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An Roinn Oideachais,
(Department of Education).
Baile Átha Cliath, 1.
(Dublin, 1).

12, November, 1970.

Mr. Sean G. Ronan,
Cathaoirleach,
Aonad Idir-Rannach um an Tuaisceart,
Department of External Affairs,
Dublin 2.

Dear Ronan,

I wish to refer to your minutes of 24 July and 6 October last and to enclose copies of a memorandum which sets out briefly a comparison between the system of education here and that in Northern Ireland.

The documents which accompanied your minute of 6 October have been brought to the notice of the Senior Officials of the Department.

I wish to apologise for the delay in furnishing this material.

Yours sincerely,

A. M. G. Keenan

Rúnaí.

Note: Phoned Miss Keenan, PSS, D/Ed. to say that:

- 1) although reference is made to the IDU's minute of 24th July above, a reply has not yet been received;*
- 2) the comparative study received in response to the IDU's circular of 12th Aug appears to be too superficial.*

Miss Keenan promised to look into the matter & ring back. 25/11/70

Brief Comparison between the system of Education
in the Twenty Six Counties and Northern Ireland

GENERAL

The ages of compulsory full-time schooling are from five to fifteen years in the Six Counties and from six to fourteen years in the Twenty-Six Counties. It is proposed to raise the upper limit here to fifteen years.

The provision of educational facilities in the two areas follows a broadly similar pattern, each having stages of primary, post-primary and higher or further education. It is in the organisation of the structure of the educational facilities that divergence occurs, the local authorities in the Six Counties playing a much more major role than here.

PRIMARY

Primary, or national, schools in the Twenty-Six Counties are in practice denominational. They are generally vested in local or diocesan trustees and are managed by the local parish priest or minister, who is responsible for the government of the school, its maintenance and the appointment of teachers. The State pays the salaries of the teachers, grants towards the cost of building, extending and improving schools (nominally two-thirds but on average six-sevenths) and grants in aid of the painting, heating and cleaning of the premises.

In the Six Counties, each county and county borough council is the local educational authority for the area and is required by statute to delegate its duties and powers to committees consisting of members appointed by the council to represent local interests and others appointed by the Minister to represent the schools. There are two categories of primary school, the county school and the voluntary school.

The county schools are managed by the local education authorities and are wholly grant-aided from public funds. These schools are in effect, Protestant as to both children and staffing. The voluntary schools are under voluntary management and receive substantial assistance from public funds comprising the teachers' salaries and 65% of approved building alteration and maintenance costs. These are, in effect, Catholic schools under local clerical management and correspond most closely with the schools under our own system. A new category of voluntary school called maintained schools was introduced from 1st April, 1968. These are managed by statutory committees of not less than six members, two-thirds representing their former managers and one-third the local education

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- 2 -

authority. This is a device to bring Catholic schools more fully under control and to enable them to benefit more fully financially from public funds, i.e., maintained schools are eligible for 80% of the costs of approved building or alteration and are fully equipped and maintained by the local educational authority.

POST-PRIMARY

In the Twenty-Six Counties children proceed to post-primary education at about 12 years of age: in the North it is somewhat earlier. In the Twenty-Six Counties there is no examination at the end of the primary period and pupils may as they wish go to secondary or vocational schools. The secondary schools are private establishments run in the main by religious orders or denominations. They prepare students for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses. The Intermediate is a three year course and the Leaving a further two or three years. The State pays the major portion of the salaries of the teachers, a capitation grant in respect of pupils and, for those schools in the "free" post-primary education scheme (about 95%) a fee of £25 per pupil. It also pays building grants to the extent of 70% of cost with a loan of the remainder repayable over 15 years.

The vocational schools are governed, managed and maintained by Vocational Education Committees, established in a manner broadly similar to the local education authorities in the Six Counties. They supply continuation and technical education but are now being developed to cater for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Courses which have been broadened to include technical and technological subjects. The general aim is to provide a comprehensive education within the vocational school or secondary school and/or through cooperation between adjacent vocational and secondary schools. Pilot State Comprehensive Schools have been set up in certain areas.

In the Six Counties an examination popularly known as the "11 plus" was initiated in 1948 with the object of determining the type of school to which the pupil should go at the age of eleven. In 1966 this examination was replaced by a new method of selection which does not involve formal attainment tests. Following this examination, the pupil proceeds either to a Grammar school or a Secondary (Intermediate) school.

The Grammar school corresponds to the Secondary school here. It provides a course of seven years' duration, the pupils usually taking the Northern Ireland General Certificate of Education at Ordinary level

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- 3 -

at the end of the fifth year and proceeding to Advanced Level at the end of the seventh year.

In the Secondary (Intermediate) Schools, the first and second year is usually a general course. In the third and fourth years the pupils may proceed to technical subjects. There are also courses of a general academic type available so that it could be said that these schools correspond roughly to our Vocational schools.

Both the Grammar and Secondary (Intermediate) schools are organised on the same basis as the primary schools, i.e. on a "county" basis run completely by the local authorities or on a "voluntary" basis under voluntary management. A somewhat similar financial support structure also exists. School fees are payable in Grammar schools but the great majority of pupils hold scholarships from the local education authorities as "qualified pupils". Where the schools are "maintained", the local authority maintains and equips the premises.

SCHOOL MEALS

Local education authorities in the Six Counties have the statutory duty of providing milk for pupils in primary schools and meals and other refreshments for day pupils in all primary and secondary (intermediate) schools in their area and in all grammar schools under their control. Managers of voluntary grammar schools receive a grant from the ministry equivalent to approved net expenditure. The total cost for the financial year 1966/67 was £3,337,336.

In the Twenty-Six Counties there is a scheme whereby grants may be made by the Department of Social Welfare to local authorities in urban and Gaeltacht areas for the provision of school meals. The cost to the State of this service in 1969/70 is £123,000.

TRANSPORT

The transport arrangements for the conveyance of pupils to schools is roughly similar in both areas.

SCHOOL BOOKS

School books generally are available in the Six Counties free of charge. In the Twenty-Six Counties, there is a scheme for the provision of free texts to necessitous children at both primary and post-primary level. Expenditure in the year 1969/70 amounted to about £250,000.

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TRAINING OF TEACHERS

The qualification of teachers in the Six Counties is governed by the Queen's University of Belfast Institute of Education which comprises the Department of Education in Q.U.B. and the three Colleges of Education, Stranmillis, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. The Institute provides a three-year Certificate course in teacher-training at both primary and post-primary level and a four-year degree course leading to the award of Bachelor of Education. It also provides a one-year course for graduates and various specialist courses. The total cost of teacher training colleges is met by the State except in the case of the two voluntary colleges, which are Catholic. Here, by accepting ministry representation on their Board of Governors, they get 80% of their costs from public funds.

In the Twenty-Six Counties, primary teachers undergo a two-year training course at six Training Colleges. The State provides the finances to run the colleges except for a fee payable by students and special arrangements with the two colleges catering for the training of brothers. Secondary teachers are required to do a university degree course and a one-year post-graduate course for the H.Dip.Ed. Vocational teachers of general subjects are required to have a degree; teachers of technical subjects must have an appropriate qualification in their subjects. The whole area of teacher training is at present under consideration following the H.E.A. report on the subject.

Vocational Guidance

Six Counties: Facilities for vocational guidance, placing in employment and the review of young people in employment are available to all pupils attending school and to all persons under eighteen years. There is an Area Youth Employment Office in every major centre of population.

Twenty-Six Counties: The Psychological Service of the Department is developing facilities for student guidance in the post-primary schools and selected teachers are being trained at suitable courses.

FURTHER EDUCATION

The set-up is basically similar. The Six-Counties has institutions of further education provided and governed by the local education authorities with Government subvention. More advanced courses are provided in the Belfast Colleges of Technology, Art and Domestic Science. In the Twenty-Six Counties, regional technical colleges, five of which are now in operation with four more planned will provide courses under the Vocational Education System with more advanced courses available in the Colleges of Technology Art and Domestic Science.

- 5 -

UNIVERSITIES

In both areas, capital expenditure is borne by the State. The local education authorities in the Six Counties provide scholarships for all qualified candidates with the aid of a Government subvention. In the Twenty-Six Counties, the Act of 1968 provides for grants for university students on a means test basis.

November, 1970.

Dept. of Education,
Dublin.