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Donogh O'Malley

And

The Free Post Primary Education Scheme

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For my first educators
my parents and grandparents
John, Éilis, J.J. and Elizabeth

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SUMMARY

Ireland, from the late 50's experienced a new era of economic expansion and this coincided with changing societal norms and expectations. Concurrently, An Taoiseach Lemass appointed Donogh O'Malley and others as Ministers for Education and these individuals transformed the Ministry of Education from its previously laissez-faire function to a new role of assertive leadership/initiator of change.

Donogh O'Malley served as Minister for Education for twenty months until his untimely death on 10 March, 1968. During this short period, he abolished the Primary Certificate examination, considered reports on Regional Technical Colleges and the Commission on Higher Education, established the Ryan Tribunal on Teacher Salaries and controversially proposed a merger between University College, Dublin and Trinity College, Dublin.

He is best known as the Minister for Education who proposed a scheme of free second level education. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse previously available public comments and the recently available private cabinet/ministerial and secondary school managerial papers regarding Minister O'Malley's free education scheme. This is supplemented by letters, interviews and recollections of persons familiar with the circumstances of this scheme.

The manner of the announcement of the free post-primary scheme was sudden and surprising and involved An Taoiseach Lemass in vetting the announcement speech. Public reaction to this speech was enthusiastic. Political and civil service reaction was

not as positive, as Donogh O'Malley had disregarded cabinet and Department of Finance procedures in announcing his scheme.

With Dáil, cabinet and Department of Finance approval of his scheme secured, the next focus of Minister O'Malley's efforts was to consult with the voluntary secondary school managers. These managers were dissatisfied with a number of issues - the lack of forward planning and consultation, the undermining of autonomy of secondary schools and the differential grants in lieu of fees. Fundamentally, these secondary school managers were unhappy with the cavalier style of consultation adopted by Minister O'Malley. An alternative scheme was proposed but the Catholic hierarchy informed the managerial representatives to accept the scheme. Finally, this dissertation concludes with tangible and intangible outcomes and implications of the free second level scheme. These range from the inequality of educational outcomes versus equality of access and the raising of societal attitudes towards second and third level education and the consequential benefit of this to the socio-economic development of Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the 1967 free post-primary scheme is inextricably linked with the name of Donogh O'Malley, so much that it is often called "the O'Malley free education scheme".

Much of what Minister O'Malley said publicly in 1966 and 1967 regarding his free education scheme has enabled one side of the story of the introduction of free education to be told. Now with the availability of primary source material from this period, a more comprehensive analysis can be undertaken. This dissertation draws on such source material for the first time in a study of this theme.

The first chapter outlines the socio-economic, cultural and political development from Irish independence culminating in innovation and change in the late fifties and early sixties. The announcement of free post-primary education and its immediate circumstances are treated in Chapter Two. Public and private reaction to this sudden announcement are detailed in this chapter also.

The manner of Cabinet and Dáil approval of free post-primary education are explored in the third chapter. The subsequent chapter describes for the first time the private consultation between Minister O'Malley, the Department of Education and the secondary school authorities.

In early 1997, An Taoiseach, John Bruton T.D. wrote in the Sunday Independent on 26 January 1997 that “one of the most important decisions taken in this century in Ireland was the introduction of free second level education in the 1960’s”. He suggests that this decision opened up higher education and job opportunities to thousands of Irish people and furthermore, he asserts that “None of this would have happened but for the original decision to extend free second level education back in the 60’s. This shows how important it is to think in a long term sense”. Chapter Five appraises the outcomes and implications arising from the introduction of free post-primary education in Ireland.

To the best of this writer’s knowledge, there has never been a comprehensive analysis of Donogh O’Malley and the introduction of his free education proposals, although aspects of the theme have been discussed in general studies by Seán O’Connor, Eileen Randles, John Healy and Séamus O’Buachalla.

The accompanying free school transport scheme is dealt with but not in detail. This is due to limits of space allocated for the dissertation, but particularly due to the unavailability of primary source material from the Department of Education and C6ras Iompair 6ireann on the establishment of the free post-primary transport scheme, which is much regretted.

Initially, the scarcity of available primary source material from the Department of Education made the analysis process difficult. Fortunately, archives from the Department of the Taoiseach contained most, if not all, of the significant papers and correspondence relating to Minister O’Malley’s free education proposals. Likewise,

the Secretariat for Secondary Schools provided primary source material originating from the Minister for Education and his Department. Moreover, the Secretariat for Secondary Schools archives enabled private consultation between Minister O'Malley and the representatives of the voluntary secondary schools to be analysed for the first time in order that a balanced view could be formulated of the scheme and its implementation.

I wish to thank those individuals, familiar with Minister O'Malley and the circumstances surrounding the free post-primary scheme, who offered recollections and opinions. Many of these requested that such assistance would not be personally attributed. I am especially grateful to those persons who wrote to me and/or granted me interviews on this topic, particularly Dr. T.K. Whitaker and Fr. John Hughes S.J.

This study details how a politician, with an unorthodox style, in a context of changing societal expectations, initiated educational change in terms of access and participation at post-primary level which was to be of landmark significance. The recent availability of primary source material regarding cabinet deliberations and private ministerial consultation with secondary school representatives has enabled a more comprehensive understanding and evaluation of the implementation of this educational change to emerge, than hitherto existed.

CHAPTER ONE: A Period of Forward Planning and Societal Change 1958-1965

From independence to the early nineteen sixties, the Irish educational system had changed little except for the major effort to gaelicise schools in the interest of language revival and national distinctiveness. Having established the Department of Education in 1924 and made significant changes in curricular policy, the general administrative framework of the system and the profile of the provision of education changed very little over the intervening decades. Moreover, the role of the Minister for Education and the Department of Education in these intervening decades was succinctly described by Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education (1948 to 1951 and 1954 to 1957) as

a kind of dungaree man, the plumber who will make the satisfactory communications and streamline the forces and potentialities of the educational workers and educational management in this country. He will take the knock out of the pipes and will link up everything.¹

Thus the first thirty five years of independence have been described as:

the interaction of a feeble economy subject to heavy constraints, a political culture in which educational policy was not accorded high priority and a range of political leaders who did not perceive the central role of education within any coherent socio-economic policy of national development.²

The manifest failure of traditional economic policies by the 1950's had left an open field for innovators. By and large, those innovators came from the ranks of the civil service or from academics who served as government advisers. Ronan Fanning remarks that "the available evidence suggests that the impetus came as much, if not more, from the civil service as from politicians".³ This new generation of officials was less constrained by precedents or ideology. This younger generation of civil servants who had experience of economic planning during "The Emergency" was now being

appointed to senior ranks in government departments. The most notable promotion was T.K. Whitaker who became Secretary of the Department of Finance in 1956, at forty years of age. He wrote the seminal publication Economic Development and this was the inspiration for the first Programme for Economic Expansion which was published in 1958.

Publication of the first Programme for Economic Expansion installed Keynesian economic principles as the main item on the national agenda. This effectively abandoned the assumptions that had guided the nationalist movement since the Land War of the 1880's - that Ireland would prosper by promoting the interests of the small farmers and of the native industry serving the local market. According to this view, Ireland's impoverishment could be attributed to it being governed for the benefit of Britain. Self-government in the national interest would inevitably bring employment opportunities, an end to emigration and the resumption of economic growth. The year 1958 marked the formal recognition that this old agenda was not tenable.⁴ Henceforth, the primary objective would be to reap the full benefit from participation in the world economy. Sociologically, 1958 dates the beginning of the contemporary period in Ireland when the various strands of societal change fused. This is clear from the consequences that followed the change in policy. The swiftest of these was Ireland's ability to benefit from the buoyancy of international trade during the period of the first Programme for Economic Expansion. Irish Gross National Product (GNP) grew at an annual rate of four per cent in those years and economic growth in the 1960's was faster and more sustained than any previous period in Irish history. In short, within ten years, state induced economic development beginning in 1958 transformed and

industrialised Irish society. Growth in the manufacturing and service sectors offered employment within Ireland.⁵

Ireland transformed rapidly in the post 1958 era from a society ostensibly dedicated to economic nationalism and its socio-cultural concomitants. It became a society which was prepared to adapt in the interest of swift growth, in a similar manner to developed Western economies. This can be explained by the transformation of a number of factors in addition to economic factors.

Social Change

David Thornley wrote that the new era of economic vitality, commencing in 1958, was quite simply the inauguration of a delayed peaceful social revolution.⁶ Another commentator sounded a note of caution regarding this peaceful social revolution that

one cannot radically change the material culture and hope to preserve all the rest intact.....We have set in train certain great and far reaching processes within the material culture which inevitably will have great and far reaching effects in other dimensions.⁷

The late 1950's and the 1960's have been called the best decades. Cardinal Conway spoke of a certain sense of "Spring in the air through the Church as a whole and if, I mistake not in Ireland also".⁸ These years constituted an era of radical change and apparent change.

On New Year's Eve 1961, Telefís Eireann went on air. British television had been received on the east coast for some years before. British and RTE news and current affairs programmes made events such as the Cuban missile crisis, the cold war, the visit to Ireland and funeral of President John F. Kennedy proximate and aided in removing

Ireland's relative and mistaken isolation from world affairs. RTE produced other programmes such as chat shows of which the most influential was Gay Byrne's 'The Late Late Show'. This programme on occasions became a forum to discuss and debate aspects of Irish life such as feminism, language and sexuality, in a manner similar to The Bell edited by Seán O'Faoláin in the 40's and 50's.

The visit of John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States, to Ireland for those few summer days in 1963 were days of national celebration. He was a young American politician of Irish descent who had become the youngest and first Catholic President of the United States of America. The Irish Press described Kennedy and his Irish visit with such headlines and phrases - "Kennedy Welcomed Home", "A Day Among His Own" and suggested that Kennedy was living proof that the Irish were made of 'the right stuff'. It has been remarked that after this visit, it was possible to believe that the Lemass tide would raise all boats.⁹

There was a renaissance of interest in Irish traditional music and in Irish writing. Seán O'Riada is described as the most outstanding artistic figure in Ireland in the sixties and was praised for his flair, for his discriminating regard for tradition and for his ability to fuse the native and the international in a synthesis that promised real development.¹⁰ Furthermore, he was regarded as typifying "those qualities of dynamism and national awakening for which Ireland so admired itself at that time".¹¹ Moreover, the growth in attendance at the Fleadh Cheol and An Tóstal, demonstrated the public's renewed interest in Irish music and Irish culture generally.

The public disapproval of books written by John McGahern and Edna O'Brien ensured their clandestine popularity among Irish young people in the sixties. However, these

writers were amongst the last generation of writers to experience artistic intolerance. Brian Lenihan, the Minister for Justice in the early sixties, was to introduce wide ranging changes to lessen censorship, by for example, legislation to provide for the unbanning of books after twelve years and the appointment of more liberal people as members of the appeals board.¹²

The showband craze is another enduring image of the energy and optimism of the sixties. The Beatles came to Dublin in 1963 and played to an adoring audience at the Adelphi cinema. 'Aircraft hangar like' ballrooms mushroomed around Ireland to accommodate the thousands who came to dance to Brendan Bowyer, Dickie Rock and others. Showbands were a source of liberation for Irish women with Eileen Reid, singing in her wedding dress providing a new and different female role model. Irish women were no longer chaperoned to local parish dances and they travelled in their thousands unaccompanied, to the new ballrooms of romance. Furthermore, Dermot Keogh suggests that "the showband industry was a metaphor for the take-off of Irish Industry. The message was clear - unfettered free enterprise was the path to modernisation."¹³

Religious Change

The Catholic Church in Ireland was subject to internal and external debate and adaptation, from the late 1950's onwards. It was noted that the economic and social changes afoot in Ireland would present great challenges to the faith of the people and to the Church itself. In such intellectual periodicals as The Furrow and Christus Rex, articles appeared which expressed concern at the intellectual poverty of modern Irish Catholicism . One such article stated directly:

Too many people in Ireland today are trying to make do with a peasant religion when they are no longer (sic) peasants any more. We are a growing and developing, middle class nation, acquiring a middle class culture and we must have a religion to fit our needs.¹⁴

In short, such periodicals contributed to the new dialogue in Irish society.

The Second Vatican Council had a major impact on the way in which many members viewed the church, the relationship between clergy and laity, the question of religious freedom and church and state relations. The Irish Hierarchy played a conservative role at this council. Returning from Rome in 1965, Archbishop McQuaid reassured a Pro-Cathedral congregation by saying "Allow me to reassure you. No change will worry the tranquility of your Christian lives".¹⁵

That being cited, in response to Vatican II, the Irish Catholic Church modernised its structures to some extent. Commissions for Justice and Peace, the Laity, Emigrants and Liturgy were established. The Catholic Press office was set up along with the Catholic Communication Institute of Ireland, under Father Joseph Dunn. He along with other priests were to produce one of the longest running RTE documentary programmes called Radharc.¹⁶

Thus, Ireland as a society had sought its rationale, in the pre 1958 period, in a separatism and economic isolation justified by national distinctiveness. After 1958, it had decided to open itself to the forces of the international market place, to set economic growth as the primary national goal and to enter fully into the economic and political life of the industrially developed states of Western Europe and beyond. Consequently, this ideological volte face had socio-cultural causes and effects which

have been outlined above. Our next focus is the political and educational changes arising from this volte face.

Educational Change

The route sketched out in the Grey Book and the first Programme for Economic Expansion pointed in the direction of efficiency, competitiveness and quality - quality of administration, quality of management and quality of labour. Few of these goals could be achieved without a transformation of the quality and quantity of education.¹⁷

There was no specific reference in the first Programme for Economic Expansion to education but it set out a framework for economic expansion within which education would subsequently play an important role.¹⁸

The Second Programme for Economic Expansion was published in 1963 with a specific chapter on Education. Furthermore, it stated that “even the economic returns from investment in education and training are likely to be as high in the long run as those from investment in physical capital”.¹⁹

The particular catalyst for educational change was the publication of Investment in Education Report in 1965 which was funded by the Irish Government and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This originated from Ireland’s participation at an OECD conference in Washington in 1961 on “Economic growth and investment in education” which resulted in Ireland participating in the Education Investment project. This project promoted a series of comprehensive studies in developed and developing European countries. Accordingly, the Irish

Government appointed a national survey team headed by Professor Patrick Lynch in 1962. He and his colleagues conducted a major pioneering quantitative analysis of the Irish educational system. Their report, Investment in Education offered a systematic examination of the education system, of future demands and of the structural and organisational weaknesses within the system. It identified as major faults, the social and geographical inequalities of opportunity, the inefficient use of resources and the imbalance of the system's output of fewer persons with an adequate education and/or technical qualification compared to more persons lacking in a basic education and/or technical qualification. It also drew attention to the inadequacy of the statistical data available on the system, the absence of any forward planning mechanism and proposed as its only specific recommendation the establishment within the Department of Education of a planning and development branch.²⁰

There were two particular issues raised by that report which were particularly important in accounting for subsequent educational policy developments. The first was, as mentioned previously, large social and regional disparities in educational participation rates. Hence, there was a need to move towards greater equality of educational opportunity.²¹

The second issue related to the needs of the economy. Here the concern of the Investment in Education report was that the level of trained manpower, given the current level of Irish economic growth, would be insufficient to meet the needs for such personnel in the 1970's without reform of the educational system. Most of the educational expansion that the reforms of the late 60's were aiming at was expansion in a particular direction. This increased participation was to be broadly vocational and

thus educational outputs would be matched in a broad sense to the needs of the economy for scientifically and technically trained manpower.²²

Such a view of the link between manpower and equality issues was common in educational thought and policy at that time. An educational system which was non meritocratic entailed a wastage of talent and resources and to this extent was ineffective and inefficient in its functioning of providing trained manpower for the economy.²³ Perhaps the greatest influence on educational thinking was the newly established theory of human capital, which came to prominence in Ireland in the early sixties.²⁴ This provided a clear justification for extensive state funding of education. According to this theory, investment in training i.e. human capital was the principal factor accounting for the rapid growth in the national output of post-war modern economics.²⁵ This point of view was taken up enthusiastically and promoted by international agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD.²⁶ Its influence on Irish educational thought is evident in the title of 1965 OECD report and the approach to education prevailing in this document. This thinking is also evident in the aforementioned educational sections of the Second Programme for Economic Expansion.

Political Dynamism

Fianna Fáil was returned to power in 1957 and this new government was to see the promotion of a younger generation of ministers and the retirement of the old guard. These young ministers brought to government a new dynamism and political dedication which seemed to respond to and reflect the popular need demanding urgent solutions for Ireland's social and economic problems.²⁷ This dynamism found expression in the

introduction of coherent economic and social planning in the form of the First and Second Programmes for Economic Expansion. The election of de Valera to the Presidency and the accession of Lemass to the post of Taoiseach in 1959 enhanced further the image of an energetic government committed to economic development.

This change in the general political situation was accompanied by raising the status of education as a political issue. Until the late fifties, the portfolio of education occupied a low rank in the cabinet hierarchy. With the developing formulation of a new education policy in the late fifties and the sixties, the education ministry was increasingly regarded as an important cabinet post. Energetic young ministers such as Lynch, Hillery, Colley and O'Malley were appointed to Education.²⁸

The growing public awareness of the importance of education alongside the extra resources allocated to education generated a wider political debate which, in turn, occasioned intense competition among the political parties. The opposition parties devoted time and energy to the formulation of education policies. Fine Gael prepared a set of co-ordinated policies under the general heading of "The Just Society". The Labour Party elaborated further on its traditional commitment to educational reform and their 1963 policy document advocated greater public investment in education and free education. Fianna Fáil utilised Dáil and press statements as contributory elements in the formation of policy but did not publish formal policy documents.²⁹

The general policy of the Lemass government was enunciated by Lemass himself when he intervened in a Dáil debate on a motion sponsored by Dr. Noel Browne T.D. Browne proposed that the minimum school leaving age be raised to fifteen and that

post-primary education be provided to all, irrespective of economic status. Lemass informed the Dáil that the government agreed with the motion but this would be done by “increasing the facilities for post-primary education”.³⁰ The evolving educational policy was further clarified in a major policy statement given by the then Minister for Education, Dr. Hillery on 20 May 1963. This speech contains many of the reforms of the late sixties and the seventies, the extension of educational opportunity, the establishment of regional technical colleges, access of vocational school students to all public exams, the creation of state funded comprehensive schools in remote areas lacking in post-primary schools and the promotion of higher technological education.³¹

Hillery’s successor, George Colley clarified further the educational policy of the Lemass government with the establishment of a planning and development branch for the Department of Education as recommended by the Investment in Education Report. Colley wrote to all post-primary school managers in January 1966 appealing for co-operation and collaboration between secondary and vocational schools in providing a comprehensive curriculum at a local level. Teacher and managerial reaction to this ministerial process of policy clarification and policy formulation was negative due to fears of the state trying to take control of secondary schools by rationalisation of school provision and fears of possible changes to teacher employment conditions and an absence of consultation with those immediately affected. George Colley was succeeded as Minister for Education by Donogh O’Malley in July 1966.

Donogh O'Malley

Donogh O'Malley was first elected to the Dáil in 1954 following the death of Dan Burke. Donogh was born in Limerick in 1921 and educated at Crescent College, Limerick. He played rugby for Bohemians and studied engineering at University College, Galway. He was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Department of Finance in 1961 with responsibility for Public Works.³²

At the Office of Public Works, he displayed his lack of convention by personally reading and signing every letter and document entering or leaving this office. This break with convention irritated his senior O.P.W. officials and resulted in Oliver J. Flanagan T.D., a former O.P.W. parliamentary secretary constantly tabling Dáil questions for Mr. O'Malley. Here, O'Malley initiated the refurbishment of older national schools and began the accommodation of Government Departments in the new office blocks. He took care of his native Limerick where he ensured the Mulcair River was drained and dredged properly.³³

Whereas new educational and economic policies were proposed in the late fifties and early sixties, new health proposals did not appear until 1965 with the appointment as Minister for Health of the young and energetic Minister, Donogh O'Malley. This was O'Malley's first cabinet post. He had a lively flamboyant style. Detailed administrative work was not congenial to Minister O'Malley but he was an asset in persuading fellow politicians and the electorate of the merit of his proposals. He was a politician in search of issues and on arrival in the Department of Health, Mr. O'Malley lent his support to those officials with ideas for action and more specifically, he agreed to publish a White Paper outlining the changes considered necessary in the health

services.³⁴ Optimistically, the new Minister promised legislation to implement the White Paper by Autumn 1966.³⁵

His openness and fresh approach were to endear him to many but it was his temperament and legendary short fuse that was to get the better of him on occasions. Such a situation was over the one difficult issue of the 1966 Health White Paper, regarding the mode of remuneration in the choice of doctor scheme. In the Senate, O'Malley criticised the leading medical spokesperson, Senator Bryan D'Alton, for rousing doctors on the issue of payment in the choice of doctor scheme and blamed 'hot heads' and 'wild catters' in the Irish Medical Association for stirring up trouble.³⁶ In an intemperate television interview, Mr. O'Malley claimed that some five percent of dispensary doctors treated some of their patients like 'pigs'. He warned the profession that he 'did not want to use the big stick' and that he would not be 'blackmailed into coming down on any particular side'. The expected showdown between the Minister and the medical profession was averted when Mr. O'Malley was appointed Minister for Education on 6 July 1966.³⁷

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CHAPTER TWO : The Announcement Of the Free Post- Primary Scheme

John Healy, a prominent journalist and confidant of Donogh O'Malley wrote that "Eighteen months - that astonishingly is the length of time Donogh O'Malley was Minister for Education. Eighteen short God blessed months".¹ In fact, Donogh O'Malley was Minister for Education for twenty months, being appointed on 6 July 1966 until his sudden and untimely death on 10 March 1968.

His appointment as Minister for Education was perhaps influenced by a cabinet reshuffle. The appointment of Dr. P.J. Hillery, a former Minister for Education as the Minister for the new Department of Labour was to result in O'Malley moving to Education from Health and the departure of George Colley from Education to the Department of Industry and Commerce.

O'Malley's transfer from the Health ministry to Education was regretted by many who saw in him "a glimmering of progressiveness, a man with not alone imagination but courage to say and to have done what he wanted done".² Brendan Corish T.D. of the Labour Party expressed doubts about his appointment to Education, saying

in this delicate field of education, perhaps the person the Taoiseach now proposes as Minister for Education, Deputy O'Malley might not be the most discreet. I do not think anybody would challenge his ability but, by times, as in the Department of Health, he has tended to kick over the traces.³

Liam Cosgrave T.D., leader of Fine Gael, was also to comment that "the Minister of Health is being moved from the Department of Health where he has promised

everything to everybody and given nothing to anybody because the government have no money to do it".⁴ The Irish Times editorial of July 7 remarked that Donogh O'Malley "would have less respect for tradition in the sense of red tape than many of his predecessors and if he rips through the Department of Education, he will have most of the parents of the country behind him".⁵

O'Malley knew what he wanted to do in the Ministry of Education long before he walked into Tyrone House, Marlborough Street. He had led the Dail campaign for a third level institution for Limerick.⁶ Earlier in 1960, he had talked about a merger between U.C.D. and Trinity at a seminar which sparked a clerical rebuff.⁷ Likewise, during the 1960 Budget debate, O'Malley possibly thinking aloud about educational matters, remarked,

I was hopeful that the minister might have devoted a little of his time to the serious plight of Education but he did not.....I would wish very much for a revolution in the educational sphere. The Minister spoke about output in agriculture and output in industry but the unfortunate aspect about young people coming from school, young people still in school and their parents who worry about what to put them on for, is that they do not know the answer.....I wonder is this country becoming less and less educated or has the generation growing up now any education at all.....We do not know what is to happen to the education of our younger people, but I do think it is the Government's duty to take some co-ordinating action, be it in agriculture or industry, whereby the young people can see a goal ahead of them when they come from school and indeed before they leave school, at which to aim.⁸

His reading over this period reflect his interests in education - The Dark by John McGahern.⁹ The foregoing would lead one to reasonably assume how Donogh O'Malley might work as Minister for Education.

The arrival of a new Minister is usually greeted with uncertainty on the part of senior civil servants of the new Department. Sean O'Connor, an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education during O'Malley's tenure as Minister for Education, wrote that "O'Malley had a reputation as a hell raiser, as being impetuous and as having little respect for convention which blinded many to his ability and his deep concern and sympathy for the underdog. From O'Malley, we expected fast and furious action".¹⁰

This fast and furious action may have been sparked off by An Taoiseach, Sean Lemass' speech during the Dail adjournment debate on July 7, 1966 when he said amongst other things -

The recent National Industrial Economic Council's comment on the earlier OCED report on Investment in Education emphasises the need for a very considerable expansion of financial outlay on educational development whichmust mean either giving this form of development priority in the allocation of public funds over other expenditure, however desirable, or willingness to accept further taxation to make it possible. The decision to give educational development the priority it deserves is the more practicable of these alternatives.¹¹

Donogh O'Malley took the Taoiseach at his word and initiated fast and furious action. On his appointment, he asked Seán O'Connor to assume urgent and personal responsibility for regional technical colleges, on the advice of his ministerial predecessor, George Colley.¹² Moreover on July 29, 1966, O'Malley addressed the City of Limerick VEC and informed them that he was setting up an enquiry, under the terms of the Vocational Act 1930, on its affairs and activities. He warned that if the enquiry disclosed a serious state of affairs which warranted serious action, such action would be taken.¹³ In fact, he disbanded the committee upon reading the enquiry report by Sean Mac Gearailt, another Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, and transferred the property, powers and duties of Limerick VEC to Padraig

O’Cuilleanáin, a Principal Officer of the Department of Education, the following February.¹⁴

Likewise, Donogh O’Malley visited Europe during the summer recess to familiarise himself with educational developments abroad.¹⁵ Before Sean O’Connor left for his own summer holidays, he briefed the new Minister about the Development and Post-Primary sections of the Department of Education. One will recall that the establishment of the Development Branch came about as the sole recommendation of the Investment in Education Report (1965). The aim of the Development Branch was to create an adequate statistical basis on the educational system and to have a forward planning role in the Department.

Minister O’Malley raised the question of free education during this briefing. Seán O’Connor explained that the plan was to increase the school leaving age to 15 in 1970 concurrently with free education to that age and in addition some form of free education up to Leaving Certificate. Minister O’Malley asked why wait until 1970. The new Minister was told his immediate predecessor, George Colley, had hoped for a considerable measure of co-operation and collaboration between secondary schools and vocational schools by 1970 in order that a student entering either type of school could avail of a broad range of subjects. Furthermore, vocational schools had only recently been allowed to prepare students for the Intermediate Certificate. It would take a few years to gain experience of this exam and gain parental acceptance and approval. These were the only reasons offered that O’Connor could recall. The new Minister was also told funding was unlikely to create any great problem.¹⁶ It is alleged that Minister O’Malley got wildly excited about the discovery and, furthermore, what

excited him was that free post-primary education would be comparatively economic.¹⁷

The conversation ended there with Seán O'Connor convinced that his new Minister had accepted 1970 as the target date.¹⁸

The new Minister had not accepted this. Donogh O'Malley rang Sean O'Connor at home on his summer holidays to arrange a meeting in the Hibernian Hotel to discuss free education. Upon O'Connor's return from holidays, the new Minister called a meeting. At this meeting, O'Malley asked O'Connor how long it would take to draft a plan for free education to which O'Connor replied six weeks. O'Malley wanted it for the following Monday.¹⁹ Sean O'Connor remarked that "in fact, a fair amount of work had already been done in the Department and we weren't really starting from scratch".²⁰ On other fronts, O'Malley was discussing the announcement of free post-primary education. It is alleged that O'Malley enthused and cajoled Brian Lenihan and Charles Haughey and lined them up as Cabinet allies when the time came. He invited John Healy around for nightly pots of tea to question and query about the social, economic and political consequences of a scheme for free post-primary education.²¹

The memorandum submitted to O'Malley and later to an Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, was very comprehensive. It contained two proposed schemes and was presented to Minister O'Malley on the following Monday. The first scheme proposed free education up to and including the Leaving Certificate. The second scheme had free education up to fifteen years of age and a means test thereafter. O'Connor and other officials reasoned that the second scheme would give the Department an element of control over those doing the Leaving Certificate and direct these students to schools teaching honours maths, sciences and modern languages. Minister O'Malley was not

enthusiastic about means tests and said that he would consult the Taoiseach over lunch. He returned from lunch saying that the Taoiseach wanted no means tests.²²

Seán O'Connor and his colleagues, wrote that both schemes were "costed insofar as this was possible in the limited time available". They opened the memorandum outlining the situation regarding free education in the six counties and the United Kingdom. The memorandum restated the worrying statistics from the Investment in Education Report regarding drop-out from school at both levels as "an accumulated loss of about two thirds." Likewise paragraph 6.92 of the same report is quoted regarding the disparity of education participation by the different social groups. The introductory remarks of the memorandum conclude that "it must be acknowledged that the picture presented discloses a state of serious social injustice. Moreover, it entails a serious drawback on this country's economic progress".²³

A number of commentators state that Minister O'Malley made a direct approach to An Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, for permission to announce the extension of free post-primary education to all.²⁴ One commentator alleges that Lemass, after discussing and reading the memorandum, decided against putting the proposal to cabinet formally and that Lemass fell back on an old ploy - he would let O'Malley fly the kite by breaking the news. This commentator remarked -

the trouble was that, lately, the cabinet members could not be sure whether O'Malley was flying the kite at the behest of the Taoiseach. Everyone knew that Lemass was susceptible to media stories and the trouble with most of us writing about politics at that time was to distinguish whether kite fliers - Lenihan, O'Malley and Haughey were using the device to promote their own policies, using the media to influence Lemass or genuinely sounding out an idea for Lemass.²⁵

Senior civil servants such as Whittaker²⁶ and O'Connor²⁷ confirm that Lemass knew what was happening. Charles Haughey concurred with this suggestion in an interview with The Irish Times on 28 March 1984.

Brian Farrell was to say of Lemass that he was “an adroit exploiter of the inspired leak, willing to organise press speculation on matters of concern, able to mobilise popular support as a means of accelerating executive action”.²⁸ Lemass told Michael Mills in The Irish Press in 1969 that he regarded such actions as -

part of the art of political leadership. One of the methods by which a head of a party or head of a government leads his party along a particular line of action is to speak in public in favour of a line of action before the government/party had decided on it.²⁹

Farrell argues that O'Malley in taking this step was only doing what Lemass preached and practised himself.³⁰ O'Malley's letter of 14 September 1966 confirms this when he wrote to Lemass -

I believe that it is essential for a government from time to time to propound bold new policies which both catch the imagination of the people.....I believe, also, that you have on a number of occasions done precisely this when it was most needed. I would be foolhardy enough to hope that my own policy statement of last Saturday was, at least approaching this sort of thing.³¹

O'Malley spent the first week of September drafting his speech and finished it on Wednesday, September 7. He also found his venue. He would deliver his maiden speech as Minister for Education to the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) seminar on Saturday, September 10 in Dun Laoghaire. Thus, his announcement would headline the Sunday papers and Sunday television and radio. The national papers would carry

the speech and reactions on Monday. An important speech, a seminal speech³² of this kind by right should have been delivered before a gathering of teachers or school managers or, more importantly, in the Dáil before his political peers. O'Malley knew this but he also knew that by doing it in the way he planned, it should bring him parental support and time/breathing space in which to deal with the churches, school managers and teachers.

On September 7, Minister O'Malley met with An Taoiseach at 11.30am to discuss free education.³³ After this meeting, O'Malley wrote to Lemass enclosing the memorandum on free post-primary education. There was obviously a detailed discussion at the 11.30am meeting of the memorandum and/or at a second meeting later on that day or on the following day to discuss it in detail. In this letter, O'Malley wrote - "I am making a speech on Saturday night and hope to make a general reference - without going into details - to some of the matters referred to in this memorandum, should you so approve".³⁴ The last four words confirm the general assertion of Lemass vetting O'Malley's speech. Likewise, Brian Farrell contends that Lemass had seen and amended O'Malley's speech before delivery based on Farrell's discussions with five of Lemass's ministers.³⁵

It is speculated that this vetting occurred on Thursday and that Lemass whipped through the speech at speed. On page five, there was the crucial paragraph announcing the setting up of universal secondary education which would be subject to a means test. Furthermore, it is alleged that Lemass took his pen and drove it through the means test phrase saying that this is 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Proclamation and that it was time that we started to treat all the children of the nation

equally.³⁶ One writer concurs that the announcement of free post-primary education could be deemed as an appropriate gesture to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising.³⁷ Furthermore, Healy alleges that O'Malley rang him to arrange a meeting in the Intercontinental Hotel that particular day to discuss a major development where O'Malley showed Healy the deletion made by Lemass.

It is claimed that Minister O'Malley headed for Limerick that day to avoid Lemass, in case An Taoiseach changed his mind.³⁸ Minister O'Malley kept in touch with Healy on Friday and Saturday to see if anyone had got wind of his plan. O'Malley was fearful that somebody might leak his plan to Garret Fitzgerald of Fine Gael.³⁹ The national papers of Saturday September 10 gave no indication of O'Malley's latest kite. The only "leaking" of O'Malley's plans was a meeting between the educational associations and Sean O'Connor and Sean MacGearailt of the Department of Education on Saturday informing these associations of the minister's intention to speak that night on the availability of free post-primary education.⁴⁰

The centrality and importance of the September 10 speech warrants a substantial quoting of this speech. Minister O'Malley addressed the NUJ at 7.30pm on Saturday night.

He began by reminding his audience that independence had created as many problems as it solved. We had lived through a number of crises - civil war, an economic depression and a world war. We had moved from problems of a political nature to economic problems of unemployment and emigration. These problems would not yield to simple solutions. We were now living in an era of change and new ideas and

education must move with the times that it was meant to serve. He continued his speech, saying that;

We will be judged by future generations on what we did for the children of our time.....

There is, of course, a lot remaining to be done with our education system. And I am convinced that we must attack the fundamental weaknesses in that system on a full national scale. And we must begin right away.

There is no difficulty in picking out the basic fault in our present educational structure - and that is, the fact that many of our families cannot afford to pay even part of the cost of education for their children.....

Every year, some 17,000 of our children finishing their primary school course do not receive any further education. This means that almost one in three of our future citizens are cut off at this stage from the opportunities of learning a skill, and denied the benefits of cultural development that go with further education.

This is a dark stain on the national conscience. For it means that some one-third of our people have been condemned - the great majority through no fault of their own - to be part-educated unskilled labour, always the weaker who go to the wall of unemployment or emigration.

I believe that this is a situation which must be tackled with all speed and determination. And I am glad to be able to announce to-night that I am drawing up a scheme under which, in future, no boy or girl in this State will be deprived of full educational opportunity - from primary level to university level - by reason of the fact that the parents cannot afford to pay for it.....

I propose, therefore, from the coming school year, beginning in September of next year, to introduce a scheme whereby, up to the completion of the Intermediate Certificate course, the opportunity for free post-primary education will be available to all families.⁴¹

This free education will be available in the comprehensive and vocational schools, and in the general run of secondary schools. I say the general run of secondary schools because there will still be schools, charging higher fees, who may not opt to take my scheme; and the parent who wants to send his child to one of these schools, and pay the fees, will of course be free to do so.

Going on from there, I intend, also, to make provision whereby no pupil will, for lack of means, be prevented from continuing his or her education up to the end of the Leaving Certificate course.

I propose that assistance towards the cost of books and accessories will be given, through the period of his or her course, to the student on whom it would be a hardship to meet all such costs.

We must, also, face up to the position of making financial aid available to the pupil who, because of the location of his home, can have post-primary education available to him only if he enters a boarding school.⁴¹

All in all, the language of this seminal speech was occasionally stark, for example, “a dark stain on the national conscience.” This starkness may stem from Minister O’Malley’s deep convictions on the social role of education and social justice. Additionally there were no specific details at any stage apart from the start-up date. Seán O’Connor comments that “with regard to Leaving Certificate students, he left himself the option of choosing between the two schemes which were put before him”. Similarly, the use of the phrase “lack of means” was deliberately disguising his intentions to have free education up to and including Leaving Certificate. Moreover, he camouflaged his intentions on free school transport.⁴² He saw that transport was a bigger obstacle than free fees in many rural areas. In short, O’Malley signalled his intentions in principle and gave a broad outline of these without going into specific details.

Reactions to this Announcement

Most commentators and those close to Jack Lynch T.D., Minister for Finance at that time differ as to whether Minister Lynch was on holidays or away on government business from Saturday September 10 to Monday September 12.⁴³ Whatever the reason for Mr. Lynch’s absence, the newspapers at Dublin Airport were the first intimation of O’Malley’s proposals to the Minister for Finance. An Taoiseach Lemass had anticipated the anger of the Minister for Finance and his department.

Some of this anticipated anger came initially in the form of a letter and a meeting between Lemass and the Secretary of the Department of Finance, T.K. Whitaker. Whitaker dispatched a “protest” to An Taoiseach⁴⁴ which opened,

It is astonishing that a major change in education policy should be announced by the Minister for Education at a week-end seminar of the National Union of Journalists. This “free schooling” policy has not been the subject of any submission to the Department of Finance, has not been approved by the Government, has certainly not been examined from the financial (whatever about the educational) aspect and therefore, should have received no advance publicity, particularly of the specific definite type involved in Mr. O’Malley’s statement.⁴⁵

He states that the Taoiseach called him over to his office for a meeting regarding his protest. At this meeting, Whitaker says that “while he (Lemass) did not expressly say so, I deduced from what he said (and the smile on his face) that he had personally authorised Donogh O’Malley to make this announcement”.⁴⁶

Possibly due to this meeting, Lemass moved to defuse this and other anger by writing a letter to Minister O’Malley on Monday, September 12. It is claimed that this was dispatched by hand to O’Malley and a copy was kept for the following day’s Cabinet meeting. Moreover, it is asserted that Lemass reminded O’Malley that laudable and all his dramatic proposals were for the extension of free post-primary education, he must understand that he had not consulted with his Cabinet colleagues and they had no opportunity of considering it. There was no hint in the remaining three paragraphs of the letter that Lemass had any hand in the announcement.⁴⁷

Lemass was leaving O'Malley in "optical isolation" in order that Jack Lynch and his department would come on side. O'Malley's reply to this letter dated September 14, confirms Lemass' written rebuke of September 12 when he wrote:

I appreciate that the normal procedures must be followed and Government approval procured for new schemes involving the expenditure of public monies. I have no wish to circumvent this system and I shall, in due course, submit detailed plans through the usual channels.....It was my understanding that I had your agreement to my outlining these lines of action.....If I was under a miscomprehension in believing that I had your support, I must apologise. I would hope, however, that what I said will persuade you that I was right in making it and that you will give me your full support in getting my plans approved by the Government.⁴⁸

Lemass continued with his "reprimand" in a letter dated September 22 and a copy of this was sent to Jack Lynch, Minister for Finance.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, outside the corridors of power, the September 10 speech gave rise to much newspaper comment. The Sunday Press of September 11 headlined the six major points of O'Malley's free post-primary scheme.⁵⁰ It shared the headlines of the Sunday Independent with the successful Irish showjumping team who had won the World Three Day Event Championship in Lincolnshire. Again, this newspaper outlined O'Malley's scheme and remarked that the minister was not prepared to comment on the financial implications of his plans.⁵¹ Charles McCarthy, the General Secretary of the Vocational Teachers Association and spokespersons for the Irish National Teachers Organisation and the Union of Students in Ireland all welcomed O'Malley's speech. Political opponents were not as complimentary. Barry Desmond T.D., of the Labour Party dismissed the scheme saying that on occasions it was difficult to take O'Malley seriously, particularly in view of his activities at Health and Public Works.⁵² Mark Clinton T.D., of Fine Gael described the scheme as "a long term shot delivered

for political reasons”.⁵³ John Healy writing under the nom de plume “Backbencher”, suggested that “behind Mr. O’Malley’s plan.....lies the first part of Mr. Lemass’ last political Will and Testament to ensure the success and future of the Fianna Fail Party when he retires”.⁵⁴

The managers of the country’s secondary schools were amongst those more closely affected by the new proposals for free education. The principle of free education was welcomed by spokespersons for the Catholic Headmasters’ Association, the Christian Brothers and Bishop Hanly of Elphin⁵⁵ but underlying all this was their dissatisfaction with the cavalier treatment of school authorities. These authorities were wary of committing themselves any further until details of the scheme were made available. They disapproved of O’Malley’s mode of action in breaking the positive consultation advocated by his predecessor George Colley and thus it was inferred by the media that they did not approve of O’Malley’s action. The school managers’ disapproval was never really voiced publicly but behind closed doors.⁵⁶

Two editorials on Monday, September 12 reflect the public reaction to O’Malley’s speech. The Irish Times editor used the word “startling/startles” on at least three occasions. This editorial observed that -

priority for education had been promised by An Taoiseach but no one can have expected either so sudden or so mighty a leap forward and one may wonder at the energy and daring of Mr. O’Malley and at the same time speculate as to why such a move suddenly became possible. The words Hey Presto were not in Mr. O’Malley’s speech but they might not be out of place.⁵⁷

The Irish Press editorial in an attempt to dampen criticism or expectations remarked “the details and especially the financial costs have yet to be investigated publicly. But there is no reason for pessimism on this score”.⁵⁸ Expectations tinged with doubts

were raised in the following day's Irish Times which commented that "the Department itself has not yet finalised adding up its long column of figures. Even on the basis of the most rudimentary calculations, however (the scheme) represents a new and substantial investment by the state in educating people".⁵⁹

However the initial omens and soundings from those most immediately affected i.e. secondary teachers and managers were not positive. The Secondary Teacher magazine - the monthly issue of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) carried two conflicting articles in its September 1966 issue. One article by Senator O'Conalláin, a former president of the ASTI, commented on the evolution of the Minister's proposals and remarked that the new Minister proposed to take "all obstacles in one colossal stride" and "it is a magnificent gesture and completely in character".⁶⁰ On the contrary, the editorial in the same issue attacked the officials who informed the educational associations on Saturday, September 10 of the Minister's major policy speech that evening "on the availability of free post-primary education" and that this attempt at public relations was the drollest burlesque.⁶¹

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CHAPTER THREE : Cabinet And Dáil Approval Of The Free Post Primary Scheme

The cabinet's first meeting following the September 10 announcement was on September 13 1966. An Taoiseach Lemass and Minister O'Malley are amongst those recorded as attending this meeting. The Minister for Finance, Jack Lynch T.D., Ministers Hilliard and Flanagan are recorded as absent from this meeting of government.¹

Cabinet discussions are regarded as confidential in the interest of full and frank debate and collective responsibility and consequently, such discussions are not recorded.² However, cabinet decisions are recorded³, but there is no decision recorded regarding Minister O'Malley's free education proposals in the minutes of this meeting.⁴

John Healy provides us with an account of this particular cabinet meeting but this is questionable.⁵ However, this account may provide us with an indication of the reaction of Minister O'Malley's cabinet colleagues towards free post-primary education. It is certain that Lemass's letter of 12 September to Minister O'Malley was discussed as Lemass said that he was placing this letter on the agenda for this meeting. This discussion would have been informal, known as a 12 o'clock item.⁶ Healy alleges that Minister O'Malley stood up when the cabinet discussion took place regarding his free education proposals and said "that the cabinet must make free education a reality or else Fianna Fáil would be shaggin decimated at the next election".⁷

All the Lemass correspondence to O'Malley after the September 10 speech is of the need for Minister O'Malley to submit his free education proposals for consideration by the Department of Finance and the Cabinet. This is clearly demonstrated by a letter of September 22, 1966 when Lemass wrote:

You are, of course fully aware of the financial limitations to the substantial extension of government services at this time, and that any new proposals, even in the area of education must be framed with strict regard to financial possibilities and in such a way as to provide for the gradual implementation so as to avoid a considerable addition to the estimate total in any single year. It is very essential that you should work out your ideas in complete detail without delay and submit them to normal examination in the Department of Finance and for the consideration of the Government, before any further public statement is made about this.⁸

The Department of Education's circular (1/66) dated September 15 requested all secondary schools to submit details of the tuition fees by September 26, 1966.⁹ Minister O'Malley and his Department could only submit his detailed proposals for consideration by Cabinet and Finance when the schools provided the aforementioned information.

When the Dail resumed after the summer recess on September 29, opposition deputies tabled a series of Dail questions regarding the September 10 speech. George Colley T.D., deputising for Minister O'Malley, answered all their questions with the following - "Detailed proposals are under consideration. I hope the government will have completed their consideration of them to permit my making a full statement on the estimate for my Department"¹⁰ This answer is contained in a letter from Lemass to O'Malley dated 26 September 1966.¹¹ Moreover, this answer was so vague and general that it sparked off a heated discussion and doubts about Cabinet sanctioning of O'Malley's scheme at all.¹²

Minister O'Malley encountered more Dáil questions when he came before the Dail on October 11. Opposition deputies pressed the Minister for a firm estimate on the number of pupils who would avail of free education. The October 11 exchanges are best summed up by Deputy O'Leary's question - "can we take it that the planning going ahead in the Ministers' Department at the moment will ensure that the arrangements for free education will reach beyond the 'hazard a guess' stage?" Minister O'Malley replied, "I cannot come up with a firm figure but I can come up with this information that we are crying out for free education for the children of the less well off section of the country".¹³ Moreover, Minister O'Malley speaking on television said that he would stake his political career on the fact that free education would be available from September 1967.¹⁴ In the absence of specific details, the doubts lingered on.¹⁵ There was substance to the doubts about Cabinet sanction for O'Malley's proposals as these were subject to close scrutiny by his cabinet colleagues during October and November 1966.

The first formal submission of the free education proposals for Cabinet consideration occurred on October 14 in the name of Seán O'Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education. It proposed that this submission be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the government which was to be held on Tuesday, October 18, 1966. This submission was for urgent consideration by reason "that the Minister requires a decision before the television debate, scheduled for Friday 21 Deireadh Fomhair 1966". Furthermore, the Department of Education suggested that it could not have taken steps to allow the usual period of notice because "the collection, processing and consideration of the requisite data has now only been completed."¹⁶

This memorandum for Government contained proposals in regard to the provision of

- a) free post-primary education
- b) assistance towards the cost of books and accessories for the children of poor parents and
- c) scholarships at university level based on ability and financial need.

Moreover, three noteworthy items are included with this submission. One is written on the covering letter and remarks that the Taoiseach wishes that these proposals be deferred to allow time for consideration. A second short note attached to the submission, written by the secretary to the Government, Dr. Nolan, stated that Dr. Nolan had spoken to Mr. O'Mahony of the Development Branch of the Department of Education. Mr. O'Mahony stated that he wished to expand upon the Minister's proposals. The third is a letter from An Taoiseach Lemass to Minister O'Malley dated October 17, 1966. Lemass wrote

It is very improbable that other ministers are likely to agree to proposals which would involve an addition to the Education vote of £3 million in 1968 and would therefore, make impracticable in other Government services such as Social Welfare and Health, in that year without substantial tax increases.¹⁷

A second submission of free education proposals was made by the Department of Education on November 11, 1966 in the name of T. Ó Raiftearaigh, Secretary of this Department. Again, it was proposed that this submission be placed on the agenda of the meeting of Government on Tuesday, November 15, 1966.¹⁸

Additionally, it was suggested that the matter was urgent and required consideration at this meeting for the reason “that the Minister has promised to give details of his new plan when introducing the estimate for his department and this estimate is being taken on November 23, 1966. Similarly, the Department submitted that it could not have taken the stages necessary to allow the usual notice being given for the reason that the memorandum had to be revised and expanded following the provisional submission to Government on October 14, 1966.”¹⁹

This revised Department of Education memorandum had four principal proposals

- (a) free post-primary tuition
- (b) special assistance for the poor and very poor pupils in terms of free books and accessories and maintenance allowance
- (c) financial assistance at university level for certain students and
- (d) a state supported transport system to post-primary schools.

The rationale underlying these proposals was based on a number of factors. One was the Governmental decision to raise the school leaving age to 15 by 1970 and thus, free post-primary education would be available up to Intermediate Certificate level. Furthermore, because of the importance of providing better educated young people for our developing economy and with a view to utilising fully our human resources, it would be essential that students be encouraged to stay at school beyond the compulsory age. Consequently, free post-primary education was proposed up to Leaving Certificate level.²⁰

Offering free post-primary education up to Leaving Certificate would offset the drop-out levels before or after Intermediate/Group Cert. This period was regarded as “the very time that training for craftsmen, technicians and the like begins - the area in which our national needs are greatest”.²¹

Paragraph 6.92 of The Investment in Education Report was cited as highlighting the extent to which ability to pay governs the rates of participation in post-primary education. This paragraph and the tables 6.27 to 6.29 demonstrated a marked contrast in educational participation, professional and clerical groups on one hand and skilled/semi-skilled and unskilled groups. This contrast became more marked the older the age group and the higher the level. This paragraph concludes that “if the same circumstances were to prevail in future, it would mean that today’s children of those latter social groups would have relatively small chance of being in full-time education in ten year’s time.”²²

The comments of the National Industrial Economic Council appraisal of The Investment in Education Report were also cited as rationale for these proposals. The NIEC drew attention to the difficulties created for our economic system through the lack of adequate numbers of people having as a basic requirement, education up to Intermediate Certificate level. Moreover, the Taoiseach’s comments on the NIEC appraisal were also reiterated as a reason for these proposals.²³

This memorandum for government submitted that free tuition be made available to most post-primary schools by:

- a) offering a supplemental grant between £15 to £25 to those voluntary secondary schools which decide to provide free education to all their pupils
- b) offering a grant of £4 to VEC committees and authorities of “Secondary tops” and
- c) abolition of fees for comprehensive schools.

Special arrangements would be made for those attending boarding schools by virtue of distance and special assistance in the form of a block grant to a Protestant representative agency for post-primary students of the Protestant faith. Reference was made to potential problems at post-primary level in the Dublin area. (This will be discussed further in Chapter Four). The question of means testing was ruled out on the grounds that “having regard to the national level of incomes, that any means test would produce a situation in which the post-primary education of 70% to 80% would have to be subsidised.”²⁴ It was suggested that free tuition would not be sufficient to enable poor children to participate in post-primary education. Accordingly, it was thought that financial assistance be provided to enable those particular students to have the necessary books and accessories. This scheme would be operated by the headmasters of post-primary schools similar to arrangements at primary level. Those eligible would be those families with medical cards. Additional assistance was suggested for those families in receipt of social welfare by way of a maintenance allowance of £1 per week or £40 per year in respect of post-primary students from these particular families.²⁵

The cabinet submission by the Department of Education advocated that financial assistance be provided to certain students attending university. Whereas, the proposals for free post-primary education did not make academic achievement a condition of

assistance, the proposed scheme of financial assistance at university level was based firstly on attainment and secondly, on the need for financial assistance. Existing local authority scholarships would be used to fund this scheme.²⁶

It was postulated that a state supported transport scheme to primary schools would be absolutely essential to ensure equality of opportunity for children in rural areas in participating in post-primary education. The OECD Investment in Education Report findings of geographical location affecting post-primary participation were cited with 25% of students living more than five miles from the nearest post-primary school.

Furthermore, this OECD report alludes to the 5% of students who resided more than 10 miles from their nearest post-primary school. Accordingly, the submission remarks that “the underlying factor behind the proposal to establish a school supported transport scheme is to remove inequalities based on geographical location. Progress with a view to widening the participation rate will not be achieved without a nation wide scheme.” Western and north-western counties were identified as having acute transport problems. Accordingly, the Minister sought a nation-wide transport scheme for all post-primary pupils living more than three miles from a post-primary school.²⁷

The cost of these schemes for 1967/68 would be £1,091,000. The cost for subsequent years would be in excess of £3m.²⁸

One should note that this submission is very detailed, comprehensive and well argued. What is noteworthy is the evolving and escalating scope of Minister O'Malley's concept of free education from the September 10 speech of free education up to the

Intermediate Certificate and the possibility of free or means testing of post-primary education up to Leaving Certificate to this memorandum envisaging free education up to Leaving Certificate level and means tests/attainment criteria for financial assistance for free university education.

The Department of Finance submitted a Cabinet memorandum on these foregoing proposals on November 17, 1966. It remarked that no sanction nor agreement had been secured between the two departments and it was to be decided by the Cabinet. Moreover, it suggested that in addition to the proposed costs of £1.09m this year and £3m for subsequent years, additional expenditure would be required for school accommodation and teacher salaries. Furthermore, the Minister for Finance asked

the Government to view very critically, proposals which will add so substantially to public expenditure.....All available forms of taxation have been exploited to the maximum extent considered tolerable.....If the proposals are to be approved, there will be no alternative to the imposition of new taxation.....The proper course would be to defer these proposals, however desirable they may be in themselves, until funds sufficient to pay for them become available at present taxation levels.²⁹

In a conciliatory tone, the memorandum suggests “if, however, the Government consider that something in the form of these proposals should be announced now, the Minister would strongly urge, in order to lessen their financial impact, that the following modifications should be made.” Firstly, it advocated that the maximum fee limit be set at £20 initially. Secondly, these supplemental grants should cease at the Intermediate Certificate stage by virtue of the responsibility of the State to provide free education ceasing at the compulsory school leaving age. Additional funding for post Intermediate Certificate education would be the monies from the Local Authority scholarships. Thirdly, it proposed that the payment of school fees be paid in respect of



first year entrants in 1967/68, first and second year students in 1968/69 and so forth. Fourthly, the special funding arrangements for Protestant post-primary schools should be at maximum fee - limit of £20.³⁰

On the general point of providing services “free” irrespective of means or needs, the Department of Finance adverted to Minister O’Malley’s White Paper on health services where the Government did not accept the proposition that “the State has a duty to provide unconditionally, all medical, dental and other health services free of cost for everyone, without regard to individual needs or circumstances...³¹

The Department of Finance recommended that special assistance for the very poor pupils in terms of a maintenance allowance should be postponed until a strong demand for it manifests itself. Likewise, it asked that the financial assistance at third level should be postponed at the present time until the Commission on Higher Education had reported. An interim solution was offered by providing for additional university scholarships.³²

The Minister for Finance agreed with the transport scheme proposals as aiding in achieving equality of educational opportunity and in rationalising the educational system generally. Again, the Department of Finance entered its general caveat for these schemes as being funded by the taxpayer and the Department of Finance expected an element of local contribution towards these transport arrangements.³³ Seán O’Connor’s view that the function of Department of Finance officials is to conserve the finances of state by all means available to them is borne out by the sentiments of the foregoing memorandum from the Department of Finance.³⁴

Brian Farrell remarks that “despite elaborately framed procedures, the cabinet remains an arena in which the complex, controversial and perennially unresolvable compete for attention and time against the immediate, commonplace and critical.”³⁵ The agenda may include anything from ten to thirty separate items. In short, the agenda for a Cabinet meeting is continually “a chronically overloaded agenda.”³⁶ The two memorandums were on the agenda of Cabinet meetings on November 18, 1966 and November 25, 1966 and on each occasion, both were deferred.³⁷ One could conclude that these memoranda were part of a chronically overloaded agenda or that there were protracted negotiations between the two Ministers and their respective Departmental officials or that these deferrals enabled all Ministers to have adequate time to consider these proposals as Taoiseach Lemass had requested on October 17, 1966. Moreover, these deferrals could be the result of the retirement of An Taoiseach Lemass and the ensuing leadership contest which ended with Jack Lynch as the new leader of Fianna Fáil and the new Taoiseach from mid November 1966.

On November 28, Fine Gael published its education proposals. Due to the September 10 speech, interest centred entirely on the proposals regarding free education for the post-primary sector and the other proposals were largely ignored. Fine Gael proposed to “institute a scheme under which almost all secondary schools will be enabled without financial loss to offer free education in most cases, to all children in the school.” All schools would be offered a sharp increase in capitation grants if they agreed to offer free education. In schools where the increased grant exceeded the income previously derived from fees, all students would receive free education. In schools where the increased grant was less than the income derived from fees, then the

school would offer not less than one third of places free. The provision of free transport or boarding school attendance would be subject to a means test. In short, these proposals did not offer free education and transport for all. These proposals were compared disparagingly to Minister O'Malley's blanket scheme.³⁸

The Cabinet met on Tuesday 29 November 1966 at 11am and finished its deliberations at 1.40pm. The minutes of this meeting read as follows:

Following consideration of a memorandum dated 11th November, 1966, submitted by the Minister for Education and a memorandum dated the 17th November, 1966, submitted by the Minister for Finance relative to post-primary education, the proposals of the Minister for Education as set out at Parts A, B and D of the memorandum dated the 11th November, 1966, were approved, subject

Part A (Free Tuition)

- I. to the actual initial grant paid in respect of pupils in each school and any subsequent alteration in that grant being fixed in agreement between the Ministers for Finance and Education,
- II. to the payment of the minimum grant in respect of pupils in schools charging fees of less than £15 a year being conditional on such schools undertaking to raise their standards of educational facilities to the satisfaction of the Minister for Education,
- III. as regards the proposals for boarding pupils whose residence is fifteen miles or more from a suitable post-primary school, to special consideration being given to the cases of pupils living in remote areas who cannot reasonably be expected to avail themselves of a school transport service,

Part B (Free books and maintenance):

- I. to the terms of the announcement regarding the scheme of free books being settled between the Ministers for Finance and Education,
- II. to further consideration being given to the proposed scheme of assistance for "very poor pupils" - the terms of the announcement in this regard to be settled between the Ministers for Finance and Education,

Part D (Transport):

VII. to the transport scheme not being introduced before the 1st April, 1967,

VIII. to the scheme being limited to the transport of pupils whose residence is not less than three miles from the nearest post-primary school at which free education is available and,

IX. as regards the proposal that an existing school transport scheme would not be assisted or a scheme initiated unless there were a minimum of seven eligible pupils, to the qualification that such would apply save in exceptional circumstances and that exceptions to the rule would be subject to the sanction of the Minister for Finance.³⁹

The detail of this cabinet decision clearly suggests that this issue may have been the sole item for decision at that cabinet meeting.

It should be noted that the university proposals were not accepted and that the Department of Finances demand for an upper limit of £20 as a grant in lieu of tuition fees was not adopted. Moreover, the usage of the phrase relating to schools charging fees of less than £15 who would be required “to raise their standards of educational facilities to the satisfaction of the Minister for Education” would confuse secondary school authorities as we shall discover shortly. Most importantly, the primary function of the Minister for Finance and his department over the sanctioning of agreement to additional exchequer/educational funding, is asserted on three occasions in this cabinet decision.

Strangely enough, the historic Dáil speech on free education was made to an almost deserted Dáil Chamber on November 30. Most deputies were campaigning in by-elections in Waterford and Kerry. However, there were 28 deputies in the Dáil - 17 from Fianna Fáil, 5 from Fine Gael and 6 from Labour.⁴⁰

Opening the final section of his Estimates speech, the Minister cited two reasons for seeking government sanction to make available free post-primary education from September 1967. Firstly, he cited that the raising of the school learning age to fifteen meant that all pupils would have to spend three years in a post-primary school and, secondly, the economy needed educated people and thus people should stay in school beyond fifteen years of age. Furthermore, he cited the Investment in Education Report finding of further educational participation being directly linked to family income and thus the reduction or elimination of financial barriers would make post-primary education accessible to all. Accordingly, he announced free post-primary education up to the end of the Leaving Certificate course.⁴¹

Minister O'Malley proposed to offer a supplemental grant to secondary schools in certain fee ranges, on condition that they would discontinue charging school fees. The supplemental grant would be the equivalent to the fees charged at that time, subject to a minimum of £15 and a maximum of £25. The minimum was proposed for two reasons, first, to ensure that reasonably adequate facilities were provided and second, to avoid the accusation that schools that held their fees at low levels were being penalised. The Minister hoped that the £25 grant would make the scheme attractive to schools charging fees up to £30 because there would be a guaranteed payment of £25 for every pupil whereas in most schools, the fees collected, fell short of the fees charged. Based on these figures, it was estimated that about 75% of secondary schools and 100% of other post-primary schools would opt for the scheme which would mean 61,500 pupils had free education. The other 25% of secondary schools

would continue charging fees and these schools would continue to receive capitation, teacher salary and other grants.⁴²

During October, O'Malley met the Catholic Hierarchy and representatives of the Protestant community. The meeting with the Protestant representatives was to result in a special arrangement for their schools. The scheme as outlined only benefited 7½% of Protestant pupils as against 75% of Catholic pupils and thus special treatment was required to avoid discrimination of sorts. Minister O'Malley unveiled in his November 30 speech, the provision of a sum equivalent to the sum required to make a grant of £25 to 75% of Protestants and give this sum to a central Protestant representative agency to distribute to individual schools on the basis of their needs.⁴³

Further provisions of the free post-primary education, concerned school books/requisites and transport to post-primary schools. For students from lower income backgrounds the state must offer more than free tuition in any plan for free education to these students. Thus, the state would provide monies towards the costs of their required books and requisites. The Minister did not want a means test and thus the most socially acceptable way was to operate the scheme through the headmaster. In aggregate, free books would not be supplied to more than 25% of pupils.⁴⁴ One should note that the Minister did not consult representative associations of headmasters on his plans.

In the Dail exchanges of October 11 with opposition deputies, Minister O'Malley admitted that transport was a big problem when one considered that The Investment in Education Report findings on the geographical inequality as obstacles to

participation at post-primary level.⁴⁵ Minister O'Malley intimated that a state supported nation wide transport scheme would remove the inequalities arising from geographical location. The only effective way of providing post-primary transport so as to provide for equality of opportunity for all, was for the state to defray the full costs of transporting pupils living more than three miles from the nearest post-primary school. Estimating the cost of such a scheme was difficult, beginning at £300,000 in the first year and rising to £1 million and more in a full year. He proposed to bring this aspect of his plans into operation in April 1967.⁴⁶ His proposals for access to third level would wait until the Commission on Higher Education had reported.

Paddy Lindsay T.D. of Fine Gael said that the Minister's scheme was divisive in comparison to the Fine Gael proposals of involving all schools in the scheme by providing at least one third of their places free. He admitted the transport proposals were better than the Fine Gael proposals. Eileen Desmond T.D. of the Labour Party welcomed the Minister's proposals but regretted his lack of plans for primary schools.

Replying to the Estimates debate, Minister O'Malley made a rather confusing comment "with the best will in the world, a great social development such as that which my humble plans will mean to education could be stymied or held up in a certain year, if things were difficult or if there were urgent strains on the economy".⁴⁷ This comment along with the previously discussed phrase "reasonably adequate facilities" was to confuse those secondary school managers contemplating entering the scheme. A meeting between managerial representatives and the Minister and his officials would have helped clear up this confusion but this did not occur until December 16, 1966.

Another indistinct issue was the number of students who would get free education and consequently, the cost of the free fees and transport scheme. On every occasion between September 10 and November 30, Minister O'Malley refused to commit himself to a figure and this refusal yielded to the perception that his September 10 speech was "a leap into the dark". Seán O'Connor comments that this was due to O'Malley's refusal to accept the Departmental estimates. In his Estimates speech, he gave 61,500 students/75% of students as participating in the scheme, 25% of students outside this group of students were concentrated almost entirely in Dublin and Cork and their schools had fees in excess of £35⁴⁸. This cluster of secondary schools were to be the focus of Minister O'Malley's efforts in early 1967.

In short, the recent availability of cabinet papers and ministerial letters has enabled that a more concise and balanced view of the deliberations of the cabinet on Minister O'Malley's proposals could be outlined in this chapter. Moreover, this primary source material confirms the lack of planning on the part of Minister O'Malley and his unorthodox usage of and disregard for cabinet procedure. This unorthodox style will also be illustrated in the next chapter as Minister O'Malley consulted with the representatives of voluntary secondary schools regarding free post-primary education.

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CHAPTER FOUR - Consultation Regarding the Implementation of the Free Post-Primary Scheme.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the underlying rationale to O'Malley's mode of consultation with his post-primary partners' i.e. the Churches, secondary school managers and teacher unions. Moreover, we shall strive to ascertain as to how these parties related to each other and how relationships between these parties determined how each reacted to Minister O'Malley's proposals in early 1967. In particular, the hierarchical relationship between the Catholic managerial bodies and the Catholic Hierarchy was important in enabling Minister O'Malley to encourage many secondary schools to opt for his scheme than was originally envisaged by senior officials of the Department of Education.

It is asserted that Minister O'Malley was aware if he started to consult and discuss with all the parties on the introduction of free education at post-primary level, one would still be consulting two years later. Thus, the only option was to present the parties with the concept as a *fait accompli*.¹ The process of long drawn out consultations would not have suited the temperament of O'Malley, a restless man. Thus, when he consulted the interested parties, they were presented with a *fait accompli* - the introduction of free education at post-primary level in September 1967. However, this type of consultation is very risky and may only work on one occasion. Minister O'Malley was to discover that this *fait accompli* method of consultation was not to work in relation to his merger plans for T.C.D. and U.C.D.

For the Catholic and Protestant churches, there was a need for discussion, analysis and perhaps, a redefinition of approaches and strategies in the light of evolving educational policy proposals in and the leadership role adopted by various Ministers for Education during the sixties. The Protestant bodies and their church agencies would seem to have conducted the transition with more efficacy and discipline. On the Catholic side, the lines of authority and communication seemed confused. At times, there were clear signs of conflict, power struggles and questioning of authority with the result that the response to Government policies was indecisive and even when positive, seemed reluctant.²

Various Church of Ireland reports were to initiate a policy change regarding educational opportunity and a positive response towards new Government educational policies. When Minister O'Malley announced his free post-primary scheme the Protestant Secondary Education Committee pointed out to the Minister and the Department that for various reasons a scheme for free education which met the needs of the majority would not necessarily meet their needs. Minister O'Malley met representatives of the Protestant community on October 13, 1966. The outcome of this meeting was the alternative scheme for Protestant post-primary schools detailed in his Estimates speech of November 30, 1966.³

It is difficult to examine the reactions of the Catholic managerial bodies to the educational reforms of the sixties, in particular O'Malley's proposals in isolation from others. Efforts to establish an umbrella Catholic managerial body and a joint Protestant/Catholic managerial body were hindered by the Catholic Hierarchy. Episcopal dominance was the only means by which such bodies received recognition

and were consulted for their views. The absence of a recognised line of authority between the Catholic agencies and the Catholic Hierarchy produced much dissatisfaction among the managerial bodies in their response to the various government initiatives. This is illustrated by the following - the Hillery press statement in 1963, the introduction of post-primary school building grants in 1964 and the 1965 circular extending the Intermediate Certificate to vocational and comprehensive schools. These were interpreted by the various Catholic managerial bodies as undermining the private nature of secondary schools and the creation of a state secondary school system. These bodies wrote to the Department for answers but they "were left in no doubt by the Department that all these questions had been discussed with the Hierarchy".⁴

The Catholic managerial associations were anxious to meet the Minister. However, a meeting did not take place until the Minister had consulted with the Catholic Hierarchy and representatives of the Protestant Churches and until after O'Malley's estimates speech on November 30, 1966. He met the Joint Managerial Body on December 16, 1966 whereas he had met the Catholic Hierarchy at Maynooth on October 4. Cardinal Conway thanked Minister O'Malley for seeking the meeting with the Hierarchy.⁵ In the absence of any official statement, it was naturally presumed that the free education scheme was the principal matter discussed. A statement given to the media about the October 4 meeting described the discussions as "friendly and co-operative".⁶ One result of this meeting was seen to be the special financial provision for the Diocesan Colleges run by the Catholic Bishops announced by Minister O'Malley in the Dail on November 30.

Whyte comments, that much of the exchanges between Minister O'Malley and the secondary school managers took place in private and that it was not easy to obtain a picture of what was happening but every now and again comments and speeches by Minister O'Malley gave one a glimpse of these private exchanges.⁷ The availability of primary source material on these exchanges by the Secretariat for Secondary Schools has enabled that these private deliberations can now be analysed and provide us with a more balanced perspective of the concerns of the managerial representatives and the response of Minister O'Malley.

The first contact between secondary schools and the Minister, regarding his free post-primary scheme was by Fr. John Hughes, S.J., on behalf of the Joint Committee of Voluntary Secondary Schools who wrote to Minister O'Malley on December 5, 1966.

In this letter, Fr. Hughes wrote,

We expected as did our colleagues in their educational associations, that we should have had a consultation with you on the details of your plan for free post-primary education, before you presented it to Dáil Eireann.

The tone of this paragraph confirms the low status of the managerial bodies within the consultative process between the Minister, his Department and the educational partners. Fr. Hughes continued

Since, to our very great regret, this expectation was not realised, the Joint Committee requests that you be good enough to meet us, so that we might seek information and clarification on quite a number of matters arising from the plan as outlined to the Dáil.

We are quite aware of the many calls on your time and attention, but we wish to state that in our view, such a meeting is a matter of urgency.

The letter concludes with Friday December 16, as the date for a proposed meeting between the Minister, his officials and the Joint Managerial Committee.⁸

On the following day, the new Taoiseach, Jack Lynch and the Minister for Education, Mr. O'Malley, received a memorandum from the Provincials of Teaching Brothers in Ireland. The covering letter to this memorandum suggested that,

a) suim mhór againn sa scéim atá foilsithe ag an Aire chun saor mheanoideachas a chur ar fáil.

b) Leasú simplí - £30 sa bhlian i leith gach dalta meanscoile.⁹

The memorandum from the Provincials of Teaching Brothers in Ireland, remarked on Minister O'Malley's Dáil speech on free post-primary education that, "while we welcome to the decision to provide such education, we cannot agree to participate in a scheme which will establish discrimination in respect of certain schools within the schools". They also commented that the proposal to divide schools into different categories for purposes of the supplemental grant at £15 and £25 was the issue which they protested most emphatically about. They contended that the differential rates of supplementary grants of either £15 or £25 for each pupil were discriminatory and unjust for three reasons :

a) categorising schools according to the amount of grant paid to them would lead to "an undesirable social distinction".

b) Unjust to provide minimum grants to schools which in the past had provided post-primary education to lower income families by keeping their fees low.

c) and the vast majority of parents will send their children to school in receipt of the higher grant because it might be perceived that such schools have better educational facilities and "a higher social status."¹⁰

The memorandum concluded by rejecting the scheme as currently constituted and the Provincials would only participate in a scheme where all schools would receive the same grant. The memorandum ended on the following note “we submit these remarks in a spirit of constructive criticism and in the belief that they may be some help to devise a scheme that will be equitable and acceptable.”¹¹

The tone of this memorandum is very critical as demonstrated by the use of such phrases as “If a grant of £25 per pupil - which we consider inadequate.” The reception given to this memorandum by An Taoiseach or Minister O’Malley is not available but one could infer that this memorandum was most effective by virtue of the fact that the Provincials were offered a meeting with the Minister on 9 December, 1966.

It has been asserted that this December 9 meeting was very stormy and that the Minister reprimanded the Provincials severely for “sabotage”.¹² It alleged that towards the end of this meeting, the Minister appealed to the Provincials to give the scheme a trial. The provincials are alleged to have given no answer to this appeal.¹³

On December 14, Archbishop McQuaid called a meeting in Archbishop’s House, Drumcondra. Seven clerical Major Superiors (Vincentian, Holy Ghost, Marist, Oblate, Carmelite, Jesuit and Augustinian) attended this meeting along with Mother Jordana and Fr. Hughes.¹⁴ It is reported that this meeting reviewed the free education proposals and discussed the lines of approach for the meeting two days later between the Minister, his officials and the Joint Managerial Committee.¹⁵

Representatives of the five secondary school Managerial Associations (Protestant and Catholic) met Minister O'Malley, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Séan O'Connor, Assistant Secretary, in Tyrone House at 11am on Friday, December 16.¹⁶ There are two accounts of this meeting by the Department of Education and the managerial representatives.

The Departmental minutes of this meeting describe the case made by the managerial representatives regarding the inequality and injustice of the £15 - £25 differential grant payments. The points raised by the memorandum of the Provincials of Teaching Brothers, are reiterated. In short, the Department notes that the managerial representatives felt that "while the Minister was not introducing a means test for parents, he was in effect introducing a means test for schools." Moreover, the representatives are recorded as proposing that the Minister make some sort of offer to include those secondary schools who were charging more than £25 per year in fees.¹⁷

The Departmental account of the 16 December meeting records the Minister's appreciation for those schools who held their fees low and that he agreed to the principle of a flat rate for all. It is noted that the Minister stated that his main problem was "to get a scheme of this magnitude off the ground" and that he hoped for a flat rate of £25 at a later date but he could not say when this would happen.¹⁸

Moreover, it is recorded that the Minister would not stipulate standards of buildings/facilities as conditions for this scheme but this might change. He did not intend to freeze fees at present levels and he would not do anything now or in the

future in relation to those schools charging more than £25. It was also noted that the Minister was against any form of entrance exam leading to children being rejected prior to or during first year.¹⁹ The Minister stated that there was no element of compulsion to join the scheme and that the autonomy of secondary schools would be preserved and respected by the Department.²⁰

Regarding the free book scheme, the overburdening of the work of headmasters was noted. The Minister stated that the decision regarding entitlement to free books by the headmaster was less intrusive than inquiries by the local Social Welfare Officer. The Minister would look favourably at alternative proposals by the managerial representatives on free books, free transport scheme and the Building Grants scheme.²¹

The managerial representatives account of this meeting noted that this meeting lasted for 3¾ hours. They are recorded as saying to the minister that they were his friends and necessary co-operators. It is noted that the Minister was taken aback at the long list of questions which the representatives wanted to ask the Minister regarding his scheme.²² The managerial minutes of this meeting record that the minister wished to give them a flat rate of £30 but that he was not allowed to provide this by the Department of Finance. Moreover, it is noted that the minister intended to eliminate the differential rate by 1968. The managerial representatives suggested that they were prepared to present their case for a flat rate to the Department of Finance. Again, the Minister's views on autonomy and entrance exams were recorded and that the Minister upheld the school's right of exclusion on the grounds of indiscipline. Regarding the free books scheme, it is noted that the Minister admitted that he should have qualified

what he stated in the Dáil, regarding headmasters who considered “that the free books scheme was a good thing”.²³

Additionally, the managerial representatives described their discussion with the Minister regarding those schools charging more than £25 and they were offended at the Minister’s use of phrases such as “snob” and “high fees schools”. It was noted that the Minister promised to praise those parents paying higher fees but that he was unhappy at the rationale for having such high fees.²⁴

Minister O’Malley gave written answers to the managerial representatives long list of questions. A flavour of these questions and answers is demonstrated by the following:

Questions by Joint Managerial body (JMB):

Will the State demand uniform standards in the matter of size of classrooms, special facilities, e.g. gymnasium, more than one laboratory, etc?

Answer for Minister for Education:

The State will not at the moment stipulate standards of building facilities, etc. for purpose of qualifying under the scheme, but ultimately this could come into question. It could arise in connection with having a flat rate of £25 for all schools. The question of filling the quota of teachers could arise, also. If a flat rate of £25 was payable, the schools at present on low fees would be in a position to employ more registered teachers.

Minister: There is no intention to freeze present fees. There would be rising costs and in such circumstances the case of any school would be considered on its merits.

JMB: Will fees be paid for three years only? Many schools wish to retain the Intermediate Course as a four-year one. Will these receive any help for the first of the four years? If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period will the fee be paid for the whole of the year?

Minister: The fee would be payable under the scheme for as long as a child attended a Secondary school. A minimal period of attendance in any year would be required. The length of this minimal period would

have to be discussed. A consideration would be that the State could not pay for a child in several schools.

JMB: If a school enters the scheme may they administer an entrance examination if there are more applications than places available?

Minister: The Minister has very strong views on such things as entrance examinations and even more so on the question of a house examination at the end of the first year on which the child might be rejected from the school; he could not tolerate the continuance of an arrangement of this latter kind. Scholarship examinations will no longer be in operation as from September next, nor should there be any question of a failing examination at entrance to post-primary stage. With reference to demand for places, the Minister does not think that the demand in September 1967 will be excessive throughout the State generally.

JMB: If, as is envisaged, there will be a heavy demand on schools entering the scheme to accept pupils, who will pay for the increased accommodation thereby necessitated? School Authorities are experiencing difficulties in obtaining bank accommodation towards building.

Minister: the problem is one of capital, which is not fully available for all projects. The Minister is acutely aware of this and is trying to free capital by arranging for an approach to the banks. He is also trying to raise the State's contribution from the present 60%.

JMB: Will schools in the scheme be compelled to accept all pupils who apply to the school?

Minister: there is no element of compulsion in the present scheme, and the autonomy of schools as to acceptance of pupils will be preserved. The Minister will not be in a position, probably for a long time to come, to offer parents a choice of schools. On the other hand, the State must ensure that any child can receive free post-primary education.²⁵

The celebration of Christmas brought an uneasy calm in the private exchanges between the Minister and the secondary school authorities.

The main representative body for post-primary teachers was the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI). The ASTI was positively favourable towards

plans to provide post-primary education for all students and offered to help resolve difficulties involved so that any proposed scheme would be educationally beneficial. However, there was residual defensiveness on the part of the ASTI in relation to plans to rationalise school provision and curricular changes, especially oral assessment.²⁶ The journal of the ASTI, The Secondary Teacher, addressed Minister O'Malley's proposals for free post-primary education in a forthright manner and these critical editorials were adverted to previously at the end of Chapter Two. Specifically the editorial of The Secondary Teachers in January 1967 published a series of questions regarding free post-primary education which were forwarded to Minister O'Malley. These questions and answers were subsequently published in this journal the following June.

ASTI:

- (a) How many children are or have been deprived of secondary education because of lack of money to pay the fees involved?
- (b) On what statistical analysis are the figures based?

Minister: Heretofore, about 17,000 pupils p.a. did not proceed to a course of post-primary education. While it is obvious that lack of means played a large part in this, only a parent could say in any particular case whether it was the necessity to pay fees that prevented him from sending his child to a secondary school. My policy springs from my conviction that education to the end of the post-primary period should be available free to any pupil who seeks it. I have set out to provide this to the greatest extent possible within the resources available.

ASTI: What guarantee has the Minister that places will be available for all the applicants he expects?

Minister: I have taken steps to ensure that the places will be available for the additional applicants to be expected in September next. At this stage, no one can do more than estimate the demand and I may have overestimated or under estimated this, although the latter is unlikely.

ASTI: Have parents an absolute right of choice of school, even within the financial limitations of the scheme?

Minister: The scheme for free education does not interfere with the parents' choice of school. In fact, it will offer a greater choice than has been the case hitherto. For instance, parents who hitherto could not afford the school fees had no choice at all.

ASTI: What obligations have the schools accepted to take those who apply for admission?

Minister: The scheme does not impose any special conditions or obligations on the schools in regard to applicants for admission.

ASTI: How does the Minister intend to meet the schools' liability for the huge debts already incurred in building?

Minister: Voluntary efforts on the part of the parents or other friends of the school towards the liquidation of such debts do not contravene the terms of the scheme.

ASTI: What facilities must be provided by those schools that opt for the Minister's scheme?

Minister: Schools which were already providing the normal facilities will not be expected to provide any additional facilities beyond what they themselves had envisaged. Schools which have been operating on a narrow curriculum and/or on less than the allotted quota of teachers may be required to make good these defects gradually. I may add that I have the fullest confidence in our schools doing right by our children.

ASTI: If equality is the aim and if there is not to be a means test, why not pay the same State contributions to the fees of all pupils, irrespective of the school they attend?

Minister: The suggestion in the question would, if carried out achieve just the opposite to equality.

ASTI: On what educational basis does the Minister justify his intention to allow students to proceed to Leaving Certificate irrespective of how they perform at the Intermediate Certificate examination? Should there not be some standard of entry to senior studies?

Minister: The fundamental reason underlying my intention in that regard is to avoid the rat-race that in too many countries is a feature of post-primary schooling. Having all progress through the post-primary courses based on examination achievement is to me the very negation of education. Any school worthy of the name should have more to offer its pupils than success in examinations.²⁷

This set of questions reflects and expands upon the concerns of managerial representatives. The differential grants of £15 and £25 per pupil per annum in lieu of fees were not addressed. Three other problems were mentioned but not solved - the provision of school accommodation, the clearing of existing school debts and the non-selective entry to senior cycle of post-primary schools. The open entry to Leaving Certificate was settled temporarily following the establishment of a Departmental committee to review the Leaving Certificate course in January 1967, with all the educational partners as committee members. Minister O'Malley did not accept that there would be accommodation problems from 1967. He told the Seanad that no child seeking free education, irrespective of means next September, will be denied a place in a school"²⁸ and he was convinced that the main problem would not be the provision of an adequate number of teachers of school places but rather it was

to educate the children and their parents to the incalculable value of post-primary education.....and only by a concerted effort on behalf of all of us in public through talking up the value of education.....will we be able to get across to those people the value of education.²⁹

Such aspirational and digressional comments only added to his differences with the voluntary schools representatives.

Moreover, the problem of existing school debts was settled when the managerial suggestion of annual parental voluntary contributions was accepted by the Department and this acceptance was confirmed in a Departmental circular.³⁰ However, the phrase "involved themselves in large capital debts", used in this circular only added to the difficult managerial/ministerial exchanges.

In general, much of the concern and unhappiness of secondary school teachers stemmed from a perception of a lack of prior consultation and forward planning by Minister O'Malley and his Department. Such sentiments were voiced by Daniel Buckley, the president of ASTI during 1965/1966.

Even if every secondary school in Dublin opted for the scheme - that is a very big "even if" - is it not a matter of common knowledge that every secondary school in Dublin is full to the doors and that many of them have waiting lists? And is the same true of every vocational school in Dublin, even without.....prior consultation.....the Minister and his Department knew this as well as you or I do? What then is going to happen next September? Where is the planning here?³¹

On January 4, 1967 there was a meeting of the seven Clerical Major Superiors at Drumcondra. Fr. Hughes and Mother Jordana attended.³² This meeting considered the managers report of their meeting with Minister O'Malley on December 16. All were of the view that the Minister was open to an alternative scheme. Mother Jordana and Fr. Hughes were asked to draft an alternative scheme.³³

The alternative scheme was drafted and placed before a meeting of managerial representatives, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Provincials of Teaching Brothers and the seven Clerical Provincials on January 26, 1967. This modified scheme proposed that as and when post-primary education became compulsory, it should logically become free. It affirmed the present situation of 75% of post-primary education being provided by voluntary schools and the remainder being provided by the State i.e. comprehensive and or vocational schools. With increasing post-primary participation, it suggested that the proportion of 75% : 25% be maintained. In exchange, the voluntary school would undertake to provide free education of a comprehensive type up to Intermediate Certificate level. This limitation would stand until such time as the

school leaving age is raised. Fees would be payable for post-compulsory school. Moreover, voluntary schools would countenance boards of governors for the schools, comprising of three voluntary school representatives with one representative from the Department and from the State school sector.³⁴

The alternative scheme proposed that the State undertake to give parity of treatment to schools in both sectors. It was remarked that voluntary schools regarded a 7 to 1 proportion as 'parity' for Building Grants and full parity regarding teacher salaries, school equipment and maintenance. The State would also be required to appoint one representative from the voluntary sector on the five person Board of Governors of State schools. This alternative proposal concluded that the proposals be implemented by an Act of the Oireachtas and not by Ministerial regulation. Moreover, a review of these proposals would occur in 1975 or whenever the school leaving age was raised, whichever came sooner.³⁵

The meeting of January 26 between the Archbishop and the voluntary school managerial representatives discussed thoroughly the alternative scheme and it was decided not to pursue it at that point in time. This meeting requested that Fr. Hughes seek an unofficial meeting with Minister O'Malley over the week-end to explore the possibility of a modified scheme. This meeting did not take place owing to Minister O'Malley's busy schedule. Fr. Hughes spoke to Minister O'Malley by phone and he subsequently wrote a letter to the Minister confirming the substance of their phone conversation earlier that morning of 27 January 1967. Fr. Hughes wrote that

At the meeting of His Grace with the Major Clerical and Brother Superiors yesterday, I was formally asked to seek an unofficial meeting with you. I was to express to you our unanimous and firm desire to accomplish the end

you have in view - the provision of free education but a means thereto, which would be acceptable to you and to the voluntary school authorities, was not yet immediately clear to us.....

I am in a position to tell you that there is not the slightest hope that a differential of £15 - £25 would be acceptable to anyone. There seems to be a consensus that, as an interim measure, the following scheme might prove acceptable: were the government to increase the capitation grant by £x, the schools would agree to lower their fees by a corresponding amount. Wherever this reduction eliminated fees entirely, free places would be immediately available.....

I have used the word "interim" advisedly. I am to say that we are convinced of the urgent necessity of an Act of the Oireachtas to spell out the future relations between the State and Voluntary Church linked (sic) parental schools.³⁶

The letter concludes that 1970 was the latest possible date for such an Act and that any further co-operation with Minister O'Malley's present proposals were of an interim nature. Additionally, and in a contradictory manner, Fr. Hughes re-emphasised that the voluntary secondary schools were 100% behind O'Malley's proposals and he warned that "the degree of our actual co-operation in the immediate future, depends solely on how far the Government can make such co-operation possible for us."³⁷

Possibly because of this letter and a previous promise to meet the managerial representatives for a further meeting, Minister O'Malley invited the managerial representatives to meet him on January 31, 1967. Minister O'Malley invited the Provincials of Teaching Brothers to meet him separately on the same day. These Provincials were asked for an immediate answer to support the Minister's scheme but they refused to give such an answer.³⁸

The meeting of January 31 between the Minister, his officials and the Joint Managerial committee explored many aspects of the free post-primary scheme. The managerial representatives were informed of new proposals regarding State grants in lieu of fees

- i) September 1967 - £15 to £25
- ii) September 1968 - £20 to £25
- iii) September 1969 - £25 with a promise that this figure would increase in the future.

There was little or no change regarding transport or free books. Minister O'Malley agreed that the foregoing is an interim solution and that an Act of the Oireachtas could be considered later. The Minutes of the meeting noted that Dr. Ó Raiftearaigh, Secretary of the Department of Education was opposed to such legislation.³⁹

Regarding building grants, the managerial representatives were told that this was to be increased to 70% but this was to remain confidential for the next ten days. This increase was to be retrospectively applied to schools built or extended under the 60% scheme. The Department intended to meet the financial institutions to seek better terms for schools regarding loans for extensions etc. The meeting was also informed that building grants may be tied to schools opting for the free fees scheme, at least to the extent that those schools opting for the free fees scheme would receive priority in respect of building grant applications. The meeting concluded with Minister O'Malley requesting the managerial representatives persuade schools in the Dublin area to opt for the free fees scheme. It was intimated that 94% of schools outside Dublin were covered by the scheme whereas only 45% of Dublin schools were covered by the scheme.⁴⁰

Two days later, a meeting was held at Archbishop's House, Drumcondra, between the Archbishop of Dublin, the seven clerical Provincials and the six Brother Provincials, Mother Jordana, Br. Walsh and Fr. Hughes, to review events.⁴¹ This meeting unanimously requested that Fr. Hughes ask the Bishop of Limerick to arrange for a meeting between the Episcopal Commission and the Catholic Managerial Committee if possible, within a fortnight, for the purpose of considering a memorandum from voluntary school representatives on Minister O'Malley's free post-primary scheme.⁴²

On the same day, Archbishop McQuaid wrote to Minister O'Malley regarding this meeting and its deliberations. Amongst other things, he wrote that

The meeting of Tuesday at the Ministry was discussed in all its findings. I regret to say that all without exception are profoundly disturbed. It is our unanimous view that the situation cannot be regarded as having been given a satisfactory solution in regard to either September 1967 or to future years.

The position is such that it must now be referred to the Hierarchy.⁴³

This unhappiness is apparent from a letter written by Fr. Hughes to Minister O'Malley dated 1 February 1967. In this letter, Fr. Hughes wrote, regarding the meetings of December 16 and January 31, 1967, that Minister O'Malley

made several references to the disparity between the fees of certain schools. While you did not in fact name the particular schools, your references were sufficiently pointed as to leave little doubt in your hearer's minds to which schools you were referring.

May I presume to remind you (1) that information on school fees was provided voluntarily by the schools in response to an appeal for co-operation from your Department (2) that this request (Circular 1/66) states "an assurance is given that this information will be treated with the strictest confidence and discretion within the Department."

I wish to protest formally to you that the use you made of this information for the dates cited was in breach of the spirit, if not the letter, of this undertaking sent out over the name of the Secretary of your Department.⁴⁴

Minister O'Malley replied to this letter by stating,

The remarks about certain fees to which you refer in your letter of the 1st February were not intended by me as more than a piece of harmless badinage as between one Limerick man and what might for the moment be regarded as another. Since you saw them in another light, I regret them.

I cannot, however, accept your charge that my reference to school fees was based on information supplied by the schools to the Department. Any information, other than that of a general kind, which I brought forward on the subject on the occasion concerned, was drawn on my own personal knowledge. Indeed, I actually mentioned (in a spirit of good humour which I hoped would be accepted as such) that I had "a certain personal stake in the matter" or some such phrasing.⁴⁵

The Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, Seán O'Connor also wrote a personal letter to Fr. Hughes regarding Fr. Hughes letter of February 1st, expressing his unhappiness at the turn of events.⁴⁶

On February 9, 1967, Seanad Eireann held a debate on Senator Professor Quinlan's motion "That Seanad Eireann notes the report on Investment in Education". However, the debate became a heated discussion on the free education scheme. Public attention was drawn to this debate because of an article in the Irish Independent of February 6, 1967, which intimated that Minister O'Malley would make a statement during the debate directed at satisfying those schools which had expressed dissatisfaction with his free education plan.

O'Malley opened his contribution in a conciliatory tone when he said that "he would consult with people and listen to the advice of people". This soon changed to uncontrolled emotionalism or frustration on O'Malley's part. Amongst other things, O'Malley said that

no one is going to stop me introducing any scheme next September. I know I am up against opposition and serious organised opposition but they are not going to defeat me on this. I shall tell you further that I shall expose them and I shall expose their tactics on every available occasion whoever they are. I see my responsibility very clearly to the Irish people and to the Irish children. No vested group or groups, whoever they be, at whatever level, will sabotage what every reasonable minded man considers to be a just scheme. I had a deputation recently and a reverend gentleman, as he went out the door.....said jocosely but there was malice in his joke, "You will never catch us. We will always be ahead of you". It was our Divine Lord who said 'Suffer little children to come unto me'. There will be a lot of suffering if that mentality prevails in Ireland. I am surprised and I am disillusioned because no Minister for Education came into this Department with more goodwill than I did and I was very surprised. Maybe some day I shall tell the tale and no better man to tell it. I shall pull no punches. Christian charity how are you....can the schools continue with impunity to bounce up the fees and can the State continue to pay the capitation grant per pupil to those schools, irrespective of what increases they make? Is it logical?.....Do they expect us to continue paying the capitation fee to those opting out of this most desirable scheme because of a few of the mothers, the 5% I suppose, considered that their children should not be mixing with the children of those, maybe working in skilled employment or on the fishing boats in this area".⁴⁷

He became calmer and conciliatory when he announced that from September 1968 that the £15 minimum be raised to £20 and the following September, £25 will be payable in all cases.

He was less mollifying when he said -

No doubt other objections will now show their heads above the surface. I do not say that they will come from the category who up to now have been charging low fees. Watch out for the week-end papers and the subsequent week-ends until next September. It will be an interesting summer.⁴⁸

The tone of the foregoing remarks should be considered in conjunction with the aforementioned letters by Fr. Hughes, Archbishop McQuaid and Minister O'Malley in the early days of February.

Senator Garret Fitzgerald in reply echoed many who felt O'Malley's comments were intemperate and undiplomatic by saying that the Minister's approach had "aggravated the problem instead of solving it...The situation we have got now has arisen out of confusion and misunderstanding but partly from prejudice on the Minister's part".⁴⁹ In addition, Senator D'Alton an old sparring partner of O'Malley's, pointed out that the apparent opposition by managers was "not so much a question of money as the hurt that teachers and others felt about these things".⁵⁰

Subsequently in the Dail on February 16, Deputy Lindsay asked O'Malley if his language used in Seanad Eireann replying to criticism was not the language of threat but merely a style of oratory. Donogh O'Malley replied that school managers could look on it as "a type of threat".⁵¹

Also on February 16, the Episcopal Commission on Post-Primary Education met with the Catholic Managerial committee to consider the deliberations between Minister O'Malley and secondary school representatives. A memorandum was placed before this meeting encompassing an analysis of Minister O'Malley's proposals and the alternative scheme suggested by the voluntary school representatives.

The memorandum opened with a reference to the two meetings between the managers and the Minister and his Department and commented,

- i) "it is their considered opinion that on the second of these occasions, the Minister presented them with his final offer and equivalently, with an ultimatum".....and

(ii) this alternative (proposed by the managers) the Minister did not discuss, nor did the Minister show any willingness to discuss it.⁵²

The opening section of this memorandum concluded that “it is the judgement of the committee that they have reached the end of the road where discussion or negotiation with the Minister is concerned. No fruitful purpose can be foreseen from further efforts as dialogue.” It was suggested that the final decision to accept or reject Minister O’Malley’s proposals was beyond the competence of individual headmasters or headmistresses or any association of managers but within the competence of the bishops and Major Superiors.⁵³

The managerial memorandum re-emphasised their opposition to the differential rates of £15 and £25 per pupil per annum. It expanded upon their basic objection to the whole concept of State grants in lieu of fees and asserted that

a school becomes totally dependant on the State as far as its income is concerned - the State paying fees, capitation and salaries. No matter what verbal assurances the present Minister may give, the fact remains that total economic dependence without legal protection can be accepted by any school.....under the O’Malley plan, without legal guarantee the situation of the school would be intolerable.

Hence, the clause in the managerial alternative to clarify the relationship between the State and the voluntary school sector.⁵⁴

The managerial submission concluded that they could not accept the Minister’s proposals or any alternative without stringent enforceable conditions attached. They suggested that the Hierarchy approach the minister regarding a flat rate for all schools from September 1967 as an interim measure and contingent on discussions for an Act

of the Oireachtas detailing the relationship between the voluntary school sector and the State. The final solution would be an Act of the Oireachtas as outlined above, alongside an exchange of voluntary school free places for parity with the State school sector.⁵⁵

The result of the meeting with members of the Hierarchy is to be found in a letter dated 17 February 1967 by Fr. John Hughes, circulated to all religious superiors involved in voluntary schools.

Amongst other things, Fr. Hughes wrote that the memorandum proposals did not find favour with the Hierarchy. Furthermore, he wrote that the Hierarchy considered that,

- 1) the situation had better be dealt with, for the present at least, by the committee itself.
- 2) that it was a matter of the greatest urgency that some statement go from the committee to the Minister as soon as possible.
- 3) that in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we have no option but to recommend acceptance of the scheme to those schools which find it financially feasible to do so.

He also informed his managerial colleagues that the Hierarchy was opposed to making any mention of a formal authorisation on the part of the Hierarchy or Religious Superiors in recommending acceptance of this scheme. The question of legal guarantees over the future relationship between the State and the voluntary school sector was to be considered at a later meeting of the Hierarchy.⁵⁶

That same evening February 16, 1967 Donogh O'Malley gave a speech at a public meeting in Clontarf, organised by the Micheál O'hAnnracháin Cumman of Fianna Fail.

It was a calmer and more considered speech aimed at the secondary school managers.

Again, he was conciliatory as he told his audience,

Don't expect miracles from us in September next, but do expect good results from us over the next three years. Once we get the feel of the "free education" movement, I have no doubt we shall be able to handle it. An essential will of course be goodwill and great patience between the Department and the schools and when all is said and done, we can count on that.⁵⁷

Moreover, he prefaced his speech, claiming that he was not speaking especially of Ireland, when describing secondary education. He described secondary education as complacent and providing an education which was not for every Tom, Dick or Harry. It had been realised in many education systems that voluntary efforts was not enough if all the children of the nation were to enjoy equality of educational opportunity. He described the private nature of the secondary grammar schools as having as one advantage "that heretofore the State, that is the Community in general, has largely escaped the burden of providing school accommodation". He also saw a disadvantage:

If we are entirely dependent on private schools, the essence of which is the right to accept or reject only particular pupils, the state could not guarantee to all children the right of access to post-primary education. A system for all but from which even one child could be locked out, could not be accepted by me, for with such a system, we would not be cherishing all the children of the nation, not to mention cherishing them equally.⁵⁸

The latter enabled O'Malley to strike a fundamental political position and, in turn, to protect his scheme from alternatives being proposed by managerial bodies.

Amidst all this, O'Malley sent his Department Secretary, T.O'Raifeartaigh, to talk with Archbishop McQuaid. O'Raifeartaigh strove to persuade the Archbishop to encourage secondary schools in Dublin to opt for the free education scheme.⁵⁹ This successful

intervention by Dr. Ó Raiftearaigh could be inferred by a phrase used by Fr. Hughes' letter of 17 February to his managerial colleagues, regarding the outcome of the meeting of the Episcopal Commission on Minister O'Malley's proposals. The phrase was "that it was a matter of greatest urgency that some statement go from the committee to the Minister as soon as possible."⁶⁰

Moreover, arising out of this letter, Fr. Hughes's colleagues submitted a list of the defects of O'Malley's scheme along with proposed paragraphs which would recommend acceptance of the O'Malley scheme by those schools who found the scheme financially feasible. These were to form the basis of the letter written by Fr. Hughes, addressed to Minister O'Malley and circulated to all secondary school headmasters and headmistresses on February 23. This letter of February 23 contained the following:

Dear Mr. Minister,
On behalf of the Catholic Managerial committee, I am to state that we are of one mind with you in your purpose, viz.: to make available the opportunity for post-primary education.

For this reason we have decided to recommend acceptance of the Scheme to all the schools in our associations which were envisaged by you in your statement in Dáil Eireann on November 30th last. We have felt compelled, however, to point out to them those serious defects in the Scheme of which we have already made you aware.

In view of your recent welcome statement in the Senate: that you are ready to consult with anyone wherever the welfare of the children is concerned, we intend to approach you in the near future to explore with you ways and means of eliminating these defects.

You yourself will clearly understand that the final decision to enter the scheme or not rests with the appropriate authority of each school.

John Hughes S.J.
On behalf of the Catholic Managerial committee.⁶¹

Copies of this were sent to all schools who became annoyed at the letter which was addressed to the Minister and not individual schools.⁶² A decision was obviously made not to include the list of defects pertaining to the O'Malley scheme and to discuss these defects at a later stage with Minister O'Malley and his officials. These defects related to the absence of detailed and formal proposals regarding free education, the autonomy of secondary schools and the funding of those schools opting to remain outside the free fees scheme.

Difficulties arose over the wording of Minister O'Malley's letter of February 28, acknowledging the Catholic Managerial Committee's recommendation of his scheme. Minister O'Malley was deemed to have ignored a qualifying clause in the letter from Fr. Hughes dated 23 February 1967. In a letter to Minister O'Malley from Fr. Hughes on 6 March, Fr. Hughes wrote "the omission of the qualifying phrase causes us very great concern, as it has the effect of extending our recommendation beyond its intended limits."⁶³ Minister O'Malley wrote back to Fr. Hughes saying that,

It is a matter of no small surprise to me to learn that I cannot simply acknowledge with thanks, receipt of a letter from you without weighing my every word and ensuring that every qualifying phrase inserted by you is repeated in my communication.

I received from you the letter concerned. I noted its contents. It would be an unprofitable exercise for me to have to sort out the niceties of the limits which you might consider to have been envisaged by me in my statement of 30th November to Dáil Eireann.⁶⁴

These letters demonstrate further, the unhealthy tension between Minister O'Malley and Fr. Hughes and the secondary school managers.

The first direct communication from the Department to secondary schools regarding the free education scheme was in February 1967. The opening sentence read 'I am desired by the Minister for Education to refer to his scheme'. The word "his" was crossed out in favour of the word "the".⁶⁵

A Departmental circular was issued in April 1967 which clarified the manager's question of the phrase "a general level in their standard of educational facilities which satisfies the Minister". The Department stated "reasonably wide curriculum" and "normal equipment" but the questions continued. The final paragraph of the circular was to help schools make a decision on the scheme when it said that the allotment of grants would be dependent on the schools acceptance or rejection of the free education scheme.⁶⁶

Moreover, during November 1966, post-primary schools in many counties received from the Development Branch of the Department of Education the results/statistics for their counties based on the county surveys from 1963 onwards. Included with these tables was a copy of the general principles which would govern the projected re-organisation of post-primary education in all parts of the county. These principles set out new criteria on which the viability of a school would be judged in the future. These principles indicated that the fortunes of all post-primary schools would in future be based on having as a minimum of 320 to 400 pupils to be considered as a major post-primary school and the final decision on this would rest with the Department of Education. Eileen Randles comments that these surveys and principles

did influence participation in the scheme. The new importance of having sufficient numbers to be considered viable outweighed real anxieties about possible loss of autonomy and compelled many schools to accept

the free scheme. The options had become simple. Survival required numbers and numbers required free education. The O'Malley scheme should therefore be accepted.⁶⁷

Secondary schools were asked to notify the Department of their decision on the scheme by May 16. This was extended to May 31. As the end of May approached, the media spotlight fell heavy on secondary managers. This heavy media spotlight originated from an article in The Irish Times of May 3rd, 1967. This article contained very detailed information - statistics and even names of schools who were opting into and opting out of the Free Scheme. Interestingly enough, the writer does not indicate his/her source but it is very obvious - the Department of Education.

The article stated that at present, that 58% of Dublin secondary schools had opted for the Free Scheme rather than the estimated 44%. Furthermore, it stated that 18% of secondary schools had opted out and that replies were due from the remaining 24%. 92% of secondary schools outside the greater Dublin area were estimated to opt for the scheme but in fact 94% had opted for the scheme. Again, it stated that replies were due from 4% with 2% opting to stay out.

Even more startling was the naming of secondary schools who had opted out or who were undecided. Fourteen schools are named as having opted out and another seventeen are named as being undecided.⁶⁸ The manner in which opting and undecided secondary schools were named was both controversial and tantamount to pressure.

The editorial of The Secondary Teacher in the same month was to refer to the war of nerves being conducted by the Department of Education to bring pressure on schools

to join the scheme and to “a campaign of most insidious moral blackmail mounted by the media. It castigated the opposition in Dáil Eireann and the Bishops for failing to support secondary schools, who had remained virtually silent”.⁶⁹ The tone of this editorial was to result in no editorial appearing in The Secondary Teacher for some six months as the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the ASTI instructed the editor to submit all future editorials for consideration by the CEC before publication.⁷⁰

When the final count was made, 92% of pupils nationally, instead of the estimated 75% would have free post-primary education.⁷¹ The die was now cast.

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CHAPTER FIVE : The Outcomes of the Free Post-Primary Scheme

In the final chapter, an attempt is made to identify and evaluate the outcomes and implementation aspects of the free education scheme. Some of these are direct and tangible and can be traced in statistical data, for example, participation rates. Other outcomes are of a more indirect character and relate more to the effects on the outlooks of people in the wake of the initiative. This chapter seeks to explore both types of outcomes and to relate them to the changing socio political and economic context.

The most immediate effect/problem was accommodating the extra 21,000 rather than the estimated 7,000. The Department of Education invited tenders for the supply of and erection of 100 prefabs for areas of greatest need. The building grant to secondary schools was increased to 70% with the remaining 30% available as a loan repayable at 15% over 15 years. Harassed school authorities soon found however, that it was almost impossible to get credit facilities from the banks for school buildings. Urgent expansion plans were held up because of credit restrictions. As a result of talks between the Department of Finance and the banks, it was announced in June that an extra four million in capital would be available to finance the building of new and the extension of existing post-primary day schools. Half of this amount would be provided from the Exchequer and the other half would be made available jointly by the banks as a special contribution.¹

The easing of credit facilities was welcome news to school authorities but they could not ignore the conditions attached to the credit. The new arrangement between the Government and the banks meant all funds for educational expansion would be channelled through the Department of Education which would act as a control agency for processing building projects. It has been asserted that this resulted in the Minister for Education arranging almost the entire building programme of all post-primary schools and, in general, the Minister imposing his will on the entire post-primary educational system.²

TABLE 5.1 - TOTAL SECOND LEVEL ENROLMENTS FROM 1965 TO 1976	
1965/66	124,415
1966/67	142,714
1967/68	164,249
1968/69	183,687
1969/70	196,660
1970/71	209,812
1971/72	221,630
1972/73	230,931
1973/74	245,245
1974/75	259,664
1975/76	246,619

Source : Department of Education Statistical Reports

The most obvious effect of the Free Education Scheme was the accelerated growth in post-compulsory educational enrolments. Participation rates had been increasing steadily during the pre 1967 period. The O'Malley free education scheme was to increase dramatically these participation rates thereafter. Nonetheless, one can assume that some of the post-1967 growth would have occurred in the absence of the 1967 free post-primary scheme.

TABLE 5.2 - TOTAL PERSONS ATTENDING FULL-TIME THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION FROM 1966 TO 1979			
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
1966/1967	21,341	14,806	6,535
1967/1968	21,737	14,977	6,760
1968/1969	23,143	N/A*	N/A
1969/1970	24,496	N/A	N/A
1970/1971	26,218	N/A	N/A
1971/1972	27,136	N/A	N/A
1972/1973	28,614	18,810	10,434
1973/1974	29,640	18,677	10,968
1974/1975	30,989	18,818	12,171
1975/1976	33,148	20,400	12,748

Source : Department of Education Statistical Reports

*** These figures were not collated by the Department of Education**

An increase in second level participation might lead one to ascertain a consequential effect on third level participation with the first large enrolment 'bulge' possibly working its way into third level colleges by 1972 or 1973. However, no such effect can be located statistically. It is noteworthy that there was a marked increase in participation at third level particularly by women after 1967.

TABLE 5.3 - EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION BY 15 TO 19 YEAR OLD STUDENTS BASED ON SOCIAL CLASS IN 1960/61 AND 1980/81		
	1960/1961	1980/1981
FARMERS	27.1	45.7
PROFESSIONAL, EMPLOYERS, MANAGERS	46.5	76.4
OTHER NON-MANUAL	28.0	50.1
SKILLED MANUAL	17.3	47.7
SEMI / UNSKILLED MANUAL	9.8	30.5
ALL	29.8	55.9

Source : Richard Breen et al., Understanding Contemporary Ireland, P.130

It should be recalled the Investment in Education report finding of class and regional disparities in education participation rates for 1960/61 for 15 to 19 year old students. These figures show a marked disparity between the participation rates for students of professional, employer or managerial backgrounds and those students from semi-skilled or unskilled manual backgrounds. In 1981, while overall participation rates for all has increased, the group with the highest participation rate in 1961 - the offspring of the professional, employer and manager have shown a much greater increase in its participation rate than students from the semi-skilled/unskilled manual group. The skilled manual group and the two non-manual groups have benefited to the greatest degree from the free education scheme while the lower working class seems to have fallen further behind.³

**TABLE 5.4 - AGE SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES
FOR 1971, 1981 AND 1991**

	1971	1981	1991
15yr olds increased from:	71%	87%	99%
17yr olds increased from:	40%	53%	71%
18yr olds increased from:	20%	28%	45%
19yr olds increased from:	11%	16%	29%

Source : Department of Education Statistical Reports

In the early 1960's approximately half of all 15 year olds were still in school, by 1970 this had increased to 70% and by 1979 to 85%. In 1989/90, 97% of 15 year olds were in full-time education.⁴

In terms of the kinds of post-primary schools entered by pupils, virtually all the growth in enrolments brought about since 1967 has taken place in the secondary schools and to a lesser extent, the comprehensive and community schools as illustrated in Appendix One. There was a marked increase in girls availing of post-primary education, particularly those attending voluntary secondary schools. The relative position of the vocational sector has worsened since the 1960's. The percentage of boys leaving primary schools and entering vocational has remained largely unchanged. Regarding girls, entering vocational schools, this has declined by 9%. Thus the academic rather than the vocational side of Irish education appears to have benefited from increases in pupil enrolments.⁵

Secondary schools were slow to adopt technical subjects, particularly at senior level (as demonstrated by Appendix Two and Three). That being stated, the increased numbers participating in second level education from 1967 onwards would result in second level schools having to attend to the educational needs of a pupil cohort from a wide variety of social backgrounds with a great diversity of talents, ability levels and educational expectations.. Previously, the small cohort of second level students studied mainly academic subjects for their State examinations.

The Government's proposals for equality of educational opportunity were bound up with the idea of a common or comprehensive curriculum. The latter would involve the amalgamation of schools, the sharing of facilities between schools and the setting up of educational centres serving specific catchments as set out in George Colley's letter to post-primary authorities in January 1966 and the November 1966 circular issued by the Development Branch of the Department of Education. The move to free post-primary education had been originally targeted for 1970 - the period to that date was to have been used for increasing the capacity of the system to cope with greater numbers. As the idea of the comprehensive curriculum made clear, this new provision was to be made in the areas of technical/vocational scientific and linguistic education rather than within the existing framework. The introduction of free post-primary education in 1967 led to the virtual abandonment of those intentions and the consequent rapid growth in participation rates invalidated the projections cost, facility requirements envisaged.⁶

Once free post-primary was in place, it became impossible for the Department of Education either to direct enrolments into specific kinds of schools as Seán O'Connor

and his officials hoped in submitting two types of free education scheme in the September 1966 memorandum. It also became impossible to effect curricular changes in the short term that would ensure a substantial move to a more vocationally orientated form of education. In short, the State's lack of control over the post-primary system combined with the O'Malley free second level education scheme and thus the introduction of one set of changes - free second level education made the success of the other - the move to a broader post-primary curriculum - less likely in the short term.⁷ However, the diverse and increasing pupil cohort availing of second level education with their diverse educational needs, ensured that a broader range of subjects and modes of assessments for all second level students would occur in the longer term.

TABLE 5.5 - NUMBER OF TEACHERS EMPLOYED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL FROM 1963 TO 1974			
YEAR	FULL-TIME REGISTERED	UNREGISTERED	TOTAL
1963/64	3,062	732	3,794
1964/65	4,012	707	4,719
1965/66	4,332	566	4,838
1966/67	4,568	745	5,313
1967/68	5,087	752	5,839
1968/69	5,359	1,325	6,684
1973/74	8,176	1,021	9,377

Source : J. Coolahan, The ASTI and Post-Primary Education, P.233, P. 273 and P. 308

The expansion of post-primary pupil participation occasioned a consequent rapid growth in the post-primary teaching force. These new and younger teachers joined the Association of Secondary Teachers (ASTI) and Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) and gave both organisations the resources necessary to play a more active role in the

educational policy process and a generation gap of younger and older teachers resulting in tension within the ASTI in particular.⁸

Additionally, the rapid increase in teacher numbers gave rise to an unusually young second level teaching force with a large number of those teachers progressing relatively little on the salary increments scale. Consequently, Tussing remarks that, “their average salaries are depressed as a consequence and that average will rise relatively rapidly over the next decade as a consequence.”⁹ It should be noted that the Department of Finance memorandum of 17 November 1966 on Minister O’Malley’s proposals, suggested that there were other additional costs not included in Minister O’Malley’s proposals other than free transport, free books and free tuition fees for second level education and these were costs relating to student accommodation and additional teacher pay.

TABLE 5.6 - STANDARD CAPITATION RATE FOR PRIMARY AND VOLUNTARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM 1968 TO 1979		
YEAR	*PRIMARY	SECONDARY
1968	NIL	£47.00
1972	NIL	£52.00
1974	NIL	£65.00
1975	£7.50	£80.00
1977	£7.50	£90.00
1978	£10.00	£96.50
1979	£10.00	£100.00

Source : Irish National Teachers Organisation and the Secretariat for Secondary Schools.

*The first payment of pupil capitation was made in October 1975 to those primary schools which had established boards of management. Prior to this, primary schools received a grant towards school maintenance, lighting and heating. The local parish contributed to any maintenance shortfall. Parishes continued to provide a local contribution towards pupil capitation at primary level which was £1.50 initially and rose to £2.00 in 1978. These local contributions are included in the above given capitation figures.

The net effect of the supplementary grant per post primary pupil in lieu of tuition fees resulted in second level schools, specifically voluntary secondary schools receiving what was in reality, an increase in their pupil capitation grant from the Department.¹⁰ Table 5.6 indicates an increasing disparity in capitation funding between primary and post-primary schools. Moreover, the foregoing perhaps confirms the contention that, increased educational exchequer funding from 1967 was directed at providing for the increasing participation at second level initially, and later at third level, during the seventies and eighties.¹¹ Furthermore, Tussing argues that the exchequer funding of the free education scheme would have been better spent by providing free second level education to low income families or alternatively "had the funds been devoted to primary education, their educational impact would certainly have been greater and more equitably distributed."¹²

On the macro-economic level, the free second level education scheme combined with the availability from 1966 of Intermediate and Leaving certificate courses in vocational schools, resulted in the labour force being reduced by approximately 20,000 persons as of 1975. This occurred through reduced entry into the labour force in 1968 to 1971.

Consequently Tussing concludes that:

The types of first jobs the economy must provide are quite different to what would have been required in the absence of changes, since the age

distribution of new entrants has shifted sharply in the direction of older and better educated first-job seekers.¹³

And furthermore, he remarks:

As long as the upward trend in participation rates continues, the age structure of new entrants into the labour force will continue to shift in the direction of an older and better educated group, seeking jobs which pay well and which use their maturity and abilities.¹⁴

The usage of the phrase “free post-primary education” is questionable. The costs of post-primary education and for that matter, all forms of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) involves costs, some of which are borne by the taxpayer, some borne by religious orders, some borne by private sector funding but mainly by the student and his/her family in terms of foregone income as well as incidental expenses.¹⁵

The net effect of the O’Malley free education scheme was that up to the end of second level education, all pupils could now reasonably enjoy the opportunity of educational participation, insofar as education is substantially free and access to schools is provided to all pupils. On the other hand, this does not mean all pupils receive the same quality of education. The fact that the State spends roughly the same amount on each child at each stage of its education means that those who can draw on additional non-State resources will receive a better quality of education. Tussing has shown that even within the free scheme there is significant regional variation at the post-primary level. For example, within Dublin, expenditure is greater in higher income areas. Such differences in per pupil expenditure “account for differences in educational opportunity which seems contrary to egalitarian standards”.¹⁶ The additional funds from parents and the community, available to schools serving a middle class clientele and the disadvantages suffered by schools in disadvantaged areas - vandalism, theft, a high

turnover of teachers mean that the quality of education available to working class and middle class pupils is far from uniform. A further source of inequality of educational opportunity lies in the existence of fee-charging, private secondary schools outside the scheme. Tussing's analyses indicate that per-school and per-pupil expenditures in those schools are considerably greater than in comparable schools in the Free Scheme. It is perhaps ironic therefore, that these private fee-charging schools continue to receive a significant proportion of their funding from the State, despite the 1986 budgetary changes.¹⁷

Despite these caveats, the O'Malley free post-primary scheme gave a greater equality of provision i.e. the quality of education formally available to all is the same. But because the provision of education has been largely without regard to pre-existing differences between pupils and their families, in terms of not only their financial but also their cultural resources, inequalities in educational opportunity have not been eliminated. It is well known that greater equality of provision is unlikely to be sufficient to tackle inequalities in educational outcomes.¹⁸

In short, one can draw two conclusions regarding the free post-primary scheme on educational participation. Firstly, it is clear that little headway has been made in terms of the lessening of class disparities in educational outcomes. Secondly, the blanket introduction of free secondary education in 1967 can now be seen as a blunt instrument, if the purpose of the change was intended to tackle undesirable differences in participation rates. Indeed one immediate result was the transfer of a sizeable ongoing windfall benefit to those parents who would have paid fees to send their

children to secondary schools but who, under the O'Malley Scheme, receive this education free of charge.¹⁹

Denis O'Sullivan questions the underlying intentions of the free education scheme. He argues that to advocate that the O'Malley free education scheme was aimed at addressing the access dimension of equality of educational opportunity would "run the risk of crediting policy makers of the era with a greater intentionality in policy and planning than appears to have been the case."²⁰ O'Sullivan suggests that what was being proposed was "some unstated notion of 'fairness' or 'unfairness', rather than individual rights or justice."²¹ Moreover, he remarks that for the free education scheme to be regarded as the access dimension of the general policy of equality of educational opportunity, this would necessitate that "the intervention (i.e. free-education scheme) be treated at a level of discourse which goes beyond the practical and recipe level."²² At the same time, O'Sullivan does not deny that "a form of discourse" did not occur during this scheme's formulation or implementation period, nor does he deny the merit of the scheme itself. Nonetheless, he asserts that

the resulting inadequate understanding of the nature of the intervention effectively isolated it, and inhibited the pursuance of a coherent programme of (or even policy commitment to) equal educational opportunity. It was as if policy makers were operating at the level of pedagogical and social folk medicine - the educational equivalent of the folk healer and the herbalist - proposing improperly understood anecdotes for inadequately defined illnesses.²³

Furthermore, one could also conclude that the manner in which the introduction of free post-primary was decided, announced and implemented was in line with the character and persona of Donogh O'Malley. Minister O'Malley regarded himself as a restless person, a man in a hurry, and he felt that the nation should be in a hurry and if it was

not, then it should be.²⁴ This impatient/impetuous spirit influenced how O'Malley worked and related to others. Sean O'Connor commented that O'Malley knew that his time was short and sadly it was.²⁵ This personal foreboding and restlessness were intricate elements in the whole free post-primary education episode.

Moreover, his gestures were always on the grand scale and dramatic. John Healy remarked that:

If a Taoiseach made Donogh O'Malley, Minister for Dustbins, he would make it the most exciting ministry in the cabinet.....
O'Malley never worried about the paternity of any thought, on any project, any scheme: all that mattered was that, if it was right and he had the power to make it a reality or use it, he was away.²⁶

In addition, Senator O'Connelláin commented that "O'Malley proposed free post-primary education to take all the obstacles in one colossal stride" and "it is a magnificent gesture and completely in character."²⁷

Seán O'Connor described O'Malley as a man with a genuine sympathy for the underprivileged and a resolve to improve their condition. He felt that O'Malley had no real interest in education per se but any proposal with social implications had O'Malley's full attention.²⁸ Séamus O'Buachalla feels that O'Malley's free education proposals stem from some very deep convictions on the social role of education, the innate injustice of inequality and the long-term national benefit to be derived from expanding education opportunity.²⁹ O'Malley's various speeches bear out this point and reveal a keen awareness of social history in Ireland and internationally.³⁰

Thus, the foregoing facets of O'Malley's personality and style yielded to what C.J. Haughey called O'Malley's unorthodox political approach³¹ in announcing the scheme,

seeking cabinet and Dáil approval and in consulting with those most affected in implementing the scheme.

The decision to plough ahead with free post-primary education earlier than 1970 stemmed from other interrelated factors as well as O'Malley's style. One such factor was succinctly indicated by Mark Clinton T.D. of Fine Gael, who remarked that the dramatic announcement was a long term shot made for political considerations.³² Such considerations can be seen in O'Malley's letter of September 7, 1966, regarding the imminent publication of Fine Gael's education policy document.³³ One commentator remarked that Fianna Fáil deputies and Ministers, despite their misgivings, concluded that O'Malley's dramatic announcement would help Fianna Fáil with the next general election. Moreover, this commentator noted that "the ubiquitous O'Malley yellow buses were everywhere to be seen. Fianna Fáil learned very quickly....(that) they were mobile "Vote Fianna Fáil" posters, reminding the punters of O'Malley and concern of Fianna Fáil for the betterment of the children of the nation."³⁴

The free education scheme was a quantum leap but given O'Malley's personality, only he could have managed this great and dramatic leap forward. This scheme saw Education take prominence in public consciousness³⁵ which had never occurred previously. The print and electronic media were to aid in this elevation. This single measure in its immediate impact and its long term influence added to the social aspirations of Irish society. It mirrored the Irish public's desire for change. It matched the economic, social and psychological changes of Irish society in the sixties which have been termed the almost inexplicable 'mental virus' which seems necessary if a society is to modernise.³⁶ In addition, it has been suggested that O'Malley's sudden

and untimely death at forty seven years of age came at a moment when he had caught the public imagination to an exceptional degree.³⁷ It could also be argued that his sudden announcement of free post-primary education was in fact the moment, the episode, which caught the Irish public's imagination perfectly. Many of the pre 1967 generation aspired to education up to the end of primary school/Intermediate Certificate. Their succeeding generations would aspire to sit the Leaving Certificate and study at third level.

It was remarked previously that O'Malley wished to present all interested parties with a *fait accompli* - the concept of free post-primary education.³⁸ Otherwise, orthodox consultation would have been time consuming and this would not have suited the O'Malley style. However, this unorthodox political approach to consultation through presenting one's partners with an ultimatum/*fait accompli* was to cause opposition.

This opposition was to come mainly from the secondary school managers. They were opposed to the timing, the lack of planning/phasing of the scheme and the overt and subtle pressure by the Minister, his Department and the media. Their opposition may stem from their defensiveness and reticence on their part, in allowing the Minister for Education and his Department to adopt and assert a leadership role in terms of educational change.

This reticence and defensiveness by the secondary school managerial representatives was perhaps influenced by their previous forty years experience of routine and pattern, based on religious management of voluntary secondary schools and the *laissez-faire* approach of the Department of Education and previous Ministers for Education.

Defensiveness is a natural consequence of the process of educational change as described in the recent literature.³⁹ One could also suggest that the lack of sensitivity by Minister O'Malley in his dealings with the educational partners - the secondary school managerial representatives contributed to defensiveness and opposition on their part. Furthermore, the recent availability and analysis of primary source material on the interaction between Minister O'Malley and secondary school managers, confirms the unorthodox approach adopted by Minister O'Malley and the defensive response of the secondary school managers.

The leadership role adopted and asserted by Donogh O'Malley as Minister for Education, in pursuit of his free education scheme, was the culmination of the new and assertive role of the Minister for Education, envisaged by O'Malley's predecessors, Dr. Hillery and George Colley. In particular, Dr. Hillery as Minister for Education (1959 to 1965) spoke on two occasions regarding this new role. On the first occasion Dr. Hillery said "It is, of course, the function and duty of a Minister for Education to be the captain of the ship and so to have the vessel in good trim and see all hands are at their work."⁴⁰ On the second occasion, Dr. Hillery remarked that "the Minister now has to be somebody planning and pointing the way, instead of going around with the oil can keeping the machinery in order."⁴¹

The foregoing would appear to confirm Margaret Archer's view that educational systems change over time, and this occurs through social interaction between the dominant/managerial groups and the rising assertive groups.⁴² One could perhaps suggest that Dr. Hillery's speech and Donogh O'Malley's free education scheme, constitutes an assertive group striving for educational change. Furthermore, it has been

asserted that Ireland has a highly centralised educational system similar to France.⁴³ Accordingly, political manipulation is one possible means by which educational change can occur within a centralised system.⁴⁴ Consequently, one could infer that the O'Malley free education scheme was a form of political manipulation.

Moreover, the assertiveness and political skills of Donogh O'Malley, in pursuit of his free education scheme, have been commented upon. Donal Creed, a former Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Food, described Minister O'Malley as a "good Minister", who was well informed and decisive and carried sufficient weight in cabinet to get government support and money.⁴⁵

It was inevitable that free second level education of some degree would become available. This was signalled and inferred by Dr. Hillery in his press statement of May 1963, by George Colley in his letter to all post-primary schools, appealing for rationalisation and collaboration between second level schools at local level, and by Seán O'Connor in his various articles on this very issue.⁴⁶ Both government and opposition political parties had all indicated their aspiration towards some form of free second level education during the sixties.⁴⁷

What was surprising was the manner in which it was announced with complete disregard for cabinet collective responsibility and cabinet procedure. The manner of the announcement was very much in line with the personality and unorthodox style of Minister O'Malley. However, the manner of the announcement and approval of the free education scheme, is more the exception than the rule. With the rarest of

exceptions, Ministers seek cabinet approval before initiating or implementing policy changes. It has been remarked that;

Approval is not a matter of the government automatically rubber-stamping proposals from ministers; it is clear (despite such rare exceptions as Donogh O'Malley's unapproved announcement of the "free education" scheme) that the cabinet acts as a genuine and comprehensive constraint on policy initiation by individual ministers. In particular, there are stringent controls exercised by the Department of Finance which circumscribe ministerial action.....⁴⁸

In pursuit of his free education scheme, Minister O'Malley disregarded procedures relating to cabinet approval and Department of Finance sanction of funding for this scheme. Subsequently, there was no follow up to this initiative in terms of adequate resources.⁴⁹ Moreover, it appears that "once the displacement of fees by public expenditure is allowed for, there was little increase expenditure on secondary education between 1965 and 1975."⁵⁰ It could be inferred that the subsequent difficulties regarding teacher salaries in the late sixties, arose from the supervisory role of the Department of Finance and its general concern/avoidance of commitment to additional exchequer expenditure on education after the free education scheme. This is best exemplified by a representative on behalf of the Department of Finance Tribunal who spoke strenuously, at the Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries (1968), against a sizeable increase in teacher salaries in the light of the increased exchequer funding of education. Moreover, he remarked that it must be strongly urged that any further substantial addition to the already very heavy and mounting costs of education be carefully weighed."⁵¹

As remarked previously, the most evident change as a result of the free post-primary scheme has been the marked increase in educational participation rates at second level initially, and later at third level. Breen et al remark that:

By and large, those who appear to have gained from educational reform have been middle class - both the old middle class, who might otherwise have had to pay for their children's education and the new middle class which have experienced mobility as a consequence of the massive structural shifts in the economy of the post 1958 era.⁵²

Moreover, they observe a rapid growth in credentialism, i.e. allocation of occupational positions on the basis of educational qualifications and the formalisation of jobs market. They suggest that the expansion of the Irish education system commencing at second level and the pervasive use of educational credentials in governing access to employment, developed in tandem. In hindsight, evidence from other countries with similar free education schemes, such as Britain during the fifties, mirror these phenomena.⁵³

That being stated, it has been observed that the rise in educational participation rates since 1980 has been greater than what occurred during the first fifteen years of the free education scheme. Tony Fahey and John Fitzgerald suggest that "the influence of improved education levels in the population is ubiquitous."⁵⁴ Furthermore, they remark that the stronger Irish economic performance of the nineties, and most demographic behaviours e.g. marriage, birth rate, labour force participation, are influenced by educational participation and attainment. In addition, they cite that the first beneficiaries of free second level education are still in their early forties and conclude that the long term effects of rising education attainment levels of this generation and their succeeding generations are "thus still in the making."⁵⁵

All in all, one could contend that the introduction of the free post-primary scheme, was the single most important change in educational policy over the last thirty years, by virtue of its effects. It caught the Irish public's imagination and raised the levels of

societal expectations and horizons. It sparked a steady extension of participation in education which was concentrated initially at second level and more recently, resulted in a major expansion in third level participation. Nonetheless, continuing social class inequality, in terms of educational participation and educational achievement, remain a challenge for present and future policy makers, for the educational community and society in general.

A person is entitled to be remembered for his/her positive contributions and actions and thus, Donogh O'Malley's free second level education scheme more than any other of his words or deeds, earns him a special place in Irish educational history and in the folk memory of the Irish public. The editor of An Múinteoir Náisiúnta wrote, following O'Malley's untimely death, that O'Malley had "built himself a monument by which he will be remembered with gratitude by generations yet unborne."⁵⁶ This monument is of course, free second level education, of which Donogh O'Malley said

There is the psychological effect on the youngster of having some years at post-primary school. There is the feeling that one can better look the world in the eye, for while there are many, many ways in which levelling down can come about, education is the one great leveller-up, greater than wealth or lineage or power or anything like.⁵⁷

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APPENDICES

Appendix One - Second level enrolments based on type of school/gender of students from 1965 to 1976.

Appendix Two - Number of pupils taking the various subjects of the Department's Intermediate Certificate programme in 1975/76

Appendix Three - Numbers of pupil taking the various subjects of the Department Leaving Certificate programme in 1975/76.

APPENDIX ONE
POST-PRIMARY ENROLMENTS (TYPE OF SCHOOL AND NO. OF BOYS AND GIRLS) FROM
1965 TO 1976

YEAR	SECONDARY			VOCATIONAL			COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE		
	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
1965/66	98,667	49,553	49,114	35,748	21,485	13,623	-	-	-
1966/67	103,558	51,041	52,417	38,467	22,902	15,565	689	346	343
1967/68	118,807	56,678	62,129	44,152	26,649	17,863	930	436	494
1968/69	133,591	62,119	71,472	48,803	29,971	18,832	1,293	612	681
1969/70	144,425	63,319	78,256	50,833	31,767	19,086	1,402	696	702
1970/71	150,642	68,396	82,246	57,578	37,315	20,263	1,592	799	793
1971/72	157,234	69,566	87,886	61,536	39,150	22,386	2,860	1,588	1,272
1972/73	162,161	71,585	90,576	63,638	40,804	22,834	5,132	2,834	2,298
1973/74	167,309	73,361	93,948	68,370	42,467	25,903	9,746	5,525	4,493
1974/75	173,188	75,698	97,460	58,333	40,108	18,225	13,091	7,194	5,897
1975/76	182,639	76,695	102,994	60,670	41,772	18,898	15,125	8,578	6,547

Source : Department of Education Statistical Reports

APPENDIX TWO
NUMBER OF PUPILS TAKING THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS OF THE
DEPARTMENT'S PROGRAMME 1975/76
INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE

SUBJECT	SECON- DARY	VOCA- TIONAL	COM- MUNITY	COMPRE- HENSIVE	TOTAL *	
1. Irish (Higher Course)	80,381	50,442	2,817	2,595	180,482	1
2. Irish (Lower Course)	38,079		2,957	2,115		2
3. English (Higher Course)	92,325	50,278	2,982	3,263	184,382	3
4. English (Lower Course)	29,829		3,035	1,572		4
5. Mathematics(Lower Course)	82,008	849	2,594	3,085	184,167	5
6. Mathematics(Higher Course)	40,146		3,367	1,580		6
7. History and Geography	122,154	39,162	5,177	3,766	171,357	7
8. Latin	27,404	144	540	356	28,154	8
9. Greek	460	-	-	-	460	9
10. Hebrew	46	-	-	-	46	10
11. French	95,924	23,328	4,122	3,164	127,388	11
12. German	11,523	399	-	479	12,401	12
13. Spanish	10,252	677	552	15	11,496	13
14. Italian	1,208	-	544	69	1,821	14
15. Science A	74,326	24,799	3,304	3,247	106,233	15
16. Science E	3,653	16,781	1,346	774	22,554	16
17. Home Economics	45,974	15,900	2,637	2,268	67,408	17
18. Music and Musicianship	32,600	2,297	1,897	2,704	39,498	18
19. Art	54,408	23,767	3,695	3,005	85,173	19
20. Woodwork	11,188	32,730	2,406	1,284	47,894	20
21. Metalwork	1,749	28,496	1,948	995	33,188	21
22. Mechanical Drawing	12,432	34,985	2,872	1,898	52,232	22
23. Commerce	70,531	18,316	3,405	1,992	94,912	23
24. Civics	122,154	43,738	6,072	3,477	176,167	24
25. Physical Education	93,166	25,308	5,545	4,432	129,045	25

Source : Department of Education Statistical Reports
***Includes secondary top figures**

APPENDIX THREE
NUMBER OF PUPILS TAKING THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S
PROGRAMME 1975/76 -

LEAVING CERTIFICATE

SUBJECT	SECON- DARY	VOCA- TIONAL	COM- MUNITY	COMPRE- HENSIVE	TOTAL *	
1. Irish	57,070	9,459	1,792	1,779	70,364	1
2. English	57,601	9,825	2,115	1,810	71,621	2
3. Latin	8,424	39	137	86	8,701	3
4. Greek	65	-	-	-	65	4
5. Hebrew	21	-	-	-	21	5
6. French	36,522	3,000	803	862	41,337	6
7. German	2,122	58	42	52	2,280	7
8. Italian	557	-	-	5	562	8
9. Spanish	4,164	172	120	52	4,508	9
10. History	23,921	2,113	647	694	27,456	10
11. Geography	37,960	3,454	859	1,055	43,472	11
12. Mathematics	55,422	9,097	1,756	1,822	68,366	12
13. Applied Maths	1,179	237	11	56	1,483	13
14. Physics	8,052	1,033	209	236	9,575	14
15. Chemistry	12,581	1,176	288	344	14,421	15
16. Physics and Chem.	1,800	642	10	10	2,466	16
17. Ag. Science	852	715	46	81	1,694	17
18. Biology	24,191	4,499	723	741	30,277	18
19. Ag. Economics	131	148	-	6	285	19
20. Engineering	158	2,989	104	113	3,434	20
21. Technical Drawing	996	4,389	260	272	5,981	21
22. Building Construction	457	3,475	121	131	4,219	22
23. Mechanics	10	108	-	18	136	23
24. Home Economics Social & Scientific	3,437	219	51	156	3,863	24
25. Home Economics General	13,413	2,612	511	417	17,010	25
26. Accounting	13,114	2,313	148	224	15,882	26
27. Business Organisation	14,426	2,461	386	350	17,701	27
28. Economics	12,233	2,035	512	289	15,149	28
29. Economic History	666	29	1	-	696	29
30. Art (Including crafts)	11,488	2,408	454	513	14,871	30
31. Music and Musicianship	3,473	151	152	370	4,146	31
32. Physical Education	37,246	2,632	1,048	1,552	42,836	32

Source: Department of Education Statistical Reports

***Includes figures for regional colleges and secondary top.**

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