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THE TEACHING OF READING IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS.

F.E. Atchison M.Ed. Thesis  
Part B:p.241-301 Part C:p.302-353.

The teaching of reading in New South Wales schools.

The sentence method lends itself admirably to emphasis from the beginning on all the basic aspects of efficient reading. It follows the natural development of perception, and is in keeping with the global or 'gestalt' concept of learning. Because the emphasis is always on the thought content, it makes for an intelligent reading attitude and a healthy interest in reading. The method does not restrict the reading matter to words with certain similarities but allows scope for variety and interest. Children who learn by this method seldom fall into 'word-by-word' reading.

When first introduced in New South Wales, however, the method was teacher-dominated. Children were not permitted to determine their reading topics nor to work on immediate interests. This robbed the method of the vital, meaningful associations which make the whole thing a success. Then again, few teachers had the knowledge, ability, or time to build into progressive lessons a comprehensive programme of basic reading skills. This made for poor readers, so that the whole method fell under suspicion and even to-day it is used more as an auxiliary technique than as a straight-out method of teaching reading.

While some teachers in the first fifteen years of the century were experimenting with the progressive, analytic methods outlined above, interest in the more formal, synthetic methods was still very much alive. The old alphabetic method had not been entirely abandoned (see Inspector Friend's 1907 Report) and an improved version of it, the syllabic method, flared up briefly, following overseas publicity in the School World and the publication of syllabic primers and readers in England. Then from 1917 to 1941,

the whole scene was dominated by two phonetic methods, the Ellis System and the Jones System, with the Departmental phonic primers completing the picture.

(a) The Ellis System

Miss Lillian Ellis evolved and demonstrated her method at Arncliffe Superior Public School in 1916 and 1917. There was at the time a reaction against the indecisiveness and lack of thoroughness in many of the methods in use and, because of this, teachers found her method, with its definite phonetic teaching, and its ingenious method of dealing with hitherto unphonetic words, comparatively appealing. With assistance from the Education Department, and especially from the Chief Inspector, Mr. James Dawson, Miss Ellis had her Readers published by the Government Printer and was given opportunities to demonstrate her method in metropolitan Infants' schools and departments. But these demonstrations were not always successful or impressive and fortunately a good many teachers refused to introduce her method into their schools.\*<sup>1</sup>

The Ellis System was based on a phonetic alphabet in which the additional sound symbols required were obtained by a differentiation in type. Altogether, three different styles of print were used, while silent letters were distinguished by placing a hook at a convenient part of the letter, e.g., **lamb**. To illustrate, the short vowel sound "a" as in "cat" was printed in thin type (**ā**), the long vowel sound "ay" as in "ale" was printed in ordinary type (**ā**), and the variant "ar" as in "bath" in Gothic type (**ā**).

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\*1. From this stage onwards, the writer is heavily indebted to the memory, co-operation, and scholarly enthusiasm of Miss Victoria Olive, one-time Headmistress of North Sydney Infants' School and a foundation member of the Infants' Reading Committee.

The a in "was" was represented by part of the printed letter not being filled in **ä**. The child was told to look for the 'o' sound at the top of the letter. The "s" in "sat" was printed in ordinary type (**S**), and the "s" in "was" (i.e., the "z" sound) was printed in Gothic type (**ſ**), and so on.\*<sup>1</sup> In this way each sound was represented by one invariable symbol, and each symbol represented one sound only - never anything else.

The system created problems in writing (already dealt with) and spelling. Because the alphabetic names were never spoken by the children under any circumstances, but always the sound names, spelling was not done alphabetically till the end of the Infant School period. Early spelling was "obtained by pronouncing the syllables separately, and then naming any irregularities in the word, e.g., "whistle" was spelt thus - whist-le, silent "t" after "s", silent "e" at the end."\*<sup>2</sup> The photographic reproductions which follow, illustrate the method. A new sound, as in Lesson 2, was introduced by a picture of the object, which the children named several times, and then the new sound was isolated, e.g., the sound "t" was obtained from the picture of a tap. The new sound "t" was then blended with the short vowel sounds as initial, e.g., ta, te, ti, to, tu. These phonograms were then used as a basis for building words, e.g., tap, ten, tin, top, tut; and so a vocabulary was formed and simple stories introduced.

Several advantages attach to the Ellis System:

1. It provided a definite and comprehensive scheme of phonics,

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\*1. See Appendix 5 for more details.

\*2. Miss J. Archibald (Mistress at North Newtown), op. cit., p.180.

which gave the child a remarkably precise knowledge of the sounds of English and training in accurate observation, careful listening, and correct voice production.

2. It gave the child a definite means of self-help in the mastery of words - and a good mental training into the bargain.

3. The blending technique, in which the initial consonant always went with the succeeding vowel, e.g., ba - t, to - p, reduced the very real problem children encounter when they try to blend separate letter sounds to make a word.

These good features are outweighed by its disadvantages:

1. The method does not follow the natural development of perception, as it begins with elements in themselves meaningless to the children, and proceeds to combine them into words.
2. The method is so logical that it is practically an adult method. With children of 6 years of age it entails an amount of reasoning that is foreign to the child's stage of development.
3. The early reading is so restricted that it is very hard to awaken interest in the child in his reading. A skilful teacher, of course, will introduce interest into any lesson, but the interest in this case is extraneous and is not inherent in the subject itself.
4. It has the disadvantage of other phonetic methods based on a differentiation of type. The child has to examine the word so closely that it is likely to affect his eyesight.

The above four criticisms come from the pen of Miss J. Archibald who had three years practical experience of teaching by the Ellis System at North Newtown Practice School. As suggested, the weakness of the system lay in its excessive linguistic emphasis. The child needed the knowledge of a phonetician to master all the details, and he was expected to revel in the mechanics of his language and academic matters for which he had neither the maturity nor the experience - and certainly not the interest!

## Lesson 2.

p n t

a tap



ta Ta ta

a	e	i	o	u		
ta	te	ti	to	tu		
ta-p	te-n	ti-n	to-p	tu-t		
ta-n	te-p	ti-p	to-t	tu-n		
pan-t	ten-t	tin-t	on	pun-t		
pa-t	pe-t	pi-p	po-p	pu-p		
it	at	on	an	in	up	a
a pan	a tap	a pup	a pin			
a pup in a tent						

j = g

s = c

sh = ch

ai = ei, ear =

ere = eer

## Lesson 10.

oo = u

rude rule cru-el ruler truth

oo = ue

blue true rue

oo = ew

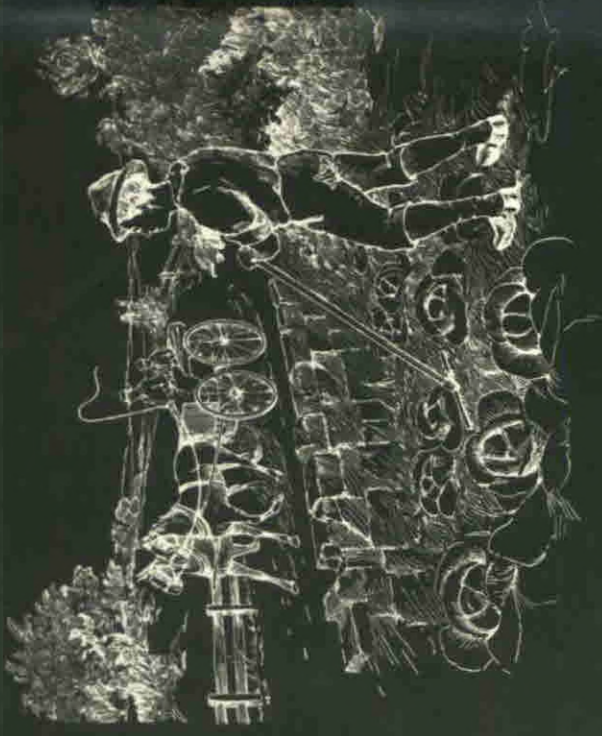
blew flew slew threw crew

## The Magic Scales—Part II.

One day Cyril was weeding his father's garden. He was feeling very hot and tired. Just then he

saw a boy drive by in a grand carriage, drawn by two beautiful white horses.

The boy was dressed in a blue velvet jacket, and he wore gloves



trimmed with fur. He and his father sat side by side on velvet cushions.

“What a lucky boy he is,” said Cyril to himself; “how nice it must

(b) The Jones System

Mr. G.E. Jones, originated and perfected his system at Bundarra, a little township in the north-west of New South Wales. Mr. G.R. Thomas, Inspector of Schools at Inverell, and later to become the Director of Education, took an active interest in the working of the system and sent the manuscript of it to Miss Taylor, Mistress of the Infants' Practice School at Norfolk Street, Newtown, and to Miss Tynan, Mistress of the Infants' Practice School at Australia Street, Newtown. After a period of experimentation, the method proved highly successful, and Miss Taylor stated:

"My experience of the Jones' system has convinced me that I have at last found a way to make the learning of reading a real joy, and an unmixed pleasure, to our little tots ... No child in this school is kept in. They get miles ahead of the syllabus and no word is too hard for them." \*1

Similar enthusiasm among Inverell teachers aroused widespread interest. Mr. Jones came to the city as Headmaster of Mortdale Public School and his Hand-book, Hand Sign Chart, Primers and Readers were published by G.B. Philip & Son in 1920. With Departmental approval, but little assistance, he visited metropolitan schools - even during week-ends - explaining and demonstrating his system. Later he lectured at the Teachers' College. Jones was an outstandingly brilliant teacher and his system had many attractive features, as a result, its use spread rapidly throughout the State. In the early 1930's, however, this popularity started to decline after Mr. Jones clashed with the Education Department over a copyright issue, and after one of the major defects in the system

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\*1. "The Jones System of Reading", N.S.W. Teacher and Tutorial Guide, p.333, Vol.20, No.1, G.B. Philip & Son, Sydney, 1923.

had produced a disturbing state of affairs in several schools. To-day, the Jones system is almost defunct, although the writer has seen it used in recent years by older teachers in small country schools, particularly with retarded pupils.

Like other phonetic systems, the Jones System was designed to overcome the phonic limitations of our alphabet and the etymological peculiarities of our language. The Jones phonetic chart contained the normal letters in ordinary print but to these were added diacritics or sound marks to indicate variant sounds which the letter or letters may represent. The diacritics were formed from the circle, half-circle, and straight line, singly or in combination, and were placed above or below the letters so that they in no way interfered with the type. Thus the diacritic + placed above the "a" in "mān" indicated that it was pronounced with a short "a" sound. The diacritic ~ was used above the ēr in her, the ūr in burn, the īr in bird, the ōr in word, the ŷr in myrtle, the ēār in earn, the ōūr in adjourn. By looking at the diacritic a child could pronounce the sound no matter how chaotic the spelling of it may be. Of course, Shearer and others in America and England had used diacritics forty years previously, and in 1908, Edmund Huey had put an end to their popularity in America with his conclusive criticism:

"I am inclined to think that diacritical marks should rarely be used upon a page that is to be read by young children ... If the child must stop to make the letter-sounds focal, he must necessarily interrupt the natural rate of thinking sentence-meanings, to say nothing of his forgetting all about meanings of any sort in his concern about the sounds as such ... it is simply obstructive of habits of natural reading and speaking to interrupt the reading with thoughts of letter-sounds, which are never normally and focally present in actual reading." (p.350)

But the Jones System differed from other phonetic systems in the introduction of hand plays. All the phonetic sounds were given a hand sign and the children first learned to make a "sound" in their hands. For example, the long sound of "i" as in "pie", "by", or "high" was represented by the hands being placed together at the tips of the fingers to make a tent shape. The letter "m" was shown by the hands being placed horizontally together. The combination of these two hand movements gave the word "my". The various vowel sounds were arranged in progressions which had a certain similarity of movement. In this play way the children associated sounds and hand movements.\*<sup>1</sup>

The next step was to associate these sounds with their diacritical marks, which bore a close resemblance to the hand sign, e.g., the sound "i" as in "by" was shown by the diacritical mark  $\Lambda$ , which resembles the tent shape previously made by the hands. Having associated the sound with the diacritical mark, the child then learned to associate the diacritical mark with its letter equivalent, e.g.,  $\Lambda$  may be written as "i", "igh", or "y". In the meantime, he was being taught to join different signs with his hands to make words, and to join sounds with a singing vocalization to produce the same words.\*<sup>1</sup> Then he learned to decipher the diacritics when written on the blackboard, translating from the 'board to his brain via his hands before pronouncing the words.

When the letter equivalents in the ordinary alphabet had been introduced, the child started to play the very interesting game

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\*1. Miss J. Archibald, op. cit., p.181.

of "dressing" the letters. A sentence, with the diacritical markings of sound value in position, was written on the blackboard and the children learned what the everyday garb of the sounds was like - "these are the clothes of the little sound symbols when they are dressed up". Then the letters were rubbed out leaving the symbols alone and the children were asked: "Who can dress these sounds for me?" Or the following would be written on the blackboard:-

d + n    h + s    +    b + t

and the children challenged to write the corresponding words underneath:-

      +            +            +            +  
d   a   n        h   a   s        a   b   a   t.

In this way, the children learned to read words amid pleasant activities and easy games. Jones claimed that at seven years of age the average child could dispense with the diacritics and read normal material. Numerous tales are still told of the speed with which some children learned by this method. Miss Tynan reported, for example, that an interested visitor had "offered one little boy a daily newspaper, and was rather thunderstruck to hear him make very easy work of the leading article" - especially as the child was still in the Infants' school.

Mr. Jones published a series of Primers and Readers ( See the reproduction of a lesson from Primer 1 on the next page.) The depression years limited the purchase of such extras, however, and many teachers used the ordinary Departmental Primers, writing in the diacritics themselves. By thus using a phonetic system with a set of phonic readers, they doubled the emphasis on the linguistic side of reading, and almost succeeded entirely in divorcing their

## HAND - PLAY EXERCISES

toý toýs joy av. pair chair  
 cār fār jār match latch patch

### SIGN READING

Tom | + nd | f m | - d | b > - |  
 < | pl < | ° - | - r b ll | v | s - | - m |  
 c + l | t | n | - < | h + nd - |

## LESSON 7

SIGNS 2

LETTER k.

1. Dārkīē is Tom's dog.
2. He will run fōr the ball  
if Tom lēt₃ it fall.
3. Good dog Dārkīē.
4. Dọ yōv hēāy him bark ?
5. Yēs I dọ.

## HAND - PLAY EXERCISES

use new few dew dark lark  
 cool fool tool call tall hall  
 fear near tear got hot lot

### SIGN READING

D k - | - | s - | - | r - | d | d ° - | | r - | n |  
 D k - | + | nd | - | t | - | - | b - | | | - |  
 T ° m | | h - | | v | k - | s | - | n | | t - | |

## LESSON 8

LETTERS x, q, v, SIGNS ^, φ

1. Our puss sits on the box.
2. Her two kits are on the rug  
by the fire.
3. Puss sees a mōuse.
4. Get dōwn puss, and catch  
that mōuse.

reading instruction from the interests and needs of the children.

The Jones System had many good features:

1. It was flexible and allowed the child to take an active interest in the reading game, bring his own vocabulary into his school reading, and avoid the stilted nonsense about the cat and the rat sitting on the mat.

2. It provided the child with many points of association - hand sign, sound, diacritic, dressed letter - and thereby increased the likelihood of recall and recognition.

3. The hand signs did captivate the children and give them plenty of enjoyment. They would appear, also, to have provided some kind of muscular learning which benefited the slower learners.

4. The diacritical marks encouraged the child to try to work out unfamiliar words for himself, gave him a large measure of success, and so laid a healthy foundation for independent reading.

Compared with modern methods, however, the Jones System seems to be unnecessarily complex, cluttered up with methodological debris and obtrusive elements - a museum of educational crutches! Teachers who may be tempted to woo a similar phonetic system in the future should ponder the following disadvantages:

1. The child cannot read any material in the early stages unless the diacritical marks are present. This reduces the possibility of valuable incidental learning at home and at play from his picture books, story books, and the world of language about him.

2. It places far too much emphasis on the mechanics of language and demands from the child an interest in linguistics and a level of abstract reasoning quite beyond his years.

3. The transition from reading with diacritics to reading without them is much more difficult than Jones' enthusiasts will admit, and if the teacher, through inexperience or incompetence, fails to effect it, all is lost. Miss Victoria Olive once took charge of an Infants' school where the children read very well, but found that her predecessor had marked every book with "Jones hieroglyphics". When the children were given unmarked matter they could not read at all. Such cases were not isolated. They destroyed confidence in the system and brought about its decline.

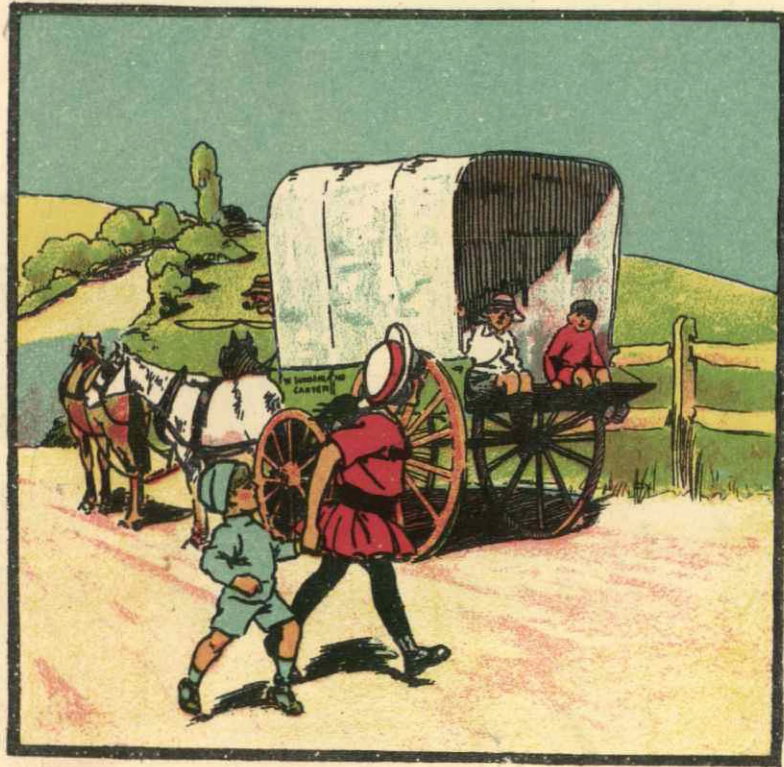
4. As mentioned by Mr. Peter Board, the system tempts teachers into pushing the child's reading ahead of his comprehension, and the need to guard against meaningless, parrot-like mouthing of words is greater than in any other reading method.

(c) The "Red", "Blue", "Green", and "Brown" Phonic Readers

During Mr. Board's regime, the Chief Inspector convened several meetings to discuss the official policy regarding reading method. No finality was ever reached and much confusion prevailed. But the ordinary teacher had a soft spot in her heart for a simple phonic approach with a few 'look-and-say' words thrown in, and in 1917 the Department of Education published its own Primers and Readers based on this uncomplicated - though dull - approach to reading. They were the famous "Red" and "Blue" Primers, and the "Green" and "Brown" Readers, which remained in use until well into the 1940's. Primer 1 commences with: A Rat and a Cat

1. A rat is on the rag mat.
2. A fat cat can see the rat.
3. The rat cannot see the cat.

## In a Van.



1. "Run, Ted, we will catch the van."
2. "See, Tom and Bill are in the van."
3. Tom and Bill saw Ted and Meg.

Department of Education,  
N.S.W. 1917.

READING PRIMER  
Part II

Popularly known as the "Blue Reader", this Primer was intended for use with a phonic approach. Thus, the children's names are all simple phonetic words.

The merits and defects of this phonic approach to reading have already been dealt with and need not detain us longer.

ii. Developments in the Primary School

As indicated earlier in this chapter, 1905 to 1941 was a period of intense interest in Infants' school reading, but more permanent progress occurred at the Primary school level. It included the introduction of a school magazine, the growth of supplementary reading, the development of the silent reading lesson, and the emergence of new concepts of remedial work in reading.

(a) The School Magazine.

The practice of providing primary school pupils with reading matter in monthly instalments, in a school paper or magazine, instead of permanent books which did not vary from year to year, began in South Australia. In March, 1889, Mr. Hartley, chief of the South Australian Education Department, had published the first number of the Children's Hour. "His object in issuing the paper was to provide the pupils of the upper classes with reading matter that possessed some local colour and greater educational value than the current child's magazine".\*<sup>1</sup> At first he authorised its use in schools as a supplementary reader, but the results were so satisfactory that he put out a paper for each class above second and made those papers the readers instead of a set of books.

During the Christmas of 1894, Mr. C.R. Long, a leading Victor-

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\*1. C.R. Long, The Genesis of "The School Paper" in Australia, in The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.52, August, 1904. Mr. Long wrote this article in anticipation of its historical value.

ian Inspector of Schools, later in charge of the Metropolitan Pupil-Teachers centre, visited Adelaide and was so impressed by the Children's Hour that he urged the Victorian Minister of Public Instruction, Sir Alexander Peacock, to introduce the idea. The School Paper subsequently appeared in Victoria in 1895 under the editorship of Mr. Long,<sup>\*1</sup> for Classes 111 to VI. No attempt was made to publish a number for Class 11 for Long thought that the children at that level were "too young to handle an unbound paper with facility, and to keep it clean and tidy"<sup>\*2</sup> and "that the work of selecting suitable topics and simplifying the language month after month would be very exacting".<sup>\*3</sup> It is interesting to note his comment that:

"The increasing difficulty of the lessons in Classes 1 and 11 is essential, and cannot easily be secured with a school paper. Higher up the school it is not of so much consequence within the class, and modern series of reading books pay little regard to it." \*4

Now that the reading process has been more carefully analyzed than it was in Long's time, we see that "the increasing difficulty" in the higher classes is of a different kind and cannot "easily be secured in a school paper".

From Victoria, the idea of a school paper spread to Western Australia after the visit of the Inspector-General of that State, Mr. Cyril Jackson. Supplies of the Victorian paper were used as supplementary readers in conjunction with a set of basic reading books. Then, in 1897, Collins Bros. produced the School Newspaper,

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\*1. See Appendix 2A for Mr. Long's comments on The School Paper.

\*2. C.R. Long, op. cit., p.52.      \*3. Loc. cit.

\*4. Loc. cit.

a periodical suitable for Class 111 and above. In 1899, Mr. S.H. Smith, Headmaster of Neutral Bay school, and later Director of Education, edited (and wrote) for William Brooks & Co. Ltd., The Children's Newspaper.<sup>\*1</sup> And in June, 1904, the Barrier Public Schools' Association (Broken Hill) launched a movement for the establishment of a departmental or local schools' newspaper. With teachers virtually demanding a paper to offset the tedium of set readers, the authorities followed the West Australian example and sanctioned the use of The School Paper from Victoria as a supplementary reader in New South Wales schools.<sup>\*2</sup>

The Children's Newspaper (ed. S.H. Smith) was actually the forerunner of the School Magazine. It ran for one year only, eleven numbers appearing between 30 January, 1899 and 28 November, 1899. It was a news paper written expressly for children.

"Its main purpose is to supply, in palatable form, the world's news carefully selected and edited, told in simple language and accompanied by appropriate explanations and references suited for children of both sexes." \*3

It contained a section on "Australian News" ("the long, weary, cruel drought still continues"), another on "News of the Empire", and a third on "Foreign News". But the paper also aimed to provide children "with instructive and entertaining reading" which would "enlarge their minds and widen their sympathies". To this end, it

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\*1. See details in Appendix 2.

\*2. The 1904 Prize Programme of Lessons for Second Class reads: "Reading.- Reading Australian Book 11. to page 13; Supplementary, the Victorian School Paper for Class 111.; Silent Reading of the School Paper ...." (Educ. Gazette, Nov., 1904)

\*3. S.H. Smith (ed.), The Children's Newspaper, p.123, 28 October, 1899, William Brooks & Co. Ltd., Sydney.

included articles such as "Facts Worth Knowing", "Empire Builders", and a "Chatter Page" of jokes; literary matter, such as Thomas Cowper's "'Twixt Nose and Eyes a Strange Conflict Arose", and an Australian fairy story by Gussie McLeod entitled "Prince Myall"; and a page for the little ones ("The Child World") written in a very simple style.

In May, 1904, the Department permitted the reading of a school paper, and Mr. S.H. Smith produced for Brooks & Co. The Australian School Paper. After a few months this merged with a rival paper, The Commonwealth School Paper, brought out by Angus & Robertson (see Appendix 2). This continued to be used as a supplementary reader - purchased by the pupils - until it went out of existence at the end of 1915. The Commonwealth School Paper had separate numbers for Classes I and II combined, Class III, and Class IV. It followed the Victorian pattern and did not profess to be a news sheet, although Australian topics received a fair proportion of space. Explanations of difficult words, &c., were appended to each section and the stories were profusely illustrated by Souter and others. The August, 1904, number for Classes I and II contains "The Shepherd" by William Blake; a story with a moral, "Tom Never-fret" ("It was just the same when he broke his leg"); a fable in verse, "The Ant and the Grasshopper"; an item of Australiana, "The Native Companion"; a musical 'Round' with time exercises; and much similar material, all attractive and reasonably well graded.

In 1916 the Education Department abolished set readers and substituted the School Magazine which was supplied free to all school pupils as basic reading material. Inspector S.H. Smith was

appointed Editor-in-Chief and carried on until he became Assistant Under-Secretary in 1924. The School Magazine has, since then, been edited by Miss Doris Chadwick.\*<sup>1</sup> Part IV of the Magazine was not added until 1935, and in 1947 the size was doubled to 32 pages but no Magazine was issued in May of each year. The merits and defects of the School Magazine will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter, suffice it to say at this stage that it has pursued the cultural ideal and lived up to its professed intention of providing "Literature for Our Boys and Girls".

(b) Supplementary Reading

The growth of Supplementary Reading as a recognized and distinct type of lesson coincided with the cultural emphasis and the scurry to find a place for literature in the schools. Teachers also welcomed it as a relief from the boredom of eternally poring over set readers. The compilers of the 1905 Syllabus held it to be the most valuable form of reading, for it made reading more extensive, led to the acquisition of literary tastes and, "in an easy pleasant way", added to the child's store of knowledge. The official 1907 instructions\*<sup>2</sup> stated that fresh material should be made available to the children at frequent intervals to cultivate a taste for good literature, and that the pupils should be at liberty to take the readers home for "perusal and assimilation during their leisure hours". The teachers were advised to exclude "objectionable and controversial matter", to talk to the individual child about his

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\*1. Technically, until 1947, the Assistant Under-Secretary remained Editor-in-Chief but had very little to do with the Magazine.

\*2. The Public Instruction Gazette, p.294, January, 1907.

supplementary reading books, and to secure from the older children more continuous reading in standard English literature than The Commonwealth School Paper provided. From this we can see that the educational leaders within the Department had sound ideas on the nature and function of Supplementary Reading.

In 1908 these ideas were given tangible support. The Department, for the first time, made a distribution of supplementary readers (3 to every 4 pupils). Teachers were allowed to select from a list supplied in the requisition form, and they were told quite clearly and emphatically that:

"The books to be supplied are for use in the 3rd and higher classes, and it is to be distinctly understood that they are not intended to supersede the ordinary reading-books of the 3rd and 4th classes, but to supplement them." \*1

From other sources we learn that the readers included easy fairy tales, simple stories, and such novels as The Cricket on the Hearth and Coral Island. Many schools raised funds to augment their supply with publications such as Collins' "Graphic" Supplementary Readers which included Dick Whittington, Cinderella, and Sinbad the Sailor in the Junior Series, and Ivanhoe, Little Women, Settlers in Canada and Mill on the Floss in the Senior Series. These books seemed to be more favoured than The School Paper (Victorian Educ. Dept.) which faded from the scene or The Commonwealth School Paper.

The new type of reading proved popular with the children. Inspector Walker, in the 1907 Braidwood District Report, wrote:

"The introduction of 'Supplementary Reading' has tended to create an interest in books and newspapers. In several of my infants' schools, the good effect which 'story-books' have had upon the

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\*1. Ibid., p.522 (October, 1908).

little ones is most pronounced - they love the tales so happily presented in the Supplementary Readers." \*1.

But the educational leaders were not altogether pleased with the way in which many teachers handled the subject. Inspector Friend complained that the supplementary reading sometimes served no purpose beyond "filling in time" while the teacher was busy with another class.\*2 Professor Mackie thought that the most effective procedure for conducting a Supplementary Reading lesson had not been worked out and needed immediate consideration. His criticism of the lessons, as given, touches on some interesting points:

"the procedure is commonly too closely modelled on that of the traditional oral lesson. The exposition is usually too detailed, and the amount read altogether too limited. The same text is supplied to each member of the class; the same amount of reading is frequently required from all; the portion read is discussed in too great detail." \*3

From this, and from lectures delivered by Professor Mackie's \*4 colleagues at the Teachers' College, we can glean that the recognized Supplementary Reading lesson of the day was actually a type of Study Lesson. At the beginning the children were set a task or problem which gave direction and purpose to their reading. For two-thirds of the lesson the children read silently with the teacher acting as a quiet and unobtrusive helper, and the last five minutes were devoted to a discussion testing the child's comprehension of what he had read. This was not really what the 1905 Syllabus committee had in mind.

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\*1. The Public Instruction Gazette, p.292, April, 1908.

\*2. Ibid., p.281.

\*3. A. Mackie, Editorial Notes, Schooling, p.35, November, 1917, Teachers' College Press, Sydney.

\*4. T.T. Roberts, "The Study Lesson", Schooling, p.138, June, 1918.

The gap between theory and practice in Australian education, as remarked in the Introduction to this thesis, can be seen as "wide as a church door" in the supplementary reading of this period. The rank-and-file of teachers fell into two groups; those who used the lesson as a 'busy-work' device, and those who turned it into a formal study-type lesson because they feared that children would skip and skim if the results of their reading were not thoroughly tested. Very few teachers interpreted supplementary reading as extensive reading, very few put into practice the Syllabus suggestion that "about six books should be read during the year; one or two classics; one book of poetry, and a couple informative (historical, geographical, romance of science, &c.)".\*<sup>1</sup> And even to-day, one rarely finds anything approaching the ideal so ably described by Professor Mackie in the following extract:

"There is much to be said for taking what happens in a library reading room as the model of procedure in the supplementary reading lesson. Instead of forty copies of two or three texts, the class might be supplied with one or two hundred books of varied character, but suited to the tastes and capacity of the particular class. Each child would select his own book, and read it at his own pace. The teacher would act as does the librarian in a children's reading room. He would advise as to choice of books; he would answer the questions, and meet the difficulties of individual children. By means of such reading lessons the children would really learn to read, and they would make a much more extensive and more varied acquaintance with books than is possible at present. There would, in fact, be for all children the same sort of opportunity, and the same sort of training as is now open only to children whose homes provide a plentiful and varied supply of reading matter." \*<sup>2</sup>

However far the supplementary reading done in schools fell short of the ideal - and it was certainly a long way - it marked a stage of real progress from the days of "sanctioned" lists of readers.

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\*1. From the 1925 Syllabus, p.13, 6th Class Reading & Literature.

\*2. op.cit., p.35.

(c) Remedial Reading

Slowly and gradually during this period, interest developed in the nature of individual differences in reading ability, their causes, and the methods appropriate to the major types of reading disability. At the beginning of the century local teachers and inspectors took an active part in an increasingly large number of meetings and discussions on child study, and this scientific trend in education received an impetus from Commissioners Knibbs and Turner's contention that "efficiency in instructing demands a thorough knowledge of the services which psychology can render" and that the superiority of European schools was due, in part, to their "abandoning empirical processes in teaching, and accepting the guidance of psychology".\*<sup>1</sup> The state of mind of those teachers who were subjecting long-established concepts to more critical analysis - and even to verification through experiment - can be sensed in the following words from a speech made by Inspector S.H. Smith to a group of inspectors in 1907:

"I have often felt at a loss ... to account for the marked differences in the progress of different children in such subjects as reading, arithmetic, writing, &c. The differences in the skill of teachers and the mental capacity of the different pupils will account, no doubt, for a great deal, but still there is much unexplained. The problem as to what is a reasonable average standard to expect a beginner to reach in a year is one which I thought worthy of investigation." \*<sup>2</sup>

Prior to World War 1, however, the New South Wales Education Department did not have the facilities for accurate educational experiments, the psychological tests, nor the standardized reading

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\*1. op. cit., p.364.

\*2. S.H. Smith, "Child Study", reported in The Public Instruction Gazette, p.323, Feb., 1907. Smith mentioned that 100 teachers in his inspectorate kept records of progress in 1st Class. (Results not collated)

tests, necessary for educationists to take full advantage of the teacher-interest in reading retardation and similar problems. \*1 In time, some of these requirements filtered into the country. Starch's comprehension tests and vocabulary tests had found their way into our schools by 1922,\*2 at least; Burt's tests and his work on the Distribution and Relation of Educational Abilities among the pupils of London schools, influenced thought and practice at the Sydney Teachers' College; teachers were recommended to consult the writings and tests of Ballard and Thorndike; The Twenty-fourth Year Book of the N.S.S.E., devoted to silent reading, stimulated local interest in objective and standardized tests; and in 1933, the newly-formed Australian Council for Educational Research began the work of constructing silent reading tests for Australian conditions. The impact of these influences and agencies upon classroom practice was not at all great, for teachers were reluctant to admit the inadequacy of their methods and suspicious of radical innovations in grouping still wet from the incubator.

During this period of transition, when the school, the community, and the children were adjusting their thought and behaviour to the new concept of individual differences, certain interesting developments were taking place at the theory level:

1. Following a period of observation of the reading process, construction of standardized reading tests, and then of diagnostic

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\*1. Professor Mackie's Editorial, "Research in Education", Schooling, p.97, Vol.2, No.4, April, 1919, gives an outline of our educational needs in the way of norms, individual tests, new methods of grouping pupils, and teaching procedures "such that varying rates of progress may take place within each class".

\*2. See the N.S.W. Teacher & Tutorial Guide, p.404, May, 1922.

reading tests, reading study in the 1920's entered a period of concentration on remedial teaching methods. The methods devised grew out of the diagnostic work which tested specific reading skills such as following directions, avoiding reversals, a knowledge of phonics, &c., and consisted of specific methods of treating weaknesses revealed by the diagnostic tests. For example, the N.S.S.E. 24th Year Book contained a chart of specific Symptoms, such as reversals, repetitions, omission of lines, and alongside each symptom were listed Useful Methods of Treatment, such as "emphasis on direction of reading by exercises involving tracing, finger pointing, or underlining while reading".\*<sup>1</sup> This "specificity of instruction"\*<sup>2</sup> was modified in America after 1936 by the concept of reading readiness, but it prevailed in New South Wales until the conclusion of World War II.

2. The term reading retardation was extended in meaning to cover not only children who were reading below their class level but also bright children who were reading at or above their class level but below their reading capacity. In 1922, W. Vout carried out an experiment with bright pupils at Darlington School and found that because promotion from class to class was on the basis of the pupil's arithmetical standard, some bright pupils were being prevented from moving forward in reading "at a pace corresponding to their natural ability". He implied that reading remedial measures should not bring the class "to one level" but should give each child the opportunity to read at a rate and level in keeping with his reading

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\*1. From the "Report of the National Committee on Reading", The 24th Year Book, N.S.S.E., Part I, Chapter X, 1925.

\*2. C.M. Fleming, op. cit., p.12.

capacity.\*<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, practising teachers continued to use chronological age rather than reading age as the yardstick for measuring retardation and to act in accordance with Gainsford F. McCurdy's statement that "here we consider a child is retarded, when he is not in the class (or reading at the standard), corresponding to the age as set forth in the Syllabus of Instruction".\*<sup>2</sup>

3. Finally, through general studies in retardation, the idea that backwardness in reading might be caused by more general factors than laziness, inefficient teaching methods, or specific reading difficulties, began to develop during the '20's and '30's. McCurdy found that general retardation could be caused by:

- (1) Late enrolment.
- (2) Irregularity and unpunctuality.
- (3) Removal from place to place resulting in absence of continuity of instruction.
- (4) Parental indifference.
- (5) Physical defects.
- (6) Mass teaching.                   \*<sup>3</sup>

Although many years intervened before we took it, it was not a big step from McCurdy's position to the modern position, viz., that backwardness in reading is usually associated with mental, physical, personality, emotional or environmental factors. Neither can we improve greatly on McCurdy's advice to give the child "as much individual attention as possible", to be sympathetic and build on his interests and hobbies, and to remember that "it is neither common sense nor good judgment to suppose that any two children are alike".\*<sup>4</sup>

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\*1. W. Vout, "An Experiment with Brighter Pupils of Darlington School", Schooling, p.160, Vol.5, No.5, July, 1922.

\*2. Gainsford F. McCurdy, "Retardation", Schooling, p.83, Vol.2, No.3, March, 1919.   \*3. Loc. cit.   \*4. op. cit., p.84.

iii. Summary and Evaluation of the Period 1905 to 1941

The new century began full of promise for a new deal in education. Informed and devastating public criticism of the Old Régime, an inquiry by two Commissioners into the state of education, far-reaching educational reforms in teacher training, the compilation of a Syllabus expressing many of the new 'progressive' ideals, and the appointment as Director of Education of a prominent young spokesman of the educational reform movement to weld the tangled mass of ideas and reforms into a functional and socially significant whole - all pointed towards major educational developments in the twentieth century.

Amid all this, the teaching of reading was caught up in a cross-current of contradictory developments. On the one side, the 'new education' fostered methods of teaching which defined reading as essentially a thought-getting process, and stressed the importance of enlisting the pupil's interests and purposes, and making reading a meaningful activity. Supported by such notable educationists as P.R. Cole, Peter Board, James Dawson and C.H. Northcott, this development led to the introduction into our schools of the sentence method, the story method, and other 'analytic methods'. At the primary school level it led to a continuation of the cultural emphasis of the previous period - tempered by a more humanistic approach; to the growth of the Supplementary Reading Lesson as a means of cultivating a taste for good books; and to the publication of the School Magazine as a basic reader providing the children with a varied reading fare gleaned primarily from the great storehouse of English and Australian literature.

On the other side, there developed an approach to reading which emphasized its narrower, linguistic aspects. We have noted this interest in the language problem gradually emerging in the educational theory of Dr. James Ross and Henry Nairne Murray during the 1788-1848 period, and in the recognition of the 'phonics' and 'look-and-say' techniques as valuable aids by those old masters of method, Gladman and Fitch, during the 1848-1905 period. Now, swept along by the world-wide interest in philological matters, it swamped all other approaches to the reading problem. In New South Wales the linguistic emphasis was dominated by two phonetic and two phonic systems: the phonetic systems of Miss Lilian Ellis and Mr. G.E. Jones; and the phonic systems of the 1917 Departmental Primers and of Miss Agnes Caldwell.

These methods gained supremacy for a number of reasons. They were more effective in over-crowded classrooms. Teachers were influenced by the logical and scholarly work of Miss Ellis, by the excellent teaching of Mr. Jones, and by the practical, readily workable nature of Miss Caldwell's ideas. And administrators and education theorists were hoodwinked by the way in which the inventors wove into their schemes a lot of educational Mumbo Jumbo about interest, pupil activity, play-way methods, &c. The point being, of course, that the so-called pupil interest utilized by these methods was not directly associated with reading itself, nor with building permanent reading interests, but with extraneous games, hand-plays, and motivational devices.

The clash between the linguistic emphasis and the broader approach to reading was resolved in favour of the former, when the

Director of Education authorized the publication of the Ellis Readers and publicly approved the Jones system. This setback held up progress in reading education in New South Wales for many years, and it was not until the advancing scientific trend in education subjected the linguistic methods to accurate experimental inquiry, and exposed their inherent defects, that we again picked up the threads of an approach to reading based on the child's natural growth and interest in language. With greater attention to the history of reading, to the writings of Edmund Huey and P.R. Cole, we could have avoided this pitfall.

This period may be evaluated very briefly. The main strength of the language emphasis period lay in the interest which it provoked in the problems of word recognition. The sounds of English, its word and sound families, the structure of its words, and the phonetic analysis of words, were all given an educational airing. And it was shown beyond doubt that the child does have a language problem in reading, that he must conquer it before he can become a genuinely independent reader, and that a knowledge of phonics, of phonetic analysis, and of the structure analysis of words, is an essential part of his equipment for this task. But it was also shown that these techniques of word recognition on their own can never constitute a complete and adequate method of teaching reading.

The secondary strength of the period lay in the advances which were made in methodology. Partly because of the inclusion of courses on pedagogy and educational psychology in the teacher training syllabus, and partly because of the interest which the new reading methods aroused in teaching procedures, techniques, and

aids, teachers began to take a more professional interest in their work. They gave more thought to the part which the school, through its methods, materials, physical environment, and educational climate, may play in producing successful, interested readers. They attempted to make lessons as interesting as possible, to incorporate activities involving pupil participation, and even to risk a few cautious experiments with play-way methods and new forms of classroom organization. All too frequently, however, this new interest in method combined with one of the language-centred reading schemes (particularly the Caldwell system) to create a teaching situation in which the master, logically and systematically, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of aids, charts, and devices, taught a system of reading instead of teaching the child to read.

This was the main weakness in the teaching of reading during the period of linguistic emphasis: the problem of establishing a consistent association between the spoken language and the written language overshadowed the problem of teaching a child to read. And it was not realized that these two problems are NOT identical. Too little thought was given to reading as a human activity, rich with meaning and inseparable from the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of the reader. And too little use was made of this fact to promote reading growth. As the linguistic emphasis operated primarily at the Infants' school level, a gap developed between the aims and methods of teaching reading in the two departments - an intolerable situation! The child should never have to unlearn anything, and the teaching of reading at one level should never be basically different from that at another. Reading aims and methods, like children,

should expand, develop, grow, - they should never be uprooted!

Closely linked with this primary weakness was the tendency for the linguistic emphasis to cut the child's early reading experiences adrift from the basic purpose, aims, and aspirations of society. Whereas our first colonial schoolboys learned to read for a religious motive, and those of the late Victorian era learned so that they may become better acquainted with their cultural heritage, the Infants' school child of the 1905-1941 period read for reading's sake. At the primary level his reading had definite links with society, but in the early grades he read about "A Rat and a Cat" because it taught him the short "a" sound which he needed to know to read words in the next lesson which, in turn, taught him the "i" sound which he needed for the third lesson, and so the process went on. This 'educational' approach to reading has its merits, but it becomes bloodless and soulless when detached from the main body of our culture.

Fortunately, many teachers held out against the linguistic emphasis. As D. McCarthy remarked at the height of the period:

"It is refreshing to note that these reforms have not quite swept all people off their feet. One of our leading educational authorities recently asked, was it not expecting too much from the little people to discriminate so soon in regard to the difficulties of the language ... After all, the little people are only beginners, not critical students of language." \*1

These people formed the nucleus of the group which, after 1941, put the teaching of reading on a sounder basis.

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\*1. D. McCarthy, "The Teaching of Reading", Schooling, p.85, Vol.3, No.3, 1920.

## Correspondence School, Blackfriars, Sydney.

INSTRUCTION LEAFLETS.

**Note.**—Do not return any leaflets unless asked to do so. Fasten them together and keep them so that you will be able to go over the lessons again and again.

Please return your Reading Primer, Part I, this week, unless you have already done so.

**READING.**

Read from Reading Primer, Part 2, the first lesson.

The new *sounds* to be learnt this week are **wh** and **ch**.  
*Two letters together make each sound.*

**whip****chop****billy-cart****mother**

To make the sound, **wh**, push out your lips as though you were ready to whistle, and blow through them. It is a whispered whistle. Say slowly, **wh** i p, and listen to the sound of the **wh** in this word.

The sound of **ch** is like the sound an engine makes as it moves along, ch! ch! ch! Play trains and say ch! ch! ch! as you go along. When you come to a station, slow down with ch! ch—! ch——! Make a long **ch** sound at the end as the engine is letting out all its steam.

Notice how you push your lips forward to make this sound.

Say the word, **chop**, slowly and hear the sound of **ch**

**Sight words** for *reading only* are : **billy-cart, mother.**

**Sight words** for *reading and spelling* are : **pull, full, for.**

\*6844

Correspondence School,  
Blackfriars, Sydney.

INSTRUCTION LEAFLET.

This comparatively recent leaflet illustrates how 'active' the linguistic emphasis in reading has been even in the modern period.

### The Letter d.

Find the picture of Dad and Dad's name. What do you notice about the first and last letters in his name? Say Dad's name slowly, D a d. What is the last letter saying?

The name of this letter is **d**, pronounced *dee*. Repeat many times, "The letter **d** says (da) **d**." Give the **last sound** as you can hear it clearly at the end of the word, Dad.

### Ear Training Exercises.

1. Draw pictures of things you know that have names beginning with this **sound** and write **d** beside each picture, like this.



2. Look at the pictures and say, "Dog begins with **d**(og), duck begins with **d**(uck)," and so on. Give the **first sound** in the word only.

3. Think of words ending in this **sound**, as, lad, sad, made, bed, fed, bead, hid, ride, nod, road, bud.

### Speech Training Exercise.

## Donald had a dog and a duck.

Practise saying this very carefully, and listen to the sound of every **d**. Be sure to sound the **d** at the end of **and** before saying, a duck. In all your speech, take care to sound **d** when you find it at the **end** of a word.

### The Letter o.

Find the picture of the cod and its name.

What letter does cod begin with? What letter is at the end? Say slowly, c o d. Can you hear the new letter talking? What is it saying? If you are not sure, say, o n, slowly, and listen to the first sound. The name of

Correspondence School,  
Blackfriars, Sydney.

INSTRUCTION LEAFLET.

It may well be that the language-centred methods meet the demands of some of our special schools more effectively than do the modern methods. Research is needed in these fields.

CHAPTER 8:THE MODERN LEARNER-CENTRED TREND (1941- )

As stated in the introduction, this study is not intended as a narrative or descriptive history. It is primarily an historical analysis of trends and developments. In dealing with the modern period, therefore, no attempt will be made to give a thorough chronological coverage but only to trace the most significant lines of development. The nature of the thesis dictates this limitation, but it is also a question of space and of prudence for many of the people associated with the present-day Departmental policy concerning reading instruction would be done less than justice by any attempt to assess their work before it has been completed.

The movement towards a learner-centred emphasis in the teaching of reading started with the influence of great educationists such as John Dewey and Francis Parker upon educational thought in New South Wales at the beginning of the century. But it came to the surface in the 1940's as the dominant emphasis primarily through the growing interest of teachers, syllabus committees, and senior Departmental officers in overseas and local research in educational psychology. The application of scientific method to studies in education, and the application of modern democratic theory to the classroom situation (see p.98) both lead to the same conclusion: that the most important factor in the reading process was not the content or the language but the child.

The 1941 Syllabus made the new emphasis quite clear. In sett-

ing out the objectives of the reading programme, "the development of habits and skills that make for efficient reading"\*<sup>1</sup> was placed last. The first objective was "to provide rich and varied experience through reading",\*<sup>1</sup> and the second, to develop "strong motives for, and permanent interests in reading".\*<sup>1</sup> But most significant of all was the statement that:

"In the past it has not been uncommon for reading matter to be selected merely for its value in teaching pupils to read. This narrow conception must give way to a broader view which chooses material not only because of its value in teaching pupils to read, but also because it provides information on matters of interest to the reader, broadens his horizon and stimulates his interests and outlook." \*<sup>1</sup>

Then again, for the first time, the Syllabus devoted a special section to "Provision for Individual Differences". It was pointed out that the usual type of reading lesson in which each pupil read aloud in turn was utterly inadequate because it did not provide for individual differences, "differences due to training and to varying capacity to learn, and to experience."\*<sup>2</sup>

"It is essential that the teacher should make a careful study of the needs, capacities and accomplishments of his pupils so that he may provide a training which will lead, in each case, to the greatest progress of which the pupil is capable. Such a training will necessarily be based upon individual and group instruction and upon regular diagnostic and remedial work." \*<sup>3</sup>

Despite the cautious statements about legitimate occasions when mass teaching methods could be employed, the Education Department in this 1941 Syllabus was obviously moving towards a child-centred philosophy in the teaching of reading. Yet the traditional practices did not alter greatly, for no definite policy had been reached about the best method of beginning reading ("no specific method for

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\*1. N.S.W. Department of Education, Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, p.153, Government Printer, Sydney, 1941.

\*2. Ibid., p.176.

\*3. Ibid., p.177.

the teaching of reading is prescribed"\*1), and the shortage of teachers during the war years tended to prevent the normal development and application of new ideas.

Many traditions died during and immediately after the 1939-45 War. Among them was the old, formal, language-centred approach to the teaching of reading. And when the 1952 Curriculum for Primary Schools appeared, it expressed the spirit and philosophy of the new age. Teachers were ready to accept its progressive principles and willing to put them into practice. In actual fact, the chief objectives of the reading programme as stated in the Curriculum were identical in wording and order (p.96) with those of the 1941 Syllabus (p.153), but the section on Reading in the Infants' School made the learner-centred emphasis more pointed and definite:

- . "His teacher will not be content to have him merely recognize and name the printed symbol; she will want him to interpret the symbol in the light of his experience.

"The approach to reading should be by sentence, phrase, and word, and no phonetic analysis should be attempted until the child shows evidence of a need for such assistance." \*2

The underlined statement left no doubt that the teacher was to teach the child and not the method.

#### i. Developments in Infants' School Reading

At various times during the 1930's committees worked on reading problems in the Infants' school. This work culminated with the setting up of a permanent Infants' Reading Committee in 1944. Mr. Inspector Barlex was its first chairman, Mr. Inspector G. Cantello,

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\*1. Ibid., p.3.

\*2. N.S.W. Dept. of Educ., Curriculum for Primary Schools, Government Printer, Sydney, 1952, p.82.

deputy chairman, Miss E. Kemp of the Research Branch, the secretary, and the committee comprised many experienced headmistresses and infants' teachers such as Miss V.S. Olive, Miss J.M. Dransfield, Miss M.E. McCaulay and Miss E. Cotton nominated by the Teachers' Federation or the Director-General of Education. Misses Inspectors Forsyth and Lee joined the committee early in 1945.\*1 The aim of the committee was:

- " (a) to investigate the teaching of reading, and  
 (b) to provide more suitable Infants' Readers and Primers."

In pursuing this aim, the committee has been largely responsible for the four major developments which will now be dealt with under separate headings.

(a) The Introduction of a Pre-Reading Programme

As early as 1925 the National Committee on Reading (American) had given explicit recognition to the fact that not all pupils who enter First Grade are equally ready for reading. This initiated a series of investigations\*2 which were summarized by Lucille M. Harrison in 1936.\*3 Harrison claimed that 'readiness' for reading was a matter of intellectual, physical, and personal development. Intellectually, the child needed a mental age of approximately 6½ years, the ability to perceive likenesses and differences, to remember word forms, to do abstract thinking, and to "correlate abstractions with definite modes of response". Physically, the

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\*1. Full details are available in A Brief Account of the Work of the Infants' Reading Committee. 1944-45, an unpublished typescript prepared by Inspector Barlex.

\*2. For example, G. Arthur, "A Quantitative Study of the Results of Grouping First-Grade Classes According to Mental Age", Journal of Educational Research, pp.173-85, Vol.12.

\*3. L.M. Harrison, Reading Readiness, Houghton, (Rev. Ed.), 1939.

child needed satisfactory general health, adequate hearing and eyesight, and freedom from problems associated with cerebral dominance and the functioning of the speech organs. In his personal development, the child needed a measure of emotional stability, adjustment to the school situation, good work habits, and a desirable attitude towards reading.

The American reading specialists agreed on these factors, but two schools of thought arose concerning the teaching of 'readiness'. Paul Witty, the main spokesman for the maturation school of thought, believed that reading should be delayed:

"until children's background of experience and mental growth enable them to find meaning in the tasks presented to them; and until this process of maturation has engendered a condition in which reversals are few and perception of words and other meaningful units is possible." \*1

Arthur Gates, of the adjustment school, believed that the school should adjust its methods, materials, rate of progress, and concept of reading to the level of the child. To stimulate the condition of readiness rather than merely wait for it to come through normal maturation.\*2 The New South Wales Infants' Reading Committee favoured Gates' approach and in 1945 produced a Pre-Primer entitled My First Book. This book was really a combination of a reading readiness book and a pre-primer. On the one hand it gave readiness exercises in auditory discrimination (p.8), visual acuity (p.25), and language background (p.29), on the other hand it attempted to build up a basic sight vocabulary of high-frequency words. Unfort-

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\*1. P. Witty & D. Kopel, "Preventing Reading Disability: The Reading Readiness Factor", Ed. Adm. & Sup., 22: p.401-18, 1936.

\*2. A. Gates & G. Bond, "Reading Readiness: A Study of Factors Determining Success &c.", Teachers Col. Rec., 37: 679-80, 1936.

unately, the Infants' Reading Committee at this stage had some members who were keen supporters of the phonic approach to reading, and they were influential in having phonic work incorporated into it. As a result, My First Book<sup>\*1</sup> has the dubious distinction of being a pre-primer which teaches reading by the phonic method and by the sight method at the same time without any co-ordination of the two approaches. Nevertheless, it introduced some worthwhile ideas. Reading activities were given in which the child used a number of senses including the kinaesthetic and stress was placed on phrase reading and reading for meaning.

The position was clarified in the mid-1950's when the Committee produced Let's Read,<sup>\*2</sup> a book containing pre-reading activities only. These activities cover the most important abilities that the child needs for reading, and the book constitutes "a bridge between the oral and the printed word".<sup>\*3</sup> The important point is that the activities are in no way directly influenced by the nature of the English language, but by the nature of the child.<sup>\*4</sup> Whereas earlier reading books began with attention to the elements of the language, Let's Read is concerned solely with the child. With those powers of visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, association and expression which the child must have before he can benefit from reading instruction.

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\*1. N.S.W. Dept. of Education, My First Book, n.d., (1945).

\*2. N.S.W. Dept. of Education, Let's Read, Gov. Printer, Sydney.

\*3. Ibid., from the Foreword.

\*4. The exceptions are the eye-movement exercises which are influenced by the purely arbitrary practice of writing the language from left to right.



man

mother

bus

man

box



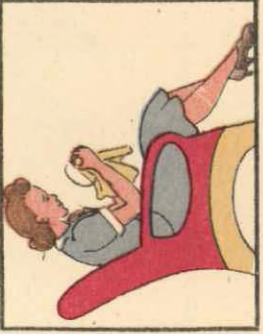
girl

boy

girl

baby

girl



mother

hen

father

mother

father



pig

boy

doll

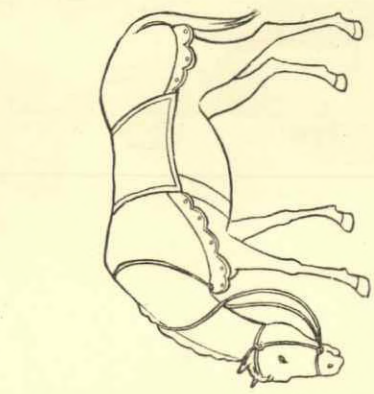
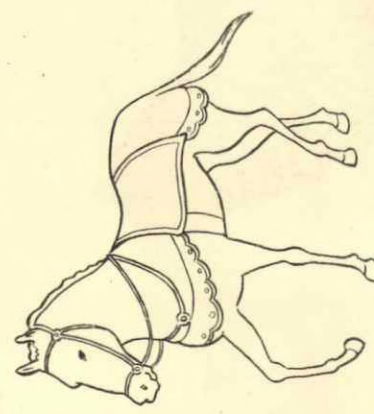
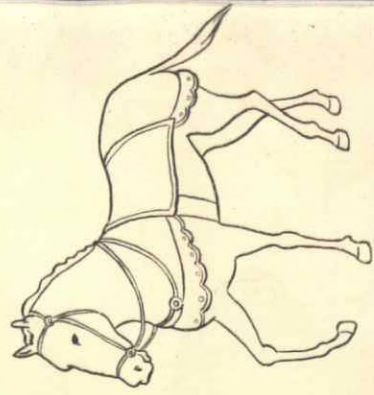
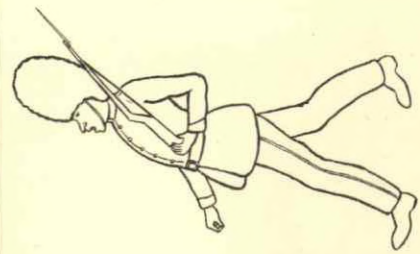
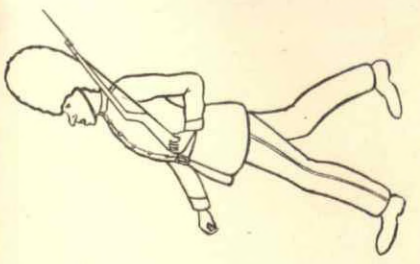
bed

pig

Department of Education,  
New South Wales.

MY FIRST BOOK

My First Book contains several word-matching activities of the above type which help to develop the child's powers of visual discrimination but their primary purpose was to build up the child's initial sight vocabulary.



LET'S READ

Department of Education  
New South Wales.

In contrast to the exercises in My First Book, these visual discrimination activities are not directly associated with language study. They are designed to teach children to see clearly and to recognize similarities and differences in size and shape - essentials skills in learning to read.

The introduction of a programme of pre-reading activities into our Infants' schools soon led to the use of reading readiness tests to help the teacher determine when her children were ready to begin formal reading. Most Kindergarten children now have the test (generally administered by a School Counsellor) prior to going into First Grade, but the practice is not universal. Some teachers prefer to rely on their observations of the child's general ability and language skill.\*<sup>1</sup> The test commonly used is the Gates Reading Readiness Test\*<sup>2</sup> which consists of:

1. A vocabulary test - through questions asked about pictures;
2. Two visual discrimination tests - through word matching and word-card matching;
3. An auditory discrimination test - through rhyming words;
4. An experiential background test - through knowledge of letters and numbers.

In practice, however, it is usually considered socially desirable to promote a child who is not ready to learn to read, either into a transition class or into a First Grade group where he will be given further preparation for reading. All of which indicates how the modern teacher adapts the teaching of reading to the development and the ability of the child.

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\*1. The Australian Council for Educational Research Primary School Studies No.1, The Approach to Reading, states that:

"the reliability and validity of some of these tests are not very high, and experience shows that teachers may obtain almost as effective an estimate based on information gathered during the period of reading preparation now common in many schools". (p.8)

\*2. Arthur I. Gates, Gates Reading Readiness Tests, Reprinted for distribution in Australia by The Australian Council for Educational Research, The Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1939.

(b) The Construction of Vocabulary-Controlled Primers

The members of the Infants' Reading Committee who favoured 'sight' methods gradually triumphed over the 'phonics' group, and their victory was reflected in the 1952 Curriculum statement that "a sight vocabulary of from fifty to a hundred words should be built up before phonetic analysis is attempted" (p.85). American practice had shown, however, that the 'sight' method demands a carefully planned and graded series of pre-primers, primers, and readers in which new words are clearly defined when first used, then repeated again and again at gradually increasing intervals for revision purposes. Careful attention must also be given to the rate at which new words are introduced, the number of new words per page and the ratio of new words to running words. The existing "Red" and "Blue" Primers had a phonic basis and were quite unsuitable for use with the 'sight' method. The first page of the "Red" Primer had 13 new words whereas the normal American 'sight' Primer averages less than one new word per page.

In 1945, the Infants' Reading Committee had begun work on a new book to replace the "Red" Primer. But at this stage the 'phonic' influence was still reasonably active and the result was a primer entitled Fay and Don<sup>\*1</sup> in which the vocabulary was not scientifically controlled. The third story (one page) contained at least 8 new words - all phonetic words! As compared with the old phonic primer, however, Fay and Don made more provision for pupil interest, eye and ear training, regular repetition of words, reading activities,

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\*1. Department of Education, New South Wales, Fay and Don, Printed by authority of the Minister for Education, n.d. (1945-6).

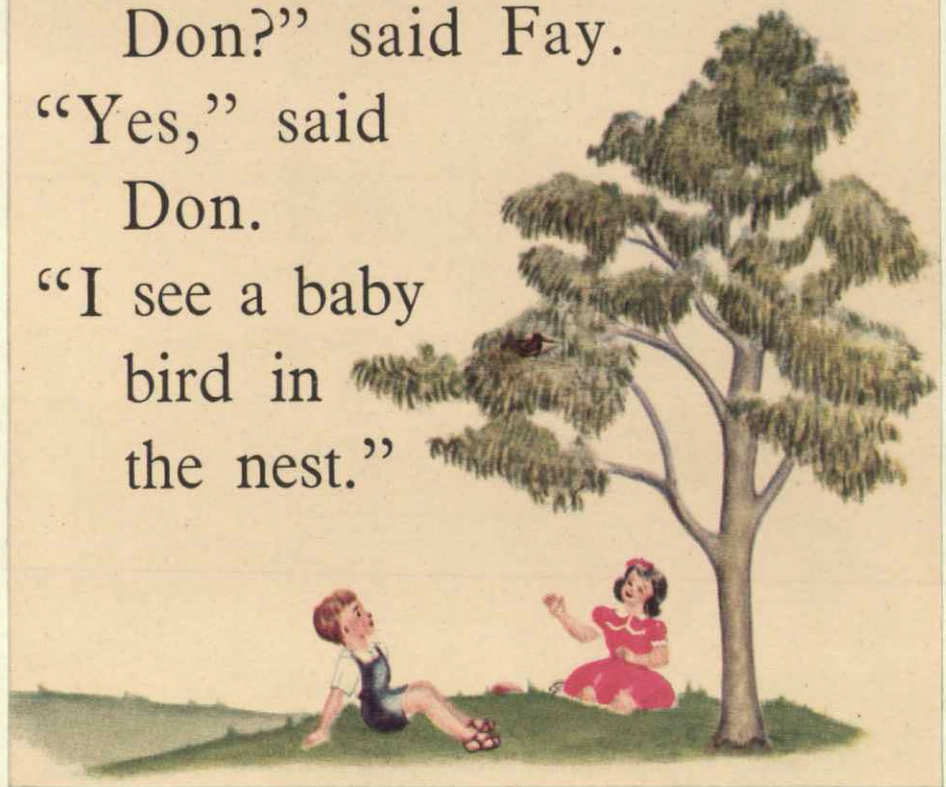
# The Nest.

It is hot in the sun.  
Fay and Don sit by the  
gum tree.

“Do you see a nest  
Don?” said Fay.

“Yes,” said  
Don.

“I see a baby  
bird in  
the nest.”



Department of Education,  
New South Wales, 1945.

FAY AND DON  
Primer 1

In this primer some elementary ideas on vocabulary control were introduced, but many pages contained eight or more new words (as above) and it was assumed that the child would use phonetic analysis as the basic word-recognition technique.



## A Dip in the Creek

“Now, let us all go  
for a dip in the creek,” said Bill.  
Down the bank ran Betty and Fay.  
Down the bank after them  
ran Don and Bill.

Splash!

It was fun to swim  
in the cool creek.

Department of Education  
New South Wales.

AT THE FARM  
Primer 11

At The Farm continued the 'adventures' of Fay and Don and it introduced for the first time - much to the consternation of the Government Printer's office - the breaking up of lines into meaningful phrase units.

and natural language usage. Fay and Don was followed in the late '40's and early '50's by the other books in the series: At The Farm (Primer 11) in which the lines of print were broken up to encourage meaningful phrase reading; Seaside Story (Reader 1)\*<sup>1</sup>; Open Road (Reader 11), and Travelling On (Reader 111).

In the early 1950's some of the outstanding American primers produced by Foresman Scott and Silver Burdett had come to the notice of members of the Reading Committee and, combined with this, the phonic approach was not only falling from popularity, it was even being treated with ignominy. So the committee was able to turn to the production of a set of readers based wholly and solely on 'sight' principles. Up to the present time only two of these have appeared: A Book to Read<sup>\*1<sup>a</sup></sup> (Pre-Primer 1) which takes the child on from the work and vocabulary introduced in the reading readiness book, Let's Read; and, It's Fun to Read (Pre-Primer 11).

The important point is that the primers now being produced have a carefully controlled vocabulary. Not as well controlled as the Silver Burdett Series, Learning to Read, in which the story appeal is also much higher, but quite adequate provided it is supplemented by work-book activities and teacher-prepared material. A Book To Read introduces only 32 new words in 32 pages, never has more than 2 or 3 new words per page, has many pages with no new words at all, and provides for controlled revision of all the words used. It's Fun to Read has similar characteristics and merely

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\*1. See p.175 for a specimen page from this reader.

\*1a See p.235 for a specimen page from this pre-primer.

continues the process of building up the child's basic sight vocabulary. It should be noted that the vocabulary is controlled by our knowledge of the way in which children learn and grow. In the phonic and A-B-C primers the selection of words depended mainly upon their nature - whether they were spelt phonetically, or had one or two syllables. In the modern primer the selection is determined by children's interests and research findings on effective learning techniques.

This learner-centred emphasis can be seen in other features of our modern primers. The size of the print, the type of print used, the spacing of the lines and even the quality of the paper, are influenced by physiological studies of child vision and of the eye behaviour during reading. Illustrations have the threefold purpose of attracting interest, providing clues to word recognition, and helping to 'carry' the story: it is no longer sufficient for them to be good drawings. Lines of print are broken at the end of phrases to assist comprehension. Even the print has been tampered with to simplify the child's learning. In the production of My First Book, the "a", the "g", and the "t" had to be done by hand by the artist, Mrs. Katherine Morris, because, although the printer's font contained the script form of the other letters, these letters were in Roman type. The use of script lettering allows the child to learn to read and to write without the confusion of having to master different letter shapes. So here, too, tradition has bowed to the needs of the child.

(c) The Use of Work-Books.

Side by side with the introduction of the 'sight' method and

the construction of reading books with a scientifically controlled vocabulary, came the work-books. Indeed, they are essential accompaniments of the modern approach to reading. If the child is to learn words by 'sight', he must have ample opportunity to see those words in slightly different settings and positions, he must learn those words through different senses by writing them and drawing pictures representative of their meanings, he must use them in new contexts and gradually discover the subtle differences which they may have in shades of meaning. In short, he must really be able to read the words wherever he finds them, his reading must not be restricted to rote memorization of particular words in specific arrangements and contexts, in a specific book. This is the great danger ever-present in the modern approach. I have known children, who were taught by 'sight' methods only, and whose reading lessons were always limited to basic reading material, who could recite their stories word-perfect from the Third Grade School Magazine but could not read 'unknown' Second Grade material at anything like a satisfactory level. The answer to this problem is the work-book.

The first successful work-books used in New South Wales were the Read and Do Books<sup>\*1</sup> produced by Miss V.S. Olive with the permission of the Department of Education in 1954-55. They were designed to accompany the Departmental readers, At The Farm, Seaside Story, and Open Road to Reading. In 1955 the Education Department produced its own Work Book for A Book to Read, and in 1959 it produced a similar work-book to accompany the new Pre-Primer 11, It's

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\*1. Victoria Olive, Read and Do Books, 1. At the Farm (1954), 2. Seaside Story (1955), 3. Open Road to Reading, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

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**Meanings**

Find the word in "Three Little Sheep" which means the same as in these sentences. Write them underneath.

The three little sheep ate grass a bit at a time.

The three little sheep \_\_\_\_\_

The stream flowed through the paddock.

The stream flowed through \_\_\_\_\_

The little sheep had no food to eat.

The little sheep were \_\_\_\_\_

The three little sheep had no water to drink.

The three little sheep were \_\_\_\_\_

The little sheep could not sleep any more.

The little sheep could not sleep \_\_\_\_\_

They came to a big tree.

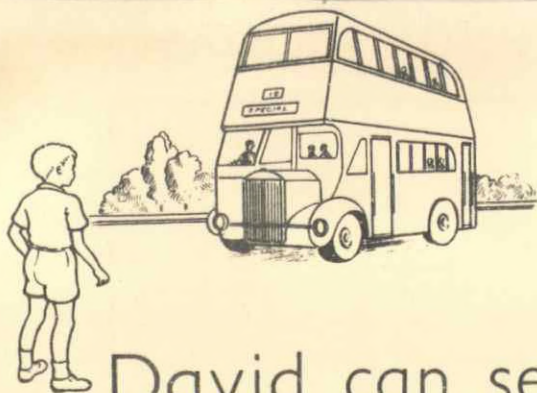
They came to \_\_\_\_\_

Victoria OLIVE,  
Angus and Robertson  
Sydney, 1954.

Read and Do Book for

SEASIDE STORY

These work-books were designed to accompany the Departmental basic readers. Practically no new words were introduced and the exercises consolidated vocabulary development, word-recognition skills, and comprehension. The simple directions allowed each child to progress at his own rate.



David can see .....

a school

a bus

a doll



Wendy is .....

a girl

a doll

a boy



Sue can .....

read

write

play

Department of Education  
New South Wales, 1955.

Work Book for  
A BOOK TO READ

As stated in the Foreword, this work-book is designed to assist the process of language development "by the experiences provided by visual and auditory discrimination, association of ideas, and kinaesthetic exercises". The above exercise links the reading readiness work in association of ideas with 'real' reading.

Fun to Read, and the policy has now been formulated of accompanying each new primer or reader with an appropriate work-book.

These work-books further illustrate the modern learner-centred trend in the teaching of reading. The individual nature of the activities enables each child to progress at his own rate, and it allows the teacher to make an objective assessment of the specific strengths and weaknesses in the child's reading. The work-book is such a flexible medium that it can be used to revise and to test vocabulary development, comprehension, word-recognition skills and other areas of reading growth. And the child who has a particular weakness can concentrate on the work-book activities relevant to that weakness without involving the remainder of the class. Some of the most recent English work-books<sup>\*1</sup> incorporate supplementary information and activities for the brighter child, all of which leads to a very high level of pupil-interest. And children do find work-books both fascinating in themselves and a stimulus to further reading. Naturally, they have some disadvantages. They are costly, and they consume teacher-time in supervision and correction. But these are more than offset by their value in focusing attention upon the needs of the individual reader.

(d) The Broadened Approach to Children's Reading

The Infants' school child is no longer restricted to reading one particular primer, for the teacher to-day does not teach a system, her aim is to make the child a reader. And different

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\*1. Cedric Austin, Reading Today, Workbooks 1 to 4, for Grades 3 to 6, Ginn and Co., Ltd., London, 1956.

children become readers in different ways. So the modern classroom may have more than one series of basic readers,<sup>\*1</sup> it may have sets of supplementary readers parallel in vocabulary and sentence structure difficulty with those used during the daily reading lessons,<sup>\*2</sup> and it may have either a home library, a book-mobile library, or facilities for using the school or local public library. Times have changed since "S.C.R." writing in the 1893 Educational Gazette stated that the library was not needed in the lower classes. To-day, the child is encouraged to read widely, to pursue his interests through reading, and to find in books sources of new and broader interests.

Together with this trend towards a wider range of accessible reading matter, has come the realization that learning to read is not exclusively a school-time activity. Increasing use is now made of the child's outside interests in radio, television, and everyday happenings to foster reading growth. The most important development, however, has been in the field of parent co-operation. Through Education Week activities and less formal parent-teacher conferences, attempts are being made to educate parents in modern reading practice and to seek their understanding and assistance in the mutual task of teaching their children to read.<sup>\*3</sup> For just as it is the whole child that goes to school (see p.18), so too, it is the whole child that goes home from school.

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\*1. Apart from the Departmental readers, the most popular basic readers are the Happy Venture Readers, Oliver & Boyd, London.

\*2. The Bush Books and the Happy Venture Readers (Wide Range Readers) are series with supplementary readers of this type.

\*3. See Roma Gans, Reading is Fun, Teachers Coll., Columbia Uni., 1949.

## ii. Developments in Primary School Reading

The spectacular developments in the Infants' school during the modern period have not been paralleled by similar progress in primary school reading. To understand why this situation has developed we must look carefully at the effect which the School Magazine has upon the teaching of reading in our schools. It should be clearly understood, however, that the following criticism is directed at our reading education policy; it is not directed at the School Magazine itself, which provides a good variety of high quality literature and compares more than favourably with similar publications in other States and is only surpassed by the New Zealand school journal.

### (a) The School Magazine

One of the characteristics of reading instruction in Australia is the regular distribution to schools of Departmental publications such as The School Magazine (N.S.W.), the Junior School Paper (W.A.), The Children's Hour (S.A.), and The School Paper (Vic.), for use as basic reading material. However, school authorities in England and America have not adopted this practice. They provide sets of permanent readers which start at the pre-reading level and proceed through to the end of the primary grades in the one complete and unified series of books. As a rule, their basic readers are accompanied by a comprehensive system of work-books, reading materials and classroom charts, teacher's guides and advisory services.

The School Magazine is not necessarily inferior to the permanent reader as a means of providing basic reading experience, but if we examine the peculiar advantages of each system we shall

see that in practice it usually is:

### Advantages of the School Magazine

- The 'new' Magazine each month, with its surprise packet of stories, plays, poems, articles, serials, puzzles and songs, appeals to the children. It never quite grows, as did the old Queensland School Readers. \*1 state
- Interesting, topical material dealing with scientific achievements, polar explorations, international sporting events, the Royal Family, and other matters of immediate concern to the child can be readily incorporated into his daily reading.
- Literary selections from recent works and from the best children's books of the year can be made available to every child throughout the State.
- By contributing original material to the Magazine, teachers have a most challenging opportunity to give the children the kind of reading matter which they think the children should read.
- Bound copies of the Magazine, kept over the years, provide a cheap source of well-graded supplementary reading material, poems, music, and plays.

### Advantages of the Permanent Reader

- The permanent reader makes the control and scientific development of the child's reading vocabulary a comparatively simple affair. Actually, The School Magazine grades very satisfactorily on readability tests, but it is a vast and endless task trying to control the vocabulary of its ever-changing stories. \*2
- The author of a basic reading series can build into the books a planned, well-graded instructional programme which introduces, develops and revises, in a systematic and educationally sound manner, all the essential reading skills.
- The book, with its high quality paper, good printing, and coloured illustrations, has a special appeal of its own. \*3
- The book gets the child accustomed to reading lengthy stories whereas the Magazine tends to produce short-winded, 'digest' readers who shy at their first high school novel.

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\*1. The Department of Public Instruction, Queensland School Readers Books 1 to 1V, Brisbane, 1913. These books were popular in N.S.W. schools after World War 1.

\*2. A task allotted to one of the Assistant Editors, Mr. Woods.

\*3. Many teachers commented on the appeal of the School Magazine's special coloured cover to commemorate the Queen's visit in 1954.

Summing up, it amounts to this. The advantages of the School Magazine are on the side of interest, topical appeal, variety and flexibility. But these are more than balanced by the difficulty of co-ordinating the reading matter in the Magazine with an organized programme of developmental reading activities. The progress which has been made in teaching reading in the primary schools of England and America during the last two decades has been essentially progress in organization. Basic reading programmes have been developed which, within a framework of interesting reading content, systematically and logically guide the pupils' growth from grade to grade in word-recognition skills, vocabulary power, comprehension, the use of reading as a study skill, and in the development of appreciation. One of the objectives of a well-known American reading<sup>series</sup>, for example, is:

"To provide, in a specific and organized fashion, for initiating, developing, and maintaining those abilities needed for general reading: word recognition, comprehension, and interpretation; and the specific skills and abilities needed for study: selecting, evaluating, organizing, summarizing, drawing conclusions, locating information, and remembering what is read." \*1

This can be done with permanent readers, it can not be done thoroughly and scientifically with the School Magazine. And this is why the teaching of reading in our primary schools has not kept abreast of overseas developments since World War II.

Of course, primary school teachers try to use the Magazine to teach reading skills. Many go to the extent of preparing from each month's Magazine roneoed sheets of work-book type activities for this purpose. But as the teacher has no idea of the content of

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\*1. N.B. Smith & S.F. Bayne, Intermediate Readers, p.2, Silver Burdett, New York, 1946.

succeeding Magazines\*<sup>1</sup> he cannot be sure that his work will constitute a complete, well-graded, and organized programme. Nevertheless, the answer does not lie in the abolition or modification of the School Magazine; we have had too much of the wild pendulum-swinging technique in educational administration. The School Magazine should continue to be used as a magazine, providing the children with much the same kind of interesting, topical articles and literary extracts as it does at present, but it should not be used as a basic reader. The present Infants' school series of which only Let's Read, (Reading Readiness Book), A Book to Read, (Pre-Primer 1), and It's Fun to Read, (Pre-Primer 11) have been completed, should be continued on as a unified series of basic readers, with work-books etc., right through to the end of sixth grade. This would eliminate many of the haphazard features of our present-day primary school teaching of reading.

(b) The Identification and Teaching of Specific Reading Skills

Although the School Magazine tradition has restricted the application of modern reading theory to primary school practice, curriculum committees and teachers generally recognize its main principles, and many aspects of primary school reading point to an increased emphasis on the needs of the child. The literary emphasis remains strong, as indicated by the 1952 Curriculum statement that the teacher's fundamental task is to guide the pupils to the varied treasures of English literature and develop a simple, elementary appreciation of their worth (p.97), but definite stress has also

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\*1. Each month a list of the stories that will appear in the next issue of the Magazine is printed in The Education Gazette but this is for general programming purposes only.

been placed upon isolated reading skills and upon the study type of reading. It is now more widely recognized that the child may need training in specific reading skills, and the Curriculum has identified such skills as reading in the content subjects, adapting speed of reading to the nature of the material, intensive reading for appreciation, silent reading for different purposes, and meaningful expressive oral reading. To carry out this training effectively and economically, most teachers divide the class into groups for reading. Ability grouping finds most favour because it allows children to progress at their own rate - more or less. However, oral reading skills are best taught in small groups covering a range of abilities, and grouping by friendship or grouping by interest make for a better class tone than results from ability grouping.\*<sup>1</sup> All of these practices stem from the needs of the child, not of the subject and are part of the modern learner-centred trend.

(c) The Broadened Approach to Children's Reading

In common with the Infants' school, the primary school no longer limits the child to a prescribed reader. Although, the old philosophy dies hard and is still one of the factors operating against the effective teaching of reading. The majority of teachers widen the child's "reading horizon" by reading selections of good prose and poetry to him; helping him to use the available library facilities; placing reference books, periodicals and newspapers in the classroom; and giving special lessons on new books added to the school library. Book Week activities have been particularly valu-

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\*1. Very successful experiments with reading groups based on interest or friendship have been conducted at The Junction Demonstration School (Girls' Dept.) and at Newcastle East.

able in bringing books and children together. Each year, in connection with Children's Book Week, The Education Gazette publishes in conjunction with the School Library Service a list of "recent publications and reprints recommended as being of good quality". This list enables teachers to keep in touch with the best children's books and to give children informed guidance and up-to-date information relating to their recreational and library reading.

Another example of the broadened approach to reading in the modern period is the extension of reading skills instruction into the secondary schools. This development began when some Opportunity Classes (now called General Activity Classes) were attached to secondary departments. Then, as the non-language secondary groups increased, teachers found that the children needed further training in the type of reading skills which the brighter, more academic children had mastered at the Sixth Grade level. Articles, written by secondary teachers, appeared in the English-History Bulletin on this question, and it is now receiving considerable attention. At first secondary teachers tended to blame the primary teachers for failing to bring their children up to high school standard. Now they recognize that there must always<sup>be</sup> a wide range of reading ability, that learning to read is a continuous process, and that even the teachers themselves can benefit from organized instruction in advanced reading skills. The Australian Council for Educational Research has rendered assistance in this new field by making available study-type reading exercises at the secondary level. (Study Type of Reading Exercises by Ruth Strang. See also, Improvement in Secondary School Reading, the accompanying manual.)

### iii. Remedial Reading

The modern learner-centred emphasis has developed most rapidly and become most pronounced in the remedial reading field for a number of reasons. In the first place, the 1952 Curriculum devoted a special section to "Remedial Reading" (p.102) in which particular stress was placed on the point that reading disability, although overtly a language problem, was closely related to personality and character maladjustment, to "emotional blockages", physical handicaps, teaching methods, and the degree of general intelligence. Teachers were encouraged to use no magic method but to study the specific problem and needs of the individual: "the pupils who diverge from the average in the scholastic sense frequently require teaching procedures of a special type to make optimum progress". (p.102) Only in the case of total reading disability did the Curriculum recommend a definite method - a tactile-kinaesthetic method based on Grace Fernald's remedial techniques. This meant that the remedial teacher concerned himself not so much with infallible procedures and the 'right' books, but with developing a thorough understanding of the child, studying his personal problem, diagnosing his educational weaknesses and identifying his exact reading difficulties.

In the second place, remedial teachers broke right away from The School Magazine on the grounds that the frustration arising from the pupil's failure to read the Magazine would be "sufficient to establish an antagonism, or emotional blockage, towards subsequent reading presentations" (Curriculum p.103). Once free from the Magazine, these teachers experimented with all manner of new read-



ing materials, with teacher-prepared reading cards, with booklets written by the child himself, with commercial publications designed for special age-groups,<sup>\*1</sup> and with sets of basic readers from overseas. They experimented also with new methods, new ways of giving reading lessons, new forms of motivation, and a vast number of new reading aids and teaching devices. These activities revealed to teachers the limitations of The School Magazine for basic reading purposes, even with normal readers, and they also made the thoughtful teachers more appreciative of the excellent work which The School Magazine staff perform in providing a common core of reading matter for thousands of classes so different in abilities and interests. And the over-all effect of all this interest in remedial teaching, although not yet readily apparent in a tangible form, has been to compel educationists and publishers to approach, and to think through the reading problem from the child's viewpoint - keeping in mind always his interests, his capacities, the way he learns, and the type of environment which stimulates maximal reading growth.

And finally, the Department of Education has provided a large number of diverse facilities for the problem reader, all of which emphasize the needs of the learner rather than the subject. Educational Clinics have been established in densely populated centres for children who require special guidance from trained psychologists. A close liaison exists between the clinics, the school counsellors, the special testing service, and the remedial classes or

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\*1. For example, James Hemming's Ready Readers, Longmans, Green, London, cater for children in their early 'teens who have a limited reading vocabulary.

schools concerned with the education of retarded or slow learning children. In some areas of the State, specially trained and qualified itinerant remedial teachers are appointed to schools as super-numeraries for the purpose of helping children who need individual instruction and have the mental capacity to benefit from it. Headmasters are encouraged to organize the available facilities so as to provide for remedial instruction in reading and arithmetic if the need exists. Although, as a general policy, "considerations of social adjustment make it desirable that such assistance should be given in the normal classroom" (Curriculum p.102). The Education Department has sought also to disseminate information on remedial work by means of bulletins prepared by the Research Division,<sup>\*1</sup> by conferences at different levels, and by Post-College Courses. And The School Magazine has offered its mite by inserting in each number a "Remedial" story which gives the weaker reader something he can master without suffering the social embarrassment of reading from a "different book".

The developments in Infants', Primary, and Remedial Reading in the modern period all point to the fact that the emphasis in the teaching of reading is no longer on the social aspects, the language problem, or methodological difficulties, but on the child. This new emphasis will be evaluated in the final part of the thesis to avoid repetition and to link it up with the general recommendations which emerge from a comparison of all four emphases.

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\*1. Department of Education, Remedial Reading in the Classroom, Division of Research, Guidance and Adjustment, Information Bulletin No.16, Sydney, 1956.

PART C

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a Heaven for?                   .... BROWNING.

CHAPTER 9:IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the preceding historical analysis, it is obvious that the teaching of reading in New South Wales schools since 1788 has followed much the same pattern of development as scholars have observed in American and English reading instruction. The initial emphasis on the religious motive gradually yielded under pressure from social, national and scientific influences, and was replaced by a strong literary and cultural emphasis which still dominates reading activities in the more advanced classes. Then, with the beginning of the twentieth century, came an intense academic interest in philology which concentrated attention on the language problem in reading; a scientific approach to education which led to a general review of traditional methods; and finally, a scientific approach to child study which ushered in the present learner-centred trend in the teaching of reading. In common with progressive practice abroad, the emphasis in New South Wales reading teaching has shifted from the social aspect to the linguistic and methodological, and then to the psychological and physiological.

Nevertheless, the developments in our country have certain unique characteristics. We have had our "pseudo-newcomers with crash panaceas", our Ellis system and our Jones system to parallel the reading schemes of Shearer in America and Dale in England, but we have also had distinct developments related to the educational conditions peculiar to Australia. At the core of our educational problem, there is always the question: how can we give each child

equality of educational opportunity - his democratic birthright - when our population is so thin and so unevenly distributed? Our educationists have sought an answer to the question in many bold and imaginative measures: the Correspondence School; the School of the Air; the Provisional, subsidized, and part-time schools; the hundreds of One-teacher schools staffed with fully qualified teachers; and the area schools to which children are transported from outlying districts. Inevitably these measures have involved a number of compromises. Australia is a land of various religious persuasions, each a significant proportion of the population and each widely scattered throughout the country. To avoid offending minority groups yet bring schooling to every child and, at the same time, establish high educational standards, it has been necessary to make education secular although by no means 'godless'. Then again, the population of Sydney in relation to the remainder of the State, and the tradition of centralized Government control which began when New South Wales was a prison-colony, have led to another compromise in educational administration. A compromise in which all of the organization concerned with finance, school buildings, essential facilities, and the appointment of teachers, comes from the centre, while local participation in educational affairs is restricted to the provision of additional facilities. What has been the effect of these compromises on the teaching of reading?

They have resulted in the production, by specialists associated with the central authority, of basic reading materials for the whole of the State. They have resulted in the standardization of teaching aims and methods - within democratic limits - imposed

by a common curriculum, by the academic authority of publications made by the central body, and by the hierarchy of supervision associated with all centralized organizations. To the passing observer, these features may seem undesirable compared with those which prevail in his own decentralized educational system. But they should not be condemned off-hand. They emanate from a workable answer to a unique and difficult problem. Until our land becomes much more densely populated, excessive decentralization would probably do more harm than good and children in remote areas would be deprived of the benefits which a central organization with research facilities and other resources can provide.

So it is that the children in our schools, whether they live at Cobar or at Manly, all read the Seaside Story. Whether they are interested in becoming sheep-farmers or steel-workers, they all read The School Magazine. And no matter who their new teacher may be, he will have been trained to use much the same methods as their previous teacher. This does not mean that the teacher is not free to try out his own ideas; a centralized organization is not necessarily dictatorial - and new ideas are welcomed. And with the help of a Parents and Citizens' Association, the teacher is perfectly free to supply his class with reading material of his own choice. But it does mean that localized developments will have little direct or permanent influence upon the teaching of reading unless they are recognized by the central administration and incorporated into its State-wide organization. Any attempt to transplant overseas reading philosophy in our soil must be worked out in terms of this characteristic of our educational system.

In addition to revealing those trends in New South Wales reading instruction which we share with other nations and those which have resulted from local conditions, this historical analysis has confirmed the original contention that reading is a subtle skill, a complex activity. It has shown that reading is a composite of psychological, physiological, sociological, linguistic and educational factors. We must now examine the implications of this upon the teaching of reading in New South Wales.

(a) Reading is a Psychological and Physiological Activity.

In Chapter 1 (The Child), it was seen that reading, as an area of language growth, is closely related to the mental, social, emotional, physical, and personality development of the child. For the child, therefore, learning to read should be no mere school drill or language exercise but an integral part of the process of growing up. What he reads, how he learns to read, and the purposes to which he puts his reading, should be determined by his level of maturation and his developmental needs. In Chapter 8, it was seen that concentration on this aspect of the reading activity has brought about certain developments in New South Wales schools. It has led to the introduction of reading readiness programmes in accordance with the theory that a child should be intellectually, physically and emotionally 'ready' to learn to read before any formal teaching is attempted. It has led also to the construction of reading books which appeal to children's interests, have a controlled vocabulary which is determined by the child's needs and the frequency with which words appear in his spoken language, and have a format, lay-out, and print determined by the child's visual

perceptual abilities and the physiology of reading. This modern emphasis upon the child has caused the Education Department to introduce many remedial reading services and to broaden its general approach to the whole field of children's reading.

Three points require elucidation. Is this emphasis sound? Have we carried it far enough? Is it over-shadowing other vital aspects of reading? To the first question our answer must surely be in the affirmative. We do not teach reading, we teach children to read - not reading but children! The child must be the central consideration. How he grows, how he learns, his capacity to learn, and his readiness for learning, will govern the effectiveness of our teaching whether we recognize the fact or not. It is only common sense, therefore, to adjust our teaching processes and the subject taught to the growth and development of the child rather than work against it. And those who would point to a decline in standards under the modern emphasis should examine carefully the validity of their assertions. Library records show that children to-day read more than ever before, and that more children read. They no longer stay away from school because they cannot keep up with the class. Our standards are not inflated by the convenient absence of the non-readers, and our good readers have no trouble reading the old I.N.B. and Collins' Readers appropriate to their age group.

This emphasis is still in its infancy and, as yet, we have not carried it far enough or worked out all its implications. In New South Wales we have not fully realized that a developmental reading programme should extend beyond the Infants' school into

the primary school and even the secondary school. The primary schools still tend to teach reading with the assumption that general reading ability can be developed, and that once the child has learned to read, he can read effectively in all reading situations. This contradicts the principle that development is a continuous process. The need exists therefore, as explained on page 296, to extend the developmental reading programme now under construction in the Infants' school to at least the Sixth Grade level. Another implication of the learner-centred trend is that the isolation of reading as a separate school subject must be radically modified. If we are teaching children and not reading, then reading must become a phase of language development and find its place alongside of speech, written expression, spelling and writing in activities which promote the child's powers of communication and expression. Once again, the Infants' school has made some progress along these lines with central theme activities - but not enough. The primary school has experimented with project methods and failed! Failed because teachers did not understand what they were doing or why they were doing it, not because the principles underlying the method were wrong. We cannot, logically, place the emphasis upon the child in education yet continue to teach subjects as distinct units. We must foster school programmes which combine reading with listening, speaking, writing and other areas of the curriculum in purposeful developmental tasks.

Many aspects of New South Wales school administration lag behind the child-centred emphasis. For example, no detailed record of a child's reading development is passed on from teacher to

teacher as the child moves up through the grades. The Third Grade teacher receives no official information concerning the reading background of the child, and the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grade teachers receive little more than the child's numerical mark for reading awarded at the half-yearly and yearly examinations. To avoid interruptions to the child's reading growth, a record should be kept of his achievements, of his rate of progress, of specific strengths and weaknesses, of his reading interests, and even in some cases, of methods that have been used in teaching him, groups he has been associated with, and books he has read. As it is at present, each teacher starts afresh, and the whole process is inefficient, uneconomical, and unprofessional.

Turning now to the third point: is the learner-centred emphasis over-shadowing other vital aspects of reading? As stated earlier, the child is the centre of the educative process but he is not the whole of it, and our concern about the psychological and physiological aspects of reading should be coupled with our findings about the other aspects which have been emphasized at different historical periods.

(b) Reading is a Sociological Activity.

The child doesn't just read; he reads a story, an article, a poem or some form of printed matter. And what he reads has meaning for him, it influences his thoughts, his actions, and ultimately the type of person that he is and will be. Moreover, the way in which he is taught, the educational climate, and the purposes set for his reading, also influence his development as a reader

and as a person. Reading is, therefore, an activity with far-reaching sociological significance.

Our society recognizes the value of reading for the preservation of its ideals and culture and for progress towards even higher forms of civilization. In Chapter 2, it was shown that our society, cognizant of this importance of reading, is deeply concerned about maintaining children's reading standards and about providing children with the right kind of reading material. Parents become very anxious when they find their children reading nothing better than comics. They feel that this will limit their cultural horizon and lower the tastes and standards of the community. Hence they are prepared to spend large sums of money equipping schools with books, training teachers to make their children better readers, and building attractive, well-stocked children's libraries. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, it was shown that this kind of thinking was uppermost in the minds of teachers and parents from 1788 to 1905. Until the 1850's, school reading books abounded with extracts from the scriptures, moral stories and psalms, for society wanted its children to gain spiritual food from their reading and become true Christians who would preserve the ideals of the Christian way of life. After the 1850's Christian unity in the community weakened but society still believed that what a child read mattered very much, and school readers became storehouses of literature, history, and culture, designed to combat the lowering of national tastes by the cheap newspaper and the spread of universal education. There can be no doubt that for the first century or so the Australian people looked upon reading as a most significant socio-

logical activity. They made the mistake, however, of stressing this aspect of reading to the exclusion of the psychological and physiological aspects.

The question arises: are these two aspects of the reading activity incompatible? Seen in proper perspective, they are not. The child occupies a key position in the activity, therefore, considerations of a psychological and physiological nature relating to the teaching of reading must receive priority. But even the child-centred approach to reading recognizes the importance of what the child reads, for one of its basic principles is that reading promotes and is promoted by the child's mental, emotional, social and personality development. In other words, because reading is not a meaningless activity, it affects the mental development of the child. But we cannot just speak about development; it must always be development towards something, development towards maturity. And that is where the sociological aspect is so important. It is not a matter as to whether the child emphasis is right and the social emphasis wrong, or even whether one takes precedence over the other; it is a matter of the two aspects blending into a unified approach.

When we come to consider the creation of an educational environment in which children's reading will develop, the kinds of books he should read, and what we mean by a mature reader, then we must find an answer in terms of the ideals and achievements of our culture. We must guide the child towards those types of reading which society has found, through centuries and centuries of experience, to be the most valuable for his life purposes. It is

the child's heritage which is involved. He has a right to be introduced to the accumulated culture of his people; he should not be expected to re-build it himself. Afterwards he has the right to embrace it, reject it, or improve or change it.

The modern learner-centred trend does frequently over-shadow this sociological side of reading. One suspects that the modern school actually hides behind the new child growth and development concept because it has lost faith in its own social and spiritual values. It concentrates on the immediate problem, on the immediately workable, on children's interests, and on the results of narrowly conceived educational research, because it is confused about the deeper, more fundamental problems. This point is well made by Harold Dunkel:<sup>\*1</sup>

"We are fond of saying that education should be related to life. Our present age, however, seems to be confused about life in general. At least, it is commonly referred to as the "age of uncertainty", and the "age of anxiety", and it seems as if at least one of each ten new books is devoted to the analysis of some crisis or conflict in our culture. All of this bespeaks a certain confusion about life. And since we are confused about life, we are equally, or even more, confused about that part of it which is education. Having no clear model of the ideal man or of the ideal society in which that man lives, we are confused about the efforts of the school, which presumably helps to produce that man and that society."

History has taught us <sup>that</sup> successful reading teaching can not be achieved by thinking only of the interests of society and ignoring the nature of the child. We have seen how in the last century society defeated its own purpose by not adjusting its methods and materials to the maturing abilities and interests of the learner.

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\*1. Harold B. Dunkel, "Educational News and Editorial Comment", The Elementary School Journal, Vol. LVII, No.2, p.68, November, 1956, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago.

We must benefit from this lesson, not by ignoring the social side and concentrating on the child, but by the common sense procedure of adjusting the way in which we impart the child's great cultural heritage to his "maturing abilities and interests". If democracy and Christianity are the foundation stones of our society, then the child's reading should gradually guide his mental development towards an understanding and appreciation of those ideals, if we believe that English literature and the classical literature of other nations have a vital role in our lives, then the child's reading should include these fields when he has the intellectual and emotional readiness to benefit from them. In brief, a reading book, a reading method, or a reading lesson, should do more than make the child a better reader; they should also make him a better person.

(c) Reading is a Linguistic Activity.

There is also a tendency for the modern learner-centred emphasis to ignore the fact that reading demands some acquaintance with the language. One gathers the impression from the writings of the more extreme 'modern' group that interest alone will carry a child over all his reading difficulties. This is theoretical mumbo-jumbo which does nothing to promote the true case for greater emphasis on the child in education. It works with certain children who already have a certain language background and a favourable linguistic environment, but in general one might just as well argue that an interest in igloos and kayaks would lead a child to reading Icelandic sagas in the original text.

In Chapter 3, it was seen that a genuine language problem

does exist in reading. It was further pointed out that this problem is intensified in English because of the chaotic irregularity of our spelling and the cosmopolitan nature of our vocabulary. In Chapter 7, a survey was made of the 1905-1941 period during which the emphasis in the teaching of reading fell on the language problem. This survey revealed that there can be no perfect system, no simple key which, once possessed by the child, enables him to unlock the mysteries of the written word. At least, there can be no language-centred reading scheme which does not damage the bond between reading and mental development by reducing the learning process to meaningless gibberish, or sacrifice the child's interest in and developmental purpose for reading to the arbitrary demands of the language. Nevertheless, the period of linguistic emphasis taught us to recognize the existence of the language problem, to respect its difficulty for the child, to analyze it out in detail, and to establish word-attack procedures for overcoming it to some extent.

Once again, the fact that we have moved on from the linguistic emphasis to the learner emphasis does not mean that we should push the former aside. We should benefit from history, not bury it. When we examine the position honestly, we find that these two emphases also are not incompatible. The teacher does not have to decide between phonics and no-phonics, between word-analysis techniques and whole word methods, between phonetic analysis and sight methods. What he has to decide is how he can foster optimum reading growth by giving the child all of these language skills and understandings, when he is ready for them, when he needs them, and

when his language and mental development requires them. This can be done and is being done in the modern developmental reading programmes. It means that the child still occupies the focal point in the teaching situation but, incorporated into his basic reading activities is a programme of word-recognition skills, carefully graded and organized, that assists and consolidates his reading development without dominating or directing it. The teaching of reading in New South Wales schools remains lamentably weak and vague in this area, we are still inclined to indulge in an "either - or" approach, either you teach phonics or you do not. Immediate and rapid progress could be made by abandoning this type of "axe-grinding" and planning a flexible, basic reading programme which introduces a working knowledge of the principles underlying the construction of English (phonics, word-building, structure of words) according to successive maturity levels.

From whatever viewpoint one approaches the study of reading what seems to be most clear and definite is that the modern child-centred emphasis is justified and sound, but that it does not cover the whole of the reading problem. Failure to realize this can produce poor readers and earn the 'modern' approach an unsalutary reputation which it does not deserve. For example, the new emphasis stresses learning by experience, and the modern teacher provides ample opportunities for the child to learn to read by doing most of the work himself. This is excellent. But some modern teachers, very unwisely, carry this to the extreme of shunning other types of learning. Now children also learn by instruction, they have been doing so since the beginning of our education sys-

tem, and the products have not all been psychiatric cases. And in some learning situations, and with some children, instruction may prove more economical and more effective as a teaching technique than experience. One does not use direct experience to teach a child about the dangers of electricity - even though it would be quicker, more effective, and rather tempting. Similarly, the child should not be obliged to bump his head against every language difficulty in reading before we tell him that it is there and do something to help him get around it. Too much frustration breeds reluctant readers. A certain amount of direct instruction in word-recognition techniques, blended with yet subordinate to purposeful reading activities, can make learning to read a much more rewarding and interesting business.

(d) Reading is an Educational Activity.

In modern times, with reading regarded as a common and not a privileged accomplishment, the majority of children learn to read at school. There is little doubt that children would still learn more quickly and effectively at the knee of a patient and sympathetic mother who could give them undivided and individual attention as she listened to their reading and read to them in her attractive well-stocked home library. But under modern conditions and with the demand for universal literacy, this is no longer feasible. So we find that learning to read is essentially a school activity and is greatly influenced by the school environment.

In Chapter 4, it was pointed out that the modern school has accepted the responsibility of bringing children and books together. It initiates the educative processes leading to reading skill.

But the problem which the school faces in adjusting to the modern learner-centred approach to the teaching of reading is less difficult than those just discussed. Whereas the sociological and linguistic problems in reading have to be approached with the knowledge that our culture and our language are more or less unalterable, such is not the case with the educational problem. Schools are flexible institutions and it is a comparatively simple matter to produce the educational climate, the learning situations, reading programmes and reading materials appropriate to the modern emphasis.

In New South Wales schools, however, certain major developments are needed before we can say that our educational practice is in harmony with modern theory on child growth and development, and with recent research findings on the psychology and physiology of reading. Before we can say that we are not contributing to the reading problem and creating additional difficulties for the young reader. Foremost among these is the need for a fully child-centred curriculum. "The curriculum design within which the teacher functions tends to define the role of reading in the various curriculum fields".\*<sup>1</sup> A subject curriculum emphasizes the teaching of reading as a separate subject, and it is exceedingly difficult for a teacher to approach reading as a child-centred activity within the framework of a subject-centred curriculum. This is not to say that the 1952 Curriculum is a subject curriculum in spirit but it does isolate subjects and skills instead of grouping them

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\*1. G.N. Mackenzie, "The Role of Reading in Different Curriculum Designs", Improving Reading in All Curriculum Areas, pp.46-50, S.E.M. No.76, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1952.

on the basis of areas of personal growth and social development or according to a pattern of developmental tasks.

Our tendency still to teach subjects rather than children is seen also in the disparity between the abilities and skills which we expect the child to use in different subjects. We correlate the teaching of various subjects but we do not co-ordinate the levels of reading maturity required for each. Our social studies text-books and other content text-books are much more difficult to read than the basic reading material for the corresponding grade. A child who can read The School Magazine with reasonable ease, often finds himself unable to cope with the vocabulary, sentence structure and concept level of his English, social studies, or mathematics text-books. For the authors of these books generally know more about their subject than they do about children or about the readability of their material. We need co-ordinated sets of text-books such that, at any grade level, a child who can read the basic reading series will find no difficulty with the specialized text-books as far as any phase of reading is concerned. This will help to make him a better reader and to increase his understanding of the content subjects. Our text-books should not only be written about subjects, they should also be written for children.

A final example of the kind of change which must come about in our educational practice before it approximates to modern reading theory relates to the question of individualized reading programmes. Giving a child individual teaching is a different thing from giving him an individual reading programme. We have made some progress with the former, but very little with the latter. Yet it

contradicts the whole concept of reading as an integral part of the child's mental, emotional, social, and personal development, to require every child to pursue the same course of reading. Naturally, library reading individualizes the child's programme to some extent, but can we honestly argue that every child needs the same basic reading programme? Can we honestly argue that The School Magazine or any basic reading series can provide the type and amount of reading practice, or touch a spark of interest, for every child? Obviously, some of the basic assumptions underlying our teaching of reading need to be examined closely, for they often run counter to the principles of modern educational theory.

In conclusion, no specific plan for the teaching of reading has been developed in this thesis, for the aim was to open up the complexity of the field not to provide ready-made solutions. And our study of reading in theory as well as reading in action in New South Wales has shown that it is indeed a complex activity, and that no one approach to the teaching of reading can provide an adequate answer. What seems to be clear is that psychological and physiological studies of reading have provided us with a reasonable understanding of how children learn to read, and that we should, as far as possible, build our teaching of reading upon that basis. In practice, however, the ideal must be modified to meet the unique problems presented by the English language, and it must also be worked out in terms of the educational conditions which prevail in our State. In the same way, the psychology of reading has provided a sound theoretical answer to the question: what should the child read while he is learning? But, in practice,

this too must be worked out in terms of the resources and the ultimate aims of our society. This does not necessarily mean that our teaching of reading must always be a compromise, or that one aspect of the reading activity should receive priority over the others. It means that the psychological, the physiological, the sociological, the linguistic, and the educational aspects of reading should be moulded into a unified and consistent approach in which each aspect strengthens and is strengthened by every other aspect.

\* \* \* \* \*

APPENDIX I

For the benefit of those who may wish to pursue this topic further, Appendix I contains details of possible sources of information which have been investigated without success.

A. THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

The following letter was received from this society in reply to a request for photostat copies of, or information concerning, the school readers ordered from the society by the Rev. Richard Johnson, other S.P.C.K. school readers sent to Australia in the 19th century, and the Bell system books and material sponsored by The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, throughout England and Wales.

S.P.C.K.  
Holy Trinity Church,  
Marylebone Road,  
London, N.W.1,  
ENGLAND.  
12 May 1959

Dear Mr Atchison,

I have taken a long time to reply to your letter of 20th March, because I have had an extensive search in our archives and old catalogues in the hope of discovering any information that would be useful to you. I fear, without success. Nor, as the enclosed letter shows, has the National Society had any greater success.

The regrettable fact is that the archives of both Societies have in the past been very haphazardly collected and casually treated. Both Societies have in the past lent their file copies and have lost many by doing so, with the result that both archives have grievous gaps.

Without having traced the titles of the books sent to N.S.W. it is not possible to discover whether the British Museum has copies. If you know the titles of any of them, I suggest that

you might write to the British Museum.

I am indeed sorry that I have failed you.

Yours sincerely,

(Rev.) E.H. Whitehorn,

Publicity Manager.

B. THE NATIONAL SOCIETY for Promoting Religious Education in Accordance with the Principles of the Church of England

The Rev. E.H. Whitehorn very kindly forwarded the request for information to the National Society and received the following reply:

The National Society  
69 Great Peter Street,  
Westminster, S.W.1.  
1st May, 1959.

Dear Mr. Whitehorn,

Thank you for your letter of the 28th of April. I am sorry for the delay in dealing with your enquiry but I have been away in the North.

We have made careful search in our records but I am sorry to say we have nothing of the material which Mr. Atchison wants. I only wish that we had and I am sorry we are not able to help you.

Yours sincerely,

Canon G.D. Leonard

General Secretary.

C. THE BRITISH MUSEUM

On the advice of the Rev. E.H. Whitehorn, a request similar to that sent to the S.P.C.K. was forwarded to the British Museum and the following reply received:

BRITISH MUSEUM,  
LONDON, W.C.1.

September 24th, 1959.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of 13th September.

With regard to the first part of your letter, - section (a), dealing with the early readers published by the S.P.C.K., I have sent this enquiry on to Miss Henderson-Howat of the Archives Section of the London headquarters of the S.P.C.K., who have kindly agreed to search their records.

On section (b), i.e. Dr. Bell's system of education, although I cannot trace any cards or instructions, I have found in the British Museum catalogue the following works by or about Dr. Bell:

A. Bell - An Experiment in Education made at the Male Asylum of Madras, suggesting a system by which a school may teach itself under the superintendance of the Master ... 1797. 48pp.

A. Bell - An Analysis of the Experiment in Education made at Egmore, near Madras ... 3rd Edition London, 1807. 115pp.

A. Bell - The Madras School, or elements of tuition ... to which are added ... a sketch of a national institution for training up children ... and a specimen of the mode of instruction at the Royal Military Asylum, Chelsea. 1808. 348pp.

A. Bell - Instructions for Conducting a School ... extracted from Elements of Tuition Pt.2, The English School ... Fourth edition, greatly enlarged, 1813. 88pp.

F. Iremonger - Dr. Bell's System of Instruction broken into short questions and answers for the use of masters and teachers in the National Schools, 1835. 43pp.

I am enclosing an application form ... etc.

Yours faithfully,  
Sally Hubert  
for the Superintendent.

D. S.P.C.K. ARCHIVES

S.P.C.K.  
Holy Trinity Church  
Marylebone Road  
London, N.W.1.

25th September, 1959.

Dear Sir,

Your letter of 13 September has been passed on to us by the Superintendent of the Reading Room of the British Museum. We understand that you have received from him a reply to the second part of your letter.

In the Annual Report of this Society for 1798 we have record of various reading primers published by us. I quote the names below:

The Child's Christian Education, by the Rev. Mr. Fisher	5d.
The English Instructor; or the Art of Spelling improved by Mr. Dixon	5d.
Trimmer's (Mrs) Teacher's Assistant, consisting of instructions relating to the First Part of the Charity School Spelling Book.	3/6d.
And in 1802 we also published Jones' Book of Nature	10d.

In addition there was of course a great deal of literature which was considered suitable for teaching, and many of the reading books contained stories with a moral.

We are sorry that we cannot be certain that two spelling books which we have here are those about which you ask, as no date of publication appears on them. Both were however printed at the School-Press, Gower's Walk, Whitechapel, for this Society, and may well be about the time. Both contain alphabets, one in capitals, and the other in script, followed by two, three, letter words, and finally by short sentences such as "Do not lie to hide a fault. Let us pray to God. All good boys do so". And in one book appears lists of Biblical names divided up into syllables as: "As-mo-ne-ans : Je-ho-sha-phat". Multiplication and division tables appear on the back of one book. If these are the kind of thing for which you are looking it would be quite possible to have photostat copies made of sample pages. Neither book has an outside cover so no title is available.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs) A. Henderson-Howat

Editorial Department.

E. WILLIAM BROOKS & CO. LTD., Educational Publishers.

For commercial reasons publishers rarely put the date of publication on educational texts. This practice presented a very real problem in establishing vital points relating to successive series of Readers. Therefore, a letter was sent to Wm. Brooks & Co. asking for details about the different editions of their Readers, their interleaved readers, and their Children's Newspaper. The following reply was received:

Wm. Brooks & Co. Ltd.,  
723 Elizabeth Street,  
Waterloo.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of 11th February, 1959, inquiring about our early publications.

We have been through our old records looking for any information which could be of use to you, but regret we have not been able to find anything relating to our early publications. As a matter of fact our old records are very scanty, as most of them prior to 1939 have been destroyed.

We have also consulted our oldest employees, but unfortunately their memories do not go back far enough to be able to throw any light on your queries.

We are very interested to hear of the facts and materials which you have already collected, and regret we cannot help you with further information.

Yours faithfully,

J.R. Parker.

WM. Brooks & Co. Ltd.

APPENDIX 2

(When Mr. S.H. Smith became Director of Education and relinquished his position as active Editor of the School Magazine, he gave Miss Doris Chadwick, the present Editor, the following summary of the early history of the work.)

"Between 1898 and 1901 I wrote a series of 8 books on History and Geography for Wm. Brooks & Co. One day when talking over my textbooks with him I suggested to Mr. Brooks that a newspaper for Children would be a good idea and he accepted the idea and got me to produce it. My idea was to interest school-boys in current events of the day. Then, we had only set readers in our schools and things were much more rigid than to-day. I started the "Children's Newspaper" and did most of the writing for it myself. It was frowned upon by the Chief Inspector of the day, and it did not sell well, so after 12 months Mr. Brooks dropped the project. (I gave my file of this old paper to Armidale Teachers' College a few years ago. If you want the exact dates of publication the librarian there would supply the information. I think theirs is the only existing set.)

"Time passed on, and then in May, 1904, the Department notified teachers that the reading of a School Paper would be permitted. Mr. Brooks then approached me and we produced "The Australian School Paper", the first number of which was published 1st June, 1904 (3 numbers for the different classes). It was sold to children for 1d per copy.

"Soon afterwards Angus & Robertson brought out a rival paper, "The Commonwealth School Paper". After it had run for a few months the then Chief Inspector issued instructions that the "Commonwealth School Paper" was the only authorized School Paper to be read in school. The "Australian School Paper" then went out of publication. Messrs. Brooks & Co. then bought from Angus & Robertson the "Commonwealth School Paper". It had been edited by Mr. J.M. Taylor for Angus & Robertson, but Brooks wanted me to take over from him.

As I was then a country inspector I could not do the work satisfactorily (I had found the "Australian School Paper" a great task, working from the country). So Brooks & Co. arranged with Mr. H.D. McLelland to assist Mr. Taylor in editing the "Commonwealth School Paper". But when I was appointed a Sydney inspector in January, 1908, Messrs. Brooks took the work out of the hands of Messrs. Taylor & McLelland and made me sole editor. I continued to edit it till the paper went out of existence at the end of 1915.

"In 1916 the Department decided to abolish set readers and use only a School Paper ("The Commonwealth School Paper" was used as a supplementary reader only by those pupils who bought it for themselves). The School Paper was to be supplied free to all school pupils.

"I was asked by Mr. Dawson (then Chief Inspector) to take over the whole management and editing of this new paper; but I said it was too much for one man who was already overburdened with other work. So I was appointed Editor-in-Chief and Manager with Miss Ruth Lucas and Mr. Inspector Dennis, Assistant Editors. After two months Mr. Dennis gave up. He found the work uncongenial. Four months later Miss Lucas resigned owing to pressure of other duties; and I then carried on alone until I became Assistant Under-Secretary."

S.H. Smith.

(Note. The original copy of this letter is available in the Records of the Education Department.

Vol.1, No.1 of "The Children's Newspaper" was published on 30th January, 1899. (Seen at Armidale Teachers' College.) Attached to the Armidale copies is a note in script reading:

'So far as I know this was the first attempt to publish in N.S.W. a newspaper for children. I edited it and wrote most of it. I was at the time H'master of Neutral Bay school .....

I think now that it was rather a poor effort and I don't wonder that it failed after 12 months' trial.'

S.H.S.

)

APPENDIX 2A.

The following is an extract from an article by C.R. Long, "The Genesis of 'The School Paper' in Australia", published in The New South Wales Educational Gazette, p.53, August, 1904:

"In the revised programme of the Education Department of Victoria, The School Paper is prescribed as reading matter for Classes III., IV., V., and VI., and the use of supplementary readers in the subjects history and nature study is recommended. No teacher will need convincing that, in those subjects, as also in geography, the oral work is deepened and broadened, knowledge increased, and the power of independent study fostered, by the reading, under guidance, of books that treat of the same topics. Books must, therefore, be the supplementary readers, not The School Paper, for it is impossible, in it, to give every teacher, or, indeed, any teacher, just what he wants in order to supplement his instruction; but a good book, written in a liberal spirit to suit the programme, can supply it, and is needed.

"A word or two now as to the features of THE School Paper (we used to emphasize the word "School", but Victorians must be allowed to shift the incidence now that we have the far-reaching titles: The Commonwealth School Paper and The Australian School Paper). The matter in each of the three papers, which constitute that school paper, is graded to suit the capacity of the child of average ability in the class, care being taken to have one or two distinctly easy lessons with which the teacher may begin the month, and a hard one with which to finish it. In order that the teacher may make a thorough success of the lesson, without spending time and energy that he cannot spare, the hard words in the article are printed in syllables, together with the meanings they have in the context, at the head of it, and notes explanatory of allusions, points in geography, history, &c., at the end. School time is too valuable to be spent in work that is not really profitable. The "new" educator has not deleted thoroughness from his creed. For a child to read without understanding, to get a part instead of the whole, is a wasteful proceeding; and the necessary help must not be too far removed if it is to be turned to account. The fear expressed by some critics, that the children would dislike the paper on account of these lesson-book features, has not been realized. The character of the selections and original articles is that of the contents of the high-class English and American reading-books, with, of course, the presence of local colouring, and current topics that are of sufficient importance and wide-spread interest to warrant the spending of time over them. The School Paper is not a newspaper. Some of the great passages in our literature are repeated from year to year, so that all who pass through our schools may absorb them. The danger of developing a taste for reading that does not rise above the desire to skim the trivial, the sensational, the scrappy, and the comic, is guarded

against. The standard of the matter in The School Paper is fixed high; and it contains lessons that are continued from month to month.

"The mighty power that an Education Department can exercise by means of a paper, such as I have endeavoured to describe, has been abundantly manifested lately, in Victoria, in connection with the Arbor-Day movement. A special issue of the Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid was sent to all schools; then followed an Arbor-Day number of The School Paper - 48 pages of liberally illustrated graded materials for readings, recitations, speeches, and essays - which reached homes as well as schools, and permeated teachers, parents, and children, with the result that an interest was created in the work, and an effort put forth that will have far-reaching beneficial results.

"I rejoice to know that the education authorities of New South Wales have decided to secure the benefits of a monthly school paper for the children under their care."

\* \* \* \* \*

APPENDIX 3THE IRISH NATIONAL BOOKS

These books are now scarce. The author of this thesis found one copy only of each book, located as follows:

Book 1: Education Museum, Armidale Teachers' College.

Book 2: Mitchell Library, Sydney.

Book 3: N.S.W. Education Department Library, Sydney.

Book 4: " " " " "

Book 5: Mitchell Library, Sydney.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the First Book is probably the most interesting to the reading student - and also the least accessible - the following extracts have been reproduced from the Armidale copy with the kind permission of Mr. E. Dunlop:

Title Page

FIRST BOOK OF LESSONS

for

The Use of Schools....

London & Glasgow.

William Collins.

Page 2

Teachers will observe that the first Section of Lessons is designed merely to make the Child familiar with the forms of the letters. In the second and third Sections, there is a regular gradation from the simplest to the most difficult sounds. It is recommended to teachers, to make their Pupils perfectly acquainted with one Lesson before they proceed to another, and to exercise them as much as possible on the meaning of such words and sentences as admit of being defined and explained.

Pages 3, 4, 5

These pages list the alphabet, vowels, and numbers up to ten in small case, capitals, and italics.

Page 6FIRST BOOK

Lessons on the Forms and Sounds of the Letters.

## SECTION. 1.

## LESSON 1.

a. i. m. n. o.

e. s. t. x. y.

an ox,  
it is,  
no ox,

my ox,  
is it?  
is so,

is it an ox?  
it is my ox,  
is it so? no.

## LESSON 2.

b. f. g. h. e.

u. p. d. r. n.

is he up, or no?  
go up; fy, be up;  
is it on an ox?

is it b or h?  
it is h, is it?  
no, it is b or p.

Page 9

## SECTION. 2.

## LESSON 1.

cat	hat	ram
fat	mat	rat

Can it be Pat or Sam?  
Sam has on a hat.  
He sat on a mat.  
Has Pat a hat? no.  
Pat is on a fat ram.  
The cat has a rat.

Note: Throughout the First Book the sentences rarely form a coherent piece of prose. From the middle of the book on moral teaching appears in such sentences as:

You must not vaunt or boast of your skill.

If I sin, I am bad.  
Let me not sin, as bad men do.

APPENDIX 3A

The following is a copy of the Preface to the Fourth Book of Lessons for the Use of Schools published by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland.

"The Fourth Book of Lessons having been compiled on the same principles as the First, Second, and Third, Teachers are recommended to pursue the same methods in using it. The Pupils should be made to spell, without the book, all the difficult words in every Lesson; and though it is expected, that Grammar and Geography shall be now taught from text-books, yet Teachers should continue to put occasional questions on both these branches of education, in the course of the ordinary examinations. Any sentence can be made an exercise in Grammar ... When an object described in any Lesson, or a plate or drawing of it, can be procured, the object itself, ought to be shown to the Pupils ... After having been examined on a Lesson, the Pupils should also be made to state, in their own words all that they have learned from it. Masters will derive considerable assistance in teaching, and Pupils in learning the lessons, from the list of Latin and Greek roots in the Appendix. Those in the First Section have been arranged according to the Lessons in which they first occur, and have been selected at the rate of six roots to each page of reading. It will be of advantage, therefore, to teach the First Section by prescribing for each Lesson a page to be spelled, read, and explained, and six roots to be committed to memory."

(The compilers then give the following example of the "method in which the lessons are recommended to be taught" using a lesson on Linnaeus, the great Swedish naturalist.)

"The Teacher having seen that his Pupils can spell every word in this sentence, and read it with proper pronunciation and accent, may examine them upon it as follows:-

Who was Linnaeus? - a Swedish naturalist.

From what Latin root is Naturalist formed? - Natura, nature.

What is the first affix added to Natura? - al, of or  
belonging to.

What part of speech is natural? - an adjective."

APPENDIX 4BROOKS' NEW AUSTRALIAN READING BOOKS (1898)

Although the Readers of this series may still be found without much difficulty, the Primers are scarce. The author located one only, a copy of the Second Primer held at the N.S.W. Department of Education Library, Sydney. The following extracts from the primer - and comments on it - may prove useful:

- \* On the back of the title page the alphabet is printed in upper and lower case but, unfortunately, it is a bold italic type of print different from that used in the text of the primer.
- \* Page 3 reads -

LESSON 1.

if	give	live	here	have
lets	wins	runs	bakes	write
begs	digs	cuts	wakes	white

1. The cat lets the mice run to a hole.
2. Jim wins his game, and gets the cake.
3. This boy wakes at peep of day.
4. Kate likes fine hats and furs.
5. The dog bites the heels of the ape.
6. He cuts a rod for a bad boy.

(Note that only four of the words at the head of the lesson actually appear in the sentences.)

- \* In most lessons the words at the head are grouped phonetically, thus -

LESSON 1V.

arm	part	card	bark	lark
farm	cart	yard	dark	mark
barn	dart	hard	park	shark

- \* The illustrations by D.H. Souter, the art editor of the series, are outstanding for their character and vitality and constitute one of the real triumphs of the series.

- \* Despite the fact that the Conference of Inspectors and Teachers in December, 1889, had specifically criticized the Collins' Readers, or rather the Primers, for being made up of detached sentences expressing no connected meaning, these Brooks' Primers, show only a slight improvement in this respect. Most of the lessons consisted of isolated sentences, occasionally developing an idea but never making up a real story. The following lesson is typical:

LESSON 11.

The Hawk.

saw	daw	straw	fawn
paw	raw	claw	dawn
jaw	draw	hawk	lawn

1. As we sat on the lawn we saw a hawk.  
It had a big nest in a gum tree.
2. Tom hit it with a stone; then we saw it fly away.
3. A hawk has big claws.
4. The cat has a rat in her paws.  
She got the rat in the straw.

- \* Compared with the Irish National Books, these readers have less direct moral teaching. But in the advanced books the many quotations from literature tend to have a decidedly didactic flavour, e.g., Fourth Reader, p.193 -

'Tis excellent

To have a giant's strength; but tyrannous  
To use it like a giant.....Shakespeare

- \* For the first time in New South Wales school readers a few touches of humour are introduced:

Page 8 has a drawing of a kangaroo playing cricket and alongside of it the incomplete sentence -

I am a .....

The last page in the primer contains a humorous little rhyme -

Three wise men of Gotham  
Went to sea in a bowl;  
If the bowl had been stronger,  
My song would have been longer.

APPENDIX 5THE ELLIS SYSTEM OF TEACHING TO READ

The following is a copy of the Preface from Primer 1 and the Directions for Teacher accompanying Lesson 1:

"This résumé and the directions accompanying the lessons are in lieu of a lengthy text-book. The basis of the system is the differentiated type and the silence symbols which denote silent letters.

"Thus a, e, i, o, u invariably symbolize the vowel sounds in at, egg, in, up, on. Under no circumstances must they be spoken of by their alphabetic names, but always by their sound names as denoted in the above words.

"a, e, i, o, u invariably symbolize the vowel sounds in ale, be, idle, old, unite. Their sound names are also their alphabetic names; they are the only five letters in the alphabet whose sound names are also their alphabetic names.

"a, i, o, u invariably symbolise the vowel sounds in bath, pique, move, rude. e symbolises the vowel heard in pretty, before, behind.

"The basis, then, of the system is the differentiated type. The two essentials of it are:- 1st, sound names, never alphabetic names; 2nd, the pronouncing of the initial consonant with the following vowel, without any pause between the two.

"Every symbol in the First Primer (s, the, of excepted) is taught by a key picture. The reading is phonetic and syllabic. The spelling also is phonetic and syllabic, never letter by letter, which is wholly prohibited.

"Thus reading and spelling are truly cognated. Each picture introduces a new symbol, and this new symbol is at once applied to symbols already learned. When the new symbol is learned the pupils should have no difficulty in reading the lesson in which it was introduced, but of course the lessons must be taken in their right order. A short dictation test should be given daily.

"Every word (of excepted) in the First Primer is phonetic, but a few equivalents and silent letters have been introduced; these need special attention in the dictation tests.

"The letters at the top of the page show which symbols have, that far, been taught, and therefore which letters a teacher may use in supplementary reading.

"I have a script, but find it unnecessary. Every lesson after No. 11 contains moral teaching, but adroitly and unobtrusively introduced. No loose or ungrammatical English has been used, and each sentence is such as a child might have thought or spoken.

### SYNOPSIS

<u>Brooks' First Primer</u>	:	<u>Ellis' First Primer</u>
	:	
All consonants except q, z.	:	All consonants except j, v, q, x, y, z.
	:	
16 compound consonants.	:	3 compound consonants.
	:	
Soft c, g, s.	:	Soft s.
	:	
5 diphthongs.	:	2 diphthongs.
	:	
17 vowels	:	10 vowels.
	:	
8 vowel combinations that end with r.	:	1 vowel combination that ends with r.

"The First Primer gives six months' work for children who begin at six years of age.

"At the end of the third half-year, that is when Primer 1, Primer 11, and Reader 1, have been read, the alphabet should be taught to the pupils by the old rhyme "A, B, C ... I have said my A, B, C", not for spelling or reading purposes, but for a reference table to facilitate their use of a dictionary later on.

"The Infant School Readers are Primer 1, Primer 11, Reader 1, Reader 11. Another Reader of the same series is for use in Third Class in the Primary Schools."

(Lilian Ellis)

LESSON 1 starts with small line drawings of a pan, a pen, a pen, a pot, and a pup. Above each picture the appropriate word appears in Ellis's differentiated type, beneath each picture is the appropriate short vowel in thin type. Then follows:

#### DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHER

"Let pupils name the first picture. Ask: 'For what does Mother use it?' While interest is keen, draw attention to the printed word above the picture and inform pupils this is the way we tell its name, when we cannot draw. Concentrate attention on the symbol a and always give it its name - the sound it has in pan. Let the pupils discover the same a below the picture, and then

let them give words containing or commencing with it - ash, Annie, rat, sat, apple - till they are familiar with this vowel. Treat the other four pictures in the same way, always speaking of the vowel a, e, etc., and always by their sound names. A common fault in teaching is telling pupils to open mouths wide; in saying a, e, i, o, much lip and tongue movement is needed, but they cannot be correctly pronounced with much open mouth. For u the mouth has to be opened much more than for a, e, i, o. Let a dictation test follow the reading. Print the symbols easiest to write i, o, e on the blackboard and underneath each its script equivalent, then give the dictation, again sound names. Do not proceed to the second step till the five vowels with their script and printed symbols are well known. For children commencing at six years of age, this first step may easily occupy from two to three weeks.

"Lessons 1 and 2 could be better taught from the blackboard than the book, also the drill on Lessons 3 and 4. The illustrations would have to be drawn on the blackboard."

NOTE. The lack of emphasis on reading content is indirectly reflected in the following extract from Reader 111 in which historical truth is of secondary importance:

#### First Settlement in Australia

...."Then (Capt. Cook) returned to England and told the news of this glorious land, how it was only occupied by bright-coloured birds, curious animals, and black people. He told, too, of its beautiful flowers, trees, and sunny skies.

"And his glowing account of this sunny southern land caused the English government to take steps to form a settlement there.

"A few years later, eleven ships were made ready to sail to Australia. The whole eleven ships did not hold so many passengers nor so much cargo as one of the big steamers of to-day.....

"While crossing the hot parts of the sea, some of the voyagers languished and died.....

"The voyagers were eager to land, and needed no persuading to clear away the scrub and get huts built quickly for all were very tired of their tiny, uncomfortable quarters on board."

APPENDIX 6BIBLIOGRAPHY

In view of the fact that Part A of the thesis deals with the reading problem in general, while Part B deals specifically with reading in New South Wales schools, it has been thought best to sub-divide this bibliography into sections corresponding with the major divisions of the thesis. This arrangement has the advantage of isolating the historical material.

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