

Supplement declared. 'The Government's White Paper promises the greatest and grandest educational advance since 1870.' The paper's editor, the progressive-minded Harold Dent, claimed that the government now accepted two key principles – 'that there shall be equality of opportunity, and diversity of provision without impairment of the social unity' – and boldly prophesied that 'the throwing open of secondary education, of various types, to all' would 'result in a prodigious freeing of creative ability, and ensure to an extent yet incalculable that every child shall be prepared for the life he is best fitted to lead and the service he is best fitted to give'.

Did that innocuous phrase 'of various types' catch some eyes? Quite possibly, for although Butler's subsequent legislation would have nothing specific to say about different types of secondary school within the state sector, the fact was that at the very time of his White Paper the Norwood Report was not only enshrining as orthodox a tripartite system of grammar schools, technical schools and secondary moderns but explicitly avowing that 'in the Grammar School the pupil is offered, because he is capable of reaching towards it, a conception of knowledge which is different from that which can be and should be envisaged in other types of school'. A former headmaster of Bristol Grammar School, Marlborough College and Harrow School, Sir Cyril Norwood had no qualms about pecking orders. In fact, there was an incipient movement under way in favour of the comprehensive school (or the 'multilateral', as it was then usually called), a movement in which Dent cautiously participated; yet even in one of English society's more egalitarian phases, such a concept was far removed from practical politics. Significantly, when Dent in early 1944 wrote a pamphlet entitled *The New Educational Bill*, he neither questioned tripartism nor mentioned the comprehensive alternative.

There seems, moreover, to have been a similar lack of concern about the inevitable selection implications of a tripartite structure. 'The Government hold that there is nothing to be said in favour of a system which subjects children at the age of 11 to the strain of a competitive examination on which not only their future schooling but their future careers may depend,' wrote Dent about the White Paper in wholly sanguine mode. 'In the future, children at the age of 11 should be classified, not on the results of a competitive test, but on assessment

of their individual aptitudes largely by such means as school records, supplemented, if necessary, by intelligence tests, due regard being had to their parents' wishes and the careers they have in mind.' Just in case anyone was worried, he added that there would be arrangements for children to transfer at 13 in the unlikely event of a mistake having been made two years earlier.⁹

If for Keynesians, social reformers and educationalists the war provided unimaginable opportunities for influencing the shape of the future, this was even more true for architects and town planners and their cheerleaders. In their case a momentum for fundamental change had been building inexorably between the wars, and now the heady mixture of destruction and reconstruction gave them their chance. That gathering impetus was perfectly encapsulated as early as 1934 by a young architectural writer answering the question 'What Would Wren Have Built Today?' After diagnosing the City of London as overcrowded, badly lit and generally impossible to work in either efficiently or pleasantly, he went on:

We must give up the building rule which restricts the height of buildings, and we must not only do that, but we must build office blocks twice as high as St Paul's, and have green spaces and wide roads in between the blocks. . . . Two dozen skyscrapers, though they would obviously dwarf St Paul's, would not take away from its beauty if they were beautiful themselves. They would alter the skyline, certainly, yet we should not sacrifice health, time, and comfort to one skyline because we have not the courage to create another.

The author of this confident, uncompromising clarion call? John Betjeman, that future doughty conservationist.

Crucially, this rapidly swelling appetite for the new embraced not only the horrors (real and perceived) of the unplanned Victorian city – above all, understandably enough, the horrors of the industrial slums. It also addressed the much more recent blight, as received 'activator' opinion had it, of the suburbs, sprawling outwards through the 1920s and 1930s, especially around London, in a spectacular and apparently unplanned way. They were, declared the Welsh architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis in 1928, full of 'mean and perky little houses that surely