid., 122 (1903), 1553.

139. See, for instance, a further speech in the Commons in Hansard, 123 (1903), 166; and also The Times, 27 June 1903, p.14.

those social reforms which are certain to come in the future."¹⁴⁰
Pensions by way of tariff reform certainly seemed a real possibility, but many people doubted Chamberlain's sincerity. Churchill, for example, believed that pensions were only tacked on to the tariff reform programme in order to win working-class support.¹⁴¹ The question of whether pensions were included merely as a sop to working class opinion is still very much an open one. But it is also largely irrelevant, for pensions were not to come through protection but were to be established within the traditional free trade system of the country.

The tariff reform campaign of Chamberlain, therefore, did nothing to advance the cause of the aged poor except in so far as it brought the Liberals to power. Its main result was so to divide the Conservatives as to make any chance of major legislation from them negligible. In December 1905 the ravaged government of Balfour was replaced by the Liberals who, perhaps surprisingly, were uncommitted in respect of old age pensions. In his budget speech of 1907, however, Asquith, while reminding his listeners that his government was unpledged as regards pensions for old age, promised that it regarded them "as the most serious and the most urgent of all the demands for social reform."¹⁴²

140. Chamberlain to Devonshire, 25 August 1903, Devonshire MSS, 340. 2942.

141. Hansard, 4th Ser., 123 (1903), 194. Similarly, Landsdowne considered Chamberlain's tariff reform speeches an attempt to probe "the readiness of the working classes to pay more for bread & meat in consideration of a corresponding increase in wages & perhaps old age pensions"; Landsdowne to Devonshire, 1 June 1903, Devonshire MSS, 340-2912.

142. Hansard, 4th Ser., 172 (1907), 1191.

The Liberals were assured by R.S.Meiklejohn, Asquith's private secretary and an expert on old age pensions, that legislation was absolutely necessary if the evil of pauperism in old age were to be dealt with and if the friendly societies were to be relieved of a severe financial burden.¹⁴³ They also received a dire warning as to the political consequences of a failure to introduce legislation.

F.H.Stead told Asquith in December 1907 that if the Liberals neglected their duty "the disappointment of the nation will be - I use the word in its sternest sense - terrible", and people would turn to tariff reform as the only avenue to social reform.¹⁴⁴

Having decided that they were going to tackle the question of old age pensions, therefore, the Liberals began to collect further information, not only on all the financial aspects of reform, but, more significantly, on the experience of foreign countries. Once again, the German system absorbed the most attention. In spite of the wealth of knowledge about that system which had been amassed over the years, many individuals were far from satisfied that enough was known about it. In 1905 Percy Ashley, an expert on foreign social legislation, had claimed that the German system and the incalculable benefits it bestowed deserved "the closest study on the part of all who are interested in social

143. B.B.Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p.206.

144. F.H.Stead to Asquith, 14 December 1907, Asquith MSS, ff.126-8.

reform."¹⁴⁵ In 1907, similarly, the Liberals were to be pressed by men such as Harold Cox and Sir J. Tuke to furnish further detailed information on German old age pensions.¹⁴⁶ In fact, by this time, the Liberals had begun to delve for such information. For example, in November 1906 Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, received full statistics on the working of the German pensions legislation from an acquaintance.¹⁴⁷ A month later an associate of Meiklejohn assured him that "Any analysis & report on the German system would be interesting."¹⁴⁸ Finally in 1908, on the eve of bringing in their old age pensions bill, the Liberals undertook further last-minute investigations of the laws operating in both Germany and New Zealand.¹⁴⁹

Their inquiry into the German system confirmed the Liberals in their view that contributory pensions were impracticable. They had been urged to accept this viewpoint both by a deputation of members of parliament in November 1906,¹⁵⁰ and by the Trades Union Congress in

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145. P. Ashley, 'The Insurance of the Working Classes in Germany', essay in W. T. Stead (ed.), Coming Men on Coming Questions, (London, 1905), p. 324.
146. Hansard, 4th Ser., 173 (1907), 269-270; 177 (1907), 89.
147. J. De Salis to Grey, 19 November 1906, Asquith MSS, 74, ff. 14-15.
148. J. D. S. Sim to Meiklejohn, 20 December 1906, ibid., 74, ff. 52-3. This led to the drawing up by Meiklejohn of a Memorandum on Foreign Systems of Old Age Pensions, 12 April 1907, ibid., 74, ff. 76-85.
149. Return of Workmen's Insurance in Germany against Sickness, Invalidity and Old Age, with Statistics, 1908 (102); and Memorandum on the Old Age Pension Scheme in force in New Zealand and the Scheme of Insurance against Invalidity and Old Age in Force in the German Empire, 1908 (159).
150. The Times, 21 November 1906, p. 11.

September 1907.¹⁵¹ They had then been warned in January 1908 that for them to take up "the cast-off clothes of Mr Chamberlain" and introduce contributory pensions after the style of Germany would be an act of political suicide.¹⁵² In fact, the opponents of contributory pensions had little cause to fear what the Liberal proposals would be. When a new contributory scheme appeared in September 1907 under the name of the prominent banker and scientist, Lord Avebury, Meiklejohn wrote to Asquith outlining all the faults of contributory pensions. Meiklejohn concluded that, in any case, contribution was impossible without compulsion: "The great authorities on contributory schemes, Canon Blackley, and Mr Chamberlain, have both agreed the problem is simplified where there is compulsion."¹⁵³ Asquith was also urged to reject the idea of contribution by Haldane on the grounds that it would exclude those most in need and therefore, would not touch the core of the problem.¹⁵⁴ In December 1907 Haldane passed on to Asquith a memorandum which Sidney Webb had drawn up and which attacked contributory pensions basically because they meant that the state would be helping those who were quite able to help themselves.¹⁵⁵ It followed that when the Liberals came finally to

151. Ibid., 4 September 1907, p.4.

152. F.H.Stead, 'The Prospects and Politics of Pensions', Review of Reviews, vol.XXXVII (January 1908), p.42.

153. Meiklejohn to Asquith, 13 September 1907, Asquith MSS, 74, ff.152-8.

154. Haldane, Memorandum on Old Age Pensions, 13 September 1907, ibid., 74, ff.176-8.

155. Haldane to Asquith, 17 December 1907, ibid., 75, f.131.

commit themselves, they did so to a scheme based neither on contribution nor compulsion. A cabinet memorandum of April 1908 argued that these two principles, "whatever may be the case in Germany", could not be adopted in England in the face of public hostility.¹⁵⁶ As Lloyd George told the Commons, contributory pensions were "in a country like ours hopelessly impracticable", whatever their success in Germany.¹⁵⁷

The Liberal bill of 1908, therefore, proposed that a pension would be given without contributions being made. The size of the pension was to be subject to a means test and would in no case exceed 5 shillings a week. Having decided that universal pensions would be far too expensive the Liberals had already committed themselves to a system involving discrimination on the lines of the scheme outlined earlier by the Chaplin Committee and akin to those operating in Denmark and New Zealand.¹⁵⁸ Thus the bill of 1908 provided that the grant of a pension would depend on the satisfaction of certain qualifications relating to behaviour, nationality, residence and thrift. Such qualifications served the purpose of reducing the cost of the scheme. To cut down expenditure even further the age at which the pension started was to be 70, and not 65 as reformers had so long urged. Rogers considered that this was "Probably in imitation of the German pension scheme."¹⁵⁹

156. Cabinet Memorandum, 1 April 1908, *ibid.*, 75, ff.200-5.

157. Hansard, 4th Ser., 190 (1908), 566.

158. See Asquith's comments in *ibid.*, 192 (1908), 776, 1148.

159. F.Rogers, Labour, Life and Literature. Some Memories of Sixty Years (London, 1913), pp.273-4.

Inevitably, the bill was opposed by the advocates of German-style contributory pensions. They had been preparing for the coming struggle during 1907. In that year Sir H. Vincent reminded the House that the German system was working "with perfect satisfaction",¹⁶⁰ while W.H. Lever agreed that it was both sound and equitable.¹⁶¹ Austen Chamberlain wrote to Balfour telling him that the pension proposals to which the Liberals were committed, were "vicious in principle & impossible in practice"; and asking: "May we not say that we are prepared to propose a contributory scheme somewhat on the German model?"¹⁶² The year 1907 also saw the publication of a book by Julie Sutter demanding contributory pensions after the style of Germany,¹⁶³ and of Lord Avebury's scheme for pensions based on contribution.¹⁶⁴

Like Miss Sutter and Lord Avebury, Austen Chamberlain was of the opinion that men did not want pensions as a dole or a charity but wanted to earn them by contributing. The payment of contributions, in other words, enabled a man to retain his self-respect. The system prevailing in Germany, and the scheme suggested earlier by his father, were better

160. Hansard, 4th Ser., 169 (1907), 235.

161. Ibid., 174 (1907), 491-2.

162. Austen Chamberlain to Balfour, 24 October 1907, Chamberlain MSS, AC 17/3/23.

163. J. Sutter, Britain's Hope Concerning the Pressing Social Problems (London, 1907). On p.66 Miss Sutter proclaimed that the British pension scheme "as at present planned, is not fit to hold a candle to the German insurance."

164. The Times, 3 September 1907, p.7.

calculated to encourage thrift and promote good conduct, among the mass of the people.¹⁶⁵ Chamberlain received support from others on the right wing of English politics. Walter Long insisted that anyone who studied foreign systems of old age pensions must conclude "that the German system, not only in itself, but because the German people are more similar to our own than the people of other countries, is one which could well be adopted in this country."¹⁶⁶ Lord Faber denounced those who claimed that contributory pensions were impracticable, for "we only have to look at what is going on in Germany to find that contributory pensions there are working very well."¹⁶⁷

It was not to be, however. The combination of Liberal and Labour in the Commons was far too strong to allow any attempt by a section of the Conservative Party to secure approval for contributory pensions and on this issue the Tories did not dare invoke the veto power of the Lords. On 4 June 1908, Austen Chamberlain conceded that he would accept the government measure, though only, he added, "as a temporary bridge to a complete scheme on a contributory basis."¹⁶⁸ He immediately drew up his own plan of contributory pensions "which, as in Germany, might be called the infirmity pension [and] would as in that country

165. For Chamberlain's defence of contributory pensions, see Hansard, 4th Ser., 169 (1907), 262-5 and 189 (1908), 795-6.

166. Ibid., 190 (1908), 735.

167. Ibid., 193 (1908), 1415.

168. Austen to Mary Chamberlain, 4 June 1908, Chamberlain MSS, AC 4/1/289.

gradually replace the existing incomplete, illogical & arbitrary distribution of state pensions."¹⁶⁹ He received encouragement from such commentators as D.S.A.Crosby, who asked "why cannot the German scheme be tried with us?"¹⁷⁰; and from the Quarterly Review, which maintained that German contributory pensions were "the most equitable in existence."¹⁷¹

No doubt even further encouragement was given to the supporters of contributory pensions by the statement put out by Lloyd George in 1909 that the Act of the previous year constituted "the necessary basis upon which to found any scheme based on German lines."¹⁷² But, as far as old age pensions were concerned, the Liberals were not to stray from the principles they had adopted in 1908. A series of amendments introduced in 1911 dealt with only modifications in the stipulated qualifications. Not until 1925 were contributory pensions at 65 years introduced by Neville Chamberlain, but, even then, non-contributory pensions remained for the over-70s. Not until 1946 were non-contributory pensions wholly abandoned in favour of a comprehensive system of retirement pensions at 65 for men and 60 for women, based on the principle of contribution.

169. Memorandum on Unionist Policy, undated 1908, Chamberlain MSS AC 7/7a/12.

170. D.S.A.Crosby, 'The Old Age Pensions Bill (1908) and After', Westminster Review, vol.CLXX (September, 1908), p.335.

171. 'Old Age Pensions' Quarterly Review, vol.CCIX (July, 1908), p.167.

172. Hansard, 5th Ser., IV (1909), 485.

Conclusion.

R.V.Sires wrote in 1954 that although there was considerable interest shown by English reformers in German legislation on old age pensions, "there was also a strong concern for social amelioration that was native in origin and that would have continued if no German legislation had been passed."¹⁷³ There is, of course, every truth in the statement that eventually England would have arrived at a solution to the problems of the aged poor even if there had been no foreign precedents to act upon. However, this is not to deny the tremendous influence which Germany exercised upon English thinking. The example which Germany set played its part in giving greater urgency and understanding to English reformers in their search for their own particular solution to the problem of the old. That the German example was not closely followed is beside the point. What was important was that a system of old age pensions suited to English needs should be established as quickly as possible, and the continuing reference to Germany greatly contributed to the achievement of this task. The German initiative had prompted a move from the attitude that the individual must help himself and that pauperism showed lack of moral fibre, to the realisation that economic conditions often made self-help impossible and that, therefore, the state's duty was to underpin personal

173. R.V.Sires, 'The Beginning of British Legislation for Old Age Pensions', Journal of Economic History, vol.XIV (1954, No.3), p.233.

effort. The system of old age pensions introduced in 1908 was constructed out of that realisation, and Lionel Holland, for one, was glad to acknowledge "that the experiments tried and the experience gained in other countries had proved to be very valuable."¹⁷⁴ Among those countries there can be no doubt that Germany took pride of place.

174. Hansard, 4th Ser., 188 (1908), 507-8.

Chapter 9: CONCLUSION.

This thesis has, in the main, taken the account of the effect which Germany had on aspects of English educational and social reform up to 1908 only. Time and space does not allow an attempt at a full description of the German influence upon the extensive national insurance legislation of 1909 to 1912, a task which would require a whole thesis to itself. However, to confirm that the German influence did not cease in 1908, it is worth touching very briefly on one or two aspects of social reform after the passing of the Old Age Pensions Act.

The attempts to find a permanent solution to that scourge of modern capitalist society, unemployment, were bolstered by reference to German precedents. Already, in 1905, a Board of Trade Report had declared that Germany, with its system of labour exchanges and its municipal experiments in unemployment insurance, "must be considered to occupy foremost place" in the minds of English reformers.¹ Two reformers who did pay particular attention to German efforts to solve this problem were Winston Churchill and W.H.Beveridge. They had been introduced to each other by the Webbs. Beveridge was a fluent German speaker (the result of his parents' predilection for German governesses for their children) and he found this useful when visiting Germany in August 1907 to study the insurance systems of that country.² In

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1. Report to the Board of Trade on Agencies and Methods for dealing with the Unemployed in Certain Foreign Countries, 1905 (Cd.2304), p.1.
 2. J.Beveridge, Beveridge and his Plan (London, 1954), pp.55-6.

July 1908 Beveridge joined Churchill at the Board of Trade and assisted in framing the Labour Exchanges Bill of 1909. He was later to work with Churchill's successor, Sydney Buxton, in devising those sections of the national insurance act relating to unemployment insurance.

Even before Beveridge joined his staff, however, Churchill had become convinced of the value of German experience. He wrote to Asquith telling him of the need to tackle unemployment on a grand scale by spreading "a sort of Germanised network of State intervention & regulation."³ In a later letter he expressed his determination to "thrust a big slice of Bismarckianism over the whole underside of our industrial system, and await the consequences, whatever they may be, with a good conscience." In short: "... to apply in this country the successful experiences of Germany in Social Organization."⁴ While introducing the Labour Exchanges Bill, Churchill declared that the English might not only profit from the example of Germany "but we may do more, we may improve on the example of Germany."⁵ This was, of course, the real justification for the close attention which English reformers paid to German achievements.

Another member of the Liberal government had a respect for German social legislation which equalled that of Churchill. In June 1908 Lloyd George had informed the Commons that the wide scope of the German

3. Churchill to Asquith, 14 March 1908, Asquith MSS, 10, ff.200-1.

4. Churchill to Asquith, 29 December 1908, ibid., 11, ff.249-254.

5. Hansard, 1909, vol.V, 503.

system of insurance indicated that English legislators could not be satisfied with their old age pension bill,⁶ and in the same month as that bill received the royal assent he went to Germany to gratify, according to The Times, "a private thirst for information."⁷ Lloyd George returned from Germany with the ambition to create a similar, grand system of contributory insurance against infirmity, ill-health and unemployment in England. He told the Commons in April 1909 that the English must strive to put themselves "on a level with Germany" in this matter.⁸ Before acting, however, Lloyd George determined to find out still more about German methods and sent W.J.Braithwaite, a young civil servant, on two fact-finding missions to Germany.⁹ The resulting legislation of 1911-12 owed much, then, to Lloyd George's knowledge of the German system and was, as one historian has claimed, "directly inspired by the German model."¹⁰ Differences in detail cannot hide the debt owed to German pioneering efforts. Indeed, one journal expressed the opinion that the real father of the 1911 Act was Bismarck himself.¹¹ Not satisfied, another of the leading periodicals appealed to Lloyd George and his colleagues to "continue their study of German national

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6. Ibid., 4th Ser., 190 (1908), 575.
 7. The Times, 22 August 1908, p.5.
 8. Hansard, 1909, vol.IV, 487.
 9. See Sir Henry Bunbury (ed.), Lloyd George's Ambulance Wagon (London, 1957).
 10. M.Bruce, The Coming of the Welfare State (London, 1961), p.183
 11. 'National Health Insurance', Quarterly Review, vol.CCXV, (July, 1911), p.193.

organisation. They have still much to learn."¹² That the government was willing to heed such advice is seen in its further investigation of Germany's insurance system in 1913.¹³

Thus, while the years immediately following the passing of the old age pensions act had seen the tariff reformers persist in their promises of social reform based on protection, the Liberals had successfully bestowed on England a whole system of social insurance after the German model, and based on free trade.

So frequent and so flattering were many of the references to Germany's educational and social achievement that the charge of 'Prussianism' was often laid against those who made them. A powerful section of English opinion was anxious to preserve English genius and character from what it considered a slavish imitation of German forms. Thus, those reformers who appeared to be advocating the copying of Prussian state education came under heavy criticism. In 1865, for example, The Times had warned against the creation in England of "a colossal system of official education after the model of the Continental countries, which would soon have left no place for that local diversity and independent energy, which ... are such vital characteristics of our national life."¹⁴ In 1884, Mundella had been accused of having "strongly avowed German preferences," and of "attempting a flight into Continental

12. 'National Insurance and the Commonwealth', Nineteenth Century, vol.LXX (August, 1911), p.348.

13. Report on Medical Benefit under the German Sickness Insurance Legislation, 1913 (Cd.6581).

14. The Times, 5 December 1865, p.9.

bureaucracy over the general education of the nation."¹⁵ Similarly, the advocates of contributory old age pensions and of insurance against industrial accidents were often accused of sacrificing the liberty and independence of the country to German notions of state regulation. One arch-opponent of all progressive reforms, especially those based on German precedents, claimed that such measures as were being contemplated by the Liberals in 1907 could only serve to destroy the spirit of individualism on which the strength of the nation depended.¹⁶ He even condemned Balfour for allowing the Conservative Party to surrender to "such socialist measures as the feeding of the children in schools and Old Age Pensions", instead of trying to rally the conservative forces of the country.¹⁷ As evidence that people like Norton and Strachey were not alone in their fears, one has only to note the statement in one leading journal that the regulation and interference involved in the national insurance legislation was "un-English, ignoble, degrading"¹⁸; and the protest by J.S.Mills against the tendency "to measure our position and progress in many departments of national life by Germanic standards."¹⁹

In fact, few reformers advocated wholesale imitation of the German

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15. Lord Norton, 'Cramming in Elementary Schools', Nineteenth Century, vol.XV (February, 1884), p.273. See also Norton's speech condemning the attempt to Germanise English secondary education, Hansard, 4th Ser., 86 (1900), 798.
 16. J.St.Loe Strachey, 'The Problems and Perils of Socialism', National Review, vol.XLIX (August, 1907), p.962.
 17. Strachey to Devonshire, 28 December 1906, Devonshire MSS, 340-3252.
 18. Saturday Review, 22 November 1913, vol.CXVI, p.642.
 19. J.S.Mills, 'Continuation Schools in England and Germany', Fortnightly Review, vol.XCV (February, 1914), p.333. See also A.D.McLaren, Germanism from Within (London, 1916), p.308.

model. They generally realised that differences of history and tradition as well/as of social and economic environment, made discrimination in borrowing from German experience both unavoidable and necessary. The pro-German, Haldane, advised that German precedents be followed subject to "the modification that the national habit of mind makes inevitable."²⁰

Like his fellow-reformers, Haldane sought primarily to direct the attention of the English people and government to those aspects of German life which were both more efficient and more humane, but whose adoption would not seriously dislocate English habits and traditions. The judicious extraction of useful and adaptable features of the German social and educational systems, backed up by a gradual extension of the supervisory functions of the state, was the programme which the reformers laid before the country. The accusations of 'Prussianism' which were heard from time to time were, therefore, largely exaggerated. They do, however, show the disturbing impact which the continual reference to German achievement made in many quarters.

In any discussion of national life and activity, some comparison with the standards prevailing in other countries must be drawn. Comparative studies are a pre-requisite of thoroughgoing reform. It was no different at the turn of the century, as Sadler observed. He then wrote: "The practical value of studying in a right spirit and

20. R.B.Haldane, Universities and National Life, (London, 1912), p.139.

with scholarly accuracy, the working of foreign systems ... is that it will result in our being better fitted to study and understand our own."²¹ Thus did Sadler correctly justify, not only the particular activities of the Department of Special Inquiries and Reports (of which he was Director), but the widespread tendency to seek accurate information about foreign, and especially German, educational and social achievements as an essential preparation for reform at home. The later Victorians were assiduous collectors of information and Germany was, by no means, the only country to which their attention was directed. The Swiss and American educational systems, and certain features of the French and Swedish systems, were also greatly admired. The attempts by the various European countries to tackle the problems of unemployment and industrial accidents were thoroughly investigated. The schemes of old age pensions in operation in Denmark and in the Australasian colonies were subjected to the closest scrutiny. But the fact remains that it was the German model to which most reference was made and to which hard-pressed industrialists and progressive reformers invariably attached most importance. There is little doubt that it was Germany which exerted the greatest foreign influence on English social policy in the period 1867 to 1908 and after.

It would, of course, be foolish to say that Germany alone shaped

21. M.E.Sadler, How Far Can we Learn Anything of Practical Value from the Study of Foreign Systems of Education? (Guildford, 1901), p.12.

the course of events during each and every stage of development. Nevertheless, the frequent citation of German activity by men who usually had real experience and knowledge of it, in conjunction with the intense fear of German industrial and commercial competition, constantly served to stimulate the movement towards reform. And, when it came, reform more often than not bore the impress of German ideas and practices. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the debt which England owed Germany was given by R.B. Haldane, speaking at a supremely critical moment in Anglo-German relations. At the height of the Agadir crisis, surveying the large debt owed to Germany in the social and educational field, Haldane spoke for a generation when he proclaimed his belief that "the Teutonic spirit is moving among us."²² The power of that spirit over the English may have passed its zenith, and very soon the two countries were at war. Yet the admiration for Germany had been of the first importance over a period of almost half a century, and, as the 1920s and 1930s were to show, its force was still far from spent.

22. An address delivered at Oxford, cited in R.B. Haldane, Universities and National Life, (London, 1912), p.140. Haldane hoped that his words would help to promote a better understanding between England and Germany, a cause to which he was emotionally committed; Haldane to his mother, 4 August 1911, Haldane MSS, 5986, ff.98-9. Professor Henkel of the University of Kassel considered that the speech formed "a turning point in the history and mutual relations between the two Indo-Teutonic or Aryan nations. The whole German nation has been impressed by it profoundly"; Henkel to Haldane, 12 November 1911, ibid., 5909, ff.170-1.

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