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NEIL SUTHERLAND

THE "NEW" EDUCATION IN ANGLOPHONE CANADA: "MODERNIZATION" TRANSFORMS THE CURRICULUM

Between the 1840's and the 1880's, English Canadians created their educational system. As part of a broader effort to institutionalize children and others whose conduct gave rise to social concern, "school promoters" made existing schools and the many others that they established into agencies of the state as well as of the family. They also banded these schools together into strong and coherent if not always efficient educational systems with characteristics so durable that most persist to the present day. By sorting youngsters into classes and grades that climbed the educational ladder together, the promoters shifted learning from what was primarily an individual activity into an enterprise that was done in groups. By arranging a common training program and powerful mechanisms of professional socialization, they created an homogeneous, homogenizing, and hierarchical teaching force. By devising a single curriculum for a whole province, by implementing it through a series of prescribed texts, and by policing it through a progression of examinations, they tried more rigorously than anyone had ever done to ensure that all children learned to believe, to think, and to behave in the same way.

In the context of the strongly-held theory of "mental discipline", pupils studied the traditional subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic. Their teachers sometimes leavened this fare with some simple history, "capes and bays" geography, singing and drawing. For most youngsters the *Reader*—a wide-ranging text that included selections from literature, science, history, Biblical and classical stories, and mythology—served as the core of the curriculum. In the *Reader* they found stories and poems that emphasized such virtues as Godliness, obedience, frugality, hard work, patriotism and respect for elders, for authority, and for the social order. This text thus reiterated in written form the same strong message that the community directed towards its young through the family, the congregation and the teacher.

After they created it, English Canadians went on to expand and

elaborate their educational system. As they moved into the empty West and into the growing cities and suburbs, they took their schools with them. As their standard of living rose, they increased their commitment to the formal education of their youngsters. In some provinces, English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians wrangled with even greater vehemence than usual over the religious form or ethnic identity of public and separate school systems. School systems themselves worked to increase the length and regularity of their pupils' attendance and to improve the quality of their teaching staffs. Within the system as well, schoolmen began to shift the intellectual basis of pedagogy away from "mental discipline". Although other notions competed with them, the "five formal steps", which their advocates explained that they had derived from the ideas of Johann Friedrich Herbart, came to dominate Canadian pedagogical practice in the early decades of the twentieth century. After carefully studying "model" lesson plans, student teachers and teachers constructed their own plans—often, very mechanically—to move sequentially through the stages of preparation, presentation, comparison, generalization, and application. They applied "Herbartian" steps to both the old subjects in the curriculum and the new.

The force of a process which historians have come to call "modernization" broke the linear continuity of this educational development. Between the 1870's and the 1920's Canada entered on and began to move through this phase at an ever-accelerating pace. Over these years a country characterized by ways of life organized around farming, fishing and lumbering made itself into a modern industrial state. In the context of this national transformation, English Canadians created a new set of social policies for children—policies governing the rearing of children in their families, policies directed to maintaining and protecting their health, policies laid out to prevent them from becoming burdens on society, and policies designed to transform the means and methods of their schooling and education. Those reformers who gave their particular attention to education over these years proposed, as a central part of their package, to make over the school curriculum so that it responded to the needs of both their new notions of childhood and their new urban and industrial society.

In the early years of the national transformation only a few English Canadians were unhappy with their new school systems. In the 1880's and 1890's, most people were clearly satisfied with and often took great pride in what their schools were doing. Nevertheless, a small but increasing number of them came to believe that the schools were not doing all they ought to prepare children for the future. Canadian and Imperial patriots called for the schools to produce a generation with deeper loyalties to nation, monarch, and Empire. Protestant and Roman Catholics alike looked, in a time of change, to schools to inculcate the tradi-

tional faith and values more effectively. Those who saw rural decay spreading like a blight across the Canadian countryside called on schools to effect a cure. Most important, two increasingly self-conscious groups of reformers, mostly drawn from outside the educational system, prodded, pushed, and cajoled Canadian schools to change what they were trying to do with their charges. One group, as it came to a new view of child, family, and the process of schooling in Canadian society, tried to make schools more humane, more child-centred, and more responsive to the way in which children grew. The other, as it examined the effects of the rapidly-changing nature of work in rural and urban Canada, attempted to make schools more practical and more directly relevant to the lives their inmates would lead when they became adults. Both groups later worked to "Canadianize" the increasing number of immigrants entering the nation. Both firmly believed that the surest way to frame in the future to their own specifications was through the children.

Thus certain essential features of the school system inevitably attracted the attention of reformers. If they could only make the institution work in the way they wanted it to, reformers believed, then they had in the school a ready-made engine of enormous power. In modern society schools could be made to contain the whole of the next generation within their walls. Public employees controlled and directed Canadian children for a growing portion of their lives. Moreover, schools assembled children in a way that one could get at them conveniently; educational authorities had already gathered, organized, and roughly classified them according to such criteria as age, sex, ability, and the neighbourhood in which they lived.

While they looked to teachers for help in applying their new ideas to the young, reformers generally believed that the "pressure must come from outside the teaching body". Moreover, some teachers were sceptical of the new ideas being forced on them. In words that many principals and teachers then and since have probably echoed warmly, one Victoria principal lamented that you could not "open your school-room door for a breath of fresh air without having someone with a mission fall in".

Over the span of a generation a loose confederation of peoples, interests, and organizations gradually forged their ideas about schooling into a new public consensus on what English-Canadian education should be. From the 1920's onward, people tended to call these ideas "progressive" education. Those who created the consensus, however, called their program the "new" education, and this chapter will conform to their usage. Although the definition varied over time and differed from place to place, a school system that incorporated most of the major elements of the new education would start its youngsters out in kindergartens, and their elementary school curriculum would include manual arts, ma-

nual training, domestic science, nature study and school gardening, health and physical education. Pupils would take an active role in learning these and other subjects. Some would go on to take vocational training as some or all of their secondary schooling. Those from non-British backgrounds would be subject to efforts to "Canadianize" them.

Although one can make too much of the distinctiveness of each group of reformers they were nonetheless separate entities. In what they had already individually accomplished by the turn of the century in changing Canadian education one can see most clearly the differences between them. In their efforts to protect and improve Canadian families, the child-centred workers had accomplished two things in the schools: they demonstrated that kindergartens made a useful addition to the school system and they added temperance education to the curriculum. As disciples of Friedrich Froebel, kindergartners believed, as one of them put it, in "reverent love for the child, profound respect for his individuality as the element of divinity in him, and freedom and self-activity as the conditions of most perfect growth physically, intellectually, and spiritually". Strongly rooted amongst those who wanted to protect childhood and preserve and strengthen family life—for years the watchword of the W.C.T.U. was "Save the Young People and Children"—the temperance movement gave much of its characteristic passion and a great deal of its attention to the nurture of the young. Youngsters all gathered together in their classrooms were natural targets for the mostly Christian but sometimes secular "perfectionism" of temperance crusaders. By the turn of the century they had persuaded many school boards and provincial departments of education to include scientific temperance instruction as a compulsory element in the school curriculum and in the training program for teachers.

Advocates of practical education wanted the school system to take an increasing share in the effort to produce efficient workers for Canadian agriculture and industry. Since, as one of them put it, a "well-organized community" was "made up of a small proportion of people skilled in brain-work and a large proportion in handwork", such people called for the schools to include agricultural, industrial and technical education in the curriculum. By the turn of the century some advanced levels of technical education were available to adolescents and adults. Only a very few elementary school pupils learned practical skills like sewing and industrial drawing, or read in an agricultural textbook about proper farming practice.

By about 1900, the interests of the "child-centred" and of the "practical" reformers temporarily converged. Both groups had come to believe that what they called "manual training" was the necessary next phase of school reform. Reflecting the dual roots of the subject, advocates of manual training used the term in two generally distinct ways. Since

handwork accorded with their ideas on child development, those working out of child-centred and Froebelian contexts saw manual activities in the school as an integral part of the general education of all youngsters. Manual training was, explained one advocate, "a means for the development of brain, eye and hand, through handicraft" to produce people "whose every power" was "fully developed and nobly guided". To others, manual training was clearly pre-vocational or frankly vocational in intent; through "free mechanical drawing, modelling in clay, working in wood for boys and sewing for girls" such people argued, children would learn rudimentary tool-handling skills and the principles underlying mechanical operations. It was also necessary "to instill in the minds of the young a preference for industrial avocations rather than the overstocked professional and commercial callings".

While favouring manual training, however, its pioneer advocates seldom agreed as to what activities they included in their new subject. Throughout the 1890's, its various proponents suggested that the schools teach a very wide range of "manual" activities, including playing house in kindergartens and the primary grades, teaching and demonstrating gardening and farming skills, English and Swedish sloyd and other forms of woodworking, the use of tools, mechanical drawing, cardboard, clay and paper handicrafts, and cooking and sewing. Some educators even encompassed such subjects as drawing, modelling, woodwork and chemical and physical experimentation in the term. Actually, it was not until about 1910 that Canadians came to a rough consensus as to what they meant by "manual training".

What came to be called the "Macdonald-Robertson Movement" made the first large-scale attempt to introduce most elements of the new education to Canadian schools. As a product of his concern for the learning of farm children—in turn an outgrowth of the difficulties he found in teaching their parents new methods of farming—in 1899 the Dominion Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, James W. Robertson, organized a contest for youngsters to select choice heads of grain from one year's crop to be used as seed in the next. As a result of the seed contest, Robertson teamed up with the Canadian tobacco merchant and philanthropist, Sir William Macdonald. Over the first decade of the twentieth century they gave Canadians many practical demonstrations of such elements of the new education as manual training, school gardening, nature study, domestic science, consolidated schools, and better methods of training teachers. They also incorporated into their demonstration schools the results of separate efforts to introduce kindergartens and systematic physical training into Canadian education. The Macdonald-Robertson Movement culminated in 1910 when the federal government named Robertson as chairman of its Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education.

After the seed contest was under way, their quest for a means to improve rural life through schooling led Robertson and Macdonald to the subject of manual training. Reasoning that all educational movements "begin in cities and spread into the country districts", they decided that the place to start encouraging manual training was in the schools of the cities and towns "in places where newspapers were published and to which the country people looked for guidance". Macdonald therefore offered to "pay for the equipment required for educational manual training in one place in every province in the Dominion, and also to meet the expenses of qualified teachers, and of maintenance for three years in all those places". The response to the offer was so overwhelming that Macdonald eventually agreed to finance demonstrations in seventeen centres. Before the period of Macdonald maintenance ceased in 1903 there were forty-five fully qualified manual training teachers in Canada receiving assistance from the Macdonald funds and training over 700 boys each week. In the next few years the manual training idea spread rapidly. While the new subject was more popular in central and western Canada than in the Maritimes, there was some growth in manual training all across the nation.

Canadian educational reformers also sorted out the various elements of practical education. By 1910, they had divided the broad territory of practical education into five relatively distinct areas: "manual arts" for younger children, manual training in the narrower sense of the term, vocational and technical education for adolescents and young adults, domestic science and nature study and school gardening.

For kindergarten and younger elementary pupils both practical and child-centred reformers called for handicrafts, plasticene modelling, needlework, raffia crafting, scissor work, basketry, clay modelling and cardboard work. These "manual arts", their proponents argued, were a "means of developing the sense organs and of training faculties and powers to meet the things and forces of the outer world with intelligent discriminations". As such, they were both pre-vocational and part of general education. They also accorded with the active practices developed by kindergartens, the child study movement and other pioneers in teaching methods. Since classroom teachers could conduct most of these activities with little in the way of special training or equipment, by the 1920's they had secured a permanent position in the practices of many elementary school classrooms.

By 1910, most English Canadians had narrowed their use of the term "manual training" to refer to a course taught to boys in the upper grades of the seven- or eight-year elementary program. Reflecting the English, American, Swedish and Canadian origins of its early teachers and their freedom to develop their own courses, what boys did under this heading initially varied from teacher to teacher and region to re-

gion. However, as local and provincial authorities made the subject compulsory, included it in teacher education, and added special directors and inspectors to help practicing teachers, the content became quite astonishingly uniform and was to remain unchanged for a generation or even longer. This standard curriculum, which was roughly based on English and Swedish sloyd, combined mechanical drawing, introduction to hand tools and the making of such useful objects out of wood as watch holders and plant stands. By this time, too, both groups of manual training's proponents had come together in the view that it could be both pre-vocational and serve general educational purposes.

In its Canadian form, manual training failed to fulfil its promised role of integrator of the curriculum. Robertson had assured the sceptical that he was not adding another subject "to the already over-burdened school course" but proposed instead a new kind of education in which manual training was "an integral and highly valuable part". In language that foreshadowed the almost endless sequence of nostrums promulgated by twentieth-century schoolmen that were supposed to "integrate" children's learning, Robertson and other advocates of practical education suggested that teachers organize their class work in such a way that reading, arithmetic, language and other subjects would grow out of problems that the pupils faced in doing their manual training projects. In practice, however, specialist teachers, mostly with a craft rather than a teaching background, taught batches of boys for half a day a week in a manual training centre. In consequence, the subject turned into a sterile, mechanical progression which even boys failed to enjoy. Indeed, it was not until the 1960's that most school shops began to make the major contribution to general education that their proponents had long promised they would.

Efforts to extend Canadian vocational training and technical education soon ceased to have much connection with manual training. Although the first flush of interest in an ill-defined manual training led some to see hand-and-eye work as directly training Canadian workmen, this attitude quickly waned as the Macdonald and other pioneering ventures demonstrated its real nature. In consequence, those who wanted Canada to establish institutions to teach skilled levels of practical education gave their energies to a separate campaign. They quickly lost interest in any handwork but that contained in their own programs. This distinct effort for specialized vocational programs for adolescents and young adults, however, continued to help those promoting the new schooling by establishing a context of discussion and activity that made manual training a welcome addition to general education.

In the third phase of their joint effort, school gardening, Macdonald and Robertson turned more directly to the problems of rural education. They supported a scheme whereby one or two children tended and

experimented with a small plot of land on or near the school ground. Macdonald Movement school gardening was a blend of three separate educational ideas; nature study, manual training for rural pupils, and agricultural education for elementary pupils. In nature study, which began in a small way in Canada in the late nineteenth century, teachers were expected to conduct field studies on local plants, animals and minerals. Until it was combined with the school garden, however, nature study in the lower grades often consisted of planting a tree or a flower bed on Arbor Day or taking a class walk in the woods on a fine spring day. In the upper grades "mental discipline" prevailed even in nature study and students memorized, and were tested on, information on the life cycle of plants and so on. When, however, school gardening was coordinated with nature study teachers took their charges outside regularly for a practical and systematic course of instruction. Nature study and school gardening eventually evolved into the general science programs of the elementary and junior secondary grades. School gardening was particularly influential in ensuring that, ever since, at least in the curriculum guides if not always in the classroom, this subject was based upon active—even experimental—work which was undertaken by the children themselves.

Although Macdonald and Robertson incorporated domestic science as a major strain in their movement, others were more central in demonstrating its effectiveness. Throughout the 1890's, some influential and mostly urban women, many associated with the Y.W.C.A., local Councils of Women, the W.C.T.U. and Women's Institutes, conducted a campaign for girls to receive this kind of manual training. Domestic science found favour amongst both child-centred and practical educational reformers. One of its most important proponents, Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless of Hamilton, explained that the subject was not "Cookery" but "the application of scientific principles to the management of a Home, or briefly—correct living". Like other manual training enthusiasts, some of those who favoured domestic science believed that it served a general educational purpose. Others argued its practical merits. To some, domestic science had a twofold function: to teach housewifely duties to those in "humbler homes" and to provide proper vocational training for potential domestic servants. The most widely used argument for domestic science, however, was that in a time of rapid change and consequent social stress, society had to come to the support of the home: the "art of 'home-making'" was the "true end of domestic science".

Whatever wider educational implications others saw in it, however, teachers of domestic science (later "Home Economics") quickly made the subject a practical experience for the girls who took it. Her notebooks show that, in her domestic science classes in Winnipeg in 1908—1909, Dora Dibney learned about the importance of air in relation

to life and fire, cleaning with powders, brooms and dishcloths, general rules for canning and preserving, and made baked apples, salads and ice cream. Although the subject has changed greatly over the years, this practical dimension has remained one of its central characteristics.

Growing concern for the physical condition of school pupils produced another constituent of the pre-First War new education. Physical education had a variety of roots. As a part of preventive medicine, public health workers insisted that hygiene teaching and fitness exercises be included in the school program. Others believed that regular exercise helped in maintaining good school discipline. Canadians also shared the growing public interest in the western world in physical fitness, games and other sports. This development, which was closely related to contemporary attitudes to sex, produced an almost mystical aura about games and play. Finally, as an expression of contemporary militarism, some Canadians called for general fitness, military drill and cadet corps to be included in the school program.

Despite official encouragement, few turn-of-the-century Canadian teachers followed any systematic program of physical activity with their charges. After 1900, some urban youngsters were able to use a growing number of supervised and unsupervised playgrounds. Nevertheless, the combined efforts of schools, voluntary associations, and playgrounds reached only a small proportion of Canadian children. To remedy this situation, the Militia Department of the federal government began in 1907 to assist provincial departments of education by providing some drill instruction in schools and courses for interested teachers. Capitalizing on Lord Strathcona's long interest in military affairs and preparedness training, in 1909 the Minister of Militia and Defence persuaded him to establish a fund to support physical and military training in the schools. Although some Canadians objected to a military form of physical education, most provincial departments of education, in accepting Strathcona grants, cast their physical education programs in a "preparedness" mould. The Trust prepared a Canadian edition of a British syllabus of graded exercises that could be performed with little or no equipment under the direction of someone with little or no training in the subject. Student teachers studied the Strathcona *Syllabus* at Normal Schools and practicing teachers absorbed the techniques in after-school classes, at summer schools and in militia camps. In a remarkably brief time, the efforts of the Strathcona Trust embedded military-style calisthenics in the curriculum, where they remained a central—and sometimes the only—element in physical education in many Canadian schools until well after the Second World War. Only then were Canadian teachers gradually able to begin to build into the curriculum the much broader notions of physical education

that had been overwhelmed by the *Syllabus* and its successors in the same genre.

In another phase of their movement Macdonald and Robertson established four "object-lesson" consolidated rural schools. Unlike their other activities, these schools were more means than ends, a way to demonstrate that rural as well as urban children could partake in all aspects of the new education. Consolidated schools could have kindergartens and could make manual training, domestic science, nature study, school gardening and physical education integral parts of their curriculum. In turn, this improved quality of education in consolidated schools would arouse the interest of pupils so much that they would help the cause of compulsory schooling. Moreover, since many of the graduates of consolidated schools would go on to teach in rural schools, their influence would spread far beyond the districts in which they were located. Despite the fact that, for their time, Macdonald schools were amongst the very best elementary schools in the world, consolidation was the least successful venture of the Movement. Although transportation costs and the poor conditions of rural roads were factors in their failure, the principal cause was the extreme reluctance of rural rate-payers to bear the extra costs of consolidation. Again, it was not until the years following the Second World War that Anglophone Canada began the massive and sustained effort that eventually placed the vast majority of rural youngsters into the consolidated, "urban-style" schools that the Movement had modelled so many years before.

The most important permanent monuments to the Macdonald-Robertson Movement were the Macdonald Institute at Guelph, Ontario and Macdonald College of McGill University at Ste.-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec. Macdonald established these institutions to train leaders needed for rural regeneration and educational reform. Graduates of the two Macdonald institutions quickly spread out across the nation, training their new colleagues in the principles of the Movement. In turn, Normal Schools across the nation gradually began to include training for teaching the new education into their programs. By the 1920's most beginning teachers had learned about the new ideas. Only a minority of them, however, actually put them into practice in their classrooms.

Partly as a product of Macdonald-Robertson and other activities, Canadian interest in education rose sharply over the first decade of the new century. In 1898 and 1899, the Ottawa and Toronto Boards of Trade appointed committees to consider ways and means of establishing technical education in Canada. In 1902, Nova Scotia's Legislative Committee on Education reported that the schools were "too much absorbed in book work and in verbal studies" and failed "to fit the pupil for skilled labour or practical life". In the same year, Macdonald paid the expenses for John Adams, later Professor of Education at the Univer-

sity of London, to investigate the Protestant educational system in Quebec. In 1904, Ontario introduced a new elementary school curriculum that included nature study, art, music and physical education and listed manual training, domestic science and agriculture as optional subjects. The same year, the Canadian Manufacturers Association set up a committee on technical education. In 1906, Ontario sent Albert H. Leake to examine industrial education in the United States. In 1907, the National Council of Women set up a permanent committee on education. In 1908, Prince Edward Island appointed a Royal Commission on Education that recommended nature study, school gardens, manual training, and rural school consolidation. In the same year, Alberta established a committee to revise the curriculum in that province. In its report, the committee strongly supported the introduction and extension of music, art, physical education, manual training, domestic science and other elements of modern education. At their triennial meeting in Victoria in July, 1909, over 400 members of the Dominion Educational Association discussed the new education and elected James W. Robertson as their president. Manitoba set up a Royal Commission in 1910 to study technical education for agriculture and industry in the province that recommended technical schools, hand-and-eye work in the elementary grades, and better training of teachers for the new education. In the same year, Dr. John Seath, Superintendent of Education for Ontario, published a special report on industrial education in Britain, France, Switzerland and the United States that made extensive recommendations for such education in Ontario. While each of these events had important regional implications and some, such as the D.E.A. meeting and Seath report, were discussed by interested people across the nation, the federal Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education had the greatest national influence.

The central function that the Royal Commission served was an educational one. Its hearings and its *Report* helped the English-Canadian community to accept the ideas of the new education as desirable and reasonable goals for its schools. The progression of the Commission across the nation was accompanied by wide publicity. To those already experimenting with new dimensions of schooling, the Commission's visit gave them the chance to tell their fellow citizens what they were doing and to exhort their communities to further efforts. To those looking for change in their schools, Robertson's speeches and the Commission's *Report* provided both a new program and a coherent rationale as to why it should be implemented. The sessions and the *Report* of the Commission were amongst the most important of the events which gradually shifted opinion in English-speaking Canada to the view that their new society demanded a new kind of education.

By the 1920's, English-Canadian reformers had created a new so-

cial consensus as to how children should be reared. In the implementation of this new social policy—which would keep them busy for much of the next half-century—a transformed school was to play the most important role after that of the family itself. Much of the change in the educational system had come from within. Canadian school systems themselves had done much to ensure that a much greater proportion of school-aged children went to school, a greater proportion of those in school attended more regularly each year, stayed in school for a longer number of years, and were taught by teachers who were both better educated and better trained than their predecessors. Canadian schoolmen had tried—and would continue to try—to build their professional activities on sure intellectual foundations. All these trends would persist throughout the next half century.

Advocates of the new education had also helped to change the educational system. Like their counterparts who worked to improve child health and child welfare, educational reformers had put together a program which, they believed, came to grips with the problems posed for children and young people by a society that had changed in so many fundamental ways. They had initiated and given strong early support to efforts to reduce “formalism”, to make learning both more active and more interesting to pupils, first in elementary and then in secondary schools, that were to become so central a characteristic of educational change in Canada over the twentieth century. They had helped to bring about a significant and permanent broadening of the curriculum. Although the term “manual training” has now almost disappeared, its legacy of handwork of various kinds remain—from the craft activities in kindergartens to the many shops of secondary schools—an important and sometimes central dimension of modern Canadian education. Nature study and school gardening introduced what is now elementary or general science to elementary and junior secondary pupils and firmly embedded scientific study in curriculum. Domestic science became home economics and, in its cooking and textile laboratories, and in its child and family study courses, helps adolescents of both sexes to rise to many of the challenges and to cope with some of the stresses of modern life. Physical education gradually grew out of its early obsessions with calisthenics and later on with elitist inter-school competition into a subject that tries to fulfil in a modern and sometimes joyful way its early proponents’ notions of *mens sana in corpore sano*. Modern pupils—and their teachers—owe more than they know to such pioneers of curriculum reform as James W. Robertson, Adelaide Hoodless and others from each province in the nation.