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PUBLIC EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA: A FAILED EXPERIMENT?

The Irish National System in Australia

Paper delivered to ANZHES Conference Brisbane, December 2013

The following paper was delivered by Jean Ely to the ANZHES Conference in Brisbane on December14, 2013.

In it she questions determinist doctrines of progress or evolution accepted by many Australian educational historians. For children of the Enlightenment things may not necessarily be getting better. She wonders about another interpretation of Australian educational history, an interpretation that sees the development of Enlightenment values in the Antipodes as an ongoing battle for survival. Perhaps 'progress' in Australian education is not and never was - inevitable. This paper looks at the failed Irish 'experiment', an unlikely contribution of the Scottish Enlightenment to the successful Australian experiment in 1844-48, and the failure of secondary education in Queensland 1899-1964.

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> It appears to your Committee impossible not to see, that the very essence of a denominational system, is to leave the majority uneducated, in order thoroughly to imbue the minority with peculiar tenets.[i] *Report from the N.S.W. Select Committee on Education* 1844.

> If we would find the causes of final corruption, we must examine those revolutions of state that remove or with-hold the objects of every ingenious study, or liberal pursuit; that deprive the citizen of occasions to act as the member of a public; that crush his spirit; that debase his sentiments, and disqualify his mind for affairs. Adam Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society* 1767.[ii]

I wish to question determinist doctrines of progress or evolution accepted by many Australian educational historians. [iii] For children of the Enlightenment things may not necessarily be getting better.

1. Introduction

I believe one delves into history in order to understand, then escape from its strait jacket. I suspect that history really is the History of Ideas. So I live in hope that the belief in individual conscience from my Covenanter forebears, well-tempered by heady ideals of the Enlightenment, will survive: a striving for the rights of minorities hammered out after centuries of religious bloodshed; separation of religion and the State; and above all, extension of educational opportunities to all children in the democratic civil society we inherited. I have discovered that, in my studies of the Enlightenment in Australia, these two ideas— individual conscience and the enlightenment — were closely entwined. Australian public education owes much to Scottish Enlightenment particularly Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart [iv]and members of the Edinburgh *literati* of the late eighteenth century. With the exception of David Hume, a heretic granted toleration, Scottish *literati* were Moderates—members of the Church of Scotland.[v] Adam Ferguson was chaplain of the 42nd (BlackWatch) regiment (1745-1754) and later held the Edinburgh chair of "pneumatics" or mental philosophy and moral philosophy (1964-1985.) Adam Smith was also a Professor of Moral Philosophy but at Glasgow University (1751-1787); and Dugald Stewart followed Ferguson as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh (1785-1820).

In the first half of the C19 there is another especially interesting Scottish thinker, an Evangelical minister, yet a polymath. He espoused voluntarism in religion and education shortly before his death in 1847. His name is Dr Thomas Chalmers. His Australian disciple, and youthful member of his Tron Church in Glasgow was Dr John Dunmore Lang. The more

I read and think about the history of the enlightenment in Australian primary secondary,and adult education, the more I discover the influence of these men – upholders of what R. Ely calls civic and civil rather than corporate Protestantism.[vi]

Their view of the economic and social development of Scotland together with their relationship with the London administration post 1707, had parallels in colonial Australia. They traced the development of civil societies from the savage through the pastoral and agricultural stages to commercial and manufacturing activities of the cities. There were similarities and differences as illustrated in Appendix One

The more I linked Scottish descendants of the Enlightenment to the Presbyterian 'Great Disruption' in Scotland in the 1840s, the more I understood the significance yet fragility of the voluntarist principle underlining separation of religion and the State —that principle which, in retrospect, protected public education systems in Australia until 1981.

I am saddened that those of us who attempted to uphold and put Enlightenment and Voluntarist ideals into practice in the second half of the twentieth century now stare down the barrel of failure. Not that one ever accepts failure in a good cause.

2. An Alternative History of Australian Education

I wonder about another interpretation of Australian educational history, an interpretation that sees the development of Enlightenment values in the Antipodes as an ongoing battle for survival. Perhaps 'progress' in Australian education is not and never was - inevitable. Perhaps the men of enlightenment in Australian educational history were doomed to fight for what has proved, in the long term, to be just an educational 'experiment' – a noble one perhaps—but nevertheless, an experiment. After all, the 'national education' systems of the various Australian States were based upon the long departed 1831 Irish national system of Lord Stanley. That Irish experiment was spun around into a virtual denominational system by 1850. By the end of the century Irish religious leaders of the corporate churches had long relegated this 'experiment' to the dustbin of history. When, in 1965 I was puzzled by the failure of the Queensland public education system to extend secondary education to the majority of children in the period 1911 to 1945 I went into the documents and discovered similarities with the Irish precedent. The Queensland public system survived and was dragged more or less into the latter half of the twentieth century with the rest of Australia.

But, as public education and the idea of educational opportunities for all Australian children staggers into the twenty first century one wonders about its national survival.

Australian educational historians tend to favour success stories, taking for granted the idea of progress or evolution. But for those who espouse enlightenment ideals, axioms may not be inferences. Things may not be getting better.

3. The Scottish *Literati*

The Scottish *literati* were more sophisticated. They were polymaths, analysing not only differences but similarities between men. They delighted in sweeping statements about various societies and speculative history. Where facts were missing – they generalised and filled the gaps.

Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith buttressed civic religion, a secular underpinning for scientific enquiry and justification for commercial and eventual industrial progress - the wealth of their nations.[vii] But Smith confronted commercial monopolies such as the East India Company. And both Smith and Ferguson analysed decline and failure of societies. For Ferguson in particular, 'progress' was neither linear nor inevitable. Nor was it necessarily better. There was no golden age or Rousseauan state of nature from which humanity has fallen: a man is as 'natural' in Niddry's Wynd (a laneway off Edinburgh's High Street) as in the forest.[viii] A human 'would be always improving on his subject, and carries this intention where-ever he moves, through the streets of the populous city, or the wilds of the forest.' Nor do his achievements die with him. Although he is 'perpetually busied in reformations', 'he is also continually wedded to his errors.' These were the sentiments read by travellers on the decks of the First Fleet as they sailed around the world to Botany Bay. Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* was among the books considered necessary for the edification and diversion of the expedition. And, as Robert Dixon has argued, between 1788 and 1849 Enlightenment myths of social and economic progress remained a thread in literary accounts of the civil, military, ecclesiastical pastoral and mercantile elites of colonial society. [ix]

The *Wealth of Nations* was studied by fifty Scottish mechanics bound for Australia on the *Stirling Castle* in 1831. [x] Emigrants to Australia under the auspices of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, they were instructed by the Rev. Henry Carmichael, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland. Carmichael organised classes for both crew and artisan-passengers. They began with mathematics but later formed a class in 'political economy'. Development of the ideas of the 'British Enlightenment' into

the promotion of moral and intellectual improvement in Australia has, in fact, been well covered by Australian historians in the last forty years.[xi]

Confronting failure, looking at what happened to enlightenment aspirations in my times; looking to significant recent moves towards abandonment of separation of religion and the state; and to the limitation of educational opportunities for many children in my country, I wish to reflect on two historical case studies:

1. Failure of the early Irish National system in Ireland while presenting a major reason for success of its introduction into Australia :
2. Failure to extend secondary education to the vast majority of children in Queensland over the years 1899 to 1964.

4. The Failure of the Irish Education Experiment.

This was the name given by Donald H. Akenson to the failure of Lord Stanley's 'highly controversial, widely denounced, and imperfectly understood national System of Education in nineteenth Century Ireland. [xii] This 'non-denominational' system, introduced in 1831, admitted children of all faiths to the same school.

Akenson analyses failure of the national system within the context of the history of religion in nineteenth century Ireland. Ecclesiastical debate may appear outmoded, unfashionable or politically incorrect in Australia, and modern day historians prefer to burrow down into social and economic history. But in Ireland Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Catholic clerics had the last say. There was an established Episcopal church until this was disestablished in 1870. However, separation of religion and the state has rarely been a realistic option in Ireland.

Before 1840, Irish Presbyterians successfully eroded the non-denominational character of Lord Stanley's National Schools. Akenson claims that

From 1832 to 1840 the synod of Ulster carried on an extremely skilful campaign of negotiation, agitation and intimidation, eventually bringing the government to modify its religious rules so that the Presbyterians could join the system without injury to their consciences. [xiii]

Presbyterians wanted Commissioner's finance with few strings attached. They applied for aid to existing parish schools which they continued to own and control as non-vested schools. They agreed however that the system should be open equally to children of all persuasions, and that during the hours of religious instruction children of other faiths could be excluded.

Irish Anglicans and Roman Catholics learned from the Presbyterians. They retained ownership of their schools but received schoolbooks and finance from the Commissioners. The only significant differences between a non-vested school and privately supported denominational schools was acceptance of a purely theoretical distinction between secular

and religious instruction and agreement that no child was to be forced to take part in any denominational religious instruction as a condition of being in school. The local patron-manager system fell under the control of the religious authorities. By mid-century the word 'manager' could usually be translated 'local clergyman'.

No more than 15% of national schools were ever vested in the Commissioners and the Roman Catholic bishops won ownership of the majority of their schools by 1849. Local clerics could hire and dismiss the teacher and arrange the school timetable. The only way a parent might express disapproval of the conduct of his local national school was to withdraw his child from schooling. [xiv]

By century's end, the only major demand of the bishops unmet was aid for Christian Brothers schools. The Commissioners surrendered on issue after issue to the churchmen on one hand and Treasury on the other. As Akenson notes:

> It is reasonable to conclude that as a body [the Commissioners] were either unconcerned with questions of who was to have direction of the system of national education, or were almost totally without political weight. Moreover, no-one could accuse them of making up for their unimportance by their fearlessness.[xv]

5. Why did the Irish National System Survive in Australia?

The Australian historian is tempted to draw a distinction between the practical demise of the National system in Ireland and success stories in the Australian colonies, pointing to committed administrators like William Wilkins, Peter Board, Frank Tate and others.

But an historian contemplating the history of secondary education in Queensland 1899 -1964 would be less sanguine. It is tempting to remark on the unimportance and timidity of public education administrators in that sad story.

But it is either not that simple or much more simple.

The historical ground has been well covered by many learned historians in the field of Australian educational history. But in this paper I want to add to the explanation of the 1848 Australian situation.

Then I wish to suggest those interested in the future of public education stand back, look at the Irish experience and take a very long view. In Australia the Denominational system suffered setbacks but never gave way. In the twenty first century it rides high – very high. The public system is undergoing systematic under-funding and *de facto* privatisation.

Writing in 1970, Akenson referred to the Irish Experiment as a 'brittle fossil'. Writing in 2013, one is left wondering about the fate confronting the Australian offspring of the Irish National system. For those involved in education in Queensland in the first half of the twentieth century, alarm bells rang loud and clear.

5.1 The Very Short View: John Dunmore Lang – the Colonial Scottish Polymath

I want to argue that, after an inauspicious introduction in the period 1836- 1844 the Irish National system was finally introduced in New South Wales in 1848 largely because Presbyterian John Dunmore Lang —a strong opponent in the 1830s — became a voluntarist, In 1844 he changed sides. [xvi]

In that year he swung behind a non-denominational system, wishing 'to atone as much as possible for the opposition he had given to the establishment of Sir Richard Bourke's system' in the 1840s. [xvii] Why the change?

By 1844 he had been back to the UK and America and returned singing praises of the American republican system as follows:

> General Education: There is one point on which the conscience of the American Government appears peculiarly alive to a sense of its interest and duty, and that is in the general education of its people. There is no country in which such gigantic efforts have been made with reference to this great object as in America, considering the circumstances of the country and the sparseness of its population. [xviii]

During one of his stints in the colony, in June 1843 Lang was elected by the Port Phillip District to the Legislative Council in Sydney. In the next five months he served as chairman or member of nine select committees, one of which was Robert Lowe's select committee on education. In 1844 this committee reported strongly in favour of a National system. Lowe drew up the report but resigned his seat on the Legislative Council before it was submitted. Lang moved its adoption.[xix] The report said:

> It appears to your Committee impossible not to see, that the very essence of a denominational system, is to leave the majority uneducated, in order thoroughly to imbue the minority with peculiar tenets. ..and being exclusively in the hands of the Clergy it places the State in an awkward dilemma, of either supplying money whose expenditure it is not permitted to regulate, or of interfering between the Clergy and their superiors, to the manifest derangement of the whole ecclesiastical polity. [xx]

Although the report was adopted, the National system was not introduced until 1848 in New South Wales. It is clear that, during the 1830s and 1840s Lang's position on both the relationship between religion and the State and the education question moved closer to that of dissenters, than that of corporate churches. Why?

Vance Palmer, in *National Portraits* [xxi]did justice to Lang's freedom of spirit. But Lang's biographer, D.W.A. Baker [xxii] avoids serious analysis of the influence of the Scottish and Irish Enlightenment had upon its colonial son. Baker is aware of the influence of Thomas Chalmers, but not the complications of the free church movement. Yet John Dunmore Lang moved freely among Presbyterian circles in Scotland, Ulster and America.

Why, for example did Lang write a pamphlet on Irish Home Rule, if he was not aware of and in part identified with, the radical Presbyterian leadership of the United Irishmen rebellion against the British Government in 1898?[xxiii] Tens of thousands of Ulsterman were slaughtered, but many others were exiled or exiled themselves to America.

Above all, why did Lang change from a Church of Scotland man to a voluntarist in matters of both religion and education in the early 1840s?

There is a very old book sitting in Richard Ely's library. He picked it up for one shilling in the early 1960s when the United Faculty of Theology associated with St Andrews College, Sydney University, had a book sale. It is the second Volume of the Memoirs of Dr. Thomas Chalmers[xxiv] by his son-in-law the Rev. William Hanna, LLD (1854). Inside its cover is pasted John Dunmore Lang, D.D. M.P. So this book was from Lang's own library.

Chalmers was the First Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland after the 'Disruption'of 1843. Like the *literati* of the Enlightenment and his admirer, John Dunmore Lang, he was a polymath. Like Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, Chalmers was a Professor of Moral Philosophy, but at St. Andrews, not Edinburgh or Glasgow. At Edinburgh he became the Professor of Divinity. Although an 'Evangelical' rather than a 'Moderate' he was more concerned with the solution of human problems than with theological doctrine, and sought to apply ethics to economic issues. His work among the poor of Glasgow helped to fix his economic views, set forth in his *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns,* 3 vol. (1821–26), and in *On Political Economy* (1832). His most significant theological study, *On the Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man,* was written in 1833 and later incorporated in his *Institutes of Theology* (1849). Not unsurprisingly, he served as Vice-president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh from 1835-42. This is a man firmly placed in the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment. But the French Revolution, the debate between conservative and radical, Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, and the industrial Revolution lay between Chalmers and the Edinburgh *literati*. At the Tron Church in Glasgow he was confronted with the plight of the urban as well as the rural poor. In the Church of Scotland he opposed aristocratic patronage in the appointment of ministers. In New South Wales John Dunmore Lang followed Chalmers, taking a stand against religious and aristocratic establishments of any kind.

What is of most interest in the current context is the 8 April 1847 letter Chalmers wrote to the Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church—just before his death —on the 'Education question'. This is reproduced as the final Chapter of the above mentioned book from John Dunmore Lang's library. The two paragraphs against a denominational system of education and State support for 'the elevation of the people in general intelligence and scholarship' have been marked A and B with a pencil. Was this Dunmore Lang preparing one of his speeches/pamphlets on the subject of non-denominational, or national education? [xxv]

The Chalmers arguments are echoed in Lang's writings. As early as 1831, in his *Present Aspect and Prospect of the Church*, he was questioning the influence of the patronage system within the Church of Scotland. [xxvi] In his 1857 *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia* Lang took the strict separation position of the United States. '*Governments are instituted for the protection and furtherance of the temporal interests of their subjects: they have nothing to do with the concerns of eternity'* he wrote. And in a passage arguing the cause of popular freedom and the rights of men in the Bible. [xxvii]he fits very well into the 'human rights 'tradition going back through Thomas Paine to the Republicans in Cromwell's model army. In his own time he sometimes echoed the Chartists:

5.2 The Long View: The Voluntarist Principle and Section 116

State Aid to religion and religious schools was abolished in all Australian colonies during the second half of the nineteenth century. Lang's 'voluntarist principle' as enshrined in the First Amendment of the American Constitution was promoted in 1890s Australia by Andrew Inglis Clark and Henry Bournes Higgins. Clark, with his Hobart 'Minerva Club' identified with the Scottish *literati* of a century earlier. He admired the Italian Mazzini and was also an Americanophile. His religious liberty clause, based on the First Amendment was finally inserted in the Australian Constitution as Section 116. [xxviii]

The threat of Section 116 helped protect, from a distance, Australian public education systems from reverting, as in Ireland, to a Denominational system. But in 1981 the Australian High Court turned the meaning of Section 116 on its head and legitimated federal funding of denominational systems of education. [xxix]

Within a year of the Constitutional Convention deciding to place a version of the American First Amendment in the Australian Constitution, the Queensland Government reintroduced subsidies to Denominational secondary schools. The effect of this State funding of the Queensland Denominational system in the years 1899-1964 left 'the majority uneducated, in order thoroughly to imbue the minority with peculiar tenets'[xxx]in that State.

6. Queensland Secondary Education: 1899 – 1964.

In 1963 I arrived in Brisbane, a young married woman with five years University training and two years teaching experience in Harold Wyndham's comprehensive high schools in the Western suburbs of Sydney. An officer in the Queensland Education Department said there were no secondary teaching jobs— there were very few State secondary schools and none near my residence. He recommended I go home to my kitchen. The problem was—I was no good in the kitchen. So, I applied to a nearby religious secondary school. An ancient nun asked me if I could teach for 'the scholarship' exam. If I had not taught the 'scholarship' I was unqualified to work in any Queensland school. I worked for a time as a kitchen hand in anAnglican theological college, then got a Commonwealth scholarship and went back to University to study history – educational history.

I did a Masters on the development of secondary education in Queensland—or lack of it. I discovered that the Denominational system in Queensland did not succeed in spinning the national system around completely as it had done in Ireland. But it was State funded and instrumental in depriving a substantial number of children of several generations in that State of a secondary education.

In the first half of the twentieth century the vast majority of children in of at least two generations never gained entrance to a secondary school. Even poor, permanently depressed Tasmania could not boast this level of deprivation. In 1939, in Queensland, only 5.45 % of

the children of secondary school age were in secondary schools of any kind. Only 2.45% of these children were in public secondary schools. During what Ely calls 'the Mean decades'in education [xxxi]and Goodman labels 'The Lost Generation' [xxxii]as many as 90 % of Queensland children of did not enter a secondary school. [xxxiii]Although a few Queensland State High opened in the period 1912-1924 in Brisbane and country centres without grammar schools, there was no new High School built until 1942. This was the second major High school for Brisbane at the bay suburb of Wynnum. It was another ten years before the next High School was erected at Cavendish Road in 1952.[xxxiv]

By 1961 only 14 per cent of the 243,977 attending State schools were in secondary schools, although the number of pupils above the age of 12 in State primary schools considerably exceeded the number in State secondary schools. Queensland was the last State to raise the leaving age to 15 in 1964[xxxv]when 'Queensland compressed into the years 1962-1964 an educational evolution which in New South Wales occupied the twenty years from 1941-1962.'[xxxvi]

Alan Barcan provides a well-measured explanation for this situation:

> The Catholic community was strong, Catholic influence was widespread in the Labor Party and the Public Service, and Catholic educational traditions were highly formal and not receptive to progressive education. The Scholarship Examination provided a form of State Aid to Catholic schools when no other Australian State gave such aid. This Scholarship examination kept the primary school heavily academic and strengthened the existing educational structure.[xxxvii]

Barcan shows some awareness of the frustrations confronting administrators of the public education bureaucracy in Queensland with the 'scholarship' problem in the 1950s[xxxviii]. But he fails to analyse their many attempts to alleviate the problem with alternative provisions.

David Goodman, in his *Secondary Education in Queensland 1860-1960* also provides a comprehensive account of the lobbying and eventual provision of 'State Aid' to denominational secondary schools by means of the 'Scholarship' examination together with the consequences. [xxxix]

> By 1900 the scholarship system was not a step on the educational ladder, nor a milestone on the broad highway leading to secondary education and the university. It had become a vast sieve in which primary children were shuffled, willy-nilly, to determine who would go on to secondary education. The determining factor was the size of the holes which governments manipulated with shrewd cunning to let few or many through according to the policy of the day. … [xl]

7. The Scholarship Examination

7.1 The Scholarship system – Aid on Grammar School shirt tails 1899-1923

In Ireland the Presbyterians led the charge against National schools which provided access to children of all faiths and none. In Queensland, representatives of the Roman Catholic sector led the other denominations in the race for state aid in 1899.

State Aid in the form of secondary school scholarships had been paid to grammar schools since the 1870s. In 1899, a supporter of Denominational Education, Frank McDonnell

managed to persuade the Queensland parliament to extend the scholarship system to the denominational secondary schools.[xli]

McDonnell and other Denominational supporters became very jealous conservators of the State Aid concessions made through the scholarship system. Because the scholarship system was jeopardised by State participation in the field of secondary education McDonnell strongly opposed the establishment of the proposed new State High Schools in 1911 and successfully opposed State control of grammar schools. He believed that 'those parents who wish their boys and girls to receive a higher education should pay for that education'. [xlii]

In his historical account, David Goodman has criticised Frank McDonnell's arguments. [xliii]He lamented the fact that that enlightened nineteenth century politicians like Lilley and Griffith were not present to demolish them.

Frank McDonnell was not alone. The Queensland Parliament had a solid membership of Denominationalists. [xliv]The extent of Catholic support within the Labor Party in general and Queensland in particular, together with the educational ambitions of the Church, was noted by V.G. Child in 1923 in *How Labor Governs*[xlv].

From the beginning restrictions placed on the expansion of Queensland secondary education by the scholarship system undercut attempts by public school administrators to extend the public system. Even when the State entered the field of secondary education in 1912, financial strictures determined the number and curricula of the new High schools. They were not founded in grammar school centres since it was expected that, in 1912, these would be amalgamated within the State system of High Schools. [xlvi]

In 1913, the Minister for Education, Mr Blair, refused to place the grammar schools under the Department of Public Instruction. His government considered secondary education a luxury commodity which the Department could not afford to grant every community. He believed that 'the true aim of education should be to see, as far as possible, that we get each boy or girl selected for that work for which they are physically endowed.'[xlvii]

7.2 Scholarship Cutbacks 1928-29

Director Generals John Story and Bernard McKenna did not give up attempts to extend secondary education to Queensland children. In 1923 the department attempted to get around the 'scholarship' problem by establishing another entrance examination for State High schools. This was taken at a lower standard than the scholarship examination.

In his 1928-29 report however, Education Minister King announced the abolition of this 'dual' system of scholarship selection for secondary schools. Free secondary education could not be extended beyond those who proved 'educationally fit' by scholarship examination standards. 'In future,' King wrote, 'the State scholarship only will be held for candidates qualifying for free tuition in secondary schools.'[xlviii]

It was the Depression and funds were very low. In 1929, 2,452 pupils gained scholarships to secondary schools. In 1930 the Government decided that only 1,000 competitive scholarships

were to be given to successful pupils in the entrance examination to High School. Candidates who passed the examination, but did not gain a scholarship however, were granted a certificate which qualified them for entrance to State High or Technical schools.

Director-General McKenna and Deputy Director Edwards were not entirely unhappy with the Moore Liberal/National Party government and Education Minister King. The cut in scholarships affected the denominational more than the public schools, [xlix] and enrolments in State High Schools improved. In 1930, one of the most miserable in the Depression, King McKenna and Edwards were pleased to announce the foundation of the first Intermediate school.

7.3 The Scholarship System and the 1932 'State Aid' Election

The 1930 'scholarship' decision antagonised the Catholic hierarchy and their flock. Archbishop Duhig condemned the Moore/King proposals as a crude attempt to bolster the State High Schools,'[l] and the *Catholic Leader* advised Reginald King, and his colleagues to drop the new scholarship regulation, for,

> ...if the Government has the temerity to put them into operation there will be a wave of indignation from one end of Queensland to the other[li]

The Forgan-Smith Labor Government was returned with a large majority in 1932. Denominational interests were rewarded. Scholarship State Aid was not only restored to its 1929 position. In 1935 complete exemptions from rates on Church property were also granted. [lii] There was a Protestant backlash in the 1938 election that succeeded in the maintenance of the status quo rather than an extension of educational opportunities for Queensland's children. [liii] Protestant fears were not without foundation.

At least two thirds of the new Labor men were of the Catholic faith. [liv] Editorials in the Catholic Leader continued to exhort such politicians to 'take a stand for Catholic principles…'for

> …unfortunately many Catholic men of the past have placed their faith second to party politics and have allowed 'free secular, compulsory education' policy to remain unchallenged on the party platform. [lv]

Mr Gair was more subtle. He considered secondary education a luxury in which the State should not indulge.[lvi] He said,

> I cannot understand why a Government should enter this field of secondary education which is being well occupied by our grammar schools and private schools. [lvii]

As in Ireland, Queensland Denominationalists did not see a role for the State in education beyond provision of public funding.

7.4 Public Education Administrators: Ways and Means Around the Scholarship Problem

The history of State education in Queensland for the first half of the twentieth century is, in large part, a story of Departmental officials, with the assistance of the Teachers Union,

attempting to find ways and means of solving financial and political problems. They quietly extended educational opportunities to the children who, for Mr Blair in 1913, were not considered 'temperamentally suited' to secondary education.

There is evidence of frustration of Directors General of Education, most particularly John D. Story (1904-1920); Bernard J. McKenna (1923-1976); and Lewis D. Edwards (1936-1951) going back to the period prior to the First World War. Their travail began soon after the State failed to take over the grammar schools in 1912 and the scholarship system became an avenue for State Aid for denominational schools. [lviii]

It assisted the cause of public education in Australia and most particularly in Queensland that, until the 1980s many administrators in the public systems were experienced educators committed to the well-being of the schools they administered. [lix] They often came up through the ranks and developed good relations with the Teachers Union.

Departmental heads John D Story (1904-1920) Bernard J. McKenna (1923-1936) and Lewis D. Edwards (1937-1951) [lx]tried avenues to protect and extend educational opportunities for Queensland children. They failed to abolish the scholarship examination. When he retired in 1949 Director –General Edwards was a deeply disappointed man. Yet they never entirely gave up.

Secondary Education: What's in a name? Departmental officials encouraged children who stayed on at school in 'post primary' schools. They attached High schools to technical colleges in centres such as Warwick, Charters Towers, Mount Morgan and later Toowomba, Townsville and Rockhampton; they established successful rural schools, the first in 1917 at Nambour.[lxi]They established 'Intermediate' High Schools and attempted to offer more 'vocationally' oriented courses in schools under their care. They enlisted Teachers Union assistance when State resources were diverted to the grammar and denominational schools. [lxii]

The historian can take an anaesthetised approach and analyse public system problems as demographic, administrative, and financial.[lxiii] Blame also can be laid at the door of the University of Queensland which, through external examinations, imposed a limited curriculum on secondary schools. Explanations can be offered in terms of a conservative, ill-educated citizenry represented by politicians who believed the majority of Queensland children should only aspire to the University of Hard Knocks. [lxiv]

8. Conclusion

But I suggest that the major challenge confronting public system administrators and teacher representatives wishing to extend secondary education to Queensland children in the years 1913- 1961 was the strength of Denominational interests within the Labor Party.

By 1963 Australian Denominationalists gained sufficient political strength at both Federal and State level to not only retain but increase State Aid. The public systems of Australia were left wide open when the voluntarist principle was abandoned in Australia by the 1981 DOGS case. The protection of the public systems of education hammered out by the voluntarists, the

colonial descendants of the Scottish Enlightenment in Australia, was lost for this generation. The ideas live on in the dissent of Justice Lionel Keith Murphy.

Recent international tests indicate that Australian children are falling behind in the international race. The Gonski Report has exposed high levels of disadvantage in the public sector resulting from a series of failed 'Needs' policies meant to bury the 'State Aid' debate. Gonski suggests a voucher system under the guise of a 'Needs' policy. Pyne wants an oxymoron— independent public schools!

The public school vote, muted, was heard in the last federal election. The future is not ours to see. But the past is knowable.

History never repeats itself. But ideas live forever. Will there be a resurgence of the Enlightenment, voluntarist ideals in Australian education, or will our national, public systems, like Lord Stanley's benighted Irish National system, become, for the immediate future, a brittle fossil, a failed experiment?

JEAN ELY

December 2013

FOOTNOTES

[i] *Report from the Select Committee on Education* 1844, *H.R.A* , Vol. 1, pp 1-4

[ii] Adam Ferguson , *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Printed for A Millar and T. Caddel in the Strand, and A. Kincaird and J. Bell, Edinburgh, 1767, p. 372.

[iii] A.G. Austin, *Australian Education* 1788-1900, (1961),Melbourne 'the evolution of a system of public education' p vi; Alan Barcan, *A History of Australian Education*, 1980 , 'The prime aim of this book is to describe and explain the evolving pattern of Australian education…'p vi; Julia Horne and Geoffrey Sherington, 'Education', *The Cambridge History of Australia*, eds. Alison Bashford and Stuart MacIntyre, Vol. 1 , '...ideas of the universal school and notions of widening social access for all were born and adopted' p. 367;

[iv] Dugald Stewart admired both Smith and Ferguson . He believed in the 'progress of knowledge' the' free commerce of ideas all over the civilised world; effects not only proportioned merely to the increased number of cultivated minds, thus engaged in the search of truth, but to the powers of the increased number, combined with all those arising from the division and distribution of intellectual labour. '*Dissertation Exhibiting the Progress of Philosophy*'in Dugald Stewart, Works (see Prologue, n.11) vol.1 p.504

[v] John Buchan, *The Capital of the Mind,* (2004), London, p. 58,67,74,93-5,109,114.

[vi] Richard G. Ely, 'Now you See it: Now you Don't! Issues of Secularity and Secularisation in Publicly Funded Elementary schools in the Australian Colonies during the Middle third of the Nineteenth Century,' to be published in *Journal of Religious History,* in 2014.

[vii] James Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World*, 2004, London,

[viii] Adam Ferguson, *Ibid* p14.

[ix] Robert Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales, 1788-1860* , Oxford University Press 1986 p. 5. Ferguson's intention was to set the ancient discipline of moral philosophy upon a modern, scientific foundation. He believed that moral philosophy should become an exact science like any other branch of natural history and derive its conclusions from the latest accounts of savage peoples in the new world. He referred to four stages of progress: savage; agricultural; pastoral and commercial.

[x] H. Carmichael, ' Introductory Discourse Delivered at the Opening of the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts', *New South Wales Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1833.

[xi] Manning Clark *History of Australia* , M.U.P. 1962, 1986 ; Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, Kibble Books, Victoria, 1978, p. 4; George Nadel, Australia's Colonial Culture, London 1957; Roe, O.M. *Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia* M.U.P. 1965;Roe, O.M. *Nine Australian Progressives* Q.U.P. 1984;H. McQueen, A New Britannia, , Ringwood, Penguin, 1970;John Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites: Intellectual Traditions in Sydney and Melbourne*, Sydney (1974); Gascoigne, J with the assistance of Curthoys, P, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, Cambridge University Press 2002; Melluish, G. *The Power of Ideas – Essays on Australian Politics and History* Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009

[xii] Donald H Akenson , *The Irish Education Experiment* London 1970,

[xiii] Ibid p. 163, also Henry Cooke, National education: a sermon, preached in the Presbyterian church, May Street, Belfast, upon Sunday the 15th of January 1832 (Belfast, 1832), pp 28,30.

[xiv] Ibid. p. 153-155.

[xv] Ibid p.331

[xvi] John Dunmore Lang, An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, Vol. 11, pp. 512-13.

[xvii] A.G. Austin, *Australian Education* 1788-1900, 1961, Melbourne, Chapter 2, ' Church, State and Common School in New South Wales', pp 31-66.

[xviii] Lang papers (National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales and Presbyterian Library, Assembly Hall, Sydney); A. Gilchrist (ed), *John Dunmore Lang*, vols 1-2 (Melb, 1951), Letter on America 75.103.

[xix] John Dunmore Lang, *Letters*, 75:1000.

[xx] Report from the Select Committee on Education 1844, *H.R.A* , Vol. 1, pp 1-4

[xxi] Vance Palmer, J.D. Lang the Nonconformist, National Portraits, (1940), Palmer Collection Australian National Library p. 5. Palmer saw Lang as the unofficial 'tribune'of the colonists. He noted that 'he thought less in terms of legislation than in those of concrete development – the erection of schools, the dreading of harbours, and experiments in agriculture. P.

[xxii] **D.W.A. Baker '**Lang, John Dunmore (1799–1878)' Australian Dictionary of Biography**,** Volume 2, (MUP), 1967.

[xxiii] D.T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877*, University of North Carolina Press, 2001, Chapter One. More than 250,000 Ulster Presbyterians emigrated to America in the eighteenth century.

[xxiv] **Thomas Chalmers** (born March 17, 1780, Anstruther, Fife, Scot.—died May 30, 1847, Edinburgh), Presbyterian minister, theologian, author, and social reformer who was the first moderator of the Free Church of Scotland. Chalmers was ordained as minister of Kilmeny parish, Fife, in 1803. After reading William Wilberforce's *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System* (1797), Chalmers adopted the evangelical position, which stressed the importance of faith for salvation. From 1815 he gained fame as one of the great pulpit orators in his ministry of Tron parish, Glasgow. On becoming minister at St. John's, the largest and also the poorest parish in Glasgow, in 1819, Chalmers addressed himself to the problems of poverty. Receiving permission from the city to administer all the charitable funds donated in the churches, he had great success in ameliorating the condition of the poor while reducing costs. In 1823 he accepted the chair of moral philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, which he left five years later to become professor of divinity at the University of Edinburgh. At this time he was gaining recognition as a leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland, those who desired independence for the church from civil interference and who advocated the right of parishioners to choose their minister. The factional conflict culminated in the Disruption of 1843, when on May 18 a group of 203 commissioners walked out of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in protest against the government's refusal to grant spiritual independence to the church. Chalmers was made moderator of the new Free Church of Scotland. He was subsequently chosen as principal of the church's New College, founded in Edinburgh for ministerial training
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/104778/Thomas-Chalmers 2 December2013

[xxv] The following are the relevant passages marked A and B respectively:

> A.
>
> I feel no hesitation as to the wrongness of an indiscriminate endowment, if it carry in it the expression of an equal countenance by the Legislature to all forms of religion. I believe that there are modifications upon their scheme by which this might be done away, so as to give no other character to the movement on the part of the State, than a desire for the elevation of the people in general intelligence and scholarship—an object which we should no more resist than the object of public health, or economic improvement, or any other amelioration that can be devised for the temporal wellbeing of the masses in our land. [xxv]
>
> B.
>
> It is this which has encompassed the Government with difficulties, from which we can see no other method of extrication than the one which we have ventured to suggest. And as there seems no reason why, because of these unresolved differences, a public measure for the health of all—for the recreation of all—for the economic advancement of all—should be held in abeyance, there seems as little reason why, because of these differences, a public measure for raising the general intelligence of all should be held in abeyance. Let the men, therefore, of all churches and all denominations alike hail such a measure whether as carried into effect by a good education in letters or in any of the sciences; and, meanwhile, in these very seminaries, let that education in religion which the Legislature abstains from providing for, be provided for as freely and amply as they will by those who have undertaken the charge of them.

[xxvi] John Dunmore Lang, Appendix A in *Reminiscences of my Life and Times both in Church and State in Australia for upwards of Fifty Years by John Dunmore Lang D.D., A.M. Senior Minister of the Scots Church, Sydney And for many years, one of the Representatives of the City of Sydney in the Parliament of New South Wales; Honorary Members of the African Institute of France, of the American Oriental Society, And of the Literary Institute of the University of Olinda, In the Brazils*, Edited by Donald Baker, Heineman, Melbourne, 1972

[xxvii] …there is certainly no book in existence that so strongly advocates the cause of popular freedom and the rights of men as the Bible. There is no book that so uniformly and so indignantly denounces injustice and oppression in every form and degree. (Jeremiah xxii.13-19) Neither is there any other religion professed among mankind so thoroughly pervaded with a spirit of downright liberalism as Christianity. (quoting Lamartine, *The History of the Girondists* vol.11, p. 179) *And yet —so it is!—the clergy of all communions, especially if supported by the State, are almost uniformly on the side of wealth, and rank, and power, and real, although perhaps disguised, injustice and oppression*. They cannot understand what the Bible means when it bids them 'Honour all men,' and of course to give all, without exception, their political rights and privileges. And, oh, how they hate universal suffrage, and vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, popular election and the rights of men! The Divine Author of Christianity was hated and persecuted to the death by the Pharisees and the rulers of his time, because he denounced them, and unveiled their hollow-heartedness and hypocrisy to the world; 'the common people heard him gladly,' because he was their Friend and Advocate. And the rulers and the rich Pharisees of our own time have still their numerous and obsequious priesthood of all communions; while the clerical friends and advocates of the common people are still few and far between. John Dunmore Lang, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia: the Right of the Colonies and the Interest of Britain and of the World* Sydney, 1857, pp 364-65.

[xxviii] Richard Ely, *Unto God and Caesa*r, M.U.P. 1976.
[xxix] Jean Ely, *Contempt of Court*, Arena Publishing , 2011.
[xxx] *Report from the Select Committee on Education* 1844, *H.R.A* , Vol. 1, pp 1-4

[xxxi] M,.J. Ely, *History: Its Theory and Practice*, Queensland University, M.Ed. (1967)
[xxxii] David Goodman*, Secondary Education in Queensland 1860-1960*, 1968 p 149.
[xxxiii] See Appendix One
[xxxiv] Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment, Education History, http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/state/brief/secondary-1912.html
[xxxv] Alan Barcan, *A History of Australian Education*, OUP 1980, p 309-310
[xxxvi] *Ibid*.p 310.
[xxxvii] *Ibid* pp257-259, pp.307-309, p280.
[xxxviii] *Op.cit*. p.308.
[xxxix] David Goodman, Secondary Education in Queensland 1860-1960, 1968, pp101-107
[xl] When scholarships were provided for a secondary education in the grammar schools established in 1860. The first scholarship examination was held in July 1873. Secretary, Board of General Education, to Chairman of Trustees, Brisbane Grammar School, 2, July 1873, B.G.E.L.B., No.6, 12/8, 1030, 691/73
[xli] *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1899,p.866. McDonnell had also brought up the same question in the debates on the estimates in 1897 and 1898
On 9 November 1899 , the Hon. Frank McDonnell put the following motion to the Assembly:

That in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the regulations dealing with grammar school scholarships should be so framed as to provide

1. That such scholarships should be open to the competition of the youth of both sexes irrespective of where educated in the colony.
2. That if so desired by successful competitors, such scholarships should be enjoyed at such schools or colleges, other than grammar schools, as may be approved of by the Department of Public Instruction.

Brother Connole, a Christian Brother historian pays tribute to McDonnell's 1899 move to extend the grammar school scholarship system to denominational schools: '…the extension of the scholarship system was designed to aid the schools who could benefit from such a move- the Catholic secondary schools. I am sure that such a move had been fully Frank McDonnell's intention, particularly to assist the Brothers'schools. By 1904, when

most of the Brothers' schools had been approved, those schools were beginning to enjoy most benefit from its operations outside of the grammar schools'. P.F. Connole, *A History of the Christian Brothers in Education in Queensland*, M.A. thesis, 1965, p 146

[xlii] *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*,1912, Vol. CX, p 3012

[xliv] The extent of Catholic support within the Labor Party in general and Queensland in particular, together with the educational ambitions of the Church, was noted by V.G. Childe, *How Labour Governs*, (1923) M.U.P. Born in Sydney, Vere Gordon Childe (1892-1957) became one of the greatest archaeologists of his day (Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at Edinburgh University, 1927-46 and Professor of European archaeology at the University of London, 1946-56), but from 1916-19 Childe was involved in the labour movement and from 1919-21 he was private secretary to the NSW Australian Labor Party leader, John Storey. The article on Childe in the Australian Dictionary of Biography indicates that he was, like the men of the Scottish Enlightenment, a polymath, and political theorist.

[xlv] V.G. Childe, *How Labour Governs*, (1923) M.U.P. Born in Sydney, Vere Gordon Childe (1892-1957) became one of the greatest archaeologists of his day (Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at Edinburgh University, 1927-46 and Professor of European archaeology at the University of London, 1946-56), but from 1916-19 Childe was involved in the labour movement and from 1919-21 he was private secretary to the NSW Australian Labor Party leader John Storey.He wrote: The extend of Catholic support within the Labour Party in general and in Queensland in particular, together with the educational ambitions of the Church, was noted by V.G. Child in 1923 in *How Labour Governs*[xlv].

[xlvi] *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1911-1912, Vol. CIX, p. 1701.

[xlvii] *Op.cit*. 1913, Vol. CXVI, p. 2665.
[xlviii] *Education Office Gazette*, 3 February 1929
[xlix] Enrolments of scholarship holders during 1931 sowed only a decrease of 6.3% in the State High schools as compared with a decrease of 19.% in the grammar schools and 17.2% in denominational schools. A.R. Thomas, *State High Schools in Queensland, the First 50 Years*, B.Ed dissertation, 1963, Chapter 3.
[l] *The Brisbane Courier*, 27 September 1930.
[li] *Catholic Leader*, 2 October 1930
[lii] *Ibid* 1935, Vol. CLXVIII, p. 1463.
[liii] Margaret Jean Ely, MA thesis, University of Queensland , 1967, pp 168-187.
[liv] *Catholic Leader* 7 July 1932
[lv] *Ibid*, 16 June 1932.
[lvi] *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1933, Vol. CLXIV speeches of Mr Tozer, Mr Roberts p 140, p 1419.
[lvii] *Ibid*. p 1429
[lviii] Margaret Jean Ely, MA thesis, University of Queensland , 1967
[lix] Public school systems in Australia had political and financial problems. But until the 1980s, they rarely experienced the problem of administrators committed to the Denominational system or 'managers' as opposed to 'educators.' Until the 1980s they were more fortunate than the National system in Ireland where the Commissioners were themselves representatives of Denominational interests. In recent decades public system administrators are rarely graduates, patrons or supporters of the system they administer. Nor, unlike administrators of the Denominational system is this a condition of their contract.

[lx] John D Story was Director-Gemneral from 1904-1920; Bernard J. McKenna was Director-General from 1923-1936 and Lewis D. Edwards was Director-General from 1937-1951.

[lxi] By 1923 the enrolment at the Nambour rural school had increased from 200 to 620 pupils. *Queensland Teachers Journal*, 18 May 1923. There were 17 rural schools in 1929 and 20 by 1933. These schools accompanied the post-war Soldier Settlement Schemes of the State Government.
[lxii] *Teachers Education Journal* 18 July 1922, p. 11
[lxiii] http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/state/brief/secondary-1957.html
[lxiv] M.J. Ely *Ibid* , Chapters 1,2,4 and 5.

APPENDIX ONE:
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AUSTRALIAN AND SCOTTISH SOCIETY 1745-1850

Scotland 1745-1830	Australia 1788-1850

1. Political top cut off 1707- Parliament in London 2. Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville, Tory politician dominated Scotland and encouraged Enlightenment thinkers. Impeached in 1805. Acquitted. 3. Decay of intolerance in religious matters. Hume tolerated in 1750s whereas Aikenhead hung in 1697. 4. Growth of pastoral holdings . Highland clearances begin 5. Emphasis on extension of elementary education 6. Emphasis on ' ímprovement' – through commercial enterprise and growth of well laid out cities. 7. Concern for hygiene **DIFFERENCES** 1. Population growth *but* emigration 2. Growth of commerce and heavy industrial enterprise in Glasgow. 3. Literati and universities	1. Political Top absent– Parliament in London 2. Colonies dominated by Governors – proconsuls who sometimes encouraged Enlightenment ideas. Macquarie was an 'enlightened despot' from Scotland. 3. Opposition to Church and School Corporation ; assertion of religious tolerance if not equality. 4. Extension of pastoral holdings. Aboriginal clearances. 5. Emphasis on extension of elementary education 6. Emphasis on 'improvement' in commercial entrepots - well laid out cities 7. Concern for hygiene **DIFFERENCES** 1. Population growth through immigration 2. Commerce rather than industry 3. University of Hard knocks with perhaps exception of Lady Franklin in Hobart.

APPENDIX TWO

STUDENTS IN ATTENDANCE

AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS 1939

Based on Statistics of the State of Queensland, 1939-1940, 7 G.

	MALES		FEMALES				TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
AGE GROUP	**State**	**Private and**	**State**	**Private and**	**Total in Full Time**	**Number in Age**	**% State Pupils**	**% Private and**	**% Queensland**
	Schools	**Grammar**	**Schools**	**Grammar**	**Sec. Education**	**Group 30 June 1939**	**in Secondary**	**Grammar**	**pupils in**
		Schools		**Schools**		**1939**	**School**	**Sec. chool**	**Sec.Schools**
age 11-12		13		63	76	18,172			
age 12-13	2	45		28	75	18359			
age 13-14	112	267	102	182	663	18554			
age 14-15	691	871	685	786	3033	18700			
age 15-16	889	1034	873	1084	3880	18818			
age 16-17	456	599	464	640	2159	18934			
age 17-18	105	261	130	244	740	19045			
age 18-19	23	82	20	67	192	18961			
age 19-20	5	23	1	8	37	18338			
age 20 +	1	4			5	17635			
TOTAL	**2284**	**3199**	**2275**	**3102**	**10860**	**185,516**	**2.45%**	**3.4%**	**5.85%**