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IJS - 20 INSPECTING THE INSPECTORATE 5:
 PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

44 Canfield Gardens
London, N.W.6.
England
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Mr. Richard Nolte
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535 Fifth Avenue
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Dear Mr. Nolte:

This newsletter is the fifth in a series of newsletters in which I examine the operation of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in England and Wales.

In this section of the continuing essay about the Inspectorate, I begin my detailed analysis and criticism of the operations of the Inspectorate. First I examine the various identified roles -- communicator, adviser, administrator -- and then analyze a series of characteristics and problems.

This analysis and criticism will continue in the next newsletter.

I remind you that the pagination of this newsletter follows the numbering of the continuing essay as a whole.

We can now comment on the record of the Inspectorate.

Sincerely,


Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

VI. HMI: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In evaluating the role of HMIs in the British educational system, I shall be interested in the implications of their present problems for their future effectiveness. I shall be using the present and its problems as the foundation for suggestions about the future.

As background for specific criticism, one must keep in mind the truly spectacular capacity of the Inspectorate to change as changing historical conditions have demanded it: from a small, ad-hoc inspecting unit to a large formal examining body and then to a small advisory body relative to a greatly expanded student and teacher population. Therefore our future expectations about the HMI's flexibility must be quite sanguine.

I shall organize these comments by first dealing with the three roles of the HMI: communicator, adviser, and administrator. Then I shall analyse some particular problems which cut across the three categories of activities. Finally I shall evaluate the manner in which the Inspectorate is responding to some very important contemporary problems facing a variety of social institutions.

A. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATOR

Perhaps the most important single role of the HMI is his activity as a national communicator: bringing the lessons of best practice and worst problems from one school in one part of England to another a long way away. Each HMI from his own personal experience is able to play this role in relation to the schools on his general list by drawing on his own direct experience and hearsay from colleagues in his division. And in regard to his speciality, he can draw on information about experience around the country.

Also, the Department of Education and Science publishes Education Pamphlets and Education Surveys which are on sale to the public through H.M. Stationery Office and any bookseller. Though authorship is not acknowledged, almost all of these are prepared and written by the Inspectorate. Among the most recent Education Surveys are "New Thinking in School Geography", "Museums in Education," "Towards Middle Schools," and "Commercial Studies in Secondary Schools." The aim of these publications is to give advice over a whole aspect or to assemble in one small publication an account of a wide range of thinking in the past few years.

The Inspector's forum for spreading the word is first the schools he visits. But second, and in some ways more important, inservice training courses which he runs communicate information about problems and solutions to more teachers than do his contacts on his personal HMI circuit.

There are formal lines of internal communication within the Inspectorate designed to enhance this role of communicator. In regard to specialities there are the various panels and committees on which the HMI in his specialist role sits. And these panels and committees are always preparing memos for the other HMIs about the latest information they have in hand. Also, the HMIs have available the resources of the Schools Council and other developers and publishers of educational materials.

However, in the function of generalist, the role of communicator is less well executed than that of specialist. The generalist function is much more difficult to fulfill in terms of communication; the mass of specialist material available to the generalist about the whole range of problems with which he must deal makes coping with the information flow almost impossible. There does exist within the Inspectorate an informal process of selection through advice by specialist colleagues. Also, there is a Staff Inspector in charge of two regular communications networks -- Information Series and Information Gazette. This system is supplemented by communications from the Chief Inspectors. There is a Research and Development Committee under a Staff Inspector. Additionally there is a sequence of conferences organized by Chief Inspectors and Division Inspectors for the Inspectorate: principally, every HMI attends once a year a further education, teacher training, or primary and secondary conference chaired by the appropriate Chief Inspector. As well, each Divisional Inspector holds a full divisional conference every two years and sectional conferences more frequently.

However, this extensive activity does not seem to be as effective in the field as one would suppose from its volume and variety. Perhaps what is needed is a reorganization of all these activities with the objective of providing a more systematic internal filtration system for organizing and distilling specialist information for generalist use. A reorganization of the bailiwicks under the Staff Inspector in charge of communication services and the Staff Inspector in charge of research and development with the goals of reducing volume but increasing generalist content of information might result in a better written and spoken communications network for the guidance of the HMI in his generalist functions. The details of such a reorganization are not clear; however problems in the field indicate that it deserves priority.

Another aspect of the communicator role deserves comment: that concerning the relationship between the HMI and the Secretary. This "eyes and ears" role is essential to decision making in the Department. It is not played in the form of "advising" the Secretary. This role is one of providing the civil servants and the political ministers with a continuing "feel" for the views and problems of the people in the

schools and the local authorities. This role seems quite well executed. A number of the Inspectors with whom I travelled were in the midst of completing studies which were to provide the Secretary with information about the state of facilities or teaching in a particular subject area. This information will not be delivered in the form of advice, but it will provide the Secretary with an impression about what is happening in the schools. In providing these reports, the HMI is usually fulfilling his specialist function but always with the perspective of his generalist experience; and this combination is what makes this information valuable.

In the future one can expect both aspects of the communication role to become more important. But the enhanced importance of this role will not be in providing a greater volume of information but instead in better selecting it. And discussion of criteria for selection of information for any of the audiences of the Inspectorate seems very seldom to occur: the clarity of appropriate standards of selection seems to be assumed. But because of the ever increasing volume of information for schools and from schools, some self-conscious attention needs to be paid to the problem of deciding what to report in both directions. In addition to the problem of selecting information, there is also usually the problem of communicating it once it is selected: most often this is a problem of quality of writing. Yet it should be said that HMI writing is such that the standard seems to be of almost literary quality. HMIs are first class writers: their only problem is in selecting what to report.

The Inspectorate as an information network has provided a great service to the decentralized British educational system. Its challenge for the future is one of dealing more explicitly with the problems of selection and perhaps better utilizing existing and future information technologies in the service of various audiences.

B. THE ROLE OF ADVISER

It is difficult and perhaps analytically inappropriate to distinguish the advisory role of the Inspectorate from that of communication. Both involve the selection and presentation of information to fit the specific needs of a particular audience. However, the distinction is worthwhile if we look at the advisory role as one where the HMI is expected to make a judgment about a particular problem and then render specific and detailed advice about its solution. The advisory role of the HMI does not require making decisions for the recipient; the advisee retains the right and obligation of final judgment and implementation of the judgment. But the relations between the advisory role and actual policy action is closer than that of the communications role.

The role of the HMI as adviser to particular schools is now quite different from that of even a decade ago and will change even in the next few years. The combination of the large increase in the numbers of teachers, students, and schools, the modest size of the HMI, and the development of local inspectorates has made the actual role of the HMI in particular schools less important. This is not to say that the HMI does not contribute much to the life of school when he does visit, but it is to indicate that the ongoing impact of an HMI in a school is relatively marginal.

Since the formal inspection of schools has now for all practical purposes died, the HMI's contact with the schools is much more informal and even in some ways more regular. But this "regularity" could still be no more than one visit every year or two. And this visit is for a day or part thereof, without any long term preparation on the part of the school. Also, there are visits of up to a week by teams of HMIs for specific purposes, e.g., curricular study or advice on organization by request of the school. But very few schools can benefit from these studies, because of the small number of HMI's.

Various witnesses before the Select Committee commented that the traditional, formal inspection forced the schools to think about their activities as a whole in a critical manner. This occasion for self-criticism is now lost. Although the visit of an HMI is still treated as an out-of-the-ordinary occurrence, it does not provide an occasion for a massive soul searching on the part of the school. Therefore, the advice of the HMI usually does not deal with problems which are raised from dialogue within the whole school. Nor does the usual recommendation of an HMI carry with it the strength of an indepth look at the whole of the particular school.

Let me qualify this analysis of the formal inspection by clearly saying that I do not argue for a return to formal HMI inspections of schools: this is neither feasible nor, in my estimation, desirable. I only wish to indicate that the process which required the school to think about its problems systematically and then provided a forum for advice on a broad range of important issues based on fairly extensive information no longer exists. And that no new HMI role or activity by any other agency has taken its place. A future which will continue to force schools to take ad hoc actions without the relief of considered judgments on the whole means that the lack of inspection may have a real cost in terms of overall institutional quality. It was not the fear of inspection but the opportunity for self-examination which was important.

The important advisory role for the schools themselves is now played by the local inspectorate. But the extent and quality of this advice varies dramatically from local authority to local authority according to the degree of provision of local inspectors. And even with the local inspector the occasions for the raising of problems and the delivering of advice seem very limited: a rare visit perhaps termly or yearly from the local inspector and very seldom a comprehensive review of the problems of the school.

If the importance of the HMI's advisory role in the schools has diminished, it has dramatically increased in the management of local authorities. The HMI role in advising local authorities about dealings with Curzon Street has become a fixture of local and national relationships in the educational system. The HMI is someone to whom the chief education officer can turn and ask advice without creating political difficulties. Many HMIs and chief education officers become close personal friends. Always the HMI seems to be a respected consultant. And unlike a school, each local educational authority has a District Inspector who is always available to deal with day-to-day problems.

The advisory role of the HMIs which is most important in their eyes and of most interest to the outside observer is that of advising the Department of Education and Science in general and the Secretary of State in particular. We have found in our survey of particular cases that the actual influence of the Inspectorate varies dramatically from case to case, depending upon the degree of party political consensus on the general issue. Given these political facts of life, it is still helpful to ask prescriptively what the role of the HMI ought to be in the decision making process at Curzon Street. This question should be answered from two different perspectives: 1) that of administrative organization; 2) that of substantive consideration.

In order to assure access to professional advice in educational matters, the advice of the Inspectorate should be integrated directly into the administrative process for decision making concerning broad policy issues, just as it appears to be in the Teacher Training Branch of the Department. However, the essential character of the advice should be carefully identified as HMI recommendations throughout the decision-making procedure, so that the elements of professional judgment will always be clearly identified and therefore subject to professional criticism and justification at crucial points.

In order to guarantee the vigorous presentation of the professional advice, the Chief Inspectors and Senior Chief Inspector should be present and involved in major policy decision, all the way to the Minister's Office. Whether this happens or not is not clear to the outside observer; but its importance is related to a second

issue, the weight to be given to the substance of HMI advice.

In important policy decisions, the professional educational considerations will be only part, and often even a subservient part, of the overall set of factors to be considered. The whole range of value judgments involved in a decision such as that to reorganize secondary schools are not subject to a simple professional educational rationale. However, the actual educational impact of such a policy must be a most important consideration. Therefore the professional's advice must be taken seriously.

But if the HMI advice is to be considered seriously it must be justified in hard educational terms: the actual educational reasons given will be more important than the professional source of them. And since most important educational policy judgments involve value and technical considerations which are closely intertwined with each other, the HMIs must be able and willing to identify both in their arguments. Therefore the professional advice of the HMI must be understood in terms of the close relationship between value and technical considerations and must be subject to close review. Because of this limitation on the character of professional advice, it must be institutionalized in a way which makes the professional available for consultation throughout the process of decision-making.

I shall return to this problem of the connection between professional educational and value considerations in the making of public policy at the end of this essay. Suffice it to say here that in the future, with the increasing political importance and social impact of educational issues, the advice of a professional advisor becomes even more important as a limit on decisions which may be expedient politically but harmful educationally. This is not to commend the role of philosopher-king to the HMI. It is only to say that the role of adviser to the Secretary is correctly considered by the Inspectorate to be its first and most important advisory task.

C. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATOR.

If one takes "administration" to mean the actual taking of decisions concerning issues arising in the social system, then the usual HMI does very little administration in the educational system. And this is one of his greatest strengths: he does not bear the onus of particularly repugnant or ridiculous decisions, nor is he seen as the executive of policies laid down by the government.

However, some inspectors do play important administrative roles. The further education HMIs play a central role in deciding about the provision of particular further education courses in a given technical college or polytechnic. And even in regard to the schools, Inspectors do sometimes take administrative actions: for example, when the Education Priority Areas were established to provide special assistance to schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students, the HMIs in fact, if not in theory, seem to have decided where the lines were drawn. But this example is the exception, not the rule.

Although it is rare for an HMI to play a clearly administrative role, the HMIs do find themselves in the position of implementing certain policies. The example here is the changing policies concerning secondary school reorganization. The HMIs were told by the Labour Government to see that each district prepared a plan for changing over to comprehensive secondary schools. Then they were told by the Conservative Government to go slow and even desist in encouraging such planning. Even though the HMI role here is not administrative in terms of making decisions, it is stronger intervention than just an advisory role to local authorities and schools. And this role of policy implementation creates problems for the professional independence of the Inspectorate; an issue to which I shall return.

One could also call "administrative" the HMI's internal responsibilities to the Inspectorate. Here I have in mind the bureaucratic activities required for the functioning of any large organization. And in this regard one finds the HMI burdened with a great deal of administration with little support. The Inspectorate, if not the HMIs themselves, seems to pride itself in its abstemiousness in regard to secretaries and even more modern office technologies. No single increase in investment would render a greater increase in the professional productivity of the Inspectorate than a marginal pound invested in secretaries, dictaphones, and electric typewriters.

The general administrative burden of the Inspectorate in relation to the other constituencies in the educational system is not great. But the ever increasing and expected future demands on the Inspectorate for information services and advisory assistance will require that there be self-conscious restraint on policy makers at Curzon Street to keep them from increasing the administrative responsibilities of the HMIs. There is a cost in this limitation which must be recognized: the professional judgment of the HMIs will be lost from administrative duties which are central to the functioning of the educational system. But this cost can be justified in terms of the benefit of their contribution to communication and advice for those who are primarily decision makers within the system as a whole.

D. THE HMI AS GENERALIST AND SPECIALIST.

Throughout my analysis of the Inspectorate I have referred to the combination of specialist and generalist functions in the various roles of the HMI. I believe this combination to be one of the most valuable aspects of the Inspectorate.

It is impossible to divide an HMI's time by a particular percentage between specialist and generalist functions. This division varies from person to person and assignment to assignment: for example, District Inspectors with large local educational authorities tend to have little time for their speciality activities, whereas a Staff Inspector with specialist assignment devotes little time to more general concerns of schools or local authorities. Although this description of time allocation is roughly correct, it would be difficult to follow the lead of the Inner London Education Authority, which officially divides its inspectors' time by percentages: general inspectors spend 70% of their time in general assignments while staff inspectors spend 70% of their time in specialist tasks. Yet it will soon be official HMI policy for the HMI to devote 1/3 of his time to his general assignment, 1/3 to specialization, and 1/3 as his interest dictate. The crucial point is that HMIs combine both functions and are especially proud of this combination.

Both functions seem to play a significant part in the self-image of the HMIs. An HMI is proud of the fact that regardless of his professional background before he entered the Inspectorate, he is able to cope with the whole range of problems facing the schools and authority on his general list. And without exception, the HMI is also a person with scholarly predisposition, so accomplishment in some speciality is a matter of great personal pride as well. And in the specialist role, it appears that the Inspectors with seniority develop international reputations in their fields. I can report from my conversations with various HMIs whose specialities were in an area of the social sciences that to a man each displayed a very high degree of competence in his field.

To fulfill successfully both generalist and specialist functions demands much from each HMI. But every HMI I met was able to cope with the challenge. The value of the combination to the HMI was that each function illuminated the other. One of the most striking impressions I carried away from my days with the HMIs on the job was the regular flashes of wisdom which most of them displayed in their judgments and their approaches to the people with whom they dealt. I would ascribe credit for this wisdom -- I mean wisdom, not cleverness or competence -- to the combination of specialist and generalist competence and experience.

This successful combination of generalist and specialist function offers an outstanding lesson in the organization of professional consultancy services for other educational systems and other professions as well.

E. THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE INSPECTORATE.

The appearance and the fact of the independence of the Inspectorate in relation to the Department of Education and Science contributes to its success with both of its major constituencies: the teachers and the civil servants. The appearance is based upon constitutional law and historical development. The HMI is appointed by the Queen in Council, which in theory makes him responsible to the Crown, not to the Party in power. The historical legacy is that of a number of strong and outstanding HMIs, who vigorously advocated their positions in spite of official policy. This appearance of independence is always mentioned by teachers in their comments about the Inspectorate.

The fact of independence is not as clear to the outside observer who decides to look closely at the operation of the Inspectorate, for the HMI role in implementing government policy raises questions about its actual independence. For example, in the machinations involved in the shifting policies concerning comprehensive schools, it is difficult to see how an HMI who disagreed with the policy -- first of Labour, and then of Conservative governments -- could continue to function as an independent agent when he had a role in implementing the policy. It is quite surprising that no HMIs resigned in the reverses of policy toward secondary school reorganization. This lack of resignation does not provide any clear evidence concerning the independence or lack thereof in the Inspectorate. It could mean that there is much scope for private dissent and disengagement from implementation of policies with which a particular HMI disagrees; But it could indicate that the HMIs are just not as independent in personality, outlook, and institutional placement as is claimed on their behalf.

However, it is clear that in regard to some issues the HMIs vigorously dissent through the policy advice channels open to them. For example, some HMIs in different divisions and dealing with very different districts have recently written strong memos to protest to the Secretary about her policy concerning absolute priority for the construction of primary school buildings at the expense of most secondary school construction. These protests questioned both the general policy and the particular application of it in the HMIs' bailiwicks. The impact of these protests is yet to be seen.

If there is some doubt about the actual independence of the HMIs in relation to the Department, there is no doubt whatsoever that they do in fact have much more independence in their relations with all of their constituencies than other similarly situated bodies in Great Britain or abroad. One of the contrasts usually drawn between local inspectors and HMIs is that the latter do not have to be subservient to the politics and policies of the authorities that govern them. And my impression is that this distinction is quite correct. This independence of the HMIs seems to rest as much on their relative lack of administrative responsibilities as on any other condition. An important lesson to the student of inspectorates.

It is likely that the past will help guarantee the future fact as well as appearance of HMI independence. This promise is supported by a story told about a former Labour Minister of Education: he got up in the Commons and made a remark about the views of "his Inspectors;" this remark immediately prompted a chorus of challenges and he quickly corrected himself -- "I mean Her Majesty's Inspectors." Although a frail flower, to use a simple metaphor, the appearance appears to be soil in which the actual blossom of independence may continue to bloom.

Because of the value of independent professional advice, it is in the interest of governments of the day to see that the word of the Inspectorate continues to be seen to be independent. This interest requires that the HMIs be protected from administrative roles which require them to implement or appear to implement governmental policy. This lesson is most important for the future of the Inspectorate.

F. AGE AND CAREER PATTERNS IN THE INSPECTORATE.

One of the most striking statistics about the Inspectorate (and one of the few available) is the average age of entry: between 41 and 42. This age of entry indicates that men and women enter the Inspectorate after a full career in other activities. Assuming entry into full time work no later than 21, which is a fair assumption in a field which requires three year certification or degree programs, then the average Inspector has had a twenty year career before becoming an HMI. Because of the prestige of the Inspectorate and the resulting competition for appointments, one can be sure that this career has been quite successful. Indeed, the fact that the HMI has already had a successful educational career and that this success is often well known-- for example, Jack Featherstone's national reputation as an innovative headmaster (see p. 15) -- contribute to the respect with which the advice of the Inspectorate is received by both local and national audiences.

Because of the relatively late appointment of HMIs in their overall career life, they usually see this appointment as their job until retirement. The turnover in Inspectors after the probationary period (and even during it) seems to be very low.² This low turnover means that the average age of the Inspectorate is relatively old -- the 50s,-- and that the few senior positions are held by men usually less than ten years from retirement.

This low turnover, which results from the self-selective and competitive recruitment as well as late appointment, means that the expectation for senior positions in the Inspectorate must be quite limited and the competition quite keen. The small number of senior posts-- about 50 Staff Inspectors, 10 Divisional Inspectors, 6 Chief Inspectors, and 1 Senior Chief Inspector-- insures that the likelihood of promotion within the Inspectorate is quite small. So a discouraging career pyramid faces a group of extremely talented and able men.

The impact of this career structure is that most HMIs must expect to be doing the usual Inspector's job for their twenty years in the Inspectorate. Because this job is so varied, with low salary balanced by high status, this prospect does not necessarily present a strain. And there is a conscious effort on the part of Senior Inspectors to change the geographical location and social character of the schools served by each HMI at least once and sometimes twice or three times during his career. Also, some HMIs can look forward to being seconded to another educational agency-- e.g. the Schools Council-- or to an international organization-- e.g., UNESCO or the inspectorate of a developing country-- for a year or two. But at present secondment is the exception, not the rule.

Another problem with the career pattern is that there does not appear to be a formal sabbatical program for HMIs, although a particular HMI can go to a university or some other institution for further study and be supported by the Inspectorate. Nor is there a formal program encouraging HMIs to go back to teaching for any extended period of time during their careers as Inspectors.

Also, there seems to be very little movement between the Inspectorate and civil service positions in the Department or administrative positions in local authorities. So there is very little utilization of the personnel resources developed through the Inspectorate in other educational agencies.

The overall impression I have of the career structure of the Inspectorate is that it is a relatively closed group of older men and women who maintain their vitality through the open nature of their jobs. The implications of this career structure are both positive and negative; Positive implications include: the status of seniority which still operates to some degree in England,

2. No hard statistics here,
just reported impressions of various HMIs.

wisdom bred by long experience, and the benefit of continuity of Inspectorate policy. Negative implications include: the limited record of initiative in educational innovation (a subject to which I shall return); a communication gap between HMIs and other constituencies in the educational community -- especially young teachers and pupils; and the loss of "feel" for the problems of pupils, which the continuing responsibility for a classroom of pupils gives the practicing teacher.

There is a very important cost to the educational system created by the HMI career structure: a pool of talent is taken away from the local management of educational problems at the height of its possible contribution to the system. If Inspectors were appointed earlier so that they could have enjoyed a decade of HMI experience before their mid-40s, then they would be in an especially strong position to move over to the job of chief education officer or senior civil servant for another decade. And perhaps these men and women could then return to the Inspectorate until retirement.

As an education for top policy making and policy implementing jobs, one could not construct a better curriculum than the usual assignments of the HMI.

And if one were to have earlier appointment of Inspectors, there might be more in-and-out movement which would provide fresh perspective on the problems faced by the HMIs in their inspectorial duties.

There would be costs to such a change in HMI career patterns. One would lose some of the experience and wisdom which are so valuable in the Inspectorate as it is. But the benefits of regular transfusions of new blood would probably outweigh the costs. And the accompanying benefits to the educational systems of Great Britain would be spectacular.

One further point related to the fresh blood problem deserves brief comment: the senior appointments in the Inspectorate are always promotions from within. It may be useful to appoint an occasional Staff Inspector or even Chief Inspector from an allied field or agency -- such as a headmaster or a chief education officer. This suggestion may be like recommending that the generals in the army be appointed from outside of the ranks, but it is helpful to shake up the rank and file occasionally. And a fresh viewer from the top may see much that an HMI who has been socialized by the Inspectorate on the way up might not see.

These comments about the age and career structure of the Inspectorate rest on an assumption that the pace of change in education will continue to increase and that therefore not only must particular HMIs be open to change and able to meet it with flexible responses, but that also the overall structure of the Inspectorate must be opened up to allow it to cope with change too. The record in the past is

fairly good. But to keep up the standards in the future, new procedures for selecting and organising both privates and generals may be required.

G. MINORITIES AND WOMEN IN THE INSPECTORATE.

If one looks at the composition of the Inspectorate, he finds an average HMI, who is white, male, and probably educated at a selective secondary school and a major British university. One must therefore ask how this picture of the Inspectorate relates to the populations served.

Records kept on minority composition of student bodies and faculties in the schools of Great Britain are quite inadequate. The current rule of classification concerning students is that a student is classified as an immigrant if his parents arrived in the country ten years ago or less. This rule is in no way related to the cluster of educational problems which students from other national and socio-cultural backgrounds face in British schools. So it is impossible to say how many minority students -- students from non-British and/or non-English-speaking backgrounds-- are in the schools. But one can confidently say on the basis of informal observation that there is a substantial minority of such students, especially in urban areas.

In regard to teachers, there are no statistics available about the numbers who come from minority backgrounds; but informal observation again leads one to believe that the number is quite small when compared with the number and percentage of minority students.

Without getting caught in the debate over detailed criteria for identifying minority persons in the British context, one could look at the HMI composition by investigating the number of Indians, Pakistanis, West Indians, Cypriots, Italians and Eastern Europeans in the Inspectorate, identified by nationality of parents and grandparents. No detailed statistics seem to be available, but informal observation indicates that the percentage of inspectors drawn from these groups is much smaller than the percentage of teachers and infinitesimal when compared with the percentage of minority students in British schools. Indeed, my impression is that there may be no more than one or two inspectors drawn from these minority nationality groups in the whole Inspectorate. And whatever the actual relationship between the percentages in the Inspectorate and those in the system as a whole, because of the learning problems faced by these minorities in British schools, positive discrimination on their behalf in the composition of the Inspectorate seems to be in order.

This lack of minority personnel in the Inspectorate will become an even greater problem in the future, because the problems of the minority children represent one of the most important challenges facing the British educational system. And the ability to encourage

the confidence of members of minority families in the schools depends on having members of those minority communities in responsible agencies such as the Inspectorate.

There appears to be an informal attempt to fill HMI vacancies with minorities, but this informality may limit its success. An affirmative and formal recruitment program to raise the number of minority HMIs to a percentage approximating the percentage of minority students in the schools should be a program of very high priority.

Another problem analagous to the minority problem is that of the recruitment of women: which should be known as the "majority" problem, because almost 75% of the teaching population in England is female, and over 50% of the pupils as well. Yet in 1968 there were only 142 female compared with 387 male HMIs in England and Wales. In the Inspectorate, then, the percentages are almost the reverse of the teacher population: 25% female and 75% male. And the percentages apparently have not changed in the last few years.

There is only one female Chief Inspector and relatively few female Staff Inspectors.

This patriarchy is, of course, not distinctive in modern industrial societies, but it must on its face seem odd and therefore require some justification. It is worthwhile quoting at some length the justification and comment offered by the Senior Chief Inspector to the Select Committee when asked about the number of women:

We are very conscious of the need to have a woman Chief Inspector for primary education. Our problem here is, frankly, one of recruitment. If we advertise a number of vacancies we are likely to get 350 or 400 applications, out of which we probably want to appoint perhaps 15 people. Amongst those 350 or 400 applications it is quite possible that five as a maximum will be women. It is likely that we shall get no woman physical education applicant. We have had only one in five years, I would say. There are few mathematician applicants from the ranks of women teachers. We suffer from something the schools suffer from -- the unwillingness, for some very good reasons in many cases, of course, by women to take posts of responsibility of this kind. Furthermore, it is not an attractive life for a woman, with constant travelling and nights away from home, etc. Therefore we are short on this side. I think it is a legitimate criticism that we are so masculine at the top. All I would say is that I think that the Staff Inspector grade from which the next grade will be recruited is better mixed than it has been before.

These remarks deserve a number of comments. First it should be noted that the Chief Inspectorship mentioned for women is the primary school responsibility: the place where most women in the system are

relegated anyway. But the most important point was that not even in the primary school sector was there a woman Chief Inspector; in fact, the last two have been men. Now there is a woman Chief Inspector in charge of educational development, overseas relations, and education of the disadvantaged. But there is only one! And there is no female Divisional Inspector.

The dearth of applications at the entry point does present problems, but this may be a reflection of the patriarchal image of the Inspectorate and the process of recruitment more than the inherent reticence of women in the educational system. With male predominance throughout the Inspectorate, one would expect some hesitation in even the most ambitious and talented women. The theoretically passive recruitment process, which is supposed to depend, in the first instance, on self-selection, is inadequate. The qualifying term in the description of the recruitment process reflects scepticism on my part about how passive and self-selective the initial application procedure is. There is some testimony to the Select Committee and a number of responses to my queries, which indicate that certain applicants are explicitly encouraged to apply. What happens informally to certain applicants should be undertaken in a formal manner for women and minority teachers in order to redress the imbalance which now exists.

A final point about the Senior Chief Inspector's remarks concerning the dearth of female applications is in order: that the HMI's life is not suitable for a woman with a family. The first response must be that the teaching profession has a large number of qualified people who do not have families. The second response is that the quickly changing conception of the role of the mother in the family will make the Senior Chief Inspector's observation even less relevant as an explanation, much less a justification, for the dearth of female HMIs. Indeed this policy has now changed - some women with families have recently been recruited. Yet the overall impression created by the Senior Chief Inspector's remarks must be, in spite of recent good intention, one of paternalistic prejudice, which is probably a major impediment to the recruitment of women to the Inspectorate.

If equality and justice are important values in the educational system, then the HMI record in regard to minority group and female composition must be improved dramatically. Recommendations for improvement on both counts in the educational system as a whole are unlikely to be persuasive unless those who make such suggestions, as HMIs often do, are seen themselves to be acting consistently with these values. The improvement of access to jobs and promotion in the Inspectorate for women and minorities must have a high priority on the list of future reforms of the HMI.

H. SIZE OF THE INSPECTORATE

The current size of the Inspectorate -- 543 -- is about the same as it was in the early part of the 20th Century when it was dealing with an educational system less than a quarter of its current size but when it was also responsible for the ongoing inspection of all institutions of education on a regular basis.

The Parliamentary Select Committee ended its analysis of the operations of the Inspectorate with the following conclusion about its size:

In our opinion...the Department has failed sufficiently to recognize this evolution and failed to appreciate the effect upon HM Inspectorate of the growth of the local inspectorates, the development of the Schools Council and the enhanced status of the teaching profession. We believe that the effect of the acceptance of our recommendations would be an appreciable decrease in the numbers of H.M. Inspectorate, a clear recognition of its⁴ changed function and a more realistic view of its organization.

Were I a judge in a court of law, after hearing all of the arguments and reading all of the evidence put to the Select Committee (which I have), I would not even allow this particular position to go to the jury, because there is no evidence to support it. Although the question of size was often put to witnesses before the Committee, few gave any real indication that they thought there were too many inspectors.

The only witness before the Select Committee to argue systematically that the Inspectorate should be reduced in size was Sir William Alexander, the Secretary of the Association of Local Education Committees, the local authority lobbyist, who answered a question about "the future" by carefully replying:

...I am looking to a future in which (a) all local authorities are of sufficient size and competence to command the services of an adequate advisory service of their own....If that assumption is made, I would expect a smaller number and frankly I would hope of a higher level of HMIs who would be working very closely with the local advisory service to keep the schools up to date and in the most effective development of inservice training for teachers. Now the corps d'elite I see not to be massive in size but in every division there will probably have to be at least **one expert** in each field. Probably 15 in each division would be required, a total of 150, plus a chairman of each field at the centre, say something up to a limit of 200 .⁵

4. SC,pxiv, s47 .

5. SCp69,s259 .

This evidence was not based on present or even immediately foreseeable circumstance. Yet the Select Committee must have taken Sir William's future as a present reality to support its caution.

And even if Sir William's assumption was accepted-that competent local advisory services did exist in every local authority - there is very little evidence that the HMI's role in servicing particular schools is the most important and time consuming part of his assignment. Indeed 300 District Inspectors spend much of their time dealing with local authorities, not schools, in terms of national issues which would never be the bailiwick of local inspectorates. One would want a great deal more information about the allocation of present Inspectorate time before agreeing with Sir William and the Select Committee that the development of local authorities inspectorates would free 50% of existing manpower from useful work.

If anything, the evidence before the Select Committee indicated that the role of the Inspectorate as a national communications system and advisory voice was taking ever more time. And other recommendations of the Committee would entail expanded responsibility for the Inspectorate in educational development and inservice training, as well as a more active role in advising local advisors. None of this supports an argument to reduce the size of the Inspectorate.

Then what should the size of the Inspectorate be? The Inspectors' own evidence to the Committee was quite unsatisfactory. In essence it was: we are now 500+, and since no one can tell us what the size ought to be, we ought to remain at the same size for the same duties. It seems that the Rosveare Committee, the internal working party which reviewed the Inspectorate in the mid-50s, had recommended a modest reduction in size to about 500 and a self-conscious decision not to attempt to expand with the expansion of the educational services; but no rigorous analysis seems to have accompanied this recommendation.

Decisions about the optimum size of institutions are at best only approximate. But other institutions -- especially industrial and commercial concerns -- have for years been making critical studies of efficient size. It would be most useful for the Inspectorate to undertake such a study of itself -- by itself or by an outside body -- in order to deal with this issue in a rigorous way.

My own impression is that the present size of the Inspectorate is about right, because of the high quality of the HMIs and their personal dedication and willingness to devote long hours. Also, the present size of the Inspectorate seems to allow an effective informal communications system to operate among Inspectors in different parts of the country. Instead of more Inspectors to deal with more work, a few

more secretaries and other clerical assistance, along with new information technologies, would provide a better strategy for dealing with increased work than enlarging the Inspectorate.

I have seen no indication that Inspectors have spare time. So the recommendation for a smaller Inspectorate does not seem relevant to current and foreseeable needs of the educational system.

I should note that the Select Committee's approach to this problem of size is typical of its overall approach to the analysis of the Inspectorate. Which raises important questions about the way it and other Parliamentary Select Committees operate; especially about the paucity of staff and expert assistance. But within the context of this essay, I can only identify this issue as a problem, not really suggest solutions to it.

Optimum size is a relevant issue to be raised about the Inspectorate, because it is basically a question about the most efficient allocation of public resources. Therefore, both the Inspectorate and the Parliament owe the public a better answer than has been given in the past.

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