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Summary of Official Reports Concerning the Feeding of School Children

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a large scale. On the contrary, a large export of iron ore would strengthen the economic forces of the country, and thus prepare the way for a new iron-age.

By the recent commercial treaty with Germany Sweden has consented not to lay any export duty on iron ore before the end of 1910. Consequently, the struggle has for the present come to an end. Even for the future it seems probable that the export duty on iron ore will be sacrificed for securing commercial advantages or guarantees against bad treatment.

G. CASSEL

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL REPORTS CONCERNING THE FEEDING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

1. In March, 1903, public attention was called afresh to this question by the *Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland)*. The views of the Commissioners on the food question are indicated in the following extracts:—

It is “most desirable that increased attention should be paid to the feeding of children attending the State-aided schools.”

“The powers of School Boards might, no doubt, be increased in the direction of establishing a system of better feeding, but this raises serious questions. It is matter for grave consideration whether the valuable asset to the nation in the improved moral and physical state of a large number of future citizens counterbalances the evils of impaired parental responsibility, or whether voluntary agency may be trusted to do this work with more discrimination, and consequently less danger, than a statutory system.

“It would be in many cases an inestimable advantage could regular and sufficient meals—such as broth, porridge and milk, or bread and milk—be provided at a minimum cost. The preparation and cooking of these meals, where it is found necessary to provide them, ought to be regarded as one of the charges incident to school management. In like manner we think that an obligation for the proper supervision of the feeding of those who come for instruction should be regarded as one of the duties of school authorities, and that teachers should be instructed to take note of all children apparently ill fed.

“We are entirely of the opinion, frequently expressed by many of the witnesses, that any scheme for the provision of meals, either for necessitous cases, or as a matter of convenience, should be voluntary or self-supporting, and not fall upon the rates.

If the steps we have indicated, as in our opinion advisable, fail to effect a substantial improvement, we consider that some compulsory powers, if necessary, should be obtained for the purpose of dealing with parents on the ground of neglect, whilst, if the cause be poverty, recourse should be had to the parochial agencies of poor relief."

2. *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* followed in July, 1904. The Committee gave special attention to the children attending elementary schools. They endorse the opinion of a witness, that "physical infirmity is practically confined to the poorest and lowest strata of the population, whose children are improperly and insufficiently fed, and inadequately housed, and where parents are improvident, idle, and intemperate." But when we have reached these lowest strata the facts are unmistakable, and as another witness (Dr. Eichholz) says: "With regard to physical degeneracy the children frequenting the poorer schools of London and the large towns betray a most serious condition of affairs, calling for ameliorative and arrestive measures, the most impressive features being the apathy of parents as regards the school, the lack of parental care of the children, the poor physique, powers of endurance, and educational attainments of the children attending school."

"The Committee think that a large number of children habitually attend school ill-fed, but this number varies locally with the time of year and with the conditions of employment, and is not likely to increase; indeed, they look . . . with confidence to the operation of many causes towards its diminution.

"It seems, further, that in a large number of cases voluntary organisations, with the support and oversight of the local authority, are sufficient for the purpose, and as long as this is so the Committee would strongly deprecate recourse being had to direct municipal assistance."

They endorse the opinion of the Scottish Commission that "the preparation and cooking of these meals, where it is found necessary to provide them, ought to be regarded as one of the charges incident to school management," and add that "by a differentiation of function on these terms—the school authority to supply and organise the machinery, the benevolent to furnish the material—a working adjustment between the privileges of charity and the obligations of the community might be reached."

In case local charity should in some districts be insufficient, "it might be expedient to permit the application of municipal aid on a larger scale," but "the law would have to be altered so

as . . . to compel the neglectful parent to take his full share of responsibility, and the Committee are sanguine that a few prosecutions to this end would have a most salutary and stimulating effect.

“It seems probable that the best way of dealing with many of these children, whose antecedents place them definitely in the category of ‘retarded,’ is by means of special schools of the Day Industrial type, in which feeding would form an essential feature.

“The Committee, moreover, do not think that children should be made the subject of either experiment without the concurrence of the Poor Law authorities, and the funds should be found through the machinery of the Poor Law, with all due precaution against affixing any unnecessary stigma upon the deserving parent.

“The Committee deem that by these means the community may be protected from the consequences of the somewhat dangerous doctrine that free meals are the necessary concomitant of free education. Education is a great social need, which individual citizens are, as a rule, not able to provide for their children on a sufficient scale, but food, like clothing and lodging, is a personal necessity, which in a well-ordered society it is not inherently impossible for parents to provide; and the effort to supplement their deficiencies, and to correct the effects of their neglect should aim, in the first instance, at the restoration of self-respect and the enforcement of parental duty.”

3. The next document in the history of the question is the “*Relief (School Children) Order, 1905*,” issued by the Local Government Board on April 26th, 1905, which gives power to the Poor Law Guardians, on the application of the school authority, to grant food to children habitually underfed, charging the cost, as a loan, to the father, and recovering it from him in the usual way. The effect of the Order is explained by a circular letter issued by the Board of Education which points out that “a child may be sent to school without proper nourishment (1) because the parents are permanently impoverished, or (2) because temporary illness, loss of employment, or other unavoidable causes, have for the time incapacitated the parents from making necessary provision for the child, or (3) because the parents, though capable of making this provision, have neglected to do so.

“The Board feel that the second of these groups of cases will provide the most suitable field for the valuable work done by the various voluntary and charitable agencies which exist

for the provision of meals for children who are sent to school hungry.

“Cases coming under the first or third category may be proper subjects for a special application to the Guardians.”

4. Then comes *the Report*, dated November 9th, 1905, of the “*Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding of Children attending Public Elementary Schools.*” This report, so far as feeding is concerned, simply describes what is at present being done by voluntary agencies, and considers how far such work could be better organised without any charge on public funds. Its chief recommendations may thus be summarised :—

The Local Education Authority should be informed of, and should co-operate with, all feeding organisations. These should be permanent, at least in framework, and should arrange for meals where necessary throughout the year, and the meals, if given at all, should be at least once every school day. The first care of the Feeding Agency should be the children of families in temporary distress.

Teachers should not take part in serving or supervising meals. “While teachers may properly make the initial selection, they should not be made responsible for the final choice of the children to receive meals.”

In selecting children, the co-operation of all local public and private authorities should be obtained.

Parents should be told when the relief is charitable, and more effort should be made to make parents contribute. The use of schoolrooms for meals should be avoided, though cookery centres may “in some cases be usefully employed.” “But a cookery centre can only provide for a few children, and it should be remembered that its essential purpose is the provision of cookery instruction.”

The Committee state that there is difference of opinion even among medical experts as to whether breakfast or dinner is the better meal to give, but they find that breakfast, if much fresh milk is given, is more expensive, and that the cost of a dinner can be brought down to something between a penny and two-pence per child. “Experience at Birmingham shows that an extremely simple meal of soup, bread and jam, such as is there given, can be actually supplied, so far as food material goes, for considerably less than a halfpenny, and at Liverpool an enterprising person actually supplies a dinner of meat and vegetables for a penny at a profit to herself.” It must, however, not be supposed

that at these very cheap meals the children receive as much as they can eat, for, as one witness says, "a great many children will eat a pound of bread, which in itself costs over a penny."

The Committee found that the feeding agencies had no difficulty in obtaining money, which appears to flow in as soon as the public are appealed to. Strangely enough, the only exception to this rule was at Birmingham, where sufficient money did not appear to be forthcoming for the work of the Birmingham Free Dinners Association.

With reference to the "children who, though not defective, are, from malnutrition, below the normal standard," for whom the Physical Deterioration Committee had recommended "special schools," this report says that these "'retarded' children embrace in their numbers those whose backwardness and want of development is due to other causes than defective food, such as late hours, premature employment, and insanitary homes. . . . It is probable that more of them will prove to owe their malnutrition to improper feeding than to insufficient feeding, and as the standard of knowledge in the homes is raised it may be hoped that their numbers, now without doubt considerable, may be materially diminished. The tenor of the evidence . . . points to the homes as the proper place in which to attack the evil. We cannot think that school meals during the winter months, however well organised, can of themselves do much to bring up ill-nourished children to a normal standard."

5. On March 2nd, 1906, the "*Education (Provision of Meals) Bill*" was read a second time, and referred to a *Select Committee*, which reported on July 27th to this effect:—

(1) Inadequate feeding is a real evil, but limited in extent, and more or less spasmodic.

(2) No effective remedy will be found until an improvement takes place in the habits and surroundings of the parents. The unhealthy condition of the children is often due not to want of food, but to congenital causes, late hours, insanitary surroundings, uncleanness, or work out of school hours.

(3) The present voluntary agencies have carried on "an admirable work to meet an urgent need," but "the evidence disclosed avoidable waste and mismanagement." Their funds are precarious. Meals are limited to the winter. An unofficial and defective system of outdoor relief has been created. There is no obligation on local education authorities to inquire into, or arrange for, the feeding of children. There is no power to recover the cost of meals from parents.

(4) To throw the duty of providing meals on the education authority would destroy voluntary agencies, would largely increase the rates, and might cause other retrenchments detrimental to efficiency.

(5) Therefore, the Committee falls back on the combination of public authority with voluntary agency as suggested by all the preceding Committees, and has amended the Bill in accordance with these general conclusions :—

The Local Education Authority to organise and direct a mid-day meal through a Committee with outside representatives, and to have power to spend money on the preparation and serving of meals, but not (save quite exceptionally, and then only to the extent of a halfpenny rate) on the cost of the actual food, payment for which should be left to voluntary agencies associated with the Committee. The necessary power to be given to compel parents to pay when able to do so. Meals not to be served in teaching rooms, and teachers not to be compelled to take part in dispensing the meals.

C. H. DENYER

Report of Ontario Commission on Railway Taxation, 1905.

THE problem of the taxation of railways, a difficult one in Great Britain, is perhaps even more difficult in later-developed communities, such as those of the United States and Canada. In the States an almost bewildering variety of methods is presented to the student, each State following its own method, and but few making use of approximately identical principles. In Canada, the opportunity for basing the practical methods of taxation on sound principles seems still to present itself without any very great obstacle in the shape of well-established, if faulty, custom. As the report before us rightly urges, the problem is but one phase of the wider problem of the taxation of corporations, and the principles sought for should be applicable in the wider field. In view of the increasing degree in which ownership of wealth is passing into the hands of corporations, some of them very large, the principles which can be applied well enough to the taxation of individuals are found to be defective in their application under the new conditions.

In the report a brief, but careful and well-reasoned, review of the subject leads up to the proposal to assess railways and kindred corporations on their gross revenue. As the proposal is one not for federal, but for provincial, application, the revenue of corpora-

tions operating both within and without the province of Ontario had to be considered. In the case of revenue earned on traffic not wholly intraprovincial, the proposal made is to assess it within the province on the basis of mileage traversed by revenue-producing traffic within the province, the proportion borne by such mileage to the total mileage over which the traffic passes being taken to be the proportion of the revenue from that traffic earned within the province. Some allowance for terminal charges may be advisable as a modification of the simple mileage basis, when traffic originating outside the province passes to points also outside the province, but traverses some part of the provincial territory *en route*.

The rate suggested for the provincial tax, as a reasonable and not excessive one, is 3 per cent. on gross revenue. The working expenses commonly absorb about two-thirds of the gross revenue in Ontario, and, where that proportion is found, the tax proposed would be 9 per cent. of net revenue, certainly no inconsiderable impost.

The objections to basing the assessment on net revenue are set forth with much force in the report. For practical purposes, the element of inequality involved in basing taxation on gross earnings is held to be outweighed by the convenience and certainty attaching to the gross earnings basis. The latter gives no place to arbitrary modes of calculating ability which are practically found associated with attempts to base an assessment on net earnings, and the basis is, moreover, a feature of each company's business which is regularly ascertained and regularly published. The point is made, too, that a difficult question is avoided in cases such as that in which a company effects reductions of working expenses by capital outlay in improving its road. Were a net earnings basis used, such a change would affect the assessment.

The whole argument is given in a concise form in the report, and it can hardly be hoped that a satisfactory account of its leading points is presented in the preceding few lines. Moreover, the references to specific experience of various American States are important features of the discussion, and the Commissioners took very great pains to study the methods practised elsewhere before framing their own recommendations, and their report is enriched by illustrations drawn from the results of those inquiries.

As an Appendix to the report, there is given a statement of the actual practice, and some account of changes leading up to existing conditions, in twelve of the chief American States, in Great Britain, and in the various provinces of the Dominion. A

large amount of information of great importance and value is condensed into a small compass, and not merely citizens of the Province of Ontario, but students everywhere of the problem here handled, owe thanks to the three gentlemen who have had this matter referred to them as Commissioners. It is worthy of note that Professor Shortt, the representative of Economic Science in Queen's University, Kingston, was one of the three. Thus the late Government of Ontario followed a growing practice in the United States in associating a university teacher with a work of such great practical importance. Arm-chair economics does not appear to be feared in Ontario.

A. W. FLUX

RECENT OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Deputy-Master of the Mint, 1905. [C^d. 3020.]

THE gold coin issued during the year 1905 was : sovereigns, £5,000,000 ; half-sovereigns, £1,500,000 ; the average issue of gold coin for 1895-1904 being £6,898,618.

Report of the Registrar-General for Ireland of Marriages, Births, and Deaths, 1905. [C^d. 3123.]

THE marriage-rate, 5·26 per 1,000, was about the average for the ten years, 1895-1904. The birth-rate, 23·4 per 1,000, was above the average ; the death-rate, 17·1, was below the average for the preceding ten years.

Report of the Vice-regal Commission on Poor-Law Reform in Ireland. [C^d. 3202.] 1906.

VOL. III. contains the evidence on which are based the important recommendations made in Vol. I., *e.g.*, that the present workhouse system should be abolished, and that different classes should be segregated in separate institutions : the aged and infirm in almshouses, unmarried mothers in institutions under religious or philanthropic management. Guardians should be empowered to collect a special rate for outdoor relief.