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THE RAGGED SCHOOL MOVEMENT

IN

NEW SOUTH WALES

1860 - 1924

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S U M M A R Y

Ragged schools were private philanthropic institutions which were established to counter the growing problem of destitute and neglected children in the nineteenth century. They were non-denominational in character, although essentially Protestant, their work being firmly based on the teachings of the Bible.

Their establishment in New South Wales was due primarily to the combined influence of the pattern of ragged school movements in England and Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as the social and economic dislocation caused by the gold rushes of the 1850's.

Ragged schools first emerged in Sydney in 1860 and the movement lasted until 1924. Their work was limited to the inner city areas of Sydney. However, their extensive history provides a means of analysing the changing philanthropic responses to the care and education of neglected and destitute children during the latter half of the nineteenth, and early part of the twentieth, centuries.

In the early years of the Sydney Ragged Schools (1860-1867), their work displayed a social reformist approach, which put the schools and their supporters to the forefront of efforts to help these types of children. In the years of consolidation and expansion (1868-1889), there developed a strong emphasis on evangelism as the chief means of reclaiming these children, so that the schools became little more than missionary agencies. Finally, in their latter years (1890-1924), influenced by the physical suffering of the depression, there was a return, in part, to the social concerns of earlier years.



This is to certify that this work has not been  
submitted for a higher degree to any other  
university or institution.

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## CHAPTER I I N T R O D U C T I O N

Colonial ragged schools, like their counterparts in Britain, were non-government philanthropic institutions that aimed at the reclamation of destitute and neglected children from their "paths of vice and depravity", attempting to "rescue" them before they became criminals. They were non-denominational schools, although Protestant in character. As day schools, with night and Sunday classes attached, they departed from the traditional form of charitable care -- the "barrack system".

There was little variation in the form of instruction given at the schools. The children received a basic secular education, often no more than the three R's occasionally some form of industrial training and, most importantly for their proponents, the teachings of the Bible. Through these efforts, in particular the imparting of some form of non-denominational religious instruction based upon the Bible, the promoters of ragged schools hoped to instil in their charges habits of temperance, morality, thrift and industry, as well as cleanliness and self-discipline. In this manner, the "gutter children" or "wild street arabs" as they were variously called, would be "elevated" and "civilised".

Ragged schools in spirit, if not in name, were established in most of the Australian colonies during the 19th century. Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia each had their separate ragged school associations.<sup>(1)</sup> It was in the eastern colonies, however,

(1) Occasionally they went by the alternative titles of free or mission schools. Mission schools were established in South Australia by the Adelaide City Mission and run along similar lines to ragged schools. Noted in Rosamond and Florence Hill, What We Saw in Australia (London, 1875), p.7.

to which the bulk of convicts had been transported, that the need for such schools was most strongly felt.

The first colonial ragged school association was established in Hobart Town in June 1853, the initial school opening in October 1854.<sup>(1)</sup> Five years later the first Victorian ragged school was founded in Collingwood, Melbourne, in November 1859. In 1862 the Hornbrook Ragged School Association was established to support and promote ragged schools in Melbourne. In the following year a Ragged School Association was founded in Geelong.<sup>(2)</sup>

The New South Wales Ragged School Movement had its beginnings with the opening of the Sussex Street School on April 2, 1860, in one of the most destitute parts of Sydney. Additional schools were quickly established in "The Rocks", and lower Glebe, near Blackwattle Swamp. By the mid 1890's at the height of their operation, there were five ragged schools in Sydney, further schools having been established in Waterloo and Woolloomooloo, catering for nearly five hundred children. In 1904 there were fifteen salaried teachers - twelve female and three male - employed at the schools.<sup>(3)</sup>

Unlike the more flourishing Victorian Ragged School Movement, the ragged schools in New South Wales remained centred in Sydney, although subscribers and supporters did come from country areas.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) See Appendix A , Tasmanian Ragged Schools.

(2) See Appendix B , Victorian Ragged Schools.

(3) See Appendix C , Enrolments at the Sydney Ragged Schools(1860-1924).

(4) Even in the larger towns such as Newcastle, although the local press made occasional references to the work of the ragged schools in Sydney, as well as expressing concern at their own problem of destitute and neglected children, no attempt was made to set up a ragged school.

The schools were established in the inner city and adjoining suburbs. They were areas of considerable poverty, vice and crime, exacerbated by the overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions of their inhabitants. The schools were controlled by a central committee and reflected a common philosophy, although the daily operation of each school was the concern of its supervising teacher.

This thesis traces the establishment, consolidation, expansion and eventual demise of the New South Wales Ragged School Movement from 1860 to the mid 1920's. In doing so, it analyses the background and influence of the leading people involved in the schools.

The first two chapters discuss the background factors which provided the conditions for the establishment of ragged schools in New South Wales. Chapter I analyses the pattern of the British Ragged School Movement, which had been flourishing since the 1840's. The British background had a significant influence upon the formation and nature of the colonial schools. In this regard, the thesis also argues against the view that ragged schools in Britain were one homogenous movement, or that the ragged school movement in New South Wales was simply an extension of the London Ragged School Union.<sup>(1)</sup> There is evidence to indicate that the New South Wales schools, in their early years, had more in common with the Scottish and English provincial ragged schools.

The second chapter focuses on the influence of the colonial

(1) This is suggested in Clifford Turney's thesis, "The History of Education in New South Wales 1788-1900" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 1964), Vol.III, p.965.

background. The problem of neglected and destitute children had become particularly acute in Sydney in the 1850's as a result of the social and economic dislocation caused, to a large degree, by the discovery of gold. Juvenile crime, vagrancy and prostitution had reached serious proportions. The existing charitable institutions were entirely inadequate to deal with the problem. Although governments of the time showed a greater awareness of the plight of these children, due in particular to the efforts of James Martin and Henry Parkes, very few positive measures were initiated. It was not until the Martin-Parkes government passed legislation in 1866, providing for the establishment of government industrial and reformatory schools, that the state assumed some responsibility.

Even after 1866, the neglected and destitute child, unless convicted of vagrancy and sent to an industrial school, remained outside the ambit of government responsibility. Magistrates were reluctant to send boys to the Vernon Industrial School without the consent of parents. In addition, the unwillingness of the state to provide a reformatory school for boys, and the inadequate classification of children at the Vernon and Biloela Industrial School for Girls, led to these institutions becoming the haven for the delinquent and immoral rather than those for whom the legislation was intended.<sup>(1)</sup> The minimal effort by the state in the field of the destitute and neglected child was also encouraged by a widely held attitude in the community that any action in this area would only encourage further parental neglect and abdication of responsibility for their children.

(1) Brian Dickey, "The Establishment of Industrial Schools and Reformatories in New South Wales, 1850-1875", JRAHS, Vol. 54, Part 2, June 1968, pp.147-148.

The care of such children was left largely to private philanthropy. In 1852, the Society for the Relief of Destitute Children had been established, and in 1858 an Asylum for Destitute Children opened at Randwick. The problem was far from solved, however, and in response to the alarming findings of The Select Committee set up to investigate the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney (1859-60), a group of clergy and philanthropists, led by Edward Joy, established the Sussex Street Ragged School.

The thesis also notes that in both the British and New South Wales ragged school movements, there were differing views as to how the problem of destitute and neglected children should be solved. All advocates of ragged schools saw the need for the moral advancement of their charges and put their trust in the efficacy of the Bible to do this. However, there were differences of opinion as to how much emphasis should be placed on the evangelistic nature of the schools and how much should be given to the role of the schools as instruments of social reform.

There were those from the evangelical wing who saw the problem as a spiritual one and looked to the religious and missionary operation of the schools as their main, indeed sole, function. The evangelist stance found causes for the problem of destitution and neglect of children in the faults of the individual -- drunkenness, lack of thrift and industry, and lack of religion. The solution lay in the teaching of the Bible and the banning of alcohol.

On the other hand, there were those who tended to blame the society at large rather than the individual. This was the social reformist viewpoint which saw poverty, neglect and crime as the result, to a large extent, of faults in society -- unemployment, inadequate

housing for the poor, overcrowding, poor sanitation and inadequate recreational space. Although they agreed that excessive drink was a major contributing factor to this problem, drunkenness was viewed as the result of much wider social problems. Consequently, these proponents of social reform argued for the introduction of more practical means of caring for the neglected and destitute child. This included the encouragement of the industrial function of the schools, the establishment of a separate industrial farm school, the extension of the secular education taught beyond the 3R's and later, the widening of the schools' role to one of "feeding" institutions. They also used the Ragged School platform to press for a greater involvement by the State in the improvement of housing and sanitation for the working classes.

The thesis argues (Chapter IV) that the early years of the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement (1860-1867) displayed a social reforming spirit in response to the problem of the "gutter children" roaming Sydney's streets. This attitude was promoted by a small group of influential supporters, including Mr. Justice Wise and the Reverends Thomas Smith and S. C. Kent, under the leadership of Edward Joy, who was the guiding force behind the schools in these years. During this period there was a large degree of involvement from the clergy and laity of the Church of England which, the thesis suggests, indicated a strong sympathy within this church, in particular, for the idea of social reform.

Some of the ideas of these men, such as the establishment of an industrial farm school, were never implemented, due primarily to lack of funds. However, those that were, established important guidelines for the care and reclamation of the neglected and destitute child.



By the end of the 1860's, the social reformist zeal within the ragged schools had dissipated and in the following decades, until the economic and social turmoil of the early 1890's, the schools were dominated by the religious motive and became little more than evangelistic missions. The thesis (Chapter VI) discusses the reasons for this change in the function and philosophy of the ragged schools, as well as noting significant changes in the composition of Ragged School Committees, and supporters in general, during this period. There was a decline in support from the Anglican Church and an increasing involvement from the Dissenting Churches. Although the social reformist faction had all but disappeared, opposition to the rather narrow aims of the evangelists was continued through the annals of the denominational press, particularly from the Anglican quarter. The issue of state aid for ragged schools was a major area of debate.

The onset of depression in New South Wales in the early 1890's led to a further shift in emphasis in the philosophy of the ragged school movement. It resulted in a greater awareness of, and social concern for, the physical needs of the poor. This modified the narrow evangelistic approach that had prevailed in the previous two decades. A greater concern was shown for practical help for the children and their families in the form of clothing and monetary handouts. The difficult times also led to the introduction of a "feeding" role for the schools, whereby meals were distributed to those children in need.

However, the thesis argues (Chapter VIII) that although the changes in operation of the schools indicated a more realistic appraisal of the

problem of the neglected and destitute, the movement never regained the social reformist drive evident in its early years. Nor did the basic philosophy of the ragged schools change. The schools rested on a firm religious foundation, the missionary motive was stressed and the principle of voluntaryism prevailed. By the turn of the century the ragged schools reflected an attitude that was becoming outmoded in an era of social welfare concern. Segregation of the poor, and the patronising attitudes encouraged by such discrimination, was increasingly unacceptable to a society hardened by depression and fired by trade unionism and working class politics.

Comprehensive legislation catering for the neglected child, in the form of The Children's Protection Act (1902) and The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act (1905), the abolition of fees in primary schools by the Free Education Act (1906), and the gradual enforcement of compulsory attendance, becoming reality through the Public Instruction (Amendment) Act (1916), meant the end of ragged schools. The movement lingered until the 1920's becoming involved in the Kindergarten and Boys' Brigade movements, but it remained a Victorian philanthropy in a twentieth century setting -- incongruous and unnecessary.

Until their demise in the 1920's, the ragged schools in Sydney reached over 18,000 children.<sup>(1)</sup> Even by Sydney standards the movement was not a large nor a well supported charity. However, its longevity makes a study of its history a valuable means of analysing

(1) Based on enrolment figures from the N.S.W. Statistical Register. See Appendix C. These figures need to be treated with some caution. See Conclusion of this thesis for further discussion.

the changing responses to the care and education of the  
destitute and neglected child in New South Wales in the 19th and  
early 20th centuries.

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## CHAPTER II

### RAGGED SCHOOL MOVEMENTS IN BRITAIN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Ragged school movements emerged in both Scotland and England in the first half of the nineteenth century as part of a major philanthropic effort in response to a serious social problem confronting both countries .. the high and growing incidence of juvenile destitution, neglect and crime. In England this concern had been set in train since the 1820's. This had been due mainly to the work of the "Spitalfields Philanthropist", Peter Bedford, who was instrumental in founding two voluntary societies -- the Society for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis (1815) and the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders (1818).<sup>(1)</sup>

Despite the early efforts of philanthropists such as Bedford, it was not until the end of transportation for convicts to the eastern colonies of Australia, largely suspended in 1846 and finally abolished in 1852, that public authorities and reformers were finally forced to find a solution to the problem of crime and, in particular, juvenile crime.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the meantime, ragged schools were being established and promoted by philanthropists who felt the need to reach these children of the "perishing classes" before they became criminals and, through instruction, reclaim and reform them.

- (1) Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society (London, 1973), II, pp.439-440.
- (2) Jo Manton, Mary Carpenter and the Children of the Streets (London, 1976), p.13.

The emergence of ragged schools was also partly due to an increasing concern on the part of churches to bring religion to the lower classes. Initially this evangelistic spirit had been confined to the Nonconformists, but by the 1840's the Evangelicals were also dominant in the Church of England.<sup>(1)</sup> The Evangelicals had a sublime faith in the efficacy of the Bible and a willingness to co-operate with other Protestant churches to achieve their goal of reclamation of the lower classes. Evangelism was responsible for the nondenominational, although Protestant, character of the ragged school movements.

Fear of social upheaval was also a determining factor, although it is difficult to distinguish, at times, between the propaganda of reformers and the reality of the situation. Commentators spoke of the threat to the stability and very existence of society by the discontent of the lower classes, steeped in poverty, ignorance and vice. The masses were viewed as being "anti-social and dangerous", soured and brutalised by a society that neglected them.<sup>(2)</sup> Fears of an uprising of the lower classes were fanned by revolutions in Europe. In England itself the radical demands of the Chartists encouraged such fears. Ragged schools were seen as one means of alleviating this discontent by educating and elevating children who would otherwise have swelled the "dangerous classes".

It was a mixture of religious and social motives primarily which led to the emergence of ragged schools. Often one motive was given more emphasis than the other, which created discernible groupings within the British Ragged Schools. There were, in fact, three major ragged school movements operating by the middle of the nineteenth century: The London Ragged School Union, the Scottish Ragged schools and the ragged schools from the English provincial

(1) E. W. Watson, The Church of England (London, 1961), 3rd edition, p.155.

(2) William Pickering, The Philosophy of Ragged Schools (London, 1851), p.19

towns.

The term "Ragged School Movement" is used with some reservations.

It suggests a homogeneity which, although generally applicable to the London Ragged School Union and Scottish Ragged Schools, was far less evident in the provincial schools. While the Metropolitan and Scottish movements had recognised leaders in Lord Shaftesbury and Dr. Thomas Guthrie respectively, the provincial schools had no such leader. Nor were the provincial towns in any type of federation.

Each tended to develop along its own lines and in its own direction.<sup>(1)</sup>

By 1861 Liverpool had a Ragged School Union of its own, comprised, it was said, of 64 schools, and Manchester 17, with average attendances of 7,500 and 3,500 respectively.<sup>(2)</sup>

Even the London Ragged School Union itself was no more than a rather loose confederation of schools. Nonetheless, as the chapter will further discuss, there was a dominant philosophy common to each grouping of schools, including the provincial schools, and if any one person can be seen as the main representative of the provincial school philosophy, it would be the indomitable reformer from Bristol, Mary Carpenter.

The origins of the ragged school are difficult to determine. Charity schools for the education of poor children had been in operation in England as early as 1699.<sup>(3)</sup>

It has been suggested that "even mediaeval England knew the ragged school as an ancient institution".<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) C. J. Montague, Sixty Years in Waifdom or The Ragged School Movement in English History (London, 1904), p.224.

(2) David Owen, English Philanthropy 1660-1960 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964), p.150.

(3) Graeme Kent, Poverty (London, 1968), p.39 .. Notes a charity school movement for this purpose was initiated by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, founded by the Reverend Thomas Bray.

(4) Montague, p.35.

It has also been argued that:

To single out any one individual as the founder of the Ragged School would misrepresent the reality. There was so little distinctive about the idea that some such response was natural enough for any humanitarian distressed over ignorance and barbarity of the children of the poor.(1)

However, most writers on the subject agree that the prototype for the ragged schools of the nineteenth century was the work of a crippled Portsmouth cobbler named John Pounds, and he is generally regarded as the founder of the ragged school movement by his example.(2)

Crippled by an accident at the age of 15, John Pounds took up a shoe-mending trade. When, in 1818, he took charge of the child of a sailor friend, he started a school to provide companionship for the child. He lured children in from the streets with the promise of free food - invariably a hot baked potato. The children were instructed in reading and writing and were also given practical lessons in cookery and cobbling. He also gave handouts of clothing and nursed the sick. In the course of 30 years he "reclaimed" some 500 waifs. A Unitarian, his work was supported and extended after his death by the Portsmouth Unitarian Congregation.

Other ragged schools were independently established and conducted in the late 1830's and early 1840's by private individuals, several of whom

(1) Owen, p.147.

(2) S. J. Curtis, History of Education in Great Britain (London, 1967), p.219.  
James Scotland, The History of Scottish Education (London, 1969), I, p.274 .  
Montague, pp.36-37.  
Manton, p.82.

were agents of the London City Mission. By 1844 there were twenty such schools in and around London, although most were "merely Sunday Schools for excluded, dirty and unruly children".<sup>(1)</sup>

In the same year the London Ragged School Union was formed by a small group of London ragged school teachers, which made possible a measure of central control and financing. Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885), who had become a supporter of the Field Lane Ragged School in February 1843, took over the presidency of the London Ragged School Union and held it for over forty years until his death in 1885.

By the mid-19th century, measured by attendance and financial support, the London Ragged School Union was one of the more flourishing Victorian philanthropies.<sup>(2)</sup> In 1848 there were 15 ragged schools in the Union catering for 1,600 children.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1861 there were 176 schools with an average daily attendance of approximately 25,000 and an annual income of 35,000 Pounds.<sup>(4)</sup> By 1851 they were operating largely on a full time daily basis and were run by paid teachers. Twenty-five years after its foundation, there were 424 paid teachers in the Ragged School Union, backed up by 3,500 voluntary workers.<sup>(5)</sup>

With the passage of W. E. Forster's Education Act of 1870, public elementary education was extended to the lower classes. Although the legislation did not effectively provide for the education of all children, its effect was to cause a rapid decline in the London Ragged School Movement. By 1885 there were only 25 schools, with a total attendance of 3,062.<sup>(6)</sup> Standards suffered in comparison to the

(1) Montague, p.37.

(2) Owen, p.148.

(3) Manton, p.82.

(4) Owen, p.148.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church (London, 1970), Part II. p.307.



newly established elementary schools, and the ragged schools were increasingly viewed as "archaic in aims, a relic of bygone days".<sup>(1)</sup>

However, the educational function of the ragged schools remained, in a limited fashion, until the abolition of school fees by School Boards in 1891. Thereafter, the schools gradually became "missions" with their chief activities religious and social. In 1893 the London Ragged School Union was incorporated as the Ragged School Union and Shaftesbury Society. Twenty years later it became the Shaftesbury Society and Ragged School Union. In the 1960's it was still operating as the Shaftesbury Society.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Scottish Ragged School Movement, on the other hand, came from origins which owed little to the English model.<sup>(3)</sup> The first Scottish Ragged School was established by Sheriff Watson in Aberdeen in October 1841, in a loft in Chronicle Lane, in an attempt to cope with the problem of juvenile delinquency which was reaching serious proportions in that city. The success of the school led to the establishment of a similar school for girls in Long Acre in June, 1843.<sup>(4)</sup> A mixed school was established in 1845.

The movement spread to other Scottish towns .. Dundee, Dumfries and Edinburgh. In Edinburgh the work was taken up by Dr. Thomas Guthrie (1803-1873), a friend of Watson and a distinguished preacher of the Free Kirk.

(1) Montague, p.317.

(2) Owen, p.151, footnote 70.

(3) Ibid., p.150.

(4) Scotland, p.274.

Inspired by the efforts of both John Pounds and Sheriff Watson, Guthrie published, in 1847, his first Plea for Ragged Schools which met with an overwhelming response for support. By the end of the year, three schools had been established in Edinburgh under Guthrie's auspices- one for boys, one for girls and one for children of both sexes under 10 years of age- with a total attendance of 265.<sup>(1)</sup>

Due to Thomas Guthrie's advocacy of the cause, Ragged Schools were extended in Scotland during the 1850's and 1860's.<sup>(2)</sup> Although the Scottish Ragged School movement never attained the proportions of the London Ragged School Union, it reached a considerable number of vagrant and neglected children. In 1861 there were 6,172 children on the rolls of the Scottish Ragged Schools.<sup>(3)</sup> However, with the introduction of a public elementary education system, the Scottish schools suffered the same fate as their London counterparts. The passage of the Elementary Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 meant that as the state assumed control of elementary education, there would no longer be a need for private charitable organisations such as ragged schools.

Ragged schools were also established in almost every English city and town of any consequence. Many of these schools operated on principles very different from those of the Metropolis. In fact, in many respects, the provincial ragged schools had a closer resemblance to the Scottish

(1) Reverend David K. Guthrie and Charles J. Guthrie, Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D.D. and Memoir (London, 1877), p.456.

(2) Guthrie issued a further two pleas for Ragged Schools, published in 1849 and 1859, and in 1860 his three pleas were published in a combined form in a volume entitled Seed Time and the Harvest of Ragged Schools.

(3) Guthrie, p.475.

type than the schools in London. Sheriff Watson had visited a number of English provincial cities by request in 1846 to speak about his Aberdeen schools and the establishment of ragged schools, notably in Manchester and Liverpool, were due, in part, to his influence.<sup>(1)</sup> Mary Carpenter, the person who was to become the foremost champion and representative of the provincial ragged school philosophy, had established a ragged school in Bristol in 1846, having studied the results of John Pound's work and the success of Sheriff Watson's Industrial Feeding School in Scotland.

Mary Carpenter (1807-1877), eldest daughter of a prominent Unitarian minister, had opened a school in August 1846, in a slum area in the neighbourhood of Lewin's Mead, Bristol. Originally called a free school, it became known through the press as a ragged school, and despite Mary Carpenter's objection to the insulting name it stuck.<sup>(2)</sup> In the following year the school's premises were changed to a lane called St. James Back, establishing what became known as the St. James Back Ragged School.

Experience at this school, which had in attendance many children who were regularly imprisoned for short periods at the local gaols, led Mary Carpenter to see a need for a different type of school to supplement the ragged school - a reformatory. She vehemently opposed the heavy-disciplined, prison punishment of juvenile offenders, epitomized by the Boys' Prison at Parkhurst, which she singled out for a bitter, although somewhat misguided, attack. Her opposition came out initially in her first work, Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes and for Juvenile Offenders (1851).

(1) Stewart Mechie, The Church and Scottish Social Development, 1780-1870 (London, 1960), p.155.

(2) Manton, p.84.

Mary Carpenter proposed three types of schools for three distinguishable groups of children - the deprived and destitute; the neglected, who invariably turned to, or were forced into, a life of vagrancy and begging; and those convicted of criminal offences. For the first group, she proposed the establishment of free day schools such as St. James Back Ragged School. For the second group, industrial schools would be established, based on Sheriff Watson's Aberdeen model where, by court order, children would stay all day and be given their meals, but return home at night to maintain the family tie. Boarding reformatory schools would be instituted to deal with convicted children. These schools would not punish but reform through love, trust and understanding, and developing self-will. They would not be prisons but farm schools or cottage homes where the children lived in a family environment under house parents and worked on the land. Such a system had been already successfully established on the continent in Switzerland, Belgium, France and various German States.

Much of Mary Carpenter's attention was taken up from this time onwards with the cause of reformatories and juvenile delinquency. In September 1852, she opened a reformatory at Kingswood on the outskirts of Bristol. After the passage of the Reformatory Schools Act in 1854, due in no small way to Mary Carpenter's efforts, she founded Red Lodge in October 1854, the first girls' reformatory school in England. Thereafter, Kingswood operated solely as a boys' reformatory.

However, Mary Carpenter's breadth of vision also included ragged and industrial schools, and in the former, in particular, she maintained a zealous involvement right throughout her life. One recent biographer of Mary Carpenter has convincingly argued that the public of the time, and subsequent writers on her work, placed an undue emphasis on her

writings on reformatories and juvenile delinquency, which "has led to a false emphasis on delinquency in her work and an unduly narrow view of her aims".<sup>(1)</sup>

After the Industrial Schools Bill of 1857 was enacted, Mary Carpenter was involved in the establishment of a boys' Industrial School in Park Row, Bristol, followed up by an Industrial School for girls in 1864. Government legislation had provided for state aid and support for the operation of privately erected reformatories and industrial schools, but despite Mary Carpenter's repeated attempts no aid was forthcoming for ragged schools. This was due to the reluctance of the state to spend public money on what they thought were only temporary institutions. The low standard of education in the schools also militated against any aid. As well, there was a strong body of opinion that felt that the state would only be subsidising parents who could pay for the education of their children but would not, thus encouraging parental neglect. Finally, because the aims of ragged schools were more long term and abstract, this appealed less to a Government more interested in the expedient and immediate aim of punishing criminals.<sup>(2)</sup>

When the 1870 Education Act was passed, Mary Carpenter closed the St. James Back Ragged School in anticipation of the Bristol School Board taking over her work and establishing, on her suggestion, feeding Industrial Day Schools with compulsory attendance, based on Sheriff Watson's scheme. Nothing eventuated, and on New Year's Day, 1872, on her own initiative, Mary Carpenter opened a Day Industrial School at the old ragged school premises in St. James Back. Due to her efforts,

(1) Manton, p.95. See also pp.153-4.

(2) W. L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise. A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation (London, 1964), pp.150-1, 152. Also Owen, p.156.

a clause was eventually added to the 1870 Education Act in 1876 whereby Day Industrial Schools would be certified and maintained by the State.

The Day Feeding Industrial Schools continued for the remainder of the nineteenth century, but did not last long into the twentieth.

Increasingly looked on with disfavour by official opinion committed to "standards" and "payment by results", the schools were declared redundant and unnecessary.<sup>(1)</sup>

While all ragged schools, regardless of origin, were seeking to reclaim children who were too poor and ragged to attend ordinary schools, there were some important differences in philosophy and function between them. The Scottish and many of the English provincial schools, developing as they did from Sheriff Watson's influence, were, in many respects, quite similar, but they differed markedly from the schools that comprised the London Ragged School Union.

In the first place, the Scottish and many of the provincial schools, tended to be Feeding and Industrial Schools, whereas the London schools were, in the main, non-feeding schools where poor children simply gained some education. At Sheriff Watson's schools industrial training received strong emphasis; boys teased hair for mattresses, picked oakum and made nets, while girls learnt sewing, cooking and household duties.<sup>(2)</sup> Because of this emphasis on industrial training, the Scottish Ragged Schools were often called Ragged Industrial Schools. The children were encouraged to attend by the police and bribed into remaining by the offer of three free meals a day. In Thomas Guthrie's view this was the

(1) Manton, p.248.

(2) William Chambers, Journal (Nov. 1845), n.p.  
quoted in Scotland, p.274.

greatest incentive to attendance. In evidence before the Royal Commission on Scottish Education in 1864, he stated:

I venture to say that there is not such a regular attendance anywhere as in our Ragged Schools, because the children know that they get no porridge unless they come there. (1)

Many of the provincial schools were also based upon institutionalised industrial schools.<sup>(2)</sup> Mary Carpenter's ragged school gave industrial training to its charges, and she was also responsible for the establishment of two industrial schools. The Day Feeding Industrial School that she established in 1872 was based directly on Sheriff Watson's schools.

On the other hand, the schools that comprised the Metropolitan Union were not generally feeding schools. Initially they were simply evening schools for poor children who attended voluntarily and usually without the lure of food. When the schools later developed on a daily basis and extended their functions, they remained non-feeding schools. As a result attendance was far more irregular than in the Scottish schools.

The non-feeding character of the London schools was partly attributable to the strong evangelistic principles on which the Union was based. Children were viewed as evangelising agents and were sent home for meals on the assumption that the improvement in the child might be transmitted to the family. Such a romantic notion was dispelled to a certain extent by the stark reality that many of their charges had no home to go to, and even if they did, the influence could work in the opposite way; the

(1) Guthrie, p.456.

(2) Montague, p.214.

corrupting influence of the home undermining the school's work. It led to the establishment of overnight refuges, "reluctantly started" by the Union.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1861 there were sixteen such refuges among the 176 ragged schools in the Union.<sup>(2)</sup>

Also, in the London schools, only a handful were industrial schools, although a minority had some form of industrial training. In 1855, there were industrial classes in fifty of the London ragged schools catering for approximately 2,000 children.<sup>(3)</sup> After the passage of the Industrial Schools Act of 1857, those schools involved in industrial training tended to discard this side of their work.

Another significant difference between the ragged school movements was that the Scottish and English Provincial Schools, motivated more by social concerns, placed less emphasis upon religion in their activities, while the London Ragged School Union, dominated by Lord Ashley and his evangelical outlook and closely tied to the activities of the London City Mission, gave a much greater emphasis to the religious and missionary aspects.

In the metropolitan ragged schools, secular education was limited to "a smattering of arithmetic and training in reading such volumes as Samuel Smiles' Self Help....."<sup>(4)</sup> Such education was always viewed as being of secondary importance to the Bible, the chief means of instruction.

The secretary of the Union could refer to its schools as "Great Gospel Machines". The evangelicals conceived the Ragged School movement as a branch of the home missionary

(1) Owen, p.148.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Montague, p.194.

(4) Owen, p.149.



enterprise. When they looked for a key to the prevalence of crime and threat of disorder, they usually found it in irreligion, particularly in the lack of religious knowledge - inability to repeat the Lord's Prayer for example. Consequently the main emphases of the Ragged School Union were, first, on imposing a degree of discipline on the children....and secondly, on inculcating some of the more elementary truths of religion." (1)

The Scottish and Provincial ragged schools, on the other hand, placed far more emphasis on secular education and religious instruction occupied a relatively small proportion of the school day. In the Scottish schools the children also received instruction in geography and natural history, as well as the three R's,<sup>(2)</sup> and in Mary Carpenter's school the "lessons ranged far beyond the three R's of the usual [ragged] schools' curriculum", with a liberal development of many aspects of general knowledge.<sup>(3)</sup> Both Thomas Guthrie and Mary Carpenter supported the movement for secular learning, reacting favourably to the incursion of the State into the educational arena with the passage of the 1870 Education Act.<sup>(4)</sup> Shaftesbury, on the other hand, reacted unfavourably to the prospect of compulsory education, fearing its implementation would undermine the Union.<sup>(5)</sup>

Related to the above, was the difference of attitude towards the concept of State aid. While the London Union vigorously opposed the concept of State aid, seeing in voluntarism the means by which the religious

(1) Ibid.

(2) Scotland, p. 274.

(3) Manton, p.88.

(4) Manton, p.27. Guthrie. p.482.

(5) Owen, p.150.

fervour of the schools could be maintained, the other schools strongly supported the need for assistance from the Government. Both Thomas Guthrie and Mary Carter campaigned strongly for the extension of government aid to ragged schools.<sup>(1)</sup>

Finally, reformers such as Guthrie and Carpenter saw the role of Ragged Schools as part of a much wider effort of reclamation, being concerned not only with the neglected "street arabs", but also those already in the hands of the law. Shaftesbury's institutions, on the other hand, were not greatly concerned with those tainted with criminality. Unlike the other two, Shaftesbury and the London Union remained aloof from moves to initiate legislation for child criminals and vagrants in the 1850s and 1860s.

Essentially, the distinction between the ragged school groups was the differing emphasis each put on the religious or social reform motive. This has led one historian to conclude that the Scottish schools were "guided by a sounder social realism than were the schools of the Metropolis".<sup>(2)</sup> The same could be said of many of the provincial ragged schools, particularly illustrated by Mary Carpenter's work. Far more concerned with the social consequences of neglect, destitution and delinquency, Mary Carpenter "was not at ease in the prevailing tone of the Union, a 'Come to Jesus' Evangelism..."<sup>(3)</sup>

These differing philosophies towards the reclamation of the neglected, destitute and delinquent juvenile spread to the Australian colonies

(1) Owen, p.156.

(2) Ibid., pp.150-151.

(3) Manton, p.182.

via newspapers and other printed material, as well as through the emigration of many of the supporters of ragged schools in England and Scotland. They were also spread by the contacts made by the various emigration schemes of the reformatory, industrial and ragged schools in Scotland and England, sending selected children to the colonies in the hope that their apprenticeship to farms would develop further the virtues of thrift and industry, in an environment free from the vices of the towns and cities.

In 1849 Lord Shaftesbury had obtained a government grant for the voluntary emigration of children from the London Ragged Schools to the colonies as part of a reclamation effort. One hundred and fifty carefully picked boys were sent out to New South Wales to be employed as shepherds in the country. The following year Shaftesbury was unable to get the grant renewed although the results were most satisfactory in the opinion of the sponsors. Thereafter the immigration effort was continued but it was based upon private philanthropy.<sup>(1)</sup>

Boys and girls from Mary Carpenter's schools were also sent to Australia, among other destinations, where they were met by Caroline Chisholm.<sup>(2)</sup> Edward Joy, the founder and secretary of the New South Wales Ragged School Movement, had also been influenced by the

(1) Pickering, p.61; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, pp.557-558; Montague, p.204.  
Such schemes were not without their colonial critics. The belief was held that the colonies were being swamped with unwanted paupers: "Irish orphans, workhouse sweepings, Ragged school children....and fag ends of broken down families."  
South Australian Register, 26 Feb., 1850, quoted in Michael Cannon, Who's Master? Who's Man? (Melbourne, 1971), p.120.

(2) Manton, p.173.

provincial ragged school philosophy. His brother was a leading figure amongst the ragged schools in the north of England, and Edward Joy had "followed in his footsteps".<sup>(1)</sup> Joy had also acted as an intermediary in Sydney for emigrant boys from the Red Hill Reformatory School in England.<sup>(2)</sup> He undertook to meet the boys at the wharf and house them until he could find suitable employment for them "up the country".<sup>(3)</sup> His involvement in this scheme indicated a strong sympathy with the philosophy of the reformation of the juvenile offender as espoused by people such as Mary Carpenter.

Many other supporters of the N.S.W. Ragged Schools had had previous links with ragged schools in England and Scotland. The first teacher of the Sussex Street Ragged School, the first of the schools established under the auspices of Edward Joy and his supporters, was Henry Lee. A Congregationalist, like Edward Joy, he had been a ragged school teacher in Leeds before emigrating to Sydney. His program had been a mixture of evangelistic work with ragged children in Sunday Schools and practical education, "engaging their interest through the conducting of experiments to illustrate principles and laws in science and nature".<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

(2) The Red Hill Farm School was a voluntary school for delinquent and destitute children that had been established by the Philanthropic Society for the Prevention of Crimes (1788). Opened in 1849, it was an enlightened reformatory based upon many of the principles that Mary Carpenter supported. Boys were apprenticed to carefully selected employers in the Australian colonies, it having become so successful that fifty were sent out each year. Pinchbeck and Hewitt, p.549.

(3) Correspondence from Edward Joy to Rev. J. S. Hassall, June 18, 28; July 24, 1860, Hassall Correspondence(ML.MS), Vol. Iv, pp. 1359-1367.

(4) S.M.H., Aug. 1, 1860.

Other supporters, such as the Reverend R. W. Vanderkiste<sup>(1)</sup> and the Reverend John Graham,<sup>(2)</sup> brought with them ideas and attitudes shaped by association with the London Ragged School Union. On the other hand the Reverends Dr. Steele and Adam Thompson were Presbyterians, with strong Scottish ties. They brought the attention of the schools' supporters to the work of the Scottish Ragged Schools.<sup>(3)</sup> Dr. Steele suggested that the Ragged School Committee should apply the Scottish principles of feeding, clothing and industrial training to the operation of the Sydney schools.<sup>(4)</sup> Ragged School Reports in the early 1860's made mention of the work done by Dr. Guthrie and the Recorder of Birmingham.<sup>(5)</sup> The first day ragged school established in Sydney, actually pre-empting the Sussex Street School by a few weeks, was founded by Mrs. Jean Reid. She had also been responsible for the second ragged school established in Scotland, before migrating to the Australian colonies.<sup>(6)</sup>

Clifford Turney, in his thesis on N.S.W. education, notes that:

....the colonial Ragged School Movement, as its supporters were proud to declare, was but "an extension" into the Antipodes of the "noble and successful working of Ragged Schools in the Mother Country". (7)

He adds further that:

.....from the start the committee desired the objects and activities of the institution to be modelled on those of the Ragged Schools in England. Already Joy, the secretary, had exchanged "extensive correspondence" with the Ragged School Union at Home, regarding the plans

- (1) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.
- (2) Charles Graham, Memoir of the Reverend John Graham (London, n.d.), pp.98, 102.
- (3) S.M.H., May, 1864.
- (4) S.M.H., August 17, 1869.
- (5) 1862 Ragged School Report (ML). See also S.M.H., May 14, 1861.
- (6) G. H. Reid, My Reminiscences (London, 1917), p.23. See Chapter III for a further discussion of this.
- (7) Clifford Turney, The History of Education in N.S.W. 1788-1900 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1964), p.978.

employed and 'found so useful in London  
Ragged Schools.' (1)

The danger of statements such as these is that they firstly suggest a homogeneity among the "Ragged Schools of the Mother Country" that is not borne out by closer study, and secondly, they imply that the Sydney Movement was simply a "sister Movement" of the London Ragged School Union.

Whilst the philosophy of the London Ragged Schools had a significant influence on the development of the N.S.W. Ragged School movement, so did the Scottish and English provincial ragged school philosophies. In fact, as the following chapters will argue, in the formative years of the N.S.W. Ragged school movement (1860-1867), through the guiding influence of their founder, Edward Joy, there developed a social reforming zeal which identified the schools more closely with the latter models. The evangelistic approach, the hallmark of the London schools, was also evident and became part of the function of the colonial schools, but in the early years it was dominated by the concept of social reform.

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(1) The Ragged School Union Magazine, Vol. 14, No. 166,  
October 1862, p.217, quoted in Ibid., p.965.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND .

The problem of neglected and destitute children had been with the colony of New South Wales almost since its inception. In the early years of the colony it was left in the hands of private philanthropic agencies. The first piece of Government legislation dealing with this class of children was the Orphan Schools Estates Act (7 Geo. IV. No. 4) in 1826.<sup>(1)</sup>

This Act, along with subsequent legislation dealing with the apprenticeship of orphaned and destitute children,<sup>(2)</sup> gave Government sanction to the Barrack System, under which children were placed in public or semi-public institutions, namely the School of Industry and the Protestant and Roman Catholic Orphan Schools, maintained there until twelve years old, and then apprenticed.

It was not until the 1850's that further legislation of any real practical value was enacted. In 1851 the Government extended its powers to deal with vagrant and deserted children as well as any child convicted of a criminal offence.<sup>(3)</sup> This act heralded an increasing concern for the neglected and destitute child on the part of the Government and community that was to develop during the 1850's.

(1) Charles K. Mackellar, The Child, the Law and the State (Sydney, 1907), p.2.

(2) An Act for Apprenticing the Children of the Male and Female Orphan Schools and other Poor Children in the Colony of New South Wales (5 Wm. IV No. 3, 1834).

(3) An Act to make further provision for the Apprenticing of the Children in the Male and Female Orphan Schools and other Poor Children (15 Vic. No. 2).

However, there was still no institution specifically for the care of neglected or destitute children. This situation was remedied in part when, in 1852, a Society for the Relief of Destitute Children was formed and an asylum opened at Paddington to which neglected children might be admitted.<sup>(1)</sup> Henry Parkes also made attempts to establish a nautical school for vagrant and delinquent children, resulting in the appointment of a Select Committee in 1854, with Parkes as Chairman. The Committee recommended that the Government acquire a hulk for this purpose.<sup>(2)</sup> However, the Government was not convinced of its necessity, and despite subsequent efforts by Parkes to obtain financial assistance and public support, the proposal was shelved.<sup>(3)</sup>

Despite this increased concern for the plight of destitute, vagrant and delinquent children, the problem was far from being solved. The existing charitable institutions in the mid-1850's were "entirely inadequate" to deal with the problem of juvenile destitution and neglect.<sup>(4)</sup> There was no institution for the juvenile vagrant or criminal. They were either acquitted by sympathetic magistrates or sentenced to terms of imprisonment with adult criminals.

In such an environment new vices were quickly acquired. A

- (1) Brian Dickey, "The Establishment of Industrial Schools and Reformatories in New South Wales, 1850-1875", JRAHS, Vol. 54, Part 2, June 1968, p.135.
- (2) Report of the Select Committee on the Proposed Nautical Schools, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Vol. II, 1854..
- (3) For further information on this see D.I.McDonald, "Henry Parkes and the Sydney Nautical School", JRAHS, Vol. 52, Part 3, pp.212-227.
- (4) Charles K. Mackellar, "The Neglected Child in N.S.W.", The Twentieth Century and After, No. 429, Nov.1912, p.955.



correspondent from The Sydney Mail who visited the Sussex Street Ragged School soon after it opened noted that many of the children attending had been in gaol for theft; "one of them, an incorrigible lad not more than thirteen years of age, had been imprisoned for stealing as often as 10 or 12 times." (1)

In November 1854 a parliamentary committee had been appointed to enquire into the state of education in New South Wales. When it presented its final report in May 1856, it gave an ominous warning about the state of many of the children of the working classes.

In Sydney, not more than half of the children of the lower classes attend school. At particular times the quays and wharfs, as well as most open public places, may be seen crowded with idle children, who there learn to use bad language, to steal, and to practice every indecency. The more wretched of these children have no homes, but sleep in the open air, or in any place where they can obtain shelter. They are probably the children of profligate parents, who exercise neither control over, nor care for them, and not a few are entirely deserted. Should they be allowed to continue in this way of life, in a few generations there will have arisen a class of Australian lazzaroni, dangerous to the peace and security of the community." (2)

(1) The Sydney Mail, July 21, 1860.

(2) Final Report from School Commissioners on Education in N.S.W. (May 27, 1856), (ML), p.6.

In 1858 the Destitute Children's Asylum at Randwick was opened, but if it led to any complacency about the problem of destitute and neglected children, it was only short-lived. In the following year a Select Committee was appointed, once again under the chairmanship of Henry Parkes, to enquire into the Conditions of the Working Classes of Sydney.<sup>(1)</sup> Its findings presented an alarming picture of depravity, destitution and neglect of children. In February 1860, plans were publicised for the establishment of a ragged school in Sydney.

The explanation for this outburst of concern for the destitute and neglected child in the 1850's is to be found in a number of factors. Firstly, as the previous chapter has discussed, there was the influence and example of agitation and reform in England and Scotland in the 1840's and 1850's.<sup>(2)</sup>

Secondly, was the serious dislocation of society caused by the gold rushes. It led to desertion and the break up of families, as well as increased migration and a rapid increase of population in Sydney. In the decade from 1851 to 1860 the population of N.S.W. rose from 197,265 to 348,546.<sup>(3)</sup>

In Sydney the population accelerated from 53,900 in 1851 to 95,800 in 1861.<sup>(4)</sup> This placed increased pressure upon the already inadequate housing

(1) Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Vol. IV, 1859-60.

(2) See Dickey, JRAHS, for a discussion of the influence of the legislative background in England on the development of industrial and reformatory schools in N.S.W.

(3) Brian Dickey, "Charity in New South Wales 1850-1914: A Study in Public, Private and State Provisions for the Poor" (Ph.D. Thesis A.N.U., 1966), Table 1 - Population of N.S.W., p.472.

(4) Ib id., Table 2 - Population of Sydney and Suburbs, p.473.

and sanitation in Sydney. This was particularly so in the predominantly working class areas of The Rocks, Woolloomooloo, the lower Glebe area around Blackwattle Swamp and the streets close to the quay and wharves, such as Sussex, Kent and Harrington Streets. The Select Committee on the Working Classes of Sydney concluded, on the basis of considerable evidence, that such "deplorable" conditions had a serious effect, not only on health, but also on morality.<sup>(1)</sup> The street became the playground for children, and the training ground for juvenile crime and prostitution.

The rapid population increase had also, by the late 1850's, led to a surplus labour force in the colony. The implementation of machinery on the goldfields and a more rationalised pastoral industry, seriously reduced employment opportunities. Many of the unemployed moved to the towns and cities in search of work. The result was that the soaring wages commanded by workers in Sydney during the early days of the diggings when the labour shortage was acute, began to fall in the late 1850's, as a surplus population competed for employment. The Report on the Working Classes of Sydney noted that a reduction had occurred in the wages of the working class "during the last few years"; in some cases to about one third of former rates.<sup>(3)</sup> Unemployment and underemployment were high. At the same time rents and food prices remained stable.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney, p.1270.

(2) See Table .. Daily Rate of Wages of Mechanics and Labourers (1853-1860), Ibid., p.1296.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid., p.1270, p.1297.

The problem of food prices was exacerbated by a prolonged period of drought from 1862-1870, which severely limited the colony's wheat harvest.<sup>(1)</sup> Poverty and crime were the corollaries of such a situation.

When the Report on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney was tabled on April 18, 1860, much of its evidence was centered on the plight of children. Considerable concern was expressed at the large numbers of vagrant children roaming the streets of Sydney. It was estimated that there were 1,000 destitute children in Sydney.<sup>(2)</sup> Police evidence indicated a growing crime rate in the areas of greatest poverty.<sup>(3)</sup> Juvenile prostitution was on the increase, the evidence suggested; mainly girls in the 14-16 age bracket, although some as young as 12 were soliciting. Boys congregated at the wharves, many living by pickpocketing and stealing. Police records could not reflect the extent of juvenile crime.<sup>(4)</sup> Magistrates discharged many of these juveniles because there was no means of separating them from hardened adult criminals in the colony's gaols.

In response to these serious social problems, many of the leading philanthropists and educationalists of the colony advocated the extension of education to the lower classes. The underlying assumption made by these proponents of education for the lower classes was that society would be ameliorated

(1) T. A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, III, (Oxford 1918), p.1. p.193.

(2) Evidence of J. Clayton (Sydney Corporation), based on observations whilst taking the census.

(3) Ibid. The worst were noted as being the Rocks and Kent Street as far as Druitt Street, and in the lanes and alleys off these streets.

(4) District police returns showed only 18 males and 21 females under 15 convicted in 1858. Ibid., p.1290.

through education. These children would be elevated and civilised, class antagonism could be overcome and the community united. Education was seen as a means by which society's problems, such as poverty and crime, could be effectively checked. Men such as the Reverend Dr. John Woolley, first Principal of Sydney University (1852-1866), and Edward Wise, Judge of the Supreme Court of N.S.W. (1860-1865), were influential advocates of this view of education.<sup>(1)</sup> Both men, particularly Mr. Justice Wise, who was on the Sydney Ragged Schools Committee from 1860 to 1865, were early supporters of the Sydney Ragged Schools. A further view, espoused by people such as Henry Parkes, was that education was the means by which a political democracy could be effectively developed. Only through an educated electorate could democracy succeed. The introduction in New South Wales of responsible government in 1855 and universal male suffrage in 1858 added more weight to such arguments.

Two other members of the Ragged School Committee in the 1860's, Thomas Holt and George Allen, were prominent politicians in the Legislative Council committed to the extension of education to the lower classes. George Allen, strongly evangelistic and philanthropic, was a Wesleyan who was a member of the Denominational School Board from 1848-60, and the Council of Education, established after the Public Schools Act of 1866, from 1867-1873.<sup>(2)</sup> Thomas Holt served on the Council

(1) For a further discussion of the Reverend John Woolley's views, see G. L. Simpson, "Reverend Dr. John Woolley and Higher Education" in C. Turney (ed), Pioneers of Australian Education (Sydney, 1969). See also George Nadel, Australia's Colonial Culture (Melbourne, 1957), Ch.14, The views of Edward Wise are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV. "The Emergence of Social Reform".

(2) Australian Dictionary of Biography, I, p.7.

of Education from 1873-1876.<sup>(1)</sup> Like his political colleagues, Thomas Holt saw education as a means of promoting virtue in the lower classes, thereby checking crime and immorality, as well as quelling any possible disorder from the "dangerous classes."<sup>(2)</sup> However, for Holt, an active Congregationalist, the most important of all education was religious education. He believed that it was impossible to teach any form of morality unless it was based on Christianity.<sup>(3)</sup>

Hence, while all advocates of education to the lower classes saw it as a means of also achieving moral advancement, there was a number of concerned clergy and laity who saw the religious motive as the most significant. The ills of society - intemperance, neglect, vice and crime - were attributed to lack of religion amongst the lower classes. There was a growing concern that the Bible was not reaching the lower classes. Attendance of the working classes at church was very poor. Churches were for the wealthy; rented pews discouraged the working man's attendance.<sup>(4)</sup>

Such concern was particularly expressed by the Church of England.<sup>(5)</sup> This anxiety that the Church lacked insight into the plight of the working man could well explain the significant part played by the clergy and lay supporters of the Church of England in the establishment and early years of the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement. Out of the twenty men on

(1) Ibid., II, p.414.

(2) Thomas Holt, Two speeches on the subject of education in New South Wales; delivered in the Legislative Assembly at Sydney, on the 2nd and 12th December, 1856. (Sydney, 1857), (ML), p.11.

(3) Ibid., p.33.

(4) R. Withycombe, "Church of England Attitudes to Social Questions in the Diocese of Sydney c.1856-1866", JRAHS, Vol.47, pp.105-6.

(5) See "The Great Want of the Church and the Duty of the Members with Regard to It" in The Church of England Chronicle, Oct. 15, 1856.

the first Ragged School Committee, eleven were from the Anglican Church, the large proportion of whom were clergy. Both Frederic Barker, the Bishop of Sydney, and Dean Cowper were foundation committee members maintaining their support, although largely nominal, into the 1880's and 1890's respectively.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement in its infancy was unduly influenced by the Anglican Church, or, for that matter, the religious viewpoint. The schools remained non-denominational from the outset. The majority of the Anglican committee members were inactive, their initial involvement inspired more by the example of their Bishop and Dean, rather than any strong commitment to the cause of neglected and destitute children. On the other hand, there were some involved Anglican supporters in the early years of the ragged schools, namely Mr. Justice Wise, the Bishop of Sydney, Dean Cowper, Reverend A. H. Stephen and Reverend Thomas Smith. It is also significant that in this period of the ragged school movement when the philosophy of social reform was dominant (1860-1867), these Anglican supporters were influential. It reflected a strong sympathy within the Anglican Church, more so than other Protestant Churches at this time, for the principles of social reform.

The era of evangelistic fervour in the colony was yet to come, and although the teaching of the Bible was one of the basic principles of the N.S.W. Ragged Schools, the social reforming spirit, rather than the religious motive, became the dominant concern of the institutions in their early years of operation. That this was so was due largely to the influence of the findings of the Select Committee on the Conditions of the Working Classes of Sydney (1859-1860) which

focussed attention on the physical, rather than the religious, deprivations of the Sydney working classes.

While 1860 marks the beginning of the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement, the colonial origins of ragged schools go back much further. A suggestion for the establishment of a ragged school<sup>in</sup> Sydney had been made as early as 1852 by the Anglican Dean of Sydney, William Cowper.<sup>(1)</sup> However, ragged schools were established in Hobart Town and Melbourne before one was established in Sydney.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the late 1850's a Ragged Sunday School was established in Kent Street, Sydney. It was promoted by the Juvenile Missionary Society, a non-denominational evangelising society founded in 1856 and operating in both the city and country. A second Ragged Sunday School was established in Gipps Street, Surry Hills, which was moved to the Juvenile Temperance Hall, Francis Street, Surry Hills, early in 1860.<sup>(3)</sup> Despite some

(1) Second Annual Meeting of Sydney Ragged Schools, S.M.H., May 31, 1862.

(2) The Hobart Town Ragged School Association had been formed in June, 1853. After two previously unsuccessful attempts, the first ragged school was opened in Watchorn Street on 7th October, 1854. A second school was opened in Lower Collins Street in Feb. 1856. By 1858, the two schools had an attendance of 200. First Report of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association, (Tasmania, 1856); The Hobart Town Advertiser, June 7th, 1853, 24 August, 1858.

Ragged schools originated in Victoria in Nov. 1859, when the first school was opened in Smith Street, Collingwood. L. T. Blake (ed.), Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria, I, (Melb. 1973), p.154; W. R. Brownhill, The History of Geelong and Corio Bay (Melb. 1955), p.278.

For a more detailed discussion of the Tasmanian and Victorian Ragged School Movements see Appendices A and B.

(3) "4th Annual Report of the Juvenile Missionary Society, Aug. 14, 1860," in Reports : Missionary Societies (1814-1864), (ML).



success with their charges, the Kent Street school closed down in September 1859 because of insufficient attendance and lack of funds.<sup>(1)</sup> The final report noted with pleasure that a ragged school movement had been established in Sydney:

The ultimate success of this school was felt in great measure to rest on the formation of a free day or night school in connexion with it; this we did not attempt lest it should be beyond our power. We rejoice to see that ragged day and night schools are now established, and trust their promoters will not forget to add the Sabbath school as well. (2)

At the end of August 1860, the Ragged Sunday School at Surry Hills closed down.<sup>(3)</sup> The Society had recently changed its name to the Bush Missionary Society, the Committee deciding to concentrate its activities in the outer suburbs of Sydney and the country areas of N.S.W., leaving the inner city area to the Ragged School Movement.<sup>(4)</sup>

The first day ragged school in Sydney pre-empted the Sussex Street Ragged School by some weeks. It was established by Mrs. Jean Reid "at Church Hill near the Rocks" in February 1860.<sup>(5)</sup> Jean Reid was the wife of

(1) Ibid., p.816.

(2) Ibid.

(3) "5th Annual Report of the Juvenile Missionary Society; now changed to the Bush Missionary Society, Aug. 27, 1861" (Sydney, 1861) in Reports : Missionary Societies 1814-1864, (ML), p.831.

(4) Significantly, most of the society's supporters were from the Dissenting Churches, whereas in the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement in its early years 1860-67, a considerable proportion of its supporters came from the Anglican Church.

(5) S.M.H., March 30, 1860; Daily Mail, July 21, 1860. See also G. H. Reid, My Reminiscences (London, 1917), p.23, and Reid's speech from the Chair of the Sydney Ragged Schools' Annual Meeting of 1896, S.M.H., Sept. 22, 1896.

Reverend John Reid, a minister of the Established Church of Scotland, who emigrated to Melbourne in May 1852, and moved to Sydney in 1858. She brought with her the experience of the Scottish Ragged School System, having been responsible for the second school for ragged children established in Scotland.<sup>(1)</sup>

At first Mrs. Reid had some difficulty reaching the class of children for whom the school was intended. However, this was rectified, and by July 1860 the average daily attendance was 35, and Mrs. Reid had apparently achieved considerable success with her scholars in the opinion of the Daily Mail correspondent who visited her school.<sup>(2)</sup>

Mrs. Reid's ragged school disappeared from the public gaze after this and no further references to its operation can be found. However, it presents an interesting contrast to the Juvenile Missionary Society's Ragged Sabbath Schools; the latter being primarily evangelistic and missionary in operation, more akin to the principles of the London Ragged School Union, whereas Mrs. Reid's school was based on the principles of the Scottish Ragged School model.

These two responses to the problem of the neglected and destitute child reflect the different responses that were evident in England and Scotland. The Sydney Ragged School Movement amalgamated both philosophies into its operations, although as this chapter, and the following chapters argue, the schools in their early years of operation were less evangelistic and more committed to the principle of social reform.

(1) G. H. Reid, My Reminiscences, p.23. This statement would be referring to the all-girls school established in Aberdeen in December, 1842, although I have been unable to find any reference to Jean Reid in its establishment or management.

(2) The Daily Mail, July 21, 1860.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF RAGGED SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, 1860-1867.

Among the remedies proposed by the Parkes' Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney there were three that related specifically to children. Firstly, it was proposed that a Reformatory for Juvenile Delinquents be established. Secondly, in accordance with the Report of the Select Committee of 1854, a Nautical School be established. Thirdly, assistance should be given for the completion of the Asylum for Destitute Children at Randwick which would receive the children housed in the overcrowded Benevolent Asylum.

The Reformatory was to deal mainly with those children convicted of criminal offences, the Nautical School was to train vagrant children and those on the path towards criminality in useful, industrious habits, while the Asylum for Destitute Children was designed to help and rehabilitate those children in extreme poverty.

Yet each institution had its limitations. Each would only cater for a limited number of children due to restrictions of size and entry qualifications. Also, as the institutions were to be based on the barrack system, the children would be withdrawn from society. This would mean a considerable drain on the purse strings of the Government to maintain such institutions. There were also many who feared that institutions of this type would only encourage its inmates to a life of vice and criminality or of vagrancy and profligacy.

There was a need felt by some philanthropists for the establishment of a non-residential institution, similar to the ragged or free schools in Britain. They would be a means of helping that large group of children

who were not generally tainted by criminality, but who were open to dangerous temptations; those who were not vagrants, but were neglected by parents - the wild "Street Arabs", as they were often called.<sup>(1)</sup> The schools would be free and non-coercive, concerned with those children willing to come and receive education, as part of a conscious effort at reclamation.

There had been no recommendation in the Select Committee Report for such a school. There was, in fact, only one brief reference to ragged schools in the whole report. Mr. Nathanael Pigeon, a lay missionary, stated in his evidence that the establishment of ragged schools in Sydney, similar to those in England, would be suitable for juvenile vagrants.<sup>(2)</sup> Although there were those in the Government who were aware of the need for a ragged school, the ragged school movement was to be a non-government philanthropy from the outset.<sup>(3)</sup> Its promotion was to be found in the annals of the Sydney press rather than on the floor of Parliament.

The person most responsible for the foundation of the Sydney Ragged School Movement was Edward Joy. Despite his very important role as secretary of the schools from 1860 to 1867, very little is known about

(1) In actual fact, until industrial and reformatory schools were established by the government as a result of legislation passed in 1866, ragged schools catered for all types, including juvenile delinquents.

(2) Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney (1859-60), (ML), p.26. Q535-537.

(3) Among the schools' early supporters were Thomas Holt, George Allen, John Caldwell, John Fairfax and Henry Parkes, all of whom were members of parliament. All, with the exception of Henry Parkes, were members of the Sydney Ragged School Committee. William Wilkins, the Inspector and Superintendent of the National Schools, had referred to the need for a ragged school in the 1859 Report of the Board of National Education, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council (1859-60), p.15.

him. A wool merchant who lived at Newtown, he was also a Congregationalist who attended the Newtown Congregational Church under the ministry of the Reverend Samuel Chalmers Kent. Thomas Holt was also a prominent member of the congregation and Joy influenced both men to support him in his ragged school scheme. In 1851, Joy had married Eliza Holt, one of Thomas Holt's sisters. Thomas Holt was a wealthy wool merchant and financier and Joy became involved with him in a partnership, speculating in properties, from 1856 until 1868 when it was terminated over a business disagreement. Edward Joy died in April 1897, leaving no descendants. (1)

During 1859, influenced by a speech made by the Anglican Bishop of Sydney, Frederic Barker, Joy procured a book that he strongly recommended, entitled "Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them". (2) Upon reading it he decided to set up a ragged school movement in Sydney.

In February 1860, in the upper lecture-room of the School of Arts, Edward Joy chaired a meeting of gentlemen interested in the plight of neglected children. Among those in attendance were the Bishop of Sydney, the Hon. George Allen, Reverends R. Taylor, John Egglestone, P. P. Agnew, and Mr. Alexander Gordon. (3)

Joy indicated to the meeting that, as a result of recent enquiries, he

(1) Henry E. Holt, An Energetic Colonist (Melbourne, 1972), p.121; 1898 Ragged School Report. (ML).

(2) The book was written by Mrs. Bayly, a ragged school teacher from Notting Hill, England. It popularised the concept of mothers' meetings as an adjunct to the work of the ragged schools. It emphasised the need to instil in mothers the importance of proper training of children. Montague, p.257.

(3) S.M.H., Feb. 25, 1860..

had uncovered an alarming problem of child vagrancy in Sydney that he had not before realised existed.

He added ..

In this city there were a very large number of children who were precisely of a similar character to those received into ragged schools at home. There were he found, for example, a number of homeless boys who usually haunted the markets in the day time, where they lived on the refuse and fruit, etc. -- pilfering when they could, attending the theatres every evening, and sleeping in out-of-the-way places by night. These, it appeared, had, some of them, absconded from their homes from mere love of vagabonding -- of others, the parents (one or both) were dead or in gaol. (1)

This group Joy distinguished from the children of the ordinary poor. He noted that they were entirely beyond the scope of existing religious or charitable institutions. The meeting decided to take immediate steps to establish a free school for neglected children rather than wait for sufficient public contributions, hoping that the money would be forthcoming afterwards.

A committee was formed for the purpose of founding the free school comprising the Bishop of Sydney, George Allen, Edward Joy, Mr. Houlding, the Dean of Sydney (Rev. William Cowper), Mr. Justice Wise, John Fairfax, Alexander Gordon and the Reverends John Egglestone, P. P. Agnew, R. Taylor, W. H. Walsh, Samuel Ironside and Robert Allwood. The majority represented the Anglican Church. It was decided that the school should

(1) Ibid.

be called the Free School for the Education of the Neglected Classes.

The school was opened on the 2nd April, 1860, in a spacious wool store in Sussex Street, one of the most destitute parts of Sydney at that time. A master of the school was appointed - a Congregation-  
alist named Henry B. Lee, a member of the Pitt Street Congregational Church under the Reverend William Cuthbertson, himself a keen supporter of the school. Henry Lee had previously been involved in ragged school work in England, having been a ragged school teacher in Leeds. He also occupied the position of Superintendent of the Pitt Street Sunday School.<sup>(1)</sup>

The master was employed on a full time salary and was assisted by a number of volunteer ladies who instructed the girls. The school initially operated from 2 to 4 in the afternoon for both sexes, and three evenings a week from 7.30 to 9 p.m. for boys only. Sixteen boys and 13 girls attended on the afternoon of the first day, many of them being acquainted with the police courts and Darlinghurst gaol. Discipline was a major problem in those early days as the following description by Edward Joy indicates:

Many of the scholars seemed as well able to walk on their hands as on their feet, and sought to elevate their understandings and relieve the pressure on their brains, occasioned by study, by standing on their heads. By a series of somersaults, or revolving like wheels. they would

- (1) The Sydney Mail, July 21, 1860. S.M.H., Aug. 1, 1860. A Farewell Sermon delivered by Rev. W. Cuthbertson, B.A., pastor of the Congregational Church, Pitt Street, on Sunday, 12th January, 1862; also a report of the Valedictory Services held on Tuesday evening, Jan. 14th, prior to Mr. Cuthbertson's departure for England on leave of absence for 12 months. (Sydney, 1862), (ML), p.36.

pass from one end of the room to the other, and look innocently surprised when any objection was taken to these modes of locomotion. Fights were common; and in one instance a young man, who had occasionally come to assist in the school, and who had excited their displeasure, was pelted in the upper room with stones, ink bottles full of ink, and everything they could lay their hands on, until the rioters were forcibly expelled. The copybooks were bedaubed with ink, filled with fancy sketches and written over with obscene words. (1)

Despite such harrowing experiences, it was agreed from the outset that "to flog would be useless" as many of these children were already accustomed to and hardened by physical beatings.(2) The schools would be administered on the principle of "judicious love".(3)

After six weeks of operation the average attendance had jumped to 41 in the afternoon and 55 in the evening.(4) The attendance figures justified the committee's belief in the need for such a school, but the rapid increase was partly due to the name of the school. The long-winded title had been abbreviated to the Free School and this led to an inundation of children whose parents were well able to pay for their education but who were attracted by the prospect of free education. At a meeting in May 1860, the Committee decided that the

(1) The Ragged School Union Magazine (London, Oct. 1862), pp. 217-218.

(2) Ibid., p.219.

(3) Ibid., p.223.

(4) S.M.H., May 12, 1860.



name should be changed to the Sussex Street Ragged School to dissuade those who could pay for education, and restrict the school to cater only for the ragged "gutter children".<sup>(1)</sup> The name "ragged school" remained a source of criticism throughout the operation of the schools, many arguing that the title reflected a patronising and superior attitude that would only repel rather than attract these children. Despite the name change, the problem of reaching the right class of children continued.

The ages of the children at the school varied immensely, ranging from 5 to 15; the average age of the boys 10 to 11, the girls younger. They were taught reading, writing and arithmetic as well as singing, although a major concern was to impart ideas of morality and religion, which took the form of "a brief familiar address" by the teacher, closing with a short prayer before they were dismissed.<sup>(2)</sup> Volunteer teachers were used to maintain order in the large classes. The children were "noisy, rude and unmanageable in the extreme", strongly violent towards each other, most were systematic pilferers", and their language and behaviour left observers "absolutely dumb with amazement".<sup>(3)</sup>

Such behaviour was not surprising when the backgrounds of many of these children were taken into account. One example referred to two brothers at the school:

.....one five years old and the other only eight, have been found to have slept together for months in a box in the corner of an open court, their mother being an habitual drunkard and

(1) S.M.H., May 19, 1860.

(2) The Sydney Mail, July 21, 1860.

(3) Ibid.

their father at sea. These children were once, if not oftener, taken (through the interposition of the police) to the Benevolent Asylum, whence, however, they ran away. Now they are again with their mother, and are of course in a state of abject poverty and miserably neglected. These two infants - for they are nothing more - are supplied by the humane master (Mr. Lee) with pieces of bread whenever they are found by him, as they occasionally are, in a famished state." (1)

In August 1860, Mr. Lee retired, rather prematurely, from the position as schoolmaster, and his place taken by Mr. Richard V. Danne.<sup>(2)</sup> His sister, Miss Kate Danne, was also engaged in October as a full time teacher of the girls' classes.<sup>(3)</sup> Soon after there were some major innovations in the operation of the school.

The school had previously attempted to obtain positions of employment for many of the older boys but they were "too lazy to work", preferring a life of "lawless freedom" and the less regimented occupations of selling note paper and envelopes about the streets, collecting bones and bottles, gathering rags and working in the slaughter houses.<sup>(4)</sup> Concerned about this, the promoters formed industrial classes for the younger children in September 1860, to inculcate "habits of industry".

(1) Ibid.

(2) The Sydney Mail, Nov. 15, 1862.

(3) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

(4) Ibid.

The early industrial work for the boys was mainly the picking of oakum.<sup>(1)</sup> It was later extended to include working on New Zealand flax, plaiting cabbage tree leaves and making paper bags to sell to shop owners. This last form of industrial activity had been successfully used in the Liverpool Ragged Industrial Schools.<sup>(2)</sup> The girls also plaited cabbage tree and were taught to make and repair their own clothing, but sewing was seen as the most essential activity for them.

The industrial output of the children was prolific. During 1861 the boys made 84,000 paper bags and the girls 1,200 yards of cabbage tree plaiting.<sup>(3)</sup> The boys became so expert at making paper bags that they were turning out between 2,000 and 3,000 each week, and it became the major industrial activity at the schools.<sup>(4)</sup>

However, such unskilled activities did little to launch the children on the road to success in later life. It posed a dilemma for the ragged school committee. Whilst the schools remained private charitable institutions, reliant on public support, their managers had to aim the industrial activities to a self-supporting goal, or even making profits. The teaching of skilled trades was costly and unprofitable, with the added problems of having to sell imperfect work and the older children leaving the school after having developed their skills. Irregular attendance also made the teaching of skills difficult. Despite these considerations, the schools' industrial training was later extended to include the making of picture frames which proved to be quite successful.<sup>(5)</sup>

(1) Oakum was a loose fibre obtained by picking old rope to pieces and used especially in the caulking of ships. It was uninteresting and disliked work, having been in former years a traditional task of convicts and paupers.

(2) Montague, p.237.

(3) S.M.H., May 31, 1862

(4) S.M.H., July 2, 1863.

(5) S.M.H., Aug. 28, 1866.

As well as encouraging industry, the industrial classes were used to develop thrifty habits in the children. They were encouraged to save about 2/3 of their weekly earnings from the industrial class. This amount was placed in a Penny Savings Bank and the scholars exhorted to save enough until they could buy shoes, caps and other articles of clothing. At the annual prize givings, awards were given to those who had deposited the largest amounts in the bank.

The work of the school was extended into other areas as well. Encouraged by Miss Danne's successful establishment of a morning school for infants and girls, the committee recommended the establishment of schools for infants conducted by female teachers. During 1861 and after, numerous attempts were made to reach the parents. Excursions were arranged, Mothers' Meetings were organised at which old clothes were cut up and remade. These developed into Clothing Clubs whereby mothers were instructed in sewing, purchased the necessary material from the teachers and paid back the amount in instalments on a "lay-by" system. Evening meetings were held for instruction in reading and conversation in religious and secular subjects.<sup>(1)</sup> Tea meetings were promoted at regular intervals in an effort to gain parent support in securing better pupil attendance, to acquaint them with the activities of the school and help overcome the sinister motives that many of the parents attributed to the schools. Attempts were also made to reclaim the parents and to exhort them to bring up their children "rightly and righteously". Some of the parents were induced to take the Temperance Pledge along with their children.

(1) The Sydney Mail, Oct. 26, 1861.

Home visitation also became a regular practice, as well as the writing of journals by teachers who detailed the vices and the poor living conditions of the people. Journal extracts appeared regularly in each Ragged School Report. The visits were a mixture of evangelising and physical aid. Religious tracts were distributed, but visits were also made to the sick and needy who were aided financially and in kind.

The attendance at the Sussex Street Ragged and Industrial School had increased dramatically, as a result of such efforts, from 70 in the first year of operation to 126 in the second year.<sup>(1)</sup> It led the committee to seriously consider the establishment of similar schools at the "Rocks" and Woolloomooloo Bay. In September 1862, the Globe Street Ragged School was established to reach the destitute and neglected children from the Rocks and Lower George Street. Mrs. Lee, the wife of the former master of the Sussex Street school, was placed in charge, assisted by Mr. Robbins of the Sydney City Mission. By July 1863, there were 57 on the rolls, with a combined total for the two schools of 233.<sup>(2)</sup>

A third ragged school had been independently established at The Glebe in July 1862, by a "group of ladies". It opened on 21st July with five scholars under the control of Miss Louisa Bowie. By December the numbers on the rolls had risen to 56 with an average attendance of 30.<sup>(3)</sup> At the end of 1863 it was handed over to the ragged school committee, "it being found desirable to conduct such schools in union rather than as independent institutions".<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) The Ragged School Union Magazine (London, Oct. 1862), p.219.

(2) S.M.H., July 2, 1863.

(3) S.M.H., Dec. 24, 1863.

(4) S.M.H., Dec. 23, 1863.

The school was situated at the "foot of Bay Street" adjoining the Blackwattle Swamp.<sup>(1)</sup> Similar to other areas in which ragged schools were established, it was comprised of squalid, overcrowded tenements and narrow streets. Because of the topography of the area, coupled with the inadequate drainage and sewerage facilities, tidal flooding created a bank-up of disease-ridden effluent which found its way into many of the tenements, often to a height of three or four feet.<sup>(2)</sup> These unsanitary conditions, as well as the pollution from the nearby slaughterhouse, gave the area a high disease and mortality rate. Wrote one observer:

None can be astonished that fever in various forms assails the inhabitants of those dreary regions. Fetid and stagnant pools present themselves in every street. Before the doors of dwellings are deep gutters, over which the inmates have to step into narrow streets. (3)

It was to areas such as this, attracted by cheap lodgings, that the most destitute classes came. That such conditions could exist forty five years later, in spite of the reclamation of Blackwattle Swamp, was evidence of the inadequate efforts made by governments in the nineteenth century in the field of drainage and sanitation.

Concerned at the effect of such surroundings on the children of the streets, the ragged school committee resolved in 1863 to initiate a further innovation of sending ragged children to situations in

(1) Originally Bay Street ran right down to Blackwattle Swamp. The swamp has now been reclaimed and forms part of Wentworth Park. L. S. Norman, Historical Notes on the Glebe) (ML MS).

(2) S.M.H., Feb. 11, 1860; S.M.H., April 4, 1887;  
S.M.H., July 24, 1905.

(3) S.M.H., Jan. 28, 1860; Oct. 3, 1875.

the interior. Here they would be boarded out with suitable Christian families away from the influence of city living.

The scheme had some difficulties associated with it. The best results of reclamation were with children up to 11 or 12 years of age; beyond the age of 13 it was considered hopeless.<sup>(1)</sup> However, it was difficult to place such young children in situations where they would be properly trained and educated. Many prospective employers, attracted by the possibility of cheap labour, were dissuaded by the youth of the apprentices, particularly when full board and lodgings had to be met by them. Despite the difficulty of finding suitable situations, considerable success was achieved. Up to 1865, 400 of the children had been placed in some form of training, mainly in the country.<sup>(2)</sup>

The committee wished to extend this work, encouraged by the early successes, and proposed the establishment of industrial farm schools in the country, where they could carry out the work under their own supervision. This was seen as the next step in the reformation of the ragged school child after he/she had attended the school until the age of twelve or so. Unless removed from their companions in the city it was thought they would revert back to habits of vice and indolence. The committee wished to establish two industrial schools - one for boys and one for girls. The boys would be trained in shepherding and farming and the girls in housework. After training they would be engaged to local settlers.

(1) S.M.H., May, 1864.

(2) S.M.H., July 26, 1865.

These proposals were publicised at the 1864 Annual Meeting at which it was decided to immediately establish the industrial school for girls. It was agreed that the committee should:

.....rent or lease a house, with sufficient quantity of land, at some distance from Sydney, and yet easily accessible by railway, and to engage a suitable matron to take as many girls as possible as will form a family, and to train them to milk, make butter, wash, cook, etc., and thus fit them to become useful and good servants in the country. (1)

Despite the committee's confidence, the school was never established. Lack of funds, a perennial problem with the schools, was the major obstacle. Although the idea continued to be mooted, it never came to fruition. All available money was used on the upkeep of the three existing schools.

Benefiting by the increased status afforded by the royal patronage of the Governor of N.S.W., Sir John Young, and Lady Young, who were earnest and involved supporters, the schools continued to expand. By 1866 the number of children on the rolls had increased, principally at the Globe Street and Glebe schools, to 476. Of these, 386 attended the day schools, as well as 90 boys who attended the night and Sunday evening schools.<sup>(2)</sup> The schools were run by five paid teachers and numerous volunteer workers. Despite all efforts to keep expenditure to a

(1) S.M.H., May 3, 1864.

(2) S.M.H., Aug. 28, 1866. Sunday evening schools had been a recent innovation, aimed at catering for the roughest and most unmanageable children who could not be induced to attend the weekday classes. The night schools had been introduced to cater for those who had obtained employment and left the day classes.



minimum, the schools were, by 1866, labouring under a deficit. However, it was with considerable pride that the ragged school committee reviewed their success in the first seven years operation. In such time, it was asserted, at a cost of only 4,500 Pounds, 3,000 children had been instructed in the ragged schools of Sydney.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) "Ragged Schools" circular, December 9th, 1867, in  
Council of Education Archives - Miscellaneous Letters  
Received 1867-75, Vol. 88, p.319. (ML.MS)

CHAPTER V

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THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL REFORM . 1860 - 1867

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As previous chapters have argued, it was the combined influence of the colonial background and the British ragged school experience which produced a social reformist spirit in the ideas and activities of the Sydney Ragged School Movement. This was strongly evident in the early years of the schools, from 1860 until about 1867. Under the leadership of Edward Joy, the founder and secretary of the schools, there emerged a group of influential supporters who guided the schools along the lines of the Scottish-English provincial ragged schools, rather than the strong evangelism of the London Ragged School Union. This was borne out by a number of factors.

In the first place the Ragged School was seen by Edward Joy and his colleagues as only part of a wholesale effort of reform of the problems of juvenile delinquency. When Joy chaired the inaugural meeting of the Sydney Ragged Schools, he outlined his proposal for a three-pronged program of social reform - the establishment of a reformatory, a type of industrial school and a ragged school:

What they wanted, he thought, was a reformatory of the same kind as those which existed for such youthful outcasts in America and on the Continent; a ragged school also, which they might be encouraged to attend, and on proving themselves to be deserving, assisted to find useful and creditable employment; and lastly, they required to be properly empowered by the Legislature to lay hold of neglected and abandoned children, and to train them in such a manner as effectually to rescue them from misery and degradation. (1)

(1) S.M.H., Feb. 25, 1860.

It was decided to shelve Joy's other proposals pending the success of the ragged schools. However, the need for such institutions was continually expressed. Joy chaired a further meeting at which the Reverend William Cuthbertson, from the Pitt Street Congregational Church, spoke on "Charles Nash and his Reformatory Home for Adult Criminals", in an attempt to stimulate interest in the promotion of reformatories in N.S.W. in conjunction with the ragged school system.<sup>(1)</sup> Two months later Joy wrote enthusiastically to the Reverend J. S. Hassall of Berrima that the Sussex Street Ragged School was "...exciting such interest here we are now preparing to establish a Reformatory for juvenile criminals."<sup>(2)</sup>

The high hopes of Edward Joy and others of establishing a reformatory did not come to fruition, due to lack of funds, but they continued to hope that one might eventually be established. At the first Annual Meeting of the Sussex Street Ragged and Industrial School, the Reverend John West, a Congregationalist committee member, reminded those assembled that the establishment of ragged schools was only the first stage; later, when more funds were available, a reformatory would be established.<sup>(3)</sup> His remarks were supported by Mr. Justice Wise who declared that .. "Reformatories and ragged schools should.....go hand in hand."<sup>(4)</sup>

Another early supporter was Richard Sadleir, an Anglican, and master of the Male Orphan School from 1829-1851. He was also an ardent

(1) S.M.H., April 4, 1860.

(2) Hassall Correspondence (ML.MS), IV, June 18, 1860, p.1359.

(3) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

(4) Ibid.

promoter of reformatory and industrial schools, responsible for the introduction to parliament in December 1863 of a "Bill to Promote Elementary Education and the Establishment of Industrial Schools." Likewise was Henry Parkes, who had been a campaigner for reformatory and industrial schools since the early 1850's. Parkes, like many of his fellow ragged school supporters, saw the role of ragged schools from a social reformist and utilitarian stance. In particular, he saw the great value of the schools as being the prevention of crime, thereby achieving considerable savings of money which would otherwise have been spent to punish the juvenile criminal. In a speech delivered at the 1863 Annual Meeting of the Sydney Ragged Schools, he argued:

How much better to teach the child than to punish the hardened youth; how much cheaper to provide schools than to build gaols; how much more charitable to us as a community to have a long list of schoolmasters than a longer list of gaolers and turnkeys. (1)

While a reformatory might have been beyond the means of the committee at this stage, it was prepared to initiate industrial training as a branch of the ragged schools. As noted in Chapter IV, due largely to Edward Joy's efforts, a country placement scheme was also initiated, and attempts were made to establish an industrial farm school in the country. This development of the industrial function of the schools was enthusiastically supported by those who represented the social reformist faction within the ragged school movement - Richard Sadleir,<sup>(3)</sup> Reverend William Cuthbertson,<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) "Friendless Children", a speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Sydney Ragged School, July 1st, 1863, in Henry Parkes, Speeches on Various occasions connected with the Public Affairs of N.S.W., 1848-1874 (Melbourne, 1876), pp. 169-170.

(2) S.M.H., April 24, 1860.

(3) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

(4) S.M.H., July 2, 1863.

Henry Parkes, <sup>(1)</sup> Reverend Dr. Steel, <sup>(2)</sup> Reverend Samuel Chambers Kent <sup>(3)</sup> and Reverend Thomas Smith. <sup>(4)</sup>

The type of industrial school envisaged by Edward Joy and his supporters was based upon similar schools that had been established in Europe. In particular they were influenced by experiments in Paris, whereby neglected children were brought to a receiving house and then put out to be brought up by country people of good character who received a small sum for their care and who were accountable for proper management. <sup>(5)</sup> The family or cottage system, as it was called, was in contrast to the traditional English system of bringing up children in highly-disciplined prisons for juvenile offenders. It is significant that Mary Carpenter's proposals for the reclamation of juvenile offenders were based upon ideas similar to Joy's proposals. <sup>(6)</sup>

Once again, as with attempts to establish a reformatory, lack of funds proved to be the major obstacle. Meanwhile, until such institutions were established, the ragged schools catered not only for those children from the "perishing classes" but also those who had already been in the hands of the law. Through Edward Joy's efforts, the committee's work was extended to helping discharged juvenile prisoners by giving them a temporary refuge until they could find suitable employment. Joy himself took many of the boys, whose sentences had expired, to his farm at Nattai near Berrima, until a situation could be found. <sup>(7)</sup>

(1) S.M.H., July 2, 1863.

(2) S.M.H., June 12, 1867.

(3) S.M.H., May 3, 1864.

(4) S.M.H., July 26, 1865; May 14, 1867.

(5) The above ideas were publicised in a work by Blanchard Jerrold entitled The Children of Lutetia (1864).

(6) Manton, p.100.

(7) Statement made by Joseph Thompson at The Sydney Ragged Schools Annual Meeting (1868), S.M.H., July 30, 1868.

Such attempts to promote industrial and reformatory schools indicated a deep concern amongst many of the ragged schools supporters for the need to solve the social problems of crime and neglect. It was a concern that went much wider than simply saving souls.

This broader view of amelioration led its supporters to view the religious function of the ragged school as only part of its function, although a very important one. Edward Joy saw the aims of the school as threefold:

.....to make the children love God and their parents;  
to get them on in reading and writing, and to put them  
in the way of earning their own livelihood. (1)

Some were prepared to go even further in their secular emphasis, arguing that if the religious education of the children could not be efficiently taught because of sectarian differences, then the schools should still function, regardless. The Reverend William Cuthbertson affirmed that:

.....if, on account of sectarian differences we cannot impart religion to the people, we may at least teach them the alphabet - we may at least place their feet on the lowest rung of the ladder, and their own British hearts would enable them to mount up the other rungs. (2)

However, most supporters, although prepared to admit the efficacy of education per se, argued that effective reclamation of this class of children must be based on the Bible. Notwithstanding this, there was an important emphasis on the secular teaching of the schools as well. When

(1) The Sydney Mail, April 12, 1862.

(2) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

the Sussex Street school was first opened, the children were taught a basic course of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious education and sewing for the girls. However, by 1866, the curriculum had been extended to include zoology, geography, scriptural history and scientific experiments, as well as pipeclay modelling for the boys. Examinations in secular subjects and prizes awarded for academic merit, as well as for good conduct and thrift, were further innovations.

A further characteristic of the social reformist stance was the attitude that the problems of destitution, neglect and juvenile criminality were due primarily to faults within the social system rather than simply the fault of the individual. In this attitude they were reflecting the sorts of responses made to the problem by people such as Mary Carpenter, as well as the findings of the Select Committee into the Conditions of the Working Classes of Sydney.

One of the chief spokesmen in this regard was Justice Edward Wise who was an involved supporter and member of the Sydney Ragged School Committee until his untimely death in 1865. He was avidly concerned with the principle of social reform, and imbued with an equally strong sense of civic duty, stemming from his education at Rugby School under Dr. Arnold. Early in his legal career in London he saw an important nexus between crime and social distress, particularly the inadequate housing conditions of the urban classes. He became actively associated with the investigation of slum housing in London, being involved in the work of Shaftesbury, Chadwick and Dr. Sutherland Smith.

Wise brought this strong social reformist background with him when he emigrated to Australia in 1855 and began a public career in Sydney in 1857. In the next nine years, first as a member of the Legislative

Council and minister of successive governments, and then as a Judge of the Supreme Court of N.S.W. from 1860 onwards, he devoted himself to his major aim of improving the health and living standards of the working class of Sydney.<sup>(1)</sup>

Wise had been called to give evidence before the Parkes Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes. Here he stated his attitude, based upon enquiries made a couple of years earlier, that intemperance was the effect of the appalling living conditions, rather than the cause of poverty:

.....I have no hesitation in my own mind in attributing the great tendency to intemperance here, amongst other causes, to the people being constantly shut up in close rooms, and being compelled to breathe impure air.....I believe that another cause is, the imperfect knowledge of domestic economy among the working classes and the almost impossibility of anything like household comfort. These two causes, I believe, drive many men from their homes. (2)

Such a view found widespread support amongst the social reform faction. The Reverend William Cuthbertson in a lecture, based on the findings of the Select Committee entitled, "The Condition of the Working Classes", declared that the causes of poverty were to be found in the dwelling houses of the poor, the inadequate land laws and the immigration policy.<sup>(3)</sup>

It was also argued that the cause of much of the immorality was to be

(1) J. Ryan. Unpublished notes on Edward Wise.  
(Macquarie University).

(2) Report of Select Committee on the Working Classes of Sydney, Q.1434-5, pp.92-3.

(3) S.M.H., Feb. 8, 1861.



found in the environment rather than the individual. The Reverend John West noted at the First Annual Meeting that .. "It was impossible for people to live virtuous lives if bound to dwell in miserable, dirty and degraded holes." (1)

Other ragged school supporters such as the patron of the schools, Sir John Young, the Governor of N.S.W., and Edward Joy, echoed these views. (2)

Another supporter was the Reverend Thomas Smith, the Anglican minister from St. Barnabas, Glebe. Soon after he came to the colony in 1857 he became a lay preacher, holding open air services for the working class inhabitants in one of the most neglected parts of Sydney - the region between Parramatta Street, the Glebe and Blackwattle Swamp. (3) He had also been responsible for gathering information on the living conditions of many of the inhabitants of Glebe and Chippendale for the benefit of a committee set up by the Philosophical Society to examine the state of Sydney. It was this information on which Edward Wise based his submission to the Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney. (4)

Reverend Smith argued at a later ragged school meeting that while the dwellings of the poor were inadequate, vice and crime would continue to increase and the work of the ragged schools would be multiplied. He noted that ..

Where those who had to live who were in straitened or necessitous

(1) S.M.H., May 14, 1861.

(2) Ibid.; S.M.H., May 31, 1862.

(3) The Illustrated Sydney News, Vol. 19, No. 9, Sept. 12, 1882.

(4) Report of the Select Committee, p.91, Q.1412.

circumstances, there was an inevitable amount of dirt, bad drainage, defective ventilation, want of space, and decent accommodation, which all told heavily upon the health, the physical comfort and the morality of the people.....There was a physical wretchedness, a craving for the adventitious excitement of intoxicating stimulants, no provision for the proper segregation of the sexes and, as necessary consequences, they had nothing and could not reasonably expect anything, but drunkenness, immorality and misery. (1)

Speaking from his experiences in Glebe, he added that it was poverty that forced people to live in such an environment, and that it was not improvident or dissolute habits that caused this, but mainly unemployment.(2)

The social reformist faction also used the platform of the Sydney Ragged Schools to publicise the need for further reform. At the third Annual Meeting the Reverend Dr. Steel argued strongly for the "promulgation of an effective sanitary code by the legislature".(3) The Reverend Steel was the incumbent minister from St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Phillip Street. He had arrived in Sydney in 1862. Like Edward Wise he brought with him a social reforming zeal that he had developed in England. In 1858 he had originated a quarterly review of social science called Meliora. For the next four years, until he left Australia, he was joint editor.(4) The review won wide circulation among supporters

(1) S.M.H., June 12, 1867.

(2) Ibid.

(3) S.M.H., July 2, 1863.

(4) The Presbyterian, Oct. 14, 1893, in Papers of the Steel Family, 1827 - c.1943, H. P. Steel (ed.), (ML.MS), I, pp.1-6.

of social reform, including in its pages such issues as temperance reform, the evils of tobacco, the work of Scottish ragged schools and the philosophy of Robert Owen.<sup>(1)</sup>

Other ragged school supporters, such as the Reverend Thomas Smith, argued for the improvement of the housing of the lower classes, advocating a slum clearance program. He also suggested that the government initiate legislation to establish an effective licensing system.<sup>(2)</sup>

Also evident within the ragged school movement in its formative years was the support from certain sections, particularly those from the Anglican faith, for the principle of State aid to be applied to the schools.<sup>(3)</sup>

Not everyone from the Anglican Church supported the concept of state aid. Mr. Justice Wise, for instance, noted that whilst in England "the struggle had been as to <sup>h</sup>wether Ragged Schools should be supported by the Government," the Sussex Street Ragged School would always be dependent upon voluntary contributions alone. In justification of this view, he added that in New South Wales:

.....it would be far better for these schools to be supported entirely by voluntary contributions, because then their exertions could be made without the trammels which must be imposed whenever such institutions were brought under the direction of the Government." (4)

(1) Meliora (London, Oct. 1860), No. 11, (ML).

(2) S.M.H., Aug. 17, 1869; S.M.H., July 26, 1865.

(3) R. Withycombe, "Church of England Attitudes to Social Questions in the Diocese of Sydney. c. 1856-1866", JRAHS, Vol. 47, p.109.

(4) Speech by Mr. Justice Wise at the second Annual Meeting of the Sussex Street Ragged and Industrial School quoted in The Ragged School Union Magazine (London, Oct.1862), p.222.

However, the shortage of funds and the restrictions this placed on the extension of work into the establishment of reformatory schools, in particular, led many of the ragged school supporters, including Edward Joy, to see the need for some form of limited aid. As early as November 1861, a train had been placed free of charge by the government for the Sussex Street School's annual excursion.<sup>(1)</sup> Further application was made for assistance from the government for the cost of excursions for the children.<sup>(2)</sup>

The provisions for the establishment of private industrial schools in the Industrial Schools' Act of 1866 encouraged hopes that the ragged schools might receive some government aid. Satisfied that the guarantee of religious instruction of the children would give managers of such institutions enough independence from state control, the social reform group urged that an industrial school be founded.<sup>(3)</sup> In such legislation was the opportunity for state aid to be used in an area where insufficient funds had deterred previous efforts. At the Ragged Schools Annual Meeting in August 1866, the Reverend S. C. Kent stated that he would "....like to see our much respected secretary [Joy]...establishing one of these establishments [industrial schools] in connection with the Ragged Schools, and working it on the principle of scriptural instruction."<sup>(4)</sup>

Bishop Barker presented the Anglican view. State aid was acceptable as long as the schools remained free from government influence and the religious element of the schools was left untouched.<sup>(5)</sup> Further suggestions

(1) The Sydney Mail, Nov. 30, 1861.

(2) Board of National Education: Calendar of Miscellaneous Letters Received, 1864-6, G2, 269, 281, (ML Archives).

(3) S.M.H., Aug. 28, 1866.

(4) Ibid.

(5) The Australian Churchman, Dec. 7, 1867.

in favour of state aid were made at subsequent ragged school meetings.<sup>(1)</sup> However, by the late 1860's the Anglican influence on the Ragged School Committees had waned and the ragged schools' support came mainly from the Dissenting Churches who advocated a voluntarist and independent position. The attitudes of the Reverend Kent and Edward Joy, as Congregationalists, were not representative of the general Congregationalist view on state aid. Most Congregationalist supporters, such as the Reverend William Cuthbertson<sup>(2)</sup> and the Reverend John West<sup>(3)</sup> rejected the concept of state aid. Later committees also rejected the idea of state aid, and the proposal to establish a private industrial school came to nothing.

For Edward Joy it was a disheartening end to his hopes. No doubt wearied by the lack of action on the part of the committee, he had already purchased a farm at Nattai and was establishing an industrial school there.<sup>(4)</sup> In November 1867 Joy resigned from the secretaryship of the schools, the reason given that he was moving to the country for "vocational

(1) S.M.H., July 30, 1868:.. S.M.H., August 17, 1869.

(2) Cuthbertson, A Farewell Sermon, p.52.

(3) Reverend John West, The Voluntary Support of the Christian Ministry Alone Scriptural and Defensible (Hobart Town, 1849); Reverend John West, "Certain Explanations as to Charges by Dr. J. D. Lang" in N.S.W. Pamphlets, Vol. XVII, No. 14, p.10 (ML).

(4) Edward Joy had supplied this information to Charles Cowper relative to a Bill that Cowper had introduced in Parliament in 1865 on the establishment of industrial and reformatory schools. It was referred to again in the debate over the second reading of the Industrial Schools Bill in the Legislative Assembly, August 8th, 1866. S.M.H. Aug. 9, 1866.

reasons".<sup>(1)</sup>

With Joy's departure the schools quickly lost their social reforming zeal. Other supporters of social reform had left or were soon to leave the movement. Reverend Cuthbertson returned to England at the beginning of 1862; Edward Wise died in 1865. The Reverend S. C. Kent resigned his position of Principal and Resident Chaplain of Camden College in 1872 and went to Melbourne a few years later, joining the Anglican Church.<sup>(2)</sup> A year later the Reverend Thomas Smith left Sydney for the Diocese of Bathurst.<sup>(3)</sup>

For the next two decades, as the following chapters will show, the Sydney Ragged Schools were controlled by a committee that was

(1) Joy's departure was abrupt and unheralded, without the leave-taking one would expect from the founder of the schools and one who had put so much work into their establishment and early operation. Following, as it did, in the wake of the Industrial Schools Act, his departure suggests a disenchantment with the evangelical wing of the movement and the lack of support given to the industrial school concept. It is quite probable that Joy went to his industrial school farm at Nattai, but I have been unable to find any information to prove this nor have I been able to find out what happened to his experiment. In 1868 Joseph Thompson, a ragged school committee member and fellow Congregationalist visited Mr. Joy's residence "and there saw several of the ragged school boys who had been taken off the streets". (S.M.H. July 30, 1868) Thereafter Joy's work remains clouded in obscurity. No private industrial school was ever certified by the government (Brian Dickey, *JRAHS*, p.146), the only reference of any government reports to the establishment of a non-certified school was an attempt made by Bishop Quinn at Bathurst. (Second Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony, (Sydney, 1874), p.59. ) Although Joy's name occasionally appears in the ragged school journals and other newspaper articles -- attending the official opening of the Kent Street School in 1872; initiating an old boys' reunion in 1881; a donation and correspondence in 1891; he essentially remained outside the movement he had done so much to establish, until his death in 1898.

(2) L.W. Farr & J. Garrett, *Camden College* (Sydney, 1964), p.13

(3) The Illustrated Sydney News, Vol. 19, No. 9, Sept. 2, 1882.

comprised primarily of supporters from the Dissenting Churches. The schools' operations became increasingly evangelistic and missionary in character, and they lost the social reformist drive that was evident in their early years of existence.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE RAGGED SCHOOL MOVEMENT CONSOLIDATED, 1868-1889.

The successful establishment of the Sydney Ragged School Movement was shaken in November 1867, by the resignation of Edward Joy, the secretary and founder of the schools.<sup>(1)</sup> For the first seven years of their existence Joy had worked untiringly in every department of the work of the ragged schools. He had himself contributed almost fully to the cost of the first year's operation of the Sussex Street School until it was on a financial footing. It led the Bishop of Sydney to describe the situation at the end of 1867 as "a crisis in the history of the Ragged Schools in this city."<sup>(2)</sup> Joy's resignation was to have a significant effect upon the nature and operation of the schools thereafter.

The resignation could not have come at a more difficult time for the schools. They were in severe financial straits; the committee had no money at all. There were still four months to go before the annual subscriptions for the ensuing year became payable, and in the meantime rent had to be found for the three schools, as well as salaries for the five teachers.<sup>(3)</sup> Under such circumstances the committee found difficulty in inducing anyone to take Joy's office. Eventually James S. Harrison, an Anglican supporter, took over the office temporarily until a successor could be found, but he subsequently became the permanent secretary, remaining in the post until the 1890's. An earnest and hardworking person, he lacked the drive and leadership qualities of Edward Joy. As a result, although the central committee maintained nominal control, the schools

(1) See Chapter V.

(2) The Australian Churchman, Dec. 7, 1867.

(3) "Ragged Schools" circular, December 9th, 1867, Council of Education Archives - Miscellaneous Letters Received 1867-1875, Vol. 88, p.319, (ML Archives).



tended to develop along their own lines; in the case of the Kent Street School, establishing its own working committee.

However, in 1867, the future of the schools looked far from being secure. In the meetings which followed as a result of Joy's resignation, it was decided by the committee that there were three courses open to them; to give up the schools, to economise in some way, or to agree to some form of control by the Council of Education.

It was agreed that the schools should continue, and despite some support for the principle of State aid and control, as long as the religious operation of the schools remained intact, it was decided that the schools should remain independent of the Council of Education. The ragged schools were seen as a "peculiar agency" and to maintain this "peculiarity" it was felt that the teachers had to be "unrestricted in their mode of imparting instruction in the management of the schools".<sup>(1)</sup>

A public appeal was initiated and enough funds were obtained to keep the schools operating, and the immediate crisis passed. However, the re-assessment of the voluntary character of the schools had important ramifications for the operation of the Sydney Ragged School Movement for the remainder of its history. The most immediate effect was the closure of the Industrial Department of the Sussex Street School.<sup>(2)</sup>

It also became quickly apparent to the promoters of the ragged schools that there was a declining interest and support in the community for the schools.<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) The Australian Churchman, Dec. 7, 1867.

(2) This demise of the industrial activities of the ragged schools is discussed in detail in Chapter VII. The Triumph of Evangelism.

(3) S.M.H., July 30, 1868.

Subscriptions declined and almost every Annual Report thereafter made urgent appeals for more funds from the public to continue the cause. This decline in public support was the result of two main factors. It reflected, in part, the vagary of a community that was less inclined to be sympathetic to the problem of destitute and neglect in periods of prosperity. It was also the result of the incursion of the State into the field of vagrant and delinquent children, with the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Acts of 1867. The Vernon was proclaimed a Public Industrial School for Boys on May 10, 1867. An Industrial School for Girls was proclaimed on August 6, 1867, in the former Military Barracks at Newcastle. In 1869, part of the school was converted into a girls' reformatory school.<sup>(1)</sup> Although far from adequate in dealing with the problem, the establishment of these institutions helped to allay public concern.

The lack of funds led the Ragged School Committee to modify their voluntaryist stance and make a number of requests to the Government for grants of stationery and books for the schools. They were prepared to accept grants in kind, but the requests were for small amounts at infrequent intervals, and their fear of state control would not allow them to accept cash grants.<sup>(2)</sup>

As a prelude to this assistance, in 1867, Dean Cowper, on behalf of the Committee, suggested that Mr. Huffer, a School Inspector under the Council of Education, inspect the schools.<sup>(3)</sup> His inspection of the

(1) Brian Dickey, JRAHS, p.147.

(2) In July 1882 a request for a grant of stationery to the value of 20 Pounds was made by the Secretary, J. S. Harrison, to Wilkins. When the grant came in the form of money it was refused by Harrison who asked that it be converted to an order for stationery. The request was agreed to. Dept. Education School Files (p.1769), 1882, Correspondence pp.1-4, (ML Archives).

(3) Council of Education, Index to Minute Books, Vol. 1 (1/456), 1867 - March 1868, (ML Archives).

Glebe and Sussex Street Schools in July 1868 led him to report that they were "on the whole satisfactory" and among his recommendations was that "suitable books.....should also be provided without delay."<sup>(1)</sup>

Inspector Huffer's recommendation led to a request from the Ragged School Committee for a free grant of books, maps and stationery for the use of the three ragged schools. They stated in support of their claim that "the Committee have never received from the Government assistance in any shape toward the support of the Ragged schools."<sup>(2)</sup> The request resulted in a free grant of books and stationery to the value of about Forty Pounds<sup>(3)</sup> and began an intermittent series of requests for similar grants by the Ragged School Committee.<sup>(4)</sup>

The amounts requested were always small - never exceeding Twenty Pounds - and the government response amenable, although tardy.

- (1) Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received 1867-1875, Vol. 88 (1869), (ML Archives), Copy of Inspector Huffer's Report, p.318. This was the only recorded official inspection of the ragged schools. The Council of Education and subsequent educational bodies were quite content to leave the schools to their own devices, and aside from the occasional visit by attendance officers after the Public Instruction Act (1880) introduced a compulsory clause, there was very little official contact.
- (2) Ibid., Letter to William Wilkins from John Fairfax and J. S. Harrison, 26th October, 1868, pp.320-320a.
- (3) Dept. of Education School Files, (Correspondence) 1/916 (1872), (ML Archives).
- (4) A grant was requested and received the following year (1869) from the Church and Schools Estate. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, 1867-75, Vol. 88 (1869), pp. 325-6, (ML Archives).

A further request in May 1872 for a grant of Twenty Pounds resulted in a Ten Pound grant being received. Ibid., (no pagination; between pages 118 and 119); S.M.H., Sept.17, 1872.

Another application was made in 1873 resulting in a Twenty Pound grant of stationery.

1873 Council of Education Minute Book (Index) 1873-6, Vol. No. 6 (1/458), pp.24, 36, (ML Archives);  
S.M.H., Aug. 11, 1874.

Further grants of Twenty Pounds were received in 1883 and 1886, as well as a supply of maps for the Waterloo School in 1886. Dept. of Education School Files, 1882 (P1769), p.4, (ML Archives); S.M.H., Sept. 27, 1884; Sept. 28, 1886.

What saved the movement financially was a number of special donations and legacies from a few wealthy benefactors. By 1872 the treasurer, John Fairfax, could state that the schools had never been in a more prosperous position.<sup>(7)</sup>

Finances were so sound that when in 1872 the Committee was given notice to vacate the Sussex Street premises, they decided to build a permanent school. In the same year a site was obtained for a new school in Kent Street near Market Street, and the school was built under the superintendence of Mr. Albert Bond, the City Architect, who gave his services freely.

The Kent Street school was officially opened on Dec. 16, 1872.<sup>(2)</sup> It could accommodate at least 400 scholars.<sup>(3)</sup> It was described as:

.....a most substantial and useful building, and is in every way adapted for the purpose intended. The length is 60 by 25 feet breadth, with gallery at end; gas and water laid on. At the rear is a large lumber room, or when required may be used as a classroom. <sup>(4)</sup>

Soon after, a second school was built to replace the Globe Street School which was considered unsuitable and poorly ventilated. Also built gratuitously by Albert Bond, it was situated on the western side of Harrington Street near Argyle Street, not far from Harrington Place. It was a notorious area - off Harrington Place ran the infamous lane called the Suez Canal - a favourite haunt of criminals.<sup>(5)</sup> The school was built for 440 Pounds

(1) S.M.H., Sept. 17, 1872.

(2) S.M.H., Dec. 17, 1872.

(3) Ibid.

(4) The Australian Witness and Presbyterian Herald, Dec. 14, 1872. See also The Weekly Advocate, July 17, 1880. The school cost 350 Pounds and was partly financed by a special appeal made in September 1872, resulting in 200 Pounds being subscribed.

(5) I. Brodsky, The Heart of the Rocks of Old Sydney (Sydney, 1965), p.58.

and was in operation by 1870.

Despite a flurry of building activity, there had been a gradual decline in the numbers of ragged school children which had begun in the late 1860's and continued into the 1880's.<sup>(1)</sup> Clifford Turney, in his thesis, suggests two reasons for this - firstly, the extension of education facilities through the Public Schools Act (1866) and the Public Instruction Act (1880) and secondly, and more importantly, the establishment of government industrial schools for boys and girls under the provisions of the Industrial Schools Act (1866).<sup>(2)</sup>

However, there were two other probable reasons for the decline in numbers. It was partly due to the improved economic conditions which became apparent in New South Wales from the late 1860's onwards. With the growing colonial prosperity, many families were able to climb out of the abject poverty that the unemployment and underemployment of the depressed years of the 1850's and early 1860's brought about. The problem of neglected and destitute children still remained, but it was less obvious, and hence more difficult to locate. Many of the children of the streets, while still remaining outside the educative process, could now find employment in a developing factory system and other more vicarious pursuits - such as street selling.

Secondly, with the rapid population increase of Sydney in the 1860's and after, as well as the commercial development of the inner city area, there was a population shift to adjoining suburbs. This affected the ragged schools with the exception of the Glebe school. Many of the

(1) See Appendix C. Enrolments of the Sydney Ragged School Movement.

(2) Turney, Thesis, p.973.

Problems of juvenile neglect and destitution were transferred to other localities such as Woolloomooloo and Waterloo. Although ragged schools were later established in these areas, resulting in a significant increase in enrolments, it was not until the 1880's and 1890's that such expansion occurred.

Due to lack of funds, the ragged schools were able to reach only a small proportion of the neglected and destitute class. Until the 1870's, except for the occasional grant, the Government had shown little interest in the education of these children at the bottom of the social ladder. However, in 1878, the Council of Education made an offer to take over the ragged schools. Underlying this offer was a growing feeling of responsibility on the part of the Government to extend the education system to reach all children, including ragged school children.

During the 1870's, the public debate over moves to establish a "national, secular, free and compulsory" education system focussed government attention on the large number of children who were not receiving any education, as well as those who were only receiving it on an irregular basis. It resulted in a study being commissioned by the Council of Education in December 1877 to determine the extent of, and reasons for, the irregular and non-attendance of children at city schools. The study followed "hard on the heels" of a Select Committee Report of the Legislative Assembly into the Employment of Children in Trades and Professions (25th Jan., 1877), which proposed, in part, that the employment of children be regulated so that a certain educational standard be reached before employment or that education should be imparted whilst employed.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) S.M.H., Feb. 9, 1877.

In the Council of Education study an experienced teacher was employed to make a house-to-house visit of two densely populated portions of the city; both inhabited to a large extent by the working classes. As a result of the inquiries, it was found that there were more than 1,200 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years not in attendance at any school or "the actual period of such attendance was too brief to be worthy of consideration". As well, nearly 1,000 others were irregular attenders. The main reasons for this were given as poverty, as a result of death, desertion, ill health or unemployment; lack of parental responsibility and intemperance. The report also disclosed a number of obstacles to the education of this type of children within the mainstream of the public system.

Firstly, although the public school fees for many of these children could be (and were) waived, they were still unable to attend the public schools because of the lack of decent clothes. Secondly, for those children who were deprived of education because of neglect and intemperance on the part of parents, a permanent reformation was needed. While frequent visitation and discussion with parents might bring about some improvement, the report admitted that a "thorough and permanent reformation cannot be effected by any means now in the Council's power".<sup>(1)</sup>

The Council decided upon a course of separate schools for the neglected and destitute. In such a course of action they were in agreement with the ragged school promoters. They also favoured segregation and presented additional arguments for such action. Richard Sadleir argued that a system of winning over by invitation rather than the coercion of a compulsory system would be more effective,<sup>(2)</sup> although his Bishop,

(1) S.M.H., May 10, 1878.

(2) S.M.H., Aug. 24, 1874.

Frederic Barker, felt that "a little compulsion in those cases would be very admirable".<sup>(1)</sup> The Bishop of Sydney also voiced another argument that was generally accepted, although too unethical for inclusion in any official report. This was the belief that "gutter children" would have a bad influence upon the children of respectable parents. The Bishop noted that:

If the uncared for and shoeless about the streets of Sydney were to be admissible to the schools, the children of a better class, who now frequented them, would leave. The young ladies who were sent to the Fort Street and other Public Schools in their fathers' buggies would not endure to be placed on the same seats with those whom it was customary to call - in a not very well chosen phrase - by the name of "gutter children".<sup>(2)</sup>

Upon the request of the Minister of Education, the Under Secretary, William Wilkins, and the Chief Inspector, Mr. Johnson, were asked to make proposals for Government action to be taken in regard to the establishment of ragged schools.<sup>(3)</sup>

They suggested an outline of a proposed organisation of future ragged schools under Government control. It was an attempted compromise between state control and voluntaryism; between the Public School system and the peculiar characteristics of the Ragged School System. The schools would be called Public Ragged Schools and all the existing ragged schools would be taken over. Teachers' salaries were to be paid by the Department and school furniture and requisites would also be provided. However, the voluntary nature of the schools would be maintained. The school premises

(1) S.M.H., Feb. 29, 1876.

(2) S.M.H., Nov. 14, 1874.

(3) Department of Education School Files, 1881 (P1758), Ragged Schools entry, p.1, (ML Archives).



were to be provided and kept in repair by subscribers. The subscribers would also be able to nominate the teachers of the schools, those who would have special aptitude for the work, although the Department would set certain minimum qualifications - equal to those required of teachers in charge of Provisional Schools. Although noting that the discipline may be less rigorous than required in Public Schools, the general routine would be the same as in ordinary Public Schools. The course of instruction would be reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, singing, scripture lessons and needlework.<sup>(1)</sup>

A meeting was organised between John McDonnell, a representative of the Council of Education, and the Committee of the Ragged Schools on Friday, 17th May, 1878, to put these proposals to them. On the following day the Committee rejected the offer. Although welcoming the fact that the Council was willing to "co-operate" with them in extending education to the neglected classes, they were not prepared to give up control of their schools.<sup>(2)</sup>

When John McDonnell reported back to the Minister, he outlined four major reasons for the Committee's opposition to their proposal. Firstly, that the schools were at present purely Protestant and presumably government control would mean that Roman Catholics would also be included. Secondly, there was the probability that the Biblical teachings, which it was emphasised were conducted "throughout the day" would be interfered with. Thirdly, the present teachers might not suit the Council's requirements and might be thrown out of employment. Fourthly, that the effect of placing these schools under the Council would, in all probability, cause the cessation of subscriptions.<sup>(3)</sup> At

(1) Ibid., p.2.

(2) Ibid., p.4.

(3) Ibid., p.3.

the subsequent annual meeting the Ragged School Committee added a further reason: that such a system would not allow for the elevating influence of the home visitation system on children and parents.(1)

Undaunted, the Government indicated that they were prepared to promote their own ragged school system. Soon after the 1880 Public Instruction Act was enacted, the newly formed Department of Public Instruction, in its first report, mentioned ragged schools as part of its concern:

Ragged schools will be established in towns for neglected children so that the discipline and repute of ordinary schools may not be interfered with, and that there may be room for special measures."(2)

The Ragged School Committee reiterated their opposition to the prospect of Government control in their 1881 Report:

Till such time as the Minister for Education shall provide such schools (if we mistake not he has promised them) these Ragged Schools cannot be dispensed with. Were they taken over by the Government there might be some gains, but there would also be some losses. At the present time there are a number of ladies and gentlemen who take an interest in these schools in the way of visiting them, and of contributing to their support, and of (as in the case of the Sunday Schools) giving religious instruction. Then there is a larger amount of religious knowledge communicated in these schools than could be given were they to come under the Education Act." (3)

(1) S.M.H., Sept. 4, 1878.

(2) The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, April 23, 1881.

(3) The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, Aug. 31, 1881.

In the 1882 Estimates for schools for children of the indigent, the Government had put aside 1,000 Pounds for the purpose of establishing ragged schools, and the same Government's estimates for 1883 had put aside a further 1,000 Pounds. However, nothing had been done. In the subsequent newly elected government, G. H. Reid, Minister for Public Instruction, gave orders for the immediate establishment of free schools for the education of destitute and neglected children. (1)

The schools would be established in suitable localities in the populous parts of Sydney and also in the populous towns of the colony. A free High school would also be established in Elizabeth Street. These separate schools, Reid felt, would remove the objection that many parents had towards allowing their children to mix in Public Schools with "gutter children". (2)

However, this decision by Reid re-opened the whole issue of free education. The Public Instruction Act of 1880 had not provided free education, despite the lofty intentions of its promoters. A clause had been inserted that required a charge of threepence per week per child up to 4 in the family - 4 or more, a maximum of one shilling. The idea behind this was that completely free education would tend to pauperise those who could afford to pay. In subsequent Parliamentary debates it was argued that compulsory education could not become a reality until public education was made free, and a motion for free education for all was carried on Feb. 6, 1883. (3) It was also argued that a dual system would degrade the feelings of the poor, and the proposed system was dropped, it being decided that

(1) S.M.H., Jan. 16, 1883. George Reid had a close association with ragged schools through his mother, Jean Reid, who was one of the pioneers of ragged schools in both Scotland and New South Wales. See Chapter III.

(2) Ibid.

(3) S.M.H., Feb. 7, 1883.

public schools should be open to all, rich and poor alike.

In practice, the situation remained largely unchanged. Despite a token effort by education authorities to enforce the compulsory clause, they were not prepared to incorporate ragged children in the public school system for fear that they might taint other children or offend the finer feelings of the more reputable parents. It was not long before the effectiveness of the enforcement of the compulsory clause of the Public Instruction Act was being questioned. The Australian Churchman suggested that Inspectors entrusted with enforcing compulsory attendance at schools were hounding, often in an unfair and oppressive manner, respectable parents who had not sent their children to school for various valid reasons. On the other hand, the paper noted, the parents of the wild street arabs who throng the streets, were not prosecuted. The article sarcastically added:

We were under the impression that to reclaim such waifs and strays, and to bring them within reach of the humanising influences of education, was one of the specific objects of the compulsory system. The action taken in several quarters would lead to a different conclusion. But of course it is far easier to hunt up the children of respectable tradesmen and poverty-stricken working men than to reach in any effectual way those most needing instruction - the Arabs of our city. (1)

However, some attempts were being made. The Ragged School Reports for 1881, 1882, 1883 and 1885 refer to the repeated visits made by inspectors of the Department of Education trying to obtain a more

(1) The Australian Churchman, Feb. 16, 1882, p.73.

regular attendance and to induce non-attenders to enrol. In a few cases successful court action had been taken against offenders.

However, the attendance officers made little progress in reaching those children who were not receiving any instruction at all. The activities of the attendance officers also emphasised the fact that although the government promoted the concept of one public education system for all, in practice they used the Ragged Schools to filter off those "gutter children" who were induced to attend school, thus avoiding the problem of incorporating them in the public school system. Although unwilling to admit it, the Government was following an unofficial policy of segregation of the neglected and destitute.<sup>(1)</sup> Largely indifferent to the education of the poor and neglected, the educational authorities followed the expedient policy of leaving it in the hands of the Ragged Schools and other private charities.

The whole issue of compulsory education presented somewhat of a dilemma for the ragged school supporters. They had strongly supported the need for a compulsory clause during the educational debate of the 1870's.<sup>(2)</sup> Rather than seeing the legislation as threatening the existence of the

- (1) A similar attitude prevailed in Victoria. A Royal Commissioner in the Report on the State of Public Education in Victoria (1877) stated that the Victorian Education Department had actually established ragged schools in the slums of Melbourne such as Little Bourke Street School. Five years later the Secretary of the Education Department denied that his Department segregated ragged children from the ordinary schools or that ragged schools were in any way connected with the Department, but ragged schools were flourishing and the Department was making no attempt to incorporate these children into the schools. A. G. Austin, Australian Education 1788-1900 (Carlton, 1972), pp.240-1. For further discussion see Appendix B . Victorian Ragged Schools.
- (2) See Dean Cowper's views in The Australian Churchman, Dec. 7, 1867; Rev. Canon Smith's views at 1872 Annual Ragged School Meeting, S.M.H. Sept. 17, 1872; The Christian Advocate and Wesleyan Record, Oct. 1, 1872; The Australian Churchman, Sept. 9, 1876; Bishop Barker's views in The Witness and Australian Presbyterian, Sept. 13, 1879. Also Barker's views in S.M.H. , Feb. 29, 1876.

schools, they expected that it would result in increased enrolment and more regular attendances.<sup>(1)</sup>

However, the expected increase in enrolments at the ragged schools did not eventuate after the passage of the 1880 legislation, and the numbers remained stationary throughout the 1880's. The Committee of the Ragged Schools expressed concern at the failure of the government to rigidly apply the compulsory attendance clause.<sup>(2)</sup>

There were other factors also responsible for the levelling off of enrolments. Firstly, there was the effect of the introduction of the boarding out system through the State Children's Relief Act of 1881.<sup>(3)</sup> Secondly, there were the effects of the proliferation of other charitable agencies for the social, moral and educational improvement of neglected children. In August 1883, a Newsboys' Brigade was established to cater for the newsboys of the city and suburbs.<sup>(4)</sup> A Working Boys' Institute was established in 1886 for the lower classes of working lads in Woolloomooloo, between the ages of 14 and 21. In the following year, the Society for Providing Homes for Neglected Children was founded. In conjunction with this organisation, a Boys' Farm Home was established at Camden. As well, a Working Factory Girls' Club had been established, and a number of denominational ventures initiated, such as those by the Rev. James Jefferies from the Pitt

(1) The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, July 16, 1881.  
Also Turney thesis, p.975 (20th Annual Report).

(2) Turney thesis, p.975 - 1882 Ragged School Report.

(3) Dickey thesis, p.139.

(4) The Newsboys' Brigade was an unsectarian organisation, open every evening, initially catering for boys between the ages of 6 and 12. The name was later extended to the Young Workman's Club and Newsboys' Brigade to include all boys up to the age of 21. Its name was later shortened to the Boys' Brigade. Its premises were situated in Sussex Street, Sydney.

Street Congregational Church and the efforts of the Central Methodist Mission to establish an institution to aid neglected children. Thirdly, there was the effect of slum demolition programs in the inner city and the population shift to adjoining suburbs.

As well as a levelling off in enrolments, there was a dwindling of public support and a decline in subscriptions. Concerned that the implementation of the compulsory clause of the Public Instruction Act (1880) might lead the public to view the work of the schools as irrelevant, the Committee took great pains to emphasise the special nature of the schools and justify their existence:

As the new Education Act is now in force, it may be thought that there is no further need for such schools. This is not, however, the opinion of the committee. They seek to educate a class of children so dirty and neglected that they would not be allowed to attend any Public School. (1)

Even though the government schools provided free education for those unable to pay, it was argued that the lack of suitable clothing would create problems for the education of ragged children in public schools. It was also argued, contradictorily, in view of the support given to compulsory education, that the irregular and unpunctual attendance of many of their charges would not fit in with the uniformity of a public school system that required compulsory attendance. (2)

Contradictory or not, the committee's arguments did reveal a number of significant problems associated with the education of the neglected and destitute child. Through necessity, many of the children were often

(1) The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, Aug. 13, 1881.

(2) 1880 Ragged School Report (ML).

employed at times during the day to help supplement the family income. The 1880 Ragged School Report noted that a number of boys were employed at about 2/6d. per week carrying meals to men at their work, and could only attend school in the afternoon. Others were engaged in street trading & newspaper selling and could not attend for the full day. Many of the girls were kept at home to look after younger children or run messages whilst their parents worked.

Despite such arguments, the schools' finances remained low and the movement in considerable debt. By 1877 the subscriptions were running short of costs and the schools were only able to continue through legacies and bequests. Teachers' salaries were low and facilities in the schools were poor.<sup>(1)</sup> The government continued the small grants of stationery and equipment based on requests from the Ragged School Committee.<sup>(2)</sup> Although suggestions were made by supporters that the government should be approached for further subsidies, the Committee, dominated by those from the Dissenting Faiths, reiterated the voluntaryist principle.<sup>(3)</sup>

In October 1881, a public appeal for funds was launched in the press. It

- (1) In 1882, there were six permanent teachers, two at each of the three schools, teaching day classes. The Kent Street School held a night school twice a week and Sunday Evening Schools were conducted in Kent Street and Glebe schools by voluntary teachers. Letter from J. S. Harrison to W. Wilkins, 11th Aug., 1882, in Dept. of Education School Files (correspondence) 1882. p.4. (ML Archives).
- (2) Grants of Twenty Pounds were received in 1882, 1883 and 1886, as well as a number of maps for the Waterloo School in 1886. Dept. of Education School Files, 1882 (P1769), p.4. (ML Archives). S.M.H., Sept. 27, 1884; Sept. 28, 1886.
- (3) John Kent, a prominent Anglican, made such a suggestion at the 1880 and 1881 Annual Ragged School meetings. The issue of state aid within the Ragged School movement is discussed in detail in Chapter VII, The Triumph of Evangelism.



met with a meagre response.<sup>(1)</sup> The financial problem was solved with a number of timely donations and bequests from Thomas Walker, the philanthropist from Concord, Charles David Smith, Hon. S. D. Gordon MLC and Joseph Paxton.<sup>(2)</sup>

Part of this money was spent on the purchase of the Glebe school-room for 300 Pounds, a leasehold property having 64 years to run free of ground rents.<sup>(3)</sup> It was also used to purchase land and build a new school at Waterloo. The numbers of children at the Kent Street School had been declining due to slum demolition in the area and in 1885 the Committee made the decision to extend the work to Waterloo.<sup>(4)</sup> The new school was opened on January 11, 1886.<sup>(5)</sup>

In 1889 the lease for the Kent Street School terminated and the school was closed on March 31, 1889. Not long before its closure it was visited by a correspondent from the Dawn magazine who gave the following description:

In Kent Street we came to a weatherboard building on which was painted 'Ragged School'. The surroundings were not cheerful, a dilapidated fence showed the boundaries. Entering the grounds where some boys and girls were having their play hour, the ground on which they played was the antipodes of those provided for any public school....we thought it would not cost much to make this playground a little easier for the bare feet running over it. The school itself was

- (1) S.M.H., Aug .24, 1882.
- (2) Ibid.; S.M.H., Sept. 1, 1883 (Annual Meeting).
- (3) S.M.H., Aug. 24, 1882.
- (4) The population of Waterloo, attracted by cheap subdivided land, small dwellings and cheap rent, had increased at a staggering rate and consisted "almost exclusively of the working and humbler classes." The Australian Witness and Presbyterian Herald, May 29, 1875.
- (5) S.M.H., Sept. 28, 1886. (Annual Meeting).

clean and furnished with all the necessary appliances for tuition....." (1)

The correspondent indignantly asked why the school did not receive state aid.

The Committee also replaced the Kent Street School with the purchase of the Oddfellows' Hall in Brisbane Street, near Goulburn Street, for 850 Pounds.(2)

Despite the recent building expansion, the position of the schools at the end of the decade was at a low ebb.

Dwindling support, lack of finance, a committee that was "advanced in years" and lacking drive and purpose, and increasing questioning by critics of the very existence of the schools, did not augur well for the future.

(1) Dawn, May 15, 1888.

(2) S.M.H., Oct. 4, 1889.

## CHAPTER VII

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### THE TRIUMPH OF EVANGELISM 1868-1889

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All supporters of the ragged school movement looked to the Bible as an important means of achieving the reclamation of "gutter children". However, there were those supporters whose faith in the Bible was so strong that they saw it as the solution to almost all of the problems associated with the education and elevation of the neglected and destitute child. Some of these evangelicals had been attracted to the ragged school movement since its inception, however they had been overshadowed by the more active social reformist faction under Edward Joy's leadership.<sup>(1)</sup>

From the late 1860's onwards, with the resignation of Edward Joy and the fragmentation of the social reformist group, the Sydney Ragged School movement became increasingly under the influence of the evangelical wing. This change in support had a significant influence on the nature and function of the ragged schools.

It was reflected in some noticeable changes in the composition of the ragged school committees during the 1870's and after. There was a significant decline in support from the Anglican Church. While over half of the numbers on ragged school committees of the early 1860's were comprised of those from the Church of England, by the early 1870's their influence had declined dramatically, so that on the 1872-3 committee there were only six Anglicans out of a total of 22. On the other hand, there was an

(1) Among the evangelical wing of the movement was Dr. J. C. Neild, a Sydney physician from the Wesleyan faith, who was a keen advocate of the temperance cause. See W. H. Skinner, Pioneer Medical Men of Taranaki, 1834 to 1880 (New Plymouth, 1933), p.88. Others included the Reverends J. Eggleston and S. Ironside, both Wesleyan and both having a strong missionary and evangelistic background. On Eggleston, see Australian Dictionary of Biography. On Ironside, see The New Zealand Methodist Times, June 22, 1935.

increasing representation from the Congregational, Wesleyan and Presbyterian faiths.

The Reverend John Graham was representative of this new influx of support from the Dissenting Churches. Incumbent at Pitt Street Congregational Church from 1864 to 1876, until his return to England, the Reverend Graham was "a ready and willing advocate of Ragged Schools", both in London and Sydney.<sup>(1)</sup> He was a keen evangelist; before coming to Australia he had been particularly involved with spreading the gospel among the poor.<sup>(2)</sup> He was a supporter of the London Ragged School Union and a confidant of Lord Shaftesbury.<sup>(3)</sup> He was also involved in giving spiritual addresses at the London Ragged School Union's refuges for poor children, leading to many conversions.<sup>(4)</sup> Just before he left for Australia, Shaftesbury had said of him that he had ".....held the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be the rule of life, and the way of everlasting salvation".<sup>(5)</sup> His main reason for accepting the ministry in Sydney was to counter "the spiritual destitution of the multitudes".<sup>(6)</sup> The Reverend Graham was a supporter of the Sydney Ragged Schools in the late 1860's, and served on the Committee from 1871-2.

With supporters like the Reverend Graham becoming involved in the Sydney ragged schools, they became increasingly evangelistic in outlook. The Committee regularly stressed the importance of achieving a moral improvement in the scholars, and the teachers' journals emphasised the problem of intemperance as the key to poverty and neglect.

(1) Charles Graham, Memoir of the Reverend John Graham (London, n.d.) p.178.

(2) Ibid., pp. 61, 84, 118.

(3) Ibid., p.98.

(4) Ibid., pp. 98, 102.

(5) The Craven St. Valedictory Service for Reverend Graham, March 31, 1864, quoted in Ibid., p.118.

(6) Address by Rev. John Graham to the Craven Chapel Congregation, March 31, 1864, quoted in Ibid., p.111 .

The evangelist wing disagreed with the social reformist faction over the causes of, and solutions to, intemperance. Intemperance was seen as a cause of poverty rather than the effect of poor living conditions.

Whilst acknowledging that such conditions existed for the working classes, they looked for the causes of intemperance, not in the faults of society, but in the faults of the individual. This attitude spread to their view of poverty in general. Poverty and neglect were the result of lack of thrift, lack of industry, lack of sobriety and lack of religion. The solution to such problems lay in the teaching of the Bible.

The effect of such attitudes was a narrowing of scope of the operation of the schools until they became little more than mission schools or evangelistic agencies. The country placement scheme declined and the industrial function of the schools was terminated. There was a decreasing emphasis on secular education in the schools and an increasing emphasis on evangelistic and temperance activities. Also, there was a rejection of any meaningful form of State aid and voluntaryism was stressed.

There were a number of reasons for this increase in evangelism within the movement. Firstly, there was the close alliance that developed between the Sydney Ragged School movement and the Sydney City Mission.<sup>(1)</sup> As a result of a public meeting held on July 12, 1862, a City Mission was established in Sydney, set up "on the basis of the London City Mission."<sup>(2)</sup> The London City Mission had been very closely identified with the London

(1) The Sydney City Mission was a nondenominational organisation concerned with the reclamation, through evangelisation, of the poor, destitute, drunken and homeless inhabitants of Sydney.

(2) S.M.H., July 12, 1862.

Ragged School Union and it was this association which helped to foster the spirit of evangelism that pervaded Shaftesbury's schools.<sup>(1)</sup> It had a similar effect on the colonial ragged schools.

At the inaugural meeting of the Sydney City Mission, over half of the 1861-2 Ragged School Committee was in attendance, and many others in attendance were ragged school supporters. Edward Joy, speaking in support of the City Mission stated that:

.....so far from feeling jealousy on account of the Ragged School, he felt that there was no agency that would do more to promote the object of the Ragged Schools than this very institution of a City Mission.<sup>(2)</sup>

Working mainly with adults, the City Mission became a support agency for the Ragged Schools, as it did for other charitable institutions such as the Infirmary, the Female Refuge and the Benevolent Asylum. A close working relationship developed between the two institutions, numerous references being made in the Ragged School Reports to the help of the city missionaries. When the Globe Street School was established in September 1862, Mr. Robbins, one of the city missionaries, assisted in bringing children to the school. However, most references to the involvement of the City Mission occur after 1866 when the ragged schools had become more evangelistic in their outlook. City Missionaries such as Mr. Druce, Mr. Bowmaker and Mr. Main were often in attendance and spoke at meetings; often they used the ragged school premises for their own evangelistic meetings in the evenings.<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) See Chapter II.

(2) S.M.H., July 12, 1862.

(3) The Australian Churchman, Jan. 30, 1875; The Weekly Advocate, Sept. 28, 1877; The Australian Witness and Presbyterian Herald, Oct. 3, 1874; S.M.H., March 7, 1871; Oct. 28, 1871.

A second reason for the growing evangelism within the ragged school movement was the response to the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Acts of 1866.

The passage of the Reformatory Act was strongly supported by the Ragged School Committee who welcomed state involvement in the discipline and reformation of the delinquent and juvenile criminal.<sup>(1)</sup> The Ragged Schools were concerned primarily with the neglected child and it was the experience of its supporters that the schools could do little for the juvenile hardened in crime.

The Industrial Schools Act was another matter, as it involved the state in the reformation of the neglected child or minor offender, an area that had previously been the province of the philanthropist. The social reform faction within the Ragged School movement supported the legislation and were in favour of state involvement as laid down by the Act.<sup>(2)</sup> They expressed satisfaction with the provisions for the establishment of Private Industrial Schools. The guarantee of religious instruction of children would give managers of such institutions enough independence from State control, while at the same time creating the opportunity for State aid to be used in an area where insufficient funds had deterred previous attempts.<sup>(3)</sup> They were prepared to use the legislation to establish a private industrial school, a project that had been frequently mooted in the past but which had not eventuated.

The evangelicals, on the other hand, emphasised the principle of voluntarism and independence from the State. It was their belief that industrial schools should be supported and directed primarily by private benevolent effort.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) S.M.H., July 26, 1865.

(2) Views of Edward Joy in support of the Vernon Sydney Ragged Schools Annual Report. (1867), (ML).

(3) Views of Rev. Samuel Kent, S.M.H., Aug. 28, 1866.

(4) S.M.H., July 26, 1865.

They saw the proposed legislation as the beginning of an encroachment by the State into their domain and saw the outcome as the eventual take-over by the State of philanthropies such as ragged schools. This would seriously jeopardise the evangelistic function of the schools. Hence, the prospect of state aid was viewed with suspicion and their reaction was to emphasise the voluntaryist and evangelistic nature of the schools. A circular sent out at the end of 1867 to appeal for more funds stated that: "Whatever good has been effected, has resulted mainly under the Divine blessing, from the free use of God's Holy Word."<sup>(1)</sup>

Their repeated statements that any assistance from the State would be refused if it tried to interfere with the use of the Bible in the schools, served only to increase fears of State control and led to an overall tightening of opinion against the whole concept of State aid and involvement.<sup>(2)</sup> One ragged school supporter, the Rev. James Edward Vetch, in a sermon to his congregation at the Woollahra Congregational Church, emphasised that it was the role of the Church not the State to provide religious education.

We cannot admit of any right of the State to interfere.  
We deny the right of the State to provide means of  
religious good for adults, we cannot admit its right to  
do so for children. <sup>(3)</sup>

A third reason was the development of a changing attitude within some elements of the clergy and laity towards the education of the "perishing classes". The early arguments in favour of education being extended to the masses was that not only would it make them more orderly and democratic, but that it would reduce crime.<sup>(4)</sup> Yet crime had continued to increase

(1) Council of Education, Misc. Letters, p.319, (ML Archives).

(2) S.M.H., Aug. 28, 1866.

(3) Sermon entitled "Religious Education", preached on Sunday, 28th October, 1866, p.12, (ML).

(4) Views of Henry Parkes, for example - see Chapter V.



with the extension of the education system. It led to the sobering realisation that the benefits of education could be used for evil purposes as well as for good.<sup>(1)</sup> While serious crime was steadily on the decrease in the colony as a whole, there were signs of growing immorality, pauperism and drunkenness, particularly among the young.

The Police Report of 1880 noted that there were three times the number of arrests for drunkenness and disorderly conduct in 1880 as compared to 1870.<sup>(2)</sup> This was attributed chiefly to the large increase in the number of public houses in Sydney during the "past few years" and "a growing tendency to intemperate habits amongst the youth of the colony". This latter phenomenon was explained in terms of the breakdown of the apprentice system by a factory system which gave young people good wages and "long hours of leisure, unrestrained by parental control".<sup>(3)</sup>

The problem was compounded by the growth of "larrikinism" which claimed the attention of the secular and religious press during the 1870's and 1880's. It led the Churches, in particular, to look for remedies. They asserted that it was only through religion, not education, that this rowdyism would be checked.<sup>(4)</sup> The only two things that would reduce crime, they concluded, was to spread the teachings of the Bible and to

(1) The Australian Churchman, Jan. 23, 1869.

(2) In 1870 there were 584 public houses, a population of 130,469 and the number of arrests 3,986. In 1880 there were 889 public houses, a population of 192,829 and 11,474 arrests. The Witness, March 19, 1881. Quoted from the Police Report of 1880.

(3) Ibid.

(4) The Australian Churchman, May 13, 1876; May 27, 1876;  
June 10, 1876.  
The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, April 16, 1881;  
May 2, 1881; June 4, 1881; July 2, 1881;  
July 9, 1881.

ban alcohol.<sup>(1)</sup>

The declining interest in social reform within the ragged schools was also due, in part, to the more prosperous economic climate in the colony in the 1870's and most of the 1880's. The ragged school movement was founded at a time of economic distress. Such conditions prompted philanthropists to think more in terms of social reform. As the 1860's progressed the colony moved out of depression and into a period of increasing boom and prosperity in the 1870's and 1880's. In such times, people were less willing to countenance the existence of poverty or neglect. Where it did exist, it was usually blamed on the vice or laziness of those in need. A correspondent to the Sydney Morning Herald in December 1870, voiced a fairly widespread attitude when he suggested that the Industrial Schools Act was enabling many "idle and drunken parents and brutal step-parents to get rid of their responsibilities" by leaving to the State the maintenance and training of their offspring.<sup>(2)</sup> Such attitudes, while on the one hand leading to a hardening of opinion against indiscriminate charity to the destitute and neglected, also confirmed the belief of the evangelists that the solution to such vices was found to be in religion. In July 1873, a public meeting on ways to check immorality led to the formation of the Association for the Promotion of Public Morality. It had the support of many of the leading clergy and laymen from the city churches, including many ragged school supporters.

(1) The Australian Witness and Presbyterian Herald, Jan. 22, 1876; Similar views are to be found in The Witness and Australian Presbyterian, Aug. 1, 1874; Aug. 22, 1874; Mar. 15, 1884. The Witness, March, 19, 1881; Oct. 21, 1882. S.M.H., Oct. 22, 1868.

(2) S.M.H., Dec. 5, 1870.

Finally, the growth of evangelism in the 1870's and 1880's was a response to the evangelistic fervour overseas, particularly in England and Scotland, which the denominational press eagerly reported. Religious revival movements were initiated in Sydney in the 1870's and 1880's, and although attempts were not very successful, it did indicate an evangelistic fervour amongst some sections of the clergy and laity.

The growth of evangelism within the ragged school movement had a significant influence on the nature and function of the schools in the period 1868-1890.

The most immediate change was that in 1868 the schools dropped their industrial function and thereafter became known simply as Ragged Schools. When Rosamond Hill visited the Kent Street Ragged School in November 1873, she noted with disapproval the lack of industrial work:

Boys and girls are taught together in the morning, the latter learning sewing in the afternoon. No other industrial work of any kind is pursued in the school, though the picture frames hanging around the walls, the work of former pupils, attests that one trade at least has formerly been taught. The master who has recently come into office could not explain why it had been discontinued.(1)

Financial considerations no doubt played a part in the decision to end industrial work. However, the lack of any further effort to establish a private Industrial School after Edward Joy's departure, indicated deeper reasons. Although State aid would be provided for a certified private Industrial School under the provisions of the Industrial Schools

(1) Rosamond and Florence Hill, What We Saw in Australia (London, 1975, ed), p.323.

Act of 1866, the fear of State control was the overriding factor. The possibility of the institution being opened to Protestant and Catholic alike would threaten any religious teaching based on the Bible. This was unthinkable from the evangelist point of view.

A further change within the ragged school movement was the growth of Ragged Sunday Schools. They had been started at the end of 1863 as an adjunct to the work of the day schools. Initially the Sunday Night Schools were for the "roughest and most unruly" and "special arrangements" were made for them, it being the only night that they could be induced to attend.<sup>(1)</sup> The 1864 Ragged School Report noted that the Globe Street School had a Sunday Night Ragged School with an attendance of 30, and Sussex Street had a night school of 80 and an afternoon school of 30.<sup>(2)</sup>

By 1872 the total number of the three ragged schools was 328, at which approximately half was made up of numbers on the books of the three Sunday Schools.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1877, the Sunday School branch had become numerically the most important. Out of a total of 475, the average attendance at the day schools was 192, the average attendance at the evening school, 38, and the average attendance at the Sunday Schools, 245.<sup>(4)</sup> No longer for the neighbourhood 'tough', the Sunday Schools had become evangelistic meetings at which ragged school children received further religious education by voluntary helpers.

With the increased emphasis placed on religious teaching within the schools, there was a decrease in the amount of secular education given. Whereas once there had been a varied secular curriculum, now it was

(1) S.M.H., May 3, 1864.

(2) Ibid.

(3) 12th and 15th Annual Reports; Turney, thesis, p.974.

(4) Annual Report . S.M.H., Sept. 4, 1877.

restricted to the 3R's.<sup>(1)</sup> It was also reflected in the examination of the children in which scriptural subjects received most attention. At the 15th Annual Meeting, the 50 or so children in attendance were examined by the Very Rev. Dean of Sydney "on various topics, principally of a religious nature....."<sup>(2)</sup> At the 1879 Annual Meeting, the Rev. J. Barnier "examined the children present on scriptural subjects".<sup>(3)</sup> The main aim of the ragged schools was to spread the Gospel to counter "the ignorance which pervades these youthful minds - ignorance more particularly in the subjects of morality and religion."<sup>(4)</sup>

The religious activities of the ragged schools were extended in conjunction with other evangelising groups. A Chinese Mission was established in the new ragged school in Harrington Street in 1875, and Chinese evangelical meetings were held there every Sunday afternoon.<sup>(5)</sup> The schools were also involved in a number of revival meetings, the 1880 Ragged School Report noting that..."the year just ended has been one of blessing, several of the elder scholars having been led to the Saviour when the gospel tent was in the neighbourhood."<sup>(6)</sup> The Y.M.C.A. had established night mission schools for poor children at the Harrington Street and Glebe Ragged Schools, meeting every Sunday evening.<sup>(7)</sup> The city missionaries were also

- (1) Letter from J. S. Harrison to W. Wilkins, 11th Aug. 1882, Department of Education School Files (Correspondence), 1882, p.4. (ML Archives).
- (2) The Australian Churchman, Sept. 4, 1875.
- (3) The Presbyterian and Australian Witness, Sept. 20, 1879.
- (4) The Weekly Advocate, July 17, 1880. See also Ibid. Oct. 2, 1880.
- (5) The Australian Witness and Presbyterian Herald, March, 6, 1875.
- (6) The Weekly Advocate, Oct. 2, 1880.
- (7) S.M.H., July 10, 1876.

particularly active in the Sunday Schools.

In the mid 1870's the Kent Street Ragged School was at the centre of this evangelistic upsurge. The Kent Street Sunday Evening School had become so popular that it had developed into a semi-autonomous organisation with its own superintendents, Mr. Hargrave, and the City Missionary, Mr. Bowmaker, supported by a large band of voluntary teachers. The activities of this aspect of the ragged schools had assumed such importance by 1875 that a separate report for Sunday Schools was presented within the Annual Report, occupying the major part of it.<sup>(1)</sup>

At the 1876 Annual Meeting, the Rev. Allen Webb, a Baptist clergyman, could state that the work of the ragged schools was "church work" and the Rev. Barnier, an Anglican colleague, refer to them as "evangelising agents."<sup>(2)</sup> Ten years later the work remained unchanged.

At the 1886 Annual Meeting the chairman referred to the schools as:

...the centre and home of unsectarian mission work in the various districts in which they are situated, being used by the city missionaries and various ladies and gentlemen who are interested in Christian work of various kinds among the masses. (3)

At the same meeting the Rev. Joshua Hargrave supported this view of the role of the ragged schools, noting that "every ragged school is a church, in which the city missionaries work".<sup>(4)</sup>

The evangelising activities of the schools also spilled over into a strong temperance lobby. Whereas earlier teachers' journals tended to

(1) See Ragged School Annual Reports for 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, (ML);  
S.M.H., Aug. 12, 1873; Aug. 11, 1874; Aug. 31, 1875.

(2) S.M.H., Sept. 15, 1876.

(3) S.M.H., Sept. 28, 1886.

(4) Ibid.

refer to the achievements of the country placement scheme, now the emphasis was on the vice and depravity of the home life of the children, with particular emphasis on the effects of alcohol. While early supporters of the ragged schools saw neglect as the main cause of destitution, even supporters such as Dr. Steel saw the problem of "gutter children" being 80% intemperance and 20% neglectful and ignorant parents.<sup>(1)</sup>

In delivering a paper at a temperance conference in December 1866, he argued that "the crime, insanity, poverty, disease, impurity and domestic misery of this colony are proportionate to the drink consumed - to the drunkenness existing".<sup>(2)</sup> Many of the ragged school supporters were involved in the numerous temperance societies which proliferated in the 1870's. One committee member, the Rev. A. Stephen, spoke at a meeting of the N.S.W. Political Association for the Suppression of Intemperance.

In arguing for the total abolition of liquor, or, at the very least, an amendment of the existing licensing laws, the Reverend Stephen proclaimed that:

He thought he should be within the mark when he said that nine tenths of the pauperism of the colony might be traced to the deplorable effects of intemperance. He thought he was well within the mark when he said the remaining one tenth might be traced to the same source .....it was the same with the crime of the colony. Those who were acquainted with the statistics of our gaols would bear witness that nearly all the crime in the colony arose either directly or indirectly from drink. <sup>(3)</sup>

(1) 1869 Annual Meeting, Sydney Mail, Aug. 21, 1869.

(2) Paper read by Dr. Steel at a conference held in the Temperance Hall, Pitt Street, Sydney, Dec. 11, 1866, to consider the prevailing intemperance, the present licensing system and the propriety of forming an anti-traffic league, p.9, in H. P. Steel (ed.), Papers of the Steel Family 1827-1943, II, p.183, (ML MS).

(3) S.M.H., Jan. 13, 1869.

The Ragged School Committee strongly supported the provisions of the Permissive Liquor Bill, legislation which aimed at the restriction of the liquor traffic.<sup>(1)</sup> In the meantime, there was a need to get into the homes of the children and spread the Gospel. Whereas once it was advocated that the children be removed from the city and its vice, as part of the process of reclamation, now Dr. Steel suggested at the 1869 Annual Meeting that they should be sent to their homes as evangelising agents to spread the Word among parents and companions.<sup>(2)</sup> This missionary drive was promoted with groups of Ragged School children involved in "services of song" at the Holy Trinity Church of England Temperance Society.<sup>(3)</sup> All were induced to take the temperance pledge. In 1878, a temperance society called the True Blue was inaugurated at the Kent Street Ragged School.<sup>(4)</sup> Every Annual Report of the 1870's and 1880's reiterated the view that drunkenness was the major cause of poverty.

This narrowing of scope of the schools did not go uncriticised. There were still some supporters who tried to modify the doctrinaire attitudes of the evangelists within the movement, and present the cause for social reform. At the 1872 Annual Meeting Rev. Canon Smith emphasised the importance of the inadequate housing of the poor and the effect this had on the intemperance that prevailed.<sup>(5)</sup> The Rev. S. Bryant, speaking

- (1) The full title of the Bill was The Retail of Fermented and Spirituous Liquors Regulation Bill. After a number of attempts in the 1870's it was eventually passed by parliament late in 1881 in a greatly modified form. It came into force on Jan. 1, 1882.
- (2) 1869 Annual Meeting : Sydney Mail, Aug. 21, 1869.
- (3) Holy Trinity Church, Argyle Street, Our News and Monthly Notes, No. 27, June 1889, p.2; No. 33, Dec. 1889, p.2. The Ragged School choir was under the conductorship of the teacher of the Glebe St. Ragged School, Mrs. Courtenay Smith. Both she and her husband were actively involved in the Church of England Temperance Society.
- (4) S.M.H., 24 May, 1878.
- (5) S.M.H., Sept. 17, 1872.



at the 1883 Annual Meeting, also urged the Committee to extend its work. He said that he would like to see the schools become more than institutions to impart secular and religious knowledge.

Because of his "intimate knowledge of an institution for neglected children in another colony [Victoria]" he would like to see them become homes for the waifs because only by withdrawing them could they prevent the work of reclamation being undermined.<sup>(1)</sup>

However, most of the criticism came from outside the movement, in particular from the Anglican denominational press. One of the most detailed criticisms appeared in an article published in 1873.<sup>(2)</sup> It was anonymously written by "a pupil of the late Professor John Woolley" and claimed to present the attitudes and teachings of the Church of England in Sydney. The author made specific suggestions for the improvement of ragged schools in Sydney. These suggestions, it was stated, were modelled on the Scottish feeding school principle.

The author stated that the Industrial School Board should be given the power, or simply use the power if they already had it, to have police compel children to a ragged school if they found they were "vagabondizing". The children should be brought to school as early as possible in the day and kept as late as possible. They should be provided with plenty of food - breakfast at eight, a good dinner, very plain and inexpensive, at 1 p.m., and another meal before they went home. It was argued that:

....nothing can be more absurd than putting a book into a child's hand and expect him to derive any improvement from it if the poor little fellow's stomach is empty. (3)

(1) S.M.H., Sept. 1, 1883.

(2) Vice and its Victims in Sydney. The Cause and the Cure, by a pupil of the late Prof. John Woolley (D.C.C., Principal of Sydney University) (Sydney, 1873), pp.1-77.

(3) Vice and its Victims in Sydney, pp.37-8.

The article further suggested that as well as instruction, industrial employment should be provided to prevent pauperisation. Large playgrounds should be built with high walls "to hide the hideous vices without". Finally, home training and influence should be improved and encouraged; parents should be encouraged to help in the provision of food and clothing for the children.

A further criticism came from the Anglican periodical, The Australian Churchman, based on suggestions made by the Rev. G. C. Bode in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald.<sup>(1)</sup> In an article entitled "Our Charity Schools", the periodical expressed grave doubt over the value of the existing system of educating destitute children. It argued that the children's time should be spent "in fitting them for their future callings - in the shop of the artizan, the factory or the field." Education was not enough - the article warned that the children would revert back to their old habits, applying their newly acquired education to vice and crime.<sup>(2)</sup>

The criticism extended to the voluntaryist principles of the ragged schools. The issue of State aid and involvement in the ragged school movement became a contentious one. Once again, the arguments came from the Anglican quarter. There had always been strong support from within the Anglican Church for accepting State aid for the education of the destitute and neglected. When the economic plight of the ragged schools caused the

(1) The Rev. George C. Bode was an Anglican Minister and supporter of the Sydney Ragged School Movement during the years 1872-3.

Committee to call a special meeting at the end of 1867, the Bishop of Sydney had suggested then that:

It must be considered, whether religious instruction could be carried on, and at the same time accept the proposal which may possibly be made by the Council of Education. If it were possible to harmonise these apparently conflicting claims, it would become a matter worthy of consideration.(1)

Subsequent statements by the Anglican press argued for greater involvement by the State in the education of ragged children, even to the point of a complete takeover of ragged schools and absorption into the public education system. In December 1867, The Australian Churchman questioned whether there was a need for more ragged schools in the suburbs, "or whether a more vigorous and thorough system can be introduced by parochial visitation by ladies who could, through a clothing pool, provide decent clothes and shoes to enable the ragged children to attend public schools?"(2)

Although the Anglican Church strongly supported denominational education it also agreed that the public school system should be extended down to the lowest and poorest.(3) Such a view included the possibility of the State taking over the control of the ragged schools, something that was also being suggested in regard to the Tasmanian Ragged Schools. The editor of The Australian Churchman, The Rev. George Bode, noted:

The Tasmanian Church News cannot see why the Ragged Schools of the City which have hitherto done much good service, should not be absorbed into the National System and take their place as Free-Schools - a name certainly to be preferred to the one they now bear. We have reason to suppose that the

(1) The Australian Churchman, Dec. 7, 1867.

(2) Ibid., Dec. 21, 1867.

(3) Ibid., Nov. 7, 1874.

Ragged Schools of Sydney will not be overlooked in any amended educational measure which may be brought before the Legislature." (1)

In another article the same source urged the establishment of free schools either directly under the Council of Education or, better still, in the periodical's opinion, by a capitation grant to any religious or philanthropic institution that would undertake the work. An additional amount could be given when the children reached a prescribed standard as determined by an inspector. Voluntary effort would still be needed to encourage the children to attend, as well as supply food and clothing.<sup>(2)</sup> The editors of the paper saw it as a matter of earnest enquiry whether the government should either assist the ragged schools financially or provide similar schools of their own.<sup>(3)</sup> They noted that in Tasmania the Ragged Schools were subsidised by the government to the extent of about half of their funds, "and under Government supervision are doing excellent work."<sup>(4)</sup>

In the following year the paper noted with approval that there were signs of the State about to take an increasing role in the education of the poor and neglected. It added -

In truth the work is getting beyond the strength of voluntary effort, earnest and thorough as it may be. We must all rejoice of course to find even 400 children brought under kindly moral

(1) Ibid., March 20, 1857.

(2) Extracted article reprinted from The Athen(ae)um, Sept. 11, 1875 in Ibid., p.171. It is noted (p.174) that these views are the same as that held by the editors for some time.

(3) The Australian Churchman, Sept. 11, 1875.

(4) Ibid.

training. But when it cannot be denied that some 4,000 need the same teaching and are not likely to get it without any effort on the part of the State in its collective capacity, our objections must needs give way to the necessity of the case." (1)

Despite such arguments from within and outside the ragged school movement it remained steadfastly voluntaryist and evangelistic in outlook. When the Rev. Dr. Steel and Sir William Manning M.L.C. argued for the need for greater Government involvement, at the 9th Annual Meeting of the Sydney Ragged Schools, they were countered by the treasurer, John Fairfax, the Rev. Mr. Kelynock and the Rev. T. S. Forsaith, who saw the way out of the financial plight of the schools as an encouragement of voluntary subscriptions. They represented the Congregational-Wesleyan viewpoint, believing that the independence of the movement was of paramount importance, even at the expense of declining subscriptions and inadequate facilities.

A further effort was made at the 1881 and 1882 Annual Meetings when Mr. John Kent, a prominent Anglican and President of the Y.M.C.A., suggested that the Government should supply half the expenditure of the schools and the rest raised by private voluntary contributions, as long as permission was given to teach the Bible.<sup>(2)</sup> Although he agreed that the Bible should be taught, he disagreed with the Committee who rigidly insisted that nothing could be accomplished without the Bible. He was prepared to see an ameliorative value in secular education and suggested that the ragged schools should act as feeder schools to the public school system.<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) The Australian Churchman, Sept. 9, 1876.

(2) S.M.H., Aug. 24, 1882.

(3) S.M.H., Aug. 9, 1881.

However, once again the voluntary spirit prevailed. His suggestions were rejected by Mr. R. G. Reading, a Congregationalist Committee member, who argued that the ragged schools would achieve greater results if the schools were based wholly on private subscriptions, "prompted by Christian principles", rather than State aid.<sup>(1)</sup>

While successive Ragged School Committees might congratulate themselves on the fact that the schools were able to function independently of the State, their adherence to voluntary principles presented problems. By rejecting any aid, the Committee made it difficult to improve standards within the schools or extend their work. Also, by divesting the schools of their industrial functions, they removed the one feature of the schools that might have justified their separate existence to the public school system. Although the ragged school supporters emphasised the special needs of their children, there were many who began to question the existence of the schools.

One such critic was the Reverend Andrew Gardiner. In addressing the second annual meeting of the Society for Providing Homes for Neglected Children in 1889,<sup>(2)</sup> he suggested that the ragged schools of Sydney should be immediately incorporated into the public school system by the Minister

(1) S.M.H., Aug. 24, 1882. For further illustration of Reading's attitudes, see his comments at a public meeting on education, S.M.H., Aug. 18, 1874.

(2) The Society had been founded in 1887 by Mr. G. E. Ardill. The society had established at Liverpool an institution for neglected children called Our Children's Homes. Its founders claimed that it was modelled on the Boys' Farm Homes, East Barnet, Hertfordshire, England, which had been in existence for thirty years. The Liverpool home was concerned with the moral reclamation of neglected children, as well as preparing them for trades and work in farms and dairies. Its inmates numbered 24 at the time of the 1889 Reports. Both Rev. Gardiner and Mr. Ardill had been supporters of the Sydney Ragged Schools. Ardill continued his support into the 1890's.

of Education, because they were not "ragged schools" in the common sense. He pointed out that they were "simply day schools for children of the poor" and they had deviated to a large extent from the original ragged schools which had provided food, clothing and industrial training, as well as education. He believed that Mr. Ardill's Children's Homes at Liverpool corresponded more nearly with the ragged schools founded by Dr. Guthrie, except for the fact that the inmates, instead of being housed in barracks in the city, dwelt in cottages in the country. He felt that it deserved the title far more than the existing ragged schools.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Rev. Gardiner's comments drew a quick reply from J. S. Harrison, the secretary of the ragged schools. In defending the school he argued that the lack of suitable clothing and irregular attendance, brought about by economical necessity, made it impossible to send these children to a normal public school....<sup>(2)</sup> The editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald also commented favourably on the work of the ragged schools, although this reaction was not unexpected in view of the continued support given to the Sydney Ragged Schools by three generations of the Fairfax family.<sup>(3)</sup>

The arguments they presented were not very convincing. The newspaper accounts of ragged school meetings regularly expressed surprise at the fact that so few of the children assembled could be really classified as

(1) S.M.H., Nov. 19, 1889; Letter to editor from Andrew Gardiner, Nov. 21, 1889, p.3. Further criticism S.M.H., Aug. 30, 1890.

(2) Letter to the editor from J. S. Harrison, S.M.H., Nov. 20, 1889.

(3) John Fairfax had been a member of the ragged school committee from 1860-1877, for the last eleven years occupying the position of treasurer. He was succeeded by his son, James R. Fairfax, to the post, which he occupied from 1877-1881. It in turn passed to Edward Fairfax (1881-1886), Charles Fairfax (1886-1893), Geoffrey Fairfax (1893-1901); the last two were sons of James Fairfax. The family maintained their involvement with the ragged schools well into the 1900's. Being Congregationalists they lent support to the movement's strong opposition to State aid.

"ragged".<sup>(1)</sup> Also, when the Herald's editorial concluded that ragged schools "with an industrial as well as an educational intention" could be left to private philanthropy, it failed to add that industrial work had not been done in the ragged schools since 1868.

By the late 1880's the evangelistic fervour of earlier years began to ebb. It was reflected most clearly in the rapid decline of the Sunday evening schools. Their combined attendance of 134 in 1882 had dropped to 93 in 1883. In place of the 50-60 children who used to attend the Kent Street Sunday School, the number had dropped to 15.<sup>(2)</sup> The reason given by the Committee was that a large number had been attracted to the services of the Salvation Army.<sup>(3)</sup> The following year the Kent Street Sunday School was closed and by 1885, the total Sunday school attendance had declined to 51.<sup>(4)</sup> Thereafter, the statistics in the Ragged School Reports referred only to the day schools.

There was also a noticeable decline in support for the schools, particularly from the clergy. Mr. John Kent, addressing the 1883 Annual Meeting noted that during the past year, with only one or two exceptions, ministers of religion had not visited the schools.<sup>(5)</sup> It indicated a general declining interest in nondenominational effort on the part of Sydney clergy, and an increasing concern with parochial duties. It led one writer in the Sydney Echo to criticise them for not doing enough work among the fallen and degraded of the city,

(1) See for example, S.M.H., Dec. 12, 1885.

(2) S.M.H., Sept. 1, 1883.

(3) Ibid.

(4) S.M.H., Sept. 27, 1884 (Annual Meeting)

(5) Presbyterian and Australian Witness, Sept. 8, 1883.



describing them as ".....comfortable looking clergymen who fold their hands on velvety cushions in their polished pulpits to pray for their fellow fallen creatures." (1)

The era of evangelistic fervour within the ragged school movement had ended. In fact, the very basis of the schools was being seriously challenged. That they continued into the 1890's and beyond was partly due to the reluctance of education authorities to incorporate the "gutter children" of Sydney into the public school system, and the tacit support they gave the ragged schools by sending "gutter children" to them when apprehended by their attendance officers. (2) It was also due to the effects of the economic distress the colony was plunged into in the early 1890s as a result of depression and strikes. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

(1) Sydney Echo . Aug. 27, 1883.

(2) Based on comments by the Secretary, J. S. Harrison,  
S.M.H., Nov. 20, 1889

## CHAPTER VIII

### EXPANSION AND DECLINE OF RAGGED SCHOOLS, 1890-1924.

The years of boom and expansion ended in New South Wales in the late 1880's with the onset of a severe drought. Land speculation ceased, government borrowing decreased and unemployment grew. This situation intensified into an economic depression. With a falling demand for produce, employers reduced wages to reduce their costs. A succession of strikes in the period 1890-1894 worsened the economic plight of the colony. During 1893 most of the colony's banks closed down and a severe financial crisis developed.

The depression continued throughout most of the 1890's. This was due to a prolonged drought (eight successive dry years from 1894 to 1902), a depressed pastoral industry, a decline in railway construction, and a stoppage of residential and office building.

The effect of the depression was to cause widespread unemployment and poverty amongst the working classes. In working class districts such as Redfern and Waterloo, a large proportion of the population was engaged in casual, unskilled work and always on the borderline of destitution.<sup>(1)</sup> Many families who had suffered from poverty or who lived close to the subsistence line in good times were now thrown into a demoralised state of abject poverty.<sup>(2)</sup> Their existence was largely dependent on charitable relief agencies, such as the Benevolent Society and the Sydney City Mission. Nearly three quarters of the families of the children attending the ragged schools of Sydney in 1889 were receiving assistance from the Benevolent

(1) The Suburban Times, March 4, 1899; Oct. 6, 1900.

(2) Reverend E. T. Dunstan, "Paupers and How We Make Them - A Night in the Domain and Refuges"...a sermon delivered at the Pitt Street Congregational Church, in S.M.H., Sept. 2, 1895.

Society.<sup>(1)</sup> In such difficult times neglect and destitution of children increased. Commentators drew attention to the large number of "neglected and shoeless children" wandering the streets.<sup>(2)</sup>

The need to supplement the family income often resulted in a child's schooling being terminated or becoming very irregular. Many children took to street trading ... in particular, the selling of newspapers and matches. With the lack of any industrial legislation, children were put to work in factories, often under miserable conditions as the Reverend Dunstan noted when he spoke of "girls of 7 and 8 years of age working in laundries for a few pence".<sup>(3)</sup> In other cases, although there was provision for the remission of school fees, the embarrassment of not being able to pay led to removal from school.<sup>(4)</sup> There were others whose clothes became so unkempt and ragged that they also stopped attending schools, but many simply roamed the streets or idled at the wharves and markets. Charles Mackellar, in support of legislation to prohibit juvenile street trading, argued that:

It is notorious that our streets are thronged with children at all hours of the day and night, who wander about under the pretence of selling various articles. Boys who begin a life of uncontrolled street-selling almost invariably fall into the practice of gambling, and not infrequently end in criminal practices; while the fate of the girls who follow similar occupations is still more deplorable, as it frequently leads to a life of grossest immorality. (5)

(1) Letter to editor by J. S. Harrison, S.M.H., Nov. 20, 1889; also S.M.H., Sept. 19, 1891; and 1895 Ragged School Report (ML).

(2) The Suburban Times, Oct. 7, 1889.

(3) Dunstan, S.M.H., Sept. 2, 1895.

(4) The Weekly Advocate, July 7, 1877.

(5) Hon. C. K. Mackellar, Address given on the State Children's Bill and Infants' Protection Bill (Sydney, 1903), p.17.

Since the legislation of 1866, there had been a general apathy on the part of succeeding governments to introduce further measures to deal with the neglected child.<sup>(1)</sup> While the State Children Relief Board might congratulate itself that in the first twenty years of its existence it had brought under its control 10,724 children,<sup>(2)</sup> it was only the "tip of the ice berg". They were comprised mainly of orphans or deserted children whose parents were in prison or in hospitals for the insane. In 1903, Charles Mackellar, President of the Relief Board, stated that:

In no case have the children been removed from the control of their parents because of their vice, and their evil surroundings rendering them unfit to properly care for their children....." (3)

The immediate effect of the depression on the ragged schools in Sydney was a rapid increase in enrolments. From an annual enrolment of 271 in 1884, the lowest since the third year of the ragged schools' work, the figures jumped to 529 in 1887, and then generally remained well over the 450 mark until the mid 1890's.<sup>(4)</sup> The enrolment increase was also due to the establishment of ragged schools at Botany Street, Waterloo (1886), and Crown Street, Woolloomooloo (1895), areas where the problem of destitute and neglected children was particularly acute. In addition, there was a more effective application of the compulsory attendance clause of the Public Instruction Act, and by the 1890's, despite the problems of truancy and irregular attendance, attendance officers were having some success in urging parents to send their

(1) See Dory Peyser, "A Study of the History of Welfare Work in Sydney from 1788 till about 1900" in JRAHS, Vol. XXV, Part II, 1939. Also Charles K. Mackellar, The Child, The Law and The State (Sydney, 1907).

(2) T. A. Coghlan, Wealth and Progress of N.S.W.(1900-1901), p.528.

(3) C. K. Mackellar, Child Life in Sydney (Sydney, 1903), p.9.

(4) See Appendix C.

children to ragged schools, if they were considered unsuitable for public schools.<sup>(1)</sup>

Yet, at a time when the work of the ragged schools had been given a new lease of life, the schools were floundering through a shortage of subscriptions, brought about by the lean times. By 1893 the schools had accumulated a debt of nearly 1,000 Pounds.<sup>(2)</sup> Plans for the rebuilding of the overcrowded and dilapidated Glebe Ragged School in Bay Street had to be shelved. There was also a need for the establishment of a ragged school in Woolloomooloo, but initially the lack of funds prevented this.

Attempts were made to publicise the work of the ragged schools, drawing attention to their existence, justifying their work and soliciting funds.<sup>(3)</sup> These efforts had some success. Subscriptions increased in number. Governmental and vice regal dignitaries consented to preside at meetings.<sup>(4)</sup> The schools were put back on to a secure financial footing by a spate of large legacies throughout the 1890's.<sup>(5)</sup> By October 1894, the debt had been removed, and by 1898 the Committee was able to place 750 Pounds in an investment account.

- (1) 1891 Annual Meeting, S.M.H., Sept. 19, 1891; 1895 Annual Meeting, S.M.H., Sept. 24, 1895. As an economy measure, the Department of Education had handed over the job of the truancy inspectors to the police in 1893. This may have had a stronger influence on parents of non-attenders.
- (2) 1893 Annual Meeting, S.M.H., Oct. 17, 1893.
- (3) See, for example, letter to the editor from Edward A. Drury, S.M.H., Aug. 7, 1891.
- (4) Mr. Carruthers, Minister for Public Instruction (1890, 1891); The Governor and Lady Duff (1894); The Mayor of Sydney (1895); Premier G. H. Reid (1896); The Governor, Lord Hampden (1897); Premier W. J. Lyne (1900).
- (5) In particular, bequests from Mrs. Elizabeth Grose (1,600 Pounds), Mr. R. T. Ford (500 Pounds) and Mr. G. Sadler (400 Pounds).

In the intervening years the Committee had embarked upon a further building program. In November 1893 they were able to buy a block of land "at the foot of Bay Street" from the government, not far from the old school, and a "commodious and well appointed school" erected on it, which was opened near the close of 1894.<sup>(1)</sup> In the following year a school was established in Crown Street, Woolloomooloo.<sup>(2)</sup>

The economic and social effects of the depression also had a significant influence on the State's attitude to the plight of the destitute and neglected child. It resulted in a greater recognition by the government of the work of the ragged schools. Premier G. H. Reid and Joseph Carruthers, Minister for Education, both admitted the failure of the public school system to reach the ragged school child and saw the ragged schools doing a job "which would be impossible for the Public Schools to cope with".<sup>(3)</sup> It was agreed that the ragged schools' emphasis on love and kindness rather than the heavy discipline of the Public Schools, as well as the lack of compulsion associated with attendance, justified the need for such schools.<sup>(4)</sup>

There was also an acceptance by the State that the ragged schools, if they were to continue their work, should remain under the control of private philanthropy and independent of the State. Carruthers noted at the 1891 Annual Meeting of the Ragged Schools, that as long as the ragged schools were associated with religious instruction, the State must refrain from the work "at least until it could be shown that some better method could be adopted....."<sup>(5)</sup> This view was

(1) 1895 Ragged School Report. (ML).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Hon. G. H. Reid at Annual Meeting of Ragged Schools, 1896.  
S.M.H., Sept. 22, 1896.

(4) Carruthers at Annual Meeting of Ragged Schools, 1891,  
S.M.H., Sept. 22, 1896.

(5) Ibid.

reiterated by Premier Reid five years later:

When he was Minister of Public Instruction a long time ago, he proposed that the Government should take the matter in hand, but he was met with such a storm of opposition that it was impossible for him to go on; but the schools were, he thought, now in better hands than they would be under a government department. (1)

Such remarks indicated a complete change of opinion by the Government in regard to the education of the destitute and neglected child, at least from the point of view of the ragged schools. In 1878, the Government in office had proposed a complete takeover of the existing ragged schools, and in the early 1880's, in the wake of the Public Instruction Act (1880), moves were made to establish their own ragged schools. Now in the 1890's, the Government ministers saw a value in the independence of ragged schools from the State.

It is doubtful, however, whether this change of attitude by the Government can be explained as simply the recognition of the intrinsic value of ragged schools. No doubt this policy also arose because the ragged schools were seen as an expedient means of siphoning off the ragged and destitute within the public school system. At the same time, however, with the emergence of trade unionism in the 1880's and the beginning of the Labor Party (1891), the industrial disputes of the early 1890's and the growing demands for female suffrage, there was a reassessment of the need for an educated working class, particularly at the lowest stratum. Certainly the ragged school supporters were quick to justify the movement in these terms, using the same arguments that people such as Henry Parkes had used in the wake of manhood suffrage (1858).

(1) S.M.H., Sept. 22, 1896.

Edward Drury, in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald, stated:

In the face of the "one man one vote" measure, we are compelled to look after them, because the tendency of legislation is to place a share of power in their hands, and the exercise of that power without a due sense of responsibility can only be disastrous. The ragged boy who is playing in the back slums and alleys will be as potent at the ballot box as the George Street merchant and the shoeless girl as well as the carriage lady, will, in my opinion, in the course of a few years, have a voice in determining the destinies of her native land." (1)

With the gradual return to prosperity, evident by the early 1900's, the enrolment at the five ragged schools declined, although a steady intake was maintained.<sup>(2)</sup> When Louisa Lawson and a number of women from the Social and Political League visited the schools in March 1904, the enrolment was given at 400.<sup>(3)</sup> In that year the number of teaching staff had been extended to 15; 12 female and 3 male.<sup>(4)</sup> The visitors noticed a considerable improvement in the appearance and management of the schools, so much so that, with the exception of the Harrington Street School, "the walls of which were in a most filthy condition", it was felt the name "ragged school" was a misnomer.<sup>(5)</sup>

In October 1906, the Free Education Act finally abolished fees

(1) S.M.H., Aug. 7, 1891.

(2) See Appendix C.

(3) Dawn, April 1, 1904.

(4) N.S.W. Statistical Register for 1904.

(5) Dawn, April 1, 1904.



in government primary schools.<sup>(1)</sup> A decade later, the Public Instruction (Amendment) Act (1916) made the principle of compulsory attendance at state schools a reality. The legislation placed upon parents the responsibility of sending their children to school between the ages of 7 and 14 years. Attendance officers were given the right to investigate cases of children found in the streets during school hours, and to consult the records of private schools. The fines for parental neglect increased. The effect was immediate. In 1917 there were 20,000 more children enrolled in schools than in 1916.<sup>(2)</sup>

Important legislation had also been enacted to deal with the neglected child. This concern of the state for the welfare of neglected children had stemmed, in particular, from the experience of the depression of the 1890's. The Children's Protection Act (1902) and, more importantly, The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act (1905), heralded the most comprehensive effort by the state, up until that time, to deal with the problem. The Children's Protection Act prohibited children under ten years of age being on the streets at any hour under the pretence of offering articles for sale, and children under fourteen after 10 o'clock at night. Parents and guardians were liable to heavy penalties. The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act led to the establishment of a Children's Court whereby minors could be charged as being neglected if found roaming the streets, employed in street selling or guilty of any crime.

There was also a greater awareness by public authorities (and private philanthropies) of the effect of poor environment and home surroundings on vice and neglect. It resulted in a concerted effort to improve slum

(1) N.S.W. had been very slow to take this final step. Queensland had introduced free primary schooling in 1869, Victoria in 1872, South Australia in 1892 and Western Australia in 1899.

(2) Alan Barcan, Short History of Education in N.S.W. (Sydney, 1965), p.227.

areas through the City Council's land resumption scheme, and a greater concern for improvements in sanitation and street widening.

As a result of such action by the State, the work of the ragged schools became less meaningful and their existence questionable. The enrolment at the schools dropped sharply. In 1907 the gross enrolment of the five schools was given at 363, with an average daily attendance of 220. Ten salaried teachers were engaged. By 1920 the gross enrolment had declined to 203, and the average daily attendance to 127. The schools could only support four teachers, one for each of the four schools still in existence.<sup>(1)</sup> The schools sought a new identity in the Boys' Brigade Movement<sup>(2)</sup> and the Kindergarten Movement. An increasingly large proportion of their scholars came from children under the age of six.<sup>(3)</sup>

In their last years the schools changed premises repeatedly as the movement lost its continuity and purpose. In 1908 the Brisbane Street School was resumed. The school was replaced by the Jubilee School, a new building opened on October 17, 1910, in Lower Campbell Street, Surry Hills.<sup>(4)</sup> The delay in building caused a further decline in attendance. In the interim the head teacher, Miss Violet Paterson, had been continuing lessons under trying conditions in the basement of the Unitarian Church in Liverpool Street,<sup>(5)</sup> hardly the

(1) N.S.W. Statistical Register for 1907, 1920.

(2) James R. Fairfax, a prominent member of the Ragged School Committee, was the founder of the Boys' Brigade. See C. Brunsdon Fletcher, Sir James Reading Fairfax. (Sydney, 1920).

(3) Derived from figures given in N.S.W. Statistical Register.

(4) S.M.H., October 18, 1910.

(5) Ibid.

environment to encourage attendance. The Harrington Street School, under the supervision of Miss Kate Bowie, also closed down in 1910, to re-open soon after in the City Mission Hall in Lower Fort Street, Miller's Point.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1914 the Woolloomooloo School moved its premises in Crown Street to the Palmer Street Presbyterian Hall.<sup>(2)</sup> The Waterloo Ragged School closed in 1916 due to declining numbers and the resignation of the teacher due to ill health. It re-opened on August 13, 1917, as the Waterloo Kindergarten School.<sup>(3)</sup>

In 1922 the Jubilee School, the largest and best appointed of the ragged schools, was given notice of resumption.<sup>(4)</sup> Further land resumption in Glebe had also reduced numbers there. In their final year of operation in 1924, the gross enrolment of the four ragged schools was only 180, with an average daily attendance of 112.<sup>(5)</sup> Supporters had also declined markedly -- by 1922 the committee had been reduced to five; till the end, all male.<sup>(6)</sup> By the mid 1920's the Sydney Ragged School Movement had disbanded.

(1) 1912 Ragged School Report (ML).

(2) 1914 Ragged School Report (ML).

(3) 1917 Ragged School Report (ML). By December 1917 there were 60 children on the roll under an experienced teacher, and more could not be admitted without further assistance. The ages varied from 2 to 6. From 1918 onwards the Waterloo School was not included in the annual statistics of the ragged schools for the Government Register, and was not referred to in Ragged School Reports. In the last reference to the schools the 1918 Ragged School Report noted that there were 70 children on the roll. The children began the day with a lengthy procedure of scrubbing hands and nails then dusting chairs and tables, filling vases with flowers, then the remainder of the time given over to free play.

(4) 1922 Ragged School Report (ML).

(5) N.S.W. Statistical Register for 1924. The remaining ragged schools were given as the Miller's Point School in the City Mission Hall, Lower Fort Street; the Glebe School at the foot of Bay Street; the Woolloomooloo School in the Palmer Street Presbyterian Hall; and the Jubilee School at Surry Hills.

(6) 1922 Ragged School Report (ML).

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL NEEDS RECONSIDERED, 1890-1924.

The economic distress of the late 1880's and early 1890's had an important influence upon the attitudes of many ragged school supporters to the problem of poverty and neglect. This, in turn, led to some significant changes in the nature and operation of the schools in the 1890's. It resulted in a dilution of the evangelistic outlook that the movement had adopted in the previous two decades and an increasing concern for the material needs of their charges. Spiritual needs were still considered important, but the ragged school supporters were prepared to adopt a more balanced and socially realistic view of poverty and neglect.<sup>(1)</sup>

From the mid-1880's onwards, the depressed labour market in the colony had created a large pool of unemployed. Destitution was widespread and increasing demands were being made on philanthropic agencies, such as the Sydney City Mission and the Benevolent Society, for practical assistance.

Similar demands were being made on the ragged schools. The extension

- (1) J. D. Bollen's thesis, "The Protestant Churches and the Social Reform Movement in New South Wales 1890-1910" (Ph.D. thesis, Sydney University, 1966) shows a similar change occurring within the Protestant Churches in New South Wales as a result of depression and strikes in the early 1890's. However, the experience of the Sydney Ragged School Movement would seem to indicate that many of the working classes were in dire economic straits by the mid-1880's, and even before the depression there were signs of growing concern within the movement over social problems. This is in agreement with the arguments of Brian Dickey's work, "Charity in New South Wales 1850-1914: A study in Public, Private and State Provisions for the Poor" (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1966), in which he notes that "evangelism and social concern were already closely linked" before the 1890's. (pp. 290-291).

of their work into Waterloo had uncovered considerable poverty. The 1886 Ragged School Report noted that two thirds of the parents whose children attended the Waterloo School were on outdoor relief. In the Report of the following year Mr. Main, a City Missionary, stated that the parents of half the children of the Waterloo School were living by the aid of the Benevolent Society.<sup>(1)</sup>

The difficult times also caused irregular attendance at the schools, as well as the problems of lack of food and adequate clothing. Many of the children, it was noted, came to the schools without anything to eat,<sup>(2)</sup> and reference was made to their ragged and "bootless" appearance.<sup>(3)</sup> This increased contact with destitution led to a greater understanding and sympathy for the plight of the unemployed and poverty stricken. The old attitudes to the problems of poverty and neglect were challenged through the experience of the depression. No longer were evangelistic practices seen as the sole solution to these problems. Whereas once the major causes of poverty and neglect were seen as laziness and drunkenness, now other factors such as unemployment, accidents, sickness, desertion and old age were also seen as important. The temperance lobby of the 1870's and 1880's had achieved the introduction of more stringent legislation on the liquor traffic with stricter licensing, higher duties, earlier closing and an end to Sunday trading. All had their effect on a decline in convictions of drunkenness - yet despite this trend, poverty and neglect had increased. It led philanthropists to look to social problems rather than simply individual fault for the cause of poverty and neglect.

(1) S.M.H., Sept. 6, 1887.

(2) Ibid.

(3) The Dawn, July 5, 1890.

For the Ragged School Committee, vice and intemperance were still seen as important causes of poverty -- the Annual Report of 1897 stated bluntly that "...the principal cause of the trouble was drink"...but there was less proselytising against intemperance in the Ragged School Reports in general, and more concern with economic hardship and material relief for needy recipients.<sup>(1)</sup> The Committee was prepared to concede that "in some cases the poverty is due to misfortune, the parents having been reduced through stress of circumstance."<sup>(2)</sup>

Similar attitudes were to be found amongst the individual supporters of the ragged schools. The Reverend Samuel Wilkinson (1813-1899) had been a supporter of the ragged school movement since the mid-1880's and a member of the Ragged School Committee from 1891 until his death in 1899.

A Wesleyan, Wilkinson had retired from circuit work in 1877 and became a supernumerary, firstly at Chippendale and afterwards at Stanmore, for sixteen years. His retirement from active work gave him the opportunity to visit many of the charitable institutions in Sydney, including the Female Refuge, of which he was a founder. He was a keen evangelist as well as being a strong temperance supporter, having been a prominent member of the Local Option League.<sup>(3)</sup> Yet, in 1894, when he was interviewed by The Methodist about the activities of the ragged schools, it was to the physical rather than the spiritual destitution of the children that he referred. He noted that the children were "...ill-clad, ill-housed and ill-fed -- some of whom came to school faint and sick, not having tasted any food."<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) See, for example, 1892 Annual Report, S.M.H., Sept. 27, 1892.

(2) 1896 Annual Report, S.M.H., Sept. 22, 1896.

(3) Glad Tidings, June, 1891.

(4) The Methodist, March 31, 1894.

Nor did Wilkinson make any mention of intemperance as a cause of the children's poverty. It was the social problems of poverty to which he referred. He noted that:

Some of the parents of the children are respectable persons out of employment, of others the father or mother is dead or sick, or perhaps in jail, and the Ragged Schools seem their only resort if they are to receive any education or religious instruction. (1)

This change in attitude did not reflect any significant change in the composition of the ragged school committees. In 1893, J. S. Harrison's position as secretary was taken by the Reverend James Buchan from the Pyrmont Congregational Church, but most of the long standing committee members remained, including the Dean of Sydney, Reverend R. S. Paterson, James R. Fairfax, N. J. Crocker, Matthew Charlton, J. H. Goodlet and Joseph Thompson. Although its numbers had increased during the 1890's, the Committee remained dominated by those from the Dissenting Churches. Those Anglicans who remained on the committee, such as the Reverends Bartlett, Martin and Joshua Hargrave, were strongly evangelistic.

The major influence came from outside the Committee. In particular, was the influence of the feminist movement through the work of Louisa Lawson and The Dawn magazine. Women had always played an important role in the operation of the ragged schools. Most of the teachers were women; it was the early experience of the ragged school promoters that women teachers had far greater success in reaching the "gutter children" than did men. Of particular note was the long-standing service of the Bowie sisters-Louisa, Kate, Jessie and Elizabeth - who had held the positions of Principals at the Glebe, Kent Street, Brisbane Street, Harrington Street and Woolloomooloo schools, spanning over forty years. Women had also been prominent as voluntary

(1) Ibid.

helpers and financial contributors to the movement. However, the ragged school committees had always been comprised of men only, and it was the central committee that had determined the general guidelines for the schools.<sup>(1)</sup>

As a result of the burgeoning feminist movement of the 1880's women began to play a prominent role in moves to improve social welfare for the neglected child. Louisa Lawson (1848-1920), one of the pioneers of the women's suffrage movement in New South Wales, had been an involved worker for the ragged schools in Sydney since the early 1880's. In May 1888 she had founded a monthly journal for women called The Dawn. She had also initiated moves in 1888 to establish the Dawn Club, a Social Reform Club for Women, which would promote the interests of women and deal with such subjects as "health/temperance; suffrage; social poverty; education/dress reform; physiological and tell of the work that women were doing in the amelioration of conditions of surrounding life."<sup>(2)</sup>

The problem of destitute and neglected children became a frequent topic in The Dawn and the work of the ragged schools often alluded to. Funds were solicited for the schools and their work encouraged. More importantly, the journal encouraged a greater concern for social welfare legislation for the neglected and destitute child and a greater awareness of the material needs of the poor.

As a result of a request from Kate Gent, one of the teachers at the Brisbane Ragged School, the journal launched an appeal at the end of 1890 for money to initiate a scheme "to provide a slice of bread and

(1) This was in sharp contrast to the Victorian Ragged School Movement which was founded and run entirely by women. See Appendix B.

(2) Newspaper Cuttings Concerning Mrs. L. Lawson, pp. 35-6. (ML.MS).



butter...twice a week" for the children.<sup>(1)</sup> It was agreed that "many of the children come unfed but pride forbids them to confess their hunger, and this method would be a powerful stimulus to regular attendance."<sup>(2)</sup> With the money received, the children were given slices of bread and butter which were distributed at about 11 a.m. with a glass of water. For some this served as breakfast and dinner.<sup>(3)</sup> This meagre beginning indicated a new feeding role for the ragged school movement which was to expand to such an extent that it became its most important activity.

Other schools quickly took up a similar function. By 1895 it had become a regular practice at the Harrington Street School for the children to receive a hot mid-day meal which usually consisted of Irish stew.<sup>(4)</sup> This had been due primarily to the liberal support of Thomas Playfair. His successful wholesale butchery business was close by the Harrington Street School.<sup>(5)</sup> Until 1893 he was a keen supporter of institutions for neglected and delinquent children and developed a reputation for his generous help to the poverty-stricken inhabitants of Miller's Point and The Rocks.<sup>(6)</sup>

Thomas Playfair was representative of a new breed of public figures who were particularly concerned with civic reform. From 1875 until his death

(1) Ibid., Dec. 5, 1890.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid., Jan. 5, 1891.

(4) Ibid., Sept. 1, 1895.

(5) The site of the Harrington Street Ragged School is now occupied by part of Playfair's premises in Harrington Street. Thomas Playfair Pty Ltd., The Playfair Story . A Century of History 1860-1960 (Sydney, 1960), p.17.

(6) Ibid., Also Daily Telegraph, 16th November, 1893; S.M.H., Nov. 16, 1893, in Newspaper Cuttings (ML), Vol. 144, p.36.

he was an alderman in the City Council representing the Gipps Ward, Mayor in 1885, and Member of Parliament from 1889-1891, representing West Sydney. It was in his role as alderman that Thomas Playfair showed his reforming zeal, involving himself in improving the water supply and sanitation of Sydney, street widening and slum demolition.<sup>(1)</sup>

There were a number of other supporters, like Thomas Playfair, who became involved in the ragged school movement in the 1890's and brought with them a social reformist approach to the problem of neglected and destitute children. Many of the aldermen from the Newtown, Glebe and Waterloo Councils became involved in the ragged schools in their municipalities.<sup>(2)</sup>

Other notable supporters were John Sulman, Quong Tart and George Anderson.

The Sulman family were supporters of the Waterloo Ragged School.<sup>(3)</sup>

John Sulman (1849-1934) was a prominent architect who had arrived in Sydney in 1885. He displayed a deep concern for city improvements, proposing resumption and low cost housing schemes.<sup>(4)</sup>

Quong Tart was another supporter of the Waterloo School.<sup>(5)</sup> An Anglican and prominent Sydney philanthropist, Quong Tart was a very religious man who gave generously to the poor. He was influenced by socialist ideas

- (1) Thomas Playfair Pty Ltd., The Playfair Story: A Century of History 1860-1960 (Sydney, 1960), p.15.
- (2) Sydney Ragged Schools Reports, 1896, 1907. (ML).
- (3) Daily Telegraph, December 18, 1894. 1895 Sydney Ragged Schools Report (ML).
- (4) John Sulman, "The Improvement of Sydney", Daily Telegraph, Dec. 7, 14, 21, 1907.  
John Sulman, FRIBA, "Australian Cities: Their Past Growth and Future Development", Australia To-day, Nov. 1, 1915, pp.49-60.  
John Sulman, "Co-Partnership Housing", Bulletin No. 3 issued by Town Planning Association of N.S.W., July, 1914.
- (5) The Suburban Times, Dec. 15, 1900; Daily Telegraph, Dec.18, 1894; 1895 Sydney Ragged School Report (ML).

at the time, resulting in a deep compassion for the destitute and neglected.<sup>(1)</sup> A man of wide sympathies, his involvement with social issues ranged from moves to prohibit the importation of opium (which he saw as the major moral and social evil amongst his fellow Chinese in Sydney) to the free kindergarten movement, initiated in the mid-1880's.

George Anderson (1844-1919) was also a keen supporter of the Waterloo School in the 1890's.<sup>(2)</sup> He was a successful factory owner, having established the Rose Valley Wool Scouring Works in Waterloo in 1888. He was alderman of Waterloo from 1881 to 1894, during which time he was twice mayor. From 1894 to 1900 he represented the constituency of Waterloo in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>(3)</sup> A parishioner of St. Silas' Church of England, Newtown, under the ministry of the Reverend Joshua Hargrave, he had been involved with fellow Anglicans - Mr. Justice Windeyer, Mr. H. Stephen and Alfred Stephen - in the establishment of a Home for Fatherless Boys.<sup>(4)</sup>

This new wave of support from the feminist movement and civic reformers was largely responsible for the ragged schools becoming more attune to the social problems and physical needs of the neglected and destitute child. Poor relief became an important operation of the schools, dependent on numerous donations from individuals and companies - donations of flannelette from Grace Brothers and gifts of cordials from Tooth and Company. The schools also expanded their feeding role. By 1905 a regular warm winter breakfast of porridge and milk was given in three of the schools, and in the Glebe and Brisbane Street Schools, a daily winter dinner of soup,

(1) E. J. Lea-Scarlett, Quong Tart - A Study in Assimilation, (ML.MS, 1968)

(2) 1896 Sydney Ragged School Report (ML).

(3) Martin and Wardle, Members of the Legislative Assembly of N.S.W. 1856-1901; Daily Telegraph, July 19, 1894, p.5; April 14, 1919.

(4) Letter to Sir Henry Parkes from Alfred Stephen, Feb. 17, 1880, Parkes Correspondence (ML.MS), pp.32-3.

warm milk and buns.<sup>(1)</sup> This had been due to the generosity of their long-standing supporter....James R. Fairfax, and the Lord Mayor of Sydney. By 1911, 10,000 warm meals were being distributed to the children during the winter months of June, July and August.<sup>(2)</sup> The meals filled an important need.

[They] ensured [stated Miss Smith, a teacher from the Waterloo School] that the children got at least one warm meal every day as it was not uncommon for some children to appear at the school in the morning without having had any breakfast....<sup>(3)</sup>

In the same year, the Mayor and Mayoress of Waterloo, Mr. and Mrs. Paxton, were responsible for giving each of the children at the Waterloo Ragged School a new set of clothes for winter. Not only did the children receive food and clothing - limited outdoor relief was also extended to their families.<sup>(4)</sup>

Despite these changes in the operation of the ragged schools, the Committee remained committed to old principles. It re-emphasised the fact that the schools' operations rested on a religious foundation and that they were primarily missionary in character.<sup>(5)</sup> Material help was only secondary to the main aim of the schools which was "...the moral and spiritual reformation and salvation of the children."<sup>(6)</sup> Whilst condoning the extension of the work of the ragged schools into material help, the committee emphasised the importance of self-reliance and saw a danger that too much material relief might pauperise

(1) 1906 Sydney Ragged Schools Report (ML).

(2) S.M.H., Oct. 7, 1911.

(3) S.M.H., July 14, 1911.

(4) See New South Wales Statistical Register, 1914-1924, which lists the amount of outdoor relief expended.

(5) Sydney Ragged School Reports for 1900, 1906, 1907, 1918 (ML).

the children and their families.<sup>(1)</sup>

The religious aim was kept to the forefront in the schools' operations. The Bible was read daily and the schools opened and closed with prayer. Non-denominational, evangelistic agencies, such as the Ministering Children's League and the Christian Endeavour Movement, worked in conjunction with the ragged schools.<sup>(2)</sup> The Missionary Training Home at Stanmore used the ragged schools as a testing ground for their trainee foreign missionaries.<sup>(3)</sup>

Among the missionaries who visited the schools was the Reverend Henry Martin. As a successor to the Reverend A. H. Stephen at St. Paul's Church of England, Newtown, he followed his example in supporting the ragged schools. He later transferred to the Waterloo Anglican Church. It was close by the Waterloo Ragged School with which he became involved.<sup>(4)</sup> After fifteen years experience as a minister he resigned in 1900 to become a lay missionary in association with the Stanmore Missionary Training Home. He was a fervent evangelist, and his experience in the ragged schools confirmed his belief in the ameliorative power of the Gospel for the young. He viewed with concern the incursion of the State into the field of "youthful depravity" with the institution of a Children's Court as a result of The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act of 1905.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Reverend Martin's views were shared by others on the Ragged School

- (1) 1904 Sydney Ragged Schools Report (ML).
- (2) 1895 Sydney Ragged Schools Report (ML)
- (3) Sydney Ragged Schools Reports for 1901, 1902 and 1906 (ML).
- (4) Sydney Ragged Schools Reports for 1895, 1900 (ML).
- (5) H. Martin, Some Brief Notes on the Lords Dealings in the Matter of the Missionary Training Home, Stanmore (7th Annual Report, 1906-7), p.5.

Committee. The increasing power of the State in the field of neglected children was seen in a critical light because it threatened the use of the Bible which was the basis of the schools' activities. It was also felt that such legislation would only serve to undermine parental responsibility.<sup>(1)</sup> The Committee maintained its independent and anti-State Aid attitude until the end. In response to The Children's Protection Act (1903), it noted critically:

There is a sphere in which the State has to work and there is a sphere in which parents should carry all responsibility. And there is also a sphere in which Christian philanthropy has to do its part, in stepping in, when children are unspeakably poor, or unfortunate, but yet far from being criminals, or such as should be dealt by the iron hand of the Law. (2)

A further government proposal in 1914 to take over the schools was unanimously refused by the Committee.<sup>(3)</sup>

Hence, although the years of depression in New South Wales had led to a reconsideration of the operation of the schools, reflecting a more socially realistic view of poverty and neglect, their basic principles of evangelism and voluntaryism remained unaltered. As the State began to undertake more positive measures in the early 1900's for the welfare of the neglected child, the ragged schools' work became increasingly unnecessary and outmoded.

(1) 1903 Sydney Ragged Schools' Report (ML).

(2) Ibid.

(3) 1914 Sydney Ragged Schools' Report (ML).

CHAPTER X

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ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

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PART A .. ASSESSMENT ..

Any attempt to assess the success or importance of the Sydney Ragged School Movement is fraught with difficulties. Even the suggested attendance figures need to be treated with some caution. Throughout their history the Sydney Ragged Schools reached over 18,000 children .. if one accepts the figures returned to the Government by the Ragged School Committees. Yet these figures were the gross enrolment; the effective attendance was considerably less. Also, the figures could be easily exaggerated by over-zealous supporters. Critics suggested that it was possible for the same child to attend different classes within the institution - day, night or Sunday School - and be counted as separate people in the final returns.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is also arguable to what extent the ragged schools actually reached the class of children for which they were intended. In Victoria, ragged schools were criticised for having been established in respectable suburbs and dealing with the children of the respectable working class, rather than catering for the real "gutter children".<sup>(2)</sup> Similar criticism was levelled at the New South Wales schools. Although Ragged School Committees echoed Shaftesbury's often repeated maxim of "stick to the gutter", as the schools became more institutionalised, they tended to encourage the retention of the good scholars. It was a strong temptation to sustain an in-built success rate with the more tractable children without the problems of poor discipline or failure.

(1) S.M.H., Feb. 29, 1876.

(2) The Vagabond Papers, pp.187-193.

As a result, many observers questioned the name "ragged schools". As early as 1862, a Sydney Mail correspondent thought it was "...questionable indeed, whether the children of any ordinary day school are as a rule, more respectably attired or wear a more healthful or intelligent appearance..."<sup>(1)</sup> When Inspector Huffer visited the ragged schools in 1868 he noted critically that "...many of the pupils in the Glebe School and a few in the Sussex Street School do not belong to the class of children for which it is necessary to provide ragged schools."<sup>(2)</sup> Rosamond Hill, when she visited the Kent Street School in the early 1870's was also perplexed by what appeared to her to be inadequate efforts to ensure that the right class of children was being reached.<sup>(3)</sup>

Such criticisms as these make it difficult to determine to what extent and with what validity the ragged schools can be taken as monitors of poverty and neglect in Sydney in the Nineteenth Century.

Whilst the extent of poverty and neglect in Sydney was nowhere near as severe as in London, for example, there were still many destitute and neglected children who remained outside of any educative or charitable institution. Many of the children who attended the ragged schools did so on a very irregular basis. In this respect, the girls from a poor working class family, particularly the eldest, were more likely to be deprived of a regular ragged school education.

(1) Sydney Mail, April 12, 1862.

(2) Copy of Report by Inspector J. Huffer, Council of Education Archives . Miscellaneous Letters Received (1867-1875), Vol. 88, p.318a.

(3) Hill, What We Saw in Australia, p.324.



Parents were less inclined to let their daughters go to a ragged school, more so if both parents worked or if there was a one-parent family. Girls were often kept at home to "baby sit" the younger children, run messages and do domestic chores.<sup>(1)</sup>

The problem is further compounded by the fact that the extent and degree of poverty was so variable. Ragged schools often admitted children whose parents were suffering from want of employment and who could not adequately clothe them to enable them to attend other schools. When the parents found employment the children were supposedly dismissed. Hence, at times, particularly during periods of commercial depression, the schools catered for the children of the "respectable poor" as well as for the neglected child. It would be wrong, however, to underrate the work of the ragged schools in the field of the destitute and neglected child. They played a major role in the philanthropic effort to reach these children in an era when very little concern was exhibited on the part of the State. There is little doubt that the numbers at the ragged schools were swelled by the attendance of some children from the "respectable working classes". However, the Ragged School Reports detailed a grim picture of the lives of many of the children at the schools. The teachers' journals alluded to frequent cases of abject poverty and neglect.

(1) The ragged schools' gross enrolment figures indicate that the majority of those taught were male. The total male enrolment at the schools was 9,365; the total female enrolment was 8,659. Based on enrolment figures given in Appendix C.

It was not infrequent for one of the child's parents to be in prison - sometimes both of them. In other instances, unemployment, desertion, sickness, incapacity or death of the breadwinner reduced the family's earning capacity and undermined morale. The situation was worse for large families where the children were very young and not able to supplement the family income by street selling or other pursuits. In very difficult times furniture and clothes were pawned for food and drink - in most cases only the barest essentials for living remained. Families crowded into rented tenements; one family per room was a common occurrence. Living conditions were overcrowded and unsanitary. In such conditions violence, drunkenness and vice were prevalent. Children were the main victims in such an environment. Lack of adequate food and clothing was a frequently observed consequence. Less detectable was the exploitation of the children. One is conscious of exaggerated and emotive writing in the teachers' journals but, even allowing for this, the various case studies build up a disturbing view of poverty and neglect of children at the lowest rung of society.

How successful were the ragged schools in "reclaiming" these children? Unfortunately we only have the views of the ragged school supporters themselves. The schools' reports refer in glowing terms to the successful reclamation of their past students. Reunions of ex-pupils or the occasional visit or letter of a past pupil, now engaged in some respectable occupation, were held up as models for the younger children to emulate. In 1864 an attempt was made by the committee to trace some of the children who had been admitted to the Sussex Street School since its foundation. Curiously, the survey only investigated the 302 boys who had been to the school. Of these, 78 were still at the

school in April 1864, 20 had gone to other schools, 6 had been admitted to the Randwick Asylum and the Orphan School, 101 were in employment, 7 had died, 41 had left the district, 29 had not been traced and only 20 had been found idling in the streets. The report concluded that one-third of the boys "have been made good and useful members of society" and the proportion could well be higher.<sup>(1)</sup> To a certain extent it was the very success of the schools in instilling an improved discipline and appearance in the children, that brought about such charges of inappropriateness of title.

Throughout their long existence the ragged schools in New South Wales laboured under a severe shortage of funds. They were not strongly supported by the general public. If the schools were as successful as claimed by their supporters it is of some interest to consider their relative lack of popularity, compared to the London Ragged School Union, for example, or even the more widespread Victorian schools. There were some probable reasons for this lack of support. Ragged Schools never attained the status of Reformatory or Industrial schools in the eyes of the community. They were not incorporated into any legislation, unlike the Reformatory or Industrial Schools. That this was the case was due partly to the voluntaryist principles constantly espoused by successive Ragged School Committees, but it was also due to the prevalent attitude in the community that ragged schools were only temporary institutions.

Also, because they were concerned with the prevention of crime, rather

(1) The Sydney Mail, June 16, 1866,

than the reformation of those already convicted of crime or vagrancy, their need and rationale to exist was justified in abstract terms, and for this reason, less likely to be supported by the community. In addition, criminality was an anti-social trait that needed attacking, but neglect and destitution were not generally viewed in this manner - the general attitude of society was that it was the fault of the individual parents. Poverty and neglect were hidden from view, rarely appeared in police statistics, and did not, in themselves, threaten the person or property of others. Because of this, the community was less sympathetic to work in this area, except when the problem became so severe, as in times of depression, that it could not be overlooked.

It was also generally agreed that the colony of N.S.W. had an abundance of resources, a healthy climate and immense opportunities for the industrious worker -- in such an environment it was unlikely that poverty would be seen as anything other than the fault of the individual. It was a widely held view that neglected children were usually the result of parents who were lazy and dissolute. There was a fear that by establishing facilities for these children, the parents would be relieved of their responsibility, which would only encourage their vices. Such attitudes help to explain the reluctance of the State and private philanthropists to establish institutions which fed and clothed neglected children and catered for their material as well as their educational and religious needs.

There was little real sympathy and understanding from many of those who had the resources to help. This was no more clearly illustrated than in two letters to The Sydney Morning Herald during the winter of 1890. The first

was from an unemployed man out of work for "many months", replying to a previous correspondent who stated that the "bootless children" to be seen wandering the streets was largely due to the neglect of parents rather than poverty. Unable to keep his five children in boots, and struggling to keep them in bread, he noted bitterly that ".....a man may be as completely isolated in his poverty in this land as in any other".<sup>(1)</sup> A month later another correspondent wrote an indignant letter to the paper complaining that his son, a boarder in a large educational establishment in Sydney, should have to clean his shoes ".....after he has washed and dressed for the day's duties....as he must, if not excessively careful, soil his clothes as well as his hands." This was something that he "....most certainly would not be required to do at home...."<sup>(2)</sup>

Finally, it could be added that the lack of support of the schools was also because they were to be found in obscure parts of the city and out of the public gaze. Although occasional appeals were made for funds and support, there was little concerted effort on the part of its committee to publicise their operations.

However, these reasons do not completely explain the lack of support for the New South Wales schools. They were all contributing factors, yet many of the above comments could also be applied to the London or Victorian ragged Schools. Was there, perhaps, a greater philanthropic conscience in Victoria than in her sister colony? The Hill sisters certainly give this impression when they note the extensive use of the voluntary provision of The Neglected and Criminal Children's Act(1864)

(1) S.M.H., June 7, 1890.

(2) S.M.H., July 4, 1890.

in Victoria.<sup>(1)</sup> In N.S.W., the failure of the Government to allow the establishment of certified private industrial schools served to emphasise the responsibility of the State at the expense of private philanthropy.<sup>(2)</sup> A full answer to the issue might have to await a comparative study of the much more extensive ragged school movement in Victoria.

Considering the barely adequate finances of the N.S.W. schools, it is surprising that they continued for so long, while steadfastly upholding the principle of voluntarism and refusing to accept any meaningful state aid. That they did was a reflection of the dedication and zeal of its committee supporters, workers and teachers. It was also due to the unwillingness of the State to fully involve itself in the education and care of the destitute and neglected child. A token effort was made to establish state ragged schools and some consideration given to the possible establishment of day industrial or truant schools, modelled on the English system.<sup>(3)</sup> However, the unofficial policy of educational authorities in the nineteenth century was to exclude the ragged "gutter children" from the state schools.

Mr. Justice Hargraves, a member of the Ragged School Committee during most of the 1870's, regularly asserted that one of their children could be educated for two guineas a year. He and his colleagues saw this as a favourable indication of the stringent economy practised at the schools.

(1) Hill, What We Saw in Australia, p.348.

(2) Dickey, JRAHS, p.146.

(3) Interim Report of the Commissioners on Certain Parts of Primary Education (as part of the Knibbs-Turner Commission on Primary, Secondary, Technical and Other Branches of Education) (Sydney, 1903), p.109. The Commissioners had visited the Drury Lane Day Industrial School, the Upton House Truant School and Highbury Truant School and their recommendations were based upon these visits. See pp.89-90, 388-394. A state truant school was eventually established at Guildford, in operation by 1919.

Yet such meagre funding produced a very poor standard of education in comparison to State schools. One could also point to many questionable aspects of the ragged schools. While they probably did the most for children of the lowest stratum, they did at the cost of cutting them off from children whose parents had any claim to respectability. This imposed a social stratification on the education system that educational authorities were prepared to accept and encourage throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. This, in turn, tended to reinforce, at best, a patronising attitude to the poor, and, at worst, an ostracism. The schools also suffered, as did many other nineteenth century philanthropic institutions, from a propensity to show off the children through procession, and their attendance at annual meetings, to such an extent that one wonders if, perhaps, at times it was not their philanthropy on show rather than the children.

Despite these criticisms, the ragged schools did some valuable work. While the standard of education given may have been inadequate, for many of their charges it was the only education they would receive. Also, in their early years in particular, they promoted concepts that took Government bodies years to imitate. From the outset the schools placed emphasis on kindness and love rather than the heavy discipline and punishment of Industrial Schools based on the barrack system, or, for that matter, the ordinary State schools. The policy of placement of children in the care of families in the country foreshadowed the implementation of the Boarding Out System (1881) long before it was introduced. Their supporters were the forefront in the movement to establish Industrial and Reformatory schools, and the attempts of the ragged school movement to establish a private

Industrial School based on the "family system" rather than the traditional "barrack system", was indicative of the innovative nature of the movement in its early years.

In 1874, the Second Report of the Commissioners of Public Charities advocated the establishment of private Industrial Schools based on a "family system". The Commissioners argued that:

If started in our country districts, they would have the beneficial tendency of preventing the congregation of children of the pauper class in the metropolis, whilst from their proximity to country life, they would have great advantages in the facility with which their inmates could be apprenticed out. (1)

Their arguments were simply echoing the sorts of reasons that Edward Joy had presented to the Ragged School Committee in the early 1860's.

Throughout their history the Sydney Ragged Schools were a curious mixture of innovation and conservatism. Their work in the field of destitute and neglected children was of significant proportions, but it would appear that the ragged school movement is more important for what light it sheds on the differing nineteenth century attitudes towards the reclamation of such children.

It should be noted that these attitudes were the responses of middle class philanthropists and this study of the ragged schools in New South Wales has been presented from their viewpoint. One can only surmise what the views of the working classes were to these philanthropic efforts. And what of the ragged school children themselves - and their parents? Were they thankful for what had been

(1) Second Report of the Commissioners Appointed to inquire and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony (Sydney, 1874), p.59.



done for them? Did they consider that they had been reclaimed and elevated? These questions have not been answered by this thesis, but perhaps they point the way for further research. The difficulty lies in the availability of sources.

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PART B .. CONCLUSIONS ..

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"It is not uncommon to hear the poor referred to as being 'bone lazy' or 'born bludgers' or possessing 'filthy habits' or being 'completely incapable of handling money' or being 'hopelessly irresponsible' or 'wasting their money on useless things and on inessentials like drink'." (1)

The thesis has argued that the emergence of ragged schools in New South Wales was due to the combined influence of two major factors. On the one hand, the influence of the ragged school movements in Britain, and their differing philosophies towards the reclamation of the neglected, destitute or delinquent child. On the other, the increased concern within the colony of New South Wales for the welfare of these types of children, stimulated by the economic and social dislocation of the gold rushes of the 1850's.

From both sources there developed two main schools of thought regarding the reclamation of ragged children; those philanthropists who were guided primarily by an evangelistic motive, and those whose dominant concern was to help reform society. Such a generalisation need to be seriously qualified. There were many supporters of

(1) P. J. Hollingworth, The Powerless Poor (Melbourne, 1972), p.59.

ragged schools, as well as many other philanthropic institutions, for whom there was a considerable overlap between the two motives. Many evangelists, in spite of their narrow outlook, would have seen themselves as reforming society, and there were many social reformers who also had strong evangelistic motives. The difference between these groups was one of emphasis rather than any major distinction, but the difference was none the less discernible for that.

From the outset, both these strands of thought were evident among the supporters of the Sydney Ragged Schools. At different times in the history of the ragged schools, one or the other attitudes tended to dominate; in the formative years of the movement (1860-67), the social reformist approach; in the years of development and consolidation (1868-1889), the evangelist approach; in the years of expansion and demise (1890-1924), a return, in part, to social concerns.

During these different phases, one can observe different attitudes towards the poverty, neglect and criminality of children. While there was unanimous agreement that there was a need for the reclamation of these "gutter children" from their paths of vice and depravity, there were differences of opinion between the two groups as to how this should be best achieved. This, in turn, was the result of differing attitudes towards the causes of the problem.

The social reformist viewpoint was that these problems were caused mainly by faults in society - inadequate housing for the poor, overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate recreational space and lack of education. Although alcohol was seen as a cause of poverty, neglect and crime, it was also viewed as the result of much wider social problems. Drunkenness was an escape from the miserable living

conditions and the worries of living; from the spectres of unemployment, old age, desertion, sickness or incapacity, in an era when social welfare was unheard of, and charitable relief, inadequate and discriminating. The evangelist viewpoint, on the other hand, saw the problems caused largely by faults in the individual; lack of religion, lack of industry, lack of thrift and lack of sobriety. Hence, while both groups saw religion as an important means of reclaiming these children, the evangelists tended to see solutions only in spiritual terms. The social reformists within the movement saw the need for major reforms in housing, sanitation and education. They saw a value in the extension of a wide secular education to the neglected and destitute, the provision of food and clothing, and the training of the children in industrial activities. In addition, the social reformists were much more prepared to encourage State involvement in the care and education of the neglected and destitute child and were not averse to receiving State aid to further their own work.

Significantly, the majority of those who supported the social reformist viewpoint, at least in the early years of the schools' activities, tended to come from the Anglican Church, whereas the evangelists were dominated by those from the Dissenting Churches. There was also a close correlation between the degree of social concern within the ragged schools, as well as the community, and the extent of economic and social dislocation within the colony.

Hence, this study of the New South Wales Ragged School Movement has provided an insight into the differing philanthropic responses

to the care and education of the neglected and destitute child in the nineteenth century. It is worth noting that poverty and neglect still remain serious social problems today.<sup>(1)</sup> Although ragged schools have long disappeared, the attitudes of the community towards poverty and neglect has changed very little.

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- (1) A fairly recent source (Hollingworth, pp.39-40) has estimated that in 1972 as many as 2,215,962 Australians, or over 17% of the population, were either in primary poverty or financially vulnerable circumstances. In times of high unemployment these figures would be much higher.
- (2) Ibid., pp. 51, 52, 59. See introductory quote to Part B of this chapter.

APPENDIX A

TASMANIAN RAGGED SCHOOLS

The Hobart Town Ragged School Association was founded in June, 1853. After two previous unsuccessful attempts, the first ragged school was opened in Watchorn Street, Hobart, on 7th October, 1854, with thirteen children.<sup>(1)</sup>

Initially the Hobart Ragged Schools were based on the principles of the London Ragged School Union.<sup>(2)</sup>

The first schools were Sunday Ragged Schools established in conjunction with the Hobart City Mission.<sup>(3)</sup> The major reason their promoters gave for the establishment of the schools was to counter the prevalence of drunkenness among the poor which in turn led to destitution and crime.<sup>(4)</sup> The chief means of amelioration of the children was through the Bible, from which the reading lessons were selected.<sup>(5)</sup>

The work of the Association was soon extended with the opening of a Ragged Industrial School in Lower Collins Street in February, 1856, following an application to the Governor, Sir Henry Fox Young, for a free grant of land on which to erect a school house.<sup>(6)</sup> The boys were

(1) First Report of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association (Tasmania, 1856), p.20, (ML).

(2) The Hobart Town Advertiser, June 7, 1853.

(3) Ibid.

(4) First Report of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association (Tasmania, 1856, appendix, p.18, (ML).

(5) Rules of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association (Archives Office of Tasmania).

(6) Colonial Secretary's Dept. File CSD 1/96/2629. A petition to the Governor dated 29th Aug. 1856(?) to grant a site for a new Ragged Industrial School. (Archives Office of Tasmania)

taught useful trades and the girls needlework. A secular education was given which included basic instruction in the 3R's, as well as the elements of English grammar, geography and singing. The moral and religious improvement of the children was also attended to. Many of the children also received clothing and footwear which was partly financed by their industrial work.

In January, 1868, the Cascade Road Free School, which had been in operation for "some three or four years", amalgamated with the Hobart Town Ragged School Association, which their Twelfth Report noted with pleasure.<sup>(1)</sup>

The enrolments at the schools increased considerably during the 1850's and 1860's. By 1858 the annual enrolment had increased to 200.<sup>(2)</sup> Ten years later the total attendance of the two ragged schools since their inception was 3,407, as well as 271 from the newly acquired Cascade Road School.<sup>(3)</sup> The average total number on the books of the three schools for the year 1868 was 446, with a total average daily attendance of 263.<sup>(4)</sup>

In the early years of the schools' operation, the Committee strongly opposed any interference in the education of the poor and indigent by the Government. It was felt that this should remain the province of

(1) Twelfth Report of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association (Hobart, 1869), p.4.

(2) Hobart Town Advertiser, Aug. 24, 1858.

(3) Twelfth Report, p.5.

(4) Ibid. The report noted that these figures represented a falling-off in numbers, mainly due to Free Schools being established in the neighbourhood by the Roman Catholic Church.

private philanthropy.<sup>(1)</sup> However, by the 1870's, similar to the N.S.W. experience, there was strong support from the Anglican denomination for the schools to be absorbed into the National System and be called Free Schools.<sup>(2)</sup> In 1878 the Managing Committee resolved in favour of dissolving the schools, however a meeting of supporters rescinded the resolution.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Hobart Town Ragged School Association continued to operate until 1911, when by Act of Parliament the "Hobart Children's Aid Association" was incorporated and had vested in it the lands of the Ragged School Association.<sup>(4)</sup>

The Hobart Ragged School movement was similar to the N.S.W. movement in most respects, however it did differ in one significant aspect. The N.S.W. Ragged Schools were based almost entirely on voluntary subscriptions, and except for the occasional small grant of stationery and books, the Government did not aid the schools. This situation was maintained by successive ragged school committees, fearful that government aid, if extended, might undermine the independence of the schools.

On the other hand, the Hobart Ragged School movement, although supported

(1) First Report, p.18.

(2) The Australian Churchman, March 20, 1875.

(3) Church News, June, 1878.

(4) 2 George V, No. 13. "An Act to incorporate 'The Hobart Children's Aid Association', to vest certain lands, and for other purposes", 2nd December, 1911.



partly by voluntary subscriptions, received substantial state aid. In 1855 and 1856, the Board of Education gave cash grants of 25 Pounds and 50 Pounds respectively to the committee, as well as grants of books and school requisites.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1857 the 50 Pound grant continued, and the Second Annual Report of the Hobart Town Ragged School Association noted that "further grants appear likely for following years".<sup>(2)</sup> The government also gave the Association a free grant of land for the erection of the Lower Collins Street School, as well as a donation of 700 Pounds towards the building.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Board of Education grants increased over the years. In 1872 300 Pounds was expended on the ragged schools by the government, out of a total of 19,000 Pounds spent on education.<sup>(4)</sup> By 1875 it was noted, the schools were subsidized by about one half of their funds by the government, which also generally supervised the running of the schools.<sup>(5)</sup>

Unlike the N.S.W. Ragged School Movement, which adopted a strong voluntaryist and anti-state-aid attitude, the Tasmanian schools actively sought and received substantial State aid.

(1) First Report, 1856, pp.6-7.

(2) Second Report, (Tasmania, 1857), p.6, (ML).

(3) Hobart Town Advertiser, Aug. 24, 1858.

(4) Examiner, Sept. 13, 1873.

(5) The Australian Churchman, Sept. 11, 1875.

APPENDIX B

THE RAGGED SCHOOL MOVEMENT IN VICTORIA.

Ragged schools originated in Victoria in November, 1859, when a school was opened in Smith Street, Collingwood.<sup>(1)</sup> It was founded by a group of women led by Mrs. Hornbrook, who had previously been involved in the visitation of houses "of the lowest and most degraded of the population".<sup>(2)</sup>

As in New South Wales, the Victorian Ragged Schools were a response, in part, to the unemployment and destitution of the time of many of those who made up the working classes of the colony.<sup>(3)</sup> Public attention was also focussed on the extent of drunkenness, prostitution and crime in the colony and suggestions made in the press for the establishment of reformatories and industrial schools to cope with the number of destitute and neglected children and juvenile offenders.<sup>(4)</sup>

Other ragged schools followed soon after the Smith Street School, opening in Rokeby Street, Collingwood (January 1860); Little Bourke Street East, Melbourne (June, 1860); Simpson's Road, Collingwood (August, 1860); Little Bourke Street West, Melbourne (August, 1860); Sydney Street, Collingwood (February, 1861); Commercial Road, Prahran (October, 1861);

- (1) First Annual Report of the Hornbrook Ragged School Association (Melbourne, 1863), p.7.
- (2) Report of Ragged Schools in Melbourne (n.p. August, 1962), p.3, (ML).
- (3) See, for example, The Age, January 17, 1859, p.5; February 15, 1859, p.4.
- (4) Ibid., April 2, 1859, p.5; May 16, 1859, p.6; September 27, 1859, p.4; December 13, 1859, p.5.

Duke Street, Prahran (March, 1862) and Little Lonsdale Street East, Melbourne (October, 1862).<sup>(1)</sup> Several of the schools included Mrs. Hornbrook's name in their titles and were often collectively called "Old Mrs. Hornbrook's Schools".<sup>(2)</sup> When Mrs. Hornbrook died in August, 1862, the Hornbrook Ragged School Association was founded to give some organisation to the schools. A central committee was formed to generally supervise the schools, distribute funds and acquire additional buildings for further schools. Within this framework each school was worked on independent lines by a small committee who provided most of the funds necessary for the school's maintenance, visited it periodically and exercised general supervision of the teacher.<sup>(3)</sup> The central committee consisted of the treasurers of each school committee, as well as a President, Vice-President and Secretary.<sup>(4)</sup> In sharp contrast to the Sydney Ragged Schools, all of the committees were comprised entirely of women.

A ragged school was also established at Geelong by the end of 1863. On November 13, 1863, a meeting of Geelong women decided on the establishment of "one or more" ragged schools to cope with the "large and increasing number of poor and neglected children whose physical and moral cultivation claims the attention and sympathy

(1) First Annual Report of the Hornbrook Ragged School Association (Melbourne, 1863).

(2) The Argus, March 12, 1864.

(3) John Stanley James, The Vagabond Papers (Carlton, 1969), p.185. (First published in 5 vols. by George Robertson, 1877-8). The information on ragged schools was originally published in The Argus, September 23, 1876; October 28, 1876.

(4) From "Rules for the Management of the Hornbrook Ragged School Association" in Sixth Annual Report of the Hornbrook Ragged School Association (Melbourne, 1868), p.5.

of the whole Christian community....."(1) In the following month a further meeting established the Geelong Ragged School Association. The first ragged school under its auspices was opened at 25 Corio Street in January, 1864, with 59 children on its rolls.(2) A Sunday School was organised as an adjunct to the day school and a daily meal was regularly supplied to those in need. A second ragged school was opened in Geelong in O'Connell Street, Ashby, in March, 1865, with an average attendance of 40 during its first year.(3)

The ragged school movement in Victoria continued to expand during the 1860's. By 1867 there were 12 schools in operation within the Hornbrook Ragged School Association, catering for a total of 887 children, with an average daily attendance of 585 at a cost of 1,100 Pounds per annum. Further schools had been established in Sackville Street, Collingwood (August, 1863); Cremorne Street, Richmond (May, 1865) and York Street, Emerald Hill (January, 1867).(4) An extra school was established in the following year, making thirteen in all.(5)

Similar to the Sydney schools, the Hornbrook Ragged Schools were unsectarian, the committees comprising followers of the Church of England, Presbyterians, Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents and Plymouth Sisters. Because there were no clergy on the committees, the religious influence was less marked than in the Sydney schools.

(1) W. R. Brownhill, The History of Geelong and Corio Bay (Melbourne, 1955), p.278.

(2) Ibid., p.279.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Sixth Annual Report of the Hornbrook Ragged School Association (Melbourne, 1868).

(5) Statement by Rev. J. P. Sunderland at the Sydney Ragged Schools' Annual Meeting, S.M.H., July 30, 1868.

However, the schools were encouraged by the clergy of various denominations. In April, 1867, the Reverend H. N. Wollaston, the incumbent minister at Trinity Church, Melbourne, preached a sermon entitled "A Plea for Our Ragged Schools".<sup>(1)</sup> In giving evidence before the Higinbotham Commission in 1866, the Reverend Mr. McDonald urged extension of the Hornbrook Ragged Schools to assist the destitute children of Melbourne, particularly in the poverty-stricken area of Emerald Hill. His urging brought swift results, for in the following year a ragged school was opened there. The Reverend McDonald's other suggestion, supported by his colleague, the Reverend C. T. Parks, that costs of the ragged schools should be met by the Municipal Council in each district as a charge on rates was far less enthusiastically received.<sup>(2)</sup> The Hornbrook Schools, like their Sydney counterparts, remained a private philanthropy based almost entirely upon voluntary subscriptions.

In 1872, an Education Act introduced a free, compulsory and secular education system in Victoria. The legislation had an immediate effect on the ragged school movement, with dwindling attendances and subscriptions. In Geelong, the O'Connell Street school closed in 1874 and the other school stopped functioning soon after.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1876, the number of Hornbrook schools had declined to five --

(1) Reverend H. N. Wollaston, A Plea for Our Ragged Schools (Melbourne, 1867).

(2) Higinbotham Commission (1866), pp. 67, 71, 89, 174, quoted in L. J. Blake (ed.), Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria (Melbourne, 1973), I, p.155.

(3) Brownhill, p.279.

two in Little Lonsdale Street, two in Collingwood and one in Prahran.<sup>(1)</sup>

Despite the decline, the ragged school movement continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. There were still five Hornbrook ragged schools operating in the early 1880's.<sup>(2)</sup> Although truant officers from the Department of Education occasionally visited the schools, there was minimal contact between the ragged schools and the state educational authorities. The Secretary of the Department of Education, Mr. G. W. Brown, could only give details (based on the annual return for 1880) for three of the schools when questioned by the Royal Commission on Education (1884). One school, he noted, operated in William Street, Melbourne, with an average attendance of 38; and one in Rokeby Street, Collingwood, with an average attendance of 86.<sup>(3)</sup>

In 1895, the Melbourne Ragged Boys Home and Mission was founded in Latrobe Street. Established during a time of economic depression it received substantial enrolments.<sup>(4)</sup> It was still operating in 1912 although its numbers had been drastically reduced to 25 destitute

(1) James, p.186.

(2) The Illustrated Australian News, February 20, 1884.

(3) Evidence of Mr. Gilbert Wilson Brown, Secretary to the Education Department, Feb. 8, 1881, in Royal Commission on Education. Third and final report of the Commissioners and Minutes of Evidence. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, Nos. 47 and 47\* (Vol.3), 1884, p.9, Q201.

(4) There were 313 children under supervision at the end of 1899 and 345 at the end of the following year. The figures also reflect a greater co-operation between the institution and government authorities than had previously been the case with ragged schools. Of the 176 admissions during 1900, five were the result of transfer of guardianship and one due to court committal. Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Report of the Secretary and Inspector for the year 1900 (Victoria, 1901), p.8.

boys between the ages of five and fifteen. The Mission also owned the Ragged Boys Seaside Home at Frankston, where 20 boys could convalesce or enjoy a holiday.<sup>(1)</sup>

In Geelong, the closure of the Little Malop Street (ex Corio Street) Ragged school was followed by the establishment of a Mission School for Destitute Children in Yarra Street, which commenced its work in November, 1876. The school was sponsored by a number of women under the leadership of Mrs. G. M. Hitchcock. The school catered for many of the neglected and destitute children of Geelong, providing them with an elementary education (religious as well as secular), a daily meal, boots and clothing.<sup>(2)</sup>

The education of the neglected and destitute child in the nineteenth century remained primarily in the province of the private philanthropic institutions such as ragged schools. The work of the state in this field of activity was slight. However, unlike their New South Wales colleagues, the Victorian educational authorities were prepared, after the introduction of compulsory education, to accept some limited responsibility for the education of the destitute and neglected children of Melbourne.

On February 22, 1873, a state "ragged school" was opened in the Gospel Mission Hall, Little Bourke Street, with an average enrolment of 80 in

(1) A Guide to Charity and the Philanthropic Work of Victoria published by Charity Organisations of Melbourne, 1912, quoted in Blake, p.155.

(2) Brownhill, p.279. See also G. M. Hitchcock, "Mission or Ragged Schools" in Proceedings of the Second Australasian Conference on Charity held in Melbourne, November 1891 (Melbourne 1891), pp.129-130.

the first year of operation. The head teacher was George Williamson, previously master on HMVS training ship Nelson.<sup>(1)</sup>

When the "Vagabond" visited the school in 1876, the average attendance had increased to over 120, the children ranging in age from 3 to 15 years. In line with the provisions of the new Education Act, the religious element present in other ragged schools was dispensed with. However, school times were modified to enable a number of boys to leave early to sell newspapers, and the irregular attendance of the children, caused often by their selling goods in the markets or gathering wood, was tolerated for more than was the case in ordinary state schools. The children were clothed by the school in many cases and the teacher often performed the duty of truant officer, visiting the homes of children and looking for new enrolments.<sup>(2)</sup>

The equipment and facilities at the school appeared to be below standard; the Vagabond's description noted that "...the room is rather dingy and dirty, the only ornaments a few maps".<sup>(3)</sup> This was in contrast to the poster announcing the opening of the school which stated that the school was "furnished with the best of apparatus and appliances for educational purposes, including lavatories, etc."<sup>(4)</sup> It was also noted that 60% of the children at the school were Roman Catholics.<sup>(5)</sup> This disproportionately large percentage was not explained by John Stanley James ("Vagabond") although it may have been because many Roman Catholic parents would have

(1) Blake, p.58

(2) James, pp.178-181.

(3) Ibid., p.179.

(4) Blake, p.58.

(5) James, p.181.



preferred the secular instruction of the state "ragged school" to the Bible-based Protestantism of the religious ragged schools.

In 1878, after further criticism about the inadequate facilities at the school, it was closed down. The Royal Commission of 1877-8, appointed to enquire into the Victorian public education system had noted critically that the Little Bourke School "is in an alley, and the children are often taught in the road for want of room inside. Not long ago two Chinese brothels were opened hard by, and the children could watch the customers going in and out during the class-work."<sup>(1)</sup> The school was replaced by Melbourne State School which opened in Exhibition Street in a renovated Jewish Synagogue on March 1, 1878.<sup>(2)</sup> The new school remained functioning until 1889 when a decision was made to close it, it being felt by education authorities to be "too distinctively a slum school to be of much moral good to the scholars".<sup>(3)</sup>

Although the State made a positive effort in reaching the neglected and destitute child, it was still only a token effort. While not displaying the indifference that New South Wales authorities showed, the Victorian Education Department encouraged a similar policy of segregation, whereby "gutter children" were excluded from ordinary state schools. When Charles Henry Pearson conducted a one-man Royal Commission on Victorian education, five years after the passage of the 1872 Act, he criticised "the practice of the department...to abstain  
from sweeping

(1) Royal Commission of Enquiry. Report on the state of public education in Victoria and suggestions as to the best means of improving it. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1877-78, III,p.10.

(2) Blake, p.79.

(3) The school was closed on December 20, 1889. Ibid.

these children into our schools, lest they should impair their tone, or to provide them in some school of a special character".<sup>(1)</sup>

Those within the Education Department refused to admit that such a discriminating policy existed. As early as 1874, Simeon Elkington, one of the Department's first inspectors, in one of his reports, confidently asserted that "the new system of education had pushed its roots effectually to the lowest strata of society." Because of this, the need for such socially regrettable places as ragged schools had almost vanished.<sup>(2)</sup> Ten years later, when interviewed by the Royal Commission on Education, the Secretary of the Department denied that "gutter children" were excluded from ordinary schools.<sup>(3)</sup> Despite such denials, the Commission found that although there were very few cases of open exclusion by teachers, the Department was not actively enforcing compulsory education for this class of children. When truant officers found such children they were usually left alone or their parents were encouraged to send them to ragged schools.<sup>(4)</sup>

As in New South Wales, the Victorian authorities proclaimed an education system open to all, yet excluded the neglected and destitute child and tacitly encouraged the operation of ragged schools to act as "feeder" or preparatory schools. Only after reclamation would the "street arabs"

- (1) Royal Commission of Enquiry. Report on the state of public education in Victoria and suggestions as to the best means of improving it. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1877-1878, III, p.9. See also A. G. Austin, Australian Education, 1788-1900 (Carlton, 1972) pp.240-1.
- (2) Report of Minister, 1874-5, Victorian Parliamentary Papers, quoted in Blake, p.301.
- (3) Royal Commission on Education. Third and final report of the Commissioners and Minutes of evidence. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1884, Nos. 47 and 47\*, III, Minutes of Evidence, p.9, Qq208-212.
- (4) Ibid., Qq3723-3734; Qq 4175-4197.

be admitted to state schools and allowed to rub shoulders with other children.

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APPENDIX C

ENROLMENTS AT THE SYDNEY RAGGED SCHOOLS (1860-1924)

The following statistics were obtained from the Statistical Register of N.S.W. (1860-1888) and the N.S.W. Statistical Register (1889-1930),

Year	Schools	Enrolment on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1860	Sussex Street	72	64	136
1861	Sussex Street	98	79	177
1862	Sussex Street	83	77	160
	Globe Street	18	22	40
				200
1863	Sussex Street	100	73	173
	Globe Street	34	27	61
	The Glebe	59	57	116
				350
1864	Sussex Street	130	81	211
	Globe Street	56	44	100
	The Glebe	64	56	120
				431
1865	Sussex Street	100	70	170
	Globe Street	71	60	131
	The Glebe	80	79	159
				460
1866	Sussex Street	115	86	201
	Globe Street	59	64	123
	The Glebe	67	80	147
				471
1867	Sussex Street	74	71	145
	Globe Street	40	54	94
	Glebe	78	75	153
				392
1868	Sussex Street	53	58	111
	Globe Street	48	59	107
	Glebe	56	66	122
				340

Year	Schools	Enrolment on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1869	Sussex Street	48	51	99
	Globe Street	50	65	115
	Glebe	58	51	109
				323
1870	Sussex Street	65	50	115
	Globe Street	53	66	119
	Glebe	63	54	117
				351
1871	Sussex Street	50	47	97
	Globe Street	50	66	116
	Glebe	60	67	127
				340
1872 <sup>(1)</sup>	Sussex Street			
	Globe Street			
	Glebe			
1873	Kent Street (late Sussex St.)	50	48	98
	Globe Street	48	60	108
	Glebe	64	83	147
				353
1874	Kent Street	47	40	87
	Harrington Street (late Globe St.)	33	51	84
	Glebe	49	60	109
				280
1875	Kent Street	56	61	117
	Harrington Street	64	68	132
	Glebe	70	72	142
				391
1876	Kent Street	51	56	107
	Harrington Street	60	44	104
	Glebe	72	62	134
				345
1877	Kent Street	51	49	100
	Harrington Street	60	41	101
	Glebe	61	81	142
				343

(1) Figures not available.

Year	Schools	Enrolment on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1878	Kent Street	45	45	90
	Harrington Street	48	45	93
	Glebe	56	63	119
				302
1879	Kent Street	74	84	158
	Harrington Street	73	72	145
	Glebe	67	55	122
				425
1880	Kent Street	50	54	104
	Harrington Street	51	56	107
	Glebe	55	51	106
				317
1881	Kent Street	60	54	114
	Harrington Street	51	50	101
	Glebe	52	52	104
				319
1882	Kent Street	43	45	88
	Harrington Street	46	36	82
	Glebe	62	52	114
				284
1883	Kent Street	41	46	87
	Harrington Street	50	33	83
	Glebe	55	47	102
				272
1884	Kent Street	48	38	86
	Harrington Street	45	31	76
	Glebe	63	46	109
				271
1885	Kent Street	74	51	125
	Harrington Street	49	40	89
	Glebe ,	105	66	171
				385
1886	Kent Street	59	39	98
	Harrington Street	79	64	143
	Glebe	38	39	77
	Waterloo	50	76	126
				444

Year	Schools	Enrolments on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1887 <sup>(1)</sup>	4 schools	n.a.	n.a.	529
1888	4 schools	n.a.	n.a.	469
1889	4 schools	237	243	480
1890	4 schools	226	249	475
1891	4 schools	241	226	467
1892	4 schools (7 teachers)	222	224	446
1893	4 schools (8 teachers)	234	233	467
1894	4 schools (8 teachers)	200	193	393
1895	5 schools (8 teachers)	n.a.	n.a.	504
1896	5 schools (9 teachers)	212	168	380
1897	5 schools (9 teachers)	198	146	344
1898	5 schools (9 teachers)	198	156	354
1899	5 schools (9 teachers)	181	150	331
1900	5 schools (9 teachers)	183	154	337
1901	5 schools <sup>(2)</sup>			
1902	5 schools (11 teachers)	201	164	365
1903	5 schools <sup>(3)</sup>			
1904	5 schools (15 teachers)	197	157	354
1905	5 schools (13 teachers)	217	185	402
1906	5 schools (10 teachers)	191	162	353

(1) As from 1887 no statistics were given for individual schools.

(2) Figures not available.

(3) Figures not available.

Year	Schools	Enrolment on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1907	5 schools (10 teachers)	176	142	318
1908	5 schools (9 teachers)	124	116	240
1909	5 schools (10 teachers)	112	94	206
1910	5 schools (8 teachers)	104	82	186
1911	5 schools (7 teachers)	124	107	231
1912	5 schools (7 teachers)	110	103	213
1913	5 schools (6 teachers)	99	85	184
1914	5 schools (6 teachers)	99	90	189
1915	5 schools (6 teachers)	82	92	174
1916	5 schools (6 teachers)	63	89	152
1917	5 schools (5 teachers)	113	115	228
1918	4 schools (1) (4 teachers)	80	80	160
1919	4 schools (5 teachers)	73	73	146
1920	4 schools (4 teachers)	72	83	155
1921	4 schools (4 teachers)	70	80	150
1922	4 schools (4 teachers)	85	66	151

(1) Statistics from the Waterloo Kindergarten Ragged School no longer appear in these figures after 1917.



Year	Schools	Enrolment on 31st December		
		Male	Female	Total
1923	4 schools (4 teachers)	79	65	144
1924	4 schools <sup>(1)</sup> (4 teachers)	73	62	135

(1) The schools are not listed in the Statistical Register after 1924.

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