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McGill Journal of Education

Closing Schools :

decline and protest
in Canada

McGill Journal of Education

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Résumés

Support or Confront?

Verner Smitheram

Organizing public participation in P.E.I.

S'il est une chose qui est bien loin d'être réglée dans les systèmes d'éducation publique, c'est le rôle que jouent parents et citoyens dans les décisions prises au niveau de l'école locale. Les éducateurs professionnels nient catégoriquement jouer le moindre rôle à cet égard. Quant aux commissions scolaires, il est manifeste qu'elles manquent aux fonctions démocratiques qui semblent leur être assignées sur papier, les rapports privilégiés qu'elles entretiennent avec les pouvoirs même les plus éloignés leur valant la hargne de l'opinion locale.

L'organisation Home and School a généralement fait face à ce problème en adoptant une attitude discrète et déférente; mais elle n'a cependant pas de gros bâton. Smitheram analyse la montée fulgurante à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard du mouvement rival Concerned Citizens et il donne à entendre qu'une solution possible consisterait à donner à Home and School au moins un petit bâton et à lui permettre de prendre part aux décisions. Mais dans un postscriptum, il nous signale que l'organisation ne semble pas vouloir adopter un rôle de plaideur.

Grassroots Politicking

Norman Robinson

to save the neighbourhood school

Dans une société où les niveaux de revenu et d'instruction varient considérablement, on a tendance à associer l'idée de "base" au plus bas niveau de tous et à lui attribuer une connotation simple et quelque peu terre-à-terre. L'ineptie de cela est amplement prouvée par le cas étudié dans le présent article, où Robinson démontre comment la menace qui pèse sur

une école de quartier provoque une réaction éminemment sobre et complexe chez les gens des classes moyennes qui possèdent tout un éventail de connaissances. Il est raisonnable de penser que ce genre d'expérience collective, une fois entamée, ne s'arrête pas là et que ses protagonistes ne redeviennent plus passifs devant les décisions de la commission scolaire, qu'elles soient de nature routinière ou stratégique. A l'instar de l'article de Coleman, mais également par contraste avec lui, ce cas illustre le facteur propre au Canada des programmes d'immersion en français, question chargée de ses propres tensions d'ordre public.

Involving Parents
A case study in closing schools

Charles S. Lusthaus
Evelyn W. Lusthaus

Les foules ont quelque chose de véritablement effrayant. Mais est-ce que l'évolution vers la démocratie "participative" n'est motivée que par la crainte, laquelle représente une série d'actes propitiatoires posé par les commissions scolaires? Charles et Evelyn Lusthaus démontrent la façon dont un certain nombre de parents ont réagi à leur participation à un processus décisionnel soigneusement planifié, appliqué par une commission scolaire de Montréal, au projet de fermer 27 de ses écoles dont 12 sont en fin de compte restées ouvertes. Les divergences d'opinion quant aux résultats, entre ceux qui ont "gagné" et ceux qui ont "perdu" ces décisions, étaient naturellement très nettes. Mais ces divergences n'étaient pas aussi marquées à propos des mérites du processus proprement dit; et il est intéressant de constater que le niveau de participation aux comités scolaires a considérablement augmenté, surtout chez ceux qui avaient "perdu".

En ce qui concerne l'acceptation manifeste des voies offertes à ces parents, cette étude contraste nettement avec d'autres études publiées dans ce numéro traitant de l'organisation de mouvements de protestation par les parents. Ces parents semblent avoir acquis, pour quelque temps du moins, une certaine confiance dans leur participation à la gestion des écoles, laquelle semble justifier certains espoirs.

A Rural Perspective
School closure and community protest

Barry G. Lucas

Les petites localités rurales de l'Amérique du nord ne sont-elles pas vouées à la disparition et la fermeture de leurs écoles n'est-elle pas objectivement un élément inévitable d'un processus plus global? Eh bien non; sans doute pas. Selon des données "objectives" dont on dispose à cet égard, la plupart d'entre elles auraient dû fermer leurs portes il y a déjà longtemps. Barry Lucas examine les conflits provoqués par la fermeture d'écoles en Saskatchewan et il voit derrière les dilemmes habituels, entre les craintes subjectives des localités touchées et les données

objectives qu'utilisent les commissions scolaires, l'incapacité de cerner le vrai problème, lequel passe par une solution politique. Une perspective analytique de la formulation des politiques sociales pourrait indiquer la voie.

The Closing of Howden School Peter Coleman
Decision-making under conditions of stress

Le rapport personnel qui suit et que l'on doit à l'ex-surintendant d'un district scolaire du Manitoba nous fait traverser pas à pas toutes les étapes de ce qui aurait pu devenir une crise beaucoup plus longue et navrante, même si elle possédait toutes les caractéristiques troublantes et bruyantes de plus d'une décision visant à fermer une école. Il s'agit en effet d'un district qui administrait pour la première fois des écoles francophones en plus des anglophones et qui, au milieu de ce tableau politiquement explosif, aggravé encore par le fléchissement du nombre d'inscriptions, avait attiré de nombreux parents anglophones désireux de voir leurs enfants apprendre le français dans des programmes d'immersion. Cet article est d'autant plus passionnant que l'on suit le cheminement précautionneux des fonctionnaires de la commission scolaire parmi les écueils et récifs de la législation publique, de l'opinion publique et du jugement légal. Nous pouvons lire le tableau qui les a guidés dans l'analyse que le surintendant fait des nombreuses options de la commission (dont on trouvera une partie à l'annexe A). Coleman conclut par ses remarques sur la lumière que son expérience a permis de jeter sur certaines propositions avancées par des spécialistes de l'administration scolaire.

Footnotes to Decline and Protest Richard Townsend
A professor's joys and sorrows

Il est plutôt rare aujourd'hui de rencontrer un professionnel qui, devant les banalités, les déceptions et les distractions de la vie quotidienne, ose demeurer sincère face aux tracas que lui cause sa conscience. Richard Townsend n'est pas du genre à éluder la question de la sincérité; sa dissertation en revient toujours aux difficultés qu'un professeur d'aujourd'hui a à répondre aux attentes du rôle, à la fois public et privé, qu'il est tenu de jouer. La tâche à laquelle il doit s'astreindre consiste à tirer des leçons de son expérience, à trouver des modèles parmi ses collègues afin de surmonter ces difficultés et d'approcher de la situation idéale. En cours de route, certaines lueurs imprévues viennent éclairer les problèmes apparemment insolubles que provoque la fermeture de tant d'écoles.

Collaborateurs

Peter Coleman est professeur agrégé à la faculté des sciences de l'éducation de l'université Simon Fraser. Fait rare, il s'est taillé sa réputation alors qu'il occupait un poste administratif au sein du système scolaire du Manitoba. Il s'intéresse à la politique de l'enseignement.

Barry G. Lucas est professeur au département d'administration scolaire du Collège des sciences de l'éducation de l'université de Saskatchewan. Il s'intéresse aux questions législatives en matière d'éducation, notamment en ce qui concerne l'aspect communautaire de ce genre de processus.

Charles Lusthaus est professeur agrégé de sciences de l'éducation au département d'administration et politiques scolaires de l'université McGill. Il s'intéresse avant tout à la formation et au perfectionnement des cadres et employés des organismes publics.

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Norman Robinson est professeur d'administration scolaire à l'université Simon Fraser. Il s'intéresse avant tout à la politique de l'enseignement et à la gestion scolaire. Il connaît fort bien ce dernier domaine puisqu'il a été administrateur scolaire de 1976 à 1980.

Verner Smitheram est directeur du département de philosophie à l'université de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Il est co-directeur de l'ouvrage intitulé "Garden Transformed: P.E.I. 1945-1980" qui vient de paraître (août 1982); il a aussi commencé à travailler à la préparation d'un livre sur la phénoménologie du conflit et de la médiation entre les humains, durant son un séjour d'études outre-mer à Paris et à Louvain.

Richard Townsend, qui est professeur agrégé à l'Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, est en train d'achever une étude quantitative sur les styles politiques et les prédispositions cognitives de certains législateurs et membres de commissions scolaires. Il part de l'hypothèse selon laquelle certaines personnes sont plus actives que d'autres sur le plan politique, ce qui s'explique par leur style et leurs prédispositions.

Contributors

Peter Coleman is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education of Simon Fraser University. Unusually for one in such a position, he established his national reputation both as academic and professional while an administrator in the school system of Manitoba. His field of interest is the politics of education.

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Charles Lusthaus is an Associate Professor of Education in the Department of Administration and Policy Studies at McGill University. His special interests are in the training and development of managers and employees of public organizations.

Evelyn Lusthaus is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling at McGill University. She is involved in teaching and research in Special Education.

Norman Robinson is a Professor of Educational Administration at Simon Fraser University. His major research interests are the politics of education and educational governance. He has first hand experience in school governance, having served as a school trustee from 1976-1980.

Verner Smitheram is Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Prince Edward Island. He co-edited *The Garden Transformed: P.E.I. 1945-1980*, which has just appeared (August 1982), and has been working on a book on the phenomenology of human conflict and mediation during studies abroad in Paris and Louvain.

Richard Townsend, who is an Associate Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, is completing a quantitative study of the political styles and cognitive predispositions of selected legislators and school board members. His assumptions are that some people are more active than others politically, and that their styles and predispositions matter.

(Vive la différence!)

Closing School Boards

"In the present state of school democracy, budgets will not be administered any worse by the Laurin formula - a commission formed of delegates from school committees - than under the existing system. The White Paper should be criticized for not going to the root of the problem: Does democratic participation still have any meaning in the regional administration of education?

"If so, it (regional administration) should be urgently channelled into providing a framework, support for schools; this would be a break from the role of elected treasurers, which is what school commissioners are. That is an urgent reform ..."

Lise Bissonnette of **Le Devoir** was responding in July to criticisms of a White Paper put out by Camille Laurin, Minister of Education in Quebec. French-speaking opponents of the anticipated legislation characterized it as unwarrantably centralizing the management of education in the Ministry. English-speakers denounced it as a purely political attack on their community's position in the province. In the furor that will continue to grip many of our Quebec readers through the fall, no remarks made here about the proper relationships between school boards and parents are likely to escape judgments made by the glaring light of this local conflict.

It is a nice irony that, whereas the focus of this issue of the Journal is on public protests aimed at school boards across Canada about the closing of schools, in Quebec what is upsetting the public is the prospect of closing the school boards. Things are being said in the province that would have surprised their own sayers only a year or two ago. It is widely repeated by quite reputable people that parents simply cannot have the time or the skill to handle the additional responsibilities that are now to be

devolved on elected school committees. The regional school boards, scheduled on the other hand to lose suffrage and several responsibilities as well as their present identities, are now asserted to have come down to us through the ages as the chief manifestations of democratic leadership in the English-speaking community; yet these are the same institutions which until recently represented, complacently enough, images to the public of stereotyped oligarchic arrogance, and on which membership was rarely if ever decided by a vote.

The one consistent note being struck, among the various whacking sounds of many sticks to beat the dog, is of an angry conviction that M. Laurin is out to get the English. He has doubtless given plenty of reason for people to think so. But the fact that he has headed for little over a year the Ministry that has conceived the very comprehensive plans being brought forward does rather seem to escape notice. Such plans take a lot longer than a year of ministerial gestation to come to fruition.

Whatever M. Laurin's motives (and sardonic pleasures) may really be, one recognizes a sharp truth in Bissonnette's dismissal of regional school boards as elected treasurers. Except rarely, and then indirectly (should they have appointed, and then tolerated, unusually able people as their executive officers), regional school boards anywhere have little to their credit, and a good deal to their discredit, in the record of actions that have been taken affecting the quality of education in schools. The best thing that might be said of many is that they habitually left all such decisions to the professionals, while they looked after the interests of their apparent constituents, the tax-payers. Yet what a dereliction of duty to their real constituents - the people who are children now - is implied in that admission. Especially so, when one considers with what rarity professionals of any judgment emerge at the top of the thoroughly bureaucratized and largely untrained, timid, harried, and convention-bound educational hierarchy.

But if school board democracy has failed to make any dent in the massive venality of that hierarchy (which in time corrupts the greater part of the young and generous-minded who join it as teachers), is it the fault of wicked school-board members (who almost invariably exhaust themselves in largely thankless service); or of the indolent public, who are roused into participatory action only by the emergency of having their school moved to some less convenient spot?

When the excitement of parents over a school closure has died down, will not their involvement, and their new confidence and knowledgeability about getting things done in schools the way they want them, fade gradually away? Once decisions are seen

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to be being taken that more or less earn their confidence, we can predict what most parents will do. Anyone who has been one, with more than one child in the family, knows how daily priorities are handled week after week in a household over-crowded with things to do. Short-term projects, like getting to the skating rink, get done; long-term things like getting understanding, or justice, wait for ever at the bottom of the pile in the file.

Can the parental energies aroused by the drama of school closure really be harnessed to resolution of longer-running issues in local education that the regional boards have ignored? The answer of several of the papers in these pages seems to be yes, but only if the right institutions are set up - and they generally aren't there now, at any level. So whatever the results of the annual Plains of Abraham Memorial All-Star Battle (and no doubt these will duly be reported in what one might call the sports pages of the Quebec press), the prospect of elected bodies effectively running local schools in congruence with the wishes of parents is surely not to be sniffed at - even if they have been developed as a sort of educational spin-off from the technology of political warfare.

J.K.H.

Support or Confront?

Organizing public participation in P.E.I.

One thing far from settled in public education systems is the role parents and citizens may play in decisions taken in the local school. Professional educators notoriously obstruct their playing any such role. School boards clearly fail to fulfil the democratic functions they may seem to have on paper, their hand-in-glove relationship with even remoter authority placing them in frequent confrontation with local opinion.

The Home and School organization has traditionally coped by talking softly with deference; it carries no big stick, however. Smitheram analyses the meteoric but much-resisted rise in Prince Edward Island of the rival Concerned Citizens movement, and suggests that a solution may lie in giving the Home and School at least a small stick and a recognized role in decisions. But in a postscript he notes that that organization still doesn't seem interested in adopting an advocacy role.

In Canada and the United States three types of organization exist to meet the need for extended public participation: the volunteer cooperative groups known as Home and School or Parent-Teacher Associations, independent issue-oriented groups, and the school-building-based organizations called School Councils which are legally mandated by Provincial or State Legislatures.(1)

In Prince Edward Island only the first two types exist, in the form of Home and School Associations and Concerned Citizens groups. The latter have emerged very recently and account for an upsurge in public debate about P.E.I. schools. Why independent parents organizations have sprouted, when a well-developed provincial system of parent representation has existed for over 80 years, is illustrated in the recent Borden school controversy.

The Borden School issue

In February 1977, the Unit 2 Regional School Board of Prince Edward Island voted to remove grade 7 and 8 students from Borden Elementary into Summerside, and to close three small elementary schools in the Borden zone by June 30. A year earlier, in anticipation of this change, parents had appealed to the principal to accept the formation of a Home and School group for the Borden School, and had made overtures to the Provincial Executive at a semi-annual meeting, but no active response had resulted. As events developed, the citizens felt urgently the need to organize for opposition independently of the traditional parents body, and formed a Concerned Citizens group.

At issue were the parents' desires to maintain a close student-teacher-parent relationship, to minimize bus travel, to preserve rural identity and values, and to maintain the basic academic program in the community school framework. The Board argued that their motion had to prevail because of provincial policies of providing for consolidation of small units, separate housing for the intermediate level (grades 7-8-9), and equal program opportunities for all students. In summary, the situation had all the well-known characteristics of consolidation debates.

Within weeks the strength of parents' opposition became manifest in petitions, well-attended public meetings, and demands to rescind the motion. The Board reconsidered on two occasions, but remained adamant in its decision. Extensive publicity attracted sympathetic parents from other areas (who formed a provincial Concerned Citizens Association), and embroiled administrators, politicians and even the then Premier of the Province, Alex B. Campbell. Parents were caught in a vicious circle, between a board which steadfastly insisted it had to implement Department of Education consolidation policies and a government which resolutely maintained it could not interfere with the autonomy of boards (which had been set up in 1971 as part of the island's Comprehensive Development Plan). A high profile dispute raged for over a year. Parental pressure finally won a compromise, whereby two one-room schools were closed, but the zone retained grades 1 to 8 in two remaining eight-room and four-room buildings. This and many similar disputes were waged by independent groups of parents rather than by the entrenched Home and School Association.

The Home and School style

The basic orientation of the Home and School is one of cooperation and support for the school system. The sincere desire

"to do what is best for the children" is interpreted in such a way that cooperation with school authorities has high priority. The correlative seems to be that conflict is typically considered destructive of the system and ultimately obnoxious in its effects upon children. It is part of the "creed" of the Home and School "that it should be a cooperative effort to produce Canadian citizens who shall be capable of perpetuating the best of national life...and...that it shall not be used as a medium of criticism of or interference with school authorities and policies."(2)

Given this orientation, Home and School has overwhelmingly favoured methods of influencing education which are non-disruptive. Typically, it employs the tools of research, discussions, briefs, conferences, and the like. Moreover, these instruments are used in a controlled fashion. Public contexts such as open meetings and conferences are used to air issues, gather information, assess attitudes, and gauge support. Once an issue has been defined and a desire to pursue it has been democratically established, subsequent action is usually carried out in the contexts of private meetings with boards or principals or government officials. There, Home and School expects, and is usually granted, a hearing.

In these private contexts advice is given and received, but nothing requires the recipients to accept it or act upon it. The Home and School rarely if ever **demands** action. It may go one step further in the sense of a repeated appeal of some sort, and a return to the public context, which usually consists of a report at an open meeting about the reception it has been accorded. Usually, this is the limit of its tactics of influence - to venture into political means of public confrontation violates its code of cooperation. The belief is that conflict may yield short-term success but in the long run maintaining friendly relations with the authorities is more effective.

The Provincial Federation's list of Presidents since 1953 is representative of the kinds of persons who are most influential in the organization. Among the fifteen Presidents elected between 1953 and 1977, ten were primarily employed in education as teachers, principals, or administrators. Of the remaining five, four were professionals or spouses of professionals. Five of the Presidents were women, ten were men.

The Home and School record

A sample of the activities of the Provincial P.E.I. Home and School Association clearly shows that it has pursued many important educational issues. The P.E.I. group cannot be charged with being a mere "booster" society preoccupied with trivia and

sociability as several studies of American P.T.A.'s have maintained.(3) Since the Provincial's major activities are frequently responses to initiatives of local groups, it can be said that the latter also are not restricted to trivialities.

The Home and School has been effective in the role of high-lighting weaknesses of the school system. An obvious example is its 1955 call for the reform of teacher education, which was reiterated in 1962 and 1972. Its appeal preceded by fifteen years any concerted effort by Government and University to upgrade teacher programs and qualifications. Other examples include far-sighted recommendations about school literature, guidance, counselling, and vocational training.

Home and School has also actively fulfilled its support role when school authorities have set off in new directions, most notably in its participation in the massive reorganization of the school system between 1969-73. Furthermore, in less dramatic ways, the bulk of its activities are of a supportive nature. Through theme-oriented annual meetings, public conferences, discussion groups, and radio programs, it has played a significant role in information transmittal. For many citizens the Home and School is among the few significant sources of information about schooling. In addition, the organization provides one of the most readily available routes of access to school authorities at board and government levels. This feature is no doubt enhanced by its cooperative, non-militant orientation.

The list of activities of the Home and School is also significant in terms of what it **does** not include. In the 20 year span from 1953-1973 there is only one salient instance of sustained opposition to education authorities.(4) In 1972-73 the Home and School fought and won a vigorous public debate to reduce the size of a proposed new high school (Three Oaks) in Summerside.

In 1974 the Association called for a moratorium on school construction, a subject of numerous disputes since the inception of the education component of the Development Plan, which required complete consolidation of schools (365 in 1965 to 73 in 1974) and boards (from 365 in 1965 to 5 by 1972). This important issue was soon dropped, however, in the face of counterpressures.

Clearly, the Home and School is weakest in the role of defending parental interests when they differ from established policies, even in instances where parents are strongly united on an issue. Though 90% of the parents were united in the Borden controversy, which persisted in public view for over a year, the Provincial Home and School remained quiescent. While several members of the Provincial Executive accepted invitations by the

Concerned Citizens to attend strategy meetings, no significant aid was offered on an official basis. The failure to respond promptly, or at all, to "crisis" situations involving a struggle with a board or the government is perhaps the chief reason for the emergence of alternative parent groups.

A change in public attitudes

What are the reasons for this weakness in what is otherwise a commendable organization? In my view, part of the problem has to do with a turnabout in the kind of public involvement called for, where a school system is rapidly transformed without adequate consultation with the populace. Prior to 1969, most complaints about education were aimed at getting government or boards to remedy an out-dated system. Finally, when massive revisions did take place, from the mid-sixties on, some of the changes were gradually found objectionable. In particular, busing, school closures, and citizen participation in the larger educational structures became controversial issues. In this context, many citizens felt the need to change the direction or mode of implementation of entrenched policies. This context is new, in the sense that rather than supporting authorities in order to get them to act, there are now pressures to oppose authorities in what they are committed to doing.

The orientation and methods of Home and School are much more suited to the pre-1969 context than to the present one. If people in a community have been told the school is to be closed in a year, quick action is needed to undo a board decision. When it turns out, as it almost invariably does, that the gentle persuasions of briefs and discussions fail, the urgency of time impels people to resort to forceful political action. But Home and School, having quite consistently eschewed such tactics, hesitates and is found wanting. Hence, an independent citizens group is formed itself and proceeds with its urgent task.

Another aspect of the problem relates to the Home and School leadership. The profile indicates that it is what the literature calls a "professionally-led influence structure", which is locked into a support role out of self-interest. The theory is a plausible one, resting on the assumption that most people hesitate to bite the hand that feeds them. A leadership dominated by school personnel is likely to be cautious, not necessarily because of lack of courage, but often because it is difficult to accept the legitimacy of opposition to the system in which one must work.

In the matter of finances, the Federation has received grants from the Government on a one-year basis. This dependency raises the possibility that the organization itself may be tempted to

compromise when public opposition emerges. While this is strongly denied by the leadership, the suspicion remains, especially since the Liberal government cut off funding for the Rural Development Council of P.E.I. when it became too critical as a result of the public participation it had been mandated to stimulate.(5)

The above factors, and the general orientation to cooperate with and rarely criticize authorities, leads the latter to think of parent organizations as listeners and reactors. Communications are typically from the school to the parents about what is about to be proposed. But it is not expected that parents will initiate or block policies.

Concerned Citizens groups

Concerned Citizens groups have developed on P.E.I. only within the past six years. They are independent, volunteer, issue-oriented groups of parents and citizens which arise in "crisis" situations. Formed by local citizens without the sanction of any larger body or the school system, they have no formal constitution or standard forms of organization. They coalesce on the basis of a concrete issue and are typically meant to last only as long as the problem remains unsolved. The main issues spawning such groups have been school closures, school building, vocational programs, French Immersion, and busing.

Usually these groups are formed after normal channels of appeal to Home and School, principals, and boards have proved ineffectual. Thus, they are born in frustration. By the time they are organized, the level of discontent is high enough to lead to a rapid escalation of tactics. The protocols of writing briefs, attending special meetings with boards, and collecting petitions are always observed, in the hope that renewed pleas under the banner of an organization will succeed where earlier individual action did not. If they are again rebuffed - as is usually the case when basic policies are being opposed (6) - they resort to methods of political activism and "go public".

In P.E.I., the methods typically include extensive use of the media through press releases and TV interviews, calls for special sessions with boards, and, almost inevitably, demands that the Minister of Education take the stand at an open meeting complete with briefs, debates, and press coverage. At this stage, issue-oriented groups clearly recognize that sustained and vociferous public pressure is their only weapon. The smooth pathways of private negotiation on the "inside" of the system are blocked. If the authorities propose renewed committee study under terms which seem to invite procrastination and delay,

reaction is swift and negative. Yet there has been a ready willingness to respond to genuine attempts by the authorities to find solutions. For example, the protracted dispute in Borden was finally resolved by the initiatives of a new Superintendent, who won the trust of the Borden Concerned Citizens after he had accepted some of their views under persistent public pressure.

In a move uncharacteristic of issue-oriented groups, a province-wide organization was formed in 1977 with the broad objective of increasing public participation in education. The Borden dispute attracted sympathizers from other communities who, after a desultory open meeting with the Minister of Education and the Unit 2 Board Chairman, decided to form the Concerned Citizens Association for Education (C.C.A.E.). Its Executive consisted of one representative each from as many communities as would join. They were in turn supported by a Research Unit made up of individuals with research experience from the University and from established community organizations. Their tasks were to prepare briefs suggesting amendments to the School Act to increase public participation and to develop a locally adapted form of School Councils based on successful models in Canada and the U.S. In addition, background material was provided upon request for local Concerned Citizens groups involved with specific problems, regardless of whether the latter were affiliated with the C.C.A.E. or not.

In every instance the Chairmen of local and provincial bodies have been drawn from among farmers, clerics, housewives, and businessmen. Though educators and professionals have participated as members, none were elected to head any of the groups. Whereas the research group was dominated by educators, their role was primarily to provide information at the request of the citizens. The policy was that researchers should serve but not control. Most groups were led by a small core of activists. All meetings were open, and constant care was taken to ascertain popular support through petitions and attendance at public meetings.

Strengths and weaknesses

The main strengths of Concerned Citizens groups are clarity of purpose, action-orientation, independence, and grass-roots support. Their sense of purpose is fueled by definite, concrete objectives (such as keeping a school open) which are of direct concern to parents and students as a community. Such clear purposes form easily recognizable rallying points. Personal commitment is reinforced by the conviction that what the group is doing is linked to basic parental responsibilities and community needs. Finally, opposition offered by school authorities is all that

is needed to stimulate solidarity.

Concerned Citizens demonstrate an organizational vigour far greater than do permanent groups with broader goals. They discuss with a view to definite action. They aim to win their case, not just to be heard. They want action, not words. Though willing to exercise self-restraint as long as some progress is being made, they are prepared to move toward strong public debate in the face of inflexibility. In cases where open conflict has ensued, it occurred only after a long series of graduated approaches had been exhausted.

The determination of the groups is enhanced by their independence. Since they are led by non-school personnel, hesitation by leaders fearful of their employers does not hamper their activities. They are also difficult to co-opt because of independent leadership, the absence of financial support by any outside agency, and local autonomy. (The provincial C.C.A.E. is there as a resource only. It exercises no administrative control over the Locals.)

Concerned Citizens groups represent the emergence of grass-roots democracy. They arise from within the community without stimulation from outside agencies or the school system itself, and are controlled by non-school personnel.

Though issue-oriented organizations have only been active for the past few years, they have succeeded in influencing a number of specific board decisions about such matters as school closures, French Immersion programs, and access to board documents and meetings. They have also had considerable impact in raising awareness of the need for strengthened citizen participation in school governance. When one considers the difficulties in altering established policies or reversing decisions made by established authorities, who have all the resources of constituted power, finances and staff, the impact of Concerned Citizens must at least be judged significant.

However, in the brief history of Concerned Citizens in P.E.I., there has been little opportunity to test their capability in the support role. In the first place they have been embroiled in attempts to change existing policies, and this seems like a negative activity. Unfortunately the positive aspects of these efforts - the preservation of community schools and the promotion of a philosophy which envisions a close relationship between pupils, teachers, and parents - have been underplayed. Secondly, they have received no help from individual teachers, who in a period of shrinking enrolments and job placements have kept a safe distance from controversy. Thus once a crisis is done with, there is no one within the school to suggest specific new roles

for the citizens. The paucity of teacher involvement militates against forming contacts for cooperative long-term efforts.

The provincial C.C.A.E. faces special difficulties in its attempts to be supportive. Its public stances have made school administrators defensive, and many have chosen to view its proposals as dangerous attempts to dismantle the present consolidated board system and to return to individual school-based administration. This serious confusion arises from its suggestion that School Councils, while basically meant to be advisory groups, should have some decision-making powers in strictly local school affairs. The C.C.A.E. brief explicitly recognizes the boards as the only bodies with the power to delegate or withdraw decision-making powers; however, a more carefully conceived brief would have stressed this important point to avoid misunderstanding.

Where constant, long-term involvement in school affairs is desired, issue-oriented groups are ill-suited, since they tend to wax and wane with the rise and resolution of each issue. Another difficulty is that in the absence of a formally constituted structure, the membership may fail to be representative of all segments of the community. It should be noted that Home and School has no safeguards against this problem either. Finally, while the citizens groups do perform a role in information transmittal, the scope is limited to selected issues and there are no funds available for an adequate communications effort.

The reactions of government

What these groups are up against is well illustrated by obstacles faced at the provincial level by the Concerned Citizens Association for Education. In a bid to increase public participation it generated three proposals: to amend the School Act to allow for plebiscites where controversy develops over school closure; to have permissive legislation for School Councils, thus requiring boards to recognize them as legitimate advisory groups; and to form a Citizens Educational Information Service.(7)

The Minister of Education has not been convinced of the need for such measures. His reluctance was probably reinforced at the House Committee hearings of the P.E.I. Legislature in July, 1978. There the C.C.A.E.'s proposals were stonewalled by the Teachers' Federation, the School Trustees, and to a lesser extent the Home and School Association. The fears generated are summed up in the conclusion of the P.E.I.T.F.'s Executive counterbrief:

In conclusion, we wish to reemphasize the fact that, as an Executive, we seriously considered the proposals

of the C.C.A.E. We are not prepared to support most of them because we do not believe that their implementation would lead to improved educational opportunities for the children of the Province. Many of the proposals appear to be aimed at breaking down the present administrative structure of education in the Province and we are not prepared to support this objective. We do not believe that the present structure has been in operation for a sufficiently long time period to achieve its potential. The proposals seem to be saying "return the decision-making power to the masses" and if one looks at the parts of the world where this is supposedly occurring it can be seen that it is done at the expense of personal freedom.(8)

The School Trustees fear a return to individual school-based boards. The Home and School's position is ambiguous; while it recognizes the need for fuller citizen participation, it has no wish to actively support what could become an alternative parent organization.

Criteria for good public participation

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that public participation in education in P.E.I. is in several important respects unsatisfactory: about 50% of the schools have no parents organization whatsoever. Among existing organizations, Home and School is often ineffectual when parents' wishes run contrary to the system's policies, while Concerned Citizens are trapped in a conflict model of interaction. The coexistence of two types of parents groups gives the impression of disunity and allows authorities to play one group off against the other.

As the legally constituted bodies administering the school system, boards must accept the responsibility for involving the public in critical decision-making activities at the local level. While no foolproof system has yet been designed for the purpose, extensive experience in Canada and the U.S. strongly suggests that the best forms of participation have emerged under the following conditions:

- when people have some sort of self-interest at stake;
- when they have a clear and compelling diagnosis of the needs of the situation;
- when they have a meaningful prescription or remedy for the situation;

Support or Confront?

and when they have a sense of power to act.(9)

The first condition is best met through a school-based organization, because most parents are directly interested in the school their children attend. Relatively few have system-wide concerns. The remaining conditions have as their *sine qua non* the delegation of specific board responsibilities to local groups. This is the "sticky wicket" which leads most boards and governments to hedge. The directives for the Quebec system of mandated School Committees, for example, state that:

school committees...must be defined within the school structure as organizations cooperating with school administrators and school boards. They are to be complementary structures without encroaching upon the duties and authority of school commissions and administrators.(10)

As a 1977 study headed by Professor Lucas of McGill shows, these committees failed to provide a useful forum for parents because they were structured so "that only benefits should be experienced by the authorities." Parents cannot be a source of meaningful contributions if their only option is to be in full agreement with the system. "If the choice is for more advocacy on the part of parents, occasional non-cooperation would seem to be one of the costs entailed."(11)

Just as boards insist on their right to criticize Department of Education policies, parents can be expected to want something more than a system which restricts them exclusively to cooperation. Besides being undemocratic, the stifling of non-cooperation is impractical, for citizens can take matters into their own hands, as we have seen. Boards must cease viewing parent groups as mere "wisdom-dispensing" agencies and accept a role for them in policy-formation. To do this boards will need to resist the view promoted by many professional educators that professionals are the only people fit to make judgments about education. The dominance of entrenched professional administrators in P.E.I. is increasingly recognized by parents and politicians alike as a potent factor in the diminished sensitivity of boards to parents' wishes.

The outcome for P.E.I.

Given the present status of parents' organizations in P.E.I., the Home and School Association would seem to be the most suited to function as the voice of all parents. However, this proposal only makes sense under certain conditions:

- (1) that some type of formal mandate be given by boards to indicate officially their desire to include parents as meaningful advisors to the schools and to the boards;
- (2) that boards delegate some specific local responsibilities to recognized parents groups;
- (3) that Home and School change its leadership profile to purge itself of the suspicion that it is a "professionally-led influence structure." It can do so by amending its constitution to ensure that its executive is dominated by non-professionals; and
- (4) that the Home and School adopt advocacy as one of its major objectives. That is to say, in addition to the roles it now plays, Home and School should, where warranted, pursue parental concerns even in the face of official opposition, with legal and political means if necessary.

These proposals are intended to strengthen the position of Home and School within the educational structure, so that Locals may play a much more substantial role in the day-to-day life of the school, and to make it a credible force as the voice of **all** parents in both support and advocacy roles.

Postscript

In the years since this paper was written, nothing has happened to indicate that Home and School can, or wishes to, assume a strong advocacy role. Where it fails to respond, independent groups continue to arise to meet the needs of the moment. (12)

In 1978, when school controversies were frequent, the possibility of rivalry between parents groups, especially at the provincial level, seemed likely. However, a period of relative peace followed the election of a Conservative government, which is officially more sympathetic to parents rights and small community interests. In the ensuing lull, the C.C.A.E. has become dormant and Home and School remains unchanged. In a word, both groups behaved true to form. It seems that in Prince Edward Island, support and advocacy roles are destined not to be played out within the compass of a single parents association. If so, political realism suggests that the two types of organization be viewed as distinct and complementary forces.

NOTES

1. Quebec has had a province-wide system of School Committees since 1972. Institute for Responsive Education studies claim there were at least 10,000 Councils in the U.S.A. by 1977. Davies, D. "Citizen Participation: Quality and Impact," in *The Common*, April/May, 1977. p.3.

School Councils vary greatly in composition, role and effectiveness.
2. The Canadian Home and School and Parent Teacher Federation, History 1895-1963. Appendix E, p.88.
3. Fantini, M., Gittell, M., & Magot, R., *Community Control and the Urban School*, N.Y.: Praeger, (1970), p.74.
4. The Prince Edward Island Federation of Home and School Associations, History 1953-1973, Hesta MacDonald, editor; 1973, p.5.
5. The Rural Development Council was established as a semi-autonomous group specifically charged with stimulating public discussion of social, economic and educational changes called for in the P.E.I. Development Plan.
6. An attempt to account for the increase in confrontations between citizens and boards and for the inflexibility of boards on basic policies is made in my unpublished paper - Smitheram, V. "Resurgence and Reaction: Small Schools, Community Values, and Public Participation in P.E.I." Paper presented to Atlantic Education Association Conference, Charlottetown: October, 1977.
7. Concerned Citizens Association for Education Brief on Public Participation, April, 1978.
8. Provincial Executive of the P.E.I. Teachers' Federation, A Reaction to Recommendations of the Concerned Citizens for Education, March 1978.
9. Palmer, P., and Jacobson, E. *Action Research: A New Style of Politics in Education*. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1974.
10. Government of Quebec, Department of Education. Mission 27, School Committees and Parent Committees. Document Number VIB. Quebec: 1972.

11. Lucas, B., Lusthaus, C.S., and Gibbs, H. "Parent Advisory Committees in Quebec: An Experiment in Mandated Parental Participation." Presented to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration, 1978.
12. Background for numerous disputes about schooling in P.E.I. since 1969 is available in "Development and the School Consolidation Debate" in Smitheram, V., Milne, D., and Dasgupta, S. *The Garden Transplanted: Prince Edward Island 1945-80*. Ragweed Press, Charlottetown, P.E.I., (1982).



Grassroots Politicking

to save the neighbourhood school

In a society having different levels of income and of education, the idea of "grassroots" tends to be associated with the lowest level of all and therefore to have somewhat unsophisticated, earthy connotations. That this does not follow is demonstrated by the case studied in this article, where Robinson shows how a perceived threat to a neighbourhood school may stimulate a highly sober and sophisticated reaction by middle-class people, who command a wide variety of expertise. Does it seem reasonable to expect that this kind of group experience, once begun, is unlikely to end at that - with a return to an attitude of *laissez-faire* towards school-board decisions whether routine or strategic? Like the Coleman article, but also in contrast to it, this case exhibits the uniquely complicating factor in Canada of French immersion, as an issue fraught with its own kinds of public tension.

In the past, school boards and educators have sold parents on the concept of the neighbourhood school. Now parents seem unwilling to give it up. Many parents believe in the educational virtues of the neighbourhood elementary school. Many also believe that once a neighbourhood school is closed, the environmental forces of out-migration, population decline, and neighbourhood deterioration are irreversibly set in motion. In view of these beliefs, it is therefore not surprising that any suggested school closure or alternative use of a school can generate intense political conflict between neighbourhood parents and a school board.

One of the most significant political developments in the Western democracies in the last half of the 1970's has been the emergence of a wide variety of grassroots associations. These are

groupings of people in a neighbourhood who have organized themselves to fight an issue that is vital to the everyday life of the neighbourhood. Such associations are most strongly developed in Europe. Spain has highly politicized neighbourhood associations. Italy's "self-reduction" movement is organized on a neighbourhood basis, and has been successful in getting citizens to pay only a "self-reduced" portion of utility, telephone and transportation rates. In France, there are well-developed neighbourhood groups in Paris fighting housing and transportation issues. (Perlman, p.4)

Grassroots associations of North America

The development of such associations in the United States and Canada has been slower, but now appears to be catching up. Grassroots groups are emerging as a powerful and significant political force. New York has been the scene of innumerable rent strikes by neighbourhood associations (Perlman, p.6). In 1975 a network of neighbourhood associations from over one hundred cities in the U.S.A. successfully lobbied for federal legislation to force savings and loans companies to disclose the locations of the mortgages they held and the loans they made. This was an attempt to fight redlining, the practice among banks and loan companies of drawing a red line around neighbourhoods they considered to be high risks. Some neighbourhood groups have organized greenlining campaigns, getting people to draw their money out of institutions engaged in redlining practices and to put it into institutions willing to invest in the neighbourhood of the investors. (Perlman, pp.4, 18)

The grassroots associations of the late 1970's differ markedly from the social protest movements of the 1960's. Those focused primarily on national issues such as civil rights, Viet Nam, and women's rights. The focus of today's associations is on local organization and on local issues rooted in everyday lives. As one commentator puts it, "People are less concerned with making history than with making life." (Perlman, p.6)

The people involved in grassroots associations in U.S.A. and Canada today represent the total spectrum of society - rich, poor, young and old. This stands in sharp contrast to the 1960's when a much narrower segment of society was involved. The most remarkable development has been the increased involvement of the middle class. As Williams points out,

By the standards of the sixties, they are unrecognizable as protestors; their dress is neat, their tone is moderate, their battlegrounds indoors, not out.(p.12)

The middle class groups tend to be low on rhetoric and ideology

but high on the things the middle class does well, "organizing, propagandizing and working like hell." Members of these associations tend to have special skills that enable them to deal effectively with government bodies and the media, and to do the background research on the issues that are being fought.

Schools serve neighbourhoods, and the neighbourhood is the basic political territory for the grassroots group. There are numerous examples of neighbourhood groups in education which have employed successfully the several political strategies of direct action, seeking power, or forming alternative institutions. (Ianni, 1975) For example, dissatisfied parents of school children in quite a number of neighbourhoods have founded alternative schools.

There has been, however, little systematic study of grassroots associations in education as political phenomena. The one exception is a study by Summerfield, which examined the neighbourhood-based politics of education. Summerfield maintains that the neighbourhood functions essentially as an interest group. Neighbourhoods are, however, not all the same in terms of their interest group behaviour. Four basic political styles can be identified. Summerfield's study examined the relationships in each of four neighbourhoods between the community, the principal, and the school district authorities; but he did not analyse in depth the forces operating in each of the neighbourhoods studied.

Persons and places in this paper have been given fictitious names to preserve their anonymity.

The study reported here investigated the conflict between neighbourhood residents and the Mackenzie School Board over the Board's proposed plan for using surplus school space in the Inglewood neighbourhood elementary school. More specifically, the study focused on the grassroots political activity of the Inglewood residents.

Inglewood against Mackenzie

Mackenzie School District is a large Anglophone urban school district somewhere in Canada. The Inglewood neighbourhood in this district is exclusively residential and upper middle class. The events in the case took place in the early months of 1978. Documentary data from the Mackenzie District files and the Inglewood group's files were collected and analyzed. Since the Mackenzie-Inglewood conflict had received wide media coverage, the newspapers, radio open-line shows, and public television forums were important.

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Structured interviews of two to three hours each were held with the principal leaders of the Inglewood group. These people were identified by a reputational technique: all members of the Inglewood group who had been active in the Mackenzie-Inglewood conflict were asked to name the group's leaders. These nominations were pooled.

No interviews were conducted with school board members or educators at the school district or school level. This was a deliberate decision, as the principal purpose of the study was to examine the Inglewood grassroots association from the "inside", from the perspective of participants.

The beginning

In early January, 1978, the principal of Inglewood Elementary sent a notice home to parents asking them to come to the school on the following day to hear Dr. Len Marshall, Assistant Superintendent in Mackenzie School District, speak on the district's plans for the use of surplus space in Inglewood school. About 30 parents attended this meeting and heard Dr. Marshall explain a plan to locate two French immersion classes of twenty-five students each in Inglewood school beginning in September, 1978. These students would be drawn from all across the city. As space became available as a result of Inglewood's projected continuing decline in enrolment, each following year an additional class would be added. At its peak, Inglewood had enrolled over 400 students. By January, 1978, its enrolment was down to 317; projected enrolment for September 1978 was 263, and by 1982 the school's enrolment was expected to be 137.

This first meeting was followed by a formal meeting of the Parents Advisory Committee a week later. At this time a number of parents expressed concern about the introduction of the French immersion classes into Inglewood, and the Committee decided to ask the members of the school board to attend a special meeting of the Parents' Committee to discuss the French immersion plan.

At this point, Mrs. Bronston, one of the concerned parents, phoned over 100 Inglewood residents asking them to come to a meeting at her home. About 60 came. At this meeting the feeling was voiced that the Parents Advisory Committee was ineffective for this situation. It was too large and slow-moving. What was needed was an "inner group" - a smaller and more active parents' group which could take the lead in opposing the school board plan. Leaders were chosen to present the parents' case at the upcoming special meeting. A petition was prepared, and workers for collecting signatures were assigned. A phone

committee was formed to get parents out to the special meeting with the school board.

Over 200 parents attended the special meeting with the school board. The parents' leaders stated that their main concern was that the regular school program at Inglewood would suffer. As time passed, more and more French immersion classes would be added to the school, and the regular English program would be reduced to a skeleton. Good teachers would leave, and parents might move to another neighbourhood.

Above all, the leaders said that the parents resented being presented with what looked like a **fait accompli**. The school board should have presented the neighbourhood with a number of alternatives to deal with the declining enrolment situation. As one speaker put it to the school board members, "You provide us with only one option, and you're trying to push it down our throats." A small minority of parents spoke in favour of the French immersion plan and accused the main group of bigotry. The meeting ended with a standing vote of over ninety per cent expressing opposition to the school board's plan.

Reactions to "reaction"

The accusation of bigotry then precipitated an intense media reaction. One editorial said that the "bigots at Inglewood are not only depriving their own children of a tremendous opportunity to learn a second language, but by their shortsightedness and stupidity, they are preventing more enlightened parents from giving their children the best our educational system has to offer." Another editorial described the Inglewood parents' reaction as "irrational, reactionary, and not in the best interests of either their country or their children." The leaders of the Inglewood parents' group responded to the charges of bigotry by repeating what they felt to be their legitimate objections to the plan. Dr. Sanderson, one of the principal leaders of the parents' group, said in a press interview that he "would like to see the school board start from scratch: explaining the situation, giving us all the alternatives, including French immersion. And then letting us see for ourselves what is the best way to go."

At the next regular meeting of the school board the issue of Inglewood school received exhaustive discussion. The board indicated that it did not think it could "start from scratch", and that it would seek another location for the French immersion classes. The President of the Inglewood Parents' Advisory Committee was in the audience and was asked to comment. She said that the parents themselves at Inglewood were going to do a comprehensive study of the declining enrolment situation at

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Inglewood and prepare a set of recommendations for the school's future.

The following evening, at the Inglewood Parents' Advisory Committee meeting, five committees were established. These committees were the census committee; the closure and facilities use committee; the committee on the alternative use of space, excluding French immersion; the committee on compatibility of the French immersion program with regular English programs; and the enrichment committee. Each of these committees had a chairman and five to ten working members. Extensive use was made of outside consultants, and the committees either visited, interviewed, or corresponded with a large number of public and private institutions and individuals. To chair the committee on compatibility of the French immersion program with the English program, the parents chose Dr. Lionel Stanfield, a university professor. He was a resident of the Inglewood neighbourhood, but had no children in school and had taken no part in the events to date. Both pro-French immersion and anti-French immersion parents were named to this committee.

The report

The committees' reports were brought in on schedule two months later and presented to the school board. The census committee had conducted a door-to-door survey of the Inglewood neighbourhood, and came to the conclusion that the school board enrolment projections were wrong. Although Inglewood school's population would be going down in the future, the drop would not be as rapid as predicted by the school board staff. Accordingly, classroom space to any large extent would not exist for the French immersion program. Subsequent events proved the parents' committee to be right. In September 1978 Inglewood school had an enrolment of 316 students, compared to the school board staff's projected enrolment of 263.

The committees generated a large number of suggestions for using school space as it became available, for programs other than French immersion. These included pre-school programs, community education programs, enrichment programs, and so on. On the controversial question of compatibility of the French immersion program with the English program, the committee report said,

We are not able to determine clearly the impact of an immersion program on a school as small as Inglewood. We feel that French immersion is a desirable side-by-side program, but not easily suited to a small school where the continuing viability of the existing

English program would be in question.

Summing up, the Inglewood parents made one final point.

We do want to express our strong disapproval of the conduct of the school board both in its handling of the French immersion issue and the attitude towards planning for the future. As parents and taxpayers, it is not enough to be told by school board officials that the future beyond two or three years is too uncertain to plan for. Effective methods are available for modelling the many variables such as school populations, programs, and physical facilities to forecast the range of possible future events. The school board's failure to do effective planning has caused the entire Inglewood community to be cast as bigots at this time of search for national consensus. For that, the school board will not soon be forgiven.

In the light of these reports, the school board dropped its plan to introduce the French immersion classes into Inglewood.

An analysis

The purpose of this study was to analyse the Inglewood parents group as a grassroots association in education. The group was analysed in terms of its social origins, its size and constituency, its leadership, its issues, and its political strategies.

Social origins. The residents of Inglewood neighbourhood had a long tradition of supporting their school. They had been satisfied with the job it was doing and, in addition, they had been satisfied with the job the school board was doing.

For the most part citizens are content to assign to school board members the trustee role in education. This means that board members are free to make judgments and provide leadership without continual public consultation. This norm of trusteeship does not apply, however, when an issue of great cruciality to a particular group surfaces. Meaningful consultation must then take place. In contemporary North American society, city councils and school boards alike have not been particularly good at knowing when to give up the trustee role and when to solicit the views of local interest groups. As Zisk points out in her study of city councilmen:

They (the councilmen) apparently believe that the council, with the advice of the city manager and city staff, is generally capable of acting in the interests of

the community without actively soliciting the views of the electorate. (They seem) to drive ahead, glancing neither to the side nor into their rear-view mirrors at the non-council traffic accompanying them. Their destination is the relatively insulated ... councilroom, where the search for "right answer" prevails, regardless of the ... clamour outside.(p.143)

In this case, there is ample evidence to indicate that the school board failed to perceive that they should consult widely with the Inglewood neighbourhood before attempting to introduce the French immersion plan. This conclusion is reflected in the remarks of one of the parents:

Reception of the proposal to introduce the French immersion program might have been different had the school board and officials apprised parents and residents beforehand of the extent of their concern about declining enrolments; had they advertised and described the French immersion program and taken steps to assure parents that qualified programs in English and French can co-exist in the same building.

When it appeared that the school board was attempting to present the Inglewood neighbourhood with a **fait accompli** on the French immersion plan, the roots of middle class resentment were tapped and the grassroots politicking began.

Size of the group, and constituency. The Parents' Advisory Committee at Inglewood school was a school-board mandated committee. As its name suggests, it had advisory powers only, and its membership was restricted to parents. For a grassroots association to be successful, it has to develop a constituency which will provide a broad base of support. The "inner group" which was formed at the meeting in the Bronston home undertook to develop that constituency. Through the telephone campaign and the circulation of the petition, additional supporters were enlisted. The interview data revealed very clearly that the "inner group" did not attempt to involve only anti-French immersion supporters. Pro-French immersion supporters were encouraged to become involved as well. A large number of Inglewood residents who had no children in school became involved also. The leaders of the "inner group" wanted to bring together as many differing points of view as existed in the neighbourhood. Conflicting points of view could be reconciled, and when this had been accomplished, the residents of Inglewood, and not the school board, would determine the future of the Inglewood school.

Leadership. Mrs. Bronston, who provided the initial leadership thrust, no longer had children in the Inglewood school. She was

an older woman and had developed a healthy skepticism about educational innovations as a result of her children's earlier experiences with such matters as the New Mathematics. Putting a French immersion program with an existing English program seemed to her an educational innovation of dubious value.

The "inner group" that formed at the Bronston home provided the leadership nucleus: there were approximately sixty people at the Bronston meeting and about five individuals emerged as leaders, each having a responsibility for a different area.

The men present at the meeting were all experienced and articulate professional and managerial people. The women were full-time housewives who had ample free time to devote to the task at hand. As needed, the "inner group" called on experienced and knowledgeable people with the requisite skills to carry out specific tasks. Everything was done expertly. A good example is the census committee's work on projected school enrolments.

Issues. What were the issues in the Mackenzie District-Inglewood dispute depends upon which sources are tapped. An analysis of the school board records shows that the board members and officials felt that they were acting in the interests of the school district as a whole by introducing a needed educational program into a school which had available space. The district would get a program it needed, and Inglewood's declining enrolment situation would be ameliorated.

Letters to the press, calls to open line radio shows, and participation in public television forums reveal that a large segment of the public saw the Inglewood parents as a group of upper middle-class anti-French bigots who were opposed to an educational program designed to promote national unity.

Documentary and interview data obtained from Inglewood sources reveal a different perspective. There is little evidence to suggest an anti-French feeling among the Inglewood residents. Indeed, the Parents' Advisory Committee had made several representations to the school board requesting an expansion of existing French programs in the school. The main issue in the minds of the Inglewood residents was that the school board had failed to involve citizens in the making of decisions that affected the everyday lives of people living in the Inglewood neighbourhood. The board had failed to discuss with residents the problem of declining enrolment, to formulate a range of alternatives to deal with it, to discuss the proposed introduction of the French immersion program, and finally to produce evidence that French and English programs could co-exist in a school like Inglewood.

There was a general feeling that the school board had relied

solely on the advice of its officials as to whether the French immersion program should be introduced into Inglewood. There are routine and strategic decisions in the life of a polity. Boards can safely leave routine decisions to their officials; but strategic decisions affecting everyday lives must be made by boards in conjunction with the people affected by these strategic decisions (Boyd, 1976). The school board treated the introduction of the French immersion program into Inglewood as a routine decision. In reality, it was a strategic decision, and the residents felt they should have been involved in the decisional process.

Political strategies. In their struggle with the Mackenzie School Board the Inglewood grassroots group used a direct action, pressure group strategy. The "inner group" provided the leadership nucleus for the broad base of neighbourhood support that came from parents and non-parents. All the grassroots politicking that took place occurred under the umbrella of the Parents' Advisory Committee. This committee, supposed to be for parents only and simply advisory to the school staff, proved to be useful as an existing organization under which community forces could be mobilized.

The political behaviour in this dispute is very similar to that of one of the four neighbourhoods described by Summerfield.

In Larsen, the principal does not serve as an active petitioner for the neighbourhood school, and the parents do not petition the principal. Generally, the intensity of Larsen political activity is low. The educational service and educated product satisfy Larsen consumers. Parents support the school, and its principal is able to operate non-conflictually with the neighbourhood and central office.

Concluding statement

At the present time the ordinary citizen has little say in the educational decision-making process except at election time. For some time there has been a call for the development of a "third force" in education to counteract the dominant influence wielded by teachers' organizations and educational bureaucrats with their rubber-stamp school boards. Wider citizen involvement in education has taken place with the growth of citizen advisory committees in education, but the committees have provided for little more than symbolic participation. No effective means have been developed to make educational institutions more responsive and sensitive to public needs and demands, particularly at the neighbourhood level.

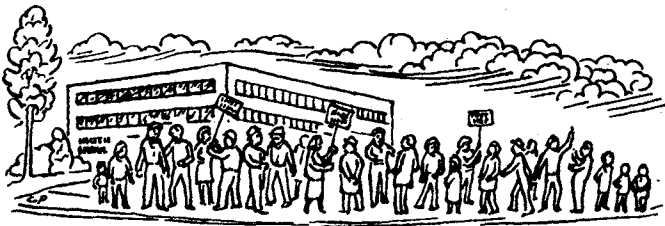
It is this that has given rise to the development of

neighbourhood grassroots associations in Europe, the United States, and Canada. It was the Mackenzie School Board's insensitivity to the feelings and needs of the Inglewood residents that gave rise to the development of a grassroots group in that neighbourhood. At a time when neighbourhood schools are threatened because of declining enrolments, it seems reasonable to expect that a lot of grassroots associations are going to come into being to protect these schools. If this occurs, the process of public involvement in education may never be the same again.

Grassroots politicking is invaluable. People see how power and politics operate. They see both the potential and the limitations of collective action. They feel a new sense of self-esteem. And a few individuals cross the threshold between making life and making history.

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Involving Parents

A case study in closing schools

Mobs are really frightening. But is development toward participatory democracy in general simply motivated by fear - representing merely a series of propitiatory acts by such as school boards? Charles and Evelyn Lusthaus show how a number of parents reacted to being involved in a well-planned process of decision, applied by one Montreal school board to proposals for closure of altogether 27 of its schools (of which ultimately 12 remained open). Their differences in opinion about the results, between those who "won" and those who "lost" these decisions, were understandably marked. But about the merits of the process itself their differences were not strong; and it is interesting that the degree of their involvement in school committees and so on became much greater, particularly among those who lost.

In these parents' evident acceptance of the channels thus made available to them, this study offers a point of contrast to others in this issue that deal with the organization of protest by parents. These parents seem to have acquired, for the short term at least, a confidence in their own participation in school management that would seem to justify certain hopes.

Parents have said that they want to be involved in decisions that affect their children's education, and the closing of a neighbourhood school is precisely the type of decision in which they expect to play a major role. Realizing this can be central to a methodology for school closure that attempts to overcome parental resistance to change. In such a methodology, the significant question is no longer whether parents should play a role in the change process, but rather, how to structure the situation to best use parents' efforts.

Parental participation is a mandated part of decision-making

process in many places in Canada. To some administrators this means that decisions are to be made and then sold to parents using public relations techniques; the structure created then has no substance. More and more this approach is being rejected by both parents and administrators, and school organizations are developing more sophisticated policies about parental participation. One large school board in Montreal has developed such a set of policies about school closings. It is the purpose of this paper to describe this board's policy and its effectiveness.

The Quebec context

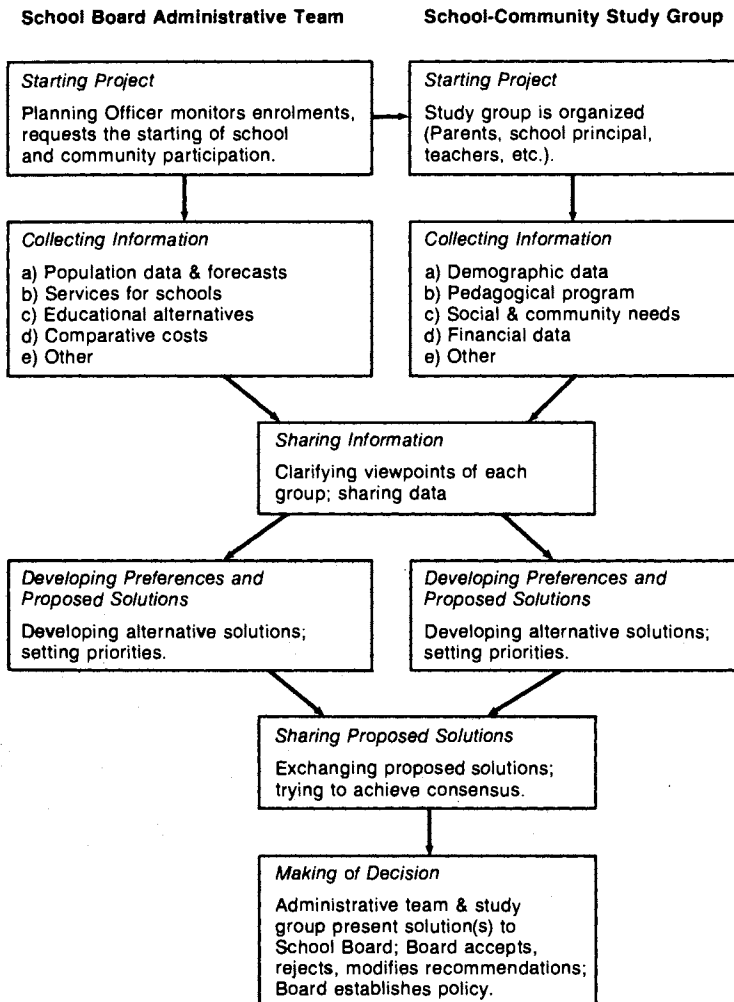
There has been a decline in school enrolments in Quebec since the late 1960's. It began in the French schools, and the methods for handling it were primarily technical; schools with enrolments below 250 students, for example, were closed. By the early 1970's a foreshadowing of major declines in enrolment also became apparent in the English sector: split classes increased, specialist services such as music and art decreased or disappeared, and so on. English school boards followed their French counterparts in adopting school closing procedures. They established a simple decisional rule to determine which school would close, most often deciding that a school with less than a certain number of students would have to be closed.

One large English board in Montreal soon found this procedure to be dysfunctional for a number of reasons. First, the English community, being a minority community in Quebec, viewed the schools as primary centres of English life and culture. Second, when specific schools had been identified as schools which were to be closed, citizen interest groups emerged as pressure forces that tried to keep the schools open. This often resulted in conflict and trauma for all segments of the school community. Third, by the 1972-73 school year, School Committees had been established by legislation for all schools throughout the Province, to guarantee adequate parent input into school decisions. The arbitrary decisional rules being used by the Board were not consistent with the spirit of this legislation to involve parents in the critical decisions of school life.

By 1974 this School Board had begun to look for alternative approaches to use for school closings. Projections had been made that there would be major declines in enrolments, sometimes as high as 50%, over the next five years. The Board turned to their Planning Officer to recommend a procedure that would involve all major groups - school commissioners, central office staff, principals and parents. A policy was recommended to the Board by 1975. The policy, called the Major School Change Policy, was drawn heavily from a text written in 1974 called "Citizens

Figure 1

MAJOR SCHOOL CHANGE PROCESS*



*This diagram depicts process from initiation to decision-making. Further steps of communication, implementation, evaluation, etc. are not illustrated here, as they are not directly relevant to parental involvement.

Participate", by Desmond Conner. By May, 1976, the policy had been accepted by the Board and plans were made for its implementation.

A policy for major changes

In its essence, the Major School Change Policy states that "the involvement of local school communities shall be sought in examining the problem, in helping to find solutions, and in planning for the future. The process is designed to facilitate consultation with the local groups..."

When the school's student population falls below 60% of capacity, the process is begun. In general, the steps of the process are followed in a parallel way between two groups, the school board administrative team and the school and community study group. This is illustrated in Figure 1, "Major School Change Process."

At the outset, the administrative team informs members of the community of the impending process and invites them to participate. The project begins with a general meeting of parents at which they are given basic information related to their school situation. The Board's Planning Officer provides enrolment data plus projections, operating costs, comparative costs, anticipated residential development, and alternatives if the school were to close. The parents are asked to form a study committee which may be made up of interested volunteers, or the study may be undertaken by the already existing School Committee. The principal of the school and teachers are part of the group, and community service groups are asked for their input.

When the study group has been organized, its first task is to **review** information. It familiarizes itself with the data provided by the Board's Planning Office. The opportunity exists for parents to challenge any of the data or to request additional clarification.

The group then follows a step-by-step process to **acquire** information about various aspects of the school situation: demographic data, the pedagogical program, social and community needs, and financial data relative to the school. Demographic data is provided by the Planning Office, but is often verified by the study group using its own resources. The description of the educational program is the responsibility of the principal and staff. The social considerations are developed largely by the study group, and the financial information is provided by the school board administrative team. The study group may also gather additional relevant information, such as pupil distribution

in an area, community priorities relative to education, and the social consequences of various alternatives and solutions. Wherever a group of schools is being studied in a given area or community, representatives of the local study groups come together on a regular basis to share the information they have gathered. This group attempts to look at the community-wide picture in order to develop solutions for the total community.

Meanwhile, at the same time as the study groups are gathering information, the administrative team has also been engaging in a process of information collection and review. As the information collection stage nears an end, members of both the administrative team and the study group come together to share their information and ideas. Each group then develops its own set of preferences and proposed solutions. The groups come together once more to share ideas about their proposed solutions, exploring ways by which they may arrive at a consensus before presenting their solutions to the School Board.

Before being presented to the Board, the alternative solutions developed by the study groups and the administrative team are presented to the parents at large, usually at a general meeting. The goals are to inform the parents of the proposed solutions and to try to get a consensus opinion from them. The parents will now have had the background information given them by the Planning Office at the original meeting, interim reports from the study group, and the final recommendations which the study group wishes to promulgate.

Finally, the recommendations of the administrative team and the study group are forwarded to the School Board, along with the data that have been collected. The School Board receives the report and listens to a verbal presentation made by administrators and by parents at a sub-committee hearing.

When there has been consensus among administrators and parents, the Board may simply accept the total set of recommendations. Where differences exist and opposite solutions are proposed by the two groups, the Board must accept one or the other, or a modified plan. In any case, the School Board, consisting of 15 elected school commissioners, must make its final decision at a public Board meeting.

The time involved between initiation and decision-making is approximately ten months. This period varies depending upon the complexity of a given situation and the necessity to avoid undue pressure to complete the study. If a study has begun in the

Table I
Information Provided To The Study Group
By The Planning Office

Area of Information	"Losing" Parents	"Winning" Parents
	% Agree	% Agree
1. Educational program		
a. Information was complete	50	84
b. Information was understood	57	82
2. Costs of running school		
a. Information was complete	50	63
b. Information was understood	43	67
3. School enrolment projection		
a. Information was complete	58	74
b. Information was understood	73	52

spring, it can be completed by late winter of the following school year and thus be given ample time for the follow up, and for transition, during the remaining months until the school year ends.

Parents who participated

During the period between 1975-1978, parents in twenty-seven schools were involved in this decision-making process regarding the potential closing of their schools. Fifteen of the schools were closed and twelve remained open. We obtained from each school an official list of the study group; these lists included sometimes as few as three parents and sometimes as many as fifteen parents as members. In all, 174 parents were formally involved in the school-closing decision; all 174 parents were sent our assessment questionnaire. Of these, 101 were returned and usable: 49 of the usable questionnaires came from schools which closed, 52 came from schools which had remained open.

For purposes of analysis, this population of parents was later divided into two groups, "winning" parents and "losing" parents. "Winners" were defined as parents whose recommendations to the School Board about whether their schools should stay open or be closed had been accepted by the Board. "Losers" were defined as those whose recommendations had been rejected.

Some results obtained from the questionnaire are illustrated in tables I - V.

Table I indicates that 50% or more of all the parents felt that the information provided to them had been complete and understood. (This was true in all groups but one.) The table also clearly shows that more of those parents whose decision had been accepted by the Board believed that the information they received was complete and clearly understood than those whose decision had not been accepted by the Board.

In Table II, several aspects of the Major School Change decision-making process are listed. Since part of the intent of the Major School Change Process had been to involve parents constructively in decision-making, minimizing conflict, it is particularly interesting to note that approximately 60% of all parents - whether winners or losers - felt that conflicts were in fact "handled adequately." Most parents, regardless of whether they won or lost in the end, also felt that they were able to control their own meetings, rather than having them controlled by administrative personnel. Further, a great majority of all parents said they thought that the meetings were worthwhile. However, parents seemed to have wanted more time to explain their recommendations to the Board; this was

Table II

Adequacy of Decision-making Process

Parent Perception of Process	"Losing" Parents	"Winning" Parents
	% Agree	% Agree
1. Alternative suggestions explored	47	59
2. Conflicts handled adequately	61	60
3. Meetings controlled by parents (rather than by administrators)	73	58
4. Meetings worth attending	66	97
5. Enough time given to Parents to ask questions of Board personnel	65	85
6. Enough time given to parents to explain recommendations to Board	37	67

Table III

Effect of Study Group On Board Decision		
Parent Perception of Effect	"Losing" Parents	"Winning" Parents
	% Agree	% Agree
1. I feel the decision made by the Board was correct	6	81
2. I feel that I can in- fluence Board decisions	14	66
3. I feel that parents had enough participa- tion in decision- making re school closings	24	71

Table IV

Effect of School Board Decision on the Child		
Effect of Decision	"Losing" Parents	"Winning" Parents
	% Agree	% Agree
1. Detrimental to my child's educational program	53	20
2. Detrimental to my child's friendship group	88	25
3. Detrimental to my child's attitude to school	63	31

Table V

Effect of Winning or Losing
On Parent Involvement

Membership and Level of Involvement	"Losing" Parents %	Winning" Parents %
1. Past Membership		
a. Home & School Committee	50	57
b. School Committee	44	46
2. Past Level of Involvement		
a. High	65	53
b. Moderate	30	28
c. Low	5	19
3. Present Membership		
a. Home & School Committee	50	64
b. School Committee	51	67
4. Present Level of Involvement		
a. High	82	67
b. Moderate	12	25
c. Low	6	8

particularly true of parents whose recommendations had not been accepted by the Board.

It is clear that perceptions of the effectiveness of the study group were significantly different between the parents whose recommendations had been accepted and those whose had been rejected by the Board. Seventy-one percent of winning parents said that parents had enough opportunity to participate in the decisional process; this is in contrast to only twenty-four percent of losing parents who said the same. Similarly, sixty-six percent of winning parents agreed that they can influence Board decisions; only fourteen percent of losing parents agreed to this statement.

Parents indicated that a decision to close the school had been most detrimental to their child's friendship group, over and above its negative effect on their child's educational program or their child's attitude toward school. More than 50% of these parents indicated that the decision to close the school had been detrimental in all three areas. Even among parents whose schools remained open, there was an indication that they felt the entire process had had a detrimental effect on their children. At least 20% of these parents reported that their children had been negatively affected, particularly in their attitude toward school.

In Table V, the membership and levels of involvement of the parents before and after their participation in the Major School Change Process is recorded. All parents - both winners and losers - reported that their membership in committees and their levels of involvement had risen since their participation in the school-closing issue. It is particularly interesting to note the comparison between the winners' and losers' present levels of involvement. Eighty-two percent of the people who are identified as losers in the school closing issue said that they presently have a high level of involvement in their schools; this compares with sixty-seven percent of the defined winners. In short, despite the fact that they did not succeed in convincing the Board to accept their recommendations about school closings, eighty-two percent of these parents continue to be actively involved in their schools.

This high level of involvement is particularly interesting when compared with the parents' response on the question of whether they feel they can influence Board decisions. Only 14% of losing parents answered yes to this question; yet 94% of these same parents rated themselves as highly or moderately involved in their schools at the present time. Although in the school-closing decision they felt defeated - unable to influence Board policy - the data clearly show that the group is continuing to be active. Thus the Major School Change Policy did not discourage involvement. This is exceedingly important if, as in the case in Quebec, one of the major goals for parent involvement is to develop structures that support participatory

democracy.

The data also suggest that whether parents were among the winners or losers in the process, they felt that their participation had been constructive rather than co-optive. This was particularly apparent in their responses to questions about information and control. Even among the losing parents, 73% reported that they felt that the parents - rather than the administrators or school personnel - had controlled the meetings. Further, most parents said they felt they had had adequate information from the School Board and enough time to ask for further information. These responses support the notion that the process was not set up in a way to co-opt parents, but rather to involve them, in a decision which could significantly affect their children's education.

This point is further borne out by the fact that in not one of the school communities slated for school closings did any other neighbourhood interest or pressure group emerge to fight in this issue. Thus the study groups that were part of the Major School Change Process seemed to have been viewed in the community itself as legitimate mechanisms for change and involvement. This is in marked contrast to the community experiences studied by Lusthaus et al (1976) and Robinson (1979), where it was found that adversary groups sprang up outside the organizational context of schools. In the light of these findings, then, this policy may be viewed as a beginning step for a school commission in involving parents constructively in difficult, school-related decisions.

The authors wish to express their thanks to Thomas Blacklock and Barbara Guard for their help in collecting data.

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Barry G. Lucas

A Rural Perspective

School closure and community protest

Are the small communities of rural North America already doomed to disappear, and is closing their schools not objectively an inevitable part of a larger process? Well, no; probably. A reasonable prediction from the "objective" data would have seen most of them disappear well before now. Barry Lucas looks at conflicts over school closure in Saskatchewan and sees behind the familiar dilemmas, between the subjective fears of a community and the objective data used by a school board, failures to get to grips with the real problem, which demands a political solution. A systems perspective in social policy-making would show the way.

School enrolment decline and closure have been characteristic of rural, agricultural areas in North America almost since the time of their settlement, yet the fact that such a problem is chronic may also have led to an assumption that it is inevitable. Indeed, the futility of much rural protest might be traced in part to such an assumption.

This paper focuses on conflicts associated with threatened school closure in rural, agricultural communities in Saskatchewan. Two central issues were evident in these conflicts, with some variations in intensity related to particular community circumstances. First it is almost the sole defence available to many small rural communities to assume that there will be an impact upon the traditions, social identity, and ultimate survival of the community. The second issue, closely related, concerns the quality of education that such communities are able to provide under restricted circumstances; school authorities may offer alluring educational opportunities in transfers to larger schools in larger communities. On these two issues it is difficult, and probably dangerous, to draw the line between "subjective" and "objective" data.

Barry G. Lucas

In rural Saskatchewan the protesting community may consist of fewer than one hundred people, while the school board experiencing the protest may be located in a town of fewer than one thousand. School organization in the province consists basically of seventeen "city and town" school divisions and sixty school divisions in largely rural, agricultural areas. The organization of the latter divisions represents a long period of consolidation, extending almost from the time of Prairie settlement, and has involved the closure of large numbers of one-room schools often in the face of strong community resistance. The fact that this number of school divisions represents a decline from 4,808 school administrative units in 1941 may indicate the magnitude of the consolidation.

The long struggle in the consolidation movement is still very much in evidence, between forces promoting the centralization and bureaucratization of educational services in larger towns, and those seeking to retain the convenience, tradition, and perceived educational and social-psychological benefits of school services in smaller communities. Population decline in the farm labour force and in small communities, many of which were originally settled as "grain delivery points" at eight to ten mile intervals along rail lines, continues as the major impetus of centralization.

A changing agricultural economy

The origins and consequences of this decline have been extensively analyzed in the rural economic and sociological literature of the United States and Canada. The central dynamic of decline concerns the changing agricultural economy, including the mechanization of farming; the concomitant increase in the size and commercialization of farms, and the resultant decline in the overall number of farms and of the farm labour force; the increased capital investment required for commercially viable farm operation and, hence, the discouragement of new farm starts by the younger generation; and, relatedly, as one writer puts it, the "decline of the economic value of children in rural areas," leading to the migration of youth to cities and towns (Whyte, 1966, p.21).

More controversial are the sociological origins and consequences of rural population decline, including, for example, the notion of "rurbanization", which suggests that a migration from rural to urban areas may have been stimulated by the diffusion of urban values and standards of living in rural areas through mass media communication, highway improvement, and the consolidation in urban areas of services, including education. The same notion is applicable to changing rural shopping patterns, which affect the economic viability and, hence, the "holding" power and residential attractiveness of smaller communities. An increased demand for a wider variety of consumer goods and services results in a tendency for rural consumers to by-pass local

convenience centres in favour of larger towns, particularly if those towns are within reasonable driving distance.

School enrolment decline

Population and school enrolment decline in Saskatchewan have also been affected by emigration from the province and by the declining birth rate trend. A study by Scharf (1974, p.93-96) has indicated, for example, that the province lost 92,203 children due to emigration during the period 1948 to 1972, and that a drop of 38 per cent took place in the number of births between 1972 and the peak year of 1954.

As to the extent of school enrolment decline, the province has experienced over the years a series of peaks, subsequent declines, and a current declining trend which is expected to result in a total enrolment figure well below that of over fifty years ago. From a total enrolment of 72,260 in 1911, school enrolment reached a peak of 230,492 in 1931, declined to 167,485 in 1951, reached another peak of 248,768 in 1969, and declined to 201,735 in 1980, a trend which is expected to continue to well below 150,000 by the end of the century. Only six of the sixty rural school divisions have experienced slight enrolment increases in recent years, and these divisions are generally located in the vicinity of the largest cities in the province, where enrolment (apart from decline in core city areas) has remained relatively stable owing to rural-urban migration. In the remaining rural divisions, enrolment decline during the five years (1975-1980) has ranged from a low of 1% to a high of 27% with an average decline of 14% (based on figures from **Annual Reports**, Department of Education, Government of Saskatchewan). Prospects for continued decline are particularly severe in those divisions in which agriculture is dependent mainly upon large-scale grain farming rather than upon a more diverse farming economy.

The field study

The four divisions chosen for the field study illustrate a number of basic conditions characteristic of the problems of rural school enrolment decline and closure in Saskatchewan. All had been experiencing steady decline in enrolment, some severely so, largely in relation to lack of economic diversity and the changing agricultural economic trends noted previously.

These trends were particularly evident in one of the selected divisions, which had farms of above average size, the highest proportion of wheat farming of any school division in the province, and the highest non-residence rates: grain farm operators tend to reside in towns, hence the decline of the "family farm." Furthermore,

this school division illustrates the impact of proximity to large trading centres. Within reasonable driving distance of the western and eastern boundaries of the school division, two relatively large "farm cities" serve as both shopping centres and residences for farmers in the division, with obvious consequences for the welfare of local trading centres.

Other divisions chosen for the study illustrate the impact of the presence of a farm city within the division itself. Such centres continue to draw resources in a way which suggests that prosperity comes to those who already enjoy the requisite development capital. This drain is particularly evident in small communities located within a reasonable day's return drive to the farm city. In one community studied, for example, the one remaining grocery store out of an original total of five had recently closed, while a community of similar size twenty miles further from the farm city continued to maintain three stores.

The study included interviews at the board level with school superintendents, assistant superintendents (where applicable), and principals of schools recently (1978-79) threatened with the prospect of eventual closure owing to staff cuts and/or reduction of the number of grades in the school. Interviews were also held with community members involved in school closure controversy, and documentary sources such as local newspaper reports and briefs prepared by protesting community groups were analyzed.

Ineffectiveness of community protest

The small rural communities observed in this study appeared ultimately powerless to prevent eventual school closure, despite political protest ranging from petitions and briefs locally to formal deputations to provincial politicians and officials. This is not to suggest that the school authorities were completely insensitive to community concerns and pressures; in some cases pressures were strong enough to lead to the delay of school closure. But delay also contributed to the conditions precipitating and justifying closure - by emphasizing the uncertain future of the threatened school, by extending the period in which further enrolment decline could occur (partly as a result of the school's uncertain future), and, in some cases, by leading other communities to complain of the school board's fiscal irresponsibility in making special provisions for a school which had originally been slated for closure. Closure decisions under these circumstances tended to "make themselves" eventually.

A number of reasons could be suggested for the ineffectiveness of protest, certainly not all of which would be critical of school authorities. They must operate within fiscal and political limitations, including the need to mediate between the demands of some

communities for particular fiscal considerations on the one hand, and the demands of other communities for fiscal restraint on the other. One obvious source of the political ineffectiveness of community protest is the system of formal representation. The cases investigated in this study involved bitter complaints on the part of protesting community members that their interests were not being represented by the board member responsible for the area in which the communities were located. These board members were seen as favouring either the interests of the larger town in which the board was located, or the interests of another, usually larger community in the subdivision. (In one case the board member representing the subdivision had moved from the protesting community to the major town in the division, but legally remained the subdivision representative because he owned property in the subdivision.)

A more fundamental reason for the ineffectiveness of protest, however, concerns the nature of the issues voiced in the protest, and the remainder of the discussion will focus on these issues.

The issue of community survival: subjectivity and objectivity

From parent briefs and petitions:

What is at stake here is not just the question of whether students should receive their education outside of their home town, but perhaps the very survival of the town in the future.

The town will die if our high school closes. Maybe this is what they're after.

At the present time, our community is actively planning to build a larger skating rink. Who for, if you close Division Four (Grades 10, 11, 12) and take our young people from us?

A central point to be made in this and the following discussion is that while school authorities are able to support school closure decisions with relatively objective data, community protest against closure relies largely upon "subjective data", including feelings, attitudes, traditions, and the like. This is not simply to suggest, however, that school authorities have superior data resources and hence are able to overwhelm the relatively emotional protests of community groups with more sophisticated and factually-documented arguments. Rather, the point is that subjective and objective data represent two kinds of data, neither necessarily superior, and both in fact complementary and essential when applied to the planning of change affecting human behaviour.

From this point of view, then, it may be hazardous for authorities to depend mainly upon objective data. But in the processes of decision about school closure examined in this study, such a dependence was clearly predominant. Indeed, community protest may lead school authorities to a greater dependence upon "facts" such as enrolment projections, costs of retaining the school, and benefits of transfer to better equipped schools. Moreover, when the authorities' apparent inattention to the concerns of the community leads it into confrontation with the school authorities, the community may succeed only in further demonstrating the emotionally subjective nature of its opposition.

The cause-effect enigma in community decline

The most obvious reason for the inclusion of subjective data in planning is that the "facts" are seldom sufficiently objective. How do we determine whether the closure of a school will affect the survival potential of a community? Where the school is one of the few remaining community institutions if not the only one, parents are on fairly safe ground in protesting that its removal would seriously affect the ability of the community to retain its present population and to attract any new development. In two communities studied, for example, the parents involved in protest claimed that numbers of local residents had moved out as a result of the threatened school closure and that the original community plans to build recreational facilities (intended to contribute to the attractiveness of the community) had been shelved because of the uncertainty introduced by the prospective loss of the school.

The problem with this line of argument, however, is that it introduces a "which-comes-first" enigma that lends itself to counter-argument. The question arises whether the loss of the school is a contributing factor to community decline, or whether it is merely a result of that decline. The community may even be open to blame for contributing to decline by failing to support local institutions and services adequately in the first place - as in fact was the case in one of the conflicts investigated in this study.

This case involved a severe split in the community between those protesting closure of the community's high school grades and those supporting the school board's decision to transfer high school students to a larger high school in a farm city. Some of the board supporters, who had formerly been businessmen in the small community, charged that community members themselves had precipitated a decline by neglecting local businesses in favour of the services available in the farm city.

The cause-or-effect enigma concerning the relationship

between school closure and community decline does not appear to be resolvable, and the argument may therefore be regarded as essentially a political one, in which the small community is, on record, going to lose.

Objective data can mislead theory

That small communities have records of decline raises another issue, and also reveals the misleading effects of dependency on objective data when arriving at theory. It may be speculated that small rural communities are to some degree the victims of an empirically-based demographic theory predicting their eventual and inevitable demise in a society evolving steadily towards urbanization. Such a theory might be characterized as the "resettlement idea", which involves the seemingly logical proposition that since many small rural communities are in fact declining, the rural community is essentially insignificant and is destined for eventual disappearance. Translated into public policy, this idea has two implications: Either we wait for the resettlement process to take its natural course; or if we decide to intervene, we hasten the process by withholding resources from "doomed" communities or by distributing resources to communities which appear to be potentially the more viable components of the emerging demographic scheme.

It is not suggested that any such policy leads to deliberate action by authorities dealing with small communities, but there is operational evidence that it is nevertheless at work. For example, the establishment in a larger community of a comprehensive secondary school, equipped with an array of educational options and facilities and promising "equality of educational opportunity", obviously constitutes a significant resource for that community; and the "pull" of that resource on school enrolment in hinterland communities can easily be documented, even where the school is not specifically intended to absorb enrolment in surrounding communities.

Certainly school board policies are interpreted in this way from the subjective point of view. In one case, community informants interpreted the school board's adamant refusal to establish kindergartens in rural community schools as a deliberate policy of withholding resources which would serve community educational needs and also bolster declining enrolments. Moreover, communities in rural school systems may be highly sensitive about what they regard as an inequitable distribution of resources in the system. The provision of busing services provides a prime example. In one case, the board's insistence on busing students from a closed school to a town school, rather than to a much closer rural school in need of the enrolment, was not

surprisingly viewed by the community in need as blatant discrimination.

Potential of a systems perspective

But when, in fact, are small communities a "lost cause"? When does the expenditure of public resources on declining communities constitute not only irresponsibility, but also interference with a process of adjustment which might just as well occur as expeditiously as possible? In the review of the literature on socio-economic development undertaken for this paper, no specific "objective" answers could be found to these kinds of questions; and it seems unlikely that any ever will be found that are not heavily reliant upon subjective values and interpretations that accordingly are sensitive to political controversy.

One source, however, at least provides a strong warning about judging the prospects of communities solely in terms of "objective" indicators such as population size and degree of economic prosperity. Zimmerman and Moneo (1971) argue that the variety of communities identifiable (ranging from "Prairie Cities" with populations above 20,000 to "Stop-off Centres" with populations below 500) represent a system of land occupation based upon community cooperation. These communities, although serving different roles, "are related in a mutual symbiotic fashion and are all required for the most advantageous use of the area as a production-consumption (cycle) and living community of man". (p.36).

A key point in this argument is that the community system represents an integration of the relatively objective factors of the economic infrastructure with the fulfilment of important social needs. Thus, as Zimmerman and Moneo point out (pp. 21-23), a linear projection of the survival of small Prairie communities, based upon the development of modern transportation since 1910, would have indicated the almost complete disappearance of small communities by the present time. Instead, small communities have demonstrated remarkable persistence, even after they have lost most of their economic functions.

A systems perspective in social policy-making, which stresses functional inter-relationships rather than the peculiarities of individual communities, has two central implications. First, since the welfare of the total system is a basic consideration, it does not deny that some communities may be dysfunctional for the system, and that efforts to maintain them may therefore be misguided. Second, and relatedly, it emphasizes the need to assess with care the potential impact of any interventions on the

functioning of the system, and to design interventions accordingly.

The first of these implications is not clearly addressed in Zimmerman and Moneo's study. In common with much recent rural sociological writing, the study stresses the second implication, particularly the argument that the rural socio-economic system has been increasingly disrupted by policy interventions which reflect a centralization of social policy-making in urban areas. To the degree that social policy-making is centralized in more densely populated areas, it will reflect a lack of awareness of the particular conditions and needs in less densely populated areas. It will also tend to deal with those areas in a universalistic manner which, by definition, involves a reliance upon "objective" data.

Little evidence of a systems approach was apparent in the rural school closures examined in this study. Instead, "survival of the fittest" seemed more characteristic of the existing situation, with declining student population figuring as a scarce resource invoking political competition, rather than as a problem having applicability to the total system. This is not to say that planning for school closure is completely unsystematic, but intentionally or otherwise, interventions such as the placement of educational facilities or the redistribution of students owing to school closure appear invariably to favour the "fittest" communities, as defined in objective terms of relative size and prosperity, rather than in terms of the possible contributions of communities to the welfare of the total system. "Listening" to small communities may therefore be important, and as this discussion has suggested, such listening necessarily involves acceptance of the validity of relatively subjective forms of data.

The issue of educational quality: fundamentally political

The second major theme in rural community protest concerns the presumed "quality" of education in small rural schools as opposed to that available in towns. This issue reveals that in rural systems it is not simply a matter of small hinterland communities unanimously opposing urban-oriented policies which threaten community survival. Opposition to "urban" policies also involves denial of "urban" opportunities, and in this study, community protest against school closure and the transfer of students to larger, more comprehensive town schools was associated with bitter controversy within the community itself.

The controversy regarding educational quality was associated in particular with the closure of high school grades in K-12 schools located in small communities within reasonable busing distance of high schools in towns. Community members protesting

the loss of what had been regarded as the community high school argued for educational "quality" in a manner closely reflecting arguments in the literature supportive of small schools (e.g., Barker and Gump, 1964; Sher and Tompkins, 1976). These arguments included the presumably greater personal attention available to students; the opportunities for student involvement and leadership experiences; and the closeness of contact between students and the community. There was also the related belief that a community-centered education promotes loyalty and service to the community, and a concern for the retention of moral values. According to one brief, for example,

The intangibles are better absorbed in smaller groups.
Good morals are controlled better in smaller
communities.

More objectively, the arguments of the opponents of closure claimed that the academic quality of small school education, as assessed by student performance on standardized tests or by the future progress of students, is not inferior to the quality of education available in larger schools.

At the same time, the availability of a clearly superior range of educational options and facilities in town schools introduces almost a moral dilemma into communities, with opponents of transfer on the one hand appearing to deny these opportunities to the children of the community, and supporters of transfer on the other hand appearing to deny opportunity for those community-centered educational experiences which presumably help to insure community identity and survival.

...for those of us who live "on the doorstep" of the highly-recognized institution of secondary education that "X" Comprehensive School is, we are, I feel, negligent in our duty to our children if we DO NOT take advantage of it... There was a time when the form of education offered by our small schools was adequate, but we are well past that era now and we are forced, if we act in the interests of the children's futures, to accept progress and the good things it has to offer.

(Parent's letter to local newspaper)

In one community, controversy reflecting this dilemma had reached a stage clearly illustrating Coleman's description (1957, p.11) of social conflict polarization, where "people break off long-standing relationships, stop speaking to former friends who have been drawn to the opposition, but proliferate their associations with fellow partisans." (Indeed, even relatives in this community had stopped speaking to one another.) It does not

seem necessary to elaborate the point that school authorities may enjoy a strategic leverage as the result of such divisions.

But the outstanding feature of the educational quality issue in school closure conflict is that it is clearly a debate about the wrong issue. Since achieving a consensus based upon objective measures of quality seems just as unlikely as achieving a consensus about the consequences of closure for community survival, the question of quality must be regarded essentially as a question of providing certain educational alternatives which are supported only by minority interests in the school system. The focus on "quality", in other words, evades a fundamental political issue. It maintains the debate on a level where professional interpretations of quality in terms of apparently objective attributes - namely resources and programs seem most likely to prevail.

Conclusion

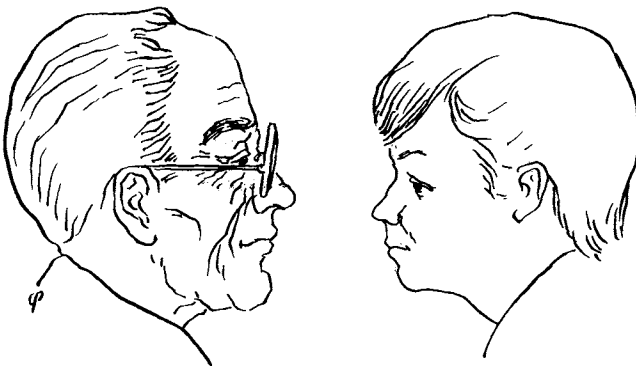
This paper has attempted to deal with an issue that from one perspective may appear to be unimportant because it seems part of an inevitable process of socio-economic development and demographic change in rural, agricultural areas. According to normal and even liberal standards of efficiency and fiscal responsibility, many small rural schools have little to justify their existence. Nor does the retention of schools characteristic of an earlier era of multi-graded, country schools appear to be justifiable by current standards of educational quality and opportunity. While special qualities may be claimed for such schools, campaigns to preserve rural institutions which have "obviously lost their utility", as Biddle and Biddle remark (1965, p.165-166), are "frequently supported by some variant of the Rural Mystique," and "represent futile reactions, attempts to cling to power privileges when the kind of life for which these were appropriate has passed, or, is passing."

As this paper has suggested, however, a "mystique" may also be present in this line of reasoning, if it is assumed that "utility" can somehow be objectively measured and that observable evidence of decline thereby constitutes a predictive theory of decline. While resort to a systems perspective also fails to provide any definitive measures of the utility of rural institutions, it does have the advantage of requiring that decision-making interventions assume a responsibility for creating scenarios for the future of rural institutions and communities. One can only conclude that in cases of rural school closure this responsibility is currently far from sufficiently exercised, whether in applying information or in discussing the issues.

Barry G. Lucas

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Peter Coleman

The Closing of Howden School

Decision-making under conditions of stress

The following personal report from the (former) superintendent of a Manitoba school district takes us step by step through the stages of what might have been a much more prolonged and harrowing crisis than it turned out - although, as it was, it had all the familiar, upsetting, and noisy characteristics of many a decision to close a school. For this was a district that was administering French-language schools for the first time as well as English-language ones, and into that politically tense picture, already beginning to be complicated by declining enrolments, had swum great numbers of English-speaking parents eager to have their children learn French by "immersion". The fascination of this article lies in following the board's officials as they navigate with care among the shoals and reefs of public legislation, public opinion, and legal judgment. We may peruse the chart that guided them, in the shape of the superintendent's analysis of the board's many options (of which a part appears in Appendix A). Coleman concludes with comments on the light thrown by his experience on certain propositions currently held by writers on educational administration.

This case-study is a participant observer account of a lengthy, intense, complex, and potentially destructive episode in the life of a school district. Since I was one of the major participants, as Superintendent, it is unavoidably subjective. However, written at some distance in time and space, the account is, it is hoped, objective enough to be useful and instructive to school districts, and particularly to senior administrators facing similarly loaded issues. I have made some attempt to generalize from the experience.

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Since the entire episode was conducted in public meetings, and subsequently extensively reviewed in court, virtually all the data is real-life. However, I have rarely used the names of individuals; rather I give offices, titles, or position descriptions. All other information of every kind is real.

Some insights can be gained into at least the following matters: the representative role of trustees; the political role of senior administrators; policy decision-making under conditions of conflict; public involvement in decision-making; the impact of declining enrolments; and the working relationship between trustees and administrators under conditions of stress.

St. Boniface, on the Red River

St. Boniface is a medium to small suburban district of 8,000 students, on the east bank of the Red River immediately adjacent to the original city of Winnipeg. The district divides by natural boundaries into three regions, North (or old) St. Boniface, a mid-age subdivision, Windsor Park, and a new subdivision, Southdale.

The most significant recent event in the history of St. Boniface School Division was the creation in 1971 of a sub-system in which French was the language of instruction. This divided the pupil population of the district, at a time when enrolments had peaked but decline was not anticipated. This initiative was the first district-level response in the province to legislation permitting French to be used as a language of instruction. The French schools were immediately and spectacularly successful. They were, for the most part, completely French and intended for children from French homes, with instruction in English only for the English language and commencing in Grade 2.

However, the national concern with bilingualism and biculturalism, and the mobility of some middle-class residents who were aware of the beginnings of immersion programs in French for English-speaking children in Eastern Canada, made these schools attractive to some English-speaking parents. One parent expressed interest thus: "It is the perfect immersion program - my child in a class of 20 Francophones." It was also to be unique and short-lived.

Concurrently with the development of the French sub-system, the population centre of the district was moving south - away from "Vieille St. Boniface" - as a large, new subdivision (Southdale) opened up and three new elementary schools and a major addition to the southernmost high school were built. These construction projects coincided with the end of the school building

boom in Winnipeg, and probably across the West.

The seeds of the 1979 crisis were already in place by about 1974. Declining populations in schools in North St. Boniface and Windsor Park were being partially offset by growing enrolments in Southdale's new schools, but the trend was down.

Phase 1: The impact of declining enrolments

In 1974 what was to be Phase 1 of a continuing crisis occurred. Two schools, one French (Taché) and one English (William Russell) were facing enrolment declines to below 200. Since Taché was a kindergarten to grade 8 school (K-8), this was particularly serious. The wide range of support services typically available could not be economically provided to such small schools. On such grounds the Board decided to close both schools.

These were the first urban closures of small schools in Manitoba, and there was tremendous community reaction, including a one-day boycott of classes at William Russell (about 90% effective) and Federal intervention by the Secretary of State on behalf of Ecole Taché, because of its symbolic significance as the first purpose-built French Language school since the Manitoba Schools Question of 1876.

However the Board held firm, and both schools were closed. William Russell students were absorbed into two neighbouring schools, each about six blocks away, and William Russell was converted into a combined Board office and Teacher Centre. The principal and staff moved to a newly opened school about ten blocks south in the new subdivision. Taché students and staff were integrated into another French school about six blocks away.

Phase 1 established several things: the major arguments for and against school closures were rehearsed; the senior administrators became familiar with the resistance to be expected from a school community, including the possible political consequences in composition of the School Board; and the damaging potential of declining enrolments became very apparent, together with the need for careful planning of such major decisions for the future. Most important, the significance of sociopolitical factors in school district decision-making as against cost-benefit analyses became obvious.

Foreshadowing Phase 2

Two developments in programming preceded and effectively initiated Phase 2. First, the district had initiated immersion

French classes at the kindergarten level in three English language elementary schools. A substantial minority of children had been enrolled in these classes, commencing in 1972. Second, population pressures on the southernmost French school, Lacerte, had led to the construction and opening of a new French school in the new subdivision, Southdale. This new school, Guyot, opening in September 1975, offered precisely the same programs for Francophones as Ecole Lacerte, and received the older students from that school, thus alleviating population pressures.

During the 1977-1978 school year, the Parents Committee at Ecole Lacerte (which still included Guyot parents, since the two schools were seen as serving a single population) addressed themselves to a serious problem, the presence in a school intended for Francophones of a substantial minority of children whose native language was English and for whom the supposedly French school was serving as an immersion experience. In many classrooms 25% of the students were effectively English-speaking. The solution proposed by the parents was to regroup students into French and French Immersion streams, to use Lacerte for Francophones, and to use the new school, Guyot, for a French Immersion program, incorporating English-speaking students from Lacerte and from the immersion classes at other elementary schools.

Despite some objections, in particular from the parents of immersion students currently accommodated in local schools, the Lacerte parents' proposal was accepted by the Board. In September 1977 Guyot became exclusively a French Immersion centre and Lacerte exclusively Francophone. At that time, Guyot had a K-5 population of 358, and a designed capacity by district standards of 326. Other schools in the district were operating at capacity or, in many cases, well below capacity.

By September 1978, Guyot had 438 students. The unanticipated popularity of the immersion program was causing two related difficulties. First, Guyot was overcrowded; second, English elementary schools were losing badly-needed students, thus accentuating the consequences of declining enrolments. Because the school-based management system allocated resources to schools on the basis of enrolments, the success of the immersion program was seen by the principals of English elementary schools as threatening. This feeling certainly contributed to the subsequent problems.

Phase 2: Immersion and overflow

Phase 2 of the crisis effectively commenced with a letter (November 20, 1977) from the Chairman of the Guyot Parents'

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Council to the Secretary-Treasurer of the School Division, suggesting that "the total enrolment for 1978-1979 could be 452 students, well over the 'working capacity' for the school. We feel construction plans must be commenced immediately to keep pace with anticipated enrolment. We would ask that you bring our request to the attention of the school board." The School Division's projections of enrolments confirmed the expectations of the parent group.

On May 4, 1978, the Assistant Superintendent (who was responsible for French and Immersion programs) reported on additional facilities for Guyot School, recommending the use of a portable classroom for September 1978, and suggesting three alternatives for September 1979:

Alternative I. That the Board request an additional ten classrooms at Guyot for September 1979.

Alternative II. That the Board establish Howden School as an immersion school. This would necessitate the displacement of 320 (K-6) and 30 (Sp.Ed.) students from Howden to General Vanier, Prendergast, and Frontenac schools. The capacity of Howden is 500.

Alternative III. That the Board establish Prendergast School as an immersion school. This would require the displacement of their 354 (K-6) students to General Vanier, Howden, and Frontenac schools. The School capacity of Prendergast is 500.

On May 16, 1978, the Board approved a "letter of intent" to the Capital Facilities Council of the provincial Department of Education, proposing the addition of ten classrooms, another gymnasium, and a multipurpose room, to accommodate an anticipated 639 students by the 1981-1982 school years. This letter included a statement on immersion programs written by the Assistant Superintendent, asserting a very important principle which became critical in the debate which followed:

The St. Boniface School Board has considered the utilization of classrooms in other schools of the division to accommodate the rapid growth of the (French) Immersion program. Inasmuch as the levels of expectation in immersion vary substantially from that in the core French program, the provision of an effective immersion program presumes the centralizing of the youngsters and the related services. It is therefore the antithesis of the community school concept. This is supported by a statement made by the Department of Education through its Minister in

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April 1977 declaring that "if enrollment in a program is sufficient for the grouping of enough classes to justify the creation of a French school, the Department of Education would expect the school division to attempt to establish such a school." We must assume that this statement holds true in the context of an immersion school.

The St. Boniface School Board is convinced that the Immersion program must remain in a regional school setting if it is to have a chance of success. The main criterion of success rests on the premise that the entire school be staffed by native-like French-speaking teachers. Accordingly, through its classroom, music library, physical education and cultural programs the school is able to provide the necessary ambiance for its pupils. We have come to realize that the immersion school is more than the sum of its classrooms. The language of the halls, playground, school clubs and related activities plays a vital role in achieving the objectives of the immersion program.

In the context of the current linguistic problems facing the country and in light of the current policies of the Department of Education, it is a matter of natural justice that English-speaking children wishing to become fully bilingual have full access to Immersion programs. The addition to Guyot School assures us that the rights of the majority are respected through granting an equal opportunity of receiving instruction in the minority language.

This letter to the Department was supported by a letter from the Guyot Parents' Council (June 12, 1978):

Because of the success of French immersion in our area, many parents are taking advantage of the opportunity for their children to learn and use a second language. We believe the most successful approach is an immersion school such as Guyot, planned and staffed specifically for the teaching of the second language.

No new space - displace

On July 6, the Board received a letter from the Public School's Finance Board refusing the request for additional space, because "there is vacant space available in other schools in the

division that could be utilized through rearrangement of enrolments and grade levels ..." At this point it became obvious that the Board faced a serious political problem involving the relocation of substantial numbers of its students.

A position paper from myself as Superintendent suggested that three assumptions needed to be examined before alternatives were generated: "(1) that program growth was inevitable; (2) that additional facilities were indeed not available; and (3) that a single immersion centre was, in fact, necessary." This report also proposed some criteria for judgment -

In determining the advantages and disadvantages of various alternatives, one needs bases for judgement. The following are given as possibilities, in order of importance:

- A. Provides a location and setting favorable to the success of the program.
- B. Makes good use of space available in the division.
- C. Minimizes disruptions for parents and students.
- D. Minimizes additional costs, including transportation costs.
- E. Is viable over both short and long term.

(Note. These bases for judgment became the Criteria A, B, etc. which were applied in the later report (see Appendix A) on which the Board's decisions were finally based.)

Ten different alternatives were rated against these criteria; only four were considered particularly promising. These were new construction at Guyot School (that is, an appeal against the Finance Board decision); leasing a school in an adjacent division; using all or part of an existing English elementary school; and using part of a French school.

At the parents' request, a meeting was held with the Guyot School Parents' Council, in which the parents pressed strongly for program growth and immersion centres, as opposed to shared facilities with other programs. The Superintendent's report listing a number of alternatives was given to the Parents' Council.

After this meeting, it became clear that, for several of the trustees, shared facilities were unacceptable; they had been convinced by the Guyot parents, and by the views of the Assistant Superintendent, that separate immersion centres were the best

way to offer an immersion program. At about the same time, it became obvious that the first two alternatives analyzed were not available. The possibilities were narrowing down to alternatives which involved the relocation of students in English programs.

Phase 3: Parents seize the initiative

At the end of November the Guyot Parents' Council proposed the use of Beliveau, a large junior high school, located centrally in Windsor Park, as the single immersion centre. Guyot School would be closed. This alternative entailed a shift from an elementary/junior high/senior high pattern to a K-9, 9-12 pattern in Windsor Park. It had been dismissed in the Superintendent's report because a great many students would be displaced, and because facilities for special programs (band, science, art, and industrial arts) at Beliveau School could not be duplicated at neighbourhood elementary schools, thus requiring the discontinuance of these programs.

The most important consequences of this proposal by the Guyot Parents' Council, made in a public Board meeting, were to make it clear that the Board, by its delays in addressing the problem, had lost the initiative. Other parent groups, particularly at the junior high school in question, were quick to respond to this proposal, and the trustees were deluged with telephone calls and letters. Various parent groups were invited to respond to the Superintendent's report, and to the proposal from the Guyot Parents' Council.

Parent groups at various schools, working with the school principals, put together briefs each arguing that the status quo should be maintained at their school. Many suggested that the empty classrooms at various schools be utilized. But this approach, although economically very sensible, was absolutely unacceptable to the Guyot Parent's Council. At its regular meeting in March, held in the gymnasium of the school board office to accommodate the large number of parents in attendance, the Board received six briefs from school parent groups, including a slightly amended one from the Guyot group. Briefs were also received from the Manitoba chapter of Canadian Parents for French, and the staff of Guyot School, both reasserting the importance of the immersion centre concept.

At the April 3, 1979 Board meeting, trustees used the information and opinion from the briefs to list seven alternatives, and asked the administration to report on these. As a consequence of the public discussion of alternatives by trustees at this well-attended meeting, the Board received a flood of letters from parents, including a petition letter signed by 306 parents of

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Guyot School. This letter resulted from a meeting at the school to which police had to be called to prevent its disruption by parents from other schools. Essentially, the Guyot letters urged the Board to make a rapid decision. The other letters urged the Board to preserve the status quo at the schools listed as alternative sites.

At the next meeting, held on April 17 in a large secondary school gymnasium to accommodate the several hundred parents in attendance, the Board addressed the report on seven alternatives requested at the April 3 meeting. The report is given, in part, as Appendix A. It recommended the adoption in principle of the use of a Windsor Park elementary school, with the identification of a specific school to follow, depending on the method of implementation. This came down to a choice between sharing facilities, phasing in immersion students, and moving out the entire present population of the school selected.

The minutes reveal what then occurred:

EXPANSION OF IMMERSION PROGRAM

MOVED Trustee Barker (S) Trustee Patterson that (1) Provencher in North St. Boniface, (2) original building at Shamrock School in Southdale, and (3) Howden Elementary school in Windsor Park, be established as the three alternatives best suited for the expanding Immersion Program.

First Amendment

MOVED Trustees Garwood (S) Trustee Patterson that Provencher and Shamrock be eliminated as possible alternatives.

Carried

Second Amendment

MOVED Trustees Patterson (S) Trustee Barker that Howden School alternative be accepted, in principle, by the Board, contingent on further consultation with the Howden and Guyot parents; and

That the administration be asked to advise the Principal and staff, immediately assuring the Principal of an administrative position within the Division and placement of staff members who would have been retained at Howden next year.

Carried

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Against:

Trustee Garwood

The procedure here, in which the amendments seem contrary to the intent of the main motion, was certainly inappropriate. The Chairman was advised by the Secretary-Treasurer in his capacity as Parliamentarian not to accept the amendments, but the trustees were adamant in wishing to proceed. Thus the decision arrived at was controversial both in substance and in form.

Phase 4: Implementing the decision

As a result of the alternative chosen at the meeting of April 17, the Board received a number of letters from Howden parents. One is provided as an illustration (Appendix B). The administration was instructed to prepare a report on how the "Howden alternative" might best be implemented.

The next meeting of the Board on May 1, 1979, was held at the Board offices, again with a large attendance. Howden parents organized a march of students and parents from the school to the Board offices, and a noisy demonstration at the Board offices in advance of the meeting. Many students carried picket signs, including some threatening violence. (For example, one carried a picture of a baseball bat, and a legend "THIS IS NEXT.") A delegation of Howden parents presented a lengthy brief, a petition, and a number of supporting letters. The brief made three main points: that the Special Education children would be disturbed by a move, that Howden School was the best school in the division, and that the Immersion Program should not be expanded because it was 'experimental' and not demonstrably successful.

In addition, the Board received a report from the administration, dated April 24, which provided detailed plans for redistributing the students and staff of Howden School. Special Education classes would move to a school approximately 1-1/4 miles away, with bus transportation continuing to be provided. Other students would move to Frontenac School, about six blocks away, with Howden teachers, Principal, and support staff. The move of the Principal was made possible by two other moves of elementary school principals, made necessary by the termination of an administrative appointment.

A meeting was planned with the Howden Parents' Committee to discuss their brief, and held on May 8. An administration response to the brief made the following points.

1. Special Education placements are normally short term

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placements being adjusted to meet the changing needs of the individual students; half the Special Education children at Howden School had only been there one year, and several of these would normally be moved the next year anyway.

2. Howden School was quite successful, but not outstandingly so. As part of the routine assessment program in the district, a parent opinion survey of schools provided to trustees earlier showed that Howden was perceived positively, but only at the Division average for elementary schools. Similarly in test scores: Howden students were four months ahead of national norms; the Division average for elementary schools was +3 months.
3. The immersion program at Guyot, by any measure available, was outstandingly successful. It was attracting more than one in four of all new Kindergarten registrations in the Windsor Park and Southdale areas, despite the fact that virtually all these students had to be bussed. Test scores showed that in tests conducted in English, Guyot students scored well ahead of Divisional and national norms; in tests conducted in French they approached the competence of Francophone students in French schools. In terms of parental opinion of the schools, Guyot was clearly the **best** elementary school in the school district.

However, this meeting was not productive. The Howden parents were unimpressed with this response to their brief, and informed the Board that they planned to ask the Minister to use his special powers to hold an enquiry, and also, or alternatively, that they planned court action, including an injunction to prevent the Board from taking any action until after a court hearing. Because of this course of action, communication other than through lawyers terminated with this meeting.

At its next meeting, on May 15, the Board confirmed its decision of April 17, to use Howden School for the expansion of the immersion program, and accepted the implementation process outlined in the administration's report of April 24. This effectively closed the decision-making stage.

The aftermath

The subsequent events were less dramatic. Howden School opened in September, 1979, as an immersion school, and an extension of Guyot. Despite the threats which had been made, by telephone and in person, in the spring, no attempts to block access to the school by the immersion children were made. The immersion program continued its rapid growth. The ex-Howden

students and staff were integrated into Frontenac School without difficulty.

In December, the Howden parents had their day in court. They alleged that "the decision of the School Board was in excess of its jurisdiction and in breach of its duty to act fairly towards the plaintiffs." They sought a court order to the Minister, under his powers in the Public Schools Act, to restrain the Board.

However, Mr. Justice Morse, reviewing the Act and legal precedents, found that "the authorities support the right of school trustees to determine what use is to be made of schools in their school division or district and what school a pupil must attend." (p.14) Further, examining the allegation that the Board had acted unfairly, he found that the Howden parents "had ample opportunity to be heard." (p.22) Again, he found that the procedure followed in the meeting of April 17, in which an improper amendment was accepted, was a procedural error, but not significant because "the motion of April 17 to choose Howden School was a motion in principle only, and the final decision was not taken until May 15." (p.22)

On the complaint that the Howden parents' views were heard but not listened to, the judge made the following interesting comments, speaking to the whole issue of decision-making:

It is clear that the trustees had a very difficult decision to make, one where they were certain to be damned if they did and damned if they did not. They did the best they could after hearing representations from all sides and after considering all of the various alternatives which were open to them. I cannot find that they proceeded with closed minds. I think they acted in good faith. (p.23)

Further, on the issue of whether the Board's decision was reasonable, he maintained:

It is not for the Court to decide whether the school trustees reached the right decision. If they acted fairly, in good faith, and within their jurisdiction, the Court cannot intervene...Merely because the plaintiffs would have liked the school trustees to give an equal or higher priority to one criterion as opposed to another, this does not render their decision subject to judicial review. (p.26)

To the allegation that the Board acted hastily, under pressure from the Guyot parents, he responded:

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...it is a normal part of the democratic process to bring pressure to bear on elected representatives to persuade them to adopt a particular policy or point of view. There is nothing sinister or wrong about this, provided no illegal or improper means are used. Certainly the Howden parents themselves attempted, at the school board meeting of May 1, to bring pressure to bear on the school trustees to change their decision in principle which had been taken on April 17. It seems to me to lie ill in the plaintiffs' mouths to criticize the Guyot parents for doing what the plaintiffs themselves did.(p.27)

Thus the judgment asserted the right of parents to attempt to influence Boards, the Board's right to accept or reject such arguments, the need for alternatives and the use of explicit criteria for judgment, and finally the authority of the Board to make such decisions. His final comment on the Howden parents case was "their remedy, if they have one, lies not in the legal process but in the democratic political arena and through the ballot box."(p.29)

Significance of the case

The case illustrates, at least in part, some propositions concerning school board decision-making and the relationship between trustees and administrators. Conversely, certain propositions from the literature may help to reveal the significance of the events described.

Proposition 1: Administrative dominance in school board decision-making.

"In school district decisions, the superintendent is clearly the dominant actor."(Zeigler, Tucker, and Wilson, 1977, p.254)

Although the parents frequently made reference to this, and there were attempts by various parent groups to ascertain the sympathies of senior administrators, in essence they largely provided information. The trustees clearly made the final decision. However, it is also true that the Board and senior administrators **together** formed the decision-making unit. Under the pressure of the parent groups, the tendency was for the administrators and the trustees to act in mutually supportive ways.

Proposition 2: School district decision-makers and community preferences.

Such studies as that of Zeigler and Jennings (1974) "exaggerate the power and dominance of the administrative staff... School administrators - and their school boards as well - are inclined to anticipate community desires as they formulate educational policy." (Boyd, 1975. See also, Lyke, 1970; Greenhill, 1977, p.92)

The decision-makers had clearly anticipated community preferences in establishing the first immersion centre, Guyot School, but had not anticipated its popularity and rapid growth. The strength of the preferences was not assessed prior to the events recorded here.

Proposition 3: Strategic decisions and community power.

"When strategic decisions in the life of a school district are faced, not only school board but also community power is likely to be mobilized... On the other hand, in more routine decisions...school boards, and communities, are much more likely to defer to the expertise of their administrative staff."(Boyd, 1975, p.121)

The Boyd critique (p.121) of Zeigler and Jennings' overemphasis on administrator control, based on a review of decisions of which most were routine, is thoroughly substantiated. In major decisions with community impact, administrative participation is very likely to be restricted to the informing and implementing elements in the classic policy-making model.

Proposition 4: Administrator as (informational) gatekeeper.

Senior administrators functioned as "gatekeepers", limiting and hence biasing the information available to trustees and thus controlling decision-making.(Boyd, 1975, p.117; Greenhill, 1977, p.94)

In the case of strategic decisions, this is an unlikely role. Many people seek to influence, and there are many sources of information. Further, the information given by the administrators is likely to be very carefully scrutinized for evidence of error, inconsistency, or partiality. In such circumstances any attempts at "gatekeeping" would be publicly and severely criticized.

Proposition 5: School board responsiveness to community preferences.

Studies of the interest group model of school board responsiveness to their community frequently conclude that boards are not responsive. However, "it is in the nature of interest group behavior and school system politics that when one group

becomes exercised enough to speak out, the issue is probably one which will evoke other positions by other groups. So in that sense a board can virtually never be responsive; if there are conflicting preferences, no policy will satisfy all."(Jennings, 1975, p.245)

The Board here was in fact responsive to the community's preferences, although in the process it alienated one sub-group. Given the limitations in buildings available, established early on, and the model of immersion centre preferred by parents, staff and administrators, it could not please all groups. (That is, as Jennings argues, implicit in the interest group model.)

Proposition 6: Informing policy-makers and policy influencers.

Political and rational models of policy-making can be combined into a model which considers rational assessments and social values, and in which alternatives are generated by insiders and outsiders. In such a model, "administrators would have to ensure, not only that all value and belief systems find access to the policy process, but also that appropriate information finds its way to those who choose and those who influence."(Downey, 1977, pp.141, 142)

The administrators here, and more particularly the Board, did attempt to provide information on values, as well as technical considerations such as enrolments and space, to all the parties concerned; in large measure the delay in arriving at a decision was intended to provide an opportunity for parent groups to share information and formulate positions. Virtually all the information available, including all administrative reports, was widely circulated.

Proposition 7: School board as meta-mediator.

"A meta-mediator is a decision-making system that processes all competing demands, organizes, reorganizes, modifies, generalizes, illuminates and emphasizes and in general reshapes these demands into an operational decision involving, usually, the distribution of limited resources."(Lutz, 1975, p.1; see also Coleman, 1977)

The incident illustrates the Lutz meta-mediator model rather precisely. Obviously the participants were not self-consciously enacting the roles described by Lutz, but the formulation of alternatives using community preferences as expressed in briefs, and the explicit weighing of the cases and the political resources of competing groups are the essential activities of the model. The "limited resource" in this case was, of course, the number of

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schools available.

* * * * *

In addition to serving as an illustration of the seven propositions cited above, the case also illustrates the impact of social change on the educational system of a community (see Boyd, 1978). Local changes - declining school enrolments in an aging suburb - and national changes - the impact of Federal bilingualism policies in creating an interest in immersion programs - clearly generated the issue faced by the school board here.

Perhaps the clearest significance of this case study for future research on school board decision-making, and particularly on the interactions of politicians with administrators, is to make it clear that routine decision-making and decision-making under conditions of conflict are quite different processes. Given the current level of interest in policy analysis, this is important.

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APPENDIX A

THE EXPANSION OF IMMERSION FACILITIES IN ST. BONIFACE SCHOOL DIVISION

Supplementary to Position Paper of November 24, 1978
Peter Coleman, Superintendent

...ALTERNATIVE 3:

USE A WINDSOR PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO ACCOMMODATE GRADES K-4 IMMERSION STUDENTS WHO ARE WINDSOR PARK RESIDENTS (i.e. 23 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRANTS, 32 GRADE 1, 41 GRADE 2, 35 GRADE 3, 22 GRADE 4, TOTAL 153, REQUIRING 7 CLASSROOMS). THE PROGRAM COULD GROW TO A K-6 PROGRAM, WITH CONTINUATION AT GUYOT. (See notes which follow for more details.)

(Note: These criteria are set out under Phase 2, in the text - Ed.)

Criterion A

The provision of a location and setting favourable to the program is questionable in this alternative, since the Immersion program might share the school. Some provision could be made to separate areas of the school, but clearly the French ambiance would suffer, to some extent.

Criterion B

This alternative makes excellent use of space available,

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since there are many empty classrooms in Windsor Park.

Criterion C

This alternative minimizes disruption, since only the 153 Guyot students would be affected, and their travelling time would be reduced.

Criterion D

This alternative limits additional costs, since reduced transportation costs would offset minor building changes. There would be costs for materials, especially library materials (see Notes).

Criterion E

This alternative might be viable over the long term, depending on which school was used, and whether or not the existing program was phased out (see Notes).

NOTES

There are two major issues to be resolved, within this alternative: which school will be used, and will the present population be moved immediately, phased out, or remain?

If the school is to be shared, then the largest school should be used, to provide maximum space for sharing. If the present population is to be moved immediately, then the smallest school should be used, to minimize disruption.

The present school populations, with capacities and rates of decline, are as follows:

	Class rooms	Capa- city	March 31/75 A	March 31/79 B	Percent Decline B + A	Percent Space Used
Prendergast	18	475	505	355	70.3%	74.7%
Howden	19	500	444*	310*	69.8%	62.0%
Frontenac	25	675	666	405	60.8%	60.0%
General Vanier	23	625	610	436*	71.5%	69.8%
Total						
W.P. Elem.	85	2275	2225	1506	67.7%	66.2%

(* excludes Special Education Students, who can readily be accommodated in any school.)

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At present, we need 66% of 85 rooms available, or 56 rooms. Thus there are about 29 spare classrooms at present in the four Windsor Park elementary schools.

ALTERNATIVE 3:

The three versions of this alternative are these:

I MOVE IN IMMERSION; MOVE OUT PRESENT PROGRAM

Logically, it would be preferable to use Howden School to minimize disruption. Howden students could attend Frontenac or General Vanier, and Special Education students could attend Prendergast. The benefits, with reference to the criteria, are as follows:

- A. This provides a good setting for the program, which would fill the school in a few years, drawing on the Windsor Park population.
- B. This makes excellent use of space available, because it helps to fill declining schools, and the many empty classrooms.
- C. This localizes disruptions to one school population of 310 (and the immersion students affected). Staff allocation is simple, because teachers would follow students.
- D. Additional costs are minimal.
- E. The Immersion program (K-8 or 9) would be well accommodated for the foreseeable future. School capacities of Guyot and Howden are 400 and 500 = 900. With enrolments of 80 - 90 per grade, the maximum space needed will be 9 grades x 90, or 810.

II MOVE IN IMMERSION, PHASE OUT PRESENT PROGRAM

It would be preferable to use the school with the most surplus space at present, i.e. Frontenac with 10 rooms spare, to minimize crowding. The kindergarten registrants at Frontenac could be accommodated at Howden and Prendergast.

- A. This would provide a good setting for the program, in the long run, with ample room for growth. In the short run, the ambience would suffer from sharing the school.
- B. This makes excellent use of space available, because it helps to fill declining Windsor Park schools.
- C. This alternative minimizes disruptions, since only the 153

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immersion students and the 35 Frontenac kindergarten registrants would be affected.

- D. This alternative limits additional costs, particularly if for the first year or two the students at Frontenac are treated as Guyot students, with administrative support and specialist services, and library materials being provided from Guyot. Eventually, the group would become independent. The major additional cost would be the salary of a full or part-time vice-principal.
- E. This alternative would be viable for the foreseeable future, since eventually the capacities of Guyot and Frontenac would be available for Immersion programs ($400 + 675 = 1075$).

III MOVE IN IMMERSION; RETAIN PRESENT PROGRAM

This would certainly require the use of the largest Windsor Park elementary school, Frontenac. It could easily accommodate its present enrolment of 405 and the 153 immersion students, since it has a capacity of 675. The rate of decline of Frontenac also suggests that it could accommodate a K-6 Immersion School (at 30% per grade = 210) and its future enrolment of about 300 K-6 English program students.

- A. This would provide an adequate but not good setting for the program, because of the difficulty of maintaining a good linguistic ambience.
- B-E. In other respects, the advantages are the same as the previous versions of this alternative.

CONCLUSION: Alternative 3, in any one of the three versions, seems the best available. Probably version II, in which a phasing in of immersion and phasing out of the existing program occurs, is the best option open to the Board at this time. (See p.6 of the November 24 report)...

(Other Alternatives are treated similarly in the original report - Ed.)

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the considerations detailed above, I recommend that the Board adopt, in principle, **ALTERNATIVE 3**, the use of a Windsor Park elementary school, with further consideration to be given to identifying which immersion students are moved, and how they are to be accommodated.

The Closing of Howden School

APPENDIX B

23 Ormiston Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2J 2Z1

April 27, 1979

Dear Mrs. Huot (Chairman of Board of Trustees - Ed.):

We are sure you feel you have heard it all before, but as concerned Howden School parents, we feel it is imperative that we express our very great concerns over the decision that has been made to take our school away from our children.

We cannot understand how this can happen in a democratic society. We have four children, all have been and three still are Howden students. We purchased our home in this neighbourhood so that our children would not have to cross busy intersections or have that far to walk to school. Now it seems we are to send our three children, one of whom is only six years old to school where they do have to cross busy intersections and have a long distance to walk. WHY when we have a school almost in our back yard.

It doesn't seem to make any sense that our children have to come home crying because they are losing their school and their teachers, yes they do consider it their school and their teachers. We have lived in different cities and provinces, and have never seen such closeness between students and teachers. They have worked hard as a team at Howden School and made it a school everyone is proud to be part of. Now some unfeeling adults who do not understand are trying to take this away from them. They just do not understand, but then we are adults and we cannot understand it either.

It breaks our hearts to say to them that we do not know how to save their school for them. Yet mom and dad are here to protect them and their property - they have to do something.

So we are writing this letter on behalf of our three children and all of their fellow classmates who beg YOU to save their school for them.

There has to be an alternative other than making so many children, parents and interested people so unhappy. There has never been so much alienation between friends and neighbours as there is now, this CANNOT be the way to solve a problem.

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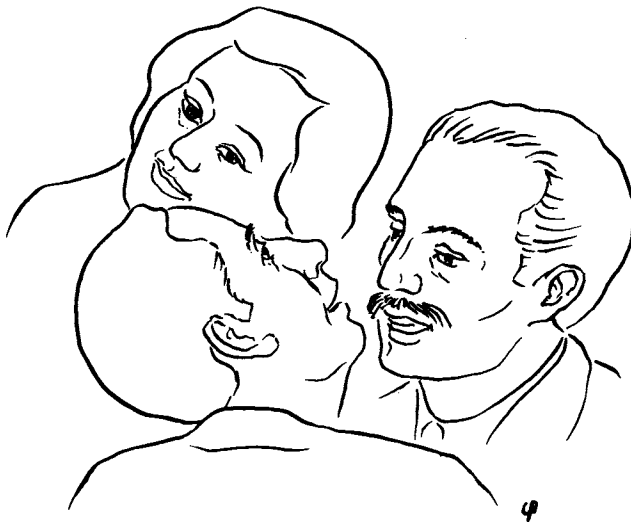
We understand that not all of you are taking a stand against Howden School, if you are one of these please accept our thank you for seeing our concerns. If you have taken a stand against our children, we ask you to take a second look.

Is this the only way? Is it worth the price it is costing our children and our community? IS IT?

Sincerely,

Bruce and Marlene
Amell.

c.c. Abe Kovnats MLA
Howden School Committee



Richard Townsend

Footnotes to Decline and Protest

A professor's joys and sorrows

It is rare these days to find a professional who, struggling with the trivialities, disappointments, and distractions of day-to-day routine, dares to be candid about the hard time his conscience is giving him (or her). Richard Townsend has never been one to dodge candour; his discussion here returns repeatedly to the difficulties a modern professor has in matching the expectations of the role, public and private, in his field. His self-assigned task is to find lessons from his experience, and models among his colleagues, so that he may surmount those difficulties and come closer to the ideal. Along the way, some unexpected lights are cast on the seemingly intractable problems occasioned by the closing down of schools, in a manner suggesting a provocative postscript to the articles in this issue.

When old professors used to advise young professors, back in the days when there still were young professors, they'd say, "Specialize. Master a specific body of knowledge. You'll have no relevance to the society that pays our bills if you try covering the waterfront as a generalist. Know a few things well and the field will beat a path to your door." That advice for outward-looking was attractive, and I came to think that the ideal academic in an applied discipline was someone with expertise in a small area. He or she found joy in objectively and rigorously applying a particular perspective to some practical person's problem.

I tried that idealism in Laurenvale, just north of Montreal Island, in a situation of zero growth - or at least, the provincial Government said in 1975 that enrolments of English Protestant students were declining to such an extent that the Laurenvale

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School Board was not allowed to build a new high school. Budgeteers in the Ministry at Quebec City indicated that if a new facility was needed in the region, it was for French Catholics, not for the English Protestants, who already had a high school. The Chairman of Laurenvale's English Board, Ron Edwards, told me about this decision, about the disrepair of Laurenvale's existing high school, and about his neighbours' wish to continue their own school (to prevent their rural suburban community from merging into the "urban pull" of big city Montreal).

While he'd been successful in enlisting a few lawyers and architects with serious skills to help make his case for a new school, Edwards hadn't realized that his community also had elements who might be attracted for the sheer excitement and entertainment value of a good feisty protest. Inferring from the protest literature of Piven and Cloward, the Fainsteins, James Q. Wilson, and especially Lipsky in the U.S., I said to him that what was needed now was another provocateur, an independent energizer of Laurenvale's more frivolous forces. There's still a central place for Edwards, I said; his modest and calm style in working through channels, his gift for filling up blackboards with statistics, and his notebooks full of documentation would make him a resource at conference tables with problem-solvers. But more flamboyant and less polite leadership was required at this point - to agitate and, vitally, to catch the attention of media, which in turn would activate certain "third parties." Those third parties, upon being convinced of the rightness of the Laurenvale protest, would use their influence on "protest targets" - that is, they'd "get to" sources in Quebec City who controlled school-building allocations. If the comparatively poor of Laurenvale didn't challenge the political system, they'd be ignored.

A fiery businessman

Edwards told me a few weeks afterwards he was taking that advice; after seven years of petitioning circumspectly, Laurenvale had nothing to lose. For the second leader, Edwards tapped Phil Lambertucci, a fiery businessman and also a parent of school-age children. Lambertucci subsequently spurred an Action Committee of other parents. Over the next two months his Committee did spark civic excitement:

- (1) Rambunctiously it led a march of 100 additional parents, who said their enrolments were **not** declining and the new school should be built.
- (2) It collected 4,000 signatures on a petition attesting to Laurenvale's entitlement.

(3) It caught the attention of programmers of television news, who reported on the parents' march, that petition, and the rat-infested classrooms.

(4) It also gained newspaper publicity by installing a billboard-sized sign asking the riding's member of Quebec's National Assembly, "MR. L'ALLIER, WHERE IS OUR SCHOOL?"

(5) It successfully encouraged clerics to use their influence in fanning public concern; they used Laurenvale's school problem as subjects for Sunday sermons.

(6) It provided funds for 33 business and cultural organizations (so-called "third parties" to the problem) to send a telegram demanding the new school to Premier Bourassa and to the Minister of Education (the "protest targets").

Following two months of this commotion, L'Allier phoned the low-key protest leader, Edwards, with news: Government had approved construction. However, Edwards, Lambertucci, the Action Committee, and 700 students had to wait until 1980 before construction began. First a lengthy court fight with owners of a site had to be won. Then Premier Levesque's government had to relax its policy of going slow with new allocations. Today, Laurenvale's new school is functioning.

This incident may seem more like a "bright light" in a professor's life than a "horror story", but it has sadness. Reflecting on that unpaid and hurried consultancy, in time I wondered, "Did I live up to my ideal of wisely applying a discipline to practical problems?" Away from that event for some years now, I've been able to "process" that question.

Rigour? Practicality? Hubris?

Anglophones in Quebec are preoccupied with survival strategies, and so it was easy for me to fall into a subjectivity - that Edwards' quest was symptomatic of strains in French-English relations existing since the Plains of Abraham. Yes, I shiver to recall, I was *that* grandiose, and grossly unfair in my anti-Ministry bias, pitting an unfeeling and rich Government against virtuous and so-needful Laurenvalers. (I didn't totally believe in Government conspiracy, however, for I went on assuming that provincial funding agencies wouldn't discriminate against my applications for research grants just because of my known "make-waves" strategy.) Overlooking the many French

communities that also were being denied new schools, I had believed that anti-English prejudice was a key explanation for the Ministry's rejection; even if that view had been partially true, would such direct and open criticism of officials have been the best way to promote change? Should I not have conceived that educational governance is something of an insider's game, and that a more credible way for a professor to make a difference is to bring reason to bear on Ministry officials? Had anything really been served except my fantasy, by picturing myself as a civilizing hero, helping the dispossessed English fend for themselves against a monolithic, faceless, and over-centralized Government?

Edwards says my contribution was in proposing an emotional and conflictual approach to supplement his rational and data-based style. But, at bottom, my political formulation presumed that government leaders are cynical creatures, primarily interested in re-election, yielding to demands of the powerless only when those citizens are "squeaky wheels." That was an unsubstantiated and facile premise.

My rigour, frankly, had been as suspect as my objectivity. I had allowed myself to presume that Laurenvale parents in 1975 had as little socio-economic clout, relatively, as U.S. blacks had had in the protest literature of a decade earlier. Had I been torturing facts to justify my "angle"? Only slightly had I worried whether such protest might be inconsistent with Canadian traditions; the Americans' goals of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness are consonant with tactics markedly different from the Canadians' means to Peace, Order, and Good Government. Even when they are under duress, the Canadians' basic faith in government may differ from the Americans' basic faith in the sort of individual and group action that I had blithely urged upon Edwards.

Likewise, the practicality of my advice could be challenged. Was a political model the most appropriate? As an analyst of conflict, I might have had a vested interest in formulating the situation as a political problem whose solution required the creation of tension. I didn't really consider whether a new high school for Laurenvale truly was a rational managerial solution, in the light of other needs of learners in that community and the province. I spoke in terms that appealed to action-oriented persons, but more cost-benefit planning studies might have paved the way for some construction well before 1980.

In this affair I had had more hubris than was justified. When events occurred that were consistent with events we sought to produce, I too quickly assumed that these occurrences were the direct results of our strategies. Yet other stimuli might well have been the trigger(s).

In turning Laurenvale's fight into my fight, and in by-passing data bases, I was more the practitioner of politics than the student or analyst of it. If I wanted to attack the Ministry, shouldn't I have run for public office and become a politician rather than a public adviser? And in turning Edwards' problem into a formulation that I was comfortable with, maybe I had been working in a rather blinkered way, being too faithful to my discipline, addressing the wrong problem. In short, my specialization - hitherto regarded as a weapon of my ideals - could have impeded my hitting upon better solutions. In shaky self-defence, about all I can say is this: there are heady joys in dipping into one's conceptual bag, in learning by feel as much as by analysis how people and institutions work, in working under pressure, in advising important people, and in having one's recommendations actually heeded. These pleasures may have corrupted, or at least seduced, me.

A professor who serves the public interest

For an antidote to my malaise about Laurenvale, I can look for a model in Brock Rideout and his consultancies. About the very time that I was in Laurenvale, Rideout (an OISE professor of school finance) was travelling around Ontario, conducting case studies on decline and its local impact for the Ministry of Education at Queen's Park. He incidentally found a way to minimize protest.

Boards which attempt a gradual closing of a school appear to encounter fewer difficulties. One Ontario board phased out a school by extending boundaries of adjacent schools until all the students had been absorbed into other schools. The school then became an annex of an adjacent school for one year, and finally closed. In another case, students were transferred one or two grades at a time; the remaining students were in mixed grades, and the surplus space was used as a holding school for other students until the school eventually closed. Gradual closing may also take place without any conscious effort on the part of the board. As the costs of keeping open a school with diminishing enrolment increase, programs and facilities may decline. If the board has a policy of open attendance areas, parents themselves may request transfer of their children to adjacent schools, thereby making the closure faster and easier. At least one board in Ontario has hit on a pleasant conclusion to closing a school. Parents, students, residents, administrators, staff, and former students participate in closing ceremonies - an agreeable way of

Richard Townsend

demonstrating that the community is still intact.

An agreeable suggestion, that, and one that's somehow befitting a man who (with his wit and song) himself is a source of pleasantry at all sorts of public ceremonies (and I've seen Rideout officiate at opening and closing ones both).

Rideout also sifted through dense masses of local statistics, regulations, and interviews at the particular level and found, among other things, that the province's financial grant system was inequitably impacting systems whose school populations were dropping quickly. He recommended various weighting factors to help those systems and, importantly, to forestall the parental protest which was in the offing.⁽¹⁾ By 1976, the provincial government had implemented his recommendations. Rideout later proposed changes in fiscal formulas to take account of new circumstances in decline, and the Government subsequently removed those financial barriers to closure from its Capital Grants Plan too.

One Rideout formula for coping with decline may have had a soupçon of the tons of non-objectivity I had when rallying forces around Laurenvale's banner. Ontario's separate schools, confronted by enrolment gains instead of by the losses endemic in the public schools, protested that they were being partisanly discriminated against by that one formula. Through their association, Catholic board members brought pressure against that alleged bias, successfully. But other recommendations of Rideout's still being implemented are repeatedly esteemed for serving the overall public interest. Experts in North America regard Rideout's work on fiscal grants as balancing adroitly between central and local initiatives.

Broad horizons are the thing?

One looks in vain through Rideout's complex and rigorous field reports for the sort of cavalier mishandling of data that I evinced when suggesting, without substantiation, that Laurenvale's blue-collar population in 1975 had about the same socio-economic clout as U.S. blacks in the mid 1960's. Nor does one see in Rideout that frightful inattention to deep-seated Canadian values or to practicality that I had when proposing that Laurenvale's throw themselves into splashy protests.

It's joyful and invigorating to sit in a prompter's seat for government, without the hazards of those who are on stage. Has Rideout been corrupted by all this success, so much so that he's blind to fiscal or community formulations other than his own? Has his ability to speak out on public issues been impaired by his

main source of funding being the Government of Ontario? How does he stay on his toes so that he's open to the fruitful ideas of others? Rideout replies:

I suppose I may not be as critical of my own framework as I might be. There's a tendency to value one's work, but I try to guard against that. The finance experts - not only at the Ministry but at the boards, the federations, and in the other provinces and states - they help keep me honest.

Besides peer review, Rideout is helped through his wide-ranging inquisitiveness and broad horizons. He is active, for example, in music and drama circles in Scarborough. He reads widely in the Canadian humanities. Commonly, Rideout ties his finance specialization to community concerns and to larger social, cultural, philosophical, historical, and political issues.⁽²⁾ To follow in his footsteps, then, I'd need to do more than what professors of old used to advise the young academic to do ("specialize"). I'd need to work at relating my expertise to other domains, as Rideout did even before declining enrolment was commonplace in Canada. I must look around and see if the top talents really do make time for books, plays, and the arts. Do they have general interests that extend the impact of their specialization? Is it the second-raters who aren't so nourished?

A connected question: does this principle of catholicity hold for researchers as well as for those directly serving the community? For example, the political scientist David Easton openly derived his highly influential systems framework from writings by biologists, cyberneticists, and sociologists. Graham Allison's idea (important for political science and for the politics of education) of having three conceptual lenses (rational, organizational, and bargaining) to analyze the Cuban missile crisis may well have come to him straight out of the blue - but aren't there antecedents for this device of three lenses at least as far back as two trilogies written by Joyce Cary in the 1940's and 1950's?⁽³⁾ Even if Allison wasn't subtly inspired by Cary's new direction, when an awfully good doctoral student tells me that both he and his wife find all sorts of new views about life in Thomas' *White Hotel*, and that Thomas' novel now is out in paperback, maybe I ought to follow-up on the implicit suggestion that I read it. That psychological novel, about a woman with the deck stacked against her, might correct the balance of my thinking (which has been tilted away from the insights of Freud, Jung, et al.).

In any event, Rideout's studies deserve to be closely read by other scholars of educational finance, and by those who stave off parental protest over school closures that emanate from enrolment

decline. But at bottom, is that enough? Dean Swift thought not. That old writer implicitly advises the young writer to "generalize, or delineate a universal pattern." Communicating with his French translator that "Gulliver's Travels" would be a failure if it were understood only in England, Swift observes:

The same vices and the same follies reign everywhere... and the author who writes only for a city, a province, a kingdom, or even an age, deserves so little to be translated, that he does not even deserve to be read.(4)

Swift's standards are wintry and severe, but there is at least one published work on decline and protest which comes close to deserving to be translated: "How To Terminate A Public Policy," by Robert O. Behn of Duke University.(5) Unless I am gravely mistaken, Behn's essay isn't particularly intended as Swift-like satire.

Those strong in their behavioral-science conviction will read Behn's piece struggling and kicking all the way. Behn doesn't elucidate a pure and testable theory of causal laws. He doesn't establish hard and sharp controls, nor does he actively manipulate one variable while holding others constant. Behn doesn't specify the precise conditions under which his scenarios work. He doesn't impart alternative explanations for what he discerns. The worth of Behn's analysis will be questioned further by those who see only faint connection between his data base (terminations of state hospitals, youth services, and programs for erosion control) and K-13 education, enrolment, and parent protest. Nonetheless I find his article a stimulating synthesis. He achieves that by combing through government and press reports (in the world of practice) and by meditating on various policy journals (in the world of theory). One doesn't need to agree with Behn's combative, cut-the-fat prescriptions to relish his understanding of the diverse political manoeuvres that public institutions can pursue.

How to close a school quietly

Behn's 12 hints are especially suggestive for board members and central-office administrators. Some may very well have been trying to follow a number of these approaches for quite a while, but I haven't seen or heard them explicate the possibilities as crisply and saucily as Behn. Below, I minimize his abstractions, and very considerably abbreviate and translate, for our educational context, a few of his incautious ideas about warding off threats.

(1) **Don't float trial balloons** to learn who's opposed to and who's supportive of program termination. That is, authorities shouldn't

announce they're contemplating the discontinuation of specified schools, as this news will only animate protest from predictable sources in the neighbourhood. Rather, take a decision, and then give the public as detailed and complete a rationale as possible. Prevent leaks until you can be that thorough and decisive.

(2) **Enlarge the constituency** of those who favour school closings. Attract a new, dedicated, and active constituency who'll keep parents of the affected schools from controlling the debate. Find some interest group that's upset with a specific problem affecting particular schools - perhaps environmental pollution that spills into certain classrooms of the to-be-closed facility.

(3) **Focus attention on the harm** of continuing a small school. Point out that teachers would have more time per individual in a smaller school than would be provided at a larger school, thus creating an unequal distribution of public resources. Show how small schools lack the quality and variety of programming available in large schools, how pupil-teacher matching and team teaching are frustrated in small schools, how gym mats and other new capital equipment are more sensibly provided to large schools, and so forth.

(4) **Take advantage of ideological shifts** to demonstrate harm. Realize that changes in popular ideologies can make a once-beneficial facility appear utterly inadequate. Thus, to garner support for closing a non-vocational high school, exploit the public's increasing sentiment for developing skilled labour. To deprecate a small school, argue that mainstreaming and other new approaches to special education could only thrive in large buildings with adequate teacher-pupil ratios. (e.g., "Too many special-education children change the nature of a small school").

(5) **Recruit an outsider as terminator.** Put someone in charge of coping with declining enrolments who's willing to renounce the system's programmatic philosophy and administrative procedures because he, or she, has no stake in the past. In winding down the system, this person will make so many enemies that eventually he'll be forced to leave - but that can be **after** fulfilling the bloody mandate.

(6) **Avoid Board votes.** The elected official who aspires to a career of influence will seek friends, not the enemies who are bound to accrue from schools' closings. So the terminator needs to have a behind-the-scenes arrangement with the Board's Executive Committee that closings are to be strictly an administrative responsibility (within Board guidelines). Board members thus would be spared the vulnerability of having to take a stand in front of protesting parents.

(7) Even in the informal arrangement with the Executive above, **never publicly encroach on the Board's prerogatives.** If the terminator has to confront elected officials, the issue may not be the merits of the terminator's policy but the arbitrary nature of his or her authority. Accordingly, if decorum requires that the Board's higher status be upheld, let the terminator do so. But emphasize those aspects of the termination which appeal to the largest coalition on the Board.

(8) **Advocate revitalization, not retrenchment.** Avoid the strong negative connotations of closings. Discuss the change instead in terms of the sunny opportunities provided to reduce class size and to give students more attention, to develop community education centres, to mount better programs for the gifted and handicapped, and so forth.

As Behn acknowledges, a flock of serious ethical questions can erupt from these cunning hints. In some circumstances, too, parental protest might be aggravated rather than avoided by his tactics.(6) Yet Behn does stimulate researchers and practitioners with ideas different from the Organizational-Development advice that usually is proffered in such uneasy situations: consultants with an O.D. perspective usually urge administrators to involve potential protesters on committees that are studying decline, and to involve parents and students as quickly as possible in their new schools so that angry feelings may abate.(7) Behn also departs from the conventional wisdom of public relations: that particular body of writing would have lay committees comprised of key members of the community (who are influential enough to persuade others), and deliberations open for all to observe.

I don't disparage the O.D. or P.R. advice; since it may be salutary, I just say that Behn's piece succinctly augments our knowledge, even though he didn't exploit a single computer or formally advance a structural or affectual hypothesis in his article. After years of blathering in favour of such "scientific" sorts of hypothesis, it seems to me now that political and policy experience can be a source of illumination without the chi squares, geni ratios, or desi slopes so fashionable in certain research leagues today.

The professor bewails his busy lot

Besides the joy of seeing how Behn arrays his information, what I take away from him is a hope that a professor, working on a subject relevant to decline and protest, can create ideas in spite of overflowing in-baskets. At Duke University's Institute for Policy Sciences and Public Affairs, Behn may or may not have quite the new courses to develop, committees to serve on, oral

exams to conduct, papers to grade, reports to prepare for inquisitive deans, dissertations to help supervise, and sundry other demands that press on my colleagues and me nowadays. Behn may or may not be able to swap concentration in Durham, N.C., during part of the academic year, for withdrawal and study during another part. He may hate working with people, he may thrive on four hours of sleep a night, he may ignore his colleagues and students, he may have skills of conceptualization and pattern-recognition at the genius level - I don't know. Scrutiny of his footnotes, however, gives two empirical clues as to how he did prevail.

Behn cites several academic papers that he prepared, years earlier, on subsidiary dimensions of his "How To Terminate" article. A quick, and possibly incomplete, literature search suggests that he hasn't published on many other topics as yet. Perhaps that's the ticket. Not surprisingly for champion researchers, Behn didn't simply "bathe in the clear idyllic light of the beginning"(8); he stayed and stayed with his problematic, disseminating pieces of his research over time; and that long-term commitment does credit to him (and to policy science). Another clue from a footnote is Behn's reference to a Technical Statement he gave a U.S. Senate Subcommittee examining sunset laws: evidently he dovetailed his previous consultancy with research.

Maybe someone like myself, fairly obscure in the politics of education, might flourish more like a green bay tree by following Behn's lead. Perhaps I ought to build consultancies and seminars around one or two grand themes, which I'd then write about. Decline, protest, and any number of other topics could be tucked into treatments of such themes, if those themes were overarching enough.(9) These concerns may not be exactly my students' concerns, nor may they be concerns that people turn to professorial consultants for. But if I don't adhere to such an encompassing frame, if I don't interweave my work-sites more and hold to a subject-matter continuity, I may never find those general patterns that Swift reminds us to search for.

The joys and the setbacks

Two themes have moved back and forth in the foreground and in the background of this essay. At one level, approaches have been reviewed for coping with parental dismay over school closings. These approaches, ranging from Rideout's gradualism to Behn's hard-edge terminations, may interest agents of school governance who want to know how people behave or how they might behave.

Yet decline and protest has been the vehicle, not the object

of this narrative. At the second level of discourse, the object has been to offer the reflections of a student of decline and protest (myself). It's the reflections that are important here, not my professorial self, especially if I've been able to say something ordinary about one academic specialization in these times. Aware, however, of the Yiddish proverb that " 'for example' is no proof," I can't pretend to have unfolded any invincible laws on how the professor works. Others in the same occupation may have quite different sentiments as they disentangle themselves from **their** problematics and find their own way.(10)

To recapitulate briefly at this second level, my realities include my own lapses into subjectivity and non-rigorous analysis of local circumstances. These difficulties stem in part from my confusing the perspective of a student of politics with that of a practitioner of that art. My realities also include adjustments to the demands of students and colleagues for time-consuming involvement in their world. (I mean no self-pity here; for society rarely assures anyone the perfect ambiance for work.) Partly because of these accommodations, I haven't held to one or two magisterial themes over time and across work sites.

One who espouses pessimism, though, will cease working. So I'm another one of the world's despairing optimists, hoping for the best but not too sure that I'm going to get there. I'll continue to value those who **do** get there - like Rideout and Behn; they're part of my realities too. Rigorously and objectively, Rideout did apply his specialist perspective to complicated questions issuing from decline and incipient protest; in the process he changed educational finance in Ontario. **He** at least wasn't confused by the student and practitioner aspects of **his** expertise. Assuredly too, the university is a difficult mistress if one wants to augment knowledge for the layman; but Behn in North Carolina did work within that setting to change consciousness, with his basis for a general theory of program or policy termination. He was clear-headed in his choice of problem and apparently unrelenting in working toward its solution.

Behn and Rideout, the generalist and the specialist, both are needed. They provide notes of hope and transcendence, helping to remind me that the professorship can be a delectable calling. It can allow a person the potential of extending his or her physical existence in a restricted number of ideas keenly developed and circulated, and in public service temperately and humbly rendered.

In this account, I've been something of a stand-in for hundreds of other middle-class, middle-income, and middle-aged academics in fields such as the politics of education. I've substituted for them because, to date, the ones I know - and I

may know the wrong ones - haven't offered much data on how they've extricated themselves from the turmoil consequent on facing the gaps between their ideals and their realities. Colleagues should share such reflections. From each other, we can pick up clues for adjusting to our profession. From each other, we may muster the inspiration and stamina to be up and doing.

NOTES

1. E. Brock Rideout, *Meeting Problems of Declining Enrolment*, Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1975.
2. See for example his "The Future Context of Educational Finance", paper for the Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1979. Rather than just the snippets of literary allusions I've included in this essay, Rideout articulates a philosophical position.
3. Joyce Cary, *Preface, First Trilogy*, New York, 1958. Cited by Elizabeth M. Kerr, "Joyce Cary's Second Trilogy", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXIX, 3, April, 1960, p.311. The move from three to four lenses came shortly after - in literature with Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (Cleo, Justin, Mountolive, and Balthazar), in political science with Paul Peterson's lenses of the rational, the organizational, pluralistic bargaining and ideological bargaining, (in *School Politics, Chicago Style*).
4. *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, Oxford, 1963, p.226. Cited by Alex Zwerdling, *Orwell and the Left*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974, p.91.
5. Robert D. Behn, "How to Terminate A Public Policy: A Dozen Hints for the Would-be Terminator", *Policy Analysis*, Summer, 1978, pp.393-413. A more comprehensive approach to this topic is taken by Neil Nelson and Linda Black, "A Conceptual Framework for Coping with Decline", paper given at the annual convention of American Educational Research Association at Los Angeles, 1981.
6. Responding directly to Behn's article, Harvey Nightingale (formerly with the Ontario School Trustees Council) has observed that the terminator might succeed with his or her first closing, only to have so much anger fueled that a city-wide watchdog group is organized to obstruct further terminations. (Conversation, July, 1980.) Indeed, such a watchdog group could exploit their community's dominant

values, saying that "threatened schools are threats against our close sense of community." The group could dramatize injustice, noting that some students "won't have a chance to participate in after-class activities, since they'll have to be bused home right at 3 p.m." The group might try isolating the intransigent, thus: "Even when the provincial government is stressing the importance of public participation in education, the terminator has acted unilaterally."

7. An article in this O.D. vein is by Judith A. Brody, "How To Close A School and Not Tear Your Community Apart in the Process", *American School Board Journal*, June, 1976, p.34. On the other hand, a somewhat Behn-like coercive style has been noticed by Lynn Harrington in rural Ontario. There terminators, appealing to reason, invoke sanctions against principals and teachers who might otherwise resist school closings. Authorities thus "head off" part of the local elite who'd be in the vanguard of protest. In this process too, the community isn't torn apart. (Term paper, Fall, 1980.)
8. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove, 1963. Cited by one of my students, Jeffrey Arbus, in a term paper on his experiences in a child-care centre.
9. For an adroit treatment of the solitary life of the scholar, see Harold Silver, "Need for loneliness of the long-distance thinker", *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, January 30, 1978.
10. This point is well developed for artists and scientists in Mark Egit, "A Matter of Appropriation: An Investigation in the Sociology of Science", unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1980.



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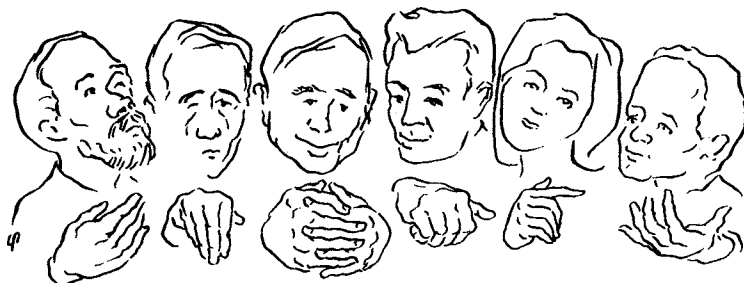
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Book Reviews

Margaret Gillett.

WE WALKED VERY WARILY: A History of Women at McGill.

Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1981.

496 pp. \$18.95.

This is, in several ways, an extraordinary book. "I would have no embarrassment in acknowledging that this work is honestly feminist," says the author. It is written with passion, as the history of the struggle of women against men - a struggle to win something nearer to equality of rights, opportunities and rewards. Men (except for a few of the enlightened) are generally viewed as the enemies, the obstructors, even as the oppressors. Nearly all the achievements of women are presented as victories over those who tried to block them.

Some would regard a book written in this spirit as more polemical than historical. The aim of the historian, at least in theory, should be to record conflict without taking part in it. But any reviewer approaching Margaret Gillett's book with an historian's disapproval is likely, sooner or later, to find himself considerably disarmed.

He is disarmed from the start by the author's honesty. She does not (like many historians) conceal partiality under a studied appearance of detachment. Immediately, she "declares an interest." She admits she is part of the struggle she records. Soon the reader realizes that her personal commitment has given a lively strength to her style, such as a cool detachment might have depleted.

The reader at once is caught up in the pace and intensity of the narrative and is carried forward, even despite himself, without loss of attention. He finds himself in the midst of the battle. He hears (perhaps even feels) the whack and whirr. There are no quiet interludes, no green pastures or still waters. There is no discharge in this war.

"The quality of the scholarship is left for the critic to judge," says the author. The critic must judge it highly. The whole question of women at McGill University, from the beginning to the present day, has been meticulously researched. All sources are given in footnotes. This reviewer has added them; they number over 500. Many refer to documents or give supplementary information. It all amounts to formidable scholarship.

Not only is the style vigorous and the scholarship real; the reader is made aware (even at times uncomfortably aware) that women have met with much unfair obstruction. They really were, as the author contends, given lesser scope than their ambitions and qualifications deserved.

Here the author's vehemence, though at times excessive, is tempered by an impressive degree of understanding. Women at McGill were not only struggling against the opposition of particular men in particular positions of authority. They were struggling against the ideas and attitudes prevailing at that time. Such ideas and attitudes were reflected in the minds of male authorities at McGill, rather than originating with them.

This awareness, which seldom fails, immensely broadens the significance of the book. Though a concentrated study of the situation of women in one university, it becomes in effect a study of the situation of women almost everywhere, as they fought for the right to higher education, then for the right to put it to full use. It becomes not only a study on local history (which it is), but a treatment of a universal theme.

The greatest drama of the conflict appears in the duel, not between a man and a woman, but between two men - Principal Sir William Dawson and the professor of philosophy Dr. John Clark Murray. Both favoured higher education for women. Each had a different idea as to what form that education should take.

Dawson believed such an education should fit women to be better wives and mothers - not to contest for their bread in the rivalries of the marketplace. Murray wanted women to be free to enjoy any form of education they wished, to acquire any knowledge the university offered, and to put it to any use.

Both men fought from sincere conviction. Though Margaret Gillett, as would be expected, is heartily on the side of Professor Murray, she respects Principal Dawson's sense of moral obligation, mistaken though she believes him to have been. While she finds Dawson at times unbearably sanctimonious, she concedes that Murray could too readily resort to sophistry.

In a preliminary chapter on Principal Dawson's personality

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Margaret Gillett, using manuscript materials not previously published, gives one of the most sympathetic and perceptive estimates of Dawson that have so far been written. She says: "John William Dawson was clearly not a misogynist, in many ways he was a humanitarian." He was "the Principal who held some of the most profoundly conservative beliefs but who was instrumental in facilitating some of the most forward-looking changes at McGill."

The chief deficiency of the book is the "noisiness" of its perpetual agitation. At times it gets on the reader's nerves. A little more restraint might have aided her cause and the quality of her writing.

Nor does the author confront one of the chief difficulties in the feminist cause, a difficulty Principal Dawson perceived. If women are to compete with men on equal terms, what will they do with the uncompetitive burdens of childbirth and mothering? Stephen Leacock, in an address before the Women's Canadian Club, wondered whether women, enjoying the excitements and rewards of their new competitive role, might not choose to have very few children, or none at all. And if they were to prefer this option, what would be the effect on eugenics, if the most active, intelligent and enterprising women failed to reproduce these characteristics?

Though Margaret Gillett does not deal with this issue (and it scarcely came within the scope of her book), it is notable from her history that most of the women who made breakthroughs into new achievements at McGill had few, if any, children.

In any case, **We Walked Very Warily** is what the English would call "a good read." Though some readers may be annoyed, few indeed are likely to stop reading. And the reader will find himself thinking more than ever about the controversy that Margaret Gillett presents and shares. That, in itself, is a significant achievement for any writer, especially for an historian.

Edgar Andrew Collard
Editor Emeritus
The Montreal Gazette

J. Donald Wilson.

CANADIAN EDUCATION IN THE 1980'S.

Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1981.

282 pp. \$13.95.

This is a book of readings that has some immediately recognizable assets. Its editor is an established educational historian and no stranger to putting together a collection of articles. In 1977 he co-edited *Precepts, Policy and Process: Perspectives on Contemporary Canadian Education*. If the present work looks familiar, it is because Prof. Wilson has again coaxed contributions from some of the same authors. However, in this instance, familiarity does not breed contempt, as the book includes some of Canada's best-known educational historians and sociologists - Hugh A. Stevenson, George S. Tompkins, Marvin Lazerson, the ethno-historian Cornelius J. Jaenen, and the editor himself.

A book of readings is always vulnerable to criticism. It is open to attack as much for what it includes as for what it leaves out. *Canadian Education in the 1980's* has, to its credit, touched most bases. The book contains fifteen articles, most of them original and each by a different author on a different subject, which means there is little in the way of annoying overlapping. At the end of each article is a "notes" section and a select bibliography, testifying to the care and effort that went into its preparation as well as steering the reader to further study. And if, as the title implies, the work is centred on present and future developments in Canadian education, it does not do so at the expense of the past. More than a few of the articles proceed on the premise that to understand contemporary issues, the past must first be engaged and explained.

Without attempting to give a grocery list of the readings, there are articles on curriculum trends, education and work multiculturalism, religion and education, language and education in Quebec, community college development, the teaching profession, and adult education. Conspicuous by its absence is any article devoted to university or higher education. To be sure, various aspects of university education are treated in several of the articles, but a more systematic examination is called for.

What do the 1980's hold for Canadian education? Apparently more of the same; that is to say, an extension and deepening of the issues and problems already upon us. Owing to demographic realities, the schools will continue to show declining enrolments at most levels. At the same time the phenomenon of an aging population will trigger new initiatives in adult learning, forcing educators to plan new curricula and to develop appropriate teaching styles. In public education the thrust will be in the

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direction of greater centralization of curriculum, reversing a trend that has prevailed for almost two decades. Financial constraints, a shrinking curriculum, and a concern for declining standards will be factors in this turnabout. At the same time the recent growth in private school enrolment shows no sign of subsiding, as increasing numbers of parents demonstrate a lack of confidence in the ability of the public school to provide a quality education. And as private educational facilities expand, so do demands by those involved for a greater share of the public purse.

Finally, what would Canadian education be without the perennial struggle between federal and provincial authorities? As long as one can remember, the two levels of government have argued over their respective educational roles. In all likelihood the federal government will continue to be heavily involved in education, though the control and administration of schools will remain firmly in the hands of the provinces. The search for an articulated national policy in education will continue.

These and other trends are effectively spelled out in this book of readings, which might well serve as a companion text in an issues course on Canadian education.

Roger Magnuson
McGill University

Jerelyn B. Schultz, Ed.
with Penny Ralston, Barbara Rougvie, Margaret Torrie and Jillian Boyd.
SEXUALITY AND THE ADOLESCENT: A Teaching Guide.
Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1981.
260 pp. \$15.95.

Texts on sexuality have over the past ten years been published with the same sort of frequency and in the same kind of numbers as rabbits produce offspring. **Sexuality and the Adolescent** is Module 2 in a series on Contemporary Parenting Choices.

The aim of the module is that adolescents acquire, in sequence, three major competencies: Competency A, where the student can describe how a teenager's concept of self is affected by growth and development in adolescence; Competency B, where the student can explain the influence of interpersonal relationships within and outside the family on sexual attitudes and behaviour during adolescence; and Competency C, where the student can describe the stages of pregnancy and the decisions to be addressed in each. Subsumed under each major competency are

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direction of greater centralization of curriculum, reversing a trend that has prevailed for almost two decades. Financial constraints, a shrinking curriculum, and a concern for declining standards will be factors in this turnabout. At the same time the recent growth in private school enrolment shows no sign of subsiding, as increasing numbers of parents demonstrate a lack of confidence in the ability of the public school to provide a quality education. And as private educational facilities expand, so do demands by those involved for a greater share of the public purse.

Finally, what would Canadian education be without the perennial struggle between federal and provincial authorities? As long as one can remember, the two levels of government have argued over their respective educational roles. In all likelihood the federal government will continue to be heavily involved in education, though the control and administration of schools will remain firmly in the hands of the provinces. The search for an articulated national policy in education will continue.

These and other trends are effectively spelled out in this book of readings, which might well serve as a companion text in an issues course on Canadian education.

Roger Magnuson
McGill University

Jerelyn B. Schultz, Ed.
with Penny Ralston, Barbara Rougvie, Margaret Torrie and Jillian Boyd.
SEXUALITY AND THE ADOLESCENT: A Teaching Guide.
Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1981.
260 pp. \$15.95.

Texts on sexuality have over the past ten years been published with the same sort of frequency and in the same kind of numbers as rabbits produce offspring. **Sexuality and the Adolescent** is Module 2 in a series on Contemporary Parenting Choices.

The aim of the module is that adolescents acquire, in sequence, three major competencies: Competency A, where the student can describe how a teenager's concept of self is affected by growth and development in adolescence; Competency B, where the student can explain the influence of interpersonal relationships within and outside the family on sexual attitudes and behaviour during adolescence; and Competency C, where the student can describe the stages of pregnancy and the decisions to be addressed in each. Subsumed under each major competency are

sub-competencies, accompanied by learning activities for students, and suggested resources for teacher use. All the resource material, except for films, but including checklists, worksheets, and illustrations, are provided in Appendices.

This module has succeeded well in providing a format whereby sexuality is introduced to adolescents as an integration of emotional, intellectual, and social factors, as well as physical factors. An attempt has been made to illustrate that sexuality is not limited to sexual behaviour, but that a clarification of values and self-understanding is crucial in making personally satisfying and responsible decisions about sexuality.

Teaching about sexuality comes across in this guide as being a very serious business. If the structured, systematic approach of a module appeals to you, this guide will be very useful. Those who prefer flexibility and spontaneity may feel, as I do, that perhaps rabbits have a lot more fun learning.

Adrienne Price
University of Ottawa

Eileen Tway, Ed.
READING LADDERS FOR HUMAN RELATIONS.
(6th Edition).
Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981.
398 pp.

This is a specialized book list for all in the service of the young who desire to improve human relations. Roughly 1500 titles offer a wide range of cultural and literary experience. The book is a clearly printed paperback which is easy enough to handle yet sufficiently substantial for frequent reference.

The present edition is the sixth since this project of the National Council of Teachers of English started in 1947. The contents have been regularly expanded and updated. The list has been assembled from the suggestions of many contributors at all levels of education. The editor's harmonising purpose was to choose books "that would promote sensitivity in human relations and that would exemplify good literary quality."

The Ladders of the title are the sections into which the book is divided. They deal with "Growing into Self"; "Relating to Wide Individual Differences"; "Interacting in Groups"; "Appreciating Different Cultures"; and "Coping in a Changing World." Each is usefully subdivided: "Interacting in Groups" handles Family Relationships; Friendships; Peer Relationships; and

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Other Social Groups. Within these lesser divisions titles are grouped by ages, 1-5, 5-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14 and up.

Sensible editing has prevented any attempt to fill out all the sections to an arbitrary minimum or maximum number of titles. Identifying With One's Heritage (Ladder 1) contains no titles for the youngest age group, while for 14 and up under the heading Meeting Personal and Political Crises (Ladder 5) there are 25 titles. Of these only one book was written before 1974. Most of the selections were published much more recently. As in any attempted classification of human relationships the labels are not over-precise, so many titles appear under two or more headings. An index indicates the major entry where one may find a three or four sentence summary of matter and theme.

The Ladders draw on an admirably wide field. We find Foxfire and Anne Frank together with the Guinea of Camara Laye and the Yorkshire of James Herriot. There is no restriction as to modes of writing, though naturally more novels are included than poems or plays. Established literary classics are not neglected in the search for modernity and relevance; the experiences of Anna Karenina and Quasimodo are offered as valid enrichments of the consciousness of young persons maturing today. William Kurelek's A Prairie Boy's Summer is only one of a number of books where the illustrations are at least as important as the text.

The avowed purpose of Reading Ladders is admirably fulfilled by the information which it contains. Furthermore, the book will be useful to many more people than those whose eye is naturally attracted by the Human Relations of the title. Anyone who has to make changes or additions to a current English syllabus, or who has to make suggestions to students for further reading, will have reason to be grateful to the compilers of Ladders. Any teacher, guidance counsellor, parent or librarian will welcome the recent writings in the guide because of their closeness to the world of today's young people. This book is substantially more than a mere culling from publishers' catalogues; it is potentially a powerful force for animating young readers to recognize themselves and others, and to reach out with new sensitivity to build a better world around them.

Philip Booth
Macdonald-Cartier Polyvalent High School
St. Hubert, Quebec

Jay Phipps.

THE ELECTRONIC CLASSROOM.

Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Education Association, 1982.

39 pp. \$4.00.

This short monograph gives an interesting overview of educational television and micro-computers in education.

In dealing with educational television the author trots out the well-known arguments about how educational television has failed, for the most part, to deliver on its promises of high quality (educational television) production. According to the author, educational television has two roles to play: the first as a production medium; the second as a distribution medium. Still, technological advances in (educational television) production suggest that we may yet learn from our past mistakes and salvage that which is good about the medium.

With respect to the future, the author gives a brief overview of the technology of video discs and describes the difference between optical and capacitance video disc systems. In what could have become a highly technical discussion the author wisely keeps the material simple, short, and understandable for the uninitiated reader. A discussion of interactive video technology completes the section on educational television, and leaves the reader with an exciting glimpse of the future of this technology.

The second part of the monograph deals with micro-computers in education. Once again, for the uninitiated reader, there is a simple explanation of micro-computers together with a discussion of some of the goals of and barriers to the implementation of micro-computers in schools. The section entitled "Why use the computer" unfortunately falls short of giving an adequate answer. To simply argue that Socratic dialogue is best and that individual micro-computers can simulate this, is to sell far short the effects of educational micro-computing. The really significant use of micro-computers in education will not be in the area of computer-assisted instruction nor as information retrieval devices, but in their role as intelligence amplifiers. The effect of such intelligence amplifiers and its extent is only just beginning to be recognized, and is far from being understood.

The author concludes with a section on hints on buying for the potential purchaser, and invokes the spirit of Alvin Tofler to end on the futuristic note that is now requisite and expected of all educational technologists.

Strangely, for a monograph entitled **The Electronic Classroom**, little mention is made of classrooms. Nevertheless, the pamphlet is recommended for teachers and administrators who

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would like to be brought quickly up-to-date with a short, readable introduction to some of the most recent advances in educational technology.

Glenn F. Cartwright
McGill University

John Hubbel Weiss.
THE MAKING OF TECHNOLOGICAL MAN.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
1982. 377 pp. \$30.00.

The reader may initially doubt that a book dealing with nineteenth century French Engineering Education would have any relevance for a general audience. Such a suspicion simply demonstrates that we come to a study of other types of education, particularly those in countries other than our own, with a preconceived set of baggage which tends to hinder our journey. Living in North America we have our particular hangups, which in part are inherited from Britain, and which are aggravated by what we interpret as an issue between general education and specialized education.

Engineering may be interpreted as a field reserved for specialists, but the primary title, *The Making of Technological Man*, reflects the importance of this book today at a time when technological advances multiply and we enter a new post-industrial age, which will change our society as radically as did the industrial revolution of the 1800's.

What is particularly apropos for Quebecers, living within a North American sphere of influence, is the gradual realization that there are two different models of preparing technological man. We have essentially adopted the British model, in which technologists and engineers have emerged from a striking variety of educational backgrounds, including picking up ideas in workshops and on construction sites, so as to form the self-made man. By contrast the French method, which became a model for Europe, was one where future engineers came from high social strata and followed a rigid system of formal schooling. In England, the first industrial nation, there were no formal engineering schools, and experience became the principal avenue of learning and training. For all later industrializers the process was necessarily different; for one thing, they were in a hurry to copy Britain and catch up with her new productivity. European nations had to rely far more than Britain on formal training offered in courses or schools. North America came closest to the British pattern partly because it could draw on British immigrants as a source of skilled labour.

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By contrast, until 1825, because of a ban on the emigration of artisans and mechanics, Europe could not officially import skilled tradesmen.

Weiss's book is marginally concerned with the Ecole Polytechnique, which became a model for engineering schools throughout Europe. Its role was limited in that it fitted its students for the older forms of engineering (construction and mining). It could not satisfy other demands, which were met by certain private schools, the most important of these in scope of quality and overall influence being the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures founded in Paris in 1829. This single Parisian school during its first 20 years of existence is the prime concern of Weiss's book. The school filled a real need for education of a corps of engineers, entrepreneurs, and managers who were to perform a vital role in French industrial growth. Candidates for the Ecole Centrale were from the social and economic elite and mostly came from the upper bourgeoisie, with only 10% from tradesmen families. In this way the pattern of stratification of the July Monarchy was reproduced in the later hierarchies of industrial enterprises and in the structure of the engineering profession.

Education at the Ecole Centrale had four primary components. Courses were formal lectures of 90-120 minutes. Practical exercises took place in laboratories, workshops, and classrooms. There were also examinations and individual projects, of which the final project or competition was the most important. A somewhat paradoxical aspect of the program was a sort of training for industrial espionage. Students were taught to reproduce a machine from memory by sketching. Such a skill was particularly important at this time, when the export of machinery and the emigration of mechanics were restricted, and when secret information about particular machines could be obtained only by brief visits to British shops and mills.

What actually took place in the history of nineteenth century technology was something with far greater ramifications than the simple application of scientific theories or the training of an individual to fit a job. The Ecole Centrale was able to educate engineers on the basis that "la Science industrielle est une", which emphasized that there were no *ingénieurs spéciaux* but only *ingénieurs généraux*. This philosophy is evident in the training of men like Gustave Eiffel for a future in the chemical industry. This claim to a type of general education appealed to those searching for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful and for "culture générale". That engineers were trained as generalists and came from high social strata ensured that engineering and technology were as much respected as any other subject areas in nations such as France and Germany.

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By contrast one is drawn to speculate whether North American attitudes towards technology and our current lack of skilled manpower would have been different, had a greater influence been exerted by the French model instead of by the British one.

John Gradwell
McGill University

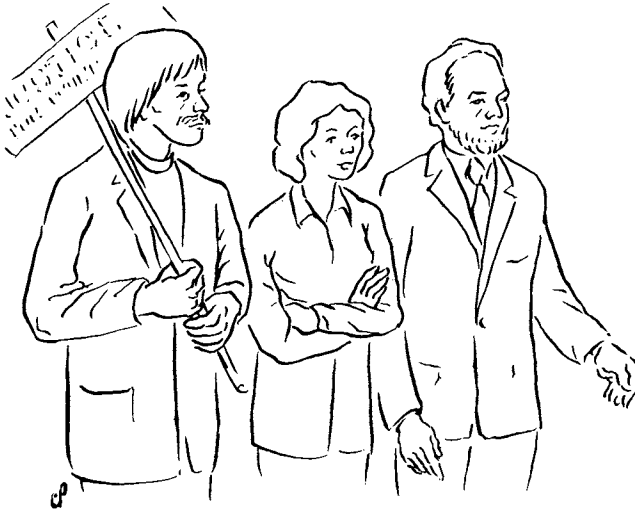


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The **Journal** invites contributions on any aspects of issues of current public concern in education. It is particularly hospitable to the discussion of problems and developments occurring on the educational scene in Quebec. The target readership is of persons ready to think clearly about education, whether as professionals in schools, as academics and students, or as parents.

The **Journal** looks for English or French articles in the form of essays, interviews, descriptive reports of research, and critical reviews of books. Lighter pieces, humorous material, poetry and graphics of quality are also welcome. All written material should be furnished in the original typescript, double-spaced, together with two copies; each should have a separate title page containing the author's name, which should not appear on the manuscript itself. A desirable length of article is between 2,000 and 3,000 words.

All such contributions should be addressed to the Editor, McGill Journal of Education, 3700 McTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1Y2.

Le **Journal** invite les auteurs à lui soumettre des manuscrits traitant de questions d'actualité dans le domaine de l'éducation. Il s'intéresse particulièrement à l'étude de la conjoncture de l'éducation au Québec. Il vise un public constitué de lecteurs capables de discernement en matière d'éducation tels que les personnels scolaires, les universitaires, les étudiants et les parents.

Le **Journal** recherche des articles rédigés en français ou en anglais, sous forme d'exposés, d'entrevues, de rapports descriptifs de recherche, ou d'études critiques d'ouvrages. Il accueille aussi des articles de style plus léger, des éléments humoristiques, des poèmes et des illustrations graphiques de qualité. Tout article doit être soumis dans sa forme dactylographiée originale accompagnée de deux copies; chaque article doit comprendre une page de garde portant le titre de l'article et le nom de l'auteur, mais celui-ci ne doit pas apparaître sur le manuscrit même. La longueur ordinaire d'un article varie entre 2000 et 3000 mots.

Tout manuscrit doit être adressé comme suit: Le Rédacteur en chef du McGill Journal of Education, 3700 rue McTavish, Montréal (Québec), Canada H3A 1Y2.

