

THE DOWNFALL OF THE RYERSON PRESS

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ABSTRACT

For 141 years, The Ryerson Press was both a cultural engine for and a reflection of Canadian society. Founded in 1829 as the Methodist Book Room, it was Canada's first English-language book publisher and became the largest textbook publisher in Canada. Its contributions to Canadian literature, particularly under long-time editor Lorne Pierce, were considerable. In 1970, however, the press was sold to American branch plant McGraw-Hill, causing a cultural and nationalist crisis in the publishing community. The purpose of this thesis is to explain many of the factors causing the United Church to sell the House. The purchase of an expensive and outdated printing press in 1962 has been blamed for the sale, as has the general state of Canadian publishing at the time. However, the whole story is much more complex and includes publication choices, personnel shifts, management failures, financial ruin, organizational politics, inflation, and the massive cultural shift of the late 1960s. Specifically, the thesis looks at the succession crisis that followed Lorne Pierce's retirement, the Woods, Gordon Management Report, the New Curriculum, *The United Church Observer*, the practice of hiring ministers as managers, the formation of the Division of Communication, the proposed merger of the United Church of Canada with the Anglican Church of Canada, and falling church membership.

This PhD dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Peter Gordon White, Editor-in-Chief of the United Church of Canada’s massive New Curriculum project, who set me on this trail in the first place. He died the year I finished this dissertation. Peter was a dear colleague, mentor, and friend, and will always be remembered and missed.

“...[E]ducators, scholars, and heads of cultural institutions rarely emerge into public view, either during their lives or afterwards. No doubt they welcome this anonymity, especially during their active careers. But the result is a gap in the record, a national amnesia in cultural history, so that, ignorant of the past, Canadians live in a perpetual daze of newness.”

— Claude Bissell¹

¹ Introduction to Albert W. Trueman’s *A Second View of Things: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), 7.

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I also owe a special debt to my mother, Doris Bradley, who supported my research at the United Church Archives in Toronto with food, tokens, theatre and opera tickets, and a place to stay. I also owe her the great debt of raising me, not just on Sundays, at Fairlawn United Church in Toronto. It would be more difficult, I think, to understand the internal workings of the United Church of Canada without having studied them from the inside since birth.

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* * *

When Peter Gordon White, editor-in-chief of the United Church of Canada's massive, bold New Curriculum project, retired from the head office of the church in 1985, he compared himself to Prospero in *The*

Tempest, saying, “it’s time to divest of power, influence and responsibility and stop running things.”² Even after retirement, though, White could still be lured back to his first love: book publishing. When Catherine Wilson became Director of the United Church Publishing House (UCPH) in 1990, White had already been convinced to return as editor-in-chief on a part-time basis by Randy Naylor, who followed Frank Brisbin as Secretary of the United Church’s Division of Communication. In the 1990s, UCPH was producing about twelve books a year for a church audience with titles like *Faith in My Neighbour: World Religions in Canada* (1994), *A Million for Peace* (1995), *Hope is the Struggle* (1996), *Joy is our Banquet* (1996), and *The Man in the Scarlet Robe* (1996). White’s years of experience, and his wisdom, kindness, patience, and collegiality made him the darling of Wilson and her new managing editor, Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr.

At the age of 94 Peter Gordon White was still with us, though not exactly going strong. When I visited him in February 2013, he had just been hospitalized for heart problems. However, he still had a few anecdotes to share about his days running the New Curriculum project, like Wally, the production manager, who had schedules for each of the publications all over the walls of his office so that he would know whom to cajole about what and when. White also insisted that C. H. Dickinson did not deserve nearly as much blame as he got for the financial problems

² *Observer*, July 1985.

of The Ryerson Press since some of the people running the finances under him were “not as good as he thought they were.” He may have been referring, though he was too polite to say so, to Ernest W. Scott, who was not quite as good at business as he made himself out to be since he presided over an era when sales went up but profits went down.

Peter Gordon White set me down the path of this dissertation in 1994 when he told me that it was not just the purchase of the “large and unsatisfactory” printing press — blamed for the financial problems by his friend John Webster Grant in his *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* article about The Ryerson Press — that was responsible for the downfall. White also blamed his own curriculum, which he said was field-tested and hated, leading to massive revisions and the loss of two years of work. However, there is no evidence that the New Curriculum was ever that far behind schedule. It seems more likely that this scrupulously conscientious man took a portion of the blame upon himself so that his friends and colleagues would not have to endure it alone. Greater love hath no man than this.

The downfall of The Ryerson Press was a heavy blow to White, and he felt responsible for it, though the archival record of the 1960s shows that his department was run as efficiently as the German railway system while The Ryerson Press itself was more like a carnival sideshow running itself into the ground. In fact, no one in the church had planned properly

for the massive expense that the twelve years of New Curriculum development would actually cost, nor was it White's job to do so. Many on the Boards of Publication and Christian Education believed that the costs could simply be absorbed year by year, but this was mere wishful thinking.

Three weeks after I visited him for the last time, on 12 March 2013, Peter Gordon White passed away peacefully with his wife, Pat, at his side. Friends and admirers remember him as “inspirational,” “unfailingly friendly, wise, gracious, interested in others” and always smiling; a man who “made everyone feel listened to and cared about”; a person with a “way of making life and work a delight.” “His heart and able mind were a great gift to the United Church and to all who crossed his path.”³ He was the last man standing of the eminent United Church book stewards and editors and so it is to him that this PhD dissertation is dedicated.

³ <<http://www.humphreymiles.com/book-of-memories/1519149/White-The-Reverend-Dr-Peter-Gordon/view-condolences.php>>

ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACP: Association of Canadian Publishers

AGM: Annual General Meeting

BD: Bachelor of Divinity

BP: Board of Publication/Board of Publication Fonds

CHP: Campbell Hughes Papers

DD: Doctor of Divinity

DivCom: Division of Communication

FBC: Frank Brisbin Correspondence

LPAQ: Lorne Pierce Archives at Queen's

M&S: Mission and Service, a fund of the UCC

M&S: McClelland & Stewart

MBPH: Methodist Book and Publishing House

NC: New Curriculum

Q&Q: *Quill & Quire*

RMF: Roy MacSkimming Fonds

TWUC: The Writers' Union of Canada

UCC: United Church of Canada

UCCA: United Church of Canada Archives

UCPH: United Church Publishing House

INTRODUCTION

A publishing house is not worthy [of] the name until it combines
the sacred and the secular.

— Lorne Pierce, 1956¹

For 141 years, The Ryerson Press (known internally as “the House” from its days as the Methodist Book and Publishing House) was both a cultural engine for and a reflection of Canadian society. Founded in 1829 as the Methodist Book Room,² it was Canada’s first English-language book publisher. However, no comprehensive explanation of why the United Church chose to sell the House in 1970 to American branch plant McGraw-Hill has yet been written. The purpose of this thesis is to redress this gap and to examine the contentions of both book history scholar George Parker that the problems of The Ryerson Press were not much different from those of other Toronto publishers in the 1960s and that of church historian John Webster Grant that the purchase of an “unsatisfactory” printing press in 1962 was the reason for the sale.

The financial side of the publishing business has always been a difficult balancing act, a give and take, back and forth between sales and editorial. Many

¹ Lorne Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956, Lorne Pierce Archives at Queen’s (hereafter LPAQ), United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 20 items, LP Z232 U553 U56 1960+.

² Until 1833, when it joined with the British Wesleyans, it was the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. After the merger, it became the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. In 1874 when it joined with the Conference of Eastern British America and the Methodist New Connexion Church, it became the Methodist Church of Canada. In 1884, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada, the Primitive Methodist Church of Canada, and the Bible Christian Church in Canada also joined. In 1925, the Methodists joined with Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Union churches to form the United Church of Canada (UCC). In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren also joined. In the 1960s, there were talks with the Anglican Church in Canada about joining the UCC (and a joint Anglican/UCC hymnbook—the “red” hymnbook) but the union never took place. See Appendix 1 for the United Church Family Tree that illustrates all the various mergers and unions that took place before 1925 to form the United Church of Canada.

a weary salesperson has complained that the editors should only publish “books that sell” and many a weary editor has complained that the sales department does not understand how to sell a favourite title into which the editor has poured his or her time and energy, sweat and vision. Lorne Pierce,³ the House’s most notable editor, describes the editor’s job as that of a visionary and a mentor to authors:

William James once remarked that the aim of a good education was to help one recognize a good man when he saw one. The training of an editor is slightly different. Either by instinct or by instruction he must learn to recognize a good man when he is at his best in his chosen field — the moment of excellence. Having discovered such an author, the editor will encourage him, direct him, stand guard over him, and finally bestow upon him the accolade of a great press. This is the editor’s task. To discover excellence, wherever it may be found, and to honour it no matter what the cost, to that the editor dedicates his life.

This editorial vocation, however, cannot succeed in an organization that pursues its projects “no matter what the cost.” The business of keeping a publishing house financially afloat in the Canadian market is an endless struggle — punctuated, hopefully, by good luck and good sales — that seems almost magical when it works. This is just as true in the twenty-first century as it was in the nineteenth and twentieth as is clear from the changing fortunes of Stoddart, McClelland & Stewart, Douglas & McIntyre, Thomas Allen, and so many other Canadian houses.

Understanding how publishing works in Canada helps us to answer an important question posed by book studies scholar Eli MacLaren:

³ Lorne Pierce, *An Editor’s Creed* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1960), 13–14.

How is literature shaped by the circumstances of its production? This is a literary question, and a historical one, a cultural-studies question, and a bibliographic one, a veritable piazza of scholarship because it allows us both to open up the significance of a text in the sense of explaining it as a function of wider society and to narrow down the meaning with purpose and accuracy and something at stake. It is a particularly important question for understanding the literature of Canada, where, combined with vastness of country and diversity of language, the successive absorption of models and standards from abroad has over time created pockets of literature largely unconnected by a national tradition.”⁴

One means of answering this question, especially as we see more and more Canadian publishers falling under the wheels of multinational competition, is to look back to the beginnings of those incursions by British and American publishers into the Canadian market. The Ryerson Press/McGraw-Hill case is certainly one of the major struggles in this battle for indigenous⁵ Canadian publishing. Not much, however, has been written about this particular battle. The one principal secondary source is George Parker’s “The Sale of Ryerson Press.”⁶ Although Parker looked at newspaper articles of the time and made a foray into the United Church Archives, it must be noted that the Board of Publication fonds, which provides much of the source material for any history of The Ryerson Press is, as the archival term “fonds” suggests, a collection of

⁴ Eli MacLaren, “Copyright and Publishing in 1920s Canada: The Origin of the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books,” Colloquium, “Culture and Ownership: The Past and Future of Intellectual Property,” Carleton University, 30 March 2012, 2. Printout of a copy sent by MacLaren to the author.

⁵ The phrase “indigenous publishing” has been used for many years by Canadian publishers to describe Canadian publishing as opposed to titles represented in Canada (geographical/agenting rights) but originating elsewhere, or “Canadianized” versions of textbooks or other publications, such as the Canadian edition of *Time* magazine. In this usage, Canadian publishers would point to definition 1c of “indigenous” in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*: “(of a musical style, sport, etc.) characteristic of or originating in a region.”

⁶ George L. Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press: The End of the Old Agency System and Conflicts Over Domestic and Foreign Ownership in the Canadian Publishing Industry, 1970–1986.” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 40, no. 2 (2002): 7–56.

unorganized files, some of which are unnamed, or named “miscellaneous.” Its fifty-one boxes take a great deal of time to peruse, much less make sense of. And because the sale took place in 1970, almost three years after the church structure had changed and the Division of Communication (commonly known as DivCom) had taken over the House from the Board of Publication, many of the important documents are contained in their archives instead. It is easy to understand, then, why more articles have not yet appeared about this important event in Canadian publishing history. As Eli MacLaren puts it, “the archives [...] are vast and we need to know more.”⁷

Book studies are rooted in three main disciplines: history, literary studies, and bibliography. Such research may involve studying objects, human activity, or abstract concepts of discourse and communication. The study of a particular publishing house may involve all three.⁸ This thesis examines human activity at The Ryerson Press in the final years of the House’s history, specifically the period from 1960, when long-time, legendary editor Lorne Pierce retired, to 1970, when the House was finally sold to the Canadian branch of McGraw-Hill, to become McGraw-Hill Ryerson. At the beginning of the decade, the printing plant was producing over a million books per year, twenty-eight story papers for Sunday schools with a combined weekly circulation of 365,000, and the bi-weekly *Observer*, whose circulation had grown from 13,500 in 1937 to

⁷ MacLaren, “Copyright and Publishing in 1920s Canada,” 6.

⁸ Leslie Howsam, *Old Books and New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

350,000 in 1961, making it one of the largest periodicals in the country.⁹ By 1970, the House was 2.5 million dollars in debt and had sunk from the first to the third largest textbook publisher in Canada. The downfall of The Ryerson Press, in short, is a story of hard work, good sales, bad management, unfortunate personnel choices, faltering editorial vision, and spiralling financial disaster, punctuated by shifting organizational priorities, changing demographics, and economic inflation. In framing the discussion, some of the early history of the House helps to explain its particular strengths or weaknesses.

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 examine the matter of editorial vision and its loss. George Parker points out that, from the 1890s up until 1960, The Ryerson Press was “an important Canadian publisher and Pierce had a lot to do with it [...] as an editor who helped many new Canadian poets and authors get published.”¹⁰ Sandra Campbell sums it up best in her biography of Pierce, pointing out that Lorne Pierce and The Ryerson Press are almost synonymous; the name “The Ryerson Press” was launched in 1919 and sold in 1970 while Pierce was its Book Editor from 1920 to 1960. The House was never able to replace Pierce’s editorial vision, and this is one of the reasons for its downfall. Chapters 3 to 6 deal with the financial problems of the House and how they arose. Chapter 3 introduces C. H. Dickinson, the last Book Steward,

⁹ “Address of Dr. Howard Trueman, 25th Anniversary of Dr. C. H. Dickinson, April 30, 1962.” United Church of Canada Archives (hereafter UCCA), Board of Publication Fonds (hereafter BP) 83.061C, Box 14, File 12.

¹⁰ George L. Parker, interview by Nigel Beale, “Book Scholar George Parker on The Ryerson Press,” *The Biblio File*, 20 June 2011, <<http://thebibliofile.ca/book-scholar-george-parker-on-the-ryerson-press>> accessed 12 June 2013 (audio interview).

and the Woods, Gordon Report that uncovered the massive management and financial problems that mired the House in the early 1960s. Chapter 4 looks at Peter Gordon White and the New Curriculum for Sunday school, a project that was, paradoxically, both massively successful and enormously crippling to the House. Chapter 5 deals with the twin matters of the United Church *Observer*, the progeny of the *Christian Guardian*, and the printing plant, both of which date back to 1829. Chapter 6 examines an area of The Ryerson Press that was enormously successful, textbook publishing; but its success was also its downfall, since it was the only valuable asset the church could sell to escape its massive debt. Chapter 7 and the Epilogue deal with the transfer of responsibility to DivCom and the sale of the House less than three years later. Chapter 7 introduces DivCom Secretary Frank Brisbin and his dilemma of what to do with the House in the face of shifting priorities for the Church. The Epilogue finishes up with the sale itself and its immediate aftermath.

* * *

In July 1970, just ten years after Lorne Pierce had retired, a gigantic book sale was held in Toronto's Varsity Arena in order to liquidate as much of the House's stock as possible. To the shock of the entire publishing community, the book sale signalled that The Ryerson Press itself was now for sale. By November, no Canadian buyer had been found to cover the \$2.5 million debt and, on 24 November 1970, an agreement was signed between American branch plant McGraw-Hill and the United Church of Canada for the purchase of the

Press. Canadian writers and publishers protested the sale and questions were raised in the Ontario Legislature and the House of Commons.

The federal government, however, despite promises to look into takeovers of Canadian companies by foreign firms, was clearly distracted by the October Crisis and its aftermath. Despite all the hand-wringing and rhetoric, the deal closed on 1 December 1970 and the great institution — the “mother publishing house” of Canada — that had operated for many generations and whose employees had spawned many new publishing houses was no more. McGraw-Hill did not want the presses and other equipment of the printing department, as book publishers by this time were outsourcing the printing side of the business. In March 1971, the Wesley Building, built in 1913 by Book Steward William Briggs at the corner of Queen and John streets in Toronto, was put on the market with an asking price of \$1.6 million.

Accounts of what went wrong centred on the purchase in 1962 of a new and expensive press that was supposed to print the United Church *Observer* and the Sunday school materials. Church historian and Ryerson Press insider John Webster Grant, writing for the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, stated that the sale was triggered “mainly through losses incurred in connection with the purchase of an expensive but unsatisfactory colour press.”¹¹ Ryerson Press art director Arthur Steven concurs that the expensive press was to blame but also admitted that the publishing house was not run as professionally as it

¹¹ John Webster Grant, “The Ryerson Press,” *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. William Toye (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983), 722.

should have been.¹² George L. Parker adds that “fierce competition in the education market, especially from American jobbers and subsidiaries, and deteriorating relations with the United Church” were mentioned by insiders.¹³ David Scollard, educational sales manager, pointed out that for years “large sums were removed from the gross earnings of Ryerson Press,” for the superannuation fund “while the barest minimum was directed back for recapitalization or development” and that this refuted the idea that the House had to be sold.¹⁴

The idea that printing equipment bought eight years before the House’s sale was the main culprit for its downfall is the theme of many accounts. In fact, for most of its history, the printing department contributed the most profit to the entire enterprise. The plant was not dedicated solely to the manufacture of Ryerson Press and United Church materials, as the department was one of the largest job printers in Toronto. Ironically, fifty years later, printers like Québecor and Transcontinental own so many media and cultural assets — local weekly papers, magazines, bookstores, radio, TV, daily papers, cellphone companies, websites, and so on — that the notion that investments made in the printing department meant financial ruin for The Ryerson Press must be challenged.

Even the introduction to the United Church of Canada Archives (UCCA)

¹² Randall Speller, “Arthur Steven at the Ryerson Press: Designing the Post-War Years (1949–1969),” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 41, no. 2 (2003): 7–44.

¹³ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 23.

¹⁴ Scollard quoted in *ibid.*

finding aid for the Board of Publication (BP) fonds itself — written by an unidentified archivist¹⁵ and focusing exclusively for an entire page of its three-page length on nineteenth century real estate — is full of speculation, judgement, and rumour about why the House was sold:

The 1960's saw the Ryerson Press sink into deep financial difficulties. General mismanagement, failure to reinvest money in the business to replace obsolete equipment and too many people for the size of the business brought the business to the verge of bankruptcy. Mr. Gavin Clark undertook to bring some order out of the general chaos.

Gavin Clark, however, only took over as General Manager — as a paid consultant, not as staff — on 1 January 1970 when the decision to sell was already in the works. E. W. Scott, who reorganized the House after the Woods, Gordon management report had recommended twenty-five major changes, was General Manager from spring 1964 until December 1968. Campbell Hughes, long-time Ryerson Press employee and a very successful publisher in his own right, was General Manager in 1969. As well, the archivist blames “[u]nionization of the plant” for the failure of the printing side of the business when the issue of unionization does not appear to have been a major concern in the Board of Publication minutes, the Woods, Gordon Report, or any other assessment of the business. One wonders then at the source of these archival pronouncements. The final paragraph of this introduction states that

The sale of the Ryerson Press provoked a storm of protest, both within and outside the Church. Years of mismanagement made any other course impossible. No outside help was forthcoming to assist in retaining it, and

¹⁵ Or depositor of the papers to the archives.

there was little genuine interest on the part of the Church in retaining a printing concern. The flurry subsided within a couple of months.

Unpacking this statement requires a knowledge of the publishing business that the anonymous writer of the finding aid seems not to have possessed. In the first place, the writer makes no clear distinction between publishing and printing, which are very different enterprises. Outside help in the form of grants to publishers did not exist at the time and even if they had been available, they would never have been given to a church-owned press (as they are not today). The provincial or federal government could have granted a one-time investment or interest-free loan, but chose not to, probably also because the House was church-owned. The United Church, as the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, was widely believed to be wealthy, and the political fallout from bailing out the church in 1970 would probably have been greater than the decision not to. A few months later, the Ontario government did bail out McClelland & Stewart when it was threatened with bankruptcy.

The flurry certainly did not subside “within a couple of months” but rather led to an Ontario Royal Commission on the publishing industry chaired by Richard Rohmer, Dalton Camp, and Marsh Jeanneret. In fact, writers and publishers have some of the longest memories of all, and the sale of The Ryerson Press is not forgotten in the circle most closely affected by it. In June 2012, when Ryerson University bestowed honorary doctorates on Graeme Gibson and Margaret Atwood, “Gibson described his part in a 1970 cultural

protest in response to the sale of Ryerson Press to a U.S. company; it entailed him draping an American flag on the statue of Egerton Ryerson while everyone sang ‘I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy.’¹⁶ Regarding the United Church of Canada position, however, it is certainly true that by 1970 there “was little genuine interest on the part of the Church” in running the commercial side of The Ryerson Press — i.e., the publishing business and the printing business — nor should there have been.¹⁷ The church had other priorities: falling Sunday school attendance (which signalled falling adult attendance in future), the complete reorganization of the head office from Boards into Divisions, and an expected merger with the Anglican Church of Canada.

In its first hundred years, the survival and expansion of the House can be credited “in large part due to its church ownership.”¹⁸ In its declining years, however, church ownership was no advantage as priorities shifted with massive new projects for a New Curriculum (NC) and a new hymnbook that was supposed to be a prelude to union with the Anglican Church of Canada.¹⁹ In 1960, the United Church Publishing House (UCPH) and The Ryerson Press, including the printing plant, were separated into “sacred” and “secular” arms of

¹⁶ Ryerson University, “Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson meet the English Department,” 21 June 2012,

<http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/literatures/news/news/General_Public/atwood_gibson_story.html>.

¹⁷ The United Church sold The Ryerson Press in 1970 to the Canadian branch of McGraw-Hill but has continued book-publishing and distribution activities under various names — primarily CANEC, The United Church Publishing House (UCPH), and UCRD — since then.

¹⁸ Janet B. Friskney, “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca’: The Methodist Book and Publishing House’s Pursuit of Book Publishing and Commitment to Canadian Writing 1829–1926” (Master’s thesis, Trent University, 1994), 321.

¹⁹ The church website’s historical timeline includes this entry for 1955–65: “Development of New Curriculum by the board of Christian Education (David Forsyth, Alvin Cooper, Frank Fidler) and the Board of Publication (Peter Gordon White, Wilbur K. Howard)”: <<http://www.united-church.ca/history/overview/timeline>>.

the business; however, their fates were still intertwined, especially as church publications were expected to be printed at the plant.²⁰ At the time of the sale, educational sales manager David Scollard “scoffed at the argument that the Church needed capital for its own religious publications,” adding bitterly that they were of “cretinous mediocrity,”²¹ but the capital had already been spent and the bank loan too great to cover any other way. The church no doubt expected to get a good price for the secular Ryerson Press, but the fire sale aspect of the offer, sparked by the massive book sale in July, did not tempt many buyers other than McGraw-Hill, which clearly wanted the press for the textbooks it had developed and not for the Canadian literature, which was merely a distraction from their business model.

As for Scollard’s other complaint about investing in the superannuation fund rather than the business, as a charity, the United Church of Canada operated under different financial rules than a “for-profit” business. Donations to the pension fund ensured the non-tax status of Ryerson Press, at least until 1960 when UCPH and Ryerson Press were split. Between 1959 and 1966, \$181,000 had been contributed to the fund²² and Scollard was perfectly correct to point out that the financial position of The Ryerson Press in the 1960s should have suspended the donations altogether. The Board of Publication could have, and did, set aside special funds for publishing — for example, in 1957 the Board

²⁰ LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 1.

²¹ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 23. See letter from David Scollard, “Ryerson Press,” *Globe & Mail*, 7 November 1970, 8, which said that the employees were “angry, sad, disgusted, at the sellout.”

²² Harold Arnup to Secretaries and Associate Secretaries, memorandum, 11 November 1970. UCCA BP 83.061C, Box 28, File 13.

set aside \$5000 for publishing Canadian literature, \$10,000 for promoting the new Sunday school curriculum, \$25,000 for developing the curriculum, and donated \$25,000 to the pension fund — but mostly they were banking on future sales to fund the New Curriculum for Sunday schools, a reasonable expectation in the 1950s with the baby boom in full swing.

There had certainly been discussion regarding the needs of the House and the heavy expenditures it would face by investing in the massive New Curriculum project, but some members of the Board of Publication²³ “rejected the idea of ear-marking money for special funds” but wanted to “face our needs year by year.” The decision that the House “should increase its working capital [via line of credit] and prepare to meet the heavy demands for new machinery and the New Curriculum facing us” proved to be fatal, as they were never able to pay back the money borrowed.²⁴

This optimism about the future was similar in many ways to the spirit that had founded the Methodist Book and Publishing House in the first place. In 1829, Upper Canadian Methodists (the Methodist Episcopal Church, or M.E. for short) decided that they needed a periodical of their own to counter the hegemony of the Anglican Church and its constant lobbying to become the state church of the colony. As Anson Green, Book Steward from 1844 to 1854 and from 1859 to 1865, put it,

For a long time we had felt the need of a *Press* at our command, not only

²³ Dean McLeod is recorded in the minutes as the dissenting voice, but the majority must have agreed with him or the motion would not have passed.

²⁴ BP AGM, 28–29 April 1958, 7. UCCA BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

to explain our doctrines and polity, but more especially to fight the battles in which we were engaged for equal rights and for religious equality. We had so long been kept in the cold shades of what can scarcely be called religious toleration, that we had fully made up our minds to let our strength be known while, calmly, but firmly and persistently, we demanded equal rights with any other and all other churches.²⁵

A young itinerant preacher, Egerton Ryerson, was chosen to edit the new Toronto-based, eight-page weekly, the *Christian Guardian*, as he had come to the attention of the church by taking on the Anglican Rev. John Strachan. Ryerson's article rebutting Strachan's sermon²⁶ — ostensibly on the death of Bishop Mountain of Quebec, but which had taken particular aim at the Methodist church in Canada, accusing its preachers of being uneducated and misguided — ran to 12,000 words and took up almost the entire issue of the *Colonial Advocate* on 11 May 1826.²⁷

Ryerson was editor of the *Christian Guardian* for three different tenures: 1829–1832, 1833–1835, and 1838–1840. He was a tireless reformer on the issue of Clergy Reserves, the land set aside for the use of the church. If Strachan had

²⁵ Anson Green, *The Life and Times of the Reverend Anson Green* (Toronto: Methodist Book Room, 1877), 134–35.

²⁶ John Strachan, "A Sermon Preached at York, Upper Canada, Third of July 1825, on the Death of the Late Lord Bishop of Quebec" (Kingston: Macfarlane, 1826) Text: 2 Peter 1:15: "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Parts reprinted in J. L. H. Henderson, *John Strachan: Documents and Opinions* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), 87–94. Strachan's claims about education were particularly ridiculous in the Upper Canada of 1825, as there were few schools and no universities.

²⁷ Egerton Ryerson, "A Review of a Sermon, Preached by the Hon. and Rev. John Strachan, D.D. at York, U.C., 3d of July 1825 on the Death of the Late Lord Bishop of Quebec by a Methodist Preacher" (*Colonial Advocate*, 11 May 1826). See also Egerton Ryerson, *The Story of My Life* (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1883), 48. The review was reprinted in *Claims of Churchmen and Dissenters of Upper Canada Brought to the Test: In a Controversy Between Several Members of the Church of England and a Methodist Preacher* (Kingston, U.C., 1828). Parts reprinted in Goldwin French, *Parsons and Politics: The Role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1962), 111 ff. See also Donald Jones, "Historical Toronto: Ryerson first earned fame defending Methodist Church," *Toronto Star*, 11 September 1982, G14.

had his way, these sections of real estate would all have been for the use of the Anglican Church, but Ryerson and other reformers wanted the lands sold and the proceeds put into public education. Ryerson went on to become the first principal of Victoria University in 1841²⁸ and then provincial Superintendent of Education (1844–1876). As Superintendent, he developed Ontario’s public school system, well ahead of such progress in Britain, by taking the best of what he found in Ireland (textbooks), Prussia (teacher training), Scotland, France, and Massachusetts (property tax school support). He took as his personal motto a quote from Herr Dinter, a Prussian educator: “I promised God that I would look upon every peasant child as a being who could complain of me before God if I did not provide him with the best education as a man and as a Christian which it was possible for me to provide.”²⁹ He was also the first president of the Methodist general conference (1874). As a staunch cultural nationalist, he even found time to learn French (as well as Ojibwa, Hebrew, and German). So widespread was his influence on Upper Canada/Canada West/Ontario that when he died in 1882, Yonge Street was lined with thousands of mourners for his funeral procession, despite the bitter December chill.³⁰

Ryerson inspired the House and its commitment to education throughout its history. In 1919, Book Steward Samuel Fallis renamed the House “The Ryerson Press” in his honour. In 1932, the next Book Steward, Donald M.

²⁸ First founded as Upper Canada Academy in Coburg in the early 1830s.

²⁹ Qtd. in Karen (Naylor) Mulhallen, “Egerton Ryerson, The Great Educator,” Ryerson Library and Archives, Special Collections, <<http://library.ryerson.ca/asc/archives/ryerson-history/ryerson-great-educator/>> accessed 2 April 2013.

³⁰ See photo and caption “Our Yesterdays,” *Sunday Star*, 13 September 1981, C9.

Solandt, reiterated Ryerson's inspiration and influence on the work of the house:

Dr. Egerton Ryerson, when Superintendent of Education, stated that, in his opinion, no people could exercise the responsibilities of self-government apart from morality and intelligence, and he looked largely to the type of reading used by the whole people for the development of that higher knowledge which would make them wise, patriotic, broad-minded citizens. He had constantly before his mind the refinement of the public taste by means of poetry and other good literature. This tradition, so splendidly expressed by this House, is one that has had boundless influence upon the life of Canada. To-day the Publishing House is an institution of which the Church and Nation should be proud.³¹

For many years, with this philosophy, book publishing flourished, first under Book Steward William Briggs (1879 to 1919) and then under Book Editor Lorne Pierce (1920 to 1960). Both Briggs and Pierce published widely, sometimes getting into hot water for their editorial choices, Briggs for Robert Service's ballads and Pierce for Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*. In his report of 1956, Pierce points to "a nice blending of both the sacred and the secular in [...] the expanding book lists of the House. Only rarely did someone rise up and challenge this, speaking of our breadth as blasphemy."³² The "list" was meant to be as broad as possible and Solandt was proud of the "catholicity" of the publishing program.³³ Pierce was intent on bringing "the best minds of Canada together [...] to provide an adequate forum for the expression of their ideas."³⁴

³¹ Donald M. Solandt (Associate Book Steward), Report to Board of Publication, 15 March 1932, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 1.

³² Lorne Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960.

³³ Solandt, Report to Board of Publication, 15 March 1932, 16.

³⁴ Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956.

Cultural nationalism, in the mode of Ryerson, was the publishing creed and the post-First World War years saw a “rapid rise of national sentiment in Canada.”³⁵ Ironically, in the 1960s, as Canada approached its centennial year, the influx of American culture, brought in part by television, convinced many Canadians that the best minds were “elsewhere,” not in Canada at all.³⁶ As Pierce had written, “A publishing house is not a true publishing concern until it becomes a creative force in the intellectual and aesthetic and spiritual life of a people.”³⁷ For some reason, most Canadians, except for those who work in the cultural field, have never been particularly interested in harnessing the “creative force” of indigenous publishing; for the most part, they don’t care where their books come from, as is clear from bestseller lists where British and American books still hold sway.

As George Parker writes, “No doubt some of its problems were unique to the firm, but in fact mismanagement, escalating costs, overexpansion, archaic distribution practices, and an inability to break into international markets were prevalent in other major Toronto houses.”³⁸ This is certainly the case, but Parker glosses over the problems that were, in fact, “unique to the firm.” The Ryerson Press was, after all, essentially a department of the United Church of Canada. As the largest publishing house in Canada, owned and operated by the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, the problems that beset the house

³⁵ Solandt, Report to Board of Publication, 15 March 1932, 15.

³⁶ Bill Clarke, interview with the author, 22 May 2013.

³⁷ Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956.

³⁸ Parker, “The Sale,” 10.

had as much to do with church operations, if not more, as they did with the conditions in the Canadian publishing industry as a whole. One major cause for the downfall of The Ryerson Press was neither curriculum, nor finances, nor mismanagement, nor the “unsatisfactory” printing press, nor worry about external competition like McClelland & Stewart, book jobbers, and the many branch plants that had moved into Canadian textbook publishing but rather the internal United Church matters of organizational restructuring and shifting priorities.

In 1966, the United Church of Canada decided to combine the Board of Publication (publishing, printing, periodicals) with the Board of Information (TV, radio, audio-visual) to create the new Division of Communication (DivCom). The resulting organization was so unwieldy in structure that it could reasonably be declared unmanageable. In the new organizational chart, the secular Ryerson Press and the huge commercial printing plant were square pegs in the round holes of the business model; the “core business” areas of the Church were Sunday school curriculum, religious books, religious periodicals, and religious messaging in general, not textbooks or poetry.

The unspecified “deteriorating relations with the United Church” also pointed to by Parker casts a rather wide net on responsibility for the sale. From the minutes of the United Church yearbooks, which contain a digest of General Council meetings for the year as well as reports from each Division of the church, it is clear that the decision to sell The Ryerson Press was made by

DivCom Secretary Frank Brisbin. As head of DivCom, he was also head of The Ryerson Press. It is also clear that the Chair of DivCom, William H. Heine, Editor-in-Chief of the *London Free Press*, resigned because of the sale to an American buyer.³⁹ General Council did not oppose the decision to sell, and it is well to remember that there had always been many opponents within the church to running a commercial business as pointed out by James Taylor, managing editor of the *Observer*, in a letter to the editor of the *Globe & Mail*. The real reason for the sale, he argued, was made

on moral and ethical grounds that a church should not be operating a commercial business in a competitive market. For if the business makes money, the church is tainted with the practices of big business; if the business is run at cost, the church is undercutting businesses that must show profit; and if the business loses money, the church has to subsidize it from the funds donated by members for other purposes — a practice which, if continued for any extended time, might be considered fraud.⁴⁰

When the Methodist Book and Publishing House (MBPH) started to publish books in the 1800s, there was no real “competitive market” to worry about. The worry, rather, was if enough copies of a book could be sold in order to break even. Of course, over the years, starting under Briggs, the House did begin to make money. By the 1960s, however, it was not even able to undercut other businesses by operating at cost, and was not, in any case, operating in a competitive market, since the market was rigged against the success of any

³⁹ UCC *Yearbook*, 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: Resignations, 40.

⁴⁰ James Taylor, letter to the editor, *Globe & Mail*, 17 November 1970, n.p. UCCA BP 83.061C, Box 18, File 13.

Canadian publisher.⁴¹ The financial crisis, which by the late 1960s had begun to encompass the whole church, not just The Ryerson Press, was not just a matter of having spent too much on a German printing press in 1962. The tsunami of demographic change that began in the late 1960s was certainly a factor, especially regarding the sales of the New Curriculum, as Sunday school enrollment suddenly plummeted.

Another often overlooked factor was the growing inflation of the time, which sparked wage and price controls implemented by the Trudeau government shortly after its re-election to majority status in the mid-seventies. The church was caught up in this demographic and economic turmoil and it affected every Board and Division. The opening page of the Division of Finance's report in the 1970 church *Yearbook* resembles a found poem or manifesto in its call to action in response to these problems:

People + Money = an effective Church

It takes people and money to do the work of the Church.

They are our resources – they go together.

Unfortunately, we have more of one than the other. The people are willing, but we lack money to pay them and to finance the work they want to do.

EVERY YEAR WE ARE DOING LESS WORK!

WHY? because receipts are falling;

because costs are increasing.

The chart on the next page illustrates the result of increasing costs and decreasing dollars.

We believe United Church people have the financial resources.

WE DON'T BELIEVE United Church people want the work of their Church curtailed.

⁴¹ See Richard Rohmer, Dalton Camp, and Marsh Jeanneret. Royal Commission on Book Publishing. *Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing* (Toronto: The Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1973); Rohmer, Richard, Dalton Camp, and Marsh Jeanneret. Royal Commission on Book Publishing. *Background Papers*. Toronto: The Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1972.

WILL YOU THINK ABOUT THIS – AND THEN ACT?

The reports of the three Departments of the Division follow. They are full of information. Please read them.

Harold L. Arnup,
Secretary

W. Harold Rea
Chairman⁴²

The financial statements that follow report that the Mission and Service (M&S) fund, which provided the base operating budget of the church's head office, needed \$12,731,000 a year in order "to be equivalent of 1965 receipts" while actual receipts were only \$11,423,000, almost a million and a half dollars short.⁴³ Indeed, 1965 — the year after the New Curriculum was launched — was the watershed year for the United Church of Canada: neither church receipts nor church membership would ever be as high again. While the Division of Finance was only looking at receipts, believing that the people were still in the pews, church records show that membership also began to decline in 1966 and has declined every year since.⁴⁴ Of the money collected by M&S, DivCom received "\$504,896 per year, plus \$3500 for capital and special projects" — hardly enough to bail out The Ryerson Press from its \$2.5 million-dollar debt.⁴⁵ A year later, in 1971, the Division of Finance reported that M&S givings were down eighteen percent over the same period the year before, despite their call to action.⁴⁶

⁴² UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Division of Finance Report, 37.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 2: United Church Membership, 1925–2011. By 2003, church membership had dropped back to the level it had been in 1925 at church union. Since then, it has continued to decline year by year.

⁴⁵ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Division of Finance Report, 39.

⁴⁶ UCC *Yearbook*, 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive May 4th, 5th and 6th, 1971, 31.

Many factors figure into the necessity of selling The Ryerson Press in 1970. While the printing press, pointed to by Grant, and the general state of Canadian publishing, pointed to by Parker, tell small parts of the story, the whole story is much more tangled. This thesis aims to weave a comprehensive, if still incomplete explanation for the downfall and sale of The Ryerson Press by untangling the threads of publication choices, personnel shifts, management failures, financial ruin, organizational politics, and the demographic tsunami that swept over it all.

CHAPTER 1

EDITORIAL VISION: LORNE PIERCE, 1957–1961

I have always regarded my self [sic] first of all a minister of the Church, and have imagined my desk to be a sort of altar at which I serve ... [as one] very much concerned about the entire cultural life of Canada...

— Lorne Pierce, 1958¹

Just as an author produces a body of work over a lifetime, and a nation produces a literary canon over many generations, so too does a publishing house produce its own “list.” The list is not randomly created from manuscripts that appear “over the transom” but rather is built from the organizing visions of particular publishers or editors. Over the long history of the Methodist Book and Publishing House/Ryerson Press (“the House”), many people helped to shape the list, including book stewards Egerton Ryerson, Anson Green, and William Briggs, and editors E. H. Dewart, W. H. Withrow, Edward S. Caswell, and F. Sidney Ewens.^{2,3} The position of Book Steward (or “publisher” in secular terminology) was influential; until 1919, the name of the Book Steward had been the name of the imprint. Starting with Briggs, the editors under the Book Steward, however, had more influence on the list itself; it was the Book Steward’s job to keep the business solvent so that the editor’s list could keep

¹ Letter to fellow minister Rev. Garth Legg, 1958, quoted in Sandra Campbell, “Nationalism, Morality, and Gender: Lorne Pierce and the Canadian Literary Canon, 1920–1960,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 32, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 137.

² Janet B. Friskney, “Beyond the Shadow of William Briggs, Part I: Setting the Stage and Introducing the Players,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 33, no. 2 (1995): 142, 143, 145, 148.

³ See Appendix 3 for illustrations of the Book Stewards and Editors from 1829–1963.

growing.

Lorne Pierce has long been recognized by those who study Canada's publishing industry as one of the finest book editors the country has ever produced. Pierce, very much a cultural nationalist, recognized the importance of textbooks and Readers in grade and high school as key to building new generations of Canadians and new readers of Canadian books. His development of homegrown Canadian textbooks is often overlooked in favour of his more literary pursuits,⁴ but the latter were often done at a financial loss to the House and would not have been sustained without the steady income that textbooks provided. His "growing effectiveness" was certainly recognized early within his own house. By 1932, one of his bosses, Associate Book Steward Donald M. Solandt, reported to the Board of Publication that Pierce was "one of the most successful book editors in Canada."⁵

His legacy has not been much appreciated or understood by those outside of a small circle of scholarship since The Ryerson Press itself has mostly been forgotten, except by those *éminences grises* of the publishing industry. One reason for this neglect is the sale of the House, which truncated the list in 1970; another is the fact that The Ryerson Press was run by the United Church of Canada and this ownership is also largely unappreciated and misunderstood. A modernist⁶ impulse to label Pierce as a spent force in Canadian literature is yet

⁴ Sandra Campbell, Pierce's biographer, personal communication.

⁵ Donald M. Solandt, Report to Board of Publication, 15 March 1932, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 20 items, LP Z232 U553 U56 1960+, 15.

⁶ The first modernist novel in Canadian literature for many years was claimed to be Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* (1959), though several scholars, such as Glenn Willmott (Queen's) and Dean Irvine

another reason, especially since the United Church would not publish literature with any overt sexual content, such as the poetry of Irving Layton. However, the most important reason for under-appreciating Pierce, no doubt, is the lack of a comprehensive biography until June 2013 when Sandra Campbell's *Both Hands: A Life of Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press* emerged from McGill-Queen's University Press. In order to understand what a sharp decline The Ryerson Press took in the 1960s, it is necessary to understand the heights to which Pierce had taken the House during his tenure from 1920 to 1960.

Pierce's energies as editor were unflagging, despite his own handicaps of deafness, lupus, and recurring bouts of exhaustion. He had an organizing vision for what to publish and how to publish it that built one of the strongest lists in Canada and included poetry, novels, art books, textbooks, and important Canadian non-fiction. This editorial vision was lost when Pierce retired and was, arguably, one of the underlying reasons for the decline and sale of The Ryerson Press. The sale would have shocked and saddened Pierce; it certainly shocked and saddened his daughter Beth, who was heartbroken to see her father's legacy squandered, and she and her brother Bruce were two of the many United Church members who wrote letters to protest the sale.⁷ Though Pierce was replaced as editor by John Webster Grant, and Grant hired John Robert Colombo and Earle Toppings to assist him on the Canadian literature side of the list, the editorial vision that had been the engine of the House for

(Dalhousie), have worked to push the date back several decades. See <<http://editingmodernism.ca/about-us/director/>> for more information about the modernist revival project led by Dean Irvine.

⁷ Beth Robinson, interview with the author, 23 May 2013, Kingston, Ontario.

forty years was irreplaceable, as we shall see in Chapter 2.

The period following William Briggs, Book Steward from 1879 to 1919, was a time of rebuilding under his replacement, Rev. Samuel Fallis, who immediately changed the name of the imprint to “The Ryerson Press”⁸ and had the good fortune to recruit Rev. Lorne Pierce as “Literary Critic and Advisor.”⁹ Unlike in the Briggs era,¹⁰ the House now had quite serious competitors in fellow publishers McClelland & Stewart and the Macmillan Company of Canada. Both houses were well-known publishers of Canadian literature and McClelland even boasted that he had “yet to lose a dollar on any Canadian book” and had “published at least as many books by Canadian writers as any other publishing house in Canada.”¹¹ But Pierce, who had done his own doctoral thesis on Russian literature,¹² was intent on building a great Canadian list despite the competition. “By the time of the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches in 1925,¹³ the House had re-emerged as a recognized publisher of Canadian writing.”¹⁴ Pierce became “Canada’s most influential publisher and editor in the period from Canada’s

⁸ The name change took effect on 1 July 1919.

⁹ Janet B. Friskney, “Beyond the Shadow of William Briggs, Part II: Canadian-Authoring Titles and the Commitment to Canadian Writing,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 35, no. 2 (1997): 199.

¹⁰ William Briggs ran the publishing house from 1879–1919. For more on Briggs, see Friskney: “Beyond the Shadow of William Briggs,” Parts I and II, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*.

¹¹ J. M. Gibbon, “Where is Canadian Literature?” *Canadian Magazine* 50, no. 4 (February 1918), 338, qtd. in George Parker, “The Evolution of Publishing in Canada,” in Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black. *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 2: 1840–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 32.

¹² *The Contribution of Russian Literature to the Philosophy of Religion*, Thesis (Th. D.), Wesleyan Theological College.

¹³ Pierce called church union at Maple Leaf Gardens in 1925 “[T]he greatest day since Nicea, the anniversary of which our new Church celebrated in so conspicuous a manner”: C. H. Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce: A Profile* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1965), 57.

¹⁴ Friskney, “Beyond the Shadow..., Part II,” 200.

coming of age after the First World War to the Quiet Revolution.”¹⁵ But this drive to promote Canadian letters had been ignited a decade before, when Pierce was an undergrad at Queen’s.

In the spring of 1912, Professor James Cappon ended his impromptu recitation of “The Ballad of Blasphemous Bill” by Robert Service with the line “It didn’t matter a damn,” which, he seemed to imply, was symbolic of the state of Canadian literature itself. Lorne Pierce, then a student, had asked him “if there was not a Canadian writer to put beside Whitman and Ibsen and the rest, someone ‘calculated to our own meridian’.” Cappon’s answer

sent Lorne Pierce out of that classroom with a fixed and somewhat angry resolve to learn all that there was to know about Canadian literature and to gather around him for the sake of the record every original piece that he could obtain.¹⁶

Pierce’s friendship with Canadian literature and art was evident in the who’s who of his own friends: Bliss Carman (Pierce was his literary executor), Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, E. J. Pratt, Wilson MacDonald, William Arthur Deacon, C. W. Jefferys, J. E. H. MacDonald, Fred Varley, Frank Johnston, Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, and Franklin Carmichael, many of whom he published or worked with professionally. It was also evident in the list of authors he published: Lucy Maud Montgomery, Agnes Laut, Marius Barbeau, E. K. Brown, Marjorie Pickthall, Frederick Philip Grove, Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Louis Dudek, A. M. Klein, F. R. Scott, Raymond Souster, P. K.

¹⁵ Campbell, “Nationalism, Morality,” 135.

¹⁶ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 1–2.

Page, Harold Innis, Mary Quayle Innis, Père Morrice, Abbé Maheaux, Jean Bruschesi, Victor Morin, Charlotte Whitton, Evelyn Richardson, Will R. Bird, Laura Goodman Salverson, Ethel Granger Bennett, Edward McCourt, Desmond Pacey, Malcolm Ross, and Philip Child, among others.¹⁷ “I want the strongest list in Canada,” Pierce wrote in his diary in 1925, “for while the other Depts. are building up for today, I feel that I am building for the future.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, the future of the House after Pierce would be short; the future that Pierce did contribute to, however, was the Canadian literary canon itself.

As a Methodist minister, Pierce had a built-in distaste for the liquor-based socializing of the almost-exclusively male literary establishment of Toronto, though he acknowledged that he had “a real he-man’s job, that of making our Meth. Bk. Room the cultural mecca of Canada.”¹⁹ Pierce was, in fact, a cultural nationalist in the mould of Egerton Ryerson. His boss, C. H. Dickinson, Book Steward from 1937 to 1966, described him as “an intense patriot.”²⁰ Pierce, in reaction to Cappon’s disdain, had gone into publishing with the intent of contributing to Canadian intellectual life and literature, taking it on as a matter of good stewardship, a concept particularly central to a Methodist minister. By 1932, Solandt could report, “We are now publishing more books on the Western Provinces than all other firms combined. We have given more space to Maritime titles than [other publishers]. Not only have we

¹⁷ Child won the Ryerson Fiction Award, inaugurated by Pierce in 1941, for *Day of Wrath* (1945) and *Mr. Ames Against Time* (1949).

¹⁸ Qtd. in Margery Fee, “Lorne Pierce, Ryerson Press and the Makers of Canadian Literature Series,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 24 (1985), 65.

¹⁹ Campbell, “Nationalism, Morality,” 136, 137.

²⁰ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 60.

endeavoured to interpret East to West, and West to East, but we have also broken new soil in bringing about a kindlier understanding between the French and English peoples.”²¹ Like Ryerson before him, Pierce believed in bringing the “two solitudes” together and made several attempts to publish bilingual books — something Canadian publishers today regard as business suicide — as well as books on French-Canadian topics. Pierce believed that, “the French are here to stay,’ [and] tried to make the House bilingual in spirit and fact.”²² One important anthology was *Our Canadian Literature* (1922) edited by Pierce and Albert Durrant Watson. Including prose and poetry in both French and English, it was the first anthology of its kind published in Canada,²³ and was another “rather proud answer to Professor Cappon.”²⁴ The anthology went through three editions and was later revised with Bliss Carman to turn it into a poetry anthology (1935). There were plans for a separate volume of prose as well, but Carman died before the poetry anthology was finished. Pierce and Professor V. B. Rhodenizer of Acadia University finished the book and in the 1960s it was still in print as *Canadian Poetry in English*.

In another nationalist move, in the 1950s, Pierce organized travel books on each Canadian province: Will R. Bird on the Maritimes; W. P. Percival covering Quebec; Marjorie Wilkins Campbell writing about Ontario; Lyn Harrington’s *Manitoba Roundabout*; Robert Moon’s *This is Saskatchewan*; and

²¹ Solandt, Report to Board of Publication, 15 March 1932, 15.

²² Victor P. Seary, “The Ryerson Press,” *Quill & Quire*, January 1967, 14–16.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 41.

Ken Liddell writing books on Alberta and British Columbia. He also published in the areas of adult education, social issues, and historical studies, including the *New Dominion Books*, the *Live and Learn* series, the *Youth Commission* series, and, in partnership with Oxford University Press and Yale University Press, a series on Canadian–American relations sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which Pierce worked on himself with economist Harold Innis.

Other textbooks included *The Ryerson Books of Prose and Verse*, the first volume of which appeared in 1927; by 1937, there were thirteen books. These were later expanded in the *Canada Books of Prose and Verse* series for grades 7 to 12, published jointly with Macmillan, and known as the *Ryerson–Macmillan Readers*. These texts were adopted in all provinces and were still in use in the 1960s, with annual sales of 200,000 copies by 1961.²⁵ The *Treasury Readers* series provided prose and verse for grades 1 to 6.

It was with the *Makers of Canadian Literature* series that Pierce's passion for Canadian literature was most evident. The series was designed to introduce various Canadian authors, including a biography and a short anthology of their work. It also proved that Pierce was not one to hold a grudge, for Cappon was the author of the volume on Charles G. D. Roberts (1925). The authors of the books were often as eminent Canadian writers as the subjects about which they were writing. Inscribed in each volume was the following: "Dedicated to the writers of Canada, past and present, the real Master-builders

²⁵ Ibid.

and Interpreters of our great Dominion, in the hope that our People, equal heirs in the rich inheritance, may learn to know them intimately; and knowing them love them; and loving follow.” Thirteen books were published in the series — Robert Norwood, William Kirby, John Richardson, Stephen Leacock, Peter McArthur, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, William Henry Drummond, Charles G. D. Roberts, Louis Honoré Fréchette, François Xavier Garneau, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, and Arthur Stringer — but forty volumes had been originally planned. In this series, Pierce’s love of Canadian literature clearly exceeded his grasp of the Canadian literary audience, as a dozen more volumes were commissioned but never published — George Frederick Cameron, Ralph Connor, Norman Duncan, Dean Harris, Charles Heavysege, Joseph Howe, E. Pauline Johnson, Archibald Lampman, Charles Mair, Gilbert Parker, the Strickland Sisters, and Duncan Campbell Scott. Most of the manuscripts lie in the archives at Queen’s University. Even more volumes were planned but apparently never written — William Wilfred Campbell, Bliss Carman, James De Mille, Joseph Howe, Marjorie Pickthall, Robert Service, Albert Durrant Watson, Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, Octave Crémazie, Henri Casgrain, and Etienne Parent.

The *Canadian Art Series* (1937–1948) made Pierce “unquestionably the most influential Canadian editor and publisher” of art books from the 1920s through the 1950s.²⁶ Canadian art was a passion for Pierce, and it was not C.

²⁶ Sandra Campbell, “The Real Discoverers and Master-Builders of This Nation”: Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press and Nationalism in Canadian Art, 1920–1950.” In *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and*

W. Jefferys alone — with his many illustrations for textbooks and his three-volume *Picture Gallery of Canadian History* — who benefitted from commissions. Thoreau MacDonald (1901–1989), colour-blind artist and son of J. E. H. Macdonald, was an important illustrator and designed, among other things, The Ryerson Press logo. Pierce was convinced that MacDonald “had, along with his father, done more to raise the standard of good book-making in Canada than any other one can think of.”²⁷ Thoreau MacDonald first began working with Pierce in 1931 and continued until Pierce’s retirement in 1960, in spite of the fact that he “deplored the press work done at Ryerson’s Toronto plant.”²⁸ His designs provided the House with an “instantly recognizable trademark” and remain “a highlight of twentieth-century book design.”²⁹

According to Randall Speller of the Art Gallery of Ontario, “Pierce gathered around him some of the most talented book artists of his day to create books that are now recognized highlights of twentieth-century Canadian book design.”³⁰ Fred Varley was another Ryerson Press illustrator, working on Pierce’s own 1925 book *Marjorie Pickthall: A Book of Remembrance*. Sandra Campbell maintains that “Varley’s design for the Pickthall text is among the

Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century, ed. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 184.

²⁷ Lorne Pierce, *Thoreau MacDonald: Being a Talk on the Artist Given in Hart House, University of Toronto, Upon the Occasion of the Warden’s Exhibition of Drawings for “Maria Chapdelaine,” February 9, 1942* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1942), 1; qtd. in Randall Speller, “Arthur Steven at the Ryerson Press: Designing the Post-War Years (1949–1969),” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 41, no. 2 (2003), 10.

²⁸ Margaret Edison, *Thoreau MacDonald: A Catalogue of Design and Illustration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 14; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” n. 15, p. 10.

²⁹ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 38.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

finest examples of bookmaking” that the House ever produced.³¹ The biography itself, according to William Arthur Deacon, was “the finest interpretive biography to come out of Canada”³² though others have since found the male depiction of the female “poetess” as a delicate, spiritual, non-intellectual being less than accurate.³³

As an art lover, Pierce was passionate about good book design. As Randall Speller has noted, “the direct relationship between good design and good economics was increasingly recognized” in the Canadian book industry of the mid-twentieth century.³⁴ Or as John Morgan Gray of the Macmillan Company of Canada put it, “Canadian publishers’ awareness of their own deficiencies was reinforced by their dealings with authors who had been published elsewhere. The resulting growth in editorial range and of interest in more sophisticated bookmaking was probably greater between 1945 and 1960 than in the previous fifty years.”³⁵ Pierce agreed, saying, “Canada has lagged in building beautiful books, yet there are now appearing an increasing number, publishers and artists working hand in hand. The time is not far distant when we may have our own exhibitions of the most beautiful books of the year, with fitting recognition of outstanding achievement.”³⁶ As a way to increase professionalism, the Art Directors Club of Toronto (ADCT) was created in 1948

³¹ Campbell, “The Real Discoverers,” 178.

³² Qtd. in Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 42–43.

³³ See Sandra Campbell, *Both Hands*, 236–244.

³⁴ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 15.

³⁵ John Morgan Gray, “Canadian Books: A Publisher’s View,” *Canadian Literature* 33 (Summer 1967), 31; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 13.

³⁶ Lorne Pierce, *On Publishers and Publishing* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1951), 1–2; The Beverly Papers; X; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 14.

and the Society of Typographic Designers of Canada (TDC) formed in Toronto in 1958, before which “J. E. H. and Thoreau MacDonald were the only book designers [...] familiar to the public.”³⁷

By 1949, it was time to hire a full-time art director for the House, a job that that Pierce had been doing alone as the person responsible for “the long-term implementation of a consistent policy for design and illustration.”³⁸ However, there was also some talent in the printing department in Charles Hasselman and William L. Cope. Hasselman joined the House (for the second time) in 1922 and retired in 1949. It was said that “No man in the House during that time knew so well the art of typography, how to make a book that had that unmistakable touch of distinction.” He was noted as “not merely a craftsman of a high order but a man of great nobility of mind and character” who “left his imprint upon almost a generation of our work” and “laid a foundation that others can well and truly build upon.”³⁹ He would certainly have gotten along well with Pierce and supported his vision since, to him, “the making of a book as well as the reading of it was an act of high devotion.”⁴⁰ William L. Cope had joined the house under William Briggs in the 1890s and worked for fifty-eight years in the printing department, almost forty of them as superintendent, before dying suddenly on 15 June 1954: “In composition presswork and binding he made the plant a leader in this branch of Canadian industry, and was known

³⁷ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ Lorne Pierce, “Charles Hasselman,” *The Book Rumour: Published by the House Committee of The Ryerson Press* 33 (April 1949), 7; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 14.

⁴⁰ Obituary, “Charles Hasselman,” *The Book Rumour* 54 (June 1954), 2; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 14.

for the excellence of his work. In no small way he helped create bookmaking in Canada in both quality and style, in fine deluxe publications as well as mass production.”⁴¹ One wonders if the fate of The Ryerson Press would have been different if his many years of experience had been brought to bear upon the decision of what printing press to purchase for the New Curriculum and the *Observer*, which began in 1959 with C. H. Dickinson’s visit to the German firm of Albert Frankenthal.⁴²

In his search for an art director, Pierce made one phone call to the Ontario College of Art to ask them to send over some recent graduates. Arthur Steven was interviewed and hired by Pierce, and then called in, unknown to Pierce, for another interview with C. H. Dickinson:

According to Steven, Dickinson and Pierce were very different personalities. Dickinson was straight-laced and slightly pompous, but a pleasant man with a “Methodist sense of humour.” Pierce was meticulous and impressive, natty about his dress, and always knew the proper thing to say with an excellent turn of phrase. Pierce was a hero, not only to Steven, but also to many of the men and women employed at Ryerson.⁴³

Arthur Gard Steven (1920–) was born in London, Ontario, served in the RCAF from 1942 to 1945, and entered the Ontario College of Art after the war. When Lorne Pierce hired him in 1949, he was the only employee in the House art department and would remain so for a decade; there were few other art departments or art directors at other Canadian publishers either, thus not many colleagues to turn to for advice. On his first day of work, Steven

⁴¹ Obituary, “William L. Cope,” *The Book Rumour* 54 (June 1954), 2; qtd. in Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 14.

⁴² BP AGM Minutes 28–29 April 1959, 9–10. UCCA BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

⁴³ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” p. 16, n. 38.

purchased the first drawing table and art supplies for the department. Since his office was right next to Pierce's, he "worked closely with Pierce, and considered him a mentor." Steven relates that Pierce was "a 'hands-on' editor who was an active participant in the look of Ryerson publications." He "had a way of asking you to revisit a project he did not approve of, or wished to do differently" and would "gently guide you in another direction." Sometimes, he says, Pierce and Dickinson would disagree about design issues:

Pierce was much less "stodgy" and more liberal in his attitudes to design and illustration than C. H. Dickinson, whose taste was more "Methodist" in its persuasion. Pierce often strove to change Dickinson's mind on individual projects and design proposals if there were any objections or concerns.⁴⁴

According to Randall Speller, the only researcher who has looked at book design at the House, Steven's work "was largely invisible once he became a full-time employee" since "no full-time employees were allowed to put their names on the designs or illustrations of Ryerson books,"⁴⁵ a policy that continued into the United Church Publishing House of the 1990s and no doubt still continues today. Steven occasionally managed to insert a minuscule signature or initials into designs he was particularly fond of, but these, like the tiny signatures on postage stamps, are best found with a magnifying glass. Other designers were also hired on a freelance basis over the years and their names do appear on Ryerson books: Albert Angus Macdonald, Harold Kurschenska, Carl Dair, Hans Kleefeld, Adrian Dingle, Hilton Hassell, Vernon Mould, Jim Reidford, Sally

⁴⁴ Ibid., 19-20.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Wildman, Claire Bice, John and Allan Mardon, Lyle Glover, and Tom McNeeley.

In his foreword to the important bibliographical work, *The Ryerson Imprint*, W. Stewart Wallace wrote the following assessment of the differing approaches to book design of Briggs, the businessman and utilitarian, and Pierce, the art and culture lover:

In what I have said about Lorne Pierce's work as editor of The Ryerson Press, I have confined myself to the matter of publication. I have not dealt with the revolution he accomplished in the matter of format. William Briggs has published books in a decent and respectable format as became the Book Steward of the Methodist Church; but I cannot think that anyone was ever persuaded to buy one of his books because of its appearance. Pierce evidently made up his mind from the beginning that he wanted the books which he edited to be published beautifully. He enlisted the services of several Canadian artists [...] and he designed formats for Ryerson books that were so far ahead of what had preceded them that one could not recognize them as publications of the same house. One needs only to look at the Ryerson Poetry Chapbooks to realize the change.⁴⁶

Pierce “was sure that poetry is the essence of human expression” and this love “set him seeking ways and means of publishing as much as possible of the many submissions he received.”⁴⁷ The way he set about achieving this was the *Ryerson Poetry Chapbook* series, launched in 1925, which would run until his retirement in 1960 and number some two hundred titles. The series began with *The Sweet o' the Year* by Charles G. D. Roberts and fifty more chapbooks appeared within five years. They were “intended as a means for publishing inexpensively either a few selected poems of an already known author or for

⁴⁶ W. S. Wallace, “Foreword,” *The Ryerson Imprint* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954), 6.

⁴⁷ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 42, 46.

introducing new and promising writers.”⁴⁸ Or, as Donald M. Solandt, then Associate Book Steward, put it in 1932, “This format has taken the terror out of the publication of poetry, and has enabled us to sponsor more true singers than all other Canadian Houses combined.”⁴⁹

In addition, for the publisher, it was “a means of obtaining copyright on material which might be chosen for school anthologies or some other publishing project.”⁵⁰ Of the 250 or so copies usually printed, most were sold or given away by the author. Eli MacLaren, presently engaged in research on the series, notes that the “slim little Chap-Books surpassed all previous initiatives to publish Canadian poetry, and yet most of the writers are completely unknown to us today — Annie Dalton, Geoffrey B. Riddehough, Lionel Stevenson, Lilian Leveridge, Elaine Catley, Leo Cox, Fred Watt,” Audrey Silcox, and so on, but in the 1930s and 1940s they provided “one of the few outlets of book publication for many poets.” While MacLaren agreed with Wallace that the books were “elegantly designed” he also notes that they

have about them an air of impoverished gentility [...] shabbily bound, printed on watermarked paper but only a single sheet of it, prefaced by a high editorial manifesto but also exhibiting typographical gaffes. The poetry within them is various, but there is a noticeable tendency, in form, toward meter and rhyme and, in theme, toward the meaning of place. Repositories of bright poetic moments of inspiration, they seem to achieve a creative desire in the double-edged sense of both completing and extinguishing it, for in many cases they were the only books the authors ever wrote, who seem to have said to themselves, there, I did it, I got into print, I have a book, it can be done, but that’s enough of *that*. To create a Canadian literature, to serve the cause of Canadian poetry, to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 46–47.

⁴⁹ Solandt, Report to Board of Publication, 16.

⁵⁰ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 46–47.

build a national identity in letters — these grand goals are belied by the diminutive, almost ephemeral form of the Chap-Books (they're pamphlets) and by their relative obscurity today. For a series that claimed national importance, the Chap-Books were remarkably small.⁵¹

The “impoverished gentility” of the series was largely due to the economics of publishing. Since poetry books had small print runs of never more than 500 copies,⁵² “the design and illustration budgets [for them] were non-existent. [...] Other projects, more vital to company profitability, like textbooks, had larger design budgets.”⁵³ In part because of the poetry chapbooks, Pierce “enjoyed a reputation for taking on book projects that no one else would, which left [Ryerson Press] with little financial backing and no expectation of profit.”⁵⁴ The poetry chapbooks would certainly fall into this category so the “national importance” in part related to the willingness of The Ryerson Press to publish unknown poets at all. However, it is also interesting to note, as Dickinson pointed out in his biography of Pierce, that securing copyright in order to find original material for textbooks was part of what kept them going.

Pierce, like Ryerson and Briggs, had boundless energy, an unwavering commitment to public service, and a vision for the institution that he was trying to build. In his celebration of the House's 125th anniversary in 1954, *The House*

⁵¹ Eli MacLaren, “Copyright and Publishing in 1920s Canada: The Origin of the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books” Colloquium, “Culture and Ownership: The Past and Future of Intellectual Property,” Carleton University, 30 March 2012, 3.

⁵² A first print run of 500 for a poetry book is still standard today. As Kitty Lewis (personal email, 10 February 2013) of Brick Books explains: “500 was the print run for poetry books and it is the requirement for a few things — the Griffin Poetry Prize for one. Canada Council requires only 400 copies in the first print run for a book to be eligible for funding support.”

⁵³ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 22–24.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

of *Ryerson*, Pierce wrote,

Once we, in common with all Canadian publishing concerns, cringed and fawned before British or American Lords of the Press; once we bore the colonial stigma with complacency — but not again. [...] Never again can the whim of a foreign publisher numb us. Never again can a foreign publisher tyrannize over our policy. [...] There have always been stress and uncertainty and anxiety; there have always been fear and grief, misfortune and loss. There always will be. But through it all we will keep our souls on top, and remain ourselves, always ourselves!⁵⁵

As an editor, according to Dickinson, Pierce was almost unfailingly encouraging and sympathetic; “seldom was a reply written to an author that did not contain positive suggestions for improvement or references to cognate material, or a promise of further consideration.” However, the job of acquisitions editor often requires a more direct approach. He told one author “your anthology would not sell unless you enclosed a five dollar book mark with each copy” and another that “with the bottom fallen out of the publishing business [in the Depression], poetry books are about as essential as lingerie in the Arctic. However... we are making our way to [your manuscript] with the swift smooth competence of a crab.” When a friend or acquaintance passed him a questionable volume for his opinion and in hopes of publication, he was friendly but firm in his reply:

I have read and re-read your poems, and who am I to wag a pudgy finger at a schoolmaster? Suppose we say that you are a happy amateur ... you know a poem when you see one ... you keep to the low road of invention ... one poem would preserve a book from oblivion, one good line would save

⁵⁵ Lorne Pierce, *The House of Ryerson 1829–1954* (Toronto: Ryerson Press/United Church Publishing House, 1954), 50–51.

a sonnet. You have succeeded in this.”⁵⁶

Because of his deafness, talking to Pierce in person about a book project was not a winning approach, as Stan Obodiac, best known as the long-time publicity director for Maple Leaf Gardens, discovered when he tried to pitch his book to him at the Canadian Authors’ Association convention in 1957:

Finally I managed to talk to Dr. Pierce. Just everybody had been taking his time. I asked him again why he couldn’t find room for my biography on Robert Hurley, called “The Prairie Painter”. I didn’t seem to be making any headway with him and he didn’t seem to be hearing me anyhow. I wondered if he was like Johnnie Ray⁵⁷ who turned off his hearing aid when anybody bored him.

I was making quite a point about the books that Ryerson Press was rejecting and finally I asked Dr. Pierce: “If Norman Mailer and James Jones would have submitted their manuscripts to Ryerson, would you have published them? He said, “definitely not”. I was astounded, for this man was saying that he would have rejected two of the best war novels, “The Naked and the Dead” and “From Here to Eternity”, of the last ten years. I had a hunch that Ryerson was not for me then and they would never publish anything that I submitted. People used to tell me that they were the greatest boosters of Canadian material. Sure they were, at least of that sappy, mediocre stuff. No wonder Canadian literature was mediocre. If anything good came along to challenge the imagination and shock people, they would reject it. More than ever I felt that Canadian publishers were the ones who were retarding the advent of The Great Canadian Novel and not the author himself.

Next I talked to Hugh Kane of McClelland and Stewart and I was still furious about what I had found out. I told him. He said, “sure, of course they would not, for they are run by the United Church of Canada”. Again I thought that was a helluva way to operate. No good publishing house could publish anything great if any sort of religion was going to hold the reins.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 73–74.

⁵⁷ John Alvin “Johnnie” Ray (1927–1990) was an American singer, songwriter, and pianist.

⁵⁸ Stan Obodiac, *My Experiences at a Canadian Authors’ Convention* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958; reprinted Shelburne, ON: The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2006), 43–44. The book was a gift from John Robert Columbo at our interview.

Of course, Pierce's answer to Obodiac may simply have been formulated in nationalist terms rather than theological or literary ones. Why publish Mailer or Jones? They weren't Canadian, after all. Pierce dealt with indigenous publishing side of the business; other departments were concerned with the agency publishing. He had certainly backed Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) despite its "scandalous" content.⁵⁹ Pierce, like Briggs and Ryerson before him, thought of the publishing work that he did as a service to the church that he loved. He happily combined this with service to Canadian literature and Canadian society as well, but his commitment to the church should not be overlooked, which it often has been, due to secular bias. Pierce thought of "his" publishing house "as a great organ in a cathedral, upon the console of which I could bring out whatever music I desired ... therefore, I would, as long as I held my chair, not allow publication of anything unbeautiful, untrue or unsympathetic."⁶⁰ He once said, "I hope to live in the work I am now doing. Surely a modest immortality."⁶¹ While his work has sometimes been marginalized, in part because of the sale of Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill and thereby the destruction of his legacy, there is still a loyal contingent who believe that Lorne Pierce "will long be remembered for his energetic and inspired leadership of one of English Canada's most historic and influential publishing firms."⁶² When Pierce died on 27 November 1961, he was working on a history

⁵⁹ See Campbell, *Both Hands*, Chapter 16.

⁶⁰ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 57.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶² Speller, "Arthur Steven," 7.

of publishing in Canada for The Book Publishers' Association and had plans for a definitive biography of Bliss Carman for which, as Carman's literary executor, he had collected all the papers. Sadly, these projects were never finished.

Agency publishing, long established by the original practice of selling books from the Methodist publishing house in the United States and perfected by Briggs as a means to deal with copyright issues, continued throughout the Pierce years of The Ryerson Press. The reasons for doing so were, of course, financial, for the Canadian market for Canadian books was a small one; the Canadian market for British and American books had always been, and still is, larger. As C. H. Dickinson put it, "the limited [Canadian] constituency has always made the publishing of much worthy material [scholarly books on religion, for example] very difficult. It has been necessary to seek collaboration with publishers in Great Britain and the United States or to be satisfied with a few slender volumes."⁶³ Some of the profits from these agency titles, as well as those from textbook sales, went to supporting Canadian book publishing. In the late 1950s, \$5000 per year was set aside as a "Reserve for the Advancement of Canadian Literature"; after his death, this fund would be named the "Lorne Pierce Fund" in his honour.

In summing up Pierce's career some years later, Victor P. Seary, a long-time Ryerson Press manager, had this to say:

He went back to Ryerson, the founder, for the ideals and principles that guided him and have guided his successors. He found them to be a credo that served him during all his career as editor. "He hoped to build a

⁶³ Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce*, 58.

covered bridge between East and West; between French and English; between Catholic and Protestant; between the learned and the unlearned.”

Defining a publisher as “somebody looking for someone who has something to say,” he laid down the ground rules still observed by his successors. “Granted you have something important to say, we do not ask whether you are Catholic or Protestant, black or white, high or low, right or left. We do not ask, Will it pay? We ask only that it be timely and as good as you can make it. If so we shall do our best to make publication possible.”⁶⁴

Pierce took a chance on everything he found worthy that he could afford to take on. If some of these authors are no longer household names,⁶⁵ it is not from poor editorial judgement, as no editor has ever been enough of a prophet to predict the longevity of the authors and books he sends out into the world. By the time he retired, The Ryerson Press had a backlist “astounding in sheer bulk” and published “an average of two educational or religious books a week plus two trade (general literature) books a week.”⁶⁶ Despite the fact that some of his plans, like those for the *Makers of Canadian Literature* series, did not entirely succeed, Pierce’s list, his reputation as Canada’s finest editor, and the bottom line of the House itself, all looked solid by the time he retired in 1960. However, the engine driving the success of The Ryerson Press was Pierce’s vision, and that proved irreplaceable.

⁶⁴ Seary, “The Ryerson Press,” 14–16.

⁶⁵ See Brian Busby, “Anyone Care about the Ryerson Fiction Award?” *The Dusty Bookcase*, 7 January 2013, <<http://brianbusby.blogspot.ca/2013/01/anyone-care-about-ryerson-fiction-award.html>> accessed 12 March 2013.

⁶⁶ “Lorne Pierce Retiring Shortly” [newspaper clipping, no author, no date, no publication]. Campbell Hughes Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, Robarts Library, Toronto (hereafter CHP), Box 1, File 4. Although there is no byline on the clipping, the author could perhaps be tracked down via his mixed metaphors: “The net fruit of what he has accomplished will not vanish with his retirement next December but remains as the hard base from which the 1960-2000 writers may reach for the stars with better aim, stronger grip.”

CHAPTER 2

AFTER PIERCE: JOHN WEBSTER GRANT AND JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, 1959–1963

Sooner or later we should state our creed as publishers as clearly as we know how. So far it is all implicit in our tradition. The time has come when we should be forthright and explicit.

— Lorne Pierce, 1956¹

Lorne Pierce died on 27 November 1961. The next day at the Board of Publication Executive meeting, a warm tribute, written by C. H. Dickinson, the Book Steward, and John Webster Grant, Pierce's successor as Book Editor, was read into the minutes:

Dr. Lorne Pierce was Book Editor of The Publishing House for almost forty years 1920–1960. He came originally to serve as Literary Advisor to The Book Steward (Rev. Samuel Fallis) and worked at a desk in The Book Steward's office. One of his favourite anecdotes was concerning the conversation of those days. Dr. Fallis, he reported, would turn to him and say, "young man, if you were the owner of an establishment like this, what would you do?" Dr. Pierce himself was forever asking a similar question, What direction should The House take in the years ahead? Who can see the next forty miles?

He was given authority to organize an Educational Book Department and went to the Western Provinces with two or three imported text books in his bag. From that small beginning there emerged the first all-Canadian set of Readers for elementary schools, known as THE TREASURY READERS. They were followed by THE CANADA BOOKS OF PROSE AND VERSE for Secondary School grades. These two series, published jointly by The Ryerson Press and The Macmillan Company of Canada became the main support of the Educational Department for many years. They have been followed by a large list of titles in several other categories, most of them inspired, assigned and edited under Dr.

¹ Report of the Book Editor, 1956, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 20 items, LP Z232 U553 U56 1960+.

Pierce's direction.

During the years of World War II and following, when Canadian trade book publishing began to flourish, Ryerson was in the lead with fiction, travel, poetry, biography and books on social and political affairs, and Dr. Pierce was in his glory introducing authors and artists. Our book publishing list has been maintained with variations since that time, and we express our profound gratitude for his leadership in so many directions.

He was a warm, personal friend of all members of the staff with whom he had any relations. Always earnest about the day's work (he was indefatigable in his own undertakings). He met everyone with a smile and with a witty remark which frequently transformed the entire day or the week. His vision of the future of the House, for the Church and for the Nation was clear and compelling. His soul's sincere desire was for a literate and appreciative Canadian people, alive to the achievements of the past, alert to all the possibilities of the present, and dedicated to the high cause of freedom, decency, and the worthy expression of the Arts and Letters.

He was never officially a member of this Board of Publication, but his presence at its meetings and his Annual Reports were highlights of its agenda. We record our most sincere tribute to his abilities and again our profound thanks for his accomplishments.²

This tribute upon his death stands in stark contrast to what was read into the minutes when Pierce announced his retirement to the Board of Publication in 1959 — despite the standing ovation that the board gave him — which was an obvious attempt to justify having a Book Editor at all, the finest tribute, apparently, being to appoint a successor:

Whereas The United Church of Canada has recognized the compulsion, in the name of the Head of the Church, to minister to people in all varieties of vocations;

And whereas to accomplish this mission, various specialized ministries have been inaugurated in order that the Christian message may be applied in all phases of individual and corporate life;

The Board of Publication places on record its thankfulness for the

² BP Executive Minutes, 28 November 1961. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 2.

ministry, in the name of the Church, to the literary, cultural and aesthetic life of our country, for which Dr. Lorne Pierce has been responsible for many years.

We acknowledge gratefully that this ministry has been owned and blessed by God, that high ideals and Christian values have been set forth in the publications of The Ryerson Press; that new writers have been encouraged to develop their creative gifts, and that literary and cultural leaders have been given the opportunity to work in an atmosphere of sound scholarship and friendly inspiration.

This Board believes that this unique ministry should be continued. To that end a successor has been appointed. We suggest that the Executive of the Board consider the establishment of some permanent recognition of the services of Dr. Lorne Pierce.³

It is clear from the phrase “[t]his Board believes that this unique ministry should be continued” — and especially the choice of the words “compulsion” and “unique,” which suggest that literature was a rather deviant choice of ministry — that the Board of Publication was already facing pressure not to continue with trade and textbook publishing. As there always had been, in Briggs’ day, those opposed to the church publishing literature, publishing fiction, publishing Robert W. Service, and so on — or competing in a commercial business of any kind — in 1959, there were surely many churchmen who considered that once Pierce retired, secular publishing should retire with him. This was a common pattern in the United Church, where redundant employees would be kept on even when their redundancy was obvious.⁴ The United Church *modus operandi* was not to implement organizational change that would make a position

³ The “permanent recognition” was to name the annual \$5000 fund for Canadian literature the “Lorne Pierce Fund.” BP Minutes AGM 28–29 April 1959, 12–13. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

⁴ For example, the Division of Communication (c. 1980s) had a receptionist whose English was very bad. The rationale for keeping her, and in fact for hiring her in the first place, was that she would find it difficult to land another job. Personal communication, c. 1994, Catherine Wilson, Editorial Director, United Church Publishing House.

redundant until the incumbent had left the position, a pattern evident with Dickinson himself after the Woods, Gordon report [see Chapter 3]. Nevertheless, before Pierce retired, in what must have been a compromise appointment, John Webster Grant, an esteemed church historian and academic, was named as his replacement. He may have taken over the editor's chair, but he was never able to take over the editorial vision. In fact, no one was able to replace Pierce, and the House suffered as a result, contributing to its downfall through the 1960s and its ultimate sale.

Born in 1919 in Truro, Nova Scotia, John Webster Grant was certainly a gifted scholar. He graduated with distinction from Dalhousie, his studies at Princeton were funded by the Eric Dennis Foreign Scholarship, and in 1941, he was the Rhodes Scholar for Nova Scotia. By 1959, Grant had three books to his name but no other publishing experience except for a one-year stint as editor of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Grant's appointment as editor elect began on 1 July 1959 and his official takeover began on 1 February 1960. Pierce mentored Grant through the transition period and had "very high hopes for his successor."⁵

Grant was no businessman and did not try to pretend otherwise. He was, however, well-liked by his staff. The first editor he hired, John Robert Colombo, certainly admired him, reminiscing later that "some people, temperamentally, are excellent editors of copy — good writers — fine researchers — and have a

⁵ BP Minutes AGM 28–29 April 1959, 4. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

knack of dealing with people [...] and Grant was one of these people.”⁶ Designer Pat Gangnon described him as “very advanced for Ryerson” and a wonderful “motivator.” Arthur Steven, the art director, called him a “true gentlemen with a fine sense of humour” and “attuned to modern design and ideas.”⁷

Grant was content to leave the art director in charge of his own department so Steven “seized the opportunity to move the Press forward” and hire staff “who would initiate or help implement innovative perspectives and approaches.”⁸ Hiring new staff to deal with the large workload was also an outcome of the report of the Sessional Committee on Book Publishing to the Board of Publication in 1961. The committee was “not entirely happy about the appearance of our books — there was criticism of the typography and layout. It was suggested that we might go outside for certain art work which would provide greater variety of style.”⁹

As he had been hired as a recent Ontario College of Art (OCA) graduate, Steven returned to his alma mater for new designers, which “became a tradition in the art department.” Steven kept the textbooks for himself and offered “the kids” poetry and fiction to “play with.” Since textbooks were designed for profit, “there was less room for experimentation. Tradition here reigned.”¹⁰ Pat Gangnon was already known for her cover designs for the United Church

⁶ John Robert Colombo, interview with Roy MacSkimming, 14 August 1998, 12. Roy MacSkimming Fonds, McMaster University Archives (hereafter RMF).

⁷ Randall Speller, “Arthur Steven at the Ryerson Press: Designing the Post-War Years (1949–1969),” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 41, no. 2 (2003): 27, n. 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹ BP AGM, April 24–25, 1961, 535.

¹⁰ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 32.

Observer when she was hired in 1962. She described Steven as “conservative” — although his design for *Poetry '62* won an American Book Design award — and “aware of the demands of upper management, all the while trying to introduce and manage change.” Editor John Robert Colombo, “best remembered by the staff for his acid tongue,” encouraged her, for Phyllis Webb’s first book of poetry, *The Sea is Also a Garden* (1962), to design a book with non-representational illustrations that he felt the conservative Steven would not like. This attempt to stir up interoffice rivalry, however, was a dud, as Steven and the House approved her design.¹¹ In fact,

In the two years she was at Ryerson, Gangnon’s designs were a breath of fresh air. Her hiring was an indication of Ryerson’s attempts to change its image following the death of Pierce in 1961, and face some of the design challenges of the heady days of the TDC [Typographic Designers of Canada].¹²

Mary Cserepy, also fresh from OCA, was hired in June 1962. One of her earliest projects was the dust jacket for Hugh Hood’s *Flying a Red Kite* (1962) and later she designed the cover of Eli Mandel’s *Black and Secret Man* (1964), as well as a new colophon for the House. She called her workplace the “wonderful madhouse of Ryerson” but left it in 1966.¹³ Gangnon, for her part, had found “the initially wonderful family atmosphere ... too comfortable and confining” and left in 1965. Bill Taylor replaced Gangnon and stayed until 1969, along with Steven. His most important work at Ryerson was *The Dangerous Sky: Canadian Airmen*

¹¹ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 27–30.

¹² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 33, 13.

and World War II (1968) by Tom Coughlin, “which he expanded from a simple manuscript into a book fully illustrated with war photographs.”¹⁴

As a member of the Editorial Board from 1961, Steven was encouraged to bring his own book ideas to the table. One of these was Edna Staebler’s Mennonite cookbook, *Food that Really Schmecks* (1968),¹⁵ which “instantly became a classic, selling tens of thousands of copies.”¹⁶ A bestselling cookbook, something Pierce had also published, was as close to Canadian publishing gold as a bestselling hockey book.¹⁷ Another significant project for the House was *Legends of My People: The Great Ojibway* (1965), written and illustrated by Norval Morrisseau.¹⁸ Despite these individual successes, Earle Toppings,¹⁹ a Ryerson Press editor from 1961 to 1967, maintains that “there was never an institutional commitment to design excellence at Ryerson during the 1960s. It was a much better bindery than a printer.”

It seems that after Pierce’s strong guiding hand had left the helm, and despite Steven and his creative “kids,” that the printing department of Ryerson Press reverted to its origins as “the job printer of the Methodist Church [...] traditionally indifferent to the best in the book arts” and to a “utilitarian

¹⁴ Ibid., 35–37.

¹⁵ Arthur Steven, interview with the author, c. 2000.

¹⁶ See <<http://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/press/Catalog/staebler-food.shtml>>.

¹⁷ *Food that Really Schmecks* was kept in print by McGraw-Hill after it bought The Ryerson Press; its sequel, *More Food that Really Schmecks*, was picked up McClelland & Stewart in 1979. M&S also published *Food that Really Schmecks* in 1981. The original was released again by McGraw-Hill Ryerson in 1994 (the 25th anniversary edition), and most recently has been published as “life writing” by Wilfrid Laurier University Press in book form in 2006 and as an iPad app in 2012. See Natalie Samson, “Edna Staebler’s Mennonite cookbook goes digital,” *Quill & Quire*, 22 May 2012. Online.

¹⁸ The first edition is now extremely rare; McGraw-Hill Ryerson reissued the book in 1977 and second-hand copies of that edition start at about \$100.

¹⁹ Toppings, hired by John Webster Grant, was “always smiling when he wasn’t smiling” according to Colombo (interview with the author, 11 May 2013, Columbus Centre, Toronto).

simplicity” where four-colour printing was prohibited as excessive. As well, because all design and production was in-house, the environment tended to stifle “artistic flexibility,”²⁰ as John Robert Colombo discovered his first week on the job:

Frank Flemington was Lorne Pierce’s right-hand man. He was there as a transitional figure but he set the tone of the operation. [...] by training, [he] was a stenographer [...] In fact, I called him Mr. Frank – a man of no humour. What would happen is a manuscript would come in [and] would be decided to be published. Right away, before an official decision had been made about it by the executive publisher, you would have it costed by the printing department. So the printing department would get a raw manuscript — unedited — no notes attached to it, and they would say, “This will make 96 pages, we’ll do it in such and such a format.” And it would come back: it was going to cost six dollars a copy for a thousand books or so. So right away, that was the budget. Well, when I came in, I would say, “Well it has to be illustrated, two-colour jacket, and so on.” But Frank Flemington would say, “The quotation calls for a one-colour jacket.” The printing department had no instructions whatsoever [from either the editorial or art department]. I said, “Well, okay, you can do it with a one-colour jacket but you need some half-tones or something or some special type decision.” “We can’t afford it” — because everything had been set arbitrarily by this basic quotation.

Then I discovered, feeding the specifications to another printer — Bryant Press, I think — [...] they had given us a lower quotation. So there’s a big squabble as to whether the printing department had the option to match the lower quote, or whether it was real dollars that went between the editorial department and the printing department. The printing department, one day, came out with a decision that, in the future, they would have three levels of professionalism. For their best customers, they would supply quality printing. Then there’d be a mediocre level for the Ryerson books. And then there’d be a bottom line for all the rest. Now I didn’t believe it until I actually saw the memo that sent forth this plan from the head of the printing department. So I [said], you know, this is ridiculous. If you look at Sir Stanley Unwin’s book *The Truth in Publishing*, I think on the first page it says, “Thou shalt not own a printing department” — right there. And I thought, “This is the

²⁰ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” p. 41, n. 83.

problem. We're going to be saddled with the debts of this."²¹

Despite such squabbles with the plant, Randall Speller argues that “Ryerson was an active participant and remained at the centre of the book design movement of the late 1950s and 1960s, a movement that transformed the look of the Canadian book and effectively changed the history of design communication in Canada for the rest of the century.”²² But Colombo was correct in that the printing plant, especially its tendency to run roughshod over the publishing house, would definitely contribute to the downfall of the House.²³ As Colombo tells it, the new printing press — the one blamed by Grant for all the financial problems — cost \$900,000²⁴ and Dickinson and the captain of the ship that brought the press from Germany got tipsy together celebrating the arrival of the white elephant, the only time Colombo had ever seen the straight-laced Dickinson imbibe.²⁵

John Robert Colombo, who had trained as an editor at University of Toronto Press, was hired by John Webster Grant in 1960. As Colombo tells the story, Grant “came in and looked around and realized he knew nothing about Canadian lit.” Colombo was applying for a job at the same time and so was “the first person to be hired under the new regime.” However, he says, “I could tell things were not very clear. In fact, there were rumours the company was losing

²¹ Colombo, interview with MacSkimming, 14.

²² Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 42.

²³ See Chapter 5 for more discussion of problems with the printing plant.

²⁴ The Woods, Gordon Report (see Chapter 3) states the figure as \$650,000.

²⁵ Colombo, interview with the author.

a million dollars a year.”²⁶ By 1960, says Colombo, “Ryerson was a survivor from another era, a brontosaurus lumbering among the mastodons.”²⁷ Publicity lists, for example, were not up-to-date, as review copies of the new trade books were not being sent to Robert Fulford, who had a book column in the *Toronto Star*. Fulford had written, “When duller books are published, Ryerson will publish them” apparently “in answer to a provocation by Lorne Pierce,” who had written that “only Ryerson Press, the mother publishing house, is doing its job.” Colombo arranged a lunch with Fulford, Grant, and himself. Grant, a natural diplomat, told Fulford, “We’d love to have a book by you, Bob.” Since this worked so well, they tried it again with Nathan Cohen and almost got him to agree to edit a book for them on theatre in Canada.²⁸

While at the House, Colombo worked on three books that eventually won Governor General’s Awards, though some of the titles came out after he had moved on. “The company hadn’t had [...] such an award in ten or fifteen years,” said Colombo.²⁹ The books were James Reaney’s *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* (1962), the last of the chapbooks, *Hugh Garner’s Best Stories* (1963), and Alice Munro’s *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968). Colombo realized that he “couldn’t last at Ryerson. There was no incentive there to publish.”³⁰ He also could not support himself on the Ryerson salary and thought he could make more as a freelancer, so he started working with McClelland & Stewart.

²⁶ Colombo, interview with MacSkimming, 12.

²⁷ Joyce Nakamura, ed. “John Robert Colombo,” *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, Vol. 22 (Toronto: Thomson Gale, 1995), 42.

²⁸ Colombo, interview with MacSkimming, 26–27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

Colombo seems to have enjoyed working at The Ryerson Press overall; McClelland & Stewart was definitely more controlled by its owner. He jokes about “the dedication of a few individuals who will selflessly sacrifice their careers [laughs] in order to further the cause of some good writers — and make a reputation doing it.” Good editors, he says, keep “moribund” publishers on the right track “Otherwise, they wouldn’t be able to tell the Atwoods from the Marjorie Freeman Campbells.”³¹ Margaret Atwood, however, belies Colombo’s editorial prescience, saying that she had “submitted a manuscript to Ryerson, which was John Colombo at that point, and that didn’t work out.”³² As well, amusingly, “John Glassco submitted *Mairobert*, his erotic novella,” a masochistic fantasy, to Ryerson, no doubt “out of ignorance — he almost invariably needed guidance when dealing with publishers.”³³ It was turned down.

Some of Grant’s decisions revealed his lack of training in publishing and displayed more indecision than vision. At one board meeting, he ventured, “Perhaps we should be more daring than other Publishers, yet we must be

³¹ Marjorie Freeman Campbell is the Hamilton-based non-fiction/history writer of *Torso: The Evelyn Dick Case* and other works.

³² Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, interview with Roy MacSkimming, Roof Bar, Park Plaza Hotel, 19 May 1999, 14. RMF.

³³ “As ‘The Black Helmet’, the work was eventually published in *The Fatal Woman* (Anansi, 1974).” (Brian Busby, personal email, 13 March 2013). Busby writes: “In 1962, he’d [Glassco] written Arthur Smith that ‘Mairobert’ had been rejected thirty-two times. It’s a claim that sounds inflated, but may very well be true; Alfred A. Knopf, First Statement Press, André Deutsch, Peter Martin Associates, Klanak, Oberon, Random House, Oxford University Press, and Longmans, Green, were just some of the varied publishers who had turned down the novella. Whether in ignorance or desperation, Glassco had even attempted to interest Ryerson Press, the publishing house owned by the United Church of Canada. Ryerson turned down the masochistic fantasy, as had McClelland & Stewart, which in 1959 returned the manuscript along with an anonymous reader’s report that dismissed the novel as a work of a ‘diseased imagination,’ a ‘stifling concentration of the stale breath of Romance and Decadence.’” Brian Busby, *A Gentleman of Pleasure: One Life of John Glassco, Poet, Memoirist, Translator, and Pornographer* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 268–269.

cautious.”³⁴ When veteran Campbell Hughes [see Chapter 6] resigned from the textbook department, Grant promoted three junior personnel to replace him. When faced with a pile of 379 “over the transom” manuscripts, Grant had “two or more persons” read each of them. However, no slush pile is ever weeded by more than one person per manuscript as no publishing house can afford to invest much time in unsolicited submissions. John Robert Colombo, who had been trained in editing at University of Toronto Press, pointed to a lack of professionalism at Ryerson Press that would inevitably have contributed to financial losses. The only person, he claimed, besides himself who had actually been trained in publishing was the proofreader. In terms of the level of professionalism at other large Toronto firms, Colombo says that University of Toronto Press, McClelland & Stewart, and Clarke, Irwin were all good, and Macmillan was the most professional. Ryerson Press, however, seemed “unaware that there was a higher level of professionalism” to which they should aspire. The advertising and promotion manager, for example, never left his office. The “pompous” Dickinson was completely unknown in the Toronto literary scene. Arthur Steven, though Colombo liked him, was so easygoing that he never observed a deadline. And there were even problems with security and storage; the management showed “no common sense regarding pilfering and damage.”³⁵

John Webster Grant’s publishing tastes, though he “could distinguish

³⁴ BP AGM 25 April 1960, 522. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

³⁵ Colombo, interview with the author. For more about “pilfering,” see Gavin Clark to Frank Brisbin, 7 April 1971. UCCA 93.095C, Box 10, File 4.

between serious and non-serious work”³⁶ ran less to Canadian literature and textbooks and more to academic, theological works. He asked for, and was granted, a \$5000 allowance for theological books to match the Lorne Pierce Fund for Canadian literature.³⁷ He felt that there should be “some theological justification for publishing good books [since] [t]he Old Testament prophets looked for the word of God in every aspect of life.”³⁸ He hoped that the “boom in religious publishing in the U.S. [...] might gradually affect our Canadian religious list”³⁹ and argued that the House “should be able to perform for the Church and Theological Colleges of Canada what a University Press performs for the University.”⁴⁰ In terms of financial viability then, his focus shifted the Book Editor’s attention from the most lucrative segment of the book publishing market (textbooks), which he seemed not to understand, to the least lucrative (academic), and the smallest segment (theology) of that least lucrative market. Grant’s grasp of the changing Canadian literature was that of a theologian and not a literary editor; he complained that “in the realm of fiction there is a lack of realism”⁴¹ and hoped that “we might receive manuscripts of ‘meatier’ fiction.” In this he was backed up by the Book Steward, who affirmed that “in our day noble writing is rather infrequent”:⁴²

People do enjoy reading beyond what they can absorb easily. Yet the

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ BP AGM 25 April 1960, 525. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 522.

³⁹ BP AGM, 30 April–1 May 1962, 541. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

⁴⁰ BP AGM 25 April 1960, 522. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

⁴¹ For a complete discussion of how Pierce had tried to grapple with the modernist shift in Canadian literature, see Campbell, *Both Hands*, Chapters 19 and 20.

⁴² BP AGM, 18–19 April 1963, 550. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

great bulk of books today is written to touch men's minds at their lowest common denominator. This may well be an important factor in the loss of interest in fiction in recent years. Writers should look at life on a higher plane with a sense of genuine purpose in life. At present their preoccupation with physical satisfactions is far from inspiring. I am certain that readers would respond to a higher quality of fiction.⁴³

Grant also made the classic amateur blunder of bemoaning the fact that the House “should conceive some better means of making known that we should like to receive *better* manuscripts than are now being sent in.”⁴⁴ Though editors do dream of such things, they never say so aloud; there is no possible way to get *better* manuscripts into the slush pile, as every author thinks of his or her own manuscript as the best. The obvious way around the problem is to solicit manuscripts directly from the best writers. Such a direct approach, however, requires that the acquisitions editor keep abreast of the developments in Canadian literature, something that Grant had already delegated to Colombo. Without Pierce's organizing vision of what the publishing house could be, the list had already begun to falter as the goal of keeping the list “maintained with variations” clearly indicates management by committee with no one able to grab Pierce's baton. John Webster Grant was “concerned about Dr. Pierce's approval for the list”⁴⁵ but clearly unprepared to take over from Pierce and he showed many signs of not knowing what to do.

Grant resigned in 1963, after three years in the editor's chair, in favour of

⁴³ News Release: “Publisher States Present Day Books Don't Inspire Readers,” 1 May 1962. BP 83.061C, Box 14, File 12.

⁴⁴ BP AGM 24–25 April 1961, 535. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

⁴⁵ Colombo, interview with the author.

an academic position at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, where he resumed his scholarly career as church historian, remaining there until his retirement in 1984.⁴⁶ He, like Colombo, had found The Ryerson Press salary insufficient for his needs; his wife was ill and the university post was far better paid and more flexible.⁴⁷ Even Pierce had not found it possible to raise a family on his Ryerson Press salary; he also collected royalties on many writing and editing projects and was Macmillan's highest earning author, as he got a cut on the joint Ryerson–Macmillan readers for which he was editor.^{48,49}

Grant remained active in the United Church, serving as chair from 1967 to 1971 of the General Commission on Church Union, which explored a proposed amalgamation of the United Church of Canada with the Anglican Church of Canada and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). By 1967, the Anglican and United churches were already sharing the expenses of international conferences by sending one delegate to represent both churches.⁵⁰ Grant also had a hand in producing the joint Anglican/United Church hymnbook (1972), which included several of his hymn translations from Latin. This anticipated union, which never happened, and the new hymnbook, which did, took up much of the organizational energy of the United Church in the late

⁴⁶ According to Colombo, Grant was a “very just” boss and “tipped off Earle [Toppings] that he was leaving.” He also “went through correspondence to check for anything critical” in his dealings with staff to make sure that he wasn’t leaving anything that would serve them ill after his departure. Colombo, interview with the author.

⁴⁷ Sandra Campbell and Beth Robinson, interview with the author, 23 May 2013, Kingston, Ontario.

⁴⁸ According to Colombo, Kildaire Dobbs discovered this when checking through Macmillan royalty statements. Colombo, interview with the author.

⁴⁹ For a thorough discussion of Pierce as an author and editor, and his finances beyond his Ryerson Press salary, see Campbell, *Both Hands*.

⁵⁰ BP Minutes, 5 December 1967. BP 93.063C, Box 3, File 6.

1960s and early 1970s. This too contributed to the downfall of The Ryerson Press, as the imaginations of church people turned to a project that promised to be far more captivating than anything had since the creation of the United Church in 1925. Even in 1958, it had been “difficult to get Publications Committees [at the Presbytery (local) and Conference (regional) level] to meet and show any particular interest in the publishing house.”⁵¹

Whereas the anticipated “manifest destiny” of another major union of mainline protestant churches in Canada was an entirely forward-looking project, The Ryerson Press, meanwhile, was looking backwards at their long history and perhaps worried that the best was not yet to come. Their Centennial display cast the press in a retrospective light, both in their choice of the Royal Ontario Museum as the venue and in their catalogue for the exhibition, which consisted of pamphlets and historical reproductions with nothing more recent than 1925.

Building a list worthy of Lorne Pierce after the departure of Grant and Colombo became impossible as one management crisis after another overshadowed the re-establishment of an editorial vision for the house. The Woods, Gordon management report was the main piece of business in 1964 and the re-organization of the House that followed took over 1965. The report had two major effects on the development of the list: first, money for publishing projects was vastly curtailed by the unmanageable debt; second, the reputation of the House suffered and authors took their projects elsewhere.

⁵¹ BP AGM, 28–29 April 1958, 11. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

An unsigned memo — hopefully not written by an editor, as he spells two of his colleagues' names wrong, entitled “Memorandum re: ‘Book Editor’ – Ryerson Press” — which was circulated sometime between 1965 and 1967, shows that management was clearly grappling with what to do next. Despite its length, it is worth quoting in full in order to give a full picture of the state of editorial vision at the House:

1. The reputation of the Ryerson Press as publishers of art, literature, belles lettres, biography, fiction, humour, etc., was built up by Dr. Lorne Pierce. He worked with several generations of Canadian authors who wrote in the accepted classic style of English literature.
2. Lorne Pierce was succeeded by Dr. John Grant who found the going difficult against changing literary trends, and against the growing opinion among authors that Ryerson is a Church House which cannot accept some of the new literature, and also that we are not very efficient and vigorous in the promotion of our publications.
3. Following John Grant's departure and the reorganization proposed by the Woods, Gordon Survey, Mr. Victor Seery⁵² [sic] was made Director of Book Publishing. Mr. Seery knows book publishing and publishers, and is very good at securing other publishers' lines of books and placing ours with them. This is a tough business operation that no “literary editor” that we might get would want to touch. Vic Seery and his small staff of editors are also working hard at finding new authors; John Grant and Vic Seery have cut down on the number of new books we produce; in the later years of Lorne Pierce we were taking on too many doubtful titles.
4. What would be the function of a “Senior Editor”, or whatever you want to call him?

Unquestionably a “name” editor, recognized in literary and publishing circles in Canada would be an asset as a “front man” for the Ryerson Press. However, this type of individual is disappearing from the publishing business, not only in Canada, but in other countries as well. With the increase in the number of publishing houses, the absorption of the old “family” houses into streamlined commercial publishing operations, the great diversity of the product, the increasing cost of manufacturing which has forced much of fiction

⁵² The correct spelling is Seary.

into paperbacks, the enormous expansion in the school textbook field, and the increasing necessity for publishing houses to represent one another in the U.S. and U.K. markets, the influence and the usefulness of the “name editor” has waned.

5. The Ryerson Press is established in the textbook field, and while we have probably the best man in Canada, Mr. Campbell Hughes⁵³ [sic], to safeguard our present position and to expand this side of our business, he will need strong support in money and personnel.
6. In the general book-publishing field there are several questions before us. How can we increase the number of good titles in the fields we now cultivate? Can we get into paperbacks in a big way? Are we interested in modern fiction? Should we publish more religious books? Are we grooming an adequate replacement for Victor Seery for contacts in the book-publishing world?

As a House with a reputation for publishing good literature, and also as a House owned by a Church, we have to be selective, and can well leave to other publishers the pornographic type of novel and the sensational report.

It is frequently suggested that we should publish more religious books. Are there any writers of stature in Canada? Will ministers buy hard-cover books at \$4 to \$6 by Canadian theologians when such books by world authorities are available through our trade service, or in preference to the large number of timely paperbacks — in English and in translations from other languages — that are readily available? How much would the publication of even one or two good theological books a year (if they are available) enhance our prestige as publishers and win friends in the Church?

7. While the publication of religious and theological books should be encouraged, the senior man in our commercial book publishing operation should not be selected with this as his primary qualification or field of work. There may be other ways of coming at this function. The searching out and commissioning of religious books for publication might be one of the functions of the Secretary of the Board who should be a minister. It might even be more desirable to spend some money in subsidizing a high quality theological journal, making an effort to combine some of the struggling ones now in existence, and setting a standard of excellence worthy of a large church publishing house.
8. The points raised in this memorandum are not intended in any way to disparage the importance of strong editorial leadership for the Ryerson Press. Rather they are intended to provide a focus for

⁵³ The correct spelling is Hughes.

attention, discussion, and disagreement. Definitely the time has come when constructive thinking is needed as a basis for decisions on the questions raised in this memorandum.⁵⁴

Despite the memo writer's highly debatable assertion that having a "name" editor was outdated, only that sort of positioning could have overcome the reputation that the House was run by the church itself, a fatal public relations flaw in the late 1960s with the waves of demographic, social, and literary change. And in the face of Jack McClelland as one of their major competitors in Canadian literature.

Obviously, the quest for the "right man" for the job automatically overlooked any woman who might have been able to provide the vision for the way forward. Although this knee-jerk sexism was a feature of the job market, and of the church,⁵⁵ before the feminist wave of the 1970s, there were many men at the publishing house who certainly knew better. For example, Peter Gordon White's wife, Mary Patricia Armstrong, was a psychiatrist; his mother, Christine S. Curtin, had been a suffragist in Britain before emigrating to Canada. During the Second World War, she left her family in Winnipeg to work for the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in Ottawa, receiving the OBE in 1946 for her service there as Chief Labour Liaison Officer.⁵⁶ Similarly, John Webster

⁵⁴ BP 83.061C Box 26, File 7.

⁵⁵ The United Church of Canada was the first mainline Protestant denomination to ordain women, beginning in 1936 with Lydia Gruchy; however, in 2014, male ministers are still preferred by many congregations, particularly for prestigious, big-city pulpits. Each church has control who is "called" to serve them.

⁵⁶ On John and Christine White's 60th wedding anniversary, 1 November 1976, the *Toronto Star* published a story on them. John's advice to husbands was this: "Having a clever wife is a help to a man, not a hindrance [...] Don't resent it if your wife turns out to be the manager of the family. Hand the job over to her."

Grant's wife, Gwendolen M. Irwin, had a Master's degree in English and worked for the National Farm Radio Forum, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, and the Department of Labour. There were many women working for The Ryerson Press, all of them paid considerably less, naturally, than their male counterparts. There were even female managers, such as Elsinore Haultain, who had been advertising manager since 1933. The announcement of her retirement in 1960 — by the Canadian Authors' Association and not by The Ryerson Press itself — suggests a woman absurdly overqualified for her position and perhaps misplaced in the organization:

Canadian publishing today loses one of its most efficient and pleasing personalities. Elsinore Haultain, advertising manager of the Ryerson Press, has retired after 27 years of exceptional service to her House. As an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, she founded *The Rebel* and was its editor during its years of publication. The editorial board of *The Rebel* founded *The Canadian Forum* and published it for some years. She graduated from University College in English and History; had a research and Traveling Fellowship in the Department of Economics and earned her M.A. She lectured for two years in History at the University of Saskatchewan. She prepared for her publishing career by a course in Commercial Art at the Ontario College of Art and summer courses at Columbia University. She is now engaged in teaching a course in Biography as it Reflects the Twentieth Century for the Extension Department, University of Toronto. Beyond that I do not know her plans for the future; but will hazard a guess that so able a woman will not remain idle long. The Authors' Association have been grateful for her organization and management of book displays, which have been a feature of conventions for many years past. Our gratitude and best wishes!⁵⁷

Sandra Campbell's biography of Lorne Pierce mentions Haultain only twice: first, that Pierce was incensed when Solandt promoted her without consulting

⁵⁷ *Globe & Mail*, 30 January 1960, n.d., unsigned. BP 83.061C, Box 14, File 12.

him and then refused to attend management meetings with her in protest;⁵⁸ second, that while he liked her, he thought her marketing ideas “thin as a gnat’s ankle.”⁵⁹ Campbell portrays Pierce as not particularly enlightened on the position of women in society, particularly evident in the treatment of his own wife, Edith Chown, who was left entirely on her own to manage the household and the children, and in his biography of Marjorie Pickthall, where any aspect of her character that challenged the wispy, feminine, spiritual image he held of her — such as cross-dressing in military garb — was omitted. Nor was Book Steward C. H. Dickinson particularly enlightened. Clearly a more thorough gender analysis of The Ryerson Press is needed in order to ascertain whether Haultain might really have been the “right man” for the job of Book Editor. The timing of her retirement, one day before John Webster Grant’s official takeover from Pierce, begs the question of whether she had hoped to replace Pierce herself, especially as she was not actually retiring, but rather teaching at the university.

After the Woods, Gordon Report, no “Book Editor” with a comprehensive editorial vision was ever found or even searched for. In typical United Church fashion, an editorial committee took over the job instead. The search committee for a new Book Editor, set up in 1966, recommended in 1967 that, due to the uncertainty caused by the formation of the new divisional system in the church, that “for the present there should be no appointment of a Book Editor for The

⁵⁸ Campbell, *Both Hands*, 304.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 473.

House. It was suggested that a high level Advisory Committee might be formed” with H. L. Trueman to prepare a statement of book publishing policy for the Committee and Executive.⁶⁰

In summing up his time at The Ryerson Press and the ultimate fate of the House, Colombo looks back to Lorne Pierce as the lynchpin holding everything together:

I knew Lorne Pierce rather well. I published one of the chapbooks with him,⁶¹ so I knew him.⁶² I spent many an evening with Dr. Pierce, recalling the writers he had known and published, but he was chronically hard of hearing so it was difficult to learn much about anything.⁶³ I remember him saying to me, “John, tell me, who’s got this marvelous young poet, Leonard Cohen?” I said, “Well, I think McClelland & Stewart will publish him.” “Oh, missed that one, missed that one.” I respected what Pierce had stood for and he gave me a copy of one of his books with the inscription “With both hands” in it — a wonderful blessing. It was called something like *My Publishing Creed*.⁶⁴ Now it could have been published about the 18th century — it was so old-fashioned.⁶⁵ But the jig was up for Ryerson Press when Pierce retired. You could hear the air beginning to seep out of the balloon.⁶⁶

Pierce was driven to achieve his editorial vision, or as Colombo puts it, “He could hear Yes, but he couldn’t hear No.”⁶⁷ After Pierce, who Arthur Steven calls “an absolutely amazing person, a genius,”⁶⁸ no one was able to replace that vision and bring a new, adaptive energy and drive that would carry the House through the difficult times of change ahead for the Canadian publishing

⁶⁰ BP AGM, 20–21 April 1967, 600.

⁶¹ A chapbook of poetry by University of Toronto students. Another chapbook was published with the poetry of McGill students.

⁶² Colombo, interview with MacSkimming, 12.

⁶³ Nakamura, ed. “John Robert Colombo,” 43.

⁶⁴ Lorne Pierce, *An Editor’s Creed*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1960.

⁶⁵ Colombo, interview with MacSkimming, 25–26.

⁶⁶ Colombo, interview with the author.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Arthur Steven, interview with the author, c. 2000.

industry.

By the Centennial year, Macmillan and McClelland & Stewart were far ahead of Ryerson in capturing the Canadian literature and non-fiction markets. An annotated bibliography, *Canadian Books for Schools: A Centennial Listing*, published by the Alberta Teachers' Association, listed "a selection of books by Canadian authors ... carefully chosen on the basis of quality, appeal to students or, in special cases, because of their interesting treatment of particular aspects of Canadian life."⁶⁹ While still in the top three publishers of Canadian books, Ryerson Press was a distant third, with sixty-eight titles recommended from Macmillan, sixty-five from McClelland & Stewart, and only twenty-six from Ryerson. Following closely behind was Clarke, Irwin with twenty-one, Oxford University Press with nineteen, and Longmans with seventeen. Other Canadian publishers represented were University of Toronto Press with nine, Gage with four, the Edmonton Institute of Applied Art, Hurtig, the Queen's Printer, and Peter Martin Associates with two each, and Baxter, Musson, Harvest House, the Book Society of Canada, the National Museum of Canada, and the Canadian Centennial Publishing Company with one each. As Canadian publishing historian George Parker puts it, The Ryerson Press was no longer "getting the authors that McClelland & Stewart and Macmillan were getting" and "that was part of the problem ... things were getting sort of stale there."⁷⁰ John Robert

⁶⁹ Kathleen M. Snow, ed., *Canadian Books for Schools: A Centennial Listing* (Edmonton, AB: The English Council and School Library Council of the Alberta Teacher's Association, 1968), v.

⁷⁰ George L. Parker, interview by Nigel Beale, "Book Scholar George Parker on The Ryerson Press," *The Biblio File*, 20 June 2011, <<http://thebibliofile.ca/book-scholar-george-parker-on-the-ryerson-press>> accessed 12 June 2013 (audio interview).

Colombo agrees: “the significant books, the books that were being reviewed and bought in quantity, were appearing on the lists of more enterprising publishing houses.”⁷¹

By the end of the 1960s, the “mother publishing house” of Canada was no longer doing its job as Pierce had envisioned it. Although the long memo about the Book Editor asked the key questions — “What direction should The House take in the years ahead? Who can see the next forty miles?” — there was no answer to the call.

⁷¹ Nakamura, ed. “John Robert Colombo,” 44.

CHAPTER 3

THE LAST BOOK STEWARD: C. H. DICKINSON, 1937–1966

We face a considerable challenge for the next five years.

— C. H. Dickinson, 1961¹

When C. H. Dickinson (1899–1999) assumed the chair of Book Steward in 1937, Lorne Pierce had already been Book Editor for seventeen years and had the job, obviously, well in hand.² Before coming to the publishing house, Dickinson had served as the minister of various pastorates in Saskatchewan and Quebec, then landed at the American Church on Sherbrooke Street in Montreal in 1931. He was called to be the new Book Steward upon the sudden death of Dr. D. M. Solandt in 1936.³ In 1932, Pierce had already turned down the opportunity to be Book Steward when Samuel Fallis, who had hired Pierce, died unexpectedly. The resulting succession crisis in 1936 eventually led church leaders to Dickinson,⁴ who had done “so well with fundraising for the church [...] in the

¹ BP AGM 24–25 April 1961. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

² Sandra Campbell also relates that Pierce assured the cooperation of his new boss by an annual “tribute” from his own royalties: “By the mid-1940s, Pierce had established a practice of presenting Dickinson with a generous cheque drawn on his own royalties twice a year, characterizing the gesture as a gift toward the education of Dickinson’s two sons. Although we do not know the amounts involved, they were probably in the hundreds of dollars for each cheque, since Dickinson uses terms like ‘generous gift’ and ‘magnificent gesture’ in his notes of thanks” (*Both Hands*, 344).

³ See Appendix 3 for the official engravings of the Book Stewards and Editors of the Methodist Book and Publishing House and The Ryerson Press.

⁴ They were led to him by the recommendation of jeweller Henry Birks when the Erskine Church and the American Church amalgamated, making one of the ministers redundant. See Campbell, *Both Hands*, 342.

dirty thirties.”⁵ In “The Story of My Life,” Dickinson relates his call to the publishing house:

It was a historic institution, the mother publishing house of Canada, engaged in educational and general book publishing as well as church programmes. I knew nothing about organized business, and certainly nothing about book publishing. I objected as long as possible but finally agreed to what I considered to be the call of the church, and, perhaps, of my Lord. [...]

I think I regarded the new office of Book Steward in terms of serving the church as a minister to a greater extent than of managing a business. But it was a big business, with some 250 employees, department managers, editors, secretaries, proof readers, and a factory staff of 150 [... as well as] a sales staff.... At the beginning of my term, the sales volume amounted to three and a half million dollars annually. That increased later to some eight million. I was always grateful for the remark of a business friend, that “a general manager should not do anything which someone else could do tolerably well”. Certainly I depended heavily on my colleagues. [...] I was not always persona grata with the church fathers.⁶

Despite his trepidation, calling himself an “infant in arms” undertaking the responsibility “with fear and trembling,”⁷ Dickinson tried to grow into the role of Book Steward, joining industry associations such as the Graphic Arts Association and the Book Manufacturers Association. He was president of The Church-Owned Publishers Association Canada–US, president of the Publisher’s Section of the Toronto Board of Trade, and the author of two Ryerson Press publications, *Seven Days and the Seven Words* (1952), a devotional book for Holy Week, and *Lorne Pierce: A Profile* (1965).

⁵ Phyllis Coulter, “Minister, community leader to preach on his 90th birthday this Thanksgiving Sunday,” *The Sentinel-Review*, n.d., n.p. Filed in Dickinson’s bio file in the UCC Archives.

⁶ C. H. Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 12–13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

Dickinson's background, as he himself confessed, certainly shows no inclination for either business or publishing. His only vocation was that of minister and he approached his job as Book Steward as he would any other church appointment, as any other form of stewardship. A man with no useful background or training, recruited in the unhappy situation of the sudden death of his predecessor, and for no better reason than an ability to raise money in Montreal in the 1930s — an area that certainly still had the largest pockets of wealthy Canadians despite the Great Depression — was not the best choice for Book Steward. Dickinson's priorities other than publishing, his reliance on colleagues and management consultants, and his lack of business sense, particularly after Pierce's retirement, crippled the House. The United Church's twin customs of always hiring a minister as the CEO of their one commercial enterprise and of never firing such a person from a management position, but rather molding the job to fit the person, contributed to the problem. In addition, The Ryerson Press showed a marked tendency for "organizational conflict, rather than teamwork focused on solutions."⁸

Dickinson's memoir, probably written for family though it made its way into his official United Church biographical file, spends far more time discussing the joys of travel, the cottage, family, and community activities than it does the United Church Publishing House or The Ryerson Press. Dickinson points to international travel, which — except perhaps for a post-war trip home from England in an unheated Lancaster bomber — he clearly enjoyed, as one of

⁸ Campbell, *Both Hands*, 304.

the “many privileges” of his position “not ordinarily the experience of a parish minister.” Dickinson travelled throughout Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.⁹ These travels dovetailed nicely with his involvement in the English Speaking Union,¹⁰ an international organization founded in 1918 by “a group of persons who had become acquainted and who had served together in those years of conflict — war correspondents, government officials, military officers, and others”:

Its programme has included the encouragement of travel to each other’s countries, visits with and lectures to member groups, student scholarships to young people, training opportunities for apprentices, all with the purpose of extending friendship and understanding as essential ingredients in preserving world peace.¹¹

As president of the Toronto branch and of the Canadian National Committee, Dickinson had the chance to mingle with “the Queen Mother, the present Queen and Prince Philip,¹² and other national dignitaries.”¹³ Although every House manager had interests outside of his own job, when measured against the zealous dedication to publishing duty of Ryerson, Briggs, or Pierce, it appears that Dickinson’s dedication was split between the English Speaking Union and The Ryerson Press, and that he used his job as Book Steward to further his association with the Union. Perusing his Ryerson Press files, one finds many tokens from Union dinners and events, including the programme for

⁹ Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 13.

¹⁰ See the English Speaking Union website: <<http://esu.ca/index.cfm?ted=3>>.

¹¹ Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 17.

¹² Prince Phillip has been honorary president of the organization since 1957.

¹³ Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 17.

a 1954 dinner at the Waldorf Astoria in New York where the Queen Mother thanked the American branch of the Union for raising \$433,481 in the name of her late husband, King George VI, for scholarships to allow British students to study in the U.S. The hundreds of guests at the event included Dag Hammarskjold, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Chief Justice Earl Warren, and Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson, seated at table 25.¹⁴ On a trip to Australia and New Zealand in 1962, a twenty-fifth anniversary gift from his employer, Dickinson and his wife “enjoyed the hospitality of members in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide; in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch.”¹⁵ At the Board of Publication Annual General Meeting (AGM) dinner in April 1963, he showed slides from his trip and “told something of his business contacts in those countries.”¹⁶ There is no evidence that any of these contacts ever furthered the work of The Ryerson Press. In 1967, Dickinson was awarded the Canadian Centennial Medal for his service to the English Speaking Union.

Another of Dickinson’s hobbyhorses was the longstanding Methodist Book and Publishing House/Ryerson Press tradition of contributions to the superannuation fund. This internal measure of financial success dated back to a modest announcement in the very first issue of the *Christian Guardian* in 1829: “The proceeds of this paper will be applied to the support of superannuated or worn out preachers of the M[ethodist]. E[piscopal]. church in Canada; and of the widows and orphans of those who have died in the work.” Support for the

¹⁴ C. H. Dickinson’s papers, The English Speaking Union. BP 83.061C, Box 14, File 9.

¹⁵ Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 18.

¹⁶ BP AGM, 18–19 April 1965, 553. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

superannuation fund would become a key indicator of the House's financial success year over year. In 1845 the book committee voted to refer to the annual church conference the question of making its unofficial contributions to the superannuation fund an official part of the business of the House. The following year, the committee reported that, from its founding, it had paid £2,278 into the fund. The importance of supporting the superannuation fund continued throughout the existence of the House and The Ryerson Press that succeeded it. As noted by Lorne Pierce, writing of Rev. Samuel Rose (Book Steward from 1865 to 1879), "[t]he progress of the Publishing House, both books and periodicals, during his term is reflected in the increasing grants to the Superannuation Fund."¹⁷ For example, the grant in 1876 was \$1000 and in 1879, Rose's last year, it doubled to \$2000. William Briggs continued this tradition and made it one of the four goals of the House.¹⁸ Annual contributions to the Superannuation Fund under Briggs increased over the first decade of the twentieth century, peaking at \$23,000 in 1912.¹⁹

While providing for retirees was obviously still a concern, Dickinson made his contributions to the fund heedless of the financial ruin dogging the House, despite criticism from the more business-minded, who asserted that the profits should be invested back into the House rather than skimmed off.

Dickinson, however, made sure that by the time he retired, donations to the

¹⁷ Pierce, *House of Ryerson*, 20.

¹⁸ Brigg's goals were: 1) to provide Methodist reading material for its followers, 2) to promote the gospel generally, 3) to contribute to the retired ministers' superannuation fund (i.e., to make money), and 4) to provide wholesome literature for the general public, a goal that developed in the Briggs years.

¹⁹ Friskney, "Beyond the Shadow of William Briggs, Part I," 137. Grants were \$4,000 in 1885; \$6,500 in 1888; \$10,000 in 1898; \$15,000 in 1904; \$23,000 in 1912.

superannuation fund under his tenure amounted to an even \$1 million.²⁰ At his retirement dinner in 1966, Dickinson asserted that the contributions were made “out of profits not required in the business” despite the fact that the House was then capitalized by a \$1.6 million line of credit with the Toronto Dominion Bank, an amount that had to be increased to \$2.1 million the next year.²¹ In 1966, a year that could not be described as financially stable, he made sure that \$71,000 was added to round his legacy of contributions up to the million-dollar mark. The difference between his contributions and those of Briggs, however, was that Briggs had also raised enough money to build a new home for the House — the Wesley Building at the corner of Queen and John streets in Toronto — while under Dickinson, the House, and the building, were both crumbling.²²

There were many indicators that the post-Pierce publishing house was unravelling, not only on the editorial side (see Chapter 2), and that Dickinson knew it. The fact that The Ryerson Press was already in difficulty in the early 1960s can be seen simply in the number of times the Executive of the Board of Publication needed to meet. In 1953 and 1954, only one meeting a year was

²⁰ The pension fund allocations for the last years of Dickinson’s tenure were as follows: \$25,000 in 1958; \$50,000 in 1959; \$30,000 in 1960; \$30,000 in 1961; no contribution in 1962 due to financial problems; \$71,000 in 1966. In 1959, Rev. Brisbin and Dr. Hughes wanted \$75,000 in order to provide for supplementary pensions for UCPH employees who were “too old to enter the current Pension Plan” when it was set up, “but the amendment was lost.” In 1962, the Board of Publication, “Moved by Dr. Forster, seconded by Mr. Simpson” had to “express our regret that under the special financial circumstances of this year no grant be made to the Pension Fund of the Church.”

²¹ The line of credit started in 1958 at \$250,000. It increased to \$350,000 in 1959, \$450,000 in 1961, and \$500,000 in 1962, with a separate request for another \$500,000 as a long-term loan. By 1963, the House needed \$1,250,000. In 1964, it was \$1,500,000 and they also requested a \$500,000 interest-free loan for six years from the General Council of the church. In 1966, the year Dickinson retired, the line of credit at the Toronto Dominion Bank was \$1,600,000. In 1967, it was raised to \$2,100,000.

²² For more on the extensive renovation work that had to be done after the building was sold, see Robert Everett-Green, “CITY Takes \$10-million Bite of Gingerbread,” *Globe & Mail*, 10 December 1985, C6.

considered necessary. From 1955 to 1961, three to five meetings a year was the norm. With the financial crisis in 1962, the number of meetings shot to six. At this point, the church ordered the Board of Publication to undergo a management review by the firm Woods, Gordon,²³ and in 1963, installments of their report appeared in July, September, October, and November, followed up by final Conclusions and Recommendations.²⁴ The Executive met seven times in 1963 and eight in 1964, the year the Woods, Gordon recommendations were implemented. In 1965, things cooled down again and only five meetings were held. By 1966 and 1967, the number shot back up to seven and eight, respectively, in part due to the new organizational structure being imposed by the General Council of the church. As of 1 January 1968, the Board of Publication was no more and the Division of Communication (DivCom) took its place under Rev. Frank Brisbin, who had been a member of the Board of Publication for sixteen years.

The Woods, Gordon Report looked at all aspects of the United Church Publishing House/Ryerson Press²⁵ business, including general organization, aims and policies of the House, the New Curriculum, the *Observer*, book

²³ The different installments of the Woods, Gordon Report, prepared by Woods, Gordon & Co. Management Consultants, 15 Wellington St. W. Toronto, Canada, are found in the United Church of Canada Archives, Board of Publication fonds, 93.063C, Box 2. The lead consultant was Edwin Bruce Chown, a nephew of Edith Chown Pierce, Lorne Pierce's wife. The Chown family was extremely well known in Methodist circles as Samuel Dwight Chown, a first cousin once removed to Edith, was the head of the Methodist Church at the time of union in 1925. He stepped aside to let the head of the Presbyterian Church assume the moderatorship of the newly formed United Church of Canada.

²⁴ BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 3 contains the following: Woods, Gordon & Co. Progress Report No. 1, July 1963; Progress Report No. 2, September 1963; Progress Report No. 3, October 1963; Progress Report No. 4, November 1963; Chown to Dickinson, 4 December 1963; UCPH revised earnings and cash requirements 1963–1967. Box 2, File 5 contains the Woods, Gordon Conclusions and Recommendations.

²⁵ "In 1960, the UCPH was subdivided and the Ryerson Press was established for commercial publishing, not affiliated with church affairs." LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 1.

publishing, the printing plant, and all supporting functions (personnel, salaries, clerical procedures, finance, sales, warehousing, distribution, and management in general), budgetary control, finances, circulation figures and projections, and the relationship of the publishing house to other Boards of the United Church of Canada. Planned areas of inquiry included selling methods, advertising policy and rates, sales promotion policy and methods, pricing policy, editorial procedures, estimating, production planning and control, labour and equipment utilization, materials handling, shipping and mailing procedures, building maintenance and caretaking, purchasing, cafeteria operations, source and application of funds, and layout and utilization of space.²⁶ On matters of “General Organization and Role of the House,” the consultants planned to speak with several other church boards “about the relationship of the Board of Publications to their particular Board”: Dr. Cooper, Board of Christian Education; Dr. Pottle, Board of Information and Stewardship; Mr. Cameron, Board of Men; Mr. Pearson, Distribution Services Section, Board of Information and Stewardship; Dr. Fiddler, Board of Christian Education “who we understand is spearheading the program for the new divisional type of organization”; Dr. Vaughn, Board of Colleges and Secondary Schools “who we understand has already carried out a study of the function of the Board of Publications and who may have some definite views on the subject”; Mr. Kitchen, Missionary and Maintenance Department; Dr. Mutchmor, Board of Evangelism and Social Service “because of their large publishing program”; and

²⁶ Woods, Gordon, Progress Report No. 1, July 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 3.

Mr. Alec Johnston, Long-Range Planning Committee. In short, the Woods, Gordon report was the most comprehensive study ever undertaken of The Ryerson Press.

Woods, Gordon predicted a loss in the range of \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 — their working figure was \$834,000 — from 1963 to 1967 “if the House’s operations are continued as at present” but hoped “for cost savings which we believe can be made.” They pointed to two departments most implicated financially: the *Observer* and Sunday school publications, the two “sacred” departments of the United Church Publishing House (UCPH) rather than the “secular” Ryerson Press side of the business. In fact, the projected UCPH loss was \$994,000, an amount greater than the total loss. The other departments, including secular book publishing and textbooks, were projected to earn \$160,000. The consultants acknowledged the fact that, for the UCPH departments, “the policy is determined by the Church” and management did “not have the same control of the situation” as it did with secular departments.

Progress Report No. 2, delivered in September 1963,²⁷ looked more closely at the financial issues, specifically the budgets for 1963–1964 and 1964–1965 and a more detailed five-year projection of profits and losses.²⁸ The five-year forecast to 1967 painted a dismal financial picture for the House, except for the Education department. The *Observer* would lose about \$60,000 per year, the mail order department \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year, the retail store \$8000 to

²⁷ No pagination.

²⁸ See Appendix 4 for Woods, Gordon’s 5-year Forecast, 1963–1967.

\$12,000 per year, and the Trade and Library book department \$18,000 to \$43,000 per year. In contrast, however, the Education department was forecast to earn \$114,000 to \$135,000 per year. The Woods, Gordon consultant tried to hide his astonishment in reporting that budgetary and inventory controls — management tools “widely used in industry” — were not “employed to any significant extent in the House up to the present.”²⁹ He hoped that by August 1963 monthly statements that compared actual results to budget would be implemented. For the 1964–1965 budget,

Departmental heads [rather than finance staff] should be responsible for preparing their budgets [...] The accounting department can then go through the mechanics of preparing monthly budgets and summarizing the departmental forecasts to indicate the net profit or loss of the House and its cash and capital requirements for the year.

What is perhaps more alarming than the projected losses themselves is that the various managers seemed to have no idea of the figures involved in running their own departments. The report is rife with expressions such as Mr. Hall Linton, the advertising agent for the *Observer*, “expects” revenue to increase by \$30,000 in the next five years but Woods, Gordon concludes that there is “nothing to indicate [his] approach will be successful.” Similarly, Mr. Bray, the retail manager, “was not able to suggest any reasons that might cause sales to increase” nor had enough analysis of past sales ever been done to provide clues about the “optimum number and type of book to be stocked,” nor had figures been even kept separate to indicate whether the store or the mail

²⁹ Draft of memos on budgetary control and inventory control. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 5.

order department contributed more to the gross profit (loss) ratio.

The House was also overstaffed, especially clerically, because of “inadequate supervision and a desire on the part of each department to staff itself so as to be able to take care of all workload peaks in the department.” Since peaks occurred at different times in different departments, the consultants recommended that the centralization of work could reduce clerical staff from 100 to 70, a savings of \$90,000 (30 people x \$3000/yr) in salaries plus another \$10,000 in benefits. On editorial procedures, the consultants spoke with Peter Gordon White (New Curriculum) and Al Forrest (*Observer*) who “agreed to ask their staff to keep track of how they spend their time during a two-week period” in order for them to gather some insight into how the editorial work was currently organized and how much time was spent on various tasks. The consultants, though, knew their limitations in tampering with the mysteries of editorial and warned that while there was “no guarantee” that they could “make any significant contribution in this area [...] both Dr. Forrest and Mr. White have indicated an interest in having this type of information for their own use as well as for our analysis.”

As \$900,000 was found to be tied up in inventory, a “more scientific method” of determining print runs was recommended. Reducing inventories would free up \$150,000 of working capital. Half of the inventory was Ryerson Press’s own books and the other half was agency titles from other publishers. Books had often been printed in one large run (to lower the unit cost) and then

written down or written off completely when they did not sell as hoped for. The consultants were not publishing experts, but they were quite accurate in saying that “there has been not sufficient realization that there are actually two decisions involved in publishing”:

The first decision is whether to publish to book or not, based on the total estimated sales of the book, the price at which it can be sold, and the cost of the book, plus any other non-financial considerations. Once this decision has been reached, an entirely different decision must be made as to how many copies of the book should be printed on the first run so as to minimize the cost of carrying excess inventory as well as the cost of obsolescence or write-off when the book does not sell as well as expected. We believe that this area would justify a great deal of further study and analysis of the optimum order and print quantities.³⁰

The credit situation was also addressed, with the consultants noting that the house was currently \$950,000 in debt to the bank, a figure that would rise to \$2,500,000 by 1967 unless major changes were made. Overall, the consultants predicted “a serious deterioration” in earnings, saying that “Whether the losses we have forecast are on the high or low side is not of as great significance as the alarming downward trend.”

In a letter from Woods, Gordon to C. H. Dickinson dated 4 December 1963, the consultants provided financial estimates that had been revised again to incorporate new data that showed even greater losses in the 5-year forecast: the original estimate of an \$834,000 loss was now \$1,080,000, an increase of \$246,000. The main reasons for the projected increase were “higher net losses over the period in the Sunday School Publications and Manufacturing

³⁰ Woods, Gordon, Progress Report No. 1, 4.

Departments of \$182 M and \$66 M respectively” with the other \$2,000 from revised interest allocations. This revision was largely created by lowering the number of New Curriculum (NC) books to be produced, which resulted in a higher unit cost per book for the Sunday school department and a drop in revenue for the manufacturing department. By the end of 1967, the church would be \$2.8 million in debt to the bank rather than \$2.5 million. Revised cash flow projections put the NC \$974,000 behind rather than \$940,000.

The Conclusions and Recommendations of Woods, Gordon Report³¹ were comprehensive; everything from sales to accounts receivable, from human resources to purchasing, from print scheduling to specifications, from heating systems to office assignments, from financial statements to pay scales. The consultants tried to map out the path the House would need to follow on its way forward, especially the need to clarify the aims and objectives of the House rather than proceeding blindly down any trail that seemed promising. They acknowledged that although the deficit of 1962 could be explained by “a number of special conditions [...] the prospect of more serious losses in the years ahead puts the matter in quite a different light.” They noted that the church could not “justify for very long owning a printing and publishing business that loses money” and stressed that the “number of people who already feel the Church should not compete with regular business concerns” would certainly grow “if it became necessary to use Church funds for any extended period to cover the losses of a Church operated business.” They allowed that “it has become

³¹ BP 93.063, Files 2–5, 88 pages.

generally accepted for churches to be in the printing and publishing business” and, because the church had been doing so for over a hundred years, they felt that “for the time being at least that the business should be carried on.” However, they warned that “if the organization cannot be placed in a self-supporting position within a reasonable time, it is obvious that part or all of the business should be discontinued.” A year later, on 13 August 1965, Woods, Gordon provided its promised analysis of why the church should withdraw from the printing business (see Chapter 5).³² This recommendation was never followed but it might have saved The Ryerson Press if it had been.

Regarding the mission and policies of the House, the report recommended “that the Board of Publication should be more clearly defined and interpret what the aims and objectives of the House should be,” should review these annually, and should make sure that the direction taken by the publishing house was “at all times [...] in agreement with the overall plans and desires of The United Church of Canada.” The questions that the Board would need to deal with, which would have “direct bearing on many of the recommendations,” included the following:

[H]ow far should the House expand its activities in the non-religious field? How much work should be performed for the Church at below cost? Should the objective of the House be to earn profits for payment into the Church pension fund or should profits be kept to a level no more than necessary to support the normal expansion of the business? Should the House be expanding both in printing and publishing or should one of these fields be given preference? To what extent should the House be

³² Woods, Gordon, Conclusions and Recommendations, 58–59. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 6.

prepared to support the publishing of good Canadian Literature?³³

Regarding the financial crisis facing the house, there were many contributing factors, but they centred on 1) the New Curriculum (NC); 2) the illustrated papers (IP); and 3) the *Observer*, with projected losses of \$242,000 for NC, \$738,000 for IP, and \$510,000 minus \$255,000 in grants for the *Observer*.³⁴ All these major losses were on the church publication side of the business, not in the Trade or Educational departments, nor even on the manufacturing side; in other words, the losses were from the United Church Publishing House and not from The Ryerson Press. The consultants scolded those responsible for the bad planning and flaccid management:

That such a situation should have arisen at all illustrates the need for a closer working relationship between the Church and the House. We feel we must be critical of The Board of Publications and the Management of the House for not presenting the Officials of the Church with a clear and well documented plan with regard to the financial aspects of producing the New Curriculum when it was first conceived. Until we made our study, the heavy losses being suffered in connection with the Illustrated Papers does not seem to have been fully appreciated and we could name other instances where the lines of communication between the Church and the House are less than satisfactory. [...]

On the one side we feel the Officials of the Church have been sometimes too prone to criticize the operations of the House without knowing all the facts of the matter. On the other side, we feel that the Executives of the House have not always presented their side of the story in a complete and convincing manner. [...] insufficient efforts are made by the senior officials on both sides to get together and work out acceptable solutions to problems and differences as they arise. In this regard, we suggest that the Management of the House should take the lead. The need for good public relations applies to Church organizations

³³ Ibid., 2–3.

³⁴ Or \$88,000 for NC, \$613,000 for IP, and \$361,000 minus \$180,000 in grants for the *Observer* if prices were increased to offset inflation. Woods, Gordon, Conclusions and Recommendations, 4–5.

at least equally as much as in ordinary business affairs.³⁵

In a recommendation that looks very much like a condemnation, the consultants suggested that business people be put in charge, that “the tradition of appointing a minister as chief executive of the House be discontinued,” and that “the title of Book Steward, which we understand is seldom found in other publishing houses, religious or otherwise, be discontinued.”³⁶ Dismissing a Book Steward who had been twenty-seven years at his post, two years away from retirement, however, was not an option, and so Dickinson was relieved of the day-to-day management of the house in order to become Secretary of the Board of Publication. In this capacity, he would visit churches, promote publications, attend meetings of other boards, and maintain close ties with other religious publishing houses, all very soft tasks; he would have no authority over the new General Manager, formerly his assistant, Ernest W. Scott. They also noted that since the editors of the *Observer* and the Sunday school publications were appointed directly by General Council, the editors felt responsible to General Council and not to the House; they should now report to the General Manager.³⁷

Woods, Gordon was not the first management-consulting firm hired by the House, nor would it be the last. The first may have been in 1950, when Dickinson hired Stevenson and Kellogg, Management Engineers, to look at the operations of the House, including “building management and maintenance,

³⁵ Woods, Gordon, Conclusions and Recommendations, 6–7.

³⁶ Ibid., 12, 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 13–14.

general accounting, departmental organization, [and] overhead costs.”³⁸ The difference with the Woods, Gordon Report was that the church had contracted the firm, not the Book Steward. Now the Book Steward had been consulted out of a job.

The following year, 1964, saw great upheaval as one memo³⁹ after another informed staff of the changes taking place as the Woods, Gordon Report was implemented. On 4 March 1964, staff were informed that there would be changes to the physical layout of departments as they became “a more closely knit, functional type of organization.” Anyone reading between the lines would have seen that layoffs would be part of that knitting. There would be interviews to find “the right man for each job” and a salary review, comparing similar jobs, in preparation to putting together a new salary scale. The head count was down by at least five by the end of the month. On 15 April, another memo with four new organizational charts was circulated to say that “Management’s intention is that The Ryerson Press will be a dynamic effective business operated on Christian principles. Full emphasis is placed on the spirit of each of the four underlined words.”⁴⁰

The new organizational charts⁴¹ showed the church publications — the *United Church Observer* and the Sunday school publications — just under the Executive of the Board, with all commercial publishing and printing clearly

³⁸ C. H. Dickinson, Report of the Book Steward, 28 April 1950, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 1.

³⁹ BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2.

⁴⁰ Memo, 15 April 1964, 2. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2.

⁴¹ See Appendix 5 for The Board of Publication Organization Chart March 1965. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

below them. It was inevitable in a church-owned publishing house that the important church publications would take priority over secular ones, no matter that the sacred lost money. At the bottom, the new chart showed four areas of operations for The Ryerson Press: 1) controller, K. R. Keeping; 2) plant superintendent, E. V. Williams; 3) director of book publishing, V. P. (Vic) Seary; and 4) acting director of sales, Ernest W. Scott. Vic Seary⁴² was to build the list, including “Educational, Religious and General book titles, plus the merchandise requirements of Churches and Church Schools” as well as agency titles. The art director (still Arthur Steven) and the manager of promotional advertising would report to him.⁴³ Scott did not intend to be sales manager for long; Mr. Westcott was being considered for head of sales but was shown on the chart as “Special Assistant to the General Manager.” Obviously, he was a valuable employee, as Scott intended to keep him in any capacity: “If he qualifies as Director of Sales, the Special Assistant position will disappear. If Westcott does not qualify as Director of Sales, he will be left on special assignments until he is appointed to another senior position.”⁴⁴ As for what to sell, one new project was sure to make money: “We are printing for the first time a gift edition of Anne of Green Gables,

⁴² In 1950, Vic Seary, “formerly manager of the education department, was appointed to coordinate the work of the Book departments.” C. H. Dickinson, Report of the Book Steward, 28 April 1950, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 1. His son, T. S. (Terry) Seary, was Sales Manager for Elementary and High School books in 1964 and moved to McGraw-Hill when The Ryerson Press was sold; he worked for Ryerson, and then McGraw-Hill Ryerson, for over forty years (Obituary, *Toronto Star*, 6 July 2010).

⁴³ Direct reports for each manager were eight for the controller, six for book publishing, eight for sales, and six for the plant. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2.

⁴⁴ E. W. Scott, Progress Report of Implementation, 23 March 1964, 2. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2. Mr. Westcott was not appointed as head of sales. The job went instead to Arthur G. Lancaster, Ontario Manager for the Dennison Manufacturing Company who was about to be appointed their General Manager (H. L. Trueman, Chairman’s Report, BP 30 June 1964).

a perennially steady seller, which should result in sales of \$7.5M.”⁴⁵

On 22 April 1964, just before the annual general meeting, the Executive of the Board of Publication met to discuss the wholesale revision of their organization and constitution with Ernest W. Scott reporting to them directly about the implementation of the twenty-five “significant” Woods, Gordon recommendations, progress on most of which was already underway. The House, as Scott had wished, was now “established on functional lines with more obvious emphasis on marketing.”⁴⁶ In closing his report, Scott reiterated that, under his watch, the many functions of The Ryerson Press would become “a dynamic effective business operated on Christian principles.”⁴⁷

Because of all the upheaval, the Annual General Meeting of 23–24 April 1964 was unusually well attended. The meeting had to be held at Deer Park United Church, rather than at Church House,⁴⁸ in order to accommodate the crowd. The Chair of the Board of Publication, H. L. Trueman, went to great pains to calm the turmoil and reassure those in attendance that the Woods, Gordon Report would straighten out all the problems of the House:

It has not been customary for the Chairman of The Board of Publication to make a formal report to the Board, but the past year has seen changes in organization and policy that should be enumerated and explained in order that members may have a clear understanding of the problems to be discussed in this Annual Meeting.

During the past two years we have all become increasingly aware of our difficulties in financing the creation and publication of The New Curriculum. The Board of Publication has never built up a cash reserve

⁴⁵ E. W. Scott, Comments on Budgets, 12 March 1964, 3. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2.

⁴⁶ BP Executive, 22 April 1964, 7. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Both at Yonge and St. Clair in Toronto.

to be used for the financing of new and large publication ventures. It would have been extremely difficult, in fact I think impossible, to justify the retention of hundreds of thousands of dollars for this purpose when there was the imperative need to assist in placing both the Pension Fund and the Church magazine on a sound footing.

The result of our support of these two essential projects to the extent of nearly \$2,000,000 has been to leave us short of funds to pay for a press large enough to print the potential circulation of THE OBSERVER and Church School papers, and to finance the cost of creating The New Curriculum, printing it and holding it in stock until it is paid for during the next three years.

The Church has assisted in recent years in meeting the cost of THE OBSERVER, and has also placed its credit behind The Publishing House to permit us to increase our borrowings from the bank. In order that these loans should be secure beyond any doubt, The Board of Finance offered to pay the cost of a Management Survey to study the efficiency of the operation of The Publishing House; this survey was conducted by the Woods, Gordon firm of Management Consultants during the past fiscal year.

Their Report is extensive and detailed. While they pay tribute to the many “outstanding achievements of The House over the years” and to “the wealth of knowledge and experiences posses [sic] by Dr. Dickinson as Book Steward and General Manager”, they make valuable recommendations for changes in organization and procedures.⁴⁹

The chair who delivered this report was Howard Lewis Trueman (1897–1992),⁵⁰ a layman who worked for the federal department of agriculture and volunteered much of his time with the United Church and with the Canadian Freedom from Hunger Committee. He was chair of the Board of Publications in 1964 and 1965 but, as with many on the Board, which drew its members from

⁴⁹ Chairman’s Report, BP AGM 1964, 560–561. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

⁵⁰ Like the Chown family, the Trueman family was also well known in the church and in Canadian society generally. Howard Trueman’s bother, A. W. Trueman, was a professor of Shakespeare and the first Director of the Canada Council. A. W. Trueman’s son Peter was a well-known journalist and news anchor for Global TV; he now lives in Kingston. Howard Trueman’s son John H. was a Ryerson Press history textbook author who made himself infamous in the United Church by becoming the national chair of the “Community of Concern,” an anti-gay group that formed after the General Council of 1988 approved a motion that allowed ordination despite sexual orientation; he died in 2013.

all over Canada, he didn't live close enough to Toronto to provide as much direction as perhaps was needed. The Woods, Gordon recommendations were left to Scott, the new General Manager of the House, to implement.

On 22 November 1963, the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Ernest W. Scott, Assistant General Manager (assistant to the Book Steward), wrote a no-holds-barred memo to his then boss, C. H. Dickinson, outlining his frustrations with the management of the House:

It has been on rare occasions only that I have presented you with a formal written submission of my convictions in regard to issues which have appeared controversial. Perhaps I should have done so more often — I have assumed that you knew my beliefs, but perhaps there were times when you did not realize how strongly I felt. Be that as it may, I would now consider it a dereliction of my duties if I did not make perfectly clear my stand regarding changes in the company organization.

First of all, this is not the voice of a rebel. Rather, it is the voice of one who feels that we must achieve a more effective organization, and that we must not be satisfied with compromises. It is also the voice of one trained (and, I believe, not unskilled) in the principles and practice of organization and management.

There is no doubt in my mind that we must abandon the present organization comprised of several more or less independent businesses pulled together rather loosely at the top. Instead, we must organize by function with an expert in his field heading up each function. Only in this way do I see it practical to effect maximum savings in cost and space. Unless it is done, I cannot see the present building satisfying normal growth for more than five or six years.

You will recall that this was my thesis when we did considerable physical re-shuffling at the time the Church Offices moved to St. Clair Avenue. I did not sell this idea successfully at that time, and the decision was made in favour of our present set-up. Once this decision was made, all my efforts were put into making this organization work. If a decision is made again which does not agree with my convictions, I would again strive to make things work to the best of my ability. But, until that decision is made, I feel I must fight to support my proposal.

As I interpret your thinking, the differences between us are one of degree rather than one of kind. I am convinced that changes which you

have in mind do not go far enough. Four or five years ago, the organization was tailored to suit the people. In my opinion, the organization has not been as effective as is necessary — many of our weaknesses are due to our present organization. Five years ago, some of our senior persons were somewhat unknown. This is no longer true. We now know most of their strengths and weaknesses, and these we cannot ignore. This time the people have to be tailored to fit the organization. Indeed, I just can't see a place for some of the people.

I would feel there must be no changes made contrary to Woods, Gordon recommendations, until such changes are discussed with and agreed upon by them. We are now waiting on the report on organization from Woods, Gordon. It may well suggest modifications which should be incorporated into my proposal. Until the Woods, Gordon report is presented, I hesitate to spell out in detail the organization I recommend, because I do not wish to commit myself to a position from which it would be difficult to retreat. But if there is any substantial agreement in the Woods, Gordon findings with my proposed organization, I would feel that no decision should be reached without the fullest consideration of organizing by function.

Respectfully submitted,
Ernest W. Scott.⁵¹

In effect, mere months⁵² after this self-serving memo was written, Dickinson was “demoted” from Book Steward to Secretary of the Board of Publication, and Scott was “promoted” to General Manager of the House. New Curriculum Editor-in-Chief Peter Gordon White pointed out that while Dickinson was almost universally blamed for the financial problems of the House,⁵³ it may have been Dickinson's tendency to rely on colleagues that was more to blame. White hinted that some of the financial people that Dickinson relied on were “not as good as he thought they were,” a reference most likely to

⁵¹ Ernest W. Scott memo to C. H. Dickinson, 22 November 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2.

⁵² Also mere months later, Scott's wife died in May or June 1964, after a lengthy illness.

⁵³ Dickinson also had his supporters. On 1 May 1962, Rev. Hugh McLeod wrote to Dickinson: “I devoutly hope that you may long be spared to continue to guide the affairs of Ryerson Press and the United Church Publishing House. I know it is not an easy task—and without you the story might have been much less radiant.” BP 83.061C, Box 14, File 2.

Ernest W. Scott.⁵⁴ Sandra Campbell describes Scott as “not a book person” and Beth Robinson says that Pierce “didn’t see eye to eye with him.”⁵⁵ Neither Woods, Gordon nor the Board of Publication anticipated any potential problems with putting Scott in charge of the operation; instead, the report and the response to it essentially vaulted Scott to Dickinson’s job. It was not until several years later⁵⁶ that Scott was confirmed to be no shrewder a manager than Dickinson. William C. Heine, the new Chair of DivCom, complained that Scott had provided the management committee with “budgets which were grossly unrealistic for 1967. A revision presented in September was even more unrealistic. A revision of that has turned out to be sadly inaccurate.” As well, the publishing program was suffering — “nothing short of sad compared to quite recent days when Ryerson was a leader in Canada’s publishing field” — and this too was blamed on “a clear lack of firm control in the management.” Scott was given warning in February 1968 that he was now on probation, and that “any significant deviation from budget will be considered an indication of failure to perform.”⁵⁷ By the fall of 1968, it was clear that Scott was not going to pass his probation:

The consensus of opinion was that Mr. Scott (a) served far too many years in a secondary role under Dr. Dickinson, which was reflected in his decision-making capacity, (b) had failed to demonstrate the aggressive leadership required by the existing situation, (c) frequently failed to give

⁵⁴ Peter Gordon White, interview with the author, February 2013. Peter died in March 2013.

⁵⁵ Sandra Campbell and Beth Robinson, interview with the author, 23 May 2013, Kingston, Ontario.

⁵⁶ In 1968 the Board of Publication was replaced by the Division of Communication (DivCom); the Chair of DivCom was *London Free Press* Editor-in-Chief William Heine and the Secretary of DivCom was Frank Brisbin.

⁵⁷ William C. Heine to E. D. Kingsbury (Chair, Management Committee), 1 February 1968. BP 83.061C, Box 24, File 1.

concise and meaningful answers to problems posed to him by the management committee, (d) and had demonstrated inability to project revenue, expenses and profit patterns of the publishing company accurately enough to satisfy those who were discussing the situation.⁵⁸

Once the blood was in the water, others started sniffing around. Vince Walters, for one, “made a strong case for his being named to this position,” arguing that with the bank poised to call in their loan of \$1 million on 31 January 1969 “we do not have time to spend three or more months looking for a man to replace Scott.” His plan was to lay off more staff, overhaul production and sales, increase work hours for non-union staff in the printing plant, and introduce an incentive program for senior executives in order to break even in 1969 and perhaps even make “a significant profit.” Heine’s letter to Brisbin of 9 December 1968 about this visit wisely noted that “the church would not be well served if we did not seek in as wide an area as possible a replacement for Scott. To accept Vince because he was there would be to repeat the error made originally in appointing Scott to the job.”⁵⁹

On 10 December 1968, Scott resigned as General Manager of The Ryerson Press, “effective immediately.” Campbell Hughes, a twenty-year veteran of the House and handpicked by Pierce to succeed him in the textbook department, was chosen as the new General Manager. George Parker posits that “the outcome for Ryerson might have been happier”⁶⁰ had Campbell Hughes taken over from Dickinson years earlier rather than Scott. By the end of

⁵⁸ William C. Heine to Frank Brisbin, 7 November 1968. UCCA BP.

⁵⁹ William C. Heine to Frank Brisbin, 9 December 1968. UCCA BP.

⁶⁰ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 24.

1968, it was too late. The Ryerson Press would be for sale less than two years later.

Dickinson's memoir, written long after his retirement, gives this perspective on why the House was sold:

The name of Ryerson Press was synonymous with Canadian literature. It had been not only the mother publishing house historically, but also, if we may say so, it was the flag ship of the voyage of Canadian writing and much of Canadian thinking and cultural expression — a signal service rendered by the church in Canada.

But as the years advanced, and as the interests of religion and an increasingly secular society expressed themselves separately, it became evident, to some minds at least, that the church, as church, was hardly obligated to serve in such a broad capacity. And under the strain of a measure of financial difficulty, as all book publishing firms suffered, it was concluded that the trade business of The Ryerson Press might be disposed of, and that the church might limit its publishing activities to its own programmes and its accompanying opportunities.⁶¹

This assessment suggests that widespread difficulties in the publishing industry, the evolution of Canadian society, and a retrenchment in church thinking made the sale of The Ryerson Press inevitable, but this is hardly the case. A Book Steward as shrewd as Ryerson, Briggs, or Pierce would have been able to steer the “flag ship” through the difficult waters — the times in which they had operated were certainly no easier than the 1960s — but Dickinson was not in their league. His over-reliance on colleagues and management consultants, his preference for travel over business duties, his focus on the superannuation fund over securely capitalizing the business, and his general

⁶¹ Dickinson, “The Story of My Life,” 18–19.

lack of skill in business and publishing, ensured that The Ryerson Press would sink.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW CURRICULUM: PETER GORDON WHITE, 1953–1965

The diffusion of Christianity is the most important subject that
can engage the attentions of men.

— Egerton Ryerson¹

No publishing project is ever more important to a church than its own denominational publications, such as hymnals, church periodicals, and Sunday school publications. The denominational book project that the church was most proud of, the “New Curriculum,” was the jewel in the crown of the United Church Publishing House. Despite its success in achieving its main objective of renewing bible study for all age groups in the church, with the added bonus of gaining publicity for the church itself, the massive project took a huge investment that was not properly funded. The lack of financial oversight, in large part, occurred because responsibility for it rested between two church boards, the Board of Publication and the Board of Christian Education. While the Board of Publication was responsible for the finances, several members on the Board (who were mostly ministers, not businessmen) were opposed to setting aside the required funds, preferring to take money year by year, as needed, from the overall profits of the House. Ever mindful of the church’s

¹ According to John Robert Colombo, ed., *Colombo’s Canadian Quotations* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1974), 517: “The first sentence of Ryerson’s to appear in print,’ in 1826, according to Robin S. Harris who quotes it in *Our Living Tradition: Second and Third Series* (1959), edited by Robert L. McDougall.”

position as a charity, the Board was reluctant to capitalize the project in an obvious way.

The editor-in-chief of the project, Peter Gordon White, in large measure blamed himself for the financial problems, citing major editorial revisions after one particular round of field-testing.² However, the project was extremely well managed, as is obvious from its archives, and was produced on schedule, with no obvious editorial or production crises that would account for the financial failure that followed. Nor did the calls to burn the New Curriculum, due to its overtly liberal biblical interpretations,³ cause any financial problems. Instead, the curriculum was almost universally adopted by United Churches across the country. However, late 1960s demographics were clearly working against the project. The New Curriculum was released in 1964 and United Church membership reached its peak in 1965; it has been in decline ever since. White had anticipated the church adding another million members by the early 1970s, which certainly would have assured the financial success of the project, but he was sorely disappointed. As well, the decision to produce quality hardcover books rather than throw-away weekly papers may have decreased production and mailing costs but, unanticipated by the editors, churches treated the books as class sets, thereby killing sales of Year 1 of the three-year cycle in the 4th and 7th years: “The assumption was that students would keep their hardcover

² Peter Gordon White, personal communication to the author, c. 1994.

³ Mrs. Harmon, Baptist, quoted in Allen Spraggett, “Virgin Birth, Goliath—Are They Just Myths?” *Toronto Star*, 4 July 1964. United Church of Canada Archives, New Curriculum Fonds, 83.051C, Series VII (hereafter cited as NC), Box 273, File 6.

texts, and that churches would buy new texts every year for the next set of students. That didn't happen. Churches chose to save money by recycling their texts."⁴ Even today, fifty years later, New Curriculum books can be found squirreled away in churches across the country.⁵

Historically, a true Methodist zeal for education, specifically free education for the masses rather than private education for the rich, contrary to the many Anglican ministers who "argued that it was beneath the dignity of the clergy to instruct the offspring of the lower classes,"⁶ provided a strong impetus for publishing activities at the Methodist Book and Publishing House.

Methodists were ardent supporters and tireless workers in the Sunday school ("Ragged School") movement founded by English newspaper editor Robert Raikes.⁷ By 1785, there were an estimated 250,000 children attending and John Wesley had "introduced singing in these schools, set up classes by ages, shortened the hours of attendance, and made the services more attractive."⁸

Publishing and education went naturally hand in hand. A "well-stocked library was part of the essential equipment of the Sunday school; its books circulated

⁴ James Taylor, email interview with the author, 29 May to 6 June 2013. For the entire edited text of the interview, see Appendix 9, Jim Taylor on the Sale of The Ryerson Press, the founding of Wood Lake Books, and working with Al Forrest at *The United Church Observer*.

⁵ The author discovered dozens of books, almost an entire bookshelf, in class sets in Christ Church United (formerly Trinity United) in Chesterville, Ontario, in April 2013.

⁶ "Robert Raikes' 'Ragged School,'" *World Christian Education*, Fourth Quarter, 1949. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁷ In Queen's Park Circle in Toronto stands a copy of a statue of Sunday school founder Robert Raikes, an Anglican. The original stands on the embankment between the River Thames and the Savoy Hotel, London, England. The inscription reads as follows: "Unveiled at the Quadrennial Convention of the International Council of Religious Education / June 28, 1930 / Commemorating the sesquicentennial of the founding of the Sunday School by Robert Raikes / Gloucester, England, 1780 / Go Teach." For more on Raikes, see Nathaniel Hawthorne's essay "A Good Man's Miracle,"

<www.eldritchpress.org/nh/gmm.html>: "How can any Christian remain idle, when there is so much evil to be remedied within a morning's walk of his own home?"

⁸ "Robert Raikes' 'Ragged School,'" NC Box 273, File 3.

among adults and children alike,” according to church historian and former Ryerson Press editor John Webster Grant.⁹ Publishing efforts in Sunday school curriculum (learning materials for children’s Bible study) and later secular textbooks evidence this strong support for education.

By 1845, Methodist Book and Publishing House Book Steward Anson Green believed that the market in Canada was sufficient to support an indigenous, denominational Sunday school curriculum. The *Sunday School Guardian*, published from 26 January 1846 to about 1854, was the House’s first attempt at curriculum. Sales, however, were not as high as Green had hoped. Six months after its launch, circulation ran at only 25 percent of what was needed to keep it going.¹⁰ After the first year, the publishers were pleading with church members for support:

We rejoiced when the design was put into execution; and when our eyes fell upon the first number we thought of the number of circuits and missions through which it would circulate — of the number of preachers, of class-leaders, and other official members, spreading over our land, who would joyfully extend its circulation, ... we thought only of the vast, the incalculable amount of good that this humble messenger was destined to accomplish. We did not allow to enter into our calculations the probability of a cold indifference in the hearts of any — much less the major part of those whom we had in our vision regarded as a host of agents for the *Sabbath School Guardian*;¹¹ and had any one predicted *that from nearly two-thirds of all our circuits and missions we should not receive any subscribers*, we would have been disposed to question his sanity.¹²

⁹ John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 103.

¹⁰ Janet B. Friskney, “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca’: The Methodist Book and Publishing House’s Pursuit of Book Publishing and Commitment to Canadian Writing 1829–1926” (Master’s thesis, Trent University, 1994), 71.

¹¹ The correct name was “Sunday School Guardian.” See <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04422>.

¹² “Sunday School Guardian,” *Christian Guardian*, 3 February 1847.

After eight years of trying to appeal to its target market, the House's first attempt at a Sunday school curriculum was considered a failure and abandoned. Starting in 1855, the House circulated the American *Sunday School Advocate* instead. By the 1860s, however, Canadians began to be uncomfortable with some of the "anti-Canadian, and anti-British sentiments"¹³ of American publications, an emerging problem during the American Civil War and the Fenian Raids. Rather than produce a wholly Canadian substitute, in 1865 the House began producing a Canadian edition of the American curriculum, meaning that many of the upfront costs of writing, editing, and typesetting would already be covered, but any offensive bits would be removed.¹⁴ In 1868, the House ventured back into publishing its own curriculum and the *Sunday School Banner and Teacher's Assistant* was launched; by 1879, circulation was 5400, enough to keep it running. *Pleasant Hours* also joined the Sunday school curriculum list; by 1879, its circulation was 11,000. Under Rev. Dr. W. H. Withrow's editorship, the *Banner* and *Pleasant Hours* "endured for many years."¹⁵ Withrow, also editor of the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, was a key figure in the growth in the late 1800s of the Methodist Book and Publishing House, working closely with Book Steward William Briggs and *Christian Guardian* editor E. H. Dewart.

After church union in 1925, the Board of Christian Education, through

¹³ "Home Publications," *Christian Guardian*, 10 June 1863.

¹⁴ This would be similar to Canadianizing an American textbook, which is still widely done today.

¹⁵ Friskney, "Towards a Canadian 'Cultural Mecca,'" 73.

the distribution network of The Ryerson Press, provided Sunday school curriculum in various formats, mostly periodical. By 1950, the United Church was producing a “horde of literary matter”: 20 million copies annually split between 24 different periodicals.¹⁶ Churches were free, however, to decide for themselves which materials they would buy, and from which source. Many began to choose American materials from David Cook Company and Westminster Press at prices five to twenty-five percent less than those of The Ryerson Press, but the desire for a United-Church-specific curriculum was strong. The surge in church membership and the baby boom that followed the Second World War looked like fertile ground for such a project; in 1949, Peter Gordon White was hired to help produce these Sunday school materials.

Peter Gordon White¹⁷ was born on 23 November 1919, just outside Glasgow, Scotland. His father, John Gordon White, worked as a printer at Collins book publishers. At age fourteen, after the family had emigrated to Canada, White quit high school, finishing at night, to complete the Typographical Union qualifications as a compositor in a printing shop, finishing with “the highest grade ever achieved in Manitoba.”¹⁸ He then paid his way through university by working as a stringer for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He held an undergraduate scholarship in English history at United College in Manitoba and won prizes in Greek, current affairs, and public speaking, was

¹⁶ C. H. Dickinson, Report of the Book Steward, 28 April 1950. LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 12.

¹⁷ UCC biographical file W7.

¹⁸ Bruce McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had” [Peter Gordon White obituary], *The United Church Observer*, May 2013, 35.

president of the student council, and still found time for acting and directing. White had gone to university “with the idea of becoming a writer and perhaps a publisher but came out a minister of The United Church of Canada.”¹⁹ Almost immediately after ordination, White went into educational ministry, as Field Secretary of Christian Education for Manitoba Conference, where he remained until 1949, when he moved to Toronto to take up the job of Assistant Editor of the department of Sunday school publications, apprenticed to Dr. George Little and Dr. Archer Wallace.

In 1953 White became editor-in-chief of the “New Curriculum” for Sunday school and the youngest member, at 34, of General Council. By then, the United Church had been clamouring for its own curriculum that would meet the specific theological beliefs of the church. Several “larger denominations in the United States were already engaged in developing and publishing their own curriculum. Indeed, it was the ‘trend’ in the late fifties and early sixties.”²⁰ The 1950s, with its baby boom, seemed like the right time to launch such projects, as more children than ever before would be entering Sunday schools. However, from the beginning, the designers of the New Curriculum hoped that it would reach beyond the United Church. As White put it,

At a time when 30 million children and young people in North America receive no religious instruction at all, the need for a Sunday school, though a different need from the one Raikes answered, is no less desperate. If a Church such as ours neglects its teaching ministry, it will

¹⁹ Peter Gordon White, “Profile,” Department of News Services, Division of Communication, June 1974, 1. UCCA biographical file W7.

²⁰ UCCA, Board of Christian Education, Finding Aid, Series VII: The New Curriculum, 122–123.

be a sick Church.²¹

The New Curriculum was the largest publishing project ever undertaken by The Ryerson Press and likely by any Canadian publisher before or since. The massive project occupied twelve years, full time, of White's career and involved managing the writing of a series of learning materials for everyone in the church, from kindergarten to adult, in a three-year cycle that followed the church lectionary.²² Before a word could be written, detailed field consultations on a national scale and the writing and rewriting of the Presuppositions (theological specifications) to guide the project were required. Ironing out the Presuppositions took several years, with final approval at General Council in 1958.²³ The process of curriculum design — with a six-year projection for writing and editing the material, and the involvement of many scholars, pedagogues, teachers, and artists — then began in earnest. White's job as editor-in-chief involved carefully planning every detail, writing funding proposals, recruiting and training staff, and handling any controversy or crisis that might arise; it also involved accountability for production deadlines, promotion, and interpretation.

²¹ Peter Gordon White, "Sunday School: What Is Its Worth?" *Observer*, 15 March 1955, 45.

²² The Revised Common Lectionary is a list of readings shared by all churches, both Protestant and Catholic, which repeats every three years. For example, for Sunday, 15 December 2013, the third Sunday of Advent (Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas) in Year A of the lectionary, the readings are as follows: First reading: Isaiah 35:1–10; Psalm: Psalm 146:5–10 or Luke 1:46b–55; Second reading: James 5:7–10; Gospel: Matthew 11:2–11.

²³ See Peter Gordon White and Wilbur K. Howard, "Progress in the Development of New Curriculum," 28 November 1960: "About 9:00 p.m. on November 3, 1959, the Executive of General Council approved plans for a new curriculum for Sunday Church Schools in The United Church of Canada." For a more complete history of the New Curriculum, see Appendix 6: Brief History of the New Curriculum by Olive D. Sparling.

Beyond his own department, the job included collaborative work inside the church as a member of the Committee on Christian Faith, the Board of Publication, and the Board of Christian Education, and outside the church on the National Council of Churches' Curriculum Development Council and the joint Baptist–United Church committee. He even found time to teach the junior Sunday school class at Applewood United Church in Mississauga, a form of field-testing his own ideas and material. White was a gifted writer, painter, and expert in photography and the use of visual aids in education and brought all these talents to the work of the New Curriculum. He was also “hard to discourage, impossible to dislike,”²⁴ an excellent administrator and diplomat, skills that would carry him through the twelve years of the project. Over the years he wrote many articles, radio scripts, and biblical studies. His book, *The Mystery of the Rock*, was part of the New Curriculum, designated as a “reading and research book” for Grades 4, 5, and 6. In terms of the production and distribution, and the “dreams, work, [and] policies” of the New Curriculum, the administration involved two of the church boards, the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Publication. The editorial staff belonged to the Department of Sunday School Publications, part of the Board of Publication, and the Board of Christian Education provided direction and oversight.²⁵

By March 1962, a decade of work on the New Curriculum was beginning

²⁴ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

²⁵ In 1965, five years before the sale of The Ryerson Press, the editorial staff joined the Board of Christian Education, forming an expanded BCE. UCCA, Board of Christian Education, Finding Aid, Series VII: The New Curriculum, 122–123.

to bear fruit. The first book published, *The Word and the Way*,²⁶ was not, as one might have expected, for the youngest Sunday school grades, but rather for the adults. White felt, quite correctly, that there was no point in releasing the New Curriculum without first teaching the adults — who would, after all be the Sunday school teachers — how to approach the material. As Mrs. Martin Johns of Hamilton put it, “Children cannot be expected to learn from teachers who have not got a thorough knowledge of what they are teaching.”²⁷ Rev. Lindsay G. King went further to say “It is better to have children without teachers than to have teachers making a sham of religious teachings.”²⁸ The main presupposition of the New Curriculum was that it was time for what was being taught in churches to catch up with what was being taught in theological colleges. The *Word and the Way* paved the way for the rest of the curriculum and sold 600,000 copies, “unheard of for a Canadian title.”²⁹ The impetus behind the project was described thusly in 1960:

The new curriculum has risen out of the ferment of the times. It has been part of the new theological stirring. It has been part of the desire for rethinking educational principles. It has been part of the rapid social changes and the new reaching out for creative freedom in countries all around the world. It has been part of a growing unrest and a demand from the grass roots — the local churches — for more and better materials for the Sunday church school. It has been part of a research and study program by national staff and committees.³⁰

²⁶ Donald M. Mathers, professor of systematic theology at Queen’s University, was the author.

²⁷ “Study Books on Religion Written to Help Adults,” *Hamilton Spectator*, 10 December 1962. NC Box 273, File 6.

²⁸ “Curriculum Brings Problems to United Church Ministers,” *Toronto Star*, 14 September 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

²⁹ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

³⁰ Excerpted from the Finding Aid for Series VII: The New Curriculum, Subseries 1–9, UCCA.

By February 1963, White reported that a print run of “the first 400,000 books of the New Curriculum” was on its way, with similar print runs for each of the following eight years “if the planning of the past ten years proves sound.”³¹ In other words, they were looking to sell over three million copies of the various books in the series. By then the investment in the project had been enormous, with specifications completed for each age group in each of the three lectionary years; the development of new periodicals, *The Christian Home*, *Focus*, and four others; three writer’s conferences; the development of a five-year promotion plan; field testing of materials; and the preparation of layouts, printing specifications, and detailed schedules for writing and production for the books. Eight editors worked directly on the book and periodical components of the project.³² Every year, the Board of Publication set aside funds from the accumulated surplus, totalling \$125,000 for editorial, writing, and testing. Although \$56,000 had been “ear-marked for promotion” by the Board of Publication, there were no staff dedicated to curriculum promotion in either UCPH or The Ryerson Press. The business and editorial offices were both responsible for “maintaining and increasing circulation.” Most of the promotion budget seems to have been destined for advertising in the *United Church Observer*.

³¹ Peter Gordon White, Editorial Report, 20 February 1963.

³² “Uniform lesson quarterlies, one editor; Four Weekly papers, three editors; Periodicals such as FOCUS and THE CHRISTIAN HOME, one editor; New Curriculum reading books and teacher’s guides, three editors” (Peter Gordon White, Editorial Report, 20 February 1963).

In his February 1963 report, White also outlined some “unexpected” difficulties and “hoped for” successes:

the four new full colour weeklies quickly reached a higher circulation than our former five weeklies. We now distribute some 360,000 each week.

The adult book, *THE WORD AND THE WAY*, has sold 112,000 to date, and its *STUDY GUIDE* about half that figure. It is possible that the House may have sales close to a quarter of a million dollars on this one item at the end of its first year in the field (i.e. Fall, 1963).

At present, two concerns are uppermost: (1) an attempt to speed up schedules so that first-year materials may be ready by January 1964; (2) a plan for long range financing of the New Curriculum so that Sunday Schools will not find high prices a barrier to acceptance of the New Curriculum on its first cycle.³³

In April 1963, the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Publication received a special visit from the Moderator himself, the Right Rev. J. R. Mutchmor, who stressed the importance of the New Curriculum project to the church by speaking “of the immense responsibility of this Board producing the written word” especially for “the large number of Sunday School children and youth” in the United Church.³⁴ That AGM also heard some less encouraging words about the financial state of those very important church publications. The Sunday School Publication department was facing problems with subscription rates, production costs, and losses, especially for the weekly story papers, but came to the meeting armed with recommendations for cost saving measures, efficiency, and future policy.³⁵ The weekly story papers were produced for children from age four to teenagers and subscription prices ranged from 85¢ to \$2.60 a year

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ BP AGM 18–19 April 1963, 549–558.

³⁵ Ibid., 554–557.

per child. Circulation of the illustrated story papers, distributed through the Sunday schools, reached eighty-three percent of Sunday school attendees in 1953 but had declined to sixty-seven percent in 1960, the year before the new papers were introduced. Heavy losses came in 1963 because of “circulation levels and subscription rates of the papers not being high enough to recover the production and overhead cost.” Summer issues for July, August, and September garnered only sixty percent circulation, losing \$30,000 per summer.

Recommendations for reducing losses included cutting the summer issues, but also dealing with the fact that production costs on the Sunday school weeklies had “risen beyond estimates to a point where estimated losses for the present year could be as high as \$130,000.” In light of this, the printing plant should “submit to the editor-in-chief a firm budget price on manufacturing the papers” and use “cost-saving innovations in production techniques,” and the Promotion Department should “make a direct approach to Churches not now using these Weeklies, with a view to gaining the 18% increase in circulation which represents a breakeven point.”³⁶ Regarding efficiency, the Sunday School Publication department made several recommendations that led to hiring the firm of Woods, Gordon to undertake their massive management study of 1963–1964. They recommended “that functional studies be carried out by independent organizations or experts” in the areas of (a) editorial procedures; (b) costing and estimating; (c) typesetting, proofreading, presswork, and binding, in order to

³⁶ Planned economies also included printing on cheaper paper; cutting page counts; reducing the use of colour, art, and engraving; using more “free material and writing by editors”; and printing more than one publication at the same time. *Ibid.*, 554–555.

establish quality control in the printed product; (d) circulation and promotion, with special attention to equipment and procedures.³⁷ Recommendations for future policy included a reminder that the Board of Publication had “the right to place printing orders with any plant³⁸ that can produce to the advantage of the Church, as is presently the case with respect to graded lesson helps printed for us by Providence Lithograph Company.”³⁹ These matters clarified, the New Curriculum project steamed ahead towards its deadline of making Year 1 materials available early in 1964 for purchase for September 1964 classes.

In August 1963, White wrote to his colleague Art Reynolds at the Victoria College Archives (which housed the United Church Archives) to provide a general update on the New Curriculum:

Circulations of our current publications have held up surprisingly well. ‘With a little bit of luck’ we may swing into New Curriculum without the slump some denominations have experienced. We have been at some pains to maintain quality in the present periodicals, even during the push (sic) on the bright new books.

Most of our authors are human, and some of our editors almost so; therefore the deadline schedule we set ourselves last year is the substance of things hoped for (and sometimes our only evidence of things unseen). Even so, the materials will be available to churches seven or eight months ahead of date of actual use, as we had planned.

This summer, vacations have been on a catch-them-if-you-can basis. Engraving proofs, galley proofs, page proofs, press proofs have been tumbling from desk to desk here in the editorial department, and from composing room to pressroom at the plant.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., 555.

³⁸ “Re Section III, - Moved by Mr. McLean, seconded by Mr. Brisbin that the addition of the words ‘Union Shop’ is included.”

³⁹ BP AGM 18–19 April 1963, 555–556.

⁴⁰ White’s imagery here is reminiscent of the reader’s visit to the publisher in Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller...* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1979): “In his arms he has a pile of galleys; he sets them down gently, as if the slightest jolt could upset the order of the printed letters. ‘A publishing house is a fragile organism, dear sir,’ he says. ‘If at any point something goes askew, then the disorder spreads, chaos opens beneath our feet. Forgive me, won’t you? When I think about it I have an

Since production must go along seriatim, the first books off the press will be stock-piled until the set for Year One is completed. By February, sample kits will be assembled for distribution to local churches on request.

Some of the books have very large runs, up to 100,000 or more. About 10% of the run will be completed in the fall, then taken off the press to permit other books to be done. Later, the remainder of the big runs will go back on press.

[...]

As you can imagine, sizable sums are involved in the production and distributing aspect of the work. In round figures, the materials have a value of some \$700,000 for each year, \$2,100,000 for the first cycle [of three years].

Throughout the church, interest is encouraging. The novel idea of beginning with adults reached almost every congregation. *THE WORD AND THE WAY* has stimulated Bible study and group discussion for some 125,000 adults to date. The coming season should see this number increase.

FOCUS, the new leadership periodical is off to a flying start with a good healthy circulation. It should do a great deal to alert ministers, superintendents and local C.E. chairman to the ideas and practicalities of New Curriculum.

As you know, we expect New Curriculum materials to continue in use for three cycles (nine years) before major revisions are required. By that time, according to census projections, the United Church constituency [membership] may have increased by another million people.⁴¹

The Woods, Gordon management review's Progress Report No. 3, submitted in October 1963, dealt entirely with the New Curriculum (NC), then in the last stages of preparation. The consultants described the project as "the result of years of research, investigation, writing and testing [...] better than anything else ever offered by the United Church." They concluded:

attack of vertigo.' And he covers his eyes, as if pursued by the sight of billions of pages, lines, words, whirling in a dust storm" (98). Pierce himself said something similar in an interview: "In no other business is the element of risk so fantastic. Only a small number of things can happen to a race horse, but a thousand things can happen to a book" (Victor V. Murray, "Book Editor 'Baits Hook' For New Ideas, Talent," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 27 September 1948, 1).

⁴¹ Peter Gordon White to Dr. A. G. Reynolds, 1 August 1963. NC Box 198, File 3.

There is presently some thought that the introduction of NC material will bring about a resurgence of interest in religion and may even cause an increase in Story Paper circulation. In this regard, Story Papers are being promoted as part of the NC. While it is hoped that a circulation increase will result, the present information available indicates that this is unlikely.

The figures showed that even if market saturation were reached (which required an over thirty percent increase in circulation), the department would still lose about \$25,000 per year. When it came to projected sales figures for the NC, Peter Gordon White was confident in his optimistic figures — around 550,000 units — as he had visited many of the churches across the country during the consultation and field-testing stages. Woods, Gordon's projected sales figure, however, was a very conservative 300,000 per year. "In making these estimates," stated the report, "we must emphasize that we made no detailed study of the matter. The above figures represent no more than an attempt to bring together the opinions of different members of Management in some sort of logical relationship" with the "known facts." They continue:

From the fall of 1964 onwards, sales have been estimated with regard to the conditions which will likely exist at that time. The Management of the House offers widely divergent views as to the sales which can be expected on the introduction of NC material. While each opinion expressed will necessarily vary to some extent, it should be pointed out that there is no official agreed sales forecast available from the Management. Estimated sales (from different members of Management) of graded books in 1964/65 vary from a high of 550,000 to a low of 280,000 units. It appears that the major area of disagreement revolves around the degree to which Sunday Schools will readily accept the new material, particularly as regards its contents and its much increased cost.⁴²

⁴² Woods, Gordon Progress Report No. 3, October 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 3.

The Board of Publication itself had certainly raised this issue in its own meetings but had no structures in place by which to make accurate sales projections. Woods, Gordon was quite harsh in its estimation of the financial planning that went into the massive project:

Considering the large amount of money that will be required to introduce the New Curriculum, we cannot help but remark that a more thorough appraisal of the sales potential should have been made in the first stages of its development.

[...]

We have gone into the matter much more thoroughly than was intended under our terms of reference. We had no alternative if we were to attempt to produce a meaningful picture of the outlook for the House over the next few years. At the same time, we want to be the first to raise doubts about the conclusions we have reached with regard to sales, cash requirements, and operating margins. We have been unable to verify many of the figures used or to work out the implications involved by alternative courses of action (such as shorter production runs or different sales estimates). There is also the matter of the margins available after the initial three-year cycle has been completed when certain fixed charges have been absorbed.

We wish to recommend that a separate examination be made of the situation. If this study could be completed before our final report is made, there would be an opportunity for us to correct the tentative estimates we have made.

Woods, Gordon also tried to estimate the cash requirements of the house, particularly for producing the stock of NC materials initially; as the NC was sold, cash would be freed up to pay for more stock.

Part of the cash flow problem was tied to the issue of format: the old curriculum was loose and produced quarterly; the NC was formatted in bound books, containing material for the whole year, meaning that orders would only

come once a year and that production could not be spread out over the entire year as it could with the periodical format. As well, the three-year cycle meant that any unsold copies would have to sit in the warehouse for three years before their next selling season. The cost of warehousing unsold inventory would also impact the financial picture. The NC would need \$940,000 over and above its projected income of \$1,630,000 in order to be produced, so \$2,570,000 would be required from 1963 to 1967 in order to pay for the production of NC. In other words, based on the Woods, Gordon sales projection of 300,000 copies, the NC would eat up all its own profits plus almost another million just to produce it (development plus production), an alarming figure.

The Woods, Gordon Report was not good news for the Sunday School Publications department; along with the *Observer*, it was blamed for staggering past and future financial losses. The report also noted that “Most of the early problems of the new printing press,” which had been bought for the *Observer* and the Sunday school publications (not for the books, as many people thought), “now seem to be overcome.” In March 1964, a few months after Progress Report No. 3 was released, the House had to deal with the continued funding of NC in the face of staggering losses and dismal cash flow. NC sales were budgeted for at 330,000 units totalling \$540,000, or ten percent higher than Woods, Gordon projections. The managers of the Board of Publication wondered how to deal with the situation of “expecting Churches to pay \$615M for lesson materials on

which they had spent only \$394M last year – a jump of \$221M.”⁴³ There was nothing to do but put their faith in future sales. They concluded, “We will not reach a position of solvency until 1973 in NC.”⁴⁴

But White’s faith in the sales potential of the NC was more than justified; orders for New Curriculum shot up to 740,000 units, more than double the Woods, Gordon sales estimate and almost a third more than White’s own most optimistic estimates. He may not have used “scientific methods” to arrive at his sales projections, but White’s feeling that the United Churches were almost a hundred percent behind the New Curriculum proved to be true. While the United Church of Canada had always been the most progressive of the mainline Protestant denominations in Canada, church members were not always so. In the case of the New Curriculum, however, United Church members, at least those making the decisions of what Sunday school curriculum to buy, were solidly behind the project.

In fundamentalist circles, though, the NC was widely criticized; while “witty and eloquent” in his defense of the New Curriculum, White “coped with death threats by mail.”⁴⁵ Those who supported White, credit him with setting the stage for “a mature and intellectually respectable faith.”⁴⁶ The *London Free Press* warned that the “individual who believes [that] no word in the Bible should be questioned, and who holds with the philosophy ‘if you can’t believe it

⁴³ Comments on Budgets, 12 March 1964. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2, 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

⁴⁶ Ruth Wilson (daughter of former Moderator Lois Wilson [1980–1982]) quoted in McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

all, you can't believe anything" would certainly not "derive any comfort" from the New Curriculum.⁴⁷ St. George's United Church (Lorne Pierce's home church) informed its members that "the future strength of the United Church lies with the New Curriculum."⁴⁸

Rev. John Bergen, pastor of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Drumheller, Alberta, disagreed, charging that the aims of the New Curriculum could be "equated with Communism" in "undermining and destroying every bit of Christianity, the foundation on which nations are built."⁴⁹ One might have expected most opposition to come from generally conservative Alberta, but instead, the protest was largely Toronto-based. Overall, Calgarians were said to favour the New Curriculum, even more so than Canadians did overall. After a news-agency-sponsored poll, one Calgary paper reported: "Despite previous controversy, only 13.5 per cent opposed the United Church's changes, following the explanation that the Biblical stories under discussion have not been dismissed as fairy tales, but are being considered as symbolic, that than literal and scientific fact. Only 12.3 per cent of Calgarians were opposed."⁵⁰ Rev. David Cline of Calgary, Alberta, wrote that the "Study books are being written by the wisest theologians of our church. In these books our Christianity is held up to the light of the vast amount of critical scientific

⁴⁷ Richard Loesch, "New United Church Curriculum Written to Be Comprehended," *London Free Press*, 20 November 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁴⁸ St. George's United Church bulletin, sent by General Council Secretary Rev. Ernest E. Long to Peter Gordon White, undated. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁴⁹ "Minister Attacks New Curriculum," clipping from Calgary, Alberta. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵⁰ "Calgarians Favor New Curriculum," n.d., uncredited. NC Box 273, File 1.

study of the past 200 years and emerges more powerful than ever.”⁵¹

Allen Spraggett, religion writer for the *Toronto Star*, began the storm of press with a fairly even-handed front-page article and an inside review, calling the New Curriculum a “new, startling, stimulating and controversial Sunday school curriculum” that “aims to provide a balanced, understandable, rounded, outspokenly modern and liberal presentation of the Christian faith.”⁵² Spraggett quoted White’s assessment of the project as

the most ambitious, the most comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum of its kind yet launched in Canada. [...] It has involved the mind of the whole United Church. In fact, few if any projects since church union in 1925 have been so widely based in the life of the church as this one is. [...] The purpose being to] make the Christian faith relevant in the jet age [...] and] above all else, to be open, frank and utterly honest.

The second half of the review dealt with the issue of biblical myth, and the new, rational interpretations of the first eleven books of Genesis, including White’s own version, from *The Mystery of the Rock*, of the parting of the Red Sea as chariots getting stuck in the mud at low tide and then drowning at high tide while the light-footed Jews made their way through at low tide, aided by a steady wind that made the waters shallower than usual. Spraggett left readers to come to their own conclusions by neglecting to provide one of his own. The title over the review — “New Child Text at Odds with Bible” — and the date of publication — July 4th — practically assured that there would be fireworks

⁵¹ Rev. David Cline, “Our Churches Speak: Actions Follow Words in Christian Education,” clipping from Calgary, Alberta. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵² Allen Spraggett, “New Child Text at Odds with Bible,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 July 1964. NC Box 273, File 6.

ahead.

Some members of the Evangelical United Brethren were opposed to the NC but that did not stop the denomination from joining the United Church in 1966. More criticism came from members of the Baptist church in Canada. There were even calls to ban it, despite the fact that the Baptists had co-published the NC with the United Church. However, a group of Baptist ministers from Ottawa wrote that banning the NC went against “the Baptist concept of spiritual liberty.” They concluded that “experience warns that no curriculum can be expected to gain universal acceptance among us [... but] it is easier to unite in rejecting what is offered than to agree on what should be accepted.”⁵³ The editor of Baptist Sunday school publications, Rev. Frederick Helps, also defended it, saying, “If this material is accepted in our Baptist churches it will be a very great step forward. It will strengthen the faith of young people.”⁵⁴

Rev. John Koulouras, a Greek Orthodox priest who had not even read the material⁵⁵ was quoted as saying that “Instead of purifying the Bible they are corrupting it. And rather than preserving a Christian religion they are transforming it into a humanitarian religion with the truths of the church fathers eradicated. [...] They are teaching that Christ was a fraud.” He accused

⁵³ “A Recall to the Baptist Principle of Spiritual Liberty by a Group of Ottawa Ministers.” NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵⁴ Spraggett, “Virgin Birth, Goliath,” 1.

⁵⁵ “Mr. Koulouras admitted that he had not seen the New Curriculum nor read one word of the books thus far published; neither had he read the Statement of Faith or the Catechism. His interview was based entirely on newspaper reports of comments by people who themselves had no knowledge of the Curriculum. Nothing need be said about the propriety or ethics of giving such an interview.” “Pastoral Letter to Congregations Answers Curriculum Criticisms,” *The Jarvis Record* (Jarvis, Ontario), 22 October 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

United Church people of being “modern, lazy Christians [...] being led astray by their leaders” and “wondered when the United Church would have a book burning of all their old texts.”⁵⁶ The Catholic Church, however, was more conciliatory, with columnist Father Roberts agreeing with the United Church’s use of the word “myth” while disagreeing, of course, with the idea that Mary was not a virgin but rather a young girl and that “virgin” was a mistranslation of the original text.⁵⁷

An editorial in the *Peterborough Examiner* asserted that “we have moved to a new understanding of mythology, how it arises, and how it comes to substitute for knowledge” and proposed that “there is something glorious about our ability to relegate yet more myth to heritage and to replace it with true knowledge. [...] to reasonable men it must appear as an act of worship that we are gradually less fettered to the imperfect imaginings of our forbears as our real experience increases. [...] To suppose that we shall remain children in the face of all mystery [...] is to ignore the tangible facts of our experience.”⁵⁸

Jim Fairfield criticized the United Church in his column of 8 August 1964, saying, “The miraculous element has been all but pruned from their books” because the “‘seeing is believing’ world has overpowered the church”⁵⁹ but he recanted his stance a few months later, saying “I goofed.” He confessed

⁵⁶ Aubrey Wice, “They Are Teaching that Christ Was a Fraud,” *Toronto Telegram*, 3 October 1964. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵⁷ Father Roberts, “Ecumenical News Notes,” *The B.C. Catholic* (Vancouver, B.C.), 16 July 1964. NC Box 273, File 1. See also “Catholics Agree Bible Part ‘Myth’: U.C. Editor,” *Toronto Star*, September 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵⁸ “The Bible in Sunday School,” *Peterborough Examiner*, 10 October 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵⁹ Jim Fairfield, “In His Service: Has the United Church Goofed?” *The Evening Reporter* (Galt, Ontario), 8 August 1964, 7. NC Box 273, File 1.

that he had “sounded off” about the curriculum without having done “sufficient research.” His revised position was that “the miracles of the Bible clutter up a clearer view of God ... by stopping man’s vision short upon the spectacular and the ‘legendary’. Therefore miracles almost hinder the gospel of the United Church curriculum.”⁶⁰

Hugh Garner’s self-serving, misogynistic diatribe against “stupid mothers” and “the unintelligent spinster Sunday School teachers of 40 years ago” made it plain that it was too late to interest him in any updates the United Church might make to curriculum even if they had repudiated the “angels with wings like a dragonfly’s [that] had as much appeal to me as a female executive panel of the WCTU” [Women’s Christian Temperance Union].⁶¹ On the other hand, Gary Lautens, a humour columnist for the *Toronto Star*, did not appreciate the application of reason to Genesis and complained that “[o]nly atheists seem to have any imagination these days. [...] What’s left is this nice, young Jewish couple having a baby in a barn behind a Bethlehem hotel. Now aren’t you ashamed of yourself for dreaming up all that other stuff?”⁶²

The Unitarians, for their part, praised the United Church as “moving as fast, as significantly, and as courageously as anyone could possibly hope.” However, they found their own liberal turf — the “trenches we Unitarians left only two or three or — at most — four decades ago” — invaded by the New

⁶⁰ Jim Fairfield, “In His Service: Apologies in Order,” *Sarnia Observer* (Sarnia, Ontario), 7 November 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶¹ Hugh Garner, “Biblical Myths: A Recantation,” n.d., n.p. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶² Gary Lautens, “Even Religion Gets New Image,” *Toronto Star*, 6 July 1964. NC Box 273, File 3.

Curriculum; they would have to move onto new ground to look for “achingly sensitive questions” such as “foreign policy, automated society, and modern sexual standards.”⁶³

Besides all the columns, the newspapers were inundated with hundreds of letters about the New Curriculum, but White characterized many of these as being from people “who read their newspaper religiously and their Bible intermittently.” He stressed to General Council that “The New Curriculum reflects faithfully the substance of the Christian faith, as commonly held among us [... and that through it] we may open our lives to the Living Word of God. No United Church member need be uncertain, nor embarrassed, nor apologetic for the teaching program of our church.”⁶⁴ General Council, of course, endorsed this position, “rejoicing that most of our congregations and Sunday Schools are now using the New Curriculum materials” and that “enthusiastic reports” were coming in of “quicken interest” on the part of children, teenagers, adults, and especially Sunday school teachers.⁶⁵ Criticism persisted, however, as

Pentecostal and Evangelistic groups issued statements endorsing the Bible, supporting God, and damning the United Church. Groups which had never seen United Church Publications in the past solemnly declared that they would never look at them in the future [...] Passionate pleas were issued to United Church members to leave their church.⁶⁶

That exodus did, in fact, happen, but not because of any fundamentalist flack;

⁶³ “Unitarians Must Take New Shock Treatment,” *Mirror*, 14 October 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁴ “Editor Gets Overwhelming Endorsement for the New Curriculum,” *Timmins Press* (Timmins, Ontario), 28 November 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁵ “Pastoral Letter to Congregations Answers Curriculum Criticisms,” *The Jarvis Record* (Jarvis, Ontario), 22 October 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁶ Peter Gordon White quoted in A. C. Forrest, “The Next Generation: The Crisis and the New Curriculum,” *Observer*, 15 February 1965, 44.

rather, it happened because of the demographic “maelstrom”⁶⁷ of the late 1960s when people began to reject religion as being too confining, not too permissive, as the United Church stood accused. As one document about education in the church in the 1970s put it,

At the beginning of the 70’s we seem to be suffering from ‘future shock.’ Too many changes are taking place too rapidly for too many people. ‘Plurality’ is the rule in church and society. Some people are angry that what was ‘right’ yesterday is not solving today’s problems. Others look back on the ‘successful’ years with nostalgia, and resent further change.⁶⁸

What no one could have predicted, even by “scientific methods,” was the huge demographic and societal changes that were about to sweep the nation in the late 1960s.⁶⁹ The whole idea behind the NC was to be ahead of the times, something that the United Church has become known for over the years. But even as the NC was going to press, there was a decline in Sunday School attendance that only increased over the subsequent years. White’s editorial staff faced “large problems [...] regarding materials to be published in the 70’s for the Church. This period of change must be taken seriously — how shall we communicate the word to the Church, through what media? Trends today [range] from books to persons, trends from biblical content to life trends, etc.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Unattributed quote from “Brief History of the New Curriculum” by Olive D. Sparling (see Appendix 6).

⁶⁸ Board of Christian Education, “Education in the Church in the 70’s: Recommendations and proposals from The Board of Christian Education for consideration by Commissioners to the 24th General Council” (1970). UCCA.

⁶⁹ *Observer* editor Al Forrest was opposed to the secularism that began to sweep the nation in the late 1960s, calling it “the faith of Expo ’67” or “the belief that man can make it on his own, achieve and bring about a wholeness within his life without spiritual help.” He pointed to the inherent contradiction of such secularism, saying, “The spread of agnosticism and atheism today is also accompanied by a great search for some kind of affirmation” (“Rejecting religion, going it alone described as new faith of our time,” *London Free Press*, n.d., n.p.).

⁷⁰ Peter Gordon White, Report to BP AGM 20–21 April 1967, 603.

Although one Sunday school teacher had thought the New Curriculum would be the answer to his prayers about dropouts,⁷¹ by 1966, the *Toronto Telegram* reported, 100,000 teenagers had disappeared from the rolls of United Church Sunday schools. The United Church was not alone in this exodus; the Anglicans reported a drop of 70,000 and one Lutheran minister bemoaned the fact that “the church has practically done handsprings to keep these kids interested” to no avail.⁷²

By 1967, United Church curriculum was facing heavy losses and an ever-declining market, though shifts were made in order to try to address these problems.⁷³ By October 1967, the second round of sales for Year 1 materials showed a sales drop of \$80,000 and a suggested price increase of thirty percent and printing on a cheaper grade of paper in order to compensate. The Circulation Department reported that “this year there have been almost no additional orders for Curriculum materials after the original orders were received — this was not the case a year ago. Sunday School attendance has dropped considerably since last year.”⁷⁴

One reason for the sharp decline in sales in 1967, perhaps not anticipated in the original planning, was that, instead of giving the curriculum books to Sunday school students to keep, as they did with illustrated story papers and

⁷¹ Len Dean, “New Curriculum Answer to Prayer” [Letter to the Editor], *Windsor Star*, 12 December 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁷² Aubrey Wice, “In Sunday Schools, ‘Handsprings’ Don’t Help,” *Toronto Telegram*, 1 October 1966. NC Box 273, File 6.

⁷³ See Appendix 7 for Projected Financial Figures, 18 May 1967. BP Executive Minutes, 23 June 1967, 3–4. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

⁷⁴ BP Executive Minutes, 31 October 1967, 2. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

other periodicals, the hardcover curriculum books were being treated as class sets, like school textbooks. Sales in the second selling year (1967) of Year 1 materials therefore were minimal. This meant financial disaster, as the costs of developing the New Curriculum had to be amortized over the entire projected nine-year selling cycle; Year 1 materials needed strong sales in 1964, 1967, and 1970, not just in 1964. With churches deciding not to give the books to the students to keep — an understandable decision due to their cost and how sturdily they had been made — churches were unwittingly undermining both the financial viability of the NC and perhaps the spiritual viability of their students. With the NC texts shelved at the church instead of with the student, the dropout rate continued to mount.

White's former Sunday school department did not fare well during the late 1960s after he had left to take up new posts in the head office of the church. The declining circulation of their publications was blamed on the fact that "the educational needs of the Church have changed radically and the days of mass circulation may have disappeared."⁷⁵ Financially this meant that the anticipated deficit for 1970 would "amount to \$80,000, and there has been no provision for funding this deficit."⁷⁶ Peter Gordon White took too much of the blame upon himself for these financial problems. In fact, demographics were clearly working against the NC. When White was hired in 1953, Canadians were predominantly a church-going, baby-producing society; when the NC was

⁷⁵ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, January 9, 1970, 21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

ready for sale in the late 1960s, however, the authority-rejecting, free-loving hippie era had already begun. The decline in Sunday school enrollment between 1953 and 1967 was staggering, and although the NC more than doubled its sales targets in 1964, the drop in sales that followed could not be overcome.

White was obviously not responsible for the changing demographics. He had rather hoped that his New Curriculum would spark a renewed interest in religion. Though there was some flower-power-fuelled resurgence in religion that went along with the drug-fuelled haze of the Age of Aquarius, it was more geared to such ultra-colloquial Bible translations as those found in the books of Carl F. Burke. *God is Beautiful, Man* (1969), for example, entitles the story of the resurrection as “After Jesus Busts out of the Grave.”⁷⁷

In 1971, revisions to the New Curriculum were already required, even though the original plan was to cycle through the material three times (nine years) before changes would be made. As Peter Gordon White explained it for the News release announcing some of the new material, “The United Church’s ‘new curriculum’ was one giant leap forward seven years ago. But you don’t stand still after a leap. The momentum carries you forward.” The new material included loose-leaf folders, cassette tapes, and teacher training materials that could be “changed quickly and cheaply in response to newer, more open concepts of learning, and in response to a growing mood of continuous change in the

⁷⁷ Carl F. Burke, *God Is Beautiful, Man: Interpretations of Bible passages and stories, as told by some of God’s bad-tempered angels with busted halos to Carl F. Burke* (New York: Association Press, 1969), 92.

church and in society.” And in a clear attempt to pour new wine into old wineskins, he said, “A curriculum is simply a large plan to help living and learning. So a curriculum is really as ‘new’ as the people who use it.”⁷⁸

In 1974, a decade after the New Curriculum had been launched into Sunday schools, Peter Gordon White looked back on the project from the benefit of hindsight: “It was a new style of Christian education — a new point of view about what religion is, and how learning comes about”⁷⁹:

One of the big changes, I think, was the point of view that religion [...] was about life issues. It wasn’t something remote, or packaged in a time slot. We challenged the assumption that “on Sunday we’ll be religious. And religion will be taught in the basement between 10 and 11 a.m.”

The other turn-around was the idea that Christian education was for little kids and that you grew up and away from it.

It started by saying, “Christian education is for adults and families and their children.” [...]

There was no use whatever thinking that we were going to educate little children and that they would grow up to be better Christians than the previous generation. Because people who are doing the educating communicate their personal value system. How they act, what they do, is what their children learn from them. Then you discover how vitally important those early years are for life.⁸⁰

On the “storm” created inside and outside the church by the New Curriculum, White said,

There was a lot of turbulence. Before General Council in Newfoundland in 1964 there even was a movement saying, “we’ve got to repudiate this — these people who are talking about the Scriptures in this way are undermining the faith.”

It was attacked by press and TV from outside the United Church. Many

⁷⁸ UCC News Release, “United Church backs curriculum material with variety of resources...” Press and Information Services, October 1971. UCCA.

⁷⁹ Peter Gordon White, “Profile,” 4. UCCA biographical file W7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

people thought, “ah! that shows that the main line United Church is really not believing in the Bible, doesn’t believe in God.” We were accused of all sorts of evils, private and public.

What happened through the turmoil? More than 90 per [sic] of all the churches in the United Church of Canada introduced the new curriculum to their people. It was as high at one point as 94.5 per cent.

We have to remember that this was by free choice. It was voluntary. They didn’t have to buy it or teach it.⁸¹

The new curriculum was a huge editorial triumph in the United Church, exceeding its sales projections in the first year despite any controversy generated by fundamentalists. The church was grateful to White for succeeding with such an enormous project and justifiably promoted him to more responsibility, first to the position of Secretary of the Board of Christian Education, then to Deputy Secretary of Ministry, Personnel, and Education (MP&E) when the new Divisional system was implemented, and then to Deputy Secretary of General Council itself. The issues he dealt with in these positions ranged from continuing education to theology and faith to ecumenism (dialoguing with the Roman Catholics, the Jews, and the World Council of Churches). He served General Council from 1979 until his retirement in 1985, which he compared to Prospero in *The Tempest*: “it’s time to divest of power, influence and responsibility and stop running things.”⁸² In his obituary of White, Bruce McLeod, himself a former Moderator of the United Church (1972–1974), called White “the best moderator we never had.”⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., 3–4.

⁸² *Observer*, July 1985.

⁸³ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

Unfortunately for The Ryerson Press, the losses due to problems with production costs and circulation, a lack of repeat sales, and the huge dropout rate in Sunday schools that began just after the New Curriculum was published left the church with very few alternatives to make up the financial losses. Selling their profitable, secular textbook line, which was hitched to the trade division, was the only remaining way to make money from The Ryerson Press.

CHAPTER 5

THE UNITED CHURCH OBSERVER:
AL FORREST, 1955–1978

The principal guardians of our liberties are the Church and the press. No publishing institution is so essential as the Church press. It is the only publishing business whose first concern is not profit. It is the only one dedicated to cultural and spiritual values above all else.

— Lorne Pierce¹

Along with the New Curriculum, the other jewel in the crown of United Church publishing was *The United Church Observer*. Unlike The Ryerson Press and the New Curriculum, however, the *Observer* managed to survive the rock of church ownership and the hard place of Canadian publishing and is still publishing today.² Although the Woods, Gordon Report clearly identified the *Observer* as a major contributor to the debts of The Ryerson Press,³ it was, as the successor to the *Christian Guardian*, too valuable an asset for the church to lose. Its survival is explained by two key factors: its heavy subsidization by the church throughout the 1960s,⁴ and the strong leadership of its editor from 1955 to 1978, Rev. Al Forrest. Forrest's unwillingness to sacrifice the *Observer*— either to the inefficient printing plant of The Ryerson Press, or to the United Church policy of using only unionized printers if a job had to go outside of its own plant, or

¹ Lorne Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956. LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce.

² See the *Observer* website: <<http://www.ucobserver.org/>>.

³ See Appendix 4, Woods, Gordon's 5-year Forecast, 1963–1967.

⁴ Currently, it receives only seven percent of its funding from the United Church. See <<http://ucobserver.org/about/>>.

even to United Church ownership itself—ensured its survival.

Alfred Clinton Forrest (1916–1978),⁵ commonly known as “Al,” became editor of *The United Church Observer* on 1 September 1955, taking over from retiring editor Rev. Alexander James Wilson. At the University of Toronto, Forrest had studied arts at Victoria College and theology at Emmanuel College; he was editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, *The Varsity*, and wrote sports copy for the *Globe & Mail*. Forrest was ordained in 1940, serving three churches as minister and the RCAF as chaplain. Before coming to the *Observer*, he also had a syndicated newspaper column, “A Cleric Comments.”

By 1955, the United Church no longer had a separate newspaper and magazine, as the *Canadian Methodist Magazine* (1875–1906) had folded and the *Christian Guardian*, after church union in 1925, had become *The New Outlook* and then, in 1939, *The United Church Observer*. The *Observer* tried to combine both the weekly newspaper and monthly magazine formats by providing a bimonthly magazine. The prospectus for advertising released in 1955 promised that “Under the new Editor, *The Observer* will forge ahead into the future with renewed vigour and energy. The best possible editorial techniques will be applied to the publication to popularize it to the fullest extent among United Church congregations.” Circulation figures were quoted as 11,500 in 1939,⁶

⁵ UCCA biographical file F6; obituary *Globe and Mail*, 28 December 1978; *Who's Who in Religion*, 2nd ed.

⁶ *The New Outlook*, reported Associate Book Steward Donald M. Solandt, had a circulation of 27,567 in 1932, a loss of less than three percent from the previous year despite the Depression, but the figure continued to sink until 1939, when the *Observer* took over (Donald M. Solandt, Report to BP, 15 March 1932, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, 2). See Appendix 8 for circulation figures for the *Observer*.

44,954 in 1952, 85,584 in 1953, 120,000 in 1954, and 150,000 in 1955, “the rapid growth in circulation” in the previous two years being attributed “in part to the popular ‘Every Family Plan’” that distributed the magazine through local churches. It was promised that with Forrest’s “experienced editorial hand on its pulse, *The Observer* is destined to reach new heights in the future.” He was certainly ambitious, and wanted to produce or purchase a second publication⁷ and to distribute the *Observer* at newsstands.⁸

Five years after his appointment, in 1960, Huntingdon University, a liberal arts campus in Sudbury, bestowed on Forrest an honorary Doctor of Divinity. In 1962, he was the guest speaker at the dinner meeting of the Board of Publication AGM at the King Edward Hotel, an honour almost as great.⁹ By then he had proven himself as an “in the trenches” editor: “His reports [...] datelined from points in the USSR, Middle East, South Africa, the Congo, Cuba, Scandinavia, Austria and Germany. He once covered 22 African countries in 10 weeks.”¹⁰ Some of these trips resulted in a book, published by The Ryerson Press, *Not Tomorrow, Now: The Middle East and Africa Today* (1960) on economic and political conditions. As editor of the *Observer*, Forrest had “gained a reputation of not mincing words in editorials on controversial topics.” One colleague called Forrest “media savvy and pushy,”¹¹ though surely it was best to be media savvy if one were part of the media. He was considered overly radical

⁷ BP AGM 27 April 1959. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2, 11–12.

⁸ BP AGM 18–19 April 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3, 553.

⁹ BP AGM 30 April–1 May 1962. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3, 540–547.

¹⁰ Al Forrest, “Profile,” undated, UCC news, UCCA biographical file.

¹¹ John Robert Colombo, interview with the author, 11 May 2013, Columbus Centre, Toronto.

in some areas and overly conservative in others, once saying that choir women “have no business wearing ear-rings or other flashy jewelry.” Able to consider both sides of an argument and to change his mind, he criticized Canadian immigration policies in 1962, saying that they “favoured Roman Catholics” but he was also an observer at Vatican II, which ran from October 1962 to December 1965, and reported that Pope John XXIII was “the best pope Protestants ever had.” He declared, “it’s better to have a Protestant expert on Vatican matters than a cardinal.”¹² He also noted that while Pierre Berton, Charles Templeton, and Gordon Sinclair were “the most influential commentators on religion in English Canada” (and all friends of his) they were all atheists. “While atheism certainly does not disqualify a man from making profound and helpful comments on religion,” he noted, “it would be helpful if the media produced more men of equal competence in communication but greater profundity of understanding.”¹³

In fact, since taking over the editorship of the *Observer*, Forrest had made quite a stir in journalistic circles, never shying away from controversy. He quipped that he had been called “everything but a Christian” and those who wanted the church to mind its own business neglected to understand that the business of the church paper was to cover “anything that comes between a man and his God.”¹⁴ Consequently, Forrest managed to offend Unitarians, Catholics,

¹² “Dr. A. C. Forrest Appeals for Christian Reporting.” News Release, n.d. (c. 1970), UCCA biographical file.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Forrest qtd. in Allen Spraggett, “A. C. Forrest: ‘I’ve Been Called Everything But a Christian,’” *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 March 1963, 51.

Jews, big business, organized labour, and even the Toronto Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. “The main problem, he explained was “that people confuse our editorials with the official position of the United Church. The editorials are my responsibility and mine alone.” It was hard to argue with his success, however, as circulation doubled to 334,000 by 1963, “making the *Observer* the biggest denominational publication in the Commonwealth.” By then, over 2800 United Churches were enrolled in the Every Family Plan.¹⁵

Such a huge circulation, along with the projected huge circulation of the New Curriculum, required a huge printing press. In 1958, plans to buy such a press were underway with Mr. Scott, Assistant General Manager, and Mr. Neville, Factory Manager, “in Britain and Europe during May to investigate several types of press equipment.”¹⁶ The next year, it was Dr. Dickinson’s turn to visit the German firm of Albert Frankenthal regarding the new web-fed rotary press “that the Ryerson Press intended to buy.”¹⁷ The problem with such a large purchase was twofold: 1) it had to be amortized over up to a decade of steady, efficient work; and 2) it had to be the most up-to-date piece of equipment the plant owned in order not to become obsolete in a time of rapidly shifting printing technology. Unfortunately, it failed on both counts. In the first place, the printers took so long to get the machine running properly that it was never as efficient as it should have been, which forced the prices of the periodicals up

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ BP AGM 28–29 April 1958. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2, 6.

¹⁷ BP AGM 27 April 1959. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2, 9–10.

and the profit margins down. Second, the machine was obsolete almost before the ink in the contract to buy it was dry. Rotary presses were fast being replaced by offset technology. The average capital expenditure for the plant — including such things as a new freight elevator (\$25,000) — was about \$125,000 a year¹⁸; the new German press cost around \$650,000 — over five years worth of expenses in one piece of equipment.

Because of the inefficiency of the press, subscription prices were forced upwards; however, most *Observer* subscribers were enrolled through the Every Family Plan, which was wholly or partially subsidized by their church. Whenever subscription prices went up, even 10¢ a year per subscription, churches pruned their subscriber lists to compensate. In April 1963, Forrest had to report a loss of 20,000 subscribers due to increased rates.¹⁹ No wonder the church preferred to subsidize the *Observer* rather than increase subscription prices.²⁰ A readership survey showed that the publication was well thought of and that the female readership was good, although “the ladies ... miss The Missionary Monthly.”²¹ As well, “Mr. Louis Foisey-Foley, Editor of Credo [the denominational periodical in French] reported that The Observer is helpful to him in his work with French-Canadian Protestants.”²²

As C. H. Dickinson pointed out in “The Story of My Life,” labour

¹⁸ Ibid., 9–10.

¹⁹ BP AGM 18–19 April 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3, 553.

²⁰ BP AGM 24–25 April 1961. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2, 535.

²¹ Before 1962, when the United Church Women (UCW) was formed, the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS) was the main outlet for female outreach work in the church. BP AGM 18–19 April 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3, 553.

²² Ibid., 553.

negotiations were “a major occupation which fell to my lot as general manager. And the church was supposed to be a model of good relations with its workers.”²³ In other words, it was official United Church policy to be pro-union. Despite this, there were some who thought that the church had gone too far in its own labour relations and that the Manufacturing Department, a union shop, had far too much power over the rest of The Ryerson Press. Forrest was certainly in this camp, but he was not alone. A memo signed V. P. S. [Vic Seary] to Dickinson on 6 March 1962 outlines the problems with “the source of supply,” the relationship between the publishing house and the printing plant:

It is my understanding that Ryerson and his associates bought a press in order to print publications required by the church and the schools. The press was an auxiliary of the publication side. Now the cart is firmly fixed before the horse. There is a tacit assumption on the part of the top management that the Book Department exists to feed business to the printing side. This situation grew up during the Depression, when, over and over again we published books that had marginal sales possibilities — and that is praising them — because the printing management came begging for printing “So we won’t have to lay off the boys.” It has now progressed to the point where the Book Department is considered to be failing in its function if it does not hand an enormous book order to the factory every Spring — and accept the prices set by the factory for the work done. We are still protecting “the boys.”

The system by which the Book Department pays factory cost plus ten percent for the product of the factory is grossly unfair to the Department since it enables the factory to include within its charges the cost of its errors, its wasted time and materials, its inefficiency. In fact, the more inefficient it becomes the higher its profits at the expense of its best customer [...] recently we got an estimate from another printer that was exactly 50% lower than that given by the factory.²⁴ [...] In any group of texts now offered [to] the schools, the Ryerson text is almost invariably the highest priced, and to remain in competition we often have to cut prices and shear profits. [...] The situation as regards Book Department

²³ C. H. Dickinson, “The Story of My Life” [unpublished], UCCA biographical file on Dickinson, 12–13.

²⁴ This may be the same incident referred to by John Robert Colombo (see Chapter 2).

sales and profits is that we are obliged to have the factory shackled to our leg and then [are] criticised by those who rivet on the shackle because we do not win races.²⁵

The Woods, Gordon consultants did not share this dire view of the Manufacturing Department, however, arguing that more, not less investment was needed in the plant in order to keep it competitive. Progress Report No. 4, submitted in November 1963, looked at the Manufacturing Department and came to two conclusions: 1) that the department was “[r]easonably well run when due consideration is given to certain difficulties under which it is now operating”; and 2) that “[c]hanges in customer requirements and advances in technology will make it necessary to replace or modify certain pieces of equipment in the near future.” They noted that the department operated on a one-shift basis, with some overtime and sometimes a second shift on the web press, but could be more profitable if it ran two shifts, which would mean having enough business to keep running. They also found that many presses were underutilized because the equipment was outdated. In noting that “[t]he design of printing presses has improved very rapidly during the past 50 years,” they proceeded to show that the efficiency could be “illustrated by comparing three types of letter presses that the Department is now using”:

<u>Type of Press</u>	<u>Production per hour</u>
Large flat bed	1,000 sheets; one colour
Sheet fed rotary	3,500 sheets; two colours
Web fed rotary	8,000 sheets; four colours

²⁵ Memo, 6 March 1962, V. P. S. to C. H. Dickinson. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2. Though there is much interesting information here, Box 2 could just be labelled “Misc.” throughout. None of the folders is labelled, nothing is in order, and some papers are tied together with 50-year-old string.

An indication of the significance of these advances can be gained from the fact that a large flat bed press would have to be run for 32 hours in order to produce the 8,000 four colour sheets that the web press will produce in one hour.

The consultants recommended replacing the old flatbed presses with new offsets — at a cost of \$300,000 to \$500,000 — and noted that when offset can be used to photograph a book for a reprint, it saves seven dollars a page over re-composing it. The overall tone of the report is in great sympathy with the plant, perhaps because printing is the solid, tangible sort of business that can be understood by accounting principles whereas publishing, especially editing, is amorphous.

The “very very very expensive”²⁶ press — bought by the House for \$650,000 about two years before and blamed by John Webster Grant for the downfall of The Ryerson Press in his *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* article — was deemed to be “a good unit for printing the *Observer* and the Sunday School papers because of their comparatively long runs.” However, “[f]or all practical purposes there was no profit [for the manufacturing department] on the Sunday School Publications or on the *Observer* because difficulties with the press created excess costs and made it unrealistic to charge the Church any more than the actual cost.” The plant was supposed to use a twenty to twenty-five percent markup for outside customers and eight to ten percent for church departments. If they had been sticking to their markups, they would have made

²⁶ George L. Parker, interview by Nigel Beale, “Book Scholar George Parker on The Ryerson Press,” *The Biblio File*, 20 June 2011, <<http://thebibliofile.ca/book-scholar-george-parker-on-the-ryerson-press>> accessed 12 June 2013 (audio interview).

an extra \$208,000. They only made a two percent profit on outside work done on the web press because of the growing pains in getting used to it. The consultants noted that

from a cost standpoint, it is better to do work at no mark-up or even a slight loss than to have equipment standing idle because such work will at least make some contribution to overhead expenses. This may result in customers receiving different estimates at different times for identical jobs. However there does not appear to be any practical way to overcome this problem.

It is not clear whether the consultants thought this was really a problem or not. From the perspective of those forced to manufacture their publications in the inefficient plant, the cost was not low enough. The conclusion was that the plant was severely underutilized and falling behind in technology, making it unprofitable and uncompetitive:

Since 1954, the House has spent approx. \$1.6 million on machinery and equipment, of which \$650,000 was invested in the new Webb [sic] press. This indicates an average annual investment of \$160,000 over the ten-year period to 1963. Allowing for the high non-recurring element of expenditure on the new press, it is likely that investments will be in the area of \$125,000 annually in the next five years.

[...]

There appears to be little scope for significantly reducing the Manufacturing Department's costs except by increasing the volume of work. The present equipment is capable of producing a higher volume of letter press work but an increasing proportion of the total printing work is being done by the offset process and the Department is not well equipped to compete in this field. An offset press capable of producing 32 page book sections would likely meet this need. However, there would have to be assurance of a substantial volume of work for it in order to justify the large expenditure that would be involved.

Accordingly, business at the plant proceeded in much the same way it always

had since the Woods, Gordon Report had mandated no radical changes. By 1967, a few years removed from the report, the Manufacturing Department was planning new investments in equipment.²⁷ On the labour front, Ernest W. Scott reported that the House was in “negotiations with the Typographical Union and that some of their requests are unrealistic” and possibly that “negotiations may break down.” The Executive of the Board of Publication instructed their General Manager “to stand firm with other Publishers in the industry should negotiations come to an impasse.”²⁸

Whatever they thought of the Manufacturing Department, the Woods, Gordon consultants were impressed with the quality of the *Observer* and felt that it provided “a most valuable tie between the Church and its members. We also understand that the magazine is so highly regarded that the Church is not averse to subsidizing its production to a limited extent.” They recommended raising subscription prices, coming up with an action plan for increasing subscriptions, and diversifying its advertising base. Of the \$135,000 the *Observer* brought in from advertising revenue each year, \$45,000 came from the House and the United Church itself while only \$90,000 came from outside advertisers. Since there had been no increase in ad revenue under the sales firm Hall Linton & Associates, they recommended that the House handle advertising itself. They also recommended switching to a cheaper paper stock, reducing the number of pages per issue, and reducing the number of issues from twenty-two

²⁷ Mr. Williams, Manufacturing Department Report, BP AGM 20–21 April 1967. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3, 600.

²⁸ BP Executive Minutes, 31 October 1967. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

to twenty-one, which was not nearly drastic enough, as the *Observer* would not break even until it finally moved to a monthly format.²⁹ Woods, Gordon also “presumed that the United Church [would] pick up 50% of the loss on the *Observer* each year [\$239,000 overall], although this has never been definitely assured.” In fact, the church did continue to subsidize the *Observer* quite heavily throughout the 1960s.

In July 1967, just after the Six-Day War, Forrest travelled to Israel to report on the refugee situation. In 1968, he took a 10-month leave (September 1968 to June 1969) to report on the Middle East for the *Observer* and other church papers.³⁰ At the time, it was said that the *Christian Science Monitor* “was the only newspaper on the continent giving balanced information of the Arab–Israeli struggle.”³¹ Forrest’s resulting stories, which included substantiated charges that Israel had used napalm on the retreating Jordanian army and the fleeing refugees,³² led to charges of anti-Semitism against him because of his empathy with the Palestinian cause. He defended himself by saying that peace would not come to the Middle East “until there is an honest attempt by the world to solve the problems of the Palestinians.” He pointed out that Canadian media, including the *Toronto Telegram*, which he labeled as “out and out pro-Zionist,” probably because the “newspaper’s Middle East expert was a rabbi,” was only providing one side of the complex story of Israel and

²⁹ Woods, Gordon, *Conclusions and Recommendations*, 60–64.

³⁰ *Presbyterian Life*, the *United Church Herald* (United Church of Christ), *Together* (Methodist), the *Episcopalian* (Anglican), the *Lutheran*, and others.

³¹ A. C. Forrest, *The Unholy Land* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), 9.

³² *Ibid.* Forrest cites General Sir John Glubb and eyewitness testimony from Mr. Sami Oweida, 16–17.

Palestine.³³ He was opposed to the position of many Christians, including evangelist Billy Graham, who subscribed to the literal interpretation that Israel belonged only to the Jews for biblical reasons. In one speech, he challenged Graham, saying, “Seldom do we find a clearer exposition of the difference between Billy Graham’s Bible and ours than in his declaration that because God promised Abraham all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18) it should belong to modern Israel. [...] Only extreme Zionists would go so far.”³⁴ The public relations department of the United Church busily tried to explain Forrest’s position, issuing notes to news media in the form of an interview with Forrest. When asked, “How is it that so much controversy has surrounded your views on the Arab–Israeli conflict?” Forrest answered, “I have basically tried to be objective and give both sides, while the Canadian public has basically been given only the Israeli side. It has nothing to do with anti-Semitism.”³⁵ This controversy definitely informed the church’s decision to make Forrest the publisher of the *Observer*, thus putting the publication at arm’s-length from the church.³⁶ In the end, they decided to pursue this line not because of Forrest’s excellent arguments in favour of it and against being part of the Division of Communication (DivCom), but rather because the charges of anti-Semitism had started to come their way. “They were made of less stern stuff” than Forrest

³³ “Dr. A. C. Forrest Appeals for Christian Reporting.” News Release, n.d. (c. 1970), UCCA biographical file.

³⁴ “Forrest takes on Billy Graham over his narrow interpretation of scripture,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 February 1968, n.p.

³⁵ Notes to news media personnel, n.d., n.p. UCCA biographical file.

³⁶ James Taylor, email interview with the author, 29 May to 6 June 2013. See Appendix 9 for the entire edited interview.

“and quickly caved in.”³⁷

In November 1969, Forrest presented three alternatives forced by “the enormous increase in postal rates: 1) to make it a monthly magazine, slightly enlarged; 2) to publish it every three weeks; 3) to continue with twenty issues as at present, requiring a subsidy of \$100,000 a year.” Perhaps clinging to its distant history as the weekly *Christian Guardian*, the Executive objected to moving to a monthly format, preferring to provide a subsidy, and sent the matter back to DivCom for further consideration.³⁸ DivCom decided to stick with the status quo of twenty issues a year and continue to print the magazine in their own plant.³⁹

However, after fifteen years as editor, Forrest was not about to give up. “It was a continuing frustration to Dr. Forrest not to have control over circulation, finance and promotion activities of the magazine”⁴⁰ and in April 1970, he was back with a renewed pitch for a monthly format, stressing the annual deficits that would occur by maintaining twenty issues a year. As well, the printing plant was failing, as new investments in equipment had not been made, and the manufacturing department could no longer produce the *Observer*. Forrest also challenged the idea that the *Observer* should be produced in a union shop, prompting the Executive to refer the matter “to the Board of Evangelism and Social Service for study and report on the subject of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive, November 11, 12 and 13, 1969, 11.

³⁹ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, January 9, 1970, 23.

⁴⁰ Al Forrest, “Profile,” undated, UCC news, UCCA biographical file.

collective bargaining and the Church's policy respecting business contracts and union shops." Nevertheless, Forrest got what he wanted, and, as of 1 September 1970, on his fifteenth anniversary as editor and just weeks before the sale of The Ryerson Press, the *Observer* became a monthly magazine with Forrest as the publisher as well as the editor-in-chief.⁴¹ At least this arm of the old Board of Publication had survived the financial crisis (despite helping to cause it) and, within a few years, it "became self-supporting after 59 years in the red."⁴²

The controversy over Forrest's position on Israeli–Palestinian relations was renewed when Forrest's second book, *The Unholy Land*, was released by McClelland & Stewart in 1971. "The book, based on personal observations by Dr. Forrest, says there will be no peace in the Middle East 'until the poor refugee gets a decent chance to live a decent life in his own land.' [...] It also compares Israel unfavourably with South Africa and Rhodesia 'when it comes to practicing apartheid and keeping another race in its place and misleading the world about it.'"⁴³ Forrest was again accused by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith of being anti-Semitic and Toronto Rabbi Gunther Plaut accused him of becoming "a virtual adjunct of the Arab propaganda office." Coles bookstores pulled the book from their shelves, saying it was not because of the controversy but because of sales, an impossible explanation since it was a bestseller.⁴⁴

However, as with all controversial issues, not everyone sided with Plaut; Jewish

⁴¹ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive, April 28, 29 and 30, 1970, 28.

⁴² A. C. Forrest, obituary, *Toronto Star*, 28 December 1978.

⁴³ "Coles stores remove book criticizing Israel," *London Free Press*, 20 March 1971, n.p.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

writer Reubin Slonim tried to exonerate Forrest in his 1977 book called *Family Quarrel: The United Church and the Jews*, published by Clarke, Irwin.⁴⁵

Chapter 8 of *The Unholy Land* documents some of the “slander and libel” levelled against Forrest because of his stance on the Palestinian situation. The charges of anti-Semitism started in 1967 and kept up until Forrest’s death in 1978. The telephone harassment was so bad that Forrest’s family insisted on getting an unlisted number. “Another A. C. Forrest in the Toronto telephone directory had to delist too.”⁴⁶ A rabbi once told him, “You’ll have a page in Jewish history along with Adolf Hitler.”⁴⁷ A letter to the editor in the *Jerusalem Post* accused him of contributing to the next war, saying, “your pen [...] will, like a sword of war, drip with the blood of the wounded and dead on both sides.”⁴⁸

Forrest had this to say about all the harassment:

During one period of bitter attack on me I asked Pierre Berton, Canada’s ablest — and I suppose most controversial — author, editor, and television personality, about it. Berton and fellow broadcaster, Charles Templeton, had come to my defense on a programme when I had been called an anti-Semite for criticising Israel, Berton had an impeccable record as a friend to the Jews and other minorities. I thought I had, too.

“Why are they zeroing in on me?” I asked him. “Many have been more critical of Israel and less critical of the Arabs than I have.”

“It’s because you keep on the refugee problem,” he said. “Every Jew in the world feels guilty about that. It’s when you criticise people where their guilt complexes are that you get such a reaction.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Kenneth Bagnell, review of *Family Quarrel: The United Church and the Jews*, *Globe & Mail*, 19 February 1977.

⁴⁶ Forrest, *The Unholy Land*, 44.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

William Heine, editor of the *London Free Press* and the Chair of DivCom from 1968 to 1970, agreed that the topic was inevitably polarizing:

Writers who try to present the Arab view are vociferously condemned privately and in public; every possible kind of pressure is exerted to try to silence the unwelcome opinion, and as a last resort charges of anti-Semitism have been levelled. It makes writers wary — it also makes them mad. The Arabs, incidentally, are the same; anything less than complete agreement is often considered gross criticism and resented vigorously.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Forrest stood firm, with the church firmly behind him: “I have often been asked,” he wrote, “if I have been pressured by my church to shut up or get out. It’s not that kind of church. [...] The pastor in his pulpit and the editor of a church paper are still the freest men in the world when it comes to saying forthrightly what they believe to be true.”⁵¹

In the summer of 1977, Al Forrest ran for the post of Moderator of the United Church, losing to George M. Tuttle on the final ballot. He returned to his desk at the *Observer* to resume the job of reporting and commenting on his rival’s work. On 27 December 1978, at the age of 62, Al Forrest died of a heart attack while sitting in his favourite chair in his living room, reading a book on Bonhoeffer.⁵² Besides his family, Forrest also left behind a grieving staff at the *Observer* and hundreds of friends, colleagues, and admirers. That night on

⁵⁰ Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵² Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor who spoke out against the Nazis for their policies, especially euthanasia and genocide. Hitler’s positioning himself as an idol and his insistence that the Third Reich represented God’s blessing on the resurrection of the German people Bonhoeffer said “mocks God.” He was arrested in 1943 and hanged in April 1945, twenty-three days before the German surrender. He is considered one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century and a Protestant martyr.

Global News, anchor Peter Trueman ended the newscast with one of the first of many tributes to Forrest:

[...] There aren't many people, in or out of the church, that I would describe as Christian gentlemen, but Al Forrest was one of them, in every sense of both words. He was a practicing Christian — that is, he studied the words of Jesus Christ and tried to live by them — and he was a gentle man. He was also an excellent journalist. He wrote well, he was excited by the things he wrote about, and he was not afraid of the truth. I never really talked to him about the subject which got him into hot water — namely his views on the Middle East. But I didn't really have to. I knew Al Forrest well enough to know that whatever his critics said, he wasn't anti-Semitic. ... What Al Forrest wanted through all those years of controversy was a fair shake for the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, particularly in the Canadian media. I think he was right in assuming they haven't had it. But it took a great deal of courage, both as a churchman and a journalist, to say it. Inevitably, he was misunderstood.

More tributes poured in, dozens of which were printed in the *Observer*.

William C. Heine wrote this of him: “Years ago when relatively new at the job he put his philosophy as an editor in one sentence: ‘If you’re not prepared to stand out front and get shot at, you’d better get back in line.’”⁵³ His bravery in standing up for the Palestinian people had certainly gotten him “shot at” by many of his fellow Canadians, but it earned him the lasting admiration of others. The day after his death, a CNCP Telex arrived from A. Abdullah of the Palestine section of the Arab Information Centre in Ottawa. It read:

It was a stunning shock to learn about the death of Rev. Dr. A. C. Forrest. I knew in him a man of moral courage, honesty and good will. His service to his church, his congregation and to humankind at large will never fade away. My people the Palestinians will remember him as the voice of the voiceless in this country. He portrayed the plight of the

⁵³ Tributes, *Observer*, February 1979.

Palestinian people in their refugee camps, under Israeli occupation and in their diaspora without bias or bigotry where he deserved the high respect of all fair-minded people. I share your sorrow and express my deepest sympathy in the loss of Dr. Forrest. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

To the everlasting regret of Forrest's supporters, the Israel–Palestine issue has still not been resolved; those who attempt even-handedness for Palestinians still face the kind of censure Forrest did in the 1970s.⁵⁴ *The Unholy Land*, published in 1971, could have been written last week. Forrest's "three-fold concern: that positive steps be taken to avoid another war that may engulf us all; that the long suffering of the Palestinian refugees be ended; and that the security of the Jewish people be assured" has still not been addressed.⁵⁵

From 1955, when Forrest started with the *Observer*, to 1978 when he died, circulation doubled from 150,000 to 312,000, with a high of 335,000 in 1967 despite a general decline in religious publications.⁵⁶ Over the same period, church membership remained largely unchanged, rising from 912,939 in 1955 until its peak of 1,064,033 in 1965 and then declining again to 916,651 in 1978. Forrest's hard-headed determination in running its news magazine had certainly put the United Church of Canada in the spotlight during his tenure, though some of the attention was unwelcome.

⁵⁴ For example, Rights & Democracy president Rémy Beaugard died after months of on-the-job harassment from several members of his board, appointed by the Harper government to ensure a pro-Israeli/anti-Palestinian stance in the organization. See Gillian Findlay, Chris Wodskou, and Aaron Brindle, "Rémy's Wake," CBC Radio One, *The Current*, 15 February 2011 (part one: <<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2011/02/15/remys-wake-part-one/>>; part two: <<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2011/02/15/remys-wake-part-two/>>). See also Joe Friesen, "Head of Democracy Group Dies Suddenly at Age 66," *Globe & Mail*, 9 January 2010.

⁵⁵ Forrest, *The Unholy Land*, vii.

⁵⁶ BP AGM 20–21 April 1967, 602–603. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

The church, however, believed almost as strongly in the freedom of its own press and its editor as Forrest did himself. Moreover, they were not about to lose the one publication that represented the entire history of the church, back to 1829, and the legacy of Egerton Ryerson. Forrest, like Ryerson, was not afraid to challenge prevailing opinion. In Ryerson's day, when the Anglican Church and Bishop Strachan were firmly in control, the issue was fair treatment for Methodists; in Forrest's day, when the United Church had become the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, the quest for social justice moved further from home and landed on the issue of fair treatment for Palestinians. The church firmly supported Al Forrest and the *Observer*, as they had Egerton Ryerson and the *Christian Guardian*. The *Observer* was subsidized and protected throughout the 1960s, and then put it on a solid footing at arm's length from church hierarchy, from DivCom, and from The Ryerson Press that it had helped to bankrupt.

CHAPTER 6

TEXTBOOKS: CAMPBELL B. HUGHES, 1947–1969

The textbook output of The Ryerson Press is clearly in the spirit of the founder of the Press, and carries into modern educational circles the name of a man more highly respected than any other for his contribution to the very basis of Canadian educational institutions. Moreover, the textbooks published by Ryerson today continue a tradition that began within the first decade of the founding of the publishing house.

— Campbell B. Hughes¹

Lorne Pierce biographer Sandra Campbell deplores the fact that most people writing about The Ryerson Press have ignored the important part that textbooks played in its list. The oversight is unfortunate, in part because this strength kept the publishing house afloat for decades and, ultimately, was why McGraw-Hill bought it in 1970. The Education department was the strongest part of the House; selling it was the only way that the United Church could cover its debts. Despite protestations when the House was sold that the Church should not have been running a commercial business venture anyway, in fact, it had a strong tradition, more than a century, in the education market. The first textbook came off the press in 1852: *Physical Training in Schools in a Series of Gymnastic Exercises. Illustrated by Upwards of One Hundred Engravings of the Different Positions of the Gymnast: With an Introductory Sketch of the*

¹ Campbell B. Hughes to H. L. Trueman, memorandum, 10 January 1967, 1. BP 83.061C, Box 26, File 7.

Athletic Games of Antiquity. Over the century that followed, many people played a role in the growth of the department, including Egerton Ryerson, William Briggs, Lorne Pierce, and Campbell Hughes. However, The Ryerson Press's tradition of management by clergy was, as we have seen in Chapter 3, not always the best business choice. In the case of Hughes, a non-clergyman, it meant that opportunities for career growth were not available to him; the House's inability to keep Hughes, and other talented employees, played a part in its ultimate downfall.

Besides Sunday school curriculum — essentially textbook material only for the Methodist/United Church, thus a rather small market — the House moved early into publishing textbooks for public schools, the most lucrative segment of the book market.² “It is a well-known fact,” wrote Campbell Hughes in 1967, “that in most large publishing houses in Canada and the United States, educational publishing provides the bulk of capital used in the more exotic areas of publishing [...] the majority of publishing houses [with textbook programs] eventually reap rich financial rewards.”³ In the 1800s, educational publishing at the House was helped along by the fact that Egerton Ryerson was made the province's Superintendent for Education (equal to Minister of Education) in 1844, a position he held until 1876. In this position, as noted earlier, Ryerson

² The textbook market was especially lucrative for two main reasons: first, the sales discount from the retail price was only twenty percent for schools and libraries whereas it was forty percent for bookstores (now forty-six percent for Chapters/Indigo, which is how they managed to defeat their competition of independent bookstores); two, the purchase of textbooks was provincially mandated, so the orders came in by the hundreds and thousands, rather than the dozens and singles, as they would for bookstore orders. In Ontario, inclusion on the Ministry of Education's purchasing guide for schools, “Circular 14,” until the late 1960s, ensured the financial success of any textbook.

³ Campbell B. Hughes to H. L. Trueman, memorandum, 10 January 1967, 1. BP 83.061C, Box 26, File 7.

established the public school system as we know it in Ontario today, well ahead of such progress in Britain, by taking the best of what he found in Ireland (textbooks), Prussia (teacher training), Scotland, France, and Massachusetts (property tax school support). He took as his personal motto a quote from Herr Dinter, a Prussian educator: “I promised God that I would look upon every peasant child as a being who could complain of me before God if I did not provide him with the best education as a man and as a Christian which it was possible for me to provide.”⁴

Before 1840 there was no publicly funded school system in any of the British North American colonies and before 1820 the education system was simply “inadequate.”⁵ In 1824, a General Board of Education was created in Upper Canada with part of its mandate to remove American influence from schools, rather a slow reaction to the war of 1812–1814. Rev. John Strachan was head of this board, but “opposition to Strachan’s direct promotion of Anglican control led to the board’s demise” in 1833.⁶ This control, in part, took the form of funnelling the entire textbook budget of £150 a year for 1825 and 1826 to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a sum (£300) that would have bought 15,000 textbooks at 5^d each.⁷ The three predominant associations of missionaries operating in Upper Canada at the time included the Society for

⁴ Qtd. in Karen (Naylor) Mulhallen, “Egerton Ryerson, The Great Educator,”

<<http://library.ryerson.ca/asc/archives/ryerson-history/ryerson-great-educator/>> accessed 2 April 2013.

⁵ John Hare and Jean-Pierre Wallot, “The Business of Printing and Publishing,” in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1840*, ed. Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 71.

⁶ Sarah Brouillette, “Books of Instruction in Upper Canada and the Atlantic Colonies,” in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1840*, ed. Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 260.

⁷ Brouillette, “Books of Instruction,” 260.

Promoting Christian Knowledge (est. 1699), which was, like Strachan, High Anglican; the Religious Tract Society (est. 1799) made up of non-sectarian/evangelical Anglicans; and the British and Foreign Bible Society (est. 1804), also non-sectarian/evangelical Anglicans.⁸ The Methodists, however, made no real distinction between missionary work and general preaching and could be considered a missionary society in their own right; one, of course, that Strachan would never have supported despite their educational zeal.

Over half the texts known to be in use in Upper Canada between 1820 and 1840 were American:⁹ of the nine known textbooks, eight were printed in the United States or England, one was printed in Montreal.¹⁰ The one from Montreal — *A Concise Introduction to Practical Arithmetic* (1809) — was written by John Strachan, Ryerson's old nemesis, who was a schoolteacher in Cornwall before he became an Anglican priest. The main Reader — the *English Reader*, intended to “improve both language and sentiments, and to inculcate some of the most important principles of piety and virtue”¹¹ — was by popular American textbook author Lindley Murray.¹² After the Upper and Lower Canadian Rebellions of 1837, American textbooks were, once again, considered a threat and British imports were preferred. Egerton Ryerson and Jean-

⁸ Janet B. Friskney, “Christian Faith in Print,” in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1840*, ed. Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 138–44.

⁹ Brouillette, “Books of Instruction,” 259–262. See also Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Ibid, 258. See also J. Donald Wilson, “Common School Texts in Use in Upper Canada prior to 1845,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 9 (1970): 36–53; Fiona A. Black, “Horrid Republican Notions’ and Other Matters: School Book Availability in Georgian Canada,” *Paradigm — Journal of the Textbook Colloquium* 2 (July 2001): 7–18.

¹¹ Brouillette, “Books of Instruction,” 260.

¹² There are 581 entries for Lindley Murray in the University of Ottawa library system.

Baptiste Meilleur, Superintendent of Education for Lower Canada, denounced “the invasion of American textbooks into schools”¹³ and worked to provide Canadian-made textbooks instead. Before Canadian textbooks were available, Ryerson used the textbooks of the Irish school system.¹⁴ By arrangement with the Irish National Board of Education, in 1844 Armour & Ramsay of Montreal (est. 1835) printed the first series of schoolbooks in Canada, titled the *British American School Books*.¹⁵

Slowly, Canadian textbooks began to appear as well. For example, in 1829, Port Hope schoolteacher Alexander Davidson had “compiled his own speller”; by 1840, there was a big enough Canadian market to publish it as *The Canadian Spelling Book*. These efforts to provide Canadian educational materials went hand in hand with those to expand primary education; public feeling finally came to believe, in the mid-1800s, “that all children should receive some instruction and that it was the responsibility of the state to see that they did.”¹⁶ By 1838, the thirteen districts of the province had 651 schools and 14,776 students.¹⁷

Ryerson’s phenomenal efforts on behalf of public education went far beyond what one would expect of his provincial office. He gave lectures on the

¹³ Brouillette, “Books of Instruction,” 260.

¹⁴ Frank N. Walker, *Sketches of Old Toronto* (Toronto: Longmans Canada, 1965), 82–83.

¹⁵ George L. Parker, “English-Canadian Publishers and the Struggle for Copyright,” in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 2: 1840–1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 150.

¹⁶ Harold Greer, “The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada,” *Ontario History* 67 (1975): 169–84; see also Greer, “The Pattern of Literacy in Quebec, 1745–1899,” *Histoire social/Social History* 11, no. 22 (November 1978): 295–335.

¹⁷ Brouillette, “Books of Instruction,” 261.

importance of education,¹⁸ founded the *Journal of Education* (published by the province), which had a thirty-year run, and made trips abroad to study education systems in other jurisdictions in order to bring their best practices back to Canada West. He made trips to England to purchase books and maps for school libraries and, in order to supply such things to schools, in 1850 he created a wholesale establishment called the Depository. As George Parker relates, Ryerson's patriarchal control over schoolbooks, from curriculum to printing to selling, was not appreciated in all corners:

[Ryerson's] disposal of textbook printing contracts brought prosperity to publishers and retailers but made many enemies. His large-scale orders from Britain and direct sales to schools prompted the newly formed Booksellers' Association of Canada (est. 1857) to attack his Educational Depository as a government department that undercut their lucrative business.¹⁹

The Depository was set up, theoretically, to make it easier for schools to source books and supplies at reasonable prices. Its critics, however, charged that it was hampering the development of the book business in English Canada by taking away markets that rightfully belonged to booksellers. One such bookseller, James Campbell, "the largest textbook publisher in the country through the 1870s,"²⁰ feuded vociferously in the papers with Ryerson about the Depository, each party accusing the other of trying to organize a monopoly. Campbell's position was that the Depository did not help but rather limited school trustees

¹⁸ Ryerson's 1847 lecture was entitled "The Importance of Education to an Agricultural, a Manufacturing and a Free People."

¹⁹ George L. Parker, "The Evolution of Publishing in Canada," in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 2: 1840–1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 28–29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

“in their choice of books, and interferes with the growth of a local Book Trade in the smaller towns and villages of the Province, which would not fail to exercise a beneficial influence in the general diffusion of literature among the people.”²¹

Ryerson, on the other hand, dismissed Campbell as an agent of Scottish publisher Thomas Nelson, accusing both of trying to carve out a chunk of the textbook market without providing the Canadian content required. Ryerson volleyed back:

Mr. Campbell has come to the country to make as much money as he can and has not the least responsibility as to the efficiency and economy of the public schools. He has published no book to supply a want in our schools, but has published two inferior books to supersede others already in use.²²

Ryerson quite correctly pointed out that the textbook market was “beyond all comparison the most certain and most profitable branch of the Book Trade”²³ and therefore should be protected from foreign and mercenary influence. The public battle, however, hastened Ryerson’s retirement (in 1876) and perhaps even his death (in 1882).²⁴ Along with George Brown, Sandfield Macdonald, and John A. Macdonald, Ryerson had become a much-satirized public figure, which must have been supremely irritating to the now-old man who had devoted his

²¹ *Papers and Correspondence with Respect to the Depository Branch of the Education Department*, Presented to the Legislative Assembly by Command (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1877), 89, qtd. in Linda Wilson Corman, “James Campbell and the Ontario Education Department, 1858–1884,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 14 (1975): 52.

²² Egerton Ryerson, *Toronto Globe*, 27 March 1866, 1, qtd. in Corman, “James Campbell,” 36.

²³ J. George Hodgins, *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada*, 28 vols. (Toronto: King’s Printer, 1894–1910), vol. 19, 220, qtd. in Corman, “James Campbell,” 40.

²⁴ Corman, “James Campbell.”

life to building the province and its education system.²⁵ In 1881, a year before Ryerson died, the Depository was closed down; however, this did not prevent Campbell from going bankrupt in 1884.

Meanwhile, at the Methodist Book and Publishing House, William Briggs, ever the astute businessman, published as many school textbooks as he could. For example, in 1896 the House published *Rhymes of the Kings and Queens of England: Being an Account of the Rulers of England from the Norman Conquest to the Reign of Victoria* by Mary Leslie. Lorne Pierce also knew that textbooks for the elementary and high school markets (known as El-Hi in the business) would keep the House profitable. In a column appearing in the *Christian Guardian* on 4 July 1923, Pierce criticized provincial ministers of education “for a lack of Canadian content in the nation’s schoolbooks together with the virtual absence of Canadian literature and preponderance of British and American materials.”²⁶ As Sandra Campbell explains, “Like any publisher, Pierce was interested in capturing the lucrative textbook market, but he also wanted to inculcate patriotic feeling with basic education.” Campbell wonders whether “the seeds of the Canadian literary boom of the 1960s [were] planted by the Readers of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s?”

This question draws the important link between textbook content and

²⁵ Michael Peterman, “Case Study: Lost from View: James McCarroll, Journalist, Poet, and Satirist,” in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume 2: 1840–1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 136. Peterman lists six satiric papers published in Toronto between 1858 and 1866: *Momus* (1861); *Latch-Key* (1863–64); *Growler* (1864); *Leader*; *Poker*; *Pick*; and *Grumbler*. McCarroll was associated with *Latch-Key* and *Growler*.

²⁶ This complaint still holds, as students in many high schools in Canada rarely see a Canadian work in their English classes.

literary influence.²⁷ It seems obvious, though it is often overlooked, that what children read in school informs their life-long tastes in reading. If they are fed a diet of “superior” British and American imports, they may never develop a taste for their own homegrown literature, considering Canadian literature sub-par. The Canadian content in school Readers and other textbooks was thus essential to developing the next generation of Canadian readers and book buyers. Pierce therefore published many textbooks, including George M. Wrong’s *Ontario Public School History of Canada* (1921) and *Ontario Public School History of England* (1921), both illustrated by C. W. Jefferys (1869–1951), and many more followed. From 1925 to 1931 the House published *The Ryerson Canadian History Readers* for school use, consisting of 102 booklets of sixteen to thirty-two pages on writers and other “outstanding personalities and events”²⁸ ranging from *Jacques Cartier* to *The Story of Hydro*.

C. W. Jefferys also illustrated this series, so Pierce “played a crucial role in the establishment of Jefferys’ stature as Canada’s most popular illustrator of our history.”²⁹ Randall Speller credits Jefferys with “Bringing Canadian history to life for generations of students with his carefully researched and detailed drawings.” His illustrations were “one of the most recognizable features of a Ryerson textbook or historical publication” and “central to the public’s

²⁷ Sandra Campbell, “Nationalism, Morality, and Gender: Lorne Pierce and the Canadian Literary Canon, 1920–1960,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 32, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 141, 142. See also Sandra Campbell, “From Romantic History to Communications Theory: Lorne Pierce as Publisher of C. W. Jefferys and Harold Innis,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 3 (1995): 91–117.

²⁸ C. H. Dickinson, *Lorne Pierce: A Profile* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1965), 48.

²⁹ Campbell, “From Romantic History.”

understanding of what a Ryerson book contained,”³⁰ and they continued to be used for decades after Jeffrey’s death. These modest history Readers were the first pictorial histories of Canada and were endorsed by all provincial departments of education as well as the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE). Pierce himself wrote the volumes on James Evans, John Black, John McDougall, Sieur de Maisonneuve, and Thomas Chandler Haliburton. The Readers that Campbell refers to included *The Ryerson Books of Prose and Verse*, the first volume of which appeared in 1927; by 1937, there were thirteen books. These were later expanded in the *Canada Books of Prose and Verse* series for grades 7 to 12 — published jointly with Macmillan and known as the *Ryerson–Macmillan Readers*. These texts were adopted in all provinces and were still in use in the 1960s, with annual sales of 200,000 copies by 1961.³¹ The *Treasury Readers* series provided prose and verse for grades 1 to 6.

In his 1932 report to the Board of Publication, Associate Book Steward Donald M. Solandt emphasized the House’s commitment to textbooks, which was so great that “[t]ime does not permit an adequate description of what we have done.” The highlights included the “Queen’s University series on Commerce and Finance, adopted throughout the Dominion in all recognized courses for accountancy and banking,” a very profitable series of Shakespeare Readers, and “multiplying titles for high schools, technical schools, commercial

³⁰ Randall Speller, “Arthur Steven at the Ryerson Press: Designing the Post-War Years (1949–1969),” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 41, no. 2 (2003): 10–11.

³¹ *Ibid.*

schools, texts in art, vocational guidance, teachers' manuals and public school books." Solandt boasted that the House aimed "to provide books by Canadians for Canadians" and was in the top three of twenty-seven Toronto-based firms dealing with educational books. His commitment to textbooks could not be plainer:

Year after year we shall reprint these educational books, develop new lines, new series, so that, come what may, we can carry on and give full-time work, make a steady profit, thus enabling us to embark upon other titles which may not promise great financial returns, but yet will make a real contribution to the intellectual life of Canada.³²

Not long before his retirement, Pierce reminded the Board of Publication of this commitment and "the importance of the Educational Department and all the research and planning which must go into the publishing of half a dozen text books per year and the re-printing of perhaps 50–60 text books." He reminded them that there were "no less than a dozen Publishing firms in Canada competing [and that] books must be planned and provided for each one of our Provinces." Pierce also "predicted that the school population of Canada could easily double in the next 15 years and our sales should double in ten years despite competition from Canadian and American Houses."³³ As his successor in the textbook department, Pierce had tapped an up-and-coming publishing whiz, Campbell Hughes, who had joined the House in 1947.

Campbell B. Hughes (1913–1990) had taught school in Orillia and

³² Donald M. Solandt, Report to BP, 15 March 1932. LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 16–17.

³³ BP AGM 28–29 April 1959, 3–4. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

Hamilton from 1933 to 1947. He received his BA from McMaster in 1946 and joined Ryerson Press in 1947 as a textbook salesman. He became Associate Editor in the Education department in 1952 and “Text Book Editor” in 1958. However, much to Pierce’s disappointment,³⁴ Hughes reluctantly moved in 1960 to Charles E. Merrill Books, based in Cincinnati, where he was vice-president and editor-in-chief.³⁵ Hughes must have been disappointed himself that his thirteen years with the House did not qualify him as much for the position of book editor as ordination would have, since outsider John Webster Grant was Pierce’s real replacement. Hughes’ departure caused upheaval in the Education department; Grant “had to spend a great deal of time” and to travel “considerably” to visit the key textbook clients across Canada. Hughes was so central that three people had to be promoted to replace him.³⁶ Another immediate effect of Hughes’ departure was that John Grey of Macmillan gained control of the *Ryerson–Macmillan Readers*, a long-time cash cow for both firms. Ryerson had always held editorial control on the Readers, but they were running out of steam and desperately needed revision.³⁷ Though retired, Pierce

³⁴ Sandra Campbell and Beth Robinson, interview with the author, 23 May 2013, Kingston, Ontario. Despite his disappointment, Pierce wrote to Hughes on 28 October 1961, a month before his death, to respond to two letters that Hughes had sent him and to tell him how proud he was of him: “You have advanced very rapidly, and I hope that it has given you time to get your climbing cleats well in before you attack the next one. The idea of speed in the United States is quite different from speed over here, and I only hope that your energies and resources generally will be equal to all the demands that are sure to be made upon you” (Campbell Hughes Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, Robarts Library, Toronto [hereafter CHP], Box 1, File 4).

³⁵ Hughes expressed his regret in his resignation letter to C. H. Dickinson: “As you know, I have not made this decision lightly, and my reservations have centred about my happy relationships with you and every member of the staff, but particularly with my colleagues in the Book and Editorial departments. I have gained much in my association with everyone here and can only hope that as an ‘alumnus’ I shall not be a discredit to the House.”

³⁶ BP AGM 24–25 April 1961, 530–531. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 2.

³⁷ Sandra Campbell and Beth Robinson, interview with the author.

tried to keep his hand in as consulting editor and wrote to Hughes, “I have on my desk the revised manuscript of Grade IX, by Mr. Fyfe. I have not been able to touch it for the last few days but will hope to be able to do so right away.” On the relationship with Macmillan, Pierce told Hughes that it “remains outwardly very cordial [but] it has long been a kin[d] of tug-of-war, both in the matter of principle and policy, as well as of protocol and prestige.”³⁸

Hughes would rather have stayed at Ryerson, obviously, but he was ambitious, as well as talented, and knew he would always be limited by the fact that he was not clergy. Because of this prejudice, even in secular publishing, Ryerson Press regularly served only as a training ground and then lost good staff, like John Robert Colombo, to other publishers. As George Parker puts it, “Ryerson wasn’t catching on to what they had to,” which was to promote the best person into the job, regardless of ordination and regardless of incumbency.³⁹ The problem of losing talented staff was not a new one. William Briggs lost several keen young men: Thomas Allen, who started as an errand boy in the warehouse in 1888 and founded his own house in 1901;⁴⁰ S. B. Gundy, who founded the Canadian branch of Oxford University Press in 1904;⁴¹ John McClelland, Frederick Goodchild, and George Stewart (“the best Bible salesman

³⁸ Lorne Pierce to Campbell Hughes, 28 October 1961. CHP Box 1, File 4.

³⁹ “They had a series of publishers and some of them were quite good. One of them went on to McGill-Queen’s Press. Another one went on to become the first head of the Prentice-Hall subsidiary in Canada.” George L. Parker, interview by Nigel Beale, “Book Scholar George Parker on The Ryerson Press,” *The Biblio File*, 20 June 2011, <<http://thebibliofile.ca/book-scholar-george-parker-on-the-ryerson-press>> accessed 12 June 2013 (audio interview).

⁴⁰ Thomas Allen and Son was sold in August 2013 to Dundurn Press: <<http://www.thomasallen.ca/site/contentFixed/About.aspx>>.

⁴¹ UOP Canada shut down its longstanding trade division in May 2013: Stuart Woods, “UOP Canada Shuttles Historic Trade Division,” *Quill & Quire*, 2 May 2013: <http://www.quillandquire.com/google/article.cfm?article_id=12500>.

in Canada”),⁴² who founded McClelland & Stewart in 1906;⁴³ and Edward S. Caswell, who became Assistant Librarian in the Toronto Public Library in 1909.⁴⁴ All of them “realized they [could] only go so far”; they could never be Book Steward because they were not ministers.⁴⁵

Unlike almost all of those who left, however, on the strength of his reputation as “the best [textbook] man in Canada,”⁴⁶ Hughes was wooed back to Ryerson Press with a starting salary of \$17,000, moving expenses, group insurance, restored pension benefits, and four weeks of vacation.⁴⁷ On 5 April 1965, he became Director of Textbook Publishing and brought with him some newfound insight into American publishing and marketing. Though on paper he was to report to Vic Seary, the Director of Publishing,⁴⁸ “in practice we will expect the decisions regarding this division to be yours,” Ernest W. Scott told him.⁴⁹ George Parker posits that had Hughes become General Manager of Ryerson Press then instead of in 1968 when Scott was finally fired, “the outcome for Ryerson might have been happier.” Sales had climbed but profits had declined under Scott, something one cannot imagine happening under

⁴² See <<http://www.mcclelland.com/100years/history/history.html>>.

⁴³ McClelland & Stewart was downgraded in January 2012 to an imprint of foreign-owned Random House: <http://publishers.ca/images/downloads/acp_press_release_ms.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Michael A. Peterman and Janet B. Friskney, “‘Booming’ the Canuck Book: Edward Caswell and the Promotion of Canadian Writing,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 82.

⁴⁵ Parker, interview by Nigel Beale.

⁴⁶ “Memorandum re: ‘Book Editor’ – Ryerson Press” (c. 1965–1967). BP 83.061C Box 26, File 7.

⁴⁷ Ernest W. Scott to Campbell Hughes, 12 January 1965. CHP Box 1, File 4. Campbell Hughes was certainly appreciated by The Ryerson Press after he returned from the States. His salary rose from \$17,000 in 1965 to \$22,500 in 1969. By comparison, other managers in 1969 were paid less: Robin Farr \$17,500, L. Johnston \$16,000, H. Tomlinson \$14,640, Terry Seary \$14,340, Arthur Steven \$11,580. Almost all the women employed by the House made pathetic wages: \$2304 to \$6240, with an average of \$3600 a year. BP 93.095C, Box 10, File 2.

⁴⁸ Hughes replaced Seary as Director of Publishing in 1968 when Seary retired.

⁴⁹ Ernest W. Scott to Campbell Hughes, 12 January 1965. CHP Box 1, File 4.

Hughes.⁵⁰ After taking over as Acting General Manager on 13 December 1968, Hughes “was temporarily successful in raising morale, and the house ended slightly in the black” for 1969, but by then, it was too late.⁵¹

As head of the education department after John Webster Grant,⁵² Victor Seary’s job was to get as many textbooks as possible onto the Ontario Department of Education’s “Circular 14,” the “bible” of what teachers, schools, and school boards were allowed to purchase as approved texts, sort of a “virtual” depository. Inclusion on the list guaranteed sales; exclusion from it, which might occur by missing an important deadline for consideration, was a disaster. Educational books could be in development for years and required huge investments, “often involving numerous authors, illustrators, designers, and staff.”⁵³ For example, in 1963 the House released a new biology textbook, in the works for several years, which captured seventy percent of the Canadian market and some of the American market as well via a rights sale to an American publisher.⁵⁴ In 1964, Seary reported to the annual meeting of the Board of Publications that fifty-five new titles had been published over the preceding year, including sixteen textbooks. The Education department was also committed to a new series of five basic Readers,⁵⁵ with one title published and two forthcoming within the year. Three other publishers were selling in this

⁵⁰ George Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press: The End of the Old Agency System and Conflicts over Domestic and Foreign Ownership in the Canadian Publishing Industry, 1970–1986,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 40, no. 2 (2002), 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² After 1963, when John Webster Grant resigned to take up an academic post at the University of Toronto, Seary took over as editor-in-chief.

⁵³ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 22–24.

⁵⁴ BP AGM 1964. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

⁵⁵ Ontario’s Circular 14 unofficially limited approved books to five per subject per publisher.

area; Seary evaluated two of the competing books as good, one as dated. In the day leading up to the annual meeting, three textbook adoptions came in from the West, amounting to a “sale of some 125,000 books,” a fine report to bring to the meeting.⁵⁶

The 1963–1964 Woods, Gordon Report clearly showed that the Education department was the star of The Ryerson Press, forecast to earn \$114,000 to \$135,000 per year. Sales in 1953 had been \$461,000; by 1963, they had tripled to \$1,400,000. The 1967 projection was for \$1,836,000 (in 1963 dollars) — an increase of over three hundred percent from 1953. In large part, the increase was attributed to the baby boom and the vast bulge in the number of schoolchildren, which almost doubled from 2.7 million in 1953 to 4.5 million in 1963.⁵⁷

The same demographics working against the New Curriculum were clearly working for the Education department. As Campbell Hughes pointed out, the education market was such that a “successful series of books can influence literally millions of young Canadians” as *Developing Language Skills* and the *Canada Books of Prose and Verse* had done.⁵⁸ In terms of overall business, the profit margin was thirty-one percent and inventory turnover was 2.4 per year, both very respectable. The write-down policy was twenty percent per year, meaning that a textbook would reach an inventory value of zero in five

⁵⁶ BP AGM 1964. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

⁵⁷ Woods, Gordon, Conclusions and Recommendations. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 5.

⁵⁸ Campbell B. Hughes to H. L. Trueman, memorandum, 10 January 1967, 1. BP 83.061C, Box 26, File 7.

years.⁵⁹ The average lifespan of a textbook⁶⁰ was about ten years before a new book or a revised edition was needed, so four to five new textbooks per year were considered a minimum. Ontario schools accounted for sixty percent of sales; the competition numbered thirty-two firms selling textbooks in Ontario, twenty-five from Ontario and seven from Quebec. Victor Seary estimated that only one or two of these firms would be larger than The Ryerson Press. Ontario was very strict in setting price ceilings and Ryerson usually had the most expensive or second most expensive book, as Seary had warned Dickinson regarding the prices charged them by their own printing plant (see Chapter 5).⁶¹

In 1968 the Ontario Government decided on a “relaxation in the rules” governing Circular 14 to give teachers greater choice in textbooks and teaching materials.⁶² The change was designed to move away from core textbooks and towards a variety of materials, such as newspapers, films, et cetera. This move certainly gave teachers flexibility and provided a greater variety in the classroom, but it devastated Canadian educational publishers, especially The Ryerson Press since, as Seary had pointed out, their textbooks tended to be more expensive than those of the competition.⁶³ The change to Circular 14 was made, however, without consulting publishers or even warning them that it was

⁵⁹ This twenty percent write-down is still used in some publishing houses, though thirty-three percent is more common (the book reaches an inventory value of zero in three years rather than five).

⁶⁰ This lifespan is probably comparable to elementary and high school textbooks in 2013. The revision cycle of higher education textbooks is three years, due to lost revenue from second-hand book sales, whereas school textbooks are bought and kept by the school rather than by the student, and thus do not enter the second-hand book market.

⁶¹ BP AGM 1964. BP 93.063C, Box 1, File 3.

⁶² Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 31. See also Harold Greer, “Ontario Affairs: ‘Canadian’ Publishing,” *Kingston Whig-Standard* 5 October 1970, 6.

⁶³ Parker, interview by Nigel Beale.

about to happen. This was extremely gauche on the part of the government since developmental and production costs on textbooks ran “from seven to forty thousand dollars,” according to Hughes.⁶⁴ Clarke, Irwin, for example, had invested heavily in three new textbooks to support the revised curriculum for elementary science but was left with 30,000 books on their hands when, despite favourable reviews by Circular 14 reviewers, the consultant in charge decided against textbooks in general and in favour of various resources instead.⁶⁵

From the perspective of the public, the sale of The Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill in 1970 came with almost no warning, though anyone following publishing news would have noticed a few articles before the sale itself was announced. In July 1969, *Quill & Quire*, the Canadian publishing industry’s news organ, published an article entitled, “Ryerson Victim of Rumor Mill.”⁶⁶ In order to respond to the rumours, Hughes spoke to *Quill & Quire*, which reported as follows:

Ryerson Press is two companies. One is a printing plant; the other, a publishing house. It is the printing plant that has sustained the problems, and in order to solve them, management some time ago engaged the services of two separate consultant firms — Kates, Peat, Marwick and Company of Toronto, and Gatelle [sic] Memorial Institute of Columbus, Ohio. Their reports are now ready, printed, and will be fully discussed at meetings to be held on July 29th and 31st. At that point, Ryerson Press will decide exactly what course to follow. “There may well be developments,” says Hughes. “There is one small piece of the operation that is redundant and old. We are folding it up.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ “Canadians Lag as Readers Editor Tells H&S [Home and School] Association,” *The Oshawa Times*, 5 February 1960, n.p. CHP Box 1, File 14.

⁶⁵ Bill Clarke, interview by the author, 22 May 2013.

⁶⁶ “Ryerson Victim of Rumor Mill,” *Quill & Quire* 35, no. 7 (25 July 1969), 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

One of the rumours was that Maclean-Hunter, publisher of *Macleans*, the *Financial Post*, and *Chatelaine*, was interested in buying the company, which was true, though Hughes denied it, saying,

“someone [at a shareholders’ meeting] asked if the company was interested in buying Ryerson. This must have grown out of the fact that we are working together on a series of books, geography-cum-social studies at the High School level. They will be out this fall with the joint imprint.” And he stressed that “it is the printing end of Ryerson that is in serious trouble.”

The article also published the following figures:

Financial figures	1967	1968
UC Year Book	\$226,000	-\$429,000
curriculum	\$927,000	\$520,000
church school	\$1,423,000	\$954,000
TOTALS	\$2,576,000	\$1,045,000
	= \$1,531,000 below the previous year	

Again, the most serious losses were on the United Church Publishing House side of the business, not The Ryerson Press side. *Quill & Quire* concluded, “These figures look depressing, but Hughes insists they are not sufficient to warrant placing the total operation on the market.”

As Hughes had explained to *Quill & Quire*, indeed, as the Executive of General Council had previously decided, it was the printing arm that needed to be sold and not the publishing arm. What should have been done, obviously, was sell the printing arm, or spin it off as an employee-owned business, at the time of the Woods, Gordon Report in 1964. Instead of making the investments in equipment that the consultants said were needed for the plant, the church took

a wait-and-see approach that proved fatal. By the time the new consultant reports were in from Kates, Peat, Marwick & Co. and Battelle Memorial Institute, which had been called in to assist because of their expertise in the technical aspects of printing, the situation was beyond salvation. The Kates, Peat, Marwick report concluded, “it is highly desirable that the business should be divested as a complete package, that is, Publishing and Printing together.” Their job, as well, was to put a dollar value on the business. If printing and publishing could be sold together, including the continued printing of the *Observer* and the New Curriculum, the business would be worth \$7 to \$9 million. Publishing by itself was valued at \$2 to \$3 million and the consultants believed it would “be difficult to sell the Printing operations as a sole function.”⁶⁸

Other consultants were called in to help set up the new Division of Communication (see Chapter 7) but some of their suggestions were not particularly helpful. A “restructuring proposal that he felt would destroy his department” caused Art Director Arthur Steven to resign after twenty years of service: “Management brought in an expert who wanted to separate all of the departments and create different companies that would compete for contracts both within Ryerson and with outside firms.”⁶⁹ Steven found this idea “ludicrous” and quit, closely followed by one of his design staff, Bill Taylor. He had been, until then, the longest serving art director in Toronto.⁷⁰ Randall

⁶⁸ Kates, Peat, Marwick & Co. Report, 27 October 1969. BP 83.061C Box 24, File 2.

⁶⁹ Speller, “Arthur Steven,” 38.

⁷⁰ Steven was further appalled when the United Church could find no record of his ever being employed at Ryerson, even though, obviously, they had been paying his salary for two decades. A long, Kafkaesque

Speller relates that 1969 and 1970 were crisis years for the art departments of Canadian publishers. McClelland & Stewart's financial problems forced their art director, Frank Newfeld, to resign under similarly "impossible conditions" in 1970.⁷¹

As a move to raise the money to pay down the heavy debt, Hughes advocated selling the beautiful 299 Queen Street building and incorporating The Ryerson Press as a separate business.⁷² He also investigated more drastic means of paying down the debt and tested the Canadian waters for a buyer for the House but found businessmen here "singularly uninterested in investing in book publishing."⁷³ In the summer of 1969, Hughes was in New York talking to Van Nostrand Reinhold about buying Ryerson Press. The company was not interested in acquiring the Press, but it was interested in acquiring Hughes. This would not have surprised his mentor, Lorne Pierce, who had written to him in 1961, "[s]omehow or other I picture you, before too long a time, back in Canada, possibly head of your own Canadian branch."⁷⁴ By late November, Hughes had sent his resignation to Brisbin, citing the "decisions that have been made with regard to the future of the Press" as his reason for leaving.⁷⁵ Brisbin

negotiation over his pension followed (Speller, "Arthur Steven," 37, n. 70). Steven became an art teacher at Gordon Graydon Secondary School in Port Credit. Upon his retirement from the school in 1986, he became a full-time artist and a member of several art societies. See <http://ontariosocietyofartists.org/member_profiles/arthur_steven>.

⁷¹ Speller, "Arthur Steven," see "Frank Newfeld," 19.

⁷² Campbell Hughes to Management Committee, memorandum, 22 September 1969, 5. BP Box 24, File 4.

⁷³ Roy MacSkimming, "Why Foreign Firms are Such Successful Canadian Publishers," *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 April 1975, F3.

⁷⁴ Lorne Pierce to Campbell Hughes, 28 October 1961. CHP Box 1, File 4.

⁷⁵ To this Hughes added, "I have no criticism of the position taken by officials of the Church with regard to problems faced by Ryerson. I can only wish that events might have conspired to produce a different result, or that past services of Ryerson to the Church might have been recognized. [...] I sincerely hope

replied, “[i]t was the kind of year that both you and I would never want to have to experience again, but I cannot really adequately say how much I appreciated the leadership and management skill which you brought to the Press. [...] We still don’t know, of course, what the future may hold for either of us.”⁷⁶ After eighteen years at The Ryerson Press, Hughes left for good, founding the Canadian branch of Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd. in January 1970, working as its president until 1978. As a publishing person who had been on both sides of the Canadian-owned/branch plant divide, Hughes had definite views about how to achieve success in publishing. In 1975, he told this to interviewer Roy MacSkimming:

I have no hesitation in saying that the kind of ownership I work under now [at Van Nostrand Reinhold] is preferable to the kind there was at Ryerson. This is true in the sense that the people I report to know what they’re doing, they have clearly defined goals. And they understand publishing and give you your head, whereas at Ryerson there was always a painful session when the board met and all the amateurs told you what you should be doing.⁷⁷

It is impossible to predict if The Ryerson Press could have avoided financial disaster with Campbell Hughes at the helm rather than C. H. Dickinson. Hughes seems, in the end, to have found the entire management apparatus of The Ryerson Press, from the Board of Publication to the Division of Communication, designed to ensure failure. Hughes was forced to choose sides in the Canadian-owned versus branch plant battle in Canadian publishing; he

that whatever the outcome, the Ryerson imprint will continue as one of the cultural forces of this country” (Campbell Hughes to Frank Brisbin, 25 November 1969. CHP Box 1, File 4).

⁷⁶ Frank Brisbin to Campbell Hughes, 9 December 1969. CHP Box 1, File 4.

⁷⁷ MacSkimming, “Why Foreign Firms,” F3.

obviously preferred the straight-ahead business approach of the branch plants. From 1970 to 1971, he was president of the Canadian Book Publishers' Council, which today (as the Canadian Publisher's Council or CPC) represents only branch plants. The Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP), which now represents the Canadian-owned segment of the business, did not exist until the sale of The Ryerson Press catalyzed opinion on this issue.⁷⁸ On all the protest surrounding the sale of The Ryerson Press, Campbell Hughes is quoted as saying

A Canadian is someone who drinks Brazilian coffee from an English teacup, and munches a French pastry, while sitting on his Danish furniture, having just come home from an Italian movie in his German car. He picks up his Japanese pen and writes to his member of Parliament to complain about the American takeover of the Canadian publishing business.⁷⁹

Whether this attitude was just sour grapes on the part of a disappointed former Ryerson Press staff member or a penetrating observation on Canadian cultural

⁷⁸ The term "indigenous" (see footnote 5 in the Introduction) applies to publishers as well as to publishing, and generally identifies which publishers belong to the Association of Canadian Publishers (i.e., Canadian owned; see the ACP website: <<http://publishers.ca/>>) and which belong to the Canadian Publishers Council (i.e., branch plants; see the CPC website: <<http://www.pubcouncil.ca/index.php>>). For example, the United Church Publishing House is a current member of the ACP while McGraw-Hill Ryerson is a member of the CPC. However, this definition has been strained in recent years with the lingering inclusion of McClelland & Stewart in the ACP when it was mostly (now wholly) owned by Random House. Cormorant Books publisher Marc Côté describes the difference between the ACP and the CPC in the following way: "Any 'Canadian' publisher (i.e. a firm selling books into the Canadian market) can belong to the CPC. Only Canadian-owned and controlled firms (75% Canadian-owned, that is) can belong to the ACP. The ACP was founded [...] in reaction to the sale of The Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill. The purpose of the ACP is to build a Canadian publishing industry. The purpose of the CPC is to exploit the Canadian market." Thomas Allen publishers was an oddball in its membership in the CPC as it was "100% Canadian-owned. They founded the CPC in something like 1920 [1910]. There was no ACP at the time," says Marc (email from Marc Côté to the author, 1 November 2012).

⁷⁹ Recorded in John Robert Colombo (ed.) *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*, "Hughes, Campbell" (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1974), 273. Colombo notes: "Quoted by *Time*, March 1, 1971. Hughes, who is the Toronto head of an American multinational publishing firm, adapted but did not originate this definition." In an interview with the author (11 May 2013, Columbus Centre, Toronto), Colombo revealed that Hughes was a nice guy but not very verbal and could not actually coin a phrase. Although Colombo attributed the phrase to Hughes, it was not actually said by him, says Colombo.

politics, the parallel between Hughes' career at The Ryerson Press and Ryerson Press's position in the Canadian publishing industry is striking. Both squandered; both could have achieved so much more.

CHAPTER 7

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE, CHURCH UNION, AND DIVESTMENT: FRANK BRISBIN, 1966–1984

The Church is a very complex organization, and hard for anyone not in it to understand.

— Frank Brisbin¹

For several years before it actually took place, there were rumblings from the upper management of the United Church about formulating a new type of head office structure. Indeed, even the Woods, Gordon Progress Report No. 1 of July 1963 mentioned consulting with Dr. Fiddler of the Board of Christian Education “who we understand is spearheading the program for the new divisional type of organization.”² Throughout the 1960s, planning for the combining and restructuring of church boards into divisions continued. Many people objected, however, to the unfortunate choice of the term “division,” citing, for example, Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth:

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.³

By 1966, however, the decision was made and the divisional structure went ahead, with one of the first to be formed the Division of Communication, known

¹ “TV or Not TV: Frank Brisbin Answers the Questions — The Secretary of the Division of Communication talks with the CBC’s Bruce Rogers,” *Observer*, February 1978: 18–19.

² Woods, Gordon Progress Report No. 1, July 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 3.

³ I Corinthians 11:17–18.

colloquially as “DivCom,” launching on 1 January 1968. DivCom combined the Board of Publication (publishing, printing, periodicals) with the Board of Information (TV, radio, audio-visual), which immediately showed up the anomaly of the “sacred” versus “secular” departments of the Board of Publication. The resulting organization was so unwieldy in structure that it appeared unmanageable. In the new organizational chart, the secular Ryerson Press and the huge commercial printing plant in the basement of 299 Queen Street West were square pegs in the round holes of the business model; the “core business” areas of the Church were Sunday school curriculum, religious books, religious periodicals, religious TV and radio shows, and religious messaging in general. There was no conceptual place for publishing Governor General’s Award-winning poetry or for printing the Eaton’s catalogue.

Another major organizational initiative of the late 1960s was the negotiation with the Anglican Church of Canada regarding a new church union. This, of course, took a great deal of time and effort and would have been a huge coup if it had succeeded. Besides all this manoeuvring, the Canadian economy added another major organizational challenge — inflation — which affected everything from church givings to postal rates for church periodicals and would later spark Trudeau’s wage and price controls. At the same time that prices were increasing, membership was decreasing: hence the value of the dollars in the collection plate was also decreasing. Overall, the shift to the divisional structure, the hoped-for merger with the Anglicans, and the problem of inflation

forced the church to reset its priorities in the late 1960s. In doing so, it discovered that the secular Ryerson Press could not be one of these new priorities.

For the 1967 Centennial year, in one of its last hurrahs as a separate entity, the Board of Publication organized an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum. Called “A Canadian Imprint,” the exhibit opened on 26 June 1967. Instead of a traditional catalogue (i.e., a book) for the exhibit, the Board decided instead on a collection of facsimile reprints of various documents that they felt best represented the House. Contents of this “catalogue” included the following: three pamphlets on “The Story of the Ryerson Press,” “The Story of Printing at the Ryerson Press,” and “138 years in Education”; the 1829 document authorizing Egerton Ryerson to purchase a press and type; the complete first issue of the *Christian Guardian*; a page from the *Christian Guardian* about the defeat of the Mackenzie rebellion; a photo of Egerton Ryerson; Egerton Ryerson’s 1867 address, “The New Canadian Dominion”; a letter from Egerton Ryerson to his daughter Sophie; a letter to Egerton Ryerson about his appointment as Principal of Victoria College; a photograph of early Cree syllabics written by missionary and author James Evans; a page in “Eskimo” syllabics from a prayer book; a typewritten letter from Duncan Campbell Scott to William Briggs; a painting by John Saunders of the corner of Queen and John Streets before the construction of the Wesley building; a programme for the fourth annual Road Race and Games from 1900; the sketches of past Book

Stewards; a facsimile handwritten copy of Bliss Carman's "Triumphalis"; a facsimile handwritten letter from Bliss Carman to Lorne Pierce; and a facsimile handwritten manuscript version of E. J. Pratt's "In Memoriam." None of these items was dated after 1925 and some were not strictly related to the House either; some of the Egerton Ryerson items, for example, had nothing really to do with the House except for their connection to Ryerson himself, who still provided the measuring stick against which his various successors — book stewards and editors alike — tended to compare their own efforts. The link with Ryerson is the most obvious theme of the "catalogue" of "A Canadian Imprint."

Besides the giant Canadian birthday party, 1967 was an especially good year for sales for Canadian publishers with McClelland & Stewart, McGill University Press, University of Toronto Press, Macmillan, Longman, and Ryerson splitting a fifty-three percent market share in English-language book sales. By 1969, however, the *Monetary Times* predicted that few publishers would survive the next decade "because there were no export markets for Canadian publishers, too many American jobbers⁴ supplying booksellers and educational institutions, too many titles, and far too few detailed statistics to analyse production and sales by Canadian and non-Canadian firms."⁵ American

⁴ A "jobber" is a wholesaler who consolidates orders from different publishers for a client, typically a library or school board. This saves staff time in sourcing the material that the client wishes to purchase. Jobbers would get wholesale discounts from a publisher — forty percent — and then make their money by passing on the smaller twenty percent education/library discount to the client. By playing with the traditional margins, jobbers could undercut the publisher by receiving a forty percent wholesale discount and then offering a twenty-five or thirty percent discount to the client, whereas the publisher would only offer a twenty percent discount to the same client.

⁵ "Book Publishers Are in Trouble," *Monetary Times* 137 (May 1969): 48–53; also "Letters," *Monetary Times* 137 (July 1969): 6, qtd. in George L. Parker, "The Sale of Ryerson Press: The End of the Old

jobbers were even supplying Ryerson's own textbooks to the college and university market.

In fact, twenty years after the Massey–Levesque Royal Commission, despite prosperity, an expanding market for books, and a wave of nationalism surrounding the adoption of a Canadian flag and the Centennial, the book industry was falling apart. John Gray, president of Macmillan Canada, had warned fifteen years beforehand, in 1955, that Canada had “become a battleground for foreign wholesalers, and in the struggle for export markets both British and American publishers have shown a cynical indifference to their contractual arrangements which neither would have countenanced before the war.”⁶ The agency system — a system where a Canadian publisher would secure the right to be the sole distributor in Canada for an American or British firm — was also undermined by booksellers “buying around” established geographic arrangements in order to counteract the small discounts and slow service, especially for back orders, that they were encountering on foreign books. “Buying around” the official Canadian agent, which meant buying directly from the British or American publisher, a practice facilitated by having an office or an affiliate in the country one was buying from, was also more profitable for booksellers by ten to fifteen percent.⁷ The terrain on which The Ryerson Press was built, and on which the Division of Communication landed,

Agency System and Conflicts Over Domestic and Foreign Ownership in the Canadian Publishing Industry, 1970–1986,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 40, no. 2 (2002).

⁶ John Gray, “English Language Publishing in Canada,” *CLA Bulletin* 11 (June 1955): 294.

⁷ “Mixed Feelings About Publishers,” *Quill & Quire* 21 (July 1955): 16–17.

was becoming more difficult to navigate.

After C. H. Dickinson retired in 1966, *Observer* editor Al Forrest served as acting secretary of the Board of Publication until 1968 when DivCom took over. *London Free Press* editor-in-chief William Heine was elected Chair of the new DivCom, an unpaid position, and tasked immediately with “improving or disposing of Ryerson’s commercial operations.”⁸ The new Secretary of DivCom, the most important paid position in the division, was Frank Brisbin.

Rev. Frank Brisbin⁹ received his BD from St. Stephen’s College (University of Alberta) and was ordained in May 1942. After serving the church in Alberta, Brisbin was called in 1948 to Metropolitan United Church (Met) in Toronto to help the Very Rev. Dr. Peter Bryce in his “groundbreaking ministry.” When Dr. Bryce died less than two years later, Brisbin, at the age of thirty-one, became senior acting minister and then senior minister. Met was still the biggest, most prestigious church in the country, as it had been in the 1870s when Book Steward William Briggs had been its minister. In the early 1950s, while at Met, Brisbin became a member of the Board of Publication. In the fall of 1967, Brisbin was invited to become the first Secretary of DivCom “because of [his] administrative competence.” By this point, he had served on the Board of Publication for sixteen years and as chair of Sunday School Publications. Brisbin was known as a “decisive man” with a “belief in open communications.” He wanted for DivCom “people who understand audio-visual aids, print,

⁸ Hal Tennant, “Step-by-Step Events that Led to Ryerson’s Sale to U.S. Firm,” *The Financial Post*, 14 November 1970: 39. In large part, this article is an interview with DivCom secretary Frank Brisbin.

⁹ The information in this paragraph comes from the Frank Brisbin, biographical file, UCCA.

broadcast, news, even the whole theory of communication.” He remained head of DivCom until 1984.

The biggest organizational project of all was the expected merger of the Anglican Church of Canada with the United Church of Canada. This project came with its own joint hymnbook (known as “the red hymnbook”), which was to be ready for General Council in January 1971.^{10,11} As a member of the commission on union with the Anglican Church, Brisbin predicted that “historical denominational lines” would not “last very much longer” though they had “been in existence 200 to 400 years.” He predicted “a lot of reshuffling — involving liberals and conservatives or whoever — and re-grouping.” In the late 1960s, all major denominations were experiencing a reduction in size and wealth but were striving to become more flexible. “We’ve come through an era when it was the respectable thing for a family to be associated with a church,” he said:

Now there are so many interests — many of them meritorious — that we are being stripped down to the few who are dedicated to what a church should be. Right beside that is the fact that the churches are losing some of their most dedicated people because the churches have been too slow to change.

Brisbin believed that after the Second World War, when churches were expanding, with denominations in competition with each other, they should have been talking about co-operation instead. One of the problems with having

¹⁰ The joint hymnbook was supposed to be printed in a union shop, “provided that no difficulties arise due to restrictive practices that might be involved.” UCC *Yearbook* 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, September 9th to October 20th, 1969, 6.

¹¹ UCC *Yearbook* 1970, 1–2.

undertaken this vast expansion was that churches now had “a load of capital debt from which they can never escape entirely.”¹² Others in the church were mostly in favour of the union. Peter Gordon White felt that it was certain. “It is already here on a practical level,” he said. “We do much of our work together.”¹³ Al Forrest was in favour of union but noted “a lot of indifference on our side and some organized resistance on the other side.” He concluded that he would not “be heartbroken” if it were called off.¹⁴

The November 1970 issue of *The United Church Observer* — ironically the same month The Ryerson Press was sold — devoted its entire issue to church union. The *Observer*, and its Anglican counterpart, *Canadian Churchman*, had published a reader survey about the proposed union in their July issues and reported on the questionnaires that readers had sent in. They cautioned that this was not a reliable random sampling of opinion, since participation was voluntary. Of those who responded, ninety-one percent of United Church members and sixty-one percent of Anglicans said that they “would accept” church union; of those, fifty-one percent of United Church members and twenty-nine percent of Anglicans were “eager” for it. On the other hand, six percent of United Church members and thirty-one percent of Anglicans, including forty-five percent of Anglicans under thirty, threatened to

¹² Press Release, Frank Brisbin, biographical file, UCCA.

¹³ United Church Publicity Department, “Peter Gordon White: A Guide for Media Interviews,” October 1971. White bio file, UCCA.

¹⁴ United Church Publicity Department, “Notes to news media personnel,” n.d., n.p. Forrest bio file, UCCA.

leave their church rather than join with the other.¹⁵

Major concerns from United Church members included the fact that the Anglican communion was done with fermented wine while the United Church was by tradition and policy “dry” in order to provide a safe place away from the social pressures of drinking. As well, the Anglican Church was not necessarily considered “Protestant,” a position with which many Anglicans agreed.¹⁶ Major Anglican concerns included the fact that United Church ministers were not considered “priests” in that their ordination was seen to be of lower rank than that of Anglican ministers; Anglicans did not necessarily think that they could accept communion from United Church ministers. Minor concerns included such things as kneeling for prayers, which the Anglicans did, being “too hard on the nylons.”¹⁷ The most telling feedback, though, related to the question “If there were no church of my own denomination in my community, I would worship with....” United Church respondents picked “Presbyterian” (2436) two to one over “Anglican” (1220). On the Anglican side, many answered “United Church” (860), but most answered “Roman Catholics” (1110).¹⁸ In light of all these concerns, it is not surprising that the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada did not, in the end, join forces. Instead, in 2001, the Anglican Church in Canada joined in “full communion,” but did not merge

¹⁵ Patricia Clarke and Jerry Hames, “What Church Members Really Think about Church Union – The Whole Story,” *Observer*, November 1970: 1, 18.

¹⁶ Robert Craig and Ralph Latimer, “Answers to the Most Asked Questions about Church Union,” *Observer*, November 1970: 23–24.

¹⁷ “The Things We Say about Each Other’s Churches!” *Observer*, November 1970: 25.

¹⁸ Clarke and Hames, “What Church Members Really Think,” 21.

hierarchies, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.¹⁹ No new mergers for the United Church have taken place since The Evangelical United Brethren Church joined in 1968, the same year that DivCom was formed.

With The Ryerson Press now a department of DivCom, Brisbin was “more involved with the agonizing decision to sell the press than any other church official...” He “knew there was one unholy mess going on at Ryerson Press,” which had been perpetuated, in part, by the continuing management of Ernest W. Scott, but he hoped it could be rescued. “We failed in that,” he said.²⁰ Only months after he had begun his tenure, Ryerson Press requested a \$300,000 loan from the church saying, “[i]t is very difficult for us to do a daily, or even weekly, cash flow since we have no guarantee as to when payments of our receivables will come in [...] In the middle of each month [we] have some very heavy fixed payments.”²¹ A year later, the requests for money were still coming: “we will require an advance from the United Church in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars by March 17,” with additional funds required in April or May.²² As a matter of sensible church stewardship, it was not possible to keep pouring money into a secular, commercial enterprise. In June 1969, DivCom presented a report on The Ryerson Press to the Sub-Executive of General

¹⁹ “This means that while each church maintains its own autonomy, it also fully recognizes the catholicity and apostolicity of the other. In practical terms, this means that Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada can share the Eucharist together, use each other’s liturgies, and participate in each other’s ordinations. Anglican and Lutheran clergy may also serve interchangeably in either church.” See the website of the Anglican Church of Canada: <<http://www.anglican.ca/faith/eir/full-communion-partnership/>>.

²⁰ “TV or not TV,” 18–19.

²¹ V. C. Watter to D. N. Borgal, 23 April 1968. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 4.

²² W. H. Tomlinson to D. N. Borgal, 10 March 1969. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 4.

Council.²³ In their response to the report, the Sub-Executive

agreed that if the printing and manufacturing were disposed of, there would have to be developed a proper publishing programme, and for this there would have to be sufficient risk capital; if the printing, manufacturing and publishing operations were all disposed of, then consideration will have to be given to the way in which the Church will publish its own publications; if the printing and manufacturing divisions are discontinued, fair treatment must be given to the personnel involved who have given many years of service to the Ryerson Press.²⁴

The Executive of DivCom was then authorized to work on the sale of the printing plant and to come back with recommendations “for the winding up of the business and the disposition of the property and/or publishing business.”²⁵ In other words, the sale of the publishing side of the business was neither the first priority nor the first option; the sale of the money-losing manufacturing department was. Unfortunately, no one, at that point, wanted to buy it.

By January 1970, DivCom had separated the Press into three segments: “Church-related, commercial publishing, and commercial printing and manufacturing.” Church-related publishing resumed under the United Church Publishing House (UCPH) name and was comprised of the *Observer* and “a composite of all other related church services.” A formula for early-retirement benefits was also approved for Ryerson Press employees and the loan from the United Church to the House was increased to \$200,000, with an additional

²³ The Sub-Executive would be the body with the most day-to-day power in the church, as the whole Executive would have to be flown in from various parts of the country. The term “General Council” itself technically refers to the national meeting, which occurs every three years, to which every Conference (region) sends delegates; however, it is often used as a short-form to refer to the Executive, which meets several times a year, or to the Sub-Executive, which meets more frequently.

²⁴ UCC *Yearbook* 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, September 9th to October 20th, 1969, 5–6.

²⁵ Ibid.

\$200,000 if required to cover the bank loan.²⁶ However, as we have seen in Chapter 5, *Observer* editor Al Forrest did not want the magazine to be a department of DivCom. By September 1970, he had managed to disentangle it from the Division.

After Campbell Hughes became General Manager at the end of 1968, Robin Farr was hired to be the new Director of Publishing and Editor-in-Chief. When Hughes left at the end of 1969, Gavin Clark from the printing firm of Rolph-Clark-Stone, became the new General Manager. Clark undertook to discontinue the library division, offload the printing division, sever many of the agency ties, and let seventeen employees go. Neither the Toronto Dominion Bank nor the United Church would extend any more credit. It was not public knowledge that Clark was not an employee of the Press but a consultant from “Innovators Contact International Ltd.,” of which he was President. Since he knew coming into the job, that he would be working himself out of a job by divesting of the Press, this move — along with the consulting fee of \$25,000 for the first six months — seems prudent on his part, although it put him into immediate conflict of interest. Clause 5 of his contract read as follows:

It is understood that the Church is actively exploring ways of divestment by it of the Printing and Publishing business carried on by The Ryerson Press and that efforts to incorporate the business will be taken. In these and in any other of its activities and deliberations related to The Ryerson Press the Church will keep Innovators informed in order that Innovators may have an opportunity to participate in future plans related to The Ryerson Press.²⁷

²⁶ UCC *Yearbook* 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, January 9, 1970, 21.

²⁷ Gavin Clark to Frank Brisbin, 11 December 1969. UCCA 93.095C, Box 10, File 4.

In other words, The Ryerson Press had just taken on a predatory competitor as its General Manager with a mandate to use the church's own money to improve the businesses that he sought to purchase. In light of this, Brisbin carefully documented his dealings with Clark in written correspondence.²⁸ Over more than a year, Clark sought to purchase first the publishing house, then the printing plant, as well as 299 Queen Street itself. In all of these goals he was unsuccessful, in part because he didn't have the required capital and sought to use the church as his banker instead, and in part because Brisbin had no reason to trust him, as he was clearly not above spinning things to his advantage, including trying to use the church's own scruples against it, regarding loyalty to employees on the one hand and American ownership on the other.

General Council, in their deliberations on what to do with the press, had considered the certain opposition it would face if it turned Canadian publications over to American control. In their quest to keep the press, or at least to keep it Canadian, the church tried to enlist the help of both the Ontario and federal governments. Brisbin wrote on 15 May to Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce, to warn him of a probable sale to an American firm and received no response. However, that same month, Ottawa announced that Ernst & Ernst, a New York firm, would examine the Canadian book publishing industry. They discovered that in 1969 Canadians had spent \$222 million on books. Of these, sixty-five percent were imported, twenty-five

²⁸ Frank Brisbin Correspondence. UCCA 93.095C, Box 10, File 4.

percent were Canadian published, and ten percent were adapted in Canada (“Canadianized”). The Canadian public was apparently more civic minded than its institutions: eighty percent of books bought by libraries were imported; for universities it was ninety-two percent. Exports of Canadian books amounted only to \$5.5 million. Canada imported \$400 million of printed materials overall and exported only \$24 million. Ernst & Ernst recommended rationalizing the industry and improving exports, especially to the United States.²⁹ In any case, this study did nothing to help The Ryerson Press.

In another attempt to raise capital to pay down the debt, in June 1970, a giant warehouse sale of Ryerson Press books at Varsity Arena offered over 600,000 books to the public at prices ranging from 25¢ to \$3. Organizers estimated that they had \$2 million worth of books and hoped to earn \$500,000 from the sale; they only netted \$140,000.³⁰ A similar sale in June 1969 by McClelland & Stewart had offered 200,000 books, plus appearances by Pierre Berton and Leonard Cohen. Both The Ryerson Press and the McClelland & Stewart sales “were symptomatic of major management and cash-flow problems among Canada’s largest houses, and a sad contrast to Ryerson’s Centennial exhibit [...] at the Royal Ontario Museum, less than a block away from Varsity Arena.”³¹

Paul Rimstead was hired to publicize the giant book sale and wanted

²⁹ “Ernst & Ernst Report, Findings – A Summary,” *Quill & Quire*, 15 January 1971, 1.

³⁰ If sold at \$3 each, the sale would bring in \$1,800,000; if sold at 25 cents each, the sale would bring in \$150,000. In both cases, you would need to sell every single book, which is unrealistic.

³¹ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 7.

“lots of hustle” including “searchlights, a dirigible, folksingers.”³² The organizers got a little carried away in their enthusiasm and forgot that they should not run a church book sale on a Sunday (June 14 and June 21), thus contravening the *Lord’s Day Act*.³³ Booksellers, always protective of their own turf and incensed whenever publishers tried to “sell around” them directly to the public, threatened to boycott Ryerson as Coles had done to McClelland & Stewart after their warehouse sale. The Canadian Retail Booksellers’ Association wrote letters to complain; direct retailing would damage relations between publishers and booksellers who had formed a symbiotic relationship over the years. As Parker notes, “[s]ometimes damage control causes more damage.”³⁴

The giant book sale was a clear sign that things were not going well with The Ryerson Press so Gavin Clark and Robin Farr tried to organize an employee takeover that would see shares offered to the public. Unfortunately, “Bad feelings and anger followed.”³⁵ On the provincial side, Liberal education critic Tim Reid, MPP, gave a speech³⁶ to educational publishers about American distribution channels. He called for federal intervention, said that a group of businessmen were prepared to buy The Ryerson Press, and said he would write

³² Peter Sypnowich, “Ryerson Press Tries to Avoid ‘Doom,’” *Toronto Daily Star*, 2 June 1970, 54.

³³ UCC *Yearbook* 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, May 14 to June 17, 1970, 31.

³⁴ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 10.

³⁵ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 28. A series of letters in the correspondence files of Frank Brisbin outlines the deteriorating relationship with General Manager/consultant Gavin Clark. Clark’s last attempt to buy a piece of The Ryerson Press business was foiled when the printing plant was sold to MacKinnon-Moncur in 1971. On 18 June 1971, Brisbin wrote to Clark, rather backhandedly, “I know that the rejection of your proposition was a disappointment to you but these things happen in life” (FBC Box 10, File 4).

³⁶ The speech took place on 11 September and was published as “Whither Books? One Man’s opinion,” *Quill & Quire*, 2 October 1970, 4.

to Brisbin.³⁷ Nothing appears to have come of this. Heine tried to set up a meeting with the Ontario department of Trade and Development but Clark met with minister Stanley Randall in late October to ask for re-financing for the employee group. After the sale, Randall said that “the province might have considered a low-interest loan” to keep The Ryerson Press Canadian.³⁸

Brisbin was not amused, as the government had not talked to the owners of the press but rather to the manager trying to organize the employee takeover. Brisbin did not believe that Clark’s proposal would have allowed the Church to retire its debt — the offer was \$50,000 up front with more to follow whereas the church needed \$2.5 million to get out of debt — and so it was never seriously considered. As Robin Farr explains, the offer from the employee group “was simply not accepted by the owners, because it was felt that it would take us too much time to put together the necessary capitalization to acquire the company. And there were buyers out there.” Of the last few months before the sale Farr says,

everything that we had tried to do seemed [...] too late in the day — the company [had a good] trade list and had some pretty good talent [...] for example an old friend of mine from McClelland & Stewart [...] — Bob Wilkie as production manager. If there was anybody that could produce a book [...] on time, at the right price, it would be Bob. You know, things like that were happening. But the Church decided to sell....

One thing Farr did learn from Ryerson Press was that “it’s a very great mistake

³⁷ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 29.

³⁸ “Ryerson Sold ‘Over My Head’: Randall,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 November 1970, 24.

to have a [large] printing operation [...] within a publishing operation.”³⁹

At the Executive meeting of October 1970 — the same meeting where the United Church officially recognized mainland China and commiserated⁴⁰ with Quebec about the FLQ crisis and the use of the *War Measures Act* — DivCom presented their update on the possible sale: “A committee⁴¹ ... was appointed, with power to negotiate the sale of the publishing division of The Ryerson Press, should a suitable buyer and suitable terms be decided upon.”⁴² DivCom then came back with a recommendation to sell “the complete commercial undertaking of the Ryerson Press.”⁴³ By the end of October, the sale to McGraw-Hill had been approved and the \$5000 cheque and \$45,000 promissory note that Clark had tried use as a down-payment for the “employee takeover,” which was really a planned takeover by his consulting firm, had been returned to him.⁴⁴

The unspecified “deteriorating relations with the United Church” pointed to by George Parker in his article “The Sale of Ryerson Press” casts a rather wide net on responsibility for the sale.⁴⁵ From the minutes of the United Church yearbooks, which contain a digest of General Council meetings for the year as well as reports from each Division of the church, it is clear that the decision to sell The Ryerson Press was made by Brisbin. It is also clear that the Chair of DivCom, William H. Heine, resigned because of the sale to the American

³⁹ Robin Farr, interview by Roy MacSkimming, 21 October 1999. RMF Box 2, File 5, 41, 3.

⁴⁰ The statement says, “the anguish of Quebec is the anguish of all Canada.”

⁴¹ “...consisting of the Moderator, the Secretary of the General Council, the Chairman and Secretary of the Division of Communication, and the Chairman and Secretary of the Division of Finance...”

⁴² UCC *Yearbook* 1971, The Executive, October 20th, 21st and 22nd, 1970, 10.

⁴³ UCC *Yearbook* 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive, November 11, 12 and 13, 1969, 10.

⁴⁴ Frank Brisbin to Gavin Clark, 30 October 1970. FBC Box 10, File 1.

⁴⁵ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 23.

buyer.⁴⁶ General Council did not oppose the decision to sell, and it is well to remember that there had always been many opponents within the church to running a commercial business, as pointed out by James Taylor, managing editor of the *Observer*, in a letter to the editor. The real reason for the sale, he argued, was made

on moral and ethical grounds that a church should not be operating a commercial business in a competitive market. For if the business makes money, the church is tainted with the practices of big business; if the business is run at cost, the church is undercutting businesses that must show profit; and if the business loses money, the church has to subsidize it from the funds donated by members for other purposes — a practice which, if continued for any extended time, might be considered fraud.⁴⁷

Once upon a time, the House had made money — enough to build the enormous building at 299 Queen Street West that housed it — but by the 1960s, it was not even able to undercut other businesses by operating at cost. Nor was it operating in a competitive market, since the market was rigged against the success of any Canadian publisher.

Brisbin believed that “when the church is most popular, it is often least effective.”⁴⁸ Whether this thought helped him sleep after a long day of dealing with the fallout from the sale of The Ryerson Press is unknown, but he certainly received the brunt of the criticism for the unpopular decision. The general climate for book publishing in Canada was very difficult, despite the lingering celebratory feel of the Centennial year, Trudeaumania, and flower power. It was

⁴⁶ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: Resignations, 40.

⁴⁷ James Taylor, Letter to the Editor, *Globe & Mail*, 17 November 1970. BP 83.061C, Box 18, File 13. For an interview with Jim Taylor by the author, see Appendix 9.

⁴⁸ UCC *Yearbook* 1978, Report of the Secretary of the Division of Communication to Conference in 1978.

only two decades since the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, co-chaired by Vincent Massey and Henri Levesque, had listened to 450 individual submissions and 400 briefs in preparing their report. The recommendations, issued on 1 June 1951, included strengthening the National Archives and the National Film Board, a new National Gallery, establishing a National Library, setting up the CRTC, funding for the humanities in universities, and the creation of the Canada Council.

Instead of following through on the two latter recommendations as separate items, Ottawa combined university and arts funding in the Canada Council, set up with \$100 million in inheritance taxes from Sir James Dunn and Isaac Walton Killam. “What was most important in this Report,” writes Parker, “was the recognition that governments would have to become patrons of the arts and supporters of the cultural industries. It was not a new idea in Europe, but it created foes as well as proponents in Canada.”⁴⁹ One of the critics of the Canada Council was Al Forrest, who said, “If I had known the sort of way it was going to be set up and the sort of business it was going to be, I doubt very much if I would have been very enthusiastic in supporting culture in that way.” Forrest pointed out that there was no labour or rural representation but rather an over-representation of the rich: “There are some very fine people on the council but there are some who have been appointed only as a gesture to big money.”⁵⁰

Despite all the cultural reinforcement that resulted from the Massey—

⁴⁹ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 12.

⁵⁰ “Sees ‘Gesture to Money’ in Council Membership,” *London Free Press*, 26 April 1969? [date not clear]. See Forrest biographical file UCCA.

Levesque Royal Commission, nothing in particular had been done for book publishers. The Canada Council offered grants to writers, but the idea that publishers themselves might be in need of a program had not yet been considered.

Between 1970 and 1973, “three other major Canadian-owned houses were sold to international corporations, and a fourth [McClelland & Stewart] was saved from bankruptcy by the Ontario government.”⁵¹ The church very much shied away from publishing after the sale of Ryerson Press, leaving a vacuum in the market that Wood Lake Books would eventually fill.⁵² After The Ryerson Press, DivCom focused on its other projects, including a few remaining periodicals — *Mandate*, *Mission Magazine*, and *Worldwind* — after the *Observer* became arms-length from the church, as well as films, AV, radio, press releases, public relations, devotional columns such as “Words to Live By” and “Unchurched Editorials” that newspapers could use for free. As well, DivCom had the money-losing CANEC Publishing and Supply House, focusing mostly on supply rather than publishing.

In 1977, however, a publishing project too good to pass up came out with the CANEC imprint: the two-volume biography of Dr. Robert Baird McClure, a long-time medical missionary and the first lay moderator (head) of the United Church of Canada. In fact, he had been moderator when The Ryerson Press was sold. “We don’t intend to repeat history,” said Brisbin, “but occasionally there

⁵¹ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 11.

⁵² See Appendix 9 for an interview with Jim Taylor, one of the founders of Wood Lake Books.

are books which should be published, which we can publish.”⁵³ Munroe Scott’s brilliant and popular *McClure: The China Years* and *McClure: Years of Challenge* were published in hardcover by CANEC and picked up in paperback editions by Penguin two years later. However, the church could not do without publishing entirely, as it still needed to get its message out. In the background, there was always discussion about the “possible future integration of the church’s publishing capacities,” since they were “now located in virtually every Division of the church.”⁵⁴

The United Church of Canada would most probably have been happy to hold onto The Ryerson Press, another connection to Egerton Ryerson, had UCPH not been losing money at such a breathtaking rate. The church was involved in many spiritual and social projects of far more importance to church members than providing Canadian literature supported by textbook publishing; the church had to prioritize, as does every business and organization, to make the work plan meet the available resources, now dwindling thanks to inflation and declining membership. The church, as a whole, was already running committees and commissions on a wide range of issues, including poverty, overseas development, missionaries, personnel and salary issues, redeveloping downtown church property, French translation of church materials, the realignment of pastoral charges, and Christian faith generally.

⁵³ “TV or not TV,” 18–19.

⁵⁴ H. L. Arnup to Frank Brisbin, 1 February 1972, Re: responsibilities related to The Ryerson Press. One item contained in the letter was the minutes of the meeting of the management committee, 25 January 1972, 4.

Organizationally, the restructuring of the various Boards was still underway with a “New Division,” which would eventually become the “Division of Mission in Canada.” There was also, long overdue, a “Committee Regarding Financing Christian Education Publications.” The whole restructuring and rationalization meant that projects that had been status quo for a long time, like the Board of Publication, The Ryerson Press, and the manufacturing department, had to be reconsidered.

Besides the internal restructuring, the prospect of union with the Anglicans rekindled the sort of controversy and excitement that surrounded union with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in 1925. In this, there was an even closer tie to Egerton Ryerson than book publishing. When Ryerson stood up to Anglican Bishop Strachan and demanded equal rights for Methodists,⁵⁵ he set in motion a series of events that would one day lead to the United Church becoming the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. Union with the Anglicans, therefore, seemed a sort of “manifest destiny” for which it was worth sacrificing a few other projects. With the merger of the Board of Publication and the Board of Information and the exciting prospect of union with the Anglicans, secular book publishing seemed quite unglamorous by comparison. By 1970, the Canadian publishing industry was developed to a

⁵⁵ Ryerson, “A Review of a Sermon, Preached by the Hon. and Rev. John Strachan, D.D. at York, U.C., 3d of July 1825 on the Death of the Late Lord Bishop of Quebec by a Methodist Preacher” (*Colonial Advocate*, 11 May 1826). See also Egerton Ryerson, *The Story of My Life* (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1883), 48. The review was reprinted in *Claims of Churchmen and Dissenters of Upper Canada Brought to the Test: In a Controversy Between Several Members of the Church of England and a Methodist Preacher* (Kingston, U.C., 1828). Parts were reprinted in Goldwin French, *Parsons and Politics: The Role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962), 111 ff. See also Donald Jones, “Historical Toronto: Ryerson First Earned Fame defending Methodist Church,” *Toronto Star*, 11 September 1982, G14.

point where it seemed possible, if not preferable, for the church to cut the apron strings to the “mother publishing house of Canada,” as Pierce had called it, and get on with matters closer to its own mandate and financial viability.

EPILOGUE

THE SALE: MCGRAW-HILL RYERSON (MHR), 1970

We had to take it out of their culture and put it in ours and that made it very profitable.

—Ron Besse, President of McGraw-Hill Ryerson¹

The fall of 1970 was a very busy one for Frank Brisbin and the Division of Communication. In September 1970, he and William Heine, Chair of the Division, travelled to New York to talk to McGraw-Hill about buying the Press. The previous March, McGraw-Hill principals Bill Darnell and Ron Besse had parked themselves like auditors at 299 Queen Street West with the goal of valuing the publishing assets in order to bid on them.

On 14 October, Donald Campbell, president of Maclean-Hunter, offered about 1.5 million for the Press, with a two-week deadline of 28 October, which was extended to 30 October. There were also four or five other tentative bids. One Toronto businessman who looked into the possibility and decided not to make an offer told Brisbin to “[w]rap it up and take your losses before they get bigger.”² On 27 October, McGraw-Hill finally made their offer: a minimum of \$2.25 million, with a two-day deadline.

DivCom reported to General Council that it had two serious offers to

¹ Ron Besse, interview by Roy MacSkimming, 28 July 1999, n.p. RMF Box 1, File 11.

² Hal Tennant, “Step-by-Step Events that Led to Ryerson’s Sale to U.S. Firm,” *The Financial Post*, 14 November 1970, 39. In large part, this article is an interview with DivCom secretary Frank Brisbin.

purchase The Ryerson Press. Heine favoured the Maclean-Hunter offer; he had spent a great deal of time negotiating with them and was opposed to selling the press to an American firm. The McGraw-Hill offer, however, was a million dollars higher. Brisbin recommended that the McGraw-Hill offer be accepted, as it was the only one that would allow for the retirement of the debt. “[A]fter very careful deliberation” and ensuring that “all necessary steps were taken” on behalf of employee interests, the Sub-Executive of General Council approved the McGraw-Hill bid, though they knew that nationalist protest would follow.³ They were quite disappointed in the lack of assistance from either the provincial or federal government and decided

that an approach be made to the Prime Minister of Ontario, stating that, unless the Government of Ontario comes forward with an alternative proposal, the said agreement to sell the Publishing Division of the Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill by December 1st, 1970, will be honoured.

Since “no action was forthcoming from that source” the sale went ahead.⁴ DivCom stressed that it was “no longer feasible for the Church to continue to operate a commercial printing or publishing business, since the field is so competitive”;⁵ in essence, the church could no longer afford to subsidize the Press, despite the fact, some would argue, that the Press had been subsidizing the church on various projects.

Wanting to do what they could to avoid selling to an American company,

³ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, October 29th to December 18th, 1970, 14–15.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

on 29 October, Brisbin phoned George Gilmour of Maclean-Hunter to see if their offer could be raised. The answer, presumably, was no, and the McGraw-Hill bid was accepted on 29 October. The church had done its best to interest a Canadian buyer and to enlist government help to no avail. They could not, in all good conscience, sell the Press for a million dollars less than the McGraw-Hill offer just because the buyer was Canadian; the church had too many financial pressures of its own to do that, and it certainly would not have stopped letters of complaint from fluttering down on them from church members. Losing a million dollars, even in the name of nationalism, would simply have provided two areas of complaint rather than one: the sale and the loss.

When interviewed in 1999, thirty years later,⁶ Besse, who was president and CEO of McGraw-Hill Ryerson from 1973 to 1976, said “I have vivid memories of sitting down there in dusty old [299] Queen [...] and trying to come up with the formula of how are we going to buy this company.” He and Darnell “took every book and [...] looked at its historical sales going back five years — we never thought we needed to go any further — then forecast it out for three to five years.” Besse said,

working on that acquisition had a major impact on me, because I still vividly remember my thoughts and the discussions I had with Bill Darnell, who I respected very much. What we learned was here you have a very successful book publishing operation, in both trade and in education. It had an unbelievable brand name and the name Ryerson, and that’s why we eventually made it McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

⁶ All the quotes in this section come from Roy MacSkimming’s interview with Ron Besse, RMF.

“Where they were losing money,” said Besse, “was they had an integrated operation. They printed their books as well as published their books [...] they were losing a lot of money in their printing operations.” By looking just at the publishing side as a separate business, the gross margins that could be earned on the books were suddenly apparent and informed the higher bid that McGraw-Hill made. The lesson Besse learned in valuing The Ryerson Press was that “the overheads of another part of an organization can destroy the profitability” of an otherwise good business. Attention to the bottom line has always been important in business, but especially so in publishing where the line between profitability and disaster can be very thin. Besse saw this in the ashes of The Ryerson Press and took the lesson to heart in his dealings with staff training at McGraw-Hill Ryerson: “We train all our middle-line management people to read a financial statement properly,” he said, “because if you don’t make it on the bottom line, you can’t publish that next book.”⁷ Buying The Ryerson Press “gave McGraw-Hill in Canada a tremendous boost” and provided them with “a very valuable author base.”⁸ McGraw-Hill Ryerson also took “the politically prudent step of going public, selling 30 per cent of its shares to Canadians,” but this gesture of good faith was drowned out by all the protest that followed the sale.⁹

On 2 November 1970, Frank Brisbin and John F. Macmillan, president of

⁷ Roy MacSkimming, “Why Foreign Firms are Such Successful Canadian Publishers,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 April 1975, F3.

⁸ Ron Besse, interview by Roy MacSkimming.

⁹ MacSkimming, “Why Foreign Firms are Such Successful Canadian Publishers,” F3.

McGraw-Hill Canada, held a press conference in the boardroom at Church House at St. Clair and Yonge. As of 1 December 1970, The Ryerson Press, including its physical assets, its trade department, its textbook department, its book archives (all the way back to the earliest books in the 1800s), and its name would be owned by McGraw-Hill. The buyer “was anxious to take over [The Ryerson Press’s] \$3 million a year textbook business,” Brisbin said.¹⁰ The reported sale price was \$2 or \$2.5 million¹¹ but the actual amount was \$1.75 million plus a royalty of six percent on net sales for the next five years, with a guaranteed minimum of \$500,000; the total was at least \$2.25 million. “Thus ended a 141 year chapter in Canadian publishing and a hectic two-year struggle to save a respected house.”¹²

General Manager Gavin Clark was not at the press conference. Brisbin had phoned him at 8:00 a.m. that morning to tell him that the deal was going public. At 11:00 a.m., Clark called the staff together at 299 Queen Street West to pass along the bad news, which “had a traumatic effect on the employees. They were welded into a great team in the last few months, putting in all sorts of extra hours.”¹³ Ironically, that same afternoon, “Robin Farr took delivery of two new textbooks for a new series that Ryerson was developing that would utilize print, film, and tapes.” As well, “[s]omeone draped a black crepe rosette

¹⁰ Peter Sypnowich, “It was a Sad, Sad, Day for Ryerson Press Staff,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 November 1970, 34.

¹¹ McGraw-Hill Takes Over Ryerson,” *Quill & Quire* 36, 11 December 1970, 1.

¹² George Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press: The End of the Old Agency System and Conflicts over Domestic and Foreign Ownership in the Canadian Publishing Industry, 1970–1986,” 21.

¹³ Gavin Clark qtd. in Sypnowich, “It was a Sad, Sad, Day.”

over Egerton Ryerson's portrait in the entrance hall."¹⁴ Thirty to forty employees were offered jobs with McGraw-Hill but not the senior staff — Clark, Farr, executive editor Bob Wilkie, educational sales manager David Scollard, and the new art director Don Fernby — who had to stay on to wind up the business. It was not until 1977 that all residual business was finally finished between the church and McGraw-Hill and any remaining proceeds from the sale of The Ryerson Press were transferred to the United Church Publishing House publication fund.¹⁵

The fallout from the sale was immediate. William Heine resigned as Chair at the press conference. He was opposed, not to selling the Press, but to selling it to an American buyer, since, as editor of the *London Free Press*, he had made public stands against selling Canadian companies to Americans. He told the press that his reasons for resigning were “personal.” He followed up, however, with editorials on 3 December and 7 December in the *London Free Press* calling for “legislation which will mark out those areas of our national life where Canadians feel we cannot tolerate economic domination” and a CRTC-like structure that would not involve direct subsidies to publishers but would protect the industry from foreign competition.¹⁶ In response to the sale, newspaper headlines asking “Did it have to perish?”¹⁷ and proclaiming

¹⁴ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 22.

¹⁵ BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 7.

¹⁶ William C. Heine, “Ryerson Sale to U.S. Firm Netted Extra Million,” *London Free Press*, 7 December 1970. See also “Canadian Content in Publishing,” *London Free Press*, 3 December 1970.

¹⁷ *Globe & Mail*, editorial, 3 November 1970.

“Textbook sellouts must be stopped”¹⁸ appeared in the daily papers. CBC Radio devoted two shows, *Sunday Magazine* and *Sunday Supplement* of 8 November, to the sale. In their coverage, *Sunday Supplement* aired two minutes of Brisbin’s explanation for the sale from the press conference and devoted about ten minutes to Dennis Lee’s dramatic portrayal of Canada as an “occupied territory.”

Besides the press coverage, the United Church of Canada was “deluged with letters from across the country that lamented the sale to a foreign corporation.”¹⁹ Two of these letters were from Lorne Pierce’s children, Bruce Pierce and Beth Robinson. They were hugely disappointed that their father’s legacy was being squandered, particularly that the sale was to an American firm, though Beth Robinson admits that she would not have been any less disappointed if Maclean-Hunter had bought Ryerson Press rather than McGraw-Hill.²⁰ Brisbin spent much of November corresponding with people on the issue of the sale, writing to one ministerial colleague at Metropolitan United Church in London, Ontario, “All my U.E.L.²¹ blood boils at selling Ryerson to the damnyankees [sic]. At the same time, I know the Canadian corporations who looked at the situation last year and dropped it like a hot brick. They have been nobly silent in all this rhubarb, and they had better stay silent.”²² To a Winnipeg colleague he wrote,

¹⁸ *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 November 1970.

¹⁹ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 29.

²⁰ Sandra Campbell and Beth Robinson, interview with the author, 23 May 2013.

²¹ *United Empire Loyalist*.

²² Frank Brisbin to Dr. George W. Goth, 13 November 1970. FBC 93.095C, Box 10, File 1.

I think we made the right decision. I think Canadian Publishers and other lines of business would have been prepared to wait until Ryerson died and then pick up the inventory and the name for a few dollars. I think also, as you say, the Boards of Education locally, and both the Provincial and Federal Governments will have to accept more responsibility for this whole business of Canadian education and culture through the print medium than they have done in the past by a long shot.²³

Brisbin also felt compelled to explain the sale to his own United Church colleagues generally, so he wrote a letter to the ministers, deaconesses, and other workers to explain that in 1967 The Ryerson Press was very much in debt, with term loans of \$900,000 and line of credit of \$1 million with the Toronto Dominion bank. There was no profit in 1968, and the \$300,000 loan from church, repaid in 1968, had to be re-borrowed in 1969 with a further loan from the church of \$500,000 later in 1969 as a “stop-gap measure designed to keep about 300 people from being laid off.”²⁴ He also, no doubt, wanted to stem the flow of letters to his office, and so he gave a long interview to journalist Hal Tennant of the *Financial Post* to explain his perspective on the sale.²⁵

Besides the letters, the Waffle wing of the New Democratic Party set about picketing outside of Church House. The flyer they handed out deplored the sale and warned that at “[t]he same time as McGraw-Hill ‘of Canada’ took over Ryerson Press, its U.S. parent company acquired thirteen television stations. What you read, what you hear, what you see — its all being

²³ Frank Brisbin to Rev. John P. Freeman, 17 November 1970. FBC 93.095C, Box 10, File 1.

²⁴ Frank Brisbin to Ministers, Deaconesses and Other United Church Workers, memorandum, 9 November 1970, 2. BP 83.061C, Box 28, File 13.

²⁵ Tennant, “Step-by-Step Events,” 39.

increasingly monopolized in the hands of huge private corporation [sic] whose only concern is greater and greater profits.” They also complained about the general Americanization of Canada, including the influx of American professors at Canadian universities, and the corporatization of education:

Textbook publishing is a vital part of an educational system presently devoted to training children to fit as obedient workers and consumers into a system of corporate capitalism. We’ve not been permitted to learn about the history of working people and their struggles to build a democratic Canada — a struggle which is far from over. We’ve not been allowed to think about socialist alternatives. McGraw-Hill is hardly likely to change that.

The flyer also demanded action on three important fronts: 1) blocking the sale of The Ryerson Press; 2) prohibiting any foreign control in the textbook industry; and 3) investigating the Canadian content in textbooks.²⁶ Brisbin was not amused that he had pickets to deal with as well.

Besides the Waffle, a new group of publishers and writers emerged with the sole purpose of protesting the sale. First called the Emergency Committee of Canadian Publishers,²⁷ the group consisted of fourteen members: Jim Lorimer and Alan Samuel (James, Lewis & Samuel), Peter and Carol Martin (Peter Martin Associates), Dennis Lee, Dave Godfrey, and Graeme and Shirley Gibson (House of Anansi), Michael Macklem (Oberon Press), May Cutler (Tundra Books), Maynard Gertler (Harvest House), Stan Bevington (Coach House Press),

²⁶ The Waffle Movement in the N.D.P., “Keep Ryerson Canadian,” 4 November 1970. BP 83.061C, Box 28, File 13.

²⁷ This group became the core of the Independent Publishers Association (IPA), and then the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP).

Barney Sandwell (Burns & MacEachern), and Michael Pitman (Copp Clark).²⁸

The group demanded that one hundred percent Canadian ownership be required of all book-publishing firms by 1977. Jack McClelland, who was not part of this group, found the sale “absolutely appalling” and said that the “church should be severely criticised.”²⁹ This from a publisher who might have known better than to throw stones. His own glass house of McClelland & Stewart was itself near bankruptcy and, on 18 February 1971, “Jack McClelland put his company up for sale, even to an American, almost two months to the day after insisting he would go bankrupt” before doing so.³⁰ Instead, the Ontario Media Development Corporation lent him \$961,000 since they did not want another Ryerson-like protest on their hands. M&S, however, had constant financial troubles right up until 1985 (especially 1976 to 1980), when Jack McClelland retired and the firm was sold to Avie Bennett.

Sometimes the newfound alliance between publishers and writers was an uneasy one. Graeme Gibson — the writer who made himself famous across Canada even among people who had never read *Five Legs* (1969) for draping an American flag on the statue of Egerton Ryerson³¹ in front of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute to protest the sale — was one of the founders of The Writers’ Union of Canada (TWUC). In organizing TWUC, he noted that:

Most of our preoccupations politically in Ottawa seem to be supporting

²⁸ Bill Clarke, interview with the author, 22 May 2013.

²⁹ Hal Tennant, “Another Canadian Firm’s Sale to U.S. Erupts into a Ruckus,” *The Financial Post*, 7 November 1970, 10.

³⁰ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 40. See Peter Sypnowich, “Politician, Publisher Debate American Takeovers,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 November 1970.

³¹ Ironically, the statue of Ryerson was made in New York.

publishers [not writers] ... At the Union, I think, there was some serious debate — what the hell are we doing? Why are we lobbying for the publishers all the time when X number of them are screwing us around in this way or that? And then, the argument was without a healthy Canadian publishing industry, we were all screwed. And the argument was that without the independent bookstores, most of the members are screwed. Very few are going to get into the chains. But there was an ambivalent feeling towards publishers. I remember someone saying, I've forgotten who it was, when I first started talking to people about the Union, saying: "Fantastic, 'cause I think what should happen is that the price of the book, a third would go to the publisher, a third should go to the bookseller and a third should go to the writer."³² It should be as simple as that. We're in this together.³³

³² Presently bookstores sell books on consignment, leaving the financial risks of publication with the publisher (not counting the financial risks of creation, which are one hundred percent borne by the writer unless the writer has an advance on royalties from the publisher or a writing grant from an arts council or other source). The consignment system came about during the Great Depression as a way for publishers to convince booksellers to take their stock. Unfortunately for publishers, the system never switched back to the bookseller shouldering a share of the financial risk. Books are returnable to the publisher, under fairly liberal terms, but must still be in saleable condition. The rise of coffee shops in bookstores has meant that checking the saleability of any items returned to the publisher has become more time-consuming, which adds more warehousing costs onto the publisher. In fact, it costs the publisher more money to process returns than it does to fill orders. The standard retail discount for many years was forty percent, meaning that the publisher would get sixty percent of the retail price of a book and the bookstore would get forty percent if the book were sold. The standard educational discount was twenty percent, meaning that if the publisher had textbooks adopted, it not only enjoyed multiple copy sales, but also had a higher return and zero risk that they would be returned (except to be exchanged if there were flaws in individual copies). In the 1990s, Chapters and other huge chains began demanding a forty-six percent discount, meaning that publishers could only expect to receive fifty-four percent of the retail price of the book, if it were sold. Publishers were forced to increase the prices of books accordingly. Because of the higher discounts, Chapters was able to undercut smaller bookstores by offering popular books at thirty percent off the retail price. As well, because of the size of the chain, it has been able to command publishers to subsidize its marketing budget in a system called "co-op," meaning that publishers have to pay Chapters for preferential display in the store, such as the end cap (the visible end of a line of shelving) or even having the book face out instead of spine out on the regular shelves.

If a bookstore chain is very large, it may order enough copies at once to clean out the warehouse stock of the publisher, who then may be forced to reprint the book, and may later end up with most of the copies ordered back unsold. There have been several horror stories related to this. For example, just after 9/11, one American university press had a book about Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in print. Before 11 September 2001, Northeastern University Press had sold 4000 copies of *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden, and the Future of Terrorism* by Simon Reeves, one of only two books available on the Al Qaeda leader. It was ordered in droves and reprinted in the tens of thousands. Then demand tailed off, and tens of thousands of books were returned. The press quickly went bankrupt; however, it has since been reconstituted as a partner in University Press of New England. See Brenna McLaughlin, "Books for Understanding: The History So Far of University Presses' Online Public Information Resource," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 33, no. 4 (July 2002).

In short, a simple 3-way split of book proceeds is not the current industry standard and would leave publishers even poorer than they are now. Publishing house profits, after all the bills are paid, generally run well under five percent, usually around two percent, and this figure is AFTER government grants. Without them, most Canadian publishers would be operating in the red.

³³ Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, interview by Roy MacSkimming, Roof Bar, Park Plaza Hotel, 19 May 1999, 7–8. RMF.

The nationalist impact of The Ryerson Press sale was felt all the more since it followed the sale of another firm that same fall: W. J. Gage Ltd. was sold to Scott, Foresman of Glenview, Illinois, on 24 September 1970, to take effect on 1 January 1971. W. J. Gage had been incorporated in Toronto in 1883 and published, among other things, textbooks in science, math, and English, including two Canadian literature anthologies that stimulated university courses after World War II: A. J. M. Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, 2nd edition (1948) and Carl F. Klinck and R. E. Watters' *Canadian Anthology* (1955). However, Gage employees began buying back the company from Scott, Foresman almost as soon the American firm had bought it. It was Canadian-owned again by 1980 and became Gage Publishing Limited.

As part of the fallout, in June 1971, the Sub-Executive met to discuss the brief presented by Brisbin to the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing. London Conference (region) had requested that "General Council urge the Federal Government to take more aggressive measures to encourage and support Canadian cultural publishing" so the Moderator was asked to put together a committee to do so.³⁴

From the perspective of the United Church, the sale had achieved its main objective of relieving it "of almost all the burden of debt which had become intolerable in recent years." However, there was still more to sell off; the printing plant was still \$232,000 in debt. The sale of the commercial side of the

³⁴ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, June 11th, 1971, 37.

business enabled the church to repay \$101,159, but \$500,000 was still required to carry UCPH and the remaining printing facilities that it needed forward.³⁵ After the sale of the book publishing side of the business was completed, the management of DivCom turned its attention to selling off the printing plant or its equipment. The interested party was another printer, MacKinnon-Moncur Ltd. Because of all the furor from the publishing sale, the church decided to tread very cautiously in this next piece of business, writing to A. C. MacKinnon that “[i]t is our desire and your desire that correspondence and conversations to date be held in strict confidence.”³⁶ This desire for confidentiality even curtailed the normal process of selling a business in that the purchaser was discouraged from visiting the plant he was proposing to buy:

I am sure you will realize that after the disturbance of the past sale, we want to do everything possible to keep to a minimum the number of parties actually entering the premises and investigating the operations with a view to purchase. I shall do everything possible to provide you with documentary information in lieu of actual visits, but I recognize that eventually you will need to carry on some first hand enquiries if you are to be in a position to make a rational decision on this matter.³⁷

On 16 June 1971, the church announced the sale of Ryerson Comprint “as an on-going business” to MacKinnon-Moncur saying, “[w]e are very pleased that in this way we have been able to ensure the continuance of the operations.” All the equipment, including that previously saved for the use of UCPH, was now

³⁵ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive May 4th, 5th and 6th, 1971, 33–34.

³⁶ Dr. H. Arnup, Secretary of the Board of Finance, to A. C. MacKinnon, President, MacKinnon-Moncur Ltd., 23 November 1970. BP Box 28, File 13.

³⁷ Frank Brisbin to A. C. MacKinnon, 14 December 1970. BP Box 28, File 13.

sold.³⁸

The beautiful Wesley building, built by the profits William Briggs had made from publishing only a handful of decades before, was the next to be sold.³⁹ The building was certainly more attractive than the outdated printing equipment and offers were soon received.^{40,41} However, the first deal to purchase 299 Queen Street West fell through, precipitating a legal skirmish over the deposit. It was eventually sold to CityTV, which spend about \$10 million on top of the purchase price restoring the terra cotta building, which is now owned by Bell Media.⁴²

As the Division of Communication reported to the Executive of General Council in May 1972:

1971 marked the end of the church's operation of commercial businesses ... operationally speaking, we have now only a church-related Publishing House, and it is our policy to increase the areas of uniformity between the House and the church. [...] I think it is worthy of note that in the process of winding up its operation of two commercial businesses, the church practised the concern for people which it asks others to exercise. Considering the dimensions of the divestment, and the labour market at the time, we have received very few complaints.⁴³

Nothing is to be gained by examining the past and wondering how the present might have been changed had we done something differently twenty-five years ago. The present facts were undeniable although unpleasant, and the necessary decisions were made. The record of our church's achievements in operating a general publishing and printing

³⁸ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, June 11th, 1971, 37.

³⁹ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Executive, March 16th and 17th, 1971, 23.

⁴⁰ UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, April 20th, 1971, 29.

⁴¹ The second offer was accepted, with a closing date of 31 December 1971. UCC *Yearbook* 1971, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, June 11th, 1971, 37.

⁴² Robert Everett-Green, "CITY Takes \$10-million Bite of Gingerbread," *Globe & Mail*, 10 December 1985. CHP Box 4.8

⁴³ Many of the Ryerson Press staff, in fact, moved over to expand McGraw-Hill.

business is now in the Archives or on its way.⁴⁴ The support and counsel of many devoted people, both lay and clergy, during the past four or five years has been much appreciated. The problems aren't all solved yet, and new problems will undoubtedly emerge, but at least we have the feeling that present and future problems will be capable of solution, which is in itself an improvement.⁴⁵

Indeed new problems did emerge. The winding up of the financial matters of the Press was a nightmare and bad news followed more bad news. Since the printer's plates for books needing reprint would be "useless [to McGraw-Hill] even if they were located, because they could be used only on the presses Ryerson had used," this made it a bigger investment to keep books in print, in many cases, than McGraw-Hill was willing to make.⁴⁶ As well, proper royalty and inventory numbers were not all in hand. Problems included royalty payments on *Anne of Green Gables* to Farrar, Straus, and Giroux of New York and disagreements with Macmillan about the *Ryerson-Macmillan Readers*.

Unpaid royalties to A. M. Klein, author of the Governor General's Award-winning poetry collection *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems* in 1948 and recipient of the Lorne Pierce Medal from the Royal Society of Canada in 1957, was another of the matters of unfinished business between the United Church and McGraw-Hill Ryerson. The matter was brought to Frank Brisbin's attention in 1972, a month after Klein died. Brisbin wrote:

⁴⁴ A letter from Douglas N. Borgal (Finance) to B.C.N. Agencies Pty. Ltd. of 10 August 1973 confirms that the records of The Ryerson Press "were divided up three ways:

- 1) records related to the on-going business were passed to McGraw-Hill Ryerson
- 2) those of historic value were left with the United Church Publishing House, for storage
- 3) those considered valueless were destroyed." BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 8.

⁴⁵ DivCom Report to the Executive of General Council, May 1972, 1-2. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 4.

⁴⁶ Frank Brisbin to D. N. Borgal (Finance), 5 April 1973, 2. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 4.

The late Abraham M. Klein was a poet, some of whose works were published by Ryerson Press. He apparently experienced some mental problems and in 1964 or thereabouts a lobotomy was performed on him. This gave rise to certain mental change in him but not sufficient to merit having him certified mentally incompetent to be responsible for his affairs. However, Ryerson Press found that several royalty cheques sent to him over a period of time, following surgery were either returned uncashed or destroyed. At some time Mrs. Klein requested Ryerson to pay her but Ryerson lawyers advised that such a procedure would be illegal since Mr. Klein had not been declared insane. Ryerson therefore kept careful record of the royalty credits, gradually being accumulated in Mr. Klein's name, and the total up to November 30, 1970 was \$1728.65.⁴⁷

MHR paid the royalties owing to Klein's estate but requested that the church reimburse them.⁴⁸ As he was going through his father's papers two years later, Sandor J. Klein noticed another forgotten matter. Royalties on *The Rocking Chair* were supposed to be ten percent on the first 1000 copies and fifteen percent thereafter but the amount calculated had never been raised despite the fact that the book was in its third printing.⁴⁹ By this point, reported Frank Flemington, formerly "Lorne Pierce's right-hand man" but now with the royalty department at MHR, both the church and MHR owed royalties to the Klein estate, \$187.50 and "well over \$100" respectively. "I am glad," Flemington wrote, "that the book concerned is a book of poetry and sales have not been great."⁵⁰

Frank Flemington was to John Robert Colombo "Mr. Frank – a man of no

⁴⁷ Frank Brisbin to D. N. Borgal (Finance), 22 September 1972. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 7. Klein died 20 August 1972.

⁴⁸ BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 7.

⁴⁹ Sandor J. Klein to McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 5 August 1974. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 8.

⁵⁰ Frank Flemington to Frank Brisbin, 8 August 1974. BP 83.060.C, Box 41, File 8. See also Frank Brisbin to Frank Flemington, 9 August 1974, same file.

humour,”⁵¹ so perhaps he did not appreciate the irony of these words or perhaps they really did reflect the opinion of McGraw-Hill on the Canadian literature that came as a package deal with the textbooks of The Ryerson Press. More notably, this cycle of correspondence seems to be the only confirmation of Klein’s lobotomy, as this detail appears nowhere in any of his biographies. Because the source of this information is a minister, trained in matters of pastoral care and confidentiality, acting on behalf of Klein’s widow or estate, it appears to be reliable. This would tend to indicate the importance of researchers tackling the seemingly tedious task of “following the money” by combing through the financial files of publishers, not just concerning themselves with the matters of the relative authorial intent of various versions of manuscripts and editions.

The entry of branch plants into Canada, particularly in the lucrative textbook market, was certainly a factor in the downfall of Canadian publishing. McGraw-Hill had been one of the first to do this, opening their Canadian branch in 1949. The branch plants had no trouble luring “very bright and aggressive Canadians to develop Canadian textbook programs — and eventually, trade book lines for the ‘new’ subsidiaries.”⁵² The Canadian branch of McGraw-Hill, therefore, had always been managed by Canadians, so it must have been rather odd for them to be considered somehow foreign to other Toronto-based publishing colleagues and now — with their purchase of The Ryerson Press — as the enemy. In 1960, when Besse had started in the publishing business after

⁵¹ John Robert Colombo, interview with Roy MacSkimming, 14 August 1998, 14. RMF.

⁵² Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 18.

graduating from the Ryerson Institute of Technology,⁵³ Canadian firms were still big in educational publishing. Besse remembers, “Clarke, Irwin⁵⁴ was a big name. Copp Clark was a big name. Ryerson was a big name. [...] Macmillan of Canada⁵⁵ was a very substantial player,” but “none of these companies really exist as major players” any longer; in fact, none of them publish books at all.⁵⁶ Clarke, Irwin and Macmillan have closed, and Copp Clark divested its book publishing interests and is now “the leading publisher of financial trading and settlement calendars in the world.”⁵⁷ In the mid-sixties, “the big American players” started to move into the Canadian market: Prentice-Hall, Holt Rinehart & Winston, Ginn, Collier-Macmillan, Harcourt-Brace, Addison-Wesley, D.C. Heath, John Wiley (all American), J. M. Dent, and Thomas Nelson (both British).⁵⁸

Following the sale of The Ryerson Press and the increasing competition with the branch plants, Canadian publishers began to cut back on educational publishing and try to remake themselves into trade houses. Ron Besse watched it happen:

Education was becoming a very competitive area and a very difficult area to be in because the American publishers were here. They probably had access to the capital, but they also knew how to produce modern curriculum materials because of their American experience. And I know that we benefitted a lot from working with our American counterparts to

⁵³ Later Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and now Ryerson University.

⁵⁴ See <<http://hpcanpub.mcmaster.ca/case-study/clarke-irwin-amp-company-limited>>.

⁵⁵ See <<http://hpcanpub.mcmaster.ca/case-study/macmillan-company-canada>>.

⁵⁶ Ron Besse, interview by Roy MacSkimming.

⁵⁷ “Copp Clark Limited’ [...] is the oldest continuously active publisher in Canada. In recent years, the book publishing and games businesses have been divested, replaced by products and services targeted to world financial markets. [...] We are the authoritative source for information on holiday observances affecting global financial markets.” See <<http://www.coppclark.com/about-CompanyHistory.aspx>>.

⁵⁸ MacSkimming, “Why Foreign Firms are Such Successful Canadian Publishers,” F3.

see what they were doing, so we didn't have to do that research, that was easier for us to access. If I could fault the Canadian-owned firms, it's just that at that time I don't think they saw what was happening in education and didn't keep up with it, because the market certainly was there and it boomed throughout the seventies [...] had they made the investment, had they been prepared to really get in like McGraw-Hill, and some of them did, I think they would have benefitted significantly from it. Instead they were kind of seduced by the trade side, [...] trade is an easy entry area, you know. Publish one or two authors, one does fine, then next year you do three or four, and companies like Clark[e], Irwin [and] Macmillan, went heavily into trade and just did not keep up with what was happening on the education side.⁵⁹

When asked by Roy MacSkimming if Canadians lacked the capital or the vision for educational publishing, Besse replied,

it's a combination of both. I think a lot of them saw the investment that you needed to make to bring out a new geography program and put all that inventory into your warehouse. You know, you've probably got a million dollars tied up in order to be in that business, and I don't think they had the capital. [...] publishing was very much a gentleman's industry [...] it was my feeling that the Canadian owned publishers didn't really acquire or access good financial expertise to see how to do this. [...] I don't think they observed the investments you have to make in good sales and marketing operations, or a strong sales team.⁶⁰

No matter how “gentlemanly” the impoverished Canadian publishers were, perhaps the advantages that the American firms had in being able to adapt materials already developed and paid for by American sales made the competition ridiculously unfair. With no cultural protection or capital in sight, the challenge was just too great and the Americans won the market by default, planting their flag in the “mother publishing

⁵⁹ Ron Besse, interview by Roy MacSkimming.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

house of Canada.”

CONCLUSION

Despite the ground-breaking work of such scholars as George Parker and Maria Tippett, Canadian cultural historians have not yet taken the full measure of the crucial ideological and practical role Canadian publishers have played in the evolution of our history.

—Sandra Campbell¹

The Ryerson Press, one of Canada's longest-lived cultural institutions, was a major force in Canadian publishing and Canadian literature for 141 years but then (seemingly) suddenly sold in 1970, at a time when many other publishing houses in Canada were just beginning to flourish. Its demise provides many important lessons for current cultural policy and publishing business practice. This thesis attempts to answer the decades-old question, "Why was The Ryerson Press sold?," which, at heart, is an interdisciplinary project that must take into account fields such as Methodist history and theology, business history, publishing economics, management and marketing theories, cultural studies, literary studies, and bibliography.

Though church-owned publishing is no longer a major force in the Canadian industry, one particular branch of publishing can glean many lessons from the history and downfall of The Ryerson Press: university presses. Pierce himself saw the similarities between university presses and church publishing

¹ Sandra Campbell, "From Romantic History to Communications Theory: Lorne Pierce as Publisher of C. W. Jefferys and Harold Innis," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 3 (1995): 91–117. (Online version n.p.; the quote is from the last paragraph of the article.)

houses, both owned, as they are, by large civil society organizations engaged in research, policy work, education, and/or proselytizing for which a publishing/dissemination arm is crucial.² The relationship between the university and its press is often an uneasy one in its balance between the subsidization from the university and the arms-length editorial policy of the press. The challenges are many, including a careful dance between academia and arts, so that the books may attract both Aid to Scholarly Publishing grants and Canada Council for the Arts grants. The current challenges, according to Robert Major, head of both the administrative board and the editorial board of the University of Ottawa Press,³ revolve around electronic communication, specifically the “serious attack from other sources of information.”⁴ Major says that all universities, ideally, would have strong presses since this dovetails with the three fundamental missions of the university: conserving, transmitting, and expanding knowledge.

In 2013 Sandra Campbell’s magnum opus biography of Lorne Pierce, *Both Hands*, was released by McGill-Queen’s University Press, the press founded in 1960 by Robin Farr. Drawing on this biography, various archival fonds, and the work of previous scholars, including Janet Friskney (York U), Dana Garrick, Mary Vipond (Concordia), George Parker (Royal Military College, retired), Randall Speller (AGO), Danielle Hamelin (Parks Canada), Margery

² Lorne Pierce, Report of the Book Editor, 1956, LPAQ, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce.

³ Like The Ryerson Press, the University of Ottawa Press was originally run by a churchman, Père Lanctôt, who subsidized the press by his vow of poverty, a particularly appropriate strategy in Canadian publishing.

⁴ Robert Major, interview with the author, 9 July 2013, University of Ottawa.

Fee (UBC), Christina Burr (U Windsor), and Eli MacLaren (McGill), this thesis has attempted to fill a gap in scholarship on the last decade of The Ryerson Press. A comprehensive history of the Methodist Book and Publishing House/Ryerson Press should now be possible.

From 1829 until the 1960s, the only investment made in the business of the publishing house was the original \$1800 pledged by the ministers, at \$100 each, to buy the printing press that Egerton Ryerson went to fetch from New York. The money was soon paid back and the *Christian Guardian* carried on, with the expected problems of cash flow difficulties and unpaid accounts, solely on the profits from the business. By the 1960s, despite the success and reputation of the house and the general willingness to buy Canadian, conditions in the Canadian publishing industry had turned against Canadian publishers. In the end, despite the uproar that followed the sale and the condemnation of the church for “selling American,” it is possible that the United Church did more to advance the cause of Canadian publishing by selling The Ryerson Press to the American McGraw-Hill than they would have by either keeping it or selling it to a Canadian company.

Maclean-Hunter, frustrated in its attempts to take over The Ryerson Press and still looking for a book publisher to buy, picked up Macmillan of Canada in November 1972. However, the long-term picture for Macmillan was not a happy one. In 1977 Ron Besse (1938–) moved from the president’s chair at McGraw-Hill Ryerson (1973–1976) to the one at Gage. At McGraw-Hill, Besse

was one of the two people who had assessed the value of the Ryerson assets before the offer to purchase was made. Besse, largely through these assets, had been responsible for turning McGraw-Hill into the largest publisher in Canada. On 25 April 1980, Maclean-Hunter sold Macmillan to Gage Educational Publishing for \$2.2 million. Besse grappled with running Macmillan and its impressive fiction list, but was not a fiction publisher and was unwilling to settle for the smaller profits involved. In 2002 Besse folded Macmillan and put the backlist up for sale. As George Parker points out, “[i]ronically,” Macmillan “had its triumphs as a branch and its disasters as a Canadian-owned firm.”⁵

Parker also notes that the sale of The Ryerson Press “would radically transform the industry for the rest of the century.”⁶ The resulting 1972 Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing and the implementation of the block grants to publishers program at the Canada Council for the Arts⁷ were remedies long past due in the fragile Canadian publishing environment — fragile particularly because of the unwavering downward pressure on book prices and the constant influx of imported books from the U.S. market. The Ontario Royal Commission’s *Background Papers* (1972) and *Recommendations* (1973) form the first major study of the book trade in Canada, since Toronto was and still is the centre of the English Canadian book industry. The sale of the Press also created the impetus for founding The Writers’ Union of Canada in 1973 and the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP), which emerged from the Emergency

⁵ Parker, “The Sale of Ryerson Press,” 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷ The Canada Council’s block grants to publishers were designed and implemented by Robin Farr.

Committee of Canadian Publishers that formed to protest the sale. In fact, many Canadian publishers were established just after the sale of The Ryerson Press, determined to take matters of Canadian literature into their own hands.

Almost all textbooks in Canada today are published by branch plants of foreign firms such as McGraw-Hill. Canadian control of this most lucrative segment of the publishing industry was lost when The Ryerson Press was sold to McGraw-Hill. Although the publishers of the Canadian Book Publishers Association were, as a group, diversified in terms of types of publishing, the Canadian-owned publishers that broke away to form first the Independent Publishers' Association (IPA) and then the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP)⁸ were far more interested in and invested in trade publishing. In part, this was because the many small publishers that grew up around the time of the Centennial, such as House of Anansi, Coach House Press, Peter Martin and Associates, could not hope to have the capital and personnel resources to compete in the field. They were also, generally, set up for more idealistic literary reasons or the more practical one of getting their founders and their founders' friends published.

George Santayana's famous quote, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" has been repeated so many times it has become cliché. However, the essential truth of his observation still holds. Today, almost fifty years after the sale of The Ryerson Press and the intensive cultural soul-searching that followed, Canadian cultural policy is repeating the same

⁸ See <<http://publishers.ca/index.php/about/history>> for the ACP website's history page.

mistakes that led to the downfall of the first English Canadian publishing house. The legacy of the next generations of The Ryerson Press, all those keen young men that William Briggs could not hold on to, is now also being squandered. Thomas Allen's house, founded in 1901, was sold in 2013 to Dundurn Press.⁹ S. B. Gundy's Canadian branch of Oxford University Press, founded in 1904, shuttered its dictionary division in 2008¹⁰ and its trade division in 2013.¹¹ McClelland & Stewart, founded in 1906 and maintaining at least partial Canadian ownership for over a century, as of 2012 became one hundred percent owned by Random House as the University of Toronto, the Canadian owner, gave it away.¹² Even Edward S. Caswell's new home in 1909, the booming Toronto Public Library, has been the target of devastating budget cuts by the "gravy"-seeking government of the City of Toronto.¹³ And what of McGraw-Hill Ryerson, the biggest publisher in Canada after its purchase of The Ryerson Press? In November 2013, it announced plans to downsize, laying off forty staff and closing its Canadian warehouse in an effort to eliminate "duplication of efforts between the Canadian and U.S. facilities [...] as more

⁹ Dundurn Press is Canadian owned, but the sale itself, as part of the endless manoeuvring required to make ends meet in Canadian publishing, is a serious concern. See Julie Baldassi, "Dundurn Press Buys Thomas Allen Publishers," *Quill & Quire*, 31 July 2013, <http://www.quillandquire.com/google/article.cfm?article_id=12563>.

¹⁰ Ann-Marie Metten, "Past Due: As Our National English Dictionary Turns 10, Canadian Editors Wait in Vain for an Update," *Active Voice/Voix active*, Autumn 2013, 16–17.

¹¹ Stuart Woods, "OUP Canada Shuttters Historic Trade Division," *Quill & Quire*, 2 May 2013, <http://www.quillandquire.com/google/article.cfm?article_id=12500>.

¹² Stuart Woods, "Random House of Canada Acquires Sole Ownership of M&S," *Quill & Quire*, 10 January 2012, <<http://www.quillandquire.com/blog/index.php/book-news/random-house-of-canada-acquires-sole-ownership-of-ms/>>.

¹³ See <<http://ourpubliclibrary.to/>> for the website of the group lobbying for more resources (and fewer cuts) to the Toronto Public Library.

customers switch to digital products.”¹⁴ As well, it is selling off its beautiful head office building at 300 Water Street in Whitby. This story sounds disturbingly familiar.

With the rate of change in the publishing industry in the twenty-first century, the unanswered question remains the same one asked in the twentieth: Is culture “a philosophic concern deserving protection, or an economic matter that should be left to the marketplace”?¹⁵ Almost fifty years after the sale of The Ryerson Press, the answer should be clear, but the lessons have apparently been forgotten. In the rush to embrace global culture, what remains of Canadian culture?

¹⁴ Stuart Woods, “McGraw-Hill Ryerson Downsizes, Plans to Close Canadian Distribution Warehouse,” *Quill & Quire*, 25 November 2013, <http://www.quillandquire.com/google/article.cfm?article_id=12650>.

¹⁵ Hugh Winsor, “Publishing Question a Crucial Test for Cabinet,” *Globe & Mail*, 30 January 1986, A3.

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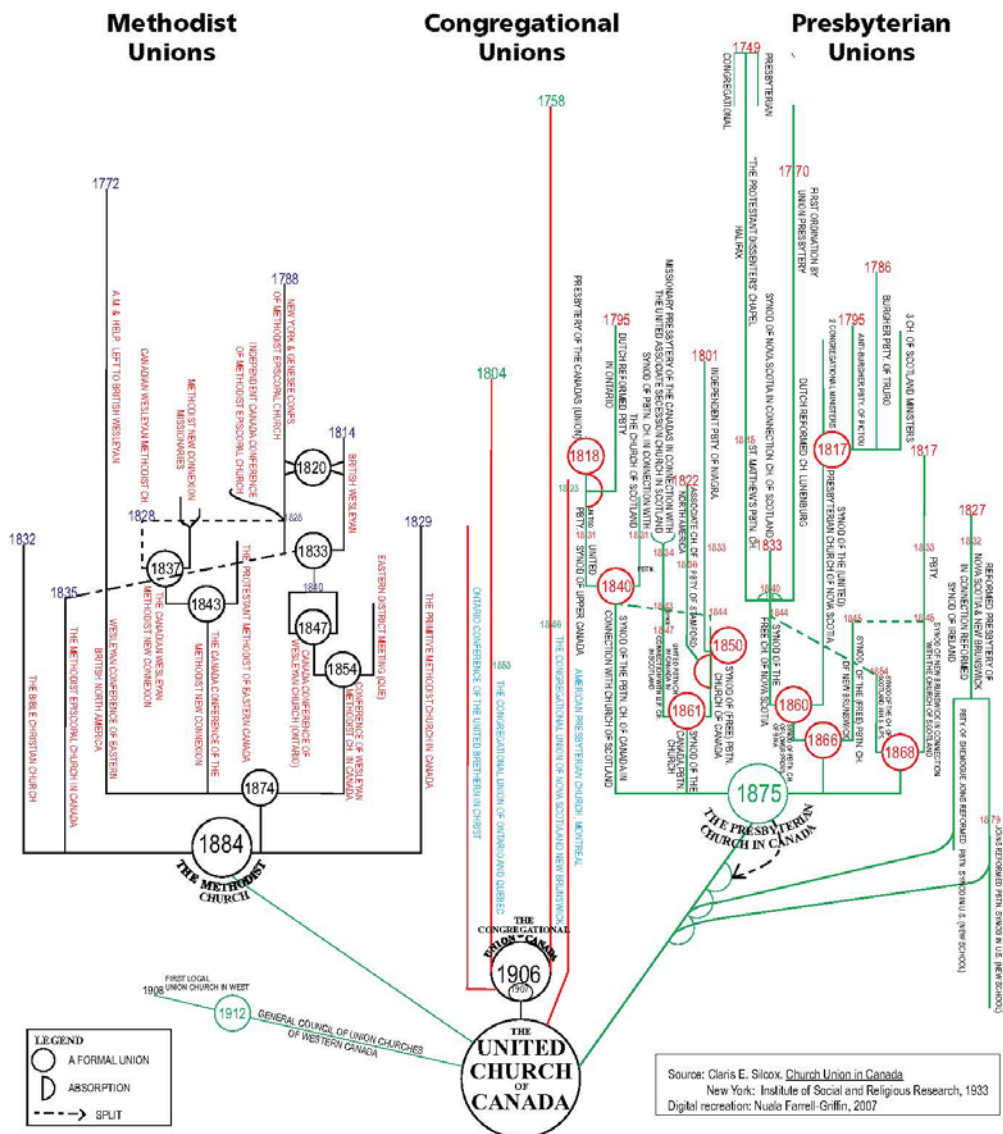
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APPENDIX 1: UNITED CHURCH FAMILY TREE



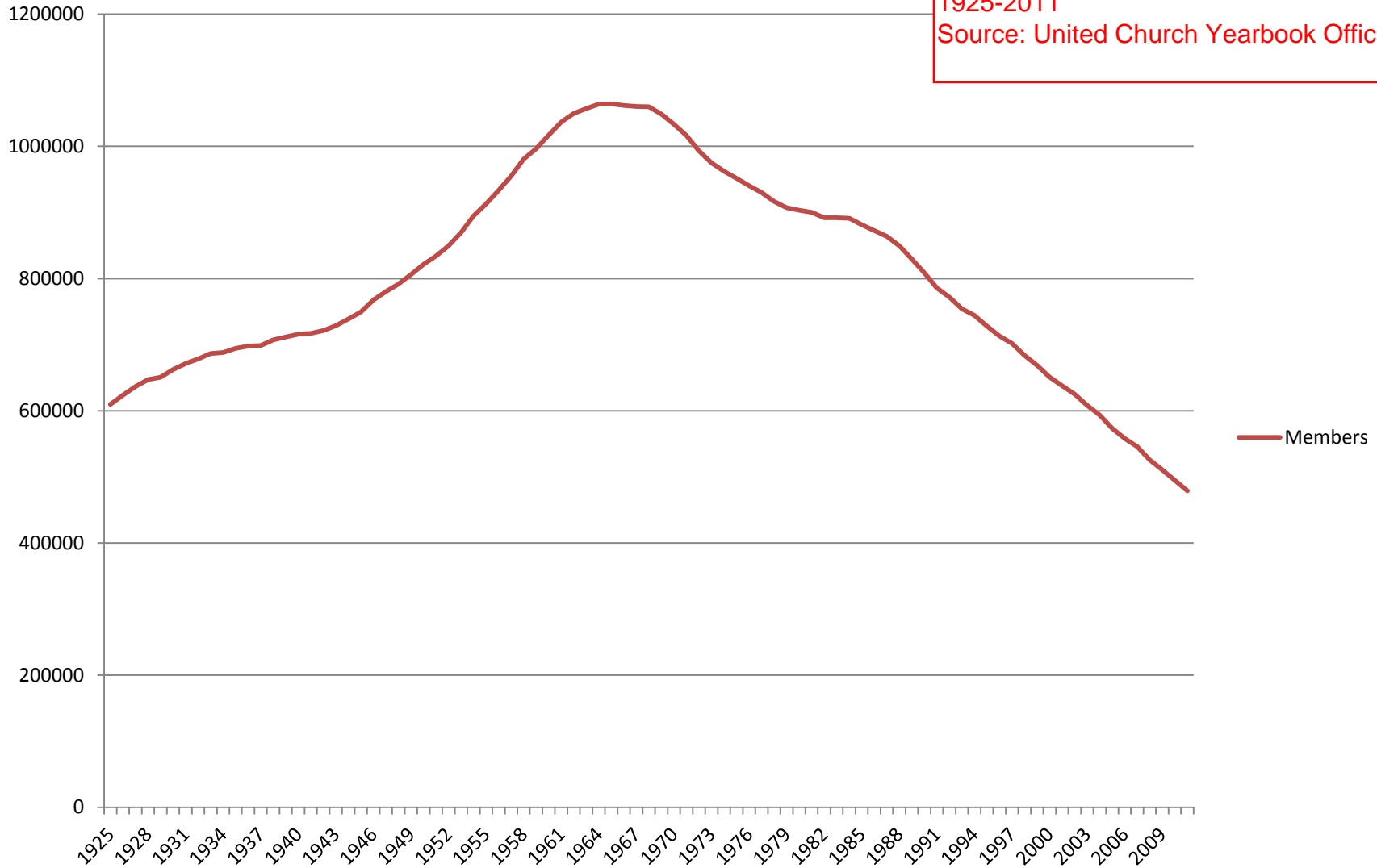
Unions of Churches in Canada Leading Toward The United Church of Canada



Source: United Church of Canada Archives. Please see the online version at <http://www.united-church.ca/files/history/overview/uccfamilytree.pdf> to enlarge for detail.

Members

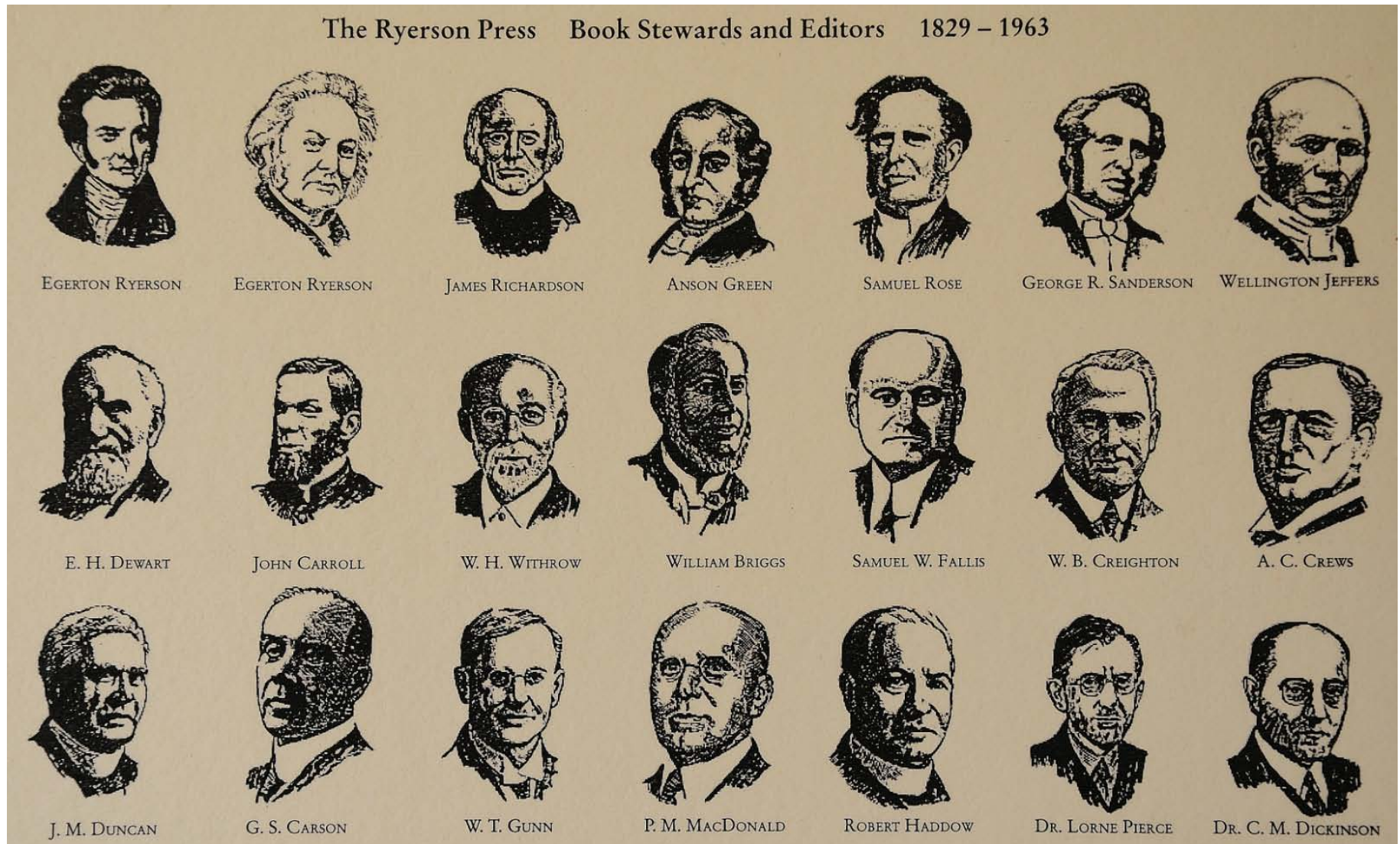
Appendix 2: United Church Membership, 1925-2011
Source: United Church Yearbook Office



Appendix 2A: United Church Membership, 1925-2011

Year	Members				
		1962	1049901	2000	651002
1925	609729	1963	1057091	2001	637941
1926	623648	1964	1063951	2002	625096
1927	636755	1965	1064033	2003	608243
1928	647154	1966	1062006	2004	593568
1929	650733	1967	1060335	2005	573424
1930	662253	1968	1059853	2006	558129
1931	671443	1969	1048733	2007	545462
1932	678445	1970	1033533	2008	525673
1933	686492	1971	1016706	2009	510672
1934	688099	1972	993190	2010	494791
1935	694374	1973	975317	2011	478909
1936	697742	1974	962163		
1937	698738	1975	951737		
1938	707264	1976	940291		
1939	711712	1977	930226		
1940	716064	1978	916651		
1941	716920	1979	907222		
1942	721184	1980	903302		
1943	728814	1981	900220		
1944	739079	1982	891975		
1945	749374	1983	891852		
1946	767998	1984	891384		
1947	780234	1985	881314		
1948	791677	1986	872290		
1949	806179	1987	863910		
1950	821199	1988	849401		
1951	834118	1989	829374		
1952	849256	1990	808441		
1953	869901	1991	785726		
1954	894556	1992	771548		
1955	912939	1993	754213		
1956	933488	1994	744392		
1957	955303	1995	728134		
1958	980461	1996	713195		
1959	996576	1997	701968		
1960	1016879	1998	683784		
1961	1036936	1999	668549		

APPENDIX 3: BOOK STEWARDS AND EDITORS



Source: United Church Publishing House files, 1996 (Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr's Managing Editor files)

Appendix 4: Woods, Gordon's 5-year Forecast

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	UC Observer	UC Observer w/o subscription increase	Mail Order Dept.	Retail Store	Trade and Library	Educational Books	Merchandise church envelopes	Printing Plant	
	-65,700	-65,700	-38,700	-8,200	-18,300	113,800	20,300	27,000	
1963	-66,000	-80,000	-41,000	-9,000	-24,000	119,000	18,000	25,000	
1964	-67,000	-96,000	-44,000	-10,000	-31,000	125,000	16,000	22,000	
1965	-67,000	-112,000	-46,000	-11,000	-37,000	130,000	13,000	20,000	
1966	-68,000	-129,000	-48,000	-12,000	-43,000	135,000	11,000	18,000	
1967	-333,700	-482,700	-217,700	-50,200	-153,300	622,800	78,300	112,000	-424,500
TOTALS							add SS publications		-460,000
								Note 1	-884,500

Note 1: Figure here would be \$834,000 adjusted for static selling prices, charges UCC grant to Observer (\$239,000), and interest

Note 2: Wesley Buildings and Lunch Room assumed to be break-even operations

SUNDAY SCHOOL PUBLICATIONS

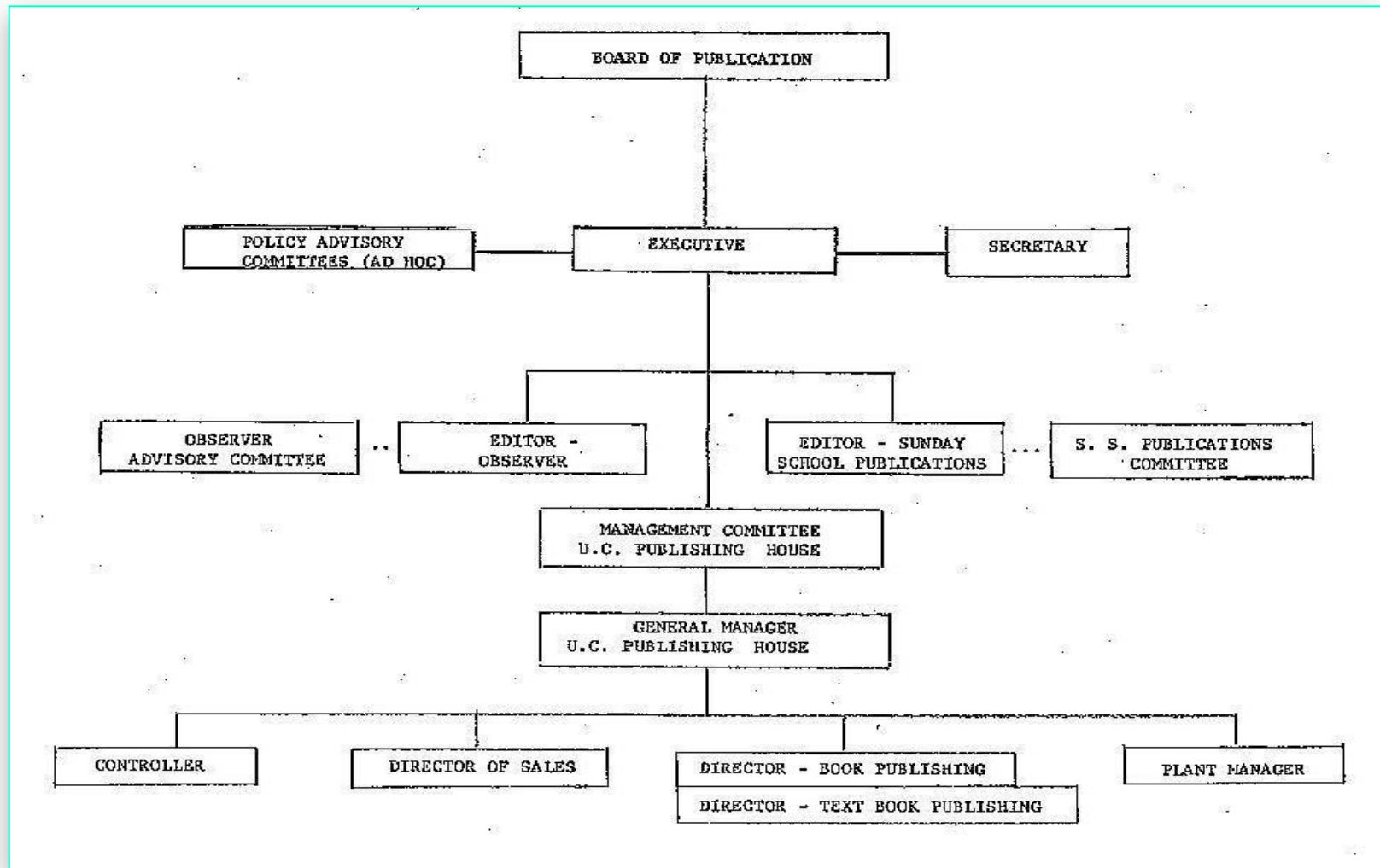
Constant 1963 Dollars

Constant selling prices

	Story Papers	Graded, Uniform, Other Publications	Total	Story Papers	Graded, Uniform, Other Publications	Total
Profit (Loss) (\$thousands)	-115	45	-70	-115	45	-70
	-150	100	-50	-162	84	-78
1964	-164	60	-104	-189	28	-161
1965	-165	50	-115	-203	2	-201
1966	-166	45	-121	-216	-19	-235
1967			-460			-745

Special Note: As noted previously, the above figures do not include the high interest charges due to carrying large inventories of NC material over the period. This is dealt with fully in the Summary of Operating Results of the House

APPENDIX 5: BOARD OF PUBLICATION ORGANIZATION CHART, MARCH 1965



APPENDIX 6: BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEW CURRICULUM¹

As one who recalls the days and years spent in developing, producing and preparing the church for the new Curriculum, I am amazed at the devotion, faith, vision, talents, and yes, — physical stamina — of the many people who were engaged in this great task. No member of the curriculum workshop was curtailed in his or her work due to illness or accident. It was a privilege to have had a share in the development of the New Curriculum from the day it was a mere dream to the time when the last publication for Year Three came off the press in 1966.

— Olive D. Sparling

Introduction

In the UCC Archives, there is a repository of documents, manuscripts, data, correspondence, and printed materials related to the development and production of the New Curriculum for The United Church of Canada. The printed resources are catalogued and found in the library of the Archives. The rest of the materials, prior to publication, are in the Board of Christian Education (BCE) section of the Archives. They were deposited there when the BCE was integrated into the Division of Mission in Canada in January 1972. Any curriculum development after 1971 will be included in the work of that Division.

Historical Review

As early as 1952, people were dreaming of the time when The United Church of Canada would produce its own curriculum for its Sunday church schools. In fact, at this time several of the larger denominations in the United States were already engaged in developing and publishing their own curriculum. Indeed, it was the “trend” in the late fifties and early sixties. The beginnings of such a mammoth project for the United Church are recorded in the History of the Board of Christian Education. The dreams, work, and policies evolving around the New Curriculum were shared from the very beginning by two Boards of the church: the Board of Publication and the Board of Christian Education. The editorial staff of the Department of Sunday school Publications (Board of Publication) and the national staff of the Board of Christian Education worked together for a decade on this task (1955–1965). The development of the curriculum and the preparation of the churches to receive and use it was one task assumed and carried out by the Board of Christian Education, but the publication of the resources was the responsibility of the Board of Publication.

¹ Source: Excerpted from the Finding Aid for New Curriculum Fonds (NC), accession 83.051C, series VII: The New Curriculum, Subseries 1–9, United Church of Canada Archives.

In 1965, the editorial staff joined the Board of Christian Education, forming an expanded BCE.

Background

The following statement, written in 1960, gives the rationale for a New Curriculum for the United Church of Canada:

The new curriculum has risen out of the ferment of the times. It has been part of the new theological stirring. It has been part of the desire for rethinking educational principles. It has been part of the rapid social changes and the new reaching out for creative freedom in countries all around the world. It has been part of a growing unrest and a demand from the grass roots — the local churches — for more and better materials for the Sunday church school. It has been part of a research and study program by national staff and committees.

Because of the “ferment” and the “stirring” of the times, the 15th General Council — meeting in Sackville, New Brunswick, in 1954 — initiated a New Curriculum for the United Church of Canada. Thus began the long, arduous, and exciting task of developing the New Curriculum and preparing the church for it. The whole church was involved in this “adventure in faith,” for from the beginning, teachers, parents, ministers, and many others participated in consultations, seminars, promotion, and in the pre- and post-publication testing program. Some people were more deeply involved as writers. The extent of this “adventure” is aptly expressed in these words:

Perhaps never before have so many worked together so long with such dedication for a new educational program within our church. An opportunity of this kind comes rarely — once in a generation — once in a lifetime! It is born in travail, nurtured in fellowship, created by faith.

To carry out this task, a Curriculum Workshop was formed in 1955, composed of the editors of the Department of Sunday School Publications and the national staff of the Board of Christian Education: “Curriculum was given priority — priority over the demands of on-going work, even over personal and family plans. The staff members were to eat, sleep, breathe, talk curriculum until there were results.” Not until the end of 1965 did the Workshop complete its task and see the first results of its labours.

First Steps

The first huge task facing the Curriculum Workshop was the preparation and production of a statement of Purpose and a plan for the new curriculum. To accomplish this task, these steps were taken:

- Survey of what was happening in other denominations and a “careful

examination of curriculum resources from denominations all over the continent”

- Conference consultations
- National staff consultations
- ***16th General Council presentation and report:*** “In September 1956 at Windsor, Ontario, the 16th General Council called upon the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Publication to prepare a statement of aims and presuppositions for a new curriculum together with an outline of the units of study which might be included in a three-year-cycle.”
- ***Statement of Presuppositions was published, 1958:*** “In April 1958, a statement of presuppositions for the development of a new curriculum for the Sunday church school of The United Church of Canada was published for study and comment throughout the church.”
- ***Presentation to the 17th General Council:*** “In Ottawa, in the fall of 1958, the 17th General Council approved the statement of theological and educational presuppositions but requested the presbyteries to study the curriculum plan and to send comments to the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Publication by March 1959.”
- ***Revision of the Plan:*** “The curriculum workshop proceeded with the revision of the curriculum plan. Comments from presbyteries were read carefully and those comments offered valuable help in the revision task. Also of great assistance was the counsel received through a National Curriculum Seminar (February 28–March 1, 1959) attended by the staff members of the Boards of Christian Education and Publication and a representative from each of the Theological Colleges from across Canada. Professor D. Campbell Wyckoff of Princeton gave leadership in examining the way in which Protestant churches plan curriculum.”
- The Committee on Christian Faith studied the plan and gave its approval.

A Progress Report

A report of “Progress in the Development of the New Curriculum” by Peter Gordon White and Wilbur K. Howard gives an overall picture of how far this project had developed in five years and projects the plans for completing the task during the next five years. This report describes the many phases involved in curriculum development and the tight scheduling that was necessary before anything was ready for the printer:

About 9 pm on November 3rd, 1959, the Executive of General Council approved plans for a new curriculum for Sunday church schools in The United Church of Canada. At that date, descriptions for every unit and all publications projected were on hand. Detailed specifications for Year One materials were near completion. Plans were on paper for a curriculum writers’ conference in January,

including names of persons who might be offered writing assignments. A new scale of fees had been confirmed by the publisher. Writers were recruited, contracts arranged, and the first conference held according to schedule. The theme for Year One was “God and His Purpose.” Writers, editors, consultants worked throughout the ensuing months. Year One manuscripts are due December 1, 1960. Some have been received, given first editing and mimeoed for the “readers.”

This process was followed for every curriculum piece for each of the three years: the basic book for adults, the reading books for pupils, and the teacher’s guides for each of the age groups, nursery to senior. It included the research program in which a carefully selected but small group of people were assigned the task of reading the manuscripts. There were no less than 42 steps taken in climbing this long ladder of curriculum development during 1954–1966.

Distinctive Features of the New Curriculum

“Tentative Suggestions for the Development of the New Curriculum and the Preparation Period” lists the features of the New Curriculum; several are worth noting here:

Common area plan: One theme for the total curriculum for each of the three years: Year One, “God and His Purpose”; Year Two, “Jesus Christ and the Christian Life”; Year Three, “The Church and the World.”

The family is central: To support this feature, a magazine, *The Christian Home*, was recommended to families. The adult book for each year provided the basis for a resource library in the home. The hard-covered pupil’s books for each age group and for each year enlarged that library.

Approved for use in The United Church of Canada: Developed distinctively to meet the needs of the UCC and to bring the message and mission of the church to every individual in each congregation.

Consultations and Seminars

A number of consultations and seminars were held during the period 1955–1961 to prepare the national staff of the BCE and the editors and writers of the Publication Dept. for their task of preparing NC specifications and writing of manuscripts. The first seminar for the staff was held in October 1955 and was followed by a second in March 1959. People in the fields of theology, education, and sociology were invited to share their knowledge with the staff and editors. Once the Presuppositions were approved by General Council, 1958, and the plan approved in November 1959, the specifications were written by members of the Curriculum workshop. A series of seminars for the writers were also held in January 1960 (Year 1), October 1960 (Year 2), and April 1961 (Year 3).

Curriculum Workshop

A curriculum workshop was formed in the fall of 1954, composed of the editors of the DSSP and the national staff of the BCE. It was organised to meet as a group to make decisions and plans related to the development of the Presuppositions and the specifications for the Units of Study. In addition, it met in age-groupings — children, youth, adult — to write specifications. At first, there were 11 members of the workshop, but by 1959 when this task was completed there were 14 members.

The workshop prepared a plan based on the Presuppositions that was presented to the General Council in August 1958. The Presuppositions were approved but the plan was returned for revision. A revised document and new plan was developed and released — Prospectus — and approved by General Council in November 1959. Only then did the workshop get the “green light” to drop everything else and write the specifications, supporting the second plan. This was done very quickly, ready for the first writers’ seminar in January 1960. Then the writers began their work on the Year One resources.

Conference and Presbytery Consultations

Once General Council commissioned the BCE and the BP to develop the NC, the Boards planned a series of consultations across the country. In one year, 1955–56, teams of national staff members consulted with all the conferences. In each one, a group of 20–30 people representing a cross-section of the Sunday church school were invited to record information relating to the curriculum being used in their districts at that time and to contribute their ideas for a NC. This proved invaluable to the staff as development proceeded. Again in 1958–59 the church was consulted. This time presbyteries were involved in assessing the Presuppositions and plans developed by the workshop. The Conference CE staffs organised and carried out this series of consultations and reported the results to the national staff.

The Preparation of Curriculum Specifications

The huge task of writing specifications for each unit of study and for each book was carried out by the members of the curriculum workshop; especially involved were the editors and staff related to each age group. For instance, the children’s grouping included units for nursery, kindergarten, primary, and junior departments of the Sunday school; the youth group worked on units for the intermediate and senior departments. For each age group, specifications were written for each year of the curriculum for the pupil’s reading book and for the teacher’s guide. All these, in turn, were given to the writers to follow in writing their manuscripts.

By the summer of 1958, specifications based on the Presuppositions were completed. By September, the Workshop was working out the second plan. It took a full year of labour to complete this task by the time of the first writers’

seminar in January 1960, and to meet the deadline to have Year One materials released by the spring of 1964.

Writing and Field Testing

Manuscript writing went through several stages: first draft, comments from readers selected from across the country, revision, testing, revision again and then the final editing before being ready for the printer. Manufacture followed several stages, including typesetting and artwork, before final publication.

In 1962 a Director of Research, Nelson Abraham, was appointed to set up a research department and develop plans to evaluate the curriculum resources as the manuscripts were submitted for testing by the writers and editors. In January 1964, Gertrude Patmore was appointed to assist in this work.

The plan included two stages: Pre- and Post-Publication Testing. The first manuscript to be tested was that of the Basic Book to introduce the curriculum and the related Study Guide for adults: *The Word and the Way*. This was released for testing in the summer of 1962. Then followed a limited testing of Year One materials for all age groups. During 1963–1964, a more thorough testing of all materials for Years Two and Three took place. During these three years, 49 churches participated in the prepublication testing program that involved adults in study groups, parents, teachers, and Sunday church school superintendents.

Post-publication testing of the printed resources commenced in the fall of 1964. This program was conducted differently to the pre-publication testing. The materials for Year One were tested, following much the same pattern as that set up for Years Two and Three of the Pre-publication Testing program. Years Two and Three of the Post-publication program provided statistical reports on the use of the curriculum in the following areas: rural, sub-urban, city, and inner city. It also asked for information concerning the Sunday church-school teachers and provided a summary analysis of the teacher's reports on the sessions they taught from the Teacher's Guides.

Periodicals

Another "arm" of the New Curriculum was Periodicals — weekly papers and monthly magazines for the different age groups in the Sunday church school and for parents in the home. Up to 1960, they were more or less unrelated to the curriculum resources used in the church. Indeed, the aim of the Board of Publication was to provide Christian journalism for all ages of the United Church constituency. But, by 1960 when the fever generated by the prospects of a new curriculum was high, the periodicals used came under close scrutiny and many changes took place during the sixties.

A complete set of new periodicals was developed during the early 1960s. Although they were designed primarily for leisure reading, they were planned to support and complement the Presuppositions of the New Curriculum. The following, known as "Weekly Papers," were ready for the church by September

1961:

- *Wonder*— kindergarten and primary children
- *Discovery*— juniors
- *Hi-Venture*— youth
- *Onward*— adults
- *The Christian Home*— families

The former *Superintendent's Quarterly* was revised. However, in 1963 it too was replaced by a new publication: *Focus on the Church School*.

As early as 1959, a publication for the family, *The Christian Home*, published by the Methodist Church (USA) was introduced to the United Church constituency. The United Church of Canada provided for it a special section for its readers. This really became the first printed resource related to the New Curriculum purposes to be released to the church. By 1968, more changes were needed:

During the more than six years since the papers first appeared our world has been changing much faster than could have been imagined. The church found itself caught in this maelstrom... There comes a time when the direction of change has been signalled... Such a time arrived in the spring of 1968.

A new monthly format for the weekly periodicals was decided upon and by the fall of 1968, these periodicals appeared:

- *Raport*— adults
- *Parentalk*— families
- *Collage*— youth
- *WOW!*— junior
- *Surprise*— primary
- *Focus on the Church School*— Superintendents and teachers

Time does not stand still, nor did the life span of these periodicals. Once again, by 1970, another change took place for most of these periodicals with the idea of relating them more closely to the New Curriculum resources. There was a demand for a more simplified Teacher's Guide and to up-date some of the contents, especially for Year 3. To meet this need, the format of the periodicals was changed once again to weekly papers and a Teacher's Guide was developed to accompany them. With this type of resource, teachers of primary and junior children in particular could use the papers and guides in their classes. They were published in a manner to keep their contents current. In the youth department, kits of resource materials related to the youth periodicals were developed for class use by intermediate teachers. The circulation of *Collage* for youth ceased in June 1969 and a new periodical, *Free To Be*, took its place until June 1971, when it too ceased publication.

Even though the periodicals were planned as simplified curriculum resources for some groups, the CORE Curriculum (formerly called New

Curriculum) continued to be recommended and used in Sunday church schools across the country.

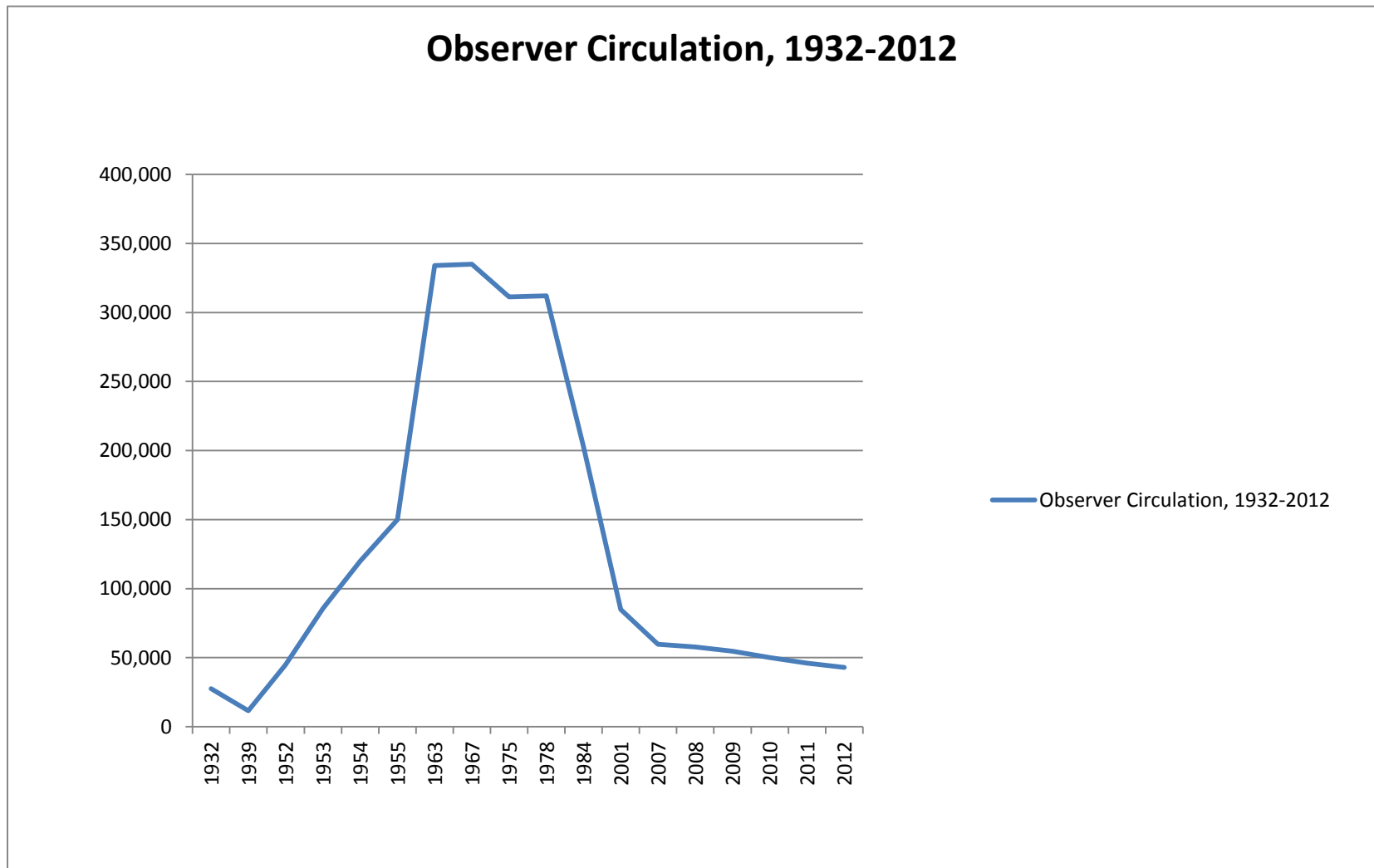
Publicity

Newspaper coverage started with a bang when the first book of the New Curriculum, *The Word and the Way*, came off the press in 1964. Never since its inception had The United Church of Canada received so much publicity in so short a time! See the article, for example, the article "Good News? ... or Bad News?" in File 5. Hundreds of newspaper clippings are filed in Box 273.

Appendix 7: Projected Financial Figures, 18 May 1967

Commercial	Profit	
Trade, Library, Schools, University, etc.	\$221,000	
Manufacturing	112,000	
Total Profit Commercial	\$333,000	
Church Related	Losses	
Distribution Services	\$27,000	
Retail Store	14,000	
Curriculum	1,000	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>\$248,000 losses associated with curriculum, weekly papers, Observer, and misc. church publications</p> </div>
Weekly Papers	146,000	
Misc. Church Publications	56,000	
Observer	45,000	
Ferment	11,000	
Total Losses	\$300,000	
Net Profit		\$33,000

APPENDIX 8:
CIRCULATION FIGURES FOR *THE UNITED CHURCH OBSERVER*



APPENDIX 9

INTERVIEW: JIM TAYLOR ON THE SALE OF THE RYERSON PRESS, THE FOUNDING OF WOOD LAKE BOOKS, AND WORKING WITH AL FORREST AT *THE UNITED CHURCH OBSERVER*¹

17 November 1970, *Globe & Mail*

News media attacked for one-dimensional view of Ryerson sale

I have no “inside” knowledge of the sale of Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill. I know neither the progress of negotiations, nor any of the price details.

Nor am I directly affected. *The United Church Observer*, contrary to some reports, was not, at the time of sale, being published by Ryerson Press, was not sold with it, and will not become an American edition.

But I am concerned that the news media have seized on a single aspect of the sale — the anti-American pro-nationalism viewpoint — excluding more serious considerations.

They have almost totally ignored, for example, the reason for the sale: the decision of the United Church of Canada on moral and ethical grounds that a church should not be operating a commercial business in a competitive market. For if the business makes money, the church is tainted with the practices of big business; if the business is run at cost, the church is undercutting businesses that must show profit; and if the business loses money, the church has to subsidize it from the funds donated by members for other purposes — a practice which, if continued for any extended time, might be considered fraud.

Furthermore, the obsession about retaining Canadian ownership has made it appear that any Canadian ownership would be acceptable.

But would it be acceptable to the Canadian people to sell a textbook publishing firm to a Canadian political party if it made an adequate offer? I doubt it. And would it be acceptable to the members of The United Church to sell their publishing business to a conglomerate such as Carlings or Imperial Tobacco? I doubt it.

The question, I suggest, is bigger than Canadian ownership. It is a question of responsibility — a virtue lacking in much of the mass media’s reporting of the controversy.

James Taylor
Managing Editor
The United Church Observer
Toronto

¹ Source: Email interview with the author, 29 May to 6 June 2013.

RBSC: It has been forty-three years since you wrote that letter to the editor of the *Globe & Mail* about the sale of the Ryerson Press. Looking back, what do you think about the sale now?

JT: Ah, yes, THAT letter! I had forgotten about it. Would I still say the same? About the church being in business, yes. About Canadian ownership, I would probably be considerably more forceful — I would choose more offensive examples of possible purchasers than merely a “political party” — perhaps the Hell’s Angels, or a casino.... But that’s what I wrote, back then, and I would still support those words today, if you choose to quote them.

RBSC: Should the church have been in the commercial publishing business?

JT: Despite what I wrote to the *Globe & Mail*, I don’t see any reason why the church shouldn’t have been in the commercial publishing business. The local church, after all, does counselling. It caters banquets. It puts on concerts. It rents space for other organizations and activities. It does not refrain from doing these things because others are doing them commercially.

The real question, I think, is what constitutes “commercial publishing.” Does that mean profit at any price? Should Ryerson have competed with Harlequin and published steamy novels? Could it have published pornography? Or white supremacist polemics? I don’t think so, because Ryerson had to be both a “commercial” publisher, and a “church-related” publisher. As the content of commercial publishing shifted, Ryerson would have found itself between a rock and a hard place, unable to compete.

RBSC: What did you know about the Ryerson Press and the New Curriculum when you worked at *The Observer*?

JT: I knew of Ryerson Press as a premier Canadian publishing house. I knew of its books, and its list of authors. Somehow, in my mind, the publishing house was separate from the curriculum publisher. The shock came, I think, with the realization that when the New Curriculum went down, so did the list of authors and titles. With the New Curriculum, the United Church moved decisively to the more liberal end of the theological spectrum. It took seriously the developing consensus among academics about the Bible, about theology, about political orientations. In earlier years, Ryerson could have, and I think did, publish books which endorsed, for example, a literal view of the Bible. But once the church moved, Ryerson also had to move. It could not have published, any longer, a book by, say, Oral Roberts or Jim Bakker.

On the reasons for the sale, I can only repeat what I was told. Ryerson Press made some flawed capital expenditure decisions, based on an overly optimistic projection of church-related publishing. It foundered on its debt. In hindsight, I think it is possible that the management of Ryerson Press was too close to the church hierarchy, that Ryerson as a business got pushed around by church priorities. I think perhaps the sale of Ryerson Press was a mistake, but a well-intentioned mistake. At the same time, I have a sense that had Ryerson Press been able to continue, it would have folded at some point anyway. Given the size of Ryerson Press, its relatively top-heavy hierarchical management system, its

investment in outdated technology, and, yes, its unions, I doubt if Ryerson could have adapted to the changing world of publishing fast enough to have survived more than another decade or two. I doubt if Maclean-Hunter would have done any better at sustaining the publication of materials that treated religious concerns with intelligence and common sense than McGraw-Hill did.

RBSC: Was the sale good or bad for the Canadian publishing industry in the long-run?

JT: This opens another question — what’s happening to publishing in general, and to Canadian publishing in particular. Since the sale of Ryerson Press, the Canadian publishing industry has certainly gone downhill. But I doubt that the sale of Ryerson was a cause. I consider it more likely that the publishing industry has become a victim of (a) technological change, and (b) the withdrawal of government support.

There are, I’m told, more books being published in Canada than ever before — but an enormous number of those are self-published. Electronic technology, from writing on computers to typesetting on computers to publishing in electronic formats, has made everyone their own publisher. Writers no longer have to thread through the needle of conventional publishing.

At the same time, governments have changed the climate. For a while, both regulations and funding favoured Canadian creativity. The Canada Council supported writers, composers, artists. Tax breaks encouraged publishers to take risks. Broadcast regulations required a certain level of Canadian content. All that began to change sometime in the 1970s (admittedly, after the sale of Ryerson). The economic, social, and political climate no longer makes Canadian publishing viable.

RBSC: Was the sale of Ryerson Press good or bad for the church in the long-run? Why did you found Wood Lake Books in 1980? Did the sale of Ryerson Press play a part in this? Did the UCPH that remained play a part in this?

JT: I’m inclined to say that it was bad for the church — specifically, for the United Church — because it left our people and congregations scrambling for reading and teaching materials. Most of them came from the U.S., and while there are many similarities and relationships between the United Church and several U.S. denominations, there are also significant differences. Canadians think differently from Americans! For about 15 years, United Church congregations floundered, trying to find materials suitable for their children and acceptable to their adults. We were, in a sense, exiled from our roots.

Here you get into the origins of Wood Lake Books in the demise of Ryerson. As a church-related publisher, Ryerson had an ethical obligation to provide published materials that stimulated the spiritual/religious lives of its readers. The evidence that the sale of Ryerson was bad for the church is, I think, substantiated by the overwhelming welcome given Wood Lake Books when we started up (and followed up later by the sales of the hymnbook supplement *Songs for a Gospel People* and the Sunday school curriculum *The Whole People of God*). If the sale had been good for the church, there would have been no vacuum for Wood Lake Books to fill. I was not the brains — or the balls, in more contemporary language — behind Wood Lake Books. I had some expertise, in typography,

design, and editing, from my work at *The Observer*. But Ralph Milton was the guy with the vision and the drive to make things happen. He organized the liaisons that made Wood Lake possible, initially with the General Council office, then with B.C. and Alberta Conferences, then with Logos Publications in Minneapolis.

I think I can safely say that if Ryerson had still been in business, we would not have attempted to start Wood Lake Books. But there was a vacuum left by the absence of Ryerson. We had no intention of becoming another Ryerson, but we did hope to provide some of the content that Ryerson used to provide. UCPH did not enter into our thinking. It existed, sort of, but it was making no impact. I think the United Church was afraid of getting back into publishing; it may also have been limited in what it could do by the terms of the sale of Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill. Ralph and I did not see UCPH as competition — the competition was G. R. Welch of Burlington, which leaned towards the conservative side. Indeed, we produced several publications for UCPH. I think of *Shall We Gather By the River*, by George Ladd, and the booklet on Baptism by the Worship office of the Division of Mission in Canada.

When Wood Lake Books started up in 1981, we had the advantage of not being locked into traditional printing technologies, or, for that matter, into traditional accounting practices. It was just at the time that computerized typesetting was becoming possible on desktop equipment. We didn't have to invest in hugely expensive, room-sized computers. Or in massive linotype or monotype text setters. We didn't go through the usual sequence of having authors sign off on manuscripts, editors sign off and pass to design, designers sign off and pass to production, and so on. We did all those functions simultaneously. So our costs of production were far lower than traditional publishing houses. We didn't have rigid budget lines for acquisitions, editing, design, publication, marketing, etc. Sometimes our acquisitions costs, or our art/design costs, or our production costs, ran waaaaaaay over industry guidelines. But it didn't matter in our integrated system. (In fact, I sometimes argue that Wood Lake began to reduce its profitability only when it started trying to conform to industry standards.)

When Ralph Milton and I launched Wood Lake Books in 1981, one of our goals was, in a sense, to pick up what we saw as the role that Ryerson had filled ten years before — to publish materials that didn't require readers to park their brains at the door. I think we were right. Initial sales far surpassed our expectations. *An Everyday God* went to 15,000 copies; Ralph's *This United Church of Ours* went over 25,000 copies; Lois Wilson's *Like a Mighty River* topped 20,000, as I recall. Or maybe it was 30,000. We had a sense that there was a vacuum left by the demise of Ryerson Press, and we were sucked into it. Obviously, there was a hunger for materials that treated religious concerns with some intelligence, some common sense.

RBSC: Can you tell me about working at *The Observer*? What was it like to work with Al Forrest?

JT: I came to *The Observer* in 1968. I was not directly involved in any of the discussions about the sale of Ryerson Press — indeed, I was barely aware that discussions were going on.

I knew Ryerson Press was in trouble, not because of any insight into Ryerson's finances, but because *The Observer* had to undergo a re-design to enable it to run on the

giant letterpress printing press at Ryerson. If I recall correctly, Ryerson spent \$7 million² to buy that press, expecting that it would be fully used doing reprints of the New Curriculum books. The assumption was that students would keep their hardcover texts, and that churches would buy new texts every year for the next set of students. That didn't happen. Churches chose to save money by recycling their texts. That meant Ryerson didn't have a steady flow of business for its press, and the interest charges built up prohibitively.

There was considerable hostility at *The Observer* to being removed from Ryerson Press when it got into difficulties, and being placed within the Division of Communication. Al Forrest was too loyal to his church to fight the move publicly, but he felt strongly that incorporating *The Observer* into a church division compromised the magazine's editorial independence. This came to a head over Al's support for the Palestinian cause, when militant elements among Canadian Jews switched their attacks from Al personally to other members in the United Church's executive structure, and Al was ordered to change his editorial policies. At that point, he lobbied for, and won, editorial independence again.

RBSC: Could you tell me more about Al Forrest, about *The Unholy Land*, and about the controversy from your perspective?

JT: Oh, my... This is an awkward subject, and I'm almost reluctant to write about it for fear of opening old wounds. I'm also not the best person to write about it. I was involved only peripherally. As a staff member at *The Observer* during the height of the controversy, my role was mostly to answer the phone when the office "girls" felt that someone was being too abusive. I found that if I simply grunted occasionally, the abuse usually ran down after about two minutes; if I attempted to respond, or worse, to argue, it could continue for 15 to 30 minutes.

The people who were much closer to the conflict were Patricia Clarke and Diane Forrest. Diane is Al Forrest's youngest daughter, still living in Toronto; Pat was Al's second in command and confidante. I suspect that both of them would probably tell you they don't want to talk about it, but I can tell you some of what I remember.

Al had been editor of *The Observer* for about 20 years³ when he asked for, and received, a year's sabbatical to go to the Middle East and do some New Testament studies. This would be 1968, I believe, one year after the 1967 war that most of us celebrated as a resounding victory for threatened Israel. I don't know how it happened that Al got taken to some of the Palestinian refugee camps, or to some of the cities on the Golan Heights that used to be prosperous and well populated. The names are in *The Unholy Land*. But it changed his mind, and his life. Initially, I think, he was still sympathetic to the Israeli cause but felt that a great injustice had been done to the exiled Palestinians.

As part of his sabbatical commitment, *The Observer* and a group of U.S. denominational magazines had organized something called Inter-Church Features or ICF. I

² This is not the cost of the press itself, which was supposed to have cost about \$650,000; however, it may represent the amount of money wasted on the press due to the learning curve of the printers and other inefficiencies.

³ Actually thirteen years, as Forrest became editor of *The Observer* on 1 September 1955.

think they may have provided some of the funding for Al's year in the Middle East. Because of the prevailing pro-Israel sentiment, Al's articles provoked a strong reaction. Within the Christian community, there was shock that anyone could criticize Israel — wasn't this Jesus' homeland? Could the land where Jesus lived possibly do anything wrong? Within the Jewish community, there was absolute outrage. Israel was what they had died for in Nazi concentration camps, what they saved for to send bonds to, what they considered their ancestral homeland....

I mentioned telephone calls. Those I knew something about personally. The people making the calls didn't care who they talked to — well, of course, they wanted to vent at Al Forrest, but since he was in Israel at the time, anyone else would do. It was sheer anger — no attempt at rationale argument.

Of course, the news media picked up on the controversy. After a few months, I found myself cringing any time I heard on the news a reference “a United Church minister” or “*The Observer*” or “the Canadian Jewish Congress,” or “B'nai Brith”.... Even if it wasn't about Al Forrest and the Palestinians, I was afraid it would have negative spin-offs for me. It took me several years to realize that if I could react emotionally after such a short time, what must it be like to be a Jew and to feel that one had been under attack for centuries?

Al was in fairly high demand as a speaker, both in the United Church and in other areas. Not that everyone agreed with him, but they wanted to hear what he had to say. He had quite a demanding schedule, especially through southern Ontario.

Now this I have only by hearsay. But apparently elements within the Jewish community kept a very close track of his movements. So he would drive up to Barrie, for example, to speak there. About the time he would be driving home to Toronto, down Highway 400, his family would get a phone call at their apartment in downtown Toronto. “This is the Ontario Provincial Police,” a deep voice would announce, and identify himself as a constable, number so and so. “We regret to inform you that your husband (or father) was killed in a highway accident on Highway 400 this evening,” giving a plausible location and timing. I do not know how many times the family received such calls, or other equally distressing messages. And I cannot say where the calls came from. I believe they came from extremist elements of the Jewish community, but it is possible some may have come from elements of Christian evangelical churches that were also livid about his charges against the Israeli government.⁴

⁴ Catherine Wilson, former Editorial Director of The United Church Publishing House, relates a story from when she was a publicist at McClelland & Stewart, publisher of *The Unholy Land*: Al Forrest was to speak at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church (on St. Clair Avenue West at the south edge of the Forest Hill neighbourhood in Toronto) where her mother was secretary to the minister, Rev. C. Andrew Lawson. Everyone at the church was “very nervous” about the event because of the death threats that Forrest had been receiving. The RCMP and police were stationed “in secret places all over the church.” Wilson was at the event in her work capacity but her mother insisted that she not stand anywhere near Forrest. “She made me stand behind a pillar,” says Wilson. As for the “standard publicity,” Wilson arranged interviews with CBC's *Take 30* (Paul Soles and Adrienne Clarkson) and *Assignment* (Bill McNeil), with Carol Taylor at CTV, on a

I did personally experience some of the hostility towards him. I went to lawyer, to get some papers notarized. Making casual conversation, while I signed on the necessary lines, he asked, “Where do you work?” “I’m an editor and writer,” I said. “Oh? Where?” “A magazine,” I replied. “*The United Church Observer*.” He literally recoiled, hurling his office chair back from his desk so fast that he crashed against the back wall of his office. “You work for that bastard Forrest?” he demanded.

Another time, I went to the Associated Press office in Toronto, hoping to get some pictures of the Aswan Dam in Egypt, to illustrate one of Al’s articles. There were three young men in the office. I didn’t notice that they were wearing yarmulkes. “Would you have any pictures of the Aswan Dam?” I asked. The three swivelled around as one. “Has this got something to do with Forrest?” one of them demanded. I did get the pictures. But I had to convince them that this particular article contained no criticism of Israel itself.

The reverse happened on a trip to Ottawa. I got into a taxi. The driver had a Middle East accent. “Where are you from?” I asked. “Lebanon,” he said, after a moment’s hesitation. “You’ve probably never heard of it.” I assured him I had indeed heard of it. My boss had spent some time there. “Who is your boss?” he asked. “Al Forrest,” I said. He almost drove off the road in his excitement, and he refused to let me pay for the fare from the airport to downtown.

The presumably Jewish hostility realized, after about a year, that they were getting nowhere with their attacks on Al himself, or his staff. So they switched to the senior executive staff of The United Church. They were made of less stern stuff, and quickly caved in. They ordered — literally — Al to temper his tone, or quit the Palestinian subject entirely. He very nearly left his position in protest, but didn’t. I was only an observer from the periphery, however, and had limited direct experience with the situation.

RBSC: Dear heavens! It must have been awful to work at *The Observer* then. Aside from *The Unholy Land*, what can you tell me about Al himself?

JT: The benefit was working at *The Observer*. I had previously worked at a private radio station in Vancouver, and for the CBC in British Columbia. *The Observer* was far and away the best place I had ever worked. There were, of course, one or two people we considered slightly less competent than others, but there were no cliques, no enduring hostilities, no slackers. And a lot of that was due to Al himself. He came out of the pastorate, Port Credit United, if I recall correctly.⁵ He treated the magazine (and by extension, all of its 330,000 subscribers) as his parish. He cared about them, and us, unstintingly. We had our disagreements, occasionally. I think I might have yelled at him once. I know I came home one time from one of these disagreements, and told Joan, “Let’s go for a drive. I need to talk

CHUM phone-in show, etc. “He was very good,” she says, and the “media were fine with him.” He was a “very gracious man.” (Interview with the author, 13 May 2013, Toronto, Ontario).

⁵ Port Credit was one of Al Forrest’s pastorates. He also served pastoral charges in Creighton Mine and Hamilton, and was a chaplain in the RCAF.

about this.” She told me to remember that Al was a reasonable man, and that I should go and talk to him, not to her. So I did, and we worked it out amicably.

He married Esther Clipsham who had some money through her mother, I believe. Through that connection, they had a fair collection of paintings by Canadian artists. Al fancied himself as a connoisseur of art. The family had a cottage at Gravenhurst, I think. They used to go up there quite regularly. Sometimes, Al invited all his staff to come up for a picnic or a day-long retreat.

He was quite a conservative man, socially and theologically. Although he had a patriarchal mindset, he was unfailingly fair to the women on his staff. I never heard him put someone down, or discount that person’s opinion, because that person happened to be female. He may have lost his nomination for moderator because someone at General Council in 1977 criticized him for failing to use inclusive language, and he shrugged it off with some kind of wisecrack about old dogs and new language. Losing the moderatorship hit him hard. He felt it was not just a rejection of his value, but a rejection of *The Observer* as a whole, as a ministry of the United Church of Canada. Eighteen months later, he died. I, we, suspect that feeling rejected by the church he loved so deeply may have contributed to his death.⁶

His conservatism alienated a few writers. When, in 1971, the United Church declared that abortion was a matter to be decided by a woman and her doctor, he opposed the church policy, and lobbied to get it changed. At one point, he contracted with a noted *Globe & Mail* writer to research and write the abortion story. When her interviews led her to support freedom of choice, he had me revise the story so as to swing the angle the opposite direction. Looking back, I’d have to say that we were both wrong — I should not have altered another writer’s point, and he should have cancelled the contract rather than have me rewrite the story.

In retrospect, he was not a brilliant writer. Some of his opening lines I would now edit fairly vigorously. In his last months, he was beginning a crusade against pornography and the sex industry in downtown Toronto. He died before anything happened.

Al tended to be impulsive. He was, at times, terrifying as a driver. Not that he was dangerous or erratic, but at one point, he bought an ex-police car. It had a powerful engine. When Al put his foot down about as far as he would have in his previous car, this one went down the Gardiner Expressway at around 80 mph. He didn’t seem to notice.

He was also impulsive in hiring me. In 1968, I was living in Prince Rupert, on B.C.’s north coast. Al came out to visit the Rev. Bob Elliott, whom he knew from a time when Bob was on Home Missions, at 85 St. Clair. Bob introduced him to me; on impulse, Al asked me to write an article about Bob’s work in Prince Rupert. I did. I guess it was good enough that on Easter Day, 1968, Al called me long distance to ask if I would come to *The Observer* as a

⁶ Another minister, Rev. Dr. George Hermanson — a man who also suffered death threats because of his work for the United Church of Canada, in his case for being the lead author on the study that led to the approval of ordination for gay and lesbian ministers at General Council in 1988 — says that Al Forrest was “hounded to death” by those who charged him with anti-Semitism (Personal communication, 27 October 2013).

senior writer. He knew next to nothing about me; he didn't discuss salary, or whether *The Observer/Ryerson* would pay my moving expenses, or anything else. It was just, "Will you come and work for me? And when can you start?" I was working that day in the recording studio, editing tape of an interview that had to go on the air that night. I was so surprised by the call that I dropped, and broke, the stopwatch I was using. I still have that stopwatch!

He was incredibly good to me. He was, for ten years, my second father. And sometimes I think he thought of me as the son he had never had. He had four daughters — loved them deeply, but probably never fully understood them. At one point, he offered to pay my way through Emmanuel College if I wanted to switch my career and seek ordination. After Pat Clarke decided to retire, he promoted me to his second-in-command, with the expectation that I would succeed him as editor of *The Observer* in a few years when he retired.

I can tell you a little about his death. He had complained to his doctor that he had trouble sleeping. He kept waking up early. Fine, said the doctor, then get up and read for a while. That morning, 27 December 1978, he woke about four, went into his living room, turned on the light over his favourite chair, and began reading Bonheoffer. That's where his family found him when they got up, with the book still in his hands, no struggle, no fear.

His son-in-law called me. I'm not sure why me. He said, "I regret to inform you that Al Forrest died at home this morning." The words were so like the formula that had been used by the (presumably) Jewish tormentors earlier that I didn't believe him. I came out of my office, and the girl at the desk nearest me, her name was Hannalore, said, "Jim, what's wrong? You're as white as a sheet." I told them what I had heard. They too wondered if this was continuation of a cruel hoax. We tried to call his doctor. We called his minister. Eventually, we had to call back to his home, and they confirmed that yes, he had died that morning, and they gave us a few more details.