

Summer 6-1956

Dot Campbell Interview with Patrick Dickinson, Exchange Teacher from England, Part 1

WLBZ Radio

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Title: Dot Campbell interview with Patrick Dickinson, exchange teacher from England; Part
1

Date: June (?) 1996

Recording number: D.16.24 ; CD 5 , track 1

Length of recording:15:31

[transcript begins]

Dot Campbell: And now for my guest this morning, I'm very happy to introduce you to Mr.
Patrick Dickinson. Good morning Mr. Dickinson.

Mr. Dickinson: Good morning.

DC: Now could you by any chance have an Irish background there?

MD: No, I don't. It is a name that just grows and grows like (inaudible)

(Dot laughs)

DC: And by now, you've probably know that he has a little bit of an English accent and of
course that's because he is right straight from England and he is an exchange teacher from
England and we are very much interested in this exchange of teachers, Mr. Dickinson and I
wish you would tell me how you happened to come over and when you came over.

MD: Yes certainly. There were 100 of us that came over here. We came on the Queen
Elizabeth in August and 100 American teachers have gone over to England in our places.
That is to say a teacher, an American teacher from Millinocket has gone over to New Castle
(inaudible), where I come from and ended up taking my job for a year. This scheme has
been going for 10 years now incidentally and it is a scheme which is recognized at a royal
level, that is to say the queen, takes an interest in it and she does invite the American
teachers to a garden party at Buckingham Palace in June every year.

DC: Well now, that sounds very imposing. What are we gonna do for you nice people here?
We can't invite people to a garden party. What are we gonna do for you?

(Dickinson laughs)

MD: Well, I don't know. I am enjoying it very much. I don't have a garden party at all.

DC: Well, we do hope something very exciting turns up for you and by now, you must know too that Mr. Dickinson is teaching school in Millinocket, Maine. I wonder how they ever came to send you to Millinocket.

MD: Well, it's because a teacher in Millinocket asked to join the scheme and of course, I go to that person's school and that person is going to my school.

DC: And as you said, all these 100 people are replacing people in these United States?

MD: Yes. It is what we call a point-to-point exchange.

DC: Well now, in order to be chosen as one of these 100 people to come over to these United States, Mr. Dickinson, did you have to have certain qualifications?

MD: Yes. It isn't so much that. I think it is general personality that they sort of judge by mostly. I was summoned to a committee in London a few months before I came over here. They judged on the results of the interview whether I was suitable for participation in the scheme. I think it's the same on this side of the Atlantic, a similar approach has come through.

DC: Now does that mean that you have to have so many years of teaching experience and training that you perhaps are not a married man. I haven't asked you that but...

MD: No, I'm not married, but that makes no difference in fact some married men bring their wives with them and their families too on the ships with them. There were several couples with their children too.

DC: Well, that must make a very nice change for them for living.

MD: Yes indeed.

DC: Let's see, you spoke of coming from New Castle, just where is that in relation to London?

MD: Well, we are on the Northeast coast of England, quite near to the Scottish border about 250 miles from London we are. It's a large city, about 300,000 people. It is named, of course, after the castle, which was built by the son of William the Conqueror about 1000 years ago. We now have an old castle, but the city is called New Castle.

(Dot laughs)

DC: That's kind of interesting. So what about your school over there in New castle. What type of school was it?

MD: This was what we call a junior school. That is to say the children are from the ages 7 - 11, but of course, all these names are new names. We have a new act which came into force in 1944 and it's produced a new structure of education altogether and it's brought new names and new descriptions and it's all confusing to use the names of all these different sections of education.

DC: Well it's rather confusing anyway isn't it? It must be for you because it is for me to talk to you about education. We seem to be in reverse. We call our private schools what you call your public schools, isn't that true?

MD: Yes I know. That doesn't help things at all.

DC: How actually is it set up with that from way down below say at the primary level? You call that the infant school?

MD: Yes, we do. A child... I ought to say first of all, education in England, it is compulsory from the age of 5 – 16 and a child goes to the nearest school after his or her 5th birthday and they go in the infant school. There, they learn the rudiments of reading and writing and arithmetic. At the age of 7, they go to the junior school. There they stay until the age of 11. At the age of 11, we do something, which is rather important. We ask the children to take an examination at the age of 11 and the results of this examination determine which of 3 schools the child is going to attend.

DC: Now when you say 3 schools, would that bring them almost up to what a high school entrance age is now?

MD: Yes. Well, it's really three kinds of high school in a way. That is to say the child who has an academic (inaudible) then goes to a school called the grammar school and there, he will concentrate on academic subjects. If a child leans rather towards a technical education, he goes to a technical school where the subjects emphasized will be woodwork, metal work, and draftsmanship and that sort of thing. And for the child who is neither too academic or too technical, he goes to a middle course sort of school, which we call a modern school.

DC: And that would include both phases of education?

MD: Yes.

DC: Is there any difference in the teaching of the boys and the teaching of the girls in the English schools?

MD: No. We keep them together, coeds you call them, until the age of 11. After that, we separate them and the boys and girls go their separate ways.

DC: When actually they are at high school level in their teens, they are not attending the school building?

MD: That is true. They are separate buildings.

DC: Now, what would you have the girls to go to in the line of a technical school?

MD: Well, usually the girls seem to prefer commercial subjects. They may take type writing, shorthand, and together with those two, they may have cookery, needlework, sewing, or something of that nature.

DC: I see. Well now, because you have been chosen as one of these hundred people to come over to the United States in exchange for some of the teachers to go over to England, are you in any way under obligation to the English government or to the School bright scholarship of which you spoke of?

MD: Yes in a way we are. We are expected to go back to England at the end of our year, that is in August, and resume teaching for a year from our own schools. I think the idea is to prevent succumbing to the temptation to stay over here a little longer, so they want us to go back and spend at least a year in our own schools.

DC: Have you been tempted Mr. Dickinson?

MD: Yes, I think I have in a way, yes

(Dot laughs)

DC: Well, have you felt that you've enjoyed the schools here in the United States and have you actually had much opportunity to look them over?

MD: I have enjoyed everything I've seen. As I've said, I'm out in Millinocket, which is a little remote, you may admit, and I haven't had the opportunity I would have liked to have for visiting schools, but I've had this week. I've seen some schools in Portland, some in South Portland and today, I've been looking around a high school in Augusta. The week after next, we have holiday and I hope to go and visit some schools in New York State.

DC: Well, that I should think you would love and I hope you have a little bit of fun while you are down there too because after all, you have been in Millinocket.

(Dickinson laughs)

DC (continued): I might say the bright lights for the city gonna look pretty good to you. Tell me about your expenses. How much of your expenses do they pay for you and I'd like to know too if you managed to make both ends meet over here.

MD: Uh well, we do pay most of our own expenses, but the government has been very generous and so has the Fulbright committee. I think that is what they are called. Both have given a grand towards our expenses and we do manage to make both ends meet. I have found no trouble really so far.

DC: Actually is your salary over here the same as it would be if you were in England or has it been raised to come up to the standards of the United States.

MD: No, it hasn't been raised. It's still my English salary, which is sent over by airmail at the end of every month and I am always very glad to see it

(Dot laughs)

MD: (continued) but it hasn't been (inaudible) in any way.

DC: I see and does it compare favorably with the salary the American teachers get.

MD: No, it's only a fraction really of what the American's get, but as I say, I do manage to make both ends meet

DC: Do you find that you have much to do on the outside in Millinocket? We sort of skipped over that more or less, but what do you find to do in the evenings and weekends up there?

MD: It is a little problem I'm afraid. It's rather quiet there and there isn't a great deal to do. I do rather miss being near to a big city or a big center or even a large number of schools that I should like to visit.

DC: Where are you making your home in Millinocket?

MD: I am staying at the requiem, which is very pleasant.

DC: Well, it must be. Did you find a place there? Did they have a place all ready and waiting for you?

MD: Yes, the teacher who cometh from Millinocket did arrange accommodations for me at the requiem and I am quite happy their really.

DC: Is this your first time on the radio?

MD: Yes it is.

DC: Is it really?

MD: Yes certainly.

DC: You've spoke of the BBC doing some work education wise in England. Would you mind telling me something about that?

MD: Yes that is rather interesting. I believe you have some space in America, which have a similar system. The BBC has a section called the BBC educational service and they do put out services to schools all over Britain. Most classrooms in schools in England have a radio set and the BBC put out programs. If the teacher finds a suitable program or a program which ties up with the work that he's doing in school, he just switches on the radio set and takes literally a backseat for the rest of the lesson, having prepared of course, following the broadcast, telling the children what to expect. They have books, which correspond with the broadcast material and the two sides do tie up entirely well.

DC: Well I think that's wonderful and I hope they do more of it and I certainly hope they do more of it right here in the United States. You spoke of speaking to the youngsters at Cony High School. Did you find that they were typical American group of youngsters? Were they enthusiastic and interested in what you had to say?

MD: They were, yes. Really, they seemed most interested in what I had to say. They asked some excellent questions, which is very gratifying. They seemed most interested in the schools, the buildings, curriculum that we have in Britain. I had a most stimulating day there.

DC: Well now, tell me, how do your schools differ over there say for instance the hour days of the schools over there. Do they start at the same time and end at the same time?

MD: No, we start later and we finish later. We start at 9:00 to 12:00 when the children go home for lunch or they may stay at school for lunch. School lunches are provided for 9 cents and school resumes at 1:30 until 4:00.

DC: Well, that means they don't have an opportunity to do much in the line of extra curricular activities in the afternoon. Where do they find the time to do this?

MD: Well, most children have a good deal of homework and that keeps them occupied in the evenings. If they do finish their homework, there are such clubs, school clubs, music clubs, drama, camera clubs, and things of that nature.

DC: And they take care of those things in the evening?

MD: Yes, all after school hours.

DC: Now, what about the school year. Does it run about the same time?

MD: Well, ours is about 38 weeks and I understand that the Americans school year is about the same, is it not?

DC: Well I believe it is. I think they have 12 weeks vacation in the summer about. Do you think that English children are more diligent than the American children?

MD: Well that puts me on the spot.

DC: Not really, of course it doesn't! After all, we are very much interested in your kind of education. We all want to know all about it.

MD: I don't know. We are rather more formal perhaps. I think that's the word. In our education, in our approach to education, we find the children, I don't know how to describe it, they don't sort of, talk so much to the teacher. They sort of come prepared to take the lesson and they don't interrupt. They don't have to have quite so much to say.

DC: I think perhaps your choice of words when you said formal is exactly what you are trying to say and perhaps, we are just a little bit more informal over here, just the American way of living, I don't know. Well, you did find that they were interested and wanted to know all about the different subjects you taught over there and all and seemed to be quite enthusiastic.

MD: They certainly were.

DC: Did they ask you anything about the social life of the English children?

MD: Yes, they asked quite a lot. They asked about their hobbies and how they spent their time, about the movies. They were very interested to hear that we have the American movies sent over.

DC: What about jitterbugging? Did they ask you that?

MD: No. Oh yes, they did ask about it, but I mean, we don't have jitterbugging. We don't sort of man handle our partners in the same way that the American boys do.

DC: Oh that's good rugged dancing, Mr. Dickinson, really.

(Dickinson laughs)

MD: Is that what you call it?

DC: Sure is. What about the school structure anyway. Are you set up over there pretty much as we are with a superintendent of schools, say a supervisor, a board of education? Is that how you handle schools?

MD: No, it is rather different. Then again, there are lots of new terms and descriptions. Education is organized in a local level. That is to say, each local area has its committee, which is responsible for the schools in that local area.

DC: Well now, for instance, do you have government aid? We'd call it federal aid here.

MD: We have government aid, but we don't have any government control.

DC: But the taxpayers do pay for the child's tuition.

MD: Yes. Roughly the expenses are shared out in this way. About 60% of the finance is provided by the central government and the other 40% roughly, is provided by the local authority.

DC: Does that give the central government the right to set up the standards for education?

MD: No, they have no say whatsoever in the organization of the schools, different from Germany, when in 1933, Hitler had a great deal of control over the schools in Germany and what was taught in the schools. That couldn't happen in England, where the power has been decentralized.

DC: I see and I do understand that you have a health plan over there. Now how does that work out?

MD: I think it is working quite well it's only been going 8 years now. It began in 1948, just 3 years, remember, after the war had ended. I think it is working quite well. Its aim was to provide the best possible medical attention and best possible medical facilities for everyone, man, woman, boy, or girl in the country, regardless of his or her

[transcript ends]

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