

XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1910-1918 (With Particular Reference to Lutheran Schools)

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About 30,000, mostly rural and mostly Lutheran residents of German heritage or birth inhabited South Australia in 1910. Lutherans were identifiably "German". Rising tension between Britain and Germany alienated them from the State's British majority. With Britain and Germany at war after 1914, Britishers' xenophobia increased and Anglophiles denounced Lutherans and their schools. The stereotype "Lutheran=German=enemy sympathizer" directed hostility at Lutherans. They attracted suspicion and legislative scrutiny between 1910 and 1918. Xenophobically motivated initiatives against Lutherans and their schools were Bills to regulate Lutheran schools in 1910, 1911 and 1915 and their closure by Act of Parliament passed in 1916. Misgivings about Lutheran loyalty pervaded the public education sector. Because Lutheran schools, such as those at rural Bethany, Langmeil and New Mecklenburg, gave some instruction in German, groups pressured the Government to control them or close them. This paper examines pressure group activities by South Australia's Lutheran Synods against legislation threatening their schools.

But first some pressure group theory. Ideologies compete in society. Rival groups promote different policies and practices that the authorities should adopt. The pressure group is the point where values can formulate into demands, develop into public issues and penetrate the political system. A correlation exists between pressure group success and concurrence with society's core beliefs. Groups aligning their demands with society's value system succeed more than those countering it.

The political system operates within the social environment. It processes societal inputs into authoritative decisions and actions that return to society. Other sections of society produce the conditions under which the political system functions. Wants and desires arise in non-political sectors. Changes in the social determinants of existence shape what society's members consider politically desirable or necessary. When a demand is expressed the political process begins.¹

Between 1910 and 1918 Anglophiles demanded that the Government fix perceived problems in Lutheran schools. The Teachers Union disparaged their "Germanness" and poor quality education. The Australian Natives Association and the All-British League assailed their alleged allegiance to Germany and use of the German language. In 1917 an ABL petition with 49,000 signatures demanded, amongst other things, the closure of German schools.²

The Lutheran curriculum warranted criticism. 40% of instruction was given in

¹ David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1965), p. 32.

² *Observer*, 3 November 1917, page 27

German and the English spoken was poor. In 1910 it consisted of sixteen lessons a week in German encompassing Religion, Lesen, Schreiben, Deutsche Sprachübungen, Singen and Geschichte, and twenty-four lessons in English of translation, arithmetic, reading, writing, spelling, language, geography, (optional) history, poetry, drawing and object lessons.³ Ex-Lutheran student, P. A. Linke, damned this syllabus in the Daily Herald. He claimed:

Lutheran schools were established for ... religious teaching ... at the expense of other subjects. ... teaching in German and English was confusing ... neither language was learned well.

German was often given precedence over English ...

Children were taught that they were Germans ...⁴

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Concern over the Lutheran syllabus and standards continued. The Teachers Union bemoaned the "want of any well managed curriculum, the poor quality of some teachers and the wretchedly improper quality of the furniture" in Lutheran schools⁵. Their 1915 conference reiterated Union opposition. Resolution 16 declared: "... in the opinion of this conference it is ... essential to the welfare of both State and children that the Lutheran Schools of South Australia be closed."⁶ Use of German in Lutheran schools had long troubled the ANA. In 1915 the Association insisted that English be the principal instructional language in all private schools.⁷ The All-British League, architect of xenophobia throughout the State, resolved in September 1915 that: "... all German schools should be closed or the teaching conducted in English only".⁸

The Government agreed and drafted legislation extending Education Department powers over Lutheran and other private schools. The 1910 and 1911 proposals required the Minister to keep a list of efficient private schools. Schools were to apply to the Minister for inspection to assess the efficiency of their discipline and teaching methods.⁹ Without inspection and an efficient listing, their instruction could not satisfy the compulsory clauses. The 1915 policy stipulated registration of private schools and teachers.

"Pressure groups feature most conspicuously in support of ... and in opposition to legislative proposals."¹⁰ Lutherans were not consulted and they opposed the proposals. Their activities matched the pattern of pressure group behaviour noted by Trevor Matthews:

deputations approaching a Minister
petitions to Parliament

³ "Course of Instruction for Lutheran Schools in South Australia" in the *Day Schools—Curricula folder*, Lutheran Archives of SA. Box 451-420.

⁴ P.A. Linke in the *Daily Herald*, August 19, 1911, p.7.

⁵ Education Department Records, E.D. 1915, No. 1305 in the S.A. State Archives, Adelaide.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Australian Natives Association Minute Book 6, p. 13, in the office of the General Secretary, ANA, Adelaide.

⁸ *The Daily Herald*, September 7, 1915, p. 3.

⁹ South Australian Parliament, *House of Assembly Bills 1910*, (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1910), No. 66, p. 16.

¹⁰ V.O. Key Jr. *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (5th ed.; New York; Crowell, 1964, p. 130.

lobbying members to withdraw a bill before the second reading vote seeking amendments during the committee stage, and seeking to influence Parliamentary elections 11

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No evidence appears in 1910 or 1911 of Lutheran deputations approaching the Minister over the Bills. However, contacts with politicians and petitions presented to Parliament evinced Lutheran opposition to the measures. In 1910 and 1911 pastors circulated petitions to Parliamentarians among the Evangelical Lutheran congregations for signatures.¹² The Immanuel Synod did not oppose the Bill in 1910.¹³ Their Synod conference of March 1911 hardened its attitude to the Bill and subscribed to the petitions.¹⁴ They censured inspection for jeopardizing the exercise of Lutherans' religious liberty.¹⁵ Mr. H. Homburg MP presented a typical petition asserting that the Bill "...contained provisions which were unnecessary, unjust, and undemocratic ... which would endanger ... parochial schools...They ... prayed that the House would not permit the provisions to become law..."¹⁶

The efficacy of this Lutheran pressure is dubious. The 1910 legislation lapsed when Parliament lacked time to process it. In 1911 Thomas Ryan secured the extension of the commission investigating University and Higher Education to include all aspects of the State's education.¹⁷ Parliament shelved the Bill until the Commission completed its work. Accordingly Lutheran opposition dwindled.

Government enquiries enable pressure groups to influence future public policies. The Ryan Commission's report formed the basis of the 1915 Education Act. Given that regulation of private schools was such a live issue, it is surprising that the Commission did not hear more about it. No Lutheran representative opposed it before the Commission, and the Lutheran press remained strangely silent. Remarks were limited to questions to the Director of Education, the President of the Teachers Union, the principal of Christian Brothers College and interstate education directors. Ultimately the Commission's recommendations on registering private schools were influenced not by the private schools, but by governmental agencies.¹⁸ Subsequent events mirrored Easton's paradigm above.¹⁹ Witness submissions influenced the political system to mandate registration of private schools and teachers. That in turn generated opposition to the policy. The Commission recommended compulsory attendance of children seven to thirteen years at a public school or an approved private school, and that

¹¹ T.V. Matthews, "Pressure Groups and Political Influence" in D.A. Jecks (ed), *Influences in Australian Education*, (Perth: Carrolls, 1974), p. 12.

¹² *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote fur Australien*, November 17, 1910, p. 185

¹³ *Kirchen und Missions Zeitung*, November 15, 1910, p.367

¹⁴ *The Barossa News*, March 17, 1911, p. 3.

¹⁵ Protest re. the 1910 Education Bill folder, Box 451-420 Lutheran Archives, North Adelaide and *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote fur Australien*, November 17, 1910, p. 185.

¹⁶ *SAPD* 1911, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸ *SAPP* 1911, No. 27,

¹⁹ David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1965), p. 32.

private schools be registered with the Education Department "subject to inspection by special officers ..." The Commissioners noted that, "We believe this would be welcomed by the great majority of teachers of private schools."²⁰ Such sweeping reforms necessitated a new Act.

The Liberal Union defeated the Verran Labor Ministry at the 1912 election. Lutherans sought to counter inspection by swaying the election result. In January the Evangelical Synod sought candidates' attitude to the relevant clauses of the previous Bills. It inferred what a Lutheran vote was worth: "As the election is drawing nigh, the electors are naturally considering the situation, in order to be able to intelligently decide, for whom to cast their vote."²¹ Bipartisan disapproval of interference with parochial schools complicated the question of whether or not Lutheran votes influenced the outcome. Lutherans believed they had helped defeat the Government and rejoiced that hostile legislation was forestalled.²² These clashes between Lutherans and Government over inspection established a pattern of confrontation that continued for years.

Between 1912 and 1915 the Liberals governed the State. They maintained existing education policies and ignored the Commission's recommendations because of the costs involved. Their term ended in 1915 and education again stirred an election campaign. The Commission's report embarrassed the Liberals because Premier Peake, while a Commission member, refused to sign the final report as its recommendations implied heavy expenditure. His use of the report after three years of inactivity lacked sincerity. The Commission identified an urgent need for reform but the Liberals failed to act.²³ Labor took advantage of this. Leader Crawford Vaughan declared Labor's education agenda in his policy speech. "We favour the adoption in the main of the recommendations of the Education Commission".²⁴ That included registration.

The inspection issue cost Labor votes in 1912, but not in 1915. The social determinants of existence had altered dramatically. Australia was at war with a nation linked in the public mind with Lutheran schools. In March 1915 electors returned Labor to Government. Labor promised a new Education Bill containing the Commission's recommendations. Victory made educational reform Government policy. Vaughan's administration honoured its promise. Governor, Sir Henry Lionel Galway, foreshadowed it when opening the new Parliament on July 8, 1915. He announced that: "My Ministers are initiating ... improvements in the Educational System ... A Bill for consolidation and amendment of the laws relating to Education ... based upon the recommendations of the Education Commission will be submitted to you".²⁵ Pressure from interested groups accompanied the legislation. Premier

²⁰ SAPP 1913, No. 75., p. lix.

²¹ Evangelical Lutheran Synod Committee to candidates, January 26, 1912, in the Lutheran Archives of S.A., Box 451-420.

²² *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote fur Australien*, March 7, 1912, p. 39, and *Kirchen Und Missions Zeitung*, 7 March 12, 1912, p. 87.

²³ *The Advertiser*, March 17, 1915, p. 13.

²⁴ *The Daily Herald*, February 27, 1915, p. 6 and *The Register*, February 27, 1915, p. 12.

²⁵ SAPD 1915, p. 3.

Vaughan, as Minister of Education, introduced the Bill on September 8, 1915. The Government sought to ensure that every child in the State received an efficient English education. Opening the second reading debate he claimed to have based the Bill on two major principles: "Firstly ... that education should be free, compulsory and secular; and secondly, that the recommendations of the Education Commission should ... be embodied in the legislation of the State".²⁶ While the Bill won general approval, conflict surfaced over clauses mandating registration of private schools and teachers.²⁷ The Government claimed consent to legislate registration because its promise to implement the Commission's report won it electoral endorsement. However, Lutherans dissented. Australia was fighting Germany in 1915 and war-related xenophobia brought the ANA and the ABL into the debate.

Before the Bill was drafted Anglophiles pressured the Minister to purge Lutheran schools of German or to close them. The Minister assured delegations from the ANA,²⁸ the Teachers Union²⁹ and the ABL that the matter was receiving the Government's attention.³⁰ He told the Union that: This ... was an opportune time to insist upon ... English ... being adopted in ... Lutheran schools and that they ... be registered. He knew of no other time when such a provision could have been passed...³¹

He assured the League that the new Bill would limit tuition in German to 30 minutes a day, and that all other subjects would be taught in English.³² Clause 61 of the Bill was drafted for that purpose. Part one provided that no private school be registered unless "for at least nine-tenths of the time ... the instruction ... is given through the medium of the English language." Part two gutted German instruction through its provision that "any time occupied in teaching the German language or literature shall not ... be reckoned as time during which instruction is given through the medium of the English language."³³ Clause 61 reflected the xenophobic clamour of Anglophiles that English should be paramount and that German be suppressed.

Lutherans changed strategy in 1915. WWI exacerbated relations, and public hostility increased. Opinion columns containing xenophobic allegations about Lutheran disloyalty escalated in 1915 and continued throughout 1916 and 1917.³⁴ Their 1910 tactic had been to flood Parliament with petitions. In 1915 they resorted to three key strategies. Firstly, deputations approached the Minister to influence the content of the legislation. Before the Bill was drafted a deputation presented declarations of loyalty, an affirmation of the pre-eminence of English for instruction and the use of German for religious

²⁶ SAPD 1915, p. 791.

²⁷ *The Daily Herald*, September 9, 1915, p. 4.

²⁸ Australian Natives Association Minute Book 6, p. 13, in the office of the General Secretary, ANA, Adelaide.

²⁹ Education Department Records, E.D. 1915 No. 1305.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 38-39.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ SAPD 1915, p. 1535.

³⁴ See for example the extensive list of articles about Germans in Australia listed in The Manning Index of South Australian History, <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/manning/sa/ww1/germans.htm> accessed 12/06/2007.

purposes only and not to promote pan-Germanic aims. 35 They asked the Minister not to include anything that would endanger their schools. While the Bill was before Parliament another deputation tried to persuade him to withdraw sections of the legislation before the second reading vote.

Secondly, they started a campaign to quell doubts about Lutheran loyalty and change public opinion. They established a fund to help wounded soldiers and their dependents in June 1915. They used the public meeting as a forum to air their grievances. Lutheran teachers convened at the Flinders Street Lutheran Church on July 2, 1915 to refute Teachers Union accusations. They expressed their loyalty and condemned pan-Germanism with an avowal that they had nothing to do with Germany.³⁶ Lutheran schools gave ostentatious displays of patriotism on Empire Day and Australia Day in 1915.

The Synods applied valid pressures before the introduction of the Education Bill. They interviewed sympathetic Members, used deputations with the Minister to request consideration, gained publicity in the press to influence public opinion and used the large meeting to expound their position. After all this they only had the Minister's promise that he would fully consider their views. Despite their pressure, when he presented the Bill to the House on September 8, 1915, it clearly contained sections Lutherans opposed.

Thirdly, and most successfully, the Evangelical Synod's School Committee interviewed politicians and provided them with memoranda and other correspondence. Lutherans rejected registration requirements in Clause 61 cited above that 90% of instruction must be in English³⁷ and a limit of 30 minutes German a day. To avert restriction of the German language the Committee conducted interviews and correspondence with parliamentarians during the second reading debate. Thomas H. Smeaton (Labor, Sturt) and Ephraim Henry Coombe (Labor, Barossa) received correspondence from and engaged in interviews with the Committee. They handed Coombe a memorandum on October 5 which he presented during the second reading debate. They argued their schools' loyalty, efficiency and Christian character to allay prejudice and assure authorities that English was already the chief medium of instruction.

The Assembly passed the Bill with the registration and language provisions intact. Before it went to the Upper House on November 2, Committee Chairman F. C. Graebner met with Edward Lucas the Opposition leader in the Liberal Union dominated Legislative Council. Lucas advised the Lutherans to leave the matter to him.³⁸ The Council struck registration from the Bill and provided voluntary inspection of private schools. Another Lucas amendment limited the obligatory use of English to four hours a day; leaving an hour for German and religion.³⁹ Lutheran pressure seemingly obstructed Government plans to enact registration.

³⁵ *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote für Australien*, July 22, 1915 pp. 115-117

³⁶ *Ibid.* 3, 1915, p. 8.

³⁷ House Bill No. 26 of 1915, Clause 61, sections 1 and 2, pp 25-26

³⁸ Report of the School Committee, 1921, p. 4.

³⁹ *SAPD*, 1915. pp. 2439-40.

Notwithstanding this ostensible success Lutheran schools were on borrowed time. In 1916 the Government overturned its decision to retain them and despite continued pressure by the Synods, passed an amending Act that closed down South Australia's Lutheran primary schools⁴⁰. The Act authorized State seizure of forty-nine Lutheran primary schools in July 1917.⁴¹ The Advertiser reported the Australia Plains School's fate: "Notice was served ... that, as from 1 July 1917, the school would be taken over by the Minister of Education ... there were 49 such schools in the State and more than 1,600 scholars ... Only one teacher of a Lutheran school was engaged by the Education Department..."⁴² Others fared worse. One complained to The Advertiser: "... few of the main sufferers are now teaching. That Act has driven me right into poverty..."⁴³

Lutherans' schools closed because their demands confronted dominant values. Campaigns framed in terms of societal standards are more successful than those contesting them. Anglophiles prevailed because they concurred with the spirit of the day. Ultimately Lutherans lacked sufficient political clout to safeguard their schools and the political system rejected their demands, favouring competing and mutually exclusive demands.

⁴⁰ Act 1268/16

⁴¹ *SAPP* 1918, No. 44, p3

⁴² *The Advertiser*, 12 June 1917, page 4

⁴³ *The Advertiser*, 16 November 1929, page 22

APPENDIX A

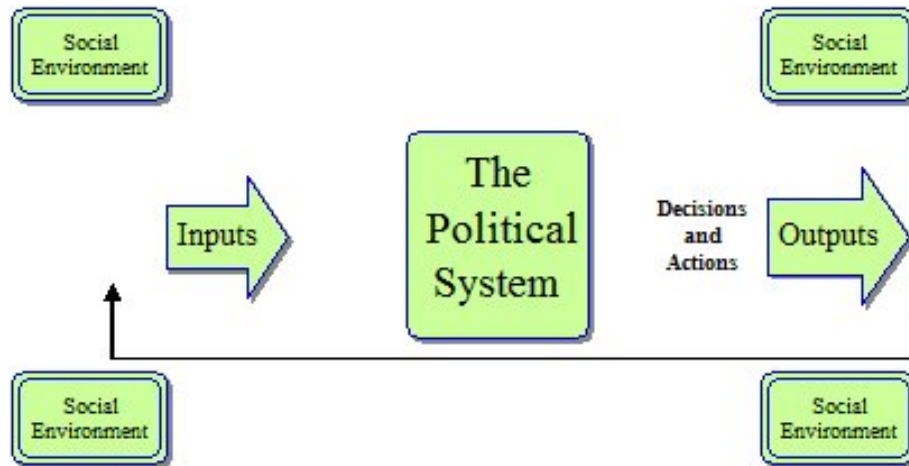


Figure 1 A simplified Model of a Political System, after Easton (1965), p 32
APPENDIX B

-phobia = Greek: fear, extreme fear of; morbid, excessive, irrational fear, or terror of something or someone; however, sometimes this Greek element means a strong dislike or hatred for something or someone.

APPENDIX C

Curriculum for the Schools of the Lutheran Immanuel Synod in Australia (1915)

In Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography, Composition the standard set by the Education Department is adopted. English history is also compulsory; the quantity to be taught is left to the discretion of the teacher. The same applies to singing and drawing; physical drill is in accordance with the demands of the Defence Department. Needlework is to be taught where practicable.

For religious instruction the 104 extracts from the Holy Bible contained in our "Bible Stories" are to be treated once every three years. The six chapters of the Catechism are to be committed to memory in six years; teachers are to confine their efforts to the explanation of the words not the subject matter. Twenty selected hymns are likewise to be committed to memory, to be distributed over a course of six years.

German reading is to correspond with the standard set in English reading.

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