

The Brotherton Library University of Leeds

THE AEC COLLECTION GUIDE FOR READERS

[this document dates from the 1980s, and some information may now be inaccurate]

The complete working files of the Association of Education Committees were donated to the University of Leeds in 1977. After three years of sorting and comprehensive cataloguing, they are now available to researchers and other interested readers, under the care of Mr. P.S. Morrish in the Special Collections section of the Brotherton Library. The Collection provides a unique source of primary and secondary material on the administration of education in England and Wales from 1904, when the Association was founded, to 1977 when it was wound-up.

Although the Collection covers the whole period of over 70 years of the Association's existence, it is on the great period of expansion and development which took place following the Education Act of 1944: that the greater part of the Collection bears. There are two main reasons for this. First it was only by the Second World War that the AEC's membership extended to the education committees of all the local education authorities of England and Wales (with the exception of London). Secondly, 1944: saw the appointment of the AEC's longest serving and most influential secretary, Dr. T.I.P. (later Lord) Alexander. He was to continue in the post for over 32 years during which time he was to make his lasting mark not only on the AEC but on the education service as a whole.

The AEC was to be at the centre of post-war period. It differed from by being representative of members outside London and by representing directly involved in the education almost every educational issue of the the other local authority associations of every Local Education Authority only those local government committees service.

This unique position was to make it extremely influential in both local and national affairs, and the Collection reflects this. At the local level the AEC served as both adviser and sounding-board for education officers. At national level the Association contributed to all the major education reports, and between times consistently put the LEA view to the Board of Education, Ministry of Education and Department of Education and Science in turn.

Moreover, the Collection is enriched by the great personal knowledge, experience and influence of Alexander himself who was for 2 years the major spokesman for the education committees of the local authorities.

GUIDE TO THE PRIMARY SOURCES

The Primary Sources take the form of the AEC's own files which are divided into 12 groups lettered A - M. This arrangement has been inherited from the Association's a filing system and has been retained mainly for convenience. I. Major Subject Headings Catalogue. The main catalogue is a bound volume which lists the Collection by major subject headings, in alphabetical order, cross-referenced to take account of subject overlaps. For the first-time user of the Collection this is usually the most useful starting point. Each entry gives the subject heading followed by the file number, title and date. This is very often sufficient information to lead the reader directly to the appropriate files.

II. Numerical Catalogue

Where more detailed information about the contents of an individual file is required, the reader should turn next to the numerical catalogue. This is in the form of a card index system, listing every file in numerical order. Each entry gives a detailed list of the documents to be found in the relevant file.

III. Subsidiary Catalogue

In addition to the two main indexes described above are a number of sections, again in the form of card indexes, which give useful short-cuts to the Collection. These sections may also direct the reader to individual documents on a certain subject which may be found in files predominantly bearing on other subjects. This is a particularly useful feature as a search through the major subject heading catalogue may miss such isolated documents which will consequently not be picked up when consulting the numerical catalogue. These subsidiary sections are as follows:

(a) Education Committees - this section lists the Committees in alphabetical order and directs the reader to documents relating to them. It is divided into two sections. The first identifies all files containing documents relating to the Education Committee in question. The second identifies the more important references and enlarges on detail.

(b) AEC Specific References - this section deals with documents and files relating to the AEC itself, its internal matters and definitive expressions of the Association's policy on particular issues. These are listed in chronological order.

(c) Personal names and places - lists documents and files on particular people, places, institutions, countries, etc. in alphabetical order.

(d) Major Reports - identifies the correspondence, memoranda of evidence, minutes of meetings, expressions of reactions etc. to the various educational Reports, under the name of the chairman or chairwoman (e.g. Robbins, Plowden) in alphabetical order.

(e) The final section of this part of the catalogue is a list of the abbreviations used throughout the catalogue.

THE SECONDARY SOURCES

The AEC library consists of published material and especially such official publications as Ministry Reports, 'Mite Papers, National Advisory Council Reports, Burnham Reports, Hansard Official Reports of Education Debates, statistical returns and so on. Much of the material duplicates what is already available in the Education Section of the Brotherton Library. However, a useful feature of the AEC Library is that much of the material available elsewhere, such as the Hansard Reports of Education Debates and AEC Executive Committee meeting minutes (which are duplicated in the files), are bound together for easy reference.

IV. Other Lists Another section of the catalogue is a box containing lists of useful documents to be found in the AEC Library. These are useful in themselves, giving comprehensive schedules of Education Debates in Parliament, the major education 'deports and Education Bills and Acts in chronological order, covering the entire period from 1907 to 1970.