



Sefydliad Materion Cymreig  
Institute of Welsh Affairs

# **SAVING OUR LANGUAGE**

**Ken Hopkins**

**Published in Wales by the  
Institute of Welsh Affairs**

**St Andrew's House  
24 St Andrew's Crescent,  
Cardiff,  
CF10 3DD**

**First Impression  
June 2006**

**ISBN  
1 904773 10 9**

**© Institute of Welsh Affairs  
/ Ken Hopkins**

**All rights reserved. No part  
of this publication may be  
reproduced, stored in a  
retrieval system, or  
transmitted in any form or  
by any means without the  
prior permission of the  
publishers.**



The Institute of Welsh Affairs exists to promote quality research and informed debate affecting the cultural, social, political and economic well-being of Wales. IWA is an independent organisation owing no allegiance to any political or economic interest group. Our only interest is in seeing Wales flourish as a country in which to work and live. We are funded by a range of organisations and individuals. For more information about the Institute, its publications, and how to join, either as an individual or corporate supporter, contact:

IWA - Institute of Welsh Affairs  
St Andrew's House  
24 St Andrew's Crescent  
Cardiff  
CF10 3DD

Tel      029 2066 6606  
Fax      029 2022 1482  
Email   wales@iwa.org.uk  
Web     [www.iwa.org.uk](http://www.iwa.org.uk)

## **THE AUTHOR**



Born in the Garw Valley of Welsh-speaking parents, Ken Hopkins was educated at Porth Grammar School and Oxford University. He taught English at Porth Grammar School and was Head Master at Ferndale Grammar School from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Later he became Education Officer with Rhondda Borough Council and then Director of Education with the former County of Mid Glamorgan during the 1970s and 1980s. For many years he was secretary of the Rhondda Labour Party, and also a member of the Welsh Labour Executive which he chaired in 1993.

## **COVER PHOTOGRAPH**

Children studying Welsh at Treorchy Comprehensive School which is pioneering the teaching of the Welsh language in the English Medium Schools sector.

## CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>FUTURE OF THE LANGUAGE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE PIONEERS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THE MEANING OF BILINGUALISM.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WELSH IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>THE BASQUE EXPERIENCE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHANGING ATTITUDES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>THE NEED FOR A POLICY INITIATIVE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>THE RHONDDA EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A WELSH LANGUAGE MANIFESTO.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SAVING OUR LANGUAGE.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<b>ACTION POINTS FOR IMPLEMENTING A WELSH LANGUAGE MANIFESTO .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>SEMINAR ATTENDEES .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## Foreword

I had probably lost all my fluency in the Welsh language by the time I was eleven years old. Later I spent more than 20 years as a teacher of English. Some people might well ask, therefore, why I am now calling for the Welsh Assembly Government to take urgent action to save the Welsh language from accelerating towards inevitable extinction.

I can still faintly remember from the distant Thirties my mother and my father speaking to me in Welsh. I owe it to them to help save what was their first language and once mine. Common Welsh phrases and expressions still come naturally to me without any conscious need for translation, very different from when I try to speak in the French or Spanish I learned at school. I am also convinced that for Welsh people, not only is their language an essential part of their cultural and individual distinctiveness, but that for us all - and particularly for non-Welsh speakers living in Wales, and for those who once spoke, but have now lost it - the language can bring a comfortable sense of personal identity and of being part of the Welsh community.

Another influential factor in persuading me to write this paper was a family friend, Mrs Elaine Barnett, headmistress of Ton Pentre Nursery and Infants School. I have learnt how in her school and others in Treorchy Comprehensive School's catchment area, teachers had been working with its Headmistress Mrs Bethan Guilfoyle, to increase the number of Welsh speakers. I have visited their two splendid schools to see and hear for myself these remarkable achievements. Mrs Guilfoyle has acknowledged the school's debt to Wayne Williams, Welsh language adviser to the Powys Education authority. Previously, he was Head of Welsh at Treorchy and played a leading part in launching the bold initiative that we hope will now also be taken up in many other schools. I am most grateful to him for the information and guidance he has given.

This paper would not have been published but for the encouragement and support given by the Institute of Welsh Affairs and its Director, John Osmond. Particularly valuable was a seminar he organised when leading Welsh-speaking educationists discussed with Mrs. Barnett, Mrs Guilfoyle and myself their approach to the teaching of Welsh as a second language and the implications of my call for a radical policy to save the language (see Appendix page 30). The Welsh Language Board was also represented at the seminar and it is only right that the help and advice that I have received from its Chief Executive, Meirion Prys Jones, and his colleagues be acknowledged.

Though it was a great relief to know from the 2001 census that the continuing decline in the number of Welsh speakers had at last been halted it is essential to ensure that any complacency does not lead to a fatal inaction. That danger is clear from a significant answer given by Jane Davidson, the Assembly Government Education Minister, to a question from my own Rhondda AM, Leighton Andrews, when he asked for the present numbers of pupils taught Welsh as a first language. Despite the Assembly Government's heavy investment in groups like Ysgolion Meithrin and the appointment of more Athrawan Bro, despite the opening of many more Welsh medium primary and comprehensive schools, and despite the deep commitment and conscientious efforts of their teachers, the latest figures from 1998 to 2003 show a disappointing increase in pupils taught Welsh as a first language. In primary schools it was up from 17.7 per cent to just 18.7 per cent, and in comprehensive schools up from 13.3 per cent to only 14.4 per cent. That was a rate of increase at just one fifth of one per cent for each year over a period of five years.

Obviously, pupil admissions may now have reached something of a plateau. However, the future could be even worse. The Minister went on to forecast that between 2003 and 2012 the sharp decline in the birth rate would lead to a critical drop of 10 per cent in the total number of pupils in our schools. As a result we should be alarmed that an annual one fifth of one per cent increase over each of five years in the number of pupils taught Welsh as a first language is never going to compensate for that critical and continuing 10 per cent drop in pupil rolls, about a fifth to a quarter of whom could be attending Welsh medium schools. It would be irresponsible to ignore the fact that the language is now facing a major challenge.

Finally, I must also acknowledge the support and guidance given by two fluent Welsh speakers. First is Mrs. Margaret Hemmings, brought up in Ceredigion, now living in Barry and the former and celebrated Headmistress of Lewis Girls' school, Second is the new Minister of my father's former chapel Reverend Gethin Rhys, past pupil of Rhydfelen, Glamorgan's first Welsh medium comprehensive school. Both have been kind enough to read drafts of the text, and both have given me detailed and invaluable advice based on their own personal experience of the language. Doug Jones, a good friend of mine from County Hall days when he was County Further Education Officer, and who has an affection for the language, has also made some most helpful suggestions, particularly about the Welsh language in adult education and the role which the media, the business world and the Internet should play. Let me make it clear, however, that this paper expresses my own personal view of what is now needed if the language is not to decline and finally become extinct.

Ken Hopkins  
May 2006

## Future of the Language

In 2004 the Welsh Language Board announced that the seemingly inevitable decline in the number of people who can speak Welsh had at last been halted. This provides an encouraging basis for us to consider the future of the language and to ask if a step change can be made to double the number of Welsh speakers by 2025. If we were to achieve that, half the population of Wales would be able to speak Welsh.

In seeking this outcome we should first acknowledge the resolute efforts of those small groups of language enthusiasts who campaigned so stubbornly for the first Welsh language primary schools to be set up in Llanelli in 1947, in Treorchy in 1950, and followed in communities in other parts of Wales. After all, it was they who had begun the first phase of what most people thought to be a doomed and unrealistic crusade to save the language. Yet, it was only because of such campaigns by determined pioneers that we are now in a position to consider what should be the most effective way of finally saving the Welsh language.

Table 1 shows the number of people, aged three and over, who, since 1901, claimed on the day of each Census to be Welsh speakers.

**Table 1: Number of Welsh speakers**

Year	Persons (thousands)	%
1901	930	49.9
1911	977	43.5
1921	922	37.1
1931	909	36.8
1951	714	28.9
1961	656	26.0
1971	542	20.8
1981	508	18.9
1991	500	18.5
2001	582	20.8

Source: Office of National Statistics and National Assembly Welsh Language Unit

Table 2 provides the number of speakers in each unitary authority on census day in 2001, a varying set of statistics that well illustrates the difficulty and complexity of the challenge facing the language. Fortunately, section 32 (c) of the 1998 Government of Wales Act the National Assembly has wide-ranging powers to “**do anything it considers appropriate to support the Welsh language.**” Indeed, the Act can without any difficulty be interpreted as almost inviting the Assembly to prepare and adopt a radical policy aimed at saving the language.



**Table 2: Number of Welsh speakers by Unitary Authority in 2001**

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Thousands</b>
Carmarthenshire	84,196
Gwynedd	77,846
Anglesey	38,893
Ceredigion	37,918
Conwy	31,298
Swansea	28,938
Neath Port Talbot	23,404
Powys	25,814
Denbighshire	28,760
Rhondda Cynon Taf	27,946
Pembrokeshire	23,967
Flintshire	20,599
Cardiff	32,504
Wrexham	18,105
Bridgend	13,397
Caerphilly	18,237
Vale of Glamorgan	12,994
Merthyr Tydfil	5,532
Newport	13,135
Torfaen	9,780
Monmouthshire	7,688
Blaenau Gwent	6,417
<b>Total</b>	<b>582,368</b>

Source: Census 2001

## The Pioneers

Another compelling reason for taking action is that the Welsh language is no longer the lonely passion of a few eccentrics. That was certainly the case in the early 1950s when I began teaching English in Rhondda schools. I remember how the pioneers' resolute struggle to persuade local opinion led to Rhondda Borough Council's Education Committee establishing its first Welsh medium school. Most councillors on that Committee reflected the commonly held public view that Welsh was a dying language. They saw establishing a Welsh medium school as a hopelessly romantic and doomed project. They assumed Welsh would suffer the same inevitable experience as that of other minority languages until, by the year 2000, it would not be spoken by anyone. Sentimentally, most people thought it rather sad that their old language should go the way of the languages of Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Ireland and Scotland.

Only a few kept stubbornly asking what could be done to save the language. Fortunately, however, there were also several Welsh-speaking councillors who felt very strongly that action should, and could, be taken to prevent their language meeting such an unhappy fate. Surprising themselves, and against the odds, they won a critical vote to establish the first Welsh Medium school in Glamorgan in Treorchy. Fifty years on the slow decline in the number of Welsh speakers has at long last been halted and in 2001 the percentage of Welsh speakers in 2001 returned to the 1971 level. However, despite this considerable achievement the number of Welsh speakers remains limited to one in five of our people.

My own personal experience probably mirrors that of many Welsh speakers who have also lost the language. My mother and father had both been fluent Welsh speakers when they married and left Upper Cwmtwrch, a small half rural anthracite-mining village at the top of the Swansea Valley. They were truly bilingual. Having worked down the pit and fought with the Welsh Fusiliers in France throughout the First World War, my father graduated from University in Cardiff before being ordained as a Congregational minister.

Although, of course, he could preach in both languages, his first call came from Pontycymmer in the Garw Valley, another mining community just across from Porth and the Rhondda Valleys. Consequently he became minister of an English Congregational Church rather than of a Welsh equivalent, a Capel yr Annibynwyr, a development that had disappointed my always Welsh speaking aunts. However, they were relieved, and very pleased, when my father told them that the language of the Manse at Pontycymmer would still be Welsh.

In the early Thirties, my father was asked to become the minister of the English Congregational chapel serving the new Ely council housing estate in Cardiff. One of my earliest memories at the age of five was feeling very isolated and anxiously nervous in the playground of Herbert Thompson Infants' school where all my fellow pupils were speaking English. Not one spoke Welsh. Only one sympathetic and older teacher, still remembering some words from her own childhood and feeling sorry for me, made a special effort on most days, offering a few familiar Welsh phrases. It was as if to reassure me that at least she did not consider me an outcast from an alien world. My younger brother Gareth, who had been born in Cardiff, had the misfortune to lose the chance to learn Welsh in the home and in later years was to attend Welsh language evening classes.

English took the place of Welsh for us at home in Ely. Our neighbours spoke English, as did nearly all my father's entire congregation. Welsh had gone. English was everywhere, and was spoken all over the world: in India, in South Africa, in America and in Australia. William Shakespeare had written his greatest plays in it, and now it had already probably

become the majority language of Wales, and most certainly in its southeastern corner. Any future for the Welsh language seemed certain to be short lived.

However, while recognising that English was a world language the language pioneers of Llanelli and Treorchy were still not prepared to concede that this meant there was no place for Welsh. Nor would my father's equally obstinate two sisters, who were infant school teachers back at home in the then totally Welsh speaking Cwmtwrch. They continually reminded him that he should make every effort to ensure their nephews spoke Welsh. Otherwise, they feared, and they were certainly not joking, we would never be able to have jobs with BBC Cymru, and not even with the Anglicised BBC Wales.

Their worst fears were once more confirmed when my father accepted another call, this time to an English Congregational church in Newport. Although only 12 miles nearer England than Cardiff, this was even more dominated by English speakers. There my schooling continued at Durham Road Junior School, where unsurprisingly no one spoke Welsh. Indeed, in the 1930s there was little evidence of Newport being part of Welsh speaking Wales. This should not be considered extraordinary because Newport was almost a border town, only twenty miles from England. In the troubled 1930s, described so accurately by the English poet W.H. Auden as the *Age of Anxiety*, it seemed obvious that if you wanted to get on in the world speaking Welsh would be of little help.

My father's last position was to be the English Congregational chapel, which at the time had more than 400 members at Porth in the Rhondda. This was another Valleys mining community suffering grievously from the harshest effects of the economic Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Of course, my maiden aunts were delighted that their brother's family was at last coming closer to Cwmtwrch, and hoped and prayed that soon the former fluency in Welsh of one of their nephews would be restored. Sadly, it was now too late. Because we were living in increasingly anglicised Cardiff and Newport, my Welsh had critically dwindled. Although I had now reached the age of 12, it remained that of a 5 year old with an inevitably uncertain syntax and a limited vocabulary.

Having been lucky enough to win a place in the unfair and cruel eleven-plus examination lottery and spent my first year at Newport's St Julian's High School, I became a second year pupil at the formidable Rhondda County Grammar School for Boys at Porth. Here I was at once faced with making a choice in the second year between Welsh and French, a decision then facing most grammar school pupils in Wales. As I had already started on French at Newport, and because my Welsh was now so rudimentary, there really was no choice left to me.

In any case, Welsh was then seen by my adolescent friends as distinctly old fashioned, and most pupils in my year had chosen French. Indeed, I was to continue with French and English into the school's quite small Sixth Form. There were, I think, fifteen of us in all, eleven of whom had chosen science subjects, and thus had had their military service delayed until after the war.

Only four of us took arts subjects. No one took Welsh, though Gareth Alban Davies, later to be a Professor of Spanish at Leeds and whose father had been minister of a Welsh chapel higher up the Valley at Ton Pentre, was of course fluent in the language, and thus understandably had no need to do so. In that small Sixth Form we all spoke in English to one another.

Rather unusually for someone from the Rhondda Valleys whose sea experience had been limited to cross Bristol Channel trips in those pre-war hot summers on P & A Campbell's paddle steamers plying between Cardiff and Weston-super-Mare or Ilfracombe, my next three years were spent as a radio operator on submarines in the Atlantic and the Pacific. This was followed by four years reading English at Oxford and completing teacher training. These seven years did nothing to restore my earlier childhood fluency in Welsh.

However, those early attempts at saving the language begun in Glamorgan after the war continued. After the advances made with the opening of the Rhondda's first Welsh medium primary school, a long period of consolidation and reinforcement proved necessary. Welsh medium schools soon followed throughout the County of Glamorgan, which then stretched from Gorseinon in the west to Caerphilly in the east, and comprised one third of the population of Wales. A major and logical step forward was the establishment at Rhydfelen, Pontypridd, of a new Welsh medium secondary school to take in the Welsh medium primary school pupils from the surrounding Valleys. Another secondary school was soon to follow at Ystalyfera in the Swansea Valley to meet the growing demand in the western half of that large county.

Over the last 50 years a network of Welsh School parents' associations have been an effective and persistent pressure group for Welsh Medium schools. Often their officers would be received at Glamorgan County Hall by the Director of Education, and occasionally they would even meet redoubtable Education Committee chairmen, such as Alderman Llewellyn Heycock of Port Talbot or later Mid Glamorgan's Philip Squire of Bridgend. Indeed, after the local government reorganisation of 1974, the latter carried on his predecessor's same strong Labour Party policy of often unrecognised, support for the language. Ignoring the marked disparity in their school populations, he would often mischievously delight in pointing

out to Welsh Medium School parents' deputations that, Mid Glamorgan now had more Welsh-speaking pupils than the language heartlands of the County of Gwynedd.

As Director of Education one of my first actions had been to confirm with the Chair of the Education Committee the County's future education policies. His first major policy decision had been to ask me to report to committee on how to complete the abolition of the eleven-plus selection examination still imposed on the pupils of schools in two of the County's Districts, the Cynon and the Rhondda Valleys. Another frustrating issue was the continuing parental demand for Welsh medium education, and the use of old school premises as an often inadequate and makeshift way of meeting the consequential need for additional school places. With the limited building programmes then granted to Mid Glamorgan, there was little that could usefully be done to improve matters.

## The Meaning of Bilingualism

Welsh Medium schools had of course been deliberately set up as separate schools to make sure that during school hours the only language spoken or heard during the school day was Welsh. The aim had been to guarantee that the 90 per cent and more of pupils not coming from Welsh speaking homes would then be taught in as complete a Welsh language environment as possible. Though such a development was essential for the survival of the language, it has had the unfortunate effect of emphasising a separation between the two languages, thus making it more difficult for us to achieve a Wales in which the majority of its people would be able to speak both English and Welsh. It will be only then that we will be able to claim that Wales truly is a bilingual country, and that in Wales, Welsh, like English, will really be on its way to becoming ***iaith pawb, everybody's language***. Unfortunately for us in Mid Glamorgan at that time, the critical shortage of Welsh speaking teachers, as we were soon to realise, had made such a development impossible.

Now, thirty years later, things are very different. The hour has come when it may be possible at last to begin, as an addition to the present Welsh Medium schools, to try and make all our schools truly bilingual, with a particular emphasis on the spoken language. First, however, it will be essential in a democracy to consult with the people of Wales, and find out if they are really content to have only one in five of our people speaking one of its languages, in sharp contrast with the five out of five speaking the other.

Do the people of Wales at last want action to save their own language? That is the imponderable, and still unanswered question, but one that perhaps formally should now be put to the people.

There is of course one direct and simple way of ensuring that in most of the school system the effect of language separation is neutralised. That is, and different and apart from the existing Welsh Medium schools which already have their own unique, distinctive role to play, to make all our other primary schools truly bilingual, but with an emphasis on the spoken language, thus making sure that by the time most of their pupils move on to the secondary stage they will all be entering what will be bilingual comprehensive schools with most pupils capable of speaking both Welsh and English fluently.

Perhaps it might now be useful to try to define what is meant by the word 'bilingual'. Unfortunately, it is not easy, mainly because of the casual and loose use of the word over so many years. For example, one dictionary definition: '*speaking or using two languages fluently*' might seem, at first, to be straightforward and acceptable enough. Yet, with the use of English limited to lessons in English and its Literature, and, in line with the immersion strategy, kept to a minimum during school hours, Welsh Medium schools are still often intentionally described as bilingual in order to calm and re-assure parents that the immersion techniques adopted in them do not militate against their children's fluency in English.

There are also some language purists who would immediately reject such a definition because it signifies that the reading and writing of the language have been sidelined by the spoken. They would claim that bilingual cannot be defined as only the spoken word, but must also include the reading and writing of the language and its literature. Others again have been so frustrated at trying to define the word that in despair they have given up the attempt, and have then argued that, as long as we are increasing the number of Welsh speakers, then trying to define 'bilingual' is a pointless exercise and a waste of time that could be spent more productively.

Attempts at definition inevitably tend to become confused but, fortunately, the Welsh Language Board has advised that a long needed study of the definition of this sensitive and many faceted word is soon to be published. That should be most helpful to any consideration of the future of the language. Later, too, in this paper there will be reference to the language experience of the Basque people living in Spain and France, which might also perhaps suggest a way forward for us in Wales, if we were to adopt the Basque practice of formally recognising and defining in our schools differing levels of bilingualism.

In addition to the Basque, there are, of course, several other models we can follow. For example, in the Canadian province of Quebec, French and English are both recognised as Canada's languages, while in Switzerland the Swiss speak French, German, Italian and even Romansch, spoken in the canton of Grisons and which has been one of the official languages of Switzerland for more than 70 years.

Why, the Welsh people must ask themselves, should Welsh and English not be the true, and not just the official languages of Wales? Why should only 20 per cent of the Welsh people be fluent in Welsh? Such a minority and continuing status for the language will not save it. If radical action is not taken urgently to improve its lowly rank then Welsh will end up, like Irish in Ireland's *Gaeiltacht*, kept artificially alive, yet doomed to final extinction, a grotesque and weird exhibit in a theme park for archaic languages.

## **Welsh in English-medium Schools**

If the language is to be saved, we must encourage and develop in our English Medium comprehensive schools the use of both languages by most of the pupils through the school day. At the moment, in schools that are for some reason mistakenly called bilingual, the standard of second language Welsh seems to be abysmal.

In fact, second language Welsh seems to have been ignored and forgotten, emerging starkly as the poor relation of Welsh Medium schools as far as status or priority for expenditure is concerned. Nor does there seem to be any evidence of any joint, cooperative working which we might have expected between the so called bilingual and Welsh Medium schools in improving the speaking and the teaching of the language before its inevitable decline and ultimate extinction.

Estyn's annual report for 2002-03 confirms the wretched situation and notes, for example, that standards at Key Stage 4 (ages 14 to 16) remain very low. The majority of pupils studying Welsh as a Second Language follow only a short course. Estyn's report observes that their lack of progress is very often attributable to the fact that many pupils only spend one hour a week studying Welsh. In addition, when it evaluates standards in developing Welsh teaching and bilingualism the report delivers the following damning and depressing judgement:

"Most schools have a long way to go in raising standards in Welsh as a Second Language. Very few pupils become fluent in Welsh by the time they leave school. Fewer than half the pupils who study Welsh as a Second Language in secondary schools follow a full GCSE course in the subject. Some schools do not do enough to help pupils who are learning Welsh as a second language to use it outside their Welsh classes." (Paragraphs 72-73)

*Iaith Pawb*, the National Assembly's action plan for a bilingual Wales approved in 2001 says that more needs to "be done to drive up standards in pupils' experience of Welsh as a second language," (paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19). However, it does not tell us what urgent and emergency action should be taken. Surprisingly and disappointingly, all it says is that the Assembly Government did not accept the conclusion of Her Majesty's Inspectors that, because of the disappointing levels of fluency achieved by learners at the age of 14, Welsh should now become an optional subject in the National Curriculum after their fourth year at the comprehensive school.

We agree Welsh should not be made optional, but in view of HMI's condemnatory report, we would have expected the Assembly to take decisive, urgent and radical action to improve the teaching of Second Language Welsh which obviously in too many schools does not come anywhere near *Iaith Pawb's* description of them as bilingual. What HMI should be asking is not whether there can be any point in retaining Welsh as an option in those so-called bilingual schools which allocate only one hour a week to its study, but asking head teachers to increase the time allocation to it.

Fortunately, however, *Iaith Pawb* does also refer to the Assembly's remit letter to the curriculum body for Wales, ACCAC (2003-2004), which asks it to provide advice on ways of raising attainment standards in Welsh as a Second Language. That advice, it asks, should focus on a real improvement in pupils' productive language skills, especially speaking skills, and to a progressive rise in the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 5 by age 14. Rightly, *Iaith Pawb* then concludes by emphasising (paras: 9.6, 9.7, and 9.9) that there should be a long term strategy to improve standards in Welsh as a Second Language, adding that pupils' perceptions of the relevance of Welsh language skills must be improved and at the same time measures introduced to raise standards by a focus on reinforcing pupils' ability to use the language in oral situations. The development of the teaching of subjects through the medium of Welsh with a strong oral element, it then finally advises, would contribute to the establishment of a successful model for teaching Welsh in English Medium schools. This, happily, is what is already going on in Treorchy comprehensive and its feeding primary schools, an exemplar for others to follow.



The critical shortage in the 1970s of Welsh speaking teachers has already been referred to as an insurmountable problem for us in Mid Glamorgan. If most of our pupils, when they moved on from primary to comprehensive school, had then been able to speak both languages, it would have seemed a miracle, but as the Chairman had then pertinently asked when we considered the practicability of the proposal, who would there have been to teach them, and how would we have been able to budget for all the additional Welsh speaking teachers which would have been needed. Such investment, he had pointed out, would be unlikely from the then Government of Margaret Thatcher.

The difficulties seemed immense. Clearly, it had not been the right time to make all our schools bilingual. We were then living in the most anxious and most troubled of times, combining high inflation, industrial unrest, and recurring economic crises. As the Chairman had explained, it would have been very difficult to have persuaded councillors to approve a proposal that most members of all parties would have judged as much too ambitious for the time, and one with unforeseen financial and political consequences. Before attempting to save the language, we would first have had to train the teachers to teach it.

## **The Basque Experience**

Let me now return to the Basque language experience. Cennard Davies, an academic at the University of Glamorgan, where he had been in charge of teaching Welsh, first suggested to me that the Basque attempt to save their language had close similarities with our own experience in Wales, and could prove helpful. I had known Cennard since we had both been young teachers at Porth County School, where Cennard was to begin a distinguished career as an outstanding teacher of Welsh. The Welsh Language Board also was soon to confirm the relevance of his advice on the Basque experience, and was good enough to let me see copies of some interesting and relevant research papers from their reference library.

One parallel between the Welsh and the Basques is a population in both cases of about 3 million. Another is that the Basques have had an industrial history linked to the iron and steel industries, not dissimilar to Wales's own strength in coal mining as well as in iron and steel manufacture. There is also a political link. In the Spanish Civil War many Welshmen, Communist and Labour party activists, particularly from the Valleys, fought on the Republican side against the Fascists.

Moreover, Basque, is a minority language trying to exist alongside the majority languages of Spanish and French. Welsh has had to contend with only one, English, although of course it is a language spoken by many millions of people all over the world.

Again, the strong support for Basque independence by some nationalist politicians had led many in non-nationalist parties to be suspicious of a language damagingly proclaimed by their political opponents as the nucleus of Basque identity. For them this implied that Spanish monoglots were second class citizens. In Wales, the language has not yet become a political football and every effort must be made in avoiding what would be such a damaging development.

There were also some other Welsh differences from the Basque experience, and not only because the Basque language had had to contend with two major national languages. Welsh, for example, had been able to achieve a widely accepted written standard much earlier than Basque, and Welsh speakers, it seems, were relatively more literate. Again, in the French Basque departments the national government's policy of one state, one language, has been a major block on Basque language development and a great contrast to that in Spain where, in what, for example, is called the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC), the majority of the people now speaks Euskara, the Basque language.

Indeed, since 1982, in the ACBC it has been an officially recognised language alongside Spanish, with its equal status guaranteed in the various types of school making up the Autonomous Community's education system. In contrast, over the frontier in France, the Basque language has not even been granted recognition, and no move has even now been made to revive the language.

Three types of school are defined within the Basque system:

- **School A:** Basque is taught as a subject, and Spanish is the medium for all the other subjects in the curriculum. This is obviously not a bilingual type school.
- **School B:** Subjects in the curriculum are taught in Basque and Spanish, with Reading, Writing and Mathematics sometimes taught in Spanish, but all remaining subjects taught in Basque. This is of course a bilingual model and uses a partial immersion approach, irrespective of whether the pupil's first language is Basque or Spanish. Interestingly, some schools of this type offer a reinforced type B in which the proportion of Basque is greater than in the normal type B school.

- **School D** (there is no letter C in the Basque alphabet): All subjects are taught in Basque, and Spanish is taught as a subject, the reverse of the situation in type A schools. Depending on the pupils' first language, immersion or maintenance techniques are used. If the first language is Basque, then a maintenance type technique is used with the aim of strengthening the first language. When the pupil's first language is Spanish then immersion techniques are used for Basque because pupils need that technique to strengthen the second language.

Over the last 25 years the statistics clearly show that most parents want their sons and daughters to speak Basque. That is clearly why in secondary schools in the 2004-05 academic year 76 per cent of pupils chose either immersion type B. (29 per cent) or type D (47 per cent). It is the parents' right to choose the school type their children will enter, and most of them living in the ACBC community seem to have chosen type D with lessons being taught in Basque.

In Wales there is linguistically perhaps an even more confusing variety of schools. In the Welsh language heartlands of the north west and in west and parts of mid Wales, where English is taught as a subject and other subjects are taught in Welsh, we might well find the Welsh equivalent of Basque type D schools. In the south east corner of Wales we can also find English Medium schools where Welsh is taught as a subject, and Welsh Medium schools where, apart from English and its literature, taught as a subject, the only language spoken is Welsh. It could clarify matters if the Language Board were to commission a research study defining the variety of linguistic provision in our schools and then take action to advocate a system by which parents might clearly understand by name the type of education their children would be pursuing in the school of their choice.

## Changing Attitudes

Earlier in this paper I recalled the 1970s and the frustration felt in Mid Glamorgan at our inability, because of the shortage of Welsh speaking teachers, to try making our schools bilingual. I had also gone on to refer to the social and economic difficulties of that time. However, over the last thirty years there have now been significant changes. Society's attitudes to the Welsh language are now very different, even from those of ten years ago.

There could not be a better time to move on to a second and, we must hope, final phase of those early attempts in Llanelli and Treorci and elsewhere in Wales to save its language.

These days there is very little hostility towards the Welsh language. We have the television station Sianel Pedward Cymru (S4C). We have a fluent, bilingual National Assembly First Minister, whose father was a distinguished Professor of Welsh. With modern translation facilities, we have bilingual National Assembly debating sessions. There are several Assembly Members of all parties who are even learning the language. Our unemployment figures are the lowest for 30 years, an incredible achievement for those who can still remember the Valleys of the Thirties.

The challenging question is whether the Welsh people want to win back our national language. Never has Wales been so prosperous, and we now have the resources for extended and continuing investment. It will be a very long time indeed before we will ever again have such an opportunity of restoring our language. But the great question, and one, because of its importance, I must repeat, will be whether the people of Wales now still have the national will for such a radical transformation. Perhaps they might want instead to give a higher priority to more improvement, for example, in the NHS, established significantly by a Valleys Welshman, or to further extensions to the Welsh motorway system, or to funding more national building projects such as the Wales Millennium Centre, or even a second Children's Hospital, perhaps this time in the North. We must wonder how can our First Minister ever get any sleep when such competing priorities have to be decided!

When the latest census tells us that only about a fifth of Welsh people say they can speak Welsh, and when the S4C viewer figures rarely exceed 10 per cent, then, of course, there could well be the real risk of a negative answer. If that were to happen, then Wales would have sadly lost a unique and golden opportunity.

There is on the other hand no doubt that at present there is in Wales a great fund of goodwill for its language. It would, however, be very foolish for us to ignore the monoglot English majority which, despite S4C's low viewer figures, has not so far asked for the cancellation of the television channel's annual £86 million subsidy from Westminster, or, despite a stubborn refusal to relax its all Welsh rule, for the withdrawal of the very generous annual grants made to the National Eisteddfod Council by County Councils and the National Assembly. Remarkably, these essential subsidies are paid for out of taxes, the biggest proportion of which is contributed to, and without any angry and vehement protest, by English only speakers, a most significant confirmation that there is still much goodwill for the language.

## **The Need for a Policy Initiative**

It also suggests there could be genuine and deeply felt public support from the people of Wales for a major and realistic strategy to save the language. An enthusiastic National Assembly organised campaign, led by the First Minister in his own inimitable way, and explaining honestly and openly how much such a radical transformation would cost, not only in public resources, but also in individual, personal commitment, and what in the end it would all mean for the Welsh people if we were, and against all the odds, able to win back our own language from the brink of sure and final extinction, could well win a reasonable and encouraging majority.

Already Westminster and the Welsh Assembly Government rightly provide substantial financial grants to encourage and develop the Welsh language and literature through the education system and the various arts, cultural and language support agencies. As part of any Language Manifesto launch, the Assembly should again formally commit itself to the continuation of such support, and should again strongly affirm its commitment to the principle of equality for the two languages.

Wise after the event, nevertheless we can now see how very unfortunate has been the continuing critical shortage of Welsh-speaking teachers. Though understandable in view of the public apathy shown by earlier generations towards the language, this deficit still represents a serious failure in performance over the past 50 years on the part of a succession of Secretaries of State and their senior civil servants at the former Welsh Office and its Assembly Government successor. It is the very same problem that had seemed so insurmountable in the Seventies and which had stopped us in Mid Glamorgan from embarking at such an early stage on our attempt to save the language. Urgent action then would have made it so much easier for us now.

Fortunately, however, the general teaching situation is now very different. Recently, the media have been full of stories about the difficulties teachers face in getting posts in Wales, and have referred to one primary vacancy attracting 200 applicants. We can be grateful that there is no general teacher shortage, but at the same time we need reassurance that there is not, as seems still to be the case for Physics and Maths, a continuing shortage of teachers of Welsh. Even Head Teachers of Welsh Medium schools have been complaining at the difficulty in recruiting Welsh speaking teachers, and most indicators seem to suggest that the number of such graduates is still far short of what is needed, certainly for a truly bilingual Wales.

One irony of the shortage, of course and a significantly strong factor in its creation, could well be the more attractive and less stressful career options being offered to former Welsh Medium school pupils, not to mention their teachers, by S4C, BBC, HTV, the National Assembly Civil Service and remaining Quangos.

If, however, there is a continuing Welsh speaking teacher shortage, and we are to mount a successful attempt to save the language, then the Assembly's Education Minister will need to take urgent action to remove this difficulty. The first decade will be critical. We can assume that a shortage of teachers of Welsh will not be too great a problem in the first years, and we will be able to plan ahead for any needed annual increase. Nor should we forget that in our present primary and comprehensive schools there is a pool of experienced Welsh speaking teachers who, attracted by financial incentives similar to those already offered, but also responding to a national appeal to save the language, might well consider, as the changeover proceeds, a possible transfer to another school where their expertise might be more critically needed.

Certainly, teacher supply must have the highest priority for consultation with teacher organisations who understandably might well want to press a compelling case for the National Assembly to offer incentive payments to encourage such voluntary transfer, just as in England they have in the past been used to attract teachers of shortage subjects. Over the ten years of transition, consultation with teachers and with school governing bodies would also be essential on the possible closure of some old and inadequate school buildings.

Teacher unions can be reassured that any staff redundancies will be highly unlikely. On the contrary, when in ten years most schools have become bilingual, there will certainly be an increase in demand for teachers, particularly those qualified to teach through the medium of Welsh.

There will also be a need to arrange short intensive courses in spoken Welsh for teachers in our developing and truly bilingual comprehensive schools so that they can become part of, and contribute to, their new language ethos. Cooperation and joint working between Welsh Medium and bilingual comprehensive schools to save the language, should also lead to helpful Welsh conversational exchanges between Welsh speaking Sixth Form students from the two categories of schools.

There is also an urgent need for an emergency programme aimed at supporting and improving the fluency of those pupils whose skills in Welsh conversation may need practice and reinforcement.

The programme might perhaps mirror that model established years ago, first in the grammar, and now in our comprehensive schools, of language assistants giving pupils conversation experience in the main European languages, but again it will be essential to consult widely with teachers' organisations and confirm to them that such assistants are not in any way intended to weaken the professional status of trained and qualified teachers.

We must also not forget the need to help those adult English speakers who might wish to learn Welsh, not to mention those parents and grandparents who might wish to create a bilingual environment at home or in their extended families. With the planned expansion in the number of Welsh speakers, we might soon expect that the number of English only speakers would soon start to decline.

To meet such varied adult linguistic needs, special adult classes should also be organised throughout Wales, preferably held at the local, bilingual comprehensive schools. We would of course expect the new National Assembly Minister for Welsh Language and Culture to argue strongly that attendance at such classes should be free of charge, and then take action to ensure that this would be the case. Another recently announced and significant project is the well funded emergency programme begun in England to increase the number of teachers of the main European languages, French, Spanish, German and Italian. We must assume that the National Assembly Government will want, if the Minister has not already done so, to mount a similar programme, and that she will have added to that list of languages, the teaching of Welsh as a Second Language.

We also need to develop one of our University of Wales colleges, perhaps Aberystwyth or Bangor or Lampeter, as a world centre of excellence, not only for the teaching of Welsh, but for high level research into new and more effective techniques of teaching and learning all second languages. The European Union should be asked to help the National Assembly in its funding, and the Welsh Language Board, now it is becoming part of the Assembly Government, should use its added influence to make this a reality.

We can also welcome the fact that the Board's officials and advisers will now be working more closely with the Minister for Welsh Language and Culture. Alun Pugh, the current Minister, should bluntly tell all those anxious about political interference in the arts that a bear hug can often be more productive than an extended arm's length, and that they should be welcoming such a development as essential to any strategy for creating a bilingual Wales.

There are other groups and organisations that should be involved in the campaign to save the language. The Ford Motor Company, for example, showed the way twenty or more years ago by implementing an enlightened policy of making available to any employee £200 to be used on any educational experience or course the worker chose.

Marks and Spencer is another employer, which, I am advised, has a good record in promoting and encouraging continuing education by its work force. We would hope that responsible, successful and certainly Welsh companies would take on a similar role, and even consider sponsorship events and national occasions which would directly or indirectly help the campaign for saving the language.

It will be important too for us not to ignore those pessimists who ask what is the point of continuing with the present policies, when the brutal statistical reality is that practically all Welsh people can speak English, but only about 20 per cent can also speak Welsh. Wales, they will say, is not yet a truly bilingual country, nor is Welsh yet everybody's language.

The answer to this challenge is to reject the views of such Jeremiahs, and say that we are engaged in a common partnership to save the language, whether in Welsh Medium or in those of our comprehensive schools trying to become bilingual, and that it is only by our working together that our language can be saved.

Just as, soon after the war, the Welsh Medium schools began the first phase of a programme to save the language from what seemed an inevitable extinction, the language now needs urgent and determined action in a second phase directed at a major extension and improvement of the teaching of Second Language Welsh.

Some critics will claim the programme is too radical. It may well be categorised as too ambitious and quaintly unrealistic, and based on much too optimistic a view of human nature in assuming that thousands of only English-speaking Welsh men and women will be ready to sacrifice their hours of leisure time, at present spent in the club or pub or football match, in exchange for the long and earnest study and practice of learning to speak the Welsh language.

However, it would be a serious mistake for us to underestimate the strong stimulus that organised community effort could have in convincing lots of Welsh men and women that it might well be worth their while to join in a well publicised and professionally marketed national campaign to save the language.



## The Rhondda Experience

Let us also be encouraged by the clear evidence now to be seen in primary and comprehensive schools in several parts of Wales that, even if the national will of the Welsh people to save their language were to prove negative, all, however, would not be lost. Saving the language will overwhelmingly depend, not on the parents, but on their young sons and daughters now in our nursery, infant and junior schools with all their insatiable hunger and excited curiosity for fresh and new experience.

Above all, of course, it will depend also on the skill and professionalism of their teachers. Indeed, teacher commitment will be most important in saving the language, firing the exuberant energy of our young pupils, so that when they have moved on to the local, bilingual comprehensive school they will be able to speak both our languages. That is why the emphasis must now certainly be on accelerating and improving the growth of learning Welsh as a second language.

The consolidation and reinforcement that must follow that early spontaneity are vital, too. For example, just as in the 1950s, when Rhondda's first Welsh Medium primary school at Ynyswen, showed us a way forward, now the teachers and pupils of the Treorchy comprehensive school, along with those in the catchment area primary schools, are making a real effort to get the two languages to flourish side by side. Indeed, we have here the beginnings of an answer to the pessimists about the future of the language. No longer does it lie solely in the Welsh Medium schools, which have served so well their original and very necessary pioneering purpose.

The future for the language now lies in initiatives with English-only speaking pupils all over Wales, just like that being taken at Treorchy comprehensive school, where, building on the strong foundation laid by its catchment area primary schools, it is quietly transforming itself in to a bilingual, comprehensive school and a splendid model we would hope for others to follow.

One of Treorchy's feeding primary schools is Ton Pentre Nursery and Infants'. After an inspection in March 2005 by H M Inspectors it received an excellent report. Standards of achievement were high, they reported, with 82 per cent of lessons graded as good or very good, and not one as unsatisfactory or poor. The main finding was that it was a successful school with many strengths, providing well for its pupils. The Inspectors found the school to be "a stimulating and happy community" and the overall leadership and efficiency of the school very good. On the use of Welsh the report noted:

"Incidental Welsh is used consistently and naturally in classes for routine instruction and responses ... The enthusiasm of the staff in developing the Welsh dimension of the school's curriculum is reflected in the pupils' active and eager response ... The use of incidental Welsh is a strength of the school, and every opportunity is grasped to consolidate and extend the pupils' knowledge across the curriculum through the enthusiasm of the teachers, pupils display very positive attitudes to learning Welsh."

I have recently visited the school, and am delighted to confirm the accuracy and the justice of the Inspectors' judgement. One significant initiative introduced by Treorchy Comprehensive school, and deserving extension at the earliest opportunity to Ton Pentre and to other infants' and nursery schools in Treorchy's catchment area, involves a Welsh speaking member of the comprehensive school staff visiting nine and ten year old primary school classes every week. The aim is to improve the Welsh speaking fluency of the pupils before they transfer to the comprehensive school at 11+. Though it would require extra teachers, if the scheme were to be extended to all infants and nursery schools, there is no doubt that a marked improvement in pupils' fluency in Welsh would soon follow. The project has been funded by the Rhondda Cynon Taf education authority for three years, but has proved so successful the Assembly Government should now give urgent consideration to itself funding and extending such projects throughout Wales as part of its Saving the Language campaign.

I have also visited Treorchy Comprehensive School, and seen for myself the equally remarkable progress being made there in the teaching of Welsh as a second language. The headmistress, Mrs Bethan Guilfoyle, tells me the school has an eight-form entry taking in about 250 pupils each year from the upper Rhondda Fawr Valley. Of the eight form entry, a quarter of the school's pupils in two streams are taught in the Welsh language: History, Geography, Religious Instruction and of course Welsh, but this, Mrs Guilfoyle claims confidently, could without too much difficulty be further extended and at least to subjects such as Art, Technology, Craft and Physical Education. She also emphasises strongly the importance of the incidental and every day use of Welsh, which is always encouraged and strongly promoted in classes and at social occasions.

There are 87 full time equivalent members of Treorchy's teaching staff of which 5 are involved in teaching the two fast track Welsh speaking streams, with another Welsh speaking teacher, referred to earlier, visiting 9 and 10 year olds in the catchment area junior and primary schools to improve their fluency in Welsh conversation, two years before transfer to the comprehensive school.

Mrs Guilfoyle assured me she has had no problems with good responses to advertisements and the recruitment of Welsh-speaking members of staff. She also expressed high appreciation of the warm support and deep commitment her school colleagues were giving to the school's policy of teaching Welsh as a second language. She also made it very clear to me that it had always been her main concern to work together with colleagues in Welsh Medium schools in a joint endeavour to achieve that major increase in Welsh speakers which would significantly help to save the language.

## **A Welsh Language Manifesto**

In an IWA lecture in 2003, Professor Jane Aaron of the University of Glamorgan suggested the Welsh people carried a 'cultural gene', which responded only to attack. The Welsh, she went on to argue:

"... had a heightened sense of living on the perpetual brink of extinction and of never rising up to defend their status and language unless doom was at hand."<sup>1</sup>

Jane Aaron's analysis of our national psyche is uncomfortably acute, and, sadly, unless something is urgently done, might well in the end be accurate. If radical action is not taken, and taken soon, on lines similar to that now followed in the schools of Treorci and in other school initiatives successfully introduced elsewhere in Wales, then a doom laden end may well be at hand for the Welsh language.

Indeed, a start could well be made, at least in delaying such a sorry and unnecessary fate, if the National Assembly were actively to encourage implementation of the relevant suggestions made by HM Inspector of Schools in their recent review of developments in the teaching of Welsh as a Second Language to pupils at the age from 7 to 11.

That review clearly demonstrates that it is not only at Treorchy that teachers and their language assistants are determined to save the language. Indeed, all over Wales, other schools have also recognised that the one great challenge now facing us in saving the language is to give top priority to the improvement and extension of teaching Second Language Welsh.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jane Aaron, *The Welsh Survival Gene: The 'Despite' Culture in the Two Languages of Wales*, IWA National Eisteddfod Lecture, Meifod, 2003.

In their survey, H.M. Inspectors had noted many examples of how this is being successfully done in such socially contrasting local authority areas as Blaenau Gwent and Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil and Powys, Carmarthenshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf. In Ceredigion and in Rhondda Cynon Taf, for example, there is joint planning and sharing of expertise with Welsh speaking comprehensive schoolteachers working with their feeder primary school colleagues. A Carmarthenshire comprehensive school employs a learning support assistant to work intensively on improving the language skills of pupils. In Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Newport, coordinators of teaching Welsh as a second language have initiated a programme for monitoring standards of Welsh, while BBC's *Good Morning Wales* has recently reported that Fishguard is, just like Treorci, also quietly turning itself in to a bilingual comprehensive school.

The time could not now be better for the National Assembly to adopt a Welsh Language Manifesto giving an historic and bold commitment to a policy programme for uniquely transforming Wales in to a bilingual country, and where most of its people would be able to speak both its languages. The remarkable change in public attitudes to the language over the last decade suggests that such a resolution could well attract cross party, and even unanimous, support. What Assembly political party or Assembly Member could these days risk foolishly opposing a Welsh Language manifesto?

The Assembly Government should acknowledge the major crisis facing the language, and quickly give a firm commitment in its Language Manifesto to finding the resources necessary for an increase in the number of Welsh speaking teachers and support staff to implement a programme aimed at extending and improving the teaching of Welsh as a Second Language.

At the same time, the Assembly should nominate its Minister of Education and its Minister for the Welsh Language to be responsible for coordination of an Assembly's Save Our Language campaign, and ask them to report twice yearly to Plenary Session on the progress that is being achieved.

As long as the majority of the Welsh people is ready to give the Assembly its full and continuing support, and this, it cannot be too strongly emphasised, must be an essential democratic pre-requisite before any action is taken, then such strong commitment could lead to a relatively inexpensive way of saving our language.

There are three other important areas which have not yet been referred to in detail, but which also have a significant role to play in saving our language:

- (i) The first would be to give the highest priority to continuing support to and extending the essential work of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, by trying to promote its work through the introduction of Welsh speaking staff and children into the play groups of the traditionally English speaking Pre-school Playgroups' Association. Joint working and cooperation between these two key organisations in pre-school education should be encouraged. There is no doubt, too, that much could also be done in the Assembly's Sure Start programme to prepare and familiarise first language English speaking pre-school children with the rhythms, sound and vocabulary of the Welsh language before they enter their bilingual nursery and infants' schools and classes.
- (ii) The second and major challenge lies in the further, technical and vocational education sector, so often overlooked, and in which, apart from adult education classes in spoken Welsh and the use of it as a first language in some colleges in the Welsh language heartlands, there still seems to have been little if any extension or development as far as the Welsh language is concerned. We cannot afford to let such an important sector continue in such an inadequate way. Urgent action is essential, and the responsible Assembly Ministers should discuss with Forum and its college principals the best way for their sector to be involved in the language campaign.
- (iii) A third would be the need to expand the provision of what was once known as adult education, but is now more accurately described as Life Long Learning and very properly part of the Minister's official title. There is, of course, already a network of college courses for adult Welsh learners, but we can safely expect that, following on from the Assembly endorsement of the manifesto and the launch of its Save the Language campaign with its undertaking to provide free lessons in spoken Welsh at local comprehensive schools, there will be an increased demand from adults for the provision of lessons at least in conversational Welsh. Consultation with NIACE Dysgu Cymru would be essential.

The media, television, radio and the press can also play an essential role, and not only by presenting programmes and publications in which both languages appear naturally side by side or together. In addition, S4C, BBC, HTV and Sky should also use both languages in its programmes, even in their rugby, soccer, tennis and cricket commentaries, if only to familiarise non Welsh speakers with its rhythms and intonation

A new University Centre for Second Language Teaching could be asked for advice, and, at the same time, high level, quality research should be commissioned and sponsored into the most effective and modern techniques for learning and teaching a second language.

Nor must we forget the Internet as a facility to help and support language learning, particularly as nearly half Welsh homes apparently now have access to it and probably half the people of Wales, including scores of octogenarians, are now computer literate. Why else should Welsh versions of Microsoft Windows and Office be available, if there were not a growing demand for them?

The last sector needing attention is higher education, though it will already be playing a pivotal part in producing the Welsh-speaking teachers needed. Also deserving re-consideration is the transformation of one of the University of Wales' Colleges in to a Welsh Medium University College attracting entrants from Welsh Medium and our new bilingual comprehensive schools. In the Basque country the number of degree courses is still limited, but some universities do offer courses partly or substantially in the language, as do some teacher training institutions. Essential for this sector will be the urgent need to establish at one of our Welsh colleges a University of Wales Centre for the teaching of Second Languages, an institution that would specialise in quality, high-level research in to the improvement of second language teaching techniques.

In 2001 the National Assembly approved an earlier National Action Plan for a bilingual Wales. The then Minister for the Welsh Language, Liberal AM, Jenny Randerson, said of the plan, *Iaith Pawb, Everybody's Language*:

"The Assembly Government is clear about the importance of maintaining Welsh as a community language, if it is to have a viable future."

To illustrate a promising cross party consensus let me also quote from her Labour successor, Alun Pugh, writing in his foreword to *Iaith Pawb's* second Annual Report for 2004-05:

"Creating a truly bilingual Wales is one of the Welsh Assembly Government's main goals. The bold vision is set out in the commitments in our strategy, in *Iaith Pawb* and in our Welsh language Scheme ..."

In the Introduction that follows, the first paragraph is most significant and is also very well worth quoting:

"The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to supporting and promoting the Welsh language. Our vision of a truly bilingual Wales is a bold one. A truly bilingual Wales means a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either or both Welsh and English, and where the presence of both languages is a source of pride and strength to us all."

That seems to be a helpful and acceptable definition of what is meant by a truly bilingual Wales. *Iaith Pawb* itself was certainly a much needed and well-timed call for action to save the language. As a result, there have been many advances, though they have been more in helping fully to sustain and promote the community use of the Welsh language, and to provide as many opportunities as possible of ensuring that people can use and learn the language, should they so choose, at work, at play, in school and home and leisure activities.

In the Foreword to *Iaith Pawb's* second Annual Report, 2004-05, the Minister, Alan Pugh, repeats his earlier statement that the National Assembly's ambition to make good progress to a bilingual Wales is bold, and says rightly that:

"A lot of good work is being done for the Welsh language and that *Iaith Pawb* projects are contributing positively to our goal... we will achieve our goal in the long term through year on year successes ... There is plenty more to be done .... We are making progress and will continue to do so."

In its Executive Summary, the report also usefully lists 20 achievements of *Iaith Pawb* and the Welsh language scheme. Eight examples are given below and confirm their close attention to detail and the comprehensive range of subjects on which the language inevitably touches. The list also convincingly illustrates the effectiveness of the excellent progress being made in 'mainstreaming' the language, and in thus sustaining and promoting a community and every day use of the language, all of which will be essential if it is to survive:

1. Welsh will appear on all UK passports from 2006 onwards.
2. Welsh now taught to all pre-school children in English Medium settings.
3. £3 million announced to increase the number of HE lecturers able to teach in Welsh.
4. 19,476 registered adult Welsh learners achieved, exceeding the target of 18,300.

## **Saving Our Language**

5. 16 per cent increase in sales of Welsh language books.
6. For the first time place names in England depicted bilingually on Welsh road signs.
7. New contract for pharmacists ensures provision of services in Welsh.
8. Welsh language packs for Microsoft Windows XP and Office launched.

Despite these many achievements there is for me, however, one major disappointment to be found in Iaith Pawb and its Action Plan. Both of them unfortunately seem to lack any real sense of the crisis situation facing the language, and of the need, which in 2005 is now even more critical, for urgent action if we are to save it from decline and extinction.

The time has really come for the Assembly to prepare and adopt a Welsh Language Manifesto and to launch a national campaign to save the language. There is now a critical and urgent need for a strategic change, an historic and a major move forward. The Assembly has the necessary powers. As mentioned earlier, under section 32 (c) of the 1998 Government of Wales Act, it can do anything it considers appropriate to support the language.

## **Saving Our Language**

I have tried in this paper to suggest what might now be appropriate if the language is to be saved. A campaign might begin first with National Assembly and overwhelming cross party support for a Language Manifesto and endorsement of a Solemn Declaration that in a devolved Wales we are all rightly proud of our Welsh identity and culture, and that our language and its literature must be considered an essential part of that identity.

Our National Assembly has the powers and could now take appropriate action to save the language. A Language Manifesto, a possible model for which appears on the last page of this paper, could then be adopted in Plenary Session by the National Assembly. On the same day the Welsh Language Manifesto should be published committing our National Assembly to a range of legal, moral and financial measures in support of a national campaign to save the language.



The present state of the language owes a great debt to those early pioneers who campaigned to set up the first Welsh Medium schools. As a result, over the last 50 years, much has already been achieved but, if we are determined to save the language, the time has now come for the National Assembly, having approved its Language Manifesto, to launch its new Save Our Language campaign, setting much bolder targets than *Iaith Pawb*'s modest target of an increase of 5 percentage points on 20 per cent by 2011.

Its first target should be to more than double by 2025 the present claimed 20 per cent or so of Welsh speakers to at least 50 per cent. Any thing less would not fire the imagination nor be a sufficient challenge for the language campaigners to take up. When that symbolic 50 per cent is achieved, then we should be well on our way to the ambitious policy of making Wales a truly bilingual country, a country where at least half the Welsh people will be able to speak its both languages, and where Welsh will be seen as becoming everybody's language and at last worthy of the description of a true ***Iaith Pawb*** (Language for Everybody).

But the National Assembly cannot, and indeed must not, finish there, with its full task only half completed. Encouraged by having achieved that first, and for long thought to be impossible target, but now with the foundation well laid, the Assembly should in 2025 then resolutely commit itself to reaching that final and ultimate target of ensuring that by 2050 almost everybody in Wales will be truly bilingual, and able to speak both Welsh and English. That is the great challenge facing the National Assembly and the Welsh people over the next forty years or so. If we do not take it up, inevitably our language will, by then, be dead and lost for ever.

## Appendices

### Action Points for Implementing a Welsh Language Manifesto

- The National Assembly in Plenary Session, and with cross party support, agrees a Solemn Declaration of Recognition of the Welsh Identity and its Culture, and commits itself to transforming Wales into a bilingual country in which most of our people speak both Welsh and English.
- The National Assembly sets targets for at least half our people to be able to speak both languages by 2025 and almost all our people to do so by 2050.
- The First Minister announces a full national public consultation to ensure that most Welsh people will support the National Assembly's Language Manifesto, and accept the spoken language targets set for 2025 and 2050.
- The First Minister confirms that the National Assembly gives its moral, legal and financial support to the commitments set down in the Manifesto.
- The First Minister announces that the Ministers for Education and for the Welsh Language will have joint responsibility for achieving the targets set down in the Manifesto, and will report twice yearly to Assembly Plenary Session on progress achieved.
- The responsible Assembly Ministers will consult with the Higher Education Committee for Wales and other interests, including teacher unions, on how the number of Welsh speaking teachers might be increased from September 2007.
- The responsible Ministers consult with the Welsh media, the press and television channels, S4C, BBC Wales, BBC Cymru, Sky Broadcasting, and Internet organisations on ways they can help people, and, in particular, more teachers to learn Welsh.
- The responsible Ministers announce programme of free lessons in spoken Welsh to be available at most local comprehensive schools.

**Seminar Attendees**

Elaine Barnett, Ysgol Gynradd Ton Pentre, Rhondda

Cennard Davies, former Head of the Centre for Language Studies,  
University of Glamorgan

Keith Davies, Standards and Performance Division, Training and  
Education Department, Welsh Assembly Government

Prys Davies, Director, Strategic Operations, Welsh Language Board

Heini Gruffudd, Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg / Parents for Welsh  
Education

Bethan Guilfoyle, Headteacher, Treorchy Comprehensive School

Ken Hopkins, former Director of Education Mid Glamorgan County Council

Sian Jones, Head of Welsh and Bilingual Faculty, Treorchy Comprehensive  
School

Gethin Lewis, Wales Secretary, NUT Cymru

Susan Lewis, HM Chief Inspector, Estyn

John Osmond, Director, Institute of Welsh Affairs

Noel Pritchard, Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda

Eirlys Pritchard Jones, former Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer

Helen Prosser, University of Glamorgan

Ifan Prys, Urdd Gobaith Cymru

MeirionPrys Jones, Chief Executive, Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg

Catrin Redknap, Head of pre-16 Education, Welsh Language Board

Huw Thomas, former Headteacher Ysgol Gyfun Glantaf

John Valentine Williams, Chief Executive, Curriculum and Assessment  
Authority for Wales

Wayne Williams, Welsh Adviser, Powys Local Education Authority