

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF NURSERY SCHOOLS  
AND CHILD WELFARE POLICIES AND PRACTICES  
IN BRADFORD FROM THE 1890s TO THE 1950s  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF  
MIRIAM LORD**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the life and work of Miriam Lord in Bradford, West Yorkshire between 1885 and the 1950s. The main investigative research for the thesis was carried out at the Bradford Archives where the voluminous collection of private papers, documents and other records which she bequeathed to the Margaret McMillan Memorial College on her death in 1968 are now domiciled and which have been ordered and collated by the archivist there.

Throughout her working life Miriam Lord campaigned for nursery education: from her position as a nursery school Superintendent, through her involvement with the Nursery School Association and the Bradford branch of the Froebel Society, and not least, via the publication of written articles and the delivery of numerous public lectures. She also gained an international reputation by both working and travelling abroad, and by receiving many visiting foreign education experts at her Bradford nursery school.

Principally due to parental influence Miriam Lord was a disciple of Margaret McMillan from an early age. She utilised much of Margaret McMillan's methodology in her nursery school work and imitated many of her innovations in child care. Like Margaret McMillan she was a socialist, but not a paid-up party member. She did, however, have close connections with the Independent Labour Party, a legacy handed down by her father, Hird Lord. She also inherited from him the stamina and determination to work tirelessly for the poor and deprived of Bradford's slums, advocating the expansion of nursery education and introducing the concept of

community centres as an antidote to the social and physical deprivation caused by those slums. Her final project was the establishment in Bradford of a college for the training of nursery school teachers - this was dedicated to the memory of her mentor, Margaret McMillan.

Proceeding on a chronological basis and examining the background to these many activities, this thesis analyses the interaction between Miriam Lord and the developments, both in Bradford and at a national level, in the fields of nursery education and child welfare during the latter years of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with the development of nursery schools and child welfare policies and practices in Bradford from the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, focusing on the work of Miriam Lord in particular. Therefore, central to the study is Miriam Lord herself.

Consequently, it will firstly be necessary to analyse the formation of her character from her earliest years, and to consider the extent and nature of her professional training prior to her appointment as the first Superintendent of a purpose-built nursery school in 1921. In this section of the thesis, which will have a chronological structure, those people who played a dominant role in her early life will be identified and their importance assessed. They will commence with her father, Hird Lord, who as well as being a successful businessman was a founding member of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford in 1893, and will go on to include Margaret McMillan, whose work in Deptford was pivotal in the development of nursery education in this country and who was a colleague of Hird Lord in the early days of the Independent Labour Party. Later, among the influences on Miriam during this period, the roles of her headmistress at Belle Vue Higher Grade School, Sarah Beszant, and the headmistress under whom she worked for eight years at Whetley Lane Infants' School, Alice Lister, will be examined. Likewise, the scope and content of the training provided by Saffron Walden College between 1906 and 1908 and by Manchester University in 1918/1919 will also come under scrutiny.

Having identified and considered the personal contacts and relationships which were crucial in the development of her character, it will then be possible to place Miriam in her social and political context. Indeed, throughout the study, the interaction between her and, in particular, the political framework, both nationally and locally in Bradford, within which she had to operate will be of ongoing interest and importance. The economic, social and political factors at work in Bradford in the late Victorian and the Edwardian period which made the city pre-eminent among other provincial industrial centres in terms of social and educational reform will be highlighted, as will the social welfare changes taking place at national level.

Although by the beginning of the twentieth century Victorian reformers had achieved a great deal in terms of improving the condition of the average citizen - every male householder had been enfranchised; elementary education was available for all children; wages had increased even though working hours were fewer and working conditions better; advances had been made in medicine and in public health - much still remained to be done, especially in alleviating poverty caused by ill-health, old age or unemployment. The election of a Liberal government with a large majority in 1906 ushered in a period of social reform leading up to the First World War. Old age pensions and labour exchanges were introduced and insurance schemes covering sickness and unemployment for some workers were provided under the National Insurance Act of 1911. Especially relevant to this thesis was the high priority taken by the welfare of children - legislation was passed to facilitate school meals, school medical inspections

and infant welfare clinics. Despite opposition from the Conservative Party which led directly to a reduction in the power of the House of Lords under the terms of the Parliament Act of 1911, a climate was established in which a continuing expansion of public spending on the welfare of the working classes was possible.

This then was the backdrop to the time when Miriam Lord, a native of a city which was already renowned for its progressive attitude in matters of public welfare, began her professional training for a teaching career. By the time that she embarked on a second period of training in 1918 the need for ongoing improvement in state-provided social welfare services had been more firmly established. This made possible the provision of nursery education in the 1918 Education Act, albeit on a permissive, discretionary basis. The momentum which led to the provision of a Welfare State after the Second World War had been created, but was consistently hindered by financial constraints throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The role which these constraints played in the evolution of social welfare policies during those years and the impact which they had, both on Bradford and on Miriam Lord herself, will be the theme of the major part of this study. It will begin with Miriam Lord's appointment as Superintendent of Lilycroft Open Air Nursery School and will end with the onset of World War Two by which time she had marginalised herself from mainstream education in favour of working in the voluntary sector in the wider field of social welfare.

It will explore the issues which brought her into conflict with Bradford Education Committee and which transformed her from a rather naive paragon of virtue, held out



as an exemplary practitioner of nursery education to visiting dignitaries, into a pariah at the age of forty eight, worthy only of demotion and a probationary period of three months at a time when she had been teaching for over thirty years. Miriam Lord's own contribution to this outcome will be examined in detail, as will her subsequent reaction and resultant later career.

The later chapters of the thesis will deal with her personal and public rehabilitation, starting with the war years and ending with her leading role in the building of a national memorial to Margaret McMillan in Bradford. They will demonstrate how she absorbed the lessons of her misfortune at Lilycroft to build a more effective strategy for achieving her objectives. Again, the interaction between her activities and events at local and national level will be appraised with particular reference to the impact of the expansion of the social services made necessary by the conditions of war. The widening of her network of contacts brought about by her involvement in community work, which in turn led her to work closely with national political figures such as Clement Attlee and Arthur Greenwood, will be outlined and her later achievements analysed against this background.

Finally, the impact of all her tireless crusading during a period of over fifty years stretching from 1912 to her death in 1968 will be examined to establish whether the fact of her existence did anything to alter the way in which nursery schools and child welfare practices developed in Bradford.

## **CHAPTER ONE: HER FORMATIVE YEARS - BIRTH TO 1906**

Miriam Lord was born in Bradford in 1885, the eldest of three daughters born to Hird and Joanna Lord. During the century preceding her birth Bradford had been transformed by the Industrial Revolution from "a pleasant market town, with green meadows and swift gleaming streams" (1) into an industrial city of almost 200,000 inhabitants. During the first half of the nineteenth century it was the fastest growing industrial town in the British Isles, and although growth slackened after 1850, it still continued to expand. This migration into the city had originated principally from two distinct sources, from the outlying villages around Bradford and from Northern Germany. Both categories of immigrants had a particular impact on the life of the city.

Those who had moved in from the surrounding villages constituted the workforce for the increasing number of woollen textile mills. They lived in narrow streets of back-to-back houses, consisting of one room downstairs and another upstairs and lacking hot water, bathrooms or sanitation, which had been built in the vicinity of the mills. Families tended to be large, and the insanitary living conditions which encouraged the spread of disease and infection, combined with the harsh working environment of the mills, gave rise to social unrest, political strife and, ultimately, the formation in Bradford in 1893 of the Independent Labour Party.

The immigrants from Northern Germany were Jewish textile merchants who saw the opportunity to ally their entrepreneurial skills with the craftsmanship available in the Yorkshire mills, and by so doing, to capture an important part of world trade. The first

Jewish business opened in Bradford in 1836, and by 1851 the city's Chamber of Commerce had been founded by two Jewish textile merchants. Such was the impact of these incomers on Bradford that, between 1851 and 1880, over 25% of the subscribers to the Chamber of Commerce were of foreign extraction. (2) The interests of the German Jewish immigrants were not merely confined to trade - they were also active in the arts and in charitable enterprises, founding hospitals and launching the Benevolent Fund for the Aged and Infirm Work people of Bradford in 1898, thus anticipating the old age pension scheme. They also concerned themselves with the education of their workforce: the Mechanics' Institute for Working Women and the Bradford Ladies Educational Association were both founded by the daughter-in-law of Martin Hertz who, himself, ensured that many of his illiterate workers were taught to read and write. (3)

In the mid nineteenth century politics in Bradford had been dominated by the Liberal Party which found its support among the middle classes and the skilled working class. However, from 1880 onwards, its dominant position had come increasingly under attack as it faced the dilemma of how to react to the prevailing social unrest - if it made concessions to its working class supporters it would lose the backing of the middle classes, but if it failed to make those concessions it would lose working class support. The situation was exacerbated by changes in constituency boundaries which created three separate constituencies returning one member each, instead of the previous arrangement of a single but double member constituency. Then in 1886 came the death of the Liberal Member of Parliament, W.E. Forster, which released many middle class voters

from a personal commitment to the Party. The outcome of all these factors was a shift of political allegiance away from the Liberal Party, from the mid 1880s onwards, towards the Conservative Party. (4)

At the same time as this movement towards the Right was taking place in the political life of the city, there was also an increasing groundswell of opinion which championed the cause of the working classes. The catalyst came in the form of a 'lock-out' in 1890 at Listers Mills in Manningham, an industrial district of Bradford. The owner of the mills, Sam Lister, later Lord Masham, locked out the workers to force down further their already low wages. The 'lock-out' lasted for nineteen weeks. It caused great distress to the workers and their families and a "Cinderella Club", supported by all classes and political parties, was formed to give relief to the hungry. Protest meetings were organised, and at one the Riot Act was read from the Town Hall steps, whilst at another the military was called out to disperse the crowd. At a meeting held at Peckover Walks, Church Bank, 30,000 to 40,000 people were estimated to be present with another 80,000 to 90,000 surging into the Town Hall square, such was the degree of social upheaval in the city. (5)

Out of this strife came the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893. In its early days it had about 2000 fee-paying members and one of its founder members was Miriam Lord's father, Hird Lord. (6)

There were many strands involved in the development of the Labour movement in Bradford. These included the Labour Church (formed in 1891 as a socialist

alternative to existing religious organisations), the Socialist Sunday schools, and the fellowship clubs spawned by the Clarion Movement which was itself based on the socialist Clarion newspaper published in Manchester from 1891 onwards. In addition, the Bradford Trades Council had been virtually ignored by the Liberal Party during the 1880s and indeed, the belief of trades unionists in the fairness of the selection of Liberal candidates for local and municipal offices had been undermined by the fact that the Secretary of the Council, Samuel Shaftoe, had been passed over for many years.

Socialism had begun to emerge in Bradford in the 1870s, and there is evidence to suggest that socialist organisations existed in limited forms during the 1870s and 1880s. (7) In the seventies a Republican Club existed to which C. 'Leonard' Robinson and James Bartley, later to be notables of the Independent Labour Party, had belonged. At 'Laycocks', radicals, republicans and socialists met frequently to discuss the political issues of the day. (Laycocks had formerly been Firths Temperance Hotel, and it was there in 1891 that the Bradford Labour Union, later to become the Bradford Independent Labour Party, was established.) Rather as the eighteenth century coffee houses in London were used as a debating forum, so Laycocks became the haunt of the intelligentsia, as well as the wits and cranks, of Bradford. It remained famous for sixty years, its fame being due in part to its connection with the emergence of socialism in the city.

A forerunner of the Bradford Labour Union was a branch of the Socialist League, which was formed within two years of a visit in 1884 by William Morris,

despite the fact that at the time of his visit he had been unimpressed by the commitment of the people of Bradford to socialism. (8) Fred Jowett, who was to become Bradford's first Labour Member of Parliament in 1906, was one of the early members of the Labour Union, along with others such as George Minty, Paul Bland, Fred Pickles and Jesse Mitchell, all of whom went on to play a prominent role in the Independent Labour Party in the 1890s. However the Socialist League in Bradford was short-lived, and some of its members formed the Bradford Fabian Society which subsequently merged with the Independent Labour Party. Others aligned themselves with the Bradford Labour Electoral Association which had been set up in the hope of persuading the local Liberal Party to select more working class candidates for local elections. This organisation too eventually moved into the Independent Labour Party. (9)

It was into this atmosphere of social ferment and political activism that Miriam Lord was born on 21 June 1885. Her mother died of rheumatic fever when she was eleven years old, and as the eldest of the three daughters she was, no doubt, expected to take on a great deal more responsibility for the running of the family than the majority of eleven-year-old children. Also, having no mother, she came more under the influence of her father than would be normal for most late nineteenth century daughters.

Hird Lord had come to Bradford, as a penniless, teenage orphan, from Pecket Well, a village near Hebden Bridge on the borders of Lancashire and West Yorkshire, approximately twenty miles west of Bradford. He came from a Scottish whaling family who would have set him an example of physical and mental toughness. His own drive

and determination to succeed was such that, having taught himself to read and write, he founded a bakery business which was eventually to become the largest in the north of England. (10) But as well as being successful he practised humanitarian acts, as Miriam Lord herself recalled in a radio broadcast shortly before her death. Remembering her childhood living at the bakery at 59/61 Longcroft Place, Bradford, she recounted hearing the

"sounds which arose on the darkness of the morning about 4.00 a.m. - from this I knew exactly what was happening in the warm bakehouse. Doors would be thrown wide open whatever the weather; with the hot fires shining out like a lighthouse into the darkness making a pool of light. Often they drew in from the night, the homeless, amongst both men and beasties. My kind parents turned none away empty. How I loved them for their kindness and compassion, and was quietly proud of them." (11)

Her political awareness was further raised through her contact with her grandparents.

"I heard for the first time of the days of the Yorkshire hand-loom weavers and of their long hours of labour in their home and how even the little children also had to take part. The grandfather ... spoke of their dire poverty and hard lives. I also learned there of the doings of a new party, the Independent Labour Party, which had been born in Bradford and which dared to challenge the old order. My father was a dedicated member and worker, for it was then a Christian Movement, not just a political party. As good radicals it was all complete madness to them (the grandparents). The West Riding had always been Liberal and would remain so." (12)

Hird Lord also practised self-denial as a non-smoker, non-drinker and vegetarian, all of which would have been unusual in the late nineteenth century. But politics and public service were his enduring interests - as well as being a founder member of the Independent Labour Party, he involved himself in community affairs. His obituary headline read 'Death of a Remarkable Social Reformer', and it went on to describe his death as the loss of "one of its (Bradford) colourful and original characters of the old generation, a citizen of public spirit and outlook, and a remarkable man."(13)

Whilst there is no evidence that he was ever a councillor himself, according to his obituary he helped establish, in conjunction with Councillor E.J. Smith and, later, Arthur Priestman, the first infant clinic in Bradford, as well as a municipal milk service. In 1902 a Health sub-committee had been appointed in Bradford to investigate the feasibility of supplying sterilised milk to needy infants. One of the recommendations in its report was that a small municipal depot for the supply of such milk should be set up. This was duly achieved in 1903, and it is ironic that Hird Lord should have been active in the promotion of this service - he had a painted hand-cart made at his own expense to advertise the municipal depot and the benefits of pure milk - for it was to be the issue of municipally supplied milk which was to lead to the eventual fall from grace with the local authority of his eldest daughter.

It is apparent then that Miriam Lord was exposed from an early age to the philosophy that the more fortunate should do all in their power to alleviate the distress and deprivations suffered by the poor. This was further reinforced when she and her



sister sat and passed the scholarship examination for Belle Vue Higher Grade School in 1895. Hird Lord would not allow either daughter to take advantage of the scholarship as he believed that it had been created for the benefit of the less well off. He had always been a businessman as well as a socialist, and as such, considered himself able and duty-bound to pay the school fees of 6d. (2½ new pence) per week each. So this he did. (14) There is little documented evidence available about his life, but what there is reveals that after moving into the dairy business in the first decade of the twentieth century, he had returned to the bakery trade by 1921, handing over the business to his youngest daughter, Edith, when he retired sometime between 1928 and 1938. (15) By that time the family was considered to be prosperous and employed a permanent housekeeper. (16)

If Hird Lord played a crucial role in the formation of Miriam's belief that one had a duty to change the world for the better by both political and practical activity, he was also instrumental in causing her to focus her attentions on young children in particular. During the conversations which she would have overheard, or even taken part in, she would have heard mention of Margaret McMillan, of whom her father was a disciple. He would expound her theories on socialism and child care at Laycocks where he was ridiculed and called 'Lord Madhatter' for his ability to remain cheerful despite opposition and criticism. (17) Margaret McMillan, already known in London for her socialist views, had been invited to Bradford in 1893 by Fred Jowett, with the idea that she should join the Independent Labour Party and make her home in the city. (18) This

she did, being elected to Bradford School Board in 1894 as an Independent Labour Party candidate.

She found herself immediately concerned about the position of children and her views on child welfare exerted a considerable influence on Hird Lord, and through him, on Miriam. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century Margaret McMillan became involved in a protracted struggle to improve the health and general well-being of school children in Bradford. Her work

"took on something of an epic quality and became the model of what an isolated socialist on a School Board could achieve. In spite of strong opposition at the outset she fought for the deprived, under-nourished and sickly slum child with such energy and vitality and with such a single consuming purpose as finally to arouse the whole country on these issues and become a national figure." (19)

She was the youngest, and only female, member of the School board and at first she concentrated primarily on leading agitation against the half-time system, still widespread in Bradford, whereby children could leave school for half-time employment at the age of eleven. As part of this campaign in 1895 she led a deputation to Asquith, who was the then Home Secretary. This direct approach to Parliament and the government would have set an example for Miriam who was ten years old at the time and who herself was to adopt a similar tactic in later years.

Margaret McMillan also became a pioneer in the cause of school meals, as well as agitating for systematic medical inspections during the battle to improve the welfare of deprived children. As a result of her efforts, school clinics, school nurses and a

school dentist were all introduced in Bradford during her early years on the School Board, and in 1897 she finally won her fight for school baths and showers when the first school baths in the whole country were opened. By focusing on improving physical health she hoped to lay the foundation for improving education and she gradually broadened her concerns to take in topics that were more specifically educational such as the training of teachers, the curriculum and the development of higher grade schools.

(20) Indeed, it was at Belle Vue Higher Grade School, where Miriam was a pupil from 1895 to 1901, that she came into regular contact with Margaret McMillan. In 1956, over fifty years later, Miriam wrote an article in conjunction with two other former pupils for the school magazine in which she still recalled the visits of Margaret McMillan to the school as outstanding, and described her as a dynamic woman with vision and drive. (21) As a role model, Margaret McMillan provided her with proof that a woman who believed passionately in a cause could achieve her ends by political lobbying using both public speaking and the written word. These were tools which men had long been employing to promote social reform, but it was relatively new for women to take such a public stance - it was a lesson Miriam Lord would never forget.

Miriam spent six years at Belle Vue Higher Grade school, and there she came under the influence of another remarkable woman, the then headmistress, Miss Beszant. The first entry in the school logbook dates back to 13 August 1877 and refers to the 'Girls Higher Grade School', Manningham. The original headmistress was an Emily Holmes who had been a successful student in classes at the Yorkshire College of Science

(later Leeds University) and had taught girls in Physiology under its Science Department in connection with the University Extension Scheme. She had previously been principal teacher at Primrose Hill Girls School in Leeds, and as a thirty year old, experienced and successful certificated teacher was recommended for the post at Bradford by Mrs C.M. Buckton, the first female member of the Leeds School Board, who had pioneered the teaching of Physiology and Hygiene in Board schools. Under Miss Holmes' leadership Belle Vue school grew from 105 pupils to 341 within three months of its opening, resulting in overcrowding and the need for new accommodation. The new building, which would house four departments, - girls' and boys' higher grade, junior mixed and infants - was formally opened on 11 August 1879 by the Rt. Hon. W.E. Forster, M.P. for Bradford. The Education Department had initially been reluctant to agree to contribute towards the Higher Grade school because it was being asked to give formal permission for the setting up of a purpose-built school where the curriculum would be more advanced from that laid down in the Elementary School Code. However, this was a situation which was by no means unusual in the nineteenth century, and permission was eventually granted. In 1884 Miss Sarah L. Beszant was appointed headmistress. At the time she was twenty three years old and she remained in post for thirty nine years until her resignation in May 1923. When she was appointed headmistress the school had been in existence for seven years and was one of the very few schools in England providing an advanced elementary education as opposed to the usual education being provided in the ordinary Board schools. She believed firmly in the validity of the study

of science as a class subject for girls and in 1892, in conjunction with the headmaster of the Boys' Department, published a handbook for teachers entitled 'Experimental Science as a Class Subject'. In 1896 Belle Vue school was designated an Organised Science School, due largely to her efforts, which then made it eligible for a grant from the Science and Art Department. Her enthusiasm for science subjects did lead to an adverse comment in one H.M. Inspectors' report in which it was suggested that some re-arrangement of the timetable was advisable to redress the balance between science and mathematics and the study of literature. (22) However, this was a concern which was also voiced about other Organised Science Schools.

Nevertheless, under Miss Beszant's headship the school quickly became recognised as one of the foremost educational establishments and, following the recommendation of H.M. Inspectors, deputations from School Boards throughout the country came to observe the work of the school. On 12 January 1899 Sir John Gorst, at that time Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education and a known opponent of School Boards, visited the school in the company of officials from the Science and Art Department. In the same year, according to the school logbooks, the school received visitors from countries such as Australia, India, Greece and America who came to study its curriculum and the classroom management techniques employed.

The era of Higher Grade and Science schools in this country was, however, relatively short-lived. Ever since the original school at Feversham Street, Bradford, had first accepted pupils their existence had been the subject of controversy. In 1901 the

issue came to a head with the famous Cockerton Judgement which declared that the London School Board's expenditure on higher grade schools was illegal. The difficulty resided in the requests made by the advanced schools for support from the rates when, in fact, they were not entitled to any financial assistance as they were not strictly elementary as defined by the then Education Act. The Act of 1902, which reorganised and co-ordinated the education service in England and Wales, also brought the school board system to an end, and in August 1902 the organised science school at Belle Vue became an ordinary Secondary Day School.

The H.M. Inspectors' report on the girls' school during its final year under the direction of the Bradford School Board was the shortest on record. It stated that "this department, like that of the boys, is so ably managed and taught that little or nothing remains to be desired." Such were the standards achieved by Miss Beszant. However, the impact which she had on the girls who passed through her school was not merely academic - she believed that girls should be taught to think for themselves, to be independent, self-reliant and self-controlled. She cited the removal of the Science and Art Department's 'payment by results' scheme in 1897 as an important factor in allowing schools to encourage the formation of character and the ability to think for oneself. She also advocated the giving of as much liberty as possible to both girls and boys, and thought that some of the hooliganism then being experienced in the streets of Bradford was caused by too much repression. (23) A contemporary of Miriam Lord at Belle Vue, a Miss J.E. Symes, summarised Miss Beszant's influence as follows:-

"Miss S.L. Beszant was a woman of insight, wisdom, humanity and force of character, carrying on in her day and in her own field of education, aided by the forces of power released by the Education Act of 1870, the work for women's equality of the women pioneers of the generations before her, Dr Garrett Anderson, Josephine Butler, Elizabeth Fry and so on. She widened our vision of life by talks from outstanding people of character in our local world. I will cite only one, the one who probably had the most profound influence on so many of us, moving us later to some form of social service. This was Margaret McMillan, then a member of the School Board." (24)

At the time of her retirement in 1923 the view was expressed that Sarah Beszant had done more than any other individual for the moral and physical welfare of the women of Bradford. (25)

There can be no doubt that Miriam was influenced by Sarah Beszant in her resolve to become a teacher herself, and at the age of sixteen in 1901 she became a pupil teacher candidate.

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## CHAPTER TWO: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - 1901-1914

In 1901 when Miriam Lord began her training as a pupil teacher candidate it was

"generally assumed that children under about five or six years old should be at home with their mothers; but in practice, ever since the start of the Industrial Revolution, very young children of working mothers were left with child-minders or sent to school with older brothers and sisters." (1)

The child-minding solution, a classic example of mutual self-help during the early years of the industrial era, is usually referred to as the dame school, although the woman involved was often merely a neighbour of the working mother and the education, if any, available in such establishments was often of a very rudimentary nature. If the very young children were sent to school as the answer to the problem of their being supervised during working hours, they were frequently placed in babies' classes of elementary schools but subject to the same monitorial regime as the older children. Whilst there were some attempts to promote a more child-centred approach to the education of the under sevens in the early nineteenth century, notably by Robert Owen and David Stow in Scotland, the main thrust of the new educational theories came from the continent of Europe through the line of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel. In Britain the impact of Rousseau's 'Emile', published in 1762, was negligible, but the practices developed by Pestalozzi (1745-1827) who was himself influenced by Rousseau's theories, had far more effect in this country. In 1836 a number of Pestalozzi's disciples formed the Home and Colonial Infant School Society with the express intention of

opening a college for the training of infant teachers in Pestalozzian methodology. This took into account the interests and capabilities of the child, providing a system of teaching which was determined by what a child was capable of at each stage of its development. Within a few years the work of the Society in training infant teachers and in publicising Pestalozzian methods had become influential for in 1846 it was reported to the Committee of Council that "the Home and Colonial Infant School Society is required to supply trained teachers for nearly the whole of the current appointments." (2) At the time the climate must have seemed favourable for a continued expansion of the child-centred approach to infant education within the public elementary school system. However, this was to be negated by the introduction of the Revised Code in 1862 which determined that teachers' salaries would depend on the amount of grant earned by their pupils in examinations, and therefore encouraged the use of rote learning from an early age in order to ensure success in the examinations.

It was in the private sector that the child-centred approach to infant education survived, eventually to flourish again in the state sector. The Industrial Revolution had given rise not only to an expanding manufacturing industrial base in this country, but also to the emergence of a significant commercial and middle class segment of the population. Whilst this group had sufficient income to pay for the education of their young children, it was not enough for each family to employ a governess in the same way that the upper classes did. At about the same time as this demand for middle class infant education arose, the kindergarten was prohibited in Prussia in 1851. It was a

natural consequence that the proponents of this movement should transfer themselves to England in order to be able to continue to put their theories into practice.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) who was the instigator of the kindergarten movement, took the ideas of Pestalozzi and developed them into a more coherent educational philosophy. Pestalozzi had tended to work empirically and had not written a systematic description of his theories and methods. Froebel propagated his beliefs both in writings and by lecture tours, but his ideas tended to reach this country via his disciples, among whom the Baroness von Marenholtz-Bulow was the most influential.(3)

Froebel believed that the child was a living organism similar to a plant, and that education should be about the development of that organism. From this belief sprang the description 'kindergarten' (literally, children-garden) which implied that the children were the plants in the garden, and the teacher the gardener whose role it was to help them develop along the lines laid down by nature. In other words, the educator's function was not to interfere and prescribe, but to oversee and protect a spontaneous development which would take place through the medium of play. However, the play would not be unstructured, because within Froebel's theories were contained graduated exercises based on children's games which would be used to introduce children to elementary science by experiment, and simultaneously to improve their motor dexterity.

Baroness von Marenholtz-Bulow first came to London in 1854 to give a lecture on Froebelian theory and, as a result, through newspaper articles and personal introductions, Froebel's ideas became accessible to the English middle classes. In

addition, Herr and Frau Ronge, who had opened a kindergarten in Bloomsbury in 1851 for the children of Prussian emigres, published pamphlets promulgating his educational philosophy and began to train English kindergarten teachers in Froebelian methods. The trainees, together with further German immigrants, went on to open kindergartens both in London and Manchester. From then on the kindergarten movement in this country developed rapidly during the 1850s and 1860s. (4)

In 1857 the Home and Colonial Infant School Society appointed Heinrich Hoffmann to introduce Froebelian methods into their training departments, and thereafter there took place a steady expansion of teacher training colleges which taught Froebel's theories on the development and education of young children. In 1875 the Froebel Society was formed and in the following year began to award its teacher's certificate on the basis of written and practical examinations. It was the Home and Colonial Infant School Society together with the British and Foreign School Society which were the organisations to have the early influence in introducing kindergarten techniques into the public education sector. (5) The report of the Newcastle Commission, which was appointed in 1858 to enquire into the state of "Popular Education in England", acknowledged in 1861 that the public elementary schools with their infant classes taking children from the age of two or three, fulfilled an important role in the nation's educational system. Some of the teachers for these infant classes were by then being trained in Froebelian methods in the training colleges run by those two Societies. Nevertheless, even by the last decade of the century, nearly half the

certificated teachers had not been trained but had become certificated by examination.(6)

Thus it came about that

"These efforts to adapt the kindergarten to mass infant education inevitably resulted in distortion of Froebel's precepts: whole classes of sixty or more simultaneously performed a series of exercises with wooden blocks, beads or sticks. Class instruction was substituted for individual learning related to the child's stage of development. By the 1890s most of the school boards required these kindergarten activities in their infant schools and classes." (7)

As a consequence, whilst the theories propounded by Froebel and his disciples gained some ground in the public education system, with recognition being given by the 1892 Code to the Froebel Certificate for teachers, nevertheless progress was hindered by a number of factors - the very size of infant classes (they could number up to three times the size of Froebel's recommended maximum of twenty four); the fixed, tiered galleries dating from the early nineteenth century which were still found in infant schools; and by the necessity to complete a child's education by the age of ten or eleven. It was against this background that Miriam Lord began her career as a teacher in 1901.

At the age of sixteen she joined the staff of Drummond Road Infants School, Bradford as a pupil teacher candidate on an income of £6 per annum. Drummond Road School had been opened on 3 October 1887 when its staff comprised one teacher and two assistants caring for sixty nine children. The school records show that by 6 January 1902 Miriam was described as a junior teacher and that in the week of 30 June to 4 July 1902 she passed the pupil teacher examination. (8) The copy of H.M.

Inspectors Report for the school states

"Year ending 30th June 1902. I have the honour to inform you that the preliminary conditions annexed by the Code to the office of Pupil Teacher are fulfilled in this school in the case of Miriam Lord and Elizabeth Trotter. The engagement is intended to commence from January 1902." (9)

There is little record of her personal or professional life during the early years so it is impossible to know whether Miriam taught the very young children at Drummond Road, but the school log book for 19/20 December 1902 does state that she was to be transferred to the senior department after the Christmas holidays. The likelihood therefore is that she did not. However, in the very year that Miriam began her teaching career the Bradford branch of the Froebel Society came into being.

In the autumn of 1900 Miss Adelaide Wragge lectured to one hundred and sixty infant mistresses and school inspectors in Bradford on behalf of the Froebel Society. Miss Wragge was the Principal of the Blackheath Kindergarten Training College in London and in 1900 she had opened the first free kindergarten at Woolwich. She thus had the appropriate credentials to give such a lecture and to lead the discussion which afterwards ensued. This discussion indicated a keen interest in Froebel's principles among those present and a desire to have closer contact with the Froebel movement. The following year the inaugural meeting of the Bradford branch of the Froebel Society took place in February with no less than fifty members joining at this first meeting. By 1904, because of the enthusiasm shown in Bradford for the Society's work, the annual



conference of the Froebel Society took place in the city, the first time in its history that the annual conference had been held outside London. Also worthy of note is the fact that the joint organisers of the conference were the Bradford branch, the West Riding of Yorkshire branch and, most notably, the Bradford Education Authority. (10) This local education authority had only been brought into being two years earlier by the 1902 Education Act, and within those two years was sufficiently radical in its outlook jointly to sponsor a Froebel Society conference.

There can be little doubt therefore as to whether Miriam Lord, in her role as a pupil teacher employed by that authority, would have been aware of Froebelian theory and its implications in terms of teaching methods. It was probably the vigour of the debate in Bradford which swayed her in favour of undertaking further training and in her eventual choice of training college. She had completed her pupil teacher training at the end of 1905 and then worked as a non-certificated elementary school teacher at Drummond Road School until being transferred in April 1906, as part of a re-allocation of teachers, to Grange Road Mixed School. But on 31 August 1906 she left this school to take up a place at Saffron Walden College in Essex to train to become a certificated teacher.

Saffron Walden College had opened on 17 May 1884, its existence due to the generosity of George Stacey Gibson, a local Quaker banker and benefactor. He gave two acres of land and £10,000 for the building of the original premises for the College. These were much smaller than the later buildings, and at the time of its opening the

approach to the College was by an unmade lane from South Road. Not unnaturally, having been established by the philanthropic act of a Quaker, the College was run under the auspices of the British and Foreign School Society, the organisation created in 1810 by Joseph Lancaster, himself a Quaker, to promote his monitorial school system. The Society in fact continued as its Providing Body until the College was closed on 31 August 1977 following a directive from the Secretary of State for Education and Science. (11)

The original purpose of Saffron Walden College was to train kindergarten teachers in the methods of Froebel, and successive Principals of the College ensured that its reputation for work with young children was maintained, with training being extended in 1894 to include work with juniors. A portfolio of kindergarten work was sent to the Paris Exhibition in 1889, and from 1927-1948 the final examinations at the College were conducted in association with the National Froebel Foundation. (12) Miriam Lord would have known of course of the College's reputation from the information available to her in Bradford, both through the education authority itself and from the activities of the local branch of the Froebel Society.

At Saffron Walden the College established its own kindergarten, although whether this was from the outset is unclear. What is certain is that the emphasis during training was always placed on the practice of teaching, and that until 1902 demonstration lessons and debriefing sessions took place in the actual kindergarten. After that date, the adjacent South Road school and other local schools were used to train students in

practical teaching methods.

In addition to the stress laid on the actual practice of teaching, the curriculum at Saffron Walden also gave importance to child psychology and the physical care of children as evidenced by the following extract from the syllabus covered by Miriam Lord whilst she was a student at the College:-

- "1. General Method (Froebel)
  - (a) Froebel's childhood and education;
  - (b) His various experiments between the end of his apprenticeship as a forester and at the beginning of his life as a teacher at Frankfurt;
  - (c) His work as a teacher in the model school at Frankfurt. What he learnt from his two visits to Pestalozzi;
  - (d) How he taught his two pupils to whom he acted as a tutor. What he learnt during his year of soldiering. His work at Kiehaer. His work at Burgdorf in Switzerland. His later work, that is, the development of the kindergarten at Blankenburg, Liebenstein, and in Varienthal;
  - (e) His principle of education.
2. Kindergarten Theory.
3. Psychology:- Instinct, classification of Instinct, Play, Child and the curriculum, Habit and Instinct - ideas. Intelligence - types of learning and activity, types of children, difference between Genetic Psychology. (sic)
4. Hygiene." (13)

The child-centred nature of the training which Miriam received whilst at Saffron Walden confirmed and validated the ideas and opinions she had previously heard expressed and put into practice by both Sarah Beszant, her headmistress at Belle Vue Higher Grade school, and, more especially, Margaret McMillan. She left Saffron Walden College in 1908 with an Elementary Froebel Certificate with Honours and a

separate, first class Froebel Certificate in Child Hygiene. Whilst she had been studying there the influence of Froebel on the teaching of infants had actually gained considerable ground in the state education system.

During the latter years of the nineteenth century, due to the efforts of Margaret McMillan and socialists like her, there had been an increasing awareness of the impact that the state of a child's health had on its intellectual development. This had led to the introduction of the school medical inspection in London in 1890 and in Bradford in 1893. However, it had been the Boer War (1899-1902) which had directed attention towards the poor physical condition of the general populace. More than 30% of the 700,000 recruits medically examined for the Army between 1893 and 1902 were discovered to be unfit for service, and as there were many more who did not even qualify for the medical inspection, the rejection rate could have been as high as 60%.

(14) It was the state of the health of the working classes, and more particularly, of the children of the working classes which provided the impetus for the work of Margaret McMillan who was "the pioneer in the creation of the English nursery school". (15)

However, her efforts in London in the early years of the twentieth century to improve children's health led her directly to the conclusion that the necessary function of a school for the very young was to assist the development of intellectual and emotional well-being as well as to provide a better physical environment.

Whilst Margaret McMillan was using the educational ideas of Pestalozzi and Froebel to arrive at her own socialist philosophy of education, debate about the

education of the under fives was also taking place in the public sector. The Education Act of 1870 had established five years of age as the minimum age at which School Boards should be permitted to make attendance at school compulsory under bye-law. The Code of 1872 published by the Committee of Council on Education stipulated three as the minimum age at which children in attendance at school counted for grant purposes. The combination of these two edicts ensured that by the time of the 1902 Education Act, attendance at elementary school by children under the compulsory age of five was well established, and so it was virtually inevitable that the nature of the education provided for them should be the subject of debate.

The local education authorities set up by the 1902 Act looked for guidance on this subject and, in response, the Board of Education employed five women inspectors to conduct an enquiry into the admission of infants to public elementary schools, and to make suggestions as to a suitable curriculum for those infants. The Board published the inspectors' reports in 1905 prefaced by an introductory memorandum by the Chief Inspector of Public Elementary Schools. In these reports the women inspectors were unanimous that "children between the ages of three and five get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction". (16) Indeed, all the evidence pointed towards a dulling of the intellect and of the powers of imagination and observation in those children who had attended the elementary school from a very early age, by comparison with those who had not. Kindergarten teachers were praised, but the kindergarten occupations as used in the elementary schools were "condemned as being

contrary to the spirit of Froebel when taught mechanically to large classes". (17) The reports drew the conclusion that because the young children of poor, working mothers required supervision during working hours, it would be necessary to establish a new form of school for this category of child. Suggestions were made in the Reports as to the preferred attributes of the new schools (referred to as nursery schools) and of the teachers to be employed in those schools. In line with the thinking of the Froebel Society they suggested that free expression rather than formal instruction should be the norm, and that there should be special training for infant teachers. (18) The final recommendation made was that the Board of Education and the local education authorities should go on to consider the whole question of the character and function of these schools.

However, because of more effective enforcement of statutory attendance at elementary schools, the numbers of children over five in school were rising at a time when the cost of having fought the Boer War was still proving a drain on the country's resources. One solution to the problem of reducing government expenditure was to abolish the grant for children under three and, additionally, in its 1905 Code, the Board of Education allowed local education authorities to refuse admission to elementary school to children under the age of five. But in the same year, in a classic example of a government department managing to face in different directions at the same time, the Board issued its 'Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers' in which it stated that it wished to continue to give encouragement to the use of kindergarten methods, and

promulgating the idea that four years attendance at infant school should be the rule and not the exception. Reflecting the influence which Froebelian theory had by then gained over official policy, this document recommended that teaching methods were to be based on two main principles: the recognition and stimulation of the child's spontaneous activity, and the development of all the child's faculties through directed activities. It even went on to give a list of the varied occupations suitable for children between the ages of three and five!

The consequence of the local education authorities being authorised to exclude the under fives from elementary school if they so wished was that this discretion was used in a variety of ways with some authorities excluding the under fives totally, others excluding the youngest and the rest continuing to admit them. The criteria used in reaching their decisions ranged from financial, through educational, social and medical, to practices adopted in other countries. (19) There was evidently sufficient unease about the whole topic, however, for the Board of Education to request its Consultative Committee in April 1907 to investigate "the desirability, or otherwise, ... of discouraging the attendance at school of children under the age of five years". (20)

The Committee's Report published in 1908 made it clear that its recommendations were intended principally for the young children of poor families where the mother had to go out to work because its basic premise was that "The proper place for a child between three and five is, of course, at home with its mother". (21) However, it had to acknowledge that the home conditions of large numbers of children

attending elementary school were far from satisfactory and so it was necessary to provide for the care and education of these children. Referring to the best place for this provision as the 'Nursery School', the Committee envisaged that these schools for the under fives would be "roomy, and well lighted, warmed and ventilated" and that, with formal lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic being excluded, the children would not be "subjected to any mental pressure or undue physical discipline". (22) Such was the influence that Froebel had come by then to exert in the field of infant education that the Report averred that "Probably the best person to have the Management of the Nursery School will be a well-educated teacher who has been trained on Froebelian principles in the widest sense of the term." (23) Not only did the Report provide detailed and forward looking recommendations on staffing, but it also gave guidance on premises, equipment and the curriculum for nursery schools. Additionally, it emphasised that these schools should be part of the public education system and under the control of the local education authority. Nevertheless, it cannot be too firmly stressed that the Report dealt only with the needs of the working class young child, and that the Committee felt unable to recommend the removal of the discretionary aspect of local authority provision, but left it subject to appeal by interested bodies such as district or parish councils, or groups of at least ten parents. (24)

Thus, it is apparent that by the time Miriam Lord left Saffron Walden College in 1908 as a certificated teacher trained in Froebelian method, the general philosophy underpinning that method had become nationally accepted and was being actively



promoted in official educational circles. She returned to Bradford to take up a post as an assistant teacher in the infants department of her old school, Belle Vue, on a salary of £76 p.a. At this time, despite the fact that there had been a successful branch of the Froebel Society in Bradford since 1904, there were still only a few signs of its influence on the curriculum laid down for the city's elementary schools. In 1905 this read as follows:-

"(a) General Subjects:-

Scripture, Reading, Composition (with Dictation),  
Spelling, Grammar, Recitation, Arithmetic, Science,  
Geography, History, Drawing (Boys), Needlework (Girls),  
Singing, Physical Exercises, Copy Book Writing and  
Varied occupations.

(b) Subjects taken by selected Scholars:-

Swimming, Woodwork, Gardening, Cookery, Laundry,  
and Housewifery." (25)

However, in the same Reports there appear some suggestions for the consideration of the Committee as to the further provision necessary in elementary schools, among which the recommendation is made by the Joint Sub-Committee that

"The Infants' Departments to be encouraged to admit children at three years of age ... If admitted to the Infants' School at the age of 3 (the Government limit) special rooms and furniture must be provided, if efficient instruction is to be given, and the teachers of classes for these children should have special Kindergarten training." (26)

A special sub-committee was appointed in May 1905 "to consider and report on the whole subject" of the curriculum in Bradford's schools. The sub-committee consulted with the head teachers of the various types of school in the city, and with the

Superintendents, and presented its report which was adopted by the City Council on 27 March 1906. The report stated that

"Every teacher will be able, personally, to submit for the decision of the Committee any suggestion he or she may wish to make upon any given subject ... [in the Infants' Schools] the Committee will be prepared to consider the request of any teacher to make alterations in existing time-tables and schemes, so as to render more suitable and effective the instruction in any particular School, regard always being had to the localities and special needs of the scholars." (27)

Thus, the local education authority was evidently aware of the nature and drift of the national debate on the education of young children, and was groping its way towards a less rigid and therefore more enlightened approach to the content, at least, of the instruction being given in its own elementary schools.

There is very little documentary record of Miriam Lord's return as a teacher to Belle Vue School, but we do know that she remained there until 31 March 1910 when she resigned in order to commence work on 1 April 1910 as an assistant teacher at Whetley Lane Infants' School, Bradford.

Whetley Lane Board School had opened on 15 June 1874, its building comprising one large main room with two classrooms at both ends. The school comprised three departments, Infants', Girls' and Boys', each with its own head teacher. Approximately sixty children were taught in each of the four classrooms and there were over a hundred children arranged in the usual tiers in the main hall. (28) However, the original building at Whetley Lane had soon proved to be inadequate, and a new infants'

school had been opened on 10 April 1877, followed by a new junior school on 27 March 1882. (29)

At Whetley Lane School Miriam Lord came under the aegis of another powerful and successful woman who was to have considerable influence over her life. The headmistress of the school was Miss Alice Lister. She had taken on the headship in 1902 and remained in post until 1927. Miss Lister actively promoted the Froebel method of teaching in Bradford and in fact had been the founding Honorary Secretary of the Bradford and District branch of the Froebel Society in 1904, a post she retained until her death in 1927. (30) Testimony to her success in creating a happy ambience, conducive to learning, in her own school is provided by the following extract from the centenary magazine of the school. The article in the magazine was written by a Kathleen J. Bennett who was a pupil there from May 1909 to July 1911.

"Whetley Lane was a very happy school under the leadership of Miss Alice Lister, with three devoted members of staff whose work for education in the city became widely known, Miss Annie Mallison, Miss A. Coates and Miss Miriam Lord, whose names are well remembered by the children they taught - and how privileged those children were if they had realised it. School was a happy place, where a firm but kindly discipline was imposed and where 'lessons' were enjoyed.

... In those long ago days the school was progressive and the little ones were happily employed. Nobody seems to remember hearing harsh words or slappings ..." (31)

An 'In Memorium' article dedicated to Alice Lister in the Official Journal of the Bradford Education Committee records that

"she had an almost uncanny flair for those new movements in education which were to prove of value ... Her great ability, her clearness of mind and speech, combined with an utter lack of self-seeking or self-advertisement, made her a colleague refreshing and stimulating yet withal practical, with whom it was always good to be associated. Her attitude of appreciation towards the work of others insensibly brought the best out of them, making not feeble copies of herself, but more independent and resourceful than they might otherwise have been." (32)

Alice Lister is remembered to this day at Whetley Lane school for there is still an individual plaque commemorating her headship in what was the main hall.

Almost immediately after going to teach at Whetley Lane Miriam Lord completed the second stage of her professional training by successfully sitting for the examination leading to the Higher Froebel certificate. There is an entry in the Whetley Lane log book dated 9 December 1910 which reads as follows:-

"Miss Lord has had leave of absence Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week in order to attend the Examination of the National Froebel Union." (33)

She had been teaching with Alice Lister at Whetley Lane for two years before she became involved in a campaign to gain recognition of the Froebel Certificate as the equivalent of a degree. In 1912 she received a letter from F.W. Jowett, M.P., from whom she had previously requested a list of the local education authorities which recognised the National Froebel Union certificate. It is interesting to note that she used the direct approach to a Member of Parliament in her attempts to acquire information, an echo of Margaret McMillan's personally led deputation to the then Home Secretary

against the half-time system in 1895, and a tactic which was to bring her into conflict with her employing authority in the 1930s. Following receipt of Miriam's original request Mr Jowett had asked a question in the House of Commons concerning the National Froebel Union certificates:-

"Mr Jowett asked the President of the Board of Education if he will give a list of the education committees in England and Wales who recognise the certificates of the National Froebel Union and give increased remuneration to recompense members of their teaching staff for the expense and labour of qualifying for these certificates; and the amount of the increase of remuneration in each case.

Mr J A Pease: I am afraid that I have not any information at my disposal which would enable me to give the Hon. Member the facts he desires, and I could not obtain it without circularising every education authority." (34)

On 10th July 1912 Mr Pease followed up his Parliamentary written answer with a letter to Mr Jowett and a copy of this letter was evidently passed on to Miriam Lord. It reiterated the contents of the written answer and went on to say

"that under our code a person who has passed the Examination for the Elementary or Higher Certificate of the National Froebel Union may be recognised as an Uncertified Teacher in Infants Schools or Divisions and in Schools for Blind and Deaf Children, but it would be impossible for us on the applications for recognition under this Section to say what authorities recognise the Certificate and pay allowances in respect of it." (35)

In his own reply to Miriam's letter Mr Jowett informed her that the President of the Board of Education had not seemed inclined to help them gather a list of the education

committees who recognised the Froebel Union certificate. He went on to say that he would try and see the President at a later date but, in the meantime, he recommended that after consultation with friendly (presumably socialist) members of the local education committee, Miriam went on with the information that she had already acquired. (36)

It would appear that she followed this advice because in her papers there is a draft, in her own handwriting, of a submission to be made to the members of the Bradford Education Committee requesting that they grant recognition in their scale of salaries to teachers holding certificates of the National Froebel Union. The draft also includes a list (with alterations and corrections) of the education committees who already recognised the certificates. The actual submission to the Education Committee mentioned the names of the twenty four Bradford teachers who held certificates from the National Froebel Union (among them Miriam Lord), listed the Education Committees which did recognise the Froebel certificate for salary purposes, and gave a brief description of the curriculum followed by Froebel students, stating that

"No other course of study prepares so definitely for the special work of training young children, whilst ensuring at the same time a broad education and general culture."

The submission terminated as follows:-

"Should the Bradford Education Committee decide to grant an advance in salary to teachers who hold these certificates, much encouragement would be given to young teachers to equip themselves

specially for their difficult and important task of training young children." (37)

Although it would seem from her papers that Miriam Lord was actively involved in the research which preceded the composition of this submission, nevertheless she does not appear as a signatory, but is merely quoted as a holder of the certificate. However, her headmistress, Alice Lister, in her position as honorary secretary of the Bradford branch of the Froebel Society, was one of the ten signatories.

The lobbying by the Bradford Froebel Society resulted in this question of recognition of the National Froebel Union certificates for salary purposes being brought before the Bradford Education Committee in 1913. The Director of Education for the city provided the committee with explanatory notes followed by his suggestions for the issues which the committee should debate. These read as follows:-

"There are two grades of certificate - elementary and higher.

Course for the Elementary Certificate

Knowledge of Child Nature. Practice of Education in Kindergarten and Transition Classes. Class Teaching. Blackboard Drawing. Nature Knowledge. Educational Handwork. Singing. (One year's work).

Course for the Higher Certificate

Part 1 - Literature. Nature Knowledge. Elementary Mathematics. Geography. Child Hygiene. Singing.  
Part 2 - Principles of Education. Practice of Education. History of Education. Class Teaching. Blackboard Drawing. Educational Handwork. (Two year course).

The fee for the elementary certificate is £2.2s.0d., and for each part of the higher certificate £2.2s.0d. Some other Authorities recognise these certificates in various ways.

Suggestions for Bradford:-

- a) For the Elementary Certificate, that the class and examination fees be returned, if the candidate is successful, and a bonus of two guineas to be paid.

b) For the Higher Certificate, that the class and examination fees be paid, if the candidate is successful, and that an annual payment of £3 or £5 be made; the maximum salary according to the grade of the teacher being regarded as higher than ordinarily to the same amount. Payment of the class and examination fees is not to be made retrospective.

The course of training is eminently suitable for teachers, especially in Infants' Schools, and the expenditure on the part of the Committee in encouraging teachers to obtain the Certificates ought to improve generally the methods of teaching." (38)

The Education Committee resolved that the recommendations made by their Director of Education be adopted, taking the higher figure of £5 as the amount to be added to the annual salary. This is the same figure as the annual increments paid to Miriam Lord at that time. The resolution was to be put into operation on 1 April 1913. (39) The Director of Education duly sent a communique dated 14 April 1913 to the city's head teachers, a copy of which was passed on to Miriam and was kept with her personal papers.

This acknowledgement by Bradford Education Committee, and by some other education committees, of the validity of the certificate of the National Froebel Union for salary purposes was, as we have seen, given without any support from the Board of Education. It is evident therefore that in 1913 Bradford was in the vanguard as far as a progressive attitude towards education was concerned, and that Miriam Lord was among those active in encouraging this progressive outlook.



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27. Ibid.
28. History of Whetley School, Centenary Magazine, June 1874-1974, T. Duxbury. Bradford Reference Library.
29. History of Education in Bradford, 1870-1970, Bulletin 5. Bradford Reference Library.

30. Obituary of Alice Lister, Yorkshire Observer, 28 February 1927. Bradford Reference Library.
31. Op. cit., History of Whetley School.
32. Bradford Education Committee, Official Journal, Nos. 110-164, January 1923 to December 1927. Bradford Reference Library.
33. Log Book, Whetley Lane First School, Whetley Lane, Bradford.
34. Hansard, Official Report, 5th series, Parliamentary Debates, Commons 1912, Vol. XL, June 24 to July 12, written answers 4 July 1912.
35. Copy letter held in the Miriam Lord collection of private papers. Bradford Archives.
36. Correspondence from F.W. Jowett, M.P., Miriam Lord collection of private papers. Bradford Archives.
37. Draft paper of research carried out by Miriam Lord, held in the collection of her private papers. Bradford Archives. The local authorities which are quoted as giving additional remuneration to holders of the National Froebel Certificate as follows:-  
  
Stretford, Widnes, Southend, Pontypridd, Huddersfield, Manchester, Coventry, Swinton, Pendlebury, Nottingham, Liverpool, Wallasey, Salford, Chadderton, Oldham, Croydon, Barry, Halifax, West Ham, West Riding of Yorkshire, Bury, Wolverhampton and Bootle.

38. Report dated 18 March 1913 from the City of Bradford, Education Report for the twelve months ended 13 July 1913. Bradford Reference Library.
39. City of Bradford Education Minutes, 1912-1913. Bradford Reference Library.

## **CHAPTER THREE: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING -**

**1914 - 1921**

The Consultative Committee in its Report of 1908 had acknowledged that there was a need to provide supervision and care for the children under five years of age of working parents. The First World War was to exacerbate the problem of adequate child care provision, particularly after the introduction of conscription in 1917. Women were required to work in a wide range of jobs traditionally done by men - the munitions factories, especially, needed large numbers of women to manufacture the ordnance being consumed in vast quantities at the front. And yet, whilst the need was apparent and recognised, provision was slow to follow.

It has to be remembered that prior to 1914

"The state interfered little in the lives of the people. The prevailing philosophy of nineteenth century Britain was laissez-faire, or non-intervention. The nation's housing was provided by private landlords; its businesses were those of private enterprise. The upper and middle classes professed the ideals of liberalism, priding themselves on their freedom to advance themselves by initiative, thrift and self-help. For the poor, the price of this advancement often had to be paid in long hours, low wages and sub-standard housing." (1)

When the war broke out the politicians' initial response to the extra demands being placed on the country's resources was in keeping with the non-interventionist attitude described above - they tried to muddle through with what was already available. In the schools, despite enlisting the services of "married women, retired teachers and

anyone else who had sufficient educational qualifications" (2), classes became larger, many boys' schools had to be staffed mainly with women, and standards of attainment were lowered. Where school buildings were scarce because many were requisitioned by the military,

"local education authorities were forced to use Sunday Schools, places of worship and public halls. Some training colleges had to seek temporary premises. In some areas a double shift system had to be adopted." (3)

Typically, the seriousness of the situation was camouflaged by the Board of Education - their Report for 1914-1915 alleged that by curtailing instruction in this way, the minds of the teachers and pupils were concentrated on essential matters, and quoted one instance of a headmaster who was so convinced of the merits of the new regime that he would not object to going on with it after the war was over. (4) But as the war dragged on, it became increasingly difficult to continue with ad hoc arrangements.

On 13 May 1915 Mr J A Pease, President of the Board of Education, stated in the House of Commons that

"The demand for women workers in many directions has produced also a demand for women who have babies or very small children in their homes. One of the great social dangers in the country has been that these children should not be properly provided for when their mothers were at work. By a system of creches which have been supported by the Board of Education, and by Grants, we are doing a very good work. We now have seventy-seven institutions in the country." (5)

Grants were also available from 1 April 1915 for day nurseries. These had been held out by the Board of Education as being nursery schools when it had authorised the cutting down of infant school places. Mr Joseph King, Liberal M.P. for North Somerset, queried why the nursery schools as then authorised were in no way a fulfilment of the offer made at the time of the decrease in infant school places. Mr Pease failed to answer the question, continued to refer to the day nurseries as nursery schools and stated that local education authorities could give grants to them if they were established in connection with elementary schools. (6) Later in the same year, in response to another question from Mr King, Mr Lewis, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, stated that

"Under the Board's Regulations day nurseries are intended primarily for young children under three years of age, but children over three may be admitted if proper provision can be made for them. A number of nursery schools, specially intended for the care of children over three years of age, have been established by voluntary agencies in different parts of the country, but no Grant is paid in respect of them. No provision is made by local authorities for children between three and five except in public elementary schools." (7)

where, of course, admission was entirely at the discretion of the local authority.

As the war continued into 1916 the difficulties in financing it increased. Under pressure from the Board of Education, local education authorities looked for ways to contain their expenditure which would, in turn, contain the amount of grant payable by the Board. In July 1916 it was admitted by the then President of the Board, Arthur

Henderson, (a Labour M.P.) that although local education spending and the spending of the Board had increased during the war, the one area where a "serious and substantial reduction in the expenditure on education" had taken place was in the exclusion from elementary school of children under the age of five. (8) But in that same year, 1916, the Ministry of Reconstruction was established. Its role was to plan the transition from war to peace conditions, and education would be one of the main issues under debate. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, offered the position of President of the Board of Education, and a seat in the Cabinet, to H A L Fisher, an Oxford historian, who was at the time Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University.

The logistics required to conduct the war at the front and to keep the Army supplied from this country meant that the laissez-faire philosophy described earlier was no longer appropriate. The previous Liberal Government had shown some awareness, in the years 1908 to 1911, of the changing social climate by introducing means-tested old age pensions and limited insurance schemes against ill-health and unemployment. But Lloyd George's wartime Liberal Government was forced to counter increasing disaffection with the war and growing social unrest by pursuing more interventionist policies in which education "would have priority as a chief means of promoting in social life that equality of condition with which men now faced death on the battlefield." (9)

The period leading up to the publication of Fisher's first Education Bill in August 1917 was one of intense debate, both in Parliament and in the country. In April 1917 Fisher announced that he intended to empower the local education authorities to establish



nursery schools for children under the age of five, to which Mr R McNeill, Unionist M.P. for the St Augustine Division of Kent, responded

"I am afraid that in this country the kindergarten system which must be applied to children of that age in some form or other, has been far too much a mere amateur playground, or an ill-considered, unthought-out mixture of play and elementary lessons, rather than any real contribution to the whole scheme of education of which the kindergarten ought to be a part ... I want to ask the Right Honourable Gentleman whether his improvement and reform of education is going to embrace any reform of method." (10)

This immediate reaction from Mr McNeill showed that there were known and identified shortcomings in kindergarten teaching as hitherto practised in this country.

In Manchester, the Professor of Education and Director of the Department of Education at the University, H Bompas-Smith, held a special conference on nursery schools on 16 June 1917. The next month he followed up this conference with an article entitled 'A National System of Nursery Schools - an Opportunity and a Danger' in which he alleged that of all the deaths in England and Wales in the period 1911-1914 more than 25% were of children under the age of five. He went on to describe the intellectual and emotional impairment of those children who did survive in bad social conditions, and called for an integrated approach commencing with infant welfare centres and day nurseries for children under 2½ or 3, passing on to nursery schools for 3-6 year olds, and then elementary schools for the over 6s. In describing the nursery school Professor Bompas-Smith stressed that its principal responsibility should be to give

the children "persons and things to love", working through its own "atmosphere of loving care and comradeship" in conjunction with "the mothers and other members of the children's families". Thus, the nursery school should be of a size which would enable the teacher to have an intimate knowledge of all the children and their homes, say not more than forty children to one teacher and a helper, and should be integrated into the local community. He expressed his anxiety that the nursery schools proposed in the Education Bill might be organised along fundamentally wrong principles and emphasised that a national system of nursery schools would require

"for its efficient working a new method of selecting and training teachers, a new spirit in educational administration, a more extended use of voluntary help, including that of parents, and a new conception of what a school should be ... it would assuredly prove a powerful instrument of social regeneration." (11)

Professor Bompas-Smith and Grace Owen, Chairman and Honorary Secretary to the Manchester conference respectively, also published the resolutions adopted by the conference and appealed for support from advocates of nursery schools for a deputation to the Board of Education and the Local Government Board. The resolutions were as follows:-

1. That further provision should be made for the education of children under five.
2. That this education should be given in small centres closely connected with the children's homes.
3. That all efforts for the care of children under school age should be co-ordinated by the establishment of child welfare centres, including schools for mothers, day

nurseries and nursery schools.

4. That it is important to preserve the continuity of the education of the children during the various periods of development.
5. That nursery schools teachers should be trained specially for the work, and that they should be regarded as fully trained only if they have completed at least a two years' course of training in an approved institution.
6. That such fully qualified nursery school teachers should rank on an equality with trained certificated teachers in public elementary schools.
7. That these resolutions should be pressed upon the attention of the Board of Education and the Local Government Board by means of a deputation. (12)

The concepts, as expressed in these resolutions, that a co-ordinated approach to both child care and children's education should be adopted, and that nursery education should be closely aligned with the children's home environment, were the result of new thinking and had not been previously expressed in the 1908 Consultative Report.

In the following month, August 1917, the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, Dr George Newman, presented his Report for 1916 to the Board. He included in the Report a special section in which he dealt with nursery schools. In this he revealed that school medical thinking on this subject was in agreement with educational opinion as represented by Bompas-Smith. (13)

When Fisher introduced his Education Bill in the House of Commons in August

1917, he stated that he wished to encourage the establishment of nursery schools for children under five and that he would empower the local education authorities to raise the age of admission to elementary school to six as soon as there was an adequate supply of nursery schools in the area. He agreed that "at four or five years sleep and play are more important than letters", and hoped that the nursery schools, at which attendance would be voluntary and aided from the local rates, would more often than not be of the open air type. Despite his best intentions it is noticeable that there is still a marked degree of tentativeness in these proposals in that neither the provision of nursery schools nor attendance at them would be compulsory, nor is there any reference to a co-ordinated approach to education as expressed in the Manchester conference resolutions. Fisher's first Education Bill was withdrawn because of objections to it from various quarters, but principally from the Northern textile manufacturers because of the proposals to abolish the half-time system and to raise the school leaving age to fourteen. These proposals combined with a scheme of compulsory part-time education for all fourteen to eighteen year olds meant that the textile mills would be noticeably deprived of a source of cheap labour. A second Bill was presented in January 1918 which was the same in all essentials as the first, with the proposals relating to nursery education remaining intact. Clause 19 of the Bill, which reached the statute book in August 1918, gave discretionary permission to local education authorities to provide or aid nursery schools for which they might receive grants from the Board of Education, but no great lead was given in that no real pressure was placed upon the local authorities. The onus

was entirely with the local representatives. Fisher himself glossed over this weakness by asserting that

"the (Education) Department looked forward to a period of voluntary experiment applied to this education of the very young ... They wanted a great deal of free experiment. The Education Department had not yet completely made up its mind as to what the ideal nursery school should be, how it should be arranged, how far it was desirable to have uniformity, what was the best type of building ... A number of problems were not yet settled, and he desired, therefore, to see a period of free experiment." (14)

In the following year, 1919, the Board of Education issued its Regulations for Nursery Schools, which included a lengthy Prefatory Memorandum setting out the conditions for recognising such schools and for paying grants towards the cost of their maintenance.

Bradford was already poised to take advantage of the discretionary permission and in view of the city's previous record as a pioneering authority where social and educational provision was concerned, it is not surprising that Bradford was again at the forefront of this "experimentation".

In June 1915 the local authority had begun a policy of trying "to continue the supervision of child life from the period of infancy to the time of entering school."(15) In the same year a special sub-committee of the Health Committee resolved that a municipal creche be set up in a working class district of the city, and the same committee also resolved that powers should be sought in the next Bill which the Council was to promote in Parliament to compel owners and occupiers of textile factories to arrange for the care of infants under three years of age when their mother was working

in the factory. (16) When Professor Bompas-Smith convened his conference on nursery schools in July 1917 two co-opted members of the Education Committee, Miss Margaret Law and Mrs Enid Burnley, attended the conference. They reported back to the elementary education sub-committee on 4th July 1917 and a resolution was passed asking them to prepare and submit for consideration at a subsequent meeting a definite scheme for the establishment of a nursery school in Bradford. (17)

At this juncture the Bradford branch of the Froebel Society stepped up its lobbying and in January 1918 presented their suggestions regarding nursery schools to the Bradford Education Committee in the form of a letter signed by the officers of the branch including Miriam Lord's headmistress, Alice Lister, as Hon. Secretary. (18)

The letter urged that though attendance might be voluntary, there should be general and adequate provision of Nursery Schools for all children from 2 to 6 years of age, not just for children from poorer districts. It stressed that children should complete their sixth year in the nursery school, whilst in poor districts where the intellectual development of children was often retarded, the age might well be raised to seven years. The age range was in keeping with Fisher's original ideas for his Education Bill but the concept that these schools should be available to all was not. Starting with the 1908 Report of the Consultative Committee, in official circles it had always been accepted that the nursery school was a response to the problem of provision of care for the unsupervised children of working parents. The Bradford Froebel Society letter echoed Fisher's submission that there was ample room for experiments in different types of schools, with each small

group of streets perhaps having its own nursery school similar to the houses in which the children lived, but with ampler accommodation and better hygienic conditions. In this way the nursery schools might well become centres of social regeneration for the neighbourhood if maintained in close and sympathetic connection with the surrounding homes. (This idea of a close relationship with the children's environment and the possibilities for social regeneration offered by nursery education replicates the beliefs expressed by Bompas-Smith's Manchester conference.) The letter also proposed that existing infants' schools could also be transformed into nursery schools and every encouragement should be given to those infant schools in which the right spirit prevailed. Where schools had to be newly provided the open-air type was obviously the most desirable. This harks back to the 1908 Report which, whilst it had concentrated wholly on the moral advantages of nursery education and had omitted to consider its social implications, nevertheless the Consultative Committee had come to the same conclusion that children of pre-infant school age should "have plenty of games and free play in the open air whenever possible." (19)

Like the 1908 Report the Froebel Society advocated that thirty children was the maximum optimum size of one class, but the Froebel submission also considered it to be important that the schools themselves should not be too large and suggested that the maximum number of children in any nursery school should not exceed one hundred. The additional help in the form of a woman attendant was to be supernumerary as far as the Froebel Society was concerned, whereas the 1908 Report had conceded that a

teacher who had the assistance of a school-help could be allowed a rather larger class.

Both the Report and the Society believed that nursery schools should be staffed by well qualified teachers of full status, holding either a certificate from the Board of Education, or the Higher Certificate of the National Froebel Union, who had received special training or possessed experience in dealing with young children, and who should give special attention to practical hygiene and the physical side of education. The Society emphasised that the qualified teachers should be assisted by an adequate staff, with the proportion of qualified teachers being not less than three to each hundred children. It also made the additional point that nursery schools might well provide training and practice for student teachers who wished to prepare for such work, and also for senior girls taking a course in Mothercraft. The training of these older pupils would further increase the need for a properly qualified staff. The letter from the Bradford Froebel Society acknowledged that facilities would be needed to supplement the previous training of existing teachers, and stated that in that respect Bradford offered unique opportunities. By co-ordination between the Education and Health Authorities, short intensive courses of training could be arranged. Both the 1908 Report and the 1918 letter urged that the sanitary arrangements should be ample, and should be such that they afforded adequate provision for the training of children in cleanliness and good personal habits. Both made the same recommendations with regard to equipment, gardens and floor coverings, and they were both equally agreed on the necessity to exclude all formal lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic.



The 1908 Report of the Consultative Committee had provided the basis for educational debate on the subject of nursery education during the years following its publication. However, shortcomings in the nation's welfare provision had been revealed by the experiences of the First World War, and by the later stages of the war a more direct link was being made between nursery education and the social advantages which would flow from it. Thus, it is noticeable, both in the resolutions passed by the 1917 Manchester conference and in the Froebel Society's 1918 letter to the Bradford Education Committee, which reiterated and developed the ideas put forward by that conference, that there is more emphasis being placed on the social advantages which would accrue from a programme of nursery education.

The Bradford letter came before the Elementary Education Sub-Committee in April 1918 where it was resolved that the two committee members who had attended the Bompas-Smith conference in Manchester the previous year, Miss Law and Mrs Burnley, and another co-opted member, Mrs Barker, should form a special sub-committee together with Aldermen Cash and Conway and Councillors Guy and Parker. The new sub-committee was to report back after considering the contents both of the letter received from the Froebel Society and of another letter on the same subject which had been sent by the Bradford Maternity Care Committee. (20) Miriam Lord herself stated that following the permissive clause in the 1918 Act which enabled local authorities to set up nursery schools, Bradford was the first to act. (21) Thus, even before the Act reached the statute book, the question of nursery education in Bradford was coming up

in both the elementary and nursery sub-committee meetings during 1918, but with no decisions being made. The Education Committee Report for the year ending 31 July 1918 gave credence to the seriousness of its intent by outlining the following future action:-

"The exploration of the city with a view to the selection of the most suitable district or districts in which to make provision for Nursery Schools. In some cases accommodation may be found in buildings outside the schools; in others, in the existing Infants' Schools." (22)

As it happened, an offer of premises, already altered and repaired as required, was placed before the elementary sub-committee meeting in December 1918. The offer was made by the Foundation Managers of St Ann's School in Broom Street and invited the education authority to exercise their powers under Section 19 of the 1918 Act.

Approval was given subject to the premises being visited by the sub-committee to consider their suitability. (23)

By January 1919 it had been resolved to establish nursery schools both at St Ann's School and at the Mothers' Club in Wakefield Road, subject to the conclusion of satisfactory financial arrangements. (24) In March of that year reports on visits to the Rachel McMillan School in Deptford and a school in Darlington were considered, and it was resolved that arrangements should be made for visits to the McMillan school by any members of the Committee who wished to avail themselves of the opportunity. It was further resolved and authority was to be given for the establishment of nursery schools in Bradford as soon as possible along the general lines of the McMillan school. The

decision having finally been made, the sub-committee also resolved to arrange a meeting between themselves and the Bradford infants' teachers to ask for volunteers for service in the new nursery schools. At the same time, the Scholarships and Grants-in-Aid sub-committee was requested to consider arrangements for sending selected students for training in nursery school work. (25)

By this time Miriam Lord was no longer in Bradford to see at first hand the culmination of the lobbying which she and her colleagues in the local branch of the Froebel Society had been carrying on over several years. Despite the difficulties in staffing the schools which had been caused by the outbreak of war and which had been exacerbated by the introduction of conscription in 1917 (see supra), remarkably, Miriam was able to leave Whetley Lane school on 30 September 1918, before the conclusion of the war, to embark on a period of further training. However, she kept in touch with developments in Bradford, a private letter written to her on 3 April 1919 by a colleague and personal friend, Miss Annie Mallison, conveying the agenda and the atmosphere of the meeting between the sub-committee and the teachers.

"I do wish you could have gone to that meeting - How Mr Parker and Mr Pickles are going to get things moving! It is amazing - Just the things you wanted a year ago and they wouldn't listen to now they are prepared to do and do quickly." (26)

Presumably the reference to Miriam's advocacy of a year previously relates to the research which she had helped to undertake for the Froebel Society letter and the lobbying which followed its submission to the Education Committee. The Mr Parker

and Mr Pickles referred to in Annie Mallison's letter are Councillor Louis Parker and Alderman Alfred Pickles who were not in fact members of the Elementary Schools Sub-Committee but were Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively of the Education Committee itself. (27)

On 2 April 1919 the Yorkshire Observer had reported that the Bradford Education Committee were engaged in drawing up a blue-print for education in the city in response to the requirements of the 1918 Education Act. Describing the consultative process going on at the time the newspaper recorded the views of Councillor Parker who stated the willingness of members of the committee to accept suggestions from any quarter whatsoever if these would improve the committee's plans.

"I reckon that within the next six months there will be a mild revolution in our educational methods in Bradford, on the lines of the open-air nursery school. We have come to the conclusion that Miss Margaret McMillan had completely cleared the way for the holding of the nursery schools in the open air. Various members of the committee have visited her Deptford schools, and everyone has come away convinced that it is the proper thing to do.

We have already visited ten sites in Bradford. We have two sites of our own that are suitable. A resolution has been passed that we proceed forthwith to establish open-air nursery schools, and to secure for any of the infant teachers who volunteer a short course in Miss McMillan's training school. In each of the slums in Bradford we shall plump down a nursery school, with all the facilities for the poor children that the nurseries of the rich provide. I think this is the way to avoid school doctors, school nurses and school clinics. We shall have four or five such schools this year." (28)

The enthusiasm for nursery education displayed by this Liberal councillor is a measure of the sea-change which had taken place among politicians since the total shelving of the 1908 Consultative Committee Report. The collective experience of the First World War, together with a more general increase in awareness of the plight of the working classes, would have been mainly responsible for this change, but the propaganda efforts of individuals like Margaret McMillan and organisations such as the Froebel Society would have played an important role in deciding how this new attitude towards nursery education would be expressed.

The Bradford Education Report to 31 July 1919 revealed that there had been positive developments.

"New premises for Nursery Schools are being provided on the sites of the Council Schools at Lilycroft and Princeville. Plans have been approved and it is hoped that building operations will shortly be commenced. Sites for other Schools have been arranged. Negotiations are proceeding for the use of the site used by the Military Authorities as an Anti-Aircraft Station, Eccleshill, and for the purchase of Huts at present on the site. This site is pleasantly situated and would make an admirable Camp School Centre." (29)

Nevertheless, despite the enthusiasm voiced in the Annual Report of the Education Committee and by its Chairman personally, the nursery schools project in Bradford did meet with some opposition. At a full meeting of the council on 28 October 1919 when the business of the Sites and Works sub-committee was being discussed, Alderman H M Trotter from the Conservative Party proposed an amendment that the tenders amounting to £2,634.1s.1d. for the building of a nursery school in Willowfield

Street be referred back to the committee on the grounds that the building of houses was at that time more important than the building of nursery schools. The amendment was supported by only two other councillors and was lost by 38 votes to 3. (30)

The Report for 1920 was therefore able to record

"The first Nursery School in Bradford has been opened at St Ann's School. Two more schools (Princeville and Lilycroft) are in the course of building, and one of these will probably be opened in the autumn. The St Ann's School has accommodation for 80 children, and there are at present 38 children in attendance. The staff consists of a Head Mistress, an Assistant Mistress, a Nurse, and a Kitchen Help. The meals for the children are sent from the Committee's Feeding Centre (Green Lane), and a charge of 6d. (2½ new pence) per day is made for each child. Children from two to five years of age attend the school.

Miss Chigwell, of the Rachel McMillan Training Centre and Baby Camp, has been appointed to organise Nursery School work in Bradford and to supervise the training of teachers. Seven teachers have been sent by the Committee to the Rachel McMillan Centre, Deptford, for a course of Nursery School Training." (31)

Thus, the size of the first nursery school established in Bradford coincided with the recommendation in the Froebel Society's letter of January 1918 that the maximum number of children in any nursery school should not exceed 100. However, the staffing arrangements, whilst similar in the ratio of staff to number of children, differed in that a nurse was appointed as well as two qualified teachers, instead of the three qualified teachers envisaged by the Froebel Society. The wish that the nursery schools should be of the open-air type was respected both at Princeville and Lilycroft, and the suggestion

that teachers at nursery schools would require further training was also accepted. The age range adopted mirrored the recommendations of the 1918 Act and the Manchester conference, rejecting the Froebel Society submission that children should be accepted into nursery school up to the age of six.

When the first public nursery school in the country outside London was opened in Bradford in 1920 by Margaret McMillan, Miriam Lord herself was no longer in the city. She was to be absent from Bradford for a period of three years, the first year of which she spent at Manchester University as a third year student on an Advanced Course in Education. It is significant and not surprising, in view of her already close association with nursery education, that she chose to undertake additional formal training for her chosen career as a teacher under the direct supervision of Professor Bompas-Smith who was himself already very prominent as a pioneer in this field.

The curriculum for her course covered a wide variety of academic and practical subjects and it also included visits and placements, including one at a hospital, as follows:-

1919 Jan. 3-9 Work at the McMillan Camp.

Jan. 13-24 Visit to London Nurseries.

Jan. 27-30 Visit to Caldecott Community, Kent.

Feb. 1-8 Visit to Birmingham Nurseries.

Undated - Visit to the Nursery Hospital, Barnt Green, Worcestershire.

Summer Term. Medical Course at Manchester Babies' Hospital, Slade Lane,

Manchester which started in April and finished in June 1919.

Other visits included:-

1. The Royal School for the Deaf, Old Trafford, Manchester.
2. The Worrall House School for the Infant Deaf.
3. The Backward Deaf.
4. Henshaw's Blind Asylum, Old Trafford, Manchester.
5. St Joseph's Industrial School, Longsight, Manchester.
6. Auxiliary Home.
7. Ardwick Nursery School. (32)

The nursery school at Ardwick is worthy of further mention for it had been among the early nursery schools established by private effort because of the lack of state funding. Founded in 1915, it was situated in a poor, working class district of Manchester, and had originally been housed in two cottages which had been knocked into one with the back yards altered to provide a playing and sleeping area. The premises were subsequently expanded by taking over neighbouring cottages and carrying out the necessary structural alterations, along the lines which the Froebel Society were to suggest in their 1918 letter to Bradford Education Committee.

The two-month course at the Manchester Babies' Hospital proved to be an unhappy experience for Miriam and she complained bitterly to her tutor about the hours probationer nurses were expected to work and the conditions which they had to tolerate.

(33) She confirmed this in her private notes where she recorded that the:-



"work of probationers in hospital is unrelieved drudgery, monotonous, grinding - the most exhausting work I have done in my life. Feeling of trapped and caged animal. No freedom - even of thought.

Probationers do not speak to doctors or patients.

Every means is taken to keep girls at work. Short holidays - docking of days 'off' - in sickness girls go to report sick and are kept - when changing to night duty girls robbed of time off, e.g. Effie worked from 7.45 till 2.00 p.m. Went to bed. On duty same day from 8.00 p.m. till 7.00 a.m.

Meal hours too short - never leave the block or get a change of atmosphere or air. Human nature goes to the other extreme - repression and monotony leads to desire for sunshine and excitement.

Parents not encouraged. Nurses holiday spent at Hostel - generally stay in bed for a time. Have to go out for meals if they have no friends. Hospital traditions and etiquette a system of repression and "Prussianism" in the exploitation of youth.

System of "seniority" a psychological device for play on human instincts - failings and weakness. Cause of petty jealousies and bullying of juniors." (34)

Miriam was obviously distressed by the conditions she encountered in hospital and was able to analyse their impact on the trainee nurses. There is no definite record but it would seem possible from her papers that, unable to tolerate the conditions, she left the Babies' Hospital before completing the placement.

The University course included visits to day nurseries and a record was kept by Miriam Lord of her observations and impressions of these visits. After a visit to Rosamund St. (West) day nursery she included in her notes her observations on an infant consultation clinic carried out by a Dr Van Ingham. (In 1918 the Maternity and Child Welfare Act had given local authorities the power to provide services for young children

from the time of their birth until the age of attending school. This was a nation-wide provision along the lines that Bradford had already envisaged from 1914 onwards.) She was informed that mothers came very irregularly with their children and apparently did not understand the importance of monthly visits, for they only attended when their child was ill with diarrhoea, sickness, cough or influenza. Their principal concern was to get assistance with obtaining more milk as this seemed to be a luxury. Miriam herself noticed that very few babies had woollen vests, and that mothers appeared to be too ignorant or too poor to be able to dress their babies suitably during the first weeks of their lives. In general, babies' clothes were numerous, but were thin and dirty and the lower parts of their bodies were in many cases unprotected. The mothers were advised by the doctor on the necessity of keeping the back and around the loins warm. On the question of diet, there appears to have been an equal degree of ignorance and she records that mothers were in the habit of giving "butties" (sandwiches) in between meals, although this was strictly forbidden by the doctor. Mothers complained that their child could not eat, did not like milk food, and was not satisfied with only breast milk. She noted the difficulty that existed with cows' milk going sour, and the inability of the mothers to follow the instructions they were given. She also wondered whether the working mothers were themselves on an adequate diet. (35)

Miriam Lord was present at another clinic conducted by a Dr Walsh. On this occasion she recorded that Jewish children were better nourished and had better physiques, this being attributed by the doctor to almost universal breast feeding among

Jewish mothers and to the fact that they did not go out to work which seemed to have a beneficial effect during the pre-natal period. She observed that Jewish mothers tended to be extremely affectionate and emotional, whereas non-Jewish mothers mostly went out to work and frequently asked the doctor for permission to be given for children to stay away from school, usually so that they could be used to run errands or to help in the house. She noted that there was an additional difficulty in making informed judgements because the information given by the parents proved to be hardly ever reliable. At this clinic too she saw that the clothing worn by some of the children was mostly thin and dirty, that attendance at the clinic was again irregular, and that parents seemed incapable of understanding instructions and carrying them out. (36)

Experiences of this nature must have reinforced Miriam Lord's views on the need to improve the actual physical environment of the working class poor, and to extend educational provision so that they would then be able to take advantage of the improvements achieved. Mothercraft classes for the mothers of nursery school children would be high on the agenda when she eventually had her own school in Bradford.

In the meantime, the Manchester University course encompassed not only visits and placements to aid students to understand the needs and the development of the nursery school child, but also required the completion of a project. Miriam chose to focus on nursery education and she sent out a questionnaire to various local authorities. It enquired about their educational provision for the under fives, the number of infants' schools and the sizes of their classes, whether their Education Committees organised any

nursery schools and if so, whether they were run on open-air lines. Nine local authorities and the London County Council all sent replies. (37) Unfortunately, Miriam Lord's private papers do not include the conclusions which she drew from the answers received, merely the fact that the local authorities listed took the trouble to respond, but her choice of topic for the project did illustrate her continuing and increasing concern with the subject of nursery education.

On completion of her course at Manchester University Miriam was provided with a reference by Professor Bompas-Smith. Dated 12 July 1919 it read as follows:-

"Miss Miriam Lord spent the session 1918-1919 at this University as a Third Year Student under the Regulations of the Board of Education, and devoted herself to the study of methods of teaching young children. During the Michaelmas Term she attended various courses of lectures and spent two days a week in the Rosamund Street Day Nursery. She also paid weekly visits to the Outpatients' Department of the Northern Hospital for Children during the Michaelmas and Lent terms and during the latter term practised in the Salford Nursery School.

Besides the lectures on the more general aspects of education, she took courses on Child Welfare, Social Psychology and Gardening. During January Miss Lord stayed in London and Birmingham visiting many schools and institutions that care for the welfare of very young children. A fortnight of that time was spent in residence at Miss McMillan's Camp School at Deptford.

Miss Lord has worked with enthusiasm and zeal and has studied the problem of the Nursery School from many sides. At the hospital her devotion to the children under her care was very marked. We believe that Miss Lord is ready for responsible and pioneer work, in which her decided gift for organisation would find an appropriate field." (38)

Mentioned in this glowing reference from one of the most important figures in

the burgeoning field of nursery education are visits to London and Birmingham. Miriam had applied for a grant of £15 from Bradford Education Committee to assist with expenses incurred in carrying out these visits. The grant was awarded on condition that she took up a post with Bradford at the end of her course. In fact, she failed to keep to this undertaking for reasons which are not explained in her private papers nor any other source. Instead of returning to Bradford, she took a position as a temporary junior lecturer at Edge Hill Training College, Liverpool, for a period of four months from 1 September 1919 (39) before going on to become headmistress of Morley Memorial Infants' School, Cambridge in January 1920.

Morley Memorial Primary School opened in Cambridge on 15 January 1900, its log book recording that there were 40 pupils on the register by the end of the first week. The school building consisted of three classrooms with interconnecting doors, together with a large hall which was also used for the teaching of cookery and woodwork. Although building work on new premises did not start until early in 1906, an Infants' Department, with 44 children, opened in 1903 with consequent inconvenience and overcrowding. The school had a reputation for being in the vanguard of educational provision from the date of its opening:-

"It is probably the only school of its kind in England, and it may be questioned whether even in the United States there is a more liberal provision made for the child being brought into contact with all that can awaken the imagination, arouse the sense of admiration for the beautiful, and give sound instruction in the rudiments of things than in this Cambridge suburban school." (40)

However, neither the reputation of the school nor the career opportunities which it might offer were sufficient to keep Miriam Lord in her post for longer than fifteen months, for on 18 April 1921 she became the first headmistress of Lilycroft Open Air Nursery School in Bradford. By the time she had finished her course at Manchester University in the summer of 1919 the decision had already been taken in Bradford to build new nursery schools at Lilycroft and Princeville. There would of course be a time lag between the taking of the decision and the availability of the new, purpose-built premises. It cannot be accidental that Miriam chose to fill this time by taking up firstly, a merely temporary post at Edge Hill Training College, a curious career move for someone whose primary interest was already in nursery education and secondly, an apparently prized post as head of a prestigious infants' school where she stayed only fifteen months. The conclusion has to be drawn that these moves were made with the sole intention of further widening her experience, and then being available for the post of Superintendent at one of the two new nursery schools in Bradford. There is no evidence that this was done with the connivance of Bradford Education Committee to which she was after all committed to return at the end of the Manchester University course, but this has to be a subject for conjecture. What is certain is that in April 1921 she returned to continue her teaching career in the city where she had been born thirty six years earlier.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY YEARS AT LILYCROFT 1921-1925

Miriam Lord's return to Bradford coincided with the fall of the Geddes "axe". The "axe" was the Committee on National Expenditure under the chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes whose function was to examine government expenditure and to make recommendations as to how it could be reduced "to the lowest level consistent with the well-being of the Empire". (1)

The First World War had caused serious disruption to the international trading system and this, in combination with the loss of British markets both to traditional competitors and to new ones, meant that the country's older heavy industries such as mining, iron and steel making, textiles and shipbuilding, which had been artificially stimulated during the war, were over-producing when demand for their products was declining. At the same time, despite the introduction of demobilisation schemes to avoid a flood of soldiers on to the employment market, it was nevertheless inevitable that the return of demobbed servicemen would place an additional strain on a now contracting economy. This contraction was exacerbated by the prevailing financial orthodoxy which believed that budgets should be balanced by curtailing public expenditure and restricting both credit and investment in the traditional as well as the newer industries such as electricity, aircraft and motor vehicles. The amount of money in circulation was reduced, and Bank Rate increased to what was a high rate of 7% p.a. The outcome of these measures was that, after a short post-war boom in trade in 1919/1920, a serious economic depression took hold in 1921. (2)

In January 1921, even prior to the first interim report by the Geddes Committee published in February 1922, the Board of Education had promulgated Circular 1190, the emphasis of which was on the avoidance of spending money on new school buildings by either halting building plans or by adapting existing buildings to serve new requirements. Paragraph 10 in dealing with nursery schools encapsulated the thinking behind the Circular -

"The Board cannot for the present entertain proposals for the establishment of Nursery Schools, except in special circumstances and on an experimental basis, where existing buildings are available."

However, despite giving local education authorities very specific instructions as to the extent of resources at their disposal, the Board also managed to place the onus for delivering what was considered to be an adequate standard of education firmly on the shoulders of the local authorities:-

"While it is the view of the Government that the strictest economy must for the present be exercised in the administration of the public system of education .... if a Local Education Authority fails on its own initiative to take the necessary actions to remedy conditions which bring the schools or their system below a tolerable standard of efficiency, particularly in respect of adequacy of accommodation, (my emphasis) staffing or attention to the physical condition of the children, the Board cannot hesitate to make and insist upon their own requirements."

The issue of Circular 1190 brought protests in the House of Commons - Mr R Richardson, Labour M.P. for Durham, reminded the House of the shortcomings in

education prior to the 1918 Act and went on

"I was glad during the last Session to hear from the Government Bench the statement that no one dreamt or thought of saving money at the cost of education ... We now find that the children are to be attacked. I trust that the Government will seriously reconsider the position ..." (3)

The Central Council of the Workers' Educational Association passed a resolution pointing out that any restrictions postponing the full operation of the 1918 Education Act would "degrade education below the inadequate standards prevailing before the war."

(4) Such protests were to no avail for when the first Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure was published in February 1922 it turned out to be a strong attack on overspending in education and advised that between £15,000,000 and £18,000,000, or approximately one third, should be cut from education expenditure.

The Committee recommended that teachers' salaries and superannuation allowances should be subject to "sharp revision", that the size of classes should be increased and also advocated the raising of the age of compulsory attendance. (5) However, the

recommendations of the Geddes Committee had to some extent been pre-empted by

Circular 1190 and by August 1922 Herbert Fisher, still President of the Board of

Education, was able to report that

"Local Education Authorities generally have made serious endeavours to effect such economies as are possible consistently with maintaining the efficiency of the public system of education." (6)

The impact of the economic crisis on nursery education was marked. In 1921, shortly after the issue of Circular 1190, the number of nursery schools open or about to open was 23. As a consequence of the circular, 12 proposals for the establishment of new nursery schools were either refused by the Board of Education or withdrawn by the local education authorities themselves. (7) A year later only 25 schools were open and Fisher was forced to concede that

"the cost of conducting nursery schools under Section 19 of the Education Act 1918 has been engaging my attention. I should be very glad if the cost could be so reduced so as to allow of their more general provision, but I am afraid that, quite apart from such portion of the expenditure as is attributable to the employment of certificated teachers, the cost per head is high." (8)

Of the 23 schools that were open in 1921 three were in Bradford, a figure equalled or surpassed only by Manchester also with three and London with nine, according to the statistics given in the same written answer in the House of Commons. However, because provision of nursery schools by local authorities was discretionary and because they attracted only a 50% grant from the Board of Education, there were inevitable rumblings about the cost of education in Bradford from one of its Conservative M.P.s, Mr P B Ratcliffe, who pointed out that the cost per capita in 1913-1914 had been £6.10s. (£6.50) whereas in 1921-1922 the estimated cost per capita was £9.10s. (£9.50), despite the school population being reduced to 42,953 from the pre-war figure of 46,621. (9) One factor in this increase in the per capita cost would be the higher cost of providing nursery education in the three nursery schools. One of these

was the new and purpose-built Lilycroft Open Air School. The Staff Sub-Committee of the Education Committee had interviewed three applicants for the position of head teacher on 21 March 1921. Miriam Lord was their chosen appointee. (10)

In many respects Lilycroft Open Air Nursery School adhered closely to the recommendations of Clause 19 of the Education Act of 1918. In its design the building was of the single storey type with the walls on the south side formed by glass, folding doors and a veranda with a glass roof running the entire length of the building. Outside, and adjoining the veranda, were a broad asphalt run, lawns, garden borders and, finally, children's gardens. The playrooms were large and bright and faced the garden and trees. The bathroom was supplied with hot and cold running water and there was a miniature swimming bath and showers. As recommended by the Board of Education, each child was allocated a separate peg with towel, toothbrush and toilet accessories. The kitchen, cloakroom and offices were all situated at the rear of the building and adjoining the elementary school. The school drew children from varying social backgrounds because it was located in an area of closely constructed back-to-back terraced houses dominated by Lister's Mill, but within half a mile was Heaton, one of the best residential suburbs of Bradford. Most of the children's parents were in fact connected with the mill, but they covered the whole range of occupations from labourers to managers. (11) So whilst the school had been built in a poor, working class area in keeping with the national philosophy of making public nursery education available only for the children of poor parents, Lilycroft rather bucked the trend in that some of its

children could not be described as needy in the then prevailing meaning of the word.

The admission and discharge of the children at Lilycroft closely followed the guidelines laid down under Article 1 (b) of the Regulations of Clause 19 of the 1918 Act which stated:-

"...a child may not be admitted before the age of two years; but it is desirable that children should begin attending the Nursery School soon after that age ... The Board anticipate that for the present at all events all children will usually leave the Nursery School at the age of five or more conveniently at the end of the term in which they attain that age. In exceptional circumstances however, it will no doubt be desired to retain children over the age of five." (12)

The majority of children attending Lilycroft were between two to three years of age and five. However, contrary to the expectations of the 1918 Act which foresaw that the age of admission to elementary school would rise to six as nursery school provision increased, by September 1924 Bradford Education Committee was holding a conference with all the head teachers of the three schools where there were both infants and nursery schools on the same site. The conference recommended that the age at which children should be admitted to the infants' schools from the nursery schools should be reduced from 4½ to 4, a proposal which was agreed by the Elementary Education Sub-Committee. (13) The records do not contain an explanation of this decision - we can only suppose that as the amount of nursery school accommodation in the city was obviously insufficient to meet the demand, dilution of the principle of nursery education by removing the older children to the infants' classes was the easiest available remedy.



Both Lilycroft and the nursery school at Princeville, which had opened in November 1920, offered accommodation for sixty children. (14) The number of children going to Lilycroft quickly increased from twelve on the day of opening to forty three only four months later. (15) At first, in direct contrast to its later decision in 1924, the Education Committee developed a policy of transferring children who were not progressing satisfactorily at the adjacent infant school into the nursery school so that their physical condition might be improved under the nursery school regime, (16) confirmation that the advantages for children's' health of the open air type of school had already been nationally accepted. In keeping with the recommendations of the Board of Education's Chief Medical Officer, Dr (later Sir) George Newman, a medical inspection was carried out on every child admitted to Bradford's nursery schools. (17) The procedure followed the routine pattern of a thorough medical examination; the data appertaining to the child's health were then entered on his or her medical schedule. Any necessary treatment or medicines would be prescribed, and these would be administered by the nursery school staff. After the initial examination of the children, the school doctor visited once every three weeks for a session lasting all morning, and the school nurse also visited weekly. In addition, a dental examination was carried out by the school dentist. The height and weight of each child was measured and recorded each month. (18)

The diseases and minor ailments encountered among the children at Lilycroft ran the whole gamut from 'nits' to 'rickets'. It was the intention of the Bradford Education

Committee to provide its nursery schools with a well balanced diet as part of the local authority's efforts to promote the health of its children. However, despite the best intentions of the local authority to provide a nutritious, balanced and varied menu (19), in the first six months of its existence a litany of complaints emanated from Lilycroft concerning the poor quality of the ingredients of the meals delivered from the Bradford Municipal Cooking Depot. (This had been set up at Green Lane School in 1907 to supply meals for necessitous children in various schools and dining centres.) The lateness of delivery and the unsuitability of the menu for the weather were also cause for complaint - there were no less than twenty six on the subject of school meals in a six month period. (20)

Article 27 of the Prefatory Memorandum of 1919 had recommended that a nursery school comprising 40-50 children should have a staff of one superintendent (head teacher), one experienced assistant and a probationer teacher. The accommodation at Lilycroft was for 60 children and in 1921, according to Miriam Lord's own records, the staff consisted of the superintendent, one teacher and a housekeeper. Prior to the passing of the 1918 Act the Froebel Society had recommended that the proportion of qualified teachers should be not less than three to each hundred children. On the face of it, therefore, the staffing arrangements for Lilycroft appeared to be adequate. However, in the school diary Miriam observes

"the staffing seems totally inadequate for the number (twenty three) of children. The bathing, lavatory and washing of hands and faces and teaching the children

how to help themselves engages one person almost the whole day. The older ones are getting quite helpful and capable - they are ready to go forward now with more educational work but the staffing is insufficient to divide the children except for a short period ... we all find the work most exacting - most tiring and most strenuous ... We get no rest throughout the day from 8.30 until the children go. We take lunch in turns and sometimes we barely have time to swallow that. We never leave the nursery before 5.30 - 6.00 and many nights it is 7 or 8 before I can get away myself. The ordinary work of Head has to be done after the children leave as every moment of the time whilst the children are in the nursery must be devoted to them ... We are so tired on leaving the Nursery that often we do nothing more than get a meal and go to bed. Anything like walking or tennis etc. would be physically impossible. We have no time or energy left for lectures or intellectual stimulation ... we still hope to find a way through our difficulties - the greatest of which is to keep in sight the educational ideal with which we started in face of the present conditions of staffing." (21)

The effort involved in getting very young children who had been accustomed to a virtually unstructured way of life into a daily routine demanding certain minimum standards of cleanliness had obviously taken its toll on Miriam's idealism within a very short space of time. Nevertheless, she did persist with the ideas which she had brought with her from her academic studies, her training and her association with the Froebel Society. She encouraged parents to participate in the nursery school's activities - a parents' club was held weekly at the school and a mutual help fund came into existence, as well as a savings fund and a clothing and holiday fund. (22) Her efforts in this direction were so successful that the parents offered to augment the salary of one of the teachers (not identified) at Lilycroft. However, the offer was declined by the Special Sub-Committee for Nursery Schools of the Bradford Education Committee who

suggested that the parents might consider providing a piano if they wished to do something for the benefit of the school. (23) Another meeting of the same sub-committee received a letter

"from the Head Teacher stating that parents of children attending this school had very kindly volunteered their services to the Committee as an expression of their gratitude and sincere appreciation of the Nursery School. The women have offered to make and mend and do all the sewing for the Nursery School, and the men have offered to undertake all the gardening and odd joinery work and small repairs. The Sub-Committee decided to accept the offer of the voluntary work, and gave instructions for the Head Teacher to be requested to convey their thanks to the parents concerned." (24)

Miriam Lord also introduced mother craft classes at Lilycroft in 1922. This idea was by no means original for as early as 1910 it had been advocated by Sir Robert Morant,

Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education. He believed that

"a substantial part of the infant mortality in this country every year is directly due to ignorance and incapacity of the mother respecting the conditions necessary to healthy infancy ... Education is concerned with bodies as well as the minds of scholars, and a practical knowledge of the common conditions which affect health and physical efficiency is as necessary a part of the purposes of a school education as intellectual attainment." (25)

Between 1910 when this document was published, and 1921 when Miriam Lord took up her position at Lilycroft, infant mortality had already declined in Bradford.

Nevertheless, in 1921 at 107 deaths per 1000 live births it was still higher than the national average of 80 deaths per 1000 live births. (26) As well as mother craft classes,

a training course in child welfare was arranged at Lilycroft for girls aged 15-16 who attended Miriam's old school, Belle Vue Secondary Girls. The course was voluntary and usually consisted of ten girls forming a 'nursery group'. On a rota basis they attended daily at Lilycroft for practical work under the direct supervision of the nursery school teacher. They were treated as students and took an active part in all the school's activities, except the treatment of medical conditions which they merely observed. The practical work was supplemented by regular lessons and discussions supervised by Miriam Lord herself. The subjects covered by these lessons included topics such as cleanliness, food and the diet of the child, sleep, clothing, common ailments and simple home treatments, and safety in the home. As well as being of benefit to the 'students', the help they gave was most welcome for the nursery school staff, struggling as they were to cope with the demands placed on them by the needs of the children. (27)

Despite the inadequate staffing resources, as they were perceived by Miriam, Lilycroft was deemed to be a success as a nursery school, so much so that it was held out as a model for others, both locally, nationally and internationally. Visitors became a regular feature at the school, and within five months of it being opened, no less than thirty nine official visitors came to look round. This number does not include, however, other visitors such as church representatives, members of political organisations and friends of parents whose children attended the school. (28) The school undoubtedly had novelty value as a forerunner of a more enlightened social welfare policy which had been ushered in by the wars of the first twenty years of the twentieth century. It was

little wonder therefore that at times Miriam tended to feel overwhelmed by all the demands being placed upon her.

For the first three years of its existence Lilycroft Nursery School functioned against the backdrop of severe economic constraint in education. In the financial year commencing 1 April 1923 teachers were subjected to a 'voluntary' reduction of 5% of their gross salaries, a suggestion from the Standing Joint Committee on Teachers' Salaries which the National Union of Teachers had felt obliged to accept. (29) Circular 1190 had effectively brought a halt to the development of nursery education and after the 1923 General Election, although the Conservative Party no longer had an overall majority in the House of Commons (258 seats as against 191 Labour and 158 Liberal), there seemed little prospect of an improvement. In June of the same year those who believed strongly in the benefits of nursery education, both for the individual and for the nation, formed a pressure group known as the Nursery School Association. At the conference which led to the formation of the association those present passed a unanimous resolution which recorded that

"The members of this conference on nursery school education, being workers in and for nursery schools, deplore the slowness of growth of the nursery school movement, and wish to see the public recognition and establishment in our own generation of nursery school education for all children under school age."

The first President of the Nursery School Association was Margaret McMillan and its Honorary Secretary was Grace Owen who had been honorary secretary to the

Manchester conference on nursery education chaired by Professor Bompas-Smith in 1917. By 1923 she was the Principal of the Mather Training College in Manchester where the conference was held. The association had a high-powered collection of Vice-Presidents including three Members of Parliament in the persons of Lady Astor, Mrs Wintringham and Ramsay McDonald. Three years later, in 1926, they would be joined by Bertrand Russell. On formation the stated objectives of the Nursery School

Association were:-

1. To make more widely known the work already achieved by Nursery Schools and their claim to public support, with a view to ensuring that the Clause in the Education Act of 1918 providing for Nursery Schools shall be carried out effectively.
2. By means of forming a strong body of opinion to influence public action as regards Nursery Schools. (30)

There were thirty five founding members, and by the end of 1924 membership had increased to 226 with another 270 belonging to associated groups which gave an approximate total membership of 500. Not surprisingly, with Margaret McMillan as its President, the Association set about achieving its objectives by issuing pamphlets, holding conferences and making representations to the Board of Education and local education authorities. It obtained financial support from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (set up by Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish philanthropist who had made his fortune in the U.S.A.) and, having become an active force in the campaign on behalf of the pre-

school child, established itself as the information and advisory service of the nursery school movement. Both at meetings and in the House of Commons, Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham, Unionist M.P. for the Sutton Division of Plymouth and Independent Liberal for Louth, Lincolnshire respectively, acted as the public voice of the association. (31).

The timing of the formation of the Nursery School Association could not have been more fortuitous. In January 1924 the Prime Minister of the minority Conservative government, Stanley Baldwin, resigned and was replaced by Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister in the country's history and a Vice-President of the Association. Charles Trevelyan, Labour M.P. for Newcastle Central, became President of the Board of Education and within three months of taking office was indicating through his Parliamentary Secretary that he was

"... prepared to consider sympathetically any proposals which may be made to him for the establishment of new nursery schools in suitable localities. The experience of the last few years has shown that it is possible to do useful work in these schools by fairly simple means and without prohibitive expense, and he would be ready to entertain proposals which reach a reasonable standard of usefulness and efficiency." (32)

The lobbying for nursery education in the House of Commons continued throughout the spring and summer of 1924 with one of the Vice-Presidents of the Nursery School Association taking a prominent role. Mrs Wintringham made an impassioned plea for an extension of nursery education during the Supply Committee hearings of the Board of Education on 22 July. After supporting with various statistics her contention that a



quarter of million children had a home life which did not provide for their health and education, she went on:-

"We want to embrace in this work more slum areas, so as to solve the problem of the health of these children as the base. By doing so we will find that in the future these children will be assets, because they will be well-nourished and well-fitted for citizenship instead of being burdens on the community, which there is every tendency for them to become nowadays." (33)

It is noticeable that in this latter contribution the emphasis is still on the health of the young child rather than its education, even though the speaker was closely identified with the nursery school movement.

Encouragement for the establishment of more nursery schools did have some impact. Earlier in the year Trevelyan had stated that only four applications had been sanctioned by the Board since 1 January 1921. (34) By October he was able to report that he had received three proposals since 1 January 1924 and that "one had already been sanctioned, one will, I hope, be sanctioned shortly, and the third is under consideration." (35) But in November 1924 there was another General Election in which the Conservatives won a landslide 413 seats, Labour 150 and the Liberals 40. Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister again and Lord Eustace Percy President of the Board of Education. One of his first acts was to issue Circular 1371 in which he stated that "the Board have (sic) decided ... to ask Local Authorities in this national emergency, to make ... economies." The circular introduced fixed block grants to each local education authority for a minimum of not less than three years from 1 April 1926 -

this would replace the system whereby the Board of Education paid a percentage of local authority expenditure on education, and would therefore give the Board more control over its own expenditure as it would no longer be directly tied to that of the local authority. The grant for elementary education would be equal to the grant payable for 1924-25 less 1%, and would be further reduced by £1.10s. (£1-50) for each child under five on the register on 31 March 1925. This caused uproar in the House of Commons particularly among M.P.s who represented industrial constituencies. The penalty of £1.10s. was referred to as a 'fine', and Lord Percy failed to answer a question as to whether it would be imposed on children under five attending nursery schools. (36)

The re-imposition of economic constraints on the development of all public education coincided with Miriam Lord leaving Bradford again. She had attended the 1923 Manchester conference as a representative of Lilycroft Nursery School, and became a founding member of the Nursery School Association. (37) By February 1924 she was sufficiently involved and esteemed to be asked to serve on one of the sub-committees of the Association, although which one is not specified. (38) The issue of Circular 1371 galvanised both the Association and the Froebel Society, in which she was also active, into further action. The circular had justified the penalty of £1.10s. on children under five attending elementary school by stating that the deduction was

"...proposed on the ground that national funds are at present bearing an undue proportion of the expenditure involved in the full-time attendance at school of very young children. The Board are not, indeed, to be understood as pronouncing a general opinion in regard

to the admission of children under the age of compulsory school attendance, a question which must depend largely on local social conditions. It is a matter for consideration, however, whether the practice of part-time attendance of children up to the age of six might not be extended, in which case considerable savings might be effected."

The purpose of the circular was to transfer a larger proportion of the cost of education from the taxpayer on to the ratepayer, which to educationalists seemed wrong in principle. They also believed that it would prove more difficult to sustain education expenditure if the main decisions on spending were being taken at a local level. Both the Froebel Society and the Nursery School Association were alive to the dangers implicit in the circular for nursery education - as part of its propaganda the Froebel Society re-issued in leaflet form an article written by a teacher in a London slum school in 1916, asserting that "what was stated in 1916 is not only true in 1926 but doubly true, for unemployment and shortage of houses have made slum life even more intolerable than in 1916." (39) The Nursery School Association wrote to all its members in February 1926 that "the very existence of Nursery Schools is now threatened by the present Government's disastrous policy of economy with regard to education" and urged them to take every opportunity of speaking and writing in favour of the establishment of nursery schools in accordance with the 1918 Act. (40)

But Miriam Lord would not be available to lend her support to the campaigns for a whole year because in 1924, even before the election of the Conservative government, she had arranged to go to the U.S.A. In the minutes for the meeting of the Bradford

Education Committee on 2 September there appears the following record:-

"Nursery Schools: Read letter from the Director of the Merrill-Palmer School, Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., asking that Miss Miriam Lord, who is now in charge of the Lilycroft Nursery School, be sent to the above named school on twelve months leave of absence, in order to establish a Nursery School in connection with the University of Michigan; the whole of the expenses involved (including Miss Lord's salary) to be defrayed by the Merrill-Palmer School Authorities. The Committee acceded to the request, and added their congratulations to Miss Lord upon her selection."

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17. Ibid., 14 July 1921.
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19. City of Bradford Education Committee, Nursery Schools, List of Dinners. Document forming part of the Miriam Lord Collection. The sample menu read as follows:-

Menu A

Monday - Buttered beans, mashed potatoes, apples and custard.

Tuesday - Mince and onions, mashed potatoes, plain suet pudding with treacle.

Wednesday - Boiled mutton, carrots and turnips, whole potatoes, sago.

Thursday - Rice soup with bread, boiled jam roll.

Friday - Fish pie, custard pudding.

### Menu B

Monday - Potato soup with bread, ginger pudding.

Tuesday - Stewed rabbit, mashed potatoes, prunes and custard.

Wednesday - Haricot beans, mutton, whole potatoes, rice pudding.

Thursday - Stewed beef or steak, mashed potatoes, bread and butter pudding.

Friday - Boiled fish, mashed potatoes, boiled jam roll.

Fresh fruit where possible.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

At the time of Miriam Lord's departure for Detroit in 1925 there were, as has been noted (*supra*), only 25 nursery schools open in England and Wales and yet by May 1925 no less than 6 fully trained nursery school teachers, including Miriam, had gone to the U.S.A. to help to organise schools for children of nursery school age in that country. (1) This is a measure of the impact in international terms made by the clauses of the 1918 Education Act which related to the provision of nursery education. But in England this occurrence passed virtually without notice, such were the other preoccupations of a nation beset by economic problems.

In America, where, in places, an urban industrialised society had developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, an educational movement also came into being as part of an humanitarian effort to realise the American dream - government of, by and for the people. The progressive movement, as it was known, held out education as a means of improving the life of the individual. However, in America a broader view of the individual's needs was taken. Not only was education seen as a programme for improving the physical health of children and the quality of family life, but, using techniques derived from the new discipline of psychology, it was also deemed to offer the opportunity for scientific research into the pedagogical requirements of all the children who had been brought into education by the increasing implementation of the principle of education for all. Whilst Pestalozzi and Froebel had also influenced educational thinking in the United States, it was the method of teaching devised by

Johann Friedrich Herbart whilst Professor of Philosophy at Konigsberg in the early nineteenth century which was to bring about the additional focus on scientific method in America. According to Herbart new thinking had to be presented in such a way as to make a vital connection between it and ideas already possessed by the student. His beliefs had come into their own during the last decades of the century, particularly among American university professors seeking to develop a scientific approach to pedagogy.

It was not surprising therefore that many American experiments in nursery education were closely connected with academic institutions. The nursery school attached to the university or college acted as a laboratory for specialised research in psychology, education or nutrition as well as providing nursery education for young children. In addition, whereas the English public nursery schools were intended for the children of the poor so that the emphasis was very much on the social advantages of nursery education with little attention being paid to its educational function, in the United States nursery schools were intended to be available to any child. The Merrill-Palmer School in Detroit, Michigan, was typical of the American model.

The school was established in 1920 under the terms of the will of Lizzie Merrill Palmer who bequeathed three million dollars for the purpose of training young girls in the skills of motherhood. Mrs Palmer held "profoundly the conviction that the welfare of any community is divinely, and hence inseparably, dependent upon the quality of its motherhood, and the spirit and character of its homes." (2) A nursery school was

opened in January 1922 to provide a laboratory for training Merrill-Palmer School students in child care. In 1921, prior to the opening of the nursery school, the director of the Merrill-Palmer School, Miss Edna White, had visited England to study the nursery schools which had been established as a result of the Education Act of 1918. Because of the scarcity of specially trained nursery school teachers in the States the director had appointed an English teacher, Emma Henton, a friend of Miriam Lord from Bradford, to run the nursery school. The school was opened in January 1922 and was organised to provide a homely environment, taking children from a cross-section of the community and providing training for students from a wide selection of universities and colleges. This manipulation of the mix of both the children and the students is indicative of the scientific basis of the undertaking. Two further nursery units were set up by Merrill-Palmer in 1924. One was attached to the Merrill-Palmer School and offered research work with children between the ages of two and four; the other was the High School, Highland Park, Michigan and concentrated on teaching the fundamentals of child care. In the same year it was decided to establish another nursery school at Ann Arbor in co-operation with the graduate school of the University of Michigan. Merrill-Palmer, which as well as supervising the nursery school and partly financing it, was also to provide the staff for the school. (3)

The task of finding a suitable person to run the Ann Arbor nursery school was delegated to Emma Henton who, by the time the scheme was sanctioned by the university and the Merrill-Palmer School in August 1924, already had her nominee in

her sights. Whilst on vacation in Bradford she wrote to Miriam Lord on 14 August confirming the arrangements and advising her to proceed with haste. She also offered her a vision of the experience to come -

"There is a wonderful time ahead of you and not more than you deserve after all these years of hard work and worry. It makes such a difference, because you see we in America are working for people who are interested, scientifically and educationally, they are not trying to grind the people in charge down and make them work to the very extreme limit without sympathy and encouragement. It makes all the difference." (4)

The offer of this post to Miriam represented a considerable honour for her for it was recognition of the capable and determined manner in which she had organised the Lilycroft school. It also acknowledged that she had become something of an expert in her own field. In the event, instead of arriving in Detroit in October 1924 as originally planned, Miriam's departure from Lilycroft and Bradford was delayed until January 1925. Her replacement as headmistress was taken ill and she was unable to leave in September as she and Emma Henton had hoped. Throughout the autumn of 1924 the minutes of the fortnightly meetings of the Board of Directors of the Merrill-Palmer school record the fact that "the demonstration at Ann Arbor would be delayed." (5) It should be noted that the Ann Arbor nursery school is referred to variously in these minutes as "demonstration", "project" and "experiment", which serves to emphasise the scientific nature of the undertaking.

Miriam arrived in New York on 12 January 1925 and was invited by Miss White

to spend a few days in that city acquainting herself with its nurseries, child welfare provision and any other work she thought relevant. (6) This generous offer of an opportunity to do some research of her own must have surprised her after the restrictions and economies to which she had been accustomed in England. She took advantage of the offer and then went on to the Merrill-Palmer School in Detroit where she spent six weeks making preparations for the opening of the Ann Arbor nursery school in March. Her personal letters home are full of the immense differences in the standard of living between the Americans and the English - she found everything very luxurious and worried about becoming too spoiled and soft. (7) She left for Ann Arbor on 1 March to make the final arrangements for the nursery school which opened on 10 March.

Ann Arbor itself was a town which consisted of little more than the university where there were 10,000 students and 1000 lecturers. Miriam's initial impression of the nursery school was that it was very small, offering accommodation for only 25 children. However, she was pleased to find that it was of a high standard and that no expense was being spared on equipment - "Anything and everything I want". (8) Because of the preparation time she had had in Detroit she was able to have a much more structured and formal approach to the actual opening of the school than she had experienced at Lilycroft where arrangements for opening had been made very much on an ad hoc basis. Unlike in Bradford the children had already been enrolled, and on 9 March she held meetings for their parents and for her helpers and graduate students. At these she was able to brief the parents and the students as to the requirements of both the children and

the school to ensure the smooth functioning of the nursery school. The school opened the next day with its full complement of 25 children.

Of the 25 children 8 were two years of age, 8 were three and 9 were four. No charge was made for tuition fees but a levy of twenty five dollars for each of the three terms was made for the meals provided. In direct contrast to Bradford where the meals for the nursery schools were provided from a central kitchen, in Ann Arbor the meals were cooked on the spot by a resident cook. Initially the cook's husband was also employed to carry out all other caretaking duties. There would be no problems here with meals arriving late and cold, nor with parents having to mend equipment to enable the school to continue functioning. To assist Miriam as superintendent, a Miss Eleanor Beach was appointed as Assistant - she would also be in charge of nutrition. (9) [By January 1926 this staff complement of two would be increased to three by the appointment of another assistant, this time from the Rachel McMillan School in Deptford, despite the fact that the numbers did not increase from 25. (10)] To help in the nursery there were twelve graduate students from disciplines as diverse as medicine, education, psychology and sociology. Their role was to observe and produce research findings as well as assist, primarily at mealtimes. They had been identified for the nursery school through the offices of Dr Helen Woolley, Assistant Director of the Merrill-Palmer School and were an example of the emphasis on research and study made possible through plentiful funding, good facilities and adequate staffing. (11)

When the Ann Arbor nursery school first opened, Miriam, no doubt influenced

by her English background, had engaged a public health nurse, but in March 1926 the task of providing a medical service was taken over by the Paediatrics Department of the Ann Arbor University. This Department carried out investigations to determine the minimum protein requirement of young children. It also took blood and urine samples from the children which were analysed at the university hospital. Psychological testing of the children also took place and the school served as a laboratory for genetic psychology experiments. Parents of the children were involved in the school at first by way of monthly meetings, but after Miriam's departure these meetings became more formalised in that a series of lectures was instigated to provide a parental education programme. (12)

Miriam did not adapt easily to the American way of life - she identified an unstable and restless society where men were for ever changing jobs in pursuit of more money. Indeed, the first few weeks of the nursery school's existence were characterised by frequent changes of non-teaching personnel. (13) She noted

"The community feels so terribly new and raw and immature like a child growing up. One longs for the stability and serenity of the old country with its age long traditions and sanity. Money is cheap here. The people work like fury for the Almighty Dollar and they work almost as hard at spending it. Here recreation becomes work." (14)

She realised very quickly that she would wish to return to England for the summer vacation. On 15 May 1925, the Board of Directors of the Merrill-Palmer School, having already verified that her leave of absence from Bradford terminated on 31



December 1925, because of the shortness of the forthcoming autumn term granted her leave of absence from Ann Arbor from the beginning of the summer vacation until the end of the year. They thanked her formally for her contribution to the Ann Arbor school and agreed to pay her full salary until the expiry of her leave. (15) These arrangements were confirmed in a letter sent from Merrill-Palmer to Bradford Education Authority which advised that

"... with the foundations (of the nursery school) so well laid we do not feel justified in asking Miss Lord to return for the short term in the fall, since her leave expires in December. We are, therefore, arranging to pay her salary in full to January with no expectation of return service, in the hope that we may partially repay our obligation to you and to her by allowing her the time and money for either study or travel." (16)

Miriam took full advantage of this, for her, unprecedented opportunity to combine travel with research and paid visits to educational establishments in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and India, as well as going to schools and clinics in London, Hull and Letchworth. By conferring with recognised educationalists in the countries she visited, she concentrated her studies mainly on child welfare and education. Slightly to her surprise, she also discovered that her visits were the focus of "considerable interest and enquiry" in the places she visited, and she described herself, rather grandiosely, as the "torch bearer for the nursery school movement in England and America." (17) She also acted as an unofficial spokesman for the Merrill-Palmer School, publicising its work and, as a consequence, several of the institutions she visited

expressed the wish to be kept in touch with the work of Merrill-Palmer through its research papers and annual reports. Reciprocally, she collected publications from these same institutions which she then passed on to Merrill-Palmer for the use of its students. She initiated the idea of a student interchange between London and Brussels and sought the support and co-operation of Merrill-Palmer in this enterprise.

The two principal centres of interest for Miriam were Leysin in Switzerland, where she acquainted herself with the medical research being carried out by Doctor Rollier in his clinic and school, and Stuttgart in Germany where she encountered for the first time the work of Doctor Rudolf Steiner. She described Steiner as a

"...Doctor, Educationalist, Philosopher, Artist, Writer who has founded a School of Research in Anthroposephy or Spiritual Science. At the School in Stuttgart of over one thousand children and at the huge Goetheaneum of Dornach, Switzerland I was introduced to this entirely new field of research and saw its applications to Music, Art, Rhythmic Movement and Education. This Movement is thought compelling, being in many respects in direct opposition to much of our Educational Practice and of our accepted Materialistic Scientific thought." (18)

This, however, appears to be the extent of her own analysis of a different approach to the education of young children and of a different philosophical outlook, at least in her communications with the Board of Directors at Merrill-Palmer who had facilitated this chance to travel and look at other educational systems and practices.

Nevertheless, the year which Miriam spent away from the economic constraints prevailing in England and the constant struggle for resources to which these gave rise,

did enable her to look at her previous experiences from a different perspective. She gave expression to her thoughts in a document found with her private papers entitled 'The Inner Significance of the Nursery School Movement'. Whether this paper was ever published is not clear, but it does summarise her beliefs succinctly. She was insistent that nursery education had to break with the elementary and secondary school traditions; that, instead of having merely a narrowly instructive role, nursery education would usher in a new era of social and civic conscience for the populations of those countries where it was allowed to take root and flourish. Nursery education, in Miriam's view, supported the right of all children to be nurtured, with particular emphasis being given to their fundamental needs for food, shelter, clothing, fresh air, sunshine, space and an ordered environment. Because its objectives were different, it would require different teaching methods. These would adopt a policy of following the child rather than imposing pre-ordained and uniform standards. By using the process of evaluating observed behaviour the child could be guided "along the path of instinct to form 'right' feeling ... leading later to the heights of right conduct and self control."

(19) The advantages of this new education should be available to children of all social classes, not merely the financially and socially disadvantaged, and because of the direct and personal contact between the social classes that this would lead to, it would become an engine for social change.

The nursery school was to be a microcosm of community life with its own identity and family spirit. Parents would be involved in the life and work of the school

and would feel that they had their own role and responsibilities. It would, however, be firmly rooted in the universal characteristics of childhood which Miriam identified as play, rest and sleep leading to healthy growth. It therefore had to provide an educative process which was dynamic and focused on the individual, using life and the realities of life as its tools. This view of pre-school education was of course diametrically opposed to the static traditions of English public elementary education, with its reliance on mass teaching using books and words. (20)

These concepts are direct descendants of the theories propounded by Pestalozzi and Froebel which by the 1920s had been given additional credence by the new science of psychology. This promulgated the view that the thwarting or denial of natural drives, such as the need to play and use the senses, led to emotional starvation, abnormalities of conduct and, in some cases, criminal behaviour. The lives of so many children in the early twentieth century were so obviously deprived in so many ways that it was inevitable that social reformers and those with a social conscience, like the daughter of Hird Lord, should believe in the necessity to improve the quality of life of these children. Miriam was convinced that the nursery school, in particular the open air nursery school, would achieve this goal.

Whilst Miriam Lord was undoubtedly driven by her own analysis of the evils visited on young children by industrial societies, and by her conviction that nursery education would rectify most if not all these evils, nevertheless there is nothing intrinsically new or revolutionary in her opinions. Using the belief systems of

recognised philosophers and the views of pioneers such as Margaret McMillan, she was merely recycling the findings of the reports of various bodies such as the women inspectors of the Board of Education in 1905 and the conclusions of the Consultative Committee of 1908. She also aligned herself with the Froebel Society and the Nursery School Association in order to give her convictions public voice, but despite the unrivalled opportunity which she had to see nursery education at work in the United States and Europe in the mid 1920s, it cannot be said that this then led to a body of published research or to any truly original theories. She was not an academic, but rather a practical person who wished to implement her ideas and see them in operation, and would sacrifice her personal comfort to that end. Unfortunately what her experiences in America and elsewhere did seem to bring about was an inability to tailor her ideals and aspirations to the hard practicalities of life in post World War I Britain, at least during the period following her return to Bradford. The invitation to set up a new nursery school in Ann Arbor represented the apogee of her teaching career but it also marked the beginning of her fall from grace.

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## CHAPTER SIX: RETURN TO LILYCROFT

When Miriam Lord returned to England in January 1926 she renewed her contacts with the Froebel Society and the Nursery School Association. These renewed connections together with her previous reputation and her recently acquired international experience, would mean that in her role as an enthusiastic supporter of nursery education she would find herself in great demand, both for written articles and for speaking engagements. However, while she had been away, there had of course been further developments in the field of education.

At the time of Miriam's departure for America in January 1925, and shortly after the issue of Board of Education Circular 1371 which effectively reduced expenditure on education from national taxation, discussions were already taking place on the relative merits of nursery schools and nursery classes. These discussions were prompted by the high average cost of providing a nursery school place as against an elementary school place - according to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, the Duchess of Atholl,

"The cost per child in most of them (nursery schools) works out at about double the average cost per child in elementary schools ... all or almost all the nursery schools in the country ... are being run at a cost which, though not excessive when compared to the value of the work done for individual children, would mean that any considerable extension of these schools could only be undertaken at a cost very much greater than the cost of other forms of education." (1)



There were differences of opinion within the Nursery School Association itself with the Director of Education in Manchester, Mr Spurley Hey, a Vice-President of the Association, fully supporting the trend in his authority, among others, of taking the cheaper option of creating nursery classes in elementary schools, whilst Margaret McMillan and her faction believed that this would be the thin end of the wedge leading to a dilution of the principles of nursery education. It was a clash between the pragmatists, as represented by Spurley Hey who queried whether any progress could be made by adopting the attitude of all or nothing, and the 'believers', led by Margaret McMillan, who did not subscribe to the idea of compromise on an issue of principle. (2)

Miriam Lord, judging from a series of hand-written notes held with her private papers, would line herself up with the Margaret McMillan wing of the Nursery School Association on this issue. Their objections to the nursery class focused on the unsatisfactory nature of elementary school buildings with their outdoor toilets and lack of other sanitary facilities, their proximity to other classes and the consequent need to restrict the volume of noise coming from the nursery class, the lack of open air amenities such as the garden, the unsuitability of the training and experience of infant teachers for nursery class duties, and, above all, the inability of the nursery class to admit children under the age of three because of the grant regulations imposed by the Board of Education on elementary schools. The Nursery School Association as a whole was of the opinion that the two to three year old period of a child's life was the most critical year from the point of view of both physical and mental health, and this was an

opinion which Miriam firmly supported, as her private notes reveal. She makes an especial mention of the need to treat rickets at the age of two if this condition is to be rectified.

Nevertheless, some local education authorities such as Manchester continued with their policy of introducing nursery classes into elementary schools because the theme of economic constraint was a recurring one throughout the period of the Conservative government in the late 1920s. After the issue of Circular 1371, which had put the onus for increases in spending on education on to the local authorities, came the use of another tactic by the government. Having said in late 1926 that no proposals for the building of new nursery schools had been refused since November 1924 (3), it then emerged in March 1927 that whilst approval had been given to Walthamstow U.D.C. for a new nursery school, sanction for the necessary loan had been refused on the grounds that the authority was levying too high a rate and was, according to the government, already in a parlous financial position. (4) Meanwhile, the Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education, Sir George Newman, continued to publish his annual reports which made it clear that the health of children under five was a cause of continuing concern - of the 94,000 children up to the age of fifteen who died in 1925 no less than 81,000 were under the age of five. (5) These statistics prompted the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, the same Duchess of Atholl, to admit that

"Everyone who has read that report must feel grave concern at the figures given there as to the health of

children under five. Anyone acquainted with the work of the nursery schools cannot fail to realise what splendid work they are doing in improving the health and general training of small children, but I would like to remind the Hon. Member that we do not look for health in this matter from nursery schools alone." (6)

The debate in the Supply Committee for the Board of Education in July 1927 brought about the surprising confession from Viscountess Astor that she wondered whether she was in the right party when she saw "the hard hand of reaction taking hold of our education policy." (7)

Nancy, Viscountess Astor, was an American divorcee who had married the heir to the Astor viscountcy in 1906 at the age of twenty seven. After the death of his father in 1919 Waldorf Astor became Viscount Astor and, on taking his place in the House of Lords, was forced to relinquish his parliamentary seat for the Plymouth, Sutton division. Nancy Astor stood as Unionist candidate in his place and was elected to Parliament on 28 November 1919. She was the first woman Member of Parliament to sit in the House of Commons and continued to represent Plymouth until her retirement in 1945. She took an especial interest in all matters concerning women and children including the raising of the school-leaving age, juvenile employment centres, women's training centres, women police officers and factory inspection. But the subjects of slum clearance and nursery education were the ones which particularly exercised her. She was very much alive to the deprivations caused by poor housing and always advocated, whatever the colour of the government of the time, that money should be spent on

improving the slum conditions prevailing in so many of the towns and cities of industrial Britain. She linked the provision of better housing with the need for much increased provision of nursery schools and was very forceful in promoting the type of open-air nursery school established by the McMillan sisters in Deptford. Indeed, there is an almost monotonous regularity about the way in which she praised the virtues of Margaret McMillan's beliefs in the House of Commons whenever the opportunity presented itself. On reading through Hansard one can practically hear the groans of dismay from the more reactionary of her colleagues whenever she raised the topic of nursery education because her speech would invariably bring mention of the McMillan sisters and their ability to provide nursery schooling on a shoestring. True to form she went on in her speech in July 1927 to make a plea for the further provision of nursery schools in industrial areas, stating that whilst she recognised that there was too much waste in education, nursery schools such as the Rachel McMillan school at Deptford were run at a minimum cost.

Despite the advocacy of influential individuals like Viscountess Astor, of pressure groups such as the Nursery School Association, and the brief intervention of the Labour Government, by 1927 there were still only twenty six nursery schools open in England and Wales, of which eleven were provided by local education authorities and fifteen by voluntary bodies but aided by the local authority in all cases except one. (8)

At the same time little headway was being made with the replacement of inadequate and insanitary school buildings, a blacklist of which had been drawn up in 1924, nor with

reducing the size of classes for the under eleven's. Indeed, the number of classes over fifty, far from diminishing, actually increased by 2000 in the period 1926 to 1928. (9) The policy of the Board of Education in respect of nursery education had not changed since the issue of circular 1358 in 1925. That policy was based on the principle "that each local authority is best able to judge the relative urgency of different proposals for educational development in its own area." (10) Likewise, planning, equipping and staffing of nursery schools was still left to the discretion of the local education authority despite the advantage of the nine years experience afforded by the few schools which had been opened as a result of the 1918 Act.

This, then, was the national scene to which Miriam Lord returned in January 1926. One of the first letters that awaited her on her return to Lilycroft Nursery School was one dated 14 January 1926 from Thomas Boyce, Director of Education for Bradford. In this letter he informed her that his Education Committee wished to investigate the question of "the suitable and adequate staffing of nursery schools". He asked her to complete a questionnaire to be returned to him rather urgently within four days from the date of the letter, and to be prepared to meet with members of the Committee to discuss any comments which she might wish to make in the context of the whole question of nursery school staffing. (11)

On 16 February Mr Boyce completed the report of the special sub-committee appointed by Bradford to consider staffing in nursery schools for presentation to the Joint Elementary and Staff Sub-Committee of the Education Committee. The members

of the special sub-committee were Aldermen Guy and Cash and Councillor Miss Law - all three had been members of the original sub-committee set up in 1918 to enquire into nursery education and the possibility of introducing it in Bradford, and were therefore well acquainted with the issues involved in nursery education. Together with His Majesty's Inspector, Mr A L Thornton, they had had a meeting on 10 February with Miriam and the headmistresses of Princeville and St Ann's nursery school. The report adhered very closely to the policy of the Nursery School Association in that it recommended that the superintendents of nursery schools should be trained, certificated teachers who had supplemented their training with courses in Hygiene and Psychology plus some nursing or hospital experience. They should be supported by at least one, preferably trained, assistant to share the educational duties and to take control when the superintendent was otherwise involved in the non-teaching work of the school such as administrative duties or doctor's visits. The report reminded the committee of the additional length of the nursery schoolteacher's day as compared with that of the ordinary elementary school teacher and recommended that probationers should be engaged to assist the teachers. It was stressed that the probationers should be girls intending to train as nurses, social workers or health visitors, and that their time in a nursery school should not be viewed as precursory to becoming teachers. The suggested staffing ratios were as follows:-

(a) a superintendent for 15 children;

(b) a trained assistant for 20, and

(c) a probationer for about 12 to 15.

This would, in fact, involve no change at Lilycroft, a state of affairs which may seem surprising in view of Miriam's complaints about the staffing levels during the first years of the school's existence. The report also incorporated a resume of the educational function of the nursery school. (12)

The special sub-committee's report was considered and approved by the Joint Elementary and Staff Sub-Committee on 3 March 1926. (13) It authorised the seeking of approval from the Board of Education for the appointment of a second trained teacher in each of the Bradford nursery schools, and on 10 May a resolution was passed by the Staff sub-committee appointing all the head teachers of the four Bradford nursery schools, together with an assistant teacher at St Ann's, to full-time service under the Bradford Local Education Authority exclusively in the capacity of teacher. (14) This development was a significant one for it recognised that the nursery school teacher was first and foremost a teacher, but with special training and qualifications, and not just a well-meaning body with a particular aptitude for caring for very young children. This recognition would help clear the path towards the amalgamation of nursery and infant schools a few years later.

In fact, the fourth nursery school in Bradford was not strictly speaking a nursery school at all, but a nursery class at Wapping Road Infants School, sanction for which had been given by a Special Sub-Committee of the Education Committee on 17 December 1924. (15) The timing of this approval coincided with the reporting of the

debate, to which reference has already been made above, which was taking place within the Nursery School Association as to the merits or otherwise of nursery classes as against the proven value of the nursery school. The same sub-committee resolution contained instructions for the provision of 500 rest-couches, suitable for both infants' and nursery schools, to be included in the next year's education estimates, another manifestation of the way in which there was an increasing tendency in Bradford to consider nursery and infants' schools as one entity rather than as separate units.

In February 1926 the head teacher of Princeville School Infants' Department sought permission to admit children of three years of age and upwards to the Infants' Department. Permission was granted, provided that the attached nursery school was full, and was extended to include Lilycroft Infants' School. (16) At the same time a special sub-committee was appointed to consider and report upon the best method of extending the nursery school and nursery class accommodation in Bradford. This development was, of course, contrary to the national situation where the progress of nursery education had been effectively halted by economic constraints. Indeed, in March 1926 the full Education Committee of the Bradford council sent to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister (sic) of Education and the four M.P.s for Bradford a copy of their resolution stating that, in their opinion, the proposals of the appropriate section of the Economy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill would prove detrimental to the interests of progressive local education authorities. (17) Later in 1926 the boys' and girls' departments of Lilycroft Elementary School were amalgamated



under the headship of the previous headmaster of the boys' department, (18) and in the following year it was resolved to accept as a general principle that combined nursery and infants' departments would be provided in any new elementary schools to be erected in Bradford. (19) Thus it can be seen that Bradford Education Committee, which from its own description considered itself to be a progressive education authority, was attempting to increase its nursery education provision whilst at the same time looking for ways to contain expenditure in accordance with central government requirements.

Meanwhile, at Lilycroft Nursery School, Miriam Lord had resumed her scheme for mother craft training for adolescent girls. In her private papers there are some hand-written, signed notes entitled 'Mother craft Training' which are dated 26 December 1925, Porto Fino, Italy, i.e. immediately prior to her return to Lilycroft. In these she covers the need for such training to be afforded to young girls of all social classes together with the scope of the training to be provided, and advocates that the girls should be between 13 and 18 years of age to derive the greatest benefit. Another undated, hand-written paper contains a detailed programme for a mother craft scheme which would cater for half a day's attendance at the nursery school each week for twenty girls. Such a use of the nursery school had been promoted by Sir George Newman in his 1923 report entitled 'The Health of the School Child' and he actually referred to the scheme which was already in existence at Lilycroft at that time. In March 1927 the official journal of the Bradford Education Committee gave an outline of the Lilycroft scheme with the information that it had been approved by His Majesty's

Inspectors and the Board of Education. The outline as published had been written by Miriam for her initials appear at the end of the article, and the draft of it is held with her private papers. It contains a specimen syllabus with the following headings:-

1. Accidents in the Home.
2. Cleanliness.
3. Diet and Food.
4. Sleep.
5. Clothing.
6. Effect on body and mind of habit and regularity.
7. Common Child Ailments.
8. Simple Treatments.
9. Importance in Life of Child (of various activities).
10. Discussions and Questions.

The discussions on child welfare and management were supplemented by talks from the school's lady doctor on personal hygiene, physiology and elements of 'sex hygiene'.

"As each group of leavers reach their last School Term, the Doctor prepares them for their new life in the greater world. She advises them how to keep healthy and strong; she points out the new dangers and temptations; she explains the facts of life and the responsibilities of womanhood; she urges them to use to the full their new opportunities for greater and wider service in the world." (20)

This was a forward-looking programme and a forerunner of the personal and social education courses now provided in schools. The same article reminded its readers that mother craft training and mother craft schemes were beginning to be discussed nationally and at education conferences, and drew attention to the degree course in Domestic Science at Bristol University which included child welfare and management as topics. It also gave the information that the Lilycroft scheme had received an award in the competition held by the National Baby Week Council.

By January 1928 her papers reveal that Miriam had drawn up an outline training course for secondary school girls in Child Welfare. This envisaged a two year course for 14-16 year olds, a three year course for 14-17 year olds, and a special student course for girls aged between 14 and 18. Practical social work and domestic science combined with work with babies, children and parents would take place in day nurseries, nursery schools, children's clinics or hospitals, parents' clubs and maternity and child welfare centres. A much less ambitious scheme was agreed between the Belle Vue Secondary School for Girls and Lilycroft Nursery School and submitted to Bradford's Director of Education on 20 December 1928. This was an extension of the scheme already in existence at Lilycroft with girls attending the nursery school for one half day per week in their final term at school, but with additional visits to other educational, social and health agencies in the city so that "Every girl on leaving school should know something of the civic life of her city concerning childhood and be alive to her own share of responsibility as she grows into womanhood." (21) There is no indication in the council

records that this scheme was implemented, although it must not be assumed that it was shelved.

However, although Miriam enhanced her reputation both nationally and in Bradford through her work in the field of mother craft and child welfare training, at the same time she would damage her standing in Bradford by renewing her series of skirmishes with the Education Committee over the subject of school meals. Ever since it had come into existence under the 1902 Education Act, the Bradford Education Committee's record of providing meals for necessitous children was one of which it was justifiably proud. It had taken over this role from the Board of Guardians in 1907 soon after the passing of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906. It financed the supply of meals from its central kitchen by raising a half penny rate, and by 1910 was providing almost a million breakfasts and dinners per year at a unit cost of 2.17d. (approximately one new penny). It also provided meals during the school holidays and itself financed the resulting shortfall from the half penny rate, probably from the profits of the municipal gas company. (22) But almost from the very moment that she had taken on the headship at Lilycroft, Miriam had been up in arms over most aspects of the meals provided for the nursery school. On her return from America where, of course, she had experienced higher expectations in everything which related to standards of living, she took up the cudgels with renewed vigour. She kept a running report on the quality of the meals supplied from the central kitchen, and when she thought it necessary she wrote to the Director of Education with specific complaints:-

"I am sending you the piece of iron found in the potatoes this week. Also a sample of the potatoes. They were green on the layer next to the tin. I cannot have potatoes for Babies sent in such old rusty tins. It is not safe. Cannot you ask for new tins? Also one morning the potatoes all ready cooked were delivered at 9 a.m.

I hate to be always grumbling.

Faithfully yours,

M. Lord."

She also kept the replies to her complaints which she received from the Education Offices. Starting on 10 September 1926, they make interesting and enlightening reading.

"Adverting to your letter of the 8th instant enclosing a sample of meat supplied for dinner on Wednesday last, the Director notes your statement that 'the meat had all to be returned'. It is understood that the reason for this was the excessive quantity of gristle and fat. The meat was today submitted to the Meat Inspector of the Health Department who stated that it was, even then, quite fresh, and he observed that it was impossible to supply mutton of the particular 'cut' without a considerable proportion of fat and gristle. The Inspector has promised to examine, as frequently as possible, the meat supplied to the Depot. The Cook at the Depot removes as much fat and bone as possible from the mutton before sending it to the Nursery Schools, but he has been instructed to try a different 'cut'."

17 March 1927 -

"Adverting to your letter of the 9th instant, arrangements have been made to send the stewed meat and gravy together in a closed container.

The Director wished to assure you that the gravy hitherto sent separate from the meat was the actual meat gravy and he will be glad to know what

reasons led you to assert otherwise."

25 March 1927 -

"With reference to your complaint that bread was not sent with the soup last week, the Cook reports that on the occasion in question he was unfortunately out of brown bread, and that when he sends white bread it is returned to the Depot.

With regard to the stewed apples having a peculiar taste and not being like fresh stewed apples, the Director has to inform you that the apples were fresh ones and that the alleged peculiar taste cannot be accounted for."

4 November 1927 -

"In consequence of your report for the week ended 28th October, special enquiries have been made regarding the meals sent to the Nursery Schools during that week.

The Cook states that the meat during the week in question was in good condition and was an improvement on that previously supplied. With regard to the potatoes on Tuesday being 'very wet' you are reminded that after mashing milk is added. The preparation of the meals for Nursery Schools is carried out by the Cook personally and every care is taken. The Cook is unable to account for any children being sick because of the dinner provided on Thursday and no complaints have been received from other Nursery Schools."

24 November 1928 -

"With reference to your report for the week ended 16th instant, your observations have been passed to the Cook at the Depot.

Until the last few weeks it was usual to pass the fish through a mincing machine and, it is understood, when this was done no complaints were received about bones. Putting the fish through a mincing machine,

however, tended to make it tasteless and unpalatable, and the Cook was instructed to discontinue the practice. It is, of course, impossible to extract all the small bones before sending the fish to the schools, though every effort is made to do so, and the Director will be glad if you will kindly say which of the two methods referred to above you consider the most advisable. The Committee do not possess a machine which would 'stone' the prunes."

20 September 1929 -

"Adverting to your letter of the 13th instant, the condition of the jam pudding in which beetles were found and the poor condition of the apples sent to the Nursery School is very much regretted. The Director has taken appropriate action in the matter and it is hoped you will not have cause to complain in future."

13 March 1930 -

"With reference to the non-delivery of the soup at your school on Monday last, I regret that the food vessel was left at the Depot. I have carefully dealt with the matter and have taken such steps as will, it is hoped, prevent a re-occurrence of a similar lapse in future.

I wish to point out, however, that some advantage would have been gained had the portion of the dinner delivered at the school been kept warm until the arrival of the soup. It is considered that there are ample facilities at the school to enable this to have been done and the children, though receiving dinner late, would have been assured of a warm meal."

This reply was written personally by Mr Thomas Boyce, the Director of

Education and Miriam added the following comment at the bottom of the letter "March

21st. Dinner arrived 1 hour late."

15 October 1930 -

"With reference to your letter of the 2nd instant, appended is a copy of a letter which has now been received from Mr Morrison.

'In reply to your letter of the 7th instant regarding the delay in delivery of goods at Lilycroft Nursery School. The order in question was for pea-nuts.

This time of year is between seasons for this article.

New crop pea-nuts had not arrived but were expected any day. We therefore decided to hold the order over until the new crop arrived. New crop goods, you will understand, are very different to those which have been in warehouses etc. for nearly 12 months. It would have been nearly impossible to have obtained any pea-nuts at the time we received the order, as all merchants had cleared their old stocks and were waiting for the new crop. We trust this explanation of the delay will be satisfactory and in future we will communicate with you on receipt of the order if we have any reason to think there may be any undue delay in delivery.' "

Despite the minutiae of detail and the exquisite bureaucratic language in all these replies from the Director of Education to Miriam's complaints, it is obvious that there is an increasing exasperation with her point of view, particularly as this seems to have been flawed by her own somewhat deficient culinary knowledge. However, this was as nothing by comparison with the letter despatched to Lilycroft on 16 October 1930 which read as follows:-

"The Director is in receipt of a letter dated the 13th instant signed by Mrs Brook, and careful enquiry has been made regarding the statements therein.

The fact that the children 'left more than they ate' does not necessarily mean the meal was unsatisfactory. The fish was cooked in solid pieces and



an apparently small piece would go a long way towards satisfying a child's appetite, as compared to fish which is minced as in fish and potato pie. 'And the sauce seems to be - well, the last straw'. This observation is not very helpful and particulars would be more satisfactory. Mrs Brook makes a request for fish pie. It was on account of the children's dislike of fish pie that this dinner was removed from the menu some time ago. Mrs Brook also refers to the strong smell of the fish. Does she infer the fish was bad or in poor condition? On the day in question fish (with sauce) was supplied to the whole of the children receiving school meals as well as those attending Nursery Schools, but no single complaint except from Mrs Brook was received regarding the quality of the fish. It had been ascertained that fish forms part of the menu of most of the Nursery Schools under other Authorities and is recommended by the Medical Officer. The Director will be glad therefore, if you will persuade as many children as possible to eat fish for their own benefit. It is considered that persistency and patience in this matter will overcome any present dislike. The Director will be glad to know whether Mrs Brook's letter was written on your instructions or with your approval." (23)

The measured tone of this reply fails to conceal the exasperation felt by its author, and the final paragraph enquiring as to the responsibility for the writing of the original letter of complaint to the local authority is pure venom. What is also remarkable is that Miriam apparently failed to recognise that she was steadily and inexorably antagonising her employing authority, and this when concern had already been expressed by the Director of Education about the commitments she was taking on additional to those at Lilycroft. In an exchange of correspondence in 1928 between Grace Owen, Secretary of the Nursery School Association, and the Director of

Education in Bradford, Mr Boyce advised Miss Owen of his unease about Miriam's workload, a concern which she then passed on to Miriam.

"I told him that from the Nursery School Association point of view we did think you were essential to the Sub-Committees both ours and the N.U.T. but that except for our own Conference we would not think of urging you to speak at meetings. All those invitations arose directly out of Lilycroft and all it means. It was difficult not to presume - but I kept religiously to the N.S.A. point of view and I know you trust me. He is so good and public-spirited that I know he will help you to find a way through the difficulty. If I may say so, I think you will have to limit meetings, and get a volunteer helper to write your letters." (24)

There is no evidence that this warning was heeded. Indeed, the flow of letters (which are retained in her collection of private papers) requesting articles and lectures appears to have continued unabated - in the main addressed to Miriam at Lilycroft, they came from organisations as diverse as the Independent Labour Party, the Liverpool Education Committee, 'Britannia and Eve' (a monthly journal for men and women) and the International section of The New Education Fellowship. She also received many requests for information and assistance from groups in this country and from sources in the United States - there is a letter from the Director of the nursery school at the Kansas State Agricultural College asking for a few days at Lilycroft to observe educational and play material for nursery age children; another from the Teachers College at the Columbia University of New York seeking material describing nursery school provision; another from Cornell University, New York, also seeking information on Lilycroft

Nursery School. Bradford Education Authority used the school as a model for visiting groups - in June 1929 Miriam was informed that a party of 42 pupils and 3 teachers from the Lichtwark Schule in Hamburg would be arriving at Lilycroft to inspect the school. Indeed, on 30 April 1930 Miriam sent a memorandum to the Education Department requesting a break from the frequent visits to Lilycroft. Her request was granted in the following terms:-

"Adverting to your memorandum of the 30th ultimo, containing a request that you and your staff should have a respite from the rather frequent visitations such as took place last term, I have to inform you that this request is granted.

We were not aware, at this Office that any applications for permission to visit had been received this term.

I presume, therefore, that the requests to which you refer have been made to you personally at the School.

In order that we may co-operate with you in reducing the number of visits in accordance with your request, I should be glad if you would inform the Office of all future applications made to you, together with your opinion as to whether official permission should be given in each case." (25)

But it was her membership of the Nursery School Association and her whole-hearted involvement in its activities which placed the greatest demands on her time and energies. She made herself available to the Association for speaking at its conferences, for reviewing and revising drafts of pamphlets which it would be publishing, for giving evidence on its behalf to bodies such as the National Union of Teachers and the Board of Education's Consultative Committee enquiring into infant and nursery schools which reported in 1933, and for attending other organisations' conferences as its

representative; in July/August 1929 she represented it at the third biennial conference of the World Federation of Education Associations in Geneva. She kept in touch by letter with Fred Jowett, still Member of Parliament for a Bradford constituency, and sent him pamphlets and press cuttings to keep him up to date with developments in nursery education - in July 1930 he wrote to her

"Do not think because this reply is so late that my interest in Education and especially in Nursery Schools is less than it has been in the past. I am keenly interested in the Nursery School movement and I anxiously watch its all too slow growth. If I could determine parliamentary policy assistance and encouragement would not be wanting from this end. I know some of the difficulties you have to contend with and wish I could remove them. No one appreciates what Miss McMillan and all of you are doing more than I do." (26)

There is some evidence that the officers and committee members of the Nursery School Association, if not all its members, saw their mission to spread the nursery education message in quasi-religious terms - Grace Owen wrote to Miriam in February 1927 as follows:-

"Many thanks for all your most interesting reports and enclosures. I follow all you tell me very closely and am indeed grateful that your work and influence are growing in such a marked way, and that you are able to do such splendid service for the cause we all believe in so firmly. I have little doubt that Miss Lister is helping you with our others who are with her. Don't do too much. I am sure we need not, and that staying power is what we need. There is more to face yet." (27)

Alice Lister, her head mistress at Whetley Lane school who, ironically, died in the month following Grace Owen's letter, had written to Miriam in similar terms on the day before her departure for America:-

"You know, do you not? that my sincerest wishes go with you, that I would like to give you strong words of encouragement to go forward in both hope and faith for yours is indeed a "high calling". This wish as you know too, is all the stronger and deeper because the work you have at heart is the work to which, in such measure as I have been able, I have devoted whatsoever talents I possess ... I do indeed wish you 'God speed' and ask that in the words of the little prayer I sent you, you may have all the protection both for your life and work." (28)

It is not surprising, therefore, that, given all this encouragement and fervour, Miriam was indefatigable in her efforts to carry the nursery school message out into the wider world.

However, by February 1929, in the narrower world of Bradford, developments were taking place which would make Miriam's position more and more difficult. On 7th February the Staff Sub-Committee of the Education Committee agreed that because the post of head teacher of the Princeville Infants' School was vacant, they would amalgamate the infants' and nursery school under one head teacher, and a special sub-committee was appointed to report on any necessary modifications in buildings consequent upon that decision. (29) The next month the special sub-committee of the elementary sub-committee which dealt with medical and nursery schools recommended that a nursery class be provided at Bowling Back Lane Infants' School, and that the

incumbent head mistress should be asked to take a month's course at the McMillan Nursery School in London with all salary, fees and travelling expenses paid by the local authority. (30) Although Miriam herself opposed the policy of establishing nursery classes rather than building new nursery schools, it has already been noted that there was considerable influential support within the Nursery School Association itself for this policy. In addition, in Bradford, where the main political thrust in support of nursery education, in common with everywhere else, had always come from the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party had set up a commission in September 1926 to report on education. Miriam had given evidence to the commission and had had its chairman as a visitor at Lilycroft to allow him to experience at first hand the atmosphere of the nursery school. (31) The commission's report had endorsed the principle of nursery education, and had recommended that nursery schools should cater for all children aged two to seven years, that these schools should remain under the control of the education authorities and not be transferred to the public health authorities, and that infants' departments should be allowed progressively to disappear. (32) Amalgamation of nursery and infant education was thus envisaged, but with nursery-type education being prolonged rather than being absorbed into the infant provision. The report bore all the hallmarks of those supporters of nursery education such as Miriam Lord herself who saw it as the solution to the deprivations of working class life, but paradoxically, it also contained the seeds of her downfall with its endorsement of one school for children up to the age of seven.

Thus, there was movement on a number of fronts which did not augur well for Miriam's prospects, and against this background she was conducting a running battle with Bradford's Education Department on the issue of the quality of meals delivered to Lilycroft. Combined with this, since returning from America, she had periodically broached the subject of an increase in her salary with Bradford Education Committee. In June 1927 she had requested an increase and although it had been agreed by the Staff Sub-Committee, it was rejected the following month by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and this rejection was subsequently endorsed by the Board of Education. Nevertheless, an award of an additional £18 per annum was given by the Staff Sub-Committee under another section of the Burnham Agreement. In September 1930 she again applied for an extra allowance in respect of her 'special qualifications and work', but this was turned down in January 1931. (33) A few months later in 1931 the salaries of all the teachers in the country would be reduced by 10% under the terms of the National Economy Act. Her sense of timing could not be said therefore to be highly developed, and although she would appear to have had a supportive Director of Education in the shape of Thomas Boyce, she nevertheless made his life difficult over the issue of the school meals delivered to Lilycroft Nursery School, and thus did nothing to enhance her own standing within her employing authority.

She may have been encouraged in the stridency of her message by the change of government in 1929. In the General Election of that year Labour won 287 seats in the House of Commons as against 261 by the Conservatives and 59 by the Liberals. As a

consequence the new Government was formed by Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister and Charles Trevelyan once again became President of the Board of Education.

Belatedly, Lord Eustace Percy, the retiring President of the Board, had held himself out to be a supporter of the nursery school movement -

"... we cannot be content either with our present rate of progress or with any of the proposals which have been recently put forward on this subject, which seem to me to amount to little more than a multiplication of isolated experiments." (34)

Some two months later Trevelyan was re-installed at the Board of Education and in answer to a question concerning the number of nursery schools in existence in England and Wales (which was 28), stated that "I am anxious to see an expansion in the supply of nursery schools, and I am considering what steps I can most effectively take to encourage their provision." (35) By the end of the year Circular 1405 had been issued by the Board jointly with the Ministry of Health urging local education authorities to increase their nursery school provision -

"... we would ask them earnestly to consider the provision of Nursery Schools for children between 2 and 5 years old. Open-air Nursery Schools where infants are tended, washed, fed and taught have passed the stage of experiment. They are a comparatively inexpensive and entirely efficient means of securing a fair start in life even for infants whose home life is most depressed."

The circular, however, was not mandatory, and it went on to state that nursery schools were not the only means of tackling the deprivations suffered by the young children of the poor, nor was it practicable to provide them for all children between 2 and 5.



Alternative provision would take the form of nursery classes, day nurseries or infant schools. Where nursery classes were the preferred answer of the local education authority, the circular stressed that the nursery school was to be the model for these classes, with attention being paid to suitable equipment and sanitary arrangements for the very young, together with the modification of existing accommodation along open air lines. The provision of sleeping facilities and of milk at least once, and possibly twice, a day was specifically mentioned. The circular also recommended the admission of children under five to public elementary schools as a means of bringing those children into the province of the school medical service. With regard to staffing, it recognised the potential need for more than one trained teacher per nursery school, and echoed the Bradford special sub-committee report in its acceptance of providing the teacher with a helper in the guise of female school-leavers who could undertake this work before going on to train as a nursery or hospital nurse.

Within six months of taking office Trevelyan had approved proposals for nine new nursery schools all of which were already under construction. (36) By early 1930 there were another 37 preliminary proposals before the Board of Education, (37) and this figure had increased to 61 by mid-summer. (38) By the end of the year there were 40 nursery schools in existence, 20 provided by local education authorities and the other 20 by grant-aided voluntary bodies. Of the 27 proposals for new schools under active consideration by the Board no less than 20 had emanated from local authorities. (39) However, this expansion was snuffed out by the international financial crisis of 1931

which led directly to the formation in March of a National Government, still under the premiership of Ramsay MacDonald. Coincidentally this was the same month that Margaret McMillan died, and tribute was paid to her in the House of Commons by the new President of the Board of Education, Mr Lees-Smith who, in his maiden speech, said that her work would leave "a permanent mark upon the health of the children of our land", but stated that he would await the findings of the Hadow Consultative Committee into the education of children under school age before coming to any conclusions about future nursery school policy. (40) By February 1932 another President of the Board of Education had taken office, Sir D Maclean, and he had to admit that plans for only 1 new nursery school had been approved since August 1931, and that the need for economy would stand in the way of building more schools. (41) Indeed, by July of that year, his Parliamentary Secretary was having to concede that it was improbable that any more nursery schools would be sanctioned. (42)

Bradford was inevitably affected by developments on the national scene. It had undertaken amalgamations of schools even before the international financial crisis of 1931 and by January 1932 a scheme prepared by Thomas Boyce for reducing expenditure by 10% for the current financial year was being considered. (43) In April a question was asked in the Supply Committee proceedings of the Board of Education by Colonel Robert Chapman, National Conservative M.P. for the Houghton-le-Spring division of County Durham, querying why it cost £6 p.a. more to educate an elementary school child in Bradford than in South Shields. (44) In May it was recommended that

the Elementary Education Sub-Committee of Bradford Education Committee should investigate their provision of nursery schools services with a view to reducing them (45), and on the last day of the same month a resolution was passed that the Lilycroft Nursery and Infants' Schools should be amalgamated under the control of the Head of the Infants' Department. (46) For Miriam the watershed had been reached.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE FALL FROM GRACE

The catalyst for Miriam Lord's downfall with Bradford Education Authority was the issue of the quantity of milk supplied daily to the authority's nursery school children. What was remarkable about this was that she should risk the whole of her considerable reputation and influence on this one issue. However, it does become more understandable when we take into account that it was when she was perhaps at the most impressionable time of her life, her late teenage years, that her own father was very involved in another issue involving milk and the underprivileged - the setting up of a municipal depot in Bradford to distribute milk to the children of the city who needed it.

As well as being one of the first local authorities to establish a school medical service and to provide school meals, Bradford had acknowledged the importance of milk in the diet of young children as early as 1902 when it appointed a Health Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of F.W. Jowett (later to be M.P. for Bradford and a political contact for Miriam) to investigate the means adopted in other English towns for the supply of sterilised humanised milk to infants who were in need. In its report the Bradford sub-committee came to the following conclusions:-

1. That it was desirable to diminish the excessive mortality among infants from diarrhoeal diseases by the supply of humanised, sterilised milk.
2. That a small municipal depot for the supply of such milk should be established,  
and



3. That the establishment of such a depot would not injure any existing private business. (1)

The recommendations of the report were accepted and the depot was opened in July 1903, at which time Miriam's father played a significant role in advertising its existence and promoting its benefits by means of his painted handcart (supra). This undoubtedly must have made a strong impression on Miriam who at the time was eighteen years old.

By 1911 the Hospitals Sub-Committee of the Bradford Health Committee was putting forward the suggestion

"That the Council be recommended to take over and be financially responsible for the work of supplying milk for infants of poor parents, hitherto done by the Cinderella Club at the joint cost of themselves and the Corporation." (2)

This recommendation was duly approved and the inevitable special sub-committee re Milk Supply for Infants was formed. In February 1912 it reported that 157 infants and 475 mothers had been supplied with milk during the previous 4½ months. (3)

Both the rise of the Labour movement to a position of influence during the first two decades of the twentieth century and the increasingly centralised management of the nation's resources brought about by the First World War contributed to a tightening of the laissez-faire philosophy which had prevailed during the nineteenth century. It had become less acceptable, even among Liberals and Tories, to allow the 'market' to dictate totally how essential services would be delivered to the population and the question of

the milk supply would be no exception. Milk production was far less 'industrialised' than it is today, and as a result, the quantity of milk available for urban areas depended on the number of cows kept within the town or city boundaries, or their immediate vicinity. In addition, during the winter months, the level of milk production fell as supplies of feed-stuffs for dairy cattle dwindled, so that the price of milk to the consumer increased. The inevitable consequence was that those whose diet was already the most deficient because of lack of income were the same people who could not afford to buy milk during the winter months. By 1918 the food shortages created by the War had led to rationing and the provision of national food kitchens, and in the same year the Food Controller (appointed by the government) together with the Local Government Board made orders empowering local authorities to supply milk free or at less than cost price not only in ordinarily necessitous cases, but also where the necessity had arisen because of the retail price of milk. (4) In February 1918 the Minister of Food, Lord Rhondda, decided to make an order under the Defence of the Realm Regulations which would enable Bradford City Council to take over the whole milk supply of the city as from 11 March. (5) This would be by way of a national experiment for which Bradford, with its record as a pioneer in social improvement, had been chosen. However, to certain political groups on the council it was an unwelcome honour and it caused a good deal of dissension at a full meeting of the Council which took place on 12 March 1918.

The resolution, previously passed by the council's own Food Control Committee,

that the requisite powers to take over the city's milk supply as envisaged by Lord Rhondda should be granted to that committee was immediately defeated on the grounds that under the Milk Prices Order of September 1917, sufficient authority was already possessed by the Food Control Committee to deal with the problem of milk distribution in the city. The main bone of contention then became whether the council should agree to any amount of expenditure which the Food Control Committee deemed necessary under the Milk Prices Order in order to carry out its responsibility to "buy milk from any person and sell milk so bought at a price estimated to cover at least the cost of purchasing and distributing such milk." Labour politicians were accused of wanting a blank cheque to do as they liked in a programme of convert "municipalisation". They in turn accused their Tory and Liberal opponents of protecting the interests of four hundred milkmen to the detriment of the poor who could not obtain the milk they required. The council was also reminded that their Health Committee already had the power to distribute milk free to those who could not afford to buy it, and that what was required was a more equitable distribution of the supplies which were available, especially as in future there would be an increasing scarcity due to the ploughing up of pastures for arable purposes in order to increase the food supply. The amendment authorising this expenditure was duly defeated by 35 votes to 20, and the status quo in respect of milk distribution in Bradford was maintained. (6)

However, the enactment of the Maternity and Child Welfare provisions in 1918 meant that the supply of milk to children under five and to expectant and nursing

mothers had by then become a national concern and that local government decisions would be subject to the strictures of national government. In October 1919 the Ministry of Health issued a circular urging all local authorities to take steps to ensure that all women and children resident within their district and likely to benefit from a supply of milk free or at less than cost price became aware of their arrangements, and to extend their arrangements if they did not comply with the provisions of the 1918 Act.

According to the first annual report of the Ministry of Health covering the period 1919-1920, many local authorities considerably increased the quantity of milk supplied as a result of this circular. (7)

Initially the costs incurred by providing milk under this Act were shared 50/50 between the local authority and central government. But, of course, as the take-up increased the costs soared, and because there was anxiety within the Ministry of Health that in many cases there were no adequate measures for ensuring that the supply only reached the truly deserving, the Milk (Mothers and Children) Order of 1919 was revoked. In its place a circular was addressed to the local authorities requiring them in future to obtain sanction for the provision of milk under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act. Sanction would only be given when the Ministry was satisfied that the quantity to be supplied would be limited and stringent conditions for administering the service would be complied with. (8) Nevertheless, in spite of these endeavours, the efforts of the Ministry to reduce expenditure were somewhat negated by the increase in unemployment caused by the post-war economic recession and the concomitant increase

in the numbers qualifying under the provisions: total spending in 1920-1921 amounted to £359,000. (9) Efforts continued in an attempt to contain costs, especially at government level, which led to local authorities being informed in 1921 that the government grant for the last six months of the year 1920-1921 would be 5% of local authority expenditure instead of 50%, and that in 1921-1922 it would be 7½% only. (10)

The outcome of these measures was as follows:-

Total expenditure:	1920-1921	£359,000
	1921-1922	£281,000
	1922-1923	£207,000
	1923-1924	£191,000
	1924-1925	£182,000. (11)

Thus an overall reduction of just over 50% was achieved in the space of only four years, and this at a time when, on the Ministry's own admission there was "widespread unemployment and distress." (12)

During these years in Bradford the debate as to the merits of 'municipalising' the city's milk supply continued. In February 1919 another attempt by the Labour Party to take over the distribution system in the city was lost by eight votes. (13) There was also considerable concern expressed as to the quality and cleanliness of the milk being supplied, and municipalisation was suggested as a solution to that particular problem, because the cost of installing the new pasteurisation plants would be beyond the means of the small supplier. (14) In 1926 a plea was made by Councillor R.C. Ruth (Labour)

for restoration of the municipal maternity home and the play centres together with the adoption of a more generous stance vis-à-vis the supply of milk and meals to the needy. He stated that the infantile death rate was increasing in Bradford, that it was higher than the national average, and higher than that in comparable industrial cities. (15)

Nationally, industrial disputes, particularly in the mining industry during the mid-twenties, increased the demand for subsidised milk supplied under the maternity and child welfare provisions with the result that expenditure in 1925-1926 increased to £188,000, and in 1926-1927 soared to £331,000. This despite the fact that the Ministry of Health declined to recognise for grant purposes any local authority expenditure incurred because of the dispute in the coal industry. The government also reminded local authorities that they were to review their procedures so as to ensure that supplies of milk and food under the statutory provisions were restricted to "persons who are not in receipt of Poor Law Relief and who require additional milk or food solely on medical grounds." (16) Thereafter, during the rest of the 1920s, the cost stabilised at approximately £220,000.

However, despite interventions from central government, Bradford did at least endeavour to continue to alleviate the distress caused to the working classes by the endemic economic problems of the second half of the decade. Debates took place as to the possibility of reducing or abolishing nursery school fees (17), and a decision was taken to supply top quality (Grade A) milk in conjunction with meals provided for its school children, whilst at the same time keeping prices at their existing levels. (18) In

March 1930 the Council approved a resolution to reduce its nursery school fees from 2s. (10 new pence) to 1s. 3d. (7 new pence approximately) per week and to supply milk free of charge to all its school children. (19) However, after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent world-wide financial crisis, the economic climate worsened and by January 1932, as we have already noted, a scheme prepared by Bradford's Director of Education for reducing education expenditure for that financial year by 10% was under consideration by the Education Committee.

Such a reduction had been part of the political platform based on economy in local government services put forward by the Bradford Citizens' Municipal League in the November 1931 municipal elections. (20) The League was a coalition of Liberal and Conservative candidates, and two of its leading members became chairman of the Education Committee and chairman of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, David Waterhouse (Liberal) and Louis Smith (Conservative) respectively. On 3 February 1932 a resolution was passed by the Elementary Education Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of Louis Smith that in future the allowance of milk for each nursery school child should be limited to one third of a pint per day. Even prior to the date of this decision a campaign had begun in Bradford to persuade the Council not to endorse this resolution. On the day following it, 4 February, Louis Smith was reported by the Yorkshire Observer as commenting that the resolution had been passed in Sub-Committee without a dissenting voice and that he "very much resented the intervention of a certain scholastic servant of the department who rushed into print on the question of

the milk supply." (21) This is, without doubt, a reference to Miriam Lord, for in her private papers there is not only a copy of an editorial of the Bradford Pioneer dated as early as 22 January opposing the decision to restrict the supply of milk to nursery school children to one third of a pint per day, suggesting that she may well have been one of the sources for the editorial, but also there is a copy of a letter addressed to the citizens of Bradford which she wrote to the Yorkshire Observer. The letter begins as follows:-

"I should be glad of the privilege of your paper to correct certain misleading statements and put before the citizens and ratepayers of Bradford some actual facts concerning the supply of milk to Nursery School babies.

During the past 11 years I have been Superintendent in charge of the Lilycroft Open Air Nursery School. Throughout this period the babies have been allowed a pint of milk daily or as much of a pint as they can drink. This policy has been supported by every medical officer in charge of the children's health, and by each successive Education Committee. In every Nursery School there is a high percentage of necessitous babies; of delicate, rickety, and ailing ones. Because of this urgent need the reduced ration has been supplemented at this school through the generosity of several public-minded citizens who have temporarily given the extra milk required.

It must be remembered that Nursery School babies are under five years of age and in our charge all day long. The period under seven years in childhood is the most critical throughout life. It is in these early years that the physical health is either made or marred. It is the period when bones and teeth are formed and the foundations laid for either health or disease in after life.  
**GOOD HEALTH IS THE WISEST AND BEST  
"ECONOMY MEASURE" FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL  
 OR ANY COUNTRY." (22)**



The Education Committee defended its position by referring to the opinion of dietetists (sic) that the amount of fresh milk to be given daily to a child should not exceed one third of a pint. (23) This view was given limited support by the National Baby Week Council which emphasised that this would be true for nursery school children who enjoyed a well-balanced diet, but would be inaccurate insofar as necessitous, under-nourished children were concerned, where even a full pint of milk daily would not compensate for the deficiencies in their diet. (24)

A full meeting of Bradford Council was held on 9 February 1932 at which Louis Smith was asked if he was "aware that certain complaints have been made in the public Press both by public servants and others in respect of the milk allowances in the nursery schools." Councillor Smith replied that he was indeed

"... aware that a certain headmaster of a secondary school and a certain headmistress of a nursery school, and a certain loquacious magistrate had made public comments regarding the administration of the department in relation to the apportionment of milk to nursery schools. In relation to the scholastic critics he might say he would have thought even an elementary education would have given them regard for a certain reserve in relation to the department which employed them."

He went on to quote from a letter from Dr Buchan, the Medical Officer of Health for Bradford, who had been the source for the dietetists' opinion referred to above, and to give an example of a typical week's lunch menu for nursery school children.

"He was quite convinced that nobody in the Council, having gone into the matter seriously merely with the intention of arriving at what the children should have,

would complain of what the department had arranged to give them. They had gone into the matter of what was usually applied for, and had gone into the expert opinion on the matter, and they might take it that if any of the children attending the nursery schools were not in the normal state of health and required more milk, they would undoubtedly get it. All the nonsense which had appeared in the papers, and all the talk about the matter, had been founded on false impressions, and made either with the intention of casting odium on the department, or in crass ignorance. The three nursery schools had an average attendance of 48 children each, and the average cost per child in these respective schools was: Bierley £9.13s.7d.; Bowling Back Lane £14.17s.7d.; and Lilycroft, the school from which the complaint was made, £23.9s.5d."

The Council then adopted the minutes of the Elementary Sub-Committee incorporating the restriction of the quantity of milk supplied to the nursery schools. (25)

The personal animosity felt by Louis Smith towards Miriam Lord is barely concealed by this record of his speech that day, and his tactic of quoting the average cost per child in the three schools was clearly designed to cast Lilycroft in a poor light as it showed that Lilycroft already cost the city more than its other nursery schools for a comparable education. But worse was to come, for on the very same day as the Council meeting Lady Astor wrote to Miriam as follows:-

"Dear Miss Lord,  
As to your milk scandal, of course I will do what I can. I have put down a question on the subject ... As soon as it is answered I will send it with the answer and any comments which arise to the Yorkshire Post. I suspect that the results of a Parliamentary question may be even more drastic than any newspaper campaign - I'm sure I hope so. I don't see how people can be so mean.  
Yours sincerely  
N. Astor." (26)

These were to be prophetic words indeed. On the copy of the Parliamentary question enclosed with the letter Miriam herself wrote "This question in "The House" started the personal persecution of M. Lord in Bradford".

The question was duly posed and answered in the House of Commons on 11 February 1932 -

"Viscountess Astor asked the President of the Board of Education whether he is aware that the Bradford Elementary Education Sub-Committee have decided to cut down the milk supply to children in nursery schools to one third of a pint per day, in spite of the fact that over 50% of the children in the Bradford nursery schools are on the free lists, which means a poverty basis and very little milk supplied in their homes; and whether he will issue a circular to all education committees giving the opinion of the Medical Research Council on the subject and requiring the issue of the correct quantity of milk to all children?"

Sir D Maclean: I have no official information as to any changes made by the Bradford Local Education Authority in the matter of the supply of milk to children in their nursery schools, but I have seen a statement in the Press that certain modifications have been made on an experimental basis to be reconsidered next April ... I can assure the Noble Lady that this is a matter which has received very careful attention not merely on the grounds of economy, but as to the proper use of milk for children in the morning before they have had their dinner." (27)

The whole question of the milk supply to nursery school children again came up for debate at a meeting of Bradford Council on 16 February 1932. Various councillors from all political parties once more rehearsed the arguments for and against the new

policy, and then Councillor Louis Smith had the chance of reply. He refuted the allegation that children were going to be deprived of milk which they needed and went on:-

"He knew perfectly well that attention had been drawn in Parliament by Lady Astor, who was communicated with by another member of the staff who seemed to be more concerned with getting her own way rather than to have the matter decided on by its merits. It was about time persons appointed by the Authority were able to recognise what their proper position was. He did not think it was right or decent that heads of schools should write either in the Press regarding the administration that employed them or write to Members of Parliament so that they would ask questions which could best be answered in Bradford. They could take it from him that members of his side of the house were just as much concerned as those who trumpeted forth their ideas so loudly in the Press and elsewhere. It was not in the interests of the children, it was in the interests of propaganda." (28)

There is no doubt that Miriam had considerable support for her point of view, both from within the Bradford Council on the Labour side, and from outside bodies such as the Nursery School Association, the National Baby Week Council and the 'Mother and Child' monthly journal. (29) But in order to marshal this support she adopted a high profile, public stance which brought her into direct conflict with her own Education Committee, and which, moreover, placed its leading members under the national spotlight, no doubt to their extreme discomfiture. A politician who apparently cannot manage his own department without arousing political controversy is usually deemed to be inadequate, and Councillor Louis Smith would turn out to be dangerous when

wounded in this way. Within less than four months Miriam's post as Superintendent of Lilycroft Open Air Nursery School had been abolished, and Miriam subsequently demoted to assistant mistress in the school of which she had been in charge since the day it had opened.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

Miriam did not go quietly or without a fight - it was not in her nature. Nor was it in her nature to lower her profile during the period leading up to the passing on 31 May 1932 of the Sub-Committee resolution to amalgamate the Lilycroft Nursery and Infants' schools. As has been noted, as early as February 1929 after the post of head teacher at Princeville Infants' had become vacant, the Nursery and Infants' schools there had been amalgamated under one head teacher. This, combined with the previous acceptance by the Council in October 1927 of the general principle that combined nursery and infants' departments would be provided in any new elementary schools opened in Bradford, should surely have alerted Miriam to the possibility that these developments could eventually impinge on her. It is quite possible that she did become concerned for her own future for it seems that she applied for a post as an Inspector of Schools in early 1931. Among her private papers is a copy of a letter of commendation written by Thomas Boyce, Bradford's Director of Education, on 9 March 1931 supporting her application for the post. In view of what subsequently happened to her at the hands of Bradford Education Committee it is interesting to note the fulsome terms of this letter of support:-

"It gives me great pleasure to write in support of the candidature of Miss Miriam Lord for the post of Inspectress. Miss Lord has had a long and unusually wide experience of Infants' and Junior work. She was appointed here in 1921 as the Superintendent of the Lilycroft Nursery School and has done pioneer work of abiding excellence.

She has been particularly successful in organising the Parents' side of the work; the mother craft classes for girls run by her in connection with the Nursery School were favourably commented upon by Sir George Newman in his 1923 Report.

Miss Lord's work has been enriched by her experience at the University of Michigan, U.S.A. and her intimate connection with the educational and social activities of Bradford.

Her sense of humour, her keenness of mind, her wide educational, social and cultural interests make her a delightful colleague. She has a sane judgement, ability to get on with Students and Assistants, and the power to inspire enthusiasm and confidence. She has shown herself a devoted, responsible and thoroughly efficient servant of the Committee." (1)

There is no other record of this attempt to find alternative employment so we do not know whether Miriam was unsuccessful with her application or whether she subsequently withdrew it. Nor do we know to what extent the eulogistic terms of the letter were truly sincere, or whether they represented an attempt on the part of the Director of Education to rid himself of a thorn in his side. In any event, she remained in situ at Lilycroft while the omens continued to portend doom.

By January 1932 consideration was being given to Thomas Boyce's scheme for reducing education expenditure by 10%. This inevitably aroused opposition in certain quarters in Bradford - on 21 January at the annual meeting of the Bradford Trades' Council standing orders were suspended to enable those attending to discuss the proposed reductions. The outcome of these discussions was the decision to forward a resolution to the Labour group on the City Council "urging them to call for the resignation of the Director of Education". (2) Four weeks after this decision was taken

by the Trades' Council Miriam gave them a lecture on the merits of nursery education -

"Miss Miriam Lord, Headmistress of the Lilycroft Nursery School, attended and delivered an exceptionally interesting and instructive lecture on the value and effectiveness of the work being done in the Nursery Schools. The lecture was profusely illustrated with lantern slides, and after questions had been dealt with, Miss Lord was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for the lecture." (3)

There is no evidence that Miriam was ever a member of the Labour Party, but given her commitment to nursery education and the fact that political support for it came mainly from the socialist end of the political spectrum, it is not surprising that when she was confronted with a growing crisis she turned to the Bradford Labour Party, among others, for support for her views. Thus, the timing of her lecture to the Trades' Council cannot have been entirely coincidental.

However, despite the problems which were looming around her, including the proposition that nursery education in the city should cease altogether, she did not back off from her skirmishes with the Education Office on the subject of school meals. Ever since the early days of her taking up the post of Superintendent at Lilycroft Nursery School she had harassed its officials on this issue. She was still pursuing it eleven years on, as late as April 1932. On 10 May 1932 a reply went out from Thomas Boyce addressed to Miriam at Lilycroft as follows:-

"Adverting to your letter of the 29th ultimo, I have made investigations regarding the presence of foreign substances in the food sent to your school. The presence of tobacco is unexplainable, and to the Cook,

apparently inconceivable. He draws attention to small collections of substances sometimes found in cases of currants which are of a dark brown colour and similar to your sample of "tobacco".

I am anxious that the meals provided should be entirely satisfactory and to ensure this, I shall be glad to have your co-operation and to receive any suggestions you may have to make from time to time." (4)

The tone of this reply from the Director of Education is more conciliatory than most of those which have previously been quoted - could it be that Mr Boyce knew that the end was in sight? He must surely have been alive to the possibility that ten days later a recommendation would be sent from the Finance, Law and General Purposes Sub-Committee of the Education Committee to the Elementary Education Sub-Committee proposing that the latter explore the current provision of nursery school services with a view to reducing them. (5) Also, he should have had knowledge of the resolution to amalgamate the Lilycroft Nursery and Infants' Schools under the control of the Head of the Infants' Department which would come before the Special Sub-Committee re Nursery Schools three weeks later. The fact that the destination of the headship of the two schools after amalgamation had already been decided and was incorporated in the resolution meant that it had been under discussion for some time. The Director of Education had indubitably been consulted, if he had not in fact been the instigator of the resolution; given the imperative of reducing expenditure, he must have known that its chances of being adopted were considerable.

Feelings immediately ran high in Bradford. The Bradford Daily Telegraph reported on 2 June under the heading of 'Nursery Schools' as follows:-

"A compromise has been reached in the move which originally aimed at the closure of the Bradford nursery schools.

Members of the Elementary Sub-Committee who are dealing with the matter have now recommended that the Lilycroft Nursery School should be linked up with the ordinary infants' school, which would effect a substantial saving, and that the other nursery departments should remain attached to the infants' schools, with the exception of Swain House nursery school, which it is recommended should be closed.

The object pursued in relation to the remaining departments is that of bringing about a closer liaison between the nursery departments and the ordinary schools.

Mr Louis Smith, chairman of the Elementary Education Committee, said today that he regarded the proposal as insufficiently drastic.

"In the state of affairs which prevails today", he said, "I consider that the luxury of nursery schools cannot be afforded, and the authorities would be perfectly justified in closing these schools." (6)

On 9 June the executive committee of the Bradford Trades Council (to whom Miriam had spoken on nursery education the previous February) resolved that

"the President and the Secretary be empowered to draft a resolution protesting against the ruthless cuts in education and other civic services, for submission to the Council at its next meeting; and that Councillor Ruth be invited to address the Council on these subjects." (7)

At the meeting of the council which took place on 14 June the question of the proposed cuts in nursery education was duly raised. The Bradford Daily Telegraph reported the reactions of various organisations as follows:-

"The storm of protest occasioned by the proposed curtailment of nursery school facilities ... was

reflected in letters submitted by the Town Clerk. The women's section of the Shipley Local Labour Party wrote protesting against the recommendation, which they described as false economy, bearing in mind that the lives of little children were at stake. The Bradford I.L.P. Guild of Youth denounced the proposal as a retrograde step and as a probable prelude to the complete abolition of nursery school training ...

The committee of the Bradford Education Society expressed the hope that, notwithstanding the present need for sacrifices, it may be possible to safeguard the nursery school service; and that, even if some temporary restriction proves unavoidable, the service may be restored and extended when prosperous times return.

Other protests were received from the Co-operative Women's Guild, and the Bradford Independent Labour Party Central Women's Group. The committee suggested that the proposals raised a grave danger of the abolition of nursery education. The late Margaret McMillan devoted the whole of her life towards the nursery school movement ... and in 1932 in the false interests of economy this honourable name and life of devoted service with which it was always associated were being trailed in the dust. The Group hoped the Council would emphatically reject these outrageous proposals." (8)

On the day of this Council Meeting, 14 June, a joint letter from the chairman of the Education Committee, Councillor Waterhouse, and the chairman of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, Councillor Louis Smith, defending their position on Lilycroft, was published in the Yorkshire Observer. Among the points raised in the letter was the average cost per child at Miriam's school which at £23.9s.5d. (£23-47p) was alleged to be almost as high as the cost per child of secondary education. The same edition of the newspaper published a letter from a previous chairman of the Education

Committee deploring the proposed cuts in nursery education, and a joint letter from Professors R.H. Tawney and C. Delisle Burns, both well-known writers and lecturers on history and sociology, which referred to the educational policy pursued by Bradford up to that time as having been a shining example to less enlightened authorities. (9)

Amid all this uproar Miriam continued to carry out her usual functions at the same time as attempting to orchestrate the protests. On 8 June she wrote to Miss Effie Ryle, the organising secretary of the Nursery School Association, trying to establish a preferred date for the association's next committee meeting and referring to the events taking place in Bradford.

"I should like to send a message to Conference but things are all so critical that I scarcely know what to send. Also I am overwhelmed with work, enquiries, protests from all directions. There is to be a big mass meeting of teachers on June 16th. and there is suggested a mass meeting of all churches and Christian bodies with the Bishop of Bradford in the chair.

As I foresaw the recent suggestions have caused a terrific upheaval. As far as I am concerned personally this may not affect my position as the reactionaries, being afraid, are rushing resolutions through committee as quickly as possible." (10)

In the same letter she refers to her relationship with her proposed successor -

"Personally I get on with the Infants Head Mistress very well indeed and she is a nice woman but professionally she is not college trained, nor has she any Nursery School training. I cannot think that the Board of Education will sanction such a combination, or what would be the use of training? I believe Miss Owen is giving this matter her immediately (sic) attention."

In the event, this alleged lack of experience and training did not impact upon the decision made by the Council, but it was to have repercussions at a later date.

On 7 June 1932 the Headmistress of Princeville school, Miss McKechnie, wrote to Miriam as follows:-

"I have been wanting to see you ever since I read Friday mornings' newspaper but I was away at the weekend - and left soon after 5 o'clock last night - went to bed with a very stiff neck. It is still bad or I would come across. I would like to see you. Whatever is going to happen to Lilycroft. Why is this step contemplated? Can I do anything to help? I shall be in school all afternoon but I dare not say I will come over tonight. I think bed is what my neck wants.

Do let me know if I can help in anyway (sic). I suppose when it comes to next year's staffing drastic cuts will be made here - then things will be hopeless.

I am so sorry that this has come to you. It seems such a poor appreciation for all you have done for the nursery cause.

All good wishes." (11)

This is an odd letter in two respects - it purports not to understand the reason for the Council's proposed course of action, but then goes on to refer to the probability of suffering cuts in her own staffing in the following year. Secondly, it offers help in this crisis but relies on the rather flimsy excuse of a stiff neck to avoid actually meeting Miriam. From a close colleague this letter of support seems to be less than wholehearted, and suggests a certain ambivalence where Miriam and her outspokenness were concerned. Miss McKechnie was the headmistress of the first combined Nursery and Infants' school in Bradford. Her school would become the subject of a national experiment in nursery/infant education in 1934, and she would be referred to in glowing



terms by Bradford's Director of Education in a speech which he would give to a conference of the Nursery School Association in 1936. She may well have preferred therefore to keep some distance between herself and Miriam for political reasons.

The resolution of the Special Sub-Committee re Nursery Schools to amalgamate Lilycroft Nursery and Infants' departments, which had been passed on 31 May 1932 and later approved by the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, came before the full Council on Tuesday 21 June 1932. On reaching the point where the minutes of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee were to be adopted, Councillor Ruth moved an amendment that the Council disapprove the minute effecting the amalgamation; Councillor Tetley seconded. In speaking to his amendment Councillor Ruth rejected the argument put forward in their letter to the Yorkshire Observer by Councillor Waterhouse and Councillor Smith that the proposals were motivated "more by a desire to unify or regularise policy rather than to save money." He called on the Council to remember that the statistics showed that children entering elementary school from nursery school showed a substantial reduction in physical defects, and stated that "Nursery schools were absolutely essential in a city like Bradford."

Coming to the proposals to amalgamate the two departments at Lilycroft, Councillor Ruth attempted to draw a distinction between Lilycroft and Princeville, which had already been amalgamated, by referring to the differences between the buildings and the fact that at the latter a vacancy had arisen - there had been no need to downgrade anyone. He then went on to remind his colleagues of Miriam's qualities and

dedication over the years and to point out that they were proposing to subordinate her to a head who had no experience or training in the special demands of nursery school work. He described their proposed course of action in terms of financial punishment and degradation for Miriam. He offered an alternative method of saving the £122 per annum - merely by replacing the assistant with a probationer a salary of £50 could be substituted for one of £185 per annum. This would avoid "destroying the identity of the school and ... inflicting humiliation and discredit upon the head of that school."

The Chairman of the Education Committee, Councillor Waterhouse, countered these arguments by reminding the council that the current proposals re nursery education were already a compromise in that the original suggestion was to abolish all the nursery schools in Bradford and effect a saving of £8000. He made reference to the question raised in the House of Commons the previous April as to why it cost £6 a year more to educate an elementary school child in Bradford than in South Shields, and reminded them that, at a time of financial stringency, they as a Council had voted by 69 votes to 4 to maintain the current level of rate. As to Lilycroft, he accused "some person or persons unknown" of engendering opposition to the proposal to reorganise in order to effect a saving in administration costs. In her copy of the official record of this council meeting on 21 June (annotated 'To my friend Miss Lord, Alfred Pickles, July 1932' - Alderman Pickles had been the Labour Lord Mayor of Bradford in 1930-1931) Miriam wrote 'Quite untrue' in the margin of the passage where Councillor Waterhouse alleged that it was not a question of a reduction of staff and discontinuance of the nursery

school. But, in fact, as it afterwards turned out, it was Councillor Waterhouse who was correct in his assertion and Miriam who was mistaken - her indignation and hurt pride prevented her from acknowledging that nursery education would continue at Lilycroft and with the same number of staff. The saving would come from the reduction in her salary. As far as Miriam herself was concerned, the Chairman of the Education Committee described her as "a very capable woman" who would be able to obtain a new and better appointment, either with Bradford or elsewhere.

Alderman Pickles spoke for the amendment by reminding councillors that it was Liberal Party policy (Councillor Waterhouse being a Liberal) to expand nursery education, its manifesto for the 1929 general election having declared that the number of nursery schools in the country was ludicrously small for the number of children needing them. He also stated that he believed that nursery education was having to bear a disproportionate amount of the cuts in the education budget. Other councillors referred to the cost per annum per child at Lilycroft Nursery School as being far in excess of the cost per annum per child at other nursery schools, both in Bradford and at the McMillan school in London. Alderman Kathleen Chambers, Labour, whose own child had attended Lilycroft Nursery School, pointed out the practical difficulty for the head teacher of the amalgamated schools as she had charge of a class, and either the Education Committee would have to provide her with an extra teacher to release her to carry out her combined function, which would negate the financial saving, or she would be unable to perform adequately her duties as head of the nursery department. (The

latter prediction is in fact what happened, although Miriam's contribution to this outcome will be the subject of later examination.) Another Labour councillor, Alderman Titterington, supported the amendment by saying that the proposal before them was "economically wrong, educationally wrong, and socially wrong. The nursery school was the basis of their educational system, and was an absolutely necessary institution if they were going to continue, as they ought to continue, to be a progressive city."

Councillor Ruth took up the argument again by reminding his council colleagues that the government when issuing its economy circular had stated that a policy of wholesale and unconsidered reductions in education expenditure seemed neither necessary nor advisable. And yet, by reducing their investment in nursery education and by creating an impossible administrative problem at Lilycroft, this was what was being done in Bradford. Councillor Louis Smith, chairman of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, then took up the cudgels. He refuted the assertion that they were proposing to abolish nursery schools - in fact they were merely closing one which had only just opened on a new housing estate where it was not really required, and were just making an alteration in the administrative arrangements at Lilycroft. He then took a sideswipe at Miriam in the following terms:-

" If there was anyone to whom he could pay tribute, it was to the publicity agent at Lilycroft who had been responsible for this splendid agitation, for this inspired Press correspondence, and for all the various letters and communications that had been

received from all over the kingdom."

Before going on to refute the allegation that it would be physically impossible for one person to manage both schools by stating that, in fact, the two buildings were in very close proximity to each other, he reminded them that the decision to combine nursery and infant school provision in Bradford had been taken as far back as 1927 and that the Nursery School Association itself had in February 1932 published a pamphlet which supported the provision of nursery school conditions and training in infants schools for children of three years and upwards. This was what was being put into operation at Lilycroft. He then personalised his comments even further by asserting that if there had been malice in their proposals, they would have involved the removal of the Lilycroft nursery school head and her substitution by a certified assistant. This was not under consideration. Instead, they thought

"... that the head there had a very good influence and had brought the school to a certain perfection, and that it would be only wise to leave that lady there and, being an intelligent person and more interested in education than in status, he was quite sure she would fall in with the arrangements."

Louis Smith was nothing if not a cunning political animal, because this backhanded compliment was intended to restrict Miriam's future ability to protest or withhold her co-operation without incurring the accusation that she was more interested in her own status than in the interests of the children for whom she was responsible. (12)

The amendment was then lost by 42 votes to 29. Miriam's fate was thus decided on her forty seventh birthday.

Later in the same council meeting, Alderman Chambers moved an amendment which was seconded by Alderman Pickles that Miriam's salary should not be adversely affected by the amalgamation. She reminded the council of Miriam's special qualities and qualifications -

"... she had taken a special course of training for it, and was an exceedingly highly qualified woman who could have done very much better for herself financially by taking up other work. She gave up other work and took this, which meant a lower salary for her ... As she had sacrificed so much in the past it seemed obviously unfair that she should now be required to sacrifice still further because of reorganisation which was not in any way her fault."

Councillor Louis Smith lost no opportunity to turn the knife, saying he saw no reason why those above a certain level of income should not take a reduction in their salary when so many others were actually losing their jobs in the economic climate which prevailed. The Elementary Sub-Committee had agreed that the Burnham Scale should be adhered to, and recommended that they agreed to this as it "would not inflict any great injury". The amendment was lost by 33 votes to 26. (13)

The 'no great injury' was in fact a further reduction of almost 30% in salary. When Miriam took up the headship of Lilycroft in 1921 her salary was fixed at £318 per annum. This was increased by £18 to £336 under the terms of a special allowance granted by Bradford Education Committee in 1927. In October 1931 all teachers' salaries were reduced by 10% under the National Economy Act - this took her salary down to £302.8s.0d. (£302-40). The additional adjustment downwards required to

bring her in line with the Burnham Scale for an assistant teacher was £86.4s.0d. (£86-20) making her future salary £216.4s.0d. (£216-20). The new arrangements were to be effective from 1 September 1932 which meant that in the space of less than twelve months Miriam had suffered a loss of income of no less than 35% and never again throughout the rest of her teaching career did she achieve her 1930 level of salary. (14)

What then followed was a series of skirmishes between Miriam Lord and the Bradford Education Committee.

On 1 July 1932 she wrote to the Committee asking them to consider a proposal to open the Lilycroft Nursery School for 10½ hours per day to fit in with the hours worked at the surrounding mills, suggesting a weekly charge of 7s.0d. (£0-35) per child. The letter continued as follows:-

"In order that the experiment may have every chance of success I am prepared to offer my services entirely voluntarily, dating from August 24th 1932, for any length of time decided by the Committee, up to one year from that date.

The only conditions I would ask for would be:-

1. That I should have entire charge of the experiment under the direction of the Committee.
2. That the same expenditure for staffing as allotted by the Amalgamated Scheme would be allowed for this experiment.
3. That in co-operation with the Education Committee some practical Student Scheme be worked out to allow of work in two shifts - 7.30 a.m. to 12 and 12.30 to 6. pm - to cover the care and education of the children." (15)

Her proposal was said by her to be supported by the parents and mothers of the Lilycroft Nursery Club, and although she stated specifically in a post script that she wanted it kept out of the press, it was nevertheless a fairly transparent attempt to derail the amalgamation. The pre-condition that she should be in sole charge also revealed her unwillingness to subordinate herself to the headmistress of the combined school.

On 6 July the relevant sub-committee passed the following resolution:-

"Lilycroft Nursery School: The Director having submitted a letter from the Head Teacher at the Lilycroft Nursery School requesting the Sub-Committee to grant her an interview for the purpose of enabling her to place a proposition before them, it was decided to request her to place such proposition before the Director in the first instance." (16)

So on 13 July she wrote to the Chairman of the Education Committee, Councillor Waterhouse, with the same idea. This letter does not lay down any pre-conditions and is far more conciliatory in tone - the final paragraph reads:-

"As Superintendent of the Lilycroft Nursery School the welfare and needs of the babies has been my first concern. Before such charge is taken away from me, I have submitted the matter to you as my last service to the babies." (17)

This ploy did not work either because Miriam's letters remained with the Director of Education who followed up by requesting further information on the proposal. To which Miriam replied on 18 August assuring him that the suggestion for extended hours had come from parents outside the Lilycroft Mothers' Club (the mothers' club being very much her creation and therefore viewed by the Education Committee as her



mouthpiece). She advised him that the Mothers' Club had the necessary information to put before the Education Committee if only the latter would agree to meet them the following month (September), and she reminded him that the experience of Princeville was further proof that a need existed. (18) By now the time scale had slipped into the new school term, by which time the reorganisation would have already been implemented and Miriam's chances of averting it, always very slim, would have disappeared altogether.

She seems to have realised this herself because, simultaneously with the 18 August reply to the Director's request for further information, she embarked upon other correspondence with him of a rather martyrish nature.

"On reference back to the dates, I find I am due to 21 school days in respect of half-term, and other short holidays due to me.

Upon these occasions I remained on duty, as the Nursery School was kept open. The other Staff have had their respective time allowed." (19)

On the same day she raised the question of the handover of the school, pointing out the further sacrifices of her own time that bringing the nursery school to the required standard, prior to the handover, had involved.

"I should be glad if you would kindly send some person in an official position, to visit the Nursery School on Tuesday August 23rd, to certify that the school has been handed over in good condition in every respect to the Head Mistress of the Infants' School.

A Nursery School is a house as well as a school. The domestic side has to be attended to in addition to the full daily routine of a long day.

There are:-

Blankets	Bed-covers	Table-cloths
Bath towels	Brush bags	Curtains
Hand towels	Feeders	Face-cloths
Serving aprons		

to be mended and kept in order. The Babies' overalls need constant repair, tapes - buttons - patches etc.

There are dolls, toys and picture books to repair etc.

Careful attention to these matters in the past has resulted in a considerable saving to the Education Committee at the above school, but at a cost of countless hours of unseen work by the Staff and Superintendent.

In addition, the Nursery garden has to be weeded and kept in order; the birds and animals to be fed, cleaned out and kept healthy. This entails work after school hours.

It has taken a week and one day of my vacation on school work to leave all in excellent condition for next Term when Staff will be depleted.

In all other types of schools and institutions additional help is given with the necessary domestic side, with the bathing of children and their school meal. The Nursery School Staff work already under considerable strain to meet all these demands and still maintain a high standard of efficiency." (20)

The barely concealed message that they would not be able to cope without her did not move the Director of Education. Mr Boyce replied on 24 August, one day after the handover,

"Dear Madam, I thank you for your letter of the 18th instant. It is not felt to be necessary to undertake any checking of your stock, since you are remaining at the School.

The attention which you have given in order to leave everything in excellent condition for this term is much appreciated." (21)

On 1 September he had to advise her that her request for reimbursement of £5 which she had paid out for gardening supplies had been turned down by the Council as

the work had not been authorised. (22) By this time the school had re-opened, Miriam had been down-graded and the scene was set for her next humiliation - being put on three months' probation with the added indignity of severe restrictions being placed on her extra-mural activities.

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## CHAPTER NINE: HUMILIATION

Whilst Miriam Lord in Bradford was fighting her losing battle against the amalgamation of the Lilycroft Nursery School with the adjacent Infants' School, the repercussions of the national financial crisis of 1931 continued to make themselves felt in the field of nursery education. The Labour Party had made the wide provision of nursery schools part of its policy during the 1929 election campaign. However, the expansion which had taken place in 1929 and 1930 under Charles Trevelyan at the Board of Education came quickly to a halt, so much so that no nursery schools were approved between October 1931 and July 1932, nor was it likely that any more would be sanctioned. The number of nursery schools recognised by the Board in July 1932 was 56 with 15 others approved before October 1931 still awaiting recognition. (1) In February 1931 the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education under the chairmanship of Sir W.H. Hadow had begun work on its enquiry into "the training and teaching of children attending nursery schools and infants' departments of public elementary schools, and the further development of such educational provision for children up to the age of 7+ ". (2)

The Hadow Committee was meeting throughout the period leading up to the Lilycroft amalgamation in September 1932 and eventually presented its report in 1933. It took the form of a comprehensive survey of the history of nursery education and its underlying principles, including substantial evidence of the value of the nursery school as a remedial as well as an educational force. It recommended that nursery schools

should be provided firstly in areas where home conditions were deficient, whilst at the same time stating the belief that, where home conditions were adequate, the best place for a child under the age of five was at home with its mother. The committee reached the conclusion that nursery schools and classes could only be complementary to the usual child welfare services, and could not stand in their stead while attendance at them was merely voluntary. The report noted, in this connection, that not one witness to the committee had advocated compulsory attendance. At the same time as recognising that deficiencies in housing, home environment and family income could be alleviated by the provision of nursery education, the Hadow Report described the nursery school only as a 'desirable adjunct' to the national system of education, both for children from economically deprived areas and for children from more advantaged areas. In so far as it impinged on Miriam's personal situation, it agreed that both the separate nursery school and the nursery class within the infants' school could indeed meet the educational and physical needs of the under five's, and therefore brought her no solace in this respect. The Report recommended that

"...each local authority should survey the needs of their area, with regard to home conditions and the wishes of parents, and, after consultation with the Board of Education, should take steps as may seem to them desirable to provide in schools nurture and training for children below the age of five." (3)

The terms in which the recommendation is expressed could not in any way be described as resolute or convincing, and they show all the signs of having been

markedly influenced by the prevailing economic climate which was obviously not propitious for advocating large tranches of further public spending. In fact, it was not until 1936 that the National Government, in Board of Education Circular 1444, actually implemented the Report's rather timid recommendation by requesting local education authorities to survey the needs of children under five in their area and to consider whether these would best be served by either expansion or improvement in their nursery or elementary school provision.

In the meantime, the policy of the government in respect of nursery education was labelled 'reactionary' by the Nursery School Association, and it was left to voluntary organisations such as The Save the Children Fund to fill the gap. By the end of 1933 the Fund had opened eight open air nursery schools in distressed areas, some of these schools later being recognised by the Board of Education for grant purposes. The Nursery School Association itself ran a campaign advocating that sites should be reserved for nursery schools on the new housing developments then being built to replace the urban slums, and launched its campaign in October 1933 with a letter to The Times signed, *inter alia*, by the Archbishop of York, the President, Chairman and Honorary Adviser to the Association, and by Professor R.H. Tawney. (4)

Not only was Miriam Lord involved with the Nursery School Association campaign by virtue of her position on the Association's committee, but she also appears to have had an involvement with The Save the Children Fund emergency nurseries programme, if only by way of a connection with its officials. On 3 May 1933, the



secretary of the Fund, Miss Sophie Sharp, wrote to her asking her to give a speech on the subject of nursery schools to the Rotherham Council of Social Service. This request seems to have been handled by Miriam in keeping with her new, punctilious mode in that the Rotherham Secretary was asked to forward their invitation via the Director of Education at Bradford, who duly gave his permission on 25 September 1933. (5)

However, it was only a short time after the date of the Rotherham speech, 4 October, that Miriam was to find herself in further trouble.

In September 1932 the headmistress of the Lilycroft Infants' School, Miss Annie Coates had taken over as head of the combined schools. She was due to retire in the summer of 1933 and the new combined school was therefore inspected by Miss A.H. Skillicorn, an H.M.I., on 14 June 1933. Whilst her report on both the individual departments of the school was satisfactory, her comments on the combined organisation are implicitly critical of Miriam. Without naming names or apportioning blame, she manages to portray the policy of minimal co-operation which Miriam had adopted in the new situation at Lilycroft.

"The Head Mistress of the Infants' department was placed in charge at the time of the amalgamation. To her tact and generosity the smooth working of the new school is largely due. She retires at the end of the term and her services in this and other schools merit appreciation. The organisation, as it stands at present, is not entirely satisfactory. There is no real co-operation between the two sections of the school and few children pass on from the Nursery to the Infants' classes. Moreover, the Nursery section provides for children of 2-5, and the Infants' for children of 4-7, so that parallel arrangements are made for the group of children aged 4-5. The result

leads to confusion of ideas as to the training which should be given, and to uneconomical use of accommodation, equipment and teaching power." (6)

Miss Skillicorn's criticisms of the Lilycroft situation were reinforced by her comments on the Princeville combined school where she carried out an inspection the following day ...

"... it provides an interesting example of the successful working of a combined Nursery and Infant School ... A most favourable general impression resulted from the visit of inspection and warm praise is due to the Head Mistress. Her enlightened leadership and understanding contribute much to the success of the school." (7)

One outcome of these inspection visits was that the Director of Education gave thought to the twin problems of admission to the nursery school and the need for a transition class between nursery and infants' schools. He issued a letter on 19 September 1933 addressed to the Head Teachers of Nursery and Infant Schools in Bradford in which he made his recommendations for overcoming these difficulties, and asked the head teachers to arrange for co-ordination between the two departments to facilitate his recommended solution. (8) The lack of the requisite co-ordination and co-operation at Lilycroft, as identified in the H.M.I. report, would undoubtedly have acted as a stimulus for such a letter.

Miss Eleanor Dibb was due to take over as head at Lilycroft at the beginning of the autumn term in 1933, but as a consequence of the H.M.I.'s report it was decided to ask Miss Coates to remain in situ until matters arising from it had been settled. (9) A

week later the Finance, Law and General Purposes Sub-Committee of Bradford Council passed the following resolution:-

"The Sub-Committee considered, on reference from the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, certain matters which had arisen out of His Majesty's Inspector's Report on the ... School, and decided that the Head of the Nursery School should be interviewed by the Director in the presence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Education Committee, the Chairman of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, and Miss Dibb, the newly appointed Headmistress, and informed of the conditions under which her services will be continued." (10)

Miriam was accordingly instructed to appear on Friday 13 October 1933 before this panel which included her adversaries from the skirmishes of the previous year, Councillors Waterhouse and Louis Smith.

There is nowhere in Miriam's private papers where she expresses her feelings about or discusses her reaction to receiving a peremptory summons to appear before a tribunal of this nature. And yet it must have been one of the great crises of her life. How is it that there is no record of it among the many papers which she kept? The possibility that she exercised a form of censorship over her documents, either at the time or at a later date, has to be entertained, for the shock at realising that she was to be on trial in this way must have been substantial. Based on her previous 'modus operandi' it is reasonable to expect a cascade of letters to like-thinking colleagues, acquaintances, political connections and fellow believers. But there is nothing. We must ask ourselves whether she was unable to admit to feelings of inadequacy and weakness, even in

retrospect or for posterity.

What there is in the private papers is a copy of the Memorandum of Statement dated 18 October 1933 and issued by the Bradford Education Committee to Miriam and Miss Dibb as a record of what was said and decided at the interview. Because of the tremendous implications for Miriam it is worth quoting this document in full. After a scene-setting preamble it went on:-

"The Director stated:- That Miss Dibb had been appointed as Head of the combined Nursery and Infants sections of the Department at Lilycroft and had been specifically charged with the responsibility of securing the coalescence of the two sections of work. It was unfair and improper to put upon her this responsibility with any unnecessary reservations or qualifications.

The implications of this position were

- 1) That Miss Lord was an Assistant Mistress in these amalgamated departments and her position could really be regarded as nothing more than this.
  - 2) The disposal of the staff in the best interests of the work of the amalgamated department must be wholly within the discretion of Miss Dibb as the Head of the School, who would be held responsible for securing the success of the work. This meant that Miss Lord, as other members of the staff, must be subject to Miss Dibb's discretion with regard to her placing in the school. This went even so far as including the possibility of Miss Lord being transferred to the Infants Department, although Miss Dibb had been asked, if occasion arose so as to appear to make this desirable, not actually to effect this arrangement of services, without consultation with the Director.
- At the same time the Director made it plain that the responsibility for successful working of the Department as a whole having been placed upon Miss Dibb he would not consider it fair or reasonable to object to such a disposal of Miss Lord's services if Miss Dibb strongly

desired it and appeared to submit satisfactory reasons therefore.

3) The determining of the best means of effecting an easy transition from nursery to Infants is the responsibility of the Head, Miss Dibb, and this implies that she must say what children shall move, and the kind of conditions that shall control their work in the difficult transition period.

4) Miss Dibb being the responsible Head of the amalgamated Department, must not be embarrassed by any public utterances on the part of Miss Lord. Miss Lord must therefore cease to speak for, or write for or upon Lilycroft Nursery School. The only person on the teaching staff who can properly be held entitled to make public utterances with regard to the policy or the practices of the school is the responsible Head, namely Miss Dibb. Miss Lord must, therefore, cease to give interviews to Press agents or to write articles for the Press upon or in regard to the work at Lilycroft.

5) Miss Lord must take her place as an Assistant in the School in that the arrangement of her times and duties will be entirely within Miss Dibb's discretion as in the case of other members of the staff.

6) Miss Lord's attendance at meetings of the Nursery Schools (sic) Association, except in an entirely private capacity, must cease. They must never involve her absence from school.

7) If the Women's Club is revived it must be by Miss Dibb and in such a form and at such a time as she is desirous of conducting it.

8) Miss Lord must regard her period of service over the next three months as being of a probationary character, in that the Committee desire to have submitted a report upon the whole condition of affairs at the Lilycroft combined Nursery and Infants Department, and they think it only proper to make it clear to Miss Lord that if any action, or refraining from any action on her part has prevented or impaired the successful working of the school and the discharge of Miss Dibb's responsibility, strong disciplinary action will be taken." (11)

On 28 October Miriam replied as follows:-

"I am in receipt of your memorandum of statement of what is termed an "interview" held on Friday October 13th.

I cannot accept this statement as fully correct.

There have been several omissions, according to my notes.

I should be glad if the committee would please give me the exact grounds of complaint upon which I was subjected to such summary treatment." (12)

To which the Director of Education replied on 3 November 1933:-

"I am in receipt of your letter of the 28th ultimo, and with regard to the second paragraph thereof I am instructed to inform you that the Memorandum of Statement can in no sense be regarded as being conditional upon your acceptance.

With regard to the concluding sentence of your letter I am desired to inform you that the interview which took place on October 13th 1933 was held because it was deemed necessary in the interests of the efficiency of the combined Lilycroft Nursery and Infants' Departments." (13)

Thus Miriam was stripped officially of any additional status or authority which she might have expected to have in the nursery school as a consequence of her long tenure in the position of head mistress - henceforth she was to be 'nothing more' than an assistant teacher. She was to be completely subjugated to the authority of Miss Dibb, more so than any other assistant teacher who would have been able at least to express an opinion on related matters without running the risk of disciplinary proceedings. In addition, an almost total restraint was placed on her outside activities, even in respect of the Nursery School Association where she was a member of the general committee. By

placing her on probation and by making successful completion of that probation contingent upon her co-operation with the new regime, the Education Committee attempted to shackle her completely.

Her only proven reaction was to write to the Nursery School Association on 13 November 1933 concerning the staffing arrangements at the Lilycroft combined school. After due consideration of her letter by the executive committee, Grace Owen, the Honorary General Secretary, sent a reply outlining the Association's position on 27 November. After thanking Miriam for the information which she had sent, the letter went on:-

"There is of course no need to assure you of the Committee's strong opinion that the Head of a combined Nursery and Infants School should have knowledge of and training in nursery school work, and that the staffing should be adequate. It is felt, however, that Lilycroft is in a very special, in fact unique position as regards staffing because you yourself are in charge of the nursery school children. It might well be argued that with some one as experienced as yourself on the staff it was not necessary to observe the usual precaution as to the Nursery qualifications of the Head. Because of this Lilycroft would not be a good case to bring up in relation to the staffing of Nursery Infants Schools. The N.S.A. is actively watching the question of staffing, but it will not contemplate approaching the Board of Education again on the question until the forthcoming Consultative Committee's Report has been received and discussed. As regards the regulations for Nursery Schools first issued, they were withdrawn several years ago. The Regulations at present in force are reduced to a minimum, and do not deal with more than a very few points." (14)

In other words, the Nursery School Association was not about to take up the cudgels on Miriam's behalf because they felt that in her case

- a) the timing was not right;
- b) the Regulations were not being contravened, and
- c) because of her own special qualifications, they would not be on strong ground.

After this additional blow one would imagine that Miriam felt extremely isolated and powerless. Not only had she been divested of her headship, then made subordinate in no uncertain terms to the new head as well as having her extra-mural activities severely curtailed, she was now suffering the disappointment of not being supported by the professional association of which she had been a founder member. There is some evidence that others within the teaching profession too believed that she was misguided in her total opposition to the amalgamation at Lilycroft: in January 1934 Miss Freda Hawtreay, principal of Avery Hill Training College and a member of the Hadow Committee, wrote to Miriam on the subject of education for 2-7 year old children. She acknowledged that Miriam shared Margaret McMillan's ideal of nursery education up to the age of seven, and lamented the fact that both the prevailing economic climate and teachers' professional anxieties were working against progress on that front.

"I wish Infants' Teachers and Nursery School Teachers could present a united front! ... The Bradford experiment of a combined Nursery School and Infant School is a compromise, but it does show recognition of the importance of continuity during these years 2-7 and I welcome it as such." (15)



There is a suggestion that Miriam almost threw in her hand - that she went to Brighton to rest and recuperate and there she had what she herself described as a "spiritual" experience when the vision of a combined social centre and nursery came to her. (16) Whatever her feelings, it was to this vision that she would later devote the bulk of her energies whilst continuing to fulfil her duties as assistant mistress at Lilycroft. But in the meantime, she would not be cowed.

She carried on collecting information and material in support of her opinion about how Lilycroft should be organised and run, that is separately and independently under her own supervision. Her private papers contain many documents hand-written by her which are critical of the new regime both at Lilycroft and in Bradford's other combined nursery and infants' schools. Indeed, it is impossible to find one word of support for anything which was being done. The truth is that her outlook, at that time and perhaps understandably, was so blinkered that she wrote that the Consultative Committee's Report had "come down on the side of the development of the separate nursery school", choosing to disregard the fact that the Report had actually come to the conclusion that both the separate nursery school and the nursery class within the infants' school were capable of meeting the need for nursery education. (17)

She also refused to allow the Education Committee to trample her underfoot completely - she adopted a policy of guerrilla warfare where she felt she was on safe ground. By February 1934 she was in correspondence with the Director of Education about the outstanding matter of leave still due to her. In view of the fact that, up till

then, it had been impossible for her to take this leave because of the demands of the school, she wished Mr Boyce to confirm her entitlement to the leave in writing. She also stated in the letter that she was keen to retain the leave as she wanted to do some educational work abroad, although what this was is not specified. (18) But once again, she had chosen to embark on something which would only bring her further disappointment. After Mr Boyce had denied all knowledge of any verbal agreement to this leave, also any recollection of any promise made by himself about it, Miriam was forced to concede. She wrote back on 6 March 1934 "In conclusion may I add that it is distasteful to me to press any claim which is not willingly granted. In the hope that a more reasonable and kindly spirit may eventually prevail I beg leave to defer further consideration of my claim." (19)

In spite of all that she had endured over the previous two years, she still could not accept that she was faced with an obdurate bureaucratic machine which had its own needs and momentum. By expressing her hope that her case would at some time in the future be judged on more humane grounds she showed that she still had not realised that a sense of humanity is not high on the list of priorities where a combination of bureaucracy and revenge is concerned. Nevertheless, the strength of the social conscience which she had derived from her upbringing did not desert her, so instead she increased her commitment to another activity into which she had already begun to channel her energies. In May 1933 the Bradford Unemployment Advisory Committee, which the previous year had set up an occupational centre for unemployed men, founded

the Forster Centre for Women. This was to be a sister organisation which would cater for the social and occupational needs of unemployed women. Miriam was immediately involved at its inauguration and became its founding honorary secretary, and it was in the field of social education that she would be principally engaged over the next seven years.

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## CHAPTER TEN: THE 1930s - A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

Humiliated as well as constrained in both her professional and extra-mural activities by Bradford Education Committee, Miriam set about building a new career whilst at the same time maintaining her employment with the Education Committee to provide herself with a source of income. Even prior to the fateful June 1933 inspection of Lilycroft school she had become involved with the organisation of the Forster Centre for Women from the time of its establishment in Bradford in May 1933, and as the 1930s progressed she became more and more immersed in her life outside her formal employment.

The notorious stock market collapse in New York in October 1929 led to the calling in from European countries of the short term loans which had been the stimulus for the economic growth which had taken place during the late 1920s. The disappearance of investment funds brought growth to a standstill and led to debtor nations attempting to reduce their deficits by restricting imports which further exacerbated the slowdown. The outcome was the virtual collapse of world trade. Great Britain, in fact, suffered less than some European countries because its position as a raw materials importer was eased by the world-wide fall in raw materials prices. Nevertheless, industrial production in the United Kingdom fell by 16½% between the years 1929-1932, and exports almost halved in value during the same period. Widespread unemployment was a natural consequence of economic recession, the total reaching almost three million which represented approximately 20% of the workforce. )

Indeed, the Ministry of Labour Annual Gazette for 1932 recorded that the national average of people unemployed in the November of that year was 20.9%.

In Bradford, the unemployment figures rose from 7,820 in November 1931 to 18,765 in November 1932, an increase of 140% in a twelve month period. The following years saw fluctuations in the figures, but with an overall pattern of reduction leading to a total of 9,132 in November 1936. In the succeeding two years the figures were again substantially up, just in excess of 16,000, before returning to 1931 levels in 1939 when ongoing preparations for war were beginning to make an impact on the national economy. (2) The misery among the working classes caused by economic recession was obvious to all who were prepared to acknowledge it, but the actual inspiration for the formation of the Bradford Unemployment Advisory Committee came from the Quakers. The Society of Friends called a conference of all interested parties for 19 October 1932 and in a circular letter advertising the conference they stated that the envisaged aims of the Committee would be:-

- "1. To open a public fund;
2. To examine schemes of work;
3. To stimulate local interest in this problem;
4. To negotiate with a similar body representative of the unemployed whom we propose to call together at an early date." (3)

In February 1933 an occupational centre was opened in Bradford to provide unemployed men with the chance to maintain existing skills or develop new ones, and at the same time to offer social facilities to help mitigate the loss of both income and social



opportunities caused by unemployment. Even prior to the opening of the West Street centre in February plans were already in the making for a womens' centre, for on 24 January 1933 a sub-committee of the Bradford Education Committee considered an application by the Unemployment Advisory Committee for use of a portion of the Forster School premises as an occupational centre for the unemployed. The application was granted subject to the Advisory Committee being responsible for repairs, heating, lighting and cleaning of the premises together with payment of rates, and also subject to two weeks' notice to vacate. (4) A meeting was called for 3 April 1933, inviting the unemployed women of Bradford to meet with the women members of the Advisory Committee to discuss the formation of their own centre. (5) Particular mention was made of the fact that the centre would be homely and run by the women themselves.

By the time of the first annual report of the Forster Centre for the period ending 31 July 1934, the centre had grown to 78 from the original 13 members, with a total of 149 having been enrolled during the period covered, of whom 34 had found work. From the outset as much emphasis was placed on its recreational role as on its educational and occupational function. The thinking which lay behind this was that, whilst a woman might be registered unemployed, she was in fact never without work because of her other responsibilities in the home. The centre began very modestly with only two dirty and dilapidated rooms and neither furniture nor equipment. By July 1934 it was using seven rooms at the Forster Street premises which it had equipped with the help of a grant of £36 from the Lord Mayor's Fund, income of a further £139 from

private subscriptions and members' fees, and donations of furniture and materials from the public. The day-to-day management of the centre was in the hands of an elected committee of nine members with Miriam Lord as secretary from the time of its inauguration in May 1933. However, on this occasion her over-riding interest in nursery education did not evidence itself in the activities of the centre, which ranged from community singing and folk dancing through to educational pursuits in the shape of classes in Esperanto and useful handicrafts. (6)

However, when the centre was visited by the Prince of Wales in December 1933, the concept of running a nursery school in conjunction with the womens' centre was raised by the Prince himself.

"To the last named (Miriam Lord), who is on the staff of the Lilycroft Nursery School, the Prince expressed his great interest in the nursery school movement. He asked if there was a nursery school in connection with the centre for women, since he had seen two very successfully run in London and another in Newcastle. The Prince was told that there was no such centre, and he suggested that it would be a fine thing for future development. He liked the family spirit, and said that the unemployment centre, which was a family, should include the youngest children." (7)

A cutting of the newspaper report covering this visit was kept by Miriam in her private papers, and it could well be therefore that the royal visit was the catalyst for her next project which was to occupy the rest of her active life. In any event, having so recently been given the cold shoulder by the educational and political establishment of Bradford, it must have seemed like balm to Miriam when she received the stamp of royal approval

for her latest venture.

Miriam continued in her post as honorary secretary for the Forster Centre for Women right up until 23 July 1940 when her resignation was regretfully accepted by the management committee. During that seven year period there were three enforced changes of premises as the Centre was inevitably never sufficiently strong financially to be able to take out a lease on its own property, but relied instead on the hospitality of the Bradford Council and the Society of Friends. During that time, also, the educational aspect of the Centre's activities went into decline, so much so that in its 1936 Christmas appeal for contributions there was no mention of its educational aims - it merely described itself as the 'Forster Centre for Women (Occupational and Recreational), Bradford'. (8) Nevertheless, the Centre survived and even after her resignation as honorary secretary Miriam continued her association with it in her role as a member of the committee. (9)

She also continued teaching at Lilycroft combined school in her reduced role as an assistant mistress. Whilst there is no record of what transpired during her three month probationary period, it is evident that she must have completed it to the satisfaction of the Director of Education for she remained in her post there until she retired in 1944. The ban on her speaking and other activities was also soon partially lifted for although a visit from the 'Babies Teacher' of Featherstone Infants' School was refused by Mr Boyce in April 1934 (10), a request from the Director of Education in Liverpool in the same month for her to lecture on nursery schools to their Froebel

trainees was allowed, together with the grant of leave of absence from Lilycroft for the afternoon. (11) By 1936 she would seem to have resumed her full round of speaking engagements - letters and press cuttings from the collection of her private papers refer to speeches to the National Council of Women in Spenborough and to the Head Teachers' Association in Heckmondwike as well as contact with the Bradford Council of Social Service.

Back at Lilycroft the situation continued to be difficult. In January 1935 Miss Robinson, the headmistress of the Belle Vue High School for Girls, wrote to Miriam to tell her that she had written to Miss Dibb, the Lilycroft headmistress, asking that they resuscitate the scheme devised by Miriam several years previously whereby senior girls from Belle Vue went to Lilycroft nursery department for training and experience in the care of young children. On the next day Miss Robinson again wrote to Miriam in the following terms:-

"I think Miss Dibb must have been told not to do anything without consulting Miss Bradshaw from the letter which she has written to me this morning. Unless she tells you herself, you had better not know that there is any hitch. I have written back to say that perhaps she did not know that the Director, his inspector - the H.M.I. had already sanctioned the scheme, and for that reason I thought that no other sanction than her own was necessary." (12)

Later that year on 5 June Miriam wrote to her friend and Bradford colleague, Helen Neatby, who was headmistress of the Grange High School for Girls. She wrote:

"My dear Helen,  
Things seem to be happening! Miss Dibb told me

yesterday that she had dropped a Bomb by telling them that she could not continue another year in a pretence. That they must either build and make one school or change it back. Also that the Nursery was anyhow a separate and distinct entity. She has to interview Mr Boyce on Thursday morning. The present Committee won't spend money - neither will they be in a mind to admit a mistake in policy so it seems she has placed them in a dilemma. I have been waiting for this and I admire her honesty and courage in facing up to the truth. They must believe from her what they would not from me. Now its up to the Director - if he is a Director of Education. Though I don't consciously worry I suppose all of this does take its toll on me - subconsciously." (13)

As predicted by Miriam the Education Committee neither changed its policy nor spent any money. It resolved its dilemma the next year by accepting Miss Dibb's resignation, advertising for her replacement as follows:-

"Applications are invited for the post of Head Teacher of the Lilycroft Infants' and Nursery School. Grade II applicants should state their qualifications and experience both for Infants' and Nursery School work as this is a two-department school." (14)

In September 1936 the question of the organisation of the combined school was referred to the Elementary Education Sub-Committee by the Education Committee itself, but after consideration the sub-committee decided to leave things as they were. (15) So that when in November Emily Tordoff was appointed head teacher of the Lilycroft Infants' and Nursery School she inherited a combined school organised on the same lines as at the time of the amalgamation in 1932. (16) However, by the following year a transition class between the two departments of the school was proposed and in the planning stage

(17), presumably because she had identified a need to smooth the transfer between the spontaneous atmosphere and freedom of method as experienced in the nursery department and the more traditional approach still utilised in the infants' department. More importantly, the Director of Education and his Committee had been convinced of the need for it.

Instrumental in this change of strategy would have been the lessons learned from the other amalgamations of nursery schools and infants' departments which had taken place in Bradford. In particular, thinking in Bradford had been influenced by the experiment, recognised nationally in 1934 by the Board of Education, of allowing the amalgamated Princeville school to be administered wholly under nursery school regulations. This was acknowledged by Thomas Boyce in the paper which he submitted on behalf of the Bradford Education Committee (18) to the conference on the 'Education of Children under Seven' organised by the Nursery School Association on 26 June 1936. Having stated that he viewed the nursery school as essentially an educational institution and not merely as a remedial measure for children who were physically deficient by reason of their home environment, he went on to say:-

"But we in Bradford ... could not but be anxious to see that it became part of our educational structure. It must take its place in serving the general educational purpose of our organisation and to this end such disparity in atmosphere, environment and method as existed between the Nursery School and the Infants' School had to be adjusted so as to make a unified organism from 2 years to 7." (19)

Bradford and Mr Boyce's acceptance of the nursery school as primarily an educational institution was in advance of most thinking at the time and certainly ran contrary to the Hadow Report which had failed to accept the need for a universal system of nursery schools on educational grounds. It was also contrary to the view of the Board of Education as expressed in its pamphlet 'Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes' issued in 1936 where it stated that "nursery schools have as their primary object the physical and medical nurture of the debilitated child." This attitude may have been fostered in part by Lady Astor who continued to use her platform in the House of Commons to publicise the need for an increase in open-air nursery schools, but who unfailingly referred to this type of school as the antidote to slum conditions and the physical deficiencies in young children caused by them.

"I press on the Government that they must restore the cuts which were imposed on nursery schools. We have 5000 children in the open-air nursery schools while 174,000 children between the ages of two and four are living in slum conditions ... But unless the Government will give a grant we shall never get the schools. I beg the Parliamentary Secretary to be courageous and to save the lives and the health of thousands of children." (20)

By 1934 the financial difficulties caused by the world-wide depression had begun to ease. In March of that year there were 58 nursery schools recognised by the Board of Education (21), but by the end of May two more had been authorised. (22) In the General Election of 1935, which returned another National Government under the premiership of Stanley Baldwin, all three political parties included the nursery school as

part of their electoral programme. This enabled Sir Percy Harris, M.P. for S.W.

Bethnal Green, to assert that

"... there is general agreement now that nursery schools should be an integral part of our educational organisation, that they should not be spasmodic or confined to a few areas, but that they should be available at any rate all through our great industrial areas ... I am glad to hear that the veto on the provision of nursery schools has been withdrawn ... that any local authority is to be encouraged - I think I am right in using that word - to submit schemes for the provision of nursery schools, and that each proposal will be received on its merits, and, as I understand, sympathetically received." (23)

The political climate was ripe therefore for a further increase in the provision of nursery education. The publicity and propaganda generated by its supporters, in particular the Nursery School Association, had achieved part of their objective, but nursery education as a vital ingredient of a universal education system for purely educational reasons had not been generally accepted. This permitted the expression of views such as that mentioned above which appeared in the Board of Education's 1936 pamphlet. It was to counteract this outlook that the Nursery School Association called its 1936 conference and made its theme the education of children under seven. This gave an educational emphasis to the proceedings and gave support to the minority opinion expressed as an addendum to the Hadow Report by one of its members, Miss Freda Hawtrey, in which she advocated the desirability of keeping children in the nursery school or class until the age of seven.

Thomas Boyce lent weight to this view in his speech to the conference. He



explained that the nursery school with its "richer environment, its more spontaneous atmosphere and its freedom of method" had much to contribute to the younger classes in the infants' school, while the infants' school could assist the nursery school at its older end with its educational achievement. Interestingly, bearing in mind the furore that had been created in Bradford at the time with the Education Committee being accused of trying to save money at the expense of the young and vulnerable, he asserted that it was the desire for unification of aim and method which had led his Committee to amalgamate its nursery and infants' schools. In what could be interpreted as a criticism of Miriam Lord, who may have been present at the conference, he went on to say:-

"The first thing to be done was to see that a staff was appointed who understood the aims and objects underlying the organisation and could be relied upon not only to have sympathy and understanding in dealing with young children, but to show judgement and initiative in giving expression to the idea that one had in mind."

[As far as Mr Boyce was concerned, it is unlikely that Miriam fulfilled this latter criterion judging from the treatment meted out to her in October 1933.] He went on to describe the difficulties that arose from the amalgamated schools having to operate under two different administrative arrangements, particularly two different grant systems. He mentioned various of the day-to-day problems which could arise, saying

"One can easily imagine the almost complete destruction of any real unity in the purpose, methods and practice of an amalgamated Nursery Infants' School, the two sides of which refused to understand and co-operate with one another. The effect

would be to reduce any such plan of unity almost to an absurdity."

Again, the question has to be asked whether he explained this with the post-amalgamation events at Lilycroft in mind.

In terms of the educational methods employed at the combined schools, Mr Boyce noted that the fixed timetable had been abolished throughout the school in order to ensure greater individual freedom of development - the keynote of the nursery school up to seven. He ended his speech in the following terms:-

"The Nursery School and the Infants' School are not essentially different in kind. Both places are dealing with similar psychological mental and physiological factors; both are places of gradual growth and development in these spheres. To permit a sudden break in atmosphere and method at such sensitive years is to be guilty of an educational crudity. The spirit of nursery work, freedom, spontaneity, nurture, should be that which permeates the atmosphere of the Infants' School with such adaptation as intelligent observation of changes in the child due to age and varying rates of development, show to be necessary."

Whether Bradford Education Committee and its Director of Education had arrived at this conclusion as the result of financial necessity combined with experience and the general advance in thinking over the previous few years, or whether they had embarked on the programme of amalgamation with this aim truly in mind, is open to debate. In the favour of the Education Committee it has to be remembered that they had accepted the general principle of combined nursery and infants' departments as early as

1927, and had amalgamated the Princeville nursery and infants' schools in 1929. The Lilycroft amalgamation was embroiled in the economic crisis of the early 1930s and therefore served a twofold purpose. Indeed, the timing of it may well have been advanced by the need for financial retrenchment. It was defended at the time by the chairmen of the Education Committee and the Elementary Sub-Committee as a means of unifying or regularising policy rather than as a way to save money. It would seem therefore that the Committee's main motivation may well have been educational, but that the issue became mixed up with personal prejudices and animosities both on the part of Miriam Lord and of members of the Committee. The result was a lot of public mud slinging, misunderstandings and much personal distress for Miriam. It also meant that she focused her attention more on the social welfare aspect of child development and began to work outside the system as well as from within the education service.

At the end of the June 1936 conference the Nursery School Association carried the following resolution without dissent:-

"that this conference notes with appreciation that the Board of Education places Nursery Schools in the forefront of its programme of educational development, and encourages Local Education Authorities to make provision for children under five. While recognising that the type of accommodation provided for such children must necessarily vary with local circumstances, this Conference is of the opinion that a single standard of nurture and education should be adopted for all young children whether accommodated in separate Nursery Schools or in Nursery Departments of Elementary Schools." (24)

It also issued a pamphlet dealing with the educational needs of children under seven which laid down eight conditions deemed essential to the all-round development of the young child. Briefly, these included the educational aspect of the nursery school, access to the open air, adequate equipment and play material, continuous medical supervision, balanced nutrition and sufficient rest, and a specially trained teacher with helpers for each group of 25 children. The pamphlet is notable not only for the unequivocal and succinct manner in which it sets out the Nursery School Association philosophy of nursery education, but also for its acceptance of the nursery class, if properly organised, as a viable alternative to the nursery school. This acceptance marked the end of the influence of what might be described as the Margaret McMillan faction within the Nursery School Association and laid to rest the argument which had gone on for over a decade as to the merits or otherwise of the nursery class as a cheaper alternative to the nursery school. In future the Association would concentrate its efforts on trying to persuade the educational establishment of the need for a combined nursery and infants' school as

"... an organic unit of education - in which all round nurture and education is a continuous and progressive process from two to seven ... For both physiological and psychological reasons for conception (sic) is sound. We believe that its full development will give us the school of the future, able to provide a firm foundation for the national system of education." (25)

Miriam Lord had of course aligned herself with the McMillan faction ever since her return from the U.S.A. in 1926. The outright adoption of the combined nursery and

infants' school as part of its policy by the Nursery School Association would have been an anathema to her for she had suffered personal humiliation in her fight against it at Lilycroft. It is not surprising, therefore, that 1936 marked the end of her time as a member of the general committee of the Association. She duly resigned (26), although she continued to be a member and in fact turned down the offer of a position as an officer in a new branch of which Miss Dibb was acting secretary, saying "I am still vitally interested in carrying forward the ideals and principles for which the Nursery School Association was originally formed and shall be glad to co-operate and help where possible." (27) She would now concentrate her energies not only on the Forster Centre for Women but also on opening a combined nursery school and community centre for a new housing estate in Bradford.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE BRADFORD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Nationally, one of the most important social breakthroughs of the 1930s was represented by the Housing Acts of that decade, especially the 1930 Act which provided a definition of overcrowding and also laid down standards against which houses could be assessed for fitness for human habitation. As a consequence, slum clearance and rehousing schemes became common in urban areas. As previously mentioned, the Nursery School Association ran a campaign from 1933 to 1935 to try to achieve a policy of reserving sites for nursery schools on the new housing estates. It began the campaign with a letter to *The Times*, continued it by asking candidates at the local elections in 1934 to support this policy, and in 1935 sent a deputation to the Board of Education to point out that the provision of new housing was not enough on its own - other amenities, in particular the nursery school, were necessary to provide for the overall health of children. In addition, in conjunction with the Workers' Educational Association, it mounted an exhibition on town planning, housing and the nursery school which went on tour to a number of major towns. (1) The campaign was successful in that at the 1935 general election all three political parties included nursery education as part of their programme, although, as will be seen, the subsequent implementation of that programme was no more than patchy.

In Bradford the requirements of the 1930 Housing Act were addressed by the council's Health Committee Housing Sub-Committee. In 1933 resolutions were passed to demolish parts of the city where the houses were unfit for human habitation because

of disrepair, bad layout or sanitary defect. At the same time, recommendations were made that the council should undertake to carry out such rehousing operations as were necessary. (2) By July 1935 plans were being drawn up for the rehousing of 2,692 of Bradford's population on the Canterbury Avenue Housing Estate. (3) The council's original plans to build tenements did not meet with the approval of the Minister of Health. However, its revised plans to build 126 three-bedroomed houses, 138 two-bedroomed and 24 one-bedroomed houses on only a portion of the site, which represented a substantial reduction in the numbers it planned to accommodate, were finally given ministerial approval in December 1935. (4) Then in 1936, plans were approved to build twice as many more houses on another part of the same site, thus restoring the original rehousing ambitions. (5)

As a still serving member of the general committee of the Nursery School Association it was entirely natural that in the early 1930s Miriam Lord would turn her thoughts towards the new housing estates in Bradford. She made full use of her connections in getting her plans off the ground: she contacted Lady Astor who wrote "How splendid it will be if Bradford leads the way in connecting nursery schools and slum clearance" and offered whatever assistance she could provide (6); she got Helen Neatby, the Headmistress of Grange High School for Girls, involved; and she enlisted the services and expertise of the Chief Sanitary Inspector for Bradford in locating suitable sites for the experiment she had in mind. The latter wished her every success in her efforts and went on:-

"I think such an experiment would be of great value to the City. If I can be of further help, apart from my official duties, I will gladly offer my experience in matters of Building Construction and Sanitation as my personal contribution to the Scheme.

I venture to suggest that this subject will in the near future, occupy the attention of Medical Officers of Health throughout the Country. As a Bradford citizen I should be proud to help my City to still lead. As you will know by its record in the past Bradford has held the foremost position in the whole Country in all matters appertaining to Child Welfare and Public Health. May it still go forward." (7)

The rest of officialdom was not as easy to convince, although at first Miriam did find a good deal of support. At a meeting at the Town Hall in October 1934 called by the Lord Mayor in response to the representations made to him by Miriam and Helen Neatby, she outlined her ideas to the Bishop of Bradford, to Father O'Connor, a Roman Catholic priest, to the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Buchan, to Councillors Bailey and Haygarth, and to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress. She presented a proposal to establish a new educational and experimental unit with a nursery school as its nucleus. To be operated initially on a voluntary basis, the nursery school would accommodate 40 children and would link in with a general community centre, student training and pre-natal care provided by the health visitor service. She also provided a breakdown of expected costs and suggested that funds could be obtained from philanthropic sources such as the Pilgrim Trust. (This was a trust which concerned itself with unemployed men and which had already been involved, along with the National Council of Social Service and the Save the Children Fund, in the establishment of emergency open air

nursery schools in distressed areas in 1933.)

All in all, it was a preliminary business plan produced in sufficient detail to show that Miriam had already spent a great deal of time and thought on this project. The meeting gave its support to the idea and Dr Buchan recommended a site at the Canterbury Avenue estate. (8)

At the next meeting in April 1935 the numbers attending had expanded to include representatives of the National Council of Social Service, the Y.M.C.A., the Bradford Unemployment Advisory Committee, the Rotary Club, and various other council members including Louis Smith, now chairman of the Health Committee, and Councillor Waterhouse, still chairman of the Education Committee. The latter expressed the view that Bradford was well provided with nursery schools, and that, in any case, it was the primary duty of parents to provide care for their children. He in fact abstained from voting on the resolution, proposed by Alderman Brown, the Lord Mayor, and passed without dissent, to the effect that the meeting resolved that "it is desirable to establish a Social Centre in Bradford for the purpose of providing instruction and social amenities to parents and families, together with a Nursery School, and that steps be taken to give effect to this resolution." The meeting elected Dr Blunt, the Bishop of Bradford, as President, Councillor Eric Haygarth as Chairman, Major Phillips of the National Council of Social Service as Treasurer, and Miriam Lord and Helen Neatby as Co-Secretaries. All others at the meeting agreed to act as a committee and to give service, with the exception of Councillors Louis Smith and Waterhouse who

withdrew at this stage. (9) The three years which had passed since the Lilycroft amalgamation furore had clearly done nothing to change their outlook on social welfare, nor to diminish their personal animosity towards Miriam. This meeting was reported in a newspaper article the following day under the by-line 'Childrens' Care Centre - A Bradford Social Welfare Scheme'. In this article the objective of the centre was made public for the first time and was stated to be the fostering of an ideal family spirit among the residents of the estate, as yet unnamed, to which it was to be attached. (10)

The plans of the Bradford Social Centre and Nursery Committee (as it would become known) were held up by the inability of the Bradford Council to obtain the necessary permission from the Ministry of Health to commence building on the Canterbury Avenue estate (supra). It also turned out that Dr Buchan's recommended site was just one flat in one of the large tenement blocks originally envisaged by the Council, an idea which the committee turned down immediately. Whereupon, the members of the committee were instructed to find another site themselves, because even when the plans for houses rather than tenements were later drawn up, there was no provision for a community centre. (11) In addition, they lost the services of Helen Neatby in 1936, her position as Co-Secretary with Miriam being taken over by Margery South, a woman with some business experience, although how much and in what field is not clear. The difficulties experienced in finding an adequate site and funding (both the Pilgrim Trust and the Carnegie Trust failed to respond to an approach to provide moneys) led to a certain amount of dissension within the committee over the scope of

the proposed venture - some members, including Mrs South, wished to have a completed and fully financed scheme in place before doing anything, whereas others, including Miriam initially, wanted to start off in a small way and expand from there. There is also the likelihood that as originator of the concept Miriam wanted to keep too much of it to herself. Mrs South wrote to her

"... I feel that the whole trouble is this - you know what you want, but the committee is in the dark. They are in sympathy with the ideal, but they are busy folk and they leave the practical details to you. The crux of the whole matter will arise when they are faced with a definite scheme - and the upkeep thereof - for we must not start something unless we are reasonably sure that it can be kept going ... Don't be cross because I am being straight with you. We are bound to differ very often, but we must try to work without acrimony." (12)

It would seem that, in the end, those among the committee members who wanted a more grandiose scheme prevailed, for at the meeting held on 6 May 1936 a motion was passed that the Social Centre and Nursery Committee venture should be undertaken as an independent scheme to form a civic memorial to Margaret McMillan, and by February 1937 an Appeal Sub-Committee for this purpose had been set up. (13) In addition, the number of members on the committee had been increased to include representatives of the Jewish community, the National Council of Women, the Soroptimist Club, the Catholic Women's League and the Bradford Free Church Council. Professor Frank Smith, holder of the Chair of Education at the University of Leeds, had become a member as well, with Mr Hammond Heap, a Bradford solicitor, taking over

as Chairman of the committee, and the Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, agreeing to be Vice-President. This was obviously going to be a 'top down' approach, rather than an organic growth from grassroots level, and shows that Miriam had learnt some strategy for getting plans to come to fruition from her experience with the Bradford Unemployment Advisory Committee and the Forster Centre.

But differences of opinion among the committee members continued to surface and in February 1937 Mrs South resigned as Co-Secretary. By this time it appears that Miriam had been won over to the idea of a Margaret McMillan memorial and had broadened her vision to include a training college for nursery school teachers - the first mention of such a concept comes in Mrs South's letter to her dated 3 February 1937: "When I heard you speak of a Training college, and when you spoke of hoping to give up your work with tinies to train young people, I was quite aghast." (14) It would be 1944 before Miriam gave up her position at Lilycroft and 1952 before the training college came into existence, but the plan was obviously in her mind as early as 1937.

In 1934 when Miriam Lord and Helen Neatby first took their idea to the Bishop of Bradford the number of nursery schools recognised by the Board of Education was fifty nine, and despite the views expressed by some Members of Parliament that slum clearance policies would negate the need for nursery schools, Lady Astor was still encouraging the government to expand their numbers. (15) After the General Election in 1935 the President of the Board of Education confirmed that, while the amount of grant available for nursery education would not be increased from the existing level of

half of the recognised expenditure made by local education authorities, it was the intention of the government to encourage an increase in the numbers of nursery schools eligible for that grant. (16) In fact, in January 1936 circular 1444 was issued requesting local education authorities to survey the needs of their area, and by the end of 1936 the number of such schools had risen to eighty four. (17) There had been, therefore, a significant increase in the provision of nursery education in a short space of time, and this does not take into account the expansion in nursery classes which also took place as a result of circular 1444. Demographic trends meant that there had been a decline in child population in England and Wales during the 1930s. This released classrooms in elementary schools which were then converted by many local authorities into nursery classes as a quicker and cheaper alternative to building nursery schools. It has been calculated that between January 1936 and July 1937 eighty three local authorities had made or proposed to make provision for children under five in one hundred and eighty three nursery classes. But as Cusden said

"... it cannot be said that these figures represent a serious attempt to deal with the needs of the pre-school child or that the progress made has kept pace with the advances in our knowledge of the physical and psychological needs of early childhood."  
(18)

By 1936 the Board of Education had stated its intention to sanction the provision of nursery schools on the new housing estates, and in that year five such schools were recognised or approved. (19) At this time in Bradford the Social Centre and Nursery



Committee were still trying to get their plans set in motion. They approached the Health Committee to enquire whether the Council would be prepared to lease to them some land on the Canterbury Avenue Estate so that they could build a communal (sic) centre. Consent was granted, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Health, for a plot comprising 1½ acres or thereabouts, with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Health Committee being empowered to negotiate the terms of the lease. (20)

The minutes of the Health Committee containing the resolution to lease this land came before the full Council for approval on 13 April 1937. Councillor Waterhouse immediately enquired whether the proposed communal centre included plans for a nursery school. Louis Smith, by then an alderman, replied that the request for land had been considered in connection with section 80 of the Housing Act 1936 which allowed the Council to lease or provide land or buildings to anyone for the purpose of activities which could be deemed to give a beneficial service to its tenants. The buildings in question would be funded by money provided by voluntary subscription, and the meeting place and recreational centre envisaged would be staffed by volunteers. He understood that there would be some attempt to provide care for younger children whilst their parents were at work. Councillor Waterhouse then recalled his own and Louis Smith's original contact with the communal centre's committee, and referred to one of the principal objectives of the scheme at the time which was the establishment of a voluntary nursery school which would then become eligible for a grant from the Education Committee. No doubt remembering Miriam's previous implacable hostility to

the nursery infant school, he pointed out that the Council had taken a decision in principle not to establish nursery schools on housing estates and were, in fact, proposing to build an infants' school, including a nursery department, on the Canterbury Avenue Estate. To the accusation voiced by Councillor William Leach that this would be a makeshift arrangement, Mr Waterhouse replied that the nursery department would have all the facilities of a nursery school with the exception that the children would go home for their midday meal. He believed that they were faced by an attempt on the part of nursery school advocates to undermine the Council's declared policy, although he did not oppose the idea of the communal centre and stated that he had no objections to the activities of its committee, other than the intention of its members to establish a nursery school on that estate.

Councillor Bailey, who had been present at the original meeting in October 1934, then reminded his colleagues that Councillor Waterhouse had been kept informed from the beginning of the Committee's existence and of their intentions. He insisted that far from trying to go behind the Education Committee's back, its members had sought to work in close co-operation with the Council and he advocated that the latter should provide the greatest possible assistance in the development of the social experiment to be carried out. He then gave his argument a final flourish by stating that it was the Committee's desire that their work should form a memorial to Margaret McMillan, that their work would be purely voluntary, but like her they would always seek the approval and official sanction of the local education authority. Alderman Louis Smith then

intervened again to try to remind Councillor Waterhouse that the objectives of the Committee had the support of the government which acknowledged that people removed from slum conditions needed more than merely improved housing before their quality of life could be enhanced. Also, because the venture would require the approval of the Health Committee, it could be guaranteed that there would not be any duplication of activities on the estate. An amendment to refer the Health Committee minute back for further consideration was then moved but was lost by 31 votes to 18. (21)

Although the loss of this amendment meant that the site for the community centre had been acquired, the Education Committee had by no means been won over. This was acknowledged in a letter sent by Professor Frank Smith to Mrs South the following month.

"I understand the difficulties in the way of the Committee in relation to the attitude of the Education Committee, but I shall be disappointed if we are too much overwhelmed by such difficulties. Public opinion is moving so fast that a voluntary endeavour should, if it is satisfied that its own plans are right, try to persuade statutory authorities to accept its own point of view, or at least not obstruct it.

I had a talk some time ago with Mr Waterhouse and I gathered that he had fears that we might begin a nursery school and then ask the Education Committee to support it. He thought the Education Committee had done more for nursery schools than any other city and could not afford any more. When this view was taken by his Committee it had much justification; I think it has less now. Speeches by the Minister of Health in recent months have revealed a different attitude.

Our Committee can only undertake responsibilities which it can finance and we are in the dark about the

support we shall receive ... But the attractiveness of the scheme to me lay in its purpose to make a community centre and a nursery school together, and to appeal to all ages on the housing estate. Opposition by the Education Committee may be because they do not fully realise our intentions, or because they are hyper-sensitive to our supposed criticism of their point of view. The former we might remove by a meeting; the second, too, we might modify. But voluntary movements have many times had to go forward without the help of statutory bodies and I hope we shall consider the possibility of doing that, if necessary." (22)

The "different attitude" to which Frank Smith referred in his letter gave rise to the Physical Training and Recreation Act which came into force in July 1937. This gave all local authorities the power to build community centres and enabled them, and voluntary organisations, to apply to central government for grants towards the capital cost. A memorandum to the Act recognised that some local authorities had already provided community centres or assembly halls on their estates, while others had leased existing buildings to voluntary organisations at low rents or had reserved sites when planning estates. This change in official thinking encouraged the Bradford Social Centre and Nursery Committee to pursue their plans for the Canterbury Avenue Estate. Advice and guidance was sought from a number of sources, including an architect in the Town Planning Department of Liverpool University, Wesley Dougill, who commented that the Bradford proposals bore a marked resemblance to the recommendations set out in the Physical Training and Recreation Act. (23)

Later in 1937 the first residents moved on to the estate and a public meeting was held on 3 November, followed by another on 1 December. At these meetings a

Residents' Sub-Committee was established and at the next meeting in January 1938 this sub-committee noted that with eighty members enrolled and two to three hundred families already in residence, the need for a community centre was urgent and could not wait for the erection of purpose-built premises. (24) Miriam Lord annotated this report to the effect that some dirty and neglected premises were then found, but that despite offers of practical and financial help from the main committee, the residents would not undertake the work involved in making them serviceable. She also noted that this sub-committee did not survive and a fresh start had to be made.

In March 1938 an application by the Bradford Community Centre Committee (the word 'nursery' having been discreetly dropped from its title in 1937, no doubt for political reasons) to lease a further 2½ acres of land on the estate (one of Wesley Dougill's suggestions was that the site should be larger) was refused on the grounds that the land in question was required for housing purposes. This decision was taken despite the representations which had been made by a deputation from the Community Centre Committee to the Council the previous month, and also despite the fact that in May 1938 the same Housing Sub-Committee was able to increase the allocation for the new elementary school from its original 4 acres to 4.67 acres. (25) This school was of course to contain a nursery department, but in fact the outbreak of the Second World War deferred the building of it until after the war. (26) This would have implications for the community centre project and would bring the idea of an associated nursery school back to the top of its agenda despite the earlier change of name. In the

meantime, it responded to the needs of the Canterbury Avenue estate residents by renting the ground floor of 42 Greaves Street, Little Horton, about ½ mile from the estate, which it designated a 'House of Friendship'. Despite the restrictions on space which this imposed, in the introductory invitation sent out to residents in September 1938 the committee expressed its hope to provide:-

- a) a meeting place for mothers in the afternoon;
- b) a girls' club one night a week;
- c) a boys' club, also one night a week;
- d) social evenings for men and women;
- e) a gardening club;
- f) a handyman home repair group.

The first report of this Community Centre was made in May 1939. All the envisaged activities were in place with the exception of the men's section where a combination of unemployment, reticence on the part of the men, and a lack of experienced leadership meant that little progress was made in the first months of the centre's existence. The report itself identified an urgent need for a recreation hut with outdoor and gymnastic apparatus, but declared that "The House of Friendship has made a brave and honest beginning. The work has within itself the germ of much future development in many directions. It needs voluntary financial support for its immediate development." (27) The work which was being carried forward in Bradford by Miriam Lord and her colleagues on the Community Centre Committee was being echoed in

many parts of the country. The possibility of improved statutory provision under the 1936 Housing Act and the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act had given added impetus to the voluntary bodies engaged in promoting the movement, and the National Council of Social Service, which had been active in promoting community activity ever since its formation in 1919, showed a lead by taking the initiative in areas of high unemployment. (28) This Council was, of course, represented on the Bradford body. It also called a national conference on the community centre at Harrogate in February 1938 at which the Bradford centre was represented. (29) At this conference the potential benefits of the community centre were described in the same messianic terms that nursery education had merited in the 1920s. The President of the National Council of Social Service, in his closing address, said

"Your movement promises to be the most epoch-making of them all, and the one most calculated to leave its impress on the social life of this country and on the happiness and contentment of its people. There is, quite obviously, a conscious craving for spiritual extension, and this appears to me to be the channel through which it is most likely to be satisfied. These community centres are not, in the future, going to be confined to the new housing estates. You are gradually evolving what seems bound to be the ideal form of communal organisation for all urban populations of this country." (30)

These high hopes were not, however, to be realised because the outbreak of war intervened in September 1939, at which time fewer than 2% of residents on large housing estates had the use of a community centre, mainly due to lack of money. (31) In Bradford the same lack of money held up the further development of the Canterbury

Avenue Centre prior to September 1939 despite the increasing number of residents.

Although a plot on the estate had been allocated to them, the members of the Community Centre committee were unable to start building work on the new premises and they had to continue to improvise in their cramped premises at 42 Greaves St.



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## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE WAR YEARS

At the end of October 1938 there were 106 nursery schools recognised by the Board of Education for purposes of grant (1) and in February 1939 there were approximately 20,000 children in nursery classes in the elementary schools (2). Of the nursery schools less than half were administered by the local education authority, the majority being run by voluntary organisations. By 1946 the number of nursery schools had risen to 374, of which no less than 370 were administered by the local authority. During the same period the number of children between the ages of two and five on the registers of the elementary schools had increased by 11%. (3) As had been the norm throughout the history of social welfare and education provision in England and Wales, the catalyst for change had been dire necessity, rather than any ideological commitment to the desirability of nursery education. On this occasion it was the Second War World and the emergency measures required for its successful conduct which forced change.

At the outbreak of war nursery education suffered a profound reversal in that all nursery schools and classes were closed down in the areas designated neutral or reception (for evacuated children) until the provision of air-raid shelters was deemed to be adequate. They were also closed in the evacuated areas. Because of the dislocation and disruption caused by the children in the reception areas it was necessary to make arrangements for the provision of care for the under fives who did not attend elementary school. In 1940 a joint circular, 1495/1936, was issued by the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health urging local authorities to establish centres which would be

almost totally restricted to evacuated children and which would be entitled 'nursery centres'. These would be wholly financed by the Ministry of Health under the auspices of the local Reception authority. However the scheme was not sufficiently successful because of the difficulty in finding suitable premises, the complicated administrative arrangements and the gradual but steady return of children to the areas from which they had been evacuated.

The joint response of the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health was the issue of circular 1553/2388 in July 1941 which authorised the provision of nurseries, to be known as war-time nurseries, in any area where the need could be proven, in order to meet the needs of both evacuated children and those of women in employment. Administration would be provided centrally by a joint staff of the two departments working from the Ministry of Health, and locally by the Maternity and Child Welfare Department of the local authority which already had responsibility for the care of children under school age. The latter was urged to undertake a survey to ascertain the needs of its area and to provide either part-time or whole-time nurseries. The hours of part-time nurseries would coincide with school hours and these would be under the direction of a teacher; whole-time nurseries would remain open for up to 12-15 hours per day and would be run by a trained nurse with supervision by a teacher of the childrens' "activities and social training". Variations on these two types would also be allowed according to local needs. Apart from payments for meals the whole cost of these nurseries would be carried by the Ministry of Health. Later the same year the

need for a rapid increase in production, particularly in munitions, led to the issue of another joint circular, 1573/2535. This introduced a child-minder scheme co-ordinated by the Ministry of Labour, and also empowered local education authorities to admit children from the age of two years to their nursery classes in the elementary schools.

Subsequent to the publication of these various circulars what happened in Bradford was representative of events in the rest of the country. The nursery on the Swain House Estate, the closure of which had been embroiled with the Lilycroft amalgamation dispute, was quickly re-opened in the summer of 1941. (4) But there were long waiting lists for entrance to the city's other nursery schools (5) and in January 1942 the Education Committee decided to establish additional war-time nurseries at five of their nursery schools, including Lilycroft, by erecting 'Maycrete' huts on the existing sites. (6) In addition, a whole-time nursery was to be provided, again using a hut, on the Canterbury Avenue Estate. The additional nursery at Lilycroft was never built, because in April 1942 Miriam Lord identified a suitable property nearby at Toller Lane which she recommended to the District Welfare Officer of the Ministry of Labour and which was later approved as a part-time day nursery. (7) By September 1942 all the extra nurseries were in operation, with the exception of Toller Lane which opened later in the year. In addition, nursery classes were introduced at ten elementary schools. (8)

During the period of the 'phoney war' (September 1939 to April 1940) Miriam Lord and her fellow committee members on the Bradford Community Centre Committee continued their efforts to foster the activities of a community centre in their premises at

42 Greaves St. The Boys' and Girls' clubs managed to survive despite difficulties in finding suitable premises, leaders and equipment, and despite the objections raised by the Roman Catholic Church to the affiliation of the Girls' club with the Y.W.C.A. The Women's group adapted their educational activities to the needs of war with classes in needlework, housecraft, war-time cookery, health and hygiene and the care of children. A play centre was opened in response to the demand generated by the closure of schools and the upper floor of the premises was taken over as well to provide further accommodation. The Men's group, however, was discontinued because of the absence of the men on war-time duties. All these activities were hampered by an ongoing lack of funds which also precluded the employment of a warden to look after the property at Greaves St. and to co-ordinate the work being carried on. (9) Additionally, the Committee was unable to meet the many demands being placed upon it by the residents of the estate who by early 1941 numbered 5,000. At this time allegations about the character and behaviour of these residents were common in Bradford and a report submitted to the Youth Sub-Committee of the Council accused the majority of families of being tainted with "slum-mindedness". Miriam Lord, as secretary of the community centre, defended the residents by pointing out that the estate was the size of a small town but lacked all the amenities of such a town including facilities as basic as shops. (10) The Community Centre Committee was working to alleviate this absence by providing what activities it could and in June 1941 obtained the authority of the Education Committee to supplement these by means of evening classes. (11)

High on the list of Miriam's personal priorities was, of course, a nursery for the estate, and she had support for her ambition from other members of the executive committee, most notably Professor Frank Smith. The schools in Bradford began to re-open as evacuated children drifted back to the city when the expected bombing failed to take place. The older children, who had helped look after the younger children, left the play-centre to return to school. This revealed a lack of provision for the very young children whose mothers were at work. A meeting held on 13 June 1940 was attended by mothers from the estate, representatives from various women's organisations in the city and other "interested people". A house-to-house survey had revealed some 550 children under the age of five on the estate, many of whose mothers were engaged on war work or were employed in the mills and factories. A nursery committee was formed from members of the Community Centre Committee and included representatives of the mothers themselves, Miriam Lord as Secretary. A deputation was then sent to the Bradford Health Committee the following month but this was unsuccessful.

Nevertheless, the project went ahead when financial support was forthcoming from voluntary sources. That the funds were raised at all was due almost entirely to Miriam's lobbying of her many contacts - the monies themselves came from Kathleen Hill, the heiress of a millowner, with whom she had conducted a correspondence concerning the community project over the years, and from Helen Neatby who had left Bradford several years previously but with whom she had kept in touch. Bradford Education Committee, which was already involved in the educational activities at the



community centre (12), supplied furniture as well as other help and advice; the Quakers, the Peace Pledge Union, the owners of the nearby mill which employed many of the mothers, and other private individuals also gave funds and practical assistance. Less than six months later, on 2 December 1940, the nursery opened with a trained nursery school teacher, Muriel Dransfield, as Superintendent and Evelyn Smith from the Brighton Day Nursery as Matron. Almost simultaneously a paid resident caretaker for the premises was employed, which gave the centre increased credibility but at the same time deprived it of part of the limited space available. A Dr Botwood offered his services as medical adviser to the nursery and arrangements were made for a nurse to visit regularly. Another nursery-trained children's nurse, a Miss Barbara Shaw, gave her services voluntarily and girls from Bradford Girls' Grammar School and Bradford Girls' High School acted as voluntary helpers. (13) These staffing arrangements were remarkably similar to those envisaged in Memorandum 249-III A, paragraph 4, which was issued to local authorities in July 1941 to supplement the information contained in joint circular 1553/2388. Given Miriam's involvement with the Nursery School Association (which was recommended in the same memorandum as being a voluntary society whose co-operation should be sought by local authorities when establishing war-time nurseries) it is probable, though not directly proven, that such similarity can be attributed to her influence. In any event, such close correlation between the official recommendations when later published and the arrangements which had already been put into place at Greaves St. could only have raised her standing with her fellow committee

members.

In 1941, when Bradford Council decided to press on with the opening of day nurseries under war-time regulations, the Community Centre Committee was advised that it was the intention of the Council to incorporate the Greaves St. nursery into their scheme. (14) Formal recognition was granted by the Ministry of Health on 9 June 1941 - this authorised the payment of 1s.0d. (5 new pence) per day for the children of war workers. The nursery would be open from 6.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. but was not considered suitable for children under two years of age, despite the fact that a matron was employed as required by Memorandum 249-IIIA for the age range 0 to 5 years. (15)

In spite of the terms and conditions applying to war-time nurseries, as set out in the Board of Education/Ministry of Health joint circular 1553/2388 and supplementary memoranda 247-IIIA and 249-IIIA, and, more particularly, the urgency of the need for greater nursery provision given the demands of the war, the complex administrative arrangements proved difficult. Kenneth Lindsay, who had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education in 1940, addressed the Winter Conference of the Nursery School Association in January 1942 and referred to the confusions and delays which were occurring in connection with the care of children under the age of five. He blamed this on the complexity of control by the four ministries involved - the Board of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office. (16) Not surprisingly, the Greaves St. nursery was affected by this national problem and the Community Centre Committee immediately became embroiled in a dispute with both

local and central government as to whether the nursery could be available for children under two and whether, in view of the financial stringency under which they were operating, the grant could be made retrospective to 1 April 1941. To assist them in settling the dispute Miriam enlisted the help of the National Council of Social Service, the Nursery School Association, The Save the Children Fund and Councillor William Leach, by then a Member of Parliament. Her lobbying appears to have been tireless judging from the volume of correspondence in her private papers; and this at a time when she was the member of the Community Centre Committee primarily involved in trying to keep the nursery running on insufficient funds, and was still employed full-time as an assistant teacher at Lilycroft school. By then she was well into her middle age - she was in fact fifty six years of age.

For the official opening of the nursery on 15 May 1941, she and the Committee obtained the services of J.B. Priestley who dedicated it to the memory of Margaret McMillan and agreed to become a vice-president of the Community Centre Committee. A civic reception in his honour was given by the Lord Mayor of Bradford and the opening was attended by officials from the Ministry of Health, the local authority and the Nursery School Association. (17) Through her association with members of the Bradford 'establishment' on the Community Centre Committee Miriam had learnt to use these occasions to the greater advantage of the cause for which she was working - a far cry from the doldrums of 1932 when she was effectively *persona non grata*.

The Greaves St. nursery was inspected for grant purposes by the Assistant

Medical Officer of Health for Bradford in October 1941. It received an excellent report which noted that the thirty places which it offered were full and that there was a waiting list which included a number of children under two years of age. The need for greater provision for the care of children under five from the Canterbury Avenue estate was acknowledged. In October 1941 a conference was called by the Health Committee of the Bradford Council at which the Bradford Community Centre Committee, the Medical Officer of Health, the Director of Education and the Regional Officer of the National Council of Social Service attended. At this conference it emerged that on the 1½ acre site reserved for the community centre since 1938 the Education Committee was planning to erect a hut to provide a youth centre to serve the estate, and on the site previously earmarked for a new elementary school the Health Committee would provide a war-time day nursery. When circumstances allowed, the nursery would form the nucleus of the new school and the youth centre the nucleus of the new community centre, both to come under the direction of the Education Committee. In other words, the aim of the Community Centre Committee to provide a combined community centre and nursery school was in danger of being derailed. (18)

Whilst the longer term threat of defeat for the principle of the combined centre was looming, the problems of financing the nursery continued. Between September 1941 and April 1942 correspondence flowed back and forth between Miriam, by now Organising Secretary of the Community Centre Committee, and Dr Buchan, the Medical Officer of Health for Bradford, on the subject of financing the deficit between the

expenditure on the nursery and its income from the aggregate of parental contributions and the local authority grant. Dr Buchan was very supportive of the case being advanced by the Community Centre Committee but was hampered in advancing its cause by his official role. He wrote under 'Private' cover that he did not "desire to be thought to be conspiring with you to get more out of the Ministry of Health." (19) Eventually, in April 1942, after representations had been made to the Ministry of Labour, The Save the Children Fund, the Nursery School Association, and William Leach, in order to resolve the situation, a solution was brokered by the Member of Parliament. The outcome was that the nursery should be taken over by the Council and run by it, whilst still being managed by the Community Centre Committee. This would at last enable the nursery to be funded on a 100% basis from the Ministry of Health via the local Health Committee. The terms and conditions of this agreement were finalised in June 1942 and the transfer took place with effect from 1 July 1942. (20)

The next problem to be overcome was how to increase the numbers that the nursery could accommodate. No. 42a Greaves St., which had originally been one house with No. 42, was at that time the home of a Methodist minister and was available for either rent or purchase. Negotiations were opened with Dr Buchan and the Ministry of Health to establish whether amalgamation of the two houses to cater for the 28 children on the waiting list was a viable proposition. (21) Agreement was reached in December 1942 that both nos. 42 and 42a should be purchased by anonymous individuals on behalf of the Bradford Community Centre Committee. The properties would then be leased by

the Council which would pay for the necessary alterations. (22) But by the time that all the paperwork for the conveyancing was ready the housing shortage in Bradford had become so acute that suitable alternative housing for the Methodist minister could not be found. Plans for extending the nursery had to be suspended for the time being. (23)

Plans for the nursery were not the only ones to be hampered. The war effort occupied the time of most of the adult male population - those who were not conscripted had to contribute to civil defence by enlisting in the Home Guard or the Auxiliary Services. This meant that facilities such as the Canterbury Avenue Community Centre were almost totally used by the female population. In September 1942 the Chairman of the Community Centre Committee acknowledged that its activities had been limited for many months to the provision of the nursery and the club for women and girls. (24) Nevertheless, planning for the future continued with a sub-committee being formed in July 1943 to explore the possibilities of teaching parentcraft and citizenship to young people, and an outline scheme was placed before the Director of Education. (25) Later that year a memorandum was issued by the Ministry of Health which drew attention to the opportunities for education in parentcraft offered by the war-time nurseries and encouraged matrons of these nurseries to avail themselves of these opportunities. (26) By December 1943 Miriam Lord had prepared an outline scheme for a mother craft training centre at additional premises at 34 Greaves St. which the Community Centre Committee had taken over for the purpose. Her first scheme was designed primarily for older girls and young women up to the age of 18, but another scheme, prepared the

following year, was aimed at adults of both sexes with the objective of promoting "good parenthood and good citizenship". (27) In many ways her ideas presaged the circular on Further Education - Homecraft, no 117, issued by the Ministry of Education in July 1946. However, it must be said that the latter did not incorporate the predominantly educational nature of her courses on 'parental responsibility' and the 'child and society - a new social conscience'. The official post-war circular was a far more pragmatic and practically-based document, designed to compensate for the homecraft experience which young women had missed during the time that they had been engaged in war work. The Greaves St. scheme was an endeavour to change the attitudes and extend the education of young people in an effort to improve society. It was a visionary document, in keeping with the ethos which had driven the Community Centre Committee since its inception.

Also, in July 1943, the community centre acted as host to a group of Bradford councillors who had been appointed to carry out an enquiry into the needs of young people on the Canterbury Avenue estate. As a consequence of this visit the Community Centre Committee were invited to submit a scheme to the Council with recommendations for future provision. A scheme was submitted in September 1943 which advocated a separate youth section of the community centre to be housed in extended premises. (28) The centre was represented too at the national conference of community centres and associations held in London in September 1943. (29) The common experience of war and the sacrifices which it involved had given rise to a

widespread feeling that efforts should be made to ensure that the neighbourly spirit continued after the war. The community centre was seen as the appropriate vehicle for this, so much so that community centres were proposed as war memorials. (30)

It is apparent that contemporary thinking was moving towards the concept of community spirit which had been the motivating force behind the Bradford Community Centre Committee since the time of its formation in 1934. It was envisaged that a significant contribution towards a democratic system of education would be made by a new Education Act. A White Paper entitled 'Educational Reconstruction' was issued by Mr R A Butler, the President of the Board of Education in July 1943. The White Paper was well received and was referred to by the Times as "a landmark in English Education", "the greatest and grandest educational advance since 1870". (31) For the first time it was officially recognised that the role of the nursery school was not merely that of social rescue as had been the case until then. The need for the nursery school in all parts of the country was acknowledged with the statement that "... even when children come from good homes they can derive much benefit, both educational and physical, from attendance at a nursery school". This statement almost replicates the 1943 report issued by the Nursery School Association which said

"No home can provide all the child needs after the period of dependent infancy, if he is to grow adequately in mind and character as well as in physique. For this period the nursery school should be the natural extension of the home and in its home-like informality provide an all-round education."



When the Education Bill was published in 1944 Clause 8(2)(b) required local education authorities to make plans for "pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery schools or, where the authority consider the provision of such schools to be inexpedient, by the provision of nursery classes in other schools." The reference to nursery classes, which had not been included in the White Paper, was already a concession to economic constraints. Nor was there any guidance to local authorities as to how universal the provision was to be. More seriously, the failure of the 1944 Act to include nursery education in the primary sector, covering children between the ages of five and eleven, left it exposed and vulnerable to economic cutbacks during the post-war period. Nevertheless, the immediate reaction of its supporters was to welcome the fact that "nursery schools have been given their proper place within the national system of education." (32)

In Bradford, the Deputy Director of Education, later to be Director, Mr A Spalding, had written to Miriam Lord prior to publication of the Bill

"We shall have to trust that the new Bill embodies all that enlightened teachers have been saying about the importance of nursery education, for years. I believe that only by building on right foundations shall we be able to achieve our object and the home and the nursery school must play a major part in any future reconstruction." (33)

The Education Act of 1944 also provided for the development of community centres on a large scale. Section 41 stated that it was the duty of every local education authority to provide adequate further education facilities, these to include "leisure time

occupation in such organised cultural training and recreative activities for any persons over school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose". Power was given to the local authority under Section 53 of the Act "to establish, maintain and manage, or to assist in establishing, maintaining and managing" places where these further education facilities were available.

On the face of it, therefore, the future seemed much more hopeful for both facets of the work being carried on by the Bradford Community Centre Committee, and by Miriam Lord in particular. The nursery school had been universally accepted as a bona fide educational institution and was no longer viewed as "an ambulance service for the casualties of a defective social order" as Cusden had described it earlier. (34) Likewise, the community centre movement had been given such widened statutory powers that there was a reasonable expectation that the community centre would become as common as the school. Neither of these hopes were to be realised in full, but they were of sufficient strength for Miriam to resign from her post as an assistant teacher at Lilycroft School in late 1944 and devote herself full-time to her new position as Honorary Warden of the Community Centre.

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## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE MARGARET MCMILLAN MEMORIAL COLLEGE**

The Second World War ended in 1945. Even prior to its termination in Europe in May of that year the war-time nurseries introduced in 1941 were beginning to close. At the same time, the hope was being expressed by the Minister of Education that the majority of them would be transferred to the local education authorities as nursery schools, or even nursery classes. He also confirmed that the increase in numbers of nursery school teachers required to staff the expected expansion in nursery education was already exercising his mind. (1) The reality was that as the training of nursery school teachers had, until then, been very much a peripheral part of the overall scheme of teacher training, the Minister of Education just did not know how many of the students then training for teaching were including nursery school work in their courses. What was certain was that there was no training college or course devoted solely to training for teaching in nursery schools. (2) This situation would be remedied by developments in Bradford during the immediate post-war years.

Before this came to pass, however, the Bradford Community Centre Committee would face further battles in their attempt to make a reality of their vision of an integrated community centre and nursery school. In October 1945 Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health in the Labour Government, advised that the war-time nurseries scheme involving a 100% grant from his department would continue in force until 31 March 1946. In the same written answer he informed the House of Commons that he

would be asking the welfare authorities, in conjunction with the local education authorities, to decide before that date how a comprehensive nursery service could best be organised using the existing services as a basis. (3) The Ministry of Education then issued Circular 75 which asked the local authorities to review their arrangements for war-time nurseries and to decide which were to be converted into nursery schools or classes, which were to be continued as day nurseries, and which were to be closed to be replaced by a registered scheme of day minders. The basis on which this assessment was to be made was left rather vague and unclear with criteria such as 'character of the area' and 'local custom' being permitted. In other words, the statutory provision of nursery education foreshadowed in the 1944 Act was already being diluted, and a return to the pre-war haphazard arrangements dependent on the progressive nature, or otherwise, of the local authority loomed on the horizon. But by this time the architect of the 1944 Act, R.A. Butler, had left the Ministry of Education to be replaced by Ellen Wilkinson who, throughout her period as Minister of Education, would be faced by a fight for scarce resources as the difficulties involved in massive post-war reconstruction became apparent.

The struggle to expand nursery education was hampered not only by a shortage of appropriately trained teachers and an equally dire shortage of building materials. These shortages were quickly followed by economic problems and were exacerbated by a dramatic rise in the birth-rate which, by the end of the 1940s, in turn led to a much increased demand for nursery schools and classes. The expansion was also handicapped



by the terms of the 1944 Act itself which combined infant and junior education to the age of eleven under the heading of primary education to represent the first of three stages of statutory education, secondary and further being the others. This effectively isolated nursery education and left it vulnerable when the economic difficulties of the early 1950s led to constraints on budgets, as well as reversing the tendency which had taken hold during the 1930s to think of nursery/infant education as the first stage of education. It certainly ran contrary to the recognition of a distinct infant stage by the Hadow Report of 1933.

In Bradford one day nursery and the nursery classes at sixteen infants' schools were taken over by the Education Committee. This represented a doubling of the pre-war provision for nursery education in the city and would provide places for 675 children between the ages of two and five. Although the figures for the number of children within that age range in Bradford are not available, nevertheless there is little doubt that this level of provision still did no more than scratch the surface, a situation which was mirrored in the rest of the country. Even by January 1948 only 1% of the children between the ages of two and five in England and Wales were attending nursery schools, and only 5% between the ages of three and five were in organised nursery classes. (4) The remaining seven nurseries in Bradford, which included Greaves St. and the Canterbury Avenue war-time nurseries, were to be designated day nurseries and kept within the ambit of the Health and Housing Committee for a further period of one year. (5) It could have been expected that this decision would have brought complaints from

Miriam Lord and the Bradford Community Centre Committee in that it gave them little financial security, the arrangements being valid for one year only, and being designated a day nursery emphasised their child-minding function rather than the educational.

However, this was not so, for by 1946 they had realised that they would need to take steps themselves to secure their financial future. They therefore decided to make an appeal for £5,000 to provide development funds for both the nursery and the community centre. The appeal was launched in 1946, the intention being to dedicate the proceeds as a permanent memorial to Margaret McMillan.

In the meantime the Committee continued its struggle to meet the many demands for its services. Because of the shortages in immediate post-war Britain the mere task of equipping and maintaining the premises at 34 and 42 Greaves St. was not solely confined to raising the necessary money - dockets had to be obtained from the Board of Trade before items of furniture could be purchased. It had been the intention that Miriam as Honorary Warden should move into 34 Greaves St. but this plan had to be shelved because the requisite dockets could not be obtained. (6) Despite the difficulties, however, the community centre activities expanded to include a mixed Workers' Educational Association study group led by a university lecturer. Other classes approved by the Bradford Education Committee covered home nursing, home-making and drama. (7) In addition, a Citizens' Advice Bureau, open one day a week, was established at 42 Greaves St. where a fortnightly distribution of orange juice, cod-liver oil and milk foods by the Bradford Health Committee also took place. (8)

But there were always more needs than facilities or funds available as revealed in the various annual reports. A resident warden was needed to co-ordinate and expand the centre, the nursery could not meet the demand for places, a youth leader was required to run activities for the local youth population, and access to a large room or hut for social functions was lacking. Formal application was made to the Director of Education in September 1948 for the appointment of a resident assistant warden or, alternatively, of a paid female caretaker together with a part-time male youth leader. In July 1949 approval was given by the Education Committee for the appointment of a full-time warden to look after the Greaves St. community centre together with the Canterbury Avenue youth centre which was run by the Youth Committee of the Education Committee. The post was in fact advertised (9) but the appointment was not made because in October 1949 the Ministry of Education issued Circular 210 which asked local authorities to reduce their expenditure under section 53 of the 1944 Act covering recreation and social and physical training. The circular stipulated that the Government did "...not contemplate any major change in policy which would result in a reduction in the scope of the services for which the Minister of Education (was) responsible". The onus was placed on local education authorities to reduce their expenditure on administration, not on services. In particular, relating to Section 53 expenditure, they were required to curtail or cut out "the less essential or more costly facilities."

At the same time the Ministry had also issued Circular 209 which asked for economies in building costs. In the section which dealt with community centres,

expenditure was restricted to maintenance costs only, both for local authority centres and for those run by voluntary organisations. Mr Spalding, formerly Deputy Director, now Director of Education in Bradford, wrote to Miriam Lord to advise her that "the erection of further community centre buildings of all types will have to be postponed for the time being." (10) The consequence for the Greaves St. community centre of both these circulars was that the appointment of a warden was not made at this time, nor would there be any progress with the plan to build a community centre actually on the Canterbury Avenue estate.

Nor was any progress being made with the desired expansion of the nursery at Greaves St. In early 1947 the Government made an appeal for women to go into industry in order to bolster post-war production. During that year various questions were asked in the House as to the progress being made with setting up new nursery schools and classes to enable mothers to enter industry. In a written answer George Tomlinson, the new Minister of Education, replied that the government campaign for the recruitment of women into industry was not specifically aimed at those with young children, but that if there was a need for additional accommodation in a particular area he would liaise with the local authority concerned. (11)

In Bradford, the Council responded to representations made by the government to provide additional nursery provision because of the importance of married women to the textile industry export drive, by resolving to erect hatted day nurseries at a further five sites in the city. Negotiations were also opened for the extension to the Community

Centre Committee's Greaves St. nursery. However, despite the urgency of the situation as evidenced by the government's involvement, developments proceeded at a very slow pace. There were difficulties in purchasing or leasing particular sites (12), there was the question of whether the buildings should be erected by direct labour or put out to competitive tendering (13), and, in the case of Greaves St., there was a dispute over the sacrifice of potential additional nursery places to the requirement for caretaker accommodation. (14) The dispute arose between the Council and the Community Centre Committee, not within the Committee itself, for by this time the energies of the latter were focused on the Margaret McMillan Memorial Appeal, and were not to be sidetracked by other issues.

The appeal for £5,000 which had been launched in 1946 "met with only a fair response", having raised only £700 net by the end of November 1946. The Committee realised that they would have to extend their fund-raising efforts and seek greater publicity for their idea. A letter was circulated in the House of Commons and came to the attention of Arthur Greenwood, the Labour Member of Parliament for Wakefield.

(15) Mr Greenwood had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health in the first Labour Government of 1924, and had been Minister of Health in the second Labour Government of 1929. In the War Cabinet he had been Minister without Portfolio and was instrumental in inviting Lord Beveridge to produce his eponymous report on social security planning. He continued in office as Minister without Portfolio in the post-war Labour Government until dropped from the Cabinet by the Prime Minister, Clement

Attlee, in September 1947. (16) Arthur Greenwood felt that if the appeal was to be a memorial to Margaret McMillan then it should be a national appeal in order to do justice to her stature as a national figure. He and Gilbert McAllister, Labour Member of Parliament for Ruther Glen, Lanarkshire, organised a National Committee, of which he would be President and McAllister the Chairman, with a meeting in the House of Commons to provide an initial informal launch. (17)

The National Appeal was formally launched by the Prime Minister in June 1947, the overall target being set at £250,000 of which Bradford's contribution was to be £20,000. It was agreed that the target income would be distributed as follows:-

- (a) £100,000 for the development and extension of the Rachel McMillan Training Centre at Deptford;
- (b) £100,000 to help found a new Margaret McMillan Training Centre to provide training for nursery school teachers in the North of England;
- (c) £20,000 for the Nursery School Association of Great Britain, and
- (d) £30,000 for the Bradford Community Centre Appeal because of its active furthering of the work of Margaret McMillan. (18)

Such was the proposed transformation in the fortunes of the Bradford Community Centre Committee as a result of this national effort that Miriam Lord wrote

"From a tiny beginning of one room and 5/- (twenty five new pence) per week to £30,000 seems an impossible dream ... Voltaire once said that 'nothing is so powerful as an Idea which is due to be born'. Looking back over our history as a

Committee, we find the Idea - the whole plan set out at its very first meeting at the Bradford Town Hall on October 8th 1934. Like Pilgrim we have been led step by step to its realisation. Like Pilgrim we have had our pitfalls, our failures, our doubts and also our times of joy and high courage." (19)

The Bradford Margaret McMillan Memorial Appeal Committee, which incorporated the Bradford Community Centre Committee, added to its ranks an Appeal Sub-Committee, of which Miriam Lord was general secretary. The main committee retained the Bishop of Bradford as President and included the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, J.B. Priestley, Professor Frank Smith of the University of Leeds, Helen Neatby and Katherine Bruce-Glasier, the Independent Labour Party activist, as Vice-Presidents. The full committee consisted of forty eight local notables, including Alderman Kathleen Chambers, J.P., and another councillor and two Justices of Peace together with Muriel Nichol, then Labour Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil but formerly M.P. for North Bradford. (20) In short, Miriam was by then fully involved with 'the great and the good' of the Bradford establishment.

Within one year of its launch the appeal fund had reached £100,000, an incredible amount of money in a short space of time taking into account inflation over the past forty five years and given the prevailing post-war austerity. However, the whole appeal was being conducted on a grand scale with an address in London SW1, and the involvement of many national figures including four other M.P.s, two Privy Councillors and twelve titled persons of whom Lady Astor was one. It also involved organisations such as the Nursery School Association, the Co-operative movement, the

National Union of Teachers, both Houses of Parliament and the Trades Union movement. Even the then Queen Mother, Queen Mary, lent her support by attending a film premiere, the entire proceeds of which were donated to the memorial fund. (21) It was a far cry from all the activities with which Miriam had previously been associated where makeshift, ad hoc arrangements had been the order of the day. It was also a reflection of the hope for a new social order which had come about as a result of the war and which had been embodied in the election of the post-war Labour Government.

As might be expected, Miriam Lord in her role as general secretary of the appeal, threw herself wholeheartedly into fund-raising activities in Bradford organising functions as varied as bring and buy sales and musical concerts. She also canvassed support from local businesses as evidenced by the many copy letters in her private papers. By April 1949 the Bradford Margaret McMillan Memorial Committee had formed itself into a Trust with many of the Committee members becoming Trustees. An indication of the extent to which the business and professional people of Bradford were involved is provided by the full list of the twenty five trustees which follows:-

\* President: The Rt. Rev. A. Blunt, Lord Bishop of Bradford.

\* Miss Phyllis Ashton, Solicitor and Hon. Solicitor to the Trustees.

\* Councillor J. Backhouse, Master Printer.

\* Mr J Foster Beaver, J.P., Worsted Manufacturer.

Miss M.A. Brinnand, S.R.N., Technical Nursing Officer.

\* Sir Geoffrey Burton, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., M.A., Retired Indian Civil Servant.



\*Alderman K Chambers, J.P., Chairman of Bradford Education Committee.

Mr R.F. Cook, M.B.E., M.C., Woollens and Tops Manufacturer.

\* Miss M A Cox, O.B.E., Civil Servant.

Lt. Col. H.W. Edwards, D.S.O., D.L., M.C., M.A., Retired Headmaster.

\* Miss D. Grayson, B.A., Headmistress.

Mr G Van Ham, Chief Accountant.

\* Mr D Hamilton, J.P., Wool Merchant and Tops Manufacturer.

\* Miss M Hooke, M.A., J.P., Headmistress.

Mr W Illingworth, J.P., F.R.I.B.A., Architect.

\* Miss M Lord, Hon. Warden and Secretary.

\* Mr A S Lynch, Development Assistant.

\* Miss J Parker, Dressmaker.

\* Mr A Riley, Retired Sub-Postmaster.

Mrs R J Steele, National Council of Women.

\* Miss J E Symes, B.A., Retired Headmistress.

\* Mr A Tate, Manufacturer of Linings.

Mr S Tempest, Clothing Manufacturer.

\* Mr H Thornton, F.R.I.B.A., Architect.

& Mr T Tordoff, Clerk.

(Those marked with an asterisk were full members of the Bradford Committee.) (22)

By April 1949 the decision had been taken that the training college to be

established in Margaret McMillan's memory would be built in Bradford itself and negotiations had already been started with the Bradford Education Committee as to its location and the composition of its governing body. The decision to place the college under the umbrella of the local authority was not reached unanimously, but was eventually taken as it would enable the Committee to obtain a capitation grant from the government and thus secure the financial future of the college. (23) It appears that, initially, certain of the Committee members felt that as they had become committed to what they had understood to be a voluntary effort, they would be unable to continue to lend their support to the appeal if the Ministry of Education and the Local Education Authority were involved. (24) However, there is no record of any resignations on this issue. Later in the same year it was decided that the building of the Margaret McMillan Training College would be the contribution of the city of Bradford to the 1951 Festival of Britain - this had a practical consequence in that it would facilitate the erection of the buildings by the spring of that year. The plan was for the college to accommodate 150 students, with a possible future expansion to 200, managed by a governing body of 27 members of whom 14 would be elected by the Education Committee. (25) In fact, the Bradford Education Committee with its Labour chairman, Alderman Kathleen Chambers, proved to be most helpful and supportive with this project - it voted a contribution of £2,000 towards the Memorial Fund, and gave permission for collections to be made on a voluntary basis in all its schools. (26) Miriam's dominating presence on the Appeal Committee was no longer a handicap in negotiations with the Education

Committee. Alderman Chambers was herself involved with the appeal and her son had attended Lilycroft Nursery School in its early days under Miriam's headship.

As negotiations progressed the identities of the Community Centre Committee's benefactors in the original purchases of 34, 42 and 42a Greaves St. were to be revealed. Using funds provided by the National Appeal Committee, it was the intention to redeem the outstanding mortgages on these properties and pay off the deposit and conveyancing charges which had been provided by anonymous individuals. These turned out to be Helen Neatby and Miriam Lord for nos. 42 and 42a, and Miss Hooke and Miriam Lord for no. 34. In respect of nos. 42 and 42a repayment of the deposit and conveyancing charges was waived as a gift to the memorial fund. At this juncture, late 1949, the community centre and nursery in Greaves St. was renamed the Margaret McMillan Community and Nursery Centre to form part of the national memorial. (27) Attempts were still being made to extend the nursery to take another 30 children, work needed to be done at no. 34 which was now designated the Women's Centre, and also at no. 36 which was derelict and had been gifted to provide premises in due course for a Men's Centre. Spurred on to greater aspirations by the potential availability of extra funds from the national appeal, the Bradford Margaret McMillan Memorial Committee were also planning at this time to purchase or lease Little Horton Old Hall to provide a headquarters and office space for the Bradford operation and some residential accommodation for the college which was to be built on the adjacent site at Trinity Road. All this would involve further expenditure of approximately £10,000. (28)

On 11 October 1950 fund-raising efforts came to an end (although the fund remained open) when the inauguration ceremony of the Margaret McMillan Training College took place. The Minister of Education, George Tomlinson, the wife of the Prime Minister, Mrs C R Attlee, and Lady Astor were among those who attended. Mrs Attlee in fact cut the first sod of earth on the site, and Lady Astor and Miss E Stevinson, a former principal of the Rachel McMillan Training College in Deptford, planted commemorative trees. (29) In the same year the Margaret McMillan Fellowship was created to keep the many people who had supported the appeal in touch with the projects set in motion, and in March of the following year Miriam was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Fellowship. (30)

By 1951 the Bradford Education Committee had consented to the alteration of the constitution of the governing body of the training college to cater for the fact that the Margaret McMillan Memorial Fund Committee had nominated sixteen people representing national and local interest rather than the thirteen originally agreed. It also settled on the seventeen who would represent the local education authority on the governing body. (31) A decision was taken to appoint a Special Sub-Committee to act in conjunction with three appointees of the Memorial Fund Committee to select for interview and interview candidates for the positions of Principal and Lecturers at the College. (32) The appointees of the Memorial Fund were the Rt. Hon. Arthur Greenwood M.P., Gilbert McAllister M.P., and Miriam Lord. (33) By the time the interview for the post of Principal took place, Miriam's own status had been somewhat

elevated by the award of an O.B.E. in the Birthday Honours List in June 1951.

Thus, in less than twenty years she had been transformed from a demoted and demoralised Superintendent of a Bradford nursery school to a recognised national figure who had personal contact with the wife of the country's Prime Minister. (34) In order to achieve this transformation she had worked incessantly and tirelessly and at personal cost to herself, not just in financial terms, but also in terms of her personal health. By 1951 she was sixty six years of age and in various documents there are references to periods of ill-health and sick leave. She was the Secretary both to the National Fund Committee and to the Bradford Committee, a Trustee of the Memorial Fund, Vice-Chairman of the National Fellowship, a member of the governing body of the Memorial College, a member of the selection committee for the College, and was still Honorary Secretary and Warden of Margaret McMillan Community and Nursery Centre in Greaves St., Bradford. These were the posts in which she was active, and in all of them she appears to have been the focus of events, the person who kept the administration under control and the enterprise moving forward, but someone who preferred to operate out of the public eye and who therefore did not seek public acclaim. In a letter written in December 1953 discussing whose was the responsibility for the building of a memorial to Margaret McMillan in Bradford, the Bishop of Bradford said "The work was all done under great difficulties and with much opposition by a small committee of local people, all of whom wish to remain anonymous, but without whose enthusiasm and perseverance the eventual Memorial might never have taken shape." (35) Likewise, her

financial contribution to the purchase of property in Greaves St. was not public knowledge and would not have come to light if ownership of the properties had not been transferred to the Trustees of the Memorial Fund. A sentence in the 1951 Report of the Bradford Margaret McMillan Memorial Committee appears to sum up her personal reaction to the high profile activities of the preceding four years - "Following this event (the October 1950 inauguration ceremony), the Centre and its Committee were relieved to settle down to quiet routine."

The quiet routine to which she referred consisted of four women's groups meeting weekly for dressmaking and needlework, cookery, make and mend, and social activities; the Workers' Educational Association study class; and the nursery, the projected extension of which had reached the stage of having plans to combine nos. 42 and 42a Greaves St. accepted by the Ministry of Health and having arrangements to lease the premises agreed by Bradford Health Committee. (36) In the event, because building programmes in the early 1950s were still subject to revision due to the ongoing need for economic constraint, a shortage of steel and a manpower shortage in the construction industry (37), it took until 1954 for the nursery extension to be completed. (38)

In the intervening period the Margaret McMillan Memorial Training College had opened on 26 January 1952 with a ceremony at which the speakers were Alderman Chambers, Mr Spalding, the Director of Education, and Miriam Lord. Initially, there were 46 students, of whom 40 were resident, and it was necessary to make temporary

arrangements to share facilities with other educational establishments in the city because the college buildings themselves were still very much at the preparatory stage. (39) The foundation stone of the college was laid jointly on 14 July 1952 by Alderman Chambers and Mrs Attlee, and at a function which followed at the Town Hall the speaker was the Rt. Hon. Arthur Greenwood. (40) The following year in June, the month of the sixtieth anniversary of Margaret McMillan's arrival in Bradford, foundation stones were laid for the residential block and the dining block by the Lord Mayor of Bradford and Gilbert McAllister respectively. In his speech the Lord Mayor referred to nursery education as being the most important of all forms of education, and the Bishop of Bradford expressed his hope that Bradford would regain its leading place in social reform. (41) Completion of building work and the official opening of the College took place in 1956. Mrs Attlee, by then Countess Attlee, performed the opening ceremony in place of the Princess Royal who was incapacitated. In its completed form the College offered accommodation for 150 students, the majority of whom were residential. (42)

However, no sooner had it been completed than it was overtaken by events at a national level. The post-war bulge in the birthrate which had greatly increased the demand for nursery education had fed through to the infant and junior stages by the early 1950s. The 374 nursery schools in existence in England and Wales in 1946 had increased to 477 by January 1954. (43) This figure marked a peak in nursery school provision and still offered nursery education for only 23,469 children. The situation with nursery classes had worsened in that the pressure for places for children over five

caused the Ministry of Education to issue two circulars, no. 280 in 1954 and no. 313 in 1956, asking local education authorities to restrict the admission to school of children under the age of five in the interests of the education of older children. Between 1948 and 1952 the number of nursery classes had already declined from 2,457 to 1,965. (44)

As the 'bulge' passed from the nursery school stage through to the infant/junior stage the shortage of adequately trained teachers became more acute. At the nursery school stage it had been compensated for by allowing women who had taken short emergency training courses in child care to be employed as temporary teachers in nursery schools and classes (Ministry of Education Circular 175, 1948). But it was stressed that this was a temporary arrangement and, of course, such an option was not available at the infant/junior stage when education became more teaching-oriented and had to offer considerably more than child care. The challenge, therefore, was to train more infant and junior teachers, and in Bradford no sooner had the Margaret McMillan Memorial Training College been officially opened than it was decided to double the size of the college. It was also decided to expand its scope from its original dedication to nursery teacher training to include the training of teachers for infant and junior schools. (45) By the early 1960s the college provided for 330 students on a three year course of training for nursery, infant and junior teachers as a constituent college of the University of Leeds Institute of Education. (46)

With the training college aspect of their plans complete the members of the Bradford Margaret McMillan Association turned their attentions back to the community



and nursery centre. Having finally achieved completion of the nursery extension in 1954, they then addressed the problem of the rebuilding of the community centre itself. The funds for this were provided entirely by the Margaret McMillan Memorial Fund without any assistance from the Ministry of Education, and the official opening of the rebuilt centre took place in 1959. The opening ceremony was carried out by Miriam Lord who by then had relinquished her duties as honorary warden but retained her position as honorary secretary.

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## CONCLUSION

Miriam Lord died on 21 July 1968 at the age of 83.

"Right until the moment of her death ...  
Miss Lord ... worked passionately for the nursery  
schools movement, for better conditions for young  
children and for the Greaves Street Community  
Centre which she founded in the Little Horton  
cul-de-sac on total capital of exactly two half-  
crowns." (1)

Thus she died as she lived, still crusading unceasingly and tirelessly on behalf of the causes in which she believed. But what had been her impact on the development of nursery education and of community centres, both in Bradford and nationally? Would their history have been any different if she had not existed? Does she have an ongoing importance today?

There were two important influences on her very early life - her father, Hird Lord, and his Independent Labour Party colleague, Margaret McMillan. From her father she inherited her physical and mental toughness along with her drive and determination - Hird Lord himself did not die until 1950 when in his ninetieth year, and after he had single-handedly turned himself from a penniless teenager into a successful businessman. As did Miriam in the 1930s, he had also shown an ability to ignore ridicule and opposition when he was dubbed 'Lord Madhatter' for the views on educational and social reform which he expounded in 'Laycocks', the local debating forum in Bradford, although his small humiliations there were as nothing compared with those of his daughter in later years. Not only did Miriam acquire her stamina and her

courage from her father; she also shared his moral code as a vegetarian and Christian socialist, although she never did align herself with any political party, preferring to work instead on a non-sectarian, non-political basis.

A common link between Hird Lord and Margaret McMillan, besides their membership of the Independent Labour Party, was their Scottish background. He had come from a family of whalers; she, though born in America, had been brought up from the age of five in Inverness. Their paths crossed in 1893 when Margaret McMillan was invited to live and work in Bradford by the newly formed Independent Labour Party of which Hird Lord was a founding member. In Margaret McMillan Miriam had a role model for her later life as a social campaigner. Indeed, such was her belief that Miss McMillan was the greatest woman who ever lived that this hero worship blinded her, during the 1920s in particular, to the ideological and economic arguments in favour of nursery classes as a valid educational alternative to the more costly nursery schools. This in turn led to her marginalisation from mainstream education and into voluntary social welfare work as an appropriate vehicle for the 'whole child' ideology which she inherited from Margaret McMillan and which had its final public expression in the Hadow Report of 1933. For by the time of the 1944 Education Act nursery education was no longer seen merely as a means of social rescue for the younger children of poor working class families. Miriam, however, because of her personal and professional disaster and because she was still operating among the poor and working class in Bradford, continued to see an ongoing need for welfare work in tandem with social



education.

Indeed, when tracing the ancestry of her beliefs it has to be said that she comes within the pragmatic, developmental tradition of education for the young child starting with Lancaster and Bell and continuing through Robert Owen to Margaret McMillan, rather than through the more scientific, theoretically based line stretching from Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Isaacs. During the time she spent in Michigan she was exposed to a more scientific approach because the nursery school she had established acted as a laboratory for specialised research. However, after she had returned to England where funds were short and the nursery school was seen principally as an antidote for social and physical conditions, and where the need for such an antidote was so acute, she once more immersed herself in active work rather than research and analysis. It has to be said, however, that this was probably more in keeping with the practical and crusading side of her character. It is not surprising, therefore, that Miriam did not at any time develop a coherent methodology for her beliefs. Instead, she channelled her considerable energy and stamina into activity, whether it be actually carrying out her responsibilities over and beyond the call of duty as in the long hours which she worked as headmistress at Lilycroft, or in taking on the secretaryship of practically every organisation with which she was connected.

She can be described therefore neither as an academic nor a visionary. The causes for which she tirelessly worked and the ideas which she energetically put into practice were not her own. The regime at Lilycroft Nursery School adhered closely to

the recommendations set out in Clause 19 of the 1918 Education Act, and the additional involvement of the parents and the provision of mothercraft classes for senior girls were the ideas of Professor Bompas-Smith and Sir Robert Morant respectively, no doubt reinforced by her personal experience at Merrill-Palmer, which of course had come into existence for the sole purpose of training young girls in mothercraft. The abject conditions under which the urban working class lived in Bradford, and in other industrial centres in this country, combined with the social conscience inherited from her father, inevitably forced her greater involvement with the issue of social welfare during the late 1920s and the 1930s. Then, simultaneously with the international financial crisis of 1931, which led to a massive increase in unemployment and therefore a worsening of those already wretched conditions, Miriam found herself in trouble with her employing authority. It is not surprising that her response to being demoted and professionally humiliated by Bradford Education Committee was to channel her energies into a social welfare issue outside mainstream education.

At first it was unemployment and particularly female unemployment. Again, although the initial impetus in Bradford came from elsewhere (on this occasion the Society of Friends), once Miriam became involved it was in a central role as honorary secretary. This experience with the Forster Centre widened her range of acquaintances and connections - work with the unemployed at that time was seen as worthy and worthwhile for it had received the Royal seal of approval from the Prince of Wales, and in pre-welfare state days certain sectors of the more fortunate in society saw it as their

duty to help the needy. As honorary secretary of the Centre Miriam came into repeated contact, probably for the first time, with the Bradford professional and business world. As a powerful lobbyist who had already shown herself to be prepared to maintain and use her contacts, such an enlargement of her connections would be most welcome and useful. Indeed, in some ways, the Forster Centre experience can be seen as a practice run for the Bradford Community Centre Committee, the next and most significant venture.

As far as Miriam Lord was concerned the original attraction of the housing estate project lay in the association of slum clearance with nursery school provision. However, on this occasion she allowed herself to be guided by her colleagues on the Committee so the enterprise quickly became defined in terms of a social centre with a nursery school as its nucleus. When the nursery school aspect of the undertaking was shown to be politically counter-productive 'nursery school' was diluted to 'nursery' in the Committee's title, and finally 'nursery' was dropped altogether. This is a measure both of the wider influences to which Miriam was subject by the late 1930s, and of her own realisation that objectives cannot always be achieved by full frontal assault. The ordeal of losing her position at Lilycroft and its aftermath, together with the experience acquired at the Forster Centre, had given her a maturity and wisdom which had been catastrophically lacking hitherto. The political naiveté which had led to the Lilycroft fiasco had been replaced by a readiness to listen to and be influenced by other counsel.

With regard to her personal life, there does not seem to be any - her crusade was

her life. She was, of course, just of that generation of women whose marriage prospects were decimated by the slaughter of the First World War. It has to be said, however, that such was the intensity of her activities that it left no time for a private life of any scale. She had a wide range of acquaintances and friends from all parts of the social spectrum, but with all of them there was a common interest in campaigning on behalf of the young and under-privileged in society. From the time when she was a young child herself she had been in contact with public figures in the Independent Labour Party, most importantly Margaret McMillan. Then she went to Manchester University in 1918 to continue her training under Professor Bompas-Smith who was himself a national figure in the world of education. The formation of the Nursery School Association in 1923, of which she was a founder member, gave her the opportunity to cultivate the acquaintance of politicians, most notably Lady Astor. The period spent in America and travelling in Europe gave her an entree to international circles in child education, and the fracas at Lilycroft in 1932 brought her into close contact with the Bishop of Bradford, Dr Blunt, who would be her final mentor. The amount of correspondence involved in maintaining this enormous network of connections was mountainous - she was definitely the lubrication which kept the whole machine moving forward, tapping into whatever source would be appropriate for the particular issue of the moment.

Miriam Lord's private papers were bequeathed to the Margaret McMillan Memorial College, but a doubt has to exist as to whether they were subject to some form of self-censorship before her death. Whilst they are comprehensive in some respects,

there is very little in them which is critical of her beliefs or behaviour, other than the newspaper reports and minutes of committee at the time of her demotion. In this case, comments written by her in the margin clearly show that she believed this criticism to be entirely misplaced and therefore not valid. In particular, there is a letter which she wrote on 28 October 1933 to the Director of Education in Bradford, Thomas Boyce, in which she refers to her own notes of the disciplinary hearing to which she had just been subjected. (2) Yet these notes were not kept despite their apparent importance.

Certainly, she was an autocrat. When the amalgamation of the Lilycroft Nursery School with the adjoining Infants' School had been decided upon and Miriam was struggling to get the decision reversed or amended, one of her proposals was that the nursery school should open extended hours which she would cover voluntarily and without extra pay in order to save costs. However, one of only three conditions which she wished to impose would be that she would have sole charge of the experiment. (3) Likewise with the Bradford Social Centre and Nursery Committee (as it was at the time): Margery South, her co-secretary, complained that she kept too much information to herself and asked her not to be annoyed when they had the inevitable (in Mrs South's eyes) differences of opinion. (4)

Miriam's conviction that she and her supporters had found the holy grail of the education of the young child in the shape of the nursery school, and her inability during the 1920s and early 1930s to realise that others, particularly local politicians, had different agenda which had to be accommodated, led to her temporary fall from grace.

Up until that time the circles within which she had moved had been mainly female, for the issue of the education of the young child and related matters were (and of course still remain) female-dominated. During the early decades of the twentieth century women were still in the first stages of their political education and, on the whole, believed that the rightness of their cause would be sufficient to carry them through. It was just a question of persistence and argument. This was patently not the case, and the ability to recognise when compromises had to be made in order to make progress was in short supply, although Margaret McMillan herself was not averse to compromising her socialist principles by speaking on a Conservative platform for Nancy Astor in 1929. (5)

It was only when Miriam moved into the wider field of unemployment and housing in the 1930s and came into closer contact with men who had been operating in the public domain for many years, and who therefore knew how to manipulate the system, that she was able to channel her impressive energies and contacts more constructively. After this, although her objectives were not achieved without a struggle and progress was often slow (vis the extension of the nursery at Greaves St.), at least they were achieved. A national training college in memory of Margaret McMillan was built, and Miriam's own contribution to that was eventually recognised by the award of an O.B.E. In her later years, too, she was given national recognition as a broadcaster with the B.B.C. (6)

As is ever the case, though, the impact which she had on her chosen field was not just the result of her own character and personality, in the same way that her character and personality were not just the result of the personal influences in her life.

If Miriam had not been born in Bradford at the end of the nineteenth century, then being her father's daughter and a close acquaintance of Margaret McMillan would not have had the same outcome as in fact they did. In our lives we are all the consequence of many interactions, both with people and events, and Miriam Lord was no exception.

Bradford is probably the most important factor of all. Social conditions in late nineteenth century Bradford when Miriam was born were appalling, as Margaret McMillan found when she went there in 1893. Even in 1910 there were 26,000 back to back houses in the city which, according to the Local Government Board, meant that over 100,000 or 39% of the population lived in such houses. The same survey found that almost two thirds of the population of Bradford lived in a house without a bath. (7) But there was also a wide variation in these conditions as between the working class and the more affluent sectors of the populace, although they did not live physically or socially segregated from each other, a feature which was quite unlike other large English cities. (8) This mingling of the social classes and her father's trade as a baker meant that Miriam came into contact with the poor working class from an early age and thus had an awareness of the deprivation and poverty which abounded.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century Bradford emerged as forerunner in the development of education and educational welfare. That it should become pre-eminent in this way may be attributed to the presence of what J.B. Priestley referred to as "this curious leaven of intelligent aliens, chiefly German-Jews" (9) who, from the time of their arrival in Bradford in the 1830s, concerned themselves with the education

and welfare of their employees. This tradition was continued by the Bradford School Board, of which Margaret McMillan became a member in 1894, and which had given a liberal interpretation to the 1870 Education Act by introducing what became known as Higher Grade Schools. These were schools where pupils could continue in education beyond the normal elementary school leaving age. In addition, these schools were available to the children of poor parents through the free scholarships offered by the School Board. Miriam Lord attended such a school and in fact passed the examination for a scholarship although her father waived her entitlement and paid her fees. As well as extending the availability of education to the children of the poor working class, the Bradford School Board, under the influence of the Independent Labour Party which had been formed in the city in 1893, was also in the forefront of introducing policies to ensure that its children would be better able to benefit from the universal elementary education provided under the 1870 Act. The most important measures were the appointment of a school medical superintendent in 1893, the building of school baths starting in 1899, the introduction of a school nurse in 1908, the establishment of a school dental clinic with a full-time dentist in 1910, and, of course, the provision of school meals in 1907. Thus, despite the continuation of the 'half-time' system of elementary education which persisted in the city until 1921, Bradford had established itself as a progressive educational authority by the early twentieth century. In its response to the various empowering Acts passed in the Houses of Parliament during this time it was exceptional, so that the environment in which Miriam Lord was educated



and did her early teaching was in fact atypical of the rest of the country. But it would undoubtedly condition her outlook.

The response of the Bradford Education Committee to the sanctioning of public nursery education by the 1918 Education Act was also atypical. By 1921 it already had three out of twenty three nursery schools eligible for grant in England and Wales, and by 1937, when only 26 local education authorities out of 316 had established or assumed responsibility for nursery schools (10), it had eight. A year previously, its Director of Education, in his speech to the Nursery School Association, had emphasised the educational importance of the nursery school at a time when its social rescue attributes still held sway, a view which would not be given national legitimacy until the 1944 Education Act. An even sterner test of its commitment to education and social welfare policies was its reaction in times of financial stringency. The 1920s were marked by the constraints imposed by the Geddes Committee and by Circular 1371; the 1930s were disfigured by the international financial collapse of 1931. Throughout this time, despite the fact that provision of nursery education was left to the discretion of the local authorities, Bradford resisted the temptation (and the will of certain Conservative councillors) to close down its nursery education. Certainly, it economised and trimmed by amalgamating nursery and infant schools and by cutting down on certain of its services, such as the amount of milk supplied to these schools, but it did not sacrifice the principle.

What is perhaps surprising is that it did not expand its number of nursery classes

as rapidly as did some other local authorities in the 1930s, most notably Manchester and Leicester. In Bradford, as elsewhere in the country, the decline in the school population consequent upon the fall in the birth-rate left empty classrooms in the elementary schools, and the financial advantage in converting and equipping these classrooms for nursery classes would have been the same for Bradford as for other authorities.

However, this failure to do so can be explained by a number of reasons which together ensured that in Bradford the emphasis remained on the nursery school. Firstly, it is often the case that the pioneer in a given field is later handicapped by the fact that it was the first into the arena, so that when considering further development later strategies are influenced by the original policy. Secondly, and reinforcing the first, the ongoing influence and importance of Margaret McMillan in Bradford and the resistance put up by her disciples, including the vociferous Miriam Lord, to the introduction of nursery classes in elementary schools may have coloured the judgement of Bradford councillors and officials. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, was the pressure coming from various directions for nursery education to be available for children between the ages of two and seven. Margaret McMillan had advocated keeping children at nursery school until the age of seven or eight, and in 1926 the Independent Labour Party in Bradford had concluded that nursery schools should cater for children between two and seven, with infants' departments being allowed progressively to disappear. It has to be remembered too that in an addendum to the Hadow Report in 1933 one of the Consultative Committee, Miss Freda Hawtrey, recommended that the nursery school

should keep its children until the age of seven when they would pass into the upper department of the primary school. Thus in 1930, when faced with the need to contain costs, Bradford embarked on its experiment of amalgamating nursery and infants' schools. The recognition of this experiment by the Board of Education in 1934 helped to lock Bradford into the nursery school formula and hindered the expansion of nursery classes in the city.

Bradford was not a pioneer where the community centre movement was concerned. In fact, although councillors were present at the meeting in April 1935 which agreed on the desirability of providing a social centre on a new housing estate, any subsequent development was entirely due to the voluntary efforts of the Social Centre Committee. Before the Second World War as little progress was made in Bradford as in other parts of the country - by 1939 fewer than 2% of the residents of large municipal estates were served by community centres and the first to be provided by a municipality had been in Sheffield in 1933. (11) Despite the lack of encouragement from her own local authority it is not, however, surprising that Miriam should align herself with this movement. Margaret McMillan had tried to involve the parents of the children at her open-air nursery school in Deptford in her work by instigating a system of home visiting and by running a weekly mothers' club - she saw the nursery school as an integral cog of a new social movement which would lead to community development and regeneration. In 1917 Professor Bompas-Smith had promulgated the idea that the nursery school should be small and integrated into the local community. When Miriam

was precluded from carrying these ideas forward at Lilycroft by her demotion to assistant teacher status, it was entirely natural that she should transfer them to the new community centre movement whose objectives were also to promote community co-operation and regeneration, especially when that movement, like the nursery education movement before it, was seen by its supporters as the antidote to the destruction of the sense of community which had been brought about by the Industrial Revolution. For she was not only the product of her home city but also of the time during which she lived.

Miriam's fortunes rose and fell along with those of the nursery school and the British economy. After the First World War she reached a high on her appointment as the first Superintendent of a purpose-built, open-air nursery school at a time when the nursery school had just received official sanction under the 1918 Education Act and when the economy was enjoying a temporary post-war boom. She rode out the Geddes Committee's restrictions in the early 1920s and was selected to go to America to organise a nursery school when the first Labour Government was in office and was encouraging the expansion of nursery education. She returned from America to another period of Conservative government marked by financial constraint and slow growth in the number of nursery schools. Her nadir was reached in 1932/33. It was occasioned by the world-wide financial crisis which commenced in 1929 in the USA and which in England and Wales led to a further period of attrition in the development of nursery education. She set about restoring her reputation and fortune in the late 1930s when the

economy, on the back of preparations for war, began to recover also. The years of the Second World War were a time of improvisation and struggle both for Miriam and the British nation. The post-war period of the third Labour Government was one of good intentions hampered by economic realities - the failure of nursery education to become a universal institution despite the passing of the 1944 Education Act exactly mirrors this. Miriam, however, managed to identify herself with a venture, the Margaret McMillan Memorial College, which had got its funding complete before the harsh economic truths of the early 1950s began to bite. And as the economy recovered in the late 1950s she entered a period of national recognition prior to her death in 1968.

The underlying reason for the development of nursery education being so closely linked to the economic cycle can be found in its discretionary nature. Whilst the desirability of nursery education was conceded by all three political parties in the 1935 General Election, and the principle of universal nursery education was granted by the 1944 Education Act, nevertheless the failure in that Act neither to make it compulsory nor to incorporate it in the primary stage of the education system left it as vulnerable to the vagaries of the economic cycle as it had been since 1918. During the late 1940s and the 1950s the prior claims of secondary education after 1945 effectively delayed the programme of nursery school expansion which had been trailed in the 1944 Act, and in 1960 the Ministry of Education issued Circular 8/60 expressly forbidding any increase in the number of nursery school places. In the thirty years which have passed since the issue of that circular it has gradually become accepted that diversity of provision for the

under fives is the norm, so that the education of young children is deemed to be provided not only in the nursery school and nursery class but also in day nurseries, play groups and even by childminders. (12) Indeed, in 1989 among the local education authorities the availability of places in nursery schools and classes varied from 0% to 65% of three- and four-year-olds. (13)

As far as Miriam Lord's own legacy is concerned, there are now only 6 nursery schools run by Bradford Education Committee whereas there are 102 nursery classes attached to First Schools in Bradford. The Greaves St. Day Nursery is now known as a Family Centre because it continues to cater for parents as well as providing a day nursery. The building which was the Margaret McMillan College remains but, together with four other colleges known collectively as the Bradford and Ilkley Community College, the College itself exists only as an associate college of the University of Bradford. It does, however, still train nursery school teachers in the sense that it trains teachers for the age range 3 to middle school age. The Canterbury Avenue Community Centre is primarily a Youth Service Centre. (14) H.M. Inspectors carried out an inspection on the Margaret McMillan Community Centre in the winter of 1961/1962 and reported

"It cannot be said that this Centre has had very great impact on community life in this area of Bradford ... A great deal of valuable work has been done in the past by the founders in initiating the venture, but their work has not borne the fruit one might reasonably expect." (15)

Nevertheless, it has to be said that Miriam Lord did leave her mark on nursery education and community life, both nationally and more especially in Bradford, not as a trailblazer in the mould of Margaret McMillan but as an activist who kept the institutions and organisations of which she was part in the public eye. To this extent it is entirely appropriate that she should be remembered and honoured by the allocation of her name to a Bradford school, but whether she would have appreciated the fact that it is a First School is another matter.

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