

FRANCIS RICHARD JOHN SANDFORD,
FIRST BARON SANDFORD, 1824-1894.

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(i) 1824-1886

AS a corollary of the article on Patric Cumin, secretary of the Education Department, in the last number, a short note on his predecessor is necessary in order to complete the assessment of the administrative contribution to the evolution of the English Educational System. We know of the great part played by Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, the first secretary, and of the influence of the second, Lord Lingen. About Francis Sandford, however, there is the briefest of notes in the *Dictionary of National Biography* which tells us nothing of his work.¹

Francis Richard John Sandford, eldest of a family of ten children, had a brilliant father, who at twenty-three had become a professor of Greek at Glasgow, and was twenty-six when Francis was born. He later was knighted at thirty-two, and became an M.P. for Paisley, but his brilliance did not extend to the political field and he resigned his seat a year later. Young Francis, on leaving school, was educated at his father's University and later went on to Balliol College, Oxford, where as Smith Exhibitioner, he graduated B.A. in 1846, with a first in greats (the same time as Thorold Rogers) at the age of twenty-two. He spent the next two years first as a tutor, then at his old school in Sunderland. Two years later he entered the Education Department as an examiner, and shared a room with Lingen, later to become secretary of the Department and Temple, later to be Archbishop of Canterbury. The grant administered was then £70,000 a year, and the Department was contained in three rooms at the Treasury. The year after joining the Department,

¹ See *D.N.B.*, vol. 1, p. 271, by Henry Craik, himself a close associate of Sandford, and *ibid.*, p. 269 for his father Sir Daniel Keyte Sandford.

he married. Unfortunately the union was childless. Six years after he joined the Department he was made assistant secretary.

From 1854 to 1861 he discharged the duties of assistant secretary with Lingen as his chief, and as the dispute over payment by results was occurring, he left the Department on appointment as organising secretary of the International Exhibition, for which Henry Cole was general advisor. His brother, H. B. Sandford, was also associated with the work. His labours were appreciated by the award of a knighthood on 2nd June, 1863. His interests extended, and in November, 1868 he became assistant under-secretary to the Colonial Office, which appointment lasted till 30th January, 1870.¹

He was appointed to the post of Secretary of the Education Department by W. E. Forster on 2nd February, 1870. It was a momentous time, and Forster was intent on introducing his Bill setting up School Boards to supplement the work of the voluntary societies. It was laid before the House of Commons just over a fortnight after Sandford's appointment. This Bill, with its impact of the administrative hand on the private life of every English citizen, needed above all a competent administrator and Sandford's work in this direction was rewarded by the C.B. on 5th August, 1871. Sandford was not only competent, but in a series of appointments he amassed more administrative power over education than any civil servant has had before or since. On 16th January, 1873, he was appointed secretary to the Committee of Council for Education in Scotland (the last person to combine these two posts), and in the February of the following year he became secretary of the Science and Art Department at South Kensington, the body which virtually controlled what technical education there was in the country. Since he was in charge of the administrative strings whereby the State controlled educational policy, he was now a person of considerable importance and consequence in view of the debates which raged as to who should control the schools. Perhaps one of the most reassuring things about his personality was that he was a close friend of Matthew Arnold, who at this time was

¹ Boase, *Modern English Biography*, vol. iii, p. 402.

pleading for a better organisation and more enlightened State control of English education.¹

He is the exemplar of this age of reform, the civil servant extending and enlarging the scope of the *droit administratif*. We do not see much of his personal point of view in the first ten years of his appointment, largely because he was being carried swiftly along in the surge of each fresh legislative addition to the system.

But by 1880, when the legal additions to the work of the Education Department seemed to have been completed with the establishment of full compulsion to attend school, Sir Francis Sandford found that more of his work was taken off his shoulders by his energetic assistant, Patric Cumin. Sandford himself served on the code reform committee, and, to the great disgust of Mundella, was not very helpful. Mundella wrote to his friend Leader, describing the newspaper reports of his code proposals,

Nearly all the press praised my scheme, the *Globe* gave the best and most intelligent article, the silly *Daily News* the worst. It actually ascribed my reforms to Sandford, who (although I praised him and all the permanent officials in order to secure their co-operation) I have dragged along with me.²

When Mundella was in virtual control of the Education Department from Lord Spencer's departure for Ireland in March 1882 till the definite appointment of Lord Carlingford the following year, Sandford was most helpful. Just before Lord Carlingford was appointed, he submitted to Mundella some notes on "impending organic changes" in the Department, pointing out how difficult it was for the permanent official to serve two masters—the Lord-President and the Vice-President, and suggesting that the responsibility should rest with the one who did the work, i.e. the Vice-President. He approved the suggested separation of the educational duties of the Vice-

¹ He brought Arnold's daughter a doll's dressing case in 1866, and was the recipient of Arnold's confidence at times (see G. W. E. Russell, *Letters of Matthew Arnold* (1901), vol. i, p. 400, and vol. ii, p. 261). He edited Matthew Arnold's reports in 1889.

² Editor of the *Sheffield Independent*. Mundella's letters to Leader are in typed transcript form in the library of the University of Sheffield. This is dated 14th August, 1881.

President from his other obligations (such as veterinary administration).¹ The project, however, came to nothing, and though the select Committee that was appointed under H. C. E. Childers to consider the desirability of appointing a minister of education, reported favourably on such an innovation, Gladstone's disapproval prevented anything being done. Sandford left office in the following January to serve on the Charity Commission. On his appointment in 1870 the government grant had stood at £840,000, on his departure it was £2,700,000, an index of the growth of his office.

For the next two years, from January 1884 to February 1886, Sandford was employed by the Government as a Commissioner. One appointment was as a Charity Commissioner. This appointment, which he held with Mr. James Anstie, Q.C., was necessitated by the passing of the London Parochial Charities Act of 1883, and was important in that it was concerned with the reorganisation of the Parochial charities of the City of London.² No longer were charitable doles to be administered to the poor of 52,000 but the money was to be used for the benefit of 4,000,000 Londoners in the form of polytechnics, libraries, and similar educational amenities. He supplemented this activity in 1885 by acting as vice-chairman of the Boundary Commissioners under the Redistribution of Parliamentary Representation that was going forward at that time. He was also sworn of the Privy Council. Two months after he left the office of Charity Commissioners he wrote to Lord Rosebery (addressing him as "my dear Primrose") suggesting that Fearon, a government inspector and friend of Matthew Arnold should succeed Sir Henry Vane as secretary of the Charity Commission. "He is just the man for the place", wrote Sandford, "methodical, accurate and very industrious".³ Whatever his views on voluntary schools, Sandford insisted on the scrupulous working of the educational endowments. Indeed, he saw that it was only by such scrupulous working that they could challenge criticism.

¹ This memorandum is in the library of the University of Sheffield.

² *Life of James Bryce* by H. A. L. Fisher, vol. i, p. 187.

³ British Museum Add. MS. 44497, f. 33. (Gladstone Papers.)

When at the Education Office his chief asset had been his capacity to deal with the Scottish as well as the English prejudices. Lord Dalhousie, as soon as he heard that Sandford was retiring, went to Mundella's office and, finding him out, wrote him a note on a sheet of Privy Council notepaper to ensure that in future administration of Scottish education should be separate from the English. He closed with

The Scotsmen stood Sandford because they knew what an enthusiastic Scotchman he was, but they won't stand anyone else interfering with the head of the Scotch Department whoever he may be.¹

This high esteem in which Sandford was held by the Scots was perhaps responsible for his appointment in the Conservative ministry of September 1885 to February 1886 as Under Secretary of State for Scotland. It was a new appointment, as the Secretaryship for Scotland had only been set up that year. When the Conservatives returned to office in September 1886, Sandford retained the appointment for two more years to get the office working and on its administrative feet. He also, as befitted his experience, became a member of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland at the same time, an appointment which he retained till 1892.

It was only with his retirement from the Education Office that his political sympathies began to show themselves. He was against Home Rule, and was generally regarded as inclining to the Conservative cause. But his work in the educational field was by no means finished, for he was nominated a member of the important Royal Commission on the working of the Elementary Education Acts, known as the Cross Commission, which sat from 1886-1888, and was the most searching examination of the working of the Educational System since the Newcastle Commission "signed its report on 18th March 1861".

(ii) 1886-1894

Hitherto we have merely considered Sandford as the servant of the State, obediently translating into action a policy framed by his minister. It is after 1886 that his real opinions reveal

¹ Lord Dalhousie to A. J. Mundella, 1883 (Mundella Correspondence).

themselves, and illumine much that might otherwise be obscure as to his relations with A. J. Mundella, his chief from 1880 to 1884, and may perhaps explain why he left the Education Office. This revelation of where his true sympathies lay is first apparent in the opinions he voiced as a member of the Cross Commission.

He signed the majority report with a series of reservations which he put forward. These reservations show that he was a much greater supporter of the voluntary schools than even Cardinal Manning, for Sandford was the only one of the twenty-three Commissioners who objected to a review of the accommodation of existing schools on the ground that "some of our best and most popular voluntary schools would be the first to suffer".¹ Many of the reforms that were undertaken during the Vice-Presidency of Mundella were condemned by Sandford, among them the central system for training pupil teachers and the raising of the age of half-timers to eleven and full-timers to thirteen. In the latter connexion his words are worth quotation, illustrating as they do the opposition to the raising of the school leaving age that was demanded by the Liberals like A. J. Mundella, A. H. D. Acland, Sir Henry Roscoe and Lyulph Stanley.

"In the present condition of our labour market, and the prevalence in this country of early and fruitful marriages, it appears to be very unwise to increase the existing pressure upon parents, by preventing children of ten, who have reached a reasonable standard of proficiency from beginning to contribute to their own support. . . .

"And I strongly object to the abolition of all passes to full time work before thirteen, in the employments not dealt with by the Factories and Mines Acts, if a reasonable standard of proficiency has been attained."

But what lays bare the essential outlook of the man is the opinion he expressed later on the system of payment by results.

"I am sorry that anything in our report should seem to under-rate the value and importance of standards, to cast a slur upon the principle of 'Payment by Results', introduced by the Revised Code, or to imply that under the present code, sufficient freedom of classification is not secured to managers and teachers. I fear that if some of our recommendations are acted on, we may see revived the scandals disclosed by the report of the Duke of Newcastle's Commission."

¹ Cross Commission. Final Report 1888 (C 5485), p. 226. This was fact which was eagerly seized upon by the supporters of the Board School system like Lyulph Stanley, who never tired of pointing this out as late as 1893. See his letter in the *Times* for 3rd February of that year.

He signed, with these and other reservations in favour of the voluntary schools, a majority report which was in itself in favour of the voluntary schools, so much so, that a minority group, led by Lyulph Stanley, drew up a report to express the viewpoint of those who supported the School Board system and its extension. With this knowledge of his outlook, it is hard indeed to agree with Professor Adamson when he hails Sir Francis Sandford as the father of the 1902 Act¹ although certain elements in that act were dictated by the motives that inspired Sir Francis Sandford. These opinions can be traced in the recorded divisions of the Commission that took place from the 15th November, 1887 to the 8th May, 1888.²

But it was in the closing years of his life as a peer that he revealed most clearly his position *vis à vis* other figures in the educational world. Created a Baron on 21st January, 1891, he reserved his speeches in the House of Lords entirely for educational topics coupling them with letters to the *Times*. He had drifted so far away from his one time associates that we have the curious spectacle of Lord Lingen writing to A. J. Mundella³ on 21st June, 1893 warning him to be "on the lookout for a certain Bill, as soon as it appears in the House of Commons". He continued :

"Besides its episcopal author, its two most active advocates are our friend Sandford and another Scotchman—a certain Lord *Shand*—though what the deuce he has to do with English Education I don't know. All my amendments are rejected and Sandford's are adopted. Nothing really can mend this Bill which is an attempt to reverse the policy of 1870. The report in to-day's *Times* is a very inadequate one of what passed."

By the 24th Lingen was less anxious and wrote :

"I have managed to get the offensive preamble dropped. A challenge should always be couched in polite terms."⁴

The absorbing interest in Sandford's brief career as an educational spokesman in the House of Lords from 1891-1893, is that he represents the point of view which ultimately triumphed in the administration of Sir Robert Morant. Sandford had no

¹ J. W. Adamson, *English Education, 1789-1902*, p. 468.

² Cross Commission, pp. 446-488 (Final Report).

³ Then President of the Board of Trade.

⁴ Mundella Correspondence, June, 1893.

love for the Radical plan for secondary education, the higher grade school and the intermediate school were in his opinion distractions from the real business of erecting a secondary system. It was for this reason that he spoke against the proposal in the Elementary Education Bill of 1891 (which abolished the payment of school fees) to give fee grants up to the age of fifteen. Sandford's argument was based on "the educational canons" of the schools inquiry commission of twenty-five years before. He maintained that the bright pupil in the elementary school should be encouraged to pass into the secondary school as soon as possible, and that if the pupil was not capable of doing this, the sooner he went to work after he was fourteen the better. This attitude on the part of Sandford and those of his sympathies reflected the sharp division which was taking place between the secondary school and the elementary school containing all the residue after the secondary school had "creamed" it. Sandford's amendment in this case was not adopted. He was an effective critic of the Bill in other directions and spoke eleven times during its passage through the upper house.¹

But his outlook was not always so limited. He introduced the Charity Commission's scheme for remodelling the Sunderland charity at Bingley, converting a series of two doles into a good educational foundation.² He also supported the lowering of the qualifications for entry to the Scottish Universities.

His critical speeches against the Liberal educational policy are best exemplified in the year 1893. A. H. D. Acland had become Vice-President with a seat in the Cabinet, and had promulgated a series of exacting requirements to which elementary schools must conform before they received the government grant. It meant that many of the voluntary schools would go under in face of them, since, with their limited funds, they could not hope to put into effect the structural and sanitary arrangements required by this circular. Sandford took up the struggle on behalf of the voluntary schools, pointing out that the rules were too severe. He illustrated his remarks by referring to the Jews School in London, where if the rule was observed that hat pegs had to be at least one foot apart, they would have to have

¹ Hansard, 20th July, 1891.

² *Ibid.*, 13th May, 1892.

1000 feet of corridor, four feet wide, as the school had 4000 pupils.¹

He was also extremely critical of the Radical plan for county governing bodies of schools, which was avowedly being set up in Wales as an experiment before being set up in England. *Proximus ardet Ucalegon* declared Sandford, as he moved for an address to the Queen to withhold her assent from the proposed scheme to set up such bodies at Carnarvon, and warned his listeners that it was but a prelude to future legislation. The mischief, as Sandford saw it, originated with the Radicals like Lyulph Stanley who, at the meetings of the National Educational Association, prompted government legislation along these lines.²

The tendency of the Education Department to create ad hoc administrative bodies he attacked once more when it applied to Scotland, for the Education Department had appointed by minute on the 1st May, 1893 a committee which impinged on the statutory functions of School Boards. Sandford moved for an address to Her Majesty praying that her consent should be withheld from this minute. He was unsuccessful.³

His struggle for recognition of the voluntary principle in the elementary education of the country was illustrated in the two important measures that the Liberal Government passed this year, The Blind and Deaf Children Act, and the Act raising the school leaving age to eleven. In the first, he moved two amendments, one that the Education Department should only inspect these schools not control them; the other was to limit the power of the school attendance committees as far as these schools were concerned. Both were defeated.⁴ In the second measure, he suggested that making a hard and fast prohibition of work before a child was eleven, might be relaxed in the case of healthy employment in the fields.⁵

He died four months later. The *Times*, recording his death, referred to him as "a model of that special type of character

¹ Hansard, 10th February, 1893. For A. H. D. Acland's work see *Journal of Education*, vol. 79, No. 939.

² Hansard, 21st March, 1893.

³ *Ibid.*, 8th June, 1893.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 31st July, 1893.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28th August, 1893.

which is the salt of the civil service ”,¹ and referred to him as “ one of the men who provided ministers with the raw materials for their policy ”. In view of the fact that civil servants are supposed to have no prejudice, it is indeed interesting to find one who, after doing so much to carry forward the extension of State authority in Education, should, when released from office, spend what should have been his retirement in stating the case of the voluntary schools and agencies, which, by the consequences of the acts of 1870, 1876, and 1880, were in such great difficulties.

¹ The *Times*, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th January, 1894. *Blackwood's*, March, 1895.