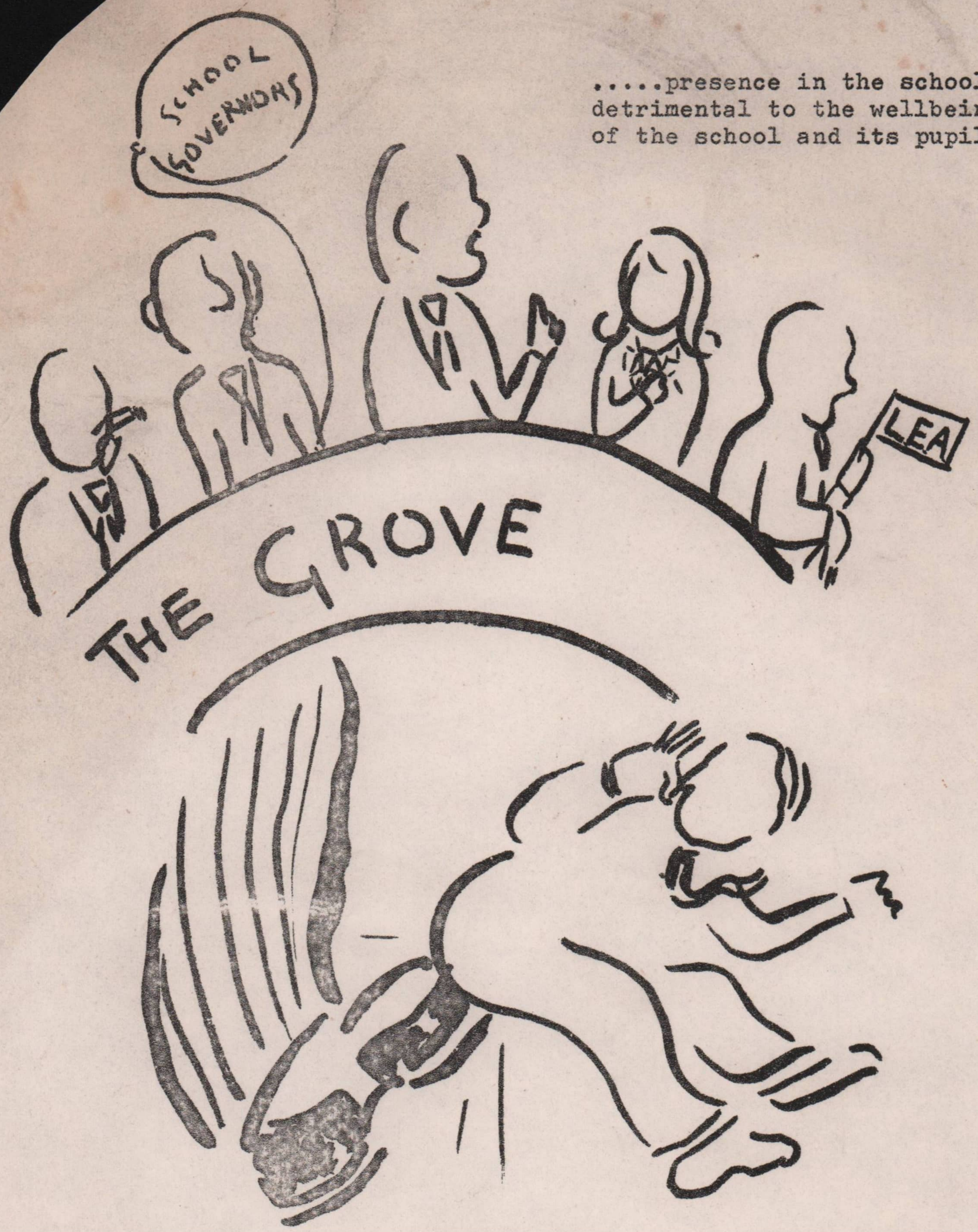


.....presence in the school
detrimental to the wellbeing
of the school and its pupils.....



RING YOUR OWN
BLOODY BELL

by rg gregory

produced with the help of the wrekin libertarians

XX
x Ring Your Own Bloody Bell x
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Corrigenda

pp. 4 maintained should read obtained
53 the word terminated is unclear
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Ring your own bloody bell

R. G. Gregory's first hand account of a dispute in a provincial Comprehensive School.

1. The background

a. The school

In the early sixties, Shropshire decided to create three comprehensive schools, one in Market Drayton, where the two local schools - grammar and modern - were not highly thought of. The subsequent campaign against comprehensive education was strong enough to force the then Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle, to come to the area to defend the county decision. But as a result of the arguments, the Authority agreed that all heads - after the first one - would be at the appointment of the school governors.

In 1964 Mr Donald Mackay was appointed head, and the two schools were merged into one in the following year. Mr Mackay's ideas were broadly progressive and libertarian, but many of his actions and encouragements caused offence to certain sections of the community, and he left the area in 1968; having succeeded in bringing the school to one identity, in convincing most of the staff that in general terms the school was developing in a sensible way; but having failed to remove the deep suspicions held against him in the more influential quarters of the town.

Market Drayton is a very isolated community, unsure of its geographical allegiances and its present and future identity. It has little industry and its agricultural past has moved into a depressed present. It is supposed to have more council houses for its size than any other town in this country. Its feudal overtones are still to be felt; the ordinary people have little say in what goes on. A local professional told me that to get anywhere you had to belong to the church and the Rotary; but his later experience was that these were mere stepping stones to the real power-group - the masons. True or not, nearly every man on the school governing body is a mason.

Mr Behenna was appointed in July 68, but did not take up his appointment until January 69. For one term, Mr Martin Ridgeway, Deputy Head, acted as Acting Head.

b. Myself as teacher

I left University - King's London - with an English degree in 1952, but with no intention to teach. However after working as a labourer for some five months I moved into supply teaching in Hampshire. After this kind of experience at two schools I took a permanent post at Fair Oak County Senior School in the same county as a general subjects' teacher with a leaning towards English and Drama.

In 1958 the senior section of this all-age school was re-organized into a secondary modern school and moved into Eastleigh - where it was named the Wyvern School after a design for a school badge by one of the teachers. (The bird on the badge later turned out to be a gryphon.) Because I was the only teacher involved in the move to hold an English degree I was offered the Headship of English.

From an ignorant start in this post, with a conventional view of the subject, except for my insistence on the importance of Drama, I steadily moved into a much more unorthodox position and by 1964, after much experimentation in syllabus, bringing drama and creative writing to the centre of work in the subject, I felt that I had exhausted all I could develop at that school and that teaching itself was a very frustrating occupation.

I gave up for a term to do some writing - the only result from that a book 'Imaginative Speech and Writing', written in collaboration with the Drama Adviser for Hampshire, Ronald James, which was published by Nelson's in 1966 - and then (after another term's delay - which I filled in with another bout of supply teaching) went to Uganda as an 'education officer'.

I was attached to Senior Secondary School Kololo, Kampala, Uganda and stayed there for two years, during which time I was in charge of the development and running of the English Block, an experiment in the use of English as communication.

When working fully, the Block took 200 students at a time, split into thirty six groups, with a tutor to six groups, each of which was largely responsible for the running of its own time-table, using as a basis a worksheet naming as many ways of using English as could sensibly be contained, with these divided into time-categories and individual/group activities. For example, each group was expected to produce a magazine once a month and a newspaper once a fortnight; each individual within the group was expected to keep a daily diary and to do a piece of intensive writing once a week. But the decision about when to do these and all other activities was left to the group members.

The English Block was an explosive and argumentative place throughout its working, but it was also very creative and a great deal of imaginative work was done. However it caused a lot of social upheaval and it was not allowed to continue after I returned to this country in March 67. An article, by myself, on the Block, as well as a criticism of it by the former Inspector of English, David Brown, was printed in 'Teacher Education in New Countries' (February 1970.)

The relevance of the Block to this pamphlet is that it confirmed the overall view of education and society (and theatre) I had been developing for many years. It showed me that the old concept of the group, which inevitably led to clashes with the individual inside it, was a wrong one. Groups were not at their best when they threw up the inevitable leader, but when each individual in them was able to be at their most fulfilled.

Only those confident of themselves were free to accept the confident self-fulfillment of others.

This led me to see that much of education was on the wrong tack. So much time was spent in trying to sort out the teacher-pupil relationships that the important relationships were being ignored - those between pupil and pupil. To explore this I decided I should have to move from English into Drama, the only subject on the timetable where I could explore the possibilities of a situation involving pupil-pupil relationships with the teacher as much a neutral as he could make himself.

Eventually I applied for the post of Head of Drama at the Grove School and took up teaching in the School in January 67 and became in charge of the Department in Sept. 67. The terms of my appointment, confirmed since by Mr Mackay, were that I was to be as free as the building would allow to pursue my concepts of free-drama; free from interference, text-book and report.

c. Other staff

Throughout the troubles at the Grove, in 70 and 71, it was frequently suggested that the root-cause was the clash of personalities between Mr Behenna and myself. This explanation was absurd. In his time at the Grove Mr Behenna alienated the majority of staff.

Within a few weeks of his arrival at the school in January 69, he was threatening to get the Deputy-Head out of the school, and the breakdown in relations between these two is as long a story as my own disputes with the Head. In September 1970 he threatened to report a member of the Arts' Department to the governors because the latter had written a letter to the Chief Education Officer asking him to intervene personally between Head and staff because relationships had broken down between them. In the summer term 1970 he refused to call a staff meeting asked for by petition from 43 members of staff, out of a total, full and part-time, of about 65.

When the dispute concerning myself broke into the open, at best Mr Behenna could obtain the full or partial support of less than twenty members of staff, and as the troubles wore on some of the most prominent of those turned against his handling of the school. A number of staff were anxious to impress upon the Authorities, after my suspension was ordered, that they too had been as guilty as myself over some of the things I had been accused of. After a stormy staff meeting at the end of the Summer term 1970, one Head of Department was so annoyed at the Head's failure to answer questions put to him that he tried to stop the Head's car from leaving and had then gone round to his house to raise the matters there, unsuccessfully.

A younger member of staff had been offered a graded post for doing careers, accepted, did the job for a month then found that no extra payment had been arranged; the offer was then denied by the Head.

During a time of dispute over the Staff Association, when the Head was threatening to ban that organisation, the Head of Technical Subjects, who was also then Chairman of the Staff Association, was given a rise in pay, had it taken away the next day and was given it again only when he threatened to write to the Press on the matter.

Most departments had tussles with Mr Behenna, often over protracted periods. When it came to my crunch, the wishes of the staff were rarely listened to, and even when expressed in bulk were treated with contempt. Much of the trouble stemmed back to the Governors' brief which attempted to force upon the school a reactionary ideology that few staff were in sympathy with.

To achieve that brief Mr Behenna had to override all objections as though they were the work of evil forces; criticism was an affront to the godhead.

Because I came to believe that some definite personal action was necessary to expose the way his methods were destroying the school - as they have now clearly destroyed it - I was the one on whom all the fury of the stung authority, in all its branches, was vented. And in this personal narrative, I have only the right to dwell on the story of my own entanglements. But other teachers at the school could tell their own versions - as they tried to tell them in the aftermath of my own suspension - and their accounts would have much in common with my own.

An isolated personality clash is so absurd an explanation of what went wrong that suspicion of motives must fall on those who propose it.

d. Henry Arthur Behenna

Mr Behenna was born in Cornwall and went to St. Austell Grammar School. In the war (or from 41 to 46) he served in the RAF Sea Rescue Service as a Flight Lieutenant. Presumably he then went to Worcester College, where he maintained an M.A. degree, though in what I do not know. From there he went as a District Officer in Northern Nigeria (50-55). When he came back to this country he taught at a Secondary School in the Cotswolds and then went to Somerset Technical College. But in 1958, after three years in education, he became Warden of Melbourne Village College in Cambridge. Ten years later he came to the Grove. Certain points are worth making.

Mr Behenna's experience of classroom teaching is sparse. For how long between 55 and 58 did he actually teach in a school? Any more than a year? What was the nature of his jobs in the Secondary School and the Technical College? How did this qualify him so soon for the job of Warden? Village Colleges are sometimes described as 'glorified secondary moderns'. But

even if they are highly creditable attempts to merge education at all levels round the needs of the community, what did Behenna do there that earned him such praise as his appointment to the Grove?

A local councillor hailed him as one of the foremost educational authorities in the country. He himself told me that he had got the job on the strength of his community achievements at Melbourne. A claim hard to believe in the light of his meagre community achievements at Market Drayton, which consisted in cutting back on whatever had been achieved by his predecessor in this field.

How did he get the Grove job? He was basically a secondary modern head, with little real experience of a classroom, appointed to turn a comprehensive school back into a grammar one. Yet, three years later, after a growing revolt among his staff that on two occasions came within one step of strike action, after continual demonstration that he was incapable of making a working relationship with almost everyone with whom he came in contact, after his incompetence became acknowledged, even by the authority that appointed him; he has been appointed elsewhere - to a post that must be seen as a considerable promotion, with more children, more staff, more problems to wrestle with.

Shropshire's attitude has been - "Let him go. He's bound to make a mess of the job there! Let's get him off our backs." And helped him go, presumably, with a good reference.

2. The Troubles 68-70

a. Staff Association

In my first year at the Grove, it became obvious to me that there was a failure of communication between departments & individual teachers. Teachers - as usual - were engaged in a mechanical practice of skills without much awareness of the implications of what they were doing. There was almost no discussion of what it meant to be a comprehensive school.

During the 'inter-regnum' of the Autumn Term, 68, after a fierce but limited dispute between the acting-head & myself involving consultation over timetabled changes, I wrote a summary of the dispute & the lessons I thought it contained; which I called 'Small point, Big issue'.

In this I advocated the formation of a staff-association. As a result of this document, Martin Ridgway agreed to chair a meeting of staff, as long as attendance was voluntary, to discuss the possibility of forming a staff-association. I then ran off a two-sided broadsheet headed 'Argument towards a Staff Association', which I distributed to all staff.

The sheet made it clear that it was not an attempt to lay down the rules of such an association; these would have to be left to those who joined it. But I did go into my own reasons for thinking such an association desirable. By this time Behenna was in regular touch with the then Head of Upper School, Philip Stevens (himself now an head), by-passing Martin Ridgway, & presumably by this avenue, was given a copy of the 'Argument' which he took at once to the Education Office in Shrewsbury. It was later described by the Assistant Education Officer for Secondary Schools as 'outrageous & inflammatory'.

Behenna asked the acting-head to stop the proposed meeting, but this was refused. The meeting was attended by the majority of staff. After considerable discussion, with views split on the question of the propriety of starting such an association in the absence of the new headmaster. It was passed that the association should be formed, & a later meeting be called to go into the association's activities. At that meeting it was agreed the association should be non-hierarchical & informal except for a 'revolving' chairman. The new head would be invited to join on that understanding.

Behenna's first words - when he met the staff in January 69 - were that he believed in working 'democratically' ("progressing through mutual respect"). Later I asked him why he objected to the Staff Association. He wanted it to disband so that he could start his own version of it with himself as permanent chairman.

'Why didn't he come to the next meeting of the Association & put his views forward?'

He refused, saying he was satisfied the two of us he was talking to then should convey his views on the matter. This we did, but the Association voted to continue on the path it had previously decided. The head was invited to address the meeting on his previous job as Warden of Melbourne Village College. The date to be agreed between himself and the Head of English, Stephen Huntley.

His talk was advertised as being given to a full meeting of staff, not to the Staff Association. In it, Behenna described the warden as one who took the credit & received the kicks. He quoted - with approval - a story about the creator of the village college system (Morris) in which he insisted that the head's study would be improved with a large tree outside the window, so that the children couldn't be seen. There was a notable absence of information about the school-part of that village college. The warden's contact with the school, to judge by this account, was minimal.

The staff association then went through a difficult time.

The head disapproved of the idea, & this caused support for the association to drop away. Also the freedom of anyone to call a meeting resulted in no one having the presumption to do so. As Behenna's plans for the school unfolded, amidst deepening dismay, it was often cried: 'If only the staff association was working - what a lot to discuss!' But I, determined not to be its leader, refused to call a meeting; & no one else would.

In the following term too, the same need for the association, but the same diffidence about actually putting it into operation, agonised the 'progressives' on the staff. At the end of that term, a demand for a proper constitution led to the appointment of a small committee to draw up the first draft.

In time it was agreed that officers should be appointed; chairman to serve for one term only, with no renewal of office, & secretary & treasurer for an year only. Membership open to all staff, language assistants & students - during their teaching practice in the school. The aims of the Association to be fourfold:-

- to provide a forum for discussion of all educational matters,
- to seek to become the representative voice of the staff,
- to invite outside speakers.
- & to make close relationships with the PTA.

Behenna declared the constitution to be contrary to the articles of government, therefore illegal. He banned the association. The NUT legal department, in a cagey letter, (it later turned out to be giving conflicting advice to Behenna at the same time) said the constitution was not outside the law. The Association took the letter to Behenna. He removed his ban, but insisted on his right of veto on speakers called by the Association. (Otherwise someone 'like Tariq Ali') might be invited.) The delegation agreed to notify him of all speakers booked.

Slowly meetings with guest speakers were arranged. In the final week of the Spring term, 70, the secretary of the Staff Association, a young art teacher, was told by the Head there was a letter for her in his office. Would she collect it at break. (Unusual procedure since letters were otherwise invariably placed in the teacher's pigeon-hole in the staff-room.) She went. The head expected her to open the letter in his presence. It was postmarked 'York'. She told him it was probably from Professor Harry Rac. Eventually she opened the letter. Professor Rac was unable to come, but if he was ever in Shropshire, he would be glad to look in on a staff association meeting.

When the secretary spoke afterwards to Dick Sutton, Head of Technical studies, & then chairman of the Association, she told him Behenna objected to Ree being invited because he was sometimes critical of headmasters. (In fact close to that time a letter from Professor Ree - which could be vaguely interpreted in that light - had appeared in the Times Educational Supplement.)

Sutton felt it was too close to the end of term to call a meeting of the Association; he passed the news on informally. The Head's action struck me as absurd and dangerous. Why should he have the right to stop staff inviting anyone they wished to talk to them? When I saw that no action was to be taken by the Association, I wrote a short letter to the Times Ed. - warning Professor Ree of the consequences of appearing to make 'anti-headmaster' remarks. This was published in the last issue of the paper before the start of the summer term.

Behenna hadn't seen the letter on the first day of term. Dick Sutton saw him about an increase in his salary as Head of Technical Studies & Behenna agreed to put up his grade. When asked, in the course of conversation, why he objected to Professor Ree, he repeated substantially the reason previously conveyed to the secretary of the Association.

The next day Behenna had seen the letter. He called in the secretary & got her to agree that he had been misquoted, & that she had been misrepresented by the chairman. He then saw Sutton, complained to him about the letter, & told him he was withdrawing the offer - he had made the previous day - concerning his raise in salary. He changed his mind on this when Sutton said that in that case he too would be writing to the papers. Later that week a meeting of the school's hierarchy persuaded the head once again to remove his ban on the Association.

A short time later an educational column in the Guardian - written by Richard Freeman - referred to my letter in the Times Ed., suggesting that teachers who let heads get away with this kind of alleged behaviour had only themselves to blame. Then a letter came to me from the Times Ed. editor saying that the paper had been threatened with legal action by Behenna over my letter; - would I provide supporting evidence for it?

I couldn't get a statement out of the secretary - who had problems of her own at that time, to wrestle with - but gathered enough evidence from other sources for the Times Ed. to inform me that it all amounted to a substantial case.

Some months later Richard Freeman was invited to talk to the Staff Association, but he declined, saying that as he too had been sent a legal letter over his article in the Guardian, he thought it would be unwise for him to get involved in any way with the

school. At the hearings against me in the last quarter of 1970 (vide section 4) Behenna revealed the letters were a bluff & were written on the advice of his NUT watching-brief.

Three weeks after the letter's publication in the TES, I received one from Michael Sayer, a Lecturer in Education at Keele university (living in Market Drayton) saying he had no contact with the school, did not know Behenna personally, but had been shown what I had written in the Times Ed. He was very interested in the staff association.

If, as the published letter implied, the association was anti-headmaster, then he would find that alarming, but if the purpose of the association was, in effect, to propagate educational ideas, he would be interested to study the achievements.

I received the letter by morning post, & found it pertinent enough to 'phone Sayer at once. (It was about 8.30; he was bound to be up, but unlikely to have left for Keele.) We had a fifteen minute conversation, a mixture of agreement & disagreement, in which we explored our attitudes to heads & school set-ups.

He told me that he had moved from schools because he had disliked intensely the policy of their heads. The gist of my reply to his letter was that the head had twice banned the staff association, - but the association had continued.

In that sense it was anti-headmaster; but its real purpose was to develop an understanding of educational ideas, & to ease communication between departments.

In the subsequent statement of complain against me, one of the accusations was that I had declared the staff association to be anti-authority. Since I had never hidden my views about authority - in fact, the broadsheet, 'Argument towards a Staff Association', had contained a succinct expression of them - a charge that I was anti-authority was to be expected. But I was not the staff association, & what its collective views on authority were was a matter for its members.

In the hearings however the complaint was substantiated by producing Sayer as a witness & revealing that after our morning 'phone conversation he had written to Behenna alleging I had used the phrase (of the association) "it is, if you like, anti-authority".

'In the normal course of school business' (as Behenna put it) this letter got in the hands of the Chairman of School Governors, Mark Suttbery. The offending phrase was kept for further use; & trotted out in the hearings - as if it were a dog stuffed with dynamite.

In a conversation much later on, after all the troubles had burst into public, Sayer told two members of staff (both strongly involved in the post-hearings struggles, Section 6) that he was in fact a friend of the Chairman of Governors. And one evening in 71, whilst I sat at home on a suspension that lasted eight months, a letter dropped through the door from Sayer, saying he was pleased a compromise had at last been arrived at in this case, & had I heard of Countesthorpe School in Leicester, where he thought my talents might be very well employed.

I believe that throughout - from May 70 on - Sayer was used as a dupe to suit the purposes of the Grove Governing body in their pursuance of what eventually emerged as a clearly defined plot to get me shot of the school, & out of the town as well.

In September 1970, after five terms of trouble, the staff association appeared to be settling into a tame but exploratory role, with regular meetings and occasional outside speakers. I was elected secretary for 70/71. I was given a list of speakers to approach for the coming meetings. Michael Sayer was on that list. He accepted, appeared at a meeting between the two hearings I had to attend, & spoke interestingly on educational technology. He seemed not to have the least understanding of the role he had already played against me; & he was the only authority witness who turned up to repeat his evidence in the second hearing against me at Shrewsbury that December.

b. Parent-Teachers' Association

PTAs are usually dominated by middle class influential parents, but such people, as usually, are under the thumb of the head-teacher. Whatever the liason function the Association is meant to serve between school & community, the only real purpose of it, in practise, is to raise funds for the school's use. Educationally such funds are useless. Staff have little good to say for them, & often have little contact.

I went along to the Grove Parents' Association, (as a parent too, - having two girls at the school,) in September 68 & pushed for greater educational consciousness. This led to a fairly heated discussion, in which the constitution had to be consulted. There were two relevant clauses: - 10 & 11. These stated that although the Association could not be used by a single parent for the registering of personal complaints about the school, it could provide a forum for discussion on anything of importance & interest to the school.

The debate was over the limits implied by these two clauses. No decision was taken, the matter being left over for the new committee to decide. Apart from those already

officers of the PTA, only two teachers - other than myself - were at this AGM.

After the meeting I was asked by the Chairman of the Association, Gordon Toon, if I'd like to serve on the PTA committee. There was room for three staff representatives, but these positions had not been taken up. I agreed to fill one of the positions, & the other two teachers (already referred to) filled the others.

Once on the committee I pushed for a radical alteration in the way the PTA thought of itself & suggested various means by which it could be more dynamic & useful. One of these suggestions in particular was accepted & planned for by the committee. It made use of an idea I was then developing in children's theatre, & was in line with the intentions of the staff association towards greater understanding of what comprehensive education meant.

The purpose was to achieve a much more informal contact between school & community, especially those outlying parts of it which found difficulty in getting to the school because of transport problems. A group of teachers and parents from the centre school would go out to each district in turn & meet parents & others interested in the educational set-up. The discussion to follow would be open & non-hierarchical.

Each member of the visiting group would be free to comment on any situation as he felt & believed. The group would be a different one each time & any teacher at the Grove would be free to take part. There would be no question of an official school-view to which the centre group would have to adhere.

The suggestion that the PTA Committee should wait for the arrival of Behenna before launching such a scheme was dismissed by the majority of the committee; surely the committee was capable of doing something for itself without always having to wait for permission from the headmaster.

By the first meeting though the new Head had arrived. At the first PTA Committee meeting of 1969 he insisted the scheme should be substantially revised. The nature of the visits should be made more official & wanted to choose the teachers. He had his way; the teachers were chosen from a narrow segment of 'loyalists', the evenings were run to a set plan & interest in them evaporated. By the end they were attracting no local people outside the carefully chosen group.

In subsequent PTA Committee meetings, the free discussions of the

Autumn term gave way to the more common servility of such committees. What the headmaster thought, or was likely to think, made others hold their tongues. Staff who attended often came out annoyed that the head had used the committees as a first-announcement place for changes, he meant to bring about in the school. The changes weren't to be discussed, but accepted without question. The staff had neither been consulted nor told beforehand.

By the start of the Summer term that year, the school was in a demoralised & disintegrating condition. (cf the next section.) Hardly a day went by without some further incredible and dismaying rumour of the head's intentions being discussed in the staffroom. An article - taken from the Times - based on a chapter in 'Children in Distress' by Sir Alec Clegg & Barbara McGson - began to circulate. The article was called "Picking out a bad school can be easy" (or something very similar). A kind of explosion followed its path from teacher to teacher & it took on the proportions of a scandalous & dirty joke. Most of the points seemed to bear a direct relevance to things happening at the Grove.

When I read it I realised that a crisis point had been reached for me. With reservations I had liked the school I had come to; its relaxed atmosphere was better than that of any other school I had taught in. But everything Behenna did sought to destroy that atmosphere; & here was an article systematising a bad school as if the writers had been present at the Grove over the past few months & simply writing down all that happened. Whatever reasons others had for doing nothing, I had to take some action.

Dissatisfied teachers are supposed to go to the governors (through the Head) but I gave that little consideration. The Grove governors were remote beings, hardly ever in the school. Moreover Behenna had told me on a number of occasions he had been appointed on a governors' brief - a brief so politically alien to me that I knew there was no chance of my being listened to. So I decided to raise the matter at the next PTA Committee meeting.

I did so under any other business. After a preamble in which I claimed that the school that had existed before was being systematically destroyed, I referred to the Times article. Behenna rose, asked why I hadn't the courage to attack him directly, claimed it was total nonsense, & walked out. Gordon Toon said that he had been on the point of calling me to order - the violence of my language was not appropriate for such a meeting. Nor was the committee competent to deal with the issue I had raised. Surely it was a professional matter I should have raised at a staff meeting. I replied

that at that time there were no staff meetings; the head had abandoned them.

Toon regretted the Head's walking out. He felt that some answer should have been made to the points I was raising. In the Corbet Arms afterwards there was considerable discussion about it. Those there didn't know enough to judge the value of my criticisms, but they thought the disappearance of Behenna astonishing. The staff present had experienced this way out of argument before. Behenna simply did not believe that he should be called on in any gathering to defend his actions (done, after all, in the role of a public servant, affecting thousands of people.)

The overall consequences of that evening are for a later section. As far as the PTA was concerned the Head refused to come to any committee meeting I attended. Gordon Toon, on another occasion, in the Corbet Arms, sought to persuade me that for the good of the Association I should voluntarily stay away from future committee meetings; the alternative was the collapse of the Association. Eventually I agreed, as long as it was made clear that I was in no sense withdrawing the criticisms I had made forfeiting my right to press for answers to them in any way I thought necessary.

At other times during that term - for example during the donkey derby, organised on behalf of funds for the school's rented farmhouse in the Lake District - Gordon Toon & I had long talks about the worsening state of the school, the difficulties of the PTA, the intractability of the Head, & in all these the major difference between us was that as PTA chairman he had to be circumspect, whereas I felt the situation was too bad to bother about protocol. One of his major complications was that his daughter, Kate, in the sixth form, was very much a rebel, & in her way opposing Behenna as firmly as I was. When the statement of complaint, upon which the two hearings were based, was sent to me in October 70, I rang Gordon Toon to see if he would be willing to act as a witness for me on certain counts. He was very sorry but he had already been called by the Authority.

During the Summer term of 69 Behenna let it be known that he wanted to alter the constitution of the PTA by bringing in a new one devised by himself. The committee agreed he should do so. (I attended no further committee meetings that term.) His proposed constitution was discussed, slightly amended, &, at the last meeting of that term, sent forward for the AGM to ratify. Within a day or two, though, of that action, Behenna informed Toon that he wished to alter a key clause in it & Toon agreed that they had the right to do so.

The Head himself had suggested the inclusion of a sixth form representative on the committee. This had received much discussion & was accepted by the committee. Then the Head had had second thoughts and had decided to reduce the representative to social sub-committee level. There was to be no committee discussion about this. Martin Ridgway got wind of the alteration & protested about it. He was told it was within the rights of the Head to alter documents affecting the school when & as he wished.

No copy of the proposed constitution was issued to staff until the day of the 69 AGM, although rumours about it had been circulating since it had been drawn up. Consequently very little informed discussion about its contents had been possible. However by this time teachers had become interested in the affairs of the PTA & many decided to attend the AGM.

Parents had been told by letter that the meeting would be short & refreshments would follow. The constitution was there to be accepted, not debated. The turn-out was much larger than for the previous AGM - over 150 parents and over 20 staff. The meeting started in its usual dull way, but when the constitution was reached the trouble began.

Martin Ridgway proposed that the constitution as passed by the committee should be used as a basis for the discussion. The chairman, Gordon Toon, refused this, saying the alterations had been made by the officers of the Association as they had every right to do. The tone of this initial dispute carried through to all other amendments. It was obvious that any changes to the constitution were to be fought from the chair, not in the spirit of debate, but in the conviction that the new proposals should be treated as inviolable, & any suggestion of alteration an act of subversion. I proposed a number of amendments - but so also did other members of staff. The chair was hostile to them all, but he was not helped by the presence of Behenna behind his right ear, every so often leaning forward & whispering to him. (Threatening to walk out if it did not go his way?)

On one occasion, Toon insisted on linking the voting of an amendment of mine with that on other amendments; then declared the amendment lost. There was loud protest from many of the staff sitting towards the back of the hall, & the chair had to deal with it separately. It was then carried by a large majority. Parents who had greeted the first amendments with restlessness gradually became more involved, & by the end, their resentment too - at the way the meeting was being handled - began to show. However when I proposed an additional clause to the constitution, that decisions of the AGM should be binding on all

members of the Association, Gordon Toon flatly refused to put it to discussion. Protests that he had no power to refuse it were ignored, & with the meeting feeling very disgruntled the rest of the agenda was forced through. Toon's argument was that the PTA was not the County Council & therefore did not have to be too fussy in its constitution.

The next morning I was approached by Philip Stevens and asked to explain my motives in organizing such a display against the platform. He would not accept that I had organised nothing, (or others' assertions that they had not been organised by me,) or that the fault lay in the chair and its hostility to the proposed alterations.

Because of the furor though interest in the elections for staff representation on the PTA was enormous. Behenna saw one science teacher who had been applying for jobs elsewhere (& of course using the Head for reference) to hint that he was doing his own career no good to become associated with the 'other side'. The teacher replied that, if the Head was referring to me, he had known me & worked with me for a long time. That he agreed with me sometimes, disagreed others, but that it was for him to decide his own allegiances, not the Head.

When the time came for the close of nominations, only seven staff names had been nominated for the five places available on the PTA committee. But for some reason the time was extended over the weekend. By Monday, fifteen staff were on the list.

Stephen Huntley, Head of English, had rung up a PE teacher & asked him to propose him for nomination. And between the Monday & the election time, his wife, Beryl Huntley, part-time French teacher, approached several staff with a list of 'names to vote for, to keep Gregory out'. Tactics which appeared to work, justifying Behenna in his belief that there was little support in the staff for my position.

He clearly believed that any opposition to him was the effect of a conspiracy organized by myself; this led him to conclude that any action taken in the future against me would also be supported by the bulk of the staff.

There is little doubt in my mind that that belief was fostered above all by Mrs Huntley, who had the ear of the headmaster in about the same degree as she hated me (& several others).

The cry of conspiracy was a daft one. The so-called 'progressives' spent so much time arguing amongst themselves over many diverse issues that concerted action on their part was a sheer impossibility at that time, & proved difficult enough even at the height of the trouble a year or so later.

At the first meeting of the reconstituted committee, Behenna tried to by-pass the additional amendment of mine that had been passed at the AGM; when attention was drawn to this he tried to argue again that he was the sole arbiter about what should be in the constitution & what shouldn't. But the new committee insisted that it had to be included. Nevertheless nearly an year later, the new clause had still not been included. It was eventually added in time for the next AGM - on October the 14th 1970 - but since this was also the date of the beginning of the Governors' hearing to consider the 'complaints' being made against me, & many of the teachers involved in the previous AGM were at the hearing as witnesses on my behalf, the alterations to the Constitution were not properly monitored & the platform was able to get away with errors that redressed the constitution in its favour.

c. Head versus Staff

From the time of his appointment in July 68 to his arrival in January 69, Behenna made no attempt to meet the whole staff. This symbolised his idea of relationships. After the staffroom conversation on his first day I commented that if his words were true to his actions, he might prove even more liberal than Mackay. Mike Braund, Head of Art, commented that we should wait & see. Not for long.

The PTA Committee meeting in the first week changed my mind, as did a series of conversations with the new head following various confrontations within the first few weeks. And from my two girls, in their fourth & second years at school, the same story. After barely a day in the school he began cutting back on the freedoms they had been given previously, areas of the school playing fields put out of bounds; silent areas created within the school (impossible to keep or enforce.) The impression from the start was of a man with narrow, even prurient, ideas, determined to impose them at all costs.

He once remarked to a teacher that it was sometimes necessary to go backwards in order to go forward, but his changes arose more out of a deep-seated distaste for freedom than out of a campaign mapped deliberately on a circuitous route.

One of the early arguments in his protection was that he really couldn't be judged on such a short time in the school; & assertions by a few of us that the future direction of the school was obvious from his first actions were dismissed as unfair. From this distance of bitter experience, who was right? Behenna's handling of the staff & school had a consistency in tone that coldly blinked through the confusions of his manner of doing it. His words often seemed to contain liberality; but never did his actions bear that liberality out.

Just before his arrival at the school, staff had been given the option of withdrawing from school-dinner supervision. The agreement between union & authority was that no member of staff was to be persuaded one way or the other; it had to be each teacher's free choice. But in the first few weeks of term, Behenna called a meeting of staff with the express object of persuading those who had opted out to come back into meal supervision. When it was pointed out that this was going against the whole spirit of the agreement, he claimed he had another meeting to attend and walked out.

He then put pressure on the deputy-head's use of his dinner hour, so that Martin Ridgway opted out of supervision as the only way to preserve his independence. The Head threatened to get him the sack for so doing. He believed he ought to have the right of appointing his own deputy - he was used to one who did the bulk of administrative work in the school.

Academically he set about altering the nature of the sixth form. With Mackay, this was moving towards a relatively free sixth-form, people being encouraged to stay on whether they were taking final exams or not. No uniforms, no prefects; an attempt to develop some form of self-government. For Behenna this was too open; at every opportunity he removed the freedom & increased the supervision. Apparently he was surprised when his methods, by reducing the numbers in the sixth-form, also reduced his own salary.

His brief from the governors argued that the examination results of the school were appalling & he was expected to reintroduce the discipline & academic standards previously enjoyed by the grammar school - a myth. His moves against the sixth-form stemmed from that instruction, as did his wish to replace the council-group system, with the more conventional year-group system.

The majority of staff were against the change; it had taken years to build up the council-groups, & to get them working properly. Now they were functioning well, they were to be disbanded. One teacher announced to others he had been asked to run the fifth year the morning before an important heads-of-department meeting to discuss whether the change should be made or not. At that meeting Behenna denied any such offer had been made; subsequently he didn't get the job. But the brief row confirmed the staff's feeling that whatever they thought, the change would be made.

Plans were floated for super-departments - at one stage it was suggested art, music, drama, p.c., & commerce should form one such department - but these did not evolve.

A list of staff meetings of various sorts was published & then allowed to lapse without in any way coming to practice.

(I criticised the list as authoritarian - each meeting was carefully constructed so that the hierarchy would have an over-weight in representation. I was told the list was as democratic as the head was prepared to be.)

Before joining the school Behenna agreed to take the school into the Keele Humanities project, - without any attempt to consult the teachers & departments concerned. A year or so later, again unilaterally, he tried to get out of it.

There were periods - in 69 particularly - when every day the staff room was fidgety with some new proposal or other casually or formally put up by the Head to one or other of the staff, who then came back and told & told an astonished, dismayed, bitter or ribald collection of teachers. This stage in the Grove's 'development' was often passed off later as the normal situation when a new head takes over; especially a reforming head. But it was totally inadequate as an explanation of the Grove teachers' mood in the first two terms of 69. It was not an ignorant, reactionary refusal to recognise the innate but awkward wisdom of a with-it head. It was often a sheer despair at the blindness of the changes being made, the lack of understanding they showed of teachers, kids, & educational basics alike.

Behenna had been appointed to bring back the myths of discipline & academic good standards. Even were such aims worth striving for, this particular man hadn't a clue as to how to bring them about.

One of the pleasures of the Grove School when I joined it was its regular exchange with a Danish High School. One summer party would go from the Grove to the Rodovre High School, near Copenhagen, & be the guests of the Danes. The following Easter the Danes would repay with a visit to Market Drayton. The contrasts between Copenhagen & Drayton gave the exchange its excitement. In the Summer of 68 I was one of the party that went to Denmark; we had a very enjoyable time & presented (some form of dramatic performance was at the heart of each visit) a production of Plautus's 'The Rope'. The Danes came to Drayton at Easter 69.

Behenna was not at all keen. He refused to start the week (the Danes arrived just before the end of the Spring Term) with the head's usual invitation to all staff concerned to some sort of gathering in his own house; & regretted he could not take part in any of the other activities during the week because he was going out of the area. The guests were fetched from Stoke railway station & arrived at the school just at the beginning of the midday break. The teacher in charge of the party took the Danish staff to the Head's office to introduce them, but was told he would speak to them after the meal waiting for them.

A special table set aside in the hall allowed space for the Head to join the party. When he arrived however, he refused the invitation to join the Danes & sat elsewhere. Later the Danish staff were again taken to see him. He met them outside his office, didn't invite them in, talked to them briefly & then excused himself.

That evening a party had been organised in the school to receive the Danes. During the whole of the time he stayed, Behenna spoke to only one of the Danish group, & that for barely two minutes. The visitors, used to the hospitality usually afforded them (& their own hospitality to us as visitors) were astonished and affronted. The week went well; at the end promises that - whatever happened in the Grove meanwhile - a party would be taken to Denmark in the Summer of 70 were made several times. But underneath the good humour and friendliness, the head's behaviour rankled deeply.

The return visit did not take place. The teacher responsible for organizing the trip, seeing the worsening situation at the Grove, hesitated about commencing the arrangements. In the winter 1970 a letter from the Danes spoke of their looking forward to our coming; they were beginning to make the arrangements their end. But in the Grove the teacher-organizer couldn't see how anything could be done without going through the head, & he wouldn't take the step; & by that time it was impossible for me so to do. So a letter was sent back to Copenhagen advising them to start from the beginning, by writing a formal invitation to Behenna for him to take a party across in the following Summer. That was the last we heard. The exchange was dead.

Summer term 69 was a bitter one. In it the deputy-head was booked to appear before the Chief Education Officer of the County. So was I - & later in the term I had to appear before the Chairman of the Governors for a second dose.

Plans for the following year began to appear, with much grumbling & dismay on the part of the teachers concerned. The art department was told by Behenna: it's about time there was art in this school I could understand. This eventually led to the department's 'creative activities' course being cut off in mid-flow. The Head of Art was also told to do art 'O' levels. When he protested he was answered: And if that suggests to you that this is turning into a grammar school (or words to that effect) then that's the way it is.

Two other events in that term illustrate the absurd & grotesque state the Grove was getting into.

One morning the school opened with the main boys' lavatory locked. OUT OF ORDER was scrawled in chalk on the door. But rumour had it in the staffroom that the reason was a false one. This was confirmed by the deputy-head who said that but for the protests of the senior woman teacher the girls' lavatory would be closed too. There was nothing wrong with the toilets. The head objected to the noise that came out of them & disturbed him in his office. Staff who found this incredible, & sought out the caretaker, were told the same story.

I went to Martin Ridgway & argued the absurdity of the situation. He was unwilling for any kind of direct approach because of the trouble that both he & I were already in, & asked that I should leave it to him. He would call the attention of the first educational visitor to the situation & ask that person quietly to raise the matter with the school's medical officer. I agreed. It took a month for the OUT OF ORDER notice to disappear & the doors to be unlocked; A no noticeable repercussions.

say goodbye you boys to the natural functions
education requires nothing but mind
you will be wiser than canute on my instructions
from today - hold back your water and wind

if in silence you can't exercise your exits
or absorb your body's graffiti into blood
you must if taken short & will not risk it
dash elsewhere

the sprint will do you good

discipline by control is the only starter
to laugh & joke in there

it isn't on
where i am such loud relief is out of order
your convenience is closed

to suit my own

Later on in the term teachers working with classes on the first floor in the main school found the hot still weather oppressive in rooms with the sunside all glass windows. Children & they themselves found it hard to keep awake. Even with the door open there was no passage of air & when they tried to open the corridor windows they found them all screwed down, - on the head's instructions, - because a few days previously some boys had been spitting out of them. Later it was added that they had been guilty of spitting down on visitors to the school.

Perhaps as a result of the re-opening of the boys' main lavatory, Behenna, in the Summer of 69, decided he needed a new room. He chose first of all a large circular downstairs room in Grove House, a large building standing about 200 yards from the main buildings & adjacent to the school's main road entrance. To

obtain this room - the largest in the place - he had to move the Art Department from half its territory, & in exchange gave it the corridor space in Grove House, between the boys' & girls' lavatories. But the sheer need of other teaching space that year forced him out of that plan, & he eventually took over the smaller anteroom on the groundfloor.

To furnish the room, he took chairs & carpet from the sixth-form area upstairs. The sixth protested that these items had been purchased by previous sixth-forms out of a county grant enabling them to furnish their own areas in a way that pleased them. Behenna, however, told them that unless they could provide the requisite receipts to prove their story, he would assume that the items were part of a general school's furnishing programme & consider himself entitled to use them as he saw fit. The large room next door was eventually given to the needlework classes. When their walking about on the wooden floor began to annoy Behenna, he took more carpet from the sixth-form & had it spread over most of the next-room floor. Even then the girls did not find it possible to cut out all the noise. So Behenna instructed the teachers there that since he had been good enough to provide a carpet there for their use, then they should see that the girls walked only on the carpet.

Behenna's obsession with other people's noise became a major cause of 'reform' in the school. One of his first moves in the school was to attempt to turn the vestibule between the main-building office & the hall into a quiet area. He asked the art department to produce a 'keep-quiet' notice for display there. The department obliged:

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For ten years it had been a rule in the school that the way to get from the main school to the bus park was not by the direct route across the grass, but by the more circuitous path that wound round Grove House, passing underneath the window of the head's new room. It was, of course, a badly kept rule, but one which a few conscientious teachers strove valiantly to uphold. One day, in morning assembly - with very few teachers present - Behenna announced that because the noise outside his room was unbearable, & because the day before some children had thrown gravel onto his window, in future the long route would be out of bounds & children would have to cut across the grass to & from the bus park. And - in memory, presumably - of the village college originator, a small patch of shrubs, looking more like a bib of pubic hair than anything else, began to be installed outside his window.

When questioned at a meeting of the PTA attached to one of the Grove's contributory primary schools, Behenna once argued that it was the job of a secondary school headmaster to be remote, & not to get to know the children in any personal way. But his move over to Grove House wasn't simply to keep himself remote from the staff & pupils. Being separated from his secretaries gave him space to refuse to see visitors he didn't to see. He liked the idea of looking down from an height. He told one teacher that when he was in the colonial service he used to have an African 'boy' standing outside his office with a cleft stick, ready to run messages at his bidding, & perhaps he ought to introduce such a system at the Grove.

Behenna's concept of an head was that of a squire, for whom others worked loyally & without question. He once told me that the only difference between us was that he was considered fit by the Authorities to occupy the chair behind the headmaster's desk & I wasn't. He couldn't understand my argument that to become an headmaster was to admit failure. If he had pleasant news to impart, he would impart it; if the news was unpleasant he would seek to pass it through someone else. He once asked the caretaker to inform the music teachers that they couldn't take their cars to the music huts; the caretaker refused.

When another teacher & I myself turned an all-morning drama class into an youth-club & he disapproved his first attempt was to get another teacher to come in & tell us to stop. When that teacher refused & he had to come himself, he approached the teacher working with me, & after a few minutes walked away having agreed with her that what we were doing was sensible. He hated meeting the whole staff & sometimes got his underlings in the school to go round pleading that he found it difficult to face more than six teachers at once. Which would have been fine if with this shyness went a willingness to leave teachers to make their own decisions & get on with it. But he believed that real decision-making was his prerogative only. He saw himself as the traditional head to whom everyone automatically paid respect.

He praised Bristol Grammar School, where the dinner tables were in long lines & the pupils stood on entry of the head followed by the staff. He wanted to get back to children standing whenever he came in a room. 'In certain circumstances' he was quoted as saying to teachers 'Jack is not as good as his master'.

He shifted the dinner-queues from passing near the stage-area where the staff ate, because he didn't want to look down on children's heads while he was eating his dinner. One of his first acts on moving to Grove House was to have his own private car-space marked off. Once at a governors' meeting - arranged in the upper floor of Grove House - he had a cricket match laid on because the Chairman of the Governors was keen on the game. Only kids in the proper cricket dress could play & they were told it was a county trial.

He wanted to reintroduce the prefect system, & gradually so did, all the time denying the fact. When it finally came out in the open, there were protests from staff - sixth form. One dinner hour posters appeared in the corridors of the school, hastily taken down by a member of staff, condemning the plan, & urging the school to 'get rid of the colonial boy now'. My own daughters were first suspected of doing it, but it turned out to be four sixth form girls, one of them the daughter of the PTA, by this time married.

The head demanded an apology, - even asking the girl's husband into the school to ask him if he couldn't keep his wife in order. The girls were told to see him one at a time; they insisted they would only go into see him all at once. So he stayed in his office & they stayed outside, with one of the sixth form masters acting as go-between. At last the girls apologised for the more personal posters, but would not retract their anti-prefect sentiments.

Early in his campaign to alter the sixth-form, Behenna had changed over the staff in charge of that area of the school, & disbanded the sixth-form committee, which had had some degree of autonomy. He did not want teachers there with sympathy for the sixth-formers' views, but simply as instruments for his own. His word had to be unquestioned law.

I have often been told that all Behenna was doing was turning a school that had been running on somewhat liberal lines back into a more conventional one. Behenna - that is - was doing no more than an ordinary run of the mill headmaster would do. I know that - & it still fills me with bottomless dread. If Behenna were unique who would worry? It is his near-universality that is killing education.

In September 69 staff were informed that the girls' uniform had been changed with effect from the beginning of that term. Not even the senior mistress - in charge of girls' uniform - had been consulted or told. There had been uniform with the previous head, & I had argued against it then, even though the girls' styles were so varied that uniform was only just the word to cover them. Now the head wanted to get it into the one conventional pattern. He had approached the local monopoly supplier to arrange a change for the following summer. (70.) But the supplier had informed parents that to go for the present pattern was a waste of time, since changes were to take place within a year. He had started right in on the new pattern, presenting the head with a fait accompli. Behenna then informed the staff.

In the same term Behenna was made a magistrate. In a normal situation, even if the head were much disliked, a school

staff would do little about it. But the announcement (in the stop press of the county newspaper) provoked more than scorn. A booklet was produced, issued by the Lord Chancellor's office, on the appointment of magistrates, which made it clear that no one could be appointed who was not a fit person & known to be so in the area, of his appointment. Behenna's appointment - within nine months of his arrival in Shropshire - seemed in flat contradiction of that statement.

Letters to the County Clerk to the magistrates got nowhere - no discussion of the appointment of magistrates was possible through that channel. Nor did a letter by one teacher (not me) to the local paper - publication was refused on the grounds of libel. Since the teacher had rewritten his letter to remove all possibility of that, the reason was not believed.

Rather there seemed to be forces of work anxious to prevent any kind of criticism of Behenna getting out into the public ear, a feeling that received strong confirmation from the actions of the authorities against me almost a year later. Perhaps headteachers shouldn't be magistrates anyway; but why should Behenna - after only nine months in the area - be the first head ever of a Drayton school to be made a magistrate? What was his importance or charm, that others who held their posts for many years did not possess?

This public appointment, which seemed deliberately to condone everything Behenna was doing in the school, completed the staff's sense of isolation from educational reality. Visitors from the education office in Shrewsbury got less; & appeals that something should be done about the Grove situation fell on ears stuffed with indifference. It was impossible to get anyone - outside the school - to believe in the state of desperation that now existed within the school.

The number of full staff meetings between Jan 69 & July 70 was four, but only the last of these constituted a meeting in the proper sense of the word, & that because, at last, a group of staff was determined to insist that some discussion of school policies should take place. The other meetings were all start-of-term affairs, occupied with technical formalities. Heads of departments' meetings gradually obtained a regularity, but to begin with, after one in the third week of Behenna's arrival, when I confessed to being confused by the gap between his words & his actions, these had faded out of existence until desultorily recommended in the Autumn 69 term. The principle of the chain of command was firmly believed in. The head spoke to the hierarchy - senior tutors - & it was their job to disseminate the orders downwards. The reason for no meetings, spread then & later, was that I would use them to make personal attacks on the headmaster.

At the beginning of the 69/70 year a new list of meetings appeared; again structured to make the hierarchy-position safe. Provision was made for meetings of 'academic heads of department', ostensibly to reduce the number of people present, but with the advantage that it kept me out too. I told the head of Upper School that I considered drama to be a department in its own right; no one was qualified to speak for me, so I would expect to attend the heads of departments meetings. I was told that drama was not academic so there was no point in my attending. I replied that if drama & other departments omitted were not replaced as eligible to attend, I would go to the first meeting & disrupt it until my right to be there was conceded. It was conceded the next day.

At a subsequent heads of department meeting, homework was on the agenda. In the course of it I argued that, as with other conventions within teaching, like marking, the acceptance of uniforms, etc., we should start by asking what its real purpose was. Wasn't there a case for abandoning it altogether? Gil Band, Head of Geography, disagreed - his subject couldn't exist without homework. Behenna would not allow the debate, (& technically he wasn't in the chair at the meeting.) That kind of discussion should be left to the staff association (which, officially, he was refusing to recognise.) Heads of department must keep to the limits he imposed.

At another meeting, a three-way argument broke out among Behenna, Mike Braund & myself, although I now forget over what topic. For some reason Behenna allowed the discussion to work its way through, the one & only time - to my knowledge - that he ever did. Afterwards Bill Chugg, in charge of chemistry, told the head that that had been the best department meeting he had known; why hadn't others been allowed to develop in that way? He was informed that it was the first time Gregory hadn't attacked the head personally.

At the last heads of department meeting of the Summer term 70, Behenna, himself, proposed the setting up of a discussion about the value of reports, & promised that at the staff meeting scheduled for the end of term the discussion would be thrown open to all staff. This indicated a considerable change of tack on his part & staff thought that things were really going to change for the better. The staff meeting had been fixed for the last day, but end of term, which seemed to ensure it as a proper staff meeting. But (as always seemed to happen at the Grove) the last day of term was suddenly topped off, bringing the proposed meeting onto the last day. When teachers began enquiring about the agenda for the meeting, they were informed that it wasn't to be that sort of meeting, but a short social gathering to say goodbye to parting members, no more.

A few of us agreed that some attempt should be made to keep it to its promised function. When Behenna, therefore,

tried to close the meeting - after the social formalities - Bill Chugg rose to ask about reports. Others supported him & I followed through with a demand for more regular staff meetings, the dates of which should be determined in advance. The head got angrier as the exchanges developed (his side of the argument largely being put by Oates, head of maths., & Wrexford, head of lower school, who took any criticism of the head to be a personal affront to themselves) but could not prevent a number of important decisions being taken. However when he could stand it no longer, he rushed through the close of the meeting. For the first time at the Grove, teachers had made the running & supported each other, & the right of the whole staff to meet regularly had belatedly been established.

Earlier that term though, it seemed that no such breakthrough would ever be accomplished. A new head of Music had joined the school in the previous January, & had had a rough first term. By the end of the second term he had been brought to a nervous breakdown & undoubtedly his difficulties with many of the children - particularly some of the boys - helped towards that state.

Some unidentified boys had gathered, apparently, outside his home & called out abuse. Whether these boys actually came from the Grove was never established. One assembly Behenna cleared the girls out, then proceeded to tell the boys that they were responsible for the teacher's breakdown, & that this was linked with the failure of discipline within the school. Teachers, who were in the hall, came into the staff room angry at what was being said, & many teachers were greeted in their classrooms by questions about the incident that left them considerably perplexed.

About ten teachers went into the deputy-head's office & asked for a staff meeting to hear from the head an explanation about what had been said. Ridgway went to see Behenna, but reported back that the head was not interested to make such an explanation, since it was a matter between himself and the boys of the school. A petition was then circulated amongst the staff requesting that a staff meeting be held nevertheless.

Forty-three teachers signed it before it was handed in. Behenna ignored it. But that he had looked over the names of the signatories became apparent when he cornered a temporary woman teacher (she had signed it because she had been so surprised by questions about the matter from her class that she wanted to know what it was all about) & tried to get her to admit that she had been forced to sign it by myself, - whose conspiracy, once again, he had put the whole business down to.

(I had in fact collected this woman's signature - along with two or three others on the list - but the bulk had been collected by other teachers, & I had approached this particular woman only because it was agreed that every member of staff would be given the opportunity to sign or refrain. I hadn't had time to try any form of persuasion on her. As soon as she learned what it was about, she signed willingly. She was far more antagonised by the head's insistence that she must have been forced to sign & that she should withdraw her signature if she wished to remain at the school.)

The point about this episode, of course, is not that the teachers were right or wrong in their view of the head's action in blaming the boys for the teacher's breakdown. It is that if staff want a meeting with the head, he simply should not have the power to refuse a meeting.

One of the consequences of this incident was that John Phillips, of the Art Department, wrote a personal letter to the Chief Education Officer, asking him to intervene in the school because the relationships between the head & the staff had completely broken down. He received no reply, his letter was filed.

That Summer John Henry, then CEO of Shropshire, went off to fill a similar post in Surrey; John Boyers, the new CEO didn't arrive in the county until November. In the interim, (when the decision to take action against me was arrived at,) John Phillip's letter also found its way into Behenna's hands. At the beginning of the Autumn term 70, at any rate, he was telling the Head of Art he was thinking of taking Phillips before the governors for writing it.

d. Behenna versus myself & the Drama Department

In this account I have not gone into the detailed story of the running battle over the same years between the head & his deputy. This is not for me to tell, although it bears much supporting evidence for my own story.

In the summer of 69 I was told the head did not regard his difficulties with me as the biggest of his problems (in fact I was the kind of teacher he would like in the school in 'five or six years' time!;) & in the inspector's report on the Grove - issued in March 71 - (the establishment concession to a strong demand for a public inquiry into the whole Grove finance) - the breakdown in relationships between head & deputy was still seen as the major school dilemma. A personality clash between Behenna & myself as the sole explanation of the Grove troubles is to ask a mole to swallow a mountain.

I had invited Bohenna to attend the school production of 'scapin the Scoundrel' by Moliere in December 68. He was unable to come but wished it well. On the first day of term, January 69, after his discussion with others & myself about the role of the staff association, I had been quite favourably impressed, although convictions that he had handled his pro-entry into the school in an ominous way remained. Others first showed me the consistent disparity between his words & his actions. "He tells you what he thinks you want to hear, then tells everyone else something different", said one teacher.

The first PTA meeting had further warned me. I had heard him lean forward & whisper to the Chairman "this is going to go my way, isn't it?" during one of the livelier points in the discussion about the proposed visits to outlying areas. And his assembly remarks to the pupils, reaching me through my own children, increased my uneasiness. "Your job is always to obey". By the end of the first week, it was impossible to deny the implications. The previous head's fears that the "new man" would destroy in four months what it had taken him four years to build, were going to be realised. From the same source though I gathered that Bohenna was unlikely to do anything against drama for a year or two, by which time I would no doubt be ready to move on. The two remarks I thought then, & know now, were incompatible.

That first term I was working on a Grove theatre production of Brecht's 'Caucasian Chalk Circle'. As a means of bringing the cast together I gave a party in my own house. The Grove Theatre at that time stood for all theatre done from the school. It covered school drama & music production, as well as staff & community plays, & Gilbert & Sullivan performances. Every year in the Spring a staff production was done, but interested people outside the school were also invited to take part.

That year Gordon Toon had agreed to be narrator (a character created out of the stage directions in the text of Brecht's play) & he & his wife were at the party. So were the Coghills, next door neighbours, & he at that time a school governor (though whether I knew it then or not, I can't remember.)

It was a loud, lively party, but somehow the Coghills, Toons & myself got locked in a large discussion about the whole story of the Grove & the potential of the new head. I was openly critical of Bohenna, but the criticism was not all mine; it was a party and the conversation was full & free. It lasted a good hour & an half, with each of us at times going off for drinks, etc., & returning to pick up the threads. The significance of the episode will come later.

In the course of those early weeks I had at least three long discussion/arguments with Behenna, each one becoming bogged down in a curious tit-for-tat argument, with hardly any chance to focus at depth on any one theme. I found that if I sat back & just let his words flow over me, they sounded fine & liberal, but any attempt to probe them beneath their surface ended in confusion. We disagreed over key words like democracy & community. Both words were to him hierarchical, to me egalitarian. He told me that in a situation where the interests of the children were at odds with those of the community - his use of the word meaning 'influential people' - he would decide in favour of the community.

My drama studio, for what it was, was in the lower school, the old grammar school building about a mile from the main Grove, now in the control of Bob Wrcford, Behenna's first appointment. It was the hall there. Along with it I had a small sideroom for the storage of equipment & a room upstairs with its append-ing storerooms for use as a TV/film studio. This was still a bare shell, but the idea was that with each bit of available money it would gradually be converted. One of the storerooms was to become a dark room. Across the back of the drama studio ran a balcony linking the two parts of the upper floor. The hall was terrible accoustically & caused noise problems both for those in the hall & - more so - for those in adjoining classrooms. Again there were plans to turn the space gradually into a studio-cum-semi-permanent theatre, & some way of curbing the noise outlet was being sought.

In the Autumn of 68 I had rigged up a thoroughly unsafe temporary lighting system, which had been angrily condemned by a visiting MEB man, but in return he managed to get some money out of the county to put in the first stages of a new expandable lighting programme, in tune with the hall's intended development. It was ready by January 69.

Behenna had announced himself, at the time of his appointment, as 'no Mackay man', to the previous head of Lower School, David Still; and Wrcford - the new one - having been teaching previously at the same Bristol comprehensive school that both Mackay & Still had come from prior to being at the Grove, was also strongly anti-Mackay, clearly a key factor in his appointment. In his first term he appeared to think part of his role was the cutting down of the liberties of drama in his domain, an impression gained not only by myself, but by the three drama teachers at that time. The first big row blew up between us within three weeks of the term's start, it led to what was probably the key clash between Behenna & myself.

I was in the drama Studio with a third year-class, split into groups & working at their own plays. There was noise & activity & I was happy. One group was climbing a mountain, & it had piled the old chairs in the hall at that time into a corner

& using them for the effect. One boy snapped a chair rung, a mountain accident. I saw it, accepted it. Then a great bellow from the balcony. Wreford & Behenna were there watching the proceedings (unknown to me) & it was Wreford who was shouting. The boy who had broken the chair rung should be sent to the office. The boy started to go, as the two administrators disappeared. I told the boy to go back to his play. I had no intention of letting him go to the office. In five minutes Wreford came in, asking where the boy was. I pointed out that I was in charge of the room & he had no right to interrupt in the way he had. He said that I should go with him to the office & explain that to the head.

On the way I said I didn't care who it was, none had the right to yell into a classroom the way he had done. Behenna heard this & hoped that he was not included in that stricture. I repeated it didn't matter who it was.

Behenna asked Wreford to keep an eye on my class - he had something he must say to me. Alone, he said he didn't normally speak like this to teachers, until he had been in school for some months, but this was a special case. If I didn't like what he was doing in the school, then I should leave. I replied that he didn't have the power to make me leave nor the right to suggest it. It was my decision & mine alone. Well, if I wouldn't be loyal to him, my department wouldn't get the money to run as I wanted it to do. That was blackmail. Not at all, said Behenna, it was normal. I said he had no right to penalise my department just because I was critical of his handling of the school.

Incidents between Wreford & myself continued through the first two terms. I was told that visitors to the school complained of the noise coming from the drama studio; I suggested that the answer was to ask such visitors to come into the hall & find out what was going on, so that at least I could explain the point of the noise. That was not taken up.

Early on Wreford fell out with his secretary & by the Summer term she had got herself transferred to the upper school. Secretary-less, the administrator thought the answer must be for all teachers in the lower school to share such responsibilities as answering the telephone & ringing the bells for beginning & end of school. Some of us argued it was his own stupid fault if he couldn't keep his secretary & it was not our job to help him out with his subsequent administrative problems. On the day my name was on the rota for the honour of pressing the afternoon bell, I arrived back from dinner at home to find him in a flaming temper. I was ordered to trot behind him to his office & there harangued about my anti-social attitudes. When I argued I was told I was the biggest bully in the school. Furthermore he had the power to order me to do any duty he thought I should do & so at this point he now commanded me; in his post of responsibility - as head of the lower school - to ring the afternoon bell. I told him to ring his own bloody bell & walked out.

Such incidents led me to a mood that pushed me to speak out at the PTA committee meeting, as described in 2b; after that occasion Behenna made no attempt to see me, - in fact would go out of his way to avoid me, - even to the extent of about-facing in the corridor when he noticed me coming, and making for the safety of his office. Not until I had to go & talk to him about departmental business did the matter come up. He told me how disgraceful the attack had been, & how nobody ever before had spoken to him as headmaster like that. He wanted me to leave, to get out of his hair; I was equally determined that I wasn't going to leave until the time came when I not he, chose that I should so do. I'm not sure if it was that occasion, or another, which ended in my asserting that he had no power to get me out of the school & his reaching for the telephone, crying, "No, but I have the power to get you out of this room".

In the same term, he sent for me after one lesson in the main school hall & exclaimed that he simply did not want my kind of drama done in his school. I told him I didn't like the main hall; it was too echoey, with very noisy dining room furniture, but it wasn't my choice to be there. And I tried again to explain the purpose of what I was doing in drama, but he couldn't begin to comprehend. He told me his experience of drama was vast; the best drama teacher he had ever known was a woman at his last school who had worked in the room above his office in complete silence. There was nothing I could tell him that he did not know already; he certainly knew more about the subject of drama than I did. I replied that may be so, but I was the drama teacher in the school, not him, or the completely silent woman, & what went on in the lesson was my responsibility.

(I know that in all these meetings two emotions overwhelmed all others; fear on his side & contempt on mine, & these were not conducive to any understanding. He could only work with teachers who accepted that they were beneath him, & I had long since come to the end of a belief that he had anything to offer the school. I was like a worm the bird had swallowed but wouldn't go down - & this petrified him.)

My 'booking' with the CEO (Behenna & Bloxham, assistant education officer i/c secondary schools, were also there,) in May or June 69, was preceded by a visit from Bert Amiss, drama adviser for Shropshire, who had been asked to convey to me that if I would publicly convey my loyalty to the head, then the education office would see to it that my drama department was not interfered with. I refused on the grounds that I would have to keep quiet whatever wrong things Behenna tried to bring about.

The meeting with Henry was cool-tempered; he was at pains to stress that there was no question of anyone being threatened with dismissal, but that he had come along because Behenna was a new boy & had run into difficulties, & he needed the county help. Bloxham was more brusque at the end reminding me of the

articles of government that put all the power in the head's hands. I told him that if he had grounds for charging me under these articles, he should get on with it. I managed to work into that meeting most of my reasons for feeling as I did about the school, but no bridge was built that day, & everyone present knew it.

One of the important agreements I had inherited from Roy Nevitt, previous head of drama at the Grove, was that no reports were ever to be written concerning the drama attainments of the pupils. I was grateful for this, because I could see no point in trying to develop pupil-pupil relationships in drama if at the end of term I then had to comment on what each pupil had achieved.

However neither of the two new administrators knew of this agreement until the end of their first term in the school, when they found the space left for drama left blank. I was then ordered to make comments, but refused, giving my reasons.

Wreford tried to force me, by taking me into Behenna's presence, but was advised to let it drop for that term, since it would delay the issue of reports. Nothing more was said until early July. At a meeting of the lower school staff it was put on orders that without exception all departments would make reports on all pupils taking the subject.

This bald statement made me angry, since it was clearly directed against me. I pointed out that my objections to doing so still stood. I was told it was an order. Later in the same meeting a lower school trip to Lake Vrnwy in Wales was being planned for the next day or so, I refused to take charge of one of the coaches, saying that if the administration could be indifferent to the needs of the departments then I saw no reason why I should help the administration out with its problems. I was given the job of looking after those children who couldn't go on the trip. Such children use their loaf & stayed home, so I had the day off.

The next morning I was visited by the head of upper school, Philip Stevens, sent to convince me of the wisdom of doing reports. I explained at length exactly why I wouldn't do them. That afternoon he came again. Would I follow him into the head's study? I went. No discussion was wanted, but just a simple answer. Would I write reports? No - & tried to give my reasons. Behenna wasn't interested in my reasons. The question repeated. No....but. No buts. That was all. That was Friday.

Monday, four o'clock, I was stopped by Behenna. Had the secretary seen me? No. She had been trying to find me all day. (Behenna had passed me twice that day, but now denied it.) On

The following morning the chairman of the Governors would be in the head's office, along with Bloxham. They wished to see me, to have another go at sorting out 'our differences'.

NUT colleagues told me not to go, since for a formal meeting I had not been given sufficient notice, nor was I being allowed to take a 'friend' with me, as laid down in the relevant procedures. Others said I should go, but say nothing until I had established whether it was a formal meeting or an informal meeting. If formal, the I shouldn't stay.

I went. Yes, formal said Bloxham since it was in front of the chairman of the governors.

No, informal said Suttbery, the Chairman, it was a get-together to reach an understanding.

I agreed to stay provided no formal charges were brought against me as a result of the meeting, & no decisions as to my future taken in it.

In 1946 - I had tried to get deferment from military call-up for a few months to enable me to sit for an university entrance exam. I had to appear before a tribunal of brass-hats, who clearly thought deferment was equivalent to national treachery.

The atmosphere was the same in Behenna's office that morning. The three one side of the desk & myself on the other had nothing in common. In no way was it a reconciliation meeting. They were only interested in my toeing Behenna's line, whatever twists that took. For them teachers were cardboard cut-outs, there merely to dance to the line of whatever head was in power.

Teachers' own experiences & developing convictions about the meaning of education was irrelevant. They demanded explanations of me, then cut me off before I had finished them.

Only once in the entire interview did one of them agree with a point I was making. On other occasions they were muttering, ejaculating such sentiments as "you really do have it in for Mr Behenna don't you" and (to the head) "How have you managed to put up with this sort of rubbish"? I obviously struck them as a very hard nut; they came over to me as ruthless & stupid. They brought up reports, & all the business again that had already been dealt with at the previous meeting with the CEO.

At one point they asked Behenna for other complaints & he announced that I had refused to do productions on the proscenium stage, even though I was the drama teacher. The implication was that I wouldn't do any kind of production at all, whereas my objection was to the proscenium, on which I hadn't worked since 1959, & certainly wasn't going to start now. I had done a number of productions in the round since I'd been at the Grove.

Behenna was really saying that he should be able to order me to do plays in the way he wanted them. I argued that it was against the professional conduct code for an head to be able to force teachers to work outside of school hours anyway; but if he wanted a play done on the proscenium then he should do it himself, or get some other willing person to do it. I had no objection to that.

Voices got harder, exclamations more exasperated. The meeting was a 'con.' from the start - its intentions had been disciplinary. Eventually I walked out without formal leave-taking.

After I'd gone, so Behenna later revealed, the Chairman of Governors told him that my future would be taken out of his hands & put into the charge of the governing body. In the light of all that followed, that can only have meant that from that moment on, ways would be sought to punish me for my obduracy. - And ways were sought, with Behenna fully conniving.

In September 69, it was planned, the school would go over to a ten-day timetable, with five hourly-periods in each day, instead of seven at forty minutes. When drama came under scrutiny, I found the total amount proposed was severely cut-back, the number of drama teachers cut from four to two, my sixth-form teaching removed (for 'perverting the sixth-formers' apparently). I lost my lower-school base, & with it all the plans for a drama studio in that building, as well as the intended film/TV studio upstairs, & all storage space. A dark room we had been developing in the cellars of Grove House had already been taken away on the grounds of fire-risk (it also happened to be under Behenna's new office). Drama was meant to be carried on in the classrooms until such time as the proposed drama studio in the upper school materialised.

I protested about the cut-down in drama-time (a misunderstanding, for which I was partly to blame) & the proportions were roughly made up with extra first year classes. I was expected to take some English - but refused - & this was not pressed. First year drama was timetabled for the lower school canteen - although this meant shifting all the dining equipment at the beginning & end of each lesson, it at least allowed us a space larger than a normal class-room. This was given us on Wreford's suggestion. Upper school drama was confined to either the main hall or one other large room; - neither satisfactory - but better again than the original intention that the department should make-do with any available room. But, despite complaints from me during the first term of the new school year, no alternative space was provided for storage, & I had to keep much of my smaller equipment at home. Large wicker baskets for clothes had to be left around in the corridors of lower school for nearly an year because there was nowhere else to put them (eventually they were placed under the main hall stage - where

they couldn't be got at) & the TV/film side of the department collapsed because of the inaccessibility of equipment & the absence of money.

In the Autumn term (9 I started work on a school production of 'the Broken Jug' & a dance drama. Behenna asked for a copy of the play, to determine its suitability. I went on with the production. Three weeks before the play was due for performance I was phoned by the father of the boy playing the lead-role. His son wanted to drop the part, because he was too busy with his school work. I pointed out that the boy had volunteered to be in the play & that he should now accept his obligation to see it through. He answered that he had been advised by Behenna that the boy should withdraw from the play. (At no time, of course, had Behenna approached me on the matter.)

I still thought the boy should continue with his part. In this particular case, I believed the boy could only benefit by keeping to his commitment. The boy (in the sixth form) saw me the next day - told me he was withdrawing. In the short time available, I had to get a member of staff to take over the role, which was a considerable one. The boy concerned then gave his spare time to attend rehearsals of the local pantomime, which was performed during the Christmas holidays.

That term a school's bursar was appointed; it was announced that all school accounts were to come under his control. Grove Theatre was issued with instructions concerning the handover. But the Grove Theatre decided that although there was no reason to withhold the school drama account from the bursar's control, the adult section should remain its own master. (It was clearly Behenna's intention - in fact he later confirmed this - that with financial control, would go control of the policies of the group. 'The Broken Jug' made £17; this was paid into the new account - but thereafter any use of that money needed Behenna's signature on the cheque, & I knew that that meant I had lost control of the school drama. In the rest of the time I was at the Grove I made no attempt to use that money.)

When Grove Theatre notified the bursar of its intentions to be autonomous, he pointed out that on the head's instructions all accounts had been transferred from their former holdings into the school account. It was quickly pointed out that this was illegal, & the money had to be transferred back again.

Behenna took umbrage at the Grove Theatre's actions & threatened to do away with all its privileges as a group connected with the school, if it continued to refuse to let him take over its monies & have its say in the programme it presented. His excuse about the position was that "in the town its believed that with Gregory, anything goes".

By this time the next Grove Theatre production was already into rehearsals. A theatre week of six nights, with Macbeth alternating with Lorca's 'House of Bernarda Alba', was fixed for date. But early in the Spring Term, with the Grove Theatre still being adamant over its autonomy, & refusing to change its name to save the head embarrassment, Behenna sent a message to me to say that in future the school hall could not be booked for performances except during holiday time, & that therefore the proposed theatre week would have to be moved back into one of the weeks around Easter.

The message had no meaning except as an act of spite, since he knew that many of the teachers in the cast would be out of the area during the Easter period. I phoned the Drama Adviser, who put me on to the Senior Adviser, Venvells, who apparently was anxious to have a chat with me anyway. I arranged a meeting.

When I got to his office, I found displays of maps & diagrams on the walls of a new community centre being built in the Telford area. Our conversation covered every aspect of the Grove troubles. He told me that he'd had a message by 'phone from Behenna asking him to ring back before speaking to me, but he had been unwilling to do so. He wanted to resolve the dispute at the Grove, & would do anything to help. He agreed the moves against Theatre Week were wrong & he would 'phone Behenna to tell him so.

He thought I should look in on the head & sort it out personally. He told me the moral story of an history teacher at another comprehensive school in Shropshire, who after a dispute with the head was now reduced to looking after the school buses. It was in the headmaster's power to do this sort of thing. Behenna could completely close down drama if he wanted to. Why didn't I save a lot of trouble - for myself particularly - & go elsewhere in the county. I would be given a job with promotion. (Reference to the diagrams & plans on the walls.) If I stayed at the Grove, there was nothing that the education office could do to save me.

I was told the office had been against Behenna's appointment in the first place, but because of the history of the coming of comprehensive education to Shropshire, the governors had the gift of all head-teachers except the first. In this case the governors had insisted on their rights from the start. Usually they would be satisfied for the office to sort the initial applications out & draw up a short list, - but at the Grove the governing-body had asked to see every single application, had drawn up its own short list, & had insisted on its right to choose. Since the trouble at the Grove the county had even checked back to Cambridgeshire to see if Behenna's references were accurate - & they were. He really did have the high reputation he came with. Yes, there had been a governors' brief, but Behenna had gone beyond that brief in several instances,

like opening up a department of religious instruction for example.

I refused to move from Drayton, but agreed to a meeting with Behenna on neutral ground, in the presence of the Senior Adviser, who would make the arrangements, - it was to take place as soon as possible.

It was at this meeting that I was informed that the reason given by Behenna to the education office for my removal from the sixth form teaching was that I had been perverting the pupils.

Back in the school atmosphere I knew Behenna wouldn't want to see me, so I gave him three days to drop me a note to say that the dates of the theatre week would be left as they originally were. But no note came.

I went to his office to get a decision made about the dates, as quickly as possible, & then to leave. It was the only way to avoid an explosion between us. But it proved impossible. It took me fifteen minutes to get to my reason for coming to his room, & by then so many explosive things had been said that equanimity was an impossible goal. He had agreed with the senior adviser to let the dates be, but now he regretted so doing. He couldn't understand me & thought my motives totally dishonest.

I told him he didn't have any understanding of anybody & that any kind of conversation with him was a waste of time. It would be wrong to give the impression that I got the better of these exchanges. I didn't. They were always frustrating & pointless. The friction came out of their inefficiency. Behenna expressed his anger by hissing, I by spluttering. I went red in the face, he white. There was no meeting on neutral territory.

About this time the Gilbert & Sullivan section of the Grove Theatre met to discuss Behenna's proposals over the finances of the group, & after a statement by John Phillips, the treasurer, about a meeting he'd had with Behenna, voted to remain autonomous. A report about the decision appeared in the Shropshire Star, with a comment by Behenna that he had once more been misrepresented. John Phillips's statement had been based upon things said to him by the head in a meeting in the latter's office. By this time it was accepted as a standard tactic of Behenna's to say one thing in private & deny it in public.

Towards the end of January 70, heads of departments were being called in to the presence to be told what was to happen to their departments from the following September. The after-comments from some of the heads of department were caustic. The head

of Art wrote to the County Art Adviser. And got nowhere, being more or less told to be a good boy. I was called in on a Friday afternoon at the end of school.

No preamble this time. No intention of argument. The drama department was - with the agreement of the governors - to be taken over by the English Department and decisions about drama were to be taken jointly by the head & the head of English. No first year drama, no course starting in the fourth year, although the present fourth year would be allowed to finish the two year course it had already embarked on. In the second & third years the top three quarters of the children would have to do literary drama - the type usually practised in grammar schools. The bottom quarter would be allowed to carry on with social drama (considered my speciality). Did this mean I was to revert to being an English & Drama teacher? Yes.

I pointed out that this was well outside the terms of my contract in coming to the school, & was pushing me back to something I had deliberately chosen to move away from years ago. This was irrelevant. Of course, Behenna said, he had no doubt about my sincerity. Not what he'd said on our previous meeting, I reminded him; he'd told me my motives were totally dishonest. Oh that was over the Grove Theatre. No, it had been about myself as a person. Well, he hadn't said any such thing. (Stevens, Head of Upper School, was present at this meeting.) When I told a group in the staffroom what had been said, they thought it was a stupid joke on my part.

Over the weekend I 'phoned Venvells. He told me he thought the head had a strong case. It wasn't worth fighting him. I also wrote to the union regional official. On the Monday I approached Stephen Huntley, Head of English, to ask if he had agreed to take over Drama without my being in any way consulted about it? Yes, he had. Didn't he think he had an obligation to discuss it with me first? No.

In answer to my letter to the NUT, the then Regional Official called on me. He couldn't believe some of the stories I told him about events at the Grove, but still advised me to move on, for the sake of my career. The autonomy of headteachers was a principle worth preserving, surely I could see that. Would I think it over & let him know what I wanted the union to do. The next day I wrote again to say it would be absurd to accept the position. It was important that teachers should be prepared to stand up for their rights, & I regarded my job at the Grove to be valid in law. A pause. My letter being sent to Hamilton House, the HQ of the NUT for advice. Hamilton House supported the Regional Official. For the sake of my career I ought to seek another job. It was useless trying to fight the headmaster.

I was a member of 'Rank & File', & had had an article on the Staff Association printed previously in the magazine. I wrote to the Editors, enclosing an account of my situation. A letter back from Barry McColgan, whose wife, Dorothy, was still involved in similar troubles in London. I went down to see them & came back for the first time with a clear idea about how to start fighting. I wrote again to the NUT insisting my case be put to counsel. If the union wouldn't, I would, at my own expense. A long hush. Then a note to say that someone from the legal department at Hamilton House would call on me at the Grove to take notes about my position. These notes would be put to counsel. Two people came at the beginning of June.

In the meantime Theatre Week had come & gone. I had no direct contact with Behenna. It was now a different kind of fight. A temporary teacher was also a freelance; she'd heard discussions & argument in the staffroom about Macbeth, & the way I was directing it, and approached me to see if I would be interested in doing a radio interview on drama, preferably with some of the children from the school to do the programme. I thought they ought to speak to Behenna first. She rang him. He refused totally. Nothing that would connect me with the school. She apologised to me, said it would have to be a single-person interview instead, & because of radio-van difficulties, it would have to be done in the holidays. She would be in touch & I wasn't to think the head's refusal meant the end of it. We both knew it did.

In May an unsigned 'Proposed outline Timetable' was put in my pigeon-hole. It confirmed what I'd been told in January, but went further with a list of books I was supposed to work with - nearly all outdated drama books published in the thirties - L. du Garde Peach's 'Plays for stage & classroom', 'Castles of England', 'Festival Plays', 'Troubadour Plays', - obviously chosen to provoke me into anger or leaving. The lists were linked by instructions about how the drama was to be conducted, in a language as insulting as could be managed. Furniture not to be damaged; five minutes to be allowed for cooling down; plays could be acted ('in small scenes') after they'd been read round the class.

I wrote a letter to the Head & the head of English, with a copy for the CEO, to the effect that I found the proposals incompetent, hilarious, & insulting to me & the children; they showed the need for a drama specialist in the school & I happened to be one. That night I typed out copies of the syllabus, pasted one of them to a sheet of paper, headed it COMPREHENSIVE 1970, added a copy of my letter to Behenna, scribbled notes at the side to point out the proposals meant a return for me to my first year of teaching in 1953; & finished with four lines of doggerel:-

there once was a naughty teacher
disloyal and uncouth
because he couldn't keep his trap shut
he had his drama cut off

I pinned the whole sheet the following morning on the staff notice board. This was soon taken down on the head's orders by the school secretary. So I made another one that dinner-time & put it up in the first one's place. This stayed up.

In the previous term, just before he left to become head of another school, the head of upper school came to see me about the timetable. Who was responsible for drama? He thought I was. Then why was I being allowed no say in what drama was being done? I should have to see the head about that. In the course of that conversation he suddenly said:

"The Head will do anything to get you out of this school. I repeat, anything."

The syllabus was evidence of that.

At the end of June, counsel's opinion was received. Its conclusion was:-

"I have come to the clear conclusion that what Mr Gregory is being asked to do is wholly outside the scope of his contract."

and suggested:

"the present unsatisfactory situation is one that is best resolved by negotiation if possible."

I asked the union to approach the Authority on the basis of that opinion & seek some kind of meeting, but the Authority stalled right through the holiday until late September. On September 16th., Behenna came into my lesson with a third year class & asked what drama I was doing. I replied: the drama I was appointed to teach. He went out. He later stated he had come to that lesson on the instigation of the Chairman of Governors, who had asked him to check up on me. One more stage in the plot.

On October 2nd, Behenna gave a coffee party for Governors & all staff (teaching, caretaking, clerical, kitchen) at the Grove. Many teachers refused to go on the grounds that it was too late for that kind of socialising. Others went to see what it was all about. During the course of the evening governors told a

small group of staff that in a crisis their job was to support the headmaster; the chairman of Governors stated things had improved in the school recently & that within the next week they would all see an even greater improvement.

On Saturday October 3rd, I received by post a Statement of Complaint against me, listing one overall complaint against my behaviour & attitude, & ten individual ones; five alleging breaches of the articles of government and memorandum of agreement, & five others 'to be noted'. The governors would discuss the complaints at their meeting of October 14th., & I was 'invited' to be present with a 'friend'.

I rang the Regional Official & spent the rest of the day going from teacher to teacher seeking witnesses to meet the complaints which struck me - & everyone who read them - as trumped up & stupid.

When I went down to the NUT headquarters on the Monday, however, I was assured that they were very serious. The Senior Solicitor said the Authority was entitled to sack me on these complaints, no doubt about it. We didn't get on well together. In the course of our argument, I swore, as I usually do. He said no wonder the headmaster was trying to get rid of me, if I used language like that. He was firm that the complaints must have been drawn up by Bohenna, & that I should work on that assumption. It was finally agreed I should take my own case, with Horace Perrin, the Regional Official by now, as my 'friend'.

Some staff were eager to take some action over the governors' meeting, but were put off by the Union's advice that it would not be in my best interests, the same reason given to me when I first suggested we shouldn't bother to attend the governors' hearing, out of contempt. My advice to teachers in such circumstances in the future would now be: kick up as much noise as possible, from the very first suggestion of authority action against you. Teachers can only hope to win when the whole battle is fought out in the public eye.

3. Statement of Complaint

it is best to give this in full

STATEMENT OF COMPLAINT AGAINST MR. R. G. GREGORY

1. The articles of Government stipulate that the Governors shall have the general direction of the conduct & curriculum of the school, & that the headmaster shall control the internal organization, management & discipline of the school, & shall exercise supervision over the teaching staff.

The Memorandum of Agreement, signed by Mr Gregory on his appointment, states that he agrees to serve 'under & in accordance with the Articles of Government..... & under the immediate orders & control of the headmaster, and efficiently & to the best of his ability to carry out all such duties as shall be reasonably entrusted to him during the whole of the time when the school is in session.

3. Since the departure of the previous headmaster, Mr Mackay, Mr Gregory's attitude & behaviour have given cause for serious dissatisfaction. He was interviewed by the Chairman of the Governors in July 69. The following are examples of complaints which the Governors are invited to consider.

3. Mr R. G. Gregory has failed to comply with the Articles of Government & with his Memorandum of Agreement in the following respects:

a) Following the headmaster's decision to place the drama department within the English department & under the direction of the Head of the English department, the head of the English department produced a syllabus of work for the school year 1970 - 71. Mr R. G. Gregory ridiculed this syllabus of work & published his comments on the notice-board in the staff-room.

b) On 16th September 1970, the Headmaster observed that Mr Gregory was not teaching literary drama, as timetabled for the first lesson of the day. When questioned about this, Mr Gregory replied: "I am continuing to teach the drama I was appointed to do."

c) In July 1969, in the presence of the Chairman of the Governors, Mr Gregory, although responsible for drama, said that he would refuse to mount a stage production & said to the Headmaster that, if he wanted one, he could do it himself.

d) On the same occasion, Mr Gregory made it clear that he would not accept any direction from the Headmaster unless it coincided with his own views.

- e) In the Summer term 69, the Headmaster asked staff to see that all desks & toilets which were covered with 'graffiti', should be cleaned by the pupils. Mr Gregory refused to comply.

4. In addition the following incidents are quoted:

- a) In connection with the activities of the Staff Association, Mr Gregory has stated that one of its aims was to undermine authority.
- b) In April 1970, a letter from Mr Gregory was published in the Times Educational Supplement. The contents of the letter were untrue & misrepresented the Headmaster publicly in such a way as to be likely to bring him into disrepute.
- c) In January 1969, in the presence of a Governor of the school, Mr Gregory, referring to the Headmaster, said: "We will raise the school against him & have him out."
- d) At a meeting of the PTA in the summer term of 1969, Mr Gregory was so offensive to the Headmaster that the Headmaster felt obliged to withdraw from the meeting. The autumn, 1969 meeting of the PTA was disrupted by the behaviour of Mr Gregory.
- e) On a number of occasions, Mr Gregory's conduct & criticisms of the Headmaster's policy at meetings of the staff have impeded the proper conduct of staff meetings.

clarification was sought on three points. The answers were:

4. a) This refers to your conversation with Mr Michael Sayer, of Yew Tree House, Stafford Street, Market Drayton.
4. e) This complaint arises because you, who hold views about a number of matters (e.g. discipline, dress, streaming, reports, homework,) which you are entitled to express, have at staff meetings - conducted by the headmaster - interrupted the meetings with lengthy arguments which have not been concerned with the purpose for which the meetings were called.
4. c) The incident referred to is stated to have taken place at your house in the presence of Mr Coghill & others. Mr Coghill was a governor of the school at the time.

a. Before the Governors

I immediately entered two charges of unprofessional conduct against Behenna, on the grounds that clearly reports had been made about me to the Authorities about which I received no notification; & in relation to complaint 3 c; that the head was trying to force me to carry out an activity in my own time.

Also, given evidence by staff present at the Head's squirearchical coffee-party on Oct. 2nd., I sought Counsel's advice through the Union about both the legality of the hearings, & the prejudice already displayed by certain governors. I also argued that since Mark Suttbery, Chairman of the Governors, was witness to items 3c & 3d, he could not rightly sit on any tribunal considering the evidence & judging it.

Counsel said that under administrative law there was no ground for stopping the procedure altogether, but thought the Chairman of Governors & the others who had stated that in an emergency their job was to support the headmaster should be kept off the panel. And they were. Only later was it pointed out to me that had these people served on the panel objection afterwards could have sustained a charge of bias against the whole proceedings.

Sometime at the beginning of the hearings I - with the help of Barry McColgan - offered a number of precedents to show the inherent bias & unfairness of what was happening, but all this was discounted.

Later in the hearing evidence was offered against two other governors; one because her daughter had been going round the school saying "Gregory is to be sacked" (her mother had told her); & the other because it turned out that he had been present at the PTA AGM referred to in 4d. But the panel refused to take any action on either of them.

In the second session of the Governors' hearing, when I tried to question the head directly, about the incident then under consideration, I was informed he was present only as an observer, & that he had not laid the charges but the Governors themselves had. Thereafter no questioning of Behenna was allowed.

The Governors, now being chaired by the vicar of Market Drayton, Rev. Grenville-Morgan, (a Mason like the permanent chairman & other men on the Governing body) obviously expected the hearing

to last one evening & became irritated when it was evident that it would have to go into a second session. In fact it went into five sessions, lasting all told about twenty hours, over the space of a fortnight. The proceedings were punctuated by much bad temper & impatience, ejaculations of 'spite' & 'who is on trial here' & the like at points where I was trying to establish the real condition of the school & the administrative chaos it blundered along in.

At one point, the Vicar, who like most of the others seemed totally at sea with any form of argument involving educational principles, jumped to his feet crying: "We cannot have the headmaster maligned. After all we're here to protect the school." Throughout the hearings, five of the eight governors left after the initial purge found it difficult to contain their wrath that it wasn't being allowed to be an open & shut case of disobedience.

With the eight, acting as educational adviser was the Assistant Education Officer for Secondary Schools, Bloxham, who had appeared at my other 'bookings'. The rules apparently say that he should have been there as a neutral. Bloxham was there as anything but. In fact at the opening session he often played the prosecutor's role.

As point after point of clear bias arose, my NUT 'friend' assured me that since a transcript of the proceedings was being made, I should be able to use it afterwards as evidence to get the hearings declared void. But when the transcript appeared it was an incredible and illiterate thing. Its inaccuracies were legion: much of what I'd said appeared as opposite, whole passages had been summarised in a prejudiced way & when I showed it to my witnesses many of them wrote letters of protest to the Education Officer. It was issued from Shrewsbury with the warning that the CEO would take no responsibility for its accuracy & discounted it as an usable document.

Memories of those proceedings before the Governors fill me now with mirth & rage. Before the hearings the Governors would gather in the office of that 'impartial witness' Behenna. It was never in the picture that I should be found innocent of the complaints - they insisted they were not charges. The hearings were the plain sequel to the Governors' plot that had worked for this confrontation, over the past fifteen months. The Governors were judges in their own cause - but still there appeared no way that this could be used against them; & the Union, which at the same time was advising both Behenna & myself, seemed little able (or willing) to face up to the reality of what was going on.

At the second hearing the Vicar announced that the verdict at the first hearing - that I should be recommended for instant dismissal from the employ of the Shropshire Education Authority -

had been arrived at unanimously. Why then take two & three quarter hours to deliberate?

During the sessions, complaints 3c & 3d were dropped since I refused to offer evidence on them since they arose from the meeting before the Chairman of the Governors at which I was promised that no proceedings would be taken. This was disputed, but after some acrimony Behenna's watching brief came out for the one & only time in my favour & the complaints were scrubbed. The 'graffiti' complaint was dropped at the end of the first hearing. It was a stupid one, anyway, but was interesting as an example of the way minor incidents at the school had been saved up for the fire.

The decision to scrub the desks was apparently taken at a senior tutors' meeting. A few of us objected, comparing the method to the Victorian practice of scrubbing out with carbolic the mouths of children who swore. But during the period on the timetable - given over to the exercise - I was taking drama in the lower school hall, & since there were no desks, I couldn't put my refusal into action. Other objecting teachers were able to carry out their refusal in a more direct way. These facts had been forgotten by the head (who else) when he reported the incident. No warning, anyway, had been given me at the time that it was an action jeopardising my career, & I'd forgotten all about it until the statement of complaint came.

All the other complaints were considered proved, even though very little evidence was brought by the Authority to justify most of them. In connection with 3a it is worth examining the Authority's attitude to the 'proposed outline timetable' now referred to as the syllabus, which by the second hearing had become the key document in the whole set-up.

As soon as I had received the original I sent a copy to the County Drama Adviser, Bert Amiss. He told me over the 'phone that he thought it was deplorable. When the statement of complaint was issued, I wrote to Bert Ronald James, Senior Adviser for Drama for Hampshire, Brian Way of London Theatre Centre, & John Allen, Senior Adviser for Drama at the Department of Education & Science, sending them all copies of the 'syllabus' & asking them for their comments. From Hampshire came the reply that it was placing the Adviser in a difficult position. It was a rule that people in one Authority should not comment on matters to do with another Authority; & he was obliged to observe it. No reply from Brian Way.

John Allen wrote me a private letter saying the syllabus was an 'impertinence & a joke' but later on the 'phone gave me permission to quote him at the hearing only to the extent that he would want to treat such a document with very great reserve. He wanted Bert Amiss to appear as my witness, but he said that

the Salop. Authority had advised all its members to keep out of the Grove situation. However he had been asked to submit a written opinion of the syllabus & he had so done. He had told the office it was a worthless document. Among those he had given this opinion was Bloxham.

At the hearing although therefore Bloxham knew that in the opinion of the County Drama expert the syllabus was a load of rubbish, he was very insistent at the first session of the Governor's hearing that the only thing that counted was whether I ridiculed it or not. The story of the syllabus goes on in the next hearing. The compilation called COMPREHENSIVE 1970, which had disappeared from the staff notice board of course turned up at the hearing as evidence against me.

The one piece of evidence offered for 4a - the Staff Association complaint - was Sayer's line "It is, if you like, anti-headmaster," which he'd culled from our 'phone conversation. He again denied that he had any previous contact with the school. When the Union 'friend' tried to ask him a question there was objection that the witness was being intimidated & the question was withdrawn.

By the time of the hearing I had obtained a statement from the previous secretary of the Staff Association who had now married & left the school. Her account substantially backed up the information I had supplied to the Times Ed. My letter was one of the sore points with the Governors, even though it had not identified school or headmaster by name.

The 4c complaint, dredged up from that party twenty one months previously, was supported only by a letter from my next door neighbour who felt unable to appear in person. His letter stated that he agreed with the contents of a letter sent him by the Governing body. That letter was not produced as evidence. I declined to discuss that complaint; in their final deliberations the tribunal decided that it was a fit complaint to be answered & found me guilty of it. What came out from the letter was that the next door neighbour had not thought the alleged remark worth reporting until some months later when another governor persuaded him to repeat it to the full governing body.

Gordon Toon was called as witness - the sole witness - for the Authority in connection with 4d. He appeared to have changed his mind about the meaning of the incidents he was witnessing & I could get nothing from him to the effect that he had once thought differently. Against his evidence I brought five witnesses of my own, but as elsewhere

in the game the weight of evidence on my side was looked upon as a kind of perjury by the Governors & therefore easily discounted.

The same happened with the last charge. Behenna refrained he said from calling any staff as witnesses because of the embarrassment they would be caused (accepted as the best of reasons by the governors) & his view of staff meetings was accepted against six witnesses appearing for me & the supporting statement of another twenty six staff. It was argued that such statements were useless since everyone knew how easy it was to cajole teachers into signing documents being circulated by their colleagues.

In my summing-up I argued that not one of the complaints could stand up in the light of what the school had become since the arrival of Behenna. The Authority and the governors must share the blame for the school's decline. Although I was supposed to have the last say, the tribunal then allowed Behenna's watching brief a ten-minute statement deriding the points I had made.

The governors' decision was starkly given with no reasons attached. It was then November 2nd. The new Chief Education Officer had taken up his appointment the day before. The Union told me that the earliest I could lose my job was April of the following year; but at the second hearing it became clear that what the governors had been pressing for was dismissal on the spot.

b. The second hearing

Once the travesty of a transcript appeared I informed the Union I was not prepared to appear at the second hearing because the transcript showed how incompetent the Authority was in matters concerning my fair treatment. The Union assured me that they would make sure at the next hearing that a proper transcript would be taken. Moreover if I didn't go, I should have no right of appeal to the Minister against a bad verdict. Meanwhile the staff, or the majority, were warned by the Union not to jeopardise my future by any kind of public action, & although my inclination was to get it out in public as soon as possible - accepted Union advice that after the first hearings would be the wrong time to do so.

The Authority was pressed to contain at least one, but preferably two, Union representatives on its panel for the second hearing; & I was offered the services of a professional QC if I would retract my refusal to appear. A senior legal department man came up to talk to me about it. I was torn. My common sense

told me that the farce had gone on long enough, but my inexperience - as always - pushed me into doing what the Union was advising. I realised that before the Governors my attempt to bring the matter to the proper grounds - the state of the school - had antagonised an already hostile body, to the point where it was not in the least bit interested in understanding what I was trying to say. It would be better to put the direction of my case into the hands of a less personally-involved advocate. The disadvantage of this course was that the QC was used to the courts, not the administrative tribunals involved in my case; therefore his expertise might be somewhat dimmed.

It was agreed the Union should write to the Shropshire Authority formally requesting Bert Amiss to appear to answer questions about the syllabus; & that I should approach Bert Amiss personally to get him to agree to do so. Bert asked for time to think it over, & in a few days told me he had sought advice from the new CEO who had told him it would be an unwise thing for him to do, since the Authority's panel wouldn't like to see someone from their own side appearing for the defence. However he (from the drama standpoint) & the Senior Adviser (from the English) had been asked to submit a written assessment of the syllabus & both had heartily condemned it. I wasn't to worry over the syllabus.

He was certain the complaints relating to it would now be withdrawn. The Authority told the Union it was not its job to supply witnesses for the defence; therefore it would not agree to the drama adviser's appearance at the hearing.

The hearing started on Friday Dec. 4th.; one headmaster, NUT, but already a coopted member of the Education Committee, was included in the panel. The NUT had been over-optimistic once more. The hearing lasted all day that Friday, went on again on Saturday, Dec. 12th., until nine o'clock in the evening & the tribunal's deliberations were held on the following Sunday morning.

I was then informed that it had been found that I had no case to answer on 4c. The rest stood. The Committee did not accept the Governors' recommendation that I should be dismissed instantly, but because my continued presence in the school would be detrimental to the well-being of the school & its pupils, I was to be given notice of termination of contract with effect from April 30th. 1971., although my presence in the school would not be required after the end of the term then in progress. If meanwhile I wished to resign, that resignation would be accepted.

In comparison with the Governors' fiasco, the second hearing was a fair one. Apart from the histrionics of the Crewe solicitor dug up from an old 1930's film to put the Authority's case,

the procedures were quiet. My Counsel refused to enter the ground I had tried to force the first hearing into; and - therefore - the state of the school was left out of the considerations. But in a very effective way he pushed Behenna into admitting that at least ninety-five percent of my Times Ed. letter was indisputably true (& at one time had Behenna sullenly refusing to answer.)

He was contemptuous with the evidence supplied by Sayer, who - since the previous hearing - had come up with the idea that what I had said to him over the 'phone amounted to professional assassination, a phrase he used several times. Toon was not produced as a witness at this hearing, although the complaints he was associated with were still pushed through. Nor was the letter from my neighbour given to the hearing, although again it was considered fit to press me to answer it. The Crewe actor introduced new evidence - not related to the complaints - that Martin Ridgway took great exception to.

A transcript was taken, but despite my persistent requests for a copy, none was ever given to me, & the Union refused to push for one to be made. Once again I was denied the evidence I needed to pursue my conviction that the whole procedure was in no sense judicial, but that of an authority abusing its power in order to get rid of an awkward teacher.

My witnesses spent all day Friday sitting around without being called, & a number of them couldn't make the second day of the hearing, & of those who did come, some had to leave before they could be called. A few submitted written statements instead.

Again after the summing-up of my case, the watching brief for the head, (who, as a witness only was anyway being allowed privileges outside his right,) was allowed to comment. The gist of his argument, given in words very close to those used here, was this:

The local Authority chooses to divide its power in three ways. It keeps a part to itself, gives a part to the school governors, & a part to the headteacher. If either of the other two arms gets into any kind of difficulty, the authority has a legal obligation to come to its aid, & it doesn't matter if in this particular case, Mr Behenna is absolutely right or absolutely wrong, in his argument with Mr Gregory; the Authority has a bounden duty to give him its full support.

In a letter to the Times Ed., commenting upon its report of the

Grove troubles (not published) I described the process of the tribunal in this way:

"To the Authority the laid-down procedure is a delight. It plays on its own sloping ground with the ball tied on elastic to the teacher's goal post. The Authority is credited with ten goals before the game starts. It appoints its own referees, the rules are 'discretionary' & no spectators are allowed. Outside the ground people are told the game is being scrupulously carried out & the Authority will be hard put to to win, since everyone is bending backwards to help the teacher score. After all the teacher does have professional representation (whose role is to persuade the teacher that to cut the elastic, or attempt to nobble the headmaster, would be unfair.)"

5. The Aftermath

Between the two hearings Behenna had told staff that he was no more than an 'impartial witness' & that he had in fact written to the Authority asking it to stop the proceedings against me & let the matter be settled within the school. The Authority refused. Despite the Drama Adviser's conviction that all charges relating to the syllabus would be dropped in the second hearing, they were not dropped but pushed harder as if the syllabus was impeccable as an educational instrument.

Its concern for the well-being of the school & its pupils now brought it to suspend me from the school.

Many times in the course of both hearings my ability as a drama teacher was upheld; this was not in question. What was wrong was that I would not lie down under the instructions of a man I believed to be a thoroughly bad head, an opinion shared by a considerable number of the staff.

The wellbeing of the school & its pupils meant in the Authority's eyes putting the screws on anyone who was critical of its own appointments - even though I had been earlier told that the education office had not been happy, from the beginning, about the Grove headmaster.

Other mysteries existed about the role of the Authority in this business. Why had it taken so long to bring the statement of complaint? Most of the individual complaints were over an year old. Had the change of Chief-Education Officer had anything to do with the timing? Was someone anxious to push it through between 'bosses'?

Were the hearings the result of a long worked out Governors' Plot? - July 69 meeting (the future of Gregory now in

hands of Governors;

- taking over drama department by English department (with Chairman of Governors' consent);

- the syllabus, pushing me into one of two courses, to leave the school out of disgust, or to refuse to teach it;

- the Sept. 16th. visit to my class room, at the instigation of the Chairman of Governors;

- the dragging up of old dead issues (party at my house, graffiti, Sayer's 'phone conversation;

- the too-coincidental squire's coffee party, with ominous prophecies;

- the complaints preferred, heard & judged by the same people;

Or, were they the result of panic, at the counsel's opinion that after all I was legally in the right to keep to the terms of my appointment?

What part did my reference - at a Tory election meeting - to the nature of the school governing body, - with the Chairman of the Governors sitting on the platform, - have to do with it?

How much were the local Masons involved in the machinations? Certainly later in the dispute they let it be known that they were supporting Behenna in the dispute. Is Behenna a Mason? And how many of the people involved on the Authority side are? Would the number be significant?

What game was Sayer up to? (One County Councillor said he should be entitled to the 'rat of the year' award for his part in the affair). And what induced Gordon Toon to give evidence to the Governors but to stay away from the LEA hearing?

If my next door neighbour was so upset about the remark he claimed I made, why did he refuse to put in an appearance? Why did he resign as a Governor?

Is it true - as I know one Governor has claimed - that the decision about what should be done to me was taken by a small ruling caucus on the Governing body, & the rest were told to fall in line?

Why did another Governor tell a friend that 'we know Behenna is a bad headmaster, but we must get rid of Gregory first?'

How was Huntley, (Head of English,) - who, with his wife, played an interesting part in the development of the troubles - soon after she wrote down the address of Rank & File, from a copy in the Staff room, that magazine was written to by the Authority, asking for copies of all issues back to Spring 69, (coincidence?) able to tell another English teacher that there would soon be no drama in the school - this before the second session of the first hearing got under way?

Why was the first transcript so badly bungled & the second never produced?

Throughout this case, echoes of deeper motives than those readily released kept almost coming back to the ear, as though this business of getting rid of an awkward teacher had in it issues right at the heart of the meaning of Market Drayton which were somehow being worked out.

What about the actions of the NUT, in particular Edward Britton's personal overall handling of the matter, which needs special & detailed examination. A chronology of events between December 1970, (when the suspension order was made,) & a year later, (when Behenna announced he was to leave for a more lucrative position,) should show some of the points that urgently need raising about the Union's conduct. I offer that chronology here, in as brief a form as I can manage it.

6. The public fight. (1970/71.)

1. Sun. Dec. 13th.

Contract terminated & suspended from Grove with effect from end of that term. My presence in the school detrimental to the wellbeing of the school & its pupils.

2. Tues. Dec. 15th.

Story breaks in local press - Shropshire Star. (All through the hearings reporters had been on to me for the story & stupidly giving in to Union advice I had withheld it.)

I had been unwilling to supply a photograph, so the paper dug up one from its files - one of me playing the King Of Egypt, in an updated mummies' play, that had been taken round the local pubs the previous Christmas.

That photograph exactly fitted the 'monster' version of myself cultivated by the Authorities during the two hearings.

It was used again on the 16th., when a much fuller story was

printed, but replaced following a letter from me arguing that it was I, not the King of Egypt, who was in trouble. I shouldn't have been so daft as to refuse a proper photograph in the first place.

3. Wed. Dec. 16th.

Unrest at the Grove. Approached by many children. One group wanted an answer to only one question: Did I want to get back in the school? "Yes." Then they'd see that I got back. Large meeting on the school playing fields that dinner hour (200); my daughters told me plans then moved towards some kind of demonstration on the Friday. Administration got wind of it. Announced school would close that Thursday, 2.30 P.M. 43 members of staff signed motion in effect expressing no confidence in the handling of the matter & demanding the Authority rescind its decision.

4. Thu. Dec. 17th.

"We want Greg," scrawled along the roadside of the school wall. Caretakers trying to wash it off. Restlessness in school considerable. Story reaching staffroom that children planned to disrupt assembly on the entrance of the Headmaster by stamping feet.

The Headmaster didn't appear. Head of lower school tried to defuse tension by getting kids to stamp & shout out a song at end of carol concert. Obviously thought he'd succeeded.

Breaktime: hall full of children drinking milk; suddenly emptied. Head of lower school entered, gathered up the 'loyal' teachers available - 4 - & disappeared into the yard. Talk of a demonstration. Banners were distributed & the march taken out of the school gates, with the intention of going round to the other gates - by the Headmaster's study - & demonstrating there.

But suddenly, at the junction with the main road those in front of the march, turned left instead of right, & proceeded into the centre of the town.

The small contingent of loyalist staff tried to stop the march & managed to turn back those pupils who attempted to join the demonstration after it had got going. But about two hundred children went through the town, regrouped, & came back again, to stand outside the Head's office, chanting for him to go.

Eventually he came out with the Education Office representatives who had arrived in the school slapping into the procession surging out of the school gates. After listening to him, the

group then decided to disband & return to lessons. But the school was in a turmoil, & more action was being talked of.

The Authority hurriedly pushed through the closure of the school at 12.00 noon, instead of 2.30., for fear of a repeat demonstration. In this time certain teachers were obviously detailed to keep an eye on those students considered more militant. My elder daughter, for instance, told me later that wherever she went during that time she was aware that Mrs Huntley was close at hand.

That afternoon a representation from the Education Office, including the CEO, the Chairman of the Education Committee, Col. Sykes, & the Chairman of the Sub-Committee that had heard the complaints against me, Mrs Hayward, met the school staff.

I was in at the beginning of the meeting, but soon felt that my presence inhibited the others, & the Authority story was so open to contradiction that I felt I should need to put my version of what happened at every point, so I left, already convinced that the meeting was a phoney affair.

Col. Sykes, whose comments never showed that he had much understanding of what the case was really about, said that the decision had been taken right or wrong & there was no going back on it. The teachers should go home, have an happy Christmas & come back resolved to put the school in order.

Mrs Hayward told the staff their opposition to the decision was silly because the sub-committee had gone into the matter fully & obviously knew more about the case than the staff could.

As the anger of the staff (the clear majority) mounted, the Authority panel saw its plan to overcome the staff with its particular brand of reason was failing, & the meeting was abruptly cut short. Some thirty staff met after the meeting to pass a motion of no confidence in the school & its Governors.

5. During the Christmas holidays.

A furious correspondence broke out in the local papers. Thirteen heads of local primary schools wrote in to give unqualified support to Behenna, & so did a number of parent groups, these in all cases linked with the PTA organisation.

John Goulding, Newcastle M.P., announced he would raise my case in Parliament; & I went to see him. But later I received a letter from him to say that the majority of parents, living in his constituency, supported the head; & therefore there was little he could do in my support. Heads of Depart-

ment answered the heads' letter, & various others - connected & unconnected with the school - wrote on both sides. It was obvious from the correspondence that the real issues at stake hardly penetrated to the public argument.

I wrote to the NUT asking that a public enquiry into my sacking be pushed for. Two petitions began circulating in the town, one pro-head, the other asking for a public enquiry to ascertain the real situation. The pro-head one sank with little trace, some 200 people were rumoured to have signed it. The other reached seven or eight hundred & was presented in time to the M.P.s concerned & the NUT; & then largely ignored.

I was told by the Union to appeal to the Minister of Education & Science. She eventually told me there was nothing she could do, since - in the circumstances of my dismissal & suspension - I had no right of appeal. Had the Governors' request that I be dismissed on the spot been confirmed by the LEA, I could have appealed against unjust dismissal; but, by terminating my contract, the second hearing shifted the issue from being one to do with the Articles of Government, to one falling within the Memorandum of Agreement; & that, then, became a matter for the local authority's discretion.

6. At the start of the Spring term 1971.

The LEA told all its advisers to cancel their diaries & to spend as much time in the Grove School as they could, talking with the staff about ways to put the school to rights, but refusing to discuss my case.

The staff had been told by Union & Authority that while my case was dragging through its hearings, the matter was sub-judice, & therefore could not be discussed outside the hearings. The hoax of sub-judice - which has no meaning at all in these circumstances - nevertheless worked its power sufficiently to deter the early action of staff that the Authority rightly feared.

But when the decision was over, staff were then told the matter was over & no further discussion would be possible. The advisers however soon found that the staff were not willing to have my case brushed aside any further, and, after three weeks, the senior advisers reported back to the County that there was no hope of getting the school right until my case had been dealt with properly in the eyes of the angry teachers.

There is no doubt that by the end of that three weeks, the LEA must have known - through its own advisory body - what the true state of feeling was within the school. But officially support for the headmaster was clung desperately to.

7. The role of the new CEO is worth a comment.

When John Boyers, the new CEO, arrived in November, the first hearing was over & he was greeted by a demand for my dismissal. He took part in the second hearing, & there was some hope that a new mind would see through the morass of intrigue that had marked the authority actions from the beginning. But it soon became evident that Boyers was unable to rise above the 'local experience' of his sub-committee.

Although his own advisers' reports on the syllabus must have shown it to be totally without educational value, he allowed the charges connected with it to remain.

When, after the decision, teachers wrote to him personal letters bitterly contesting that decision & trying to get him to understand the real state of feeling in the school, these letters - or some indication at least of their contents - found their way back to Behenna, who referred to such letters in his conversations with other staff.

He refused a request from me to meet him, & in the Spring Term attempts to seduce the bulk of the staff away from supporting my part of the story merely convinced those staff that the sole aim of Authority was to ride over the truth & reestablish Behenna as head.

Boyers's own role in this came in for severe staff criticism, & the general feeling was that he, like the rest of the Authority, was concerned only to protect the seat of power, with no regard for the children of the Grove School, - in whose name so much of the Authority action was being carried out.

In a letter to Boyers dated Dec. 31st., I wrote "It seems to me the Authority has now placed itself in the position where it is defending the proposition that any old rubbish can be fed to the children of Market Drayton, in the name of education as long as the power of the headmaster is upheld." This remained the Authority position throughout, & Boyers at no time publicly disassociated himself from it.

7. On Jan. 22nd.

At a meeting called by a local educational group (which has since sunk without trace) I put my case to the Drayton public, to try & counteract the stories going round about the real trouble at the Grove.

(In petitioning for the head, one person, now on the PTA told a Staffordshire parent that there were two reasons why I had to be got rid of - I was a Communist, & I believed it right for pupils to spit out of windows at visitors to the school. But by this time I was also raping fifth year girls & responsible

for every bit of indiscipline the school had suffered in the past years.)

The hall was packed & an estimated 170-200 people present. I issued copies of articles I had earlier written on the nature of the complaints, plus a two-sided blue-broadsheet prepared especially for the meeting, in which I sought to outline the situation to date. The last point read:-

(17.) "I believe deeply in the rights of ordinary people & hold that bad authority has done so much to the fabric of ordinary lives that it should be opposed & criticised publicly wherever it is met. In my opinion there is an excess of bad authority in Drayton & Shropshire at this moment, & those who genuinely desire a better education & life for their children should be outspoken in their stand against it."

9. The meeting; & consequences.

The statement of my position was well received & journalists present agreed that a largely hostile body was converted into a largely favourable one by the time the meeting was over. The consequences of that meeting were considerable. The Grove School Governors called an emergency meeting on the Monday following, & on the Thursday after that a copy of a letter - to go to all parents - found its way into the pigeon-holes of all staff. This letter stated that the Authority & Governors wished parents to know that if fully supported the headmaster in his attempts to run the school.

An hastily convened meeting of staff insisted that the letter be withdrawn or over half the staff would go on strike, with support from another ten more. Moreover it was later learnt that senior advisers saw the CEO with a statement that they would resign if the letter were not withdrawn. Along with the staff demand went a further request for a meeting with the Governors - originally sought in the previous November, & till then ignored. On the Friday a delegation from staff saw the CEO & a few Governors. The letter was withdrawn and a preliminary meeting with the Governors arranged.

On the next Tuesday 23 staff turned up to meet the Governors, found a different lot present who seemed to have no idea of what had been agreed on the previous Friday, & treated the staff as if they were so much dirt, refusing to see them altogether, & not the least bit interested in what they had to say. The staff presented the Governors with another intention to strike - on the following Monday, for half a day, as included in the original plans (Everyone knows the delay was a

mistake; Bohenna's prediction the next day that the strike would not take place proved dismally true, but the staff at the Grove was out in territory that few other teachers have ever dared to tread & its mistakes were painful & inevitable.)

On the Wednesday, Edward Britton came to the school, spent over an hour with the headmaster before calling in to see the staff & returned to London, without making any effort to call into see me, sitting at home anxious for any news of events. Britton of course tried to persuade the staff to call off the strike (& succeeded - as the Union always did - in weakening the collective resolve of the NUT members at the school) but told teachers that the Union was pushing for an enquiry into the school & the teachers' help was needed in deciding what kind of an enquiry to go for.

By the end of the meeting he had got them to go for a private enquiry - not to wash the dirty linen in public. This scuppered my own campaign for a public enquiry, as well as that of the public petition, but again the staff just wasn't knowledgeable enough on these things to overcome the Union's arguments. But the militant staff kept up its intention to strike & prepared a press statement explaining why. The statement opened:

We have resorted to militant action on Monday Feb. 8th. due to utter frustration at the manner in which:

- i) our professional standing & judgement, and
- ii) our concern for our various specialist subjects & for the children we teach

have been questioned or ignored in our attempts to seek some solution to the new pressing problems of communications, relationships & direction that now exist at the Grove School.

We have tried to communicate through the proper channels our concern for the wellbeing of the school, & at all levels, have received a refusal to listen, or a complete disregard for our efforts, from the Authority.

We have individually or collectively:

- a) sought interviews with LEA advisers & County Councillors;
- b) written detailed statements about our work to the LEA, the headmaster & advisers;
- c) written to our M.P.s & the Secretary of State for Education;
- d) spoken to and asked questions of the LEA, Governors & Headmaster, at every opportunity;
- e) supported as witnesses a colleague's claims, as to the problems within the

school.

NO APPRECIABLE IMPROVEMENT HAS RESULTED FROM ANY
OF THESE ACTIONS

On the Thursday staff were surprised to hear that the Chairman of Governors, Mark Suttbery, was trying to arrange, off his own bat, a weekend conference to discuss the whole matter, & was seeking out staff to find out what terms would be acceptable to them for a possible settlement of the whole matter. I was visited by Dick Sutton & Bob Edwards to find out what my position would be. I agreed to take part in such a conference, & expressed willingness to discuss the whole matter without preconditions.

On Friday I was informed the Union & Authority were near agreement on the form of an enquiry, to be ratified that afternoon by the sub-committee. Suttbery's initiative was squashed by the LEA - too late for that kind of thing. (But important in that now both Head & Chairman of the Governors had tried to withdraw from the consequences of their earlier actions.)

The Shropshire Star headlined the staff statement on the Friday, the first editions of which reached the sub-committee at the start of its meeting, & from what I was subsequently told by the Union, they used that as the reason for proving adamant & not agreeing to any move towards an enquiry.

10. Over that weekend considerable activity.

Union supposedly threatening official strike action if an enquiry not agreed to; to-ing and fro-ing between Hamilton House & Curzon Street, base of the Department for Education & Science. By Tuesday, a formula agreed on; & later in the week a delegation of staff summoned to Shrewsbury to be given the terms. Two members of staff thought the enquiry terms represented a betrayal, but the rest accepted them as being the opening needed.

No public enquiry - an inspectorial enquiry only, looking into the school as it now was with no direct reference to my own case, but should factors be revealed not already taken into account about the condition of the school, the LEA would accept representations from the Union with regard to my case. I was assured by the Union officials that just one mention of things not being right at the school & the Union would press for the re-opening of my case.

11. Beginning of March, & after.

The enquiry took place. Four days with four inspectors - but one was ill. Two and an half days spent with staff, one & an half days with the administration & Authority. Many staff not seen, but told the inspectors had met with such an unanimity of feeling, unnecessary to see all.

Suspicious remained in many staff that a whitewash job was under way. Report due out within three weeks but by now staff - hardened - had already noted Authority's ability to delay important events to the end of term; & the conviction was widespread that the report wouldn't be out until the last day of term.

In fact it arrived in school the day before the last one, but it was only read on the last day. Copies of report kept in head's office & the staff allowed in - in sixes - to read it. No one allowed to take a copy away or make notes on it.

The first reactions were those of alarm. A whitewash report, that included hardly anything of the facts reported tirelessly by the staff. I sat at home, going on hearsay. I was to see the Union copy, & that was kept from me for eight days. I was handed it at a meeting, & had to hand it back before the meeting was over.

The language was dull officialese, & the opening chapters of the report seemed designed to stop people reading further. But the NUT official reported to a group of staff that in the eyes of the General Secretary it was 'one of the worst reports he had ever read about a school'. On this, the staff present urged the Union to press for my job back again.

The head let it be known that the report was a dull one, concerned with the day-to-day problems of the school & containing nothing relevant to my struggle. This too was the view of the LEA.

12. April.

My contract was due to expire on April the 30th. On April the 19th., the Union met the sub-committee & put its case for my re-instatement. The Authority deferred answer for ten days, & then for a further day. On April 30th. the LEA reported to the Union that it was not going to change its mind. Nothing new in the inspectors' report. No job back, no further pay, but I could apply for a job in another Shropshire school if I wanted to. The Union pressured for my pay to be extended, & eventually the Authority agreed to pay me for a further term, 'till August 1971.

13.

Late Spring.

The struggle went on, but with increasing pressure on the Union to stand out against the Authority. The Grove Report was issued to all County Councillors, & eventually was leaked to the Press. The Shropshire Journal headlined it one Friday, & the Shropshire Star printed the whole of the main body of the report on the next day. The effect was nil. The language defeated most people who read it, & the overwhelming impression was left that there was a running dog-fight between head & deputy that soured the rest of the school's relationships. In the middle of June the Authority again turned its back on doing anything about my case, turning down three suggestions for my future. I could apply for a post elsewhere in Shropshire, if I wanted to, but that was all. No setting up a special drama post in the county to enable me to work in community drama; no seconding me to Newcastle-upon-Tyne for a course in Advanced Drama.

14.

July.

In answer to a motion from the Wrekin Teachers' Association deploring the ineffective handling of my case by Hamilton House, the General Secretary & others visited Wellington. A group of Grove NUT members, supported by a small contingent from Abraham Derby, another comprehensive in the Telford area, picketed the meeting which was long & forthright.

When the meeting was over, the group outside came into the room & had its own meeting with the General Secretary, promising him to take strike action before the next confrontation with the LEA, which was dated ten days away. The anger of the teachers, & their determination to push the Union into some action before the coming of the long Summer holidays seemed finally to get through to the General Secretary.

Everyone at the meeting knew from Britton's replies that he would not bring himself to take any kind of militant stance, but the teachers went away that night convinced that they had made clear their own refusal to give ground. Shortly after, I wrote to the General Secretary saying I was not prepared to take secondment to Newcastle as the result of a backstairs agreement between Union & Authority, without there being also agreed action on the state of the school. Without the second I would repudiate the first.

15. final Friday, of the Summer term

On the final Friday of the Summer term, 1971, the Union delegation met the LEA sub-committee, & in a room at

the back of an Aitcham pub afterwards, first the Wrekin Teachers' Association Committee & then a group of Grove teachers met the Union delegation to hear the outcome. The official later phrased the key paragraphs like this:

The representatives of the Authority will recommend that Mr Gregory's services with Shropshire be extended to permit his secondment to a one year's course of advanced training in Drama on the understanding that we will use this course to re-establish himself in a suitable post in another school or college.

The officers will collaborate closely with the Authority in implementing the report of the HMIs & will do all in their power to help the Authority and headmaster & staff of the school to remedy the practical, professional & educational difficulties instanced in the report.

The Authority saw this as some kind of victory to the staff, and - so Britton said - asked the Union to see to it that the staff didn't hold some kind of victory celebration through town. To questions about the real meaning of the agreement, the General Secretary argued that it was a breakthrough of great magnitude; the Union was being invited in to sort out a school. It meant, he said, in answer to a question from Martin Ridgway, that a fourth power base in the school had been established - the staff; that there would be an union official, in close contact with staff needs, and participation & consultation would be on an important scale. I asked whether it meant that the community would now be involved in the affairs of the school, & not kept in the dark, as it had been in the past. The General Secretary said that the agreement meant that anything was now possible, & a new era of cooperation was now opening up. He would be seeing the headmaster & deputy-head in London separately to ease their problems.

I wanted to reserve my judgement, partly because I wanted to talk it over with my wife, but also because of a nigling suspicion that the words would eventually stand in the place of action, not simply be its forerunner.

But the staff present made it plain to me that it would be wrong to turn the agreement down, since the position of teachers in the school had at least been officially recognised, & it was a matter now of my trust in the staff that they would see that the agreement was honoured.

I determined to put out a statement of acceptance, that would tie down in writing the various things we had been told the agreement meant:

I share the feelings of my colleagues & fellow union

members both at the Grove School & in the Wrokin & Shropshire Teachers' Associations that this statement has the makings of a real solution.

As I see it, it offers opportunities for ensuring full comprehensive education in the Market Drayton area, for the full participation of the whole staff & for the full involvement of all other groups concerned in the future of the Grove School. If this is true I am satisfied.

As for my own situation, I am willing to accept secondment on full pay to the Institute of Education, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for an year's advanced drama course, & am content to wait & see what further develops over the next year.

16. Autumn half-term

I waited until half-term in the Autumn for news of what the Union was to do in the Grove. All I heard was that the deputy-head went to see the General Secretary & came away more angry than he went. No Union official had been anywhere near the Grove. I made enquiries. I was informed this wasn't so. A South London headmaster had been in the school for two days, sizing it up for the Union. I went back to Martin Ridgway & told him.

He listened with amazement. Yes, there had been such an head in the school. No one knew he was from the NUT. The staff thought he'd been a friend of Behenna's; he certainly didn't seem to go far in the school without the head being with him.

Those on the staff he talked with, - including Martin Ridgway, - he kept in conversation for little more than five or so minutes, on the most general of topics, & some union members weren't seen at all. There was no chance he could have found out anything relevant about the school. Anyway such a visit, in such secrecy, seemed to contradict the whole spirit of the July agreement.

I learned from another source that in his report to the Union, none of which was ever made available to the staff at the Grove - so much for consultation! - he complained of the reception given him by the head; but that meant little to teachers whose impression of the man was that of one whose school was about to go comprehensive, visiting the Grove for some obscure reason in order to find out how another comprehensive worked.

Who else but a friend of Behenna's could seek such information at the Grove?

But there was no fire in the staff response to this denial of all they had fought for.

Teachers told me that the school was in a worse state than it had ever been, but what was there left worth fighting for?

I wrote to the General Secretary arguing that the action of treating the July agreement with such contempt was close to a corrupt one, & in my opinion he had shown himself as unfitted to be a representative of teachers.

In time I received a letter back saying the General Secretary didn't agree with my interpretation of the Union's actions, but since I was an interested party my views would be kept in mind.

To which I replied in turn that the General Secretary must know that such a reply wouldn't satisfy me, & listing ten questions seeking detailed answers to the state of affairs at the Grove. So far no reply. Further proof to me that teachers need to fight their Unions, as well as the Authorities. The chief betrayal of the teacher's interests lies there.

Mr Behenna's appointment to Lincoln was made known in the October or November. Nobody, however privately they thought it a scandal that promotion should follow on the deplorable chaos created at the Grove, has felt publicly obliged to denounce it.

As the Grove affair now stands, I am still the one being punished. However valuable the course which I have been on, it has involved me in considerable debt, since my family has had to stay in Drayton for the year, & my salary is tied down there. I have been got out of the way. The Grove affair has not changed the school or Drayton; the Governors stay in charge; the only departure being that the mason-vicar has gone elsewhere for reasons apparently not connected with the school. Some good staff have left, & the fight seems to have gone out of those who remain.

A victory that we were asked not to celebrate has been turned into the old mediocre taste of apathy & defeat. And the Union is very pleased with the progress.

7. Reasons for this pamphlet.

I believe the appointment of Behenna to the headship of Lincoln School with the responsibility for welding four schools into one comprehensive establishment containing 1,500 pupils, to be an educational scandal in the light of the events at the Grove School, Market Drayton, Salop., during his short period as head there.

It cannot be right that a man who has palpably failed to manage the problems of a school containing 1,000 pupils should then move on to a larger school. When he took over the Grove it had already been comprehensive for four years. There was dispute about how good a comprehensive, but the hard job of welding the various elements (that are bound to be present in a new school) into a workable shape had been more or less done.

But from the day of his appointment Behenna showed none of the understanding required of someone in his job, & within a very short time all confidence that he could carry out the brief set him by the Governing Body of the school vanished, even amongst those responsible for his appointment.

The brief itself was a political act, prepared by a group of people, acting out of their own prejudices rather than out of the needs of the community as a whole, & Mr Behenna's willingness to run the school to the terms of such a brief against the interests & needs of both staff & pupils in the school was a major cause of the disintegration of confidence amongst them.

In this sense Behenna was a tool of a political move within the influential sections of the community to alter the school back into a pseudo-grammar one.

His blame for the situation that developed must be swallowed up in the larger blame attachable to the local authorities, both in Drayton itself, and within the LEA, for allowing such a man to be appointed on such a brief. But his failure, as a teacher, to understand the implications of what he was doing, the lengths to which he was prepared to go, to prevent any criticism of what he was doing as headmaster, & his connivance in the plot to get rid of myself as a teacher instigated by the Chairman of the Governors, Mr Mark Sutherly, & subscribed to by the whole governing body: all these must suggest that he is unfitted to have the future of teachers & children within his dispensation.

Obviously no one in Authority, who knows the facts of the Grove situation, should be sitting back & watching Mr Behenna's transfer with equanimity. Yet for him to be appointed as head of Lincoln School, this is precisely what the

Shropshire authorities must have done. Indeed, they must have supplied Mr Behenna with the kind of testimonials without which he wouldn't have been eligible for the job.

His appointment therefore raises these important questions:-

1. On what grounds was Mr Behenna first chosen for the post as Head of Grove School, Market Drayton? (On his appointment one local councillor described him as one of the foremost education authorities in this country. The description is laughable, but what led the councillor to speak in these terms?)
2. Was he appointed on the strength of a testimonial from the Cambridgeshire Education Authority?
3. Did the Shropshire Authority give Mr Behenna a similar testimonial when he began applying for jobs out of the county? Was there an embargo on his applying for jobs within the county?
4. Did the Lincoln Authority know of the troubles at the Grove School, when they appointed Mr Behenna to this new, larger job?
5. What part has the NUT played in the situation?

During 1971 there was widespread action amongst NUT members against the behaviour of the authorities & the headmaster in relation to the situation concerning myself. The NUT executive knew of the bitterness that existed. Yet so far no comment has been made by the NUT HQ about Mr Behenna's new appointment, & no indication of any protest on behalf of the NUT members of the four schools concerned in the proposed merger.

Are they meant to remain in ignorance of the kind of person they are now expected to work for? If the answer to this is: "but Mr Behenna is a member of the Union also:" could the Union confirm that in 1971, although the Union had been supporting Mr Behenna's side of the troubles throughout that year, up to November, Behenna had not yet paid his subscription?

6. Why has no action been taken to alter the composition of the Grove School Governors?

Of all bodies they bear the closest blame for the situation that developed from the leaving of the prev-

ious headmaster. Yet to this day they remain substantially the same body as they were then.

Have they given the new Head the same brief as they gave Mr Behenna? And has there - with this appointment - been any attempt by the Authorities to learn any lessons from their past mishandling of the situation? Are the staff & children of the school being treated now with any less contempt than they have always been?

.....

This has been an abbreviated account of the Grove troubles. I offer it because of all the important issues for teachers, children, community & the future wellbeing of education in this country, that it raises.

There is a lot of lying going on in our education system, a lot of career-making at the expense of ordinary people's needs. I doubt very much if the Grove situation is that unusual; it is common for a failure at one post to be encouraged to apply elsewhere, as long as he gets out of the area of those who have had to cope with his failure. Because of the belief that a man's personal career is inviolate (if he is an authority man) it is propagated as bad form for anyone to make his objections to such a system public. But if nothing is said or done about a state of affairs that is in its least aspect a corrupt one, then it will go on & get worse in its deviousness & harmful effects; and as always, it is the people who suffer.

.....

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duplicated by
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