

SECRETMemorandum by the Minister of EducationThe Lockwood Report

1. I invite my colleagues to give consideration to the Report of the Lockwood Committee. In his letter accompanying the Report Sir John Lockwood points out that his Committee has attempted to evolve a rational and co-ordinated interdependent modern system. The Committee's proposals are therefore closely interlinked and the Report must be looked at as a whole.

2. We have now to take decisions on a number of important questions and it is advisable that these should be taken before the Report is made public. In the following paragraphs I have dealt with the major recommendations: there are many others which will be settled later with the parties concerned. The Report will be ready for presentation to Parliament on the first sitting day after the Christmas recess.

3. The basic assumption of the Lockwood Report is the same as that contained in the corresponding Robbins Report - that courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so. If we are to maintain parity with the rest of the United Kingdom, this must be accepted. We should also accept the Committee's estimates of the number of places which will be required in the various types of institutions for the next ten years: this will entail the provision of between 8,000 and 9,000 full-time university places, roughly twice the number now at Queen's; it also involves substantial increases in other full-time courses including teacher training. We are bound also to take carefully into account the 1980 estimate of 12,000/13,000 full-time university places, since on this rests in large measure the case for a second university.

4. Queen's University

The Principal recommendations affecting Queen's University concern the new role which it should play in future, particularly in Applied Science and Technology, and the future limitation of student numbers to 7,000, of whom not more than 6,000 should be undergraduates. I shall, of course, have to consult with the University authorities on the application of the Committee's recommendations, particularly that for a substantial build-up on the technological side. The limitation of the student body to 7,000 should not lead to serious difficulties since this is the figure proposed by the University for development up to 1978. Consultations will also be necessary with the Belfast Corporation on the proposed repeal of the Higher Technological Studies Act of 1954 and the transfer to the University of responsibility for Queen's University degree courses which are still provided by the College of Technology.

5. A New University: Size, Location and Site

The most important recommendation in the Report is the establishment of a new university. The Committee considers that the new university should aim to admit the first students by October, 1968, and to provide for a build-up so that it will reach 2,000/3,000 by 1973 and 5,000/6,000 by 1980. It is therefore important that the new university should be established without delay.

The Government decided that the Lockwood Committee should advise on a location for the new university. Lockwood has recommended Coleraine.

Further, I understand that the University Grants Committee, which will have to approve the actual site, will offer no objection. The Lockwood reasoning is sound* and I consider that the Government should accept the Committee's recommendation. Legislation will be needed for site acquisition and I would propose that this should be broad enough to cover sites for other institutions of higher education. We should expect the four sponsoring local authorities to present the site free of charge.

6. Magee University College

The Committee recommends that Magee College should cease to function as a university institution by the gradual withdrawal of grants for university work. Much as I would prefer, on grounds of sentiment and tradition, not to have to accept this recommendation I am convinced that if we are to have a second university it must be accepted.

The University Grants Committee has refused in the past to advise the Ministry of Finance on grants to Magee, which means that the College is not regarded by the Committee as an institution of university standing. The Lockwood Committee says unequivocally that there is no future for it as a university institution: there is, therefore, no possibility of the University Grants Committee in future advising on grants to the College as an independent institution. We are in any event approaching a stage when far-reaching decisions must be taken about the future of the College as it seems almost certain that Trinity College, Dublin (where all its degree students complete their courses) will find itself obliged to restrict the flow of students from Magee after the present year.

Moreover, if a second university is to be established it will be essential, in view of the extremely heavy expenditure involved, that we should concentrate all available financial resources for university development on Queen's and the new university, and should not seek to continue university grants to an institution so definitely considered unsuitable for proper development by our advisers. Furthermore, from an academic standpoint the new university must be able to develop quickly into a real counterpart to Queen's; if Magee were to continue as a university college the development of the new university could well be seriously impaired. I doubt, for example, whether it would be possible to recruit an effective Academic Planning Board and a good Vice-Chancellor for the new university if it were to be saddled with a continuing liability for Magee against the advice of the Lockwood Committee.

But it would clearly be political folly for the Government to place itself in the position of having deliberately 'killed' Magee if this can possibly be avoided. Some alternative use must be found for the College and I am quite prepared to think in terms of trying to convert it into a training college for teachers, perhaps on an emergency short-term basis in the first place but with at least the possibility of association with the new university on a long-term basis if, as may prove to be the case, we run into real difficulties in the attempt to create a truly inter-denominational Education Centre in the new university.

7. The character of the new university

The Committee's conception of the new university is that it should differ radically from Queen's and thus avoid the danger of becoming a second class institution for Queen's rejects. While it would be multi-faculty, with both Arts and Science courses, it should not compete with Queen's in the

*Lockwood Report. See Paragraphs 211 - 225

† This will be a voluntary unpaid body consisting of senior university professors, and if possible some Vice-Chancellors, which must be recruited almost entirely from Great Britain to act as the controlling academic council during the formative years.

technological field but concentrate instead, against a rural background, on the biological sciences. The Committee expects that these sciences will provide for the next generation the chief growing points for the advancement and application of knowledge leading to higher standards of living. The development of a new conception of teacher training or education, linked with studies in social sciences, would also give the university a new look different from that of Queen's.

A matter which must, however, be settled at an early date is whether the existing Faculty of Agriculture at Queen's is to be replaced, as the Committee recommends, by a new Faculty at the second University. I do not ask for an immediate decision on the point and will submit a separate memorandum at a later stage.

8. Teacher Training

I accept in principle the Lockwood recommendation that an Education Centre should be established within the precincts of the new university under the control of a body appointed by the University in association with my Ministry and that the existing general training colleges in Belfast should be called "Colleges of Education". I am prepared to have discussions with interested parties to try to work out a scheme which will give greater independence to these colleges as a first step towards a new association with Queen's University. The Churches (Protestant and Roman Catholic) will be closely concerned in the negotiations.

9. An "Ulster College"

The proposals for the re-organisation of higher technical education below the university level do not conflict with the policy set out in the recent White Paper on Educational Development. There is a clear need for a Northern Ireland "Regional College of Technology" to take over the more advanced non-university work of the Belfast College of Technology in this field. The Belfast Colleges of Art and Domestic Science already serve the whole of Northern Ireland and should also be given regional status. The new conception recommended by Lockwood is that all these institutions together with new Colleges, probably of Commerce and Catering, Music and Drama, should be joined together administratively as constituent parts of a single "Ulster College". I am prepared to accept this central conception and to initiate consultations with the Belfast Education Authority to this end. It means that the Exchequer must accept responsibility for all existing and future capital commitments, but the question of the extent to which running costs should be met from central funds could for the present be left open. I do not think the transfer of responsibility from local to central control will be resisted by the Belfast Education Authority.

General

10. If we are not prepared to face the discontinuance of Magee as a university institution then we should abandon the idea of a new university completely, build up Queen's as much as possible and reconstitute Magee as a constituent college of Queen's, of restricted size, administered and financed through Queen's. This alternative course has obvious attractions. We should be relieved of all the location, site and development problems of a new university; our immediate capital commitment would be reduced at a time of increasing strain on our financial and other resources; Londonderry would to some extent be placated; Queen's would be left as the only university and could develop with greater freedom; we should be acting more in line with present Whitehall thinking which is in favour of larger not more universities. On the other hand there is general expectation of a second university and Lockwood has firmly recommended it: the development of Queen's beyond 7,000

or so would create increasing site problems which might be capable of solution only by radical measures such as the acquisition of the whole of the Botanic Gardens: such concentration on Belfast would run contrary to the Matthews/Wilson strategy of growth centres outside the city: and the position might well be reached by the middle 1970s when Queen's could expand no further, when it would be too late to start a second university and when, if Lockwood estimates are right, Northern Ireland would become increasingly dependent on universities outside Northern Ireland for its overspill of students with no guarantee that the necessary places could be found. On balance I am against this alternative and remain firmly in favour of Lockwood.

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11. There are two possible courses open to the Government now: either to announce immediate decisions on the vital question of the establishment of a new university and its location, or to allow a period to elapse before decisions are taken in the light of public reaction and parliamentary debate.

12. If the latter course is taken pressure will inevitably build up behind the various vested interests: whatever doubts individuals may have, the public demand from Londonderry for the second university, based on Magee, is bound to be clamant: County Armagh may be equally vociferous: Belfast interests, ignoring all the difficulties and the academic arguments, may claim that the very idea of a second university is ill-conceived and demand instead the unlimited expansion of Queen's, though this on the whole seems less likely. It will, in my view, become increasingly difficult rather than easier to take the vital decisions which must be taken without delay if the general public demand for a second university is to be satisfied and if a gross shortage of places in a few years time is not to cause the Government much more embarrassment. It is also vital that we should have a new source of teacher supply at the earliest possible date.

13. I am, therefore, firmly of opinion that a brief Government statement in the form of a White Paper should be issued at the same time as the Report itself (as was done by the Westminster Government when the Robbins Report was published a year ago), and I append a draft for consideration.

14. The Minister of Finance has been consulted and has agreed to the circulation of this memorandum. In view of the extent of the expenditure involved and the effect of the proportion of educational expenditure borne by the Exchequer he is seeking the views of the Treasury. Drafts of the Lockwood Report have been made available to the Treasury and there have already been consultations between officials. The next stage will be a formal submission when the views of the Cabinet are known.

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