

# **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

## **PRESS RELEASE 479**

### **DEVOLUTION MEANS**

### **DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**5 July 2012**

**The current strike of teachers in NSW over the State Government's *Local Schools, Local Decisions* policy giving school principals more power over staffing and budgets is symptomatic of a basic problem confronting public education. The decentralisation policy, which cuts the local schools adrift from the resources and responsibility of the central administration is driven by ongoing attempts to privatise public education.**

NSW Principals, and indeed many principals in other States are starting to realise that local budgets, local staffing in a funding environment where public schools are starved of funds is a poisoned chalice – an abrogation of responsibility for the provision of a quality education for every Australian child by irresponsible politicians.

#### **Defining the Problem**

Centralisation of the administration of a public education system is its lifeblood. It is essential for

- Equitable provision of resources to disadvantaged and geographically isolated children.
- Gathering of information concerning school requirements and expenditure.
- Accountability for expenditure public money.
- Effective lobbying of government for both provision and expenditure on public education.
- Efficient appointment, security, conditions, and payment of teachers and other employees within the system.

Advocates of the private education systems, particularly the Catholic system know this. In fact, while private sector advocates decry the public system and its ‘centralised bureaucracy’ the Catholic sector is administered by the most powerful, centralised multinational organisation in both Australia and the world. It is no accident that the private sector is extraordinarily effective in lobbying governments for billions of dollars for religious systems guaranteed to educate the few at the expense of the many – failing the nation dismally in the process.

Public Education in Australia is in trouble because private sector lobbyists, apologists and academics have been attacking the centralised administrations, the nerve centre of the Australian public systems since the 1950s. Freeman Butts,<sup>1</sup> who visited Australia in the 1954/5 understood the crucial importance of the public system administrations. ( See DOGS Press Release No. 50 at <http://www.adogs.info/images/pr50.htm> also see Chris Bonner quoting Freeman Butts at <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/dangers-of-classroom-apartheid-20110128-1a8al.html>)

They have done this in the following ways:

- Academics like Brian Caldwell have advocated cutting schools adrift from the central administration( See DOGS Press Release No 50 above)
- Politicians, many of them graduates and patrons of the private sector, have engaged in constant re-structuring and cut-backs in the central administrations.
- Private school graduates and patrons have taken over key posts in the central administrations (this occurred in Victoria in 1983 and more recently in New South Wales). As Hitler discovered, the best way to deal with a centralised bureaucracy is to take it over.
- There is no commitment test for public education teachers or administrators. Religious commitment is essential for the major private administrations. Yet in Victoria for instance, there is hardly any person committed to the ideal of public education who sends their child to a public school in the policy area.
- The effective career structure which enabled principals to become inspectors and central administrators has been abandoned.
- Public school principals and principal organisations, particularly those which have joined private sector principals, have been bought off. Many public school principals send their children to private schools.

- Those still left in the administration with any feeling for the public system have become risk averse in a highly politicised environment dominated by ministerial advisers.

### **The Answer**

DOGS suggest that those currently engaged in the battle to protect public education should learn from those who fought the same battle in the second half of the nineteenth century. The person who looms large in the solution of the problem is William Wilkins, the man who assisted in the building up of the NSW public school administration in NSW in the period 1854-1880.

Williams Wilkins realised that the only way to provide resource to struggling National schools was through the central administration with funding from the central Treasury.

In the years 1854-1880 he, and the leading public school advocate in the NSW Parliament, Henry Parkes, discovered that:

- Parents
- Teachers and
- Politicians concerned about accountability for every penny of public money

wanted a centralised administration to do the job.

**DOGS repeat: NSW Principals, and indeed many principals in other States are starting to realise that local budgets, local staffing in a funding environment where public schools are starved of funds is a poisoned chalice – an abrogation of responsibility for the provision of a quality education for every Australian child by irresponsible politicians.**

***THE DOGS RADIO PROGRAM***

***3CR***

***855 ON THE AM DIAL***

***12.00 NOON SATURDAYS***