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C.P. 11/31.

C A B I N E T.

Conference on the Voluntary School Problem.

Joint Memorandum by the
President of the Board of Education.
Minister of Health
and
First Commissioner of Works.

The Committee appointed by the Cabinet attended the Conference on the Voluntary School question, held at the Board of Education, at which representatives of the five chief interests were present. The proposals for aiding Voluntary Schools (see Cabinet Paper 418(30)) were put before the Conference.

On the first day a large measure of agreement was evinced, after which a Committee amended the proposals in several important respects. On the second day the amended proposals were discussed anew. Finally, it appeared that the representatives of the Church of England and the Roman Catholics were prepared to accept the proposals on behalf of their Churches. The representatives of the Authorities and of the Teachers also were prepared to agree, though they could not, to the same extent, commit their Organisations. The Nonconformists remained dissatisfied. In their amended form, however, the proposals are more favourable to the Nonconformist position than those put forward by the Government last year.

- (1) The Voluntary Managers are required, in the first instance, to provide at least 25 per cent. of the money involved, and may be required to provide 50 per cent.

- (2) Two alternative methods of appointing reserved teachers have been inserted, on the whole more favourable to public control.
- (3) A proposal has been inserted, largely at the suggestion of Dr. Workman and enlarged with the goodwill of the Church of England representatives, which secures undenominational teaching in all "single-school areas" and wherever children are transferred for reorganization purposes.

The Nonconformists appreciated the value of these concessions, but persisted in the opinion that the present proposals were not merely emergency proposals as those of last year, but were of a permanent character. In this respect it was pointed out that they did not differ materially from last year, but were to meet the same emergency.

Our predominant impression of the Conference was the amount of agreement secured, rather than the absence of complete unanimity. The fact that the Nonconformists are not reconciled is serious. But it is even less possible to ignore the fact that the proposals are acceptable to the representatives of the other four parties directly interested.

The representatives of the teachers were particularly insistent that it was a valuable increase of public control that all the teachers in these schools so aided would become public servants of the Authority instead of servants of the Managers. The representatives of the Local Authorities attached great importance to the assistance which the proposals would give to the efficient and economical development of education in their areas. There was a general desire that the passage of the Education Bill should not be jeopardised by failure to find a solution of the

difficulties involved.

We append a copy of the amended proposals. We recommend that legislation be undertaken on these lines. It will be necessary for a definite announcement to be made by the President as soon as the Education Bill comes up for further discussion on Wednesday, January 21st. He must then state whether it is the intention of the Government to legislate and, if so, he will certainly be asked as to the date of the introduction of the Bill.

C.T.

A.G.

G.L.

15th January 1931.

Amended P R O P O S A L S.

(The underlined passages represent amendments, made at the Conference, to the proposals in C.P. 418(30), which were placed before the Conference as a basis of discussion.)

1. Local Education Authorities may make arrangements with Managers of Non-provided Schools which are required for purposes of re-organisation, or for raising the school leaving age.

2. Associations of schools may be constituted in the area of any Local Education Authority representative of the Managers of the schools of any particular Denomination and of its Church Authorities. Such Associations may be authorized to make agreements under this Section on behalf of their constituent Managers and to act for the Managers in every other respect under this Act if so desired by the Managers.

3. Such agreements are to be made between Local Education Authorities on the one hand, and, on the other, Associations of Schools or Bodies of Managers of individual schools. Throughout the proposals the word "Managers" means either Associations of Schools or individual Bodies of Managers.

4. Such agreements may be altered if both parties so agree.

5. Schools which come within an agreement shall be aided towards the necessary improvements or re-conditioning to the extent in the original agreement of not less than 50 per cent. and not more than 75 per cent. of the cost by the Local Education Authority.

6. The Local Authority shall have power to make future improvements, and shall be able to pay the whole or such proportion of the cost as may be agreed in each case. But

the duty of the Managers to keep the Schoolhouse in repair remains unaffected.

7. The school cannot be closed without the consent of the Local Education Authority.

8. The Teachers are to be in the employment of the Local Education Authority and are to be appointed and dismissed by them.

9. The agreement shall lay down how many teachers shall be reserved, as having religious qualifications. The unreserved teachers shall be appointed as in Provided Schools. But the agreements shall permit a variety of arrangements as to the methods of appointing the reserved teachers.

10. The agreement may specify alternatively -

either (a) that the Local Education Authority shall appoint the reserved teacher, provided that he possesses some certificate of competence or other qualification in relation to religious teaching as agreed on between the Local Education Authority and the Managers;

or (b) that the Local Education Authority shall appoint the reserved teacher, provided that the Managers are satisfied as to his fitness and his competence to give the required religious instruction;

or (c) that the Managers may have the right of recommending a teacher for appointment from a short list of not less than five applications selected by the Authority after consultation with the Managers, on the understanding that the Local Education Authority do not refuse to appoint the recommended teacher on grounds solely connected with his religious suitability and competence.

11. Reserved teachers are to be dismissable by the Local Education Authority. But the Managers may request the transfer or removal on religious grounds.

12. In case of a serious deadlock between the Managers and the Local Education Authority as to either appointment or dismissal, the matter shall be decided by an arbitrator appointed by the Board of Education, assisted by two assessors - one appointed by the Local Education Authority, the other by the Bishop of the Denomination to which the school belongs.

13. In any area where there is no effective choice of schools or where children over or under the age of eleven years are transferred from a school provided by the Local Education Authority to a school not so provided, or from a non-provided school of one denomination to a non-provided school of another denomination -

(a) provision shall be made for religious teaching to be given in the school to which such children are transferred upon the syllabus (if any) prescribed or authorised by the Local Education Authority for use in schools provided by them.

Nothing in this Act shall prevent the giving of Special religious instruction under the provisions of Section 29 (5) (c) of the Education Act, 1921.

(b) any child attending the school may be withdrawn from it during the time of religious instruction if -

(i) his parent so desires:

(ii) the Local Authority are satisfied that arrangements have been made for him to attend religious instruction elsewhere.

14. The agreement may stipulate that religious teaching according to an agreed syllabus shall be obligatory in the school.