

# READ ALL ABOUT IT!

## 1872 EDUCATION BILL

### History - Background - Benefits - Disadvantages from 1868 - 1872

This newspaper shows the history of the 1872 Education Bill on the Isle of Man, through newspapers of the time. Not everyone thought it was a good idea and there were definitely some benefits and some disadvantages, which are all written about here for you to discuss.

### THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE (1868)

#### “The Whole Country is Astir.”

Within the past few years public opinion has, on this subject, undergone a most wonderful change. Everybody now admits that an education of **some kind should be placed within the reach of the people**. There have in the past been a few volunteers but, the many years' experience they have had of their working has only served to convince them of their inapplicability, in the matter of education, to the growing requirements of the age.

It is felt to be far more desirable that the state should be at the expense of teaching the people how to become good and useful citizens rather than that it should incur the still more enormous expense of punishing them as criminals ; and statistics have indisputably proved that the chances are far greater of an uneducated person becoming a criminal than of an educated person. On these questions public opinion is now happily at one. Old quarrels have died out and upon the same platform we see a noble array of earnest hearts, men of every grade and feature of non-conformity and dissent, shaking hands with every measurement of high church and low church. It must be admitted, however, that upon these there is still a little of the "old leaven" remaining.

**We are yet far from being united in our views as to the character of the education that is to be imparted. Some affirm that it ought to be religious, others denominational, and others purely secular.**

As a proof of the advance of enlightened opinion upon this all-important subject, we point with pride to the National Conference that was last week held at Manchester. **It was felt that nothing short of a compulsory system of education would be acceptable either to parliament or to the country** and the conference went in for this. Other speakers also expressed themselves to be highly in favour of a **compulsory rating for the maintenance of our schools**, and also in favour of **enforcing a compulsory attendance at those schools**. On all these points the opinions of the conference were pretty clearly stated, and there is every reason to believe that these principles will be embodied into the new Bill which is shortly to be introduced into parliament.

What we most devoutly wish is that a little of the same spirit that now happily so largely prevails across the water will reach us in this Island. If it does, there is no need to fear but the forthcoming deliberations in the House of Keys on the state of education amongst us will be attended with similar practical and useful results.

*Mona's Herald, Wednesday, January 22, 1868; Page:6*



*Laxey School children, early 1900s. imuseum.im*

## To the Editor of Mona's herald... (1869)

Sir, Have the goodness to allow me a small space in your truly liberal paper and I will in as few words as possible express my opinion. Many good things have been said on the subject of education—should it be secular, should it be religious? It cannot be religious, for there is no such thing as national religion; there is no such thing as national conscience, or national agreement, or any one principle of religion. How can a nation teach religion of any one given principle, when the same nation pays many sects of Christians and some pagans? Now, what is the true interpretation of the Bible? The Church established by law cannot agree upon it. Now, my dear Sir, if the so-called clergy cannot agree, how can it be expected that the school masters can agree? Let the school master take his proper place, and give a good secular education and leave religion to the minister of his choice. Since writing the above, I have been favoured with a sight of the Bill printed by the Government, and I confess that I have a great difficulty to believe that it is not an hocus-pocus affair. Surely it could never be thought by any modern legislature that the Islanders, five-sevenths of whom are Dissenters, would accept such an illiberal, intolerant measure. Men of Mona! Up, and tell the House of Keys civilly and plainly, that no such law can be palmed on this Island! *Mona's Herald, Wednesday, December 15, 1869; Page: 3*

## The Education Bill and the Council (1870)

### THE BILL REJECTED.

We are informed that the Education Bill was under the consideration of the Council on Wednesday last, and that, on the principle of Compulsory Education, the measure was **rejected**. We understand it is his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor's intention on an early day to submit the Bill, with amendments, for the consideration of the House of Keys.

We are given further to understand that the Council were summoned for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, this week, to discuss the measure, but the consideration of the compulsory clauses arising on the first day, the Bill being rejected on that principle there was no need for further sittings. The religious question was not taken into consideration at all. The Bill was rejected by the very barest majority. This unexpected result has caused considerable sensation in the public mind.

*Isle of Man Times, Saturday, February 12, 1870; Page: 5*

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## RELIGION AND THE EDUCATION BILL. (1870)

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THE Education Bill now before the House of Keys contains provisions against which every Non-conformist in the Island ought at once and energetically to **protest**. Of those who regularly attend public worship in the Island, more than half attend the various Non-conformist chapels. Yet this bill provides that the Incumbent of the parish and the Churchwardens shall be ex-officio members of the School Committees of each parish. The only equitable arrangement would be for all the members of the School Committees to be elected by the ratepayers. The Bill further provides that the religious instruction is to be given on week-days, and Sundays in the National Schools shall be "according to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England." The effect of this would be to cover the Island with schools for the propagation of Church of England, and this at the expense, in great part, of Non-conformists. **There is much dispute now going on as to what really are the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England.** It is for Nonconformists of all denominations to say whether they are prepared to pay rates and taxes in order to provide facilities for the instruction of the children of the Island according to a Church system to which they do not themselves conform, and in connection with which it is possible that anti-Protestant doctrines and practices may be taught. *Mona's Herald, Wednesday, March 09, 1870; Page: 2*

## THE FARMERS CLUB (1870)

### EDUCATION BILL DEPRIVES FARMERS OF LABOUR

On Saturday afternoon, in the Clubroom, British Hotel, there was a meeting for the purpose of taking into consideration the proposed Education Bill and its relation to agriculture. The President said the bill, if passed in its present form, would **deprive them altogether of the labour of the children** until they reached the age of twelve years. This would no doubt be a great loss to the agriculturists, especially in those districts which were not thickly populated. It was a well known fact that **children between four and twelve years of age could be made of considerable use in various departments of agriculture**. Thus they were very useful for "thinning" turnips, indeed in many instances the crops would be spoiled without them. Then in districts where the fathers were employed in the fishery, **the children were the principal aid on the farms**. It appeared to him, therefore, to be desirable that the school committees should have power to liberate the scholars at different times of the year, providing a specified number of days was up.

A long discussion followed, occupying over two hours. The matter was discussed with great earnestness, but with considerable unanimity, in as much as the following resolutions were passed:

"That in the opinion of the Isle of Man Farmers' Club, in the Education Bill, **it is not desirable that children in the agricultural districts from nine to twelve years of age should be compelled to attend school all the year round**, their services, in consequence of the scarcity of labour, being at certain times and in certain districts indispensable for the fulfilment of

agricultural and other operations. It is resolved, that while approving generally of the compulsory principle, it would be advisable that the compulsory attendance should not for children between the ages mentioned, extend to more than 300 half days in the year, the times for such attendance to be at the discretion of the school committees of the various parishes, so that the **children may be liberated at such periods as they are most likely to be useful for such agricultural or other purposes**.

It also being the opinion of this club that the age **four years** being the age at which the compulsory attendance at children at school should commence, is **too early an age to send children to school**. It is resolved that the Legislature be respectfully requested to so alter this provision as to render **six years the age at which attendance at school should be enforced**, and that school attendance prior to that age should be left optional with the parents and guardians of children.

It being in the opinion of this club **unfair and unjust** that the religious teaching in all Public Elementary Schools should be according to the doctrine of the Church of England and it is resolved that it would be a more equitable arrangement if all the members of the various school committees should be elected by the parishioners, and that if any religious teaching be given in such Public Elementary Schools that **such religious teaching be defined by and be under the direction of such school committees**.

*Mona's Herald, Wednesday, March 09, 1870; Page: 2*



*Children John and William Murray in a corn field, Isle of Man. iMuseum.im*

# EDUCATION BILL DEBATE (1871)

## RELIGION

Clause 7.—This clause, which contained regulations for the conduct, of public elementary schools, was subdivided into four parts. A long discussion arose on the first part, generally termed the "conscience clause." *'It shall not be required, as a condition of any child being admitted into or continuing in the school, that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday school, or any place of religious worship, or that he shall attend any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects ' in the school or elsewhere, from which observance or instruction he may be withdrawn by his parent, or that he shall, if withdrawn by his parent, attend the school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parents belong.'*

Mr DALRYMPLE moved, as an amendment, that the clause stand as it is. In England they had compulsory education, but the **parents had the power to withdraw their children from any school during the time that religious instruction was being given which did not accord with their convictions.** He thought it would be much better if religious and secular instruction were separated.

Mr SHERWOOD said he had been in hopes they would have avoided all discussion on this subject by simply adopting this clause as it stood, which was the result of all the controversy which had taken place in England on the subject. He did not think that, in providing for the elementary education of the people, they should **interfere with religious convictions.**

Mr FARRANT said that his objection to the clause was, that by it **they were providing for a difficulty which did not exist in this Island.** In England, where they were torn by religious controversies from the highest to the lowest, it

had become absolutely necessary for legislation on the subject; but in this Island the people were divided, to a great extent, into only two sects, namely, the Methodists and the Church people.

Mr DUMBELL said he would **never agree to any Education Bill for this Island which left out religious instruction, or at all events the teaching of the Bible.**

Mr JEFFCOTT said that the chief aim of education should be to instruct in morality, and to inculcate the principles of religion. It was highly important that in all our schools religious teaching should be given. He considered that **without morality and religion, education would do a great deal of harm.** It would simply teach the people to commit frauds and crimes in a more refined manner than they could do without education. With regard to the conscience clause now under discussion, he did not think it had been intended to prevent religious instruction altogether, and he hoped that any Education Bill that was passed would provide for the religious instruction of the people, the great majority of whom entertained the same religious opinions as they did.

The SECRETARY said that, in this Island a certain amount of religious instruction had always been given in the schools, and he trusted that such would always be the case. He would be sorry to see the day when a system of **godless education** would be introduced into the Island. It would be a monstrous thing, on the part of the House, to do anything that would tend to spread infidelity.

Mr DUMBELL then moved that all the latter part of the clause be omitted after the word "worship." ... The Speaker gave his casting vote against the motion, and the clause was passed in its original condition

# EDUCATION BILL DEBATE (1871)

## ATTENDANCE

Clause 64: As to attendance of children at school.

Mr CORRIN remarked on the importance of the clause, in as much as it contained the **compulsory attendance of all children from five to twelve years of age**, irrespective of seed time and harvest, which he thought would have the effect of pauperising a large class of the inhabitants of the Island in the country districts. He took as an example where a large family and father and mother altogether only earned about 17s per week, and showed that if the children's earnings were taken away such a family would be very greatly impoverished. They would be compelling the children to attend the school every day, set up the principle of a poor-law, and have to erect poorhouses throughout the Island. If compulsion is to be adopted let it be earlier than seven or eight years of age, and even then it must be left to the local school board to decide in cases brought before them. (Hear, Hear). He considered **a milder scheme of compulsory education would suit this Island better than the one laid down in the bill**. He objected to the hard and fast line in the bill, also, with respect to the distance which a child had to walk, and showed that a quarter of a mile might make it incumbent upon the country to build a school. He moved that the whole clause be struck out.

Mr DUMBELL supported the closing remarks of the hon. member for Ramsey. He said that Mr Corrin was afraid of two things, first that farmers would **not be able to get their fields worked by young children**; and, secondly, that parents would not be able to condemn their children to a species of slavery. He asked the House to compel parents to give their children a reasonable amount of education, and also that

they should be compelled **not to condemn them to labour at too tender an age**. He alluded to the factories of Lancashire before the passing of the Factory Act, as a proof of the neglect of parents, and the injury done to children by working them like slaves at too early an age. He had always acted upon the principle that **five years of age was a time when a child should begin to receive a reasonable amount of education** compatible with the capacity of its little mind.

Capt. GOLDIE was **utterly and entirely opposed to the feature of the bill now being discussed**. He asserted that the Education Bill in England had been forced down the throats of the country party by the towns ; and he was sure that the compulsory principle would be **utterly unsuitable for the country parishes**.

Mr GELL **agreed with compulsory education to a certain extent**, but he could not agree with it as laid down in the clause before them ; and he urged the necessity of discretionary powers being extended to the school boards. There would be a great deal of dissatisfaction if they passed the clause deciding that children of five years of age should be compelled to be sent to school.

Mr SHERWOOD then moved an amendment to the effect that children should be compelled to attend school from the ages of 7 to 13 years, for 150 week-days in the year, with certain exceptions as to sickness, to be decided by the school board, and that **the distance to be walked to school by the children should be not more than three miles**.

The House divided, when they voted for the motion - for: 14 ; against: 5. The motion was then carried, and the clause its sub-divisions having been altered to meet clause 64, as amended, was passed.

# EDUCATION BILL DEBATE (1871)

## RATES

Clause 43.—Provision for school-rate to be levied.

**Background:** The New Education Bill was published in early March 1870 (Mona's Herald 09 03 1870). The finance for the new scheme of public education would arise from various sources – government revenue, school pence (paid by students), donations and local rates.

A few years earlier when the government required finance for the building of the 'Lunatic Asylum' at Ballamona it had raised money through a local rate based on real estate (land and property). Something similar was proposed for education. **Not all were happy.**

The first draft of the Bill was rejected on February 12th 1870, just over two months after its introduction. The Legislative Council had been summoned for four days of work, but since they rejected the clause on Compulsory Attendance on the first day, albeit by just a single vote, there was no need for further sittings and discussion. The religious clauses were not addressed. The local education rate was not addressed.

The House of Keys met in March 1870 for a second reading of the Bill. But after a petition against the Bill submitted from the parish of Bride, the discussion of the Bill was adjourned until May. In advance of the May 1870 debate, rate payers in the towns questioned why they should subsidise education

*"The people of this Island cannot possibly afford to pay rates to carry out every new fangled scheme"* (hear, hear),

In the event, the adjourned debate on the Education Bill was adjourned again and there was no further discussion until the next version

of the Bill was published over a year later in September 1871.

The published version indicated that there was **no change in the expectation that a local rate would need to be imposed as a contribution to the total costs of the scheme**, but it was amount that continued to attract comment and resistance. For example:

*....that free education can be given without the imposition of a tax we should be extremely foolish to imagine; but at the same time there is no necessity that a tax of any great amount will be required...*

*...one thing is certain, the Island cannot afford such an expensive measure.... We shall be much mistaken if an education bill is promulgated next 5th July ...*

The Mona's Herald went further and suggested that if the Bishop sacrificed his 'heavy' salary of £3,000 per annum, the burden on local rates would be reduced and the salaries of teachers, the books of the scholars and the conditions of the school rooms improved. However, **the only way to secure this money and secure lower rates would be to disestablish the Church, which was unlikely!**

Now that the Bill looked as though it would become law its funding and, in particular, the imposition of local rates for education came to the fore. There continued to be debate about which types of land should be rated, for example whether the poor vicarages should be taxed, whether the mining companies should be taxed, whether the Bishop's lands should be taxed.

Ultimately it was agreed that the education rate would be levied in a similar way to the Asylum rate.

# EDUCATION BILL PASSED (1872)

## THE EDUCATION BILL IS PASSED - BUT WHAT OF FEMALE EDUCATION?

The Insular Legislature have actually done that which for twelve months they were one and all afraid of touching—they **have passed an education bill**. Granted that they had the model of the English Bill to work upon, still their labours have been great, and although they may have approached the matter with something like the timidity of a youngster taking his first sea bath, once in, they plunged right up to the neck, and floundered, and spluttered, and sank, and swam, and rolled back and rolled forward, until they have landed high and dry before her most gracious Majesty a bill which, like most bills of a similarly revolutionary character, **possesses many good while it possesses many bad features**.

We have got the bill, and we must now try and do our best with it. For our own part, we are still of opinion that it will prove a most cumbersome thing.

One of the worst features of the bill is that it introduces the principle of "pensioning" public servants. Why a schoolmaster who makes his £2 to £2 10s a week should be more eligible as a government servant to receive a pension, than the labourer who gets and has to live and bring up a family, too, upon 12s to 15s a week, we cannot see.

Amongst the omissions in the bill is a more complete reference to **female education**, and on this point we heartily coincide with the sensible opinion of Capt Mark Goldie. Of course, when we speak of female education, we refer to that part of their training which is supposed **to fit them for the household duties** which are expected to fall to their lot in the natural course of things. We ask is there one

girl in ten turned out of school who is capable of making the commonest of common shirts? All that girls are taught at school is to put a few irregular stitches in a piece of rag of no use whatever. Not a single lesson is given how to cut out a sleeve, or form a wristband, or cut a button-hole, or shape a shoulder, or fit a neck; no idea is given how even to cut out an apron. **Are not the evidences of this want of female education seen in every dwelling from the highest to the lowest?** How many national school girls are able to cut out and make a shirt for their father, or a female shirt for their mother? Very few! and nearly every working man in Douglas is this day able to confirm this statement. We say nothing of instruction in theoretical cooking, with annual contests in actual cooking, and the hundred other useful things connected with household life, although it is quite possible and reasonable to make the national system reach this far. **A very great deal of silly twaddle is talked about religion in the national schools; if there was a little more attention paid to instruction in the useful things of this life there would be a good deal more people travelling to heaven than there are, and public houses would not be so plentiful, and women beaters and bad husbands would not be so numerous.**

The bill, however, is passed, and all we can do is to wait with curiosity to see how the cumbersome thing will move. As we have said, we have little hope of it, and quite expect not only an Education Amendment Bill, but an Education Amendment (Amendment) Bill.

*Mona's Herald, Wednesday, February 07, 1872; Page: 12*

*Laura Corlett, Alice Corlett, Edith Callister, schoolgirls c.1898  
iMuseum*

