

SIR JOHN ELDON GORST AND  
BRITISH SOCIAL POLICY 1875-1914

by

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## ABSTRACT

### SIR JOHN ELDON GORST AND BRITISH SOCIAL POLICY 1875-1914

The period of Liberal rule in Britain between 1906 and 1914 is justly remembered for its social reforms. The "New Liberalism" of these years produced the social legislation which constituted the nucleus of what is now the British "Welfare State". These measures represented a reversal of the individualistic, laissez-faire doctrines of the nineteenth century, a reversal effected partly through the efforts of social investigators, partly as a result of hard-headed political expediency and the ambitions of particular Government ministers, and partly the Liberal Government's response to the threat of Socialism. These reforms also resulted from the efforts of various individuals and many of them, particularly those of Cabinet rank, such as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, have received recognition from historians for their efforts. Other equally concerned and energetic reformers have virtually been ignored. One of these is Sir John Eldon Gorst. Through examination of Gorst's speeches in the House of Commons, his writings in the periodic press, and his communications to the Times, plus reports therein of his various activities connected with social reform measures, it is shown that Gorst made a significant contribution to late Victorian and Edwardian social legislation.

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John Eldon Gorst. c. 1863.



## INTRODUCTION

During the quarter century between 1880 and 1914, mounting social, economic and political problems gradually effected a change in attitudes concerning the role of the State in society which dramatically transformed British social policy by the eve of the First World War. In responding to the various problems, successive British governments found themselves being drawn into ever-increasing areas of national life until governments themselves became prime agents of social change. During the period 1880-1914, the functions of the State expanded steadily, culminating in a concentrated burst of social reform activity during the Liberal Administration of 1906-1914. This period saw the introduction of school meals and medical services for children, old-age pensions, and insurance against health and unemployment. Minimum wages were fixed in certain industries and labour exchanges were instituted. The enactment of these measures owed much to practical politics, most specifically, to successive governments' reactions to the social, economic, and political developments of the period and to their desire not to be outbid by their parliamentary rivals. However, much of this legislation was patterned on ideas formulated and promoted by social reformers and progressive politicians during the final decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Many of these

<sup>1</sup>For background to these various social, economic and political developments see Keith Burgess, The Challenge of Labour: Shaping British Society, 1850-1930 (London, 1980), Chap. 2-4. H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1914 (Cambridge, 1973). Eric Evans, Social Policy, 1830-1914: Individualism, Collectivism, and the origins of the Welfare State (London, 1978). J.R. Hay, The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms, 1906-1914 (London, 1975). Donald Read, England, 1863-1914 (London, 1979). Paul Thompson, The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society (London, 1975).

individuals have received recognition from historians for their efforts while other equally concerned and energetic reformers have been largely ignored. Included in the latter group is Conservative politician, Sir John Eldon Gorst.

Gorst had a long and noteworthy political career. He gave forty years of service to the Tory Party, thirty-three of them in Parliament. Between 1868 and 1874 he served as Party Agent, during which time he effected a reorganization of party machinery which resulted in the resounding Conservative victory in the 1874 General Election. He subsequently held the offices of Solicitor-General (1885-86), Under-Secretary for India (1886-1891), Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1891-92), and Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education (1895-1902). He was also a member of the Tory party's prominent parliamentary ginger group, the Fourth Party, and was British Plenipotentiary to the 1890 Berlin Labour Conference. Throughout his career Gorst actively promoted social issues, in the Commons, on public platforms, and in the press, and his efforts had a marked influence upon the social legislation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Certain aspects of Gorst's colourful career have been the subject of individual historical studies. His work in the reorganization of the Conservative Party has been examined in detail;<sup>2</sup> the exploits of the

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, James Cornford, "The Transformation of Conservatism in the Late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies 7 (1963-64): 35-66. E.J. Feuchtwanger, "J.E. Gorst and the Central Organization of the Conservative Party, 1870-1882", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 32 (1959), 192-208.

Fourth Party, a quartet of Parliamentarians which included the renowned Randolph Churchill and future Prime Minister A.J. Balfour, have been frequently recorded;<sup>3</sup> and Gorst's role in the development of the extensive educational reforms of the period 1896-1902 has been scrutinized.<sup>4</sup> However, because of his undeniable success in reorganizing and invigorating the Tory party machinery during the 'seventies and 'eighties, historians in general, "have been content to accept him as a good deed in a naughty world, and he has passed into undergraduate history as a byword for an imaginative approach to borough Conservatism which an insensitive party orthodoxy foolishly chose to ignore".<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Gorst's efforts to obtain the reform and extension of British social welfare institutions, which have been acknowledged by many of his contemporaries, have largely been neglected by historians. In his work, Tory Democracy, W.J. Wilkinson has touched upon Gorst's social reform endeavours,<sup>6</sup> while those he put forth during Disraeli's last Administration have been noted by Paul Smith;<sup>7</sup> and Gorst's early twentieth-century agitation for increased

<sup>3</sup> See Winston S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (1906, London, 1952), Chap. 3. H.E. Gorst, The Fourth Party (London, 1906). R.R. James, Lord Randolph Churchill (London, 1959), Chap. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Eric Eaglesham, From School Board to Local Authority (London, 1956). Bernard M. Allen, Sir Robert Morant (London, 1934), Part 3. See also, N. Daghish, "The Educational Work of Sir John Gorst" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> J.R. Vincent, "'A Sort of second-rate Australia': A note on Gorst and democracy, 1865-8", Historical Studies (Australia and New Zealand), 15 (1973), 539-544.

<sup>6</sup> W.J. Wilkinson, Tory Democracy (New York, 1925).

<sup>7</sup> P. Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London, 1967).

State responsibility for child welfare has been discussed by Bentley B. Gilbert.<sup>8</sup> However, as yet there has been no work devoted solely to the examination of Gorst's contributions to British social policy of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One explanation for this omission may be the absence of both personal papers and an autobiography but, whatever the reason, this neglect is regrettable because Gorst's achievements in the area of social reform were even more innovative and permanent than his successes in party organization. This dissertation will attempt to justify this latter claim by providing a comprehensive study of the social reform dimension of Gorst's career.

<sup>8</sup>Bentley B. Gilbert, "Sir John Eldon Gorst and the Children of the Nation", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 28 (1954), 243-251. "Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel", Historian, 18 (1956), 151-169.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY YEARS

As W.T. Stead observed, "Sir John Gorst was not born in the purple".<sup>1</sup> The second son of Elizabeth and Edward Chaddock Gorst, John Eldon Gorst was born at Preston on May 24, 1835 into an old established Lancashire family which had been Tory since at least the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Edward Gorst, who took the name of Lowndes upon succeeding to the family property in 1853<sup>3</sup>, was, at the time of his second son's birth, a solicitor in Preston and Clerk of the Peace for the County of Lancashire. As a child, Gorst was not banished to a public school but remained at home to be educated locally at Preston Grammar School, after which he entered St. John's College, Cambridge. There he distinguished himself, becoming Third Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos of 1857 and being elected Fellow of his college in the same year.<sup>4</sup> It was also during those years, through participation in the activities of the Cambridge Union, that Gorst developed the debating skills which were later to become renowned within the House of Commons and upon political and public platforms

<sup>1</sup>"Character Sketch: December. Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews 3 (1891): 575-585. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch".

<sup>2</sup>H.W. Clemesha, A History of Preston in Amounderness (Manchester, 1912), p. 210. Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 1927), pp. 218-219.

<sup>3</sup>The eldest son of this branch of the Gorst family assumed the name Lowndes under the testamentary injunction of Robert Lowndes of Palteron. See, Sir John Bernard Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic Listing of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain, ed. Ashworth P. Burke, 14 ed. (London, 1925), p. 1130.

<sup>4</sup>Dictionary of National Biography, p. 218. The Times, 5 April, 1916.

throughout Britain and abroad.<sup>5</sup> This phase of his education completed, Gorst decided upon the Bar as his profession and, following a European holiday, began reading Law at the Inner Temple. However, a few months later his father fell seriously ill and Gorst abandoned his legal studies and took a position as mathematics master at Rossall School, Lancashire, in order to be close to his ailing parent.<sup>6</sup> Following the death of his father, in 1859, Gorst decided against resuming his preparations for the Bar and resolved to leave the "tame and unadventurous life in England" in order to "try a more active existence in the Colonies".<sup>7</sup>

This new existence Gorst now decided to seek abroad was that of lay missionary in the South Seas and when, in late December 1859, he left Liverpool aboard the White Star liner 'Red Jacket', bound for Auckland, it was under the auspices of Bishop Selwyn,<sup>8</sup> a fellow of St. John's, who intended that the new recruit assist Bishop Patteson with his work among the Polynesian natives.<sup>9</sup> Confidence in Gorst's suitability for this task,

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Stephen, Life of Henry Fawcett, 4th ed. (London, 1886), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> H.E. Gorst, The Fourth Party (London, 1906), p. 25. Hereafter referred to as H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party.

<sup>7</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 25-26.

<sup>8</sup> New Zealand National Archives (hereafter referred to as NZNA), Gore-Browne Papers 2/3, p. 24. Sir T. Gore-Browne to Sir Charles Clifford, 20 September 1862. George Augustus Selwyn (1809-1878), Bishop of New Zealand, 1841-1868.

<sup>9</sup> "Character Sketch", p. 576. Some years later, following his return to England, Gorst offered a totally different explanation of the underlying motives precipitating his departure for the Antipodes. "My object in visiting the Colony", he wrote, "was to investigate for myself the question how half-civilised people ought to be managed. From my arrival in May 1860, to my departure in August 1863, this was my one employment and pursuit". (Parliamentary Papers, [hereafter referred to as PP], 1865, 37: 198-199. J.E. Gorst to Sir Frederick Rogers, 20 December, 1864.) The explanation for this discrepancy in Gorst's interpretation of his reasons for going to New Zealand may be that, in retrospect, Gorst's latter claim corresponded more closely to the actual nature of the work carried on by him there, where the majority of his time had been spent as a Government Officer.

and his sincerity in embarking upon it, was expressed by Bishop Patteson himself shortly after Gorst's departure for New Zealand. "All we have heard of him promises well. He has great ability as a mathematician and seems desirous of working away from the right motive".<sup>10</sup> During the voyage out, between fulfilling the role of substitute ship's doctor and helping suppress a mutiny aboard the 'Red Jacket', Gorst found time to fall in love with fellow passenger Miss Mary Elizabeth Moore, daughter of the Rev. Lorenzo Moore of Christchurch, and when the ship docked in Melbourne, the couple was engaged to be married.<sup>11</sup> Gorst continued his journey to New Zealand, arriving in Auckland on May 17, 1860. Shortly after his arrival he met Bishop Selwyn and Gorst's first weeks in the colony were spent assisting the Bishop in a variety of tasks, at the same time becoming oriented to his new environment. During the month of June he helped the Bishop prepare his Melanesian Mission College at Kohimarama to host a conference convened by the Governor, Sir Thomas Gore-Browne, to explain to the invited Maori chiefs the government's policies which had precipitated the recent native uprisings at Taranaki. Later that month Gorst accompanied Selwyn on an expedition to re-float the Melanesian Mission schooner, "Southern Cross", which had gone aground near Whangarei north of Auckland. Although this operation proved abortive, the vessel resisting all their attempts to re-float it, the episode proved valuable for Gorst. During the two-week excursion he received instruction in the basics of the Maori language from Bishop Selwyn, was introduced to Maori village life, and became acquainted with the versatility of the New Zealand civil servant in the person of the government's local representative at Whangarei, a Mr.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Turnbull Library New Zealand, MSS Collection. Bishop Patteson to Sir J. Patteson, 23 March, 1860.

<sup>11</sup>J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited (London, 1908), pp. 6-22.

Aubrey, who held every civil office in the settlement, including those of postmaster, customs officer, harbour master, magistrate and policeman, a role Gorst later admitted he had found "extraordinary at the time, little thinking that I was to fill a similar post in Waikato".<sup>12</sup>

Late in July, Gorst returned to Australia for his marriage to Miss Moore,<sup>13</sup> and by early October, the voyage to New Zealand behind them, the newly-married couple was preparing to journey to the mission station at Waikato at the invitation of the Rev. Benjamin Yates Ashwell of the Church Missionary Society. The timing of Gorst's visit proved to be less than auspicious. Coincidental with his return to New Zealand, the corpse of an apparently-murdered Maori had been discovered south of Auckland, rousing in settlers fears that the natives would fasten upon this incident as an excuse for an attack upon the city. Having been assured by Ashwell that the affair presented no real danger to them, the Gorsts proceeded with their trip as arranged. However, following their arrival in Taupiri, the situation became sufficiently tense to cause Gorst to dispatch his bride back to Auckland as a precautionary measure.<sup>14</sup>

It was during this crisis at the mission station at Taupiri that Gorst first made the acquaintance of the Christianized and peace-loving Maori chief, Wiremu Tamihana,<sup>15</sup> with whom he formed a lasting friendship, who was later to serve frequently as an intermediary between Gorst and hostile Maoris.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 28-35.

<sup>13</sup>Keith Sinclair, "Introduction" in J.E. Gorst, Maori King, ed. K. Sinclair (London, 1959), pp. ix-xxv.

<sup>14</sup>J.E. Gorst, The Maori King, ed. K. Sinclair (London, 1864. Reprint ed. London, 1959), pp. 3-4. Hereafter referred to as J.E. Gorst, Maori King.

<sup>15</sup>Also known by the name Te Waharo, after his father, and as William Thompson by the Europeans.

<sup>16</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 7.



Following the peaceful settlement of the crisis, achieved primarily as a result of Wiremu Tamihana's mediation,<sup>17</sup> Gorst remained in the Waikato area for several months and spent part of this period teaching Maori boys at a school in Hopuhopu, close by Taupiri, initiating his educational work in the colony which eventually led to him becoming a "favourite of the Church of England Board of Native Education, the chairman of which was Bishop Selwyn".<sup>18</sup>

The crisis in which Gorst had become involved while at the mission station at Taupiri was but one incident in a larger struggle being waged between the settlers and the Maoris, which had erupted in the Taranaki province a month prior to Gorst's arrival in Auckland. This conflict arose out of Ngatiatiawa chief Wiremu Kingi's resistance to further land sales to the settlers. This opposition to the continuing sale of native land to the Pakehas<sup>19</sup> was widespread amongst the natives and had been a major factor in the establishment of the Maori King in 1858, and there was a general fear among the colonists that the land cause might be actively supported by the Waikato tribe, resulting in the escalation of the dispute into a general war between the Maoris and the settlers.<sup>20</sup>

The entire King movement, which according to Gorst had been generated by Maori discontent over Government indifference to native

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-100

<sup>18</sup> "Letters and Journals of the Rev. John Morgan", (Typescript), Auckland Institute and Museum, 17 December, 1863, quoted in Sinclair, "Introduction", p. xi.

<sup>19</sup> Maori term for white man or foreigner.

<sup>20</sup> J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 1-2, pp. 47-48, p. 101.

grievances,<sup>21</sup> was treated with contempt by the majority of the settlers, regarded as "a nuisance and an obstruction" rather than - as the Maoris claimed - a legitimate response to government mistreatment and apathy; considered an irritant which, because of its potential threat to British supremacy, must be suppressed.<sup>22</sup> The government's reaction to the resistance of Wiremu Kingi had been the application of military force, resulting in the Taranaki War. In Gorst's view this approach to the King movement was misguided. Against the popularly-held belief that there was "something pre-eminently manly in gaining an end by downright strength", Gorst argued that "There is one display of force ... that has never been dignified by the name 'manly', that of the strong towards the weak." He doubted if the world at large would "think that there is much glory in a highly civilised nation of 28,000,000 men crushing 50,000 'half-naked' savages."<sup>23</sup>

Having informed himself on the background to the development of the King movement and through personal contact become familiar with the natives' current situation, Gorst concluded that this manifestation of Maori independence could be best eradicated through the introduction of an extensive scheme of English education and law into the Waikato province, thereby undermining the base of the movement which was located at the Maori capital of Ngaruawahia. "If we had educated the natives in civilisation, and fitted them for the enjoyment of these full rights, as British subjects ... nothing would have been heard of ... 'King movements'", he asserted.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-53, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 1-6, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 26.

These conclusions Gorst set forth in a series of three letters to the Auckland newspaper, The New Zealander, which were published under the pseudonym, "Fabius".<sup>25</sup> Gorst's initial letter met with an immediate negative response in the form of a derogatory leading article in the other Auckland newspaper, The Southern Cross.<sup>26</sup> More positively, the letters so impressed the New Zealand Governor, Sir T. Gore-Browne, that he considered engaging Gorst for the government service, despite the fact that the latter's views concerning the solution to the King problem "differed widely" from the governor's own, and the opportunity to do so not having arisen during Governor Gore-Browne's term of office, before his departure from New Zealand he took the opportunity to "recommend him [Gorst] officially to Sir G. Grey", Browne's successor in the colony.<sup>27</sup>

The arrival of Sir George Grey in September 1861 "gave some hope for a peaceful solution" of the Maori problem.<sup>28</sup> Following his installation in office, Grey decided upon a pacific approach to the native question in the form of a new system of administration involving a measure of Maori self-government<sup>29</sup> and closely resembling the policies advocated by Gorst in his "Fabius" letters. In this design he was aided by recent political events in the colony. The commencement of Grey's second term as governor<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 27-29.

<sup>26</sup>Cited in Sinclair, "Introduction", p. xii.

<sup>27</sup>NZNA, Gore-Browne 2/3, p. 24. Sir T. Gore-Browne to Sir Charles Clifford, 20 September, 1862.

<sup>28</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 133-34, pp. 144-145.

<sup>30</sup>Grey's first term covered the period 1845-1853.

followed closely upon the defeat of the incumbent Colonial ministry, which had conducted the Taranki War, and the formation of a new ministry headed by William Fox who had previously demonstrated himself to be a defender of native rights.<sup>31</sup> The similarity of outlook shared by the new Imperial and Colonial administrators facilitated the speedy introduction of the new scheme by the Governor and it was in connection with this new departure in policy that Fox dispatched Gorst, in October 1861, to the Waikato district, "ostensibly to inspect and report upon all the schools supported by the missionary societies, and the natives, and at the same time to keep my ears open, and learn all I could as to the state of things in general, and the sentiments at present prevailing among Waikato chiefs as to peace or war."<sup>32</sup>

By late October, Gorst was reporting to Fox that native resistance to government authority remained strong in the Waikato area<sup>33</sup> and, shortly

<sup>31</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup>Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, New Zealand (hereafter referred to as AJHR), 1862 E-1 Section II, Despatches from Governor Sir George Grey to the Duke of Newcastle, p. 12. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited (London, 1908), p. 160. It is not clear who made the initial decision to utilize Gorst's services in this way. It may have been made by Grey, arising out of Gore-Browne's recommendations, or by Fox, based upon a personal assessment of Gorst's abilities and suitability for the task made following a reading of the "Fabius" letters. In any event, Gorst's appointment appears to have been a popular one. F. Dillon-Bell, the Native Minister in the Domett ministry which replaced Fox's administration in 1862, observed that "Nothing was ever done by the present Government so good as sending Gorst up to the Kingites of Waikato ... A thoroughly conscientious, just, truthful, and highly-educated man, which he is, will have more weight with the Assembly than anyone else ... ." (NZNA, Gore-Browne Papers, 1/2/146. F.D. Bell to T. Gore-Browne, 29 May, 1862.)

<sup>33</sup>AJHR, 1862, E-1, Section II, p. 14. J.E. Gorst to William Fox, 23 October, 1861.

thereafter, the Governor appointed Gorst as Resident Magistrate in the Upper Waikato and charged him "with the duty of fully explaining" to the Maori chiefs "the scope and object of my plans".<sup>34</sup> Gorst, together with his wife and baby son, now took up residence at Te Tomoto, Upper Waikato, and by early December he had concluded his inspection of all the Waikato and Bay of Islands native schools and completed a detailed report on their condition for the Minister of Native Affairs. Gorst's report was highly critical of the government's role in Maori education.<sup>35</sup> He enunciated a long litany of deficiencies. The government exercised no control over the monies it contributed to the religious bodies supervising native schools and exerted "just so much influence as the fear of the withdrawal of the subscription confers". Although by law certain conditions were to be fulfilled before such grants were made, "these regulations ... are not always practically carried out, and the Government has used no means for ascertaining or compelling their observance". Despite legislation directing that "schools be visited each year by an Inspector, the office has been honorary and irregular, and never discharged twice by the same person. His function is simply that of reporting and though the duties have often been most ably performed by gentlemen of high position in the colony, I do not learn that their reports ever produced action on the part of the Government".<sup>36</sup> Gorst urged the government to upgrade and expand its native schools in order that

<sup>34</sup>AJHR, 1862, E-1, Section II, p. 45. Dispatches from Sir G. Grey to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, 8 December, 1861.

<sup>35</sup>AJHR, 1862, E-4, Native Schools. Reports of Inspectors. Report of J.E. Gorst, Inspector of Schools, pp. 3-11.

<sup>36</sup>AJHR, E-4, Native Schools. Reports of Inspectors, pp. 2-11. Report of J.E. Gorst, Esq., Inspector of Schools, December 5, 1861.

the children might be taught "the decencies of civilization, as well as the learning habits of industry".<sup>37</sup> .

This report exposed native schooling as one more facet of the government's administrative indifference with respect to its indigenous population, indifference which Gorst claimed had helped establish the Maori King, and his recommendations reflected his continuing conviction - first aired in his "Fabius" letters - that education could play an important role in reducing Maori intransigence. Moreover, Gorst's report reveals the thoroughness and degree of perceptiveness which he applied to the task in hand, qualities which were evinced time and time again during his subsequent political life, in situations ranging from his re-organization of the Conservative party to his campaign for child feeding. The report also exhibits Gorst's propensity never to mince words which later became the hallmark of his parliamentary career.

Gorst remained in Te Tomoto as magistrate until June 1862, during which time he grew increasingly disillusioned by the inefficacy of the government's new scheme of native administration and the farcical nature of his own office.<sup>38</sup> Although he arrived "armed with proper legal powers",

<sup>37</sup> AJHR, E-4, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> In May, 1862, Sir Donald McLean told Gore-Browne that Gorst was "disgusted" with the state of affairs in the Waikato (NZNA, Gore-Browne. 1/2. No. 121. Sir Donald McLean to T. Gore-Browne, 26 May, 1862), and three days later F.D. Bell wrote to the former Governor that "Gorst is getting extremely dissatisfied with things in general" in that area. (NZNA, Gore-Browne Papers. 1/2/146. F.D. Bell to T. Gore-Browne, 29 May, 1862.) Also, in a series of letters to Gore-Browne, written between January and September of 1862, the Rev. J. Morgan of Otawhao repeatedly referred to the futility of Gorst's position as Resident Magistrate. (NZNA, Gore-Browne Papers. 1/2 d.) For references 1/2. No. 121 and 1/2 d. above, I am indebted to Kay M. Sanderson of the New Zealand National Archives. See also, J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 158-171.

his magistracy was "repudiated and set at naught" by the Maoris, who "from the first refused their consent to my exercising any kind of authority among them".<sup>39</sup> Prior to Gorst's arrival in the district the Runanga<sup>40</sup> of Ngaruawahia had passed an "abstract" resolution barring the installation of Queen's magistrates within the Maori domain<sup>41</sup> and, although thereafter the Maoris took no direct action to expel him from the area - save for one unsuccessful and inept attempt by Ngatimaniapoto Chief, Patene<sup>42</sup> - Gorst's authority was effectively negated by the subsequent enactment by the King's loyal Runangas in Waikato of laws prohibiting, under severe penalties, natives from resorting to European courts.<sup>43</sup> So effective was this measure that Gorst found his duties "limited to settling disputes among Pakeha settlers ...".<sup>44</sup>

Gorst ventilated his dissatisfaction in a general report on conditions in the Upper Waikato issued by him in June 1862.<sup>45</sup> A state of "utter lawlessness and anarchy" existed among the native population, brought about by the declining authority of the traditional internal Maori rule and

<sup>39</sup>J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, p. 93.

<sup>40</sup>Native court or assembly.

<sup>41</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 162.

<sup>42</sup>AJHR, 1862, E-9, Papers Relative to Sir George Grey's Plans of Native Government, Section III, pp. 3-4. Report from J.E. Gorst to the Colonial Secretary.

<sup>43</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 164.

<sup>44</sup>J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, p. 197.

<sup>45</sup>AJHR, 1862, Section III, pp. 9-19. Commissioner's Report - Upper Waikato. NZNA, Gore-Browne 2/4.

the impotency of the Colonial administration. "The great mischief of all is not that the Natives choose to be governed by a King instead of by us", he argued, "but that they are not in any real sense governed at all". Gorst readily admitted that the initial high hopes he had entertained for the Governor's new policies had been dissipated by the realities of practical service in the field. Experience had shown that the ministry's new scheme of administration could not diminish support for the King movement nor effect a reconciliation between the government and the Maori population. That an organized legislative system did not in itself guarantee law and order had been demonstrated by the Waikato experiment. "My residence in Waikato is bringing me to look upon vigour and power as the highest qualities in Government", he told F. Dillon Bell.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Gorst concluded that the existing chaos could only be remedied through more positive government:

... but I mean vigorous Government - I mean authority which is able to protect life and property by enforcing obedience to the law. We do not want additional laws - there is a very madness of law-making infesting the country; we do not want Magistrates - they exist in abundance. It is the last link between the sovereign and the subject, it is the police which is defective.<sup>47</sup>

Gorst quite expected that his report would incur his swift dismissal from the Colonial service but, instead, the government pressed him to attend a personal interview with Sir George Grey in Auckland. Although the Colonial ministry had acknowledged the accuracy of Gorst's report they had persisted in maintaining the administrative status quo in the Waikato and, thus, he declined the invitation on the grounds he had

<sup>46</sup> NZNA, Gore-Browne Papers, 1/2/146, F.D. Bell to T. Gore-Browne, 29 May 1862.

<sup>47</sup> AJHR, E-9, Section III, pp. 18-19.



nothing new to add to his previous comments, and that if the government disagreed with his views he was willing to resign. However, at the government's insistence he subsequently met with Sir George Grey who professed support for Gorst's viewpoint and persuaded him to return to Waikato as Civil Commissioner, under the Governor's rather than the Colonial ministry's jurisdiction.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to his normal duties as Commissioner, Gorst was entrusted with the implementation of two special projects - the formation of a native police force at Kohekohe, Lower District, and the establishment of an industrial school at Otawahao, Upper Waikato. The school was the brainchild of Gorst who persuaded Grey to substitute it for his original scheme for a police force at that location also, Gorst rationalizing that so overt a government institution as the latter would simply result in its immediate suppression by the militant King Maoris. The new plan was to develop the Otawahao establishment into a police station at a later date. Both projects were to form part of Grey's revised approach to native administration, designed to secure the peaceful subjection of the Maoris to British authority. The force of native youths at Te Kohekohe would be "gradually and cautiously made use of, to suppress dangerous offenders ... and establish a real system of law and order" in the area. The school, at which both basic subjects and trade skills were to be taught, would exhibit to native youth the advantages of physical comfort and civilization offered by the government in exchange for "barbarous independence", thus working as a "trap to catch the King's soldiers", thereby serving to undermine the

<sup>48</sup>J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 209-210, pp. 223-225.

nationalist movement.<sup>49</sup>

Gorst returned to the Waikato and immediately proceeded to introduce Grey's new schemes. The venture at Te Kohekohe progressed little beyond the planning stage, but the second enterprise at Otawhao was successfully launched. An existing mission station at Te Awamuto,<sup>50</sup> consisting of school house and 200 acres of land, was relinquished by Church authorities and given over to Gorst for his new educational venture,<sup>51</sup> in support of which "neither expense nor trouble was spared".<sup>52</sup> However, the project soon aroused the suspicions of the Maoris who viewed it, in combination with the proposed police force at Te Kohekohe, as part of a new scheme for reducing the Waikato. The institution was promptly denounced by the militant Ngatimaniapoto chief, Rewi Manipoto, and his supporters who urged that Gorst be immediately expelled by force. The more moderate Waikatos,

<sup>49</sup>AJHR, 1863, E-4, Papers Relative to Native Affairs. Section VI - Upper Waikato, pp. 35-36. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst, R.M., on the Establishment of a Police Station at Kohekohe, and an Industrial School at Otawhao. J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 193-194. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 223-225.

<sup>50</sup>The Maori name of Otawhao.

<sup>51</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 194. According to Gorst, the incumbent of twenty years, Rev. John Morgan, gave up his station with grace, so as not to obstruct a project which might benefit the natives. However, Morgan's personal papers reveal that he deeply resented the way the Church authorities treated him in this matter and, as a consequence, resigned from the Church Missionary Society. See J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, p. 227. Sinclair, p. xvi.

<sup>52</sup>AJHR, 1863, E-1, Papers Relative to Native Affairs, pp. 1-2. Memorandum by Native Minister F. Dillon Bell to Governor G. Grey, 30 April 1863.

however, called for lawful and peaceful opposition to the school and at their Runangas passed laws forbidding their youth from attending the institution and prohibiting the sale of timber for the construction of its new buildings. Despite this opposition, building commenced and a sufficient number of native boys enrolled in the school as to permit it to open as planned, and progress made during its first months of operation gave promise for considerable future success.<sup>53</sup>

This initial hope remained unfulfilled, however, as Gorst's project came to an untimely end as a consequence of renewed Maori insurgence. In the winter of 1862-63 the land disputes, in abeyance since the Taranaki War, were revived threatening a renewal of the conflict and causing both sides to actively prepare for the expected confrontation. In their newspaper, Te Hokioi, the King party accused the Governor and the settlers of deceit in the land issue, charging them with ignoring legally-acquired native land rights and questioning the Governor's anticipated action against their King. At Grey's suggestion, Gorst countered this Maori attack by establishing a printing office at Te Awamutu and issuing a rival journal named Te Pihoihoi Mokemoke,<sup>54</sup> the first number of which contained an article, in Maori, by Gorst - "The Evil of the King's Government" - outlining the anarchy prevailing in the Waikato and citing the King and his Council's inability to maintain law and order as the root of the problem.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> AJHR, 1863, E-1, pp. 1-2. J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 195-202.

<sup>54</sup> Its full title was Te Pihoihoi Mokemoke I Runga I Te Tuanui - "The Sparrow Alone Upon the House Top", but it was generally known simply as Te Pihoihoi Moke, which translates as "The Lonely Groundlark". See Sinclair's footnote in J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 217.

<sup>55</sup> J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 205-207, pp. 209-213. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 254-256.

The article incensed the more militant Maoris and reinforced their belief that Gorst's activities at Te Awamutu were part of a calculated scheme to overcome the King movement. Earlier, Grey had assured the Maoris that he would not "fight against your King with a sword" but would "dig around him with spades, until he falls of his own accord". To the Maoris Gorst now appeared the most active spade and his school the centre of the digging and the decision was made to eject the Civil Commissioner and his press from Te Awamutu.<sup>56</sup> On March 24, Chief Rewi Maniapoto and a band of Ngatimaniapotos descended upon the school, occupied the printing office, and carried off the press. After first declaring their intention to expel Gorst by force, they were persuaded to withdraw and allow him three weeks in which to obtain Grey's authorization to leave Te Awamutu. However, during this period of grace, in a letter to Grey, they reiterated their intention to remove Gorst and warned the Governor that "if you say he is to stay, he will die".<sup>57</sup>

When informed of the revolt at Te Awamutu, Grey and Dillon Bell, the Native Minister, advised Gorst to use his own discretion in deciding his future course of action, but giving him full authority to abandon his post should his life or the lives of anyone on the station be endangered.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 219-220, p. 223. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 251-252.

<sup>57</sup> AJHR, 1863, E-1. Further Papers Relative to Native Affairs: Native Disturbances at Te Awamutu, pp. 3-4. J.E. Gorst to F.D. Bell, 25 March, 1863. AJHR, 1863, E-1, p. 4. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst to Mr. Wood, 25 March, 1863. AJHR, 1863, E-1, p. 5. Rewi Maniapoto to G. Grey, 25 March, 1863.

<sup>58</sup> AJHR, 1863, E-1, p. 7. F.D. Bell to J.E. Gorst, 27 March, 1863. F.D. Bell to J.E. Gorst, March 28, 1863. NZNA Governor Archives. G36/3, p. 446. Sir George Grey to J.E. Gorst, 28 March, 1863.

Having ascertained from the moderate Maoris there was a "universal consent to get rid of the Government establishment at Awamutu", that the authority of the King was at an end, and that the militants were in control and determined to remove the Civil Commissioner by force, Gorst concluded that "the experiment at Awamutu" was over. Consequently, on April 18, with general war imminent, Gorst and his party departed for Auckland.<sup>59</sup> Grey considered the abandonment of Te Awamutu a temporary expedient and ensconced its personnel at his private residence on the Island of Kawi, pending their expected reinstatement at the school, but on July 12 government forces occupied Kohera Heights, in the Maoris' alleged domains, signalling the resumption of the Waikato War, nullifying these plans and Gorst's party was returned to Auckland for dispersal.<sup>60</sup>

Immediately following his expulsion from Te Awamutu, Gorst stayed for one week in New Plymouth with Bell, drafting minutes on the situation in Waikato for the Governor and then spent the next few months in Auckland serving as Bell's private secretary. When, in August 1863, Bell departed for Australia to raise a Colonial force, Gorst, who believed the Waikatos to be victims of circumstance rather than willing participants in the war, found this assignment abhorrent and agreed to accompany the Native Minister only after being granted the option of returning to England if he so desired. Before Gorst embarked for Australia, Bell and the New Zealand Prime Minister, Alfred Domett, indicated to Gorst their intention to appoint him to the

<sup>59</sup> AJHR, 1863, E-1, pp. 13-14. J.E. Gorst to F.D. Bell, 11 April, 1863, pp. 14-15. J.E. Gorst to F.D. Bell, 14 April, 1863, pp. 20-21. J.E. Gorst to F.D. Bell, 23 April, 1863. AJHR, 1863, E-3, Dispatches from the Secretary of State and the Governor of New Zealand. Section I. Dispatches from Governor Sir George Grey KCB, pp. 28-29. J.E. Gorst to F.D. Bell, 16 April, 1863.

<sup>60</sup> J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 247. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 24-26.

Legislative Council but, after only a few weeks brief stay in Australia, Gorst departed for the United Kingdom without waiting for verification of this offer.<sup>61</sup>

Following his return to England in late December, 1863, Gorst resumed his legal studies at the Inner Temple and, at the same time, set about informing the public of the situation in New Zealand and publicizing his personal solution to its problems. In the daily and periodical press and in his book The Maori King, published in 1864, he denounced both the Imperial and Colonial Governments for their policies in the colony.<sup>62</sup> The inconsistency of the Imperial government, with its repeated changes of administration and vacillation between indifference and haphazard regulation had gradually destroyed the Maoris' confidence in British authority.<sup>63</sup> The native wars were in essence struggles against "European aggression", argued Gorst. The Colonial administration had consciously taken steps to "make the continuance of the war certain and the submission of the natives impossible" for the benefit of the Auckland Province at the expense of the Imperial government. Moreover, the New Zealand government's policy of land

<sup>61</sup>AJHR, 1864, E-3. Further Papers Relating to the Native Insurrections, pp. 88-89. J.E. Gorst, "Observations and the Native Inhabitants of Ranglaowhia and Kihikihi", 21 May, 1864. J.E. Gorst, New Zealand Revisited, pp. 46-47, p. 326. PP, 1865, Vol. 37, pp. 98-99. J.E. Gorst to Sir F. Rogers, 20 December, 1864. Sinclair, "Introduction", pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>62</sup>J.E. Gorst, "Our New Zealand Conquests", Macmillan's Magazine, 12 (1865): 168-175. Hereafter referred to as J.E. Gorst, "New Zealand Conquests". J.E. Gorst, Maori King, passim. The Times, 24 December, 1863, p. 10. Ibid., 6 May, 1864, p. 5. The Maori King analyzes the inception and development of the King movement in New Zealand and recounts Gorst's personal experiences with Maori nationalism, and the Imperial government's responses to it, during Gorst's years in the colony.

<sup>63</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, Chap. 4.

confiscation was essential to that administration because "they had enlisted militia in Australia and other places by promising them a share of the spoil".<sup>64</sup> In order to resolve the native question, Gorst advocated an end to double government in the colony and the placing of all native districts under direct Imperial rule. A central Council of Chiefs with law-making powers, reinforced with a native police force, and under the direction of a British Resident, could be constituted to conduct affairs in Maori provinces.<sup>65</sup>

Gorst was later to discard these views. By the close of the eighteen sixties, events in both England and New Zealand combined to effect a revision of Gorst's attitudes towards colonial rule. In 1869, with the native rebellions still not finally quelled and the supposedly "Separatist" Gladstone government apparently poised to set the colonies adrift, Gorst suggested, along with a plea for retention of the self-governing colonies in the Empire, a different approach to colonial management. As the Maori Wars had resulted, in part, from the "injudicious interference of the Imperial Government", it was wrong of Britain to now expect the colony to single-handedly retrieve a situation the former had helped to create. While wholeheartedly supporting the current government's policy of evacuating Imperial troops from New Zealand as "the first necessary step in the pacification of the colony", he urged that the Imperial government guarantee the colonists a loan which would enable them to provide for their own internal security and to assume sole responsibility over native affairs.

<sup>64</sup>J.E. Gorst, "New Zealand Conquests", p. 168, pp. 170-171, p. 173.

<sup>65</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, pp. 257-262.

This granting of colonial freedom would not involve the dismemberment of the Empire, as critics charged, but on the contrary, could result in the preservation of its unity, argued Gorst. Just as in America the independence of individual states was found to be compatible with the maintenance of the Union, "... there is no reason why Great Britain, and the other enfranchised countries which acknowledge the sovereignty of the Queen, should not continue in one free confederation". Although he offered no detailed scheme to be followed, Gorst's advocacy of a federal solution to the colonial question places him amongst the earliest proponents of federation.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, however, Gorst's efforts during 1863-1865 to promote direct Imperial rule in New Zealand failed to effect a change in British policy, or notably stir public interest in that colony, but his views were angrily received there producing a tirade of criticism in the columns of the daily press. It was suggested that Gorst's viewpoint was coloured by his failure to obtain an appointment to the Legislative Council - a rather illogical argument considering Gorst had repeatedly criticized the government's native policies whilst serving in the colony;<sup>67</sup> another correspondent intimated that Gorst's desire for an Imperial appointment was behind his new scheme for native government;<sup>68</sup> and the Daily Southern Cross bluntly asserted that Gorst penned the Maori King in order to demonstrate "he ...

<sup>66</sup> J.E. Gorst, "What Ought to be the Legal and Constitutional Relations between England and her Colonies?", Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science 14 (1870): 97-100. See also, C.A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism (New York, 1968), pp. 80-100. C.C. Eldridge, Victorian Imperialism (London, 1978), pp. 80-101. The Times, 29 July, 1869, p. 10

<sup>67</sup> For example, see AJHR, 1862, E-9, pp. 18-19. AJHR, 1862, E-4, pp. 9-11.

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Sinclair, "Introduction", p. xv.



was an uncommonly clever fellow".<sup>69</sup> Gorst's genuine concern<sup>70</sup> for the native population, evidenced by his tireless efforts on their behalf while in the colony, and his subsequent publicity campaign in England, along with his service to the New Zealand government - which had prompted the colonial administration to officially acknowledge its gratitude and admiration following the abandonment of Te Awamutu,<sup>71</sup> were now apparently forgotten or ignored.

Gorst's call for direct Imperial control of native affairs sprang from his deep distrust of the existing state of representative government in the colony. In his view the New Zealand Assembly was merely a tool of the avaricious colonists who utilized the legislature for personal gain:

... the moment a question is stated affecting any pecuniary interest, the House becomes ... a mere Assembly of delegates from the various provinces of the colony; each member well knows how he is expected to vote, and knows also, that any eccentricity in voting on his part, would evoke a speedy and unanimous call from his constituents for his resignation.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. xv. Gorst's Maori King has now come to be regarded in a more favourable light in New Zealand. According to Sinclair, the work can now be considered "one of the very best of nineteenth-century accounts of life among the Maoris" and seminal to the understanding of the development of the British Empire in that century, whilst at the same time being of "relevance to the modern world where nationalist movements, often anti-European in tendency, and Imperial (or Imperialist) wars continue to occur". See *ibid.*, p. xvi.

<sup>70</sup> This concern was most forcefully expressed in The Maori King in which he reveals a deep sympathy for and understanding of the Maori nation and Maori grievances and a solicitude for their cause and the future welfare of the New Zealand native population.

<sup>71</sup> Following Gorst's expulsion from the Waikato, F. Dillon Bell wrote in glowing terms of the success of the project in Te Awamutu and of Gorst personally. After enumerating the goals of the scheme, Bell wrote: "Their prosecution was confided to a man who, to a real interest in the Native people, united peculiar abilities for the task: willingly relinquishing the advantages which private fortune gave him in a country where wealth is so easily accumulated, and content, a Master of Arts of Cambridge University, to live in the bush, almost without society and without books for the sake of laying the foundations with a few poor Native boys, of a school that should replace the indolence and dirt of a pa, by the industry, discipline, and comfort of a civilised home". (See *AJHR*, 1863, E-1, p. 1.)

Moreover, the increasingly democratic nature of the Assembly had resulted in its repeated dismissals at the hands of disgruntled constituents, thereby destroying the Colonial government's viability as administrator of the subject races.<sup>72</sup> It is evident that Gorst believed that this form of "popular government" was responsible for the policies which provoked the resurgence of Maori hostility and the resumption of the native wars which had abruptly ended his schemes, so successfully launched at Te Awamutu, for the government and pacification of the Maori nation.

This experience with "popular" government led Gorst to actively oppose parliamentary reform along democratic lines when, in July of 1866, he stood as the Conservative candidate for Hastings at the general election. Although Reform was not a national issue at this election<sup>73</sup> and locally the electorate was apparently most concerned with maintaining resistance to "further concessions to the Romanists",<sup>74</sup> Reform Bills had been introduced in Parliament by the Liberals in 1854 and 1860, and by the Conservatives in 1859, and this general movement towards Reform, combined with his recent experiences in New Zealand, evidently provoked Gorst's anti-democratic stand at the election. "Having witnessed the results of democratic government in our Australasian Colonies I am opposed to the lowering of the franchise ...", he declared in his election address.<sup>75</sup> In these colonies the colonists had

<sup>72</sup>J.E. Gorst, Maori King, p. 258.

<sup>73</sup>See Robert Stewart, The Foundation of the Conservative Party 1830-1867 (London, 1978), pp. 339-346.

<sup>74</sup>Hastings and St. Leonards News, 7 July, 1865, p. 2. Mr. North, the Liberal incumbent, who was accused of supporting such concessions, was defeated.

<sup>75</sup>Hastings and St. Leonards News, 26 May, 1865, p. 2, p. 3.

the main power in the election of members to the Colonial Assemblies and it was lodged in one class - the labouring class, which was a great and monstrous evil". In his view, certain reformers were determined to change England "into a sort of second-rate Australia". If universal suffrage was introduced at home, where the labouring masses were vastly inferior economically to their counterparts in Australia, the nation would "get something a great deal worse" than in that country. "Instead of lowering the franchise they should try to raise the working man".<sup>76</sup> He was, however, willing to countenance an extension of the suffrage "provided it was not one which would overthrow the present constituencies".<sup>77</sup>

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Hastings and St. Leonards News, 9 June, 1865, p. 3. Gorst apparently feared that any reduction in the franchise would ultimately lead to universal suffrage and a form of economically-motivated electoral pressure potentially more disruptive than that exercised by the colonists in New Zealand.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 16 June, 1865. See also, *ibid.*, 26 May, 1865, p.2, p.3, 9 June, 1865, p.3. Gorst no doubt had in mind a form of lateral extension which would increase the potency of the traditional Conservative vote, very much along the lines of the Tories' 1858 Reform Bill which, through various devices, aimed to make the Tory strength in the counties more effective. (See Stewart, pp. 354-358.) Gorst was also amongst those willing to extend the franchise to females. In the May 20, 1867 debate on the Representation of the People Bill, he voted in favour of J.S. Mill's amendment to include women in the vote. (Parliamentary Debates [hereafter referred to as PD], 3rd Series, 187 [1867]: 845.)

Gorst's bid for a Commons seat proved unsuccessful<sup>78</sup> and he, therefore, resumed his preparations for the Bar, to which he was called during the same year. However, in Spring of 1866, seemingly undaunted by his defeat at Hastings, Gorst agreed to contest the Borough of Cambridge seat at the April 24 by-election which had resulted from the disqualification of one of the two sitting members.<sup>79</sup> In this campaign Gorst again voiced his objections to Reform, revealing his continuing resentment of the New Zealand Assembly<sup>80</sup> and mistrust of "popular government".

This election occurring whilst the Liberal Reform Bill was before the Commons resulted in the interjection of the suffrage issue into the

<sup>78</sup>Result: July 12, 1865:

Mr. Waldengrave-Leslie (Lib.)	749
Mr. Robertson (Con.)	737
Mr. North (Lib.)	725
Mr. Gorst (Con.)	591

Gorst's anti-democratic stance does not appear to have been a factor in his defeat. His successful running mate, Robertson, whilst declaring "It was not of the working men he was afraid; not of going too low - it was the masters", at the same time "saw no particular advantage in lowering the franchise ...". Although he agreed that the suffrage "might be greatly extended" he did not know how it could be done, because it was necessary to maintain some standard ...". He believed that "Lord Derby's scheme" (the 1859 Reform Bill) would have provided "a great extension of the Suffrage". (Hastings and St. Leonards News, 6 June, 1865, p. 3; 16 June, 1865, p. 3.) From the outset Gorst was considered the underdog in this election, which was seen as a contest between "three old combatants". Gorst's candidacy was viewed as the trial run of an aspiring politician. "Mr. Gorst is quite right to try his way, and to introduce himself in the constituency", observed one local newspaper editor, "but it is not likely that a borough which has twice rejected so old and respected a resident as Mr. Robertson, will elect on his first appearance, an untried stranger ...". (Ibid., 16 June, 1865, p. 2; 2 June, 1865, p. 2.)

<sup>79</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 21 April, 1866, p. 4.

<sup>80</sup>His highly critical "Our New Zealand Conquests" had appeared in Macmillan's one month earlier.

contest and Gorst's opposition to the lowering of the franchise now took the form of a direct attack upon the current Bill. The proposed legislation was merely an expedient to capture votes declared Gorst<sup>81</sup> and he did not believe the Bill would bring any benefit to the people. On the contrary, the measure would serve to unbalance the Constitution by giving the working class a preponderant influence, thereby opening the door to class representation. Consequently, if elected, he would oppose the Bill in Parliament, "not from fear of the Working Class but because neither that nor any other class should have undue preponderance in the country ... What was needed was a balance of power - the poor should not be able to do without the rich nor the rich to do without the poor".<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the Liberal Bill was an inadequate measure, dealing solely with the lowering of the franchise to the exclusion of other elements of Reform.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup>"The object of the Government's Franchise Bill is not so much to benefit the people as to redeem the pledges rashly given to catch popularity by the party that calls itself Liberal ...", Gorst stated. (Cambridge Chronicle, 21 April, 1866, p. 5.)

<sup>82</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 21 April, 1866, p. 5, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup>"He was quite willing that the question of Reform should be well and carefully considered; but let us have an honest and complete Reform ... If they wanted to bring in a Reform Bill why did they not bring in the whole bill and nothing but the bill? Why put off the question of redistribution of seats ...?, he said. "Let us have a bill which dealt fairly with all those questions which Reform involved ...". (Speech at Nomination of Candidates, 23 April, 1866. Speech at Conservative Meeting, 23 April, 1866. Supplement to the Cambridge Chronicle, 28 April, 1866.) Gorst evidently shared the majority of the Conservatives' fear that the provisions of this Bill would produce a situation in which a combination of county leaseholders in the boroughs and the newly-enfranchised in the non-borough towns and the suburbs would swamp the safe Conservative tenant farmers. (See Robert Blake, Disraeli [New York, 1967], pp. 339-340.)

In Gorst's view the working class needed social rather than political reform.<sup>84</sup> Amongst the many conditions requiring amelioration were the situation of manual labourers, lack of education, low wages - especially among agricultural labourers - and inadequate housing. Thus, any suggestion that the workers' sole requirement for happiness was the vote was abhorrent to him. If he was a worker he would say "Don't degrade the franchise to my level, but raise me to the level of the franchise".<sup>85</sup> However, Gorst did not believe that legislation could effect economic improvement. He was of the opinion that "the people could not be made richer by anything but labour, industry and frugality".<sup>86</sup>

Gorst's advocacy of economic improvement through self-help was consistent with mid-nineteenth century society's laissez-faire attitude towards social reform. The current accepted social philosophy, produced from a synthesis of political economy and utilitarianism, attributed material advancement to the individual's pursuit of self-interest unencumbered by state intervention. At the political level, this philosophy was subscribed to by Conservatives as well as Liberals, the traditional party of laissez-faire, Tory paternalism of the early decades of the century having largely dissipated. The limited social legislation enacted up to this period, such as the Poor Law, Factory and Health Acts, was undertaken to remedy only what was viewed as the most flagrant of social injustices

<sup>84</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 21 April, 1866, p.9. Speech at Barnwell, 23 April, 1866. Speech at Cambridge Theatre, 23 April, 1866. Supplement to the Cambridge Chronicle, 28 April, 1866.

<sup>85</sup>Speech at Barnwell, Cambridge. Cambridge Chronicle, 21 April, 1866, p.9.

<sup>86</sup>Speech at the Lion, Cambridge. Ibid., 21 April, 1866, p. 9.

and in the case of the Derby government's reforms of 1866-1867, safe measures designed to appear as social concern for the working classes. In the mid-sixties, even most social reformers could not conceive of collectivism as a solution to social distress. Acceptance of the need for state intervention in social affairs developed only gradually during the latter half of the century.<sup>87</sup> Gorst was amongst the first Tory reformers to recognize this need and during the early eighteen seventies began to agitate for social reform measures. Another Conservative reformer, Richard Assheton Cross, who was later to achieve recognition for his social legislation while Home Secretary between 1874 and 1880, displayed both antisocial reform and anti-democratic tendencies.<sup>88</sup>

It would appear that Gorst's anti-democratic attitude was in tune with the bulk of popular sentiment for he succeeded in gaining the support of a sufficient proportion of the Cambridge electorate to narrowly defeat his Liberal opponent at the polls.<sup>89</sup> Following Gorst's entry into Parliament on April 25,<sup>90</sup> the House remained in session only until

<sup>87</sup>For nineteenth-century social philosophy, see Eric J. Evans, Social Policy 1830-1914: Individualism, Collectivism and the Origins of the Welfare State (London, 1978). Derek Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State (London, 1973), Chap. 5. E.C. Midwinter, Victorian Social Reform (London, 1968). For mid-nineteenth century Conservative attitudes towards social reform, see Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London, 1976), pp. 18-36, pp. 40-47, p. 130.

<sup>88</sup>See Dennis J. Mitchell, "Richard Assheton Cross, a Political Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mississippi, 1976, pp. 68-78).

<sup>89</sup>Election result, 24 April, 1866. Gorst 774. Torrens 755. Cambridge Chronicle, 28 April, 1866, p.4. According to the Chronicle's editor, "The victory showed that the majority of the electors of Cambridge were averse to the passing of that dangerous measure ..." (Ibid., p. 4).

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

August 10 and he did not address the Commons during that time. When Parliament met again on February 5, 1867, it was under a Conservative administration<sup>91</sup> destined to take its "leap in the dark"<sup>92</sup> with the second Reform Act. Gorst witnessed the progress of the Reform Bill through the House with mixed feelings.<sup>93</sup> Party advantage dictated an extension of the franchise at this time, a political expedient Gorst was prepared to accept,<sup>94</sup> but when, during the Bill's passage through the House, the Opposition proceeded to dismantle the restrictions designed to keep the working class from effectively becoming the electoral majority, with which the Conservatives had surrounded the measure, he felt obliged to sound a note of resistance in the House.

A succession of Radical amendments having secured unsafeguarded household suffrage in the Bill, Gorst now attempted to draw Parliament's attention to what he believed were the dangers inherent in the proposed

<sup>91</sup>The Liberals resigned in June 1866, following the defeat of their Reform Bill and the Conservatives formed a new administration under Lord Derby.

<sup>92</sup>This phrase was first used, in 1860, by Philip Rose, Tory election manager, in a letter to Lord Derby commenting upon the moderate Liberal Reform Bill of 1860. (See Stewart, p. 358, p. 371.)

<sup>93</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 578. According to W.T. Stead, at this point Gorst was not opposed to Reform per se but shared the opinion of those, like Lord Salisbury (Second Marquess), who were agreeable to a lowering of the franchise provided safeguards against democracy were preserved. (See also, F.B. Smith, The Making of the Second Reform Bill [Cambridge, 1966], p. 209.)

<sup>94</sup>Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (London, 1970, Fontana Paperback edition, 1976), pp. 103-105. Hereafter referred to as Blake, Conservative Party. T.E. Kebble, A History of Toryism (London, 1886. Republished Edition with Introduction by E.J. Feuchtwanger, London, 1972, p. 352.)



franchise. The immediate electoral advantage which the party leaders anticipated would flow from passage of the Bill were poor compensation for its long-term effects, he warned. The most harmful consequence of the measure "would be its demoralising effect upon men who would be compelled to make themselves popular". He dreaded the influence which "the opinions of a constituency" would exert "upon young men whose political character was not formed and who would have to make themselves popular". He urged the adoption of a minority representation clause because it would provide a way "in which hereafter it might be possible for people who were unable to make themselves popular with the masses to find their way into parliament". He reminded the Members that it was their boast that the House "at present represented all classes, and could not afford to be indifferent to the opinions of any class of their constituents, but after this Bill passed they would represent only one class, and that, generally, the lowest".<sup>95</sup> Evidently, memories of the electoral pressures exerted by a democratic electorate upon the members of the New Zealand Assembly continued to influence Gorst's attitude towards Reform.

Gorst perceptively observed that his Tory colleagues would vote for the Bill "only because they believed it must pass".<sup>96</sup> Failure of the

<sup>95</sup>PD, 3rd series, 188 (1867): 1073-1074. The minority clause supported by Gorst which was an attempt to reverse the drift towards single votes of equal weight, was closely akin to the Hare system of proportional representation backed by Radical J.S. Mill in Parliament and agitated for by the Reform League. Both measures were "desperate attempts to preserve the balance of class interest in the constituencies by minimizing the pressure of the mob". (See F.B. Smith, pp. 240-241.)

<sup>96</sup>PD, 3rd series, 188 (1867): 1558.

measure would almost certainly have seen the initiative for electoral reform pass to the Liberals, resulting in a Radical measure even more detrimental to Tory interests.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Disraeli was willing to adopt Radical amendments in order to ensure passage of a Bill in which he was able to retain the initiative in redistribution and the re-drawing of constituency boundaries. He and his supporters calculated that the possible electoral disadvantage resulting from the granting of household suffrage in the mainly Radical boroughs would be offset by an increase of Conservative strength accruing from the expansion of county seats.<sup>98</sup>

Gorst, however, did not share this confidence and accurately predicted that if the Bill passed the Conservatives would be rejected by the people at the next election. Because "the measure was one which greatly disturbed the balance of political power, and gave to one class in the country a preponderating power over the rest ...," presenting a threat to the country's political future, Gorst announced his intention to oppose Third Reading of the Bill: "Without a decent interval in which to change his opinions he could not support the Bill further; if there were an opportunity of voting against it he would do so ...".<sup>99</sup> Thus, during his first term in Parliament Gorst displayed what a critic was later to describe as that "rebellion against the bonds of party" which was to be "the chief ...

<sup>97</sup>P. Smith, p. 89.

<sup>98</sup>Maurice Cowling, 1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution. The Passing of the Second Reform Act (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 70-72. In the general election of 1868, the franchise provisions of the Second Reform Act gave the edge to the Liberals who were returned to office. However, as the Tories had anticipated, redistribution had increased their representation in the counties.

<sup>99</sup>PD, 3rd series, 188 (1867): 1557-1558.

cause of his want of (political) success".<sup>100</sup>

Gorst's protests attracted little attention in Parliament and had no impact upon the Reform legislation in the House. During this period Gorst gained what little recognition he achieved principally through one of Disraeli's speeches in which he referred to "the Honourable Member for Cambridge who seems so proud of his extreme youth".<sup>101</sup> However, during 1867 Gorst also became closely associated with party organization, through his involvement in the formation of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, which was to effectively bring to an end his brief term of political obscurity.

Gorst did not allow his personal antipathy to democracy blind him to political reality. He no doubt recognized that the movement towards parliamentary reform was irresistible and that, once it was enacted, political survival would require the Conservatives to mobilize the support of the newly-enfranchised urban workers. He predicted that "when the constituencies of the country were enlarged by the present Reform Bill, the victory would go to the party possessing the best organisation ...".<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Arthur A. Bauman, "Sir John Gorst", The Saturday Review 123 (1916): 345-346.

<sup>101</sup> Sir Edward G. Clarke, The Story of My Life (London, 1918), p. 96. Gorst had come to Disraeli's attention initially as a result of the former's attack upon the Colonial Under-Secretary, Sir Charles Adderley, for his alleged insensitivity to the grievances of the colonists in Ceylon. Gorst's speech so impressed Disraeli that he instructed Spencer Walpole to acquaint the Member for Cambridge of the fact and Walpole duly told Gorst, "I thought you would like to know that Mr. Disraeli was extremely pleased with your smart attack upon Mr. Adderley". See H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 31. "Character Sketch", p. 578.

<sup>102</sup> Speech on the occasion of a meeting held to discuss proposed Conservative Union, Monday, 29 April, 1867. Cambridge Chronicle, 4 May, 1867, p. 4.

Thus, when, early in 1867, there developed within the Tory party a scheme designed to organize support among the urban working class, Gorst was among its initiators.

The basis for such an organization already existed in the form of a smattering of Conservative working-men's associations which operated around the country, primarily in northern districts. Some were remnants of the old Operatives' Conservative Societies, originally founded in support of Oastler's democratic Toryism during the 1830s and 1840s; others had developed during the second half of 1866 to counteract the influence of Reform agitators.<sup>103</sup> The introduction, and eventual passage, of the Reform Bill, which ultimately added approximately one million householders to the electorate<sup>104</sup> - the majority of which were members of the urban working and lower-middle classes - necessitated a more vigorous approach to the organization of Conservative working men on the part of the Tories. The party could scarcely presume that this new electorate would instinctively recognize its identity of interest with the Conservatives. Thus, the wooing of this new group of voters and its formation into a mass organization of local associations, capable of dealing efficiently with the tasks of registration and canvassing necessary to obtain maximum attendance at the polls on election day, became of vital importance during 1867.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone (London, 1959), pp. 105-106. R.H. Hill, Toryism and the People 1832-1846 (London, 1929. Reprinted ed. Porcupine Press, Philadelphia, 1975), Chaps. 2-3. P. Smith, p. 116.

<sup>104</sup> R.T. McKenzie, British Political Parties, 2nd ed. (New York, 1967), p. 146.

<sup>105</sup> R.T. McKenzie, pp. 146-147. P. Smith, p. 116.

Efforts in this direction were initiated early in 1867, at the behest of Lord Nevill,<sup>106</sup> a party manager and supporter of Disraeli,<sup>107</sup> by a group of young "Disraelian" Tories led by H.C. Raikes, the most active of whom - in addition to Raikes - were W.T. Chorley, A.G. Marten, W.C. Harvey, Edward Clarke and Gorst.<sup>108</sup> At a meeting held at the office of the Imperial Review, a weekly paper which Raikes had just begun publishing, a provisional committee was created and plans were formulated for the establishment of a Conservative Working Men's Association in London and for a nationwide Union of all such organizations. In April the Imperial Review reported that both organizations were in the process of formation and shortly thereafter the inaugural meeting of the Metropolitan Working Men's Association took place in London, followed ten days later by a Manchester meeting of representatives of the Conservative and Constitutional Associations of Lancashire, convened to co-ordinate measures for the organization of the party. During the Autumn months Raikes and Gorst traversed the country promoting the national organization and, finally, on November 12, 1867, representatives of 70 associations from 55 cities and towns met at the Freemason's Tavern, London, to launch the new Union.<sup>109</sup>

Gorst occupied the Chair at this conference and in his opening address set forth the purpose of the meeting, namely, "to consider by what

<sup>106</sup>H. St.J. Raikes, The Life and Letters of Henry Cecil Raikes (London, 1918), p. 59.

<sup>107</sup>Clarke, p. 96. E.J. Feuchtwanger, Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party (Oxford, 1968), p. 123. (Hereafter referred to as Feuchtwanger, Democracy and The Tory Party.)

<sup>108</sup>Clarke, p. 97; Raikes, p. 60.

<sup>109</sup>Clarke, pp. 97-98; H. St.J. Raikes, pp. 60-62.

particular organisation we may make ... Conservative principles effective among the masses".<sup>110</sup> A proposal outlining the methods to be used to achieve this object was presented by the honorary secretary pro tem, Mr. Harvey. The new central union "will afford a centre of communication and action between local associations" and "strengthen the hands of the local associations where existing in their respective districts, and ... encourage the establishment of associations in districts where they are wanting", in order to "help disseminate the Conservative creed and facilitate the recruitment of party supporters".<sup>111</sup> The meeting thereafter drew up a constitution, elected officers - Gorst being amongst the Vice-Presidents selected - and settled upon the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations as the name for their new organization.<sup>112</sup>

Gorst presided at this inaugural meeting because, as he explained in his opening remarks, both Lord Holmesdale and Lord Dartmouth had found it necessary to decline the invitations extended them to serve as Chairman on this occasion.<sup>113</sup> The absence of Conservative notables from this founding conference reflected the party hierarchy's initial cool response to the National Union. The Conservative leadership experienced misgivings regarding this venture into mass organization among the working classes.

<sup>110</sup>Minutes of the Proceedings of the First Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, 1867, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup>Minutes of the Proceedings of the First Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, 1867, pp. 5-6.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-78; pp. 89-90.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 3

Party organizer Major, the Honourable C.J. Keith-Falconer, expressed his hope that the party "shall not be like Frankenstein, and have raised a spirit that we cannot control!" Disraeli halted the issue of a National Union circular because he believed its terms committed the party too strongly.<sup>114</sup> According to H.C. Raikes, the members of the Conservative Cabinet declined to serve the Union in any official capacity for fear "they might be connected by the Radical press with some pamphlet or publication, or some act of the Union which they might not endorse";<sup>115</sup> and those prominent Tories whose political positions depended upon influence were disinclined to adopt formal organisation.<sup>116</sup>

Gorst's participation in the formation of the National Union marked the commencement of his involvement in party organization, in which he was to play an important role in the near future. The Tories' failure

<sup>114</sup>P. Smith, pp. 117-118.

<sup>115</sup>McKenzie, p. 155.

<sup>116</sup>Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1960-1962), 2, 148. J.R. Vincent has suggested that the lukewarm reception given to the National Union by the Conservative Party hierarchy, especially "the absence of top brass from its first meeting", may have arisen from the fact that this elite, "while keen to build up new forms of organisation ... wished to steer clear ... of a body in which Gorst had somehow become a moving spirit", in view of the latter's attitude towards Conservative Reform measures. (J.R. Vincent, "'A Sort of Second-Rate Australia': A Note on Gorst and Democracy, 1965-8", Historical Studies [Australia and New Zealand, April 1973]: 539-544.) However, it appears highly unlikely that the Conservative leadership would consider as a threat a novice back-bencher who, in Vincent's words, was "an unknown young lawyer", of whom even the anti-democratic Tory notables in the House "appear not to have been aware". (Ibid., pp. 541-542.) Moreover, it is doubtful that party chieftains who were reluctant to support the Union because of Gorst's participation in that association would, less than three years later, acquiesce in the decision to entrust him with the key office of party agent. (See below, pp. 40-53 for an account of Gorst's tenure in this office.)

to regain power in the 1868 general election prompted Disraeli and some of his more forward-looking associates to re-appraise the party's management methods, leading them to conclude that Conservative central organization was totally inadequate for the new era of household suffrage and large popular constituencies.<sup>117</sup> At this period, this organization was unmethodical and loosely-structured, being shared by the Whips, the party agent, Markham Spofforth, who was responsible for the daily work of party management, and a variety of federal bodies including the National Union.<sup>118</sup>

The resignation of Spofforth, in March 1870, provided the opportunity to introduce some new blood into central organization. Spofforth's management of party affairs, which, according to Disraeli, had been conducted "not always with perfect judgement",<sup>119</sup> had become the target for criticism from within the party and it was resolved that his successor should be a man of a totally different stripe, one capable of formulating a scheme of party management more in tune with the needs arising out of the creation of a new borough electorate.<sup>120</sup> By April, Gerard Noel, the Chief Whip, was

<sup>117</sup>Hanham, p. 114. W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, 2 vols. (revised ed. London, 1929), 2, p. 524.

<sup>118</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 106. E.J. Feuchtwanger, "J.E. Gorst and the Central Organisation of the Conservative Party, 1870-1882", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 32 (1959), 192-208. Hereafter referred to as Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation".

<sup>119</sup>Disraeli to Cairns, 13 January, 1875, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 106-107.

<sup>120</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 111-114. "Central Organisation", pp. 193-194.



suggesting to Disraeli that Spofforth's former post could be more than adequately filled by Gorst: "... we could not find a better successor than Mr. Gorst ... I think that Gorst combines the necessary qualifications, he is a gentleman, with a good manner ..., has had a legal education, and is also very energetic in all he undertakes".<sup>121</sup> With Disraeli's approval, Noel offered the position to Gorst but the latter was at first reluctant to accept the appointment for doing so meant relinquishing his hopes for an early return to the House of Commons, a stipulation clearly outlined by Noel.<sup>122</sup> However, during these negotiations Gorst was apparently given to understand that his efforts on behalf of the party would be rewarded with the offer of an office in the government when the Conservatives were again returned to power, and, thus, he accordingly agreed to serve as Principal Agent.<sup>123</sup>

Perhaps to emphasize the new direction he hoped to take in party management, Gorst did not occupy the office formerly used as Conservative headquarters by Spofforth but, instead, established himself at 53, Parliament St., Westminster, the home of the newly-reorganized Conservative Registration Association, which over the course of the next year become known as the Central Office. Gorst's chief goal as party agent was the formation of an organization capable of harnessing to the Tory party the urban conservative electorate, including both the newly-enfranchised working classes and the

<sup>121</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/114, Noel to Disraeli, 14 April, 1870.

<sup>122</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/102, Noel to Disraeli, 2 April, 1870.  
B/xxi/N/115, Noel to Disraeli, 22 April, 1870.

<sup>123</sup>According to Gorst's son, his father was assured by Disraeli that "If the party comes to power ... you can look with certainty for some substantial gratification of your laudable ambition". (Quoted in H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 32.)

middle-class professionals and businessmen who were becoming alienated from Gladstonianism, a potential source of future local leaders. This infusion of urban political strength was essential if the Conservatives were to undermine the Liberal domination of the larger boroughs, given a substantial boost by the 1867 Reform Act's granting of household suffrage to the urban workers - traditionally Radical supporters - which was a prerequisite for any future Conservative electoral success.<sup>124</sup> As Gorst explained to the Chief Whip: "We are generally strong in the counties and weak in the boroughs, and we shall never attain stable political power until the boroughs are conquered".<sup>125</sup>

The type of difficulties confronting the party in its pursuit of a "new Conservatism" were reflected in one of Gorst's first reports on conditions in the larger borough constituencies, in this instance, Rochester, which he compiled after only a few months in office:

The register has not been attended to for years; no Conservative agent appears at the revision court. The mayor, the entire town council, the overseers, assistant overseers, and rate collectors are all radicals: both register and burgers-roll are no doubt affected by this circumstance. The chief employers of labour are of the same party. ... There are no Conservative large employers of Labour. Mr. Nicholson (a retired Banker), Mr. Manclark and other of the gentry who take interest in the county elections take little in borough elections ... The Chapter has been 'antediluvian' and exercised no influence at all.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup>Blake, Conservative Party, pp. 146-148. Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p.91, p.114. The granting of household suffrage established a ratio of electors to population in the English boroughs at one to eight, and in the counties at one to fifteen, at the time of the 1868 General Election. In the Scottish boroughs, the ratio was one to nine, in Scottish counties one to twenty-seven (F.B. Smith, p. 239). In the 1868 electoral contest the Conservatives were successful in only 25 out of 114 seats for boroughs over 50,000 and won only 4 out of 25 London seats. (Blake, Disraeli, p. 512.)

<sup>125</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/120a, Gorst to Noel, 22 September, 1870.

<sup>126</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/234, J.E. Gorst to B. Disraeli, 25 July, 1870.

In order to eradicate these forms of political and organizational weakness, the Central Office, under Gorst's supervision, worked to establish local associations, primarily in the larger boroughs,<sup>127</sup> which were to function as constituency electoral organizations by assuming responsibility for the selection and management of local candidates at election time<sup>128</sup> and, at the same time, propagate the Conservative doctrine, chiefly among the newly-enfranchised working classes.<sup>129</sup> To facilitate the formation of these new bodies, Gorst travelled around the country making personal contact with Tory leaders in the constituencies urging them to form committees from which the local associations might develop.<sup>130</sup>

At first the activities of the Central Office closely duplicated the work being undertaken by the National Union, under Secretary Leonard Sedgwick's direction, resulting in some confusion at constituency level, a state of affairs which, according to Gorst, constituted a "method of

<sup>127</sup>In the smaller boroughs and the counties, where electioneering remained largely influence-based, there was as yet little scope for the development of new organizational methods. In 1873, Disraeli did establish a separate committee of prominent Conservatives to oversee safe seats, presumably chiefly in the counties. (Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", p. 197.)

<sup>128</sup>Disraeli told Gorst that priority in the new scheme of electoral organization was to be given to the advance selection of candidates at constituency level. (H.E. Gorst, The Earl of Beaconsfield [London, 1900], p. 125.) Hereafter referred to as H.E. Gorst, Beaconsfield. See also, Monypenny and Buckle, 2, 524-525.

<sup>129</sup>Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", p. 197.

<sup>130</sup>H.E. Gorst, Beaconsfield, p. 126. "Character Sketch", p. 579.

proceeding ... not calculated to create confidence on the part of the country associations in the central organisation of the party".<sup>131</sup> This difficulty was surmounted by the resignation of Sedgwick, the appointment of Gorst as Honorary Secretary of the National Union, in 1871,<sup>132</sup> and the subsequent transfer of National Union headquarters to the Central Office premises at 53 Parliament St., from where, during the next few years, the two bodies worked in close co-operation.<sup>133</sup>

Gorst was convinced that the future electoral success of the Tory party rested with working-class Conservatism, the so-called Tory Democracy, which he rather mistakenly assumed formed the core of Disraeli's domestic policy,<sup>134</sup> and it was towards the newly-enfranchised workers in the boroughs that the main thrust of his organizational efforts was directed.<sup>135</sup> However, Gorst's enthusiasm for working-class Toryism was not shared by certain influential sections of the party, particularly the county squirearchy, as the cool reception given the formation of the National Union illustrated.

<sup>131</sup> Gorst to H.C. Raikes, 8 March, 1871, quoted in H. St.J. Raikes, p. 63.

<sup>132</sup> Report of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, presented at the Fifth Annual Conference of the Union, June 2, 1871: 1871 Annual Conference Report. 1872 Annual Conference Report, p. 7.

<sup>133</sup> E.J. Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", pp. 196-197.

<sup>134</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/259, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1878. Blake, Conservative Party, p. 145. For Disraeli and Tory Democracy see: James Cornford, "The Transformation of Conservatism in the Late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies, 7 (1963): 35-66. Richard W. Davis, Disraeli (Boston, 1976), pp. 170-181; P. Smith, pp. 2-3; Stewart, pp. 358-366.

<sup>135</sup> Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", p. 197.

Moreover, the defeat of 1868 was perceived to be the bitter fruits of Tory democracy by large numbers of Conservatives, which, in addition to weakening Disraeli's position in the party, served to discredit further Gorst's policy in their eyes. Consequently, Gorst received virtually no encouragement from party management in his efforts to rally the support of urban workers to the Conservative cause; only Disraeli and Cairns among the party hierarchy concerned themselves with Central Office activities.<sup>136</sup>

Gorst believed that the principal source of increased working-class support was to be found in the northern industrial boroughs, particularly those of Lancashire where the party had gained additional seats in the 1868 election.<sup>137</sup> Based upon his close personal acquaintanceship with the County Palatine, Gorst concluded that the operatives of Lancashire were "genuine bona fide Conservatives" and this county the "stronghold of the party". Because in the urban centres such as London, Birmingham and a number of smaller boroughs, where the craftsmen laboured in small-scale industries producing goods for the wealthier sections of society, the workers were largely under the sway of radical influences, Gorst reasoned that "It was amongst the employers of large staple trades like cotton and shipbuilding that we must look in the first instance for conservative workmen".<sup>138</sup>

Although Tory gains in Lancashire at the 1868 general election gave credence to Gorst's assumptions, they had not succeeded in convincing

<sup>136</sup> Feuchtwanger, "Conservative Organisation", p. 197. Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 3-8. H.E. Gorst, Beaconsfield, Chap. 8 and pp. 84-87.

<sup>137</sup> Hanham, Chap. 14

<sup>138</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/120a, Gorst to G. Noel, 22 September, 1870.

opponents of Tory Democracy within the party of the viability of borough Conservatism. Thus, when, in autumn 1870, representatives of urban Lancashire's Tories pressed him to have their party leader visit the county,<sup>139</sup> Gorst seized the opportunity to promote such a visit in the belief that Disraeli's participation in a large public demonstration of working-class support would consolidate his leadership position within the party and fire public imagination, while at the same time serving to illustrate the strength of popular Toryism and its attraction for working men, and the value and effectiveness of Gorst's organizational methods.<sup>140</sup> Gorst also anticipated that Disraeli's attendance would bring political benefits in the form of a Conservative swing in the neighbouring large boroughs of Yorkshire's West Riding.<sup>141</sup>

In November 1870, Gorst informed Disraeli that he would shortly receive an invitation to attend a "County Demonstration" in Lancashire, "signed by every class in every part of the County", which the operatives in particular had been most enthusiastically supporting.<sup>142</sup> However, this was overly optimistic. While the middle and working class Conservatives in the boroughs were genuinely eager to receive their leader, certain sections of the county gentry, still bitter towards Disraeli on account of the Reform Bill, were opposed to any such visit.<sup>143</sup> Only one month later

<sup>139</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/120a, Gorst to Noel, 22 September, 1870.

<sup>140</sup> Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", pp. 198-199.

<sup>141</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/120a, Gorst to G. Noel, 22 September, 1870.

<sup>142</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/235, Gorst to Disraeli, 19 November, 1870.

<sup>143</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xiii/109a, Algernon Egerton to Disraeli, 25 December, 1870, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 9.

Gorst himself was obliged to acknowledge to his leader, "in south west Lancashire ... there was lukewarmness" towards the proposed visit, whilst again stressing the extent of working-class enthusiasm for the event. "Among the working classes of Preston, Bolton, Blackburn, Accrington, Clitheroe, Darwen, Burnley - the men by whom the Lancashire borough elections were carried - there is a very strong desire that a workingman's meeting should take place at either Blackburn or Preston. They want to see and hear you and they want you to see the newly-enfranchised electors of your own creation. Amongst them at least you would receive a genuine thanks for the Reform Bill of 1867 ...".<sup>144</sup>

The lack of unanimity amongst Lancashire Tories, and the reluctance of Lord Derby to sanction the proposed demonstration, convinced the county's Conservative leadership that a visit by Disraeli would be inopportune in 1870,<sup>145</sup> a conclusion apparently also reached by the party leader himself for he declined the proffered invitation shortly thereafter.<sup>146</sup> Consequently, the project hung fire for over a year, awaiting the development of a favourable consensus on the question, and the demonstration eventually took place in Manchester on April 3, 1872. In the interim, Gorst worked assiduously to promote the event. In April 1871 he passed along to Disraeli a resolution issued by the Lancashire invitation committee expressing its regret that circumstances in the county had prevented the

<sup>144</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/236, Gorst to Disraeli, 22 December, 1870.

<sup>145</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 9.

<sup>146</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/237, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1871.

proposed visit from taking place and reiterating their desire to have him attend a meeting in the county,<sup>147</sup> and following a visit to the area in December of the same year, Gorst assured his chief that "The people are as eager as ever for your promised visit, but they thoroughly understand your position as leader of the party, and they will wait confidently and patiently until you yourself give the signal for such a demonstration as they contemplate".<sup>148</sup> Once the decision to hold the meeting was finally made, Gorst played a key role in formulating the arrangements, which included consultations with influential Manchester Tories, meetings with local party leaders around the county, and the preparation of detailed information on individual constituencies to assist Disraeli respond to addresses delivered by their representatives at a monster rally in Manchester.<sup>149</sup>

Disraeli's visit proved to be an immense personal triumph which succeeded in strengthening his leadership position.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, this success, and the volume of work undertaken by Gorst in preparation of the event, reflected both his political insight and the efficacy of his organizational system.<sup>151</sup> However, opposition which had served to delay the demonstration for over a year after it was first proposed indicated the degree of mistrust with which a large proportion of the party viewed

<sup>147</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/237, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1871.

<sup>148</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G.239, Gorst to Disraeli, 8 December, 1871.

<sup>149</sup> Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 118-119.

<sup>150</sup> Monypenny and Buckle, 2, p. 532.

<sup>151</sup> H.E. Gorst, Beaconsfield, p. 135.



Gorst's ideal of popular Toryism.<sup>152</sup>

Important as it was, the Manchester demonstration represented only one aspect of Gorst's organizational endeavours during the early 'seventies. While the preparations for the Lancashire visit were proceeding he continued to conduct the day-to-day operations of the Central Office which embraced a formidable amount and variety of tasks including the compilation of national registration and election statistics, assistance with the candidate selection at constituency level, promotion of and assistance with the formation of new local Associations, and the publication of National Union pamphlets on diverse political questions.<sup>153</sup> In the summer of 1871, Central Office established a Conservative Central Press Association<sup>154</sup> to help foster the Conservative provincial press and, in order to further publicize the Tory viewpoint. Gorst also served as political representative for the London Conservative daily, the Standard, which he provided with authoritative information relating to party policy.<sup>155</sup> Under Gorst's direction the activities of the Central Office developed slowly but steadily after 1870. Less than two years after his appointment as Principal Agent, Gorst was able to inform Disraeli "that during the past year no less than 69 new Conservative Associations ... have been formed in England and Wales ..., and there are at the present moment 420 Associations, the great majority of which are in good working order, and most of which have largely increased their number of members since last year".<sup>156</sup>

<sup>152</sup>Freuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 120.

<sup>153</sup>H.E. Gorst, Beaconsfield, pp. 126-131. Hanham, pp. 359-361.

<sup>154</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/238, Gorst to Disraeli, 23 September, 1871.

<sup>155</sup>Freuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 120.

<sup>156</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/240, Gorst to Disraeli, 12 February, 1873.

Central Office enterprise was also reflected in a series of Conservative by-election victories occurring between 1871 and 1873.<sup>157</sup>

However, despite these achievements the progress of Central Office's organizational work fell short of what Gorst had anticipated. By 1874 only thirty-three of the forty-nine boroughs with a population exceeding 50,000 possessed official Conservative Associations. Of the remainder, eight were under the jurisdiction of registration associations, three were regulated by Conservative clubs, in another three a solicitor functioned as agent, and two were without any Conservative organization whatsoever.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, the majority of the traditional elements within the party continued to be openly antagonistic towards, or remained aloof from, Central Office activities. Thus, notwithstanding Gorst's crucial role in party organization, the leadership made no attempt to establish a rapport with him<sup>159</sup> and he was not kept fully informed of policy decisions on matters falling within Central Office areas of concern, as events during the Ministerial crisis of 1873 illustrated.<sup>160</sup>

Following the Liberals' defeat in the House in March 1873, Gorst informed the Standard that Disraeli was prepared to form a government, an assumption he based upon what he divined to be the general feelings of the party, having been kept "entirely in the dark as to the opinions and wishes of the Leader".<sup>161</sup> However, Disraeli refused office and the resulting disparity between Gorst's expectations, as expressed in the Standard, and

<sup>157</sup>R.T. McKenzie, p. 263.

<sup>158</sup>Hanham, p. 115

<sup>159</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/249, Gorst to M. Corry, 19 February, 1874.

<sup>160</sup>For background to this crisis see Blake, Disraeli, pp. 527-529.

<sup>161</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/241, Gorst to M. Corry, 17 March, 1873.

the actual course of events not only reflected the extent to which he was excluded from the mainstream of party affairs but, in his eyes at least, also served to lessen his credibility as an authoritative source of information on party policy. Consequently, Gorst bluntly, and with ill-concealed bitterness, requested Disraeli's secretary, Montague Corry, that he be kept better informed of party decisions in order that he might fulfil his obligation to the Standard "in a manner consistent with my own honour". Gorst also made known his dissatisfaction over the lack of communication existing between himself and the Conservative hierarchy: "Since I have been political representative of the Standard I have never been ... thoroughly 'en rapport' with the leaders of the Party as I expected to be when at Noel's request I reluctantly accepted the position".<sup>162</sup> Here perhaps can be seen the beginnings of a disillusionment with his position as party agent, his treatment during the Ministerial crisis no doubt having diminished the expectations of political advancement he had earlier expected would be derived from the post.

Despite his dissatisfaction, Gorst carried on his duties at Central Office with his customary diligence which included keeping Disraeli informed on a variety of matters, amongst them proposed National Union publications, by-election prospects, and the progress of the Liberal government's negotiations with leaders of the Nine Hour Movement, the

<sup>162</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/249, Gorst to M. Corry, 19 February, 1874. The leadership's reluctance to familiarize Gorst with key Conservative issues was apparently increased as a result of his association with the Standard. This newspaper represented the views of the new Conservatism of the commercial middle class which was anathema to certain aristocratic and landed elements within the party (Feuchtwanger, "Central Organisation", pp. 199-200.)

latter information being obtained from a Tory M.P. contact of Gorst's in the West Riding.<sup>163</sup> Gorst continued to pay particular attention to the furtherance of borough Conservatism. When, in Spring of 1873, Disraeli contemplated opposing Forster's Education Bill, Gorst counselled against such a move on the grounds that it would alienate an important section of the party, namely, those in the boroughs and populous county ridings, who were "zealous and active promoters of Education", and who Gorst anticipated would supply the future electoral strength of the party. "I confess that the idea of defeating the Government and having an appeal to the country on this question fills me with dismay. We cannot carry the English majority we hope for without the active help of those, who on the question will be opposed to our policy".<sup>164</sup>

Early the following year Gladstone unexpectedly dissolved parliament presenting Gorst with the opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of the organization he had worked so tirelessly to perfect since 1870. The premise upon which he had structured party re-organization - the potential of borough Conservatism - received overwhelming justification from the Tory victory at the general election which gave them an overall majority of 50 seats, their first majority in over twenty years.<sup>165</sup> Of the 114

<sup>163</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/244, Gorst to Disraeli, 11 September 1873; B/xxi/G/245, Gorst to Disraeli, 23 September, 1873; B/xxi/G/247, Gorst to Disraeli, 19 January, 1874.

<sup>164</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/243, Gorst to Disraeli, 21 June, 1873. A party council convened to discuss the Bill also advised Disraeli against his proposed action, leading him to give way on the issue. (P. Smith, p. 180.)

<sup>165</sup> Blake, The Conservative Party, p. 77. According to W.T. Stead, immediately prior to the election Gorst predicted precisely such a majority, a calculation received with derision by the "old gang" at the Carlton Club who dubbed the figure "Gorst's Champagne Estimate" on the grounds that it could only have been arrived at following "liberal libations of champagne". ("Character Sketch", p. 579.)

boroughs with populations over 50,000, where the majority of working-class voters were to be found, the Conservatives took 44, compared to 25 in 1868. The party also obtained a higher proportion of seats in the "industrial" counties than in the English counties as a whole. Moreover, substantial gains were made in the former Liberal strongholds in middle-class areas of London and its environs: in addition to the city itself, suburban Surrey, Kent and Essex swung to the Tories, whilst Middlesex and Westminster each elected two Conservative members.<sup>166</sup> Although this triumph could not be credited solely to Gorst's endeavours, they were a crucial factor in the revival of 1874,<sup>167</sup> and "... Disraeli always regarded the victory ... as largely due to his (Gorst's) arrangements".<sup>168</sup>

Despite the role played by urban Conservatism in restoring the Conservatives to office, its representatives were noticeably absent from the seats of power when Disraeli's new government was formed in February 1874. Ministerial positions went almost exclusively to members of the

<sup>166</sup> Hanham, p. 92, note 2, pp. 225-226. Donald Southgate, "From Disraeli to Law", in The Conservatives: A History from their Origins to 1965, ed. The Rt. Hon. Lord Butler (London, 1977), p. 183. P. Thompson, "Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London 1880-1900", Past and Present, no. 27 (1964): 74. (Thompson erroneously gives 1875 as the date of this election.)

<sup>167</sup> Hanham, p. 222. For a discussion of other factors contributing to the victory see Blake, Disraeli, pp. 553-558. Hanham, pp. 227-228.

<sup>168</sup> W.S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, new ed. (London, 1951), p. 114.

traditional ruling class.<sup>169</sup> Only two representatives of the industrial and commercial middle-class received such appointments: Richard Cross became Home Secretary and, outside the Cabinet, W.H. Smith received the post of Financial Secretary to the Treasury.<sup>170</sup> Gorst himself was left entirely out in the cold; he received no recognition whatsoever for his services to the party.<sup>171</sup>

Gorst's official engagement as Principal Agent terminated following the general election, and he now looked to the party to reward him with a government office and assistance in securing an early re-entry into Parliament, in fulfillment of the promise supposedly made to him at the time of his appointment in 1870. An opportunity to discharge this latter obligation soon arose. In May 1874 a vacancy occurred at Midhurst and a recommendation from the Tory leadership would have placed it in Gorst's hands. However, the new Chief Whip, apparently with Disraeli's approval, threw the party's support behind another aspiring candidate, Admiral Hornby.<sup>172</sup> Not unnaturally, Gorst felt himself to have been treated shabbily in this affair. "Now I would have given way in a moment

<sup>169</sup>W.T. Stead describes this process more colourfully: "The old aristocratic gang, which had sulked in its tent during the time Mr. Gorst was toiling and moiling in the constituencies, returned with a rush as soon as the spoils of office were within reach and established themselves in full possession of the field". ("Character Sketch", p. 580.)

<sup>170</sup>Even these concessions to middle-class support were resented by some aristocratic and squirearchical elements within the party. For example, Lord Randolph Churchill very soon dubbed the pair "Marshall and Snelgrove" and they became the butt of his sarcasms on "bourgeois placemen". (See Viscount Chilston, W.H. Smith (London, 1965, pp. 83-86.)

<sup>171</sup>According to his son, "There was some talk afterwards of a dinner and the presentation of some plate, but nothing came of it". (H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 34.)

<sup>172</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/251, Gorst to Disraeli, 7 May, 1874.

to Admiral Hornby, if I had been asked to do so for the good of the cause, but I think that my claim to consideration of the Party should have been recognised and not ignored", he complained to Disraeli.<sup>173</sup>

As the months elapsed following the election without bringing Gorst any offer of preferment, he grew increasingly resentful towards the party leadership. Upon receiving a rejection to his request for the consideration of his brother for a minor post at the Treasury, he acknowledged to that department's Financial Secretary, W.H. Smith:

I am by this time so accustomed to the refusal of every request I make of the Conservative Government, whether on political or personal grounds, that I am neither surprised nor mortified at the announcement that the promise made to me on my brother's behalf is not to be fulfilled. ... I greatly deplore the forgetfulness which all the members of the Government exhibit of those men, to whose exertions they largely owe their present positions ... and I cannot see how we are to keep our party together, unless those who have worked and made sacrifices for the party in the days of adversity are to have some share in the advantages which attend success.<sup>174</sup>

This treatment at the hands of the party leadership also prompted Gorst to complain to Hart Dyke regarding the general distribution of rewards by party management: "... looking back on the nine months that we have been in office, I cannot but perceive that all our patronage has been divided between the personal friends of the ministers and our political opponents; nothing whatever has been done to reward those who have shared with us the labours and troubles of opposition ...", a practice which Gorst asserted had produced "general discontent ... among their most faithful adherents".<sup>175</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/251, Gorst to Disraeli, 7 May, 1874.

<sup>174</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/D/463c, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 11 November, 1874.

<sup>175</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/D/463b, Gorst to W.H. Dyke, 19 November, 1874.

When, in January 1875, the resignation of the Tory Member for Chatham provided another chance for the Conservatives to compensate Gorst, the party hierarchy opposed his candidature.<sup>176</sup> Despite their opposition, Gorst on this occasion succeeded in obtaining the nomination, was successfully elected, and entered the House on February 18, 1875<sup>177</sup> "with a somewhat cynical determination to say his say and go his own way without regard to the convenience of party chiefs".<sup>178</sup>

<sup>176</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 34-35.

<sup>177</sup>Chatham News, 16 January, 1875. Ibid., February 20, 1875.

<sup>178</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 580.



## CHAPTER II

### THE QUEST FOR TORY DEMOCRACY: GORST AND PARTY ORGANIZATION, 1875-1885

Gorst's success at the polls in 1875 brought no accompanying reward of office from the Conservative Government. Finally, in November 1875, ten months after his return to the House, he was offered a minor government position, that of Secretary to the Local Government Board. However, after a few days' reflection he declined the offer, being convinced that with the President of the Board also in the Commons the post would lead only to "political extinction".<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, no further offers were made to Gorst and he later expressed regret at not having made a personal appeal to Disraeli for preferment at that time.<sup>2</sup> This came to light during an exchange of letters between Gorst and Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, which took place in the aftermath of the Prime Minister's final cabinet re-shuffle of 1878 in which Gorst had again been excluded from office. Beaconsfield reportedly told Gorst, "I have always been accustomed to people pestering me for appointments, and could not understand you keeping away. You have been very badly treated, and I am extremely sorry for it."<sup>3</sup> Gorst hastened to re-assure Disraeli that he exonerated

<sup>1</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/254, Gorst to Disraeli, 20 November, 1875; *ibid.*, B/xxi/G/259, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1878.

<sup>2</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/259, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1878.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in H.E. Gorst, The Fourth Party (London, 1908), p. 34.

his leader from any vestige of responsibility for his mistreatment:

I am sorry that my letter of Saturday last was so ill-expressed as to convey anything like a 'reproach'. I have never supposed that you were either responsible for, or even cognizant of, the way in which the party managers have since 1874 behaved towards me: and I have regarded their hostility as a natural consequence of my steadfast adherence to those popular principles in politics, which you taught me, which won the boroughs in 1874, and which though for the time being in discredit must ultimately prevail.

I am to blame for not having asked for an interview with you before declining the offer you so kindly made me in 1875. I then believed that, for a person like myself without social interest, the acceptance of such an offer meant political extinction.<sup>4</sup>

Disraeli was certainly "cognizant" of the party management's hostility towards Gorst. He had apparently acquiesced in Dyke's decision to by-pass Gorst at the time of the Midhurst vacancy<sup>5</sup>, and on at least two occasions thereafter had received from Gorst correspondence outlining the leadership's continuing disregard of him.<sup>6</sup> Gorst had apparently fallen victim to Disraeli's conservative strategy of the post-election years. In order to preserve his newly-eminent position and party unity, both largely products of the 1874 electoral victory, Disraeli created a mainly patrician government, traditional in Tory administrations: half the Cabinet were peers, the Whips were drawn from the landed gentry, and preferment in other areas was given chiefly to representatives of the great Tory families. Consequently, "men without aristocratic connections, but with considerable claims on grounds of merit, political weight, or services to the party in

<sup>4</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/259, Gorst to Disraeli, 4 April, 1878.

<sup>5</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/251, Gorst to Disraeli, 7 May, 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/257, Gorst to Disraeli, 30 March, 1876. Ibid., B/xxi/G/258, Gorst to Disraeli, 3 March, 1877. In his letter of March 1876, in which he sought Disraeli's consideration for a rumoured vacancy at the Treasury, Gorst reminded his leader that "I am the only person engaged in party management in 1874 to whom our accession to office has brought no political advancement as yet."

many cases received no preferment".<sup>7</sup> Among this latter group were to be found many middle-class borough members, representatives of the urban Conservatism espoused by Gorst. Disraeli's failure to act on Gorst's behalf was thus compatible with his current policy with regard to non-aristocratic elements within the party.

Meanwhile, whilst working to establish his legal practice, Gorst continued to serve the party management informally, although his official engagement as party agent had ended with the victory of 1874.<sup>8</sup> However, circumstances soon rendered this arrangement increasingly unworkable. Relations between Gorst and the party management, already strained because of their indifference to his requests for preferment, were to deteriorate further as a consequence of changes occurring in central organization after the general election. Gorst now found himself being consulted less and less as the Whips gradually assumed control over electoral management, thus negating much of the work carried out by Gorst and his colleagues between 1870 and 1874, particularly with regard to the boroughs.<sup>9</sup> Gorst's reaction was expressed in a letter to Disraeli shortly after the November 1874 municipal elections:

<sup>7</sup> E.J. Feuchtwanger, Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party (Oxford, 1968), pp. 16-17 and Chap. 3. Hereafter referred to as Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party.

<sup>8</sup> After the election, Gorst had "consented, at Sir W. Dyke's request and out of personal regard to him, to remain in a sort of undefined position until some fresh arrangement could be made". (Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/258, Gorst to Disraeli, 3 March, 1877.)

<sup>9</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/258, Gorst to Disraeli, 3 March, 1877.

... These returns show that whereas in the contests of 1873 we won 112 seats and lost 83, in the contests of 1874 we have won 93 and lost 100 ... I do not dissent from your view that the mass of the people is, or may be made, Tory. But masses cannot move without leaders; and in English Boroughs we are grievously deficient in Tory leaders. Those of the higher classes in Boroughs who take part in politics have everything to lose and nothing to gain by attaching themselves to the Tory party; and we therefore find wealth, influence, ability, and all local political forces arranged against us. I am in hopes that the power and patronage which the possession of office has given us might have been to some extent at least so used as to create in the Boroughs a permanent Tory faction.<sup>10</sup>

Gorst went on to complain that the party management, none of whom were Borough members, were either unable to appreciate the situation or had resigned themselves to an erosion of borough electoral strength.

However, the leadership was not prepared to take Gorst's warnings seriously. When they were brought to the attention of Dyke he brushed them aside. Although he was obliged to admit that the returns appeared to support Gorst's view that the party was losing ground, he assured Disraeli that Gorst's diagnosis of the situation was overly pessimistic. He apparently felt that the latter's conclusions were coloured by what he perceived to be mistreatment by the party leadership, citing Gorst's complaints concerning the direction of party patronage and his failure to obtain office for his brother as examples of Gorst's resentment. Despite the friction between them, Dyke apparently found Gorst too valuable an associate to dispense with his services at this time for he concluded his letter to Disraeli with the admission, "He is I am bound to say of great use to me with all his crotchets and since our talk the other day he writes me a cheerful letter and he is working hard now at the St. Ives Election ... Things are so quiet now that I am much disposed to keep Gorst in hand,

<sup>10</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/D/463a, Gorst to Disraeli, 2 December, 1874.

crotchets and all".<sup>11</sup>

The municipal elections of 1875 resulted in further reverses for the Conservatives, and further calls to action from Gorst,<sup>12</sup> all of which went unheeded by Disraeli and the party management. This indifference, together with their continuing insensibility towards Gorst's requests for preferment, intensified his criticism of the party management, increasing the acrimony between them. At the same time, Gorst's behaviour in the House following his re-entry into Parliament in February 1875, succeeded in further alienating the leadership. As he had intimated whilst on the Chatham hustings ("if returned ... he should always be sufficiently independent to say what he thought"<sup>13</sup>), Gorst refused to toe the party line. On two occasions he led the Opposition into the lobby against the Government.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, early in 1877 the decision was made to dispense with his services and, after being notified of this by Dyke, Gorst wrote to Disraeli outlining his grievances and warning him again of the perilous state into which party organization had fallen since 1874:

During this period I have found myself without any power and with continually decreasing influence, having had little or no voice in the selection of candidates and the management of elections; and I have had the misfortune to witness the whole system, to establish which so much trouble was taken, gradually fall into decay. Our organisation in 1877 is greatly inferior to what it was in 1874; and the attempt to renovate and improve it has not come a day too soon. But to succeed in the attempt you must put a stop to that which has been the chief cause of all the mischief that has occurred - the system which Sir W. Dyke has been required to follow - of managing elections at the Treasury. I always thought this a most unwise policy on

<sup>11</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/D/463, W. Dyke to Disraeli, 8 December, 1874.

<sup>12</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/253, Gorst to Disraeli, 10 November, 1875; B/xxi/G/255, Gorst to Disraeli, 22 November, 1875.

<sup>13</sup>Chatham News, Feb. 13, 1875.

<sup>14</sup>"Character Sketch: December. Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews, 3 (1891): 580. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch".

the part of the late government, and since we have been in office experience has justified that opinion. Instead of the management being vested in my office, under Sir W. Dyke's control, I have been consulted intermittently. ... The established principle of non-interference with the local leaders has in many instances been neglected; and these leaders have been constantly offended and alienated both in distribution of patronage and in other matters.<sup>15</sup>

In order to mitigate these problems, Gorst advised Disraeli to divorce electoral management from the Treasury. He suggested that an independent M.P. be placed in charge of party management, but that a finance committee, other than any one individual, oversee electoral expenditures. Gorst concluded with the admonition that if nothing was done the Conservative organization at the next general election would be as inferior to that of the Liberals as it was superior in 1874.

Once again Gorst's counsel was ignored and his prophecies of disaster were soon to be proved correct. His replacement at Central Office, W.B. Skene, was ineffectual and the Whips' practice of controlling electoral management from the Treasury continued through 1879, at which time organization collapsed completely when Dyke fell ill from over-work and the 1880 general election was conducted amid dislocation and disarray.<sup>16</sup>

The election result, a resounding Liberal victory, undoubtedly owed something to the Conservative leadership's neglect of the party machinery following Gorst's departure in 1877.<sup>17</sup> Gorst himself survived the swing to the Liberals, retaining his seat at Chatham, albeit with a reduced majority,<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/258, Gorst to Disraeli, 3 March, 1877.

<sup>16</sup>Hanham, pp. 362-363.

<sup>17</sup>T.O. Lloyd, The General Election of 1880 (London, 1968), pp. 79-81. Election Results: Conservatives 237; Liberals 353; Irish Nationalists, 62.

<sup>18</sup>F.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918 (London, 1974), p. 82.

and the Gladstone Parliament which followed was to witness the further development of both his political independence and his commitment to Tory democracy which had marked his apprenticeship in the House between 1875 and 1880.

Rumblings of discontent with party organization echoed through Conservative circles in the wake of the 1880 election fiasco. There were numerous complaints that the liaison between Tory headquarters and the constituencies was highly ineffective.<sup>19</sup> According to one defeated Conservative candidate, and future Solicitor-General, the party machinery at this period suffered grave defects: "Election affairs had gone to the dogs ... The care, the experience, the personal supervision which Mr. Disraeli, assisted by a few practised hands, had bestowed upon the preparations for the general election of 1874 disappeared. A weak but widespreading centralisation enervated the vigour of the provincial organization".<sup>20</sup> During the National Union's post mortem of the defeat, held during its annual conference of that year, Gorst concluded that "compared with the organization of their opponents they were left far behind".<sup>21</sup>

The advantages to be derived from efficient organization were evidenced by the Liberal victory. Moreover, the distinct possibility of the extension of the franchise to the counties in the not too distant future made the overhaul of Tory party organization an urgent necessity.

<sup>19</sup>See "Conservative Reorganisation", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 127 (1880): 804-810; "A Tory View of the Election", Nineteenth Century 7 (1880): 905-916.

<sup>20</sup>Sir Edward Clarke, The Story of My Life (London, 1918), p. 95.

<sup>21</sup>Minutes of the 1880 Conference of the National Union, quoted in T.O. Lloyd, p. 80.

Consequently, when the Conservative Cabinet assembled for its final meeting it resolved to take "some serious steps to improve our organization" and a standing committee, headed by W.H. Smith, was established to consider the problem.<sup>22</sup> The chief results of this body's deliberations, to which Gorst contributed,<sup>23</sup> were the appointment of a permanent committee to oversee party organization and the re-appointment of Gorst as party agent. The new committee, which eventually became known as the Central Committee, was composed of individuals experienced in party management - the Whips and a number of party officials and prominent Tory politicians - plus a representative of the National Union, with the Principal Agent, Gorst, as executive officer and W.H. Smith as Chairman. It was essentially just another version of the ad hoc election committees utilized by the party in the contests of 1868 and 1874 resurrected in more formal guise.

The decision to re-engage Gorst was apparently made with some reluctance; memories of the acrimony which had developed between Gorst and the party managers during the final stages of his previous term of office as party agent obviously remained fresh. There were, however, compelling arguments in favour of his reinstatement. The party was sorely in need of his expertise and, in addition, it was thought that his recall would work to conciliate borough leaders currently venting their anger in the National Union Council over the election defeat.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the Tory hierarchy relinquished their initial objections and re-appointed him agent.

<sup>22</sup>Iddesleigh Papers, Add. MS.500 63A, Northcote's Diary 20, (April 1880), quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 5, 21, 26 May, 1880, cited in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 144.

<sup>24</sup>James Cornford, "The Transformation of Conservatism in the Late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies 7 (1963-64): 35-66.



Nevertheless, Northcote proposed that Gorst's re-instatement should be initially an "experimental arrangement", apparently allowing for a trial period during which the party could assess his performance in office.<sup>25</sup>

However, the party management's willingness to accede to Gorst's terms during negotiations conducted between them, prior to his re-engagement, reveal that despite their reservations, they still wanted to have Gorst in harness once again. At a meeting held between Northcote, W.H. Smith and Gorst in early July 1880, the offer of the position of agent was made to the latter along with the promise that "if he gave his assistance in re-organizing the electoral machinery of the constituencies, and the party were successful, his services would be recognised by the offer of office for which he might be eligible". Gorst at once declined the offer because, as he pointed out to Northcote and Smith, the same assurance had been given to him before the victory of 1874 "and the only offer he got was an Under-Secretaryship with the Chief in the Commons, thus practically shelving him". Smith hastened to reassure Gorst that he could expect a Law Officer's appointment consistent with his qualifications, and he now agreed to serve on a part-time basis on the condition that the future offer "should be one which would not silence him in the House or deny him the chance of showing his own ability and claim for further political promotion".<sup>26</sup>

At a subsequent meeting between the three, Gorst succeeded in obtaining further concessions to his independence. The Central Committee had intended to keep control of party monies in its own and the Whips'

<sup>25</sup> Hambledon Papers, PS6/617, Northcote to W.H. Smith, 15 May, 1880.

<sup>26</sup> Hambledon Papers, Ps6/626. Notes of an interview between Sir S. Northcote, W.H. Smith and Mr. Gorst, 7 July, 1880.

hands, allowing Gorst jurisdiction over candidate selection, but at his insistence Smith was obliged to grant him some measure of authority over finances. Thus, Smith's original proposal stating Gorst was "not to be at liberty to promise any money" was changed to read "Mr. Gorst should in all cases initiate proposals though he should have no power to do this without the sanction of the committee".<sup>27</sup>

Personal differences proved to be one impediment to the development of a rapport between Gorst and party management. In the wake of the 1880 election an analyst of the Conservative defeat had suggested that the much-needed party reorganization ought to include the appointment of a London agent "of high social position, the equivalent of the Chief Whip, so that he could mix with the wealthy supporters of the party".<sup>28</sup> This reflected the desire of the Tory traditionalists, including some members of the party management, to preserve the party as a bastion of the landed gentry supported by an electoral system based upon wealth and influence.

Gorst failed to match this party image; his middle-class background rendered him out of step socially with a large section of the party and most of its management, the latter being a close-knit group of predominantly country gentlemen. Gorst did not enjoy the confidence of the great landed families and was thus denied access to upper-class social life, the milieu for the development of those contacts with rich and influential Tories which many in the party considered essential to successful party management.

<sup>27</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS6/646. Memorandum on Party Organization by W.H. Smith, undated.

<sup>28</sup>"Conservative Reorganisation", p. 808.

However, political differences rather than personal dissimilarities were the crucial factor in the development of animosity between Gorst and party management. During July 1880, when Gorst was resuming his duties as party agent, Dyke's successor as Chief Whip, Rowland Winn, assumed office and the widely-differing political outlooks of these two individuals very soon led to disagreements over policy. Winn was a Tory of the old school; his political experience had been gained in the influence-dominated, small electorates in the counties and he feared and resisted democratic and radical tendencies. Thus his viewpoint contrasted sharply with that of Gorst who, in the wake of the 1880 debacle, was more than ever convinced that the fortunes of the Tory party rested with Tory Democracy: only by seeking and obtaining the support of the middle and working-class electorates, particularly in the boroughs, would the Conservatives obtain future success.<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, Gorst and Winn were very quickly at odds over electoral methods, particularly with regard to the deployment of party funds. Gorst, who was strongly opposed to corrupt practices and determined to dissociate Central Office from its methods, complained to Smith regarding the activities of one T.C. Shaw, a party agent at Sheffield and Winn's protege:

I will do my best to 'menager' Winn and his protege Shaw. My objection to the latter is more complex than the former supposes. Chiefly he is prone to corrupt practices, which accounts for his being in such request among corrupt constituencies. What Winn's phrases about not appreciating the money etc. spent for Birmingham come to is that I won't fight corruption by corruption. To this I plead guilty: it is our policy to force the Government to pass an Act that will stop as much corruption as possible, and if Harry Thynne and his friends will have corrupt practices on our side they must have them locally, not fostered and organised from headquarters by Mr. Shaw or anybody else. ... I am quite in favour of treating Winn and the old identity with consideration, but they can

<sup>29</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 56-57. Viscount Chilston, W.H. Smith (London, 1965), pp. 159-160.

hardly expect us to take their modus operandi as our model or accept Dyke's judgment of character as infallible.<sup>30</sup>

The limitation of corrupt practices, as advocated by Gorst, by reducing the power of influence and corruption and increasing the role of the party organization in election contests, would provide the Central Office with a greater voice in candidate selection, a development clearly in accordance with Gorst's concept of party management.

On the question of corrupt practices Gorst had the full support of Northcote,<sup>31</sup> but was opposed by W.H. Smith, who later objected to the Corrupt Practices Bill on the grounds that its passage, by reducing expenditure on elections and thereby creating the necessity for voluntary help, would place the party at a disadvantage to their opponents who, unlike the Conservatives, had the trade unions, dissenting chapels and other Radical organizations working for them.<sup>32</sup> Gorst's convictions also met with little sympathy amongst the "old identity", the members of the 1880 electoral committee such as Lord Abergavenny (formerly Lord Nevill) and Henry Thynne, who preferred the prevailing system of influence and corruption and to whom the Tory Democracy advocated by Gorst was anathema.

To these tensions arising from corrupt practices were also added friction resulting from Gorst's continuing independence in the House of Commons, particularly his activities as a member of a Conservative ginger

<sup>30</sup> Hambledon Papers, PS6/639, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 8 September, 1880.

<sup>31</sup> Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> W.H. Smith to Lord Salisbury, August 14, 1883, quoted in H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management (London, 1959), p. 247.

group known as the Fourth Party.<sup>33</sup> This small clique of freelancers, consisting of Sir Henry Wolff, Lord Randolph Churchill, Arthur Balfour and Gorst, rose to prominence during the Gladstone Parliament of 1880-1885. The Fourth Party was created out of the turmoil of the first stages of the notorious and protracted Bradlaugh controversy, early in the opening session of the new Parliament. Radical Liberal Charles Bradlaugh, whose writings and speeches advocating atheism, birth control and republicanism had earned him the contempt of many within the middle and upper-classes, sought to avoid the usual oath of allegiance required of new members of Parliament, claiming the right to affirm instead. When a select committee, appointed by the Speaker to examine Bradlaugh's request, ruled against him, he publicly announced his intention to take, to him, the meaningless oath. The apparent willingness of the Liberal Ministers to acquiesce in Bradlaugh's manoeuvre prompted the Fourth Party to oppose Bradlaugh's attempt to take his seat in the Commons, Wolff, Gorst and Churchill providing the debating skills, Mr. Balfour contributing mainly voting strength. What began as personal, independent resistance on the part of these individuals very quickly developed into concerted group action as they perceived the advantages to be gained from a unified campaign. In debate after debate upon Bradlaugh's status, the Fourth Party adopted obstructionist tactics which won the support of the House and succeeded in having the Radical

<sup>33</sup>The origin of the group's designation as the "Fourth Party" is unclear. Sir Winston Churchill suggests the name derived from an interjected conversation in a House of Commons' debate: upon an M.P.'s remarks that there existed "two great parties in the State", Mr. Parnell interposed, "Three", whereupon Lord Randolph Churchill retorted, "Four". (Winston S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (New Edition, London, 1951), p.122). For other explanations see: W.L. Arnstein, The Bradlaugh Case (Oxford, 1965), pp. 44-45; H.W. Lucy, Memories of Eight Parliaments (London, 1908), p. 255, hereafter referred to as H.W. Lucy, Eight Parliaments.

repeatedly barred from Parliament.<sup>34</sup>

In the playing out of this drama, the Fourth Party colleagues formed an informal alliance to assault Bradlaugh's stance; at the conclusion of the battle they had been forged into an identifiable political unit constituting a vocal, independent Opposition to the Government. Once this liaison was formed, the Fourth Party very rapidly expanded its activities beyond the Bradlaugh issue, taking every opportunity to attack the Gladstone Ministry in the Commons. The Government's legislative proposals and its Imperial and foreign policies were systematically subjected to Fourth-Party assault.<sup>35</sup> By the end of August 1880, Wolff, Churchill and Gorst together had contributed a grand total of 247 speeches and asked 73 questions in the Commons, Gorst personally having delivered 105 of the former and put forward 18 of the latter.<sup>36</sup>

In executing these tactics, the Fourth Party sought not only to embarrass the Liberals but also to supply some vigour to a Conservative Opposition demoralized by its electoral defeat and apparently unable to present an effective parliamentary counter attack against the Government. However, according to Gorst's son, his father's decision to cast his lot with the Fourth Party was made "not only because he perceived the tactical advantage of such a combine in the absence of an effective and united

<sup>34</sup> Arnstein, Chaps. 4,5 and 8. H.E. Gorst, The Fourth Party (London, 1906), p. 43, pp. 51-68. Hereafter referred to as H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party; W.H. Lucy, Peeps at Parliament (London, 1903), pp. 168-171; Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Rambling Recollections, 2 vols. (London, 1908), 2, p. 258. Following the general election of 1885, Bradlaugh was allowed to take the oath without challenge and in 1886 he successfully steered an Affirmation Bill through Parliament.

<sup>35</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 119-131.

<sup>36</sup> H.W. Lucy, A Diary of Two Parliaments (London, 1886), p. 87, hereafter referred to as H.W. Lucy, Two Parliaments.

Opposition", but because he believed that his colleagues shared his desire to revive Tory-democratic ideals within the party.<sup>37</sup>

It was also the Fourth Party's intention to highlight the weakness of the Tory party's Commons' leadership, particularly that of Sir Stafford Northcote whose authority they repudiated and to whom they were openly disrespectful.<sup>38</sup> Northcote, who had assumed leadership of the Commons upon Disraeli's elevation to the Lords, was an agreeable, unassuming man whose earlier service as Gladstone's private secretary had rendered him excessively deferential to the Liberal premier and, consequently, no match for him in Parliament.<sup>39</sup> Disraeli himself admitted to Wolff that he would have remained in the Commons had he known that Gladstone would return as Liberal leader. Northcote's repeated failure to take the initiative in the House during the first session eventually prompted the Fourth Party to launch a direct attack upon the Conservative leader, without specifically naming him, in a speech delivered by Balfour at a party meeting at the Carlton Club in August 1880, whilst Wolff made a formal complaint to Beaconsfield concerning Sir Stafford's over-cautious and indecisive behaviour.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, frustration with the leadership's continuing

<sup>37</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 74, pp. 245-246.

<sup>38</sup> Winston Churchill, pp. 124-125; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 130; H.W. Lucy, Two Parliaments, pp. 76-77; Edith Vane-Tempest-Stewart, Marchioness of Londonderry, Henry Chaplin (London, 1926), pp. 160-161.

<sup>39</sup> Winston Churchill, pp. 123-126; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 3-4; Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, 2, 253.

<sup>40</sup> Winston Churchill, pp. 125, 131.

irresolution led the group to ever-increasing parliamentary independence. By early September, Lord Granville was reporting to the Queen that "Sir Stafford Northcote has lost all authority over a portion of Conservative M.P.'s ...".<sup>41</sup>

Not surprisingly, the party management considered Gorst's Fourth-Party activism incompatible with his official position as party agent. His participation in the group's attacks on Northcote in Parliament were in direct conflict with his role as loyal officer to a Central Committee answerable to the official Conservative leadership for party business outside the Commons.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, attempts were made to break up the rebel clique. Gorst, however, was quite unrepentant and determined to continue actively involved with the Fourth Party and to remain independent of officialdom. In September 1880, he complained to Smith: "... There is a regular intrigue going on on the part of Bourke and others against Lord Randolph Churchill, Wolff and myself. They tried to detach Balfour from us but failed. We mean to stick together and we shall be loyal to Northcote if he is loyal to us. But self-preservation is the first law of politics as well as nature and contingencies may happen which will end in your being obliged to take the place of leader in the Commons whether you like it or not".<sup>43</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Northcote himself, under cover of regular management correspondence with Gorst, asked for a cessation of the Fourth

<sup>41</sup>Quoted in The Letters of Queen Victoria, ed. George E. Buckle, 2nd Series, 1862-1885, 3 vols. (London, 1928), 3, 143, note 2.

<sup>42</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 148.

<sup>43</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS6/639, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 8 September, 1880.



Party's parliamentary activities. After a discussion of party business, Northcote cautioned Gorst: "I am inclined to think that the Fourth Party has done enough for its fame, and that it will be the wiser course for its members now quietly to take their places in the main body where they will have work enough and to spare ...".<sup>44</sup> Gorst's reply was cordial but uncompromising. He lauded the group's steadfastness and loyalty to the party, whilst avoiding any mention of their dissolution.<sup>45</sup> However, on the same day he wrote to Churchill commenting on Northcote's actions and revealing his determination not to yield. "I got a letter a day or two ago from the Goat<sup>46</sup> which nearly gave me a fit ... After some banalities about organisation he went on to propose the dissolution of the Fourth Party ... I have replied that we shall prove one of his best instruments of political warfare ...; that each of us feels stronger for the support and wiser for the counsels of his fellows; and that we are all determined to back him up loyally in fighting the combination of Whigs and Radicals who oppose us ...".<sup>47</sup> However, after reflecting further upon Northcote's letter, Gorst conceived a plan to turn his leader's suggestion to the Fourth Party's advantage, and he immediately outlined his plan to Churchill:

<sup>44</sup>Balfour Papers, BL. Add. MS. 49791, ff.1-4. Northcote to Gorst, 11 September, 1880.

<sup>45</sup>Iddesleigh Papers, BL. Add. MS. 50041, ff.25-38. Gorst to Northcote, 15 September, 1880.

<sup>46</sup>The "Goat" was the Fourth Party's name for Northcote. It was originally coined in reference to his beard but later became the designation for all Tories the Fourth Party considered "weak-kneed". (Winston Churchill, p. 124.)

<sup>47</sup>Churchill Papers, 11, Gorst to Churchill, 15 September, 1880. Gorst also wrote similar letters to Balfour and Wolff. (Balfour Papers, BL. Add. MS. 49791, ff5-6, Gorst to Balfour, 15 September, 1880; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 132-133.)

Suppose we were to treat the proposition of the Goat as a serious one and after mature deliberation accept it, that we should at his request give up the idea which we had never seriously entertained of a separate Fourth Party, and consent at his invitation to take our 'places in the ranks'. We could then next session, all four of us plant ourselves in a body on the second bench immediately behind Northcote. There we should have him completely under our thumb...: we should cut him off from his satellites... In short, we should invade the front bench, make prisoner of the Goat and set him up as our leader.<sup>48</sup>

Gorst's main reason for opposing Northcote was the latter's inability to provide an effective Opposition, the consequence, so Gorst believed, of over-reliance upon the advice of subordinates, particularly Richard Cross and W.H. Smith. Thus, if his plan succeeded, placing the Fourth Party in a position to implement Tory Democracy, he was willing to accede to Northcote's stewardship.<sup>49</sup>

Gorst's colleagues, however, were not prepared to accept Northcote's leadership, even under Fourth Party control, and rejected his suggestion.<sup>50</sup> Balfour's opposition stemmed from his desire to avoid strengthening Northcote's position to the detriment of his uncle's, Lord Salisbury's, prospects as Beaconsfield's successor,<sup>51</sup> and both Churchill and Wolff believed Northcote too mediocre ever to cope effectively with the demands of leadership.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, Gorst conceded to his colleagues

<sup>48</sup> Churchill Papers, 12, Gorst to Churchill, 16 September, 1880.

<sup>49</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> Churchill Papers, 10, Gorst to Churchill, 21 September, 1880.

<sup>51</sup> H. Drummond Wolff, 2, p. 258.

<sup>52</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 134, p. 215. Some years later, Churchill confessed to Charles Dilke that he regretted not having adopted Gorst's plan because it would have rendered their endeavours more effective. (Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude M. Tuckwell, The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Dilke, 2 vols. [London, 1917], 1, pp. 267-268.)

on the issue and the Fourth Party maintained its independent Opposition role. Gorst did, however, continue to keep Northcote informed of Central Office activities and to offer him suggestions concerning the direction of Conservative policy, and on this level at least their relationship remained a cordial one.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, following his return to Central Office, Gorst resumed his earlier practice of corresponding with Beaconsfield on organizational matters and their relationship remained unruffled by the friction which marred his association with party management.<sup>54</sup> Gorst believed that Beaconsfield approved of the Fourth Party's parliamentary independence.<sup>55</sup> In August 1880, Beaconsfield had made one of his infrequent visits to the Commons to view the group in action and was apparently very impressed by their tactics<sup>56</sup> and following a meeting with Beaconsfield at Hughenden, early in November, Gorst triumphantly reported to Churchill that his Lordship had praised their energy, expressed great confidence in their ability, offered them his advice and assistance and suggested that "just

<sup>53</sup> Hambledon Papers, P6/644, Northcote to W.H. Smith, 21 December, 1880; Iddesleigh Papers, Vol. 29, BL. Add. MS. 50041, ff. 39-40, Gorst to Northcote, 30 October, 1880; *ibid.*, ff. 41-42, Northcote to Gorst, 1 November, 1880.

<sup>54</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/260-264, Gorst to Beaconsfield, 30 September, 4 November, 14 December, 29 December, 1880. 24 February, 1881.

<sup>55</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 147-151.

<sup>56</sup> W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, 2 vols. (New ed. London, 1929), 2, 1460-1461.

at present we need not be too scrupulous about obeying our leader".

However, Beaconsfield had also admonished Gorst to have the Fourth Party "courteously inform Northcote ... of any step we are about to take in the House of Commons and listen with respect and attention to anything he may say about it"; because "An open rupture between us would ... be most disastrous".<sup>57</sup> This would seem to indicate that Beaconsfield was willing to condone Fourth Party attempts to rejuvenate a demoralized Conservative party but not at the expense of party unity.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the demands of his parliamentary duties and Fourth Party activities, Gorst continued to apply himself conscientiously to his work at Central Office, as his letters to Beaconsfield during the Autumn and Winter of 1880-1881 reveal.<sup>59</sup> However, the current political situation being uncondusive to bold initiatives on the part of the Conservatives<sup>60</sup> meant that the bulk of Central Office activity was restricted to routine organizational work.<sup>61</sup> However, the party management was evidently inclined to attribute Conservative malaise to what they perceived to be Gorst's neglect of party organization. In April 1881, Gorst wrote to Smith in defence of his organizational policies, apparently in reply to the latter's criticism of his performance. In Gorst's view, revitalization in the

<sup>57</sup> Churchill Papers, 23, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1880.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Blake, Disraeli (London, 1966), pp. 729-730. Hereafter referred to as Blake, Disraeli.

<sup>59</sup> Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/260-264, Gorst to Beaconsfield, 30 September, 4 November, 14 December, 29 December, 1880; 24 February, 1881.

<sup>60</sup> Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 152.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/264, Gorst to Beaconsfield, 24 February, 1881. Also reproduced in Hanham, pp. 359-361.

constituencies was dependent upon local initiative rather than Central Office stimulus: "... I will have the work we are doing in stimulating local effort pushed on. I do not however expect much practical result. Political activity seems to me to depend on causes too wide and deep to be controlled ... We may to some extent guide political activity when it does arise into useful channels - but create it - no. We can gain thoroughly reliable information as to the state of the constituencies and we can let the local leaders know that there is a body at headquarters to communicate with. Further than this we cannot go until local feeling awakes".<sup>62</sup>

This episode served to accentuate the tensions existing between party management and Gorst, tensions reminiscent of their difficulties of the 'seventies which had precipitated his dismissal from office. Consequently, he now evidently became concerned over his future prospects with the party. Thus, following a conversation with Smith during which the question of recompense for Gorst's services seemingly arose, he hastened to reject any offer of monetary reward, evidently fearing that such a payment would prejudice his claims to future political office.<sup>63</sup> Smith, however, immediately seized the opportunity to press exactly such a settlement on Gorst, at the same time indicating that he would be expected to give more time and effort to his duties under the new arrangement.<sup>64</sup> No doubt because of his past experiences with the party in the matter of political rewards, Gorst apparently concluded that this offer did indeed

<sup>62</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS7/21, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 20 April, 1881.

<sup>63</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS7/40, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 27 May, 1881.

<sup>64</sup>Hambledon Papers, 10/3, W.H. Smith to Gorst, 21 June, 1881.

represent the only compensation he was likely to receive and, thus, he now agreed to a pecuniary settlement.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps because of financial necessity,<sup>66</sup> or simply out of justifiable chagrin at his continuing exclusion from political office, Gorst determined to extract maximum financial benefit from his position. The party offered him one thousand guineas for the year 1881-1882, which he accepted, assuming that a similar sum would be paid him retroactively for the year 1880-1881. However, party management presented him with a cheque for only half that amount stating that this payment was outside their formal agreement and was proffered to him as a gesture for services rendered to the party. After several unsuccessful attempts to obtain the full amount to which he believed he was entitled, Gorst finally relinquished his claim.<sup>67</sup>

Following this disagreement, Gorst found himself on the defensive once again in response to continuing criticism from the party. Within a few weeks Smith was reprimanding Gorst for absenting himself from Central Office without informing his colleagues there and suggesting that this involved a dereliction of duty on Gorst's part,<sup>68</sup> despite having received a letter from him just one week earlier in which Gorst outlined the extensive

<sup>65</sup> Hambledon Papers, PS7/52, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 23 June, 1881.

<sup>66</sup> The demands of political office effectively prevented Gorst from establishing a lucrative legal career and this lack of income combined with the expenses of parliamentary life, seems to have kept Gorst in modest circumstances throughout his political career. His friend, Charles Dilke, described him as being "a poor man all his life". (S. Gwynn and G.M. Tuckwell, p. 565.)

<sup>67</sup> Hambledon Papers, 10/3, W.H. Smith to Gorst, 21 June, 1881; PS7/52, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 23 June, 1881; PS7/59, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 15 July, 1881; PS7/60, W.H. Smith to Gorst, 16 July, 1881; PS7/61, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 18 July, 1881; PS7/63, Note by W.H. Smith on reply to Gorst's letter of July 18 (undated).

<sup>68</sup> Hambledon Papers, PS7/81, W.H. Smith to Gorst, 17 August, 1881.

organizational work he had undertaken in the month previous to his departure for holidays, including preparations for a promotional tour of constituencies in Northern England, Ireland and Scotland.<sup>69</sup> In addition, when Gorst returned from this tour<sup>70</sup> he found that management dissatisfaction with him had spread to a small but influential group of his constituents in Chatham who were seeking to deny him the parliamentary nomination for that borough in the future. This prompted him to solicit, apparently successfully, the intervention of Lord Salisbury on his behalf,<sup>71</sup> the latter being one Conservative notable with whom Gorst appears to have been still on amicable terms.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, notwithstanding Gorst's promotional efforts, there were few indications of Tory rejuvenation at the constituency level during Autumn and Winter of 1881-1882, further increasing management's discontent with organizational methods.<sup>73</sup> The Central Committee apparently moved to usurp Gorst's authority, particularly his privileges in the delicate area of electoral finance granted him at the time of his re-appointment in 1880, a move he strenuously resisted.<sup>74</sup> By the late Summer of 1882, Gorst's frustration with the leadership's continuing commitment to class interest at the

<sup>69</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS7/79, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 10 August, 1881. Both Feuchtwanger and Viscount Chilston suggest that Gorst's action in absenting himself from Central Office at this time indicates a weakening of his commitment to his official duties, arising from his monetary dispute with the party (Viscount Chilston, p. 164; Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 154.) However, Gorst's letter of August 10, 1881, to Smith shows that he continued to involve himself actively in organizational work at this time.

<sup>70</sup>Churchill Papers, 52, Gorst to Churchill, 21 October, 1881.

<sup>71</sup>Salisbury Papers, 41, Gorst to Salisbury, 5 December, 1881.

<sup>72</sup>Salisbury Papers, 40, Gorst to Salisbury, 26 November, 1881; *ibid.*, 42, Gorst to Salisbury, 15 December, 1881; 44, Gorst to Salisbury, 30 December, 1881.

<sup>73</sup>Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 154-155.

<sup>74</sup>Hambledon Papers, HA 10/4, Gorst to W.H. Smith, 24 February, 1882.

expense of Tory Democracy, in the running of the Conservative organization, prompted him to contemplate a public critique of the party's ineptness as a political institution and a denunciation of its self-seeking, oligarchic leadership.<sup>75</sup>

Gorst's censure of Conservative management and party organization duly appeared as an unsigned article entitled "Conservative Disorganisation" in the November 1882 issue of the Fortnightly Review. Once again, Gorst recapitulated the many criticisms he had been making since the early 'seventies. The Conservative party continued to be a bastion of the upper classes, its leadership existing in an environment in which "a sense of their own importance and of the importance of their class interests and privileges is exaggerated, and to which the opinions of the common people can scarcely penetrate". In order to survive as a political power the party must become a "popular party", he argued. The majority of upper-class Tories were unconcerned with party organization; since the great victory of 1874 social influence had again become predominant in the party, resulting in a heightening of class distinctions and the neglect of borough interests and, as a consequence, those areas had swung to the Liberals in 1880. If the Conservatives persisted in adhering to these methods as a means of returning to political power, "they had a long time to wait", concluded Gorst.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Churchill Papers, 76, Gorst to Churchill, 10 September, 1882.

<sup>76</sup>"Conservative Disorganisation", Fortnightly Review 32 (1882): 42-45. The article was signed "Two Conservatives" and Gorst's collaborator is thought to have been his Fourth Party colleague, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. (See R.T. McKenzie, British Political Parties, 2nd ed. [New York, 1963], p. 168; J.H. Robb, The Primrose League 1883-1906 [AMS Press ed. New York, 1968], p. 30; W.J. Wilkinson, Tory Democracy [New York, 1925], p. 90.)



Not surprisingly, party reaction to this attack was extremely hostile<sup>77</sup> and, once its authorship was established, it served to end Gorst's second term as party agent. At a meeting of the Chelsea Conservative Association a resolution was passed condemning Gorst's conduct towards the party leaders. This decision, strongly endorsed by the meeting's chairman, Sir Claude Hamilton, was sent by him to Northcote who thereupon forwarded the resolution to Gorst. Upon receipt of Northcote's letter, Gorst tendered his resignation to Northcote,<sup>78</sup> at the same time informing Salisbury of his action.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, as in 1877, Gorst's departure from office was prompted by the basic incompatibility existing between himself and party management, resulting primarily from political rather than personal differences. Gorst's continuing commitment to popular Conservatism and the party leaders' persistent promotion of upper-class interests to the neglect of Tory Democracy had once again created an acrimonious situation which rendered Gorst's position untenable.

As party agent, Gorst had been a thorn in the side of the Tory hierarchy. His resistance to party discipline, combined with his outspoken parliamentary criticisms of Conservative policies and leadership, particularly

<sup>77</sup>This reaction was evidently so strong that Randolph Churchill thought it politic to publicly denounce the article, intimating that its authors were not "Two Conservatives" but, rather, two dissatisfied Whigs. (Minutes of the 1882 Conference of the National Union, cited in T.O. Lloyd, p. 81.)

<sup>78</sup>Iddesleigh Papers, BL. Add. MS. 50041, f.114, Gorst to Northcote, 17 November, 1882.

<sup>79</sup>Salisbury Papers, 50, Gorst to Salisbury, 17 November, 1882.

after 1880, had earned him a reputation as a "malcontent Tory".<sup>80</sup> Once released from his official duties, and the restraints they entailed, he was to prove an even more formidable adversary of traditional Toryism.

Having once again failed in his efforts to obtain the Conservative hierarchy's support for the development of Tory Democracy, Gorst now adopted new tactics to achieve this goal. If party management was unwilling to reform the Tory machine so as to permit its borough supporters a larger share in organization and the rewards of office then, Gorst concluded, the entire organization of the Tory Party must undergo a "radical revolution" in order to effect the change.<sup>81</sup>

The vanguard of this "revolution" was to be the National Union, the representative organ of the Conservative rank and file around the country, and Gorst now entered upon a campaign to make that body pre-eminent in Tory party organization. The "revolution" had in fact been brewing for several years. Following its inception in 1867, the National Union had served chiefly as a propaganda organ for the party rather than a vehicle for Tory Democracy as Gorst, one of its founders, had intended. One year prior to his resignation from the party agency in 1877, Gorst, at the Union's tenth annual conference, had proposed measures be adopted to democratize the Union Council, but was overruled.<sup>82</sup> Thereafter, Gorst and his supporters among the conference delegates, mainly middle-class

<sup>80</sup> Bernard Holland, Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire, 2 vols. (London, 1911), 2, p. 269.

<sup>81</sup> "Conservative Disorganisation", p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> Minutes of the Tenth Annual Conference of the National Union, 1876.

Conservatives of which the Union's local associations were now increasingly composed,<sup>83</sup> utilized the annual meetings as a platform from which to issue their repeated demands for party reorganization.<sup>84</sup> Provincial Tories' discontent with party management had intensified following the defeat of 1880 and their criticism had contributed to the leadership's decision to appoint the Central Committee to supervise and rejuvenate party organization. However, the Committee had retained for itself the direction and management of party machinery and the control of party funds, while maintaining the National Union in its traditional role of "handmaid to the party",<sup>85</sup> much to the dissatisfaction of the growing numbers of middle-class urban Conservatives in the constituencies.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, Gorst's criticisms of Tory party machinery, as outlined in "Conservative Disorganisation", were sympathetically received by many of these newer elements in the party and it was from their ranks that he was to receive backing for his campaign to obtain a more vital role in party management for the National Union.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (London, 1970; Fontana Paperback ed. London, 1976), p. 151. Hereafter referred to as Blake, The Conservative Party; McKenzie, p. 169.

<sup>84</sup> See Minutes of the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Annual Conferences of the National Union, 1876-1879.

<sup>85</sup> The Union's function was so designated, in 1873, by its then Council Chairman, H.C. Raikes. See Minutes of the Seventh Annual Conference of the National Union, 1873.

<sup>86</sup> As Ostrogorski observed, the middle-class business and professional men who were now finding their way into the party were intensely dissatisfied with the "hole-and-corner management of affairs". (M. Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, trans. Frederick Clarke, 2 vols. [London, 1902], 1, 267-268.)

Gorst's campaign was conducted in concert with Randolph Churchill, who devised the strategy designed to bring Gorst's aspirations for the Union to fulfillment.<sup>87</sup> This plan involved nothing less than making the Fourth Party "masters" of that body by garnering the support of its local party organizations and, thereafter, utilizing this backing to capture its Council which could then be used to wrest from the hands of the Central Committee control of candidate selection and administration of party funds.<sup>88</sup> Gorst apparently intended that, once acquired, this authority could be employed to democratize party organization in order to reduce the power of social influence and allow borough Conservatives a larger role in party affairs. For Gorst, this transformation was a matter of some urgency for he anticipated that the County members who formed the bulk of the parliamentary party were destined to political extinction at the next election, as a result of their resistance to the upcoming Franchise Bill, leaving the smaller group of borough members to provide "the nucleus of the Tory party of the future".<sup>89</sup>

Although he professed to share Gorst's goal of Tory Democracy,<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Churchill Papers, 146, Gorst to Churchill, 2 August, 1883.

<sup>88</sup> Iddesleigh Papers, BL. Add. MS. 50041, Bartlett to Northcote, 20 September, 1883, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 174; Churchill to Wolff, 28 September, 1883, quoted in R.R. James, Lord Randolph Churchill (London, 1959), p. 132, hereafter referred to as R.R. James, Randolph Churchill; A.J. Balfour, Chapters of Autobiography, ed. E. Dugdale (London, 1930), p.159; Winston Churchill, p. 237.

<sup>89</sup> Churchill Papers, 105, Gorst to Churchill, 29 January, 1883.

<sup>90</sup> See Lord Randolph Churchill, "Elijah's Mantle", Fortnightly Review 33 (1883): 1-3. Churchill wrote and spoke about Tory Democracy and the value of working-class Conservatives but he produced no specific programme to assist this group. His own interpretation of Tory Democracy, given in a cynical moment, was "mostly opportunism, I think". (Quoted in Blake, The Conservative Party, p. 153.)

the desire for personal aggrandizement appears to have been the principal motive behind Churchill's participation in the National Union struggle.<sup>91</sup> Churchill apparently contemplated using Fourth Party dominance of the National Union Council to transform that organization into a policy-determining caucus, along the lines of National Liberal Federation, which, following the defeat of the Central Committee, might be used to support his bid for party leadership.<sup>92</sup>

Churchill's opposition to Northcote had originally prompted the former to promote Lord Salisbury as sole leader of the party.<sup>93</sup> He employed this strategy initially in conjunction with Wolff, but not Gorst, in the National Union Council following Beaconsfield's death in 1881,<sup>94</sup> and thereafter, in Spring of 1883, in the columns of the Times.<sup>95</sup> However, shortly afterwards he was intimating that he himself was willing to assume the leadership.<sup>96</sup> This development was received by Gorst with considerable misgivings. He wished to transform party organization, not overthrow its leadership, believing Churchill should aim to "succeed rather than supplant

<sup>91</sup>Balfour, p. 159. According to Arthur Balfour, "the ingenious idea occurred to Lord Randolph, that if by judicious management he could dominate the institution (the National Union) and endow it with new powers, it might effectually further his political ends".

<sup>92</sup>Cornford, p. 48; R.R. James, Randolph Churchill, p. 132.

<sup>93</sup>Upon Beaconsfield's death in 1881, Salisbury had assumed the leadership of the party in the Lords, whilst Northcote retained that position in the Commons, and they were regarded as joint-leaders of the party.

<sup>94</sup>Iddesleigh Papers, Add. MS. 50040, H.S. Northcote to Sir S. Northcote, 30 April, 1881, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 167-168.

<sup>95</sup>The Times, 2 April, 1883, p. 8; *ibid.*, 9 April, 1883, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup>Lord Randolph Churchill, pp. 1-3.

Northcote".<sup>97</sup> However, loyalty to his Fourth Party colleague, and the fact he was already persona non grata with the party leadership, led a somewhat reluctant Gorst to join Churchill in his battle for control of the party machinery.<sup>98</sup> Churchill also received the backing of Wolff but not Balfour. The latter's relationship with the Fourth Party had always been an ambivalent one<sup>99</sup> and now, when Churchill's leadership aspirations became apparent, he immediately moved to dissociate himself from the group as he had no desire to support a campaign which threatened the position of his uncle, Lord Salisbury.<sup>100</sup>

Churchill and Gorst launched their campaign to achieve mastery of the National Union at the annual conference held in Birmingham in October, 1883. Prior to the opening of the conference, Gorst and Churchill had circulated among the delegates a letter requesting support for their candidates for Council,<sup>101</sup> and on its second day Churchill delivered a speech to the assembly attacking the Central Committee and issuing a call for popular control of the party.<sup>102</sup> His sentiments seemingly echoed those of many of the delegates who had grown increasingly resentful of the

<sup>97</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 247. Following the publication of Churchill's letter in the April 2 edition of the Times, a Memorial expressing confidence in Northcote was drawn up by Stanhope and a group of back-benchers loyal to their leader, and was signed by Gorst. (Cited in R.R. James, Lord Randolph Churchill, p. 125.)

<sup>98</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 242-247.

<sup>99</sup>Mrs. George Cornwallis-West, The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill (London, 1908), p. 93; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 44-45; Lady St. Helier, Memories of Fifty Years (London, 1909), p. 273, p. 282.

<sup>100</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 249; D. Walker-Smith and Edward Clarke, The Life of Sir Edward Clarke (London, 1939), p. 152.

<sup>101</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS8/84, Northcote to W.H. Smith, 26 September, 1883.

<sup>102</sup>Winston Churchill, pp. 241-242.

Committee's bureaucratic regulation of party machinery for they responded by carrying a resolution authorizing the new Council to obtain for the National Union "its legitimate influence in party organisation".<sup>103</sup>

Yet, despite their canvassing and the apparent success of Churchill's personal overtures, in the subsequent election for the Council the Fourth Party were unable to achieve a working majority.<sup>104</sup> However, at the Council's first meeting on December 7, Churchill successfully proposed the appointment of an Organization Committee authorized to take the necessary steps to implement the 1883 annual conference resolution seeking greater influence for the Union, and was duly elected its chairman. He thereupon commenced negotiations with Salisbury aimed at transforming these aspirations into reality. These negotiations continued into January 1884 without agreement being reached but on February 1, Churchill strengthened his own position, and that of the National Union vis-a-vis the Central Committee, when he succeeded in getting himself elected chairman of the Union Council following the resignation of Lord Percy from that position.<sup>105</sup>

While these initial skirmishes between the leadership and the Organizing Committee were being conducted, Gorst was absent from England, having left in November, 1883, for a three-month business trip to India.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup>Gorst to Wolff, 3 October, 1883, quoted in H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 257-258.

<sup>104</sup>Edward Clarke, The Story of My Life (London, 1918), p. 215; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 257-258.

<sup>105</sup>Winston Churchill, pp. 244-245.

<sup>106</sup>Churchill Papers, 206, Gorst to Churchill, 7 November, 1883; *ibid.*, 209, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1883; *ibid.*, 230-240, Gorst to Churchill, December 1883-February 1884. Gorst was visiting India in his capacity of advisor to the Ministers of the Nizam of Hyderabad, a service he had performed for the previous ten years. On this occasion he was to consult with the Ministers on government affairs attendant upon the coming-of-age of the current Nizam. (See, *Ibid.*, 209, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1883.)

Churchill, whose decision to utilize the National Union as a vehicle for his leadership aspirations had to some extent been motivated by the fact that his colleague-in-arms, Gorst, possessed intimate knowledge of the workings of the party machinery,<sup>107</sup> was greatly perturbed by Gorst's absence while the campaign was in progress and prior to his departure had made an unsuccessful attempt to dissuade him from leaving, arguing that his expertise would be sorely missed.<sup>108</sup> Gorst, however, professed the contrary view, suggesting to Churchill that "in the National Union you will have much less difficulty with Northcote and the Central Committee in my absence because the element of personal jealousy will be eliminated and Stanhope will capitulate to you far more readily than he would to you and me co-joined".<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 168.

<sup>108</sup> Churchill Papers, 209, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1888: H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 260-261.

<sup>109</sup> Churchill Papers, 209, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1883. Feuchtwanger suggests that Gorst's decision to visit India at this crucial point in the campaign is possibly a reflection of his reluctance to support the former's bid for power. (Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 168). This assessment is in conflict with Gorst's sentiments as expressed to Churchill. However, it is very likely that Gorst's reasons for embarking on the trip were completely free from political considerations, his assurances to Churchill being perhaps an attempt to restore the latter's confidence in his chosen course of action in the face of a fait accompli. Preparations for the visit had apparently been underway prior to the Birmingham Conference, a further indicator of its dissociation from the National Union controversy. (Churchill Papers, 206, Gorst to Churchill, 7 November, 1883; *ibid.*, 209, Gorst to Churchill, 9 November, 1883.) Gorst's principal motive for making the trip appears to have been financial. He was being paid a fee of £1,000 per month for his services and had already received a £2,000 advance before his departure, making it virtually impossible for him to withdraw from the arrangement. (See Churchill Papers, 210, Wolff to Churchill, 10 November, 1883.)



Gorst's return in early March, 1884, coincided with the commencement of a critical stage of the Fourth Party's struggle for control of the Council which followed upon Churchill's election to the Council chairmanship. The ensuing battle waged during the Spring and Summer of 1884, becoming increasingly bitter as Churchill's demands for National Union control of policy, election expenses, and candidate selection were rejected by the leadership who remained determined to retain these functions for themselves. By late March, Gorst was evidently eager to achieve a settlement. Reluctant from the first to support Churchill's leadership bid, he now apparently became greatly concerned over the direction the campaign was taking - the tactics used to supplant Percy as Council Vice-Chairman he found particularly regrettable - and his anxiety proved deep enough to prompt him to attempt to accelerate the reconciliation process through a personal interview with Northcote.<sup>110</sup>

Meanwhile, negotiations were underway between Churchill and the leadership and by late Spring both sides were indicating a willingness to compromise. At the beginning of May a settlement appeared likely<sup>111</sup> but at this stage the opponents of Churchill on the Union Council temporarily gained the upper hand and, unaware that an agreement was in the offing, passed a resolution expressing their desire to reach an accommodation with the Central Committee, despite Churchill's objections to this manoeuvre. Regarding this action as a want of confidence in his leadership, Churchill now resigned the Council Chairmanship but this resulted in an upsurge of

<sup>110</sup>Salisbury Papers, Northcote to Salisbury, 28 March, 1884, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 182.

<sup>111</sup>Balfour, pp. 165-166.

popular opinion in his favour and the rallying of local Conservative associations in his support, and in May the Council unanimously re-elected him Chairman. Following his re-instatement, Churchill appeared to be in an even stronger position than before from which to continue the struggle and he now resolved to make his move to capture the Council at the upcoming annual conference of the Union to be held in July 1884.<sup>112</sup>

In the interim, developments in Parliament exacerbated the dispute. The Fourth Party were currently championing the Liberal Government's Reform Bill over which the Conservatives were divided, leading Northcote to fear that, given the backing of the local associations, many of which were pro-Reform, Churchill's challenge to the leadership under the banner of Tory Democracy would lead to schism in the party in the event of a general election fought on the Reform issue.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, Northcote sought to obtain postponement of the National Union Conference<sup>114</sup> and when this failed, attempted a last-ditch reconciliation with Churchill, but did not succeed.<sup>115</sup> Salisbury, however, apparently welcomed the opportunity to meet Churchill's challenge head-on at Sheffield, for he co-operated with the anti-Churchill faction in the preparations for their confrontation with

<sup>112</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 285-290.

<sup>113</sup>Northcote expressed his fears to Salisbury: ".. we may come to a split and the line of cleavage may alter and some new adjustment of party forces may take place". (Salisbury Papers, Northcote to Salisbury, 3 June, 1884, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, pp. 185-186.)

<sup>114</sup>Salisbury Papers, Northcote to Salisbury, 22 June, 1884, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 186.

<sup>115</sup>Sir Stafford Northcote to Lord Randolph Churchill, 10 July, 1884, quoted in Winston Churchill, p. 274.

the Fourth Party.<sup>116</sup>

The elections for the new Council were held on the opening day of the conference. When the ballots were tabulated the Fourth Party appeared to have scored a decisive victory. Churchill led the polls and both Gorst and Wolff were elected; a total of 22 of Churchill's nominees were successful, compared to 19 from the opposition. The Fourth Party were jubilant. However, closer inspection of the results revealed that certain of those elected had appeared on both slates whilst three had appeared on neither.<sup>117</sup> Churchill's majority was slim at best. The opposition had been defeated but Churchill did not have effective control of the Council. The outcome was, in fact, a stalemate, virtually a return to the situation prevailing six months' earlier at the start of the Fourth Party's campaign. Thus, upon reflection, both parties recognized the necessity for reconciliation<sup>118</sup> and, with Wolff acting as mediator, they swiftly came to terms: "Churchill and Salisbury, recognising each other tacitly as equals, agreed that they would work in harmony, that the Central Committee would be abolished, that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach ... would become Chairman of the Council, and that the Primrose League would become officially recognised".<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup>Winston Churchill, p. 273.

<sup>117</sup>Edward Clarke, p. 217.

<sup>118</sup>Several explanations are offered as to the reasons behind this decision to reach an agreement. See A.J. Balfour, pp. 168-171; Winston Churchill, pp. 276-277; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 303-305; R.R. James, Randolph Churchill, pp. 154-155.

<sup>119</sup>R.R. James, The British Revolution: British Politics, 1880-1939, vol. 1. From Gladstone to Asquith, 1880-1914 (London, 1976), p. 77. The Primrose League had been founded by the Fourth Party in 1883 as a means of "moulding into a compact body the more active and energetic partisans of the newer and more democratic school of Conservatism ..." (The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill, ed. R. Nevill [London, 1906], p. 330.) Because of its association with the Fourth Party, the League had been coolly received by the Tory leadership but it now received their formal approval. However, although its army of volunteer workers became a valuable asset to the party, it thereafter lost much of its Tory Democratic flavour. (See J.H. Robb, The Primrose League, 1883-1906 [New York, 1968].)

These negotiations were conducted "without Mr. Gorst either being consulted or informed". For him, the election "victory" had appeared to mark the attainment of his prime objective, the National Union's acceptance of Tory Democracy as its guiding principle, and, confident that the future belonged to the Fourth Party, he had departed Sheffield immediately following the conclusion of the Conference to spend a few days of well-earned rest on the Isle of Wight. Churchill informed him of the terms of reconciliation only after the arrangements had been completed, apparently contravening an agreement he had made earlier with Gorst promising not to take any step without the latter's approval.<sup>120</sup>

Not surprisingly, Gorst was astonished to hear of the agreement<sup>121</sup> but, apparently, his first impression of it was that it had effected no dramatic reversal of the Fourth Party's fortunes and, thus, his immediate response to the fait accompli was cordial. He commended Churchill's decision to decline the Chairmanship as "a good stroke of policy" on the grounds that "We shall have much more power as independent members of Council criticising the acts of the Executive and we are almost certain to get our own way whenever we like to interfere", at the same time expounding upon their considerable successes: "... We have destroyed the Central Committee: we have revolutionised party management: and defeated the leaders in their attempt at Sheffield to suppress us".<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 302-303, pp. 311-312

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p. 303, pp. 311-312.

<sup>122</sup>Churchill Papers, 455, Gorst to Churchill, 27 July, 1884.

Gorst's cordiality was also born of political necessity. Because of the leadership's enmity towards him, resulting from his role in the National Union controversy,<sup>123</sup> Gorst obviously realized that any further effort on his part to implement Tory Democracy would be strenuously resisted by the party and, thus, his only possibility for success lay in working in harmony with Churchill. Gorst's recognition of the situation was clearly expressed in his reply to Churchill:

I have no hope of being able to carry out my ideas. The leaders I can never trust again; I cannot like you throw myself on Tory Democracy. With you the thing was difficult: without you it becomes impossible. After the experience of the Central Committee and W.H. Smith, I know the forces are too strong to contend with and I am not disposed to recommence a fruitless struggle.<sup>124</sup>

Shortly thereafter, however, perhaps following a closer examination of the terms of the pact, Gorst concluded that Tory Democracy had been sacrificed by Churchill in exchange for personal advancement.<sup>125</sup> Although the Central Committee had been abolished it was to be replaced by a traditional executive of Whips and the Party Agent who, in their capacity as representatives of the Conservative leadership, would have control over party affairs, whilst the National Union was to continue its earlier function

<sup>123</sup> Ever since Churchill initiated his tilt at the party leadership, with his letter to the Times in Spring 1883, many within the party had regarded Gorst as the Machiavellian influence behind the attack. "Gorst is, I feel convinced, the real motive power in this business, the clever intriguer ...", Viscount Barrington observed to Northcote in April 1883. (Idesleigh Papers, Add. MS. 50041, Barrington to Northcote, 4 April, 1883, quoted in Feuchtwanger, Democracy and the Tory Party, p. 169.) As early as June 1884, Gorst had predicted the direction the "Old Gang's" animosity would take. "Seeing that Randolph is too strong and popular to be crushed, they will now make you and me object of their attacks". (Gorst to Wolff, 4 June, 1884, quoted in H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 294.)

<sup>124</sup> Churchill Papers, 455, Gorst to Churchill, 27 July, 1884.

<sup>125</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 304-305, p. 12.

of "handmaid" to the party in Parliament.<sup>126</sup> Thus, Gorst's goal to achieve for that organization a more vital role in party affairs remained unfulfilled. Gorst was now understandably angered by what he saw to be Churchill's betrayal of both the principles of Tory Democracy and Gorst's personal interests. During the campaign, Gorst had supplied Churchill with invaluable advice and assistance and had risked his own political future by loyally supporting him throughout the difficult period of negotiations with the party management. His reward was the surrender of his objectives by Churchill and the odium of the Conservative establishment.

Gorst demonstrated his opposition to the settlement by refusing to attend the dinner given by Salisbury to celebrate the accord, and relations between Churchill and himself now became increasingly strained,<sup>127</sup> their dissention even provoking them into open conflict in the Commons.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> McKenzie, p. 173. In his reminiscences of the agreement, Balfour later observed, "We are told that Tory Democracy triumphed. Yet ... the functions of the National Union, which was to be its organ, remained unchanged!" (A.J. Balfour, p. 168.)

<sup>127</sup> A.J. Balfour, p. 172. Edward Clarke, p. 218; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 312.

<sup>128</sup> On the second reading of the Reform Bill, an amendment designed to delay temporarily its passage as a means of protecting Conservative interests, and placed on the table by Churchill but presented in his absence by Stanhope, was denounced by Gorst. Next day Churchill responded by publicly castigating Gorst from the floor of the House. (See W.H. Lucy, Two Parliaments, pp. 437-438; Winston Churchill, pp. 288-289.) According to Gorst's son, his father opposed the amendment in order to show that the events of July had in no way diminished his commitment to Tory Democracy. Gorst wished "to prove to the Conservative party and to his former colleagues that there had been no yielding of principles on his part ...". (H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 313.)

Their relationship was never to regain its original harmony. Moreover, although to all appearances the Fourth Party continued to function right up until the formation of the Salisbury Government in 1885,<sup>129</sup> it was "virtually broken up and dissolved from the moment when the capitulation was carried out without the knowledge and consent of one of its three members".<sup>130</sup>

Notwithstanding his estrangement from Gorst, upon the formation of the new Conservative Government in 1885, Churchill pressed Salisbury to provide a position therein for his former ally:

I do feel very uneasy indeed about Wolff and Gorst and cannot think that I have submitted to you their position as regards myself with the urgency which they are entitled to expect from me ... Gorst's disappointment is intense. He knows his powers, his position in the House, his hitherto barely recognised claims and it makes me perfectly wretched to feel that it must occur to his mind that his failure to obtain that for which so many persons of knowledge consider he is fitted for in every way, is due to lukewarmness on my part.<sup>131</sup>

However, not to have made such an appeal for this colleague who had contributed so much towards his success would have exposed him to accusations of callous ingratitude, and its attendant political repercussions - the possibility of which Churchill was evidently fully aware:

If I did not know what the general feeling of the House of Commons will be as regards myself on this point I would have hesitated to trouble you, but I am certain that if with respect to these two cases things remain in the position you gave me to understand this morning they would be, I shall be considered to have failed my friends, and my powers, whatever they may be, of being useful to your Government will be impaired.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> See A.J. Balfour, pp. 172-173; R.R. James, Randolph Churchill, Chap. 6; H. Drummond Wolff, 2, 272-273.

<sup>130</sup> H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 311.

<sup>131</sup> Salisbury Papers, 112, Churchill to Salisbury, 16 June, 1885.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. (Emphasis added).

Solely as a result of Churchill's patronage, Gorst was appointed Solicitor-General,<sup>133</sup> a minor office but one which carried with it a knighthood.

Gorst's participation in the National Union controversy effectively sealed his political fate. As "Lord Randolph Churchill's position was too strong to be assailed ... the full vengeance of the leaders eventually fell upon Mr. Gorst".<sup>134</sup> Because "time after time, he was the creative force and impetus behind a particular action or manoeuvre" of the Fourth Party,<sup>135</sup> the Conservative hierarchy considered him "the dangerous man among them".<sup>136</sup>

Consequently, they were now determined to exclude him from the party's inner circles. Thus, during subsequent Conservative administrations, Gorst found himself occupying a succession of secondary parliamentary offices, condemned for the remainder of his career never to "obtain that political success to which he was entitled by reason of his undoubted talents".<sup>137</sup> Had Gorst been willing to accept the settlement and renounce Tory Democracy, the leadership might have eventually forgiven and forgotten; but this Gorst would not do. His commitment to his political philosophy was too strong, and became even stronger as his parliamentary career progressed.

<sup>133</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 317.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>135</sup>Andrew Jones, The Politics of Reform, 1884 (Cambridge, 1972), p. 73.

<sup>136</sup>Charles Whibley, Lord John Manners and His Friends, 2 vols. (London, 1925), 2, 202.

<sup>137</sup>Wilkinson, p. 76.



His plan to utilize the National Union as a vehicle for Tory Democracy having failed, and denied the opportunity to directly influence Tory policy by virtue of his exclusion from the highest councils of the party, Gorst was now obliged to employ alternative methods in his fight to have the Conservative party embrace the Tory Democratic creed. Although only in the second rank of politicians, ten years of vigorous and frequently independent, parliamentary activity had gained for him a prominent parliamentary position. He now began to use this position to harrass successive Conservative governments, in and out of Parliament, with demands for measures designed to transform the Tory party into "a national party to whom the masses of the people could look with confidence for the protection and furtherance of their interests".<sup>138</sup>

<sup>138</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 36.

## CHAPTER III

### THE QUEST FOR TORY DEMOCRACY: GORST AND SOCIAL REFORM, 1875-1890

Gorst's pursuit of Tory democracy through the legislative process, following the failure of his National Union campaign, represented not a new departure in his policy but, rather, the continuation of a course of action he had been actively prosecuting throughout the previous decade. Gorst's philosophy encompassed much more than the democratization of party organization and the subversion of antiquated party methods. His Tory democratic ideal was in essence that outlined by Disraeli in his address to the National Union at the Crystal Palace in June 1872, in which he set forth his concept of national and popular Conservatism. Declared Disraeli on this occasion, the principles of the Tory party involved not only the maintenance of the institutions of the country and the upholding of the empire but, also, "the elevation of the condition of the people".<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's speech, together with others expressing similar sentiments which he had delivered in Lancashire earlier in that year, apparently deeply affected Gorst: "... he was greatly impressed by the reality of Disraeli's sympathy with the working class, and by the keen understanding he displayed of the minutest circumstances of their humble lives. It gave him a genuine insight into his chief's political ideals ...".<sup>2</sup> However, whereas Disraeli's commitment to social progress sprang primarily from his calculation of

<sup>1</sup>The Times, 25 June, 1782, p. 8

<sup>2</sup>H.E. Gorst, The Fourth Party (London, 1906), p. 72. Hereafter referred to H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party.

benefits to be derived from support of working-class interests,<sup>3</sup> Gorst's quest for social justice was more deeply rooted. Although he assuredly recognized and appreciated the party advantage to be gained from embracing the cause of working-class welfare, Gorst was, according to Lady Dorothy Nevill, "undoubtedly animated by a sincere passion for social reform".<sup>4</sup> Even one of his severest critics felt obliged to acknowledge that Gorst's "genuine sympathy with the suffering of poverty, the fruit of his deep religious feelings", lay at the root of his political philosophy;<sup>5</sup> and Gorst's son relates that his father entered the Fourth Party "because he believed that his colleagues shared with him the keen determination to revive Disraeli's policy of social reform ...".<sup>6</sup> Thus, following Gorst's by-election victory in 1875, his devotion to what he perceived to be Disraeli's philosophy of social progress found expression in agitation for social legislation in the House of Commons.

When Gorst re-entered Parliament in February 1875, the year-old Conservative Government was in the process of enacting the most extensive series of social reform measures to be produced by a British administration prior to that of 1906. However, this reform activity represented not the

<sup>3</sup>Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London, 1976), pp. 157-161.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Nevill, Life and Letters of Lady Dorothy Nevill (London, 1919), p. 109. Hereafter referred to as Nevill, Life and Letters.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur A. Baumann, "Sir John Gorst", The Saturday Review 123 (1916), 345-346.

<sup>6</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, p. 246. However, Lady Dorothy Nevill expressed the view that social reform "made no particular appeal to either of his colleagues", e.g., Churchill and Wolff. (See Nevill, Life and Letters, p. 109.)

implementation of a Disraelian programme of Tory Democracy but, rather, the party's ad hoc response to the exigencies of the hour. Despite his expressed desire "for the elevation of the condition of the people", Disraeli entered office in 1874 without any coherent domestic policy in mind. Consequently, although he encouraged its creation, the formulation and management of subsequent Tory social legislation devolved upon a small group of his ministers, of whom the Home Secretary, Richard Cross, was to prove the most productive. Thus, in the absence of a definite social programme, the Conservative reform measures emerged as a series of piecemeal reforms whose birth and character resulted from a variety of factors.<sup>7</sup>

The motives prompting Tory initiative in social reform were complex. In the 1874 election campaign fear of alienating the reform-wary middle classes, whose votes they hoped to garner in the contest, prevented the Conservatives from making a special appeal to the working classes or placing too much emphasis upon social measures pertaining to their interests, except in the case of candidates in the large urban and industrial constituencies. However, once returned to office, the party recognized the necessity of making some effort to reward working men who had contributed to their electoral success in order to ensure their continued support in the future, a factor considered to be particularly crucial with respect to the populous urban boroughs. Furthermore, the enactment of judicious social reforms was considered an effective ploy in forestalling the growth of

<sup>7</sup>Smith, pp. 198-202, pp. 257-259. For a detailed examination of the contribution of Cross to this legislation see Dennis J. Mitchell, "Richard Assheton Cross: A Political Biography". (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Mississippi, 1976), Chap. 3.

dangerous working-class discontent.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the Tories, aware that their victory at the polls to some extent resulted from the reaction of middle-class voters against the conduct of the previous Liberal administration, which had "harassed every trade, worried every profession and assailed every class, institution and species of property"<sup>9</sup> through its domestic policies, were committed to providing a respite from "incessant and harassing legislation".<sup>10</sup> Consequently, they now embraced social reform as an area of parliamentary activity open to their efforts, while at the same time being largely non-partisan in nature and, thus, not likely to create political turmoil. In addition, several of the measures tackled by the Tories were already under formulation at the various government departments when the party took office, others were extemporaneous products of official enquiries, while still others represented the consolidation of earlier legislation.<sup>11</sup>

Further impetus for the Conservatives' drive for social legislation was provided by the emerging climate of opinion concerning social reform and the government's role in its implementation. As early as 1869, Sir Stafford Northcote had expressed the view that "social questions are assuming such large dimensions that they cannot be adequately dealt with except by

<sup>8</sup>Smith, pp. 200-201, p. 203

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management (London, 1959), p. 221.

<sup>10</sup>"Disraeli's Election Address", The Times, 26 January, 1874, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Blake, Disraeli (New York, 1967), pp. 552-558. Hereafter referred to as Blake, Disraeli; Smith, pp. 200-203, pp. 257-265.

the employment of the central administrative machinery";<sup>12</sup> and, speaking in Parliament in Spring of 1874, Disraeli observed that "the disposition of the country is favourable, beyond any preceding time that I can recall, to the successful consideration of the social wants of the great body of the people".<sup>13</sup> These arguments reflect the changing attitude towards the role of the state, and the scope of the tasks it could justifiably undertake in social and economic matters, which was beginning to take place among thinking men in Britain in the eighteen seventies. The considerable extension of government intervention in both social and economic fields, which had occurred during the previous forty years,<sup>14</sup> had served to bring about the growing realization that, in the face of the continuing problems being generated by urban industrial society, the state's traditional role as "holder of the economic ring", intervening only to prevent greater evil, was no longer a viable one. Government intervention in socio-economic questions was increasingly accepted as a positive good and the most appropriate solution to an ever-increasing range of social and economic problems.

However, despite the various benefits which the Conservatives anticipated they would derive from their venture into social reform legislation, the party as a whole lacked enthusiasm for the enterprise and was

<sup>12</sup>Sir Stafford Northcote, "Opening Address", Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (1869), 1-27.

<sup>13</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 219 (1874): 259.

<sup>14</sup>During the so-called "age of laissez-faire", between 1840 and 1970, British governments had enacted a succession of socio-economic legislation which included the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, factory acts, and education and public health legislation. (See Ursula R.Q. Henriques, Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain (London, 1979); David Roberts, The Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State (New Haven, Conn., 1960).

anxious to limit the scope of the measures to be adopted. At a time when increasing numbers of informed members of society were coming to appreciate the need for the tempering of individualism and laissez-faire through judicious state intervention, many Conservatives were experiencing a strengthening of their commitment to Government non-interference in socio-economic affairs. By the early 'seventies, the party's absorption of large numbers of those members of the commercial and industrial middle-class seeking a nostrum for growing working-class militancy and Liberal Radicalism had served to reinforce the marked strain of Liberal-Conservatism already existing within its ranks. This resulted in a further decline of its Tory paternalism already diminished by the backlash against the 1867 Reform Act and the threat presented to the traditional dominance of property and the stability of the social order by evolving working-class consciousness and organization. At the moment of their return to power in 1874, "the Conservatives looked less than ever like the trustees of paternalism and the organic view of society, as they took up the cudgels of individual liberty and freedom of enterprise against the bogies of collectivism and socialism".<sup>15</sup>

The Conservatives' attachment to the individualistic creed, when combined with their suspicion of centralization, the inescapable constraints of prejudice and vested interest within Toryism, and the traditional reluctance shared by both parties to spend the ratepayers' and taxpayers' money, served to inhibit the party's social policy. The philosophy guiding the Conservative administration's social legislation was exemplified in

<sup>15</sup>Blake, Disraeli, pp. 552-556; Smith, pp. 203-204.

Cross's speech to the Edinburgh Conservative Working Men's Association in October 1875. He assured his audience that the Government wished "to promote, as far as lies in our power, the improvement of the social condition of the people ..." but he cautioned them that acts of Parliament were of limited efficacy in accomplishing this amelioration. His intention was to show people "how they can improve themselves". In a genuflection to Benthamism, he stipulated that the Conservative policy was intended "to give the greatest amount of happiness to the largest possible number that is consistent with the actual rights of the few".<sup>16</sup> However, in the case of the Tories, this ideology was modified to ensure the limitation of the greatest happiness for the greatest number to that happiness which did not detract from the rights of the propertied minority.<sup>17</sup>

Upon assuming office in 1874, the Conservative government was obliged to deal with labour issues, their consideration rendered necessary by the increasing political power of organized labour and the working-class contribution to the Conservatives' electoral success, particularly in the north.<sup>18</sup> Taking over Radical A.J. Mundella's private member's bill designed to reduce the hours of labour in the textile industry, Cross adapted it to meet the Government's own specifications and brought it into Parliament as the Factories (Health of Women) Bill in May 1874. The bill, which met with little opposition and went through third reading without debate, emerged as the Factory Act of 1874 which established the ten-hour day and raised

<sup>16</sup>"Parliament Out of Session", The Times, 18 October, 1875, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Mitchell, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup>Smith, pp. 208-214.



the age for half-time employment from 8 to 10 and for full-time from 13 to 14.<sup>19</sup> Having earlier assured Parliament that the ten-hour provision would apply only to women and children, because "as far as adult males were concerned there could be no question that freedom of contract must be maintained, and men must be left to care for themselves", Cross presented his bill as being consistent with laissez-faire principles, assuring the House that his provisions would incur as little violation of the doctrines of political economy as did the current factory acts.<sup>20</sup> Yet, reducing the working hours to ten for females and young persons meant, in practice, curtailing the working hours for male workers also. "It was a good case of a Conservative minister doing in fact what he could hardly have attempted to justify in theory".<sup>21</sup>

The session of 1875 saw the passage of further reforms, including additional labour measures. This period saw the enactment of two important Trade Union Acts: the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and the Employers and Workmen Act; the Public Health Act, which consolidated and systematized existing legislation; the Artizans Dwelling Act, which empowered local authorities to replace deficient insanitary dwellings with adequate housing; an Agricultural Holdings Act, a Friendly Societies Act, and a Sale of Food and Drugs Act. In addition, the 1876 session produced three more measures, the Rivers Pollution, Merchant Shipping and Education

<sup>19</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 219 (1874): 455, 1415-1471; 220 (1874): 302-339, 672-673.

<sup>20</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 218 (1874): 1793-1794; 219 (1874): 1420.

<sup>21</sup>Smith, p. 214.

Acts.<sup>22</sup>

The practical significance of these measures, however, was less impressive than the simple tabulation of the Acts suggests. Developed piecemeal and conceived and executed in a spirit of pseudo-Liberalism, the reforms were of varying quality and efficacy. Only the Conservatives' labour measures, the Trade Union Acts, which effectively settled the status of labour for the remainder of the century, can be considered a resounding success.<sup>23</sup>

Thereafter, the Tory government's preoccupation with social reform dissipated. Beginning in 1877, increasing emphasis upon foreign and Imperial affairs, and their drain on revenues already weakened by economic depression, combined with a gradual reaction on the part of many Conservatives against what they regarded as excessive concessions to working-class interests in the wake of the 1867 Reform Act, served to impede the development of additional Tory reforms and the remainder of Disraeli's second ministry yielded only one social measure of note, the

<sup>22</sup>For background to this legislation see Maurice Bruce, The Coming of the Welfare State (London, 1961), pp. 135-136; W.M. Frazer, History of English Public Health, 1834-1939 (London, 1950), pp. 114-120; P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875 (Manchester, 1961), Chap. 7; Enid Gauldie, Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing, 1780-1918 (London, 1974), pp. 275-281; George Howell, Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1905), 2, Chap. 35; Nigel Middleton and Sophia Weitzman, A Place for Everyone: A History of State Education from the End of the 18th Century to the 1970s (London, 1976), pp. 72-73; Christabel Orwin and Edith H. Whetham, History of British Agriculture, 1846-1914 (London, 1964), pp. 170-173; P. Smith, Chapters 5 and 6; John N. Tarn, Five Per Cent Philanthropy: An account of housing in urban areas between 1840 and 1914 (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 77-81.

<sup>23</sup>For an evaluation of the working of these various Acts see Gauldie, pp. 276-278; Middleton and Weitzman, p. 73; Orwin and Whetham, pp. 170-173; Smith, pp. 257-260.

1878 Factory Act which consolidated earlier legislation into a unified scheme.<sup>24</sup>

Gorst appears to have made no significant parliamentary contribution to the passage of the bulk of this legislation,<sup>25</sup> a seemingly surprising abstention in view of his subsequent involvement in the development of British social policy. However, his lack of participation may have resulted from frequent involuntary absences from the House occasioned by the demands of his extra-parliamentary duties which were particularly onerous during this period. Between the years 1875 and 1877 Gorst's official duties as Principal Agent undoubtedly occupied a large proportion of his time. During 1875, when the majority of the Conservative social measures were under debate in the Commons, Gorst was deeply engrossed with the municipal elections being contested around the country. His conviction that the party's future rested upon borough Conservatism prompted him to work assiduously for the promotion of Toryism at the local level, whilst urging the party leaders to give more attention to municipal elections and to regard them as an indicator of the fluctuations in public opinion.<sup>26</sup>

During Gorst's initial years as Agent, municipal elections had produced a succession of Tory victories, foreshadowing the general election triumph of 1874. However, the municipal elections of that year brought a reversal of this trend, inducing Gorst to once again pressure the party

<sup>24</sup>Smith, Chapter 6.

<sup>25</sup>Gorst did, however, give his verbal support to the Government's proposed social legislation in his by-election speeches during January and February, 1875, promising to make "the elevation of the condition of the people ... one of his cardinal principles so far as legislation was concerned ..." (Chatham News, 6 February, 1875. See also, *ibid.*, 23 January 1875, 30 January 1875; 13 February, 1875.)

<sup>26</sup>Hanham, pp. 388-389.

leaders to use their influence to stimulate local associations, but without success.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, during 1875, he worked through Central Office to nurture borough Conservatism with a view to stemming its decay but the adverse results of the 1875 municipal contests, carefully collated by him and presented to Disraeli, confirmed his fears of continuing Conservative decline.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the time which Gorst could allot to attending the Commons was further eroded by the duties entailed in fulfilling his role as honorary secretary of the National Union and by his efforts to establish simultaneously a legal practice, rendered necessary by his relatively impecunious state.<sup>29</sup>

One Conservative reform which did elicit Gorst's active involvement during the period was the merchant shipping measure. When Gorst took his seat in the Commons, in February, 1875, the Government had just introduced its Merchant Shipping Bill designed to secure greater protection for seamen against loss of life at sea. The Bill's principal provision was an attempt to place responsibility of safety upon the shoulders of the individual shipowner by rendering him accountable for unlimited liability with regard to damage to persons or property resulting from his consciously dispatching unworthy ships to sea. This proposal followed the recommendations of the

<sup>27</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/D/463a, Gorst to Disraeli, 2 December, 1874; *ibid.*, B/xxi/D/463, Dyke to Disraeli, 8 December, 1874.

<sup>28</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G/253, Gorst to Disraeli, 10 November, 1875; *ibid.*, B/xxi/G/255, Gorst to Disraeli, 22 November, 1875.

<sup>29</sup>"Character Sketch: December. Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews 3 (1891), 575-585. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch".

1874 Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships which advocated that shipowners, not the government, must bear the responsibility for the safety of shipping.<sup>30</sup> The Conservatives were more than eager to comply with this directive for they sought to limit as far as possible state intervention in private enterprise,<sup>31</sup> preferring to follow the lead of the previous Liberal government whose Merchant Shipping Acts of 1871 and 1873 had vested in the shipowners the responsibility for the seaworthiness of their vessels.<sup>32</sup>

The Conservative measure was attacked by the shipowners, who were fearful that the Government's scheme of unlimited liability would bring them to financial ruin, and by the allies of the seamen who argued that the proposal was inadequate.<sup>33</sup> The chief agitator for the latter view was Liberal M.P. for Derby, Samuel Plimsoll, who claimed that the over-insuring of ships, followed by overloading to guarantee their sinking, was the greatest contributor to loss of life at sea and who, between 1870 and 1874, had conducted a campaign for greater government control over shipping which had included the introduction into Parliament of three bills designed to end overloading and unseaworthiness by the enforcement of compulsory survey and load line.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Final Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships (Cmnd. 1027), PP, 1874, 34: 1-19. (All citations of Parliamentary Papers in this thesis refer to the microcard version of the Papers. See, Great Britain, House of Commons. British Sessional Papers. New York: Readex Microprint, 1731-.)

<sup>31</sup>Smith, pp. 230-231.

<sup>32</sup><sup>34</sup> and 35 Vict., Chap. 110. <sup>36</sup> and 37 Vict., Chap. 85.

<sup>33</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 222 (1875): 125-138.

<sup>34</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 204 (1871): 153; 214 (1873): 273-274; 218 (1874): 191. See also Howell, 2: 263-283; D. Masters, The Plimsoll Mark (London, 1955). Neville Upham, The Load Line, National Maritime Museum Monographs. No. 33 (London, 1978). A.C. Warner, "The Plimsoll Agitation: A Chapter in Nineteenth-Century Social History" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1960). This latter work was, unfortunately, not available to the author of this dissertation.

Faced with this opposition and the consequent likelihood of continued parliamentary obstruction to the Bill, and unable to sidetrack the measure because this would leave the way open for Plimsoll to bring in his rival bill,<sup>35</sup> the Government introduced two amendments devised to pacify both opposition groups, the shipowners by withdrawing unlimited liability, the sailors' friends by allowing for voluntary observance of the load line. Compulsory load line and survey were again rejected because, as the President of the Board of Trade, Adderley, pointed out, such legislation "might supplement the necessary perils of the sea by the graver perils of Government protection still more treacherous and disastrous than the sea itself".<sup>36</sup>

Although these concessions served to soften opposition and increase support for the Bill sufficiently enough to allow it to pass second reading without division,<sup>37</sup> Plimsoll's supporters, amongst whom were a substantial group of Conservative M.P.s including Gorst, remained committed to the Derby Member's scheme for obligatory load line and survey. In debate during committee stage of the Bill, Gorst urged the Government to adopt Plimsoll's proposals as a means of ridding the seas of unseaworthy vessels, thereby leaving a manageable number of ships to regulate resulting in safer conditions for the seamen.<sup>38</sup>

As the session advanced and the slow progress of the Bill brought it into competition for parliamentary time with the Agricultural Holdings

<sup>35</sup>Smith, p. 233.

<sup>36</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 223 (1875): 474a.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 223 (1875): 474a-573.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 225 (1875): 109-110.

measure, which the Prime Minister was eager to enact, the Government decided to defer the Merchant Shipping Bill. This action prompted Plimsoll to launch a scathing attack on the government from the floor of the Commons, which was followed by mounting agitation in his support from around the country. The Conservatives were accused of insensitivity for advancing the Agricultural Holdings Bill ahead of legislation for the protection of seamen. Alarmed by the intensity of the opposition to the Shipping Bill's deferment, the Tories elected to introduce a limited measure designed to reduce loss of life at sea pending a re-examination of the entire question in the following session.<sup>39</sup>

The Unseaworthy Ships Bill, tabled in the Commons on July 28, 1875, strengthened the powers of the Board of Trade to detain unseaworthy ships and made provision for the intensification of survey, this inspection being allowed upon the request of twenty-five percent of the ship's crew, the legislation to remain in operation for one year.<sup>40</sup> Once again the provisions of the Bill fell short of Plimsoll's demands and the consequent pressure from his supporters on both sides of the House for the adoption of a load line eventually obliged the Government to concede on this point,<sup>41</sup> although the exact position of the load line on the ship was to be decided by the individual owners.<sup>42</sup> This concession enabled the Government to pass the

<sup>39</sup>Masters, Chapter 17; Smith, pp. 235-236.

<sup>40</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 226 (1875): 145-149.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 226 (1875): 379-431. Disraeli feared that defeat on the issue would involve grave political risk because, as he confided to Lady Bradford, "My position is difficult ... if I were defeated in the House, I could not dissolve, for, in the present fever, I should probably get worsted". (Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 28 July, 1875, quoted in W.F. Monypenny and G. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, 2 vols. (London, 1929), 2, p.725.)

<sup>42</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 226 (1875): 575-588, 617-625.

emergency bill, but, as Disraeli admitted, not without difficulty: "We pulled through, but not triumphantly; had the Opposition had a leader adequate to the opportunity, we might have been much humiliated. As it was it needed much tact and vigilance to mitigate, or conceal, our concessions".<sup>43</sup>

During the parliamentary recess the Government worked to prepare a revised shipping bill to replace the temporary Unseaworthy Ships Act. Although ministers remained unwilling to accept Plimsoll's scheme, being, for example, resolved to retain the Act's provisions for individual choice in the placing of the load line, the furor which had accompanied the passing of the stop-gap measure had convinced them that shipping legislation could no longer be based exclusively upon the concept of "responsibility" but must include a substantial dose of government regulation.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, in February 1876, the Government brought in two bills to amend the Merchant Shipping Acts, one to tackle the basic problem of marine insurance - most specifically, the over-valuation of ships for insurance purposes - the other to make permanent the provision of the temporary act of 1875, whilst at the same time providing additional reforms including one to deter the dangerous practice of deck loading.<sup>45</sup>

Little progress was made with the marine insurance bill but the general Merchant Shipping Bill was subjected to prolonged and spirited

<sup>43</sup> Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 3 August, 1875, quoted in Monypenny and Buckle, 2, p. 727.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, pp. 238-239.

<sup>45</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 227 (1876): 163-179.



debate.<sup>46</sup> The absence from the Bill of provisions for compulsory survey and a verified load line led Plimsoll to denounce the measure and to introduce his own amendments to rectify these omissions.<sup>47</sup> Gorst gave his full support to Plimsoll's amendment,<sup>48</sup> and launched his own criticism of the proposed legislation. He was particularly critical of the Government's failure to incorporate into the Bill measures to deal with the relations between seamen and their employers and he urged that they mitigate the severe penalties imposed upon seamen for breach of contract by bringing them under the provisions of the 1875 Labour Acts.<sup>49</sup> In Committee, Gorst proposed an amendment to extend this protection to seamen but withdrew it when the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicated that the Government would itself introduce a clause pertaining to the question. Gorst promised, however, "that ... if the Government did not bring forward such clauses, he would".<sup>50</sup> Gorst's proposal secured the support of Opposition members such as Burt, Mundella, Macdonald and Forster but received no backing from the Conservative benches.<sup>51</sup> When the Government continued to disregard the issue, Gorst moved the insertion of a clause

<sup>46</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 227 (1876): 163-186, 428-466; 228 (1876): 519-551, 627-687, 884-912, 1147-1161, 1367-1377, 1580-1622, 1779-1809, 1879-1885, 1913-1949; 229 (1876): 53-96, 208-235, 1054-1082, 1334-1337.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 228 (1876): 627-638.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 228 (1876): 660-662.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 227 (1876): 435-437; 228 (1876): 519-525; 229 (1876): 221-222.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 228 (1876): 519-525, 539.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 228 (1876): 525-538.

to deal with breach of contract and its harsh penalties as applied to seamen but the Conservative administration again successfully deflected the challenge by claiming it lay outside the scope of the current Bill and by assuring the House that the question of the relation of seamen to the Employers and Workmen Act would certainly be dealt with in the following session.<sup>52</sup>

Despite repeated attacks from its critics the measure survived debate, the Government's only important defeat occurring at the division on Plimsoll's amendment to abolish deck loading in winter,<sup>53</sup> and the Bill finally passed on May 26.<sup>54</sup> However, the Commons' decision on Plimsoll's amendment was reversed by the Upper House which, under ministerial direction,<sup>55</sup> replaced the clause with one permitting deck loading in the winter months under certain conditions.<sup>56</sup> Thereafter, at Northcote's request, the Lords kept back the Bill to ensure as brief an interval as possible between its passage there and its return to the Commons in order to reduce the time available for criticisms of the deck-loading and other amendments carried out in the Upper Chamber.<sup>57</sup> When the amended Bill was finally returned to the Commons, Gorst denounced the Government for utilizing the Lords for the purpose of substituting amendments devised by the Board of Trade officials for those effected by the Commons but he

<sup>52</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 229 (1876): 221-227.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 228 (1876): 1590-1622, 1921-1943; 229 (1876): 1077-1079.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 229 (1876): 1334-1377.

<sup>55</sup>Smith, p. 241.

<sup>56</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 230 (1876): 1132.

<sup>57</sup>Masters, p. 240; Northcote to Richmond, 1 July, 1876; Goodwood Papers, box 31, cited in Smith, p. 241.

declined to support a Plimsollite motion calling for rejection of the Bill, not wishing to "incur the responsibility of wrecking the whole Bill because he disapproved of the conduct of Her Majesty's Government in submitting these Amendments at the end of the Session. He thought it would be better to let the Bill pass under protest".<sup>58</sup> This last-ditch attempt on the part of the Plimsollites to have the amended Bill rejected failed and the measure passed the Commons on August 12.<sup>59</sup>

As the Disraeli Parliament wore on without the Conservatives having made any notable progress towards dealing with the reforms excluded from the 1876 Act,<sup>60</sup> Gorst publicly reproached the Government for failing to redeem their pledge to address the problem of breach of contract as it related to merchant seamen.<sup>61</sup> When a bill dealing with the question was finally brought before Parliament in 1878,<sup>62</sup> he denounced the measure because the benefits of the Employer and Workmen Act were to apply to sailors only for the period between their making an engagement and their joining the ship, arguing that the Act should apply to seamen at sea as well as on shore.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 231 (1876): 1172.

<sup>59</sup>For the debate see *ibid.*, 3rd Series, 231 (1876): 1162-1184. This legislation confirmed the owners' load line as established by the Unseaworthy Ships Act, a provision which fell short of Plimsoll's proposal for an officially fixed line. This weak provision remained in effect until the passage in 1890 of An Act to Amend the Merchant Shipping Acts relating to Load-line which included a clause establishing a verified load line, the line becoming known as the Plimsoll mark. (See Vict. 53 and 54, Chap. 9.)

<sup>60</sup>The Maritime Contracts Bill of 1876 was re-introduced only to be withdrawn yet again, whilst pressure of parliamentary business prevented the introduction of a measure to deal with the relation of seamen to the Employers and Workmen Act (Smith, p. 278.)

<sup>61</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 232 (1877): 380; 236 (1877): 723-724.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 3rd Series, 237 (1878): 304-307.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 3rd Series, 237 (1878): 309-310, 609-610.

Unable to surmount the difficulties hindering passage of the bill, the Government was eventually obliged to postpone the measure but its replacement, prepared for presentation in 1879, was not brought forward during that year,<sup>64</sup> notwithstanding Gorst's continued agitation for Government action,<sup>65</sup> and it finally succumbed to the dissolution of March 1880. When the issue of breach of contract and sailors' discipline was taken up by the incoming Liberal Government, early in the first session of the new Gladstone Parliament, Gorst resumed his agitation to bring seamen within the provisions of the 1875 Labour Laws,<sup>66</sup> and had the satisfaction of seeing his long campaign for the extension achieve fulfillment in the Merchant Seamen (Payment of Wages and Rating) Act of 1880.<sup>67</sup>

The Conservative Government's defeat in the General Election of 1880 brought to a conclusion six years of repeated but none-too-successful attempts on their part to deal with the problems of the merchant service. The complexity of the issues involved, the pressures from vested interests and frequently bigoted and cautious civil servants, combined with the Government's own adherence to classical liberal doctrines of freedom and individualism, had produced shipping legislation which had done little to increase the seaman's safety or improve his general welfare.<sup>68</sup> Although they required an extension of government interference, the measures demanded by Plimsoll and promoted by Gorst were essentially paternalistic involving the kind of government regulation already conceded in the fields of public

<sup>64</sup>Smith, p. 279.

<sup>65</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 244 (1879): 297-298.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 252 (1880): 955-959; 253 (1880): 791-792, 798; 254 (1880): 596-599.

<sup>67</sup>43 and 44 Vict., Chap. 16.

<sup>68</sup>Smith, p. 280.

health and factory legislation. Nevertheless, even this moderate advance in state intervention went far beyond what the majority of Conservatives were prepared to accept and Gorst's advocacy of these reforms placed him amongst the very tiny majority within the party willing to accept an expansion of government responsibility in socio-economic affairs.

Another labour reform upon which Gorst diverged from the party's cautious position, and for which he agitated in the House, was that of employers' liability for injuries to workmen. Labour had for several years been endeavouring to procure legislation which would enable workmen to obtain adequate compensation from their employers for industrial injuries or death resulting from negligence. A Compensation Act had been called for by miners as early as 1863 and by the late 'seventies the demand for an Employers' Liability Act was the most important proposal on the agenda of the Trades Union Congress. Labour's main objective was the reform of the existing law of "common employment" which held that an employer was not liable to an employee for the injuries caused by the negligence of a fellow-worker, a rule felt to be particularly inequitable when the fellow-employee was a manager or foreman acting with authority invested in him by his employer.<sup>69</sup>

In 1876, Liberal M.P. Alexander Macdonald introduced a bill to abolish common employment but was persuaded by the Government to submit it to a Select Committee. The following year the Committee reported against the ending of common employment, prompting Macdonald, in 1878, to bring in another bill designed to abrogate the law.<sup>70</sup> The majority of Conservatives

<sup>69</sup> Howell, 1: 226-227; 2: 303-304, 422-432; Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, 3rd ed. (1963. Pelican Paperback, 1976), p. 86; Smith, pp. 280-281.

<sup>70</sup> Smith, pp. 280-281.

remained firmly opposed to the measure but this did not deter Gorst from rising to support the bill, the only Member to do so from the Government benches.<sup>71</sup> After issuing a vague promise to introduce its own measure to deal with common employment, the Government spent almost twelve months attempting to devise a draft bill which would strike a balance between the demands of labour and the employers' preference for a measure relieving them entirely from liability for injuries incurred, except by themselves personally. A compromise bill was finally brought forward in March 1879 but made little progress and eventually expired with the dissolution.<sup>72</sup>

Following the election the incoming Liberal administration assumed responsibility for the problem, introducing an Employers' Liability Bill as one of its first measures in the new Parliament. The Bill, which was identical in principle to that proposed by the Conservatives in 1879,<sup>73</sup> met with sharp criticism in the Commons, leading the Government to promise its amendment in Committee.<sup>74</sup> Gorst, however, attacked the measure as a

<sup>71</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 239 (1878): 1053-1054. For entire debate see *ibid.*, 239 (1878): 1049-1071.

<sup>72</sup>Smith, pp. 281-283. The compromise bill provided for the retention of the employer's liability to the general public but made him liable to his employees for the negligence of "servants in authority".

<sup>73</sup>Howell, 2: 428-429; Pelling, pp. 85-86. The measure extended the liability of the employer for injuries caused by defect in machinery, by negligence of a person in superintendence, or as a consequence of obedience to employers' rules or by-laws, but did not abolish common employment.

<sup>74</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 252 (1880): 1092.

"dummy Bill ... which the Government was hereafter at its leisure to fill up" and moved that debate on second reading be adjourned until "the Government might meet in Cabinet, and might be able to lay before the House some definite and decisive proposal on which the House might express an opinion".<sup>75</sup> No division was taken on second reading but the debate convinced the Ministers that the measure required revision, leading to a re-committal of the Bill.<sup>76</sup>

The re-committed Bill, which retained its compromise character, became the focus of a sustained attack by Gorst and his colleagues in the newly-formed Fourth Party.<sup>77</sup> This offensive was conducted not only with the intention of forcing the Government into expanding the measure beyond its designated limits for the benefit of the workers but, also, in the hope that it might effect within their own party a revival of Tory democracy, which it appeared to have abandoned following the election fiasco of 1880 in the belief that new Conservatism had spawned their defeat.<sup>78</sup> Instead of assailing the Bill's provisions in defence of employers' rights, a line of attack which Liberal Ministers had anticipated would erupt from the Tory Opposition, the Fourth Party carried out their assault on the measure in support of working-class interests. In an effort to induce the

<sup>75</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 252 (1880): 1143-1145.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 252 (1880): 1282; 253 (1880): 1399-1423, 1752-1787. See also Winston S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, new ed. (London, 1952), p. 116.

<sup>77</sup>See Churchill, pp. 116-120; H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, Chap. 5.

<sup>78</sup>H.E. Gorst, Fourth Party, pp. 77-82.

Government to render the Bill more inclusive in its scope, they conducted a prolonged campaign of harassment against them in the House. Whenever the measure came up for debate in the Commons, the Fourth Party were in attendance. "There was not a single sitting from which they were absent, or a single clause which they did not ... seek to amend".<sup>79</sup>

When the Government remained firmly opposed to the removal of the doctrine of common employment, Gorst urged them to accept amendments designed to modify its application in order to "put an end to those unhappy cases in which a man was killed, or injured, by the negligence of his fellow-servants, with whom he had no more to do than the man in the moon, but in which he was precluded for obtaining compensation because the man was, technically his fellow servant".<sup>80</sup> He protested against the acceptance of a clause which limited to three years' compensation the maximum rate of damages for injuries sustained by an employee through the negligence of a fellow servant. Gorst objected to the provision because it applied exclusively to workmen and because, in his view, the restriction would prove particularly pernicious when administered in children's claims for in many cases the average earnings of a child over such a period would frequently be totally inadequate recompense for the injuries received.<sup>81</sup>

Gorst also attempted to have the measure broadened to cover the many categories of workers excluded from the provisions of the Bill, the

<sup>79</sup> Churchill, p. 117. For Gorst's participation in the debates see PD, 3rd Series, 255 (1880): 132-136, 145, 148, 151, 159, 187, 199, 225, 228-229, 267, 281, 295, 348, 378, 388, 486-490, 519, 570-571, 1106-1107, 1110, 1158, 1160, 1179, 1180, 1182, 1189, 1223, 1332-1333, 1478-1482; 256 (1880): 1110, 1114.

<sup>80</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 255 (1880): 235-236, 1158-1159.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 255 (1880): 378, 388-389, 1189.



consequence, he claimed, of their having "no votes".<sup>82</sup> He sought to obtain a re-committal of the Bill because, as introduced, it was restricted to manual workers, "domestic servants, clerks, time-keepers, watchmen and other persons not actually engaged in manual labour, though associated with manual labourers, being thrown over as a sop to employers of labour". Their exclusion, he alleged, "arose from the fact of their not being sufficiently powerful to induce the Government to include them in the Bill". He proposed an amendment to extend the Bill to workmen in the nation's dock-yards and arsenals. He asserted that since the Government, under the Merchant Shipping Act, "was liable to pay compensation to a powerful and wealthy shipowner" for injuries sustained as a result of the negligence of Crown officials, they should be equally responsible to dock workers for damages sustained in common employment. Hence, if the Government excluded these workers from the Bill, "they would establish a flagrant instance of applying one principle to the rich and another principle to the poor. If the Dockyard labourer had been as powerful in that House as the shipowner he would have received consideration", declared Gorst.<sup>83</sup>

However, the efforts of Gorst and his fellow Tory democrats to render the measure more comprehensive and equitable were largely ignored by the Government and only in 1897 were their proposals finally translated into legislation by the Workmen's Compensation Act of that year.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 255 (1880): 519.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 255 (1880): 1478-1482.

<sup>84</sup> 60 and 61 Vict., Chap. 37.

Although the merchant shipping measures and employers' liability had together provided frequent opportunities for Gorst to exercise his reforming tendencies during the Disraeli Parliament of 1874-1880, other labour issues had commanded his support in the House during those years. One of his earliest efforts to improve labour conditions was made on behalf of the dockyard workers in his constituency of Chatham. He appealed to the Government to discontinue its inequitable hiring, promotion, and wage policies among dockyard employees, which he reported to be a source of considerable dissatisfaction among them.<sup>85</sup> Later, during debate on the Factories and Workshops Bill, he supported a Liberal Member's amendment designed to guard against the exploitation of children in workshops.<sup>86</sup> In the winter of 1878-79, when the depression was causing great hardships among both the industrial working class and agricultural labourers and the Government's commitment to laissez-faire principles apparently precluded the adoption of measures to stimulate the economy and reduce unemployment, Gorst was amongst a handful of Tories who urged the administration to intervene to relieve the situation. He exhorted Northcote to postpone debt extinction so as to evade having to increase the income tax and, consequently, withdraw investment funds.<sup>87</sup>

Thereafter, the Gladstone Parliament of 1880-1885 provided little opportunity for Gorst to prosecute social reform issues from the Opposition benches beyond the agitation over Employers' Liability and Merchant Shipping

<sup>85</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 226 (1875): 499-500.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 238 (1878): 319.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 239 (1878): 1239-1242, cited in Smith, p. 305.

Bills, conducted during the early months of the new Liberal administration. Afterwards, ongoing crises in Irish and Imperial affairs, together with the Government's inadequate social policy formulation and co-ordination, resulted in a dearth of social reform legislation during Gladstone's second ministry.<sup>88</sup> Thus, when, in the first session of 1884, the President of the Board of Trade, Joseph Chamberlain, introduced a Merchant Shipping Bill designed to render more effective the Act of 1876, Gorst immediately fastened upon the issue and, with the support of his Fourth Party colleagues, began a crusade in the House for its passage.

When opposition from the shipping interests threatened progress of the Bill,<sup>89</sup> Gorst repeatedly pressed the Government to proceed with the measure.<sup>90</sup> He urged that the seamen as well as the shipowners be given the opportunity to present their views on the proposals to Chamberlain.<sup>91</sup> He suggested to Chamberlain that the Government might expedite the passage of the proposed legislation by taking morning sittings<sup>92</sup> but "Mr. Chamberlain rather sharply conveyed to him that he had better mind his own business".<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> See D.A. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford, 1972), Chap. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Annual Register, 126 (1884), pp. 167-169; Joseph Chamberlain, A Political Memoir, ed. C.H.D. Howard (London, 1953), pp. 101-102.

<sup>90</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 285 (1884): 1354; 286 (1884): 312; 287 (1884): 143, 746.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 3rd Series, 286 (1884): 1166.

<sup>92</sup> Gladstone Papers, B.L., Add. MS. 44126, f.15, Gorst to Chamberlain, 8 March, 1884.

<sup>93</sup> "Speech of Lord Randolph Churchill at Birmingham", The Times, 16 April, 1884, p. 7.

When the Government finally proceeded with second reading, Gorst chastised them for showing "a very culpable remissness in not pressing this measure on the House of Commons at a much earlier period" given the growing evidence of loss of life at sea, as reported by their own Minister at the Board of Trade. He accused them, further, of weakening the provisions of the original Bill in favour of the shipowners, the outcome of "extraordinary negotiations" conducted between "the authorities and the Board of Trade, assisted by the Solicitor General and the shipowners who had seats in the House, and many who had not".<sup>94</sup> However, despite Gorst's pleas to Chamberlain that he "address himself to the Bill with the earnest and serious intention of passing it into law this Session",<sup>95</sup> the debate on second reading was adjourned never to be resumed, the Bill being withdrawn on July 7. Chamberlain claimed pressure of public business forced its abandonment<sup>96</sup> "but it was obvious that the hostility it had produced among a large section of the habitual supporters of the Government rendered it expedient to withdraw the measure".<sup>97</sup>

Notwithstanding the lack of opportunities to promote social reform in the Commons, resulting from Parliament's concentration upon Irish and Imperial affairs, together with the demands made upon him by his second term of office as Principal Agent and his involvement in the National Union controversy beginning in 1883,<sup>98</sup> one cause which he continued to pursue

<sup>94</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 288 (1884): 774-782.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 288 (1884): 782.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 290 (1884): 348-367.

<sup>97</sup>Annual Register, 126 (1884), p. 169.

<sup>98</sup>See pp. 74-90 above.

throughout the Conservatives' Opposition years of 1880-1885 was that of improving the working conditions of employees in the State dockyards.<sup>99</sup>

Consequently, early in January 1887, Gorst was able to inform his constituents in Chatham that "Representations which he had from time to time made in Parliament and deputations to the Secretary of the Admiralty on his visits to the dockyards had induced the Government to enter carefully into the question of reserved pay, with the view of adjusting many of the points in the relations of the Government and their dockyard employés" (sic) and to take steps to remove other grievances.<sup>100</sup>

Because of the pertinacity with which Gorst pursued Tory democratic interests in Parliament, along with the independence he had displayed in executing his duties as Principal Agent and his involvement in the National Union controversy, by 1885 the Conservative hierarchy had come to regard him with unconcealed mistrust. Thereafter, Gorst's tenure as Solicitor-General in Salisbury's short-lived first ministry served to strengthen the leadership's doubts concerning his reliability as a "party man", the consequence of his posture during the debates on the Maamtrasna murders.

In 1882, in Maamtrasna, County Galway, an Irish family had been brutally murdered and three Irishmen had subsequently been executed for the crime and five others sentenced to penal servitude for life for their part in the murders. Later, doubts arose concerning the validity of the verdict and it was alleged that the prosecution had intimidated a witness in order

<sup>99</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 253 (1880): 1045-1047; 273 (1882): 460-464; 281 (1883): 1608-1611; 286 (1884): 862-863; 290 (1884): 1144-1149; 294 (1885): 251; 298 (1885): 1299; 306 (1886): 1323-1339.

<sup>100</sup>The Times, 14 January, 1887, p. 8.

to obtain the death sentence for an innocent man, but an inquiry conducted by Lord Spencer, Liberal Lord Lieutenant, upheld the justice of the verdict. During a Commons debate on the question in 1884, the majority of Conservatives had rejected an Irish motion of non-confidence in Lord Spencer but Gorst, along with Wolff and Churchill, had voted in the minority with the Irish Nationalists. When the Salisbury Government assumed office in 1885, Parnell moved a resolution impugning Lord Spencer's administration and demanding a review of the case by the new ministry. The Cabinet decided against a review and agreed to reject Parnell's motion. In the debate, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hicks-Beach, duly opposed the resolution on behalf of the Government. However, he then went on to state that the present Lord Lieutenant, Lord Carnarvon, would be willing to consider any request for a judicial review presented on behalf of the presumably wronged defendants. From the Opposition Front Bench, Sir William Harcourt opposed Parnell's motion, supported by loud cheering from the Tory benches, and the Ulster Conservatives were vehement in their denunciation of the concession offered by Hicks-Beach.<sup>101</sup>

Gorst, now Solicitor-General, succeeded in inflaming not only his party but also the Queen by openly attacking Lord Spencer's handling of the question and by referring to his Ulster colleagues who opposed Hicks-Beach's proposal as "reactionary Ulster Members".<sup>102</sup> In his speech Gorst not only threw over the Cabinet's decision but expressed his opinions

<sup>101</sup> Churchill, pp. 335-337; A. Hardinge, Life of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 3 vols. (London, 1925), 3: 167-170.

<sup>102</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 299 (1885): 1120-1125.

as though these represented ministerial opinion.<sup>103</sup> Lord Salisbury described Gorst's conduct as "quite indefensible"<sup>104</sup> and told the Queen he had "read with great regret the speech of the Solicitor-General" and assured her Gorst would be reprimanded.<sup>105</sup> According to Lord Cranbrook, even Churchill disavowed Gorst's actions.<sup>106</sup>

The Maamtrasna affair doomed Gorst's chances for re-appointment to the Solicitor-Generalship following the Tory election victory of 1886, which followed upon the Gladstone Government's defeat on the Home Rule Bill. Lord Salisbury later acknowledged to Gorst, "I was unable to recommend you for the post of Solicitor-General again, because at a very critical time, as Solicitor-General, you used publicly to the Ulster supporters of the Government very offensive language ...".<sup>107</sup> However, Salisbury did offer Gorst a Judgeship, perhaps as a device to remove his troublesome presence from the Commons, but Gorst declined, intimating that his duty to his constituents precluded his resignation from Parliament at that time.<sup>108</sup> Having been informed by Salisbury that his decision as to Gorst's future

<sup>103</sup>Hardinge, p. 170.

<sup>104</sup>Lord Salisbury to Lord Carnarvon, 22 July, 1885, quoted in Hardinge, p. 170.

<sup>105</sup>The Letters of Queen Victoria, ed. George E. Buckle, 2nd Series, 3 vols. (London, 1928), 3, p. 688.

<sup>106</sup>Cranbrook Diary, 18 July, 1885, cited in The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain, 1885-1886, ed. A.B. Cooke and J. Vincent (Brighton, 1974), p. 278.

<sup>107</sup>Salisbury Papers, 85, Salisbury to Gorst, 9 August, 1899. See also, *ibid.*, 710-711, Gorst to Churchill, 29 July, 1886.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 54, Gorst to Salisbury, 29 July, 1886.

appointment would depend upon Churchill's recommendations,<sup>109</sup> Gorst requested Lord Randolph, "for old friendship's sake", to intercede with the Prime Minister on his behalf: "... a word from you will resolve Lord Salisbury's doubts and secure me the position to which your influence originally promoted me ... I am sure you will not at a crisis like this fail an old comrade and sincere friend of your earlier career".<sup>110</sup>

Gorst's confidence in his former ally proved somewhat misplaced. Apparently Churchill no longer felt obliged to promote Gorst despite the risks taken earlier by the latter in supporting Churchill's bid for the party leadership. Churchill responded to Gorst's appeal by complaining to Salisbury that Gorst was "too impractical for anything. He ought to jump at a Judgeship".<sup>111</sup> However, he subsequently suggested that Gorst be appointed Education Minister, provided this did not create difficulties in the placing of other candidates for Government office.<sup>112</sup> The situation was apparently complicated by Henry Chaplin's<sup>113</sup> refusal to accept the Presidency of the Local Government Board. In order to avoid the formation of a coalition between two disgruntled former Government officers, Gorst and Chaplin,<sup>114</sup> which Salisbury's secretary, Manners, warned the Prime Minister "would be a very mischievous thing",<sup>115</sup> a subordinate position was found for Gorst.

<sup>109</sup>Salisbury Papers, 54, Gorst to Salisbury, 29 July, 1886.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 710-711, Gorst to Churchill, 29 July, 1886.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 708, Churchill to Salisbury, 29 July, 1886.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 712, Churchill to Salisbury, 30 July, 1886.

<sup>113</sup>Chancellor, Duchy of Lancaster, in Salisbury's First Ministry.

<sup>114</sup>Salisbury Papers, 146, A.J. Balfour to Salisbury, 1 August, 1886.

<sup>115</sup>Salisbury MSS, Manners to Salisbury, 1 August, 1886, quoted in A.B. Cooke and J. Vincent, p. 455.



Thus, Gorst was appointed Under-Secretary of State for India, "a much less lucrative and important post" than that of Solicitor-General<sup>116</sup> and one "which was hardly adequate to his Parliamentary repute".<sup>117</sup> Although his relegation to a minor post was no doubt a source of considerable chagrin for Gorst, "he showed entire forbearance and good humour, not allowing any expression of vexation or disappointment to escape him. And so he buckled down to his work at the India Office".<sup>118</sup> The department's permanent under-secretary described Gorst as "one of the very ablest men" in the party who, while at his post "was very industrious, and worked very long hours ...".<sup>119</sup> Even more vivid testimony to Gorst's diligence is provided by the contemporary observations of one of his parliamentary colleagues:

Gorst soon ... evinced a remarkable aptitude for getting up any Indian case, great or small, which had to be presented in the House of Commons, and some of them were great indeed. He showed skill in parrying the blows and fencing the questions that proceed from the regular Opposition which is springing up in the House in reference to everything Indian. And, certainly, as representative of the India Office in the Commons, he

<sup>116</sup> Arthur Godley (Lord Kilbracken), Reminiscences of Lord Kilbracken (London, 1931), p. 186.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Temple, Letters and Character Sketches from the House of Commons, ed. R.C. Temple (London, 1912), p. 465.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>119</sup> Kilbracken, p. 186.

discharged his considerable functions right well. Indeed, on many occasions he made speeches so effective as materially to influence the division when Indian interests have been threatened.<sup>120</sup>

By the time of his appointment to the India Office in 1886, Gorst's parliamentary agitation for social legislation during the previous decade had established him as one of the Conservatives' foremost reform advocates. However, despite what his party colleagues may have feared, Gorst's reforming instincts at this period remained essentially paternalistic rather than collectivist or socialist. His continuing adherence to Tory paternalism was aptly demonstrated in one of his parliamentary speeches delivered at the close of the 'eighties. In June of 1889, during the committee stage of the Cruelty to Children (Prevention) Bill, the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, moved an amendment exempting children performing in a place licensed for public entertainments, from the prohibition against the employment of children under ten years of age.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Temple, pp. 465-466. The India Office's permanent under-secretary, Arthur Godley (later Lord Kilbracken) claimed that Gorst was given great freedom to manoeuvre in the department because his "hardly concealed contempt" for his superior, Lord Cross, intimidated the latter causing him to allow Gorst to do "pretty much as he liked", in order to preserve peace between them. (See Kilbracken, p. 186.) However, this assessment of the relationship between Gorst and Cross can, perhaps, be questioned in light of the sentiments expressed by Gorst to Cross following the former's appointment as Under-Secretary. Wrote Gorst to Cross, "I had no idea when we talked last Saturday at the Carlton that I was to begin Official life under such a friend as you have always been to me". (Cross Papers, Add. MS. 51275, Gorst to Cross, 4 August, 1886, quoted in Mitchell, p. 289, emphasis added.) The description of the acrimonious relations which Godley purports to have existed between Cross and Gorst would perhaps be more accurately applied to the situation prevailing between Cross and Randolph Churchill. During the heyday of the Fourth Party in the early 'eighties, Churchill's aversion to Cross had run very deep, frequently provoking him to public scorn of the latter. This aversion remained very much in evidence at the time of Salisbury's second ministry. (See Mitchell, p. 285; pp. 288-289.)

<sup>121</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 337 (1889): 806-807.

After a lively debate the amendment was rejected by a majority of 49.<sup>122</sup> However, on the Bill being reported to the House for consideration as amended, the Member for Stockport, L.J. Jennings, proposed an amendment almost identical to that of Webster's, but limited to theatres and excluding acrobatic and gymnastic performances. Jennings claimed that "the clause as it stands was adopted somewhat suddenly by the Committee" and under a misconception of the facts. The Bill, he stated, "is a Bill for the prevention of cruelty to children, but it has never been alleged either out of doors or in this House, that any cruelty to children has been practised in theatres".<sup>123</sup>

In the ensuing debate, which was conducted across party lines, opponents of the amendment protested the relaxing of the prohibition against the employment of children under ten; they argued that children engaged in theatrical performances laboured under severe educational disadvantages and painted a vivid picture of the evil influences exerted by the stage upon young children. For their part, supporters of the measure denied that children employed in theatres were physically, educationally, and morally deprived. They quoted evidence, derived from inquiries into such employment, to illustrate that the work itself was neither uncongenial nor excessively strenuous, that facilities for training and educating children were adequate, and that children who began their theatrical training at an early age developed a business-like approach to their occupation and were less likely to drift into an immoral life than those who entered the theatre

<sup>122</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 337 (1889): 806-820.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 338 (1889): 6.

in their late teens. They pointed out, moreover, that theatrical children were usually drawn from the poorest backgrounds and, thus, employment in the theatres, which provided them with the opportunity to develop habits of cleanliness and order as well as much-needed remuneration, should not be denied them. On the contrary, declared Jennings, "anything which takes them, even for a time, from their misery and degradation should be welcomed as an alleviation of the hardships of their lot".<sup>124</sup>

Gorst was drawn into the debate in response to the arguments of the Member for Cirencester, A.B. Winterbotham. The latter, who protested against the exemption proposed, based his opposition largely on moral considerations:

I am not afraid of being told that I am in favour of grandmotherly legislation when I advocate the protection of these children of tender years from being brought up to this profession by special relaxation of the law. What becomes of them? They grow up as ballet girls, and what becomes of ballet girls? - I am sorry to say - that the majority of these poor girls go on the streets; .. it is as a Christian I am going to vote; it is in the cause of 'these little ones' so dear to Christ that we plead for today ... it is because I believe the moral and spiritual welfare of these dear little children of 6, 7 and 8 years old is involved that I am going to vote against the Amendment.<sup>125</sup>

Inherent in Winterbotham's statements was the intimation that the poor were incapable of exercising suitable parental discretion in the matter of their offspring's employment on account of their intrinsic moral turpitude, an attitude compatible with Victorian society's widely-held assumption that poverty was the outcome of individual weakness of character,<sup>126</sup> and, thus,

<sup>124</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 338 (1889): 12.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 338 (1889): 25-28.

<sup>126</sup>Michael Rose, The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914 (London, 1972), pp. 7-8.

it was the duty of the state to act in loco parentis. Winterbotham's posture so infuriated Gorst, he rose to object to the former's "affectation of moral superiority" in dealing with the amendment and to protest his assumption that "he and those who agree with him ... have a right to tell parents how their children should be brought up and to exercise through this House in a vicarious way the duties which in reality belong to the parents themselves". In his view, opponents of the amendment had been unable to substantiate their claims as to cruelties practised in the theatres on the degenerative effects of theatrical life on young children and, thus, he asserted, "no case has been made out for State interference of this character with the usual employment of children of the poor ...". On the contrary argued Gorst, such interference, "in the name of Christianity and benevolence", would increase rather than lessen the hardships suffered by the poor by depriving them of the financial assistance derived from their children's temporary employment during the winter months. "There are hundreds and thousands of children in the Metropolis whose employment in this way helps to lighten the struggles of their parents with cold and hunger and all the other difficulties which beset the lives of the poorer classes", alleged Gorst, "and therefore it would be an act of tyranny ... to shut the door to such employment, and determine that these children shall be deprived of the opportunity of assisting their parents in obtaining their daily bread". Consequently, Gorst urged - "upon the doctrine that the hon. and learned Gentleman is disposed to sneer at" - that the State leave the responsibility of parents untouched unless a clear case for interference could be made out.<sup>127</sup> Although, as the Times conceded, "there

<sup>127</sup> PD, 3rd Series, 338 (1889): 28-31.

was manifestly a great deal to be said on either side" of the question,<sup>128</sup>  
 the amendment was rejected by 188 to 134.<sup>129</sup>

Although while pursuing his reform campaign in the House Gorst had pressed successive governments to adopt a more positive role in the formulation of social policy, his response to Jennings' amendment shows that his concept of that role continued to be influenced by Tory paternalism. Though he eschewed the dogmatic non-interventionist principles of orthodox laissez-faire ideology, arguing that it was the government's duty to mitigate social and industrial misery through remedial legislation, it was the removal of the worst abuses of the current socio-economic system - rather than radical changes in its direction - which Gorst was advocating in the 'seventies and 'eighties. However, shortly thereafter, his conception of the government's role in socio-economic affairs was to undergo modification as a consequence of his exposure to Continental thinking on social legislation.

In 1890, Salisbury appointed Gorst Plenipotentiary at the International Labour Conference to be held in Berlin during that month.<sup>130</sup>  
 As Prime Minister of a Conservative Government, Salisbury no doubt felt it

<sup>128</sup>The Times, 11 July, 1889, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 338 (1889): 38. During the Bill's passage through the Lords, the prohibitory clause was amended to allow a court of summary jurisdiction permission to sanction employment of children over seven in theatres once the court was satisfied that provision had been made to secure the health and solicitous care of the children. (Ibid., 3rd Series, 339 [1889]: 273-302.)

<sup>130</sup>PP, 1890, 81: 539. Salisbury to Gorst, 13 March, 1890.

imperative that he include in the British delegation not only experienced representatives of the British Labour Movement but, also, a prominent member of his own administration who was known to be an active proponent of working-class interests, as a measure of the Government's good faith at a time when labour questions were assuming unprecedented importance both in Britain and abroad.<sup>131</sup> Thus, it is likely that these considerations prompted Salisbury's selection of Gorst to the British delegation to the Conference. However, it is also likely that Salisbury was later to regret this choice for it transpired that Gorst's attendance at the Conference not only reinforced his commitment to Tory democracy but rendered him more than ever determined to seek further advances in social legislation on behalf of the working classes, a goal which would once again bring him into conflict with the Tory leadership and estrange him even further from the party.

<sup>131</sup>For the situation in Britain see Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), Chap. 1; H.M. Lynd, England in the Eighteen Eighties (Oxford, 1945), pp. 237-298; Donald Read, England 1868-1914 (London, 1979), pp. 323-335.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WORKINGMEN'S ADVOCATE

The International Labour Conference held in Berlin during March 1890 had been convened by the Emperor of Germany, Wilhelm II, in response to the growing militancy of European labour movements. He intended to bring together representatives of "all the Governments who evince the same interest in the Labour question ... for the purpose of further discussing it in detail" with a view to reaching mutual agreement upon possible measures to satisfy workers' demands.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which Wilhelm's concern over rising working-class agitation was shared by other European governments was perhaps reflected in their strong participation in the Conference; delegates from fourteen nations assembled together in Berlin for the opening meeting March 15.<sup>2</sup> However, according to Gorst, the British Government's decision to attend the meeting was prompted to some extent by economic considerations:

There was -- an idea prevalent among manufacturers in this country that they were handicapped in their competition with foreigners by the benevolent provisions of our laws, and that if foreign states could be persuaded to enact like protection for their people it would be beneficial to British industry. This opinion, although no doubt erroneous, may have had something to do with the readiness of the Government, which was falling more and more under capitalist influence, to take part in the Conference.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Correspondence respecting the Proposed Labour Conference at Berlin (Cmnd. 5914), PP, 1890, 81: 531.

<sup>2</sup>The countries participating were: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Great Britain, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. (See Further Correspondence respecting the International Labour Conference at Berlin (Cmnd. 6042), PP, 1890, 81: 545.)

<sup>3</sup>J.E. Gorst, "Introduction" to Frances E. Greville, Countess of Warwick, A Nation's Youth. Physical Deterioration: Its Causes and Some Remedies (London, 1906), p. X.



The Government's optimism with regard to possible reciprocal social legislation arising out of the Conference had no doubt been kindled by the pronouncements in Wilhelm's decrees inaugurating the gathering in which he stated his desire to extend factory legislation in accordance with workers' wishes, and by the proposed programme of subjects to be discussed at the Conference which included the regulation of labour in mines, Sunday labour, and the working conditions of children, youths and females,<sup>4</sup> matters which had already been subject to legislation in Britain.

Although eagerness to enhance its own trade position vis a vis its foreign competitors, at a time of relative economic stagnation for British industry<sup>5</sup> apparently played a role in the British decision to participate in the Conference, late nineteenth century political developments - which required that governments display at the very least concern for working class interests - no doubt contributed to Salisbury's willingness to send a British contingent to Berlin. From the eighteen eighties politicians were faced with the reality of the growing political power of an increasingly organized and enfranchised working class. The enfranchisement of urban workers in 1867, and of agricultural labourers in 1884, increased the political influence of the masses at the expense of "men of property", bringing parliamentary democracy one step closer. At the same time, economic

<sup>4</sup>Correspondence respecting the Proposed Labour Conference at Berlin (Cmd. 5914), PP, 1890, 81: 534.

<sup>5</sup>See, Francois Crouzet, The Victorian Economy, trans. Anthony Foster (New York, 1982), Chap. 12. S.B. Saul, The Myth of the Great Depression, 1873-1896 (London, 1969), pp. 36-52.

and political developments within the labour movement indicated that the working classes were learning the value of class solidarity in their struggle for social and economic advancement. By 1890 the Trades Union Congress, first formed in 1868, had achieved a membership of close to one-and-a-half million<sup>6</sup> and in the wake of the 1889 Dock Strike large numbers of unskilled, and formerly unorganized workers, were incorporated into the trade-union movement via the so-called "new unionism".<sup>7</sup>

The organization of labour as an economic interest group began to be duplicated also in the political sphere. A resurgence of British socialism during the eighteen eighties re-established the British socialist movement, which had been in abeyance since the decline of Chartism in the eighteen fifties. By the end of the decade the new wave of socialist activity had succeeded in establishing several new socialist societies, most notably the Social Democratic Federation<sup>8</sup> and the Fabian Society.<sup>9</sup> Thus, by the final decades of the nineteenth century, working class political power, whether expressed through socialist societies or the organized Labour movement, appeared to pose a potentially dangerous threat to the ruling elite, causing politicians to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards workers' interests. Although neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were coerced into introducing social legislation as a result of massive working-class

<sup>6</sup>B.C. Roberts, The Trades Union Congress (London, 1958), Appendix 2, p. 379.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, 3rd ed. (Pelican ed. 1976), Chap. 16. Hereafter referred to as Pelling, British Trade Unionism. See also, Keith Burgess, The Challenge of Labour: Shaping British Society, 1850-1930 (London, 1980), pp.64-72.

<sup>8</sup>See: Eric Hobsbawm, "Hyndman and the S.D.F", in Labouring Men (Weidenfeld Goldback ed., London, 1968), pp. 231-238. Chuschichi Tsuzuki, H.H. Hyndman and British Socialism (London, 1964).

<sup>9</sup>See: A.M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918 (London, 1962) Stanley Pierson, "The Fabians", in Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism (Ithaca, 1973), pp. 106-139.

pressure or the fear of revolution<sup>10</sup> - though the bogey of socialism remained to haunt both parties throughout the Edwardian years - both contrived to implement specific legislation as a means of obtaining tactical advantage over rival parties. With the establishment of the popular vote, neither party was prepared to be outbid in auctions on what a carefully ordered State could obtain for its citizens.<sup>11</sup>

It was this form of expediency which produced the pragmatic collectivist welfare measures of Salisbury's second administration.<sup>12</sup> Although he was not unsympathetic towards the plight of the poor, Salisbury was a reluctant reformer. He was a staunch upholder of Smilesian orthodoxy, believing that the aim of social legislation should be the promotion of self help; he had little faith in the "wholesale reformation of society through the operations of government".<sup>13</sup> However, in order to retain an electoral

<sup>10</sup> See: Jose Harris, Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Politics, 1886-1914 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 54-56. For a contrasting view of the effects of working-class activism on British social policy see: K.D. Brown, "Conflict in Early British Welfare Policy: The Case of the Unemployed Workmen Bill of 1905", in Journal of Modern History, 43 (1971): 615-629.

<sup>11</sup> See, P.F. Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism (Cambridge, 1971). Eric J. Evans, Social Policy 1830-1914: Individualism, Collectivism and the Origins of the Welfare State (London, 1978), p. 14. D.A. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford, 1972), pp. 219-220.

<sup>12</sup> The major reforms enacted were the Local Government Act of 1888; Housing of the Working-Classes Act (1890); an education measure, the Fee Grant Act of 1891; and modest land reforms, the Allotments Act of 1887 and the Small-holdings Act of 1892. See: Roy Douglas, Land People and Politics: A History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom, 1878-1952 (London, 1976), pp. 184-185. E. Gauldie, Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing, 1780-1918 (London, 1974), pp. 293-294. H.M. Lynd, England in the Eighteen Eighties (Oxford, 1945), pp. 165-174. H.J. Perkins, "Land Reform and Class Conflict in Victorian Britain" in The Victorians and Social Protest, eds. J. Butt and I.F. Clark (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 177-217.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Salisbury on Politics, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 47-53.

edge over the Liberals, Salisbury, after 1886, was prepared to advance certain measures even when he was opposed to them in principle.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the handful of measures enacted between 1886-1892 were largely dictated by political necessity.

It was probably with an eye to similar political advantage that Salisbury sanctioned his government's participation at the International Labour Conference. Thus, writing to Gorst on the eve of his departure for Berlin, Salisbury noted that the Labour question was "one of deepest importance" and enjoined that "every proposal which promises an improvement in the condition of the factories and mines will naturally receive the most attentive consideration at your hands" However, at the same time, he instructed Gorst not to support proposals which transgressed traditional British government social policy: "... You are familiar with the efforts which have been made in this direction for two generations back by the Parliament of this country, and you will not be disposed to readily accept benevolent projects which travel beyond the well-considered limits within which the legislation in this country has uniformly confined its interference". He urged Gorst to focus the attention of his fellow delegates "upon such plans and suggestions as may give a hope of benefitting the labouring man without interfering with the freedom of labour".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Paul Adelman, Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics (London, 1970), pp. 71-72. Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (London, 1970, Fontana Paperback ed., London, 1976), pp. 161-162. Desire for party harmony was an additional factor prompting Salisbury's venture into social legislation. Following the entry of the Liberal Unionists into the Conservative Party, in 1886, he recognised that in order to retain their support some social reform measures would have to be enacted. At the same time, the demands of the reformist elements within the party itself had to be satisfied.

<sup>15</sup>The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir J. Gorst, 13 March, 1890, Further Correspondence respecting the International Labour Conference at Berlin (Cmd. 6042), PP, 1890, 81: 539-540.

However, Salisbury's directives cautioning Gorst against accepting imprudent resolutions was to prove largely redundant. Most of the proposals which emerged from the deliberations of the two-week Conference were already covered by the British Factory Acts.<sup>16</sup> Compared with the language of the original decrees from Wilhelm inaugurating the Conference,<sup>17</sup> the recommendations which evolved from its meetings were relatively modest. For example, the burning question of the limitation of the hours of adult male labour was reduced to the proposal that the duration of shifts in mines, where labour was considered to be injurious to health, be restricted by law or in accordance with agreements made between employers and employed.<sup>18</sup> As one skeptic afterwards observed, "... philanthropic rhetoric, however sincere its inspiration, could not possibly alter the hard facts of economic science, and ... the moment the delegates attempted to deal with the problem of how to mitigate the fury of industrial competition" they recognized "that to do so was the very last thing they really wanted".<sup>19</sup>

In one area, however, that concerned with the protection afforded to children, certain resolutions were in advance of British legislation. To one such proposal, establishing 12 years as the minimum age at which children might be employed in industrial occupations, the British delegation, with Salisbury's endorsement, gave their full support.<sup>20</sup> However, a proposition

<sup>16</sup>Final Protocol of the International Conference on Labour in Factories and Mines (Cmnd. 6042), PP, 1890, 81: 718-720.

<sup>17</sup>See, the Times, 6 February, 1890, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Final Protocol of the International Conference on Labour in Factories and Mines (Cmnd. 6042), PP, 1890, 81: 718.

<sup>19</sup>The Economist, 48 (April, 1890): 425-426.

<sup>20</sup>Gorst to Salisbury, 19 March, 1890. Salisbury to Gorst, 20 March, 1890. Further Correspondence respecting the International Labour Conference at Berlin (Cmnd. 6042), PP, 1890, 81: 548-549.

that children be required to complete their elementary education up to a prescribed standard before being allowed to work was firmly opposed by the British, such a proposal being incompatible with the maintenance of England's current "half-time" system.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, when the Swiss proposed that the Conference recommendations be enforced by international legislation, the British delegation spearheaded opposition to the motion<sup>22</sup> and succeeded in obtaining adoption of a less drastic resolution, introduced by Germany, which was incorporated into the Final Protocol along with the following directive: "In case the Governments should give effect to the labours of the Conference, the following provisions are recommended ...".<sup>23</sup> Thus, the British delegation had succeeded in "reserving to the Parliament of Great Britain the right ultimately to pronounce on this important question" of labour in factories.<sup>24</sup>

Following the conclusion of the Conference the Times rather smugly observed that, because of Britain's relatively advanced state of factory legislation, any subsequent enactment of the Conference resolutions "would more affect the well-being of the working class on the Continent than in Great Britain".<sup>25</sup> However, the Government soon found themselves obliged to take action on several proposals, albeit reluctantly, as a result of Gorst's determination to see them advanced.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the subsequent development of

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 550-551, p. 561.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 620-621, p. 623, p. 720.

<sup>24</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 863. Speech of Sir John Gorst.

<sup>25</sup>The Times, 31 March, 1890, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>See p. 154, pp. 158-159 below.

British social policy was to be affected, in the long term, as a result of the Conference's impact upon Gorst personally. Participation in the Conference debates, where he was brought into contact with the proponents of the "practical socialism" of the Continent, made a deep and lasting impression on Gorst. This exposure to European socialists' ideas and aspirations served to increase his awareness of the many areas of British social policy still requiring development in order that a material improvement in the conditions of the working classes might be effected and he returned to Britain determined to do his utmost to initiate programmes through which Britain might move into the vanguard of European social action for the benefit of the masses.<sup>27</sup>

An additional influence which no doubt served to strengthen Gorst's commitment to social reform at this period was the University Settlement movement with which he had become acquainted through his friendship with Canon and Mrs. Samuel Barnett, founders of the first settlement - Toynbee Hall.<sup>28</sup> Whilst his wife was visiting New Zealand in 1890, Gorst made Toynbee Hall his home when Parliament was in session and there gained "a close insight into the life of a great industrial centre".<sup>29</sup> Daily contact with London's East-End slums, within which Toynbee Hall was situated, could not but increase Gorst's awareness of the realities of poverty and reinforce his determination to further working-class welfare. Thereafter he maintained his close association with the settlement, spending in residence there some portion of each week the

<sup>27</sup>Salisbury Papers, 64, Gorst to Salisbury, 31 March, 1890. "Social Politics in England: An Interview with Sir John Gorst", in Review of Reviews (New York), 3 (April, 1891): 266-270. Hereafter referred to as "Social Politics in England".

<sup>28</sup>For an account of the founding of Toynbee Hall see: S.A. and H.O. Barnett, "The Beginning of Toynbee Hall" in Towards Social Reform (New York, 1909), pp. 239-254.

<sup>29</sup>H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett: His Life, Work and Friends, 2 vols. (London, 1918), 2, p.44. Hereafter referred to as H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett.

the Commons was sitting, a practice he continued up to 1903, and he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Settlement movement in England and America.<sup>30</sup> In addition to its philanthropic role, Toynbee Hall also functioned as a forum for debate on social problems and for ideological and philosophical interaction between resident and non-resident intellectuals of various political creeds, particularly Liberals and moderate Socialists.<sup>31</sup> Gorst's participation in these exchanges undoubtedly provided him with a wealth of ideas which he conceivably found valuable when formulating his own social policies.<sup>32</sup>

The stimulus to social action Gorst received from his attendance at the Berlin Conference and his contact with Toynbee Hall was reinforced by a growing conviction on his part that more positive government intervention was required in order to effect an improvement in the social condition of the people,<sup>33</sup> a sentiment that was gaining increasing support by the final decade of the century. The development of this new attitude towards the role of the State was generated by the mounting social and economic problems with which Britain was afflicted after 1880. By this period, social and economic crises had begun to erode British confidence in laissez-faire, the principle which

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, pp. 44-50. See also: J.E. Gorst, "Settlements in England and America" [Address delivered to the University of Glasgow, November 2, 1894] in Universities and the Social Problem, ed. J.M. Knapp (London, 1895), pp. 3-29. J.A.R. Pimlott, Toynbee Hall: Fifty Years of Social Progress, 1884-1934 (London, 1935), pp. 52-53.

<sup>31</sup>See: K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London, 1963), pp. 163-164. Pimlott, pp. 51-71.

<sup>32</sup>Henrietta Barnett observed that, when at Toynbee Hall, Gorst "... hugely enjoyed the youthfulness of the men, and the go and stir of the place and ... rejoiced in being asked questions and in expounding his views, which did not exactly fall into party lines or bear recognised labels". [H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett, pp. 47-48.]

<sup>33</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5.



governed that State's policy of minimal intervention in national life.<sup>34</sup> As confidence waned the simple assumptions which had buttressed the laissez-faire ideal began to be questioned and gradually came to be regarded as unacceptable. The view that poverty was the result of personal failing - the consequence of idleness or improvidence - and, thus, to be relieved only through charity or moral upgrading, gradually fell into disrepute largely as a result of the weight of evidence produced by social investigation.<sup>35</sup> The first-hand studies of poverty conducted after 1870,<sup>36</sup> particularly the work of Charles Booth, were instrumental in discrediting the idea that poverty was the outcome of moral failing and supplied the evidence from which a strong case for government assistance could be made. Furthermore, the nineteenth-century belief in the competitive ethic's ability to bring about automatic and ever-

<sup>34</sup>See, Derek Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State (London, 1973), Chap. 5.

<sup>35</sup>Fraser, Chap. 6. Michael Rose, The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914 (London, 1972), pp. 13-13, 20-30.

<sup>36</sup>The scale of the problem of poverty was initially brought to light as a result of investigations conducted during the 'seventies by the Charity Organization Society. [See: Judith Fido, "The Charity Organization Society and Social Casework in London, 1869-1900", in Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain, ed. A.P. Donajgrodzki (London, 1977), pp. 207-230.] Thereafter, public attention was kept focussed upon the problem during the 'eighties by a succession of books and surveys. These publications included: Henry George, Progress and Poverty (London, 1891); Andrew Mearns, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London. An Enquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor (London, 1883); G.R. Sims, How the Poor Live and Horrible London (London, 1889); William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (London, 1890); Charles Booth, "The Inhabitants of Tower Hamlets (School Board Division), Their Condition and Occupations", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 50 (1887): 375-376. Charles Booth, The Life and Labour of the People of London, 17 vols., (London, 1889-1902): 1. Poverty.

increasing wealth and progress began to falter as prices fell, industry stagnated and profits dwindled during the "Great Depression" of the 'eighteen-eighties and 'nineties.<sup>37</sup>

The evaporation of the trust in the ability of laissez-faire to produce automatic economic progress and prosperity occasioned a re-assessment of the role of the State. The notion that governments should do no more than "hold the economic ring" was gradually being replaced by the view that State intervention in economic and social matters was desirable, even necessary, when conditions became sufficiently bad - as, for example, to mitigate the effects of poverty and employment during periods of grave economic uncertainty.<sup>38</sup> Weight was given to these arguments by the pronouncements of intellectuals such as economist Alfred Marshall, who warned of the perils of unrestrained economic freedom,<sup>39</sup> and philosopher D.G. Ritchie, who spoke out against the waste generated by laissez-faire.<sup>40</sup>

Motivated by these various influences, Gorst initiated his social reform campaign shortly after his return from Berlin. He began by urging that the State, in its capacity as a great employer of labour, should set an example to private industry by establishing ideal working conditions in its own dockyards, factories and workshops; the government must become the model employer of labour. In a memo to Conservative House leader W.H. Smith, in May 1890, Gorst pressed the Tory administration to conduct an inquiry into labour conditions at the Royal Arsenal and dockyards, as a step towards creating

<sup>37</sup> Crouzet, Chap. 12. Saul, pp. 11-15, pp. 36-52.

<sup>38</sup> E. Evans, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Marshall, Principles of Economics, 8th ed. (London, 1890. London, 1959), Appendix A, pp. 621-622.

<sup>40</sup> D.G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference (London, 1891, Select Bibliographies Reprint Series, New York, 1969), pp. 49-50.

itself a model employer. He reiterated his request at the beginning of June but, despite the willingness of both Salisbury and Smith to consider a modified form of inquiry, no action was taken.<sup>41</sup> This inaction on Gorst's proposal was chiefly the result of opposition from the permanent officials at the War Office and Admiralty, departments which employed the majority of workers, who counselled "Let sleeping dogs lie ...; our workmen are perfectly contented - why should you stir them up with dreams of Utopian excellence".<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the Conservative leadership, perceiving that little in the way of political advantage would be derived from Gorst's scheme, decided not to press for its adoption. A similar fate at first befell Gorst's simultaneous proposal for the establishment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the conditions of labour existing in the "most advanced nations of the world" for the purpose of ascertaining to what degree Britain's current labour conditions were capable of being improved.<sup>43</sup>

Undaunted, Gorst now laid his proposals before the public. Speaking in North Shields early in October, he again urged that the State become a model employer, warning that the workers could utilize their power at the ballot box to obtain the Government's compliance in this matter, and observed that "the labour question would become, and had indeed become, a great and urgent question".<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Salisbury Papers, 360, Gorst to Smith, 1 June, 1890. Ibid., 366, Smith to Salisbury, 2 June, 1890.

<sup>42</sup>Quoted in "Social Politics in England", p. 267.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>The Times, 6 October, 1890, p. 3.

The government's continuing inactivity on labour issues led Gorst to publicly announce his own programme of social reform in February, 1891. In an address to his constituents in Chatham he presented a general overview of his ideas for the improvement of the conditions of labour.<sup>45</sup> Shortly afterwards he was interviewed by W.T. Stead, Radical editor of the Review of Reviews, and during the course of the meeting Gorst set forth a detailed scheme of reform measures designed to extend existing British social legislation to include measures already adopted by many Continental nations. A report of the meeting was subsequently published in the April edition of Review of Reviews and Worlds Work.<sup>46</sup>

The programme outlined by Gorst early in 1891, and which he was constantly extending to include new areas he saw as requiring attention, was at the core of his campaign for social reform which occupied him to the end of his official career and beyond. Labour questions commanded a prominent place in Gorst's programme. Amongst the reforms he saw as requiring immediate enactment was that of employers' liability, a measure to which he had given his attention in the 'seventies and 'eighties.<sup>47</sup> This was one area in which Gorst claimed England was far behind almost every other country in Europe. He condemned British employer liability laws as being only partial and inadequate provision against loss of wages arising from accidents and denounced the doctrine of "common employment" as particularly abhorrent. He held up the

<sup>45</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup>"Social Politics in England", pp. 267-270. The interview also appeared in the December 1891 issue of Review of Reviews (London). See: "Character Sketch: December. Sir John Gorst, Review of Reviews 3 (1891): 575-586. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch".

<sup>47</sup>See pp. 116 to 120 above.

Compulsory Accident Insurance law of the German Empire - whereby under law every German worker was compulsorily insured against accident at the employer's expense - as a measure Britain might well emulate.<sup>48</sup>

One other measure on which Gorst had urged government action during the previous two decades, that of the prevention of loss of life at sea,<sup>49</sup> was included in his programme of 1891 as a reform ripe for legislation. Gorst sought the implementation of two recommendations contained in the Report of the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea, published in 1887, on which he had served as a Commissioner. The first recommendation was that no shipowner be allowed to insure his vessel and freight at its full value and the second, that in the event of fatalities at sea a formal inquiry be held into the circumstances leading up to the disaster. Gorst asserted that implementation of these recommendations would go a long way towards reducing shipowners' negligence which, in his view, was the main underlying cause of loss of life at sea.<sup>50</sup>

In Gorst's view, one of the most pressing problems requiring attention was that of industrial disputes between employers and workmen and he outlined several areas in which legislation might alleviate the situation. The current practice of settling disputes involving existing contracts between employer and workers, by resort to regular court, Gorst condemned as ineffective. He recommended as a solution the creation of non-criminal domestic tribunals, consisting of representatives of both parties, plus an impartial adjudicator such as a factory inspector or other appropriate government appointee, through

<sup>48</sup>"Social Politics in England", pp. 267-268.

<sup>49</sup>See pp. 107 to 115 above.

<sup>50</sup>Final Report of the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea (Cmnd. 5227), PP, 1887, 81: 29-31.

which negotiations could be conducted in the event of a disagreement between capital and labour. In Gorst's view, such a tribunal provided a better alternative to the then general practice of relying upon the decision of a judge "who in almost every case belongs to the class of employer, and cannot therefore be regarded as impartial and disinterested by the workmen". In the case of more serious disputes, such as a breakdown in new contract negotiations, Gorst felt the State should avoid direct interference and suggested Boards of Arbitration, formed by the churches, as a suitable procedure. However, in the event that these methods were not adopted, Gorst recommended the government establish a permanent College of Conciliation in each district of the nation, to which the disputants could appeal. No compulsion would be involved but Gorst believed that public opinion would constitute a powerful force directing the parties concerned to avail themselves of the services of the College.<sup>51</sup>

One question of some urgency in Gorst's opinion was the need to legislate the postponement of child labour from the age of ten to twelve years. He pointed out that at the Berlin Conference the nations of Europe had agreed that twelve be the minimum age at which children should be allowed to work and, whereas many of those nations were moving to implement this recommendation, nothing was being done in Britain to honour this pledge.<sup>52</sup>

With respect to the hours of adult male labour, Gorst believed that the only legislation required at present was that to secure the six day week.

<sup>51</sup>"John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5. "Social Politics in England", p. 268.

<sup>52</sup>"Social Politics in England", p. 269.

Steps should be taken to strengthen the legal and administrative guarantees already in existence to ensure the worker one day's rest in seven. With regard to the statutory legal day of eight hours, however, Gorst's position was consistent with traditional nineteenth-century laissez-faire assumptions. He felt that this measure was incapable of curing all the evils under which society suffered. When limitations were established there was a strong tendency for every trade to work up to the limit. Furthermore, such legislation would be in opposition to the desires of many workers - those who feared it would lead to a reduction in their wages and those who currently worked less than eight hours and were apprehensive that such legislation would result in an extension, rather than a reduction, of their working day. Any attempt to establish a uniform legal limitation for all trades would be foolish at this time. However, Gorst urged the government to limit the hours of labour of its own employees in State industrial establishments, of railway workers, those engaged in unhealthy occupations, and also the natives toiling in the mills of India.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to legislation to alleviate adverse working conditions, Gorst advocated government action to extend technical education, to enable the worker to upgrade his practical skills. This was absolutely necessary, he asserted, if Britain hoped to make up the leeway existing between herself and many foreign nations in the area of industrial development. Whilst it was essential that the urban workers be educated to compete with their counterparts abroad, there was also a need for agricultural workers to undergo a similar upgrading. Moreover, it was in the national interest to improve the

<sup>53</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5. "Social Politics in England", pp. 269-270.

education of the future mothers of the nation. He urged the establishment of housewifery schools where girls could be thoroughly instructed in the domestic arts to equip them for their future maternal roles.<sup>54</sup>

Gorst concluded his outline of reforms requiring immediate legislation by importuning the government to create a Ministry of Labour to take care of the interests of the working classes. The current practice of placing labour questions under the aegis of several offices - the President of the Local Government Board having some, the Board of Trade others, and the Home Office still others - was an inefficient and inadequate system. Labour questions should be collected and placed under the jurisdiction of a competent Minister of Labour, asserted Gorst.<sup>55</sup>

Gorst's programme represented an amalgam of the ideas aired at Berlin and his own theories derived from a growing conviction of the need for increased State social action in the light of late-nineteenth-century social, economic and political developments and a genuine desire to alleviate the hardships of the working classes. In no way could his proposals be regarded as "socialistic", except perhaps by the more reactionary members of his own party. The measures Gorst advocated were mildly collectivist but they were designed to assure the continuation, not the destruction, of the capitalistic economy. From the beginning of his campaign he had emphasized that both national wealth and the progress of labour, depended upon the ability of employers and workers to establish a mutually-harmonious

<sup>54</sup>"Social Politics in England", p. 269.

<sup>55</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5. "Social Politics in England", p. 269.



working relationship.<sup>56</sup> Gorst's programme was designed to help rectify the current socio-economic imbalance existing between capital and labour, in order that the latter might participate from a position of greater equality.<sup>57</sup>

Gorst's advocacy of a more socially responsible form of capitalism reflected his recognition of the growing importance of social politics. Although he deplored the degeneration of the labour question to the level of partisan politics,<sup>58</sup> he was aware of its value as an election issue<sup>59</sup> and concerned that any benefits from it go to the Tories rather than their opponents. He stressed that under the leadership of the "prudent and honourable gentlemen who formed the bulk of the Constitutional party ..." the labour movement could prove beneficial to both the workers and the economy. Thus he expressed the hope that "the present Government would distinguish itself by legislation which would confer upon the working classes of the country a large measure of improvement such as, perhaps, no previous generation had witnessed".<sup>60</sup>

In addition to those measures ripe for legislation, Gorst included in his programme questions which he believed should be the subject of government inquiry. He urged that two Commissions be appointed immediately, one to inquire into the hours and conditions of labour, and the other to investigate the

<sup>56</sup>

The Times, 26 September, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup>Bentley B. Gilbert, "Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel", Historian, 18 (1956): 154. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, "Conservative Rebel".

<sup>58</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5. The Times, 6 October, 1890, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup>"Sir John Gorst on the Labour Question", Chatham and Rochester News, 14 February, 1891, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup>The Times, 22 January, 1891, p. 7.

subject of Poor-Law relief. Whilst not advocating a full-scale Commission on the matter, Gorst also recommended that some form of inquiry be made into the unemployment question. With regard to Poor-Law relief, Gorst wanted the Commission to examine ways in which it might be rendered more humane. He urged that greater consideration be given to the circumstances which had brought the recipients into pauperism and that they should be treated accordingly. Against the two extreme procedures of increased laxity of outdoor relief and the treatment of paupers without regard to their backgrounds and needs, Gorst advocated that relief be given according to a "broad general principle", namely, "that those who correspond to the fraudulent bankrupt ... be assigned to a quasi-penal treatment, while others who are worn-out veterans of industry should be regarded as pensioners of the State and treated apart". Thus, although he wished to retain a distinction between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, Gorst condemned to the latter category only those seeking doles under false pretences, all other indigent poor - the unemployed, the sick, and the aged - he deemed worthy of assistance. Another aspect of the poor law system Gorst saw as requiring revision was the treatment of pauper children. Steps should be taken to end the economic exploitation of work-house children and he suggested that the remedy might lie in the replacing of institutional care with a carefully supervised, and more caring, boarding-out scheme.<sup>61</sup>

Gorst's programme received a cool reception from the Conservative government who were loathe to see labour questions given prominence with a general election on the horizon. However, any plans the government might have had for quietly ignoring the issues were shattered when, following

<sup>61</sup>"Social Politics in England", pp. 269-270.

submission of Gorst's scheme to the Liberal leaders by W.T. Stead, Radical John Morley indicated his willingness to move a motion on the question of a Royal Commission on Labour, "... secure that he would receive in so doing the united support of the whole Liberal Party", a development which obliged the government to act.<sup>62</sup> Faced, on the one hand, with a Liberal motion with which many Tories sympathized and would support in the House and, on the other, with the prospect of further agitation on the matter from Gorst, the Cabinet decided to take the initiative and appoint a Royal Commission<sup>63</sup> to "inquire into the questions affecting the relations between employer and employed; the combinations of employers and of employed; and the conditions of labour which have been raised during recent trade disputes in the United Kingdom", with Gorst as one of the Commissioners.<sup>64</sup> The Commission, which met for the first time on May 1, 1891,<sup>65</sup> remained in progress for three years, its final report being issued in June, 1894.

<sup>62</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 585.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 585. The Times, 24 February, 1891, p. 9. The Conservatives responded swiftly to the Liberal challenge. Gorst's initial call for a Commission came during his Chatham speech on February 14, 1891. His interview with Stead came shortly thereafter, followed by the circulation of Gorst's programme among the Opposition and the resulting intimation of Liberal action. On February 24, the Times reported that the Cabinet's decision preceded a speech by Randolph Churchill, in which he advocated the establishment of the Commission, which was delivered by him on February 20. Thus, the government's reaction was virtually immediate. The Times made no mention of Gorst's role in the Commission's appointment.

<sup>64</sup>First Report of the Royal Commission on Labour (Cmnd. 6703), PP. 1892, 34: 1, p. v., p. 3.

<sup>65</sup>The Times, 2 May, 1891, p. 7.

With the appointment of the Royal Commission on Labour Gorst had the satisfaction of obtaining implementation of one of his proposals a little over a year after the Berlin Conference and within days of the public pronouncement of his social programme. However, his success was to prove costly for his parliamentary career. The Conservative leadership were angered by Gorst's use of the Stead interview to obtain publicity for his proposals and by his subsequent strategy of employing Liberal support as a pressure tactic against his fellow Ministers. Then, towards the end of Spring, their animosity was further aroused when Gorst again violated party discipline on two separate occasions in the House, actions which, when combined with his presumptuousness in the Royal Commission incident, prompted the party leadership to deny him promotion to higher office within the Government.

The first of these parliamentary indiscretions took place on June 16, 1891, during Commons debate on the Manipur incident.<sup>66</sup> Following disturbances arising out of a dispute among the ruling family of Manipur, and a resulting palace revolution, a British force had been sent to restore order but was routed and the government's representatives executed. In England a public outcry arose over the "disaster". The Times asserted that "... a serious blow has been inflicted upon British prestige and influence" and demanded that the murder of the Crown's officials be avenged.<sup>67</sup> An investigation of the affair revealed that mismanagement by the Indian government had precipitated the crisis. Although highly critical of the

<sup>66</sup>For an account of this incident see: Anthony Brett-James, "Disaster in Manipur: An Imperial Episode", History Today 12 (1962), 48-55.

<sup>67</sup>The Times, 10 April, 1891, p. 7.

conduct of the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, the Cabinet, under pressure from the Queen, agreed to defend his actions. Although he opposed this decision, Gorst, as Under-Secretary for India, was directed to express in the Commons the government's confidence in Lansdowne.

However, when the debate took place Gorst's long-standing resentment against colonial government ineptitude, first aroused during his service in New Zealand, rose to the surface and his defence of the Viceroy turned into a condemnation of the Indian Government.<sup>68</sup> The administration's intervention to remove a recalcitrant Manipur ruler was prompted by self-interest, declared Gorst; it was engineered as a method of disposing of an able but independent man. "Governments have always hated and discouraged independence and original talent, and they have always loved and promoted docile and unpretending mediocrity. It is as old as Tarquinius Superbus; and although in these modern times we do not lop or cut off heads of tall poppies, we take other and more merciful means of reducing any person of dangerous pre-eminence to a harmless condition ...".<sup>69</sup> The similarity of the situation described by Gorst and his own position within the Conservative party could also have been construed by the leadership as public criticism of their treatment of him, providing an additional mark against him.

The government were rescued in the debate by Secretary of War, Edward Stanhope, and back-bencher George Curzon, the latter asserting he had "never heard a more painful line of defence than that adopted by the

<sup>68</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 585. Dennis J. Mitchell, "Richard Assheton Cross: A Political Biography", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mississippi, 1976), pp. 325-331.

<sup>69</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 567. For complete debate see Ibid: 541-641.

right honourable gentleman on behalf of the Indian Government".<sup>70</sup> Cross attempted to mollify the Queen by attributing Gorst's behaviour to his recent poor health, reporting to her that while "... The speech was certainly most unpalatable to the House ...", the Under-Secretary "had been suffering much lately from the effects of influenza and gout".<sup>71</sup>

Following a hurried briefing on the details of the case from the India Office's Permanent Secretary, Godley, Stanhope now "... took charge of the matter in the Commons and Gorst had to take a back seat".<sup>72</sup> In addition, he was subjected to a barrage of criticism for his stand,<sup>73</sup> the dimensions and intensity of which surprised and pained him, as he later indicated to Salisbury:

... I must express to you the deep sense I feel of the harshness with which I have been treated in reference to that matter... My speech I admit was a very bad one, but no-one was more astonished than I at the peculiar effect it produced, for which to this day I cannot wholly account. It might have been remembered in extenuation of my failure, that I was suffering from a disease singularly depressing to the nervous system; and in mitigation, that I had many times extricated the Government from difficult positions by successful speeches; but instead of this I seem to have been tried, condemned, and for aught I know sentenced, without an opportunity given me to defend myself. There are plenty of instances of a minister making a fiasco in debate: I doubt if there is one precedent of an old and faithful servant of the party being so savagely trampled upon for a single failure".<sup>74</sup>

Apparently Gorst was not immediately aware of the furor his "... very clever, cynical and almost brutal" speech<sup>75</sup> on the Manipur incident

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 572, 624-631.

<sup>71</sup>George Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, Third Series, 3 vols. (London, 1930), 2, p. 43.

<sup>72</sup>Lord Kilbracken, The Reminiscences of Lord Kilbracken (London, 1931), p. 186.

<sup>73</sup>Thomas Wodehouse Legh, Baron Newton, Lord Lansdowne: A Biography (London, 1929), pp. 88-89.

<sup>74</sup>Salisbury Papers, 71, Gorst to Salisbury, 15 September, 1891.

<sup>75</sup>Sir Alfred Pease, Elections and Recollections (London, 1932), p. 285.

had caused in political circles, or perhaps chose to ignore it, for two days later he again diverged from the party line, this time on a labour issue. During debate on the Factories and Workshops Bill, Opposition member Sidney Buxton proposed a clause raising the age of "half-timers" from ten years to eleven, a step he asserted the Government were obliged to take given their pledge on the issue at Berlin.<sup>76</sup> Rising in response to requests from both sides of the House for clarification of commitments made by Britain at the Conference, Gorst confirmed that Salisbury had sanctioned acceptance of the resolution calling for the raising of the age of child labour to twelve years and then went on to point out that Britain had declined to accept the proposal requiring completion of elementary education before a child commenced work, as this stipulation appeared to be inconsistent with the maintenance of the half-time system. He noted that with regard to implementation of the Conference resolutions, the Final Protocol contained "recommendations" for their adoption but no call for obligatory legislation. Thus, parliament had the right to legislate or not on the question according to its inclinations.<sup>77</sup>

However, Gorst went on to stress that among the European delegations generally, the British half-time system had been condemned as possibly "... a very good makeshift 40 years ago, when it was instituted, but ... not a method of education coming up to the requirements of these more enlightened days". He then went on to observe that "All Members of the House have been boys. Let them ask themselves whether they could have performed their school work satisfactorily ... when they were between 10 and 11 years

<sup>76</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 803-815.

<sup>77</sup>PD, 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 859-863.

old if they had to begin a day by spending six hours in a cotton factory" and concluded his speech with an appeal on behalf of the proposed amendment: "So far as our labours at Berlin were concerned, however deeply the country may be under a moral obligation not to go back from those philanthropic sentiments which, when they were useful to us, we professed at Berlin, Parliament tonight is perfectly free to come to that conclusion which will be for the interest of the people of this country. I trust that the vote of the House of Commons tonight will be such as will promote that interest".<sup>78</sup>

Government opposition to the clause, outlined by Home Secretary, Mathews, was based partly upon what the administration claimed was overwhelming unacceptance of the measure on the part of operatives around the country and partly upon its conviction that "no argument had been advanced to justify so serious an interference with large and vital interests".<sup>79</sup> However, the majority of Members apparently shared Liberal John Morley's assessment that the Government had been placed in an "unparalleled position" by Gorst's speech for in the subsequent division the amendment carried 202 - 186.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, the Government were obliged to give way on the issue and, after prolonged discussion, the amended bill passed third reading the following day.<sup>81</sup> Thus, as W.T. Stead observed shortly afterwards, the Tory Government "for the second time this year" was "overruled by a colleague [Gorst] to whom Lord Salisbury had not even yet conceded Cabinet rank".<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 865-866, 867-872.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 863, 877.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 3rd Series, 354 (1891): 981. For entire debate see Ibid.: 907-981.

<sup>82</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 585.



This humiliation succeeded in alienating Gorst still further from the Tory hierarchy, particularly as they interpreted his actions as the result of personal pique, a "bucking over the traces" prompted by his continued exclusion from the Cabinet.<sup>83</sup>

Gorst's repeated flaunting of party discipline to the detriment of the Government, during the 1891 parliamentary session, became a powerful influence operating against him when, in the closing months of the Salisbury Parliament, the death of Post-Master General, H.C. Raikes, necessitated the selection of replacements for both his government office and his Cambridge University seat in Parliament. Gorst felt he ought to be offered first refusal for both vacancies. As he pointed out to Salisbury, the openings provided the Conservative leadership with the opportunity to honour the many unfulfilled promises of promotion made to him over the years and also to recompense him for having refused a "safe seat for life" at Preston, at their request, earlier in his career.<sup>84</sup>

Salisbury acknowledged that Gorst was one of the two candidates whom he considered to have the strongest claim to promotion to Raikes' former position<sup>85</sup> but he nevertheless accepted "every excuse for not raising to high office the tetchy and aggrieved, but able, articulate and progressive"

<sup>83</sup> Baron Newton, p. 89.

<sup>84</sup> Salisbury Papers, 66, Gorst to Salisbury, 28 August, 1891. Ibid. 67, Gorst to Salisbury, 4 September, 1891.

<sup>85</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 49689, f.118. Salisbury to Balfour, 25 August, 1891. The other forerunner was E. Ashmead Bartlett, M.P., a Civil Lord of the Admiralty, who had given the party sterling service in provincial party organization but who was rejected because he was "entirely without authority in the House". [Ibid.].

Under-Secretary for India.<sup>86</sup> Objections to Gorst's advancement were numerous. After considering the relative merits of the various aspirants to the Post-Master Generalship Balfour reluctantly concluded that circumstances appeared to dictate that the offer be made either to Gorst or W.L. Jackson, the current Financial Secretary to the Treasury, but he opposed the appointment of Gorst because of "the insecurity of his seat, and his disloyalty to the party".<sup>87</sup> He told Gorst quite bluntly that the marginal nature of his seat at Chatham made his proposed change to the "safe" one at Cambridge quite "impossible",<sup>88</sup> and he indulged in some behind-the-scenes intriguing to have the Cambridge nomination withheld from Gorst.<sup>89</sup> W.H. Smith also felt that the Government was obliged to advance Gorst to Raikes' former post but was adamant that Gorst should contest his current constituency in the by-election necessitated by his promotion, otherwise "we ... should throw Chatham away".<sup>90</sup> Chancellor of the Exchequer Goschen's misgivings regarding Gorst hinged upon different considerations. In view of the current unrest among government employees, particularly postal workers, he thought it imprudent to give Gorst the Post Office, given his attitudes towards labour issues: "He has the ability, but he is rather deeply pledged

<sup>86</sup> Donald Southgate, "From Disraeli to Law", in The Conservatives: A History from their Origins to 1965, ed. Lord Butler (London, 1977), p. 223.

<sup>87</sup> Salisbury Papers, 327, Balfour to Salisbury, 27 August, 1891.

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Viscount Chilston, W.H. Smith (London, 1965), p. 355.

<sup>89</sup> Hambledon Papers, PS16/85, Balfour to Smith, 9 September, 1891. Salisbury Papers, 329, Balfour to Salisbury, 31 August, 1891.

<sup>90</sup> Salisbury Papers, 626, Smith to Salisbury, 29 August, 1891.

to take the side of wage earners on every possible occasion".<sup>91</sup>

However, it was Gorst's penchant for independent action - what Balfour termed his "disloyalty" - particularly concerning labour questions, which eventually tipped the scales against him, for ultimately the Conservative leadership decided that Gorst's independence outweighed his many positive qualities. Although Smith continued to press Salisbury to make Gorst Post-Master General, "notwithstanding all that has passed ...", he acknowledged that Gorst's indiscipline of the previous session could be regarded as sufficient reason for passing him over.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, Gorst got wind of the movement, inaugurated by Balfour, to block his candidature at Cambridge and at once shot off a letter to Salisbury expressing, in forceful terms, his displeasure at the interference and intimating that if he was barred from contesting the Cambridge University seat he would not run at Chatham.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Gorst once again displayed the temerity which was already a source of displeasure to the party leadership.

In responding, Salisbury denied having made any personal representation to the Cambridge Senate with regard to their selection of a candidate and disclaimed any similar interference by his governmental colleagues,

<sup>91</sup>Salisbury Papers, Goschen to Salisbury, 25 August, 1891, quoted in J.P. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil", in Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in honour of George Kitson Clark, ed. Robert Robson (London, 1967), p. 297. See also: Donald Southgate, "The Salisbury Era 1881-1902", in The Conservative Leadership 1832-1932, ed. Donald Southgate (London, 1974), p. 136. Despite his apprehensions, Goschen still thought that if Jackson refused the position "... Gorst should have the post, notwithstanding his drawbacks. Ridley would be better, but it is difficult to pass Gorst over ...". [Goschen to Akers-Douglas, September 5, 1891, quoted in Viscount Chilston, Chief Whip: The Life and Times of Aretas Akers-Douglas (London, 1961), p. 195.]

<sup>92</sup>Salisbury Papers, 629, Smith to Salisbury, 3 September, 1891.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 67, Gorst to Salisbury, 4 September, 1891.

suggesting that any such intervention was likely the work of Gorst's "enemies among the partisans of the Government", an enmity prompted by his repeated indiscipline: "You claim a much wider freedom in the expression of your independent opinions than is customary among members of the Government under our system: and you have in consequence embarrassed us considerably more than once during the past year. No serious evil resulted from it ultimately but it gave rise to a good deal of angry comment in the party at the time; and I should not be surprised if there were many who viewed your candidature with apprehension, as doubting how far you could be relied upon in difficulties". Salisbury went on to elucidate in a very candid, though kindly, manner how Gorst's want of party loyalty had worked to the detriment of his official career and urged him to consider the extent to which his independent attitudes were proving a barrier to his advancement:

I entertain - as everyone must do - the very highest estimate of your abilities; and I have seen with great sorrow the impediments you have thrown in your way. ... You complain that you have not got on to the extent your abilities justified you in expecting. In order to secure the general support and confidence of a political party something is more necessary than ability - and that is the general confidence that the party can rely upon you to stand by them at a pinch ... I only express the fear, which what I heard in the Session suggested to me ... that your action on two or three occasions has seriously qualified the confidence which your great powers should otherwise inspire. ... I wish you would think dispassionately how far the independent attitude you assume is likely to contribute to your wishes as to your own career, on occasions on which you have reason to look for the confidence of the party".<sup>94</sup>

Gorst was disposed to accept Salisbury's advice in the spirit in which it was apparently offered, but was not disposed to concede that his stand on labour issues jeopardized his position in the party, claiming

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 69, Salisbury to Gorst, 7 September, 1891.

that dissatisfaction with his performance emanated solely from certain of the leaders, the product of their personal animosity towards him, and he refused to compromise his principles in order to achieve promotion:

Upon this labour question, I have not at all lost the confidence of the Conservative party either in the House of Commons or the country. But I fear many of your colleagues are wholly out of touch with their party and with public opinion upon the subject. Nor am I unwilling to act cordially with members of the Cabinet; it is some of them who from foolish jealousy will not act with me ... But I care a great deal more about the question than I do about offices and seats, and if my political leaders leave me without sympathy or advice I am compelled to proceed by my own poor light in the best way I can".<sup>95</sup>

Gorst's reply clearly indicated his determination to continue his pursuit of Tory democracy despite the opposition of the leadership and, consequently, doomed any chance he might have had of becoming Post-Master General. Although Salisbury agreed with him that labour questions were of greater import than "offices and seats", the Tory leader continued to emphasize that "those who are acting together in the Government must have regard to each other's opinions on this and other questions"<sup>96</sup> and, following these exchanges, offered the Post Office to W.L. Jackson.<sup>97</sup> In defending his passing over of Gorst to Smith, Salisbury referred the latter to Gorst's letter, admonishing him to "read the enclosed. You told me to exhort him - you will see the result of my parental efforts. ... You will admit that it may be dangerous to 'endorse' him to the extent which such a promotion would imply; also dangerous to put him in a position where he would be able

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 70, Gorst to Salisbury, 10 September, 1891.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 68, Salisbury to Gorst, 21 September, 1891.

<sup>97</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 49689, ff. 120-123, Salisbury to Balfour, September 1, 1891. When Jackson declined the position, Salisbury offered it to Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir James Fergusson, who accepted.

to try so many hazardous labour theories ...".<sup>98</sup> When explaining his decision to Balfour, Salisbury reiterated these fears, noting Gorst's "... claims of independence in respect to labour questions were so vehemently expressed, that I feel it would be quite impossible to put him at the head of a department where the labour question is constantly cropping up ... and where he would have frequent opportunities for driving us into a corner ...".<sup>99</sup> Smith concurred with Salisbury's decision to shelve Gorst, observing that "it would have been madness to 'endorse' his independent attitude by promotion. It is a great pity - a clever man who has completely thrown himself away".<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, Balfour's efforts to deny Gorst the Cambridge candidature apparently proved successful. According to Gorst, at the request of the Conservative party the University nominating committee declined to issue the necessary invitation to him and, thus, his hopes for a "safe" seat were, albeit temporarily, once again destroyed.<sup>101</sup>

Shortly after his rejection by Salisbury, Gorst's proclivity towards independent action, which had cost him the Post-Master Generalship, almost precipitated his dismissal from the Government. Following his appointment as Labour Commissioner in Spring 1891, Gorst had diligently

<sup>98</sup>Hambledon Papers, PS 16/87, Salisbury to Smith, 15 September, 1891.

<sup>99</sup>B.L. Add. MS. 49689, ff. 120-123, Salisbury to Balfour, 19 September, 1891.

<sup>100</sup>Salisbury Papers, 635, Smith to Salisbury, 17 September, 1891.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 72, Gorst to Salisbury, 29 September, 1891.

attended the Commission's meetings<sup>102</sup> and his desire to familiarize himself with all aspects of labour problems, particularly the circumstances of rural labourers, led him to devote the parliamentary recess of 1891 to a private informal inquiry into these conditions in various parts of Britain.<sup>103</sup> Whilst visiting a Christian Brothers' school in Cork, Ireland, Gorst observed that the Government's position on State aid to Irish education appeared to be "inconsistent" and he advocated an extension of grants to include Roman Catholic institutions.<sup>104</sup> Gorst's pronouncements infuriated Balfour, currently Irish Secretary, who complained to Salisbury that it was impossible to tolerate "a member of the Government going to Ireland and committing himself to opinions on details of Irish Administration without consulting me, and in opposition to my views", and intimated that Gorst must be disciplined.<sup>105</sup>

Salisbury, whilst acknowledging that Gorst had played Balfour "a very dirty trick", was disinclined to censure its perpetrator, believing there was little to be gained by such action in this instance: "Two of the ordinary objects of punishments cannot be aimed at in this case - reformation of the offender and a warning to others like him. There is no chance of reforming the offender: and there are no others like him in the Government".<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 585.

<sup>103</sup>The Times, 19 September, 1891, p. 6. Ibid., 21 September, 1891, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup>The Times, 21 September, 1891, p. 7. See also: Glasgow Herald, 21 September, 1891 [Cutting from the Herald enclosed with letter from Balfour to Salisbury, 21 September, 1891. B.L. Add. MS. 49689, ff. 124-125.]

<sup>105</sup>B.L. Add. MS. 49689, ff. 124-125, Balfour to Salisbury, 21 September, 1891.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 49689, ff. 128-131, Salisbury to Balfour, 24 September, 1891.

Balfour agreed that to reprimand Gorst would be futile but thought that Gorst's latest indiscretion, coming on the heels of the three committed during the 1891 Session, showed conclusively "that he is treacherous by temper and by calculation" and thus he urged Salisbury to take the opportunity presented by Gorst's latest escapade to "turn him out", in order to forestall the possibility of continued indiscipline on his part during the next Tory administration of which he "must necessarily be a part".<sup>107</sup> Salisbury, however, counselled against Gorst's dismissal, diplomatically pointing out to Balfour that the incident, "though large in your eyes ... would seem small in the eyes of the party" and, thus, any action taken against Gorst at this time would rebound to his, rather than the leadership's, advantage. "Gorst would be thought to be ill-treated: and the vague discontent which exists in the party - and which is necessarily at its worst in the last year of Parliament - would crystallize around him. He is more powerless for evil where he is, than if he were sent below the gangway". Salisbury believed a more opportune time for Gorst's removal would occur at the formation of a new Conservative administration. At such a time "the exclusion of Gorst would not furnish the same ground of complaint as his dismissal would supply now. I am anxious that if he goes, he should go in such a manner as to carry with him the minimum of influence. I think he is knocking himself to pieces".<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Salisbury Papers, 334, Balfour to Salisbury, 28 September, 1891. Balfour didn't feel that Gorst's meddling in Irish affairs would, of itself, cause the Government any problems: "I shall, if necessary, publicly throw him over: a certain amount of trouble will be given in the House of Commons: his utterances will be used in debate against us: and that will be all". [Ibid.]

<sup>108</sup> Balfour Papers. B.L. Add. MS. 46989, ff. 135-136, Salisbury to Balfour, 1 October, 1891.



Thus, for the time being, Gorst was allowed to remain at the India Office but, shortly thereafter, he presented the leadership with a further dilemma when it became necessary to re-shuffle government members following the death of W.H. Smith in October, 1891. The ensuing changes saw Balfour succeed Smith as leader of the House of Commons and W.L. Jackson take over Balfour's former post at the Irish Office, leaving vacant Jackson's position of Financial Secretary to the Treasury. The selection of a successor to Jackson proved a none-too-easy task. As Goschen pointed out to Salisbury, what was required was a man with wide-ranging qualifications - an aptitude for business and the facility to work harmoniously with civil servants, essential for his official duties, and at the same time possessed of sufficient tact or parliamentary stature to successfully conduct government business in the House.<sup>109</sup>

Notwithstanding what the leadership perceived to be his many handicaps, Gorst emerged as the most suitable candidate for the position. After appraising the likely contenders, Goschen adjudged Gorst to be the forerunner, despite the risks involved in appointing him, and he informed Salisbury, "I would take Gorst for a strong man who I understand has not got on badly with the India people, and who has the dexterity, if not the tact, in the House. I know of many objections. I might have a great deal of trouble with him: yet he would be less dangerous than at the Post Office".<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the necessity of finding the most competent man available for the

<sup>109</sup> Goschen to Salisbury, 22 October, 1891. Salisbury MSS., quoted in J. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil", in Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, ed. R. Robson (London, 1967), pp. 268-311.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-302.

Secretaryship was apparently sufficient to negate the antagonism which, but a few weeks earlier, had prompted Balfour's attempt to oust Gorst, for he now advised Salisbury not to be concerned "that I shall find him difficult to get on with if you make him Secretary to the Treasury. He knows nothing about my views of his Irish and Indian escapades: and the man himself ... dangerous as I think him, I have always been able personally to get on with".<sup>111</sup> For Salisbury, the attraction in transferring Gorst to the Treasury seemingly derived from his belief that the position would provide the latter with fewer opportunities to embarrass the Government. As he observed to the Queen, the appointment "... will have the advantage of removing Sir John Gorst from the India Office, where as he showed last summer, he had considerable power of doing harm. He can scarcely do any harm at the Treasury".<sup>112</sup>

Thus, In November 1891, Gorst was relieved of his duties as Under-Secretary for India and given the nominally more important position of Financial Secretary to the Treasury.<sup>113</sup> In certain quarters the appointment was viewed as a positive step towards social reform; the Annual Register speculated that Gorst's promotion indicated the intention of the Ministry to make some efforts towards solving social problems.<sup>114</sup> Whilst such considerations were far removed from the administration's minds, Gorst's transfer did coincide with a further expansion of his own social programme. In a series of speeches delivered during November and December, 1891,

<sup>111</sup>Balfour to Salisbury, 2 Nov., 1891. Salisbury MSS. quoted in Cornford, p. 302.

<sup>112</sup>Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 5 Nov., 1891, quoted in Buckle, 2: 78.

<sup>113</sup>The Times, 7 November, 1891, p. 5.

<sup>114</sup>Annual Register, 133 (1891): 185.

Gorst added to his earlier proposals for the extension of existing social legislation new measures entailing direct, though limited, State provision of services for the benefit of the working classes, indicating his increasing willingness to sanction an expansion of government interference in national life.

Speaking at Halifax on November 10, Gorst urged the implementation of a comprehensive scheme of compulsory State insurance of workers against illness, accident, or the inability to work on account of sickness or old age. He placed particular emphasis upon the desirability of "making some worthier and better provision" for the aged,<sup>115</sup> a topic which had been under serious consideration since the eighteen-seventies<sup>116</sup> but which had so far failed to commend itself to British governments because it appeared to promise little in the way of political profit. Gorst advocated that current inadequate provision for the old in the form of outdoor relief be replaced by a scheme consisting of compulsory deductions from the wages of young men, to establish an annuity fund which would be used to finance a pension in later life. To the worker's contribution there should be added a small subvention from the State to compensate the recipient for his abandonment of the right to be maintained by the poor law.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup>The Times, 11 November, 1891, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup>See: D. Collins, "The Introduction of Old Age Pensions in Great Britain", Historical Journal 8 (1965): 246-259. Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), Chap. 4. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, National Insurance.

<sup>117</sup>The Times, 11 November, 1891, p. 7. Gorst's proposals for a contributory annuity plan were akin to those devised and published by Canon William Blackley in 1878, whilst his advocacy of a state subsidy was inspired by his admiration for the German social insurance scheme, inaugurated in 1889, which contained similar provisions [See, Gilbert, Conservative Rebel, p. 156.]

Thus, Gorst became one of the first front-bench voices to be raised on behalf of old-age pensions, Joseph Chamberlain being the only other prominent politician to have publicly espoused their introduction at this period.<sup>118</sup> However, unlike Chamberlain, who seems to have been motivated by the desire to be associated with what he perceived to be an inevitable reform - combined with an eagerness to forestall possible Liberal pension legislation in the near future,<sup>119</sup> Gorst was genuinely concerned to improve the lot of the working-classes, as was evinced by his willingness to risk his political career in pursuit of their advancement. At the same time, however, the potential force of rising working-class political influence provided him with an additional stimulus to action. Thus, after stressing the State's responsibility towards the aged poor, he went on to warn of the alternative schemes in the making "for improving the position of the labouring classes by means of violent and fantastical changes" and expressed the hope that the necessary social modifications "would not be forced on society from the outside" but would be "allowed to grow up by the natural development of events".<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Chamberlain first announced his conversion to pensions in April 1891 and in November of that year he outlined his proposals for a voluntary contributory plan which incorporated a state subsidy to encourage worker participation [See: The Times, 22 April, 1891, p. 10. Ibid., 19 November, 1891, p. 7. Gilbert, National Insurance, pp. 180-181.] Two prominent non-parliamentary reformers who were also at this time agitating for the introduction of old age pensions were Samuel Barnett and Charles Booth. [See: S.A. Barnett "Practicable Socialism", Nineteenth Century 13 (April, 1883): 642-668. Charles Booth, "Enumeration and Classification of Paupers, and State Pensions for the Aged", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 54 (1891): 600-643. Charles Booth, Pensions and the Aged Poor (London, 1889).]

<sup>119</sup> Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 180.

<sup>120</sup> The Times, 11 November, 1891, p. 7.

In subsequent speeches delivered in early December, Gorst reiterated his ideas for social insurance schemes and urged that females as well as males participate in an old age pension scheme. In addition, he advocated action be taken to relieve urban unemployment and suggested as a solution to the problems created by this situation the re-migration of redundant town labour to the countryside.<sup>121</sup>

Thereafter, although his official duties as Financial Secretary kept Gorst in almost continuous attendance in the House during the final session of the Salisbury Parliament, he nevertheless succeeded in keeping his reform programme before the nation through the media of public speeches and the press, one such address being delivered from a platform shared with Socialist, Tom Mann.<sup>122</sup>

However, this intensification of Gorst's drive for social improvement came during the waning months of the Salisbury administration, a time unpropitious to the development of social legislation. The Conservative leadership's reluctance to enact reforms on the eve of an election was demonstrated by Salisbury's reaction to Gorst's proposals for a new employers' liability bill early in 1892. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Gorst urged the adoption of a measure to terminate the practice of "contracting out" by employers, a step also being promoted by Chamberlain. Salisbury's initial response was not unfavourable. He intimated to Balfour that he had

<sup>121</sup>The Times, 8 December, 1891, p. 6. Ibid., 10 December, 1891, p. 13.

<sup>122</sup>The Times, 9 May, 1892, p. 7. Ibid., 21 May, 1892, p. 11. Ibid., 1 June, 1892, p. 9.

"no objection to Gorst's scheme".<sup>123</sup> However, by March he had arrived at the conclusion that the adoption of this measure would prove detrimental at the polls: "Treating this purely as a question of electoral architecture - I think you would lose more by the wrath of the employers than you would gain by the gratitude of the men", he told Goschen. "If both of these two parties were from the outset in an impartial frame of mind towards us - the favour of the workmen might be the best investment of the two. But the favour of the employers if we do not adopt Gorst's suggestion is much more to be counted on than the favour of the men if we do. Gorst's proposed investment would therefore be rash".<sup>124</sup>

In the 1892 general election Gorst campaigned on a social reform platform, focusing attention upon the need for the new parliament to give its immediate attention to social issues and asserting that "If supported by a majority of the new House of Commons there is no obstacle to hinder the Unionist Government from dealing with them without delay".<sup>125</sup> However, this majority failed to materialize, the Liberals triumphing at the polls. Although the Conservatives went down to defeat, Gorst successfully contested the Cambridge University seat, having finally been offered the candidature upon the retirement of Sir George Stokes.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the Liberal victory

123

Balfour Papers, Salisbury to Balfour, 24 January, 1892. Add. MS. 49690. Quoted in Thomas J. Spinner, George Joachim Goschen: The Transformation of a Victorian Liberal (Cambridge, 1973), p. 172.

124

Balfour Papers, Salisbury to Goschen, 25 March, 1892. Add. MS. 49766, ff. 124-129. Quoted in Spinner, pp. 171-172.

125

Cambridge Chronicle, 1 July, 1892, p. 4.

126

Ibid.

dispatched Gorst once again to the opposition benches and, on this occasion, to a Gladstone Parliament which proved even more ineffective than its Tory predecessor in the area of social reform.

During the interval of Liberal rule between 1892 and 1895, the Radical party made little effort to adopt policies beneficial to the working classes. Partly because of deficiencies of leadership, partly as a result of party sectionalism, emphasis was placed upon traditional issues:- Ireland, local option, local government and disestablishment in Wales and Scotland. During Gladstone's ministry these issues remained paramount. Following his resignation in 1894, his successors in the leadership, Harcourt, Rosebery and Morley, were disunited and ineffectual, further reducing the impetus to reform. The development of social legislation was further retarded by traditionalism within the rank and file of the party. The departure of the Liberal Unionists in 1886 allowed non-conformists and their supporters greater influence in matters of party policy. The strength of this traditional element in party circles resulted in the acceleration of campaigns against the Lords, the Church, and the brewers at the expense of social reform. This trend was reinforced by the consolidation of power and leadership in the provincial party organizations in the hands of non-conformist employers, who often rigidly adhered to the laissez-faire ideal and abhorred trade unionism. Consequently, "the dogmas of Gladstonianism at the top were reinforced by the dogmas of Dissent and Big Business at the bottom of the party: for both the Liberal needle was stuck at about 1870".<sup>127</sup>

<sup>127</sup>Adelman, pp. 50-56. See also, H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics 1892-1914 (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 54-68, and Hamer, Chap. 8. R.R. James, The British Revolution: British Politics, 1880-1939, Vol. 1, From Gladstone to Asquith 1880-1914 (London, 1976), pp. 135-156.

However, Gorst did not wait for the Liberals' lack of initiative on social legislation to develop before moving to the attack; he began immediately to agitate in and out of Parliament for measures to improve the conditions of the people. The problem he first pressed the Government to consider was the burning social question of the hour, unemployment. The grave economic climate of the 'eighties and the spate of poverty studies conducted during these years had, by the early 'nineties, produced the realization that unemployment was a chronic problem of the British economy rather than a temporary aberration or a self-inflicted condition of the "work-shy", as was commonly held during the nineteenth century. Formerly seen as a problem of poor-law administrators and philanthropists, unemployment thereafter became the concern of politicians, "efficiency experts", and leaders of the labour movement. The cyclical depression of 1884-1887 was more protracted and involved a wider range of occupations than those experienced in the 'sixties and 'seventies, giving rise to profound alarm throughout the country - stimulated to a substantial degree by concern over the potential threat to the social fabric posed by throngs of unemployed, respectable and "debased", within the cities. Conditions were particularly bad in London and the severity of the unemployment situation in that city precipitated a series of riots among the unemployed during the winters of 1886 and 1887, which thrust the employment problem to the forefront of political life. In an effort to erase the distress temporarily, the Conservative government took steps to "tide over" at least some of the workers with a scheme of public works. In March 1886, the President of the Local Government Board, Chamberlain, issued a circular to local authorities urging them to undertake necessary public works during periods of depression



and to co-operate with poor-law guardians in making available short-term, non-pauperizing employment for the deserving workless.<sup>128</sup> Finally, under pressure of unusual economic depression the government was willing to concede that there existed certain categories among the needy, for example, the normally hard-working, for whom the deterrent and humiliating poor law was simply not appropriate.<sup>129</sup> The Chamberlain circular was issued on five further occasions between 1886 and 1893 and, although as a solution to the problem it was virtually a complete failure,<sup>130</sup> unemployment became and remained an object of public concern.

The onset of a new period of depression, which lasted from 1892 to 1895, precipitated a renewal of agitation for an expansion of public responsibility for the relief of the unemployed which included a campaign in the Commons in support of increased government intervention in this process.<sup>131</sup> In this campaign, Gorst was an active participant. Eight days after the commencement of the opening session of the new Parliament, in February 1893, Gorst rose during debate on the Queen's speech to support Independent Labour member, Keir Hardie's motion criticizing the government for failing to include the problem of industrial depression in its proposed legislation and to urge them to move quickly to enact effective measures to alleviate unemployment. With the exception of Home Rule, to which he

<sup>128</sup>Maurice Bruce, The Coming of the Welfare State, 4th ed. (London, 1972), pp. 181-184. Fraser, pp. 130-131. Harris, pp. 1-4, pp. 75-76. G. Stedman-Jones, Outcast London (Oxford, 1971), pp. 281-282.

<sup>129</sup>Fraser, p. 131.

<sup>130</sup>See: Bruce, pp. 183-184. Harris, pp. 76-79.

<sup>131</sup>Harris, pp. 79-90.

acknowledged the Liberals were committed to give first consideration, Gorst argued that no other question deserved the urgent and critical attention of Parliament and the government more than the plight of the unemployed. The current number of workless in urban centres, he concluded, "is a discredit to our civilisation, a standing danger to the maintenance of order, and a social evil ... requiring prompt legislation".<sup>132</sup>

Gorst actively promoted local authority work schemes for the relief of unemployment, as an alternative to the humiliating and ineffective provision of outdoor relief through stone-yard labour. He rebuked the Government for refusing Hardie's request for a reinstatement of old statutes empowering Boards of Guardians to acquire land for the purpose of providing gainful labour for the unemployed.<sup>133</sup> Instead of hindering such experiments by local authorities the government "should afford them every facility that could be afforded consistently with the law". He cited the Salvation Army farm colony at Hadleigh as being one example of a successful experiment of the type being proposed by East London guardians and urged the Liberal administration to allow those authorities to conduct similar schemes, "... which would certainly be productive of instruction and might guide them in the direction to which this great social problem might be solved".<sup>134</sup> Gorst also proposed the introduction of the eight-hour day in government naval establishments as a mechanism for reducing unemployment,<sup>135</sup> a technique the

<sup>132</sup> PD, 4th Series, 8 (1893): 754-758.

<sup>133</sup> For Hardie's demands see *Ibid.*, 4th Series, 14 (1893): 807-808, 1143-1144.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th Series, 17 (1893): 1026-1028, 1117-1118.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th Series, 9 (1893): 1113-1116.

socialists and trade unionists advocated the State extend to several branches of industry.<sup>136</sup>

For the relief of the great army of unemployed casual labour inhabiting the cities of the nation, amongst whom starvation - and suicide to escape the condition was increasing, Gorst pressed for immediate intervention of the Central Government and Parliament. This task, he claimed, was beyond the capabilities of local authorities. This class of unemployables resulted directly from uncontrolled migration from the countryside to the urban centres, asserted Gorst, and the solution to the problem rested with some form of State scheme for re-settling excess casual labour upon the land. A system of labour registries might also contribute towards this dispersal of the urban unemployed but, in order to be effective, they ought to be under the aegis of a Labour Department clearing house, a mode of supervision Gorst pressed the Government to establish.<sup>137</sup>

When, in 1895, following agitation for action on unemployment by organizations for the out-of-work and the Independent Labour Party,<sup>138</sup> the Government appointed a Select Committee of the House of Commons to examine the powers of local authorities and the extent of distress arising from unemployment, Gorst condemned the exercise as a delaying tactic adopted by the Government "because they did not know what to do" with the problem of unemployment and "had no policy to declare with regard to it". He feared that the inquiry would serve to delay remedial measures and suggested that

<sup>136</sup>Harris, pp. 58-67.

<sup>137</sup>PD, 4th Series, 19 (1893): 1197-1202. The Times, 3 October, 1893, p. 8. Ibid., 24 January, 1895, p. 12.

<sup>138</sup>Harris, p. 89.

the unemployment situation would be better served by the Government acting "to instruct their permanent advisors in such matters to prepare some plan for dealing with the subject".<sup>139</sup>

Gorst's agitation for the application of the eight-hour day in government naval establishments also formed part of his ongoing campaign to have the State establish itself as a model employer of labour, which he resumed from the opposition benches following the 1892 election. Early in March, during Committee of Supply on the navy estimates, Gorst moved "That ... no person should in Her Majesty's naval establishments be engaged at wages insufficient for a proper maintenance; and that the conditions of Labour as regards hours, wages, insurance against accidents, provision for old age, & etc., should be such as to afford an example to private employers throughout the country".<sup>140</sup> In his accompanying speech he outlined the deficiencies in labour conditions currently existing in the Royal Naval yards and emphasized the relative ease of removing them. Unlike private industries, government establishments were not hidebound by the necessity of reaping profits and they had no foreign competitors challenging their markets; moreover, the necessary changes required no new legislation but only changes in administrative procedures which could begin immediately. His motion provided his fellow Members in the House with the opportunity to redeem their election pledges to reform and elevate the condition of the people, asserted Gorst, and he urged it be accepted and, thereafter, its provisions be extended to all government establishments employing labour,

<sup>139</sup>PD, 4th Series, 30 (1895): 209-210, 250-252.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 9 (1893): 1126.

such as the War Office, Post Office, and the Board of Works.<sup>141</sup>

Although Gladstone opposed any statutory limitation of the adult working day, by this date a considerable number of Liberal M.P.'s supported its introduction,<sup>142</sup> amongst them Secretary for War, Campbell-Bannerman,<sup>143</sup> and the new initiative on the question, launched by the Opposition's strongest supporter of labour reforms, Gorst, apparently convinced the Liberal government to act in order to pre-empt future Conservative legislation.<sup>144</sup> Thus, following Campbell-Bannerman's acceptance of the proposal on behalf of the Government, Gorst's motion was adopted without division.<sup>145</sup> However, Gorst recognized that Government acceptance of his resolution did not automatically guarantee its implementation and, consequently, during the Spring and Summer of 1893 he continued to press the Liberal administration to honour its pledge<sup>146</sup> and shortly thereafter had the satisfaction of seeing his efforts bear fruit.

On June 8, in response to Gorst's request for information regarding Government progress towards implementation of the March 6 resolution, Campbell-Bannerman informed the House that "those under minimum wages of labourers as determined by the Government" would receive an immediate increase.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 9 (1893): 1109-1124.

<sup>142</sup>Harris, pp. 69-70.

<sup>143</sup>J.A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B., 2 vols. (London, 1923), I, p. 142.

<sup>144</sup>H.A. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889 (Oxford, 1964), I, p. 222.

<sup>145</sup>PD, 4th Series, 9 (1893): 1127-1180.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 9 (1893): 1709-1710, 1782-1785, 1856; 13 (1893): 526; 16 (1893): 124-125, 1399-1403.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 13 (1893): 526-527.

However, the minimum figure eventually arrived at by the Ministry failed to satisfy Gorst who doubted it was sufficient for maintenance and considered it open to the imputation of sweating.<sup>148</sup> Six months later, approximately one year after Parliament carried Gorst's resolution, a Liberal member moved adoption of a similar motion advocating payment of trade-union rates of wages in Royal Dockyards and other naval establishments<sup>149</sup> which the Civil Lord of the Admiralty indicated the Government would accept.<sup>150</sup>

Gorst's proposal for the reduction of working hours met with considerably more success. In Autumn of 1893 the Government introduced the eight-hour day into one section of the Woolwich Arsenal,<sup>151</sup> and extended the scheme to all its ordinance factories and arsenals at the beginning of 1894.<sup>152</sup> Thereafter Gorst agitated to have the measure brought in at the Royal Dockyards<sup>153</sup> and two months later the Government decided to take this step.<sup>154</sup> In 1895 the measure was applied to several branches of the General Post Office.<sup>155</sup>

Meanwhile, however, efforts by Gorst to obtain the statutory eight-hour day for one category of railway workers proved fruitless. Early in 1893, President of the Local Government Board, Mundella, brought in a bill

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 16 (1893): 1399-1403.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 22 (1894): 608-609.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 22 (1894): 624-627.

<sup>151</sup>Harris, p. 70.

<sup>152</sup>PD, 4th Series, 20 (1894): 1024.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 20 (1894): 1024, 1330-1331; 22 (1894): 321.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 22 (1894): 627.

<sup>155</sup>Harris, p. 70.

designed to regulate the hours of railway men. Under the provisions of the bill, the Board of Trade could order a railway company whose hours were considered "excessive" to submit a revised time schedule which brought them within "reasonable limits".<sup>156</sup> Because it failed to attach a definite figure to hours limitation, Gorst denounced the measure as a sham and asserted that, if passed as it stood, it would prove to be a "dead letter" and that "the hours of no railway servant in the kingdom will be reduced by its operation". Consequently, he introduced a new clause specifying maximum hours to be worked:- "Hours exceeding eight for signalmen and ten for other servants to be deemed prima facie excessive". Gorst claimed that State intervention in the hours of adult labour was justified in this case because railway workers functioned as servants of the public and, as such, could be subjected to the same hours-regulation as dockyard and public service employees; more importantly, State interference was required to ensure adequate protection against accidents for the travelling public.<sup>157</sup>

The amendment came under immediate attack from the spokesmen of the railway interests, Liberal industrialist Sir Joseph Pease and Conservative Sir James Fergusson, who objected to any parliamentary limitation of hours or interference with freedom of contract, claiming that hours limitation ought to be at the discretion of the Board of Trade not the House of Commons - sentiments echoed by Mundella who warned the House against being "led away by the specious arguments of the right hon. Member for Cambridge University".<sup>158</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Clegg et al., p. 234.

<sup>157</sup> PD, 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1089-1093.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1093-1095.

The majority of Members heeded his advice; Gorst's amendment was defeated 257-71,<sup>159</sup> and the bill subsequently underwent further emasculation in the Lords.<sup>160</sup>

The parliamentary session of 1893 also found Gorst once again at the forefront of agitation for an improved Employers' Liability Act.<sup>161</sup> In February the Liberal government introduced a bill which extended the employers' liability to include those injuries to a workman caused by the negligence of any person in the service of the workman's employer - thereby abolishing the defence of "common employment" - and prohibited any contracting out of the measure's provisions by means of private schemes.<sup>162</sup> However, if the employer were able to prove that the workman's own negligence contributed to the accident producing the injuries "then it would not be fair, and the law would not allow, that the master should be held liable".<sup>163</sup>

The measure came under attack from the Unionists. Chamberlain argued that it provided no compensation for those numerous injuries and fatal accidents not attributable to negligence on anyone's part but resulting from "acts of God". Thus he moved an amendment stating that no legislation relating to employers' liability "will be final or satisfactory which does 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".<sup>164</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1106.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 12 (1893): 429-438, 1218-1219; 13 (1893): 1167-1176, 1634.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 10 (1893): 498, 1550-1552; 11 (1893): 1205-1210; 12 (1893): 218-219.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 8 (1893): 1943-1961.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 8 (1893): 1948-1949.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 8 (1893): 1961.



Gorst supported Chamberlain's call for a more comprehensive measure, citing statistics derived from the operation of the German insurance laws to illustrate that only 27% of the accidents occurring to workers in the course of their employment would be covered by the proposed bill. Thus he pressed the Government to adopt Chamberlain's amendment. "The principle advocated is that any person who carries on a dangerous trade or industry for the purpose of production of any article must, in the first instance, regard the cost of life and labour necessarily sacrificed in the course of the employment as part of the cost of production", declared Gorst.<sup>165</sup> He also expressed amazement that the Government proposed to exempt its own employees from the operation of the bill and urged that this omission be rectified, a step Asquith then indicated the Government would consider taking.<sup>166</sup>

Although Chamberlain's proposal won the support of some Conservatives and Liberal Unionists,<sup>167</sup> it was rejected by the Government. Asquith declared the amendment a ploy on Chamberlain's part to destroy the Bill by introducing into it a totally new principle - that of industrial insurance,<sup>168</sup> a concept Chamberlain had been actively promoting<sup>169</sup> and one which Gorst had advocated in his 1891 social programme.<sup>170</sup> Asquith rejected such a scheme of insurance on the ground that it provided "no security and no incentive for the exercise of care on the part of the employer and because it involved "an amount of

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1206-1210.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1209-1210; 12 (1893): 218-219.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 10 (1893): 1053-1059; 1066; 1590; 11 (1893): 1182. Speeches of W.R. Bousefield, A.B. Forwood, H. Seton-Karr, and C.B. Stuart-Wortley.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 4th Series, 8 (1893): 1956-1957.

<sup>169</sup> See Joseph Chamberlain, "The Labour Question", Nineteenth Century, 32 (1892), pp. 677-710. See also the Times, 22 February, 1893, p. 10; 18 May, 1893, p. 11.

<sup>170</sup> See, "Social Politics in England", pp. 267-268.

official interference upon the part of the State ... that I do not think either the employers or workmen of this country could be readily brought to tolerate".<sup>171</sup> Trade union and labour representatives in the Commons also repudiated Chamberlain's proposal stating that "as the T.U.C. had not made a demand that all accidents should be met by a common insurance fund, they could not approve the amendment",<sup>172</sup> and they echoed Asquith's claim that Chamberlain was merely attempting to "strangle the Bill".<sup>173</sup> Consequently, Chamberlain, having successfully publicized his own alternative to the Government's measure, but not wishing to sabotage its passage, withdrew his amendment.<sup>174</sup> The Bill eventually passed the Commons<sup>175</sup> but it was later destroyed by the Lords' repeated efforts to insert a "contracting out" clause,<sup>176</sup> leading to Gladstone's dropping of the measure in February, 1894.<sup>177</sup> This wrecking by the Upper Chamber of one of the few pieces of Liberal social legislation to emerge from the Commons during the current Parliament confirmed Gorst's fears that the increasing obstructionist tactics of the Conservative-dominated Lords<sup>178</sup> would prove detrimental to the cause of Tory Democracy.

<sup>171</sup>PD, 4th Series, 8 (1893): 1957-1958.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 10 (1893): 1058.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 10 (1893): 1064. Speech of S. Woods.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 11 (1893): 1210.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 18 (1893): 1656.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 19 (1893): 53-87, 750-788; 20 (1894): 3-57, 1639-1656.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 21 (1894): 851. For an analysis of the controversy surrounding the Bill, see D.G. Hanes, The First British Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897 (New Haven, Conn., 1968), Chap. 5. W.C. Mallalieu, "Chamberlain and Workmen's Compensation", Journal of Economic History, 10 (1950), pp. 50-54.

<sup>178</sup>For background to the Lords' obstructionist tactics at this period, see M. Barker, Gladstone and Radicalism: the reconstruction of Liberal policy in Britain, 1885-1894 (Brighton, 1975), pp. 246-248. With particular reference to the Employers' Liability Bill, see Hanes, pp. 82-84.

Thus he cautioned Salisbury:

The loss of the Employers' Liability Bill, as a result of the H. of Lords insisting on their amendments will inflict a very heavy blow upon your working-class supporters. I do not doubt that this point has been properly brought under your notice, and fully considered by you. But having just returned from a political visit to the West Riding and the industrial corner of Cheshire, where I heard much to confirm the opinion I had previously formed, I feel impelled to add my testimony to that of others on this point.<sup>179</sup>

Undaunted by the Government's obduracy, Gorst now channelled his energies into efforts to alleviate one of the most distressing problems of the Poor Law system, the mistreatment of children in the Metropolitan pauper schools. Following a series of incidents in certain of these institutions, in which neglect had resulted in injuries, permanent disabilities, or death to numerous children,<sup>180</sup> Gorst brought the issue to the attention of Parliament through his judicious questioning in the House of the new President of the Local Government Board, Shaw-Lefevre.<sup>181</sup> He urged that a Commission or Committee of the House be appointed to inquire into the organization of pauper schools and to consider the feasibility of alternative care methods for pauper children.<sup>182</sup> Shortly afterwards he pressed home his point by participating in a "monster deputation" to Shaw-Lefevre which demanded the establishment of an investigation, along the lines suggested by Gorst, during which he presented a speech "... clear, incisive, from the standpoint of a Parliamentary veteran, and a tender father ...".<sup>183</sup> This representation succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a Departmental Committee to inquire into Poor Law schools, upon which Gorst and Henrietta Barnett were offered

<sup>179</sup>Salisbury Papers, 74, Gorst to Salisbury, 28 January, 1894.

<sup>180</sup>See, H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett, pp. 291-292.

<sup>181</sup>PD, 4th Series, 24 (1894): 1161; 26 (1894): 121, 443.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 26 (1894): 121.

<sup>183</sup>H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett, p. 293.

seats.<sup>184</sup>

Gorst also drew the attention of the Commons to the abuse of child labour by some Poor Law authorities, claiming that many pauper children were employed in excess of ten hours daily.<sup>185</sup> Child labour had remained a burning issue for Gorst ever since his return from the Berlin Conference. Just two weeks earlier he had made an unsuccessful attempt to have inserted into the Factories and Workshops Bill a clause raising the minimum age for child labour to 12 years, as pledged by Britain at Berlin.<sup>186</sup>

Meanwhile, the Government's continuing neglect of social issues led Gorst to launch a public criticism of the Liberal administration in the periodical press, which he combined with a further airing of his own solutions to current social problems.<sup>187</sup> The dearth of social legislation during the Government's current tenure of office Gorst blamed upon the Liberals' pre-occupation with constitutional questions and upon their affluent members' lack of sympathy for the condition of the poor: "It is impossible for capitalists, as a class, to prefer the interests of the workers to their own", he declared.<sup>188</sup> Gorst proceeded to examine critically the various reform measures upon which the Liberals had failed to make any real progress - the settlement of trade disputes, reduction of the hours of labour, relief

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., pp. 292-293.

<sup>185</sup>PD, 4th Series, 31 (1895): 1033.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 4th Series, 31 (1895): 181-183.

<sup>187</sup>See, "A Conservative on Social Reforms: An Interview with Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews 9 (1894), p. 602. J.E. Gorst, "English Workmen and Their Political Friends", North American Review 159 (1894), pp. 207-217. Hereafter referred to as J.E. Gorst, "English Workmen".

<sup>188</sup>J.E. Gorst, "English Workmen", pp. 208-209.

of unemployment, employers' liability, and the raising of the minimum age for child labour. For each of these questions he offered his own reform proposals, which were in essence those outlined in his 1891 schemes and which he had promoted in the House during the current Parliament.<sup>189</sup>

Gorst conceded, however, that while current political attitudes continued to dominate Parliament there was little chance that such social legislation as he proposed would be enacted. Once a party had succeeded in duping the workers into voting for them, by professing devotion to social issues, the politicians' "zeal for the interests of labour is choked by cares for other matters more important to their ascendancy in Parliament" and reform was put aside. Only when the working class realized its potential at the polls would the situation be remedied, asserted Gorst. The workers' political power, "... if they knew how to use it, would be irresistible: they could confer the government upon whomsoever they would". At the present time, however, the workers' ignorance of where their best interests lay prevented their emergence as a powerful political force, and, consequently, politicians felt no compulsion to legislate on social issues, he declared. "The public enthusiasm is wanting which, in our Constitution, is requisite to turn a project into law, and this want is not likely to be supplied until education has made the workers far better judges of their own interests and necessities".<sup>190</sup>

Gorst believed that the University Settlement Movement constituted one influential agency for the education of the workers:

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., pp. 210-217.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., p. 207, pp. 209-210.

The prevalent political sentiment of such people is apathy ... and they receive promises of amelioration, which philanthropists and politicians make them, often from interested motives, with scornful incredulity. They have a dull sense of being treated by society with injustice, and a dull rancour against the rich and leisured classes for not inventing some plan by which their condition might be improved. But they have no plan for themselves; they have no leaders whom they trust; they have no revolutionary projects to carry out, either by violence or by their legitimate votes ... They will furnish no force for social or political change unless they are first aroused".<sup>191</sup>

This arousal could be stimulated by the bringing together, in the settlement environment, of university graduates and the workers:

There is the latent interest and the latent power in the masses; there is the latent knowledge and the latent ability in the men and women of culture. Make friends and associates of the two parties, and the problems which are insoluble to each alone become determinable by the two combined. The social questions of the day can be calmly and scientifically examined; the facts of the case can be accurately ascertained; the measures to be taken arrived at in accordance with common sense and the general interests of society; and the keen interest which an instructed and enlightened people would have in their own amelioration would supply the irresistible force necessary to carry such measures into speedy execution".<sup>192</sup>

Moreover, Gorst asserted, the graduates could ably fill the void in working-class leadership resulting from the failure of the trade-unionists to assume this role because of their inability to comprehend the needs of their unorganized brethren. The graduates could supply an acceptable alternative to those "designing persons" bent upon stirring up the poor to "revolutionary outbreaks". If the people had wise counsellors whom they trusted the trade unionists would gladly accept their co-operation, and take their views into consideration, and the selfish agitators would probably disappear. Such a position University men and women settled amongst

<sup>191</sup> J.E. Gorst, "Settlements in England and America", pp. 13-14.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

the poor have every prospect of attaining".<sup>193</sup>

By the late Spring of 1895 a general election appeared imminent, prompting Gorst to issue another programme of social reform which he presented as a potential guide for a new Conservative administration.<sup>194</sup> The programme ran essentially along the same lines as his previously published schemes, containing proposals to deal with unemployment, Poor Law reform, and provision for the young, the sick, and the aged. Gorst also included measures for the handling of labour disputes and for the amendment of the employers' liability law which he had earlier included in his minority report appended to the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Labour.<sup>195</sup> The majority of Commission members having shrunk from supporting statutory measures for the settlement of industrial disputes and for the increasing of employers' liability for accidents,<sup>196</sup> Gorst declined to sign the majority report, choosing instead to issue his own recommendations separately. Gorst now reiterated his minority report proposals calling for the establishment of Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration and for a new Employers' Liability Bill to provide a worker with compensation for all accidents suffered in the course of his employment - save those resulting from his own misconduct.<sup>197</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>194</sup> J.E. Gorst, "The Conservative Programme of Social Reform", Nineteenth Century 38 (1895), pp. 3-16. Hereafter referred to as "The Conservative Programme".

<sup>195</sup> Fifth and Final Report of the Royal Commission on Labour (Cmnd. 7421), PP, 1894, 35: 156-159. Report by Sir John E. Gorst.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-121.

<sup>197</sup> J.E. Gorst, "The Conservative Programme", pp. 4-5, pp. 8-10.

Gorst asserted that a victorious Tory party would possess one "immense and obvious advantage" over its Liberal rivals: "Pledged to no political changes, they can devote the whole of their Parliamentary time and the entire energy of their administration to the framing, discussing, and passing of measures which directly affect the well-being of the people: they will not be obliged to put off reform by Royal Commissions, Select Committees, and Sham bills".<sup>198</sup>

Whilst Gorst's programme was undergoing publication, the Conservatives were provided with the opportunity to fulfill his predictions with regard to their social policy. On June 21, 1895, the Liberal Government was unexpectedly defeated on a vote to censure the Secretary for War, Campbell-Bannerman, over an alleged shortage of cordite for the armed forces, leading to the resignation of Rosebery and the formation of a new Conservative administration.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



## CHAPTER V

### VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL 1895-1902

The formation of Salisbury's third ministry was completed with unaccustomed swiftness, despite the complications created by the need to include Liberal Unionists. Although their inclusion gave rise to some dissatisfaction among Conservative aspirants denied office, Salisbury experienced no unsurmountable problems in forming his Unionist coalition Government which brought five former Liberals into the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> The paucity of competent candidates for Ministerial positions obliged Salisbury to overlook Gorst's "disloyalty" once again and find a place for him in the new Administration as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education.<sup>2</sup> According to Sir Almeric FitzRoy, then official private secretary to the newly-appointed Lord President of the Council, the Duke of Devonshire, Gorst's appointment to the politically sensitive area of education had been made "in the belief that his ingenuity might assist the

<sup>1</sup>Peter Marsh, The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902 (Hassocks, Sussex, 1978), pp. 241-245. Robert Taylor, Lord Salisbury (London, 1975), pp. 152-158. The Liberal-Unionist Cabinet appointments were:- the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council; Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs; the Marquess of Lansdowne, Secretary of State for War; George J. Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty; and Lord James of Hereford, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancashire.

<sup>2</sup>J.P. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil", in Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, ed. Robert Robson (London, 1967), p. 302. The Office was more commonly referred to as Vice-President of the Council or, alternatively, as the Minister of Education. As incumbent, Gorst was effectively head of the Education Department and spokesman for the Government in matters of education policy, in the Commons.

Government to square the educational circle".<sup>3</sup> In making his offer of the Vice-Presidency to Gorst, Salisbury indicated that the position would offer the former considerable scope for his talents: "the office ... is one which I think you would find interesting, and in which you would have an opportunity of performing valuable work ... The questions connected with education are difficult but urgent; and your powers would have full employment in solving the various problems it presents".<sup>4</sup> Although, as President of the Council, Devonshire was to be the official head of the Education Department, Salisbury anticipated that the Duke's simultaneous position as chairman of the Committee of Public Defence would keep him fully occupied and intended the daily work of the Department to be under Gorst's supervision. As he told Gorst, "Your nominal chief is the Duke of Devonshire: but you would enjoy an independence more than usually complete, as his hands will be full with other matters".<sup>5</sup> However, despite the apparent importance Salisbury attached to the Vice-Presidential post, it was to be a non-Cabinet appointment, a decision Salisbury justified to Gorst by claiming it was necessitated by the complexities involved in constructing a coalition Ministry.<sup>6</sup> This denial of Cabinet rank to Gorst, following many years of what he justifiably considered valuable service to

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in B.H. Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1911), 2, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup>Salisbury Papers, 75, Salisbury to Gorst, 1 July, 1895.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Wrote Salisbury, "Your Office is sometimes though not generally included in the Cabinet. At present I fear such an arrangement would be impossible, as the numbers of the Cabinet are swollen beyond all former precedents. The coalition of two previously independent organizations makes the task of arrangement more than usually difficult".

the party, was undoubtedly a blow to him, and his disappointment is reflected in his curt letter of acceptance to Salisbury: "I will accept the Office to which you have designated me, and I will do my best to fulfil the important duties which it involves".<sup>7</sup>

Gorst's appointment was given qualified approval by educationists. They regretted the selection of an individual relatively inexperienced in educational matters, interpreting this as an indication of the politicians' continuing inability to form "a proper conception of the importance of education as a factor of national prosperity and greatness".<sup>8</sup> However, they were prepared to acknowledge Gorst's potential:

If we must have an untried man we might have gone further than Sir John Gorst and fared much worse. His intellectual eminence is as unquestionable as his sympathy with the poor. The part which he played in the Berlin Conference is well remembered, and we shall look to him first to raise the age for half-time employment, and then to abolish the baneful system altogether ...".<sup>9</sup>

The Westminster Review was less restrained, declaring that the choice of Gorst for Vice-President "has given hearty satisfaction to practical educationists. His ripe experience and wide sympathies will be invaluable ..." in the administration of the Education Department and it expressed confidence that "the appointment of so honest and able a statesman as Sir John Gorst" would guarantee the continuation of his Liberal predecessor, Acland's, policy of progress and thorough efficiency".<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Salisbury Papers, 76, Gorst to Salisbury, 2 July, 1895.

<sup>8</sup>"Notes on Elementary Education", Journal of Education, 313 (1895): 459.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>J.J. Davis, "The New Minister of Education and his Work", Westminster Review, 144 (1895): 332-336.

When Salisbury accepted the Queen's invitation to form a new Government, in June, he had made an early election a condition of his acceptance<sup>11</sup> and dissolution duly took place in early July. The ensuing contest produced a resounding victory for the Unionist Government. The Liberals and their Irish Nationalist allies elected only 177 and 82 respectively, while the Conservatives' total of 340 and the Liberal Unionists tally of 71 gave the Government a commanding majority of 152.<sup>12</sup> At Cambridge University Gorst and his fellow-Tory, Jebb, were returned unopposed.<sup>13</sup> Parliament reassembled August 12, only to recess three weeks later, giving Gorst a period in which to acquaint himself with the "difficult and urgent" education questions to which Salisbury had referred. Parliament would not reassemble for the new Session until the New Year.

There were three major educational problems awaiting resolution when the Unionists returned to power in 1895. Firstly, there was an urgent need to modify the existing dual system of elementary education, provided by the board and voluntary schools, in order that the national standard might be raised; secondly, public education beyond the elementary, as yet undefined, required organization; and thirdly, the administrative chaos existent throughout the entire system demanded rectification.

At this period, elementary education was provided through board and voluntary - chiefly Anglican - schools. This dual system had been created by the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Prior to this legislation,

<sup>11</sup>Marsh, p. 242.

<sup>12</sup>Donald Read, England 1868-1914 (London, 1979), p. 356.

<sup>13</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 19 July, 1895, p. 4.

elementary education for the masses had been furnished almost exclusively by the voluntary schools, first established at the beginning of the nineteenth century and fostered, after 1833, by State grants. By 1870 they had evolved into a network which sparsely covered the country. The 1870 Act instituted for the first time State-provided and State-maintained elementary schools, the "board" schools, which were designed to fill the gaps left by the voluntary system. Provided and run by elected boards, these schools were established in areas where need for them existed and were financed partly by local rate-payers and partly by the State. As prescribed by the Cowper-Temple clause of the 1870 Act, denominational religious teaching was prohibited in the schools, and every pupil had the right to withdraw from religious instruction classes on grounds of conscience. The board schools were intended to supplement, not supplant, the voluntary schools, which continued to receive grants under the Act.

However, this dual system was neither co-ordinated as a whole, nor connected with the existing, mainly private, secondary schools. Although nowhere in the 1870 Act was it specifically stated, the dual system was designed to serve the labouring classes, the classes above them customarily receiving their education in fee-paying private schools. In keeping with the popular nineteenth-century assumption that the State should neither involve itself in, nor allot public funds for, higher education, the 1870 measure made no provision for secondary schools. Consequently, secondary education remained the province of the universities, public schools, and endowed grammar schools and thus continued to be primarily the prerogative of the middle and upper classes, who were able to pay for the privilege of receiving it. Hence, after 1870, the two branches

of education, elementary and secondary, continued to operate separately, serving to reinforce the class distinctions already dividing English society.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1890s, a series of developments occurring within the educational system, combined with increasing administrative disorder, made reorganization of the educational structure seem imperative. The rapidly-developing board school network now posed a serious threat to the voluntary system. While many of the rural board schools had proved inefficient, their urban counterparts generally possessed better buildings and equipment and better teachers than the voluntary schools. The latter institutions, which received no rate aid and subsisted on a combination of government grants, voluntary subscriptions, and fees, were increasingly unable to compete with their rate-maintained rivals.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, by this period, elementary education had progressed far beyond the limits envisioned by the 1870 Act. That measure had stipulated that the education provided in the public elementary schools must be chiefly "elementary" in nature, that is, consisting primarily of instruction in the three basic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic. A pupil's performance was measured according to his ability in these areas and his progress was measured in "standards". However, some children

<sup>14</sup>W.H.G. Armytage, Four Hundred Years of English Education, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1970), Chaps. 5-7. Marjorie Cruickshank, Church and State in English Education (London, 1964), Chaps. 1 and 2. A.M. Kazamias, Politics, Society and Secondary Education in England (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 36-48. John Lawson and Harold Silver, A Social History of Education in England (London, 1973), pp. 267-324. Mary Sturt, The Education of the People: A history of primary education in England and Wales in the nineteenth century (London, 1967), pp. 383-392.

<sup>15</sup>Cruickshank, pp. 38-56.

succeeded in completing the standards in a shorter period than that assigned, leading boards to provide "higher grade" schools for them in which a variety of subjects were taught in addition to the three R's. Because these schools classified their pupils by elementary school standards, and defined their principal educational work as "elementary", they continued to be eligible for grants from the Education Department, despite the fact these schools were supplying essentially "secondary" education. Although the Education Department possessed no mandate for the organization of education other than elementary, the undetermined status of higher grade schools, the absence of a central policy for the education they provided, and the Department's desire to retain control of them, created a situation in which the schools were allowed to continue expanding despite their dubious legality. In fact, the Department encouraged this development. Since, unlike the grammar schools, the higher grade schools were not constrained by a classically-biased curriculum, they were able to offer technological-oriented subjects and, in a time of rising foreign competition, this was seen as supplying a felt need. In addition, higher grade pupils were the academic elite of the elementary system's working-class population, the most capable of which succeeded in obtaining scholarships to training college or university.<sup>16</sup>

A comparable situation had also developed within the system of evening continuation schools. Established originally to provide a basic

<sup>16</sup> Olive Banks, Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education (London, 1955), pp. 13-19. Eric Eaglesham, From School Board to Local Authority (London, 1956), pp. 29-40. Hereafter referred to as Eaglesham, Local Authority. Eric Eaglesham, The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Education in England (London, 1967. Reprinted. Old Woking, Sussex, 1972), pp. 10-14. Hereafter referred to as Eaglesham, Twentieth Century Education.

elementary education to illiterates beyond school age, the evening schools were, by 1895, providing mainly secondary-type schooling to youths and adults, the introduction of compulsory education in 1880 having gradually reduced the need to supply elementary instruction to adults. By interpreting liberally the provisions of the Education Code (1890) Act,<sup>17</sup> the school boards had succeeded in expanding their evening school curriculum to include a wide range of educational subjects, particularly commercial and technical, as well as recreational courses, which they provided at public expense although they had no authorization to expend the rates for any education other than elementary. This expansion of higher grade and evening school education beyond their legally-prescribed limits resulted in part from the Education Department's failure to devise a co-ordinated policy to meet the changing conditions which developed after the passage of the 1870 Act, serving to confuse Department officials as to what was, and was not, acceptable under the various Codes. Moreover, in a period when the need for a comprehensive national system of education was becoming increasingly apparent, the higher grade schools were gaining wide political and public approval, leading Department officials to tolerate, even encourage, this development of unauthorized "secondary" education.<sup>18</sup>

The Education Department's ventures into non-elementary education brought it into competition with the other central educational agencies in

<sup>17</sup> By this Act the Education Department intended only to release the schools from the necessity of making the three R's the principal part of their work, while remaining eligible for Government grants and rate aid by giving instruction in a combination of elementary subjects prescribed in the new 1890 Department Code [See, Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 57.]

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-45, pp. 53-58.



in the field, the Science and Art Department and the Charity Commissioners. The Science and Art Department, an off-shoot of the Board of Trade, regulated the spending on secondary education of monies allotted for science, art or technical instruction. The Charity Commissioners distributed legacies, gifts and endowments for purposes of education. Although the funds they controlled were not dispensed exclusively to secondary schools, the Commissioners had provided, through their disbursements, a secondary school form of education to over 75,000 children by 1895 and so were effectively a secondary education department. Thus, by this date, all three bodies - the Education and Science and Art Departments and the Charity Commissioners - were functioning as agencies of secondary education, although none of them were established for that purpose. As their respective spheres of responsibility had not been clearly defined, the result was administrative overlap, confusion and conflict.<sup>19</sup>

By the time of Gorst's appointment to the Education Department the educational situation had reached crisis point. The impoverished voluntary schools could no longer compete with the rate-aided board schools.<sup>20</sup> Lacking the financial resources necessary to maintain the ever-rising standards imposed by the Education Department, many were transferring their buildings to the school boards while those that remained in operation were

<sup>19</sup> Eaglesham, Twentieth-Century Education, pp. 21-28. For a detailed examination of the development of the Education and Science and Art Departments and the Charity Commissioners, see A.S. Bishop, The Rise of a Central Authority for English Education (Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>20</sup> In 1895, the voluntary schools' per pupil income averaged £1.95 compared with £2.5 for the board schools. [Nigel Middleton and Sophia Weitzman, A Place for Everyone: A History of State Education From the End of the 18th Century to the 1970s (London, 1976), p. 91.]

offering a standard of education increasingly inferior to that provided by the urban board schools.<sup>21</sup> As the voluntary schools were now educating nearly 60 percent of the elementary school population, 2,445,812 as compared with 1,879,218 in the board schools,<sup>22</sup> the future standard of national literacy demanded that voluntary school education be improved. Until the difficulties associated with the dual system of elementary education were solved, no efficient national system of elementary or secondary education could be established. At the same time, the school boards were facing mounting opposition. Churchmen alleged that the religious education provided by the board schools was simplified to such a degree that it favoured the Nonconformist point of view, rendering the schools virtually secularist institutions which fostered unbelief; in the large towns the urban ratepayers accused the boards of unjustifiable extravagance.<sup>23</sup>

The Government was under intense pressure to rationalize "other than elementary" education. The agitation was not confined to educational reformers. Demands were being made by the "respectable" members of the working class for secondary places for their children and, as many of these citizens were now enfranchised, their needs could not be ignored. Calls

<sup>21</sup>Cruickshank, pp. 61-62.

<sup>22</sup>PD, 4th Series, 39 (1896): 526. Gorst's speech introducing the 1896 Education Bill.

<sup>23</sup>Eaglesham, Twentieth Century Education, pp. 3-5. The term Churchmen is used as an all-embracing term for Anglicans plus Roman Catholics. Non-conformist refers to members of any denomination dissenting from the teachings of the Anglican Church, other than Roman Catholics.

for improved secondary education were being made by industrialists who were finding themselves obliged to import German technicians because of the lack of competent Englishmen for the jobs. The increasing economic challenge by England's foreign competitors, particularly Germany, was prompting educators, social reformers, politicians and thinkers to press for expanded opportunities in secondary and technical education.<sup>24</sup> The various demands were reinforced by the Royal Commission on Secondary Education. Reporting in November 1895, the Commission condemned the patchwork nature of secondary education, together with its accompanying administrative confusion and overlapping of functions, and recommended it be placed under central supervision. They proposed this take the form of a central authority under a Minister of Education who would assume the relevant functions, formerly exercised by the Education Department, the Science and Art Department, and the Charity Commissioners, and the setting up of local education authorities in county and county boroughs empowered to expend the rates and State grants, under the supervision of the central authority.<sup>25</sup>

The return of the Conservatives to power in the summer of 1895 provided a political climate more favourable to voluntary-school interests. The Tory party, being by tradition the supporters of the Established Church, were naturally sympathetic towards the voluntary schools, the majority of which were Church of England institutions. Salisbury, himself a staunch

<sup>24</sup>Kazamias, pp. 107-111. Middleton and Weitzman, pp. 91-93.

<sup>25</sup>Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education (Cmnd. 7862), PP, 1895, 43: 257, 268-270. (This Commission is more commonly known as the "Bryce Commission", after its chairman James Bryce. In this dissertation the two titles are used interchangeably.)

Anglican, deplored the growing incidence of voluntary-school collapse and supersession by board schools.<sup>26</sup> He disliked the existing nature of the dual system, preferring an arrangement "which would enable each man to pay his rates for the teaching of his own religion".<sup>27</sup> Just one week prior to the return to power of the Unionist Government he had told the supporters of Anglican education that all measures designed to "strengthen the voluntary schools and swell the resources on which they rest", must be employed in order to guarantee their survival.<sup>28</sup>

However, there were as Salisbury acknowledged, "enormous practical difficulties" associated with the adoption of any plan to relieve the voluntary schools.<sup>29</sup> Nonconformists and their Liberal supporters were opposed to any further provision from the public purse which would serve to maintain voluntary-school education. In many localities, particularly in the countryside, the absence of a board school obliged Nonconformists to send their children to the local Anglican school, where they were exposed to alien doctrinal beliefs, and thus they hoped for the eventual supplanting of the voluntary schools by the board system. In addition,

<sup>26</sup>The Times, 21 November, 1895, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 22 March, 1895, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 13 June, 1895, p. 12. The Anglicans' clamour for increased public support had reached a crescendo by 1895, culminating in the presentation of a memorial to Salisbury by a deputation of clergy, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 20 November. In this memorial were outlined the measures the Churchmen hoped to see included in the forthcoming Education Bill. [See, the Times, 16 November, 1895, p. 6. Ibid., 21 November, p. 4.]

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 22 March, 1895, p. 5.

among the voluntarists there was a lack of consensus over the type of financial relief required. The Roman Catholics were committed to rate aid but many Churchmen feared that stipulations regulating any such aid might undermine their administrative and religious hold upon the Anglican schools, particularly under a Liberal Government.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the Government had to construct an aid scheme which would supply the voluntary schools with additional financial help without imperilling their independent existence and which would also garner sufficient political support to withstand the anticipated Liberal and Nonconformist opposition.

The responsibility for devising a suitable scheme now rested with Gorst and during the parliamentary recess of 1895-1896 he worked to formulate an acceptable plan. Early in December 1895, he forwarded to Balfour a "first rough sketch of some clauses of an Education Bill".<sup>31</sup> This scheme constituted an audacious, comprehensive plan to transfer control of elementary and secondary education to a new county authority. Under the plan, county and county borough councils were to supervise all schools in their areas and superintend all funding, including monies previously distributed by the various government departments.<sup>32</sup> This would allow for the development of secondary education under a single authority, as recommended by the Bryce Commission, and also provide a channel through which

<sup>30</sup> Cruickshank, pp. 55-63. For the Nonconformist position on the voluntary schools, see D.W. Bebbington, The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914 (London, 1982), pp. 125-139.

<sup>31</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791. f.7. Gorst to Balfour, 6 December, 1895. Ibid., f.23, "Sketch of Education Measure".

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., f.23, "Sketch of Education Measure".

rate aid might be extended to the voluntary schools. Apparently in keeping with a suggestion made earlier by Balfour,<sup>33</sup> Gorst reluctantly included in his scheme a rider making grants subject to conditions to be established by the new county authority,<sup>34</sup> a step which threatened to curtail board-school expenditure.

Gorst's proposals received a cool reception from Balfour as they ran counter to the policy decisions on the Bill made earlier by the Cabinet Committee on Education, to which Gorst was witness. This show of independence on Gorst's part prompted an exasperated Balfour to complain to Salisbury that the draft was "quite unsatisfactory, and it is certainly not framed along the lines laid down by the Committee", but he nevertheless suggested that Gorst's proposals be incorporated into a draft Bill.<sup>35</sup> However, Gorst, anticipating Balfour's suggestion, had by this time already initiated this process. On December 2, Michael Sadler, Director of the Office of Special Enquiries and a Bryce Commission member, had been recalled from vacation for consultations on the proposed Bill and by the twelfth of that month was engaged in drafting that portion of the measure pertaining to secondary education.<sup>36</sup> Thus, although it had met with considerably less than outright approval, Gorst's scheme had nonetheless survived the Conservative leadership's initial scrutiny intact.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., f.7. Gorst to Balfour, 6 December, 1895. Ibid., ff.127-128. Salisbury to Balfour, 10 December, 1895.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., f.23, clause 4.

<sup>35</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49690. ff.123-124. Balfour to Salisbury, 6 December, 1895.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Sadleir, Michael Ernest Sadler (London, 1949), pp. 143-144.

However, a subsequent appraisal by the leading Liberal Unionist within the coalition Government, Joseph Chamberlain, was to prove more damaging. Despite his Radical and Nonconformist background Chamberlain recognized the Conservatives' need to honour their election pledges to their denominationalist supporters, as well as the necessity of upgrading voluntary schools in the interests of national education. Consequently he was disposed to sanction an increase of State aid to these institutions, provided denominational instruction continued to be self-supported.<sup>37</sup> As Gorst's proposals provided for the granting of rate aid to the denominational schools, and the restriction of future school board expenditure, they were vehemently opposed by Chamberlain:

... They are the very maddest proposals I have seen in the course of my life. They would absolutely break down, in the interests of the Church and the Roman Catholics, the so-called Compromise of 1870 ... For myself I have fully recognized the necessity of making great concessions to the feelings of my present allies ... I am ready to make such provisions as may be absolutely necessary to prevent the extinction of Voluntary Schools. But I could not hold up my head for a day after I had consented to such a Bill as is now suggested ...<sup>38</sup>

After detailing his objections to Gorst's proposals he warned the Cabinet of the probable political repercussions should they accept the measure,

<sup>37</sup> St. Aldwyn Papers, Chamberlain to Hicks-Beach, 20 July, 1895, cited in Marsh, p. 250. J.L. Garvin and J. Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, 6 vols. (London, 1932-1969), vol. 3, Empire and World Policy 1895-1900, p. 152. In this dissertation the term "denominational schools" refers to the Anglican and Roman Catholic schools and is used interchangeably with the term "voluntary schools". Similarly, the term "denominationalist" denotes the supporters of denominational education, as provided by the voluntary schools, as does the term "voluntarist".

<sup>38</sup> Chamberlain to the Duke of Devonshire, 15 December, 1895. Quoted in Garvin, 3, p. 153.

stressing that "the mere introduction of such a Bill as proposed would do more to re-unite a solid Liberal opposition, and to shatter the Unionist majority than could possibly be accomplished by any other means whatsoever".<sup>39</sup>

The Government could not ignore the views of Chamberlain and his supporters. With the decline of Home Rule, there were indications that the Unionist alliance was in danger of collapsing and dissent among the extreme factions of both parties had become more apparent.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, prior to the 1895 election Chamberlain had warned that if the Conservatives wished to preserve the alliance, deference to Liberal-Unionist opinions would have to be maintained. "There is no room for further concession, and they will find it bad economy to haggle over the terms of the bargain".<sup>41</sup> Hence, in order to conserve the union, the Government chose to defer to Chamberlain and withhold direct rate aid to voluntary schools.<sup>42</sup>

Notwithstanding this concession, there remained much in Gorst's draft to which Chamberlain was opposed, while the proposal empowering the new authority to establish rate-aided schools in rural districts had been given an unfavourable reception by everyone in the Cabinet.<sup>43</sup> Consequently,

<sup>39</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49773, f.86. Memorandum on Draft Scheme for an Education Bill, J. Chamberlain, 16 December, 1895.

<sup>40</sup>Holland, 2, pp. 266-269. Marsh, pp. 235-241.

<sup>41</sup>Chamberlain to the Duke of Devonshire, 19 April, 1895, quoted in Holland, p. 268.

<sup>42</sup>Garvin, p. 153. In reaching this decision, the Government were no doubt also influenced by the fact that a substantial number of their Anglican supporters remained opposed to accepting rate aid out of fear that conditions governing it might threaten the independence of their schools (see Cruickshank, pp. 60-61).

<sup>43</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791. ff.9-10. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst, 21 December, 1895.



Gorst immediately framed an expanded version of his draft and submitted it, in memorandum form, to the Cabinet in defence of his proposals. In it he stressed the necessity for consolidating educational administration at the local level. The proposed county authorities were required, not only to secure the co-ordination and development of secondary education and assist necessitous schools, but also to advance elementary education. By organizing teachers and providing centres for their training, these authorities could effectively reduce the disparity existing between rural and urban schools, to the betterment of national education. Gorst emphasized that in the majority of county and county boroughs no radical departure in organization was required as the new authority could be developed out of the existing education committees which had been created to dispense monies accruing from the Local Taxation Act of 1890.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, if, as he suggested, the proposed authority was made a committee of the county council or municipal corporation, no additional election would be required. Gorst acknowledged that conflicts could possibly emerge between the new authorities and the established school boards jealous of their prerogatives and, thus, he stressed that the former would have to refrain from interfering with the latter's functions in order to ensure the smooth working of the system. He suggested that co-operation between the two bodies could be fostered through the establishment of joint committees which would "co-ordinate the work of

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., f.9. These funds were commonly termed the "whisky money". In 1890, in an effort to promote temperance, a Bill was introduced which proposed increasing the duties on spirits, and allotting a portion of the resultant money towards the purchase of publicans' licences as a means of eliminating redundant public houses. This compensation provision was sternly opposed in the Commons and, after prolonged debate, the Government agreed to allow the "whisky money" to be given to the County Councils to be used, at their discretion, on technical education.

each".<sup>45</sup>

Gorst defended his proposals authorizing the new authorities to distribute the Government grants on the grounds of both efficiency and economy. The local authority would be in a far better position to assess, and respond to, the needs of their areas than the Education Department, while simultaneously serving as a watch-dog against over-expenditure of Imperial funds by the schools. Its vigilance would also provide the best insurance against misuse of the proposed special grant to necessitous schools, a local-level authority having "the means of ascertaining the true circumstances of each case, and a strong desire to husband its resources ... for the really necessitous cases".<sup>46</sup> However, he expressed opposition, as had Chamberlain, to the proposed limitation on board-school expenditure, arguing that such a proposal would prove politically catastrophic. Any move aimed at lowering the quality of board-school education "would raise a storm of indignation which even the present Government would be powerless to resist", while any attempt to reduce or limit teachers' salaries would arouse the opposition of the entire profession, "which is capable of developing an electioneering force which would be most formidable at the polls ...".<sup>47</sup>

In order to facilitate the passage of the Bill, Gorst urged that it be rendered more palatable to the Liberals through the adoption of his proposal delegating to the new authorities control of higher education in

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., f.9.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., f.9.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., f.9.

their areas, a step which would serve to obviate the current overlapping and disorder in the secondary field. This provision, he argued, would also serve to surmount opposition to the granting of increased aid to voluntary schools; "Many Radicals, for the sake of getting a new authority which would stop the further growth of confusion, would swallow the proposal to confer upon the new authority the function of distributing additional State aid to Voluntary Schools".<sup>48</sup>

Although, unlike Chamberlain, he had no desire to retain the Cowper-Temple provision, in order to protect the Bill from what the former predicted would be "an outburst of Parliamentary indignation" against any attempt to repeal the clause, Gorst indicated his willingness to forego its revocation "until public opinion was better educated on the subject". However, he urged the Cabinet to retain his proposal allowing the new authority to become the school board in county districts because of the urgent need to improve the efficiency of the rural schools. He believed that the failure of the current system in this regard strengthened his case for establishing the county councils as the new education authorities: The methods of the Act of 1870, which have succeeded admirably in the towns, have failed miserably in the country. If the County Councils had existed in 1870, I believe the Government of the day would have taken the county and not the parish as its educational unit; and if rural education is to be, I will not say improved but even maintained at its present low level, some reform is necessary".<sup>49</sup>

Having presented his case, Gorst now drafted his proposals into a formalized "Scheme for an Education Bill" which included his controversial

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., f.9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., f.10.

proposals providing for county education authorities, special aid to necessitous schools, the repeal of the Cowper-Temple clause, restrictions upon the further creation of school boards in country districts, and the limitation of school board rates as requested by Balfour.<sup>50</sup>

The scope of Gorst's measure produced some concern within the Education Department. Sadler felt certain that "if the Cabinet doesn't alter it, the H. of C. will rouse tremendous opposition".<sup>51</sup> However, the Cabinet, evidently recognizing that given existing political realities, Gorst's measure constituted a logical and practical solution to current educational problems, decided to defer to their Education Minister and accept a majority of his proposals. The major point of contention appears to have been his proposal giving additional financial aid to all necessitous schools, board as well as voluntary. Despite repeated appeals from Gorst,<sup>52</sup> the Ministers opted to reject this provision in favour of special grants to voluntary schools, a decision apparently prompted by a desire to avoid alienating their voluntarist supporters.<sup>53</sup> Thereupon, Gorst turned to Chamberlain for support and he, being determined to protect the interests of the school boards, succeeded in having the clause reinstated.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791. ff.14-20. Gorst to Balfour, February, 1896, "Scheme for an Education Bill".

<sup>51</sup>Sadleir, p. 147.

<sup>52</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791. ff.11-13. Memorandum by Sir John Gorst, 12 February, 1896. Ibid., f.21. Gorst to Balfour, February, 1896.

<sup>53</sup>Barnett Papers, F/BAR/139. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 7 March, 1896.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., F/BAR/140. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 14 March, 1896.

Notwithstanding the Government's lingering doubts over the Bill,<sup>55</sup> the measure was now drafted in its final form for presentation in the Commons at the end of March. The Bill's principal clauses were in accordance with Gorst's scheme.<sup>56</sup> Each county and county borough council was to appoint a new committee, which was to be the chief education authority in the district. It was empowered to administer all grants formerly distributed by the Education and the Science and Art Departments but according to conditions determined by the respective Departments and within financial limitations prescribed by the Bill - measures designed to ensure a degree of Government control over expenditures. The authority might also utilize the "Whisky Money".<sup>57</sup>

In rural districts currently without school boards, the local authority was to become the authority for elementary education, with the power to levy rates for its support.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere, the authority might replace a defaulting school board or assume responsibility for any school a board wished to relinquish.<sup>59</sup>

The authority was accorded the rating-powers previously conferred upon the county councils by the Technical Instruction Act of 1889<sup>60</sup> and

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., F/BAR/141. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 28 March, 1896.

<sup>56</sup> Bill to make further provision for Education in England and Wales (Bill 172), PP, 1896, 1: 541-559.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 543-545. Clauses 1-3.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 544. Clause 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 548-549. Clauses 6-9.

<sup>60</sup> This Act authorized the county and county borough councils, established the previous year, to spend up to the product of a penny rate on technical and manual instruction.

empowered to aid, develop, and supervise secondary education in its district. In addition, the Education Department might transfer to the authorities any school or department maintained by a school board which, "in the opinion of the Education Department, is other than elementary".<sup>61</sup> These provisions constituted a threat to the school boards' higher grade work and implied a possible future absorption of the boards by the local authorities. The danger was underscored by the inclusion in the Bill of a clause enacting that the school board rate be limited to that currently levied,<sup>62</sup> effectively restricting any future expansion of school board education.

Necessitous board and voluntary schools were to receive a special aid grant of 4s per child, per year, to be applied in the first instance to improving teaching staffs and thereafter to upgrading facilities. Payment was to be withheld by the authority from any school which misused the grant, and the recipient schools were to be subject to audit.<sup>63</sup> By these stipulations Gorst secured a measure of public control over State aid to voluntary schools, as was demanded by the Nonconformists.

Despite Chamberlain's opposition to such a measure, a clause (Clause 27) was included permitting, if parents requested it, separate denominational religious teaching in both board and voluntary schools, in contradiction of the Cowper-Temple provision.<sup>64</sup> Two further clauses prescribed reforms dear to Gorst's heart; the raising of the minimum age at which a child

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 550. Clause 12.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 555-556. Clause 26.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 547-548. Clauses 4-5.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 556. Clause 27.

might leave school to twelve years, per the commitment made at Berlin, and provision for placing pauper schools under the control of the local education authority.<sup>65</sup>

As Canon Barnett observed, Gorst's Bill contrived to overcome "every obstacle inhibiting educational progress".<sup>66</sup> The appointment of county education authorities was a move towards the establishment of a uniform, decentralized administrative system designed to develop and co-ordinate education in accordance with local needs. The special-aid grant to necessitous schools was devised to raise the calibre of English education by providing for the levelling-up of these schools to the board-school standard of efficiency, this process to be further accelerated by the eradication of unnecessary school-board competition through the restriction of their excessive spending. Through Clause 27 it aimed to eliminate from the educational arena the conflicts generated by the religious issue. Politically, the Bill sought to fulfill the Conservatives' election pledges to its denominational supporters, to conciliate the Opposition by organizing secondary education and providing for supplementary religious instruction to relieve Nonconformists in rural areas, and to court the rate-paying electorate by tightening public control over educational expenditures.

Gorst introduced his Bill in the Commons on March 31st.<sup>67</sup> He began with a lengthy preamble in which he outlined "the difficulties in

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 554. Clauses 21 and 24. For Gorst's campaign for reform of the pauper schools, see pp. 322-328 below.

<sup>66</sup> Barnett Papers, F/BAR/135. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 1 February, 1896.

<sup>67</sup> PD, 4th Series, 39 (1896): 526-544.

education which the wisdom of Parliament will have to meet",<sup>68</sup> thereby focusing Members' attention upon the deficiencies his measure proposed to eliminate - a strategy designed to garner maximum support for the Bill. He dwelt at length upon the voluntary schools' problem and concluded by emphasizing that because a large proportion of English children attended these schools the future of national education demanded that their financial and educational deficiencies be removed, as must those of the inefficient rural board schools. He stressed the need to check the existing administrative confusion in Secondary Education, created by a multiplicity of local and central authorities simultaneously distributing money and duplicating each others' work. The conclusions of the Secondary School Commissioners' on this point had provided the Government with "the justification ... for bringing in the Measure which they are going to ask the House to adopt". He outlined the evils inherent in the current system of concentrating educational administration under the Central Department, thereby implying decentralization was crucial to the future well-being of the national educational system.<sup>69</sup>

Gorst now turned to the Bill itself, presenting it as essentially a scheme for effecting the much-needed decentralization. He stressed that his proposals were "not novel" having been recommended by various nineteenth-century Commissions, including the recent Bryce Report. Thereafter he moved swiftly through the remaining provisions elaborating only upon the final proposal permitting denominational teaching in board schools, which he

<sup>68</sup>Ibid: 526.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid: 526-534, 537-538.



described as "a sincere attempt ... to introduce a system of perfect religious toleration", and he concluded with an appeal to Members to "co-operate together to make this (Bill) a real step in advance in the education of the country".<sup>70</sup>

Gorst resumed his seat to the accompaniment of loud cheering. However, as one parliamentary observer noted, this demonstration "was a tribute to the man, not a note of approval for the Bill",<sup>71</sup> and the Opposition's hostility to the proposals was immediately manifested by a succession of Liberal speakers. Gorst's predecessor as Vice-President, A.H.D. Acland, denounced the decentralizing provisions as constituting an excessive curtailment of the Central Government's authority and influence.<sup>72</sup> Y.H. Yoxall, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers and a Bryce Commissioner, deplored the absence of proposals to establish "a satisfactory comprehensive central education authority", as recommended by the Secondary Education Commission, and he attacked what he perceived to be the Bill's studied attempt to weaken the school boards, entrench the voluntary schools in a "non-voluntary condition" and disturb the religious compromise established by the 1870 Act.<sup>73</sup> Yoxall's criticisms presaged the direction of subsequent Opposition censure of the measure, his judgments being reiterated by numerous Liberal Members.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Ibid: 538-544.

<sup>71</sup>"Essence of Parliament", Punch, 110 (1896): 179.

<sup>72</sup>PD, 4th Series, 39 (1896): 548.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid: 564-570.

<sup>74</sup>See, for example, the speeches of James Bryce and F.A. Channing. Ibid: 571-575, 575-578.

Despite the initial objections raised by the Opposition, the Government were optimistic the measure would pass eventually. As Balfour informed the Queen, the Bill's complex and controversial provisions would preclude "an easy passage through its various Parliamentary stages. Nevertheless, the first of these stages has been got through as successfully as the most sanguine supporters of the Government had dared to hope, which, so far, is of good augury for the future".<sup>75</sup>

However, this optimism was rapidly proven misplaced. In the wake of first reading the various opposition forces organized against the measure. At numerous gatherings in England and Wales, Nonconformists attacked the proposals, echoing the criticisms expressed by the Liberals in the House.<sup>76</sup> Their objections to the Bill were aptly summarized in the "manifesto" issued by the London Nonconformist Council:

The Bill practically involves the destruction of the present educational system and substitutes a measure which is retrograde in principle and destructive of popular control ... It damages the existing School Board system by subjecting them to the control of unsuitable bodies ... It makes increased grants of public money to sectarian schools without requiring the continuance of existing voluntary contributions ... It will foment sectarian strife and bitterness in every county by encouraging a system of distinctive religious education which will be worked in the interests of sacerdotal superstitions".<sup>77</sup>

The Opposition publicized its position on the Bill in an effort to mobilize national feeling against it. Acting in the interest of the Nonconformists, Liberal associations convened meetings and passed resolutions condemning the

<sup>75</sup> Balfour to Queen Victoria, March 31, 1896, quoted in G.E. Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, 3 vols. (London, 1926: 1930-1932), 3, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> See for example, the Times, 9 April, 1896, p. 7; 10 April, 1896, p.8; 11 April, 1896, p.8; 15 April, 1896, p.10; 16 April, 1896, p.12; 17 April, 1896, p.11; 18 April, 1896, p.10; 25 April, 1896, p.9; 30 April, 1896, p.11. For Nonconformist agitation against the Bill, see J.E. Munson, "A Study of Nonconformity in Edwardian England as Revealed by the passive resistance movement against the 1902 Education Act" (D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1973), pp. 71-78.

<sup>77</sup> The Times, 18 April, 1896, p.10.

measure;<sup>78</sup> M.P's took to the public platform, frequently in concert with Free Churchmen, to decry the Unionists' proposals<sup>79</sup> and to urge that the Bill be "energetically opposed on the second reading".<sup>80</sup> Urban school boards protested their projected submission to the town councils.<sup>81</sup> The Brighton School Board voiced the objections of many of its counterparts around the country when it denounced the provisions subjugating school board expenditures to the supervision and control of the new authorities and the granting to them of the means to appropriate existing board schools and prevent the establishment of new ones.<sup>82</sup> The non-county boroughs, determined not to relinquish their authority to the new county education committees, demanded that the powers and duties accorded the county boroughs by the Bill be conferred upon municipal corporations generally.<sup>83</sup> The National Union of Teachers approved of the proposed single authority for all education but insisted its members be "directly elected by the parochial electors ad hoc" rather than being drawn from the county councils.<sup>84</sup> Fearing the effects of tightened expenditures, the Union opposed rate limitation and it denounced Clause 27 "as likely to cause controversy without effecting much change".<sup>85</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See the Times, 9 April, 1896, p.7; 15 April, 1896, p.10; 16 April, 1896, p.12; 17 April, 1896, p.11; 30 April, 1896, p.11.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 10 April, 1896, p.8; 16 April, 1896, p.12; 30 April, 1896, p.11.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 3 April, 1896, p.8.

<sup>81</sup> A.S.T. Griffith-Boscawen, Fourteen Years in Parliament (London, 1907), p.101.

<sup>82</sup> The Times, 30 April, 1896, p.11. See also E. Lyulph Stanley, "The New Education Bill", Contemporary Review, 69 (1896): 741-760. Stanley was then Vice-chairman of the London School Board.

<sup>83</sup> The Times, 17 April, 1896, p.11. Ibid., 25 April, 1896, p.9.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 8 April, 1896, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 3 April, 1896, p.8.

The denominationalists were not entirely satisfied. The Anglicans in general supported decentralization, albeit with reservations,<sup>86</sup> but criticised the aid grant as inadequate.<sup>87</sup> Some called for direct rate aid,<sup>88</sup> an appeal supported by Lord Cranborne in the House.<sup>89</sup> Roman Catholics gave the measure their approval but urged that voluntary schools be placed upon equal footing with board schools with regard to "maintenance".<sup>90</sup>

Opposition even emerged within the Unionist party itself. Some Nonconformist Unionists openly condemned the Bill as detrimental to national education and warned that if the Government pressed forward with the measure "the country would witness another split".<sup>91</sup> Others voiced their opposition to Chamberlain,<sup>92</sup> who was himself placed in a very difficult situation by the Bill. When a Radical, he had agitated for a universal system of compulsory, free, and unsectarian education financed out of the rates and subject to public control. He had opposed the public funding of voluntary schools and the "permissive sectarianism" provided by the 1870 Act. His switch to the Unionist Party in 1886 had apparently not diminished his support

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 30 April, 1896, p.11. The Convocation of Canterbury approved decentralization but urged the Bill be amended to make the appointment of non-council members to the new education committees compulsory rather than optional.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 11 April, 1896, p.8; 16 April, 1896, p.12; 25 April, 1896, p.9; 29 April, 1896, p.12.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 17 April, 1896, p.11.

<sup>89</sup>PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 633-636.

<sup>90</sup>The Times, 9 April, 1896, p.7; 24 April, 1896, p.12.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 25 April, 1896, p.12.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 16 April, 1896, p.12.

for board schools nor his commitment to Nonconformist interests.<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, having earlier indicated to Gorst that he would support the measure,<sup>94</sup> following its introduction into Parliament he upheld it publicly.

His justification for preserving the voluntary schools was two-fold:

"practical politics" precluded the abolition of a system supported by a majority of parents and, more importantly, the prohibitive cost to ratepayers of replacing them with board schools ruled out that alternative; and he maintained that the Bill left the Cowper-Temple clause untouched.<sup>95</sup>

Although, on this occasion, "bold dexterity carried his argument",<sup>96</sup> he prudently avoided participating in debate on the measure.<sup>97</sup>

Chamberlain's acquiescence and the Government's comfortable majority in the House no doubt contributed to the apparent assurance with which Gorst approached the next stage of the Bill. In moving for second reading on May 5 he sanguinely observed: "The facts which I have stated on First Reading have never been contradicted, and the inferences drawn from those facts have never been controverted, so that we may start on the further discussion of the Measure upon common grounds",<sup>98</sup> an evaluation

<sup>93</sup> Cruickshank, pp. 15-16, pp. 40-46. Peter Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain (London, 1966), pp. 5-15, 17-20. Garvin, 3, pp. 152-153. Richard Jay, Joseph Chamberlain (Oxford, 1981), pp. 11-19.

<sup>94</sup> Barnett Papers, F/BAR/141. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 29 February, 1896. For Chamberlain's change of position on the continuation of the voluntary schools see L.O. Ward, "Joseph Chamberlain and the Denominational Schools Question", Journal of Educational Administration and History, 2 (1973): 21-24.

<sup>95</sup> Public Record Office (hereafter referred to as PRO), Ed.24/13a/4. Extracts from Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham Town Hall, May 1, 1896.

<sup>96</sup> Garvin, 3, p. 154.

<sup>97</sup> Chamberlain offered only brief comments on the Bill during its long passage through the House. See, PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 585; 41 (1896): 862, 1590.

<sup>98</sup> PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 555.

which even the pro-Government Times termed too liberal and over-optimistic.<sup>99</sup> Notwithstanding this display of confidence, his subsequent address was "studiously uncontentious and conciliatory",<sup>100</sup> an approach doubtless prompted by the preceding clamour from opposition factions and the knowledge that the Liberals had already prepared amendments to the Bill.

Gorst dealt in turn with the various objections to the measure, giving particular attention to the most contentious proposals - the decentralizing, financial, and religious provisions. He dismissed as redundant the demands for a central authority, claiming that the existing Committee of Council could adequately fulfill this role, having jurisdiction over the Education and Science and Art Departments which it could "mould and combine at will".<sup>101</sup> This was a debatable argument given the current state of administrative chaos. He defended the proposed special aid grant to voluntary and necessitous board schools by presenting it as the most viable solution to the problems they presented. Faced with the acknowledged evils of the present system, Parliament could choose one of three options: it could accede to the continued inadequacy of a major portion of the nation's elementary schools, or sanction State financing of the entire cost of education, or provide special aid to necessitous schools from Imperial funds. Recognizing that the bulk of the Members and the general public preferred the latter course of action, he endeavoured to capture support for his decentralizing measures by presenting the new county authority as an

<sup>99</sup>The Times, 6 May, 1896; p.11.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 557.

indispensable part of the proposed aid scheme. He asserted that if Parliament accepted the special aid provision they would, of necessity, have to approve the creation of local education authorities:

It is impossible for a central department to discriminate between school and school, or to make a selection of those which really require aid. That can be done only by a local authority which has the means of ascertaining the circumstances of each school; and no central department can secure that the grant should be applied really to increase the efficiency of the schools ... You cannot do that without having a paramount authority which will hold the balance between the Boards and the managers of the Voluntary schools - an authority which will take a calm and dispassionate view of the general educational needs of the district, which will distribute this special aid grant as far as it will go ...<sup>102</sup>

Gorst denied that the proposed authorities were designed to directly undermine the school boards, stressing that under decentralization they would remain unchanged save for requiring local authority sanction to increase their maintenance expenditure.<sup>103</sup> However, his denial could not disguise the fact that the new authorities constituted an indirect threat to the boards' autonomy. As Liberal H.H. Asquith subsequently pointed out, once established the education committees would possess an educational and financial control over the boards sufficient to greatly restrict their functions.<sup>104</sup> Gorst rejected the claims that Clause 27 subjected the board to clerical control, asserting that, on the contrary, the provision would introduce greater "religious freedom and toleration" into the system by securing the right of parental choice. He pointed out that currently this right was frequently denied. In single school districts some children were obliged to submit to religious teaching which was contrary to their beliefs, or go without

<sup>102</sup>Ibid: 559-561.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid: 561-562.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid: 579-582.

religious instruction altogether. Thus, Clause 27 provided the most equitable solution to this difficulty.<sup>105</sup> Despite the moderateness of his delivery, Gorst's remarks reflected his frustration with his opponents' continued exploitation of the so-called "religious difficulty", which he considered an artificial and politically-contrived issue bearing little resemblance to actual conditions in the schools.<sup>106</sup>

Following Gorst's motion for second reading, the Opposition resumed their onslaught on the Bill, relentlessly prosecuting the issues raised during earlier debates.<sup>107</sup> Yet, despite the vehement hostility of the Liberals, the Bill was overwhelmingly endorsed at this stage, passing second reading with a majority of 267,<sup>108</sup> the Irish Nationalists having thrown their support behind the measure on behalf of the English Catholic schools.<sup>109</sup> However, thereafter the Bill met with ever-increasing difficulties. Commencement of the Committee stage was delayed by the Whitsuntide recess, thereby adding a time factor to the Bill's various problems, raising the fear that the few weeks remaining in the current session would prove insufficient for the passage of so large and contentious a measure. With the onset of debate the Bill's prospects were further diminished by an intensification of Liberal obstructionism and Unionist

<sup>105</sup>Ibid: 564-566.

<sup>106</sup>"It was a happy thing that this religious difficulty was little heard of in the schools themselves, and gave little trouble to the teachers, but it was a great deal heard of in Parliament and in public discussion, and it gave a great deal of trouble to those who had to legislate upon the subject" [Sir John Gorst on National Education", the Times, 21 December, 1895, p.11.] See also PD, 4th series, 39 (1896): 566-567.

<sup>107</sup>See for example the speeches of H.H. Asquith, F.A. Channing, J.H. Yoxall, and J. Bryce, PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 567-595, 595-603, 657-667, 688-705.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid: 1252-1258.

<sup>109</sup>See the speeches of John Dillon and T.P. O'Connor, Ibid: 1216-1224, 1214.



Members' own protracted speeches.<sup>110</sup> Then, only hours into Committee, the Conservatives themselves launched a chain of events which was ultimately to seal the Bill's fate. Party backbencher, Albert Rollit, who was also Chairman of the Association of Municipal Corporations, moved an amendment to compel all boroughs and not just county boroughs to appoint education committees. This move was rejected by Gorst chiefly because, as he pointed out, it would result in a proliferation of local authorities to the point where viability of devolution would be endangered.<sup>111</sup> Just then Balfour entered the House, having missed the exchange between Rollit and Gorst, and proceeded to accept the amendment for boroughs of 20,000 and above.<sup>112</sup> This action, in addition to opening the door to an avalanche of amendments, served to heighten the uncertainty surrounding the measure, and "the House adjourned in bewilderment".<sup>113</sup>

Balfour now advocated that the Bill be hung up and Parliament be adjourned - not prorogued - in August until early January, when debate could resume on the Bill. Then, hopefully, it could be enacted before March when the exigencies of Supply would oblige the Government to begin a new Session. However, this plan would not prevent the Opposition from resuming their destructionist tactics, resistance the Government was powerless to curtail,

<sup>110</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 103.

<sup>111</sup>PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 896-902. Rollit's amendment had been formulated in response to pressure from many non-county boroughs who were opposed to being subjected to the county councils (see Ibid, 4th series, 40 (1896): 1229).

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 41 (1896): 902-907.

<sup>113</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 104.

Balfour having already announced that the Bill would not be closed by compartments.<sup>114</sup> Despite its incongruity, Balfour's proposition was accepted.<sup>115</sup> However, following a further week of discussion, at the end of which only two lines - fourteen words - had been carried and 1,238 amendments remained on the Paper,<sup>116</sup> Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, urged Salisbury "to withdraw our Bill, remodel it and under new and more favourable conditions reintroduce it ... Our men are disheartened, and divided, and unless we in a very short time cut the rope of the noose round our necks we shall be strangled".<sup>117</sup> Hamilton's assessment of the most suitable course to be followed came to be shared by the remainder of the Ministers in the Commons. However, Salisbury, together with the Queen,<sup>118</sup> opposed the plan, fearing that such action would weaken the Government's credibility as an energetic and unified Parliamentary force in what was the first full session of the new Parliament. Despite Salisbury's urgings that it stay with the Bill, the Cabinet in the Commons decided to drop the measure<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1079-1080.

<sup>115</sup> Griffith-Boscawen, p. 105.

<sup>116</sup> PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1572-1574.

<sup>117</sup> Salisbury Papers, Lord George Hamilton to Salisbury, 19 June, 1896, quoted in Marsh, p. 253.

<sup>118</sup> Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 19 June, 1896, in Buckle, 3rd series, 3, pp. 52-53. Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 20 June, 1896, *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>119</sup> Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 22 June, 1896, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 54. No record appears to exist indicating exactly how Gorst was informed of the decision. There is no hard evidence to substantiate the oft-quoted report that the Cabinet delegated the Duke of Devonshire to perform the task, whereupon he simply went to Gorst and stated baldly, "Gorst your damn Bill's dead". [See, for example, B.M. Allen, Sir Robert Morant (London, 1934), p. 109. Hereafter referred to as Allen, Robert Morant. Armytage, p. 180. Bishop, p. 136. L. Grier, Achievement in Education: The Work of Michael Ernest Sadler, 1885-1935 (London, 1952), p. 62. Holland, 2, p. 272, nl.] Gorst himself maintained there was no truth to the story but added that "he couldn't recall anything truer or more characteristic of the Duke". [H.E. Gorst, Much of Life is Laughter (London, 1936), p. 125.]

and its abandonment was announced in the House by Balfour on June 22, at which time he intimated the Government would replace it next session with a smaller measure designed to aid the voluntary schools.<sup>120</sup>

Save for Salisbury, the Queen,<sup>121</sup> and Gorst, who was "in great straits" over the action,<sup>122</sup> few mourned the loss of the Bill.<sup>123</sup> The Webbs, who had hoped to get it amended to their satisfaction, termed its failure "discreditable".<sup>124</sup> Opponents, however, were jubilant. Sir William Harcourt "sounded a long note of triumph in the House";<sup>125</sup> the Reverend Hugh Price Hughes, editor of the Methodist Times, exulted that a "proud government" had been humbled "when it truckled to Clericalism and Popery",<sup>126</sup> while Liberal H.J. Wilson observed that his party "were in great spirits and the Tories hardly pretended to be sorry".<sup>127</sup>

Various explanations were subsequently offered for the Bill's failure. Parliamentary Observer Henry Lucy cited Balfour's ineptitude,<sup>128</sup> an assessment with which Balfour's niece later concurred.<sup>129</sup> Balfour himself

<sup>120</sup>PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1572-1581.

<sup>121</sup>Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 23 June, 1896, cited in Buckle, 3rd series, 2, p. 56.

<sup>122</sup>Quoted in Sadleir, p. 148.

<sup>123</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 106.

<sup>124</sup>Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, ed. B. Drake and M.I. Cole (London, 1948), pp. 132-133.

<sup>125</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 106.

<sup>126</sup>Quoted in Munson, p. 77.

<sup>127</sup>H.J. Wilson to Gertrude Wilson, 24 June, 1896. Wilson MSS. M.D.2605-6. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>128</sup>Henry Lucy, Diary of a Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900 (Bristol, 1901), p.100. Hereafter referred to as Lucy, Unionist Parliament.

<sup>129</sup>B.E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, First Earl of Balfour, 2 vols. (London, 1936), 1, p. 245.

asserted that Opposition obstructionism destroyed the measure,<sup>130</sup> a view shared by Conservative M.P. Arthur Griffith-Boscawen.<sup>131</sup> Liberal Sir William Harcourt claimed that the Bill "perished not from any factious opposition but from its inherent imperfections".<sup>132</sup> Gorst apparently believed that a combination of Balfour's behaviour and the Cabinet's machinations,<sup>133</sup> plus antagonism of the school boards<sup>134</sup> and the bungling of Keckewich,<sup>135</sup> the Secretary to the Education Department, destroyed the measure.

There was, in fact, a degree of accuracy in all of these judgments. Although Liberal obstructionism was frequently based upon fallacious arguments,<sup>136</sup> their criticisms were in certain cases justified because of

<sup>130</sup> PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1572-1581.

<sup>131</sup> Griffith-Boscawen, p. 106.

<sup>132</sup> PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1584.

<sup>133</sup> Following Balfour's acceptance of the Rollit amendment and the Cabinet's subsequent decision to put aside the Bill until January, Gorst observed, somewhat bitterly, that "even when dealing with Education Bills, political considerations have often as great a force as educational ...", hence the deference to the non-county boroughs on the issue, despite his objections [see, *Ibid*: 1109].

<sup>134</sup> Shortly after the withdrawal of his Bill, Gorst told Keckewich that a concession requested by the National Association of School Boards might be included in a future Education Bill, as "A provision of this kind might be a useful sop to the School Boards and mitigate some of their hostility to the next Bill". [PRO, Ed.11/32. Gorst to Keckewich, 3 July, 1896.]

<sup>135</sup> G.W. Keckewich, The Education Department and After (London, 1920), p. 102.

<sup>136</sup> One such case was the Liberal claim that the county councils were unfit to assume the responsibilities accorded them in the Bill because of their inexperience in educational matters. [See for example the speeches of James Bryce and Mark Oldroyd, PD, 4th series, 39 (1896): 574. *Ibid.*, 40 (1896): 1191-1194.] However, in the first few years of fulfilling their functions under the Technical Instruction Acts, the county councils had displayed a remarkable level of competence, a fact attested to by the Bryce Commission. [See the speeches of Henry Hobhouse, Sir Francis Powell, and Sir Albert Rollit, *Ibid.*, 4th series, 40 (1896): 791-793, 615-620, 680-688].

inadequacies inherent in the Bill. Gorst's attempt to decentralize the education system's administrative framework was a perceptive response to his own conviction of a felt need and to current public opinion, newly strengthened by the Bryce Report, which favoured similar changes.<sup>137</sup> However, though the principles underlying the measure were sound, the mechanisms chosen to effect the necessary reforms were faulty.<sup>138</sup> The decentralizing provisions left central administration relatively unchanged. Although the creation of local level education committees would relieve the Education and Science and Art Departments of some of their bureaucratic responsibilities, the Charity Commissioners were left untouched to continue their involvement in the educational process in conflict with the new authorities. Thus the administrative muddle would have been only partially modified.<sup>139</sup> Gorst's claim that the Committee of Council could effectively function as a central authority by moulding and combining the Education and Science and Art Departments, while allowing the Charity Commissioners to continue operating in accordance with current procedures,<sup>140</sup> was not supported by past experience. Thus, Gorst's misplaced confidence in the Committee's abilities constituted an error of judgment on his part which weakened his scheme and, thereby, detracted from the Bill's credibility. It is possible that Gorst's misjudgment derived from his unfamiliarity with the "machinery

<sup>137</sup>Kazamias, p. 71, p. 91.

<sup>138</sup>J.R. Diggle, "The Education Bill, 1896", National Review, 27 (1896): 435-448. Diggle was then Vice-Chairman of the London School Board.

<sup>139</sup>See PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 690-692. Speech of James Bryce. See also Diggle, pp. 436-438.

<sup>140</sup>PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 557-558.

of national education", as Beatrice Webb surmised,<sup>141</sup> a deficiency which no doubt could have been corrected by the judicious intervention of the Education Department's permanent officials but evidently was not. This was perhaps recognized by Gorst, following the Bill's demise, which would account for his according Keckewich partial blame for the measure's failure.<sup>142</sup>

A more critical impediment to the satisfactory functioning of Gorst's devolution scheme, if implemented, was the retention of the school boards alongside the new education committees. This duplication would not only increase overlap, but, in addition, the committees' unavoidable infringement of the boards' rights would produce a friction which would intensify rather than remove administrative confusion.<sup>143</sup> Abolition of the school boards would have resolved the problem but, as Gorst evidently recognized, for various reasons this was not an available option at this time. Despite the confusion created by the dual system, officialdom was reluctant to recommend the change, apparently regarding it as logistically too radical a solution to the difficulty. For example, the Bryce Commission

<sup>141</sup>B. Webb, pp. 133-134.

<sup>142</sup>"He (Gorst) attributed to me, rightly or wrongly (I forget which but it matters little) the framing of the groundwork of the Bill ... which, in his opinion, eventually led to its withdrawal" [Keckewich, p. 102]. As Keckewich was an avid promoter of the school boards it may be that he consciously refrained from pointing out the deficiencies in the decentralizing proposals, in which case Gorst's criticisms were not without justification.

<sup>143</sup>PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 762, 1087. Speeches of Sir Charles Dilke and Sir James Woodhouse. See also, Armytage, p. 180. Cruickshank, p. 65. Elie Halevy, Imperialism and the Rise of Labour, 2nd ed. trans. E.I. Watkins (London, 1951), p. 192.

felt that, despite their inefficiency in rural areas, the boards were too firmly entrenched in secondary education to be summarily dismantled.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, abolition was politically inexpedient. By the 'nineties the success of the urban school boards had garnered for them such strong support from the Liberals and the working classes that their arbitrary removal would have arrayed a formidable electoral force against the Government, a threat which they fully appreciated.<sup>145</sup> Most importantly, perhaps, the need to preserve the Unionist coalition precluded the suppression of the boards. Any action in this direction would have been resisted by Chamberlain and his Liberal-Unionist supporters, thereby creating a disunity with the potential to split the alliance - a risk the Government were not prepared to take.<sup>146</sup> Given these circumstances, Gorst's decision to retain the school boards was justifiable.

The proposed special aid grant was an additional weak point in the Bill. As many of the Government's own supporters argued, the provision of 4s per head was insufficient to allow voluntary schools to reach parity with the board schools and would have merely postponed but not prevented their

<sup>144</sup>"The ground of Secondary Education is, if the metaphor may be permitted, already almost all covered with buildings so substantial that the loss to be incurred in clearing it for the erection of a new and symmetrical pile cannot be contemplated". [Bryce Report, Vol. I, p. 1, quoted in P.L.P. Clarke, "The Education Act of 1902" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1964), p. 17.]

<sup>145</sup>Kazamias, p. 93. See also the speech of Tory Ernest Gray, PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 804. Gray observed that the abolition of the school boards and the establishment of one single county authority "for the express purpose of education was an ideal, but he was afraid that any responsible Government would find the realisation of such an ideal beyond the range of practical politics".

<sup>146</sup>Armytage, p. 180. Halevy, p. 192.

ultimate decline.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, the grant provided no permanent solution to the voluntarists' fiscal problems, such aid being vulnerable to the vagaries of party politics. For, as one Opposition member noted, the continued inadequacies of the voluntary schools, following implementation of the provision, "would strengthen the temptation of the next Government to step in and mercifully give the system its coup-de-grace".<sup>148</sup> The Liberals' chief objection to the grant - that there would be insufficient popular control over the voluntarists' expenditure of public funds,<sup>149</sup> was unjustified because, as Viscount Cranborne amongst others pointed out,<sup>150</sup> the Bill contained provisions for precisely just such control.<sup>151</sup>

Clause 27, providing for denominational teaching in board schools, added to the Bill's defectiveness by prompting the most formidable obstructionism against its passage by Liberals and Nonconformists determined to protect the religious independence of those institutions. The clause's retention, despite Chamberlain's warning of its potential for arousing

<sup>147</sup> See for example the speeches of Unionist M.P's, PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 603-606, 611, 616-617, 633-635, 770-771, 807-811, 1028-1029, 1040-1050, 1097.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 40 (1896): 659. As Gorst later pointed out, to achieve this end the Liberals could simply "cut off supplies in the House of Commons, and render impossible the distribution of any exceptional grant". [J.E. Gorst, "Prospects of Education in England", North American Review, 163 (1896): 427-437. Hereafter referred to as Gorst, "Prospects of Education".

<sup>149</sup> See for example PD, 4th series, 39 (1896): 558, 565-568; 40 (1896): 600, 622-624, 1083, 1156.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 40 (1896): 635-636, 1097-1098.

<sup>151</sup> Bill to make further provision for Education in England and Wales (Bill 172), PP, 1896, 1: 541-559, Section 4, Clause 5.



"parliamentary agitation" and Gorst's willingness to eliminate it,<sup>152</sup> was apparently sanctioned because of Salisbury's commitment to such reform in defence of Anglican interests.<sup>153</sup> He had previously expressed to Churchmen his concern regarding the Nonconformist character of much board-school religious instruction,<sup>154</sup> and late in November 1895 he had assured the Anglican bishops that "from a point of view of religious liberty we desire, so far as we can do it, to assist the voluntary schools in their trouble ...".<sup>155</sup> However, in defence of the Government it must be noted that in pursuing their parliamentary opposition the school board supporters were guilty of a great deal of cant which owed very little to mass opinion. The bulk of the working classes, whose children occupied the majority of places in board-school classrooms, were, through ignorance or indifference, largely unconcerned with the possible threat to religious liberty which the Opposition claimed Clause 27 represented.<sup>156</sup> This suggests that the school-board supporters' vehement parliamentary opposition to Clause 27, which effectively impeded the Bill's progress, was orchestrated to defend a narrow self interest.

<sup>152</sup> Balfour Papers, Add. MSS. 49791, f.10. Memorandum from J.E. Gorst, 21 December, 1895.

<sup>153</sup> See Salisbury's speech to Nonconformist deputation, November, 1895, reported in the School Guardian, 30 November, 1895. Cited in Marsh, p. 251.

<sup>154</sup> See for example the Times, 22 March, 1895, p. 5. Ibid., 13 June, 1895, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 21 November, 1895, p. 4.

<sup>156</sup> For an analysis of working-class reaction to this issue see J.S. Hurt, Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918 (London, 1979), pp. 172-178.

Despite its various weaknesses the Bill was not without potential. As Clarke has observed, "in its most important aspects it anticipated the 1902 Act",<sup>157</sup> and the Vice-Chairman of the London School Board, Joseph Diggle, believed that, with suitable amendments at the Committee stage, it could have been turned into a viable measure.<sup>158</sup> That the Bill was withdrawn before it had its chance in Committee was not primarily the result of Liberal obstructionism, as Balfour claimed. It was, rather, the outcome of the Government's own strategy. Given the Unionists' overwhelming parliamentary majority they could have carried the measure despite Liberal resistance, a fact Opposition members conceded.<sup>159</sup> Thus, Justice described the Unionist cave-in as "one of the most remarkable in modern political history".<sup>160</sup> Evidently, the reason the Government did not bring its majority to bear, and so save the Bill, was because there was insufficient support for the measure amongst the Unionists themselves.<sup>161</sup> While many damned it with faint praise,<sup>162</sup> others openly opposed the measure: some, as has been noted, denounced the aid grant as inadequate, while others rejected the secular control to be exercised by the local authorities over the voluntary schools and the Metropolitan Conservatives feared that the London School Board, which they controlled, would be subjected to a London County Council dominated by Progressives and Radicals.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, Chamberlain

<sup>157</sup> Clarke, p. 383.

<sup>158</sup> J. Diggle, "The Education Bill 1896", National Review, 27 (1896), 435-448.

<sup>159</sup> PD, 4th series, 40 (1896): 594. Speech of H.H. Asquith. See also the speech of Liberal Mark Oldroyd, Ibid., 41 (1896): 1604.

<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Brian Simon, Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920 (London, 1965), p. 161. Justice was the journal of the Social Democratic Federation.

<sup>161</sup> PD, 4th series, 41 (1896): 1584-1585, 1599. Speeches of Liberals Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Henry Labouchere.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 40 (1896): 1205. Speech of T.P. O'Connor.

<sup>163</sup> Griffith-Boscawen, p. 102. Marsh, p. 252.

told the Duke of Devonshire "there was no real enthusiasm for the Bill" amongst Liberal Unionist Churchmen.<sup>164</sup> Consequently, in order to avoid internal division, the Government chose to sacrifice the Bill.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, it would appear that Balfour's acceptance of Rollit's amendment, which triggered off the developments leading to the measure's abandonment, was a calculated manoeuvre designed to subvert the Bill. Hence, Balfour's action was not taken out of "ignorance and rooted unconcern" for the measure, as one critic claimed.<sup>166</sup> Rather, it was the logical extension of his realization that the combination of apathy and antagonism towards the Bill, present within his own party, precluded the maintenance of a determined parliamentary struggle for its passage. Having reached this conclusion he then convinced the Cabinet, but not Salisbury, of the wisdom of his plan to drop the Bill, a decision which Gorst, being outside this circle, could do little to influence.

Considering the attention Gorst had given to the Bill since the Autumn of 1895, it is not surprising that he "took umbrage" at its failure,<sup>167</sup> particularly the manner in which it was withdrawn. Even Lady Randolph Churchill, who had "no pity" for Gorst, could appreciate that "it must be galling to have brought in a Bill of your own creation and to have Balfour

<sup>164</sup>Balfour Papers, 49669, ff.84-111, Joseph Chamberlain et al., "The Education Bill 1896", quoted in Munson, p. 78.

<sup>165</sup>See "The First Failure", the Spectator, 76 (June 27, 1896): 908.

<sup>166</sup>T.J. Macnamara, "The Education Bill", Nineteenth Century, 49 (1896): 998. See also Lucy, Unionist Parliament, p. 100. Dugdale, I, p. 245.

<sup>167</sup>Keckewich, p. 102.

take it out of your hands and not even consult you about it".<sup>168</sup> However, it appears that, this humiliation apart, the Bill's loss was not totally unwelcome to Gorst. According to his confidant, W.T. Stead, Gorst did not particularly regret "the failure of the attempt to subordinate the interests of education to the demands of clericalism".<sup>169</sup> This seems to indicate that, upon reflection, Gorst had come to appreciate more fully the extent to which his proposals had been manipulated by the Government, particularly Balfour, and the Church, to accommodate more completely their own interests,<sup>170</sup> a perversion he believed had been compounded by the ineptitude of the Education Department officials.<sup>171</sup> However, he was evidently consoled by the belief that, should public opinion demand a new Bill, he would have the opportunity to make a new beginning.<sup>172</sup>

In an effort to stimulate such a demand, and ensure the Government responded to it, Gorst now worked to keep educational issues in the public eye.<sup>173</sup> During the parliamentary recess of Autumn 1896, he used the periodical press to arouse public opinion through his ideas, in an attempt to force the hand of the Unionist leaders, "and compel them, however

<sup>168</sup> R.S. Churchill, Winston S. Churchill, Companion Vol. 2 to Vol. 2, p. 728. Lady Randolph Churchill to Winston S. Churchill, quoted in N.D. Daglish, "The Educational Work of Sir John Gorst" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1974), p. 223.

<sup>169</sup> "Progress of the World", Review of Reviews, 14 (July, 1896), p. 6. Gorst may have communicated his displeasure at this interference to Stead even prior to the measure's withdrawal. R.G. Gretton claimed that the Liberals "shrewdly suspected that Sir John Gorst, though officially responsible for it (the Bill) had no great love for it as a whole". (R.G. Gretton, A Modern History of the English People, 1880-1910, 2 vols. (London, 1913), 1, p. 395.)

<sup>170</sup> Daglish, p. 225

<sup>171</sup> Grier, pp. 58-62. Keckewich, p. 102.

<sup>172</sup> Barnett Papers, F/BAR/143, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 11 July, 1896.

<sup>173</sup> See The Times, 10 August, 1896, p.10. Ibid., 18 September, 1896, p.10.

reluctant they may be, to face the duty of educating our people".<sup>174</sup> In an article entitled "Prospects of Education in England", published in the October 1896 issue of the North American Review,<sup>175</sup> Gorst castigated his fellow politicians for allowing "party spirit" to delay educational reform at a time when such reform was imperative if England was to regain her industrial supremacy which had been lost to her foreign competitors. Despite this urgent need England's statesmen "will postpone reform indefinitely ... to secure a party advantage thereby", he declared.<sup>176</sup>

He then outlined the directions reform must take if England was to achieve educational parity with her European rivals. In so doing, Gorst returned to the principles which had underlined his original proposals for the 1896 Bill. The inefficient voluntary schools must be up-graded to board school level in order to raise the national standard of elementary education, to provide a firmer base upon which to build technical education. Thus, the voluntary schools must be given additional financial assistance, preferably rate-aid, as any Imperial subvention was liable to withdrawal by a subsequent hostile government. Rate-payer sanction of such rate-aid could be obtained, he intimated, by permitting local authorities to negotiate with voluntary-school managers for a measure of control over their expenditures, in exchange for such assistance - his experiences with the 1896 Bill evidently having convinced him that only under such conditions would the Opposition approve rate assistance to the denominationalists. The quality of rural education

<sup>174</sup>"England's Need of Education: Two Manifestoes by Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews, 14 (1896): 428-430.

<sup>175</sup>See footnote 148.

<sup>176</sup>Gorst, "Prospects of Education", p. 227.

must also be improved, as the instruction presently offered to the nation's future agricultural workers was inferior to that provided the children of the European peasantry, which explained the supremacy of foreign agriculture and the current agricultural depression in England, he argued. Thus, the inefficient rural board schools must also receive additional financial aid. Moreover, their organization, along with that of the rural voluntary schools, must undergo rationalization because "No improvement in education is possible in rural districts until voluntary schools are grouped by some system of federation ... and some educational authority is provided which is more fit to manage than the village board", these reforms allowing for improved planning for educational efficiency.<sup>177</sup> Government inefficiency constituted a further obstacle to educational progress. Funding for secondary education was channelled through a variety of competing, uncoordinated agencies, which produced an overlapping of functions - resulting in waste of money and effort. It was essential that reforms be effected immediately in order to introduce the needed coherence and coordination into the system. To this end, a paramount education authority should be established in every district and given sole responsibility for dispensing public funds. Moreover, "That district should be the county, because that is already the area of the Technical Instruction Acts".<sup>178</sup> Gorst concluded by warning that if future attempts to legislate for educational progress

"were thwarted for the sake of party victory, and if the difficulties which had been pointed out are to be made greater still by the infusion of sectarian and religious animosity, it is very improbable that a system of education can be established which will enable the workers of England to compete on fair terms with their foreign rivals".<sup>179</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

Gorst's admonitions reflected his awareness of the importance of national education to Britain's industrial and agricultural future, a significance he had emphasized even prior to his appointment to the Committee of Council,<sup>180</sup> and his frustration that the necessary reforms should be impeded by the self interest of partisan politicians. However, the majority of his party chieftains lacked the vision which motivated Gorst's concern and their attitudes towards educational reform continued to be shaped primarily by political considerations. Thus, following the failure of the 1896 Bill, the Government were reluctant to attempt once again a reorganization of the education system,<sup>181</sup> as urged by Gorst, and they turned instead to a piece-meal approach to reform.

In September 1896, on Devonshire's instructions, Education Department officials began preparing a new, "more limited" Education Bill.<sup>182</sup> Also, a committee was established, under Gorst's chairmanship, ostensibly to scrutinize the Science and Art Department's funding methods but in actuality to examine ways by which supervision of secondary education could be transferred from the school boards to the education committees of the county councils, as proposed in the failed Bill.<sup>183</sup> It is probable that this subterfuge originated with Gorst.<sup>184</sup> Although the minute establishing

<sup>180</sup>See "Social Politics in England: An interview with Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews, 3 (1891): 266-270. Hereafter referred to as "Social Politics".

<sup>181</sup>Halevy, p. 192. Sturt, p. 404.

<sup>182</sup>Salisbury Papers, 233, Devonshire to Salisbury, 13 September, 1896.

<sup>183</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 113-114.

<sup>184</sup>Daglish, p. 263.

the Committee was written by Devonshire,<sup>185</sup> it was almost certainly at Gorst's instigation, for, according to Keckewich, Devonshire was not an innovatory President.<sup>186</sup>

However, Gorst was not to have charge of the new Education Bill. Although Balfour had been "widely blamed" for the failure of the 1896 measure,<sup>187</sup> he succeeded in convincing the Cabinet that the fiasco was primarily the product of Gorst's ineptitude<sup>188</sup> and that, given the Vice-President's "want of dexterity as a parliamentary pilot"<sup>189</sup> he, Balfour, ought to manage the Bill.<sup>190</sup> The Government's decision to by-pass Gorst, which apparently was not finalized until after November 7,<sup>191</sup> may have been clinched by his renewed public agitation on behalf of devolution and rate-aid to voluntary schools which he launched in the November 1896 issue of

<sup>185</sup>Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the Distribution of the Science and Art Grants (Cmnd. 8417), PP, 1897, 33: 421.

<sup>186</sup>Keckewich, p. 93. Keckewich claimed that Devonshire "never initiated any change, and was quite content to ... avoid the more laborious work of providing for the future". Canon Barnett apparently also believed the Committee resulted from intrigue on the part of Gorst. Barnett told his brother, Gorst "has got a strong committee to overhaul South Kensington ... I fear he is playing with edged tools". [Barnett Papers, F/BAR/152, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 24 October, 1896. The "South Kensington" referred to is the Science and Art Department. It derived this designation from its geographical location in South London.]

<sup>187</sup>Sidney H. Zebel, Balfour: A Political Biography (Cambridge, 1973), p. 86.

<sup>188</sup>Salisbury Papers, 233, Devonshire to Salisbury, 13 September, 1896. See also, Griffith-Boscawen, p. 115. "To many independent members this appeared a rather severe judgment, many being of the opinion that if the First Lord had allowed Sir John to manage his Bill in his own way things would have fared better ..."

<sup>189</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 115.

<sup>190</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49769, f.112, Devonshire to Balfour, 7 November, 1896. Salisbury Papers, 233, Devonshire to Salisbury, 13 September, 1896.

<sup>191</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49769, f.112. Devonshire to Balfour, 7 November, 1896. Wrote Devonshire, "I think I had better take the opportunity of telling him (Gorst) that you will take charge of the Bill, and that he will not be held responsible for its deficiencies".



Nineteenth Century.<sup>192</sup> In it he outlined how several previous governments had made unsuccessful attempts to establish local education authorities empowered to assist voluntary schools out of the rates, illustrating "how ignorant of the past these party politicians were who brought against ... the Bill of 1896 the accusation of novelty".<sup>193</sup> He reiterated his earlier arguments justifying devolution and rate-aid to the denominationalists, now emphasizing that in exchange for increased public funding of their schools their managers must be prepared to accept increased public control: "Managers must submit to such conditions as ratepayers may properly require for securing the efficiency of secular education in their schools".<sup>194</sup> As this was a condition demanded by the Liberals and their Nonconformist allies, Gorst's argument could be interpreted as a concession to the Opposition. In actuality, Gorst was displaying a prescience which was to be proved correct. He recognized that rate-aid represented the only funding sufficient to upgrade the voluntary schools to board school level and thus, must of necessity, come to be accepted.<sup>195</sup>

However, Gorst's recommendations were largely ignored by his Government colleagues. Following the withdrawal of the 1896 Bill, Chamberlain ascertained that the Nonconformist Unionists were now willing to sanction additional State assistance to the voluntary schools, but would reject any attempts to provide them with rate aid or to introduce denominational religious instruction into the board schools. He also learned that any

<sup>192</sup>J.E. Gorst, "The Voluntary Schools", Nineteenth Century, 40 (1896): 699-710. Hereafter referred to as Gorst, "Voluntary Schools".

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., p. 699.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., p. 710.

<sup>195</sup>Daglish, p. 244.

proposals which threatened these schools, or altered the way education was administered at the local level, would alienate his supporters from the Government.<sup>196</sup> Thus Chamberlain concluded that the new Bill should be restricted to relieving necessitous voluntary and board schools out of Imperial funds, but, unlike Gorst, he urged that the grant be distributed by the Education Department rather than the local authority.<sup>197</sup>

Salisbury, not wishing to repeat the fiasco of the previous Session, determined that the new Bill should eschew reorganization and concentrate upon easing the voluntary schools' financial problems.<sup>198</sup> Balfour also proposed that financial relief be given solely to the voluntary schools,<sup>199</sup> but he did accept some of Gorst's proposals. He was prepared to consider giving rate aid to the denominationalists.<sup>200</sup> In addition, his genuine desire to raise the standard of voluntary school education<sup>201</sup> prompted him to support Gorst's proposed "system of federation" for these institutions,

<sup>196</sup>Memorandum by John Boraston, 22 October, 1896, on the Education Bill of 1896, Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49769. Cited in Marsh, p. 271.

<sup>197</sup>Salisbury Papers, 235, Chamberlain to Salisbury, 11 November, 1896.

<sup>198</sup>Salisbury preferred, however, that the additional aid be applied strictly to denominational instruction, apparently because he believed that, otherwise, the "educationists" in the schools would squander the funds upon secular education: "if you let him (the educationist) such according to his will, he will soon have swallowed up the slender increase of sustenance you are now tendering to the voluntary schools. So long as you leave him to determine what improvements shall be exacted, you are giving no relief at all to the voluntary schools ..." [Salisbury to Balfour, 20 November, 1896, Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49690. Quoted in Marsh, p. 272.]

<sup>199</sup>Salisbury Papers, 234, Draft by A.J. Balfour on Education Question, 9 November, 1896.

<sup>200</sup>P.R.O. Cab. 37/43, Memorandum for the Cabinet from A.J. Balfour, 8 November, 1896. Cited in Marsh, p. 272.

<sup>201</sup>The Times, 4 February, 1896, p.7.

in the belief that it offered a suitable means of achieving the necessary upgrading by providing the organizational machinery for improving voluntary school management.<sup>202</sup> Thus Balfour's draft for the new Education Bill contained provisions for establishing voluntary school associations on the Gorst model. It did not, however, include a rate-aid clause, the Cabinet evidently having vetoed that proposal. Instead it made provision for a special aid grant to the voluntary schools to be distributed by the Education Department in conjunction with the new associations,<sup>203</sup> not through a local education authority, nor to the poor board schools, as Gorst continued to advocate.<sup>204</sup> The draft also retained from the 1896 Bill two other provisions aimed at easing the denominationalists' financial burden: the abolition of the 17s-6d per child limit on Government grants to voluntary schools, and the exemption of their buildings from rating.<sup>205</sup>

As these proposals exceeded what Chamberlain and Salisbury wanted they provoked prolonged and contentious debate in Cabinet, particularly between Balfour and Chamberlain who were in "considerable disagreement as to both principles and procedure".<sup>206</sup> The proposal to create voluntary school associations proved a particularly divisive issue. Chamberlain was suspicious of their ecclesiastical character, while Salisbury was alarmed by the potential for control given to the educationists in such organizations.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Salisbury Papers, 236, Cabinet Memorandum by A.J. Balfour, 16 November, 1896.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> The Times, 13 November, 1896, p. 4.

<sup>205</sup> Salisbury Papers, 236, Cabinet Memorandum by A.J. Balfour, 16 November, 1896.

<sup>206</sup> Garvin, p. 154. Marsh, p. 272.

<sup>207</sup> Marsh, p. 272. Salisbury's fear was prompted by Balfour's provision that allowed the combined associations to select delegates to "advise the Department as to the distribution of grants between the schools of the Association" [see, Salisbury Papers, 236, Cabinet Memorandum by A.J. Balfour, 16 November, 1896.]

Under pressure from these two Ministers, the Cabinet voted 10 to 8 to modify Balfour's proposals,<sup>208</sup> and the finalized Bill, which was eventually introduced into the House on 4 February, 1897,<sup>209</sup> represented a compromise between the opposing viewpoints. It gave an additional grant of 5s per child to voluntary schools, granted them rate-exemption for their property, and abolished the 17s. 6d. limit, but provided for only an emasculated version of the Balfour/Gorst scheme for voluntary school federation.<sup>210</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Gorst participated directly in the Bill's preparation and his behaviour during debates implies the contrary. He rose only to respond to an Opposition member's taunt that Gorst "rather agreed with the criticisms of the Bill than with the arguments in support of it".<sup>211</sup> However, rather than expressing his own views he delivered a brief speech assessing the measure from the perspective of a member of Committee of Council, thereby emphasizing his exclusion from the framing of the Bill - a fact that Balfour had already signalled when he and not Gorst introduced the measure in the House.<sup>212</sup> Gorst noted that the Committee "do not question whether it is desirable or undesirable that the Voluntary Schools should exist" but, given that fifty percent of the nation's children attended them, were duty bound "to accept with gratitude any legislation which Parliament may pass to make these schools efficient".<sup>213</sup> In reply to

<sup>208</sup>Note by Chamberlain, 2 December, 1896. Chamberlain Papers, JC5/5/25. Cited in Marsh, p. 272.

<sup>209</sup>PD, 4th series, 45 (1897): 1415. The measure, being a money bill, was first introduced to a Committee of the Whole House in the form of a resolution. See *Ibid*: 926-936, 944.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid*: 1415.

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*, 4th series, 46 (1897): 474. Speech of F. Lockwood.

<sup>212</sup>Annual Register, 1897, p. 29.

<sup>213</sup>PD, 4th series, 46 (1897): 482-483.

Opposition Members' expressed scepticism with regard to the ultimate recipients of the grant, he gave assurances that the Committee would see that it went to the schools and was not diverted into relieving subscribers. Gorst did, however, adopt a more approbatory stance with regard to the school associations, observing that they could ensure that the truly necessitous schools received the grant while also serving to improve voluntary school management.<sup>214</sup>

Although his speech contained nothing derogatory, Gorst's "subtle modulation of the voice investing innocent syllables with barbed point",<sup>215</sup> quite clearly indicated his dissatisfaction with his colleagues on the Treasury Bench and his distaste for the Bill, which excluded most of the reforms he had been advocating. The significance of Gorst's approach was not lost on the Opposition, Campbell-Bannerman observing that the Government would derive little satisfaction from Gorst's remarks.<sup>216</sup> Not surprisingly, Gorst's speech was received in complete silence by the Tory Front Bench. However, his behaviour subsequently drew a scathing attack from H.H. Asquith, who termed Gorst's taciturnity "a grave Parliamentary scandal",<sup>217</sup> a somewhat harsh judgment considering his dissociation from the Bill had been imposed from above - a fact of which Parliament, including Asquith, were fully cognizent.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>214</sup>Ibid: 483, 488-489.

<sup>215</sup>H.W. Lucy, "Essence of Parliament", Punch, 112 (1897): 107.

<sup>216</sup>PD, 4th series, 46 (1897): 585.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 47 (1897): 1336.

<sup>218</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 115.

Despite determined opposition from the Liberals and Nonconformists, the Bill passed second reading 355-150, thirty eight Irish Nationalists voting with the Government.<sup>219</sup> In order to limit Opposition obstructionism, and so ensure the measure's passage in time to provide the voluntary schools with financial relief in the current year, Balfour applied closure in Committee.<sup>220</sup> Consequently, this stage was concluded on March 18th, and the Bill passed Third Reading on March 25th.<sup>221</sup>

Although "surprise was generally expressed that he was willing to retain office after such a slight",<sup>222</sup> Gorst appears to have accepted the Government's shunning of him with equanimity. According to Beatrice Webb, Gorst considered the relatively modest Voluntary School Bill a humiliation for Devonshire rather than for himself because at Cabinet level, where the final decisions on the measure had been taken, the Ministers had ridden roughshod over the Duke's opposition to the proposals.<sup>223</sup> He may also have been solaced by the knowledge that the measure contained, albeit in a diluted form, his federation of voluntary schools and by the fact he was

<sup>219</sup>PD, 4th series, 46 (1897): 607-612.

<sup>220</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 116.

<sup>221</sup>PD, 4th series, 47 (1897): 1420. Twenty Liberal Unionists abstained from voting but so also did some Opposition Members. They apparently did not wish to oppose a measure which preserved the voluntary schools because these institutions relieved to a considerable degree the burden of the education rate in many districts - thereby bringing economic advantages to many Liberal supporters. [Annual Register, 1897, p. 29, p. 75.]

<sup>222</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 115

<sup>223</sup>B. Webb, p. 137.

currently making some progress towards implementing another of his proposals, the empowering of county and county borough councils with the responsibility for administering secondary education. Following some twenty two meetings, Gorst's Committee created to devise a non-legislative method of accomplishing this step,<sup>224</sup> produced its report which proposed this change be implemented immediately. The Committee recommended that this be accomplished through the insertion into the Science and Art Directory for 1897 of an appropriate clause allowing county or county boroughs to become the authority for Science and Art in their districts by obtaining recognition from the Department at South Kensington.<sup>225</sup> This step was duly taken by the Science and Art Department, the proposal becoming Clause 7 of its Directory. Under this regulation county and county boroughs were permitted to administer secondary education in their areas through their existing Technical Instruction Committees.<sup>226</sup> Although school boards retained their right to provide higher-level education, schools and classes coming into operation after the regulation came into force would usually be eligible for grants only if working in cooperation with the county authority.<sup>227</sup> Thus, although Clause 7 appeared innocuous on the surface, in reality it was the first in a series of administrative steps designed to undermine the advanced work carried out by the school boards in preparation for a future rationalization of educational administration in which they would have no part. As Lyulph

<sup>224</sup> See p. 238 above

<sup>225</sup> Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the Distribution of the Science and Art Grants (Cmnd. 8417), PP, 1897, 33: 426-427.

<sup>226</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 114-115.

<sup>227</sup> Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 108.

Stanley observed some three years later when this process was well underway, "Sir John Gorst ... openly makes the boast that as he failed by legislation to supersede School Boards by county councils, he will do administratively what he cannot do by law".<sup>228</sup>

Having successfully obtained the objective for which his Committee had been formed, Gorst now concentrated his efforts upon obtaining passage of the Government's new educational measure, the Necessitous Board Schools' Bill. When the Voluntary Schools' Bill had been before the House in February the Government had resisted Opposition pressure to have the measure's provisions extended to necessitous board schools but had promised that a Bill to relieve these institutions would be introduced "at as early a date as possible".<sup>229</sup> Evidently the Government entertained some doubts as to the advisability of entrusting the new measure to Gorst,<sup>230</sup> but they eventually relented and he was given the responsibility for introducing and piloting it through the Commons - his performance apparently constantly monitored by his Treasury Bench colleagues.<sup>231</sup> The resolution authorizing the increased grant to be given by the Elementary Education Act (1870) Amendment Bill was introduced by Gorst in the Commons on April 5.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>228</sup>E.L. Stanley, "Higher Elementary Schools", Contemporary Review, 78 (1900), p. 645.

<sup>229</sup>PD, 4th series, 45 (1897): 116.

<sup>230</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791, f.30. Gorst to Balfour, 2nd March, 1897. "I have asked for and got a copy of the latest draft of the Board School Bill. I had not seen it before ...".

<sup>231</sup>H.W. Lucy, "Essence of Parliament", Punch, 112 (1897): 228.

<sup>232</sup>PD, 4th series, 48 (1897): 539-540.



The measure proposed to make available supplemental grants to boards in poor districts where the local authority's rate-income was insufficient to adequately meet its portion of the board-school costs, which it shared with the State. Gorst estimated that 555 out of 769 school boards would be assisted from the total new grant of £110,602 to be distributed under the new provisions.<sup>233</sup>

Although Opposition members denounced the proposed aid as totally inadequate,<sup>234</sup> they did not obstruct the measure because to do so would have been inexpedient, as Acland acknowledged, since "it was perfectly obvious that £110,000 was better than nothing, they must not vote against the clause".<sup>235</sup> Consequently, the Bill passed third reading on May 20th.<sup>236</sup> Though the measure was doubtless produced in response to the Opposition's persistent demands, the principle upon which it was based originated with Gorst, appearing first in his 1895 proposals and in his ill-fated 1896 Bill. Thus, even though his contribution to the drafting stage of the Board Schools Bill appears to have been limited to an unsuccessful attempt to provide more flexible funding,<sup>237</sup> Gorst deserves some of the credit for the educational benefits provided by this legislation which became the Elementary Education Act, 1897.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Ibid: 539-546.

<sup>234</sup> See for example the speeches of Mr. S. Evans and Mr. H. Fowler. Ibid., 4th series, 49 (1897): 128, 131-134.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid: 126-128.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 49 (1897): 950.

<sup>237</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MSS. 49791, ff.31-32. Gorst to Balfour, 1 April, 1897.

<sup>238</sup> 60 and 61 Vict. Ch. 16: An Act to amend Section Ninety-seven of the Elementary Education Act, 1870 (Elementary Education Act, 1897).

The passage of the Voluntary and Board Schools Bills eased the immediate educational crisis facing the Government but, as Gorst reminded them in the House, the critical problems of overlap and waste of effort in secondary education still awaited resolution. Moreover:

every year which passes over our heads without a proper reorganisation of our system of higher education above the elementary, not only makes the problem more complicated and more difficult of solution, but raises up a crop of opposition to any kind of reform that may be proposed, which may make either legislation or administrative reform impossible".<sup>239</sup>

However, Gorst's warnings elicited little response from either side of the House. The prevailing mood of Parliament was unpropitious for the furtherance of additional educational reforms, both Government and Opposition having succumbed to lethargy.<sup>240</sup> Following a bout of intra-party dissention over the Workmen's Compensation Bill,<sup>241</sup> the Government were disinclined to embark upon further domestic legislation<sup>242</sup> and, in any case, they were becoming increasingly preoccupied with foreign and Imperial affairs, particularly Britain's relations with Germany and the deteriorating situation in South Africa.<sup>243</sup> The Liberals, enfeebled by ineffective leadership, weakened organization and internal indiscipline, were incapable

<sup>239</sup>PD, 4th series, 50 (1897): 297.

<sup>240</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 131.

<sup>241</sup>See, D.G. Hanes, The First British Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897 (New Haven, 1968), Chap. 6. W.C. Mallalieu, "Joseph Chamberlain and Workmen's Compensation", Journal of Economic History, 10 (1950), pp. 45-57.

<sup>242</sup>Marsh, pp. 265-270. Donald Southgate, "From Disraeli to Law" in The Conservatives, ed. Rt. Hon. Lord Butler (London, 1977), pp. 220-225. Young, p. 180.

<sup>243</sup>J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy (London, 1964), pp.148-176, pp. 233-240. Halevy, 5, pp. 27-41. R.R. James, The British Revolution: British Politics, 1880-1939. Vol. 1. From Gladstone to Asquith 1880-1914 (London, 1976), Ch. 6. Marsh, pp. 272-279.

of galvanizing the Unionists into action.<sup>244</sup>

The Government's indifference only served to increase Gorst's determination to effect reforms and he now utilized the parliamentary recess of 1897 to campaign for improvements in the educational system, particularly the raising of secondary education standards through a rationalization of its organization. In a series of speeches delivered during November and December, Gorst emphasized that this rationalization was required in order to provide a system in which the English work force could acquire the skills comparable to those received by its European rivals, thereby enabling the nation to meet the ever-increasing industrial competition from the Continent and the United States.<sup>245</sup> Parliament's current apathy towards social issues prompted him to urge that the people initiate reform at the local level through their county councils. They could use for this purpose existing funds such as the "Whisky Money" and they could also co-operate with the Science and Art Department.<sup>246</sup> This latter option had of course been facilitated by the recent implementation of the Clause 7 revisions to that Department's Directory. Gorst stressed, however, that the reform of higher education was meaningless unless accompanied by improvements in elementary

<sup>244</sup>P. Adelman, Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics (London, 1970), pp. 50-56. H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics (London, 1970), pp. 64-71. D.A. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford, 1972), Chaps. 10 and 11.

<sup>245</sup>See, the Times, 18 November, 1897, p.7. Ibid., 20 November, 1897, p.12; 21 December, 1897, p.11; 24 December, 1897, p.4.

<sup>246</sup>Ibid., 21 December, 1897, p.11.

education, which were necessary to produce pupils capable of benefitting from post-elementary instruction. Raising the school-leaving age was essential to achieving this condition but this was effectively blocked by the self-interest of the ruling party. The Government would not act because its members belonged to a class "that was not concerned with the necessity or desirability of higher education for the people. They hold the opinion that there were certain functions which had to be performed in the modern life of civilised communities which were best performed by people who were ignorant".<sup>247</sup>

Evidently, Gorst's criticisms were prompted not only by his exasperation with the Unionists' attitudes towards education but, also, by frustration arising from his continued exclusion from policy formation, for the Government were currently preparing a measure to reorganize the central authority for education without consulting him on the issue.<sup>248</sup> Gorst's resentment was clearly visible in his speeches. He observed that his subordinate position in the Government obliged him to withhold his personal opinions in the House, rendering him merely the Education Department's "mouthpiece" in debate. Thus, he "had to defend the measures and the policy of the Government, but ... had no voice in determining what those measures and that policy should be".<sup>249</sup> He described his office as "a bit of a sham" because he exercised far less influence on education than was popularly believed. He was "more like the figurehead of a ship which turned into any

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 24 December, 1897, p.7.

<sup>248</sup> Keckewich, p.103.

<sup>249</sup> The Times, 18 November, 1897, p.7.

channel into which the steersman was pleased to direct it".<sup>250</sup> Although apparently delivered in a bantering tone, judging by the laughter they elicited, Gorst's comments reflected his annoyance with the Administration's persistent disregard for his position.

Gorst's agitation for reform and criticism of the Government continued, in and out of the House, following the resumption of Parliament in February 1898. In a speech given February 7 at Cambridge, he intimated that progress in higher education was being inhibited by Ministerial interference in the operations of the Education Department. The future success of technical education depended upon Department officials being "left to themselves" to co-operate with county councils in the promotion of such education, he declared.<sup>251</sup> The following month he told a deputation from the Women's Industrial Council that their mutual objective to raise the compulsory school-leaving age was unlikely to be achieved under the current Administration. To obtain such legislation would require the acquiescence of the Government's landowning supporters around the country and experience had shown that they would oppose any increase of education to "those whom they look upon as their future labourers".<sup>252</sup> During an April 19 Commons' debate on a Lloyd-George resolution calling for additional school boards and more non-sectarian teacher-training,<sup>253</sup> Gorst censured Parliament and particularly the Government, for indulging in irrelevant religious controversies at the expense of critical educational problems. Given that the

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 21 December, 1897, p.11.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 7 February, 1898, p.10.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 3 March, 1898, p.8.

<sup>253</sup> PD, 4th series, 56 (1898): 479.

Unionists' comprehensive scheme for educational reform had been rejected by Parliament, it was essential that the Government proceed with individual measures, in accordance with a settled policy, with priority being given to the most urgent issues. "The idea is to get more children into the existing schools, to get them there in a condition to receive instruction, and to keep them there until a later age".<sup>254</sup> Thus, existing problems such as irregular attendance, insanitary buildings, and underfed children incapable of benefiting from instruction, required immediate resolution. As long as these difficulties remained unresolved "you cannot compete in technical or commercial education with your Continental rivals. Your higher schools will languish for lack of a sufficient supply of scholars properly grounded in the elements, and your labour and your money will be, to a great extent, thrown away".<sup>255</sup>

Gorst's insinuations regarding the Government's lack of initiative on educational reform doubtless increased their animosity towards him, particularly as his call for action from the Treasury Bench was acclaimed by Liberal Members. His speech was punctuated by "Opposition Cheers" and "Opposition laughter" and Sir William Harcourt was moved to observe that Gorst was "a reforming educationist at heart and if we can only strike off his arms those fetters which restrain his true inclinations we might get something for the advantage of this country".<sup>256</sup>

<sup>254</sup>Ibid: 499.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid: 500

<sup>256</sup>Ibid: 504. See also the speech of Liberal Earnest Gray, Ibid: 505.

Gorst's statements of April 19 were, however, but an overture to a more detailed exposé of the state of national education which he gave in the Commons on June 17.<sup>257</sup> It was given in the presence of both Balfour and Chamberlain, who had remained in an almost empty House apparently in an effort to discourage Gorst from making any further censorious pronouncements.<sup>258</sup> However, their attendance did not inhibit Gorst. The failure of his 1896 Bill, and his subsequent exclusion from the Government's educational policy formation, had evidently convinced him that as Vice-President he could do little to achieve educational reform and, thus, his only chance for obtaining legislation lay in his ability to rally public opinion behind the necessary but unpopular reforms which he advocated.<sup>259</sup> Thus, his speech, delivered with "amazing and embarrassing candour",<sup>260</sup> provided a critical assessment of the deficiencies afflicting national education. His arguments were essentially the ones presented in his previous speeches but they were now reinforced with indisputable facts and figures taken from official sources.

Using the report of the Education Department's Chief Inspector to substantiate his claim, Gorst alleged that terminating elementary education at age eleven years produced children unable to cope intellectually with higher instruction, thereby obliging the secondary and continuation

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th series, 59 (1898): 587-605.

<sup>258</sup> Lucy, *Unionist Parliament*, pp. 238-239. "... the situation suggested the case of a child, known to be subjected to ungovernable paroxysms of naughtiness, sent out to take a constitutional under the supervision, not of one able-bodied nurse, but of two".

<sup>259</sup> Daglish, p. 308. Bentley B. Gilbert, "Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel", *Historian*, 18 (1956): 160.

<sup>260</sup> The *Times*, 18 June, 1898, p.11.

schools to provide basic education rather than the advanced technical and commercial work for which they were intended. Until this situation was redeemed it was pointless to talk of England competing in technical education with her foreign rivals. Educational inefficiency was being further eroded by pupil absenteeism and by the condition of many of those in attendance who, because of malnutrition or fatigue brought on by "half-time" work, were unable to benefit from the instruction given. Gorst asserted that irregular attendance in some rural areas was chiefly the consequence of landowners' employing children for casual labour, an allegation he supported with evidence from the reports of school inspectors. This testimony was "suspiciously irritating to the country party", who constituted the bulk of the Government support, and who, having caught the drift of Gorst's speech "now clustered in momentarily increasing numbers below the gangway".<sup>261</sup>

Gorst then proceeded to offend the urban Tories by demonstrating how the staffing of urban voluntary schools with untrained and pupil teachers produced a poorer quality of instruction and lower academic standards in these schools than in their board-school counterparts. This inferiority extended even to Bible teaching, he claimed. Gorst noted that he could have suppressed the facts but "What a traitor I would be to my Church if knowing the danger I were too cowardly to give a warning of it by telling the truth".<sup>262</sup> However, he did hasten to exonerate the voluntary

<sup>261</sup>Lucy, Unionist Parliament, p. 240.

<sup>262</sup>PD, 4th series, 59 (1898): 599.



school managers from the blame for these deficiencies, asserting that they resulted from a paucity of funds, which the aid-grant enacted the previous year had done little to alleviate. The voluntary-school economic and educational difficulties could be overcome, he insisted, through the provision of rate aid under local control.

Gorst reiterated his oft-repeated statements concerning the inefficient state of rural education, during which he succeeded in directing further criticisms against the county Tories. Quoting from yet another inspector's report, he showed that whilst the inefficiency of rural education stemmed partly from the labourers' ignorance of the value of education, which translated into early school leaving for rural children, the lower educational standards among the rural population were also the product of the landowners' negative attitudes towards schooling. "They associate agricultural depression and low rents with compulsory education, and they grudge to pay for that teaching which deprives them of servants and furnishes their labourers with wings to fly from the parish".<sup>263</sup> The remedy for rural educational inefficiency lay in improved local organization and supervision, he claimed, specifically that which could be provided by replacing rural boards of guardians with county council education committees, as proposed in his 1896 Bill.

Gorst concluded by warning that the benefits which England derived from her Empire and free-trade policies would be squandered in the future if the nation's workers were too ignorant and ill-trained to compete with their foreign counterparts. However, the required system of secondary

<sup>263</sup>Ibid: 600.

education must be built upon a foundation of sound elementary education and, thus, reform "must begin with the elementary schools, otherwise the technical institutions and the commercial colleges will fail for lack of properly prepared boys and girls on which to operate".<sup>264</sup>

Gorst's statements, particularly those on voluntary-school inefficiency, drew down upon his head the wrath of Government supporters who did not appreciate the fact that his criticisms were prompted by a desire to stimulate Government action on educational reform. Evidently, their anger was rooted in the knowledge that his revelations were basically accurate and, thus, uncontradictable. As Lucy observed, "It was because it was all so incontestably true that it was fatally damaging".<sup>265</sup> Being, thus, unable to convincingly dismiss Gorst's allegations as conjecture, Government supporters were obliged to attack his speech on other grounds. Lord Cranborne criticized him for enumerating problems without offering suitable solutions,<sup>266</sup> despite Gorst's frequent references to possible remedies during the course of his speech. This criticism was repeated by Unionist M.P's Henry Hobhouse and C.A. Cripps,<sup>267</sup> and echoed by the Times, which also accused Gorst of disloyalty, suggested his behaviour was prompted by frustration with his current minor role in policy formation,<sup>268</sup> and intimated he should be removed from the Education Department.<sup>269</sup> The attack

<sup>264</sup>Ibid: 604-605.

<sup>265</sup>Lucy, Unionist Parliament, pp. 241-242.

<sup>266</sup>PD, 4th series, 59 (1898): 640.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid: 646-649, 667.

<sup>268</sup>The Times, 18 June, 1898, p.11. Gorst was also subjected to severe criticism by the Church press. [See the speech of the Duke of Devonshire, PD, 4th series, 61 (1898): 635.]

<sup>269</sup>Gilbert, "Conservative Rebel", pp. 166-167.

was subsequently continued in the Lords by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who accused Gorst of overstepping his authority in impugning the voluntary schools and demanded that the President of the Committee of Council, "explain in some satisfactory manner" this behaviour on the part of his subordinate.<sup>270</sup> In responding, Devonshire displayed considerably more tolerance of Gorst's actions than his parliamentary colleagues, perhaps because he appreciated the sincerity which had prompted them.<sup>271</sup> He attempted to conciliate the county Tories offended by Gorst's observations on the landowners' reactionary stance on education with an expression of regret that such an assertion had been made by an Education Department official, and with a personal affirmation of the landowners' contributions to rural education.<sup>272</sup> However, he devoted the remainder of his speech to defending Gorst's pronouncements in his April 19 speech and during the June 17 debate on the Education Estimates. Gorst's observations represented not an attack on the voluntary schools but, rather, an expression of concern by one "anxious - sincerely anxious - to increase the efficiency of both Board and Voluntary Schools, and of one who is deeply impressed by the difficulties under which elementary education suffers ...".<sup>273</sup> He emphasized that Gorst's revelations regarding voluntary school efficiency had been made in the hopes of promoting their alleviation but that the

<sup>270</sup>PD, 4th series, 61 (1898): 631-634.

<sup>271</sup>See Ibid: 634-642.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid: 640-641. "... there is no class, as a class, that has done more for the cause of elementary education than country gentlemen, or have done it at a greater pecuniary sacrifice".

<sup>273</sup>Ibid: 637.

bluntness of his delivery had apparently served to obscure this intention, creating consternation amongst the denominationalists. He assured the House that Gorst's views on the voluntary schools had never biased his administration of that system.

Gorst now halted briefly his public agitation and gave his attention to a measure currently being devised within the Education Department<sup>274</sup> which was designed to enact several minor amendments to existing Elementary Education Acts. This so-called "Omnibus Bill"<sup>275</sup> contained two proposals to promote an increase in elementary school attendance and allow for the raising of the school-leaving age, reforms for which Gorst had been agitating. It also included a provision permitting boards of guardians to defray the cost of the education received in public elementary schools by poor law children,<sup>276</sup> thus facilitating the attendance of such children in the schools, a step recommended by the Poor Law Schools Committee in their 1896 Report upon which Gorst had had a strong influence.<sup>277</sup> Thus, these proposals would appear to bear the imprint of Gorst's reforming hand, but, beyond this, his role in the Bill's formulation seems to have been restricted to that of fulfilling his official function of intermediary

<sup>274</sup>Halevy, 5, p. 193.

<sup>275</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 31/18/1. Keckewich to Gorst, 25 May, 1898.

<sup>276</sup>Ibid.

<sup>277</sup>See pp. 325-328 below.

between the Cabinet and the Education Department.<sup>278</sup> As the measure's provisions were relatively uncontentious,<sup>279</sup> its acceptance by the various Departments concerned was virtually automatic,<sup>280</sup> and the final draft was submitted for Cabinet approval on July 21.<sup>281</sup> Although the majority of the Ministers apparently raised no objections to the Bill,<sup>282</sup> Balfour opposed its introduction because this "would be contrary to a pledge which he had given in the House ...".<sup>283</sup> Consequently, the measure was effectively shelved and by March 1899, with no action having been taken in the interim, Gorst believed the Bill dead.<sup>284</sup>

With the Government's educational legislation thus at a standstill, it is not surprising that Gorst welcomed the opportunity to support Liberal M.P. W.S. Robson's Private Members' Bill, which proposed to raise the school-leaving age from eleven to twelve years, particularly as it was, as Robson noted, "nothing more than a clause taken from the 1896 Bill".<sup>285</sup>

<sup>278</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 31/18/1, Keckewich to Gorst, 25 May, 1898. Ibid., Ed. 31/18/2, Devonshire to Gorst, 5 June, 1898. Ibid., Keckewich to Gorst, 7 June, 1898. Ibid., Ed. 31/18/10, Keckewich to Gorst, 6 July, 1898. Ibid., Gorst to Keckewich, 6 July, 1898. Ibid., Ed. 31/18/11, Keckewich to Gorst, 12 July, 1898. Ibid., Gorst to Keckewich, 12 July, 1898.

<sup>279</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/1, Keckewich to Gorst, 25 May, 1898.

<sup>280</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/10, Keckewich to Gorst, 6 July, 1898. The Departments involved in addition to Education were the Local Government Board and the Treasury. The latter did question the increased expenditure occasioned by the provision facilitating attendance up to fourteen years of age but relented upon Gorst's insistence that it be retained. [Ibid., Ed. 31/18/4, Her Majesty's Treasury to Education Department, 22 Jun, 1898. Ibid., Keckewich to Her Majesty's Treasury, 28 June, 1898.]

<sup>281</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/11, Keckewich to Gorst, 12 July, 1898. Ibid., Gorst to Keckewich, 12 July, 1898. Ibid., Ed. 31/18/15, Keckewich to A. FitzRoy, 21 July, 1898.

<sup>282</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/2, Devonshire to Gorst, 5 June, 1898. Ibid., Ed. 31/18/15, Keckewich to A. FitzRoy, 21 July, 1898.

<sup>283</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/15, Gorst to Devonshire, 21 July, 1898.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/19, Gorst to Keckewich, 16 March, 1899.

<sup>285</sup>PD, 4th series, 67 (1899): 922.

Gorst gave the Bill his unqualified approval, noting that its adoption "would improve the education of the country" and adding that the nation should regard it as a point of honour to fulfil the pledge given at the Berlin Conference and so far unredeemed.<sup>286</sup> Perhaps because the Bill served to highlight the Government's inaction on education, Gorst's treasury bench colleagues were unenthusiastic about the measure,<sup>287</sup> leading him to caution Salisbury that Unionist opposition to its passage would be politically unwise. There was a strong desire for such a measure among "all classes of the Electors" and, thus, "It would be most disastrous to our prospects at the next Election, if the defeat of the Bill can be attributed to our apathy by our opponents".<sup>288</sup> Gorst's warning was apparently taken to heart by the Government for the Bill survived its passage through both Houses and was subsequently enacted as the Elementary Education School Attendance Act (1893) Amendment Act, 1899.<sup>289</sup>

With Parliament currently focussing on Education, Gorst took the opportunity to press the Government for action on the languishing Omnibus Bill, but though Cabinet "raised no objections to the measure",<sup>290</sup> it was not brought forward in the 1899 session. During the parliamentary recess of Autumn and Winter of 1899-1900, Gorst successfully resisted attempts to

<sup>286</sup>Ibid: 972.

<sup>287</sup>See the speech of H.H. Asquith, Ibid: 942.

<sup>288</sup>Salisbury Papers, 82, Gorst to Salisbury, 1 June, 1899.

<sup>289</sup>62 and 63 Vict. Ch. 13. Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act (1893) Amendment Act.

<sup>290</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 31/18/22, R. Walrond to Keckewich, 31 July, 1899. Riversdale Walrond was Devonshire's recently appointed Secretary.

emasculate the measure<sup>291</sup> and after Parliament reassembled in February 1900 he pressed for its introduction.<sup>292</sup> On this occasion he succeeded, the Bill being presented in the Commons by Gorst on March 26.<sup>293</sup> It subsequently enjoyed a smooth passage through the Commons, emerging from Committee "without amendment of any kind ..."<sup>294</sup> and passing third reading on July 31,<sup>295</sup> thereby marking one more enactment of a provision from Gorst's 1896 Bill.<sup>296</sup>

By permitting Gorst only a nominal say in the formulation of this minor measure, the Government once again underscored their determination to limit his direct influence on official policy. They had not, however, succeeded in restricting his reform agitation, for while the measure was shelved he had worked assiduously to keep the issues of school attendance and child-employment before the public eye. From various platforms around the country he had denounced the current situation in which close to a million children remained outside the system and considerable numbers of those who attended were unfit to learn "... owing to their employment out of school hours for extravagantly long periods at ridiculously low wages".<sup>297</sup>

<sup>291</sup>Ibid., H. Pooley to Keckewich, 13 December, 1899. Ibid., Gorst to Keckewich, 16 December, 1899. Ibid. Ed. 31/18/25, H.W. Orange to H.M. Lindsell, 4 January, 1900. Ibid., Gorst to Keckewich, 14 January, 1900.

<sup>292</sup>Ibid., Ed. 31/18/25, Gorst to Devonshire, 8 February, 1900.

<sup>293</sup>PD, 4th series, 81 (1900): 334.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 87 (1900): 202.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>296</sup>See, 63 and 64 Vict. Ch. 53. An Act to amend the Elementary Education Acts, 1890-1893 (Elementary Education Act, 1900).

<sup>297</sup>The Times, 29 October, 1898, p.9. Gorst's speech at Liverpool. See also his speeches at Sheffield, Cambridge and Bradford, Ibid., 28 October, 1898, p.8; 12 December, 1898, p.16; 12 January, 1899, p.8.

When the 1899 parliamentary session began he spoke out even more forcefully on these issues during the debate on Supply. Armed with statistics drawn from a recent Parliamentary Return, he painted a lurid picture of the prevalence of child employment and the condition of wage-earning children.<sup>298</sup> The Return, with supplementary additions, revealed that 145,000 so-called full-time pupils were actively engaged in some form of remunerative employment, a figure which was only partially representative of the actual numbers of children employed. Many children worked long hours for meagre wages:- six-year olds turned hose for 20 hours per week for 6d; tiny girls seamed hose for 16 hours per week for 1d. Some children laboured excessive hours:- 2,390 worked between 41 and 50 hours per week, while 793 worked in excess of 50 hours weekly. Using the figures supplied by the Return, Gorst calculated the average earnings of these children as approximately 1s per child, per week.<sup>299</sup> Thus, as Lucy observed, had Gorst occupied the Opposition benches "he would naturally and reasonably have concluded by moving a note of censure on the Ministry which permitted such inequities to survive" but, being a member of the current Administration, he was obliged to forego this step and, instead, terminated his speech by disclaiming any personal responsibility for the situation he had outlined.<sup>300</sup> His function as Vice-President, he pointed out, was officially defined as assisting the President of the Committee of Council and acting under his

<sup>298</sup> PD, 4th series, 70 (1899): 830-841.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid: 833-839.

<sup>300</sup> Lucy, Unionist Parliament, p. 285.



direction, a role he had "endeavoured to the best of my ability to perform ..." since his appointment to the office.<sup>301</sup>

Ironically, it was not Gorst's revelations pertaining to irregular attendance and wage-earning children that drew parliamentary fire, as he had intended, but his declaration of unaccountability as Vice-President.<sup>302</sup> Although there was some willingness to acknowledge that he was restricted by the limitations of his office, he was rebuked for not insisting upon "those reforms his Department thought necessary",<sup>303</sup> and there were suggestions that he should resign from "an office for which he shows his contempt ..."<sup>304</sup>. Thus, Gorst's speech had largely the effect of reducing temporarily his credibility in the House,<sup>305</sup> at a time when his position on the Front Bench was a significant weapon in his fight for educational reform.

Undaunted, Gorst now again utilized the periodical press to place the question of wage-earning children before the public eye. His article<sup>306</sup> was in essence a reiteration of the issues of attendance and child labour which he had raised in the Supply debate and in his public and parliamentary speeches of the preceding months. He repeated, albeit in less-detailed form, the statistics from the Parliamentary Return on attendance to exemplify

<sup>301</sup>PD, 4th series, 70 (1898): 841.

<sup>302</sup>See for example the speeches of A. Birrell, J. Bryce, and H. Campbell-Bannerman, Ibid: 846-848, 869-875, 911-914.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid: 848. Speech of A. Birrell.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid: 913. Speech of H. Campbell-Bannerman.

<sup>305</sup>Daglish, p. 363.

<sup>306</sup>J.E. Gorst, "School Children as Wage-Earners", Nineteenth Century, 46 (1899): 8-17.

the appalling labour conditions to which the wage-earning children were subjected, a situation Gorst termed a "great social evil".<sup>307</sup> Gorst acknowledged that under prevailing social conditions a total ban on the employment of children was impossible but argued that the excesses of the system could be effectively reduced through the adoption of stricter methods of regulation to prevent "the immense injury to the children which long hours combined with attendance at school must cause".<sup>308</sup> He suggested, however, that such regulation remain, in the first instance, the responsibility of the parents and only when they abused this right should the State intervene to protect the children. Gorst urged that the powers of restraint be placed in the hands of local authorities rather than the central government because the former "could in the main be trusted to make such regulations as would be suitable to the particular circumstances" in their areas.<sup>309</sup> Gorst's remarks reflected not only his belief in the greater efficacy of local as opposed to central government, but also the continuing cautiousness of his attitude towards collectivism, evidence that traces of Tory-democratic paternalism still exercised an influence upon his reformism. However, he displayed no such reticence with regard to the State's obligation towards under-nourished children. If the improvident parent guilty of this form of neglect were subjected to the full force of the law, "there would be less economic danger in giving breakfast at public expense to

<sup>307</sup> Ibid: 11-15.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid: p. 15.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

children who were starving because their parents had no bread to give".<sup>310</sup> Thus Gorst became the first prominent politician to publicly advocate government responsibility for child feeding,<sup>311</sup> an advocacy he was later to develop into a full-scale campaign for State-supported school meals.<sup>312</sup>

Although his article drew attention to the appalling conditions he sought to alleviate, once again Gorst's efforts failed to stimulate Government action. However, though his public agitation of 1898-1899 prompted no immediate legislative response, during the same period he succeeded in making steady progress towards the achievement of his goal to establish county and county borough councils as the paramount authorities for education at the local level. The first step in this process, the implementation of Clause 7 of the Art and Science Directory,<sup>313</sup> had met with some favourable response in the counties,<sup>314</sup> but had been resisted by many school boards, especially in large towns, who were opposed to subordinating themselves to county authorities.<sup>315</sup> Although throughout 1898 Gorst continued to urge the councils and the school boards to co-operate in implementing Clause 7, in order to provide a co-ordinated scheme for

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>311</sup> The Social Democratic Federation had called for State provision of school meals for elementary school children as early as the nineteen-eighties. [See, M.E. Bulkley, The Feeding of School Children (London, 1914), p.26.] However, as that group lacked political credibility their demands received little public attention.

<sup>312</sup> See Ch. 6 & 7 below.

<sup>313</sup> See pp. 245-247 above.

<sup>314</sup> PD, 4th series, 59 (1898): 576. Gorst's reply to question put by Tory M.P., E. Flower.

<sup>315</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, p.115. B.M. Allen, William Garnett: A Memoir (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 69-70. Hereafter referred to as Allen, William Garnett. Halevy, 5, p. 195.

secondary education in their areas,<sup>316</sup> he meanwhile accused the latter of deliberately blocking operation of the provision.<sup>317</sup> He sought, thereby, to generate hostility towards the boards and public support for the concept of county education authorities. He emphasized that it was the county councils, and not the boards, which had been empowered by Parliament to provide post-elementary education<sup>318</sup> and noted that, despite this, many of the larger boards had "established higher grade Board schools, which are the real secondary schools in the great towns ... thus taking the law into their own hands".<sup>319</sup> This was a reference to the doubtful legality of the school boards' provision of higher education which was shortly to form the spearhead of Gorst's assault against them. By the close of 1898, the continuing failure of the boards to co-operate on Clause 7 prompted Gorst to intensify his criticism of their behaviour to the point where he was now advocating that the councils alone should constitute the foundation of any new local education committees,<sup>320</sup> a concept which was henceforth, under his tutelage, to command increasing influence in Education Department policy.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>316</sup>See PD, 4th series, 64 (1898): 362. The Times, 29 October, 1898, p.9. Ibid., 18 November, 1898, p.10; 30 November, 1898, p.7.

<sup>317</sup>See for example, PD, 4th series, 64 (1898): 360. The Times, 29 October, 1898, p.9.

<sup>318</sup>The Times, 29 October, 1898, p.9.

<sup>319</sup>PD, 4th series, 59 (1898): 605.

<sup>320</sup>The Times, 12 December, 1898, p.16.

<sup>321</sup>Halevy, 5, p. 197.

Then, late in December, the opportunity arose for Gorst to further advance his plan to secure the position of the councils at the expense of the school boards. The London County Council decided, despite the objections of the London School Board, to apply to the Science and Art Department for recognition as the authority for secondary education in London under the Clause 7 regulation. The Board, recognizing that this would impede their future expansion in the field, immediately appealed against the application to the Science and Art Department and requested an opportunity to present a case for their own recognition. Their request was granted and the inquiry duly took place on February 1, 1899, with Gorst in attendance.<sup>322</sup>

The Board representatives argued that they and not the Council were the superior local education authority and they opposed the latter's application on the ground that it would severely retard their own work. They claimed that the Code Act of 1890 had empowered them to provide instruction up to any level and they warned that if the Council's application was accepted the Board would deliberately open new schools and classes to compete with those of the Council, thereby aggravating the current problem of overlap.<sup>323</sup> Alarmed by the Board's assertion of the right to educate pupils up to any standard,<sup>324</sup> and vexed by their attempts to block the County

<sup>322</sup>Allen, William Garnett, pp. 70-80.

<sup>323</sup>Ibid., p. 85. William Garnett, A Retrospect. How the County Council became the Local Education Authority for London on 1st May, 1904. Reprinted from the Educational Record, April 1929, cited in Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 113-114.

<sup>324</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, p. 132.

Council's application,<sup>325</sup> Gorst convinced the Science and Art Department to decide in favour of the Council.<sup>326</sup>

However, as Gorst realized, this decision did not invalidate the Board's claim to legally provide education up to any stage, which, if left unchallenged, would result in the continuance of their advanced work at the expense of the programmes offered by the County Council,<sup>327</sup> and also interfere with his plan to establish county councils as the authorities for secondary education. Consequently, he now sought to contest the legality of the Board's claim. There was ample evidence available to support Gorst's efforts in this direction. Instances of school boards' illegally providing higher education out of the rates were to be found in the Bryce Commission Report<sup>328</sup> and in Education Department documents,<sup>329</sup> the most damaging data appearing in a report prepared by Robert Morant, Assistant to the Director of the Education Department's Office of Special Enquiries.<sup>330</sup> Consequently, Gorst, with the aid of William Garnett and

<sup>325</sup>Barnett Papers, F/BAR/138, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 5 February, 1898.

<sup>326</sup>Allen, William Garnett, p. 89.

<sup>327</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>328</sup>See Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 40-41.

<sup>329</sup>See Gorst's speech at Paddington, the Times, 18 November, 1897, p.7. See also Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 117-118.

<sup>330</sup>Special Reports on Educational Subjects Vol. 3 (Cmnd. 8988), PP, 1898, 25: 1-82. The National Organization of Education of all grades as practised in Switzerland. The information pertaining to board school illegalities was distributed in data within the report (see p.58, pp. 60-61, pp. 18-81. App. F.). Educational historians have frequently asserted that Morant's report initiated the chain of events which led up to the challenge of the London School Board expenditures in court. (See for example, Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 117-131, p.143. Grier, pp. 72-74. G.A.N. Lowndes, The Silent Social Revolution: An Account of the Expansion of Public Education in England and Wales, 1895-1935 (London, 1937), pp. 76-78.) However, as Daghish has noted, this analysis fails to take into account Gorst's agitation against school-board illegalities, which he had been conducting during the two years prior to the publication of Morant's report, the result being that the latter's role in the attack on the boards "has been magnified with the advantage provided by hindsight of his later career, as well as general ignorance about Gorst's". (Daghish, p. 341.)

M.P. Edward Bond,<sup>331</sup> arranged that Francis Black, headmaster of Camden School of Art, in his capacity as ratepayer,<sup>332</sup> should contest the London School Board's expenditures on higher education before the district auditor, T.B. Cockerton.<sup>333</sup> Black in turn retained solicitor F.W. Hales to assist him in the challenge and together they compiled from the Board's registers and accounts damaging evidence that its schools were fraudulently providing higher education out of the rates.<sup>334</sup> Gorst also ensured the public would be acquainted with the School Board's activities by arranging to have questions put in Parliament on the issue.<sup>335</sup>

<sup>331</sup>Garnett was then Secretary of the London County Council Technical Education Board and Bond was its Chairman.

<sup>332</sup>As the Camden School was a ratepaying corporation Black was eligible to make the challenge.

<sup>333</sup>Eaglesham has asserted that Gorst was the sole instigator of the Cockerton case (see, Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 113-121). However, this assertion is questioned by Tony Taylor who has effectively argued that William Garnett played a key role in devising the strategy of a legal challenge to the London School Board's interpretation of the Code Act of 1890, a claim made earlier by Garnett himself. (See, Tony Taylor, "The Cockerton Case Revised: London Politics and Education, 1898-1901", British Journal of Educational Studies, 30 (1982): 329-348. Allen, William Garnett, pp. 87-88.)

<sup>334</sup>Allen, William Garnett, pp. 91-92. Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 114-115.

<sup>335</sup>Allen, William Garnett, p. 89. See, PD, 4th series, 66 (1899): 1091, 1445-1446.

Black and Hales presented their case before Cockerton in a series of meetings during April and May, 1899 and, in a decision given in June, the auditor disallowed the Board's expenditure on science and art schools and classes, but sanctioned their provision of evening classes. Not surprisingly, the Board refused to accept the decision and eventually resolved to appeal it in High Court.<sup>336</sup>

Pending the appeal, Gorst turned his attention to more pressing educational matters, the most immediate being legislation to reorganize the central authority for education. As this step was "an almost indispensable preliminary to the establishment of satisfactory local authorities" for secondary education,<sup>337</sup> the Government had prepared a Bill which provided for the merging of the Education and Science and Art Departments into a single department, headed by a Board of Education, which would also assume the functions of the Charity Commissioners and be charged with "the superintendence of matters relating to education in England and Wales".<sup>338</sup> Although it appears Gorst was given no role in the Bill's preparation,<sup>339</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Allen, William Garnett, pp. 91-93. Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 120. The challenge to the Board's evening school expenditures had been made independently by Hales, as a ratepayer. Thereafter he made an unsuccessful appeal against this decision but when the arguments against the Board's provision of Evening Continuation Schools were subsequently endorsed by the decisions in the main case he did not pursue his separate case further. (See Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 128-129.)

<sup>337</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/8. Memorandum by the Lord President for the Cabinet, 28 January, 1898.

<sup>338</sup> PD, 4th series, 63 (1898): 666.

<sup>339</sup> The Bill seems to have been drafted by Devonshire in collaboration with officials of the various Departments concerned. See P.R.O. Ed. 24/8, Memorandum by the Lord President to the Cabinet, 28 January, 1898. Bishop, pp. 259-262.



he was assigned to pilot it through the Commons. This was doubtless because, like the Omnibus Bill, it was uncontentious,<sup>340</sup> its basic concept having the approval of both parties,<sup>341</sup> and thus assured of parliamentary support. The most significant effect arising out of Gorst's association with the measure was his decision to second Robert Morant as his temporary personal assistant to advise him on the complexities of the Bill while it was under debate in the House.<sup>342</sup> This appointment set Morant upon a path from which he was able to exert ever-increasing influence upon the evolution of the nation's education system.<sup>343</sup>

Gorst introduced the Bill into the Commons on June 26, 1899. Because, as he noted, its proposals were familiar to Members, having been debated previously in the Lords and out of Parliament, his outlining of them was perfunctory and the subsequent debate brief.<sup>344</sup> Although there was some Opposition criticism of the measure's failure to reorganize at the local level,<sup>345</sup> the general feeling of the House was perhaps best summed up by Liberal James Bryce who expressed satisfaction at the Government's provision of "an organized authority to deal with secondary education".<sup>346</sup> This feeling was subsequently translated into support for the Bill, which

<sup>340</sup> See the speech of J. Bryce, PD, 4th series, 73 (1899): 630.

<sup>341</sup> Speech of Liberal F.A. Channing, Ibid: 617.

<sup>342</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, p. 135.

<sup>343</sup> See Eaglesham, Twentieth-Century Education, pp. 41-43.

<sup>344</sup> PD, 4th series, 73 (1899): 612-690.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid: 617-618. Speech of F.A. Channing.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid: 638.

successfully completed its passage through Parliament by August 1.<sup>347</sup>

With the establishment of the Board of Education the Committee of Council became defunct and, along with it, the position of Vice-President. However, a clause in the Act provided that the current office-holder, Gorst, should retain his title and position until his retirement or promotion, while the current Administration remained in power.<sup>348</sup> Not surprisingly, Gorst found the prospect of remaining in such a situation of impotency intolerable. He wrote to Salisbury expressing his dissatisfaction at having to remain in an "ornamental sinecure office" and requesting he be moved to "a position in which I can at least suppose myself to be of some use to the public service".<sup>349</sup> However, Gorst also, somewhat tactlessly, reminded his leader that it was upon his request that he, Gorst, had relinquished his legal career, in 1886, to serve the Government,<sup>350</sup> a faux pas not conducive to disposing Salisbury to accede to Gorst's appeal. Moreover, this situation was not helped by Salisbury's reception, at that point, of a letter from a group of Tory back-benchers complaining of a speech made by Gorst in which, they claimed, he had denounced squires and farmers as "the greatest enemies of education in the countryside".<sup>351</sup> As this was, according to Salisbury, but the latest in a series of denunciations by Tory M.P's of Gorst's attitude towards "the Government's

<sup>347</sup>The Bill passed second reading the same day and third reading August 1. See Ibid: 690-691. Ibid., 4th series, 75 (1899): 1130. It reached the statute books as the Board of Education Act, 1899. See 62 and 63 Vict. Ch. 33.

<sup>348</sup>See 62 and 63 Vict. Chap. 33, Clause 1, Sect. 3.

<sup>349</sup>Salisbury Papers, 83, Gorst to Salisbury, 2 August, 1899.

<sup>350</sup>Ibid.

<sup>351</sup>Ibid., 84, A.F. Jeffreys et al. to Salisbury, 4 August, 1899.

supporters and measures", Salisbury felt he could not offer Gorst another position, "without associating myself with your peculiar line of conduct". Thus, he declined to offer Gorst another post.<sup>352</sup> Gorst's subsequent attempt to deny any lapses into disloyalty on his part<sup>353</sup> failed to affect Salisbury's decision,<sup>354</sup> but with characteristic asperity Gorst determined to have the final word which included a dig at the leadership's social exclusiveness. He declared his presumed anti-Government posture to be a fabrication of the press, particularly the Times, adding that "Unfortunately for me, few of the leading members of the party know me personally, so that in my case, there is little chance of the false character being modified and corrected by the true one".<sup>355</sup>

Given what Gorst regarded as the injustice of the accusations against him,<sup>356</sup> Salisbury's refusal must have been difficult to accept. However, he evidently resolved not to allow the unsatisfactory position in which he was obliged to remain to interfere with his campaign for reform. This he indicated by resuming his struggle with the school boards, immediately following the passage of the Board of Education Bill. When, during Commons debate on August 4, one of the London School Board's members, M.P. E. Flower, indicated that the Board would appeal the Cockerton decision,<sup>357</sup> Gorst set about ensuring it would be upheld. By applying

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 85, Salisbury to Gorst, 9 August, 1899.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 86, Gorst to Salisbury, 25 September, 1899.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 87, Salisbury to Gorst, 27 September, 1899.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 88, Gorst to Salisbury, 30 September, 1899.

<sup>356</sup> Gorst's claim to having been misrepresented was not without foundation. For example, in making their complaint to Salisbury, the Tory back-benchers quoted Gorst's remarks out of context. See Gorst's speech at Dunmow, the Times, 29 July, 1899, p.10.

<sup>357</sup> PD, 4th series, 75 (1899): 1505-1506.

sustained pressure, he succeeded in convincing a reluctant Local Government Board to prosecute the case against the School Board.<sup>358</sup> Then, while awaiting resolution of the contest, he engineered two additional administrative steps designed to curtail the advanced work of the school boards, these being taken to ensure restriction would be achieved should the Cockerton decision be overturned. In preparing these measures he was now able to draw upon the expertise of Morant, who had assumed the position of private secretary to Gorst following the resignation of the incumbent in November, 1900.<sup>359</sup>

The first of these steps was taken in March 1900 in the form of a new Education Code.<sup>360</sup> This measure was devised to improve elementary education by making changes to the current funding system under which grants were made for individual subjects, a method which provided "a strong inducement to managers and masters to turn a school into a machine for earning the largest possible grant irrespective of the educational interests of the children".<sup>361</sup> The new Code replaced the piecemeal grants with a block grant. Curriculum changes were also effected providing for a central core of requisite subjects and a variety of subsidiary ones.<sup>362</sup> It was hoped that these changes would secure greater financial stability

<sup>358</sup> Eaglesham, p. 120. The Local Government Board's reluctance sprang from the fact it had no direct interest in the audit case and wished to avoid appearing antagonistic towards school boards generally.

<sup>359</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 138-140.

<sup>360</sup> Report of the Board of Education, 1899-1900 (Cmd. 328), PP, 1900, 19: 10-11.

<sup>361</sup> PD, 4th series, 82 (1900): 599-600. Speech of R.C. Jebb.

<sup>362</sup> Cmd. 328, pt. 1, pp. 9-10; pp. 10-11.

for the schools, greater freedom in the classification of pupils, a more liberal curriculum, and make more suitable provision for the special circumstances of a wide variety of schools, particularly the rural. Although the Government acknowledged that under the new provisions some progressive school boards would be obliged to relinquish the higher subjects they were currently teaching, they emphasized that most board and voluntary schools would receive increased grants, enabling them to raise their educational level. Thus, they argued that "the general standard of efficiency in our primary system, as a whole, will be unquestionably raised by the block grant".<sup>363</sup> Although the measure met with some opposition, most notably from the Progressives on the London School Board,<sup>364</sup> the Code was welcomed by many board-school supporters,<sup>365</sup> one such, J.H. Yoxall, rising in the House to "rejoice and approve of it" and to congratulate Gorst upon his effecting of the reform.<sup>366</sup>

Gorst's second and more controversial reform was introduced the following month as the Higher Elementary School Minute of April 6th,<sup>367</sup> which outlined the requirements which the boards would, henceforth, have to meet in order to qualify for grants applicable to higher day school education. The regulations embodied in the Minute were derived from a

<sup>363</sup> PD, 4th series, 82 (1900): 599. Speech of R.C. Jebb.

<sup>364</sup> See, The Times, 30 March, 1900, p.15. Ibid., 8 May, 1900, p.14.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 30 March, 1900, p.15.

<sup>366</sup> PD, 4th series, 82 (1900): 610.

<sup>367</sup> Minute of the Board of Education, April 6, 1900, Establishing Higher Elementary Schools (Cmd. 127), PP, 1900, 64: 959-963.

memorandum prepared by Gorst four days earlier.<sup>368</sup> In it Gorst proposed the establishment of a new category of school, a Higher Elementary School, to be created from the reorganization of the two elements of the existing Higher Grade Schools, public elementary and school of science into one institution. These new schools would be funded in accordance with the block-grant principle of the new Education Code of 1900, thus eliminating current overlap in higher elementary school financing, providing a saving to the Treasury of approximately £6,872 over the previous year's expenditures.<sup>369</sup> Gorst thus presented the scheme ostensibly as one of fiscal cost reduction, a stratagem designed to appeal to a Cabinet faced with the increasing military expenditures incurred by the South African War.<sup>370</sup> However, he stressed the saving was dependent upon strict adherence to certain conditions, which he then outlined, in which resided the true purpose of the proposed reform - the curtailment of the school boards higher educational work.<sup>371</sup>

The conditions were so devised as to ensure that only a minority of schools could meet them.<sup>372</sup> In order for a board to establish a Higher Elementary School it must first "be recognized by the Board of Education as 'necessary', i.e., actually required by the circumstances of the district".

<sup>368</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/39, 2 April, 1900. Scheme for New Grants under the Code to Higher Elementary Schools: To take the Place of the Present Grants from South Kensington and Whitehall.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., p. 4, Sections 13-15.

<sup>370</sup> Darglish, p. 405.

<sup>371</sup> Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 51-52.

<sup>372</sup> Eaglesham, Twentieth Century Education, p. 33.

The school must provide a full four-year programme with a curriculum based upon that of the "School of Science" course in the South Kensington Directory. Children up to, but not beyond, age 15 were to be admitted and they must have reached the requisite standard of attainment to be able to profit from the course. The school must not, however, attract middle-class children normally destined for a grammar-school education and, in order to guard against the development of competition between the Higher Elementary Schools and the recognized secondary schools, the former's curriculum was to be kept strictly non-secondary.<sup>373</sup>

Gorst's proposals apparently received immediate approval from both the Treasury and the Cabinet for they were quickly drafted into the Higher Elementary School Minute for publication as a Parliamentary paper on April 6th.<sup>374</sup> With the exception of the pupil age restriction, on the surface the Minute appeared beneficent.<sup>375</sup> It seemingly provided the higher grade schools with the means to acquire legal status.<sup>376</sup> It evidently ensured the establishment of a system of intermediate and technical schools under the school boards and, through the block grant, provided more efficient funding. In addition, it "cleared the way for a rational and uniform policy for these higher schools, which had for so long suffered from duality of central administration",<sup>377</sup> a reform which Gorst had

<sup>373</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/39, pp. 4-5, Section 16.

<sup>374</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/39/c. Gorst to Keckewich, 2 April, 1900. Ibid., Keckewich to Gorst, 4 April, 1900. The Times, 10 April, 1900. p.15.

<sup>375</sup>Eaglesham, Local Authority, p.51.

<sup>376</sup>See Gorst's speech during Commons debate on the Minute, PD, 4th series, 82 (1900): 690-691.

<sup>377</sup>Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 51.

stressed in his memorandum.<sup>378</sup> Consequently, the Minute met with substantial approval from both sides of the House.<sup>379</sup> There were some, however, who appeared to anticipate the direction the Board of Education would take in implementing the measure. Tory Albert Rollit and Liberal Alfred Hutton voiced dissatisfaction with the rigid nature of the Minute and expressed the hope that Gorst would "make some few concessions when putting it into operation".<sup>380</sup>

Gorst, however, knowing that the Minute's effectiveness depended upon its conditions being strictly observed, determined that no relaxation of the requirements would be permitted. Thus, he convinced Devonshire to deny London School Board requests for an easing of the regulations<sup>381</sup> and for recognition of 79 of their higher grade schools as Higher Elementary Schools under the Minute.<sup>382</sup> Gorst justified his position on the issue to Devonshire by asserting that the Board was proposing to establish "a type of school differing entirely" from the one outlined in the Minute and he urged that the Board be informed that the commercial-type schools they proposed were ineligible under the measure,<sup>383</sup> to which Devonshire acquiesced.<sup>384</sup> Despite pressure from some Board of Education officials, notably Keckewich, for greater flexibility in implementing the Minute,<sup>385</sup>

<sup>378</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/39, p.8, Section 23.

<sup>379</sup>PD, 4th series, 82 (1900): 608-609, 611. Speeches of H. Hobhouse and Y.H. Yoxall.

<sup>380</sup>Ibid: 626, 660.

<sup>381</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 14/102. Gorst to Devonshire, 14 May, 1900.

<sup>382</sup>Ibid., London School Board to Secretary, Board of Education, 29 June, 1900. Ibid., Gorst's marginal notes on the Board's letter.

<sup>383</sup>Ibid., Gorst to Devonshire, 24 July, 1900.

<sup>384</sup>Eglesham, Local Authority, p. 150.

<sup>385</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/40. Keckewich to Gorst and Devonshire, 22 July, 1900.



Gorst succeeded in gaining Devonshire's support for a continuance of the strict policy he had established<sup>386</sup> and, consequently his interpretation of the Minute's provisions were the ones subsequently followed by the Board of Education.

The success of Gorst's policy is reflected in the numbers of Higher Elementary Schools established during the first year of the Minute's operation: out of 190 applications for recognition made to the Board of Education only two had been approved.<sup>387</sup> Consequently, by November 1900, because of his success in acquiring Board of Education adherence to his strict policy on the Minute, Gorst had already succeeded in curtailing the school boards' higher educational work before the first court decision was handed down in the Cockerton case. Thus, this decision was in effect complementary to Gorst's plan to truncate the boards, rather than the lynchpin of his campaign.<sup>388</sup>

At this point the future of Gorst's entire reform campaign was called into question by Salisbury's decision to go to the country for affirmation of the Government's policy in the Boer War. Fortunately for Gorst, the Unionists were returned to power in this "Khaki election" of October 1900 with a majority of 134,<sup>389</sup> Gorst again securing his Cambridge seat unopposed.<sup>390</sup> However, as before and notwithstanding a Government re-

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., Gorst to Devonshire, 26 July, 1900. Ibid., Minute by Duke of Devonshire, 6 August, 1900. Ibid., Devonshire to Gorst, 20 November, 1900. Ibid., Gorst to Devonshire, November, 1900 (no date).

<sup>387</sup> PD, 4th series, 89 (1901): 481-482. Gorst's reply to question by J.H. Yoxall.

<sup>388</sup> Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 151.

<sup>389</sup> The Times, 17 October, 1900, p.4.

<sup>390</sup> Cambridge Chronicle, 5 October, 1900, p.4.

shuffle, he was not given a place in the Cabinet, a slight he had anticipated but nonetheless found mortifying.<sup>391</sup> As on previous occasions, Gorst's response to rejection was a redoubling of his efforts to secure the reforms he sought, doubtless spurred on by a determination to triumph over the ignominious situation in which the Government appeared resolved to retain him. Following his return from the hustings, Gorst prepared a scheme to effect a sweeping rationalization of administration at the local level and presented it for incorporation into the forthcoming Education Bill,<sup>392</sup> with which the Government intended to create local authorities for education.<sup>393</sup> Gorst proposed that these authorities conform to the pattern already established in local government administration, namely, "single areas with single governing bodies which exercise all functions ... within their district". Accordingly, he advocated the county and county boroughs be constituted the education authorities for "all purposes" in their districts; that they assume the powers of the school boards, in order to obviate the overlap which would otherwise result if the boards were allowed to operate alongside the new authorities; and that they be authorized to delegate their authority to bodies of local managers, as was prescribed by Clause 10 of the 1896 Bill. He also recommended that the new authorities

<sup>391</sup>H.W. Lucy, Nearing Jordan (London, 1916), p. 251.

<sup>392</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/29/11a. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst (November ? 1900). Ibid., Further Memorandum by J.E. Gorst on present situation (November ? 1900).

<sup>393</sup>This measure had been promised by the Government when replying to Opposition criticism of the Board of Education Bill's failure to deal with overlap at the local level. See, PD, 4th series, 73 (1899): 621-622. Speech of R.C. Jebb.

be empowered to aid voluntary schools out of the rates.<sup>394</sup> Gorst justified his plan for the assimilation of the boards by the new authorities by warning of the danger posed to the new administrative system by the boards if they were allowed to continue in existence. "This Authority will find itself in nearly every County Borough confronted by an Elementary Authority possessed of unlimited resources, which has already successfully invaded the sphere of secondary Education, and which in the meanwhile will have made every effort it can to extend its operations". Given the boards unlimited power to rate, this work was likely to continue as the Board of Education's only weapon of defence, the withholding of funding for buildings, was easily overcome by the boards through their ability to obtain loans secured on the elementary school rate. Consequently, the new education authorities would prove to be "little more than a feeble competition with the School Board, unless some method is adopted for putting a stop to rivalry, overlapping, and consequent waste of public resources".<sup>395</sup>

Gorst formulated his proposals into a draft Education Bill and forwarded it to Devonshire on November 13,<sup>396</sup> with a covering letter, in

<sup>394</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/29/11a. Memorandum by J.E. Gorst (November ? 1900). By 1900, the financial benefits acquired by the voluntary schools in 1897 had been almost completely exhausted and these institutions were now once again faced with the prospect of extinction. (See Cruickshank, pp. 70-71.)

<sup>395</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/29/11a. Further Memorandum by J.E. Gorst on the present situation (November ? 1900), pp. 1-3.

<sup>396</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/29. Definite Proposals by J.E. Gorst for a Bill. See also Appendix A.

which he recapitulated the main points of his scheme.<sup>397</sup> However, the odds were against it being accepted. Devonshire felt the county councils should be consulted to discover if they were prepared to take the responsibilities proposed in Gorst's plan, "as in the face of strong opposition the proposals would meet with from many quarters, they would have little chance of being accepted unless the County Councils could be reckoned on".<sup>398</sup> When, accordingly, Gorst conferred with Sir John Hibbert, former President of the County Councils' Association, regarding the councils' likely response to the proposals,<sup>399</sup> the latter replied that he thought the plan workable but believed "the difficulties of carrying such a scheme through Parliament will be so great, that I doubt the wisdom of making the Secondary Education Bill in any way dependent upon the suggested transfer".<sup>400</sup> There was also evidence that Gorst's proposal for rate aid to voluntary schools would meet with some opposition from the most conservative sections of the Anglican Church.<sup>401</sup> Then, on December 20, the judgment was handed down in the Cockerton case which helped to lessen the threat of competition between the boards and the proposed new authority by drastically

<sup>397</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/29/11b. Gorst to Devonshire, 13 November, 1900. This letter is dated 13 December, 1900. However, in his reply Devonshire clearly states he is considering proposals submitted by Gorst on 13 November, 1900. (See, Ibid., Ed. 24/29/11c. Memorandum by Duke of Devonshire on Gorst's two proposals, 6 December, 1900.) The discrepancy is evidently the result of a typographical error.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/29/11c. Memorandum by Duke of Devonshire on Gorst's two proposals, 6 December, 1900.

<sup>399</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/29/10. Gorst to Sir J. Hibbert, 14 December, 1900.

<sup>400</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/29/11b. Sir J. Hibbert to Gorst, 21 December, 1900.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/15/57. G. Arthur Jones to Gorst, 4 January, 1901. Ibid., Gorst to Jones, 10 January, 1901.

limiting the former's ability to expend the rates on non-elementary education. This doubtless served to weaken, in the Cabinet's eyes, the rationale propounded by Gorst for legislating a comprehensive reorganization scheme at this time.

The judgment gave legal confirmation to the auditor's earlier decision. The Justices ruled that the education given by the London School Board, under the Art and Science Directory, in day and evening schools was illegal, that the Board's authority under the Education Acts was confined to giving instruction out of the rates to children only, and that the Board's powers did not extend to providing evening school education to adults. This ruling signalled the beginning of the end for the Board's evening continuation schools and effectively restricted the greater part of their higher grade work, thus reinforcing the administrative actions already implemented by Gorst since 1897, although the judgment was temporarily held in abeyance by the Board's decision to challenge the ruling in the Court of Appeal.<sup>402</sup>

The Government's concern for the possible political consequences of adopting Gorst's Bill was reflected in Balfour's response to its provisions. He found them alarming, "not because they are defective but because they are too complete. I fear a repetition of our parliamentary experience in '96!"<sup>403</sup> An indication of the direction in which the Cabinet's attitude on the question was crystallizing emerged in early March

<sup>402</sup> Allen, William Garnett, pp. 94-96.

<sup>403</sup> Salisbury Papers, Balfour to Salisbury, 5 January, 1901.

in Gorst's Commons speech outlining the Government's future educational policy. Gorst announced that a Bill would be introduced to effect "the creation of Secondary Education Authorities", empowered to supply public instruction in non-elementary education, but then added the qualification that should Parliament conclude there ought to be one authority for all education there was a possibility the Bill could be amended in this direction during debate.<sup>404</sup> Having thus delivered the Government's official line, Gorst proceeded to state his own position with regard to the proposed authority. There would be no efficient national education system, he declared, "until we make up our mind what is to be the authority, until we have one authority, and until schools of every kind of every grade are placed under that one authority". Only then would overlap and organization chaos be removed.<sup>405</sup>

While the proposed Education Bill was being moulded into its final form, Gorst negotiated one more administrative limitation upon the school-boards' sphere of operation. The Cockerton decision of December 1900 had ruled that the London School Board's, and thus, all boards', expenditures of rates on adult education was illegal. This placed the future of large numbers of evening schools in jeopardy as many of them were maintained out of the school-board rate. Consequently, the Government was faced with the

<sup>404</sup>PD, 4th series, 90 (1901): 610. This statement had been authorized by Devonshire in advance of the debate. "The Duke thinks it would do no harm to hint at the possibility of creating one authority for all education: but it would have to be done, more or less, as if it was the V.P.'s own suggestion and the Government should not, of course, be committed in any way". (P.R.O. Ed. 24/14/63. R. Walrond to R.L. Morant, 5 March, 1901.)

<sup>405</sup>PD, 4th series, 90 (1901): 613.

necessity of making provision for the continuance of these schools and Gorst seized upon the opportunity to effect a reorganization of the evening school system which strengthened the powers of the central and county education authorities at the expense of the school boards.

The incentive for Gorst's action was provided by Robert Morant who, following the handing down of the Cockerton judgment, produced a memorandum in which he examined the entire evening school situation and submitted proposals aimed at solving the current difficulties.<sup>406</sup> Morant outlined how, in the process of their development, the evening schools had become de facto secondary schools which the Government, by undisguised pretence, had continued to treat as elementary institutions in order that they might remain under the jurisdiction of the school boards and the Education Department's Whitehall (elementary) branch. This expedient had restricted evening school development by ensuring the boards' institutions were restrained by the requirements of the elementary day school code, while simultaneously hindering the county councils efforts to establish evening school education as they were empowered to expend the rates only for technical education. This system had also produced wasteful competition at the local level and confusion and want of co-ordination within the central departments.<sup>407</sup> He urged that the Government remedy these ills by rationalizing

<sup>406</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/39. The Organisation of Evening Schools. Eaglesham claims this memorandum was written in March 1901 but Daghlish effectively argues that it was produced in late December, 1900, in response to the Cockerton decision. (See Daghlish, p. 482, n.3, p. 483. Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 158.)

<sup>407</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/39. The Organisation of Evening Schools, Section I.

the system, this to be effected by placing all evening schools and classes under one central authority, by creating one set of regulations for all evening school education, and by replacing separate subject financing with a single grant system. He advocated that at the local level the county and county borough councils be constituted the education authority. He suggested, as a means of obviating political objections to the scheme, that the boards be permitted to act as the designated agents of the local authority in expending elementary education rates on evening schools.<sup>408</sup>

As Morant's ideas were consistent with Gorst's aims for evening school administration,<sup>409</sup> as well as his general policy for rationalization at the local level, he now decided to use them to reorganize secondary education while simultaneously applying one more curb to the boards' higher educational work. He pointed out to Devonshire that, if the Cockerton decision was upheld in the Court of Queen's Bench, the boards would be debarred from expending rates on education for pupils over sixteen and for instruction not within the Evening Continuation Schools Code. As a solution to the difficulties Gorst proposed the creation of a new Code for Evening Schools "by which they would cease to be public Elementary schools and become frankly what they really are Secondary Schools ..."; and to include a clause in the proposed Bill empowering the new secondary authorities to designate school boards their agents for the administration of evening schools and permitting them, in this capacity, to maintain these institutions out of the rates.<sup>410</sup>

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., Section III.

<sup>409</sup> Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 158.

<sup>410</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/83. Gorst to Devonshire, 15 March, 1901.



Devonshire gave his approval for the preparation of such a measure<sup>411</sup> and when, two weeks later, the Court of Appeal upheld the Cockerton decision, increasing the necessity for taking some such action as proposed by Gorst, he, Morant and Sir William Abney,<sup>412</sup> began to draw up the new scheme of regulations, which they completed by the end of April.<sup>413</sup> Gorst urged that the scheme be used to end the overlap in the central administration of evening school education by transferring its management to the Board of Education's branch at South Kensington.<sup>414</sup> The proposed regulations were so devised as to ensure that hereafter evening schools would provide essentially post-elementary education to adult pupils.<sup>415</sup> As school boards were prohibited by the Cockerton judgment from supplying such education out of the rates to adult pupils, this meant that boards wishing to operate such schools would be obliged to become agents of their local secondary education authority. A clause permitting this delegation of powers had been included in the Education Bill introduced into Parliament on May 7th, along with one enabling Technical Education Committees to finance all evening school work.<sup>416</sup>

<sup>411</sup>Ibid., Devonshire to Gorst, 16 March, 1901.

<sup>412</sup>The head of the Board of Education's South Kensington division.

<sup>413</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/83. Memorandum on the new Scheme of Regulations For Evening Schools and Classes under the Board of Education. Ibid., Ed. 24/83/29. W.R. Abney to Morant, 3 May, 1901.

<sup>414</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/83/B18. Gorst to Devonshire, 8 May, 1901.

<sup>415</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/83. Memorandum on the new Scheme of Regulations For Evening Schools and Classes under the Board of Education, paras. 8-9.

<sup>416</sup>Ibid., para. 11.

Devonshire approved the scheme and its proposals were formulated into a draft Minute of 20 clauses for the regulation of non-elementary evening school education.<sup>417</sup> To this draft Morant subsequently added a further clause specifying the conditions under which the school boards might operate an evening school as a public elementary school.<sup>418</sup> Although this clause appeared to grant the boards a degree of independence, in actuality its financial and age restrictions effectively reduced the boards' current level of independent activity in the field. Thus the Minute provided the mechanisms for overcoming the Cockerton difficulty while also ensuring that, hereafter, the final responsibility for the organization of evening school education resided with the county authorities. The Minute was issued on July 3rd,<sup>419</sup> but its implementation had to wait upon the successful passage of the Education Bill currently before the House.

This Bill had been introduced by Gorst on May 7, at which time he had requested leave "to establish in every part of England and Wales a local Education Authority which is intended to supervise education of every kind ...",<sup>420</sup> apparently heralding the presentation of a comprehensive measure along the lines he had already advocated.<sup>421</sup> However, as his

<sup>417</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/83. Minute Establishing Regulations for Evening Schools and Classes.

<sup>418</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/39. Additional article to be added to the New Regulations for Evening Schools. (This clause had been added in response to a suggestion by Devonshire that there be included in the Minute some further clarification of the future permissible limit of the school boards evening school work within the framework prescribed by the Cockerton judgment. See, Ibid., Ed. 24/83, R. Walrond to Morant, 20 May, 1901.)

<sup>419</sup>The Times, 21 July, 1901, p.7.

<sup>420</sup>PD, 4th series, 93 (1901): 970.

<sup>421</sup>See pp. 281-283 above.

subsequent outlining of the provisions revealed, the Cabinet had balked at taking this contentious step. The Bill proposed to establish committees of the county and county borough councils as local authorities for education. The authorities would derive their funds from the "whisky money" and from the levying of a special 2d rate. However, these funds were to be applied to secondary education only, the school boards thereby being permitted to continue as the authorities for the elementary schools.<sup>422</sup> The boards would also be allowed to continue operating the "Cockerton" schools threatened with closure by the court's decision, but only as agents of the new county authorities.<sup>423</sup>

The Bill was in substance the proposals of Gorst's 1896 measure pertaining to non-elementary education and, when combined with the educational reforms implemented during the intervening years, represented the fulfillment of the basic aims of his original Bill. However, because of the Cabinet's diffidence, this 1901 version also duplicated its precursor's failure to abolish the school boards, thereby again preventing complete rationalization of the education system. The Bill's inability to effect unity of educational administration was seized upon by the Opposition and made the focus of its attack on the measure.<sup>424</sup> Moreover, Gorst's opening statement that the new local authorities would hopefully come to control and supervise all schools<sup>425</sup> was accurately perceived by the Liberals as

<sup>422</sup>PD, 4th series, 93 (1901): 978.

<sup>423</sup>Ibid: 985.

<sup>424</sup>See for example the speeches of Bryce, Macnamara and Yoxall, Ibid: 988, 994-998, 1001.

<sup>425</sup>Ibid: 970.

signalling the eventual abolition of the school boards,<sup>426</sup> serving to intensify Liberal opposition to the measure. In addition to the resistance it met with from the Opposition benches, the Bill also had to contend with an over-burdened parliamentary timetable. The Session was already half over when the Bill was introduced and, following the Whitsuntide recess of May 5-June 10, Parliament still had to deal with Finance and Army Bills in addition to Education, while simultaneously coping with the overriding demands of the Boer War.<sup>427</sup>

Consequently, the Bill was crowded out and was dropped on June 27.<sup>428</sup> This necessitated the enactment of some form of temporary legislation to legalise the "Cockerton schools" pending the introduction of a permanent Bill to replace the one abandoned. Consequently, a small Cabinet Committee was formed, comprising Devonshire, Balfour, Gorst, W.H. Long, President of the Local Government Board, and Morant, to shape an appropriate measure. The Committee duly framed a one-clause Bill,<sup>429</sup> along the lines proposed earlier by Gorst,<sup>430</sup> which was introduced into Parliament on July 2.<sup>431</sup>

At first glance it appeared to be a straightforward measure to resolve the Cockerton difficulties. Its stated purpose was, to enable

<sup>426</sup>Griffith-Boscawen, p. 201.

<sup>427</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 147-148. Griffith-Boscawen, pp. 200-201.

<sup>428</sup>PD, 4th series, 96 (1901): 218.

<sup>429</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/14/14. Successive Stages of the Education Bill.

<sup>430</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/138.

<sup>431</sup>PD, 4th series, 96 (1901): 609-611.

"local authorities to empower school boards temporarily to carry on certain schools, and for sanctioning certain school board expenses".<sup>432</sup> It conferred on the local authorities the right to sanction school board expenditure out of the rates on secondary education, for one year. However, in so doing it subordinated the boards to the county and county borough councils, in the area of post-elementary education, and it established the principle of a superior local authority for education, this being the councils.<sup>433</sup> Consequently, the Bill met with determined opposition from the school board supporters on the Liberal benches, particularly as it had been brought in under the ten minute rule.<sup>434</sup> Gorst effectively refuted the Opposition's claims that the Cockerton judgment, and the resulting Bill, would cripple the boards' higher grade schools, but was obliged to acknowledge that their evening schools would be severely affected. However, he claimed that this was less devastating than it appeared to be at first sight because the general quality of education in the boards' evening schools was inferior to that given in the secondary schools and, thus, some "might be closed with great advantage to the public education of the country".<sup>435</sup> Spurred on no doubt by the knowledge that the Government possessed both the determination and the parliamentary strength to assure the Bill's passage, Gorst then added to his already critical remarks a scathing commentary on the boards themselves.<sup>436</sup> Although, as one Unionist observed, his comments

<sup>432</sup>Ibid: 609.

<sup>433</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 97 (1901): 1358-1364. Speech of A.J. Balfour.

<sup>434</sup>See for example the speech of James Bryce, Ibid., 4th series, 96 (1901): 611-612.

<sup>435</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 96 (1901): 1170-1184.

<sup>436</sup>Ibid: 1180.

contained more than a kernel of truth, "they were unwise", for they "lashed Radical 'Educationalists' like Dr. Macnamara, Mr. Bryce, and Mr. George White into fury", provoking them into heated response and, thereby, prolonging debate on the measure.<sup>437</sup> However, the Opposition's obstructionist tactics could delay, but not prevent, the Bill's passage, which was eventually achieved at the end of third reading on July 20.<sup>438</sup>

Immediately following the division, the House debated the Evening School Minute of July 3,<sup>439</sup> the restrictive provisions of which might now be implemented through the associated clause in the newly-passed Bill. Having failed to halt the enactment of the Cockerton Bill the Opposition now directed its resentment against the Minute but, as in the previous debate, Unionist strength again ensured a victory in the subsequent division,<sup>440</sup> thereby marking the attainment of one more step towards the completion of Gorst's rationalization scheme.

As the Cockerton Act was only a stop-gap measure, following its passage the Government were obliged to turn their attention to the preparation of legislation to provide a more permanent solution to current educational difficulties. Consequently, the Cabinet Committee consisting of Devonshire, Balfour, Long and Gorst, which had drafted the Cockerton Bill, now reassembled to consider the proposed new measure.<sup>441</sup> The basis for their discussion was a memorandum prepared, one week earlier, by Morant at

<sup>437</sup> Griffith-Boscawen, p.202.

<sup>438</sup> PD, 4th series, 98 (1901): 625. The Bill was enacted as the Education Act, 1901. See, Edw. VII I. Ch. II (also referred to as the Cockerton Act).

<sup>439</sup> PD, 4th series, 98 (1901): 625-674.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid: 674.

<sup>441</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/14/14. Successive Stages of the Education Bill.

the request of the Committee.<sup>442</sup> In this memorandum Morant had focused upon the problems associated with the two potential Bills the Government might devise, one for secondary education only, the other a comprehensive measure dealing with both secondary and elementary education.<sup>443</sup> Although the memorandum presented a lucid analysis of the multiple problems the proposed Bill must address, it fell short of constituting a definite plan for immediate Government action, indicating that Morant's ideas were still in process of formation at this stage.<sup>444</sup>

The Cabinet Committee's discussion of the memorandum was similarly irresolute, being "in the nature of a rambling preliminary conversation without much in the way of definite conclusions".<sup>445</sup> A great deal of the debate revolved around the perennial thorny issue of rate aid to voluntary schools. Gorst proposed the establishment of two sets of schools under the borough councils, one (the former board schools) rate-supported and subject to the Cowper-Temple Clause, the other rate-aided, in accordance with terms agreed on between the council and the voluntary school managers, and free of the Cowper-Temple restrictions. It was noted, however, that Chamberlain would oppose repeal of the Clause, prompting Balfour to suggest that Gorst's two-fold system be revised to a dual scheme of (a) rate-aided schools and (b) rate-supported schools subject to Clause 27 of the 1896 Bill.<sup>446</sup>

<sup>442</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 150-151.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 24/14/13a. Some questions to be considered before drafting Education Bill for 1902.

<sup>444</sup> E.J.R. Eaglesham, "Planning the Education Bill of 1902", British Journal of Educational Studies, 9 (1960): 3-24. Hereafter referred to as Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902".

<sup>445</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/16/81. Sir C. Ilbert to R. Walrond, 17 August, 1901.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., Ed. 24/16/79f. Notes by R.L. Morant (on discussions preceding formulation of the 1902 Act), 8 August, 1901.

At Balfour's request, Gorst prepared a draft Bill "to focus discussion on the important points at issue".<sup>447</sup> Gorst's draft, "the 1902 Bill in embryo",<sup>448</sup> provided for the establishment of a single local education authority in every county and county borough to be responsible for both elementary and secondary education, as proposed in the Education Bill of 1901 withdrawn in June. The authorities were permitted to levy an unlimitable rate and empowered to expend it on all types of education - elementary and secondary, including evening and voluntary schools. The non-county boroughs and urban districts might continue to levy a penny rate under the Technical Instruction Acts and were granted the additional right to raise a further rate for the provision of evening and elementary education, including aid to voluntary schools. This was an attempt to overcome the obstacle of the minor local authorities, referred to as the "Rollit difficulty", which had helped to wreck the 1896 Bill. The draft authorized the Board of Education to vest in the councils, by means of a Provisional Order, the powers of the school boards, under any one of the following circumstances:- (1) an application of the council itself; (2) the existence of conditions under which a school board would otherwise be set up; (3) the school board being in default - a provision designed to further undermine the boards. The measure would also repeal the Cowper-Temple provision, replacing it with a new clause.<sup>449</sup>

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., Ed. 24/14/14. Successive Stages of the Education Bill.

<sup>448</sup> Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 4.

<sup>449</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/15/64c. Memorandum on First Draft of Education Bill, 1902. J.E. Gorst, 19 August, 1901. The Cowper-Temple replacement clause was not defined in the memorandum.



Although the draft retained the rationalization principle of one paramount local authority for education proposed in Gorst's previous measures, it also duplicated the weaknesses of his 1896 and withdrawn 1901 Bill, namely, the inability to deal effectively with the school board problem and the "Rollit" difficulty. Even Gorst was obliged to acknowledge that "Under this Bill a potential double authority would still exist in non-County Boroughs and Urban Districts. The possibility of overlapping is not excluded, and I see no way it can be. With common sense and mutual forbearance, however, a modus vivendi might be established".<sup>450</sup> Thus the measure possessed the potential for arousing the opposition of the supporters of the boards and the minor local authorities.<sup>451</sup> Despite these flaws, Devonshire found the measure "thoroughly comprehensive and to raise most of the points which we shall have to decide".<sup>452</sup>

Morant, meanwhile, had been endeavouring to ingratiate himself with Balfour, in an effort to gain acceptance for his own proposals for the measure. He had ascertained that Balfour was the Minister upon whom final responsibility for shaping and piloting the Bill must devolve, given that Gorst's behaviour in recent educational debates had convinced the Government he was not "a suitable man to lead a big Parliamentary fight".<sup>453</sup> At Morant's request, Dr. Talbot, Bishop of Rochester, arranged a meeting with

<sup>450</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>451</sup>Daglish, p. 541.

<sup>452</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49769, ff.195-196, Devonshire to Balfour, 25 August, 1901.

<sup>453</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, p. 154. See also, Sadleir, pp. 181-182.

Balfour, at which Morant succeeded in impressing the Cabinet Minister with his ideas.<sup>454</sup>

After perusing Gorst's draft, Balfour discussed the whole question of the measure with Salisbury,<sup>455</sup> who asked that a finalized Bill be completed in time for the next Cabinet meeting on November 5. Balfour thereupon instructed Devonshire to have three alternative Bills prepared, one involving secondary education only, one embracing both elementary and secondary, and one dealing primarily with secondary but containing provision for the repeal of the Cowper-Temple clause, the Bills to serve as a basis for future discussion.<sup>456</sup> Devonshire duly requested Gorst to have the Bills drawn up, although, apparently with reluctance, for he considered Gorst's draft a satisfactory measure.<sup>457</sup> Gorst, however, "viewed with consternation" Balfour's proposed number one and number two Bills, not only because of his commitment to the single authority concept but also because of these measures' potential for arousing parliamentary opposition. He warned Balfour, "The introduction of a mere Secondary Education Bill next year will evoke a storm of indignation from both friends and foes, and will probably profoundly damage the reputation of the Government", while the religious provision in the number three Bill "is of no practical importance" and should be eschewed save "to establish some great principle or ... to please our own party".<sup>458</sup>

<sup>454</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 154-156. Dugdale, pp. 320-321.

<sup>455</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, p. 157.

<sup>456</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/16/79a. Balfour to Devonshire, 28 August, 1901.

<sup>457</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/16/79b. Devonshire to Gorst, 2 September, 1901.

<sup>458</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/16/79c. Gorst to Devonshire, 9 September, 1901.

After further discussion, Devonshire, Gorst and Morant concluded that the abolition of the school boards might be required in order to facilitate the granting of rate aid to voluntary schools, it being thought "inexpedient for the County Council to subsidise Voluntary Schools in competition perhaps with Board Schools in a Board School area".<sup>459</sup> Devonshire instructed Morant to report details of the discussion to Balfour<sup>460</sup> but Morant had already privately arranged for such a meeting, for the purpose of "talking out the things which seem always 'left at a loose end' after the confabulations between Gorst and the Duke".<sup>461</sup> Thus, while ostensibly briefing Balfour on the progress of the Bill, Morant used the meeting to urge the former to assume control of the Bill next session, and to impress Balfour once again with his command of the complexities of the educational question.<sup>462</sup> Following this discussion, Morant relayed Balfour's views to Devonshire and Gorst, including his request for a further draft Bill, which Gorst duly completed by October 16.<sup>463</sup>

This October 16 Bill was subsequently re-drafted by Parliamentary Counsel, Sir Courtney Ilbert, essentially in accordance with Gorst's suggestions, to ensure "the right language necessary to carry out the

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., Ed. 24/14/14. Successive Stages of the Education Bill. Ibid., Ed. 24/14/15. Duke of Devonshire's notes on the Education Bill. Ibid., Devonshire to Morant, 1 October, 1901.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid., Ed. 24/14/15. Devonshire to Morant, 29 September, 1901.

<sup>461</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49787, ff.22, Morant to Balfour, 19 September, 1901.

<sup>462</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 158-159.

<sup>463</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/14/14. Successive Stages of the Education Bill.

various proposals".<sup>464</sup> Devonshire also had drawn up, albeit reluctantly, two additional draft Bills dealing solely with secondary education, as requested earlier by Salisbury and Balfour,<sup>465</sup> his reluctance here clearly indicating his continuing preference for the fundamental concepts contained in Gorst's measure.<sup>466</sup> By this time, however, Gorst was experiencing qualms with regard to the abolition of the large school boards, believing such a step "would constitute a formidable, and I think unnecessary obstacle to the acceptance of our Bill". Consequently, he recommended that compulsory abolition be limited, initially, to school boards in districts having populations of less than 10,000, an action he thought would arouse little opposition because the ineffectiveness of these boards was generally recognized. Provision could be made for the gradual abolition of all other boards by reverting to "our original plan of transferring their powers,

<sup>464</sup>Ibid., Ed. 24/16/95. (Keckewich?/Morant?) to Ilbert, 21 October, 1901. Two revisions were effected. (1) Two alternative clauses were prepared for Gorst's Clause 8, the provision pertaining to the compulsory delegation of educational powers to the minor local authorities. One clause was to follow Gorst's original, the other to restrict the delegation to non-county boroughs of 10,000 or above with the lesser urban districts to be absorbed by the county authority. (2) An alternative to Gorst's provision determining conditions for rate aid to voluntary schools was formulated "requiring the Council to pay all maintenance expenses of the School; but it is not to be saddled with any reference to religious instruction". (Ibid.)

<sup>465</sup>Ibid.

<sup>466</sup>Daglish, p. 553.

by Provisional Order made on local application",<sup>467</sup> as proposed in his August 19 draft.

Some Unionist ministers were also experiencing doubts about the measure. When, on November 5, the Cabinet met to consider the Bill it very quickly came under attack. Although efforts by some members to restrict it to secondary education only were thwarted, a majority of the Cabinet, led by Chamberlain, succeeded in obtaining rejection of the provision giving rate aid to voluntary schools.<sup>468</sup> Chamberlain's objections were based on political considerations, namely, that such a provision would alienate the Radical Unionists.<sup>469</sup> Those who supported

<sup>467</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/16/99. Gorst to Devonshire, 23 October, 1901. Eaglesham has opined that it was Gorst's hesitancy at this stage which eventually led to his being relieved of responsibility for the 1902 Bill (Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p.5). However, while his doubts might have contributed to the Government's decision, there were far more important factors leading the Government towards this decision. As has been seen, the fiasco associated with the 1896 Bill had led to his being subsequently entrusted with only minor measures in the House. The Government's lack of faith in his ability to effectively carry educational reforms through Parliament had been increased, thereafter, by his ill-advised parliamentary outbursts, particularly those directed against sections of his own party and the influential London School Board (Allen, Robert Morant, p. 154). A further factor operating in Gorst's exclusion was the parallel ascendancy of Robert Morant. As Eaglesham himself has observed, Morant's successful bid to capture Balfour's support, and their resulting alliance, assured that Morant became "the decisive force" in the future development of the Bill (Eaglesham, Twentieth Century Education, pp. 41-42). Moreover, as Daglish has effectively argued, although Gorst may have entertained some doubts as to the political advisability of the planned measure, he remained committed to its fundamental concept of one paramount local education authority (Daglish, pp. 548-549).

<sup>468</sup>A. FitzRoy, Memoirs, 2 vols. (London, 1923), I, p. 63.

<sup>469</sup>"If you were to promote a Bill giving Rate aid to denominational schools, I think you would lose Birmingham and the Birmingham influence, whatever that may be worth to the Unionist Party". (Chamberlain to the Earl of Selborne, 7 November, 1901. Quoted in J. Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, vol. 4, At the Height of His Power, 1901-1903 (London, 1951), p. 482.)

him were apparently motivated by a desire to avoid the rate increase necessitated by such a provision.<sup>470</sup> Consequently, a decision was made to appoint a Cabinet Committee to draft a Bill comprising both secondary and elementary education, but devoid of a clause granting rate aid to voluntary schools.<sup>471</sup>

However, Church leaders and their supporters were now beginning to press for a comprehensive and permanent solution of the voluntary schools' difficulties in the form of rate aid, but granted by parliamentary legislation rather than "local option", the latter alternative being one which Balfour was known to favour.<sup>472</sup> Representations in support of such a solution were made to Morant and Salisbury by the Bishop of Rochester,<sup>473</sup> and to Balfour by Lord Hugh Cecil.<sup>474</sup> Then, in November, the Archdeacon of Birmingham, E.A. Coventry, forwarded to Gorst a copy of resolutions agreed to at a November 2 Conference of Church educationists, which included recommendations urging the Government to pass, next Session, a comprehensive measure dealing with both secondary and primary education and granting rate aid to the voluntary schools, in exchange for which the latter would be prepared to cede some measure of public control.<sup>475</sup>

<sup>470</sup>FitzRoy, I, p. 63.

<sup>471</sup>Amery, 4, p. 482. Allen, Robert Morant, p. 161.

<sup>472</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, p. 162. Cruickshank, p. 77. Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 11.

<sup>473</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 162-163.

<sup>474</sup>Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 17.

<sup>475</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 24/17/111. Resolutions agreed to at a Conference of Representatives of the Manchester Diocesan Board of Education, the Birmingham Archidiaconal Council of Education, and Leeds Church Day School Association. Ibid., E.A. Coventry to Gorst, 2 November, 1901.

By early December, Devonshire too was becoming convinced that "Whatever may be the difficulties or objections to Rate aid for the Voluntary Schools ... we cannot pass a Bill without it ...".<sup>476</sup> Gorst now conveyed to Devonshire his own admonitions regarding the weakness of a Bill which failed to empower the new authorities to assist voluntary schools out of the rates. Without these powers they would be unable to raise up the schools to the required level of efficiency and this failure to assist what amounted to more than fifty percent of the children under their jurisdiction would be politically hazardous. Such a Bill would "not find favour with that increasing number of people who see our deficiencies in Elementary Education and desire to have them remedied, nor with the County and Municipal Councils who are accepting these new powers in order to make all schools in their areas efficient".<sup>477</sup> No doubt motivated by Gorst's arguments, and despite Chamberlain's reluctance, Devonshire now advocated to Balfour that they propose inclusion of rate aid in the Bill, to the Cabinet, even though its acceptance would probably mean either dropping the Bill or breaking up the Government. If they failed, he believed they "had better adopt(?) the Secondary Bill and leave Elementary Education alone".<sup>478</sup> Balfour, fearing that the division of opinion within the Cabinet, on the question of rate aid, would provoke a crisis within the Government,<sup>479</sup> sought to neutralize the danger by sending Morant to win

<sup>476</sup> Devonshire to Chamberlain, 3 December, 1901. Quoted in Amery, 4, p. 482.

<sup>477</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49769, ff.199-200. Gorst to Devonshire, 5 December, 1901.

<sup>478</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49769, ff.201-202, Devonshire to Balfour, 6 December, 1901.

<sup>479</sup> FitzRoy, I, p. 66.

over Chamberlain on the issue, but without success.<sup>480</sup> Thus, at the next Cabinet meeting opponents of a comprehensive measure, led by Chamberlain and Salisbury, obtained rejection of the proposed Bill in favour of one limited to secondary education, "though with a view to being ready for emergencies, a second Bill dealing with Elementary Education is to be prepared, but not mentioned in the King's Speech".<sup>481</sup> Upon reflection, however, Chamberlain concluded that eventually party interest would dictate the adoption of a comprehensive measure, which he must accept or resign. As the latter action would cast him into the political wilderness, the time for reconciliation with the Liberals being long past, the most profitable course of action appeared to be the acceptance of the proposed Bill but with modifications designed to render it more palatable to his supporters.<sup>482</sup> Thus he now indicated he might be willing to concede the principle of one paramount local authority for all education and, albeit

<sup>480</sup> Although Morant succeeded in showing Chamberlain that his counter-proposal to rate aid, additional Exchequer grants, was impractical because of the costs of the Boer War, he was unable to completely convince him of the necessity of even optional rate aid (See, Amery, 4, pp. 483-484. Dugdale, pp. 155-159. Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 19. FitzRoy, I, p. 67.). Bernard Allen's claim that Morant did effect a conversion of Chamberlain to rate aid, at this meeting, appears to be refuted by the evidence of Amery and FitzRoy. (For Allen's claim, see his Robert Morant, pp. 166-169.)

<sup>481</sup> FitzRoy, I, pp. 67-68.

<sup>482</sup> Amery, 4, pp. 486-487.



reluctantly, the repeal of the Cowper-Temple clause, in exchange for a provision making rate aid subject to "local option";<sup>483</sup> a concession designed "to draw the sting of Nonconformist criticism".<sup>484</sup>

Salisbury, however, continued to oppose the one authority plan and rate aid to voluntary schools.<sup>485</sup> Nevertheless, Balfour was by now firmly committed to the one authority scheme, and rate aid, arguing that the retention of the board schools alongside the new county authorities would increase the administrative overlap they were attempting to eliminate.<sup>486</sup> He acknowledged that such a Bill as he was advocating was politically hazardous for the Government but he, nevertheless, would refuse to be personally responsible for a lesser measure, "and if his colleagues were disposed to prefer the parliamentary conduct of Sir John Gorst, they will know what to expect".<sup>487</sup>

Balfour herewith firmly indicated his determination to attain his objectives. His resolve was born partly of a wish to aid the voluntary schools,<sup>488</sup> but also from a desire to effect a major legislative achievement to serve as a Conservative legacy following what he anticipated would be

<sup>483</sup> Chamberlain to Devonshire, 14 December, 1901. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 487.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 487.

<sup>485</sup> Memorandum by Lord Salisbury circulated to the Cabinet, 17 December, 1901. Cited in Amery, 4, p. 485. See also Marsh, p. 316.

<sup>486</sup> A.J. Balfour, Cabinet Memorandum, 17 December, 1901. Cited in B.E.C. Dugdale, "Arthur James Balfour and Robert Morant", Quarterly Review, 260 (1933), pp. 152-168.

<sup>487</sup> FitzRoy, I, p. 69.

<sup>488</sup> Zebel, p. 119.

the party's departure from office at the next election.<sup>489</sup> His threat to dissociate himself from the measure stiffened the Government's resolve to continue their isolation of Gorst and to entrust to Balfour the task of piloting the Bill through the House, for as he confided to his sister, Lady Rayleigh, the Cabinet had determined "they would not have Gorst at any price".<sup>490</sup> Thus, "the faithful servant was dismissed for his uncertainties of temper at a critical stage" of the Bill's development,<sup>491</sup> the Cabinet adding insult to injury by deliberately concealing this change from Gorst.<sup>492</sup> Thereafter, while Balfour took control of political manoeuvrings within the Government, major responsibility for the drafting process was assumed by Morant.<sup>493</sup>

To Balfour's pressure upon the Cabinet was added that of the party Whips. They urged the espousal of a one authority measure, as proposed by Gorst, warning that it would be politically inexpedient "to ignore the feeling of the great bulk of the party in favour of rate aid to the voluntary schools, for the sake of removing the scruples of a few Radical Unionists in the Midlands".<sup>494</sup> By this time Morant had also

<sup>489</sup>Marsh, p. 316.

<sup>490</sup>Lady Rayleigh's Diary and Recollections, 21 January, 1902. Quoted in Max Egremont, Balfour: The Life of Arthur James Balfour (London, 1980), p.150.

<sup>491</sup>Lowndes, p. 92.

<sup>492</sup>FitzRoy, I, p. 72. As late as January 20, 1902, FitzRoy was recording that while the drafting of the measure continued, Gorst, meanwhile, "is kept in ignorance that he is not to have charge of the Bill".

<sup>493</sup>Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 5. For an analysis of Balfour's and Morant's contributions to the development of the Bill following Gorst's deposition, see *Ibid.*, pp. 11-16. Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 169-171.

<sup>494</sup>FitzRoy, I, p. 72.

become firmly convinced that the answer to all the difficulties attendant on the Bill resided in a radical solution of the voluntary school problem, namely, "complete rate maintenance".<sup>495</sup> After tentatively suggesting this course in December, 1901,<sup>496</sup> two days after Gorst's advocacy of it to Devonshire,<sup>497</sup> Morant now prepared a memorandum recommending the adoption of a measure establishing one authority for secondary and elementary education, provision for compulsory rate aid to voluntary schools, and retention of the Cowper-Temple clause. However, these proposals remained too radical to gain full Cabinet support,<sup>498</sup> and their wrangling continued through February and into March,<sup>499</sup> apparently with such animosity that Gorst despaired of the Bill ever reaching the House.<sup>500</sup> By mid-March, however, a compromise was achieved: Salisbury and Chamberlain agreed to a one authority measure and rate aid and Balfour and Devonshire accommodated by making the latter provision subject to local option, "the price that had to be paid for securing the support of Chamberlain".<sup>501</sup> A decision was taken to introduce the Bill into the House on March 24th and Balfour succeeded in obtaining the Cabinet's pledge that in the event that the measure survived second reading Parliament would remain in Session until the Bill was passed. He was now to take charge of it, the attendant shunting of his Vice-President being facilitated by the latter's temporary absence

<sup>495</sup>Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 11.

<sup>496</sup>R.L. Morant to A.J. Balfour, 7 December, 1901. Cited in B.C. Dugdale, "Arthur James Balfour and Robert Morant", pp. 154-155.

<sup>497</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49769, ff.199-200. Gorst to Devonshire, 5 December, 1901. See also, p.302 above.

<sup>498</sup>Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", pp. 11-16.

<sup>499</sup>FitzRoy, I, pp. 73-74, pp. 80-81.

<sup>500</sup>Barnett Papers, F/BAR/259, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 22 February, 1902.

<sup>501</sup>Allen, Robert Morant, p. 171. See also, Amery, 4, pp. 488-489.

from his official duties, "a timely attack of influenza having withdrawn Gorst into obscurity".<sup>502</sup>

Although not officially in charge of the Bill during its passage through Parliament, Gorst frequently rose to defend the measure. The central theme of the Bill was the concentration, in one local authority, of direct responsibility for all types of education, a step first proposed by Gorst shortly after his assumption of the Vice-Presidential office in 1895,<sup>503</sup> and one which he had constantly proposed in the intervening years. Thus the current measure's successful enactment would mark the fulfillment of the goal for which he had so assiduously worked since arriving at the Education Department. Consequently, following a denunciation of the measure's provisions by James Bryce,<sup>504</sup> Gorst argued effectively<sup>505</sup> for acceptance of the centralizing proposal, emphasizing the resulting administrative benefits and the increased efficiency of both elementary and secondary education.<sup>506</sup> He defended the Government's decision to make the county and county borough councils, rather than the school boards, the paramount education authority. He asserted that the non-universality of the boards, their incompetence in rural areas, their lack of statutory authority beyond the elementary level - as a result of the Cockerton decision - and the lesser democratic nature of their constitution,

<sup>502</sup>FitzRoy, I, p. 81.

<sup>503</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49791, f.7. Gorst to Balfour, 6 December, 1895.

<sup>504</sup>PD, 4th series, 107 (1902): 638-662.

<sup>505</sup>H.W. Lucy, "Essence of Parliament", Punch, 122 (May 14, 1902), p. 247. As Lucy observed, "Gorst's speech commanded attention by its mastery of educational intricacies, its lucid arrangement, its cogent reasoning".

<sup>506</sup>PD, 4th series, 107 (1902): 663-665, 671-675.

disqualified them as candidates for the new authority. Moreover, it was essential that the new authority be a popularly elected body possessing sole control of local finance, a requirement the councils but not the boards could fulfill.<sup>507</sup>

Despite the Liberals' fierce opposition to the Bill, particularly the provision granting rate aid to voluntary schools,<sup>508</sup> the measure passed second reading on May 8 with a majority of 237.<sup>509</sup> The Bill entered Committee stage on June 2, and from then until early July Gorst repeatedly supported it in debate<sup>510</sup> and was also called upon to clarify technicalities pertaining to the measure.<sup>511</sup> At this point an unrelated event, Salisbury's departure from office, had an effect upon both the Bill and Gorst. At the beginning of July, Salisbury quietly began arranging for his retirement on July 11, a step originally planned for June but delayed by the sudden illness of the King. Salisbury's impending departure from the Government prompted Balfour to assert his influence upon the Education Bill, Chamberlain's temporary indisposition and absence from Parliament serving to facilitate Balfour's actions. During debate on July 9, he permitted a free vote on Hobhouse's amendment to remove the "Local Option" clause from the Bill. Without the clause it would be compulsory for county and county

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., pp. 667-669.

<sup>508</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Opposition's campaign against the Bill see Munson, Chap. 5.

<sup>509</sup> PD, 4th series, 107 (1902): 1214.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 108 (1902): 1192, 1194. Ibid., 4th series, 109 (1902): 887, 902, 1471, 1472-1475, 1547, 1578, 1579, 1581. Ibid., 4th series, 110 (1902): 318, 320, 441-442, 487, 1005, 1102.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 108 (1902): 1307. Ibid., 4th series, 110 (1902): 396, 397, 398, 435, 545, 998, 1000, 1005, 1021, 1035, 1036, 1126, 1153, 1173.

borough councils to assume full responsibility for elementary education, including the provision of rate aid to voluntary schools. Believing loyalty to Church interests would prompt the Conservative Members to support the clause's deletion, Balfour openly argued against its retention.<sup>512</sup> His confidence subsequently proved justified, the clause being rejected 271 to 102.<sup>513</sup>

Two days later Salisbury submitted his resignation to the King and Balfour succeeded him as Prime Minister. In the resulting reconstruction of the Government, Devonshire relinquished his educational office to Lord Londonderry, who became the first President of the Board of Education, and Gorst found himself replaced by Sir William Anson, who became Parliamentary Secretary to Londonderry, the position of Vice-President being dissolved under the provisions of the 1899 Board of Education Act. Thus Balfour used the opportunity presented by Salisbury's resignation to finally dispatch Gorst from the Government.<sup>514</sup> He apparently attempted to dislodge

<sup>512</sup>Marsh, pp. 318-320.

<sup>513</sup>PD, 4th series, 110 (1902): 1240-1243.

<sup>514</sup>Gorst's parliamentary colleague Griffith-Boscawen reported Gorst's departure as a straightforward "retirement" from office, an assessment subsequently repeated by Morant's biographer, Bernard Allen (Allen, Robert Morant, p. 182. Griffith-Boscawen, p. 242). However, there is evidence to support the above claim that Gorst was in fact dismissed from the Government. He did not formally resign until August 5 (Sandars Papers, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Hist: C:737, ff.16-20. Gorst to Balfour, 5 August, 1902). This was over three weeks after Salisbury's resignation and a scant four days before the ministerial appointments were finalized (FitzRoy, I, p. 97). This would seem to indicate Gorst's desire to remain in office. Moreover, in that month Balfour's secretary, Sandars, wrote upon a communication to, or from, Devonshire, the inscription "Letter as to the removal of Gorst (Sandars Papers, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Hist. C:737. D24:ix:34. Emphasis added). In addition, Gorst's son recorded in his diary that his father's resignation essentially resulted from his "being, in fact, politely told to go" (Sir Eldon Gorst, "Autobiographical Notes", II, p. 85. Quoted in Daghlish, p. 570).

Gorst from the House as well, by offering him the Governorship of the Isle of Man.<sup>515</sup> However, as acceptance would have entailed retirement from Parliament, Gorst "declined to walk into that particular parlour",<sup>516</sup> and thus the Unionists were faced with the prospect of his continued, and perhaps even more critical, presence upon the Commons back-benches. Consequently, when the opportunity arose, Balfour made one further attempt to reduce Gorst's potential for parliamentary activism. At the time of his resignation from office, Gorst applied to Balfour for a pension,<sup>517</sup> "from a fund established for the benefit of ex-ministers whose private circumstances make such assistance desirable".<sup>518</sup> Balfour, while acknowledging that Gorst qualified for such a stipend, bluntly told him "it would seem absurd to recommend him for a Pension, if he meant to use his liberty seriously to embarrass the Government", and he asked Gorst to indicate his intentions in this regard. Gorst assured Balfour that although he had some reservations concerning the Bill, he would not vote for any amendment that might kill the measure, adding that "this was symbolic of his personal attitude" towards the Government.<sup>519</sup> Although Balfour apparently found Gorst's response less than satisfactory,<sup>520</sup> he evidently decided to give him the benefit of the doubt for he subsequently granted him a life pension of £1,200 annually.<sup>521</sup>

<sup>515</sup>H.W. Lucy, The Balfourian Parliament 1900-1905 (London, 1906), p.202. Hereafter referred to as Lucy, Balfourian Parliament.

<sup>516</sup>Lucy, Nearing Jordan, p. 250.

<sup>517</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49791, ff.36-37. Note of a Conversation with Sir J. Gorst on Thursday, August 7, 1902.

<sup>518</sup>Lucy, Balfourian Parliament, p. 202.

<sup>519</sup>Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49791, ff.36-37. Note of a Conversation with Sir J. Gorst on Thursday, August 7, 1902.

<sup>520</sup>On September 15, Balfour was still deliberating on what action to take with regard to Gorst's pension (FitzRoy, I, p. 106).

<sup>521</sup>Lucy, Balfourian Parliament, p. 202.

When debate on the Committee stage of the Bill resumed, Gorst did honour his pledge to Balfour, rising only to defend the measure,<sup>522</sup> or to clarify administrative points at issue,<sup>523</sup> behaviour also consistent with his desire to see the Bill enacted. Meanwhile, the Opposition continued its obstructionist tactics in the Commons, disputing the Bill line by line and introducing so many amendments that progress on the measure was reduced almost to a standstill. Outside the House, Nonconformist agitation against the Bill reached a crescendo in a series of huge protest demonstrations. Thus, in late October, Balfour reached the conclusion that some concessions to the Nonconformist interest would have to be made to facilitate the Bill's passage. He instructed Unionist M.P. Kenyon-Slaney to move an amendment transferring control of religious instruction in voluntary schools from the clergy to the entire body of managers, which was to comprise a substantial elective element. He presented the amendment as an effective method for protecting the schools from the excesses of ritualistic clergymen and, despite firm resistance from some of the Unionists, it was carried by a large majority. Although opposition to the measure continued, the chief difficulty now faced by the Government was lack of time and, consequently, during the final stages of the Bill, Balfour was obliged to apply guillotine procedures to effect its passage. The

<sup>522</sup>PD, 4th series, 113 (1902): 707, 847-849. Ibid., 4th series, 114 (1902): 199-201, 324, 325, 1054, 1061, 1315, 1316, 1317. Ibid., 4th series, 115 (1902): 55, 425-429, 555.

<sup>523</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 113 (1902): 180, 260, 960, 1007, 1133, 1245. Ibid., 4th series, 114 (1902): 27, 1045, 1410, 1411, 1427. Ibid., 4th series, 115 (1902): 393.



victorious division was eventually achieved on December 3 and the Bill received Royal Assent on December 18.<sup>524</sup>

Thus was placed on the statute book the Education Act of 1902 which "made possible the whole future development of Education" in Britain, its provisions remaining substantially in force until the Butler Education Act of 1944.<sup>525</sup> To its supporters it constituted "a great national reform",<sup>526</sup> a view which eventually came to be shared by many of its Liberal opponents. Speaking in the Commons in 1913, Liberal Minister of Education, J.A. Pease acknowledged that "Many of us have thought that there were serious defects in the Act of 1902, but no one who compares the position of today with what it was ten years ago can deny that a very great advance has been made in the education of the country".<sup>527</sup> Commenting, in 1926, upon this educational legislation, Halevy observed that "Regarded from the distance of a quarter of a century it seems no small achievement"<sup>528</sup> and as the century draws to a close historians still extol the benefits of the measure: "The 1902 Education Act can now be seen as ... a legislative action of far-reaching effects, and a substantial step forward in the provision of national State education".<sup>529</sup> Even present-day critics of the

<sup>524</sup> Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 192-197. Cruickshank, pp. 83-85. FitzRoy, I, pp. 112-113. Marsh, pp. 318-319. For the Act's provisions see 2 Edw. 7, Ch. 42.

<sup>525</sup> Sturt, pp. 417-418.

<sup>526</sup> PD, 4th series, 115 (1902): 1080. Speech of Sir Richard Jebb.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 5th series, 55 (1913): 1909. See also Ibid., 4th series, 178 (1907): 90. Speech of A.G.C. Harvey. The Times, 26 March, 1913, p.9. Lord Haldane's speech at Weston-Super-Mare.

<sup>528</sup> Halevy, 5, p. 204.

<sup>529</sup> R.R. James, p. 206. See also, Banks, p. 1. Cruickshank, p. 85. Evans, p. 71. Kazamias, p. 330.

Act concede that the statute, "whatever its defects, created an educational system which worked",<sup>530</sup> and that its "unity of administration, finance and control made for a uniformity of progress not made possible before".<sup>531</sup>

Following the passage of the 1902 Education Bill, Balfour's secretary, J.S. Sandars wrote, "All the official help that the Prime Minister could obtain was from Morant. Morant was excellent and his industry phenomenal. Thring the draughtsman did good work. The Act as we know it was the product of these three brains, while the carriage of it through the House of Commons was the sole work of A.J.B.".<sup>532</sup> A leading Church dignitary sent Balfour "heartiest congratulations upon the achievement of your immense task", while Cardinal Vaughan extended to Morant "most hearty thanks for all you have done for us - for the tact and determination by which you have brought about the impossible".<sup>533</sup> These assessments, crediting to Balfour and Morant the successful enactment of the 1902 measure, have subsequently been echoed by numerous historians. With the exception of Eaglesham, who attributes to Gorst partial responsibility for the framing of the Bill,<sup>534</sup> historical accounts of the evolution of the 1902 Act generally ignore Gorst's contributions to its development.<sup>535</sup> This oversight

<sup>530</sup>Eaglesham, Local Authority, p. 141.

<sup>531</sup>Middleton and Weitzman, p. 114.

<sup>532</sup>Sandars Papers, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Hist. C: 771: 324.

<sup>533</sup>Quoted in Allen, Robert Morant, p. 197.

<sup>534</sup>Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", pp. 3-5. See also, Zebel, p. 118. Zebel notes that Gorst proposed a plan for educational centralization, but asserts it was inspired by the Fabians.

<sup>535</sup>See for example, Armytage, p. 186. Cruickshank, pp. 77-79, p. 85. Keith Evans, The Development and Structure of the English Educational System (London, 1975), p. 65. Middleton and Weitzman, pp. 111-112. Simon, p. 218, p. 220.

might result in part from the historians' over-reliance upon the observations of contemporaries, such as FitzRoy, Morant, and Sandars, whose close relationship with the key Government figures engaged in producing this legislation no doubt added a ring of authenticity to their pronouncements. FitzRoy's observations evoke a picture of Morant as the behind-the-scenes factotum;<sup>536</sup> Morant, himself, actively promoted the view of Gorst as a negligent by-stander in the events leading up to the Bill's enactment, describing him as "cynical and careless, having given up even the semblance of any interest in the office" of Vice-President;<sup>537</sup> and Sandars' comments, quoted above, deny Gorst even a minor part in the Bill's creation. The fact that Gorst had resigned his office of Vice-President just as the Bill entered the Committee stage, thus relinquishing any official connection with its subsequent passage, may have helped to give credence to the view of Gorst as a non-participant in its development.<sup>538</sup>

Undoubtedly, the measure's successful passage through the Commons was primarily the result of Balfour's determination and skill in debate, Gorst's participation in this process contributing little to the Bill's progress. However, Gorst's involvement in the framing of the measure, as outlined above, reveals that he played a key role in the creation of the 1902 Act. Moreover, the final form in which the measure was enacted also reflects the extent of his contribution to the legislation. The central

<sup>536</sup>FitzRoy, I, p. 74. "In the meantime the indefatigable Morant flies from one Cabinet Minister to another and receives the frankest confessions from them all ...".

<sup>537</sup>B. Webb, Our Partnership, p. 239. Morant apparently also told Beatrice Webb that he had been "exclusively engaged by the Cabinet Committee to draft this present Bill ... Both Keckewich and Gorst have been absolutely ignored. Neither the one nor the other saw the Bill before it was printed". (Ibid., p. 240)

<sup>538</sup>Daglish, pp. 574-575.

principle underlying the Act, the establishment of a new administrative framework at the local level, had constituted the main theme of Gorst's centralization proposals since he became Vice-President of the Council in 1895. It had appeared in his first tentative scheme for an education bill in December 1895;<sup>539</sup> it was the fundamental principle of his 1896 Education Bill;<sup>540</sup> the concept underlay Clause 7 of the Art and Science Department Directory for 1897,<sup>541</sup> which he devised, and was the pivotal provision of his proposed 1901 (No. 1) Bill.<sup>542</sup> Although the 1902 Act's clauses prescribing local reorganization were modified versions of Gorst's original draft proposals, the principle of a single paramount local education authority for all education was retained. According to Keckewich, Gorst was "mainly responsible" for this retention,<sup>543</sup> a claim the evidence given above would appear to support. Moreover, as Gilbert has noted, it was Gorst's constant advocacy of the "one authority" system, during his years in office, which served to create a climate of opinion favourable to its acceptance by 1902.<sup>544</sup>

It is interesting to note that a major retrospective criticism of the Act's centralizing provisions echoes the sentiments expressed by Gorst during the Bill's passage. Educational historians assert that the measure's establishment of non-county boroughs and larger urban districts

<sup>539</sup> Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 49791, f.7. Gorst to Balfour, 6 December, 1895. Ibid., f.23, Gorst's Sketch of Education Measure.

<sup>540</sup> Bill to make further provision for Education in England and Wales (Bill 172), PP, 1896, 1: 541-559.

<sup>541</sup> See pp. 246-247 above.

<sup>542</sup> P.R.O. Ed. 24/29. Definite Proposals by J.E. Gorst for a Bill.

<sup>543</sup> Keckewich, p. 105.

<sup>544</sup> Gilbert, "Conservative Rebel", p. 160.

as education authorities for their areas created an administrative dichotomy between these bodies and the county education authorities which resulted in a weakening of the system in the counties which continues to plague educational administration in the final quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>545</sup>

This concession to the minor urban authorities was the only provision against which Gorst spoke in debate. He regarded the proposal as "a departure from the principle of the Bill" and, conscious of the potential difficulties the step entailed, expressed the hope that this digression would "not be attended by any evil consequences" in the future.<sup>546</sup>

The relative ease with which the Government were able to enact the abolition of the school boards owed much to the preparatory work undertaken by Gorst. The provisions of Clause 7 of the 1897 Art and Science Directory, the Higher Elementary School Minute of 1900, and, most importantly the Cockerton Act of 1901, all devised by Gorst to effect the subordination of the school boards to the county authorities with respect to non-elementary

<sup>545</sup> Keith Evans has argued that once the concession of partial educational autonomy to the minor urban authorities had been entrenched by the 1902 Act it subsequently became difficult to rescind the privilege. Consequently, when the "elementary only" authorities were dissolved by the 1944 Act, there emerged "divisional executives and excepted districts which continued to confuse and dilute the power of the County local education authorities". Moreover, "the fact that the 1902 Act sanctified the right of the urban locality to influence directly its own development has more recently made for difficulties in the formulation of policy for major government reform as it affects education". See also, Middleton and Weitzman, pp. 221-225, pp. 289-292.

<sup>546</sup> PD, 4th series, 107 (1902): 666.

education, so successfully established in advance the principle of the 1902 Act as to weaken the Opposition's case for the retention of the boards.<sup>547</sup>

The Act's extension of rate aid to voluntary schools and its concomitant, increased public control of the secular aspects of the education they provided, had been prescribed by Gorst as early as 1896.<sup>548</sup> Thereafter, as has been noted above, he repeatedly asserted that only through the application of rate aid could the voluntary schools be effectively incorporated into the State system and rendered more efficient. It was these crucial aspects of the rate-aid provision, and the retarding effect upon local educational administration its absence from the Bill would produce, that Gorst outlined to Devonshire in December, 1901, just prior to Morant's presentation of a similar argument to Balfour, an argument which Eaglesham considers the key element in the measure's successful enactment.<sup>549</sup> As with the one authority concept, Keckewich credits Gorst with securing the inclusion of the rate-aid provision in the Bill.<sup>550</sup>

Given the evidence cited above, the oft-repeated assessment of Morant as the chief architect of the 1902 Education Bill<sup>551</sup> would appear

<sup>547</sup> Eaglesham, Local Authority, pp. 141-142. See also Appendix B.

<sup>548</sup> Gorst, "The Voluntary Schools", pp. 709-710.

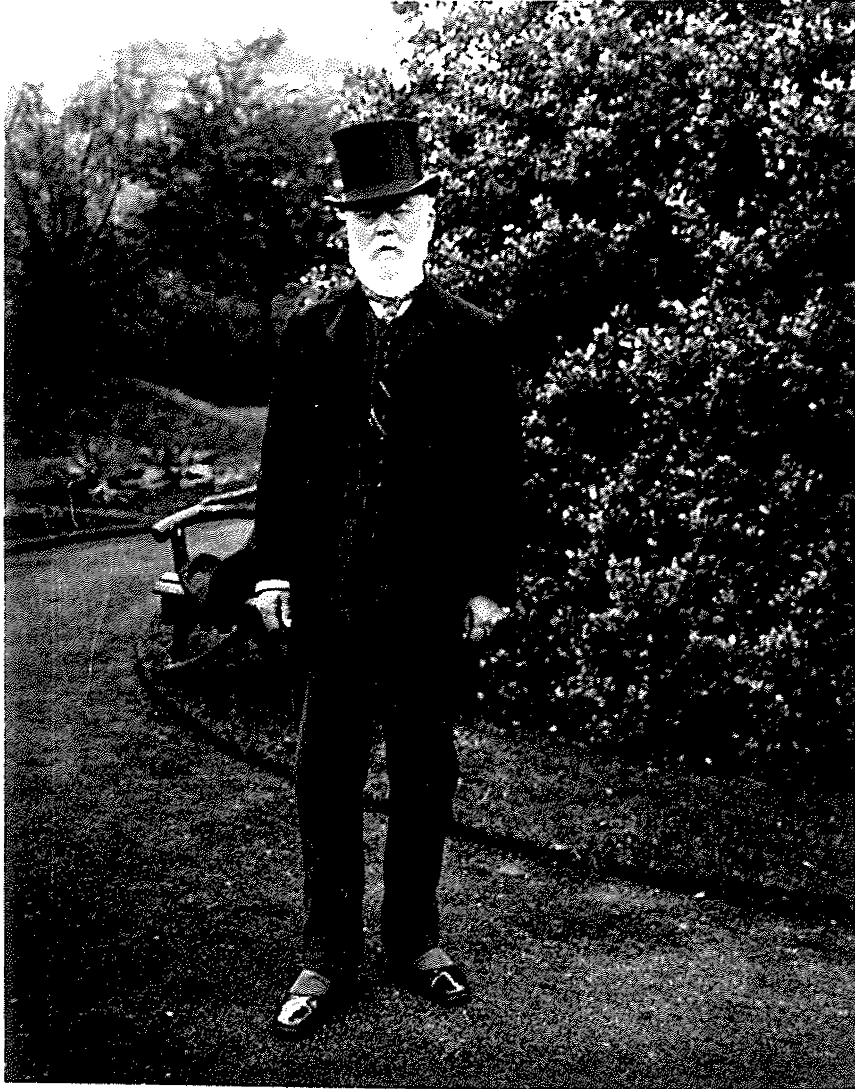
<sup>549</sup> Eaglesham, "Education Bill of 1902", p. 11.

<sup>550</sup> Keckewich, p. 105.

<sup>551</sup> See for example, Allen, Robert Morant, pp. 145-171. Cruickshank, pp. 78-79. Eric Evans, Social policy 1830-1914: Individualism, collectivism and the origins of the Welfare State (London, 1978), p. 238. K. Evans, p. 65. Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p. 134. Middleton and Weitzman, p. 111.

to require revision in order to do justice to Gorst's contributions to the measure. While Morant's role in the development of the Bill was considerable, he might be more aptly described as the expert weaver who gathered together the warp and weft prepared by Gorst and wove them into a complex and serviceable educational fabric.

The 1902 Act marked the fulfillment of Gorst's long campaign for educational improvement. Following its enactment, he once again turned his attention to the many social evils still awaiting reform. One of the most pressing problems with which Gorst was concerned was the failure of public authorities to adequately provide for the welfare of the poorer children in society. Relieved of his duties in the Education Department, Gorst now devoted the remainder of his parliamentary career to agitating for social reform, particularly for the improvement of conditions for underprivileged children and especially those unable to benefit from education because of under-nourishment.



*John Gorst*

*J. Benjamin*

Sir John Eldon Gorst. c. 1905.



## CHAPTER VI

### "THE CHILDREN'S VALIANT CHAMPION"

Concern for the welfare of the nation's underprivileged children had been a constant, if underlying, theme of Gorst's social reform activity since the early days of his parliamentary career. Although the demands and constraints of political and government office had largely restricted his time and energies to other areas of reform, he had continued to press, albeit intermittently, for the amelioration of the excessively harsh conditions to which many of society's poorer children were subjected. During debate on the 1878 Factories and Workshops Bill he had pressed for adoption of an amendment requiring employers in workshops as well as factories to obtain certificates of medical fitness for children under 16, in order to ensure that children "not be sent by their parents to places for which they are unfit".<sup>1</sup> He had urged rejection of a compensation clause in the 1880 Employers' Liability Bill because he believed its provisions would be particularly harsh when applied in children's claims.<sup>2</sup> Gorst's 1891 social programme had urged the adoption of legislation postponing child labour from 10 to 12 years, an end to economic exploitation of pauper children, and the replacement of their inhumane, institutional care with the boarding-

<sup>1</sup>PD, 3rd series, 238 (1878): 319.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3rd series, 255 (1880): 388-389. See also p. 119 above.

out system.<sup>3</sup> Also in 1891 he had been instrumental in obtaining acceptance of an amendment to the Factory Bill raising the age of "half-timers" from 10 to 11 years.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter he had maintained his efforts to have the minimum age for child labour raised to 12 years,<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the pledge given at the Berlin Conference, and in 1895 he had made an unsuccessful bid to have a clause containing this provision inserted in the Factory Bill of that year.<sup>6</sup> Gorst's endeavours at Berlin and his subsequent attempts to implement the pledges made there to relieve the conditions of child drudges, together with his stand on their behalf during debates on the 1895 Factory Bill, had prompted one contemporary to describe him as the "childrens' valiant champion ... (who) has demonstrated his determination to strive his utmost for their physical, moral, and intellectual welfare".<sup>7</sup> Following his appointment as Education Minister, Gorst had incorporated into his ill-fated Education Bill of 1896 a clause raising the school-leaving age to 12 years.<sup>8</sup> Following failure of that

<sup>3</sup>"Social Politics in England: An Interview with Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews (New York), 3 (April 1891), pp. 266-270. Hereafter referred to as "Social Politics in England". See also "Character Sketch. December. Sir John Gorst", Review of Reviews, 3 (1891), pp. 575-586. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch". See also p. 149 and p. 153 above.

<sup>4</sup>PD, 3rd series, 354 (1891): 859-863. See also "Character Sketch", p. 585, and pp. 158-159 of this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup>See J.E. Gorst, "English Workmen and their Political Friends", North American Review, 159 (1894), pp. 207-217. The Times, 4 May, 1894, p.4.

<sup>6</sup>PD, 4th series, 31 (1895): 181-183.

<sup>7</sup>J.J. Davies, "The New Minister of Education and His Work", Westminster Review, 144 (1895), pp. 332-336.

<sup>8</sup>A Bill to make further provision for Education in England and Wales, PP, 1896, 1: 54-559, Sect. II: 544, Clause 21.

measure he had continued to agitate for the age reform<sup>9</sup> and had succeeded in having a similar clause included in the Omnibus Bill of 1898.<sup>10</sup> When that Bill had been temporarily shelved, he had played a key role in obtaining passage of the Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act 1893 (Amendment) 1899 which implemented the age provision he had been seeking.<sup>11</sup>

Gorst had been particularly active in the promotion of improved care for pauper children. His 1891 and 1895 social programmes had advocated reforms in Poor Law relief, particularly as it applied to children,<sup>12</sup> and during 1894 he had spearheaded a successful campaign for the establishment of a Departmental Committee to inquire into conditions in London pauper schools.<sup>13</sup> As a member of that Committee he had subsequently given close to two years diligent labour to fulfilling its mandate. Between November 1894, when the Committee first met, and the publication of its Report in April 1896, he had participated in regular meetings, attended numerous hearings, and inspected a variety of institutions catering for pauper children. As one of his colleagues, Henrietta Barnett later recalled, during the period the Committee met:

<sup>9</sup>See for example, PD, 4th series, 56 (1898): 499-500. Ibid., 4th series, 59 (1898): 590-596. The Times, 22 March, 1897, p.4. Ibid., 19 November, 1897, p.7; 24 December, 1897, p.4; 3 March, 1898, p.8; 29 October, 1898, p.9.

<sup>10</sup>P.R.O. Ed. 31/18/1. G.W. Keckewich to Gorst, 25 May, 1898.

<sup>11</sup>See pp. 260-261 above.

<sup>12</sup>J.E. Gorst, "The Conservative Programme of Social Reform", Nineteenth Century, 38 (1895), pp. 3-16. Hereafter referred to as Gorst, "Conservative Programme". "Social Politics in England", p. 270.

<sup>13</sup>See pp. 186-187 above.

"We sat fifty times, saw seventy three witnesses, and asked 17,566 questions. Each member inspected schools, when and where he deemed well ... Sir John Gorst came to stay in Toynbee Hall every Monday. On Tuesdays the Committee sat at Westminster, usually for five hours. On Wednesdays Sir John and I inspected all day ... and on Fridays the Committee again put in five or six hours' work".<sup>14</sup>

Echoing the criticisms made earlier by Gorst,<sup>15</sup> the Committee's three volume Report<sup>16</sup> constituted a stinging indictment of the Metropolitan District School system's "barrack" schools.<sup>17</sup> These institutions, which frequently housed between 800 and 1500 children, were revealed to be nurseries of disease and ignorance. Evidence gathered by the Committee disclosed that among children herded together in these establishments physical, mental and moral development was unfavourably affected. The health of the children was generally deplorable, ophthalmia and ringworm being rife.<sup>18</sup> The aggregation of children into these large schools, with their regimented programmes and sterile environments, turned their inhabitants into mechanistic individuals devoid of any sense of personal

<sup>14</sup>H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett: His Life, Work and Friends (London, 1918), p. 293. Hereafter referred to as H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett.

<sup>15</sup>See Gorst, "Conservative Programme", p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee (Cmnd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 1-1418. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations were contained in the 187 page first volume which was supplemented by volume two, consisting of 849 pages of evidence, and volume three comprised of 400 pages of Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence.

<sup>17</sup>The Metropolitan District School system had been instituted in 1884 when Parliament empowered the Central Poor Law Authority to assemble combinations of London unions for the purpose of establishing schools separate from workhouse association. [See Elizabeth S. Lidgett, "Poor Law Children and the Departmental Committee", Contemporary Review, 71 (1897), pp. 205-220.]

<sup>18</sup>Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee. Vol. 1 (Cmnd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 16-22.

responsibility.<sup>19</sup> The instruction given in these schools was both deficient in quality and meagre in quantity when compared to that received by children in ordinary elementary schools.<sup>20</sup> The children were routinely engaged in un-educational, domestic tasks, designed to dull rather than develop the faculties, which provided little vocational training. Consequently, many children departed the schools quite unfitted to make their way in life.<sup>21</sup> The Committee had thus concluded that, given existing circumstances, there were "serious dangers" in maintaining the current system of barrack schools: "Under such conditions there are, as we have shown, insufficient means of encouraging mental activity, the development of what is best in individual character, and aspiration after better things; at the same time many of the conditions of the children's life are proved to be unfavourable to health".<sup>22</sup>

Additional impact had been given to these conclusions by a memorandum prepared by Gorst, at the Committee's request,<sup>23</sup> recounting the circumstances surrounding three tragic incidents in the barrack schools which had prompted Gorst's agitation for the creation of the inquiry in

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee. Vol. 2, Minutes of Evidence (Cmnd. 8032), PP, 1896, 43: 628, para. 11352-11353. Evidence of Miss B. Hall.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1 (Cmnd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 50-51.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 2 (Cmnd. 8032), PP, 1896, 43: 52-57, para. 166-205.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 1 (Cmnd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 176-177.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1 (Cmnd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 182-184. Appendix A.

1894.<sup>24</sup> His memorandum, compiled from Local Government Board papers, was a brief but poignant testimonial to the deficiencies of the large pauper schools. In the case of the fire at Forest Gate schools, Gorst reported how 26 boys who died perished as a result of an official's incompetence. He outlined how, in the poisoning incident, the children were fed fly-blown meat followed later by a meal of soup consisting "chiefly of officer's waste, and very little fresh meat", and how, thereupon, 148 became violently ill and two subsequently died of ptomaine poisoning. He related that at a coroner's inquest into the tragedy a verdict of accidental death was returned and the jury recorded their confidence in the school's superintendent. In the third episode, for which an infant's attendant had been sentenced to five years penal servitude for abusing the children under her care, Gorst recounted how to all her cruel actions her fellow officers, including the matron and superintendent, had turned a blind eye, she being convicted only following an inquiry by the Local Government Board.<sup>25</sup>

Not surprisingly, given the evidence they had accumulated, the Committee had recommended the abandonment of the barrack school system, urging that no more schools of this type be built or enlarged and that the numbers of children in the existing institutions be reduced. They had

<sup>24</sup> See p. 186 above. The incidents were a fatal fire at one Forest Gate school in 1889; the accidental poisoning of children at another Forest Gate institution in 1893; and the cruelties perpetrated at Brentwood Schools in 1894. [Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee, Vol. 1 (Cmd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 182-184.]

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1 (Cmd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 182-184.

advocated that, where possible, the majority of the pauper children be given non-institutional care through the boarding-out system - either in cottage homes or foster or scattered homes - "where the varying surroundings and interests are more favourable to the development of character, and approximate more nearly the conditions of ordinary life".<sup>26</sup> These solutions were akin to those advocated previously by Gorst,<sup>27</sup> suggesting the possibility that his influence shaped their recommendations. In order to facilitate implementation of their suggestions, the Committee had advocated the creation of a Central Metropolitan Authority "which shall have control and supervision of all London institutions for Poor Law children".<sup>28</sup> This particular recommendation had generated a divergence of opinion among Committee members. The Rev. Brooke Lambert and Mr. W. Vallance had objected to the proposal on the grounds that it would completely relieve the guardians of the care of the pauper children and end local control.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Gorst and Henrietta Barnett expressed misgivings regarding the suggested constitution of the proposed central authority which, as worded, envisaged placing control under the joint aegis of the Education Department and the Local Government Board. Because, in their view, the latter body had "failed to develop proper treatment of children, or to stop scandals

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1 (Cmd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 182-184. The Committee recommended that certain groups of children, the feeble-minded, the casual attenders, those suffering from opthalmia, and other contagious diseases - be housed in special schools.

<sup>27</sup> See Gorst, "Conservative Programme", pp. 12-13. Gorst, "Social Politics in England", p. 270.

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 177.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum by the Rev. Brooke Lambert and Mr. Vallance. Ibid: 180.

in the institution" and because they believed it was essential that pauper children be severed from a life-long connection with the Poor Law system, Gorst and Henrietta Barnett urged "that the proposed central authority should not be a Poor Law but an educational body", and that such a body "be under the sole supervision of the Education Department".<sup>30</sup> Their reservations upon this issue had prompted them to sign the Report "Subject to dissent appended".<sup>31</sup>

Although the Local Government Board took no immediate steps to implement the Committee's recommendations, the interest aroused by the Report, and sustained by Gorst's speeches, had led directly to the formation of the State Children's Association - dedicated to obtaining "individual treatment for children under the Guardianship of the State" - which reportedly was eventually able to pressure the Local Government Board into adopting a substantial number of the Report's proposals.<sup>32</sup> Gorst, meanwhile,

<sup>30</sup> Ibid: 179. "Memorandum drawn up by the Right Honourable Sir John Gorst, M.P., and Mrs. Barnett". The divergence of opinion on this question had apparently created dissention within the Committee which had led to a delay in completing the Report. However, through the mediation of Mrs. Barnett the difficulties had been overcome and the Committee had reached a compromise and finalized their Report at the end of February, 1896, although "Gorst at the last moment was restive and was only brought in by great skill". [Barnett Papers, F/BAR/138, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 29 February, 1896. See also, Ibid., F/BAR/133, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 7 December, 1895. Ibid., F/BAR/135, S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 1 February, 1896.]

<sup>31</sup> Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 8027), PP, 1896, 43: 178. The Rev. Brooke Lambert and Mr. W. Vallance, together with two others of the seven member Committee signed the Report "Subject to Memorandum appended". (Ibid: 178.)

<sup>32</sup> H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett, p. 295. For the interest generated by the Report, see H.O. Barnett, Towards Social Reform (New York, 1909), pp. 125-126. "Children of the State", the Spectator, 76 (1896), pp. 509-510. Lidgett, pp. 205-220. The Times, 8 June, 1896, p.11. "Editorial Comment", Blackwoods Magazine, 160 (1896), pp. 538-539.



in his capacity as Vice-President of the Council, had already taken steps designed to bring the Poor Law Schools under the jurisdiction of the Education Department. In his 1896 Education Bill, introduced into Parliament prior to the Report's publication, he had provided that the proposed new education authority - the education committee of the County and County Borough Councils - would "constitute a body to which may be entrusted hereafter those unhappy children of the State who are to be found in industrial and Poor Law Schools".<sup>33</sup> Although this provision was lost as a result of the failure of the 1896 Bill, Gorst had succeeded in promoting the increased attendance of pauper children in ordinary elementary schools through a proposal incorporated into the Elementary Education Act of 1900.<sup>34</sup>

One further question with which Gorst had been concerned during this period, and with which he was now to become increasingly involved, was that of the malnutrition suffered by children in the schools. It was in his capacity as Education Minister that Gorst grew to be aware of this problem amongst poorer children and of the dangers inherent in this condition. During his years in that office his visits to schools, discussions with the inspectors, and conversations with teachers, had all served to impress upon him the futility of attempting to educate children whose physical condition rendered them incapable of benefitting from the instruction provided.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, he had arrived at the conclusion

<sup>33</sup>PD, 4th series, 39 (1896): 540. Gorst's speech introducing the 1896 Education Bill into the Commons.

<sup>34</sup>See p. 259 and p. 262 above. The pauper schools were eventually brought under the education committees by the 1902 Education Act. [See 2 Edw. 7. Chap. 41-42. Clause 14.]

<sup>35</sup>Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 2. Lists of Witnesses and Minutes of Evidence (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32: 581, para. 11788. Evidence of Sir John Gorst.

that the State must effect some arrangement for feeding the underfed children in the schools. Although during the period Gorst had served as Vice-President of the Council, the constraints of his position had "rendered it inexpedient and inadvisable" to make public pronouncements upon matters of general public policy, such as the condition of the people,<sup>36</sup> he had nevertheless drawn attention to the issue of hungry school children. In his 1899 article on the problem of children as wage-earners, he had emphasized that "a child must be fed before it can be taught" and had intimated that, where necessary, this ought to be done at public expense,<sup>37</sup> comments which evidently got him "into a great scrape".<sup>38</sup> During a Supply debate in the Commons, in June 1900, Gorst had expressed the view that it was the duty of the school authorities to ensure that "children were fed before they were taught", and if the charitable agencies were unable to cope with the problem the former bodies must take over the responsibility, because "if you compel children to go to school and compel them to receive instruction, then you have the obligation thrown upon you to make some provision by which those children are in a fit state to benefit from the instruction given".<sup>39</sup> Whilst delivering a presidential address to the

<sup>36</sup>The Times, 12 February, 1903, p.4. Gorst's speech at Lancaster.

<sup>37</sup>J.E. Gorst, "School Children as Wage-Earners", Nineteenth Century, 46 (1899), pp. 8-17.

<sup>38</sup>PD, 4th series, 84 (1900): 30. Speech of Sir John Gorst.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

Educational Association for the Advancement of Science, in 1901, he had stated that "Advantage should be taken of the fact that the children come daily under the observation of a quasi-public officer - the school teacher - to secure them the protection, to which they are entitled by law, against hunger ..." as well as other forms of abuse and neglect.<sup>40</sup> Following his resignation from the office of Vice-President in Autumn 1902, Gorst very soon resumed his campaign for social reform,<sup>41</sup> and the issue of under-fed children featured prominently in his agitation. In January, 1903, Gorst travelled to South Wales to address two working men's meetings on the question of feeding hungry children in the schools.<sup>42</sup>

Up to this point, the issue of under-fed children in the schools had largely been the concern of philanthropic organizations. For the previous forty years various charitable bodies had undertaken to provide free or cheap dinners to the more necessitous among the school children. The first experiments of this nature were carried out, on a limited basis,

<sup>40</sup>J.E. Gorst, "The National Control of Education" (Address of the president of the Educational Science Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Glasgow, 1901), Popular Science Monthly, 60 (1901), pp. 49-57.

<sup>41</sup>Barnett Papers, F/BAR/136. S.A. Barnett to F.G. Barnett, 7 February, 1903. Wrote Samuel Barnett, "Gorst came on Thursday. He is off on a Social Reform Campaign and we try to bring him up to date". See also, J.E. Gorst, "Social Reform: The Obligations of the Tory Party", Nineteenth Century, 53 (1903), pp. 519-532. Hereafter referred to as Gorst, "Social Reform". PD, 4th series, 118 (1903): 319-325, 1424-1425. The Times, 11 February, 1903, p.5. Ibid., 12 February, 1903, p.4; 14 February, p.8. Gorst's speeches at Manchester, Lancaster, and Keighly.

<sup>42</sup>Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. lett. C.257, ff.11-12. Gorst to E.M.D. Marvin, 27 January, 1903. Edith Deverell Marvin, the former Edith Deverell, had been one of the first women inspectors appointed by the Education Department.

by Roman Catholic schools in the early eighteen sixties.<sup>43</sup> Also in the early 'sixties, the Destitute Childrens' Dinner Society, was founded in connection with the Ragged Schools in Westminster.<sup>44</sup> In their appeal for funds they expressed a concern which was to be echoed by Gorst over thirty years later; the children's almost constant destitution of food, they declared, "reduces them to so low a state that they have not vigour of body and mind sufficient to derive any profit from the exertions of their teachers".<sup>45</sup> The Society also took pains to reassure potential critics of their work that their efforts were in no way pauperizing: "Our object is not indiscriminate Relief of the multitude of poor children to be found in the lowest parts of the metropolis. Our efforts are limited to those in attendance at ragged or other schools so as to assist the moral and religious training thus afforded".<sup>46</sup> A charge of a penny a meal was made by the Society, but in some localities the children were invariably unable to pay.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the Destitute Childrens' Dinner Society, and the majority of the other charitable feeding associations which sprang up during the period, continued to charge a nominal sum for a meal out of a desire to force at least a minimum of parental responsibility.

<sup>43</sup>See Report of the Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, 1906. Evidence of Monsignor Brown, Qu. 1038, "Many of our own (Roman Catholic) schools fed children even in the 'sixties". Quoted in M.E. Bulkley, The Feeding of School Children (London, 1914), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Bulkley, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup>The Times, 5 December, 1867, p.6.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 1 November, 1870, p.6.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 15 April, 1868, p.6.

The Charity Organization's<sup>48</sup> attitude to school dinners typified this form of approach. They approved of the work of philanthropic school feeding organizations which provided self-supporting dinners as a public service but opposed any attempts to supply food free of charge without inquiry into the needs and means of recipients, on the ground that the latter method constituted "a barbarous and uncivil" system.<sup>49</sup> During this period, school feeding was carried out only sporadically, usually the meal was provided on one or two days each week, and even then only during the winter months. This resulted not from a lack of interest on the part of child-feeding agencies, most of which aimed at more than a relief of temporary distress, but was a schedule forced on them through lack of funds.<sup>50</sup>

The onset of the 'seventies marked a rapid period of growth for the Destitute Childrens' Dinner Society and other similar organizations, the result of interest stimulated by the passing of the Forster Education Act of 1870, and educational considerations now became the overriding motive for feeding.<sup>51</sup> The increased influx of children into the schools

<sup>48</sup>The Charity Organization Society was formed in 1869 in an attempt to bring some organization and co-operation to Victorian philanthropy, which was largely inefficient as a result of the duplication of effort and a good deal of wasteful competition which existed between rival organizations in the same cause. See Judith Fido, "The Charity Organization Society and Social Casework in London, 1869-1900", in Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain, ed. A.P. Donajgrodzki, (London, 1977), pp. 207-230. C.L. Mowat, The Charity Organization Society, 1869-1913: Its Ideas and Work (London, 1961).

<sup>49</sup>The Times, 19 December, 1889, p.13. See also, "Children's Dinners", Spectator, 66 (1891): 166-167.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 15 April, 1868, p.6. Letter from the Treasurer of the Destitute Childrens' Dinner Association.

<sup>51</sup>Bulkley, p.6.

in the wake of the Act not only brought greater numbers of poverty-stricken boys and girls into public view, whose half-starved condition the teachers, managers, and philanthropists found themselves compelled to relieve,<sup>52</sup> but also heightened these individuals' awareness of the futility of attempting to teach hungry children. One such individual was Mrs. Burgwin, headmistress of Orange St. School, Southwark, London, who was responsible for the establishment of a very successful feeding programme, the Referee Fund.<sup>53</sup> The feeding association most often lauded by contemporaries as the ideal organization of its kind was that begun by Sir Henry Peek at Rousden, in Devonshire, in 1876. As a service to the children of the area, who had to cover large distances in order to attend school, Peek served penny dinners every day of the week and succeeded in making his programme beneficial and self-supporting.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup>The Times, 13 November, 1872, p.11. Letter from the Chairman of Reading School Board.

<sup>53</sup>Following her attempts to provide drinks in school for the very needy of the school's children, a small organization was formed and its promotion in the Referee by one of the paper's staff, G.R. Sims, and an appeal for funds in the columns of the newssheet, the Fund was established to provide meals for necessitous children, first in Southwark and then in other districts also [See Bulkley, p.7.].

<sup>54</sup>Bulkley, p.7. According to a local school inspector, the experiment "turned out a very great success. What strikes one at once coming into the school is the healthy, vigorous look of the children, and that their vigour is not merely bodily but comes out in the course of the examination. There is a marked contrast between their appearance and their work ... and those of the children in many neighbouring schools". [PD, 3rd series, 282 (1883): 577-579. Speech of A.J. Mundella.]

At the beginning of the 'eighties, a new concern began to be voiced in connection with the provision of school meals. Public opinion became aroused over the question of over-pressure. Critics protested that the schools taught too many subjects and claimed that the system of "payment by results" led many of the teachers to overwork the children in order to guarantee the grant.<sup>55</sup> Concerned individuals, amongst them teachers, doctors and school managers, began to express the fear that attempts to instruct half-starving children were not only futile but also ran the risk of inflicting permanent damage on these poor unfortunates.<sup>56</sup> The topic was the subject of a heated debate in Parliament during which Mr. S. Smith, Member for Liverpool, anticipated the demands of the parliamentary agitators of the early twentieth century, including Gorst, when he expressed the opinion that "If Parliament compelled persons by force of law to send their children to school, and the little ones were to be forced to undergo such a grinding system, they ought not to injure them in so doing, but should provide them, in case of proved necessity, with sufficient nourishment to stand the pressure".<sup>57</sup> A report submitted to the Education Department in 1884 by Dr. Crichton-Browne, the Lord Chancellor's Visitor in Lunacy, following his private inquiry into over-pressure, served to further publicize the extent of malnutrition amongst

<sup>55</sup>The Times, 9 April, 1880, p.11. Ibid., 10 April, 1880, p.12; 13 April, 1880, p.11; 15 April, 1880, p.11 (Letters to the Editor). For a detailed analysis of the controversy, see A.B. Robertson, "Children, Teachers and Society: The Over-Pressure Controversy, 1880-6", British Journal of Educational Studies, 20 (1970), pp. 315-23.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 15 April, 1880, p.11. Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake, Letter to the Editor; 19 April, 1880, p.12. Dr. Robert Farquherson, Letter to the Editor; 20 April, 1880, p.14. Lucy Harrison, Letter to the Editor.

<sup>57</sup>PD, 3rd series, 282 (1883): 597. For entire debate see Ibid., 585-605.

school children. After outlining numerous instances of near-starving children among the school population, Crichton-Browne stated that "Liberal and regular feeding is necessary in order that a child may be prepared to profit by education".<sup>58</sup> Out of all this discussion, one fact emerged quite clearly: good education results were dependent upon good health and could not be achieved where children were seriously underfed.<sup>59</sup> By now it had come to be generally accepted that the system of compulsory education must include some provision of food for necessitous children.<sup>60</sup> There was little agreement, however, on what form the feeding should take. The question was, should the meals be provided free or be self-supporting? A bitter controversy developed as to the merits of penny dinners.<sup>61</sup> The Minister of Education, A.J. Mundella, was of the opinion that any system which provided meals solely for those who could afford to pay for them would fail to solve the problem of undernourished children in the schools, and that the children should not be deprived of food on account of their parents' vices.<sup>62</sup> The Charity Organization Society were adamant in their opposition to free food, on the ground that payment for meals was the only

<sup>58</sup>Report of Dr. Crichton-Browne to the Education Department upon the alleged Over-Pressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools, PP, 1884, 61: 268.

<sup>59</sup>Bulkley, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup>"It is now admitted that children cannot learn unless they are properly fed". Leading Article, the Times, 13 December, 1884, p.9.

<sup>61</sup>See, Letters to the Editor, the Times, 6 October, 1884, p.12, 11 October, 1884, p.6, 29 October, 1884, p.10, 30 October, 1884, p.11, 11 November, 1884, p.3.

<sup>62</sup>Leading Article, the Times, 13 December, 1884, p.9.



possible way of avoiding "pauperization".<sup>63</sup> Undeterred by criticism of their methods, the free-meal societies continued to provide food, without payment, to starving children, and at most dinner centres around the country, free or self-supporting, necessitous children were rarely denied a meal when they appeared minus their pennies. Private philanthropists recognized the childrens' need and satisfied it, without inquiring too closely into the consequences.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, the Poor Law Guardians, who were responsible for relieving destitution, shunned any participation in the child feeding programmes and apparently made no attempt to co-operate with the various voluntary organizations around the country on the matter. At this point State responsibility for child feeding was restricted to one small area, the provision of meals by local education authorities at the Day Industrial Schools, as stipulated in the Education Act of 1876. However, parents were obliged to pay a portion of the cost. As very few of these schools were established, State involvement was small.<sup>65</sup>

Hard times and social unrest during the 'eighties provided further stimulus to the child feeding movement. Many self-supporting school-meals associations were obliged to appeal for funds in order to continue their work and many new voluntary-funded programmes came into existence. Consequently, by the end of the decade, school-feeding was being undertaken

<sup>63</sup>Leading Article, the Times, 20 January, 1885, p.9.

<sup>64</sup>Bulkley, pp. 12-13.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

by many competing agencies, some of which were funded by charitable donations and provided their meals free of charge, and others which collected, not always successfully, a small sum from the children. In May 1887, Sir Henry Peek attempted to bring some order into the chaos by organizing a committee of representatives of the various voluntary organizations in London for the purpose of formulating some kind of plan for co-operation. However, no further developments were forthcoming and during the remainder of the decade, school feeding proceeded in a disorganized fashion.<sup>66</sup>

In 1889 the situation prompted the London School Board to appoint a special sub-committee to investigate the entire question and to report to the Board.<sup>67</sup> The inquiry disclosed that, while certain areas were plagued with a plethora of competing organizations, the majority of districts lacked even one school dinner programme. The investigators roughly estimated the percentage of children attending the schools of the Board in a constant state of hunger as 43,888 or 12 percent of the total school population, less than half of which were provided for.<sup>68</sup> The findings of the committee prompted the formation of the London School Dinner Association, a central council of representatives from all the major dinner societies, for the purpose of improving organization of feeding in the schools.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-16. Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p. 105. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, National Insurance.

<sup>67</sup> C.S. Loch, Letter to the Editor, the Times, 19 December, 1889, p.13.

<sup>68</sup> Bulkley, p.16.

<sup>69</sup> A.J. Mundella, et al., Letter to the Editor, the Times, 3 December, 1889, p.7.

Little appears to have been accomplished by this body for two subsequent inquiries conducted by committees of the London School Board, in 1895 and 1898, produced very similar findings,<sup>70</sup> indicating that the situation in school feeding remained in a state of inefficiency and confusion despite almost ten years of the Association's efforts. Consequently, the majority on the 1898 committee urged the State to take some responsibility for child feeding by increasing its grants to the Centres for Physically and Mentally Defective Children in order that food provision and training at meals be included in their programmes. They were of the opinion that education authorities had a definite responsibility to provide food for those of their charges who came to school underfed.<sup>71</sup> They stated that the question of school feeding ought to be one of public concern and recommended the formation of a permanent committee with authorization to obtain reports and general assistance from the Board's staff, and the provision for use of school premises for feeding, and they issued the following statement of principle:

(1) It should be deemed to be part of the duty of any authority by law responsible for the compulsory attendance of children at school to ascertain what children, if any, come to school in a state unfit to get normal profit by the school work - whether by reason of underfeeding, physical disability, or otherwise - and that there should be the necessary inspection for that purpose. (2) That where it is ascertained that children are sent to school 'underfed' ... it should be part of the duty of the authority to see that they are provided, under proper conditions, with the necessary food ... (3) That existing or future voluntary efforts to that end should be supervised by the authority. (4) That in so far as voluntary efforts fail to cover the ground the authority should have the power and the duty to supplement them.

<sup>70</sup>The Times, 9 November, 1895, p.11. Ibid., 2 November, 1899, p.15; 17 November, 1899, p.14.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 2 November, 1899, p.15.

Meals provided by the authorities should be made available to all children for a small fee, the charge being waived for those unable to pay, but both paying and non-paying recipients should be treated on an equal basis. Where undernourishment was the result of parental neglect, they recommended that the Board prosecute the parent, and in the case of repeated neglect, the former body should have the power to deal with the child under the Industrial Schools Act.<sup>72</sup>

However, the London School Board rejected these proposals, accepting instead the recommendations of the minority who asserted that there was no necessity for any public authority to assume responsibility for school feeding, the voluntary associations being quite able to cope effectively with the need provided some reorganization was undertaken.<sup>73</sup> The Board's decision to leave the problem in the hands of voluntary agencies, who, it had been repeatedly shown, were incapable of reducing the great mass of hunger facing the education authorities, placed the school feeding movement in a position it had been in forty years previously. Thereafter, with the commencement of the South African War, interest in the movement diminished and voluntary agencies, hard-pressed financially to meet their commitments, were obliged to make urgent appeals for donations.<sup>74</sup> Lady Burdett-Coutts utilized patriotic feelings and the cult of "national efficiency" to solicit funds for the Destitute Childrens' Dinner Society:

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 17 November, 1899, p.14.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 17 November, 1899, p.14; 1 December, 1899, p.9; 15 December, 1899, p.6.

<sup>74</sup>See, for example, Lady Burdett-Coutts, Letter to the Editor, Ibid., 14 December, 1901, p.11. Harry Philips, Letter to the Editor, 11 December, 1901, p.7. Lord Reay, Letter to the Editor, 11 December, 1901, p.7.

The children do credit to their dinners, and the dinners will do credit to the children and will help them to grow up strong, hardy men and women - a credit to their own special locality and to the empire at large. In connection with this remark I am tempted to revert to an observation I made in a letter to you a year ago, that many of the men fighting for their country in South Africa were lads who in their childhood found their share of food and comfort in our dining rooms, where the foundation of their manhood was laid.<sup>75</sup>

Such appeals did little to improve the voluntary programme of school feeding. Nevertheless, complacency in this area, as in many others, was to be swept away after the turn of the century by the revelations of weakness among army recruits. Concern over the undernourished children of the nation gradually brought the realization that voluntary feeding was an inadequate system for alleviating the chronic underfed condition of large sections of the nation's youth.

Of the many weaknesses revealed by the South African War, that of widespread physical disability among working-class recruits had been the greatest.<sup>76</sup> Because this was the first time for close to fifty years that large numbers of Englishmen had undergone physical examination, it was possible to argue that conditions discovered were new, the result of industrialization or urban environment or of a gradual racial degeneracy.<sup>77</sup> While the war was in progress there had been warnings, largely ignored, of the physical condition of Britain's industrial workers. Arnold White, in

<sup>75</sup>Lady Burdett-Coutts, Letter to the Editor, *Ibid.*, 14 December, 1901, p.11.

<sup>76</sup>For an analysis of these weaknesses, see G.R. Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Thought, 1899-1914 (Oxford, 1971), Chap. 2.

<sup>77</sup>One example of this type of speculation on the topic is Alfred A. Mumford, "Some Considerations on the Alleged Physical Degeneration of the British Race", Fortnightly Review, 82 (1904), pp. 324-338.

his book Efficiency and Empire, published in 1901, claimed that the British race was deteriorating physically and supported his claim by pointing out that 60 percent of the recruits attempting to enlist at the Manchester depot in 1899 had to be rejected as physically unfit.<sup>78</sup> White's pronouncements went largely unnoticed.<sup>79</sup> A few months later, Seebohm Rowntree published his Poverty: A Study of Town Life in which he included figures, gathered while surveying living conditions among the working classes in York, which showed that over half of the intending recruits in York, Leeds, and Sheffield, between 1897 and 1901, failed to meet the required medical standards. Accordingly, he went on to state, if this physical fitness was representative of the working men of the remainder of England, one could only conclude that at least fifty percent of the country's manpower would be unavailable for military duty.<sup>80</sup> As with Arnold's statements, Rowntree's comments on the physical condition of army recruits appear to have made little impression on the public.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Arnold White, Efficiency and Empire (London, 1901), pp. 95-121.

<sup>79</sup>A survey of the London Times revealed only two responses to the claims concerning national physique made by White. One response came in the form of a letter to the editor from Earl Grey; the other was the paper's leading article concerning this letter (See the Times, 26 November, 1901, p.5. Ibid., p.3.). Grey's response was prompted by concern for Empire rather than compassion for the working classes. He expressed the fear that if existing conditions remained unchanged and unchecked, the next generation would be unable to "bear the burden of Empire".

<sup>80</sup>Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty: A Study of Town Life (London, 1901), pp. 216-221.

<sup>81</sup>A survey of the Times published in 1901-1902 yielded only two responses to Rowntree's statements delivered in a series of lectures at Cambridge in which he had reiterated the conclusions drawn in his book. Both responses were negative (See Leading Article, the Times, 23 August, 1902, p.7. George T. Hartley, Letter to the Editor, Ibid., 29 August, 1902, p.5.)

However, at the beginning of 1902, the seriousness of the fitness problem was again brought to the attention of the public and it now made a more forceful impact. In January, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, writing under the pseudonym "Miles", published an article in the Contemporary Review in which he maintained that the current dearth of army recruits could be traced to the fact that only a handful of those presenting themselves at the recruiting station were able to meet even the severely-reduced wartime physical requirements.<sup>82</sup> Repeating the ratio cited by White, Maurice emphasized:

What I want to insist upon is that a state of things in which no more than two out of five of the population below a certain standard of life are fit to bear arms is a national danger which cannot be met by any mere scheme of enlistment, and that true patriotism requires that the danger be recognised".<sup>83</sup>

Additional impact was added to Maurice's statements by the fact that they followed closely upon statements, all critical, regarding the problem of inefficiency within the nation issued by three prominent Britons, the Prince of Wales,<sup>84</sup> Sidney Webb,<sup>85</sup> and Lord Rosebery.<sup>86</sup> Maurice's article, following as it did upon these criticisms of national efficiency, helped to set in motion a rising tide of critical and apprehensive discussions concerning the physical condition of the British nation. These discussions led the British to view the two questions of public health and national

<sup>82</sup>"Miles", (Major-General, Sir John Frederick Maurice), "Where to Get Men", Contemporary Review, 81 (1902), pp. 78-86.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>84</sup>Leading Article, the Times, 6 December, 1901, p.5.

<sup>85</sup>Sidney Webb, "Lord Rosebery's Escape from Houndsditch", Nineteenth Century 50 (1901), pp. 366-386.

<sup>86</sup>Leading Article, the Times, 17 December, 1901, p.10.

welfare as one indivisible whole.<sup>87</sup> National physical deterioration came to be seen as a danger, not only to the structure of domestic society, but also to the existence of Britain as a world power.<sup>88</sup>

A year after the appearance of his first article, Maurice published a second paper in which he stated that exhaustive inquiries he had subsequently conducted into the poor physical condition of army recruits had led him to the conclusion that the condition of these men was even worse than recruiting statistics indicated because patriotism was bringing in a better class of volunteers. In addition, army enlistment standards had been lowered and recruiting sergeants had been instructed to accept all those men they considered might pass the army's physical examination. Even so, Maurice claimed, 60 percent of Englishmen were unfit for the army.<sup>89</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Inspector-General of Recruiting, Major-General H.C. Borrett, C.B., published his annual report for 1902 in which he included figures to show that, despite lowered enlistment standards, the percentage rejections for various ailments had risen from 16.3 percent in 1900, to 19.46 percent for the year 1901, and for the year 1902 had increased to 22.46 percent. He emphasized that "one subject which was causing anxiety was the gradual deterioration of the physique of the working classes, from whom the bulk of the army recruits must be drawn".<sup>90</sup> Concern about the condition of the

<sup>87</sup> Gilbert, National Insurance, pp. 84-85.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, George F. Shee, "The Deterioration in the National Physique", Nineteenth Century, 80 (1903): 797-805.

<sup>89</sup> Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, "National Health: A Soldier's Study", Contemporary Review, 83 (1903): 41-56.

<sup>90</sup> Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for 1902. (Cmd. 1417), PP, 1903, 11, p.15, para. 75, p.30, para. 150.



British people now became the province of all those who felt themselves to have the future of the nation at heart: military thinkers, imperialists and national efficiency advocates, as well as philanthropists and social reformers.<sup>91</sup> At the same time the controversy surrounding the question of physical degeneracy began to move beyond the moral and political to the scientific.<sup>92</sup>

Although Rowntree's findings clearly showed that those below the artisan class in the cities he had surveyed had not sufficient food to maintain health, and, consequently, physical deterioration was rampant, none of the ensuing discussions had yet proposed that school feeding might be utilized by the State to check the alleged physical degeneracy among working-class children. Malnutrition amongst this group was generally regarded as the result of lack of thrift on the part of the parents and the mother's ignorance of the arts of housewifery, and its remedy was seen to lie in education of the parents rather than government intervention in the area of public welfare.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, throughout this period, the various voluntary feeding agencies continued their efforts to relieve the distress of the school children in a more-or-less unorganized fashion, despite efforts on the part of the London School Board to develop a more unified system. In 1900, acting upon the recommendation of the minority report of its General

<sup>91</sup>Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 87. See also, Searle, Chap. 3.

<sup>92</sup>See, for example, Alex Mackendrick, "Heredity and Environment in Social Development", Westminster Review, 162 (1904): 180-187.

<sup>93</sup>See, Leading Article, the Times, 23 August, 1902, p.7. Maurice, "Where to Get Men", p.85. Maurice, "National Health", pp. 50-52. "National Health and Military Service", British Medical Journal, 2 (1903): 207-208. Seebohm Rowntree, "Poverty in Provincial Towns", the Times, 20 August, 1902, p.9.

Purposes Committee's enquiry into underfed children in the schools,<sup>94</sup> the Board formed a "Joint-Committee on Underfed Children" to promote and supervise co-operation between the Board, voluntary feeding agencies, and specially appointed school sub-committees, in the belief that this would result in a more efficient programme of school feeding.<sup>95</sup> These efforts met with little success.<sup>96</sup> The Board's scheme depended upon the proposed three-way co-operation between the voluntary agencies, sub-committees, and the joint-committee of the Board. In many areas this co-operation had failed to materialize chiefly because very few sub-committees were established and amongst those that were officially formed, many met only once and had then dissolved themselves or had taken no further action, while others continued intact but led a merely nominal existence.<sup>97</sup> During 1900-1903, notwithstanding the joint-committee's efforts to eliminate from their lists of underfed children all but the most "necessitous" of the Board's pupils,<sup>98</sup> the numbers of meals provided in the Board's schools continued to increase. Furthermore, the "organized" system had proved to be quite disorganized in many areas<sup>99</sup> - the London School Dinners Association

<sup>94</sup>See the Times, 2 November, 1899, p.14.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 2 March, 1900, p.14; 18 October, 1901, p.6.

<sup>96</sup>See London School Board Joint-Committee on Underfed Children, First Annual Report, 1900-1901, the Times, 18 October, 1901, p.6; Second Annual Report, 1901-1902, Ibid., 11 July, 1902, p.13; Third Annual Report, 1902-1903, Ibid., 16 July, 1903, p.14.

<sup>97</sup>The Times, 18 October, 1901, p.6. Ibid., 11 July, 1902, p.13. For an examination of the reasons for this lack of co-operation, see Ibid., 11 July, 1902, p.13; 26 November, 1901, p.71. Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, Ibid., 18 December, 1901, p.12.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 18 October, 1901, p.6. Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, Ibid., 18 December, 1901, p.12.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 18 October, 1901, p.6; 16 July, 1903, p.14.

being the only group of its kind to have worked with the Board, the majority of voluntary organizations refusing to co-operate with them in any way.<sup>100</sup>

The meagre success achieved by the London School Board joint-committee, the constant rise in the numbers of children fed, and the continuing appeals<sup>101</sup> of the voluntary feeding associations for donations, illustrate the deficiencies of the voluntary feeding programmes at the turn of the century. However, the growing unease over the physical condition of the British nation failed to produce a corresponding rise in interest in the question of school feeding during the war years.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the revelations of the apparent physical degeneracy amongst the poorer classes in no way diminished the stand of the ardent opponents of State feeding. They continued to support the position that voluntary feeding programmes were sufficient to deal with the problem of underfed children. The Charity Organization Society remained the most vocal and stalwart proponent of this

<sup>100</sup> Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, *Ibid.*, 18 December, 1901, p.12. The voluntary associations' decision not to co-operate with the Board was no doubt influenced by the joint-committee's determination to eliminate "undeserving" recipients from the school lists.

<sup>101</sup> These included appeals by the London School Dinners Association, and the London Vegetarian Association. See Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, *ibid.*, 10 December, 1901, p.13. Lord Reay, Letter to the Editor, 11 December, 1901, p.7.

<sup>102</sup> Interest in school feeding appears to have diminished rather than grown between 1900-1902. During the period 1900-1901 the subject of underfed children appeared in the Times on nine occasions; seven were letters to the editor - five of which were from representatives of voluntary feeding associations, the other two being submitted by Charity Organization Society spokesman, Sir Arthur Clay (see the Times, 1 March, 1900, p.10. *Ibid.*, 10 December, 1901, p.13; 11 December, 1901, p.7; 14 December, 1901, p.14; 18 December, 1901, p.12; 20 December, 1901, p.10); the other two instances were reports of the First Annual Report of the London School Board Joint-Committee on Underfed Children and of a special meeting of the Charity Organization Society (see *Ibid.*, 18 October, 1901, p.6; 26 November, 1901, p.7). In 1902 the subject appeared on only one occasion, that of the publication of the London School Board Joint-Committee's Annual Report for 1901-1902 (See *Ibid.*, 11 July, 1902, p.13).

view.<sup>103</sup> It was their contention that the "party who advocated State feeding" had deliberately sought to undermine the work of the Board's joint-committee by strenuously opposing that body's efforts to organize the voluntary programmes into a unified system.<sup>104</sup>

The "party who advocated State feeding", referred to by the Charity Organization Society,<sup>105</sup> was the Social Democratic Federation. They had made the provision of a free meal for all children in elementary schools one of the fundamental planks of their platform since the 'eighties and had presented several memorials to the London School Board urging the feeding and clothing of the children of the unemployed out of the rates.<sup>106</sup> Outside of the socialist group the only prominent political figure who appears to have concerned himself with the question of State

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 26 November, 1901, p.7. See also, H. Bosanquet, Social Work in London, 1869-1912 (London, 1914. 2nd ed. London, 1973), pp. 230-255.

<sup>104</sup> Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, the Times, 18 December, 1901, p.12.

<sup>105</sup> The Charity Organization Society's accusation may have arisen out of a belief that the Fabian Socialist members of the London School Board were in some type of collusion with the S.D.F. to jeopardize the workings of the joint-committee on underfed children. This appears unlikely, as the Fabians seem to have embraced the cause of State feeding only after the growth of public opinion on the matter, following the rise of the physical degeneracy controversy, had made the issue politically profitable (see "After Bread, Education: A Plan for the State Feeding of School Children", Fabian Tract 120. Fabian Tracts, Nos. 96-129, 1900-1906 (London, 1906. Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, 1969)).

<sup>106</sup> See Justice, March 29, September 13 and 27, December 6, 1884. Minutes of the London School Board, November 17, 1892; February 20, 1896; December 7, 1899. Cited in Bulkley, pp. 25-26.

provision of school meals, at this period, was Gorst. His concern at this point continued to be the futility of attempting to educate children whose physical condition rendered them incapable of benefitting from the instruction provided by the schools.<sup>107</sup>

In the Spring of 1903, the school feeding problem became an integral part of the physical deterioration problem as a result of new evidence to support the claim that the British nation was experiencing racial decay. This evidence furnished ample proof of the harm being inflicted upon the physical health of the nation by the malnutrition of school children. In 1903, the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), which had been appointed to consider the best method of imparting instruction in physical exercises in Scottish schools, published its report in which it stated that there was an undeniable degeneration in certain classes.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the report showed indisputably the necessity for better feeding, a point emphasized by a large number of witnesses.<sup>109</sup> However, the Commissioners were very cautious in their recommendations. In spite of their conviction that feeding was necessary, they were uncertain as to what should be the precise extent of local education authority responsibility in the relieving of underfed school children. "It is a matter of grave consideration", they declared, "whether the valuable asset to the nation in the improved moral and physical state of a large number of future citizens counter-balances the evils of

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, PD, 4th series, 84 (1900): 30.

<sup>108</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland). Vol. 1 (Cmnd. 1507), PP, 1903, 30: 25, para. 125.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, evidence of Mr. J.E. Legge and Mr. Clement Dukes. Ibid., Vol. 2. Minutes of Evidence (Cmnd. 1508), PP, 1903, 30: 164-165, para. 760-764, 456, para. 8140-8142.

impaired parental responsibility, or whether voluntary agencies may be trusted to do this work with more discrimination and consequently less danger than a statutory system".<sup>110</sup> They emphasized, however, that some parents who had the desire to "act up to their parental responsibility" possessed insufficient resources to allow them to adequately feed their children. This being so, they considered that "accommodation and means for enabling children to be properly fed should ... be provided either in school or in a centre; but, except for a limited sum to provide the necessary equipment, no part of the cost should be allowed to fall on the rates". The food should be provided by voluntary agencies but the Commissioners proposed that where charitable donations failed to cover the cost, the public authorities be given the powers to pay for meals and to obtain reimbursement from the parents.<sup>111</sup> Thus, almost one year after the conclusion of the South African War, the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) became the first official body to suggest school feeding as one way of curtailing physical deterioration amongst the nation's rising generation, even though the Commission was reluctant to suggest that local education authorities themselves be empowered to provide food.<sup>112</sup>

The Royal Commission's recommendations were less sweeping than the earlier proposals of the Social Democratic Federation and Gorst, but they carried the weight of an official body and Gorst lost no time in utilizing the report to publicize and support his demand for State responsibility for child feeding. Shortly after the report's publication, he

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 1: 30 para. 165.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 1: 30-31, para. 167, 172.

<sup>112</sup>Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 108.

seized the opportunity presented by the debate on Scottish education estimates, to rise in the House and launch what was to become a personal crusade for State-supported school meals.<sup>113</sup> Beginning on a note more or less guaranteed to gain the attention of the Members, he expressed the view that the enormous sums of public money expended upon education were being wasted because children were not in a condition to receive the instruction provided for them in the schools. This state of affairs had been revealed, and more luridly than ever before, by the Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland). Gorst reiterated the findings of the Commissioners regarding the poor physical condition of large numbers of children in both rural areas and urban centres in Scotland. He made special reference to a particular institution in Edinburgh, the North Canongate Board School, which the sub-committee of the Commission had investigated and had found the majority of its pupils habitually underfed. This school, Gorst asserted, was a replica of a type found in certain areas of London, particularly Bermondsey and the poor districts south of the Thames. Those having contact with the poorer children in these schools were struck by the extreme thinness of their bodies and their generally underfed condition, which was exactly the impression gained by the Scottish investigators at the Canongate institution. Evoking the popular sentiment of the moment, Gorst questioned Britain's ability to raise an Imperial race if a majority of the children in a large number of the nation's schools displayed these characteristics of insufficient nourishment. He drew the

<sup>113</sup>PD, 4th series, 123 (1903): 1350-1355.

attention of the House to the recommendations of the medical men on the Commission, namely, that "Physical exercises unsupported by adequate food ... must result in early physiological exhaustion and infirmity".<sup>114</sup>

If children inadequately fed were unfit for physical instruction, as stated by these medical experts, then they were even more unfit for mental instruction, declared Gorst. No-one who had the prosperity and welfare of Britain at heart could ignore the implications which the Commission's findings had for the nation as a whole. There was no reason for doubting that the conditions prevalent in many of the schools in Scotland existed in English schools and, therefore, Gorst urged that the question be given immediate attention. He suggested two methods for attacking the problem: periodic medical examination of the children in schools, in order to pinpoint at its earliest stage any disease or condition likely to interfere with the child's school work, and feeding, because "at all hazards the children must be fed before they are taught" not only to ensure they benefited from the instruction presented but also to prevent injury through overstrain. The task of feeding the child could be undertaken by the charitable agencies, if they were able to cope adequately with the situation. If they could not, "then the State must see that the children were fed. That was the fundamental fact on which all administration and practice should go". Parental responsibility need not be undermined, emphasized Gorst. Those parents who could pay must be made to pay. However, those parents who had not the means to pay should be treated with tenderness. He, personally, had no objection to the State feeding those children; "but

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 1352.



at any rate they could be referred to the relieving officers under the Poor Law".<sup>115</sup> Gorst's proposals met with scant approval in the House and his advocacy of State provision of food, where voluntary efforts proved inadequate, prompted certain parliamentary colleagues to deem him "socialist".<sup>116</sup>

The Reports of the Inspector-General of Recruiting and the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), also aroused the concern of two prominent peers. On July 6, the Earl of Meath rose in the Lords to draw the attention of the government to these reports and to ask if they would be prepared to appoint a Royal Commission, or a committee of inquiry, which could be charged with the task of assessing whether or not inhabitants of the industrial towns and cities were existing in conditions which, if allowed to continue, would constitute a hazard to the national health and vigour.<sup>117</sup> Support for the Earl's suggestion came from the Bishop of Ripon who urged the government to give their best attention to the question of the alleged physical deterioration of the urban working class, and the conditions in which they lived, and by some form of inquiry enlighten the public on these matters.<sup>118</sup>

Replying for the government, the Duke of Devonshire concentrated upon the aspect of alleged physical deterioration of army recruits,

<sup>115</sup>Ibid: 1355-1356.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 125 (1903): 196. See also, the Times, 20 February, 1904, p.11. Gorst's speech to the Labour Co-Partnership Association at Cardiff.

<sup>117</sup>PD, 4th series, 124 (1903): 1324-1337.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid: 1337-1346.

as presented by the Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, and dismissed as less urgent the question of working-class conditions in industrial cities and towns. He cautioned his audience against accepting the evidence in the report at face value as it was not supported by any accurate statistics. He informed the House that, following consultations between the Secretary of State for War, the Local Government Board and the Home Ministry, it had been decided that an investigation should be carried out to determine the validity of the claims that "certain classes" within British society were undergoing physical deterioration. Thus, it was likely that a Royal Commission would be appointed to conduct the inquiry, but only after the government had consulted with the medical profession in order to obtain their opinions on the best means of obtaining information as to the causes, rather than the extent, of the undoubted physical deficiency existing in some parts of the population, and to hear their suggestions as to the most efficient means by which these deficiencies could be remedied. The inquiry would also await the completion of the report of the Registrar-General, and the memorandum on the army manpower problem by the Director-General, Army Medical Services, both of which were currently in preparation.<sup>119</sup>

Devonshire's emphasis on the allegations concerning the physical degeneracy of army recruits, to the exclusion of the problem of the physical condition of the working-class population, can be seen as a reflection of the government's desire not to emphasize those aspects of the question which might lead to State involvement in the area of public welfare.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid: 1346-1352.

Moreover, the long-drawn-out nature of the proposed "preliminaries" to the establishment of the requested inquiry, may be interpreted as a carefully devised government plan to allow the problem to "float" in the hope that it might gradually disappear as public interest waned.<sup>120</sup>

Gorst, however, was not prepared to permit the questions of physical deterioration and underfed children to "float" and he re-introduced the subjects in Parliament just three days later.<sup>121</sup> He now urged that the Board of Education undertake an inquiry into the condition of children of London, similar to the one conducted by the sub-committee of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), in order to determine if the appalling physical inadequacies discovered amongst children in certain Scottish urban schools existed among the school population in England's capital. The Scottish investigators had pointed out that to give physical instruction to undernourished children was tantamount to cruelty, said Gorst. In his view, to give mental instruction to them was equally cruel. No hungry child should be forced to learn. He rejected as inadequate the remedy of increased philanthropic effort, proposed by Sir William Anson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education. Voluntary agencies had rendered valuable assistance in the succouring of needy children in the past, but it had been shown that philanthropy alone could not remedy the evils resulting from inadequate feeding. Gorst argued that "no public

<sup>120</sup>The normally pro-Conservative Times apparently believed this to be so. See Leading Article of 7 July, 1903, p.9.

<sup>121</sup>PD, 4th series, 125 (1903): 193-197.

authority should say 'let the philanthropist deal with the matter' and allow the evil to go on".<sup>122</sup>

If the Board of Education was not prepared to act in the matter then the local authorities, the municipalities of great cities, and the county councils should assume the responsibility for improving the condition of those children found to be below an acceptable physical standard, insisted Gorst. Certain measures could be taken by the teachers themselves to greatly reduce the problem; he suggested that they conduct a brief daily examination of their charges in order to detect those children who, from hunger or overwork, were unfit to learn. There should also be periodic medical inspection of children conducted in the schools in order that diseases and debilities could be noted and treated in their earliest stages. He reiterated once again that "if the authorities undertook to give instruction, either mental or physical, they had no right to do it without also being responsible for seeing that the children were adequately fed before they were instructed".<sup>123</sup> Thus, Gorst proposed that the local education authorities establish self-supporting school dinner programmes in schools where there was proven need through which under-nourished children, examined and passed as such by the authority, could be fed at no cost to the parents. Such a programme would not lessen parental responsibility, he asserted, because all parents who could pay would be required to pay and those who could not could be referred to the Poor Law

<sup>122</sup>Ibid: 194.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid: 196.

authorities and would receive public relief.<sup>124</sup>

Later the same day he again pressed the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education to make some commitment on the part of his department with regard to the type of action, if any, it proposed to take in alleviating the sufferings of their underfed charges in the schools. Referring to the statement made in the Lords three days earlier by the Duke of Devonshire, to the effect that the government was contemplating a Royal Commission into the whole question of physical deterioration, Gorst expressed the hope that the Board of Education would not delay action of its own until the promised inquiry had been conducted. He believed that the Board had sufficient information of its own as to the physical condition of children in its schools, supplied by inspectors and teachers, to allow it to proceed immediately with the implementation of measures for improving the health of the children without first awaiting the results of any further inquiry.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup>Ibid: 197.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid: 264. Gorst's concern for the near-starving children of the working classes also prompted him to publicly oppose the Tariff Reform proposals currently being espoused by Joseph Chamberlain, an issue then dividing the Unionist party. Gorst denounced the proposed Colonial preference, claiming that the resulting tax on food would reduce the already pitifully-low living standard of the poorer workers, many of whom were already existing below subsistence level. If, as recent official reports had indicated, the British workers were experiencing physical deterioration, any increase in food prices would cast them into even deeper distress. "Such an augmentation of the present menacing destitution of the mass of the population in the British Isles cannot be borne", he asserted. (See, J.E. Gorst, Mr. Chamberlain's Proposals", North American Review, 177 (1903), 165-171. For an examination of the Tariff Reform controversy within the Unionist party see Richard A. Rempel, Unionists Divided: Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain and the Unionist Free Traders (Hamden, Conn., 1972).

Gorst's remarks could no longer be dismissed by merely labelling his suggestions "socialistic". The few short weeks which had elapsed since Gorst first mooted the topic of child feeding in Parliament had been sufficient to allow for the development of an increased awareness of the question amongst the general public and now the government were obliged to show that they were at least alive to the problem. Thus, Anson now assured Gorst, and the House, that an inquiry into the whole problem of the physical condition of "certain classes" within the nation was soon to be carried out by a special committee, and this would no doubt include investigation of the condition of children.<sup>126</sup>

Shortly, thereafter, the awaited memorandum on the army manpower problem, compiled by the Director-General of the Army Medical Services, Sir William Taylor, was issued as a parliamentary paper<sup>127</sup> and the general tone of his remarks indicated that he believed that the fears expressed with regard to physical degeneration were well-founded. He stated that his own investigations had produced facts which appeared to substantiate Maurice's claims that 60 percent of Englishmen were unfit for the army. He claimed that his research into the problem of army recruitment had yielded evidence that the rising generation, in those classes below that of artisan, included a large number of poor physique. Sir William concluded by adding his own request to those made by Maurice, the Earl of Meath, and the Bishop of Ripon, for an inquiry, preferably a Royal Commission, to discover the most suitable methods of removing defects and improving

<sup>126</sup> Ibid: 246-247, 265-266.

<sup>127</sup> Original Memorandum Prepared by the Surgeon-General, Sir William Taylor, Director-General of Army Medical Services, 1903 (Cmnd. 1501). Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 1 (Cmnd. 2175), PP, 1904, 32: 101-103. Appendix 1.

national health.<sup>128</sup>

The publication of the Memorandum served to stimulate further the physical degeneracy controversy and comments began to be heard from representatives of various sections of British society, particularly the medical profession.<sup>129</sup> This discussion in Parliament, in the press, and in journals, could not be ignored by the government and, consequently, at the beginning of September, 1903, they appointed an Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, which was charged with the task of making a preliminary inquiry into allegations that had been made concerning the physical deterioration of "certain classes of the population", as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the army, to determine if a full Royal Commission investigation was warranted.<sup>130</sup> The Unionists evidently hoped that the establishment of the interdepartmental committee would both satisfy those demanding government action and also create an image of a concerned and active government, while at the same time keeping the inquiry as low-key as possible, reflecting the

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>See, for example, "National Health and Military Service", British Medical Journal, 2(1903), 207-208. William D. Hall, M.D., Letter to the Editor, the Times, 1 September, 1903. See also, Leading Article, Ibid., 20 July, 1903, p.7.

<sup>130</sup>Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 2175), PP, 1904, 32: 5. See also, PD, 4th series, 131 (1904): 724-725.

Balfour administration's reluctance to grasp the nettle of social reform at a time when its political fortunes were on the decline.<sup>131</sup>

However, contrary to the Government's expectations,<sup>132</sup> the appointment of the Interdepartmental Committee inquiry failed to dissipate the discussion on physical deterioration. During the succeeding months, while the Committee was conducting its hearings, the controversy revolving around the condition of the national physique and its contributory causes continued unabated.<sup>133</sup> Gorst took advantage of his public speaking engagements to draw attention to the question of child feeding, which he now placed in the context of physical deterioration and race degeneracy. Addressing a meeting sponsored by the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union and the Leeds Trade Council, on September 4, he supported trade unionist Will Thorne's resolution calling upon the Government to empower the local authorities to "provide at least one free meal a day for children attending State schools". He noted that in many schools the children were "anaemic, ill-nourished, degenerate, totally unfit to profit by the instruction ... provided" and he stressed the need for regular medical

<sup>131</sup>For an examination of the Unionist government's situation at this period, see John Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin (London, 1978), pp. 2-20. See also, Bentley B. Gilbert, "Health and Politics: The British Physical Deterioration Report of 1904", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 39 (1965), 143-153. R.R. James, The British Revolution: British Politics, 1880-1939. Vol. 1. From Gladstone to Asquith, 1880-1914 (London, 1976), pp. 196-230.

<sup>132</sup>The government's hopes in this direction were reflected in the Times comments following the Duke of Devonshire's announcement that an inquiry was to be conducted into the allegations of physical degeneracy. The Times welcomed the proposed investigation but observed, "we shall not be surprised if its effect is to dispel a considerable proportion of the fears as to national degeneration which have been entertained in many directions, and perhaps a little too loudly proclaimed in some". (Leading Article, 20 July, 1903, p.7.)

<sup>133</sup>Between December 1903 and 3 March, 1904, twelve letters and three leading articles concerning the subject were published in the Times. See Letters to the Editor, 26, 29 and 31 December, 1903; 1, 2, 4, 11, 14, 25 and 28 January, 1904; Leading Articles, 23 and 25 January, 1904; 3 March, 1904.



inspection.<sup>134</sup> Speaking at Halifax later that month, he stated that if the British people were to continue to be a great Imperial people it was essential that they should breed a likewise great Imperial race. In order to accomplish this end, regard must first be given to the health of the children of the nation, he declared, and this included seeing that they were properly fed.<sup>135</sup> Three days later, while delivering a presidential address to the Navy Club in Sutton Coldfield, he reflected upon the fact that the British race, which had formerly been "distinguished with an extraordinary amount of vigour", was now evidencing signs of deterioration. The State should give its immediate attention to the nation's children, who would have to carry the burden of Empire in the future, in order that their health be unimpaired by inadequate nourishment.<sup>136</sup>

The continued high level of interest in the question of physical degeneracy made the Unionist government realize that a more extensive inquiry than the one they had launched would undoubtedly be necessary. Consequently, the government decided to extend the scope of the Inter-departmental Committee. The original terms of reference were enlarged to provide for a full-fledged investigation into the entire question of physical deterioration among "certain classes" of the population.<sup>137</sup> The "certain classes" mentioned were actually the urban poor and the Committee concentrated for the most part on the conditions existing in the city slums

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 5 September, 1904, p.5.

<sup>135</sup> The Times, 30 September, 1903, p.5.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 2 October, 1903, p.6.

<sup>137</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 2175), PP, 1904, 32: 5. See also, PD, 4th series, 131 (1904): 724-725.

- the over-crowding, pollution, sub-standard working conditions, and high infant mortality rates.

Gorst continued to keep the question of child feeding before the Commons. Fearing perhaps that the Interdepartmental Committee's recommendations would fall short of proposing State responsibility for child feeding, given that the Committee was both official and partisan in composition,<sup>138</sup> Gorst once more expressed the opinion that the Board of Education had sufficient information of its own upon which to base action on child feeding in the schools. He reminded the Members that the Board had conducted three investigations into the question of underfed children, between 1889 and 1899, which had showed that large numbers of the children in its schools were being subjected to the strain of being instructed while in a half-starved condition. The Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) had added further evidence to the investigations, giving the Board more than sufficient information upon which to act. In his opinion, it was the duty of Parliament to either prescribe remedies or delegate power to local authorities that they might fulfil this task. He

<sup>138</sup> Although it was appointed to inquire into public health the Committee contained no Medical Officer of Health nor any representative of the Local Government Board's public health authority but was composed entirely of civil servants, when one uses the term in its broadest sense, a fact commented upon by Gorst in the House (see, PD, 4th series, 140 (1904): 48). In addition, the status and background of the Committee's chairman, Sir Almeric FitzRoy, was true-blue Tory. His Memoirs reveal that he was the confidant of many highly-placed government officials and on the day of the first meeting of the Committee he recorded in his diary, "The first meeting of the Deterioration Committee gave promise of a satisfactory course to the inquiry ... I do not think I shall have any difficulty in guiding the team". (See Sir Almeric FitzRoy, Memoirs, 2 vols. (London, 1923 ), I, p. 162. Emphasis added.)

urged the Government to inform the House when the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee was to be expected and when they proposed to implement its recommendations.<sup>139</sup>

Some four weeks later, the question of local education authority provision of school meals for elementary school children was debated in Parliament and Gorst once again reiterated that the time had come for "some definite and distinct action on the part of the Government and the local authorities" with regard to the provision of meals for underfed children. To those who claimed that such action would serve to undermine parental responsibility, a favourite argument of those opposed to government intervention in child feeding, Gorst replied that he "objected to bringing home parental responsibility to the minority by letting the children starve". Moreover, he asserted, State involvement would serve to strengthen rather than weaken the parental role, in the case of the severely neglected child. Through the procedures instigated to gain reimbursement for the meal provided to a child the local authorities would be able to supply the police magistrate with sufficient evidence to convict the negligent parent. The threat of such proceedings would serve, except in a handful of cases, to increase the parents' sense of responsibility as well as ensuring the child was sufficiently nourished at home.<sup>140</sup>

The Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration was duly published on July 20, 1904. With regard to the question of underfed children, the Committee's findings were far more definite and striking than those of the Royal Commission on Physical

<sup>139</sup> PD, 4th series, 132 (1904): 905-912.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 133 (1904): 790-791.

Training (Scotland) had been. Evidence presented before Committee members indicated that the extent of underfeeding was considerable. Dr. Eicholz, M.D., and Inspector of Schools, carried out a detailed investigation of the numbers of underfed children in London elementary schools and, on the basis of this inquiry, estimated that 122,000 or 16 percent of the elementary school population were unable, by reason of their underfed condition, to attend to their lessons.<sup>141</sup> Information supplied to him by the Education Committee and Medical Officer of Health in Manchester revealed that not less than 15 percent of that city's elementary school children were underfed.<sup>142</sup> Dr. W.L. Mackenzie, Medical Officer to the Local Government Board for Scotland, reported that a large proportion of the children in the slums of Edinburgh were half-starved<sup>143</sup> and Dr. Kelly, the Catholic Bishop of Ross, informed the Committee that in the South of Ireland it was quite common for children to go to school unfed.<sup>144</sup>

Members of the medical profession gave striking testimony as to the effect of underfeeding upon the physique of school children. Dr. Robert Hutchinson expressed the view that if a child was insufficiently fed during the period of growth encompassed by the school years, it would be permanently stunted.<sup>145</sup> Stated Dr. Collie of the London School Board, "Apart from infectious diseases malnutrition is accountable for nine-tenths of child sickness".<sup>146</sup>

<sup>141</sup>Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 2 (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32: 176, para. 476.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid: 266, para. 6977-6980.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid: 567, para. 11380.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid: 514, para. 9973-9974.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid: 320, para. 3992.

It was the opinion of Dr. Eicholz, an opinion he said "shared by most medical men, school managers, and teachers conversant with the conditions of our schools, that food is the point about which turns the whole problem of degeneracy".<sup>147</sup> Conversely, there was considerable evidence to show that a regular and nutritious diet could reverse the degenerative effects of underfeeding.<sup>148</sup>

Facts supplied by the various witnesses concerned with malnutrition as a cause of physical deterioration provided the Committee with an exhaustive survey of the existing voluntary programmes for school feeding.<sup>149</sup> Although there were varying opinions as to the most desirable method of providing meals for necessitous children, with scarcely an exception there was a general consensus of opinion that the time had come when the State should realize the necessity of ensuring adequate nourishment to children in attendance at school.<sup>150</sup> There was general agreement that the purely voluntary feeding agencies, valuable as they were, could not successfully cope with the extent of the problem.<sup>151</sup> Even those witnesses who thought

<sup>147</sup> Ibid: 175, para. 471.

<sup>148</sup> See, for example, the evidence of Dr. Eicholz and Dr. Collie, Ibid: 176, para. 486. Ibid: 317: 3938.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, the testimony of the following individuals: Ibid., Mr. J.B. Atkins, pp. 279-280, para. 2967-2974; Dr. Airey, pp. 634-635; Dr. Chalmers, p. 397, para. 6173-6177; Mr. H. Libby, p. 450, para. 7848-7869; Sir Frederick Maurice, pp. 162-163, para. 279-286.

<sup>150</sup> The exception was Dr. Kelly, R.C. Bishop of Ross, who though he acknowledged that there was an enormous number of underfed children in Ireland, deprecated any measures being taken to remedy the situation, on the ground that it would weaken the self-respect and self-reliance both of parent and child. See, Ibid: 568, para. 11382-11384.

<sup>151</sup> See, Ibid., Mr. J.B. Atkins, pp. 281-282, para. 3000, 3006-3018; Mr. Charles Booth, p. 203, para. 1129-1133; Sir L. Brunton, p. 258, para. 2428, p.260, para. 2450-2452; Dr. Collie, p. 317, para. 3938, p.318, para. 3945-3958; Dr. R. Hutchinson, p.514, para. 9976, p.515, para. 1004-1006, p.517, para. 10067-10078; Dr. Niven, pp. 403-404, para. 6349-6378.

that the need for school feeding had been greatly exaggerated, believed that those children who proved to be underfed should be given food, providing it was done without impairing parental responsibility.<sup>152</sup>

The most "uncompromising advocacy" of State provision of meals for underfed children came from Gorst and Dr. Thomas Macnamara, Liberal M.P. for Camberwell.<sup>153</sup> When he appeared before the Committee, Gorst first pointed out to its members that the evidence he would present had been accumulated during eight years as Vice-President of the Council on Education, the result of conversations with teachers and inspectors, and personal experience gained through visiting various types of schools.<sup>154</sup> He went on to condemn the policy of submitting half-starved children to the processes of education which resulted in an exhaustion of the brain and muscles from which they might never recover. "If you do not intend to feed them you should not attempt to lay any stress upon either their bodies or their minds", he declared.<sup>155</sup>

Gorst drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that underfeeding was not restricted to schools in poorer sections of urban

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., pp. 526-527, para. 10271-10275; p. 530, para. 10402-10410. Evidence of Mr. C.S. Loch and Mrs. Murphey.

<sup>153</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 1 (Cmnd. 2175), PP, 1904, 32: 70, para. 356. For Dr. Macnamara's recommendations see Ibid., Vol. 2 (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32, pp. 604-605, para. 12373-12377; p. 607, para. 12438; pp. 608-609, para. 12458-12477.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2 (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32: 581, para. 11788.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid: 583, para. 11826.

areas but was also widespread in many rural districts. The majority of underfed children in these areas were the sons and daughters of widowed mothers who simply did not have the means to sufficiently nourish their offspring and their only source of relief was the Poor Law, which invariably made inadequate provision. Although no statistics were available as to the number of insufficiently fed in country schools, he could personally vouch for the extent of the problem in Essex and he had no reason to doubt that similar conditions existed in rural districts around the country.<sup>156</sup>

Gorst urged that the school authorities organize a provision of school meals, both a breakfast and a dinner, in all schools where a class of underfed children was found to exist. The meals should be made available to all these children in the school who were willing to purchase a meal at cost price. Gorst denied that such a system would tend to disrupt family life; he pointed out that it was commonly the case for the father to eat his dinner at his place of work, the mother and children often remaining at home to eat scraps. He thought the benevolent societies could undertake the responsibility of running the programmes but they should do it as agents of the school authority. The latter body should, however, be responsible for providing the premises for the cooking and serving of the meals and all preparations should be carried out under its guidance. If the programme was later found to be inefficiently run, the school authority should step in and take over the programme for the benevolent society. In Gorst's view, payment by the parents and charitable donations

<sup>156</sup>Ibid: 583, para. 11829; p. 589, para. 11973-11976.

would be sufficient to make the scheme self-supporting but he believed that there should be recourse to the rates. He suggested that any deficit by made up out of the school rate.<sup>157</sup>

Gorst proposed a ticket system be used for distributing the meals. Meal tickets could be purchased by those parents who wished to use the service as a convenience. The underfed children of poor parents who had not the means to purchase a meal for them could be given a ticket. Gorst emphasized that no distinction should be made between those pupils who purchased their tickets and those who received them gratuitously. He suggested that the teachers be responsible for supplying the free tickets because they were the most competent to undertake the task, being more familiar with the needs of the children under their case than either the district visitor or the secretary of the benevolent society. However, Gorst stressed that the teacher should be obliged to make a daily return, to the head teacher, containing details of the children receiving free food to protect the system from abuse.<sup>158</sup> He also urged that the teachers conduct daily medical inspections of their pupils, for the purpose of compiling records of the childrens' general health, nutrition and standard of hygiene. This would provide the authorities with vital information currently unavailable to them. Gorst envisaged that the teachers' daily inspections would constitute the initial stage in a complete school medical inspection scheme. The teachers' inspections were to be complemented by quarterly examinations by qualified nurses and less-frequent ones by medical doctors. The nurses would conduct more complete inspections than

<sup>157</sup> Ibid: 583, para. 11829, para. 11833, pp. 590-591, para. 11993-12000.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid: 583, para. 11833-11834.



the teachers and would locate those children requiring treatment.<sup>159</sup> Any such necessary medical attention ought to be furnished at public cost, stated Gorst, because "it is in the interest of the State to cure and alleviate, as far as possible, the diseases of members of the community" in their formative years. Children so treated would grow up to be an asset to society and it was simply false economy to ignore a curable weakness in a child and refuse treatment; "it is the most wasteful extravagance not to deal with it early and cure it".<sup>160</sup>

Once the underfed children had been provided with food, investigations could be carried out to determine whether or not the parents should be obliged to reimburse the school authority. Those parents who could pay and refused to pay could be prosecuted under existing law for neglect of family, he stated. Even better, he would like to see new legislation passed which would make the cost of the meal summarily recoverable from the parents, in a manner similar to the procedure currently used for non-payment of rates. In the cases of those parents unable to pay, the cost could be recoverable from the benevolent society but if subscriptions were insufficient to cover the cost, there must be recourse to the rates. Such a system would be superior to the current one in which benevolent societies distributed free meal tickets indiscriminately, thereby tending to undermine parental responsibility.<sup>161</sup> Gorst was fully aware that only a programme containing the type of safeguards he proposed would have any kind of chance for consideration by a Unionist Administration suspicious of

<sup>159</sup> Ibid: 586, para. 11877, para. 11880.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid: 586, para. 11882.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid: 583, para. 11835-11839, p. 589, para. 11919-11924.

any plan which appeared to threaten interference with parental duties and anxious to avoid "social reform" expenditures which might antagonize the rate-paying electorate.

Gorst emphasized, however, that investigation of the parents' circumstances should be made after and not before the child was fed. This practice might result in a small number of abuses of the system but it was far preferable to adopting the procedure of the Charity Organization Society which "made elaborate inquiries and in the meantime the patient died". He allowed that certain parents would take advantage of the system - permit their children to go hungry and after they were given a meal refuse to pay the cost, claiming they had fed them earlier at home - but he believed the number of such cases would be small and that the benefits accruing to the masses of genuine necessitous children well worth the abuses of the few.<sup>162</sup>

Gorst acknowledged that the scheme he proposed was not unique, that similar proposals had been carried out to a certain degree by voluntary agencies. But benevolent societies alone could not cope with the magnitude of the problem and it was now time for the local authorities to assume responsibility for the provision of meals for the underfed children compelled to attend its elementary schools.<sup>163</sup>

In the light of the evidence with which it was presented the Physical Deterioration Committee was obliged to acknowledge:

<sup>162</sup>Ibid: 590, para. 12006-12008, p. 591, para. 12025-12026.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid: 590, para. 12002-12004.

that the evils arising from underfeeding were so widespread, and in certain localities so pressing, that some authoritative intervention is called for at the earliest possible moment to secure that the education of the children who are obliged to attend school shall not be hampered and retarded by the physical conditions thereby engendered.<sup>164</sup>

Nevertheless, the Committee felt that in a large number of cases voluntary agencies could successfully handle the feeding problem, with the assistance of the local authority, and, as long as this was so, the Committee would "strongly deprecate recourse being had to direct municipal assistance".<sup>165</sup> However, in cases where "the extent or the concentration of poverty might be too great for the resources of local charity ... it might be expedient to permit the application of municipal aid on a larger scale".<sup>166</sup> However, if the local authorities were empowered to disburse such assistance, new legislation would be required to facilitate the prosecution of neglectful parents. They proposed that the meal system be introduced on an experimental basis and be funded through the apparatus of the Poor Law because they wished to protect society from "the somewhat dangerous doctrine that free meals are the necessary concomitant of free education".<sup>167</sup>

With regard to medical inspection, the Committee shied away from advocating Gorst's full-scale scheme, recommending only the adoption of

<sup>164</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 2175), PP, 1904, 32: 72, para. 330.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid: 78, para. 359.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid: 78, para. 362.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid: 78, para. 362-365. The Committee concluded that evidence overall failed to support the claim that the British race was undergoing physical deterioration. However, they reported that their inquiry had revealed widespread physical incapacitation, the result of poor environmental conditions and inadequate diet, but that physique improved when these conditions were abolished. (Ibid: 19-20, para. 68-69.)

the initial step of his plan, namely, daily inspection and recording of data by the classroom teacher. They stressed that with the utilization of competent teachers, "the system should be so far based on their observation and record, that no large and expensive medical staff would be necessary". They urged that where a child's condition was thought to warrant treatment, the school medical officer's function should be restricted to an assessment of deficiencies requiring parental attention, "cases of poverty and neglect being left to the proper authorities to deal with".<sup>168</sup>

Thus, the recommendations of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration with regard to child feeding were more positive and forceful than those put forward by the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) one year earlier. Moreover, unlike the latter report, that of the Physical Deterioration Committee was not allowed to recede into the background after its publication, but was used by Gorst as a weapon with which to breach Government opposition to State involvement in social welfare programmes.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid: 71, para. 324.

## CHAPTER VII

### CAMPAIGN FOR FEEDING LEGISLATION

The Physical Deterioration Report indicated that the best place to begin improving the physique of the urban poor was with the children of that class, through measures aimed at preventing them from degenerating to the level of physical debility evidenced by their parents. But welfare programmes require additional revenue and the Unionist Government's response to the Committee's recommendations was apparently determined by economic considerations. Although William Anson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, favoured some measure of Government action on child feeding along the lines suggested by the Report, Balfour's Cabinet had already decided not to allow local authorities the right to increase rates to obtain revenues for social welfare programmes. Balfour informed Anson that on the question of child feeding he "could be as sympathetic as he liked, but there would be no increase in rates".<sup>1</sup> That the Government was later forced to reverse this stand was in great measure the result of Gorst's determined promotion of the Physical Deterioration Report, particularly its recommendations on child feeding.

It is difficult not to view the timing of the Report - just before the lengthy parliamentary recess of Autumn 1904<sup>2</sup> - as a deliberate

<sup>1</sup>R.L. Morant to Balfour, December 3, 1904, British Library, Add. MSS. 49787, Balfour Papers, Vol. CV, f.128. Quoted in Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966), p. 95. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, National Insurance.

<sup>2</sup>The recess lasted from August 1904 to February 1905.

tactic of a Unionist Government loath to embark on a programme of costly social reform. If the Unionists' intention here was to avoid undue discussion on the Report's recommendations, thereby minimizing possible adverse public reaction to its proposals, they were only partially successful. Because Parliament recessed shortly after the Report's publication, discussion upon its recommendations was largely postponed to the next Session. However, Gorst succeeded in introducing the subject on one occasion before the House rose. Rising during debate on Revenue Department estimates, Gorst drew the attention of the Members to the Physical Deterioration Report's recommendations, most specifically those regarding State provision of meals. The Committee, he pointed out, had severely criticized local authorities for failing to intervene in the area of school feeding. They had proposed, as he had done on several occasions, that where the efforts of charitable organizations proved inadequate, local authorities should apply municipal aid. Such action on the part of these authorities would require Government permission but there was no evidence at present that the latter were willing to provide municipal authorities with this power. Therefore, he wished to ask the Government if they proposed to take such legislative action in the near future?<sup>3</sup> Gorst's attempt to force discussion on the issue was successfully curtailed by the Unionists, his comments being ruled out of order on a point of procedure. However, in a parting shot, before he resumed his seat on the benches, he requested Anson to recommend to the Government that the legislative power to which he, Gorst, had referred be granted to the local authorities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>PD, 4th series, 140 (1904): 47-53.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid: 41-53.

With Parliament recessed, Gorst continued his agitation outside the House. Fully aware that the Government could only be impelled to take action through pressure of public opinion, he made his campaign for State provision of school meals an integral part of his promotion of the Physical Deterioration Report. He well realized that the concern and interest generated by that document would ensure his agitation for child feeding a high level of attention and, he hoped, the weight of sympathetic public opinion with which to pressure the Government into meeting his demands. He also hoped that, pending legislation, his appeals for the relief of underfed children would be responded to by voluntary agencies because, as he told one of his supporters, "no authority can help us until Parliament gives power".<sup>5</sup>

In order to give his arguments the widest possible appeal, Gorst included in them aspects of concern to a wide range of opinion. In his speeches and writings he emphasized the correlation between under-nourishment amongst large numbers of the nation's elementary school children, as evidenced by the Report, and physical degeneracy.<sup>6</sup> He constantly reiterated that the Physical Deterioration Committee had found "the want of proper and sufficient food" to be the "one great cause" of this degeneracy.<sup>7</sup> He quoted at length the medical evidence supporting

<sup>5</sup>Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. Lett. C.257, ff. 33-34. Gorst to Marvin, 20 September, 1904.

<sup>6</sup>See the Times, 5 November, 1904, p.11; 8 November, 1904, p.6; 13 December, 1904, p.7; 24 December, 1904, p.2; 2 January, 1905, p.10; 17 January, 1905, p.9. See also, Cambridge Chronicle, 11 November, 1904, p.7.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 5 September, 1904, p.5.

this view presented at the Committee's hearings by various physicians,<sup>8</sup> conscious that the general public would be highly impressed by information supplied by the medical profession.

Gorst pointed out that the findings of the Committee indicated that the condition of malnutrition endured by the mass of lower-class urban school children resulted from ignorance, neglect and poverty. The first, he said, could be remedied through education by instructing girls in the arts of housewifery in preparation for their future roles as mothers; the second was amenable to stricter enforcement of criminal law; in the case of the third cause, poverty, Government intervention could do much. Poverty was not a necessary condition of the people. What was required was legislative action on the part of the Government. However, as far as he could see, they had no immediate plans for such action. Immediate steps could and should be taken to feed the necessitous children at public expense, to spare them as far as possible the effects of that poverty.<sup>9</sup> He emphasized that the interdepartmental investigation revealed beyond doubt the advantages to be gained from a regular, nutritious diet provided by school feeding, namely, the greatly improved health of its recipients. The establishment of a better standard of health among the children of the country was in the national interest, declared Gorst, for it "would lead to the bringing up of a people possessing physical and mental strength and high mortality, and would make the English really a nation fit to constitute a great Empire".<sup>10</sup> This argument had particularly

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2 January, 1905, p.10.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5 September, 1904, p.5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 17 January, 1905, p.9.



wide appeal at a time when the general public was still experiencing the impact of the humiliating revelations of the South African War.

To those not moved by concern for Britain's imperial future, there was the appeal on purely economic grounds. As he had done so frequently in the House, Gorst argued that the expending of large sums of money on education when the children were incapable of receiving instruction due to their half-starved condition, was an exercise in futility. What possible value was there in spending millions of pounds to open schools and compel children from the age of five years upwards to attend them, when many of their numbers were anaemic, undernourished, degenerate, and "totally unfit to profit from the instruction for which the money of the nation was provided?"<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the problem did not stop there. In acquiescing in such a state of affairs the Government was compounding the economic problem by bringing up children to fill hospitals, work-houses, and asylums, and to be life-long burdens on society.<sup>12</sup>

Gorst also fulminated against what he considered the injustice perpetrated by the State upon those children it allowed to go unfed. It was the duty of the State to feed necessitous children, he declared. Under the existing social system all children had a civil right to be maintained by their parents during childhood and, in their default, by the public. One of society's principal functions was the maintenance and enforcement of individual rights and no member of the community had a stronger claim to this service than the helpless child. In the event that parents failed to fulfil their duties, it became the responsibility of the

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 5 September, 1904, p.5. See also, Ibid., 13 December, 1904, p.4.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 24 December, 1904, p.2.

State to enforce the rights of the child. Furthermore, to this traditional responsibility the State had added that of universal education on a compulsory basis. The assumption of this responsibility required that the State ensure that all those it compelled to receive instruction in its schools were adequately fed. To ignore this obligation was both unjust and cruel: "by forcing starving children to attend and receive instruction in its schools the State is not only failing in its general obligation to secure the children's rights, but it is inflicting on them a cruel and additional wrong".<sup>13</sup>

Gorst's public advocacy of State feeding was viewed with alarm by certain individuals and groups within the society and drew from them criticism ranging along the scale from polite disagreement to enraged condemnation. Gorst's most vigorous opponent was the Charity Organization Society and during December and January, 1904-1905, he carried on a running battle with the Society's spokesman, Sir Arthur Clay, in the columns of the Times.<sup>14</sup> Clay denounced the "persistent agitation" of Gorst and his supporters for State feeding. He denied their assertion that private charity was unable to cope with the problem of underfed children in the schools, claiming that the 1904 Annual Report of the London School Board Joint-Committee on Underfed Children clearly showed that the organization of private charity was successfully meeting the needs of necessitous children in the schools. Moreover, he pointed out, the Report noted that

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 17 September, 1904, p.10. See also, Ibid., 24 December, 1904, p.2.

<sup>14</sup>See Ibid., 22 December, 1904, p.8; 24 December, 1904, p.2; 27 December, 1904, p.5; 28 December, 1904, p.5; 2 January, 1905, p.10; 6 January, 1905, p.12; 7 January, 1905, p.8.

relief was often given to children not actually in want and he believed that if the rates were drawn upon relief would be distributed even more widely.<sup>15</sup> Clay drew his readers' attention to Gorst's declaration that he intended to continue his agitation until his aim was accomplished and warned that "the (socialist) danger averted in 1899 is once more pressing".<sup>16</sup> Clay accused Gorst of emphasizing certain parts of the Physical Deterioration Committee's recommendations, those which when taken out of context appeared to support his claims, and of ignoring other comments of the Committee which would weaken his case. For example, he declared, Gorst insisted that the Committee unequivocally declared that private charity could no longer successfully meet the needs of hungry children and that State intervention was necessary, but he failed to point out that the Committee had stated that the underfeeding of children was not likely to undergo an increase and that they "looked with confidence to the operation of many causes leading towards its diminuation". Furthermore, he had carefully avoided mentioning that the Committee believed that voluntary effort, under official supervision, could in the majority of cases cope with school feeding and, while this state of affairs was maintained, they "would strongly deprecate recourse being taken to direct municipal assistance". Gorst had asserted that his proposed feeding programme would require only a minimum of rate assistance, stated Clay, but there was evidence to show that such aid would be substantial and, thus, he prophesied that adoption

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22 December, 1904, p.8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 27 December, 1904, p.5. The "danger" to which Clay referred was the State feeding of elementary school children, as discussed by the London School Board joint-committee on underfed children, in 1899, and depicted as a great social danger by the Times (see Ibid., 22 December, 1904, p.8.).

of Gorst's plan would lead to complete State maintenance of all school children as advocated by the Social Democratic Federation. He urged the Government to stand firm and resist the "State-feeding party's" demand for the introduction of "so dangerous and far-reaching a change in our social system".<sup>17</sup>

In defending his position, Gorst insisted that Clay had mistaken the object of his agitation. He was not advocating State maintenance of all school children but only the feeding of those pupils who presented themselves at school in an unfit condition to benefit from the instruction given, as a result of undernourishment. The substance of Clay's disagreement with him was, declared Gorst, that whereas Clay and the Charity Organization Society thought that private charity could cope with the problem of underfeeding, he and the Physical Deterioration Committee - composed of "distinguished Government officials" - found that it did not, a verdict "amply confirmed" by the evidence given before the latter group.<sup>18</sup> Gorst quoted at length such evidence given by Dr. Eicholz and Dr. Collie to support his claims that charity, even in London alone, was unable to cope with the problem and that hunger was the chief cause of deterioration.<sup>19</sup> He pointed out that his scheme was the one advocated by the Physical Deterioration Committee itself, after careful and detailed study of the evidence gathered from various areas of the country, whereas Clay's objections were based on a London School Board committee report which

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 24 December, 1904, p.2.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 2 January, 1905, p.10.

contained evidence gathered from London only.<sup>20</sup>

Gorst denied that his proposals represented a socialist threat. He sought only to ensure that the State fulfilled its existing obligations as defined by the Court of Appeal some four years previously in the case of "Attorney General v. MerthyrTydfil", namely, that hungry children, if not provided for by their parents had a legal right to be fed by public authority.<sup>21</sup> He was at a loss to understand, he said, why his proposal "that local education authorities should be instruments for fulfilling the already existing obligation of society, and enforcing the civil rights already possessed by children", should be denounced as a "dangerous and far-reaching change in our social system".<sup>22</sup>

Gorst concluded his defence by turning Clay's attempts to raise the spectre of socialism back upon the Charity Organization Society spokesman. He expressed the view that repudiation of all public responsibility for the physical condition of the nation's public school children was a highly dangerous position to adopt, one which, in the current state of popular feeling, could well lead to the outcome he feared, that of State feeding of all children.<sup>23</sup>

Gorst's agitation produced a response similar to Clay's within the ranks of the Unionist party, and the Times reprimanded him publicly for his behaviour:

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 28 December, 1904, p.5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 2 January, 1905, p.10

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 28 December, 1904, p.5.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 7 January, 1905, p.8.

Sir John Gorst presents a not unusual combination of cynicism and sentimentalism. He is very lacking in sympathy with other people's ideals, aspirations, and efforts, and he is very much wedded to his own notions. On this question (of feeding) he contentedly accepts all the exaggerations that may help to make out a case for sentimental legislation.<sup>24</sup>

Echoing Clay's claim that Gorst's proposals for State provision of meals for necessitous children constituted a fundamental and dangerous social change, the Times denounced his scheme as "social quackery, a cheap and easy method for enabling the social reformer to shirk his work by throwing a financial burden upon other people's shoulders". It warned of the collectivist consequences of adopting such a plan:

We have already made a serious inroad upon personal responsibility and personal independence by relieving parents of the duty of educating their children. That is now used as an argument for relieving them of the duty of feeding their children. When we have done that the argument will be stronger than ever for relieving them of the duty of clothing their children. It will be said that we pay vast sums for teaching and feeding, but that the money is wasted if the children are not properly clad. L'appétit vient en mangeant. From that it is an easy step to paying for their proper housing ... If, instead of quickening parental sense of duty, we are going further to weaken it, we shall have to begin with the newborn babe. It is a race of fatherless and motherless foundlings to which Sir John Gorst's proposals point.<sup>25</sup>

Nor had Gorst's advocacy of State feeding, and his accompanying criticism of Government inaction on the question, escaped the attention of his constituents at the University of Cambridge. On November 25, 1904, Unionist supporters among the resident members of the University Senate, held a closed meeting and adopted the following resolution:

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Leading Article, 2 January, 1905, p.7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. For Clay's comments, see Ibid., 27 December, 1904, p.5.

Considering Sir John Gorst's political action during the last two years, this meeting regards him as no longer representing the views of the supporters of the present Government, and resolves to proceed to the choice of another candidate to represent the University in Parliament.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the Senate's mounting dissatisfaction with Gorst's behaviour in the House during 1903 and 1904, where he had become increasingly critical of the Unionists - on one occasion voting against the Government - was brought to a climax as a result of his agitation for State feeding.<sup>27</sup>

Upon being informed of the meeting's resolution by the Chairman of the Senate Executive Committee,<sup>28</sup> Gorst responded by making the whole issue public,<sup>29</sup> alleging that the members concerned had acted in an unauthorized manner:

The conveners of the meeting of the 25th at Cambridge acted on no authority but their own. They not only sent me no intimation of any ground of complaint against me, but they did not even inform me that my conduct was to be the subject of discussion. I was told that I should not be allowed to be present, while free scope has apparently been given to my accusers, of whose names even I am still ignorant. I have thus been deprived of all opportunity of either hearing the charges or making any explanation or defence.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, he would reject the judgment of the meeting, choosing instead to place his political future in the hands of his Cambridge constituents-at-large at the next election. At that time he would ask them

<sup>26</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 2 December, 1904, p.8. Sir Robert Ball to Sir John Gorst, 26 November, 1904. Cambridge University Register, 50, 1, 13.

<sup>27</sup>Cambridge University Register, 50, 1, 23. Robert S. Ball to Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, 28 December, 1905.

<sup>28</sup>Cambridge Chronicle, 2 December, 1904, p.8. Sir Robert Ball to Sir John Gorst, 26 November, 1904.

<sup>29</sup>Cambridge University Register, 50, 1, 21. See also, the Times, 30 November, 1904, p.6.

<sup>30</sup>The Times, 30 November, 1904, p.6. Sir John Gorst to Sir Robert Ball, 28 November, 1904.

to return him to the Commons "to oppose protection and uphold free trade and to help in advancing those social reforms too long delayed - such as better housing, better education, more care for the health and prevention of intoxication - upon which the happiness of the people at home and the strength of the Empire abroad largely depend".<sup>31</sup>

Undaunted by the weight of party disapproval<sup>32</sup> Gorst went on to anger them further by serving as principal speaker at a meeting organized by the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, at which he shared the platform with Will Thorne and the Countess of Warwick, and supported a resolution proposed by the latter urging the Government to "grant to educational authorities the power necessary to provide food for children attending State supported schools".<sup>33</sup> Then, in January, 1905, he occupied the chair at the National Labour Conference on State Maintenance of Children held at the Guildhall in London. The Conference was attended by some two hundred and fifty delegates representing approximately two million workers, by several Members of Parliament, including Dr. Thomas Macnamara, and by Lady Warwick, who introduced herself as a delegate from the Social Democratic Federation.<sup>34</sup> In his address to the delegates, Gorst emphasized that he did not endorse State maintenance of all children, but only the necessitous. He simply advocated the vindication of the

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. Gorst's decision to publicize the steps taken by the resident members in the columns of the Times was undoubtedly made in the hope of eliciting the sympathy and support of the University electorate at large. Unfortunately for Gorst, this move failed (see pp. 414-416 below).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 7 January, 1905, p.8.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 13 December, 1904, p.4.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 21 January, 1905, p.14. See also Appendix C.



children's legal rights as set down by the Court of Appeal in 1900. This Court had determined that every child had the right to State maintenance in the event of default on the part of its parents and that was all he was urging. To deny a child this maintenance was to rob him of his rights, stated Gorst. "It was obvious that the State, whose sacred duty it was to protect the rights of the poor and helpless, had been robbing the children of the poor and leaving them to perish for the lack of that maintenance to which they had as valid a title as any citizen to his property".<sup>35</sup>

At its conclusion, the Conference declared unanimously in favour of State maintenance "as a necessary corollary of universal compulsory education, and as a means of partially arresting the physical deterioration of the industrial population of this country, which is now generally recognized as a grave national danger". The resolution also urged that "as a step towards such State maintenance, the Government introduce, without further delay, such legislative measures as will enable the local authorities to provide meals for children attending the common schools", the cost to be met from the National Exchequer.<sup>36</sup>

Gorst's association with the Labour Movement at the Guildhall Conference reflected his growing alienation from a Unionist Government he considered had abandoned the social ideals of Disraelian Tory Democracy. Several months before the Guildhall meeting, Gorst had achieved what one

<sup>35</sup>The Times, 21 January, 1905, p.14.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

contemporary had described as "one of the most important of his many contributions to social reform" also in alliance with Labour, which, on that occasion, was represented by the trade unionists.<sup>37</sup> Between September 5-9, the Trades Union Congress met in Leeds and on the evening of the first day Gorst was principal invited speaker at a meeting held to discuss the question of free meals for school children.<sup>38</sup> In his address Gorst reiterated his various arguments in support of State feeding - physical regeneration, children's rights and State obligations, economics and simple humanitarianism. The principal thrust of his speech, however, consisted of a biting indictment of the current Unionist Government, in particular, and Parliament, in general, for their ineptitude in the handling of the school feeding issue. Feeding, like all other social problems, declared Gorst, was hung up chiefly because the Government and Parliament saw no advantage to themselves in passing such legislation. The House was a "rich man's assembly" and the administration of the nation was a "rich man's pastime". The country was governed by permanent officials and party officials and social reform was troublesome to the former while the latter, of which Parliament was constituted, were people of high social position and their relations and supporters who were concerned only with party issues, namely, those matters upon which their existence depended. Only strong public opinion could move them to deal with non-party issues. Gorst outlined two steps that might be taken to

<sup>37</sup> Gertrude M. Tuckwell, "Trades Union Congress, 1904", Commonwealth, 9 (1904), pp. 307-308.

<sup>38</sup> The Times, 6 September, 1904, p.5.

promote speedier enactment of social legislation. He suggested that one avenue of approach would be the establishment of an independent Labour Party in the House of Commons, which would be able to secure in Parliament a much greater attention to social questions than they currently received. Secondly and more importantly for the present, there should be greater autonomy for county and borough councils in order that they might "decide these social questions for themselves, make laws which they thought would be of advantage to their people, and carry them out without the continued interference of ignorant officials in London".<sup>39</sup>

In response to Gorst's appeals, the meeting unanimously adopted a resolution in favour of child feeding.<sup>40</sup> Four days later, with Gorst on the platform, the entire Congress followed suit by adopting without dissent, Will Thorne's motion that "This Congress ... urges the Government to introduce without further delay legislation instructing education authorities to provide at least one free meal a day for children attending State-supported schools".<sup>41</sup>

Gorst's activities around the country and his appeals in the press, during the parliamentary recess of Autumn and Winter, 1904-1905, helped to keep interest in the Physical Deterioration Committee's recommendations - particularly those concerning underfed children - at a very high level. Consequently, on February 9, 1905, the Government decided it would be politic to display some regard for the plight of starving

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Tuckwell, p. 308.

<sup>41</sup> Report of the Annual Trades Union Congress, 1869-1966, p. 119.

children, particularly as the opening of Parliament was fast approaching and they anticipated that the King's speech, which was to ignore the Physical Deterioration Report completely, would provoke Gorst into posing embarrassing questions concerning this omission. Therefore, shortly before Parliament reassembled, the Cabinet elected to form a second committee to examine the findings of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration.<sup>42</sup>

This inquiry was a delaying tactic. This was well illustrated by the Memorandum sent to the Cabinet, on the day following its decision to form the new committee, by the President of the Board of Education, Lord Londonderry, which contained recommendations upon which the committee was shortly thereafter established.<sup>43</sup> Londonderry suggested that the Committee be composed exclusively of civil servants to "avoid the difficulty of having persons pressed upon us who might approach the subject with pre-considered conclusions". He urged that the committee meet forthwith, "so in the event of any serious debate on the Address (King's Speech) we may be aided in resisting premature or too far-reaching proposals by referring to the lack of specific information and practical

<sup>42</sup>Bulkley, pp. 33-34. Bentley B. Gilbert, "Health and Politics: The Physical Deterioration Report of 1904", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 39 (1965), pp. 143-153. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, "Health and Politics".

<sup>43</sup>Lord Londonderry to Cabinet, MS Memorandum, February 10, 1905, Ministry of Education, Private Office Papers, "Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, 1906, Papers Leading up to Bill", unsorted. Extracts reproduced in Gilbert, "Health and Politics", pp. 150-151. As Gilbert has noted, Londonderry was the most active opponent of social legislation among the Unionist leaders and he appears to have determined the Cabinet's policy towards the Physical Deterioration Report.

suggestions ...". It could be pointed out that further action could await publication of the new committee's report. Careful attention should be paid to the committee's terms of reference, to ensure that that body be restrained from advocating "any far-reaching proposal that the Unionist party would be unwilling to support"; for example, recommendations necessitating new legislation or increased taxation must be resisted. However, the terms must not be overly-restrictive or the Government "would be accused of parking(?) discussion while taking no really effective steps to discover or bring about any practical remedies for the evils now generally admitted to exist".<sup>44</sup> Thus, in place of action on school feeding, the Government chose to substitute a civil servants' investigation into the findings of a previous civil servants' inquiry.

A few days after the Cabinet made this, as yet, unannounced decision, Gorst, as they had feared and Londonderry's memorandum had anticipated, responded to the Unionists' total disregard of the Physical Deterioration Report in the King's speech with an attack upon the Government on the opening day of the new parliamentary session.<sup>45</sup> Gorst inquired of the Government what steps it proposed to take towards implementing the Interdepartmental Committee's recommendations on feeding of necessitous children. This question, he felt, was quite as important as "that of the adulteration of butter", an item which had appeared in the throne speech.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>PD, 4th series, 141 (1905): 141-145.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid: 145.

He reminded the House that the Physical Deterioration Committee had concluded that of all the many causes operating to produce degeneration in children that of insufficient and improper food was the most deleterious and that it was useless to eradicate other causes if these were not eliminated. Thus, the Committee had proposed that local authorities be empowered, if they so desired, to spend some of their own school funds in feeding those necessitous children who they were satisfied could not be fed by any other method. In requesting this type of action, no new right for the children was being solicited, argued Gorst. Children now had the right to be maintained by their parents and, in the event of their default, by the State. He and others advocating State feeding asked only that "this right should be made more effective, and that the State fulfill its obligations to the children". He expressed astonishment that the Government had apparently failed to appreciate the benefits which would accrue to the Empire from the enactment of a "short and simple Act" giving local authorities the right to expend funds upon school feeding. How could the Empire be maintained if causes of physical degeneracy such as inadequate feeding were allowed to continue operating among the classes from which future soldiers and sailors were to be drawn? Gorst concluded by expressing the hope "that some steps would be taken (that) session to carry out the recommendations of the Committee, and put an end to this thing which was a scandal to the race".<sup>47</sup>

This speech marked the beginning of an intensification of Gorst's campaign to keep the Physical Deterioration Report before Parliament and the nation. The following week he again introduced the topic of underfed

<sup>47</sup>Ibid: 144-145.

children into Commons' debate and promised to "bring the subject to the attention of the House at every opportunity. He would bring it up on the Irish Estimates, the Scottish Estimates and the English Estimates, and he would entreat the Government, for the sake of the nation and Empire ... not to neglect the recommendations of the Committee (on Physical Deterioration)."<sup>48</sup> Three days later, during the question period in the House, Gorst rose to question in turn the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the President of the Local Government Board, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, as to the action their respective departments were taking to adopt the recommendations of the Committee on Physical Deterioration, as far as they fell within the jurisdictions of their departments. From each he received the same evasive answer, that the proposals had been "under consideration" for some time, and appropriate measures were in the process of being implemented.<sup>49</sup>

During the next two months Gorst and his supporters in the House carried out an unremitting attack upon the Government in the Commons. Scarcely a day went by without one or other of the "State feeding party" rising to direct a question on underfed children to Government ministers, primarily those of the Treasury, the Board of Education, and the Local

<sup>48</sup>Ibid: 1145.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid: 1316 -1318.

Government Board.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of March, voluntary meals programmes in two of the country's largest cities, Manchester and Leeds, were forced to cease operations due to lack of funds. Gorst and his supporters pointed out that this occurrence was being repeated up and down the country and, in view of this failure on the part of voluntary agencies to cope with the needs of the hungry children, they urged the Government to review its decision not to empower local authorities to provide meals for underfed children out of the rates.<sup>51</sup>

The Unionists, however, planned no such reversal of their policy but only the formation of a further interdepartmental inquiry and on March 14, in response to yet another of Gorst's almost daily questions on the physical deterioration of school children, the Government announced the appointment of the Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding of Children Attending Public Elementary Schools.<sup>52</sup> In line with Londonderry's recommendations, its terms of reference and membership were suitably conservative. The Committee was directed to "ascertain ... what is now being done in Medical Inspection ... and further to inquire

<sup>50</sup>See Ibid., 4th series, 142 (1905): 731-733; 1184-1185; 143 (1905): 197-198, 210-211, 455-456, 456-457, 869-870, 872-873, 873-874, 874-875, 875-879, 960-966, 1231-1232, 1233-1234, 1240, 1244-1251, 1720-1721, 1738; 144 (1905): 127, 128-129, 149-150, 645, 1040, 1272. Gorst's principal supporters were Liberal M.P.s, Thomas J. Macnamara, Will Crooks, and Tory Claude Hay. Although not a supporter of Gorst, personally, Keir Hardie contributed on several occasions to the agitation in the House for State relief of underfed children (see Ibid., 4th series, 142 (1905): 731; 143 (1905): 1231-1234, 1720; 144 (1905): 129.).

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 142 (1905): 731-733.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid: 1185.



into methods employed, the sums expended ..." by voluntary feeding agencies and to report "whether relief ... could be better organized without any charge upon public funds".<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Committee was to be mainly concerned with questions of administration. With only one exception, the Committee were all members of the Board of Education Inspectorate, the lone outsider being H. Franklin Parsons, Assistant Medical Officer of the Local Government Board.<sup>54</sup>

Gorst denounced the Committee's appointment as a "bare-faced expedient for hindering action while Parliament is sitting" which would "serve no purpose but delay".<sup>55</sup> He accused the Unionist Administration of deliberately turning a blind eye to the evidence that degeneracy was largely produced by undernourishment, which had been supplied by both the Physical Deterioration Report and the earlier Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland). This evidence had shown that the problem affected all areas of England, not just one or two cities; it was a national problem. Therefore, the question of underfed children required the immediate attention of many departments of Government - the Home Office, the Local Government Board, the Board of Education, the Irish Office and the Scottish Office. Yet, the only action taken so far was the appointment by the Board of Education of another committee of investigation. This inquiry was totally superfluous; the Government had more than enough information upon which to act, if it so desired. The time for inquiry was over; it was now time for action, insisted Gorst, and he denounced the Government's tardiness on the

<sup>53</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding of Children Attending Public Elementary Schools. Vol. 1 (Cmnd. 2779), PP, 1906, 47: 7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. Lett. C.257. ff.46-49. Gorst to Mrs. Marvin, 25 March, 1905.

the issue as "most discreditable". He hoped that before the present session was over the individual departments concerned would see their way to making positive declarations as to what measures they proposed to adopt to carry out the Physical Deterioration Committee's recommendations. He concluded by promising the Government once again that he would bring the matter before the Commons on every possible occasion. "The Government would not get rid of him until they took the matter up seriously and treated the interests of these children as they would the interests of any powerful body of constituents whose votes they were anxious to secure".<sup>56</sup> True to his word, Gorst reintroduced the subject of underfed children into debate on six different occasions during the following two weeks.<sup>57</sup>

Gorst's verbal attack stung Anson into retorting that he had searched in vain for evidence that Gorst had displayed any interest in feeding, while at the Education Department.<sup>58</sup> He then went on to state that the Board of Education had no authority to provide food for underfed children and suggested that those who arrived at school in a starved condition could be relieved under the Poor Law.<sup>59</sup> Just two days previously, Sir Walter Foster had urged the new President of the Local Government Board to "issue a circular to boards of guardians calling their attention to their powers and duties as to underfed children". To this appeal, Gerald Balfour had replied that he believed the guardians were fully aware of their

<sup>56</sup> PD, 4th series, 143 (1905): 873-875.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 143 (1905): 1194-1195, 1196, 1247-1251; 144 (1905): 128, 149, 645.

<sup>58</sup> Anson's comments provoked Gorst to reply that he had brought the question to the attention of the House in 1899, to which the former rejoined that "he was glad that after four years of official life the hon. Gentleman had paid attention to the subject". (see Ibid., 4th series, 143 (1905): 875-876.).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 143 (1905): 876.

responsibilities in the area and, thus a circular was unnecessary.<sup>60</sup>

The glib assumptions on the part of Anson and Gerald Balfour concerning the effectiveness of the guardians' role in feeding prompted Gorst to test the practical value of the relieving officer's powers. There was in the Lambeth district of London a particular school, Johanna St. School, which had become notorious for the number of children in a chronically underfed condition which it housed. In his testimony before the Physical Deterioration Committee, Dr. Eicholz had testified that he considered that 90 percent of the Johanna St. children were unable, by reason of their physical condition, to attend to their lessons in a proper way.<sup>61</sup> This appalling evidence had also been brought up in the Commons by Gorst as a means of drawing attention to the need for State feeding<sup>62</sup> and he and his supporters repeatedly directed questions to the Government in the House as to the measures they proposed to take to rectify the state of affairs at Johanna St.<sup>63</sup> The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, William Anson, had visited the school but had refused to admit in Parliament that the children were unfit to receive instruction owing to hunger.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Ibid: 455-456.

<sup>61</sup>Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 2 (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32: 123.

<sup>62</sup>PD, 4th series, 142 (1905): 1184-1185.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 142 (1905): 1184-1185; 143 (1905): 455-456, 958-959, 1247-1248, 1379-1380.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 143 (1905): 456.

Now, at the end of March, Gorst, Thomas Macnamara, Lady Warwick, and Dr. Robert Hutchinson, M.D., Physician to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond St., visited the school and inspected the children for signs of underfeeding. From amongst these pupils Dr. Hutchinson selected twenty boys whom he was prepared to certify were actually suffering from hunger so acute that they were unable to benefit from instruction given and, consequently, were in urgent need of immediate relief in the form of food. The party then proceeded to the offices of the Lambeth Board of Guardians where they made an application, on behalf of the boys, for food and relief and demanded that the relieving officers be instructed to visit the school immediately and feed the children they had listed. The Guardians responded to this request with alacrity, immediately issuing orders for the outdoor relief of all necessitous children in the Lambeth Union. The fact that Gorst's group included two Members of Parliament and a peeress apparently prompted the rapid action on the part of the Lambeth Guardians.<sup>65</sup> However, as Gorst shortly thereafter pointed out in the House, the children, in fact, were not relieved.<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, Gorst once again pressed Anson to have the Board of Education issue a circular to local education authorities "advising them

<sup>65</sup> J.E. Gorst, Children of the Nation (London, 1906), pp. 86-87.

<sup>66</sup> PD, 4th series, 143 (1905): 1195, 1249-1250. The relieving officer later reported that this was because the working class parents' abhorrence of the Poor Law was so great that only one family applied for relief. Following perusal of the information in this report the Lambeth Guardians concluded that Gorst's contingent had overstated their case. The Guardians claimed that food tickets had been distributed with virtually no enquiries being made, and that the children had acquired them simply to add variety to their diet. (Cited in J.S. Hurt, Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918 (London, 1979), p. 122.).

to instruct the managers and teachers of public elementary schools to refer the case of children attending their schools hungry and destitute, and unable from affliction to profit by the instruction provided, to the proper Poor Law authorities for relief".<sup>67</sup> When Anson responded that such a directive could only be issued with the concurrence of the Local Government Board, Gorst requested Gerald Balfour to dispatch a circular to the local Poor Law authorities "pointing out the duties of relieving officers in reference to giving medical and other relief to destitute children irrespective of the conduct and character of their parent".<sup>68</sup> However, the obviously irritated Balfour would not commit himself to any such action, merely replying that he had no grounds for assuming that the guardians and their officers were "not alive to the powers and duties which attach to them in relation to destitute children, where application is made for relief".<sup>69</sup>

This intransigence on the part of Anson and, particularly, Balfour, served to intensify the feeding party's attack upon the Ministers' respective departments. Later the same day, Gorst again castigated the Board of Education and the Local Government Board for their continued disregard of Physical Deterioration Report recommendations. He noted the Government's competence at forming Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees but expressed regret that when the time came for action the various Government departments were paralyzed. "They were 'ever learning

<sup>67</sup> Ibid: 1194.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid: 1195

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

and were never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth'." The Board of Education was constantly reiterating the need to acquire further information before taking action, but considering the amount of evidence provided by the Physical Deterioration Report, and before the House, he failed to see how any further evidence was required. As for the investigation instigated by the Board of Education, he could not see the value in appointing a committee of junior officials to revise the proposals of senior officials. It was to be regretted that action on the urgent question of child feeding "was hung up by an inquiry so futile and so obviously for the purpose of delay". To give immediate assistance to necessitous children no new legislation was needed; relief could be given at once through the Poor Law guardians. Thus, he urged the Board of Education to ensure that managers and teachers were made aware of the existence of this channel for the relief of their half-starved charges and to take steps to make the reporting of destitution to the guardians the duty of the teachers.<sup>70</sup>

Also that day, Gorst, Hardie and Macnamara supported a Provision of Meals Bill presented by Tory M.P., Claude Hay.<sup>71</sup> This measure,

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 143 (1905): 1244-1251. See also Ibid: 1234-1235, 1240-1241. Speeches of Keir Hardie and Thomas Macnamara.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid: 1307-1309. Gorst apparently contributed to the planning of this Bill. On February 22, 1905, Ramsey Macdonald invited Gorst to discuss the matter of the Bill with him and Gorst agreed to a meeting for that purpose. (See, Labour Representation Committee Documents 20/90 (hereafter referred to as LRC), Ramsey Macdonald to Sir John Gorst, 22 February, 1905. Ramsey-Macdonald Papers, P.R.O., 30/69/1149, 1905. John E. Gorst to Ramsey-Macdonald, 23 February, 1905.)

and a second bill also empowering local education authorities to provide school meals, introduced two days later, on March 29 by Arthur Henderson, Labour Member for Barnard Castle,<sup>72</sup> were designed to pressure the Unionists into taking action on the question. However, the Government successfully resisted this attempt,<sup>73</sup> and both measures were subsequently withdrawn to make time available for debate on a provision of meals resolution.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the repeated requests from Gorst and his supporters, Gerald Balfour continued to refuse to expedite Poor Law relief of necessitous children through the circulation of a directive to Boards of Guardians, insisting that new legislation was required for such relief.<sup>75</sup> This position of non-responsibility assumed by Balfour on behalf of the Local Government Board was immediately challenged by Gorst. He claimed that in 1896 the Board had issued its relieving officers with extracts from its General Orders which directed them to give relief to children destitute of necessary food, on whose behalf teachers made application for such aid. Thus, he urged the Board to issue a circular to all Guardians reminding them of their responsibilities in this regard.<sup>76</sup> In responding to this challenge, Balfour was obliged to admit that this claim appeared to be a valid one and promised he would consider issuing a

<sup>72</sup>Ibid: 1543.

<sup>73</sup>The Unionists' intentions towards these Bills were reflected in A.J. Balfour's response to questions regarding the possible timetable for these measures: "I am not aware that any suggestion has come from this bench that facilities should be given to any Bill". (Ibid., 4th series, 144 (1905): 150.)

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 144 (1905): 1040, 1284. For details on this resolution and debate, see pp. 399-403 below.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 144 (1905): 127-128.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid: 128.

circular on the subject.<sup>77</sup> Gorst and his supporters now intensified their pressure on the Government, in Parliament, to issue the directive they had requested. Questions on the subject were repeatedly directed to the President of the Local Government Board, the First Lord of the Treasury, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education by Gorst and Thomas Macnamara.<sup>78</sup>

Then, on April 18, the proponents of State-supported feeding succeeded in forcing a debate in the Commons on the resolution:

That ... local education authorities be empowered (as unanimously recommended by the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904) to make provision ... for ensuring that all the children at any public elementary school in their area shall receive proper nourishment before being subjected to mental or physical instruction, and for recovering the cost, where expedient, from the parents or guardians.<sup>79</sup>

The promotion of this resolution by its supporters proceeded along much the same lines as their previous appeals had done. The House was reminded of the recommendations which had issued from both the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) and the Physical Deterioration Committee Report and of the importance of underfeeding as a cause of degeneracy, as outlined by the reports.<sup>80</sup> Both the Government and the Opposition were criticized for their attitude towards the crucial question of underfed children and the former was accused of failing to utilize existing laws to feed hungry children and of being remiss in carrying out prosecutions of parents who neglected to feed their offspring. The Opposition Front Bench

<sup>77</sup>Ibid: 129.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid: 129, 149, 645, 1270, 1272; 145 (1905): 308.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 145 (1905): 531. Speech of Bamford Slack.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid: 531. Speech of Bamford Slack.



was rebuked for failing to show "an iota of interest or a breath of suggestion" in the problem under debate.<sup>81</sup>

What they were advocating, insisted the supporters of the motion, was not "sham Socialism" but "real patriotism and general Imperialism". The disasters of the recent war had just brought to the nation's attention the deterioration present in the army and the poor physical condition of children owing to insufficient food. However, it was necessary to realize that "the future of the Empire, the triumph of social progress, and the freedom of the British Race depended not so much upon the strengthening of the Army as upon fortifying the children of the State for the battle of Life". The reformers denied that their proposals were revolutionary. The law already restricted the control exercised by parents over their children, through compulsory education and labour laws; why then could not feeding of hungry children be ensured by the Government? They pointed out that, whereas previous resolutions on the issue had sought to lay obligation on the Board of Education to require arrangements to be made for feeding of inadequately nourished children, the present resolution was only permissive and sought only to empower local authorities with the right to act at their own discretion.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Ibid: 540-541. Speech of Claude Hay.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid: 533-539. Speech of Bamford Slack. The Government's obdurate opposition to any form of rate-supported feeding may have been a factor in the reformers' decision to reduce their demands. It is likely that the promoters of State feeding reasoned that a less radical demand might be granted and that this would be a concession from which others could be gained later. This is what did eventually occur; the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, was a subsequent development from the Relief (School Children) Order, 1905, which emerged from this debate.

One aspect of the debate was new. In previous debates on State feeding, argument had chiefly revolved around the question of whether or not voluntary agencies could cope with the problem. Now it was no longer suggested that feeding be left solely to these organizations. Most members now recognized that charity was an inadequate solution. The point of contention now was finances; were the necessary funds to be derived from the Education rate or the Poor Law rate?<sup>83</sup> The reformers favoured recourse to the rates. They suggested that a small levy to help finance feeding programmes would eventually return great dividends to the community because "the better health of the children would be secured and better health meant increased intelligence, brighter homes, a more contented people, and more efficient workers".<sup>84</sup>

Gorst appealed to the Board of Education to empower local authorities to spend the education rate in the provision of dinners and other meals at school. "It would be much more convenient and expeditious, and free from Poor Law taint" if the meals were provided in this manner rather than by the Poor Law authorities. It was unfortunate that the Board of Education's recently appointed interdepartmental committee had been debarred from recommending this type of scheme. The provision of meals by public authority would strengthen parental responsibility, not weaken it, as opponents of the resolution claimed, declared Gorst. It was the system of charitable relief, with its indiscriminate distribution of free meals, which

<sup>83</sup>Ibid: 554. Speech of J. Keir Hardie.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid: 538. Speech of Bamford Slack.

encouraged this weakening, he concluded.<sup>85</sup>

Strong objections to these proposals were expressed by the opponents of state-aided school meal programmes. Sir George Bartley asserted that such a system of feeding would very quickly result in the whole of the children being fed and the ultimate outcome would be decreased parental responsibility, leading to "the destruction of the entire social fabric". He pointed out that, contrary to claims made during the debate, the Physical Deterioration Committee had recommended that as long as voluntary agencies were able to provide for the needy children, no recourse should be made to direct municipal aid.<sup>86</sup> Sir Frederick Banbury warned that the provision of free meals would lead to a demand for free clothing and shelter.<sup>87</sup>

While the debate was in progress, Anson rose to inform the House that the Local Government Board would shortly issue a circular to Guardians permitting them to give Poor Law relief to school children upon application from the school manager or teacher. This relief might be given by way of a loan or as out-door maintenance. In the latter case the father would fall under the disability of the Poor Law. With regard to relief given in the form of a loan, Anson was unable to state definitely whether or not this type of relief would disenfranchise the parent.<sup>88</sup> He went on to observe that the problem of underfed children had been vastly exaggerated - a criticism obviously directed at Gorst. Charitable individuals were

<sup>85</sup>Ibid: 557-558.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid: 542-543.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid: 547.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid: 562-563.

frequently misled by appearances, and something of this nature had apparently befallen "the distinguished party visiting Johanna Street School".<sup>89</sup> Anson announced that he, personally, would not be able to vote for the resolution as it stood but that the Government would not make the subject a party question. Consequently, at the ensuing division the resolution was carried by 100 votes to 64. All the Unionist Ministers present voted against the resolution; none of the Liberal leaders attended the debate.<sup>90</sup>

On April 26, one week after the debate, the Local Government Board issued its Relief (School Children) Order empowering Guardians to relieve the child of an able-bodied father without requiring him to enter the workhouse or perform the outdoor labour test.<sup>91</sup> In instances where the child's father was deemed habitually neglectful, relief had to be extended in the form of a loan; in other cases it was to be left to the discretion of the Guardians.<sup>92</sup> For relief extended as a loan, proceedings were to be initiated to recoup the cost but, in any case, the father was pauperized whether repayment was made or not.<sup>93</sup> Offspring of widows, wives separated from their husbands, and children living with relatives,

<sup>89</sup>Ibid: 561.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid: 567-568.

<sup>91</sup>Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1905-1906. Appendix III (Cmd. 3105), PP, 1906, 35: 321-322. Relief (School Children) Order, Article V.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., Article II, Sect. 2.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., Article VI.

were excluded from the scope of the Order.<sup>94</sup> This stipulation effectively prevented the relief of those children most in need of assistance. The reason given for this exclusion was that the Guardians were already authorized to deal with children in these categories, and thus, no additional sanction was required. Unfortunately, this was not clearly explained in the Order, or later, leaving the Guardians with the impression that these children were unprovided for, and leading many Guardians to strike from their relief rolls large numbers of children they had already been feeding.<sup>95</sup> The Order also recommended that where voluntary feeding agencies existed the Guardians should make arrangements with them for the provision of meals; where this service was not available, a local tradesman might be authorized to supply the food.<sup>96</sup>

The Local Government Board Order and accompanying circular of instructions to Boards of Guardians were sent by the Board of Education to local education authorities, together with a covering letter drawing their attention to the Order and explaining how they could co-operate in carrying out its provisions. Particular attention was drawn to criteria to be employed when classifying recipients for feeding. Underfed children were to be considered as falling into three separate groups:- (1) those whose

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., Article VII.

<sup>95</sup>Bulkley, pp. 39-40. A critical commentary on this administrative blunder can be found in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress. Vol. 3. Minority Report. (Cmnd. 4499), PP, 1909, 37: 160-161.

<sup>96</sup>Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1905-1906. Appendix III (Cmnd. 3105), PP, 1906, 35: 317-320. Circular of the Local Government Board accompanying the Relief (School Children) Order.

parents were permanently impoverished; (2) those whose parents through illness, loss of employment or other unavoidable cause were temporarily unable to make provision for them; and (3) those whose parents, though in a position to provide for them, had neglected to do so. It was suggested that children in the second group should be fed by voluntary agencies, while those in the first and third categories might be considered proper subjects for special application to the Guardians or relieving officer. It was stressed that, except in cases of extreme emergency, special application for feeding should only be made after careful inquiry into the child's circumstances in order to ascertain to which class the case belonged.<sup>97</sup>

If the value of the Relief (School Children) Order is gauged by the ratio of results to effort expended, this measure would appear very scant reward for the over two years of unremitting agitation which Gorst had devoted to promoting State feeding. Not only did the Order's provisions fall short of the measures he advocated but they still involved pauperization. However, as Lady Warwick noted, although the Order was "inadequate and undemocratic, ... it certainly acknowledges the principle that the State owes an obligation to see to it that the children of the nation are properly fed".<sup>98</sup> Thus, the value of the measure cannot be over-estimated for it created the precedent of State assistance for feeding, thereby marking a

<sup>97</sup> Circular issued by the Board of Education to Local Education Authorities re Relief (School Children) Order, 28 April, 1905. Reproduced in the Times, 29 April, 1905, p.12.

<sup>98</sup> The Daily Express, 1 May, 1905, quoted in M.A. Blunden, "The Educational and Political Work of the Countess of Warwick, 1861-1938". (M.A. dissertation, University of Exeter, 1966), p. 115.

step in the right direction for State involvement in the area of social benefits. Moreover, the Order was able to perform a valuable service to future British social policy by focussing attention on the Poor Law authorities' ineptitude in implementing its provisions, thereby "destroying forever any vestige of the possibility that the ... guardians would be permitted to take part in the reforms of the next decade".<sup>99</sup>

In practice the Order brought few benefits to those children it was designed to aid. Many unions ignored the directive.<sup>100</sup> Some local authorities declined to implement the Relief Order provisions, correctly perceiving that in many areas they represented retrogressive action. The London County Council expressed a willingness to co-operate with local authorities in carrying out the Order but refused to initiate proceedings because they were of the opinion that it could do little to solve the problem of underfeeding. Furthermore, they believed that the risk of fathers being disenfranchised because of meals supplied to their offspring, without their knowledge, would reduce the effectiveness of the scheme.<sup>101</sup> In those districts where Guardians and the local education authorities did attempt joint action, their differing philosophies produced constant friction. The education authorities wished to eradicate the condition

<sup>99</sup> Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 109.

<sup>100</sup> Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1905-1906. Appendix III (Cmnd. 3105), PP, 1906, 35: 452-454.

<sup>101</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, July 11, 1905, p. 297. Cited in Bulkley, p. 41.

which prevented the children from benefitting from the instruction they provided at such expense, whereas the Guardians' main concern was to restrict feeding to the smallest possible number of recipients. This conflict precluded the development of effective co-operation between the two bodies. In many districts the lists of underfed children compiled by the local education authorities were ruthlessly pared by the Guardians, not because they regarded the children as adequately fed but because they considered the parents financially capable of making provision for their offspring.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, in the majority of these cases the Guardians failed to follow through and pressure the parents to feed their children and, as a result, the children remained unfed. In a large number of districts, many of the fathers of the children offered relief refused to allow them to be fed when they became aware that to do so would result in disenfranchisement.<sup>103</sup> The Order's stipulation that the cost of the meals be recovered, where possible, from parents or charitable organizations proved highly unrealistic. For example, the City of Bradford's feeding programme served 101,932 meals in the first six months of its operation, at a total cost of £1,300. During this period, the Guardians took action in county court against 51 fathers they considered guilty of neglect. Although orders for payment were obtained in each case, the Guardians recovered only £1 19s 3d by voluntary action and £1 by Court Order. Approximately 45 percent of the

<sup>102</sup>Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1905-1906. Appendix III (Cmnd. 3105), PP, 1906, 35: 453.

<sup>103</sup>Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress. Vol. 3. Minority Report (Cmnd. 4499), PP, 1909, 37: 161.



financing of the programme was derived from the rates, the remaining 55 percent coming from charity, in this case the Lord Mayor's Fund.<sup>104</sup> The uncertainties regarding the scope of the Relief Order, the working-classes' suspicion of the Poor Law authorities, and the latter's emphasis upon deterrence instead of relief, all combined to render the Order a dead letter by the end of 1906. Moreover, the general public now assumed that the problem of underfed children was being eradicated by the Guardians and, as a consequence, voluntary contributions generally declined.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, Gorst and the other reformers continued to pressure the Government to enact legislation empowering local education authorities to provide school meals out of the rates. During the second reading of the Education (Scotland) Bill, Gorst rose to chastise the Government and the Scottish Department for failing to include in the Bill measures dealing with the feeding of necessitous school children, in total disregard of the recommendations of the Physical Deterioration Committee and the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland). He pointed out that the President of the Local Government Board had clearly stated in the House that children had a legal right to be fed by public authority but this right was not secured for Scottish children in the measure under debate. It was pointless for the Government to include in the proposed legislation provision for the expenditure of rate money on medical

<sup>104</sup>See Bradford City Council Proceedings, September 26, 1905, cited in Bulkley, p. 43, fn. 3. "Special Report and Report from the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, 1906; and the Education (Provision of Meals) (Scotland) Bill, 1906", PP, Reports from Committees, 1906, VIII, Part III, 288, p. 299, Appendix 10, cited in Gilbert, National Insurance, pp. 108-109.

<sup>105</sup>Bulkley, p. 44, fn. 1.

inspection if they did not give local authorities the power to mitigate the evil from which the children suffered, he declared.<sup>106</sup>

The reformers used the June 1 Committee of Supply debate to express their dissatisfaction with the Relief (School Children) Order, outlining the administrative difficulties which they claimed were rendering the whole scheme unworkable and once again criticizing the Government for denying local education authorities the power to grant extra funds for feeding programmes.<sup>107</sup> A spokesman for the Labour Representation Committee urged that the Order be scrapped and that local education authorities be allowed to co-operate directly with the voluntary agencies to provide food for necessitous children. The funds could be granted for this purpose by the Guardians under their existing powers which permitted them to subscribe to institutions that could render useful aid in the administration of relief to the poor. Parents found to be grossly neglecting to feed their children, when not impoverished, could be prosecuted under existing law governing the prevention of cruelty to children.<sup>108</sup>

Gorst, however, did not call for cancellation of the Order, apparently being more realistic than his Labour colleagues in recognizing that a Unionist party badly divided internally by dissent, particularly over the question of Tariff Reform and gradually losing strength through by-election defeats, would be disinclined to adopt social reform measures

<sup>106</sup>PD, 4th series, 145 (1905): 1162-1164.

<sup>107</sup>See, for example, Ibid., 4th series, 147 (1905): 631-633. Speeches of Will Crooks and Thomas Macnamara.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid: 632-633.

which would undoubtedly increase intra-party discord. Furthermore, to abandon the Order would be in effect to admit its total failure, a fact which could be used to advantage as a propaganda tool by the opponents of State feeding, just as well as by its supporters. Gorst no doubt felt that it was more advantageous to build upon concessions obtained than to attempt to force through legislation empowering local education authorities to provide rate-aided school meal programmes, in what was obviously a dying Parliament. All signs pointed to an early election and a Liberal triumph and, therefore, Gorst evidently reasoned that the legislation he and other reformers sought would be passed in the first session of the new Parliament. Consequently, he urged that in the interim the Relief Order be made more effective by giving voluntary organizations, working with the Guardians and the education authorities, the advantage of public authority. The Government should make members of these charitable bodies its official representatives in the homes within the Unions. These voluntary workers could visit the parents and urge them to fulfil their duties to their children, thereby bringing a sort of public pressure to bear. He pointed out that a similar system applied in certain districts by the London School Board had produced a noticeable improvement in the condition of the children involved.<sup>109</sup>

His parliamentary campaign having produced only a token response to his appeals for State aid for underfed children, Gorst now sought to rouse public support for his cause through the columns of the periodical press. In three articles, published successively between May and July, 1905,

<sup>109</sup> Ibid: 533-535.

he censured the Government not only for failing to pass legislation to alleviate the sufferings of countless poverty-stricken children but also for abdicating their responsibilities in many other areas of urgently needed social reforms.<sup>110</sup> As with previous administrations, asserted Gorst, the current Government had resisted social legislation - despite their election pledges - because they were wealthy men who thought it would "interfere with their convenience or curtail their pleasures" and because they were "afraid of burning their fingers if they applied themselves to the task of genuine reform".<sup>111</sup> He accused the Unionists of callousness in their treatment of hungry children for they could, with very little effort and expense, eradicate their destitution and suffering, he declared. Apparently the Government believed that the children should be left to starve if their parents wilfully neglected them, or refused to apply for Poor Law relief - an attitude he denounced as being "only worthy of Barbarians".<sup>112</sup> Not only did such treatment defraud children of their rights, declared Gorst, it also caused them increased suffering through impelling them to learn on empty stomachs, the effects of which were permanently debilitating. He noted that if a starving animal, such as a horse, were treated in the same way as hundreds of children were treated daily by public authority in the elementary schools the offender would be prosecuted under the criminal law. Many of the nation's best statesmen

<sup>110</sup>J.E. Gorst, "Governments and Social Reform", Fortnightly Review, 83 (May, 1905), 843-855; "Children's Rights", National Review, 45 (June, 1905), 705-715 (also published in Living Age, 246 (July, 1905), 230-237); "Physical Deterioration in Great Britain", North American Review, 584 (July, 1905), 1-10.

<sup>111</sup>Gorst, "Governments and Social Reform", pp. 849-850.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 846-847.

and philanthropists were guilty in this respect, he claimed. They were aware of the children's rights but they refused to recognize their claims. Gorst appealed to the Government to take action while there was still time. With proper food and attention large numbers of the debilitated children currently in the nation's schools could be restored to health and grow into strong men and women capable of maintaining the Empire. If, however, those in authority continued to salve their consciences with some specious adage about parental responsibility and leave the children to their fate, the nation would in the future "receive from our criminals, our lunatics, our cripples, our incurables, and our paupers, just punishment of the injustices of which they were the victims in their helpless infancy".<sup>113</sup> For the information of his readers, he once again reiterated the appalling statistics relating to the physical condition of the nation's working classes, as revealed in recent Royal Commission and Interdepartmental Committee reports, and pointed out that State assisted feeding programmes and school medical inspections would go a long way towards improving the national physique.<sup>114</sup>

Following his onslaught in the press, Gorst "tramped the country" in an attempt to rouse public sympathy for his cause.<sup>115</sup> Early in September, he and Lady Warwick were principal speakers at a large meeting organized by the National Union of Mineworkers and General Labourers, at Hanley in the Midlands, at which the feeding of school children was the

<sup>113</sup>Gorst, "Children's Rights", pp. 712-713, p. 715.

<sup>114</sup>Gorst, "Physical Deterioration in Great Britain", pp. 1-10.

<sup>115</sup>Frances E. Maynard, Countess of Warwick, Afterthoughts (London, 1931), p. 233.

main theme. In October, Gorst included the subject of State feeding into addresses delivered to the Navy Club, in Sutton Coldfield, and the student body of Reading University College.<sup>116</sup>

The following month, the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Inspection and feeding of School Children was finally completed. Its recommendations were as meagre as the Government could have desired.<sup>117</sup> The Report focussed primarily upon improving the organization of existing voluntary programmes. The Committee envisioned local authority involvement as being minimal, amounting only to supervision of voluntary effort. They suggested these authorities be "kept regularly informed of feeding" and be represented on feeding agency committees. They recommended that teachers be relieved of all duties attendant upon school feeding except for that of drawing up a preliminary list of necessitous children.<sup>118</sup> The Committee reported that, because of the diversity of viewpoints expressed by the witnesses, it was unable to ascertain precisely how successful a self-supporting school dinner service would be, but they would "welcome experiments made in this direction", particularly in rural areas where need appeared to be greatest.<sup>119</sup> There was no mention of recourse being made to the rates for purposes of feeding hungry elementary school children. However, the evidence presented before the Committee demonstrated once more the inadequacy of existing schemes to meet the needs of underfed

<sup>116</sup> The Times, 4 September, 1905, p.4. Ibid., 5 October, 1905, p.4; 23 October, 1905, p.3.

<sup>117</sup> See pp. 387-388 above.

<sup>118</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding of Children Attending Public Elementary Schools, 1906. Vol. 1 (Cmd. 2779), PP, 1906, 47: 92-93. See also p.70, para. 220.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid: 79 , para. 258 ; pp. 76-79, para. 242-258.

children,<sup>120</sup> thus giving credence to reformers' claims that the Relief (School Children) Order had proved insufficient for the purpose for which it was intended.

With the Relief Order largely discredited and with reformers clamouring for new measures, the problem of underfeeding clearly remained a major embarrassment to Balfour's administration. However, in December, Balfour resigned and the question hung fire while the nation went to the polls. The issue remained, however, very much upon the minds of Gorst's Cambridge University constituents. After being elected unopposed in the two previous electoral contests, Gorst now found himself challenged by two other Conservative candidates. Although the election nationally was largely fought on the question of "Protectionism" versus "Free Trade", of which Gorst was a supporter, his social reform activities, his alleged secularist views on education, and his increasing "disloyalty" to the Unionist party over the previous two years became the critical issues facing his constituents.<sup>121</sup> Just prior to Dissolution, a committee formed from resident members of the University Senate opposed to Gorst's candidacy publicly announced their position stating that "the dissatisfaction with Sir John Gorst originated some time before the question of Tariff Reform was started and is due to reasons quite unconnected with Free Trade".<sup>122</sup> Their true reasons for renouncing Gorst were the ones first stated by them one year earlier in November 1904, and which they now presented again to

<sup>120</sup>See for example the evidence of Mrs. Adler, *Ibid.*, pp. 242-249; Mrs. Burgwin, p. 172, para. 241-242; G.F. Grant, pp. 387-391, para. 6090-6215; Rev. J.C. Mantle, p.249, para. 2444; Mrs. Pillow, p.312, para. 4218-4224.

<sup>121</sup>See, Cambridge University Register, 50. 1. 21.-50.1. 44., 4 December, 1905-12 January, 1906.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, 50. 1. 21., Robert S. Ball et al. re Representation of the University of Cambridge in Parliament, 4 December, 1905.

the Members of the University Senate:- "(1) The attitude of hostility taken up against the Unionist Government which he was returned to support, and of which he was at one time a member"; (2) Gorst's apparent failure to oppose a trade union resolution promoting secularist education in State supported schools, at a meeting where he was a main speaker; and (3) the fact that "some of the views expressed by Sir John Gorst on the subject of State interference, in connection with the providing of free meals for children attending State schools, seemed to tend to lessen parental responsibility and to be dangerously socialistic in their character". They noted also that several of his election committee members were "actively engaged in supporting the Radical candidates for the Borough of Cambridge".<sup>123</sup> Thereafter, Gorst's adversaries conducted a campaign based primarily upon their opposition to his candidacy.<sup>124</sup> Their appeal to Churchmen, both clergy and laity, to reject Gorst because of his secularist stance apparently made little headway, many voluntarists rallying to his support.<sup>125</sup> However, despite Gorst's public denials of the accusations

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 50.1.23., Robert S. Ball et al. to Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, 28 December, 1905.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 50.1.25., Notice to Electors from Robert S. Ball et al., 6 January, 1906. See also, Cambridge Chronicle, Letter to the Editor from Robert S. Ball et al., 5 January, 1906, p.5.

<sup>125</sup> Cambridge University Register, 50.1.39., T.E. Cleworth et al., 5 January, 1906. Ibid., 50.1.44., Fitzroy Stewart, Letter to the Editor, 8 January, 1906. T.E. Cleworth, Secretary of the Church Schools Emergency League, Letter to the Editor, 9 January, 1906. H.S. Torr, Letter to the Editor (no date). [All three letters included as cuttings from the Church Times of 12 January, 1906.]



made by his opponents,<sup>126</sup> and the active support of Free Traders<sup>127</sup> and diverse University personnel,<sup>128</sup> he was easily defeated at the polls.<sup>129</sup> Gorst's long campaign for improved social benefits for the children of the nation may well have cost him his parliamentary seat.<sup>130</sup>

Consequently, when Parliament reassembled following the election Gorst was absent from the Commons' benches. As the contest had resulted in a resounding Liberal victory,<sup>131</sup> school feeding now became the concern of the new Liberal Government. Yet the reformers had no reason to suppose that the new administration would be any more sympathetic to the question than its outgoing counterpart. The Liberal leaders had absented themselves

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 50.1.22., Sir John Gorst to Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, 11 December, 1905. Ibid., 50.1.38, Sir John Gorst to Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, 3 January, 1906. See also the Cambridge Chronicle, 5 January, 1906, p.8.

<sup>127</sup> Cambridge University Register, 50.1.35., Notice to Electors from A.D. Elliot et al., Cambridge University Free Trade Association, 12 December, 1905. Ibid., 50.1.44, Extract from the West (?) Gazette, 10 January, 1906. Cambridge Chronicle, 5 January, 1906, p.8.

<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Cambridge University Register, 50.1.36., Letter from Sir John Gorst's Executive Committee to the Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, (no date). Ibid., 50.1.42., C. Taylor, Master of St. Johns to Robert S. Ball, 10 January, 1906. Ibid., 50.1.42., Rev. Stephen Selwyn, University Elector, to Members of Sir J. Gorst's Executive Committee, 11 January, 1906.

<sup>129</sup> Cambridge Chronicle, 19 January, 1906, p.8. Election results: Dr. S.H. Butcher (Conservative), 3,050. Mr. J.F.P. Rawlinson (Conservative), 2,976. The Right Hon. Sir John Gorst (Conservative and Free Trader), 1,653.

<sup>130</sup> Bentley B. Gilbert, "Sir John Eldon Gorst and the Children of the Nation", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 28 (1954), pp. 243-251.

<sup>131</sup> See Donald Read, Edwardian England, 1901-1915 (London, 1972), pp. 131-132.

from the April 18 debate, which had resulted in the issuing of the Relief (School Children) Order, and the question of school feeding had not been featured by them in the 1906 election campaign.<sup>132</sup> The issue had, however, featured prominently in the election speeches of Socialist and Labour candidates<sup>133</sup> and by the opening of the new Liberal Parliament Labour had already prepared a new Bill, providing for the feeding of school children by local authorities, for presentation in the House. This went beyond what many Liberals desired, most hoping for no more than an extension of the scope of Poor Law relief as provided by the Local Government Board Order.<sup>134</sup> The Board of Education itself was apparently caught off balance, being unprepared for any decision on the question of State aid for school feeding. The Board's Permanent Secretary, Robert Morant, wrote to his counterpart in the Local Government Board, Sir Samuel Provis, that someone, "I think a Labour Member", planned to introduce a Feeding Bill, "or something of the kind", and he suggested that the two consult on the matter. He confessed to having little knowledge of the measure and commented that his President's mind "was blank on the subject". However, he believed that the Government would be obliged to take a position on the matter, upon which "the party was considerably divided".<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 109.

<sup>133</sup> Brian Simon, Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920 (London, 1965), State maintenance of school children had also been the main priority in the Social Democratic Party's Election manifesto.

<sup>134</sup> F. Le Gros Clark, Social History of the School Meals Service (London, 1948), p.6.

<sup>135</sup> R.L. Morant (unsigned) to Sir Samuel Provis, February 23, 1906, Bill File, Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, Ministry of Education, cited in Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 110.

The measure was duly presented on February 22, as a Private Member's Bill, by W.T. Wilson, newly-elected Labour M.P. for Westhoughton, and it received second reading on March 2, at which time the Government indicated it would make the matter an open question for party members.<sup>136</sup> The arguments of the Bill's supporters in the House, mainly Labour Members, were based chiefly upon physical deterioration as evidenced by recent official reports and upon the inadequacy of voluntary schemes.<sup>137</sup> Excluded now from Commons' debates, Gorst was left to promote the Bill outside Parliament. The spearhead of his campaign now took the form of a book about the nation's children - including the sick, the retarded, the over-worked, the neglected and the orphaned children - in which he detailed the appalling physical condition of the offspring of the poorer classes.<sup>138</sup> The book was both a denunciation of neglect and a plea for reform. Starving children, declared Gorst, were being defrauded of their legal right to be fed by the State as a result of Government ineptitude. It had been admitted by the previous Unionist Administration that the Guardians were responsible for relieving necessitous children who were destitute for want of food, even in those cases where the destitution resulted from parental neglect. Yet, the latter rarely if ever fulfilled this duty because of bureaucratic mismanagement. "In plain words, children are systematically robbed of their rights because our administration of Government is badly organised".<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> PD, 4th series, 152 (1906): 525, 1399.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, PD, 4th series, 152 (1906): 1390-1393. Speech of W.T. Wilson.

<sup>138</sup> J.E. Gorst, The Children of the Nation (London, 1906).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

Gorst had bitter criticism for those who advocated the processes of parent reformation as a means of dealing with underfed children. To leave children to starve in order to coerce their parents into feeding them was not only cruel but ineffective. Parents who neglected their offspring, in order to satisfy their craving for drink, would never be recalled to a sense of parental responsibility by the sight of their children's sufferings. This fact had been illustrated by evidence presented to the Physical Deterioration Committee. Furthermore, children were too valuable an asset to be used as instruments for upgrading public morality. The healthy development of a child was far more advantageous to the State than the moral rectitude of a reformed parent, he argued. To expose a child to the risk of degeneracy in the hope of redeeming the parent was bad economy. When faced with the choice of helping a parent or a child the Government should "save the child and let the parent go".<sup>140</sup>

However, Gorst expressed opposition to the plan proposed by the Social Democratic Federation which advocated feeding all elementary school children at public expense. Such a scheme would undermine parental responsibility and make the children more charges of the State than their parents. Not only would mothers be deprived of their educational roles but children would be deprived of individual attention "which every child

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

needed and the State was unable to provide".<sup>141</sup> Gorst urged the establishment of self-supporting school meals programmes by local education authorities, which would serve as a convenience for working parents while providing for the needs of necessitous children whose parents were unable, by reason of their poverty, to feed them. Meal tickets could be purchased by paying children and given in confidence to necessitous children, no distinction being made between the two groups in the serving of the meals. The "free" tickets could be paid out of public funds if the parents were found to be destitute, presently out of Poor Law monies pending the successful passage of legislation empowering local authorities with recourse to the rates. Those parents who could pay should be made to pay but the first responsibility of the public authority was to ensure that hungry children were fed. "To feed the child at once, without any inquiry except into the fact of its hunger, is an imperative duty", he insisted. Investigation of the parent's circumstances should be the second not the first step in feeding.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77. Gorst had frequently spoken out against complete State maintenance, such as was proposed by the Social Democratic Federation. (See, for example, Letter to the Editor, 24 December, 1904, p.2. PD 4th series, 141 (1905): 144-145.) One reason for doing so, in addition to his basic opposition to such a scheme, was his desire to dissociate his own proposals from the "socialist" taint. Opponents repeatedly claimed that implementation of Gorst's schemes would lead inexorably to demands for free clothing, medical attention, and housing. (See, for example, PD, 4th series, 145 (1905): 542-543. Ibid., 166 (1906): 1662-1670. Arthur Clay, "The Manufacture of Paupers. I. The Feeding of School Children", Spectator, 97 (1906): 821-822.)

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-85.

Gorst agreed that the circulars issued by the Local Government Board and the Board of Education were the best makeshift without legislation that the previous Government could have devised, it having been incompetent at the time to carry legislation through, but the agreement needed between the two departments concerned to enable the scheme to function effectively had not materialized. He expressed the hope that Parliament would move more rapidly than the Boards of Guardians had done if hungry children were to be denied food until the current Education (Provision of Meals) Bill had made a successful passage through the House.<sup>143</sup>

Opponents of the Bill argued their case along traditional lines, emphasizing the need to respect parental responsibility and the wisdom of maintaining the current practice of assigning all questions of relief to the Poor Law authorities.<sup>144</sup>

In the debates on the measure emphasis was placed for the first time upon the educational value of school meals when served under proper conditions. Mr. Lough, the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, declared that "It was desired that this work should be a work of education ... They wanted wholesome food given to the children and they wanted the children taught how to eat it, which was a most useful lesson".<sup>145</sup> "This was not just a question of providing meals", said John Burns, "it was also one of teaching manners".<sup>146</sup> The education authorities were better

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>144</sup>See, for example, PD, 4th series, 166 (1906): 1274-1278. Ibid., 167 (1906): 722. Speeches of Harold Cox and Sir Frederick Banbury.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 4th series, 166 (1906): 1280.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid: 1285.

equipped to carry out this work than the Guardians, he argued, and thus it was essential that the former bodies be empowered to provide meals, not merely for necessitous children but also for the children whose parents wished to purchase meals for them.<sup>147</sup>

By the time the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill came before the Commons public pressure for action on the issue was being felt by all parliamentary parties.<sup>148</sup> Consequently, in replying to W.T. Wilson's presentation of his Bill in the House, Augustine Birrell, President of the Board of Education, felt obliged to adopt a positive approach towards the measure. The education authorities, when faced with a hungry child, "must either feed it or turn it away", he declared; "and as Minister of Education he could not be responsible for the latter alternative. As everyone agreed that the child must be fed, then fed it had to be".<sup>149</sup> He went on to express the view that, in light of the French experience,<sup>150</sup> the local education authority appeared to be the appropriate body for providing meals.<sup>151</sup>

During its second reading the Government promised time for the Bill<sup>152</sup> but it, nevertheless, proceeded very slowly. Various attempts were made to alter it; an amendment to substitute the Poor Law Guardians for

<sup>147</sup> Ibid: 1284-1285.

<sup>148</sup> Clark, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> PD, 4th series, 152 (1906): 1440-1441.

<sup>150</sup> Birrell was referring to the evidence given before the Physical Deterioration Committee, by Gorst, on the feeding methods adopted by the French Government for use in its schools. (See Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol. 2 (Cmnd. 2210), PP, 1904, 32: 583, para. 11831.

<sup>151</sup> PD, 4th series, 152 (1906): 1440.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 4th series, 152 (1906): 1446.

the local education authorities, as the body to administer the Act, was resoundingly defeated 290-36,<sup>153</sup> and one to limit the provision of meals exclusively to underfed children suffered a similarly emphatic rejection of 230-39.<sup>154</sup> Additional delay was incurred when the Bill was referred to a Select Committee which did not complete its report until July as Parliament was about to recess.<sup>155</sup>

Although the Bill generated only mild opposition within the Commons, in the Lords<sup>156</sup> and the Tory Press it was subjected to a great deal of criticism. Here, opponents of the Bill stressed that the measure, although fairly innocuous in itself, represented a radical departure from the traditional principle of limited State involvement in social welfare. They expressed the fear that the Bill would set the State upon the path to total responsibility for facets of social life hitherto held to be the province of individual self-help. For the first time, they warned, the State proposed giving relief to its members without requiring them to surrender their rights in exchange, thus removing the stigma normally attached to the reception of Poor Law relief,<sup>157</sup> a step viewed with

<sup>153</sup> Ibid: 1274-1288.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid: 1339-1340, 1350.

<sup>155</sup> Special Report from the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, PP, 1906, 8: 59-402.

<sup>156</sup> See PD, 4th series, 167 (1906): 1629-1670.

<sup>157</sup> In fact, this step would not create the precedent claimed by the Bill's opponents. As J.S. Hurt has noted, from 1876, Guardians had been empowered to pay voluntary school fees for the children of poverty-stricken parents and patients had been permitted treatment at Poor Law hospitals since 1885, without suffering disenfranchisement (See Hurt, pp. 123-124.). For criticism appearing in the Tory press, see fn. 159 below.



suspicion and trepidation by the Bill's adversaries. The most adamant and vocal amongst these were the Local Government Board Joint-Committee on Underfed Children<sup>158</sup> and the Charity Organization Society.<sup>159</sup>

The Bill finally came up for third reading on December 13. By this time various modifications had been introduced, in keeping with the recommendations of the Select Committee,<sup>160</sup> and the final version represented a compromise between the parties. The Bill, when it left the Commons, applied to Scotland as well as England and Wales but the Lords proceeded to strike out the clause extending its application to Scotland.<sup>161</sup> The Upper House was requested to reconsider the amendment and the Bill went back and forth between the two Houses, but the Lords would not revoke their decision to exclude Scotland. Finally, on December 21, because the Session was far advanced, the Commons agreed to the Lords' amendment, but not without protest, their action prompting the Liberal Prime Minister to enter the debate on the Bill, for the first and only time, to protest against the Lords' encroachment on the Commons' authority.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>158</sup> See, for example, the Times, 4 July, 1906, p.4. Report on the issuing of the Joint-Committee's report for the session 1905-1906.

<sup>159</sup> See, Arthur Clay, "The Manufacture of Paupers: 1. The Feeding of School Children", Spectator, 156 (1906), 821-822. Arthur Clay, Letter to the Editor, the Times, 21 August, 1906, p.5. C.S. Loch, Letter to the Editor, Ibid., 19 November, 1906, p.16.

<sup>160</sup> See, Special Report from the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, PP, 1906, 8: 74-80, 98-99.

<sup>161</sup> PD, 4th series, 167 (1906): 1662-1670.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid: 1870-1872. Speech of H. Campbell-Bannerman. See also, Clark, p.8. The provisions of the Bill were eventually extended to Scotland by the Education (Scotland) Act of 1908 (see Bulkley, p.48).

When the Bill finally received Royal Assent on December 26, 1906, it was a considerably weakened version of the measure introduced by Wilson the previous February. The Education (Provision of Meals) Act permitted but did not require local education authorities to "take such steps as they think fit for the provision of meals for children in attendance at public elementary schools in their area ...".<sup>163</sup> Local education authorities might co-operate with established feeding agencies to establish a committee (to be called a School Canteen Committee), upon which the local authority would be represented, which would assume the task of providing the food. They might also assist the committee by providing facilities and the officers and personnel required for the operation of the service.<sup>164</sup> The local education authority could charge the children receiving the meals a reasonable fee and, unless satisfied that the parent was unable to pay, recoup the cost, summarily as a civil debt.<sup>165</sup> However, parents who were unable to pay were not to be disenfranchised.<sup>166</sup> The education authorities could pay for the meals by soliciting charitable donations through voluntary organizations but, as a last resort, when such funds were insufficient to defray the cost of the food, they could support the meals from public funds providing that no rate for the purpose exceed one half-penny in the pound.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906. 6 Edward 7, Chap. 57, Clause 1.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., Clause 2.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., Clause 4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., Clause 3.

Thus, despite the acknowledged failure of voluntary schemes to deal adequately with the problem of underfed children during the previous four decades, Parliament remained convinced that such organizations were the most suitable agencies through which to supply the meals. The proposal to make the local education authorities solely responsible for the task, supported entirely by public funding, was never "seriously suggested".<sup>168</sup> Local authorities might only supply rate aid when voluntary subscriptions were insufficient to cover the cost, and then only if the local authority so desired. Nevertheless, despite being hedged around with these various restrictions, the Act involved the assumption by the State of responsibility for securing for the children in its elementary schools, "the necessary minimum, not only of education but also of food".<sup>169</sup>

The issuing of the Relief (School Children) Order, 1905, and the confirmation of the principle it embodied by the enactment of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, introduced a new principle in social legislation. The Government's actions "implied acceptance by the community of responsibility for poverty",<sup>170</sup> and, thus, these two feeding measures mark the birth of the British welfare state.<sup>171</sup> As one observer of the Act's inception noted when reflecting upon the measure some years later:

<sup>168</sup>Special Report from the Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bill, PP, 1906, 76: para. 13.

<sup>169</sup>Bulkley, p. 49.

<sup>170</sup>Simon, p. 282.

<sup>171</sup>Gilbert, National Insurance, p. 112.

It would be difficult to place too much emphasis upon the new principle of state action which the Education (Provision of Meals) Act implied, for in a nation jealous of its individual rights and proud of its conservative instincts it was nothing less than a revolutionary principle".<sup>172</sup>

That such a "revolutionary principle" succeeded in gaining acceptance at all was due, in no small measure, to the persistent exertions of John Eldon Gorst. He gave to the movement for child feeding, tireless physical and oratorical effort and unflagging determination to succeed. He also brought to it the weight of his stature as a parliamentarian and Government administrator and, perhaps more importantly, his reputation as a promoter and protector of children's rights; Gorst's genuine humanitarian interest in the condition of impoverished children had given him a high profile and personal popularity among the general populace. Gorst's forceful presence in Parliament was an important factor in the ultimate success there of the Relief (School Children) Order and, because of his earlier parliamentary agitation for the principle embodied therein, the 1906 Act - for he had been the only political figure of importance in the Commons promoting the cause of State aid for school feeding.

<sup>172</sup>Charles W. Pipkin, Social Politics and Modern Democracies (New York, 1931), 1, pp. 72-73.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FINAL YEARS

Following his defeat in the 1906 General Election, Gorst observed to Edith Marvin that "as I also have lost my regular employment, I have to invent new methods of work". However, he confessed to deriving consolation from the fact that, "The Tory Party by its own act emancipated me from the chains I have so long worn, and that I am now free to speak out".<sup>1</sup> His initial post-election ventures in this direction were undertaken with his pen. In his Children of the Nation, published in 1906, Gorst urged State provision of health programmes to protect the rights of these young members of British society and he denounced successive nineteenth-century governments for their neglect of the nation's children.<sup>2</sup> He emphasized the disillusionment and frustration he felt towards his former Government colleagues by dedicating his book to "the Labour Members of the House of Commons in token of my belief that they are animated by a genuine desire to ameliorate the condition of the people".<sup>3</sup> In an "Introduction" to a work on British youth, written by the Countess of Warwick, Gorst delivered a stinging rebuke to the defeated Unionist Administration for the paucity of their social legislation while in office,

<sup>1</sup>Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. Lett. C.257. ff.65-66. Gorst to Marvin, 3 February, 1906.

<sup>2</sup>Gorst, Children of the Nation, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. ii.

accusing them of indifference to the welfare of their poorer citizens and the abandonment of Tory Democracy. In contrast to the Disraelian Parliament of 1874, which had enacted welfare measures which the British workman enjoyed to the present day, the subsequent Tory Government of Lord Salisbury had permitted a "spirit of aristocratic privilege and class ascendancy" to suffuse the party. Consequently, by the advent of the Unionist Administration of 1895-1905 the desire to mitigate the hardships of the poor had dissipated declared Gorst:

Hardly was the Government settled in office when it abandoned the principles of Tory Democracy in favour of a new policy invented by Mr. Chamberlain. The amelioration of the sad condition of the poor ... gave place to schemes for extending the power and prestige of the British Empire ... But the same sort of impotence fell upon them after their victories in Africa as fell upon their predecessors after their defeat on Home Rule. During the whole period for which the Unionist Government held office no social reform of first-rate importance in either administration or legislation was accomplished".<sup>4</sup>

Gorst's alienation from the Tories was further underscored by his resignation from the Presidency of the Primrose League, in February 1906, an action which severed his last formal link with the party.<sup>5</sup>

These efforts completed, Gorst now journeyed to New Zealand where he represented the British Government as Special Commissioner at an International Exhibition in Christchurch, which afforded him the opportunity to renew old friendships and to compare the Colony he had known in the eighteen sixties with the Dominion it was to become in 1907.<sup>6</sup> However,

<sup>4</sup>J.E. Gorst, Introduction to A Nation's Youth by Frances E. Greville, Countess of Warwick (London, 1906), pp. vii-vx.

<sup>5</sup>The Times, 23 February, 1906, p.8. The Primrose League was a grass-roots Tory Association Gorst had helped to establish in 1883 (see p. 90, fn. 119 above).

<sup>6</sup>Keith Sinclair, Introduction to The Maori King by J.E. Gorst (1864, London, 1959), p. xxiii. For a description of Gorst's visit, see his New Zealand Revisited (London, 1908).

distance was to prove no barrier to fulfilling his role as party critic. While in the Antipodes, Gorst read Lord Rosebery's newly-published biography of Randolph Churchill in which the author opined that Tory Democracy was "an imposture" - "the wolf of Radicalism and the sheepskin of Toryism" and that he doubted Disraeli "ever became seriously responsible" for the philosophy in any shape or form. These comments prompted Gorst to immediately challenge Lord Rosebery's assertions with a public rebuttal in the Times, which included a declaration of the Tory-Democratic creed:

The principle of Tory Democracy is that all government exists solely for the good of the governed; that Church and King, Lords and Commons, and all other public institutions are to be maintained so far, and so far only, as they promote the happiness and welfare of the common people; that all who are entrusted with any public function are trustees, not for their own class, but for the nation at large; and that the mass of the people may be trusted so to use electoral power, which should be freely conceded to them, as to support those who are promoting their interests. It is Democratic because the welfare of the people is the supreme end; it is Tory because the institutions of the country are the means by which that end is to be attained.

He also took the opportunity to once again criticize the Tories for "drifting far from the principles" of this creed, charging them with using the popular enthusiasm for Toryism - created by Disraeli - to further not the interests of the masses but the interests of their own class. As a result of their indifference towards social reform large numbers of working-class Tory democrats had gone over to the Labour Party, claimed Gorst, and consequently at the 1906 election the Conservatives had received their just desert. "The Tory party then fell, perhaps never to rise again", he declared.<sup>7</sup> After years during which his similar and oft-repeated warnings

<sup>7</sup>J.E. Gorst, Letter to the Editor (written "At sea, off Australia", 20 December, 1906), the Times, 6 February, 1907.

had been attacked by the Tory press, his admonitions now moved the Times to suggest that the Tories heed his words and respond with a constructive social programme.<sup>8</sup>

Following his return to England in January 1907, Gorst was very much in demand as a guest speaker, particularly by organizations within the Labour Movement.<sup>9</sup> The Times later described his public speaking engagements at this period thus: "After nearly half a century as a Conservative politician, Sir John Gorst now came out as a Radical, and went about the country addressing Labour and Socialist meetings on the questions of social reform".<sup>10</sup> In fact, a more apt description of Gorst's political inclinations at this time would be Labour sympathizer rather than Liberal. He professed little confidence in the new Liberal Government. He considered them "constitutional tinkers" and had little faith in their ability to change. The natural outcome of their sterility would be the ascendancy of the Labour Party, thought Gorst, and this is reflected in his dedication of The Children of the Nation to that group.<sup>11</sup> He believed Labour was in an excellent position to procure from Parliament the social legislation neglected earlier by Liberals and Tories for, as a result of

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 9 February, 1907, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the Times, 30 September, 1907, p.10. Ibid., 12 October, p.11. See also Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. Lett. C.257. ff.153-154. Gorst to Edith Marvin, 29 January, 1907. Ibid., MS. Eng. Lett. C.257. ff.166-167. Gorst to Edith Marvin, 4 March, 1908. Lancashire Daily Post, 25 October, 1909, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> The Times, 5 April, 1916, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> Bentley B. Gilbert, "Sir John Eldon Gorst and the Children of the Nation", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 28 (1954), 243-251. Hereafter referred to as Gilbert, "Children of the Nation".



the 1906 Election, workers now "had a strong Labour party acting as an admirable spur and whip" in the Commons.<sup>12</sup> Gorst's optimism was no doubt linked to the success the thirty-member fledgeling Labour party had had in pressuring the Liberal Government into enacting reform legislation, during 1906, notably the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, the Trade Disputes Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act.<sup>13</sup>

The passage of these measures and the subsequent enactment of the Children's Act of 1908, a seventy-page-long statute consolidating earlier Acts and also providing new provisions for the protection of a child's health and welfare,<sup>14</sup> evidently convinced Gorst that the time was opportune to press for further reforms. Thus he now urged the adoption of a government medical care scheme, a reform he had advocated in many publications but most fully in his Children of the Nation.<sup>15</sup> Although he favoured a totally tax-supported scheme, he recognized that such a plan had little chance of commanding Parliamentary support at this time<sup>16</sup> and consequently

<sup>12</sup>The Times, 30 September, 1907, p.10. Gorst's speech at an Edinburgh meeting held under the auspices of the Independent Labour Party.

<sup>13</sup>For background to the development and passage of the Trade Disputes Act see Clegg et al., Chaps. 8-9 and pp. 368-370, pp. 393-395. For the Workmen's Compensation Act, see Emy, pp. 148-149.

<sup>14</sup>9 Edward 7, Chap. 67. For a summary of the Act's provisions, see "The Children Act - What it is and Does", Liberal Monthly, 4 (1909), 5.

<sup>15</sup>Gorst, Children of the Nation, pp. 139-149. See also his articles as follows: "The Conservative Programme", pp. 13-15. "Governments and Social Reform", p. 845. "Physical Deterioration in Great Britain", pp. 6-8.

<sup>16</sup>Gilbert, "Children of the Nation", p. 250.

he recommended the implementation of a plan for compulsory insurance against sickness and accident, such as had been successfully launched in Germany, and he bolstered his arguments with a detailed exposition of the German system.<sup>17</sup> By the time Gorst's proposals were published Lloyd-George's ambitious health insurance scheme, which was to form Part 1 of the National Insurance Act of 1911, was in preparation. His provisions had been formulated following an August 1908 mission to observe first-hand the working of the German social services, a visit which took place just one year after Gorst had mooted his insurance proposals in Children of the Nation. As Lloyd-George was both well-acquainted with Gorst and a "noted picker of men's minds", it is quite possible that the Minister's interest in the German social insurance system had been stimulated by Gorst's verbal and written observations.<sup>18</sup>

By the close of the decade the Liberal Party's successful implementation of several pieces of social legislation,<sup>19</sup> and their formulation of a National Insurance Bill, occasioned a reversal of Gorst's attitude towards that party and in the Autumn of 1909 he agreed to stand

<sup>17</sup> John E. Gorst, "Insurance of the Working Classes in Germany", Forum 40 (1908), 569-576.

<sup>18</sup> See Bentley B. Gilbert, Sir John Eldon Gorst: Conservative Rebel", Historian, 18 (1956): 151-169.

<sup>19</sup> By 1910 the Liberals had enacted measures establishing wage boards, labour exchanges, new measures to regulate town planning and to provide for small-holdings, and the provision of old age pensions (see Eric Evans, pp. 213-295. Gilbert, National Insurance, Chaps. 4 and 5. Hay, pp. 43-59. Donald Read, Edwardian England 1901-1915: Society and Politics (London, 1972), Chap. 6.

as the Liberal Candidate for his native Preston at the next General Election.<sup>20</sup> Yet, in delivering his speech of acceptance of the candidacy, Gorst clearly illustrated that, regardless of his new party label, he remained fundamentally a Tory Democrat. He promised that if elected he would support the Liberal Government but he noted that it was not he who had left the Conservative party but, rather, the party who had in recent years "changed completely its character, its principles, and its policy" and he stated that the measures which "really had won his allegiance to the Liberal Government was the steps they had already taken, and the steps they proposed hereafter to take, towards the great subject of social reform".<sup>21</sup> From November until the Election on January 17, 1910, Gorst conducted a tireless campaign in the riding, during which he placed great emphasis upon social reform issues.<sup>22</sup> However, despite his vigorous electioneering, and public support from such Liberal luminaries as Sidney Buxton, Postmaster-General, Lewis Harcourt, First Commissioner of Works, Joseph Pease, Chief Whip, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd-George,<sup>23</sup> Gorst was rejected by the Preston voters.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Lancashire Daily Post, 25 October, 1909, p.2. Ibid., 3 November, 1909, p.2, 14 December, 1909, p.5. Preston Guardian, 30 October, 1909, p.4.

<sup>21</sup>Lancashire Daily Post, 3 November, 1909, p.2. See also, Ibid., 14 December, 1909, p.5.

<sup>22</sup>See Ibid., 3 and 4 November, 1909. Ibid., 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 30, 31 December, 1909; 4-7 and 10-15 January, 1910.

<sup>23</sup>See Ibid., 3 November, 1909, p.2, 5 November, 1909, p.2, 24 November, 1909, p.3, 5 January, 1910, p.2.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 18 January, 1910, p.3. Election results: Major G.F. Stanley (Unionist), 9,526. A.A. Tobin (Unionist), 9,160. J.T. Macpherson (Lab.), 7,539. Sir John Gorst (Liberal), 6,281. H. Cox (Independent), 2,704. The Lancashire Daily Post claimed that the Liberal defeat derived primarily from two factors: (1) the Anglican and large Roman Catholic vote swung to the Unionists because these electors believed that party would more effectively protect voluntary school interests and (2) the local Liberal organization's inability to mount an effective counter-campaign to the Tariff Reform movement. Moreover, the Unionist who topped the polls, Major G.F. Stanley, was the younger brother of the Earl of Derby and a member of a prominent Lancashire family long associated with the town (see Clemesha, pp. 278-279).

This defeat brought Gorst's public career to a close. In 1909 Gorst had inherited the family estate upon the death of his brother, and he now retired to a life of a Wiltshire squire.<sup>25</sup> However, he remained actively involved with child-welfare issues. In August of 1910, he made a public appeal to the London County Council to reduce class size in its schools in order to fulfill the dual purpose of improving the quality of the children's education while providing employment for some of the hundreds of newly-qualified teachers currently unemployed.<sup>26</sup> By the close of the following year his acute disappointment with the progress made in national education since the passage of the 1902 Act, and the continuing incidence of physical incapacitation among the nation's children, revealed in a recent report of the Board of Education's Chief Medical Officer, prompted Gorst to once again utilize the columns of the Times to draw public attention to the situation. He suggested that the time was "opportune for taking stock of our national provision for the education of the people" of the nation. The millions of pounds currently being expended upon the system were being wasted, a fact attested to by the majority of welfare workers and educationists in the Kingdom, claimed Gorst:

<sup>25</sup> Arthur Bauman, "Sir John Gorst", Saturday Review, 123 (1916), 345-346.

<sup>26</sup> The Times, 29 July, 1910, p.9. Two weeks prior to making his appeal, Gorst had served as Chairman of a meeting of the Joint-Council of Ex-Students of London County Council Training Colleges for Teachers at which were discussed the measures he advocated in his letter.

Physical growth of the children of the nation is, except in the more advanced of our great cities, insufficiently provided for; children are medically inspected and their ailments and defects officially noted and recorded ... Remedial measures, however urgently needed are not compulsory by law, and in many cities and most counties are neglected. A starved and stunted race is at the present moment being allowed to grow up as a legacy to the next generation to deal with. The pernicious system of 'payment for results' practised by the Education Department up to 1895 still leavens the instruction given. Originality of teacher and scholar is sternly repressed. ... The higher or secondary schools and the Universities are still fettered by medieval systems, which make the acquisition of learning, to be produced at examinations, the main work of students ... We have, at the present moment ... local authorities everywhere, most of whom are far more fit than any central departments to spend wisely and effectively the money voted by Parliament, and provided by rates. The time is thus ripe for a drastic revolution in the red-tape methods by which education is tied and bound, and the tyranny of the Board of Education over local authorities could now be relaxed or altogether removed".<sup>27</sup>

The failure of the public authorities to provide adequate health care for the nation's school children induced Gorst to launch one more attempt to rouse public opinion on the question, in the hope that this might prompt the Government to take action. In his booklet, Education and Race-Regeneration, published in 1913, he took to task the Home Office, the Local Government Board, and the Board of Education for failing to ensure that the provisions for the care of destitute and necessitous children, already legally available to local authorities under these Departments' jurisdiction, were not employed to their fullest extent.<sup>28</sup> This situation could be rectified, he declared, by educating permanent officials in the public departments concerned to a new awareness of "the needs and aspirations of the poor", because it was these officials rather than the Ministers who most influenced the formulation and implementation of Government legislation.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to the Editor, the Times, 27 November, 1911, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> J.E. Gorst, Education and Race-Regeneration, (London, 1913), pp. 33-64.

Moreover, civil servants could, "when convinced of the public need and of the practicability of a plan of reform, persuade the Ministers who happen for the time being to be in office to bring forward measures" for which the Government might thereafter take credit.<sup>29</sup> He had harsh words for the local education authorities in rural and "backward municipalities", which constituted the majority amongst non-city administrations, for neglecting to implement the provisions of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act and the medical inspection clause of the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act of 1907:<sup>30</sup>

With the main object of the authority to save the rates, no expenditure that is permissive and not compulsory is sanctioned if it is possible to evade it. They do not feed necessitous children; they do not appoint nurses; they do not cleanse the children from vermin; they do not provide the remedies recommended by the school doctor, except so far as it can be done by charity without cost to the district or county. They do not co-operate with the Health Authority; they do not champion the rights of the children before the Boards of Guardians".<sup>31</sup>

This publication was to be Gorst's final public appeal on behalf of the children of the poorer classes, bringing to a close his long campaign in the promotion of their social welfare which had "become the dominant passion

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>30</sup> Clause 13 of this Act, which had been inserted into its provisions clandestinely by Morant, required local authorities to carry out medical inspections and permitted them to provide treatment (see 8 Edward 7. Chap. 43, Clause 13. For background to the development and passage of the measure see Gilbert, National Insurance, pp. 117-131.).

<sup>31</sup> Gorst, Education and Race Regeneration, pp. 54-55, pp. 61-64. Gorst's criticisms were well founded. An examination of the working of the feeding and medical inspection statutes shows that there was a marked discrepancy between the intentions of Parliament and the implementation of the provisions at local level, which resulted in little practical progress being made in both areas in the pre-war years (see Bulkley, pp. 54-55. Gilbert, National Insurance, pp. 113-115, pp. 138-158. Hurt, Chap. 6.).

of his later career".<sup>32</sup> His promotion of social issues had been terminated by failing health, the legacy from a heart attack suffered in 1914<sup>33</sup> from which he had never fully recovered. In 1914, he suffered the additional burdens of personal bereavement, the death of his wife occurring in that year,<sup>34</sup> and mental trauma brought on by the outbreak of World War One.<sup>35</sup> The onset of this conflict had been "a terrible blow" to Gorst who had been something of a Germanophile, "a propensity now entirely cured".<sup>36</sup> Some eighteen months later the effects of a second coronary thrombosis, combined with an influenza attack, brought his life to a close on April 4, 1916.<sup>37</sup>

Gorst's demise was announced in the Times of April 5 under the headline "Death of Sir John Gorst: Independence as a Politician". The latter epithet set the tone for the obituary which followed. It consisted of a straightforward biographical account of Gorst's political career punctuated by references to his lapses into disloyalty towards the Conservative hierarchy and his resulting failure to achieve high office within Tory Administrations. His success in reorganizing the party machinery and orchestrating the Conservative victory of 1874 was acknowledged, albeit grudgingly, it being noted that even at this time of triumph "Mr. Gorst

<sup>32</sup>Wilkinson, p. 223.

<sup>33</sup>Daglish, p. 667.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 5 April, 1916, p.4.

<sup>35</sup>Marvin Papers, MS. Eng. Lett. C.257. ff.191-192. Gorst to Edith Marvin, 14 December, 1914.

<sup>36</sup>Bryce MSS. U.B. 7. J.E. Gorst to J. Bruce, May 4, 1915, cited in Daglish, p. 668.

<sup>37</sup>Daglish, p. 668. The Times, 5 April, 1916, p.4.

found himself out of harmony with some of the leaders of the party, a state of relationship which marked the entire course of his public life".<sup>38</sup> Tory back-bencher Arthur Baumann's assessment of his former colleague was even more damaging: "Sir John Gorst's career illustrates instructively the fate of a politician who cannot make himself a good party man", with the result that, despite his "first-rate mental calibre, his public life was an indisputable failure".<sup>39</sup> This view of Gorst is shared by Richard Rempel who has observed that "Gorst became such a difficult and cantankerous politician that he never fulfilled the great promise he had shown in reorganizing the Conservative party organization in 1872".<sup>40</sup> These perspectives of Gorst as a disgruntled and failed politician are difficult to reconcile with the image of the man which emerges from the evidence presented in the preceding pages. Yet, it must be acknowledged that these harsh assessments contain a certain degree of truth. Gorst never achieved Cabinet rank and, although he gained a place on the Conservative Front Bench, throughout his career he occupied only secondary parliamentary offices. Moreover, the depiction of Gorst as an irascible malcontent who displayed "a cynical determination to say his say and go his own way without regard to the convenience of party chiefs"<sup>41</sup> represents a reasonably

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 5 April, 1916, p.4.

<sup>39</sup>Baumann, p. 345.

<sup>40</sup>Richard Rempel, Unionists Divided: Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain and the Unionist Free Traders (Newton-Abbot, Devon, 1972), p. 107.

<sup>41</sup>"Character Sketch: December. Sir John Gorst," Review of Reviews, 3 (1891): 580. Hereafter referred to as "Character Sketch".



accurate evaluation of his public personality. Credence is given to this evaluation by his parliamentary indiscipline during debate on the Maamtrasna episode,<sup>42</sup> the Manipur incident,<sup>43</sup> and the 1891 Factories and Workshop Bill,<sup>44</sup> and by the similar behaviour he displayed on numerous other occasions, in the House, on the public platform and in the press, when he criticized Conservative policies and leadership. Thus, his reputation as a "perennial sour rebel"<sup>45</sup> with a "pushing, ambitious and prickly character"<sup>46</sup> has some foundation in fact. Yet it must be noted that many of Gorst's contemporaries held more positive views of his disposition. Chief Whip, Gerald Noel, who had urged Disraeli to appoint Gorst Principal Agent in 1870, thought him "a gentleman, with a good manner;"<sup>47</sup> his former Fourth Party ally-turned-adversary, Arthur Balfour, who had crossed-swords with Gorst on many occasions, viewed him in a not entirely unfavourable light, describing him as "an acute and ready debater, of more force than charm, but clear and incisive if somewhat cynical".<sup>48</sup> The estimation of Gorst

<sup>42</sup>See pp. 124-126 above.

<sup>43</sup>See pp. 155-157 above.

<sup>44</sup>See pp. 158-159 above.

<sup>45</sup>Peter Marsh, The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902 (Hassocks, Sussex, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>46</sup>Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (London, 1970. Fontana Paperback edition, London, 1976), p. 144.

<sup>47</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/N/114. G. Noel to Disraeli, 14 April, 1870.

<sup>48</sup>Earl of Balfour, Chapters of Autobiography, ed. Edgar Dugdale (London, 1930), p. 135.

which best captures his true nature is that expressed by his long-time friend and associate, Henrietta Barnett:

Under his cynical manner and often contemptuous words, under his dour silences or suspicious sentences, Sir John has a deeply religious nature, a capacity for enthusiasm, and a dogged sullen loyalty to his hopes for the future. The contradictions between the real and the apparent man were exceedingly annoying to those of his friends who cared for him, and all the more so because a certain strain of impishness in his nature made him enjoy puzzling people, and take pleasure in their not always courteous confusion".<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately for Gorst, it was the more visible and negative aspects of his character which captured and held the attention of the Tory leadership. After the brief period from 1868-1874, during which his work in reorganizing and revitalizing the party machinery had won him the approbation of Disraeli, Gorst's parliamentary independence and critical pronouncements against his own Front Bench earned him the mistrust of the party hierarchy and a reputation as a disloyal rebel. However, the members of the latter group must also bear partial responsibility for the situation of mistrust which existed between themselves and Gorst. With the exception of Randolph Churchill, none of the party elite appear to have attempted to establish a rapport with Gorst, a fact of which he himself complained, first to Disraeli, in 1874,<sup>50</sup> and then most tellingly to Salisbury, in 1899, when his request for a change of office had been rejected by the Prime Minister because of Gorst's reported anti-Government posture in the House.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup>H.O. Barnett, Canon Barnett, 2 vols. (London, 1918), pp. 48-49.

<sup>50</sup>Hughenden Papers, B/xxi/G.249, Gorst to M. Corry, 19 February, 1874. (Corry was Disraeli's secretary).

<sup>51</sup>See pp. 273-274.

After stating that this presumed disloyalty was a fabrication of the press, Gorst observed that "Unfortunately for me, few of the leading members of the party know me personally, so that in my case, there is little chance of a false character being modified and corrected by the true one".<sup>52</sup>

This was an amazing admission given Gorst's years of service to the party and the offices he had held, suggesting that the Conservative chieftains had done little to develop a closer affinity with their recalcitrant colleague which might have led to improved relations between them. This situation also reflected the social exclusiveness of the aristocratic Tory leadership,<sup>53</sup> and this was an additional factor working against the development of such a rapport. Gorst's background was decidedly middle-class. He had received his schooling at his local grammar school, amongst companions of similar social status, and some of a lower, and thus he probably retained at least some of the demeanour of his class, despite his subsequent undergraduate years at Cambridge. Such a background rendered Gorst out of step socially with his aristocratic associates in the Government. The resulting exclusion from aristocratic social circles considerably reduced his chances of forming any kind of a close alliance with the members of the Tory elite, including his ministerial colleagues. In addition, his failure to attend one of the exclusive public schools prevented him from

<sup>52</sup>Salisbury Papers, 88, Gorst to Salisbury, 30 September, 1899. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>53</sup>For an analysis of the aristocratic character of the Salisbury and Balfour Administrations of 1886-1892 and 1895-1905, see J.P. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil" in Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, ed. Robert Robson (London, 1967), pp. 268-311.

developing those contacts with sons of the hereditary ruling class which later might have facilitated the establishment of closer ties between Gorst and his ministerial colleagues and smoothed the way for his advancement within the party.

It has been stated that Gorst's rebelliousness grew out of his resentment of the treatment he received at the hands of the party leadership.<sup>54</sup> However, though he had "an uncontestable right to feel that he had been scurvily treated",<sup>55</sup> and apparently did so,<sup>56</sup> personal pique was not the principal cause of Gorst's incompatibility with the Conservative hierarchy. The chief source of this difficulty resided in their conflicting ideologies. Following his entry into Parliament in 1866, Gorst had become a virtual disciple of Disraeli and an adherent of Tory Democracy, which he somewhat mistakenly believed was the philosophy of his mentor. Thereafter, for the remainder of his political career he laboured to maintain within the Conservative party the Tory-democratic principles of responsibility for, and promotion of, the welfare of the working classes. Born and raised in a north of England industrial city, where he witnessed first-hand the privations of the poor, Gorst had an appreciation of the benefits social legislation conferred on the working classes, an appreciation generally lacking among the aristocratic members of the Tory Front Bench.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, Baumann, p. 345. "Death of Sir John Gorst", the Times, 5 April, 1916, p.4. R.R. James, Lord Randolph Churchill (London, 1959), p. 81. Hereafter referred to as James, Lord Randolph Churchill. Marsh, p.58.

<sup>55</sup>James, Lord Randolph Churchill, p.81.

<sup>56</sup>"Character Sketch", p. 580.

Following Salisbury's accession to the leadership in 1881, Gorst found himself increasingly at odds with the party hierarchy as they "drifted far away" from Tory-democratic ideals.<sup>57</sup>

Gorst's pursuit of Tory-democratic policies during Disraeli's second ministry of 1874-1880 had been limited by the demands made upon him by his extra-parliamentary duties,<sup>58</sup> but he had nevertheless been instrumental in obtaining passage of the Merchant Shipping Bill and minor labour legislation.<sup>59</sup> However, already his agitation had been tinged with criticism of the Government's reluctance to proceed on the issues.<sup>60</sup> During the subsequent Gladstone Parliament of 1880-1885 Gorst, with the support of his Fourth-Party colleagues, had continued his campaign for social issues and, although they failed to obtain passage of an Employers' Liability Bill in the form they desired, the compromise measure they were instrumental in placing on the statute books provided the foundation for the more equitable and comprehensive Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897.<sup>61</sup> Following Salisbury's assumption of power in 1885, Gorst had found himself increasingly at odds with the party hierarchy as they "drifted far away" from Disraelian principles.<sup>62</sup> After the dissolution of the Fourth Party

<sup>57</sup>The Times, 6 February, 1907, p.7.

<sup>58</sup>See pp. 106-107 above.

<sup>59</sup>See pp. 107-115 above.

<sup>60</sup>See pp. 117-124 above.

<sup>61</sup>See pp. 116-120 above.

<sup>62</sup>The Times, 6 February, 1907, p.7.

and the departure of Randolph Churchill from the Government, late in 1886, Gorst was left an isolated and discredited figure on the ministerial benches, separated from his colleagues as a result of his pursuit of Tory Democracy. As Gilbert has noted, "Throughout most of the nearly unbroken Conservative tenure of office from 1886-1905 ... Gorst was the sole occupant of the Treasury Bench to take more than a momentary interest in matters of domestic public welfare".<sup>63</sup>

The intensification of Gorst's social reform campaign, following his visit to the Berlin Conference in 1890, served to estrange Gorst even further from the party. His continual and uncompromising promotion in the Commons, in public speeches, and in the press, of his 1891 social reform programme, effectively doomed his chances of obtaining a Cabinet post in subsequent Salisbury and Balfour Administrations. Because Gorst's agitation was conducted during the waning months of the Salisbury Parliament of 1886-1892 and the short span of Liberal rule thereafter, periods inopportune for the development of social legislation,<sup>64</sup> his efforts produced no immediate concrete results. However, his continuous publicizing of social issues, in and out of the House, served to impress upon the public mind the need to reform public welfare institutions and "The Liberals would soon find it politically profitable to enact what he had proposed".<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Gilbert, "Conservative Rebel", p. 152.

<sup>64</sup> See p. 172, p. 174 above.

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, "Conservative Rebel", p. 152.

Gorst's appointment as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in 1895 brought him into contact with an area of national life urgently in need of reform. However, by this period Gorst's "independence" had all but dissipated the Government's trust in him and, consequently, he was granted no real authority to implement these reforms. Despite being denied control over education in the House, he exerted considerable influence over the formulation stages of the legislation and his ill-fated measure of 1896 was in effect the "1902 Education Bill in embryo".<sup>66</sup> Moreover, as Lowndes observed, Gorst accomplished much "by administrative measures and minor legislation which appeared 'innocent' to bring about a position in which it could be represented that a final settlement did not change the existing order too drastically".<sup>67</sup>

Gorst's resignation from the Education Department in 1902 concluded his public career and opened the way for him to launch his crusade for child feeding, through which he was to effect the introduction of the "revolutionary principle" of State responsibility for poverty, which was to mark the beginning of the British Welfare State. Although Gorst never achieved Cabinet rank, and is chiefly recognized by historians as an efficient but malcontent party organizer, the evidence given above would appear to support the claim that Gorst's endeavours in pursuit of Tory Democracy made a significant contribution to the social legislation of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

<sup>66</sup>Eric Eaglesham, "Planning the Education Bill of 1902", British Journal of Educational Studies, 9 (1960): 3-24.

<sup>67</sup>G.A.N. Lowndes, The Silent Social Revolution (London, 1937), p. 61.

## APPENDIX A

Approximately two months after Gorst completed his draft Bill, Sidney Webb's Fabian tract, the Education Muddle and the Way Out was published, with proposals bearing a strong resemblance to those contained in Gorst's measure (see, The Education Muddle and the Way Out, Fabian Tract, No. 106 (London, 1901). The Tract was unsigned but Edward Pease has credited the Fabian's educational plans to Webb (see, Edward R. Pease, The History of the Fabian Society (London, 1916), p.42). Webb proposed extending limited rate aid to the voluntary schools and abolition of the school boards, but wanted the larger boards - including London - exempted from the latter provision. Pease claimed that the proposals in the tract had been under intermittent discussion since May 1899 and that proofs of the tract had been supplied to the education authorities at Whitehall before publication (see, Pease, pp. 143-144). This raises the question of the extent, if any, of Webb's influence upon Gorst's 1901 draft Bill. Given that Gorst was on friendly terms with Sidney and Beatrice Webb at this period, it is logical to assume they exchanged ideas on the education question. (For Gorst's relationship with the Webbs see, B. Webb, pp. 132-138, p. 137. See also, M.A. Hamilton, Sidney and Beatrice Webb (London, 1933), p. 128. Passfield Papers, Sect. II. 4. b41. ff.114-117. Gorst to Sidney Webb, 24 June, 1902). However, the "one authority" and rate aid concepts were not new innovations in Gorst's plans at this time, having been propounded by him since 1896. Although, as Brennan notes, "there is not one shred of evidence that Sidney was ever identified with Gorst's policy" (see, Education for National Efficiency: the Contribution of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, ed. E.J.T. Brennan (London, 1975), p.8), it



is quite possible that interaction with Webb served to crystallize Gorst's ideas more fully by 1901. Nevertheless, McBriar believes that Fabian influence on Gorst's Bill was "slight" (A.M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918 (Cambridge, 1962), p.215). Simon appears to have pinpointed the most important benefit derived by Gorst from Webb's tract, namely, the authoritative support it gave to Tory, and thus, Gorst's, aims. Hence his distribution of the tract to his fellow ministers (Simon, p. 208).

## APPENDIX B

Reiterating the criticism levelled at the Act by the Labour movement of the day, Brian Simon has denounced the 1902 legislation as reactionary because of what he asserts were its restrictive provisions affecting working class higher educational opportunities as a result of the abolition of the boards. Their destruction eliminated the higher grade schools which had provided a relatively inexpensive secondary-type education. Thereafter, these institutions were either integrated into the fee-paying system of State grammar schools or became strictly elementary institutions, to the detriment of working class education. However, Simon notes that it was not so much the provisions of the Act as the way in which Morant, as Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, subsequently interpreted and applied them which produced the resulting elitist secondary education system. In Morant's defence, however, Simon observes that his efforts "were as warmly approved by a Liberal as by a Conservative government", his policy being "not so much a party policy ... as a policy serving the interests of class" (see, Simon, pp. 235-239. For Labour's reaction to the measure see Ibid., pp. 223-235). In contrast to Simon, Keith Evans sees the 1902 Act as a positive factor in the development of a national system of secondary education. Although it began as a fee-paying system, "the Act's provision for scholarship awards to enable elementary school children to transfer to secondary grammar schools pointed the way towards a 'free-place' system (1907) and the ultimate rejection of the nineteenth-century concept of secondary education as the prerogative of the middle and upper classes" (K. Evans, pp. 69-70).

## APPENDIX C

The National Labour Conference on the State Maintenance of Children was organized by a committee representing a cross-section of the Labour movement. The Committee's seven members included two representatives from the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, two from the London Trades Council, one Social Democratic Federation member, and W.C. Steadman of the London County Council (see, Labour Representation Committee Documents 19/207. J. Sexton et al., 23 December, 1904. Invitation to attend National Labour Conference on the State Maintenance of Children). The Labour Representation Committee was not represented at the Conference. Its Executive Committee had unanimously decided to support J. Ramsey Macdonald's decision to decline the invitation because they had not been consulted at all with regard to the arrangement of the event, or the resolutions to be discussed, and because it was indicated that their status at the Conference would be the same as that awarded the Social Democratic Federation or similar group (Ibid., 19/207-221. "Guildhall Conference": National Labour Conference on the State Maintenance of Children: correspondence endorsing decision that L.R.C. should not be officially represented at the Conference. Inclusions from: W. Thorne, W. Hudson, J.J. Stephenson, J. Parker, J. Keir Hardie, J.N. Hodge, J.R. Clynes, P. Curran, E. Pease, D.J. Shackleton, A. Gee, J. Ramsey Macdonald.) However, in accordance with a suggestion made by Edward Pease, the L.R.C. Executive's letter of declination to the Conference Committee gave the invitation's late arrival as the official reason for their non-attendance, it being felt that to state their true feelings on the issue would indicate "offended dignity, which is apt to raise a sneer". (Ibid., 19/218. Edward Pease to J.R. Macdonald, 5 January, 1905. Ibid., 19/221. J.R. Macdonald to W. Steadman, 16 January, 1905).

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