

UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENTS BOARDS IN BRITAIN

IN 1961, at the suggestion of the University Grants Committee and with the approval of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, Nuffield College agreed to undertake and finance an enquiry into the scope, purpose, constitution and organization of university appointments boards, and Lord Heyworth agreed to supervise the enquiry with the assistance of a steering committee.

To a large extent Lord Heyworth, in coming to his conclusions and in framing his recommendations, has relied on the results of surveys carried out of the control, composition, finance and activities of appointments boards through a questionnaire to vice-chancellors, a review of the present and projected work of appointments boards, based on papers written by the secretaries of the boards, and on surveys of fact and opinion relating to the use and utility of the boards among students, recent graduates and employers. This is pointed out by Lord Heyworth in the report of his enquiry which has now been published*.

The report sets out, in successive chapters, the need for appointments boards and considerations of organization, finance and staff, before discussing the employers of graduates, the students searching for a job, appointments services at work, and the future of appointments services. In a later chapter the cost of future work is reviewed, and finally it is emphasized that appointments boards represent a joint responsibility of academic staff, students and employers.

Appointments services have been overtaken by the influx of students and also by the increase in the number of employers of graduates. Invariably they suffer from a shortage of appointments officers and of clerical staff, as

* University Grants Committee. *University Appointments Boards: a Report by the Rt. Hon. the Lord Heyworth*. Pp. xii + 127. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1964.) 12s. 6d. net.

well as of accommodation and of excessive concentration of work in the spring term. As a result, the services vary from fairly adequate to frankly rudimentary. The report maintains that, if standards are to be put right and kept right, efforts should be made to see that the ratio of appointments officers to students available for employment should not rise far above 1:100; as the number of students increases so the resulting demand for clerical staff and accommodation should be met. It recommends that certain functions now performed separately by various services should be performed centrally for the benefit of all, thus lightening the burden of labour and reducing the cost. This refers particularly to certain information services, and especially those connected with a register of employers. To bring to a proper state of efficiency the services now offered by appointments boards would require an increase in the total expenditure of all boards of upwards of 40 per cent on the average for 1961-62 of £14.2 a head. This would bring the sum *per capita* to £25, which should be set against the £1,500-£3,000 a year which to-day the education of a university student costs the State (depending on his subject). The lowest figure of fixed expenditure for running an appointments service is likely to be about £5,000 a year, but with growth of the service economies of scale might reduce somewhat the expenditure *per capita*.

The overriding purpose of the report in making these recommendations regarding appointments boards is better service both to students and to employers so that students may develop their abilities to the full and make their fullest contribution to the national life. To this end the closest co-operation is essential between the boards and their staffs and the other parties mainly concerned, namely, the academic staff of the universities, the students and the employers.

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BRITAIN

THE National Union of Teachers has published, under the title *First Things First**, a memorandum of evidence submitted to the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), under the chairmanship of Lady Plowden, which presents the results of extensive consultation with teachers serving in the primary schools. It is based on replies to a questionnaire which was circulated among Union members. The questionnaire, which had been drawn up by the Plowden Committee, covered the stages of primary education, the transition from primary to secondary education, the work of the primary schools, their size and organization, teachers and their training, handicapped children and the relation of home, school and community.

Points of special interest in the memorandum include a request to the Council to investigate the possible development of the present services available to mothers through the child welfare clinics, so that advice is available not only on the nutritional and medical aspects of child nurture, but also on those quasi-educational functions which only the mother can render to the child at this stage of growth. No claim is made that the evidence presented on the transition from primary to secondary education represents the opinion of all primary-school teachers, but

* National Union of Teachers. *First Things First: A Memorandum of Evidence Submitted to the Central Advisory Committee for Education (England)* under the chairmanship of Lady Plowden. (An inquiry into primary education in all its aspects and the transition to secondary education.) Pp. 44. (London: National Union of Teachers, 1964.) 2s. 6d.

the lack of general agreement disclosed by the questionnaire reveals that many quite definite patterns of thought exist.

The pamphlet observes that, if the value of the comprehensive school is to be properly tested, certain necessary conditions must be established: first, the intake must be genuinely comprehensive with no subtraction of children regarded as having higher ability, and, secondly, its buildings must be designed or satisfactorily adapted for their purpose. In very few areas have both these conditions been fulfilled. The memorandum stresses the need to create adaptable minds well furnished with the basic concepts which underlie modern social organization and its technology. So far as the primary school is concerned, the problem is one of using its free and informal methodology in a curricula context that is directed towards the new aims of the secondary school.

The memorandum welcomes the many experiments now being carried out into ways in which mathematical and scientific ideas can be developed inside the framework of primary method. The use of primary teachers without professional training or teaching in the primary school is not simply a question of the best internal organization. Highly trained teachers are the key to success in solving the problems affecting the balance between internal freedom and the responsibility of the school to society. The memorandum argues that, if the social role of the primary school is to be continued to be regarded as the great