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15th July, 1958

CABINET

A DRIVE IN EDUCATION

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland

I support strongly the general case made by the Minister of Education in C. (58) 148 for planning now a forward drive which would give substantial improvements within a few years, and for announcing our proposals in the autumn.

Primary and secondary education

2. Increases in the school population in Scotland since the war have followed the same general pattern as in England. There, too, the number of secondary pupils will fall slightly between 1961 and 1964, although the increased number of births in 1956 and 1957 suggests that a further bulge will begin to enter the schools very soon after the first has moved out. There has also been a steady increase in the number of children remaining at school beyond the age of 15 and more widespread concern for education on the part of parents.

3. In Scotland, besides providing the additional accommodation for the increasing school roll, our major tasks must be:-

- (a) to improve or replace out-of-date and unsatisfactory schools, both secondary and primary; and
- (b) to reduce the size of classes in both secondary and primary schools.

4. To achieve these objectives would require a capital investment programme for schools of £12 millions per annum (compared with about £10 millions at present) rising to £14 millions - a sum which would correspond to the figure for England of £75 millions.

5. In Scotland we expect that by 1965 the number of certificated teachers will have risen to 38,000 from the present figure of 35,000. With these teachers it will be possible to cope with the increasing number of pupils remaining at school - although difficulties in mathematics, science and some other subjects may be greater than ever - and to get rid of some classes which exceed the permitted maxima. (We have not so far set our standards in this respect as high as England. In Scotland the maximum permitted size of a secondary class is 40 and of a primary class 45.) But it will not be possible to dispense with uncertificated teachers or to get rid of all oversize classes - even by the less exacting Scottish standards: this would require 1,500 more teachers than we expect to have. The improvement of the physical conditions of our

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schools which I propose above would be not only a desirable educational advance in itself but also a very important contribution towards solving the problem of improving teacher recruitment by removing a real source of dissatisfaction among serving teachers and making teaching a more attractive career.

6. I should be the last to minimise the difficulties of increasing the teaching force sufficiently and quickly enough to achieve all our aims. But we must let it be seen that we are in no less earnest about the supply of teachers than about school buildings. In paragraph 5 I have emphasised the bearing of my proposals on teaching conditions because I am convinced that, if our proposals for a forward drive are allowed to give the impression that we regard the supply of teachers as only an incidental problem, we shall lose much potential support. Some criticism of that kind was made of the White Paper on Technical Education in 1956. It would be much stronger in this context.

Technical education

7. The White Paper on Technical Education (February, 1956) was issued at a time when education authorities in Scotland were still preoccupied with problems relating to primary and secondary education, and had given less attention to the development of further education than had their counterparts in England. On the other hand, technical education at the most advanced levels had in the central institutions in Scotland been developed to a greater extent than in England and Wales. For this reason our 1956-61 programme was directed mainly towards doubling the comparatively small amount of accommodation then available in local technical colleges for day-release courses. At the same time we hoped to achieve an increase of about 25 per cent in the accommodation for advanced full-time and sandwich courses. After 1961, because of the comparatively poor position from which we started in 1956, a big programme of local technical college building will still be required, while the central institutions will need to expand further because of the larger numbers who will be coming up for advanced courses. Subject to more detailed consideration with my colleagues of the contents of such a programme, I should want to aim at continuing capital expenditure for technical education after 1961 at a level of about £2-£2½ millions, corresponding to the figure for England of £15 millions.

Cost

8. The proposals made above, together with minor works and other smaller programmes, would involve an annual rate of capital investment rising from £10.75 millions at present to about £14.5 millions in 1961-62 and possibly to about £17 millions eventually. As in England, current expenditure on education in Scotland will rise in any event between now and 1964 as a result of the developments already in train. On that basis annual expenditure, including loan charges, on primary, secondary and further education would rise from £70 millions in 1958 to £87 millions in 1964. It is estimated that this last figure would be increased by not more than £1 million as a result of the proposals in this paper, since their effect would be largely limited to loan charges.

Assuming the present proportions of current expenditure falling on rates and taxes respectively, the Exchequer share would rise from £47 millions in 1958 to £59 millions in 1964, without a forward drive, and to about £59.5 millions if the drive is undertaken.

Publication of White Paper

9. If it is decided to publish a White Paper as suggested by the Minister of Education, I should favour having a single White Paper dealing with both England and Scotland. Despite some differences in the educational problems of the two countries, I think it would be undesirable to have two separate Papers on a matter of general policy. A single Paper would follow the precedent of the White Paper on Technical Education. The general form of the latter could also be followed - a short introduction in purely general terms; a series of chapters for England and Wales; one or two chapters on Scotland; and a general concluding section.

J.S.M.

Scottish Office, S. W. 1.

15th July, 1958.