

THE TURMOIL OF STATE AID

JACK WOODWARD

My offering is a comparatively short segment of a story which is long, complicated, cluttered and controversial. The term 'State Aid' always has been an evocative, if not provocative expression on the Australian scene. It is also misleading. If my approach to a complex and vexing subject is seen to be simple and ordinary, then blame Dr Boland; he chose a simple, ordinary bloke to present it in this series.

Something would be missing from Catholic life in Australia if we forgot the struggle for State Aid and the remnant of other forms of discrimination. In the 1860s, Dr Polding observed that governments "were every day giving proof of a deadly hostility to the Catholic schools" (Patrick O'Farrell in *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*) and to combat this he set up a Catholic Association in 1867 to "defend, improve and raise funds for Catholic schools".

Following a period of intense activity on the State Aid front, Sir Henry Parkes was able to announce to the Australian community that "I think I have shown that the Act of 1866 provided effectively for the gradual extinction of the denominational schools" and on 25 February, 1880, he excelled himself by claiming that it was "the peculiar genius of the Roman Catholic Church to thrive upon the enslavement of the human intellect". The education Act of 1875 did at least three things:

- *it directed tax revenue from all parents exclusively to State schools;
- *it made education secular;
- *it made education compulsory for all, but free for those who accepted the State system.

From then on there has been conflict, not so much between Catholic and Protestant, but between State and parent. To this day, the State raises money from all parents but spends much more of it on children of some of the parents.

It is apparent that when Bishop Quinn came to Queensland in 1861, he fostered good inter-denominational relations. Pleasant as this may be to recall, sectarianism remained a visible, divisive and enduring thing. Patrick O'Farrell claims that it was a time when Catholics grouped themselves under Irish banners to combat aggressively the hostility with which they were surrounded, and the chief banner-bearer in Queensland appeared to be Bishop Quinn.

However, at this time - the late 1880s - the news from the south was a little comforting. The Anglican bishop of Melbourne, Dr Moorehouse, publicly stated a century ago that "I will never unite with the secularists against Rome to keep Christ out of the schools of this colony ... the Roman Catholics are asking from us nothing more than what the freest government in the world would have granted ... Wherever Protestants and Catholics are largely intermingled, the government has recognised that the peculiar opinions of the Roman Catholics have made separate schools for them necessary." That must have been music to the ears of the besieged Catholic community.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Catholicism was vibrant and on the move. It had shed its chains and its trumpet blasts smacked of an exultation which was not welcomed by extreme Protestant groups. It is worth noting in 1986 that the philosophical basis of the Catholic claim has remained constant over the past century. It can be summed up in a few short sentences:

- * In a free society the State should not interfere with parents' right of choice in education, for the State has not replaced the parents in establishing State schools, but it is co-operating with them in the proper fulfilment of their natural task.
- * In effect, the State grants from the public purse a scholarship to every child in a State school, but does not assist equally others.
- * Our real opponents in this area of concern are those whose only concept of unity is State imposed uniformity - a 'fascist' idea still clung to by many of the most liberal minded Australians.
- * The obligations of justice are prior to the obligations of charity.

Following the defeat of the Conscription referendum in during the years of World War I, sectarianism acquired a new dimension in Australia. Perhaps it had one advantage in the public arena; it aroused the Catholicism of the day to a new pitch of tribal activity. There is clear evidence of the direct involvement of the Catholic men's organisation, the Knights of the Southern Cross, in State Aid advocacy in Queensland in the early 1920s and, indeed, thereafter.

The first Minutes of a Brisbane KSC meeting to make a decisive reference to KSC involvement were those of 12 April, 1926. The meeting was informed that "the Premier, Mr McCormack, was asked these questions:

Was he in favour of free material for Catholic schools?

Was he in favour of exemption of all rates for Catholic schools?

Answer - Not Likely!

Shades of Pygmalion.

That there was close collaboration between this Special Committee and Archbishop James Duhig on these matters is clear from abundant correspondence on record. Significant paragraphs in the archbishop's long letter of 19 March, 1926, addressed to the KSC Committee chairmen for his guidance read as follows:

"It will be seen that the demands are concerned only with minor expenses in connection with our educational work, and are meant to procure justice for the pupil more than for the school.

"Now it is an unheard of thing for any government or municipality to tax a recreation or playground area, especially when it is for the good of the children. You will observe that we have said nothing of the principal cost of education which consists of the erection of buildings and the payment of teachers, and by bearing these ourselves we save the government a huge sum every year.

"I therefore trust that you and the gentlemen associated with you who have taken up the matter, will meet with a sympathetic hearing from the public men whom you approach on the subject."

The Committee was authorised in writing by the archbishop to approach the Premier and also the Leader of the Opposition, as the matter was an economic one, more than a religious one. Therefore it was a matter for laymen, rather than the clergy. The claims were made on behalf of all non-government schools for obvious reasons, and efforts were made to gain the co-operation of non-Catholics. Committee men interviewed the leaders of some other denominations, particularly those who had been most outspoken in their condemnation of education without religion.

They admitted the justice of the claim, but they were not prepared to act publicly in unison with the Catholic body. That brief reference is a significant commentary of the times. One of their leaders doubted the wisdom of allowing the State to have any part in the control of the denominational schools; an attitude which revealed a

misunderstanding of the Committee's approach. Control was not the issue; survival and justice were. The Committee felt it was forced to act alone, but the plea for assistance was made for all non-government schools. It met the Premier, M.W. McCormack, presented to him a letter from Archbishop Duhig, and revealed its case for aid.

This was just before the 1926 State election. The available report on the meeting claims that McCormack was extremely cordial, and frankly admitted that the Labor Party had a strong Catholic vote and he did not want to lose it. He thought the Committee was starting reform at the wrong end; that it should be working towards altering the Labor Party platform.

The election was won by Labor with a comfortable majority of fifteen seats. Communication between the Premier and the Committee was interrupted and appointments were hard to secure. McCormack's stock excuse was the tightness of the Labor Party's platform on education aid. The Committee was critical of the many Catholics who participated in the party's State Convention, but who did not support a change in the policy. It got down to bedrock. It would attempt to organise representation at various political conventions. The first was the Labor Convention in Townsville in 1928, and although reports indicate there was a majority of co-religionists present, only a few solid supporters could be mustered outside the KSC Committee's sphere of influence.

The Country-Progressive National Party held its convention the same year and the matter was taken in hand by KSC members who were known to support that Party which, apparently, did not have a platform on State Aid. It was known to the Committee that its leader, A. E. Moore, felt that a platform would commit him unduly, whereas State Aid was an open issue at the time. As the leader of his party, as Premier, he could grant privileges without being tied by party regulations. The Committee's response made it plain that it was not privileges that they were seeking, but some evident and attainable measure of justice.

The effort climaxed with the 1929 State elections. In a letter to the Premier of Queensland dated 1 November, 1929, from the Chairman of the Committee, J. Heffernan, emphasis was placed on the provision of free school materials for non-government schools. He claimed that "our deputation merely requested the grant to the denominational schools and colleges, of those school requisites and materials that are being granted to the State schools and colleges for use in the school only ... Our deputation did not request charity. It simply asked for justice and a fair deal. Supporters of the denominational schools, as taxpayers, bear their full share of the cost of State education, and although they provide land, buildings, upkeep, teaching staff and school requisites for their children, which otherwise would be a direct charge on the State, they consider it only just and fair that the government should provide necessary school material and requisites as enumerated above." The Premier's reply was brief and predictable. In two neatly typed paragraphs on top quality embossed stationery it said "No".

Before the elections in 1929, Premier McCormack, made overtures to Archbishop Duhig to the effect that if returned to power, he would place 10,000 pounds on the estimates for school material for denominational schools. The amount seems trivial today, but remember, the weekly basic wage at the time was a little over four pounds.

By arrangement, the Premier was asked his attitude towards State Aid for non-government schools at practically every centre during his northern tour. He admitted the claims were just and he saw no reason why they should not be granted. "Give the boy a chance" was one of the Opposition's slogans for the 1929 election, embellished by a picture of a kid in the Jackie Coogan mould sitting in a street gutter staring hopelessly into the future. It saw the Labor Government defeated and Moore's National Government placed in power.

After settling in, Moore was interviewed as Premier and was asked to consider some forms of aid. After much prevarication he committed himself to writing. In a lengthy letter he concluded by saying "it was decided to express the regret of the government that the request (made by the Committee) could not be conceded." The position was then where it had been since the abolition of aid to denominational schools half a century previously. The Committee, working in close collaboration with the archbishop, had tried and failed.

The next bomb to explode was not unexpected, for kites had been flown in the Department of Public Instruction by senior officers to have State scholarships taken out at State secondary schools. The penal days did not seem so remote. A statewide protest was arranged. Even in those days our publicity could proclaim that in every portion of the British Empire, excepting Australia and New Zealand, some assistance was given to all students irrespective of the type of school attended. "Broadminded Australia does not, yet Protestant England does", became part of the militant campaign cry.

We were in the heart of the depression years and the dominant concern for Catholics at this time was personal survival and the State Aid issue, polarised by the variation in the terms of allocating annual State scholarships in Queensland in 1930 by the Country-Progressive Party led by Moore. The aid activity was stepped up, culminating in a State-wide form of protest in the final months of 1930. It centred on public meetings - seventeen in all - held throughout Queensland on or about 30 October, 1930. That which was held in the old Catholic Leader Hall, Ann Street, attracted wide attention and triggered one of the greatest pre-World War II controversies. A detailed reported thereon would lengthen this offering inordinately.

As if to pre-empt the pulling power of the protest meeting, both the *Courier* and the *Daily Mail* on the morning of 30 October, the very day of the meeting in Brisbane, released a government decision through its Minister for Public Instruction, R. M. King. Briefly, the new decision increased the number of full State scholarships in the following years by 440 to almost double the number previously proposed by the government. These were to be allocated thus:-

Scholarships in open competition	830
Additional scholarships for Maryborough	30
Additional scholarships for Ipswich	30
Additional scholarships for country children	50
Total allocation	940

The scholarship examination was to be used also as a qualifying examination for admission to state high schools. The Brisbane *Courier* report of 31 October, 1930, on the Leader Hall meeting was comparatively brief and prosaic, Part of it read:-

"PROTEST MEETING
Scholarship scheme
Rights of Parents.

"This meeting of citizens of Brisbane considers the secondary education of the child and the respect of its parents' wishes is of more importance than balancing the budget and calls upon the government to maintain the number of scholarships and freedom thereof, even at the expense of some other public necessity.

"This motion was carried at a public meeting held at the Leader Hall last night ... The Hall was filled to its utmost capacity, and the speeches were broadcast to an overflowing meeting of about 1,000 people by means of loud speakers."

The report in the *Courier* indicated that J. Heffernan presided and said "that thousands of children had been preparing for the forthcoming examinations, and now, at the end of ten months' study they found, on the plea of economy, that only a small proportion could become beneficiaries. Even though the financial conditions were not good, it was a low-down thing to take it out on the children." Heffernan, chairman of the Parents' Protest Meeting, figured prominently in the subsequent correspondence to the daily press, but the correspondence is too voluminous for reference thereto in this talk.

It is interesting to record at this time a sentence from the pen of the archbishop, which appeared in the official organ of the archdiocese: "we note with pleasure that Catholic activities are now frequent and widespread among our own laity in Queensland. The meeting held recently to protest against the curtailment of the scholarship allowance was outstanding proof that the laity realise their duty and are watching over Catholic interests."

(In 1954, the competitive aspect of the State scholarship examination was abolished. By passing the examination, the scholarship was secured. This system ended in 1962, so that a period of secondary education was secured for "each normal student".)

The All-Australian Catholic Education Congress held in Adelaide from 8 -15 November, 1936, was an historic occasion; one which coloured the life of the Australian community for the remainder of the decade. A constitution was drafted and a number of resolutions adopted. The last of the seven claimed "that we now, at the termination of the congress, dedicate ourselves to the organisation of an association under the name and title 'The Catholic Taxpayers' Association of Australia'. The objective of this Association will be the finding of a remedy for the injustice and hardship imposed by the existing situation; we further pledge ourselves to the vigorous, loyal and continuous support of such organisation until that remedy has been found and applied. Adelaide, 15 November, 1936."

May 1937 was a significant month in the life of the Australian community, for on the 16th day of that month, the national campaign was launched. The *Courier Mail* of 17 May was generous in its coverage of the Brisbane meeting. The public announcement unleashed a newspaper controversy unmatched in volume and virulence since the anti-conscription campaign of earlier days. I have preserved a mass of material relating to public reaction to the launching, including approximately 300 letters to the editor published in the *Courier Mail* during the period May to November, 1937. A pamphlet was released by the Catholic Taxpayers' Association of Australia for distribution in the parishes. It spelled out in six short paragraphs the essence of the protest. It was called 'A Claim for Justice'.

A series of dramatised vignettes directed to the "common man" was prepared for weekly radio presentation throughout Australia. Thirty-eight radio stations participated in six states. It was an unforgettable experience to go to work the morning after those broadcasts. The "common man" can be an uncommonly irritating, uninformed and insulting man! There was anger in the air.

The premier made his party's position clear. The *Courier Mail* of 21 June, 1937, reported him saying that there could be no question of State Aid for denominational schools by the Labor government in Queensland. The party's platform on education was "primary education in State schools, secular and free."

Archbishop Duhig's letter to the Premier, and printed in the *Catholic Leader* at the time, was pungent and prophetic. There is room only for its final paragraph in this presentation. "All fair-minded citizens will, I believe, deplore the hard and unfair things said and written about Catholics and the Catholic church during the last few weeks. I am sure you will agree with me that such a question as that under review should be debated on

its merits and on a high plane without introducing side issues or resorting to any of the sectarian bitterness from which Queensland had for many years been singularly and happily free."

The lengthy editorial in the *Courier Mail* of 29 July, 1937, had a peculiar significance. It is headed "The Fires of Sectarianism", and it refers to the Catholic Taxpayers' Association's claim for assistance from the State for denominational schools. There is time only for comparatively brief reference to this historic editorial, which surely was one of the longest ever written in a Queensland paper. "This is a political question", it claimed without originality. "It concerns public policy and the use of public funds. The Catholic Taxpayers' Association has had the fullest opportunity short of having the issue put to the decision of a referendum at a general election. It has been told by the Premier that the government has no intention of acceding to its request. In a letter to Archbishop Duhig, published on 7 July, Mr Smith (the Queensland Premier) declared 'The Labor policy is Primary Education in State Schools, secular and free'.

"Nor from the Parliamentary Opposition has the campaign received any countenance. Politically the question is settled, and in a manner that most evidently is approved by the majority of citizens. The *Courier Mail* stated its own opinion on the issue on June 16. It then held, and still holds just as firmly, that to grant the Catholic Taxpayers' Association's demands would be against the public interest."

It repeats: "Disintegration of the present state system of free primary instruction would be inevitable, and its present basis of equal opportunity for all children dependent upon the State for education would provoke unceasing rivalry among religious denominations, and for so much damage done to public interests only denominational interests would be served." It continued "this campaign has been given a fair and a long run in a patient and tolerant community, and it has received an answer that should convince the leaders of it that their demand has been rejected. It should be closed, for all that it is doing now is to inject the bitterness of sectarianism into the public life of the state. The *Courier Mail* presses this advice as consistent with the right of free speech. The Roman Catholic advocates of State Aid for denominational schools and their opponents have enjoyed that right abundantly in the last few weeks, but freedom of public discussion does not extend to ceaseless reiteration of a claim that has been fully debated and has been refused by those to whom it is addressed. If the Catholic Taxpayers' Association and its supporters are not yet satisfied that they have had sufficient opportunity to present their case to the tribunal of public opinion, or if they doubt that that tribunal has given a majority judgment against them, what trial and verdict do they require which they will accept as conclusive?" One is tempted to cry out today, 'not the verdict of the mob, nor the dreadful finality of the guillotine!'

The editorial was surely one of the longest ever published in the *Courier Mail*. It concluded with this quaint reference and peculiar logic: "There is no justification on grounds of public interest to alter the State's present policy of free and secular primary education in order to give financial assistance to Roman Catholic or any other denominational schools. This is also the opinion of the majority of Queensland citizens. The Catholic Taxpayers' Association has received their judgment. Surely now men and women of Christian goodwill and charity, Catholics and non-Catholics, those who have argued for State Aid to denominational schools and those who oppose it, will recognise the need of reproving and curbing bitterness in those who share their views, and of joining as citizens to put out the fires of sectarianism and to restore to Queensland the spirit that ensures freedom to all religions and privilege to none." It is consoling to know that this outdated rhetoric no longer prevails in popular form.

A letter on file in this period stated quite virtuously that the United Protestant Association had not allied itself as an organisation with any political party anywhere. "We

are urging our members to vote Protestant, no matter what the conditions may be," the correspondent wrote. "If each party has provided a Protestant candidate, then members have the fullest freedom. If political bodies do not give their supporters the opportunity to vote for a Protestant, then it is only fair that they should suffer as far as Protestant voters are concerned."

How impartial can you get! It did not appear in the 'Comic Capers' or 'Funny Cuts', but in the *Courier Mail*. It was signed by Rev. James Gillespie, Norman Park. The Council of Churches, through its president, Rev. Norman Miller, made a lengthy statement in the *Courier Mail* of 5 August, 1937, one sentence of which suffices for our purpose. "The Acting Premier and the Leader of the Opposition stated that what the Roman Catholic Church was asking was politically impracticable, or against public interest, and that it might invite the leader of the Roman Catholic Church to terminate the discussion and re-establish the previously happy relations." How 'happy' were those public relations?

Catholic authorities made it clear that its principles were not up for grabs. Out of the hectic hub-bub of 1937 emerged the only overt religious political party in Queensland history, the Protestant Labor Party. This was base bigotry at a professional level. Conceived in the womb of religious bias, it was born without celebration and died without regret in infancy. The first plank in the platform was "No State Aid in any form to denominational schools".

Archbishop Duhig may never have written a more retrenchant letter to a State Premier than that on 26 March, 1938, which was published in the *Catholic Leader*. It concluded with these two punchy paragraphs: "Above all, the Catholic church minds its own business and scrupulously abstains from slandering or persecuting people on account of their religious belief. It is evident that if some people had their way no Catholic school could exist, no Catholic child could have a scholarship, and no Catholic could fill any public office in Queensland.

"Hitler, in his mad campaign, differs only in degree from these people in as much as he persecutes Catholic, Protestant and Jew alike.

"Yours etc ... James Duhig.

"Wynberg, New Farm, 25 March, 1938."

In September, 1939, World War II began, bringing with it a semblance of peace on the home front.

In 1943, Robert Menzies made a significant broadcast. "My own opinion is that it is unlikely that the church schools can, in the post-war period, efficiently survive unless there is some measure of State assistance given to them." He concluded by saying, "in the past, this problem, unhappily, has been somewhat clouded by a belief that some special case was being made out for the Catholic church schools ... This is not so."

The great political upheavals on the Australian scene in the 1950s and the early 1960s produced much heat and little light on the State Aid issue. In the early 1950s, the Federal ALP had, as part of its policy, a plan to provide grants to the States for the purpose of assisting all forms of education. In 1957, this clause was removed from the platform. The DLP at this time had a policy of "assistance to all forms of education". It also had a Catholic label attached to it, whether it deserved it or not.

While the Catholic body rebelled against the education injustices of the day up to World War II, the Catholic mind was not cultivated or properly motivated until the 1960s and the 1970s when, in a different climate of concern, it was shown that a measure of

justice is more likely to be achieved by amiability, persistency and education than by aggressive words which cannot be supported by deeds which are generous and not abusive. This paper will not concern itself with all the by-play of politics which enlivened the education scene in the 1950s and 1960s, but it must include reference to some agencies which subsequently advanced the cause of Catholic education in Queensland. Only two will be referred to:

* The Federation of the Parents and Friends Associations of Queensland established in 1960 - not primarily nor precisely an active agency on the State Aid scene;

* The Queensland Bishops' Standing Committee on State Aid proposals which was and is just that. Its creation twenty years ago was a milestone on the way to distinctive and fruitful representation at State level.

Integrated in due course with these specialist bodies were the Diocesan Education Councils and the Queensland Education Commission. Following the Goulburn schools closure in 1962 emerged the Australian Parents' Council with which the Queensland Federation was later affiliated.

For State Aid protagonists, 1968 was a year to remember. The effect of the September budget was:

- * To establish a per capita grant of \$25 at the primary level;
- * To increase the special grant paid to the school for each secondary student from \$15 to \$25, while retaining the existing tuition fees of \$42 per annum to grades 8, 9 and 10 students and that of \$46 per annum to grades 11 and 12 students, which are paid directly to the schools;
- * To increase text book allowances paid to parents from \$4 to \$10 at Grades 8 and 9, from \$6 to \$10 at grade 10, and from \$20 to \$40 at grade 11.

These welcome measures had the effect of more than doubling all existing aid to Catholic schools at the time. The new budget provided for an additional payment of -

Primary	\$1,302,075
Secondary	\$210,070
Total	\$1,512,145

The total text book gains, difficult to assess accurately, are not included in the total above, but surely exceeded \$100,000. Interest grants to Catholic schools in 1967-68 totalled almost \$94,000.

The figures quoted above now seem to be of little significance, but in 1968 they were history-making at the State level. At a routine meeting of the Archdiocesan Education Council held on the evening of the public announcement of these gains, a senior priest said "we should be lighting fires on the hills of Brisbane tonight to celebrate an historic occasion."

A retrospective view from the mid-1980s cannot hope to recapture the euphoria that was found in Catholic education circles when that "per capita grant of \$25 at primary level" was made. It was not inspired so much by the amount, but by the principle of direct aid which was established. It was the first notable success of the Queensland Bishops' Standing Committee on State Aid Proposals. It was a landmark in the history of State Aid in Queensland; a point of no return for the government, and a foundation on which successive advocates in the Bishops' Standing Committee on State Aid proposals have been built each year without public reaction, or apparently, internal contention.

The significance of united Catholic activity at the Federal level should not be overlooked. The Federal Catholic Schools Committee, comprising clerical and lay representatives from each state was founded in 1967 to advise and assist the bishops in their efforts to obtain further financial assistance from the Federal Government. The creation of a Federal Office of Education in Canberra with a full-time director, Right Rev, Monsignor Bourke, B.A., was another administrative advance made in 1968.

Of significance was a meeting held at the Geelong Grammar School from 22 - 24 August, 1968, to which were invited representatives of the Independent Schools of Australia, including the Director of Catholic Education from each state. This group existed primarily to promote the independent system and to support all action to sustain and extend the independent schools. A significant reference in the 1969 Report of the Federation of P & F Association of Queensland bears repeating: "In further justification of its claim of State supremacy in government education assistance, a 1969 report shows that prior to the Commonwealth grants, Queensland easily led all other state in per capita grants to students in non-government schools as a proportion of expenditure on students in government schools in that year."

<u>Primary</u>		<u>Secondary</u>	
Western Australia	4.8 ^o /o	South Australia	3.74 ^o /o
Victoria	5 ^o /o	Tasmania	5 ^o /o
Tasmania	5 ^o /o	Victoria	6.8 ^o /o
South Australia	5.9 ^o /o	New South Wales	8.9 ^o /o
New South Wales	11.3 ^o /o	Western Australia	11.8 ^o /o
Queensland	15.3 ^o /o	Queensland	27.6 ^o /o

Malcolm Fraser, then Federal Minister for Education and Science, announced in the final quarter of 1969, that the new government grants "together with those to be made available by the States would represent from 20^o/o to 35^o/o of the running costs per pupil in government schools, except in Queensland where the supplementary grants to the independent schools would take the figure to about 45^o/o of the per pupil cost of operating government schools."

Remember the year 1969. Unquestionably Queensland was a front runner in the aid stakes as we entered the 1970s. The fact that an active national public organisation was formed to oppose this evidence of progress at both Federal and State levels, namely the Council for the Defence of Government Schools, merely added spice to the Catholic victories, small though they may seem now. The D.O.G.S fielded candidates in the 1969 federal election, polling an average of 4.5^o/o of votes cast in the twelve seats they contested in New South Wales.

Not so long ago we were captives in a compound of contempt. By that I mean we were regarded as a group unworthy of equality in education and therefore entitled only to small hand-outs at convenient times; like elections. Every dollar wrung from reluctant governments, both Federal and State, until recently, have been dragged through the muck and mire of intolerant controversy. Without doubt, our greatest triumph in the 1970s and 1980s was the achievement of a concentrated and co-ordinated united front in the tough arena of aid advocacy at State and Federal levels.

I do not have the time nor, perhaps, the inclination to explore all the political factors which contribute to the ebb and flow of State Aid. At all times it was a political issue with all the risk and inconsistency of political action and advocacy. Reduced to utmost simplicity, direct advocacy in Queensland after the Bishops' action in appointing a Standing Committee with statewide representation thereon was earnest, well-informed, non-provocative, and it was supported by those ultimately responsible for the conduct and expansion of that sector of education generally known as the 'Catholic system'. The

Catholic 'whinge fringe' and the 'Hanrahans' who thought we'd "all be ruined" declined in numbers and influence as communications improved and as decisive gains were made.

Detailed progress in the 1970s need not extend this paper beyond the levels of tolerance. The lines of communication were extended and strengthened at a professional level, and there does not seem to be any excuse for parents to remain uninformed about the significant events in recent decades. On 2 November, 1973, the Human Rights Bill was introduced to the Senate by Lionel Murphy, then Attorney General. Those interested in Australia noted that there was nothing provided which protected freedom of choice in education, despite assurance provided by the Schools Commission Act of 1973 that "the Commission shall have regard to such matters as are relevant and, in particular, shall have regard to ... the prior right of parents to choose whether their children are educated in a government or a non-government school." (Senate Hansard 2.12.1973).

By mid-January 1974, the Australian Parents' Council had reacted skilfully, pointing out that Senator Murphy had omitted to include three important provisions of the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affecting Australia. At about that time, the Catholic Bishops of Australia published a statement which accused the government of deliberately excluding the family from adequate protection by the State, threatening the right to worship, and eroding parents' rights to choose moral and religious education for their children.

Naturally, humanists and anti-aid groups at the time were delighted to find that education aid policies would ensure that denominational schools would be deprived of their due and that parents of children attending thereat would continue to be disadvantaged. 1974 was the year of the Federal election and the appropriate Catholic bodies were asked to let the election candidates know their concern. In various ways, this concern - call it pressure if you like - has been maintained. This is not sectarianism. This is democracy at work.

I have always felt that the divine arrogance of the church is one of its most appealing characteristics. It is difficult to gag or moderate in any way. Let us remember at all times that the church is people; but people who have heard the divine instruction to teach. Catholic education, in its broadest sense, has always been seen as a preparation for Catholic involvement in the life of the community, and in the life to come.

Finally, I am reluctant to speak about an era in which I was not actively involved, (i.e. the post 1980 period), but I refer briefly to the State budget decisions conveyed in the May 1986 Report of the Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Queensland; a body *au fait* with modern development. The State budget brought down in September, 1985, provided for a 7% increase in per capita grants from the third term in 1985. I believe the new figures for 1986 are -

- * Primary \$384 per student (remember that \$25 per capita grant in 1968!)
- * Secondary \$621 per student (remember the special grants at secondary level of \$113!)

Other increases in text book allowances were -

- * Year 8 - \$45 to \$48;
- * Year 9 - \$55 to \$58;
- * Year 11 - \$90 to \$98.

The State government provides assistance for the payment of interest on loans negotiated for school buildings. This is a far cry from the 1968 figures referred to above which were the beginning of something big. Let us always remember those men and women, clerical, religious and lay, who have intelligently, courageously and quietly brought about this happier state.

It was, and is, an educational endeavour enriched by the constancy of the hierarchy and clergy, the energy and poverty of the religious congregations, hallowed by the support, initiative and sacrifice of Catholic families, and blessed by God in His boundless beneficence and wisdom.

Jack Woodward is author of *Knights of the Southern Cross: The Queensland Story*. From 1947 - 81 he was secretary of the Knights of the Southern Cross. He was foundation secretary of the Parents and Friends Federation, a member of the Archdiocesan Education Council, and foundation secretary of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society.