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THE ORIGINS OF  
WRITTEN PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS  
IN ONTARIO:  
AN HISTORICAL STUDY.

by Mary Elisabeth Mainwaring.

Thesis presented to the School of  
Graduate Studies of the University  
of Ottawa as partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education.

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## INTRODUCTION.

When the public schools of Ontario came into being in the mid-nineteenth century, school-examinations were well established. Legally, it was required that each school should hold a "public, quarterly examination"<sup>1</sup> to which the teacher was to invite trustees, parents of pupils, and School Visitors.<sup>2</sup>

This public examination was not a written one, nor did it provide a certificate or passport to other grades or institutions. The Visitors, trustees and parents acted as examiners, in that they attended school on the day appointed, and listened to the children recite their lessons. The Minister in 1875 set enough store by this exercise that he suggested that a school failing to carry out such a public examination, in accordance with law, should perhaps be denied funds. The Report continued:

Such examinations being tests of efficiency on the part of the teachers, and of progress on the part of the pupils, cannot fail to produce beneficial results in Public Schools.<sup>3</sup>

This system of examination of the schools, relying on local dignitaries, not normally involved in education,

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1. Report, 1875, p.6.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

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as examiners or Visitors, had existed for years in the common (elementary) schools of the province. At best such an examination was a general evaluation of the atmosphere and type of work performed in a school. Children recited their lessons, previously committed to memory, or chanted multiplication tables, or read from their Readers. Work books, general neatness and politeness, and equipment was inspected. Criticism or praise was offered the teacher and perhaps the trustees as well.

While the Minister was recommending adherence to the law in respect of this type of examination, there was, at the same time, another type of examination being used in the schools of the province. This had been introduced when the 1871 and 1873 School Acts set up the provincially administered High School Entrance Examination. The new form of examination consisted of written answers to be tried by all pupils who wished to enter the high schools. Previous to this legislation, the various high schools had administered their own tests for entrance, as did the colleges, private schools and universities; however, such individual examinations seem to have failed to exclude children who had not completed their elementary

education, so that high schools might offer classes with the same, or similar, content to those offered in the elementary schools. This became particularly acute when an English course was offered in the high schools rather than the traditional classical curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

The year 1875 to 1876 was viewed by Ministry officials, leading teachers, and principals, as a culmination of a thirty year effort for the improvement of education.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, they were very conscious of their own role in setting up a new system, which they saw as progressive and just, that would raise the education of the people at large to new, higher levels than ever before achieved. By the Acts of 1871 and 1873, schools became free, compulsory, inspected and examined. Uniform written examinations existed throughout the province for the purposes of promotion by 1875-6. It is with this written, provincially administered, uniform examination system that the present study is concerned. Under its impact, only a few remnants of

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4. See H. Dickenson, "Relation between High and Public Schools", in J.G. Hodgins, Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, 1791 - 1876., vol. 27, 1875-6, Toronto, King's Printer, 1908, p. 63.

5. See A. MacCallum, "Report of the Ontario Teachers' Convention, 1875", in J.G. Hodgins, op. cit., Chapter 4, p. 58-64.

the old, local and oral examination system was to remain, as gradually the provincial examinations became the norm.

This study is concerned with the role played by these provincial examinations both in education and in society. This concern with role raises such questions as why examinations were considered necessary, what they were expected to achieve within the schools or for society, and whether these expectations proved to be realistic in practice.

The purpose of the study is to describe the relationships of centralized, written examinations with schools, society, and the bureaucracy of the Ontario school system.

This interest in the provincial examinations arises particularly strongly in a time such as the present when statements about education in recent school board elections, and by the Minister, contain references to a return to provincial examinations; yet little information in the form of a description of the examinations and their history is available.

The reason for this lack of information is that history is always changing its focus as the interest in

and understanding of the past alters under the impact of the intellectual life and practical interests of the contemporary world. In the mid twentieth century, the historians have been challenged by the upsurge of interest in the social sciences, and the first reaction seems to have been a redefinition of the aims and methods of history and a renewed interest in the philosophy of history. Notable among such writers are Collingwood<sup>6</sup> and Carr.<sup>7</sup> As some of the methods of analysis developed by sociology, for example, were applied to the past, they changed orthodox beliefs about the past just as they changed orthodox ways of looking at the information available.<sup>8</sup>

In the same way, changes occur in the history of education. Our present orthodoxy, expressed in the standard texts, is that schooling is universally accepted as a good thing. As a result of this feeling of overall approval, the history of schooling, of the growth of

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6. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, London, Clarendon, 1946.

7. E.H. Carr, What is History ?, New York, Vintage Books, 1961.

8. See P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost, 2nd edition, London, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, 1971, for an example of this.

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formal education, is seen as one of progress as its benefits are brought to more people for longer periods of time.

Latterly, however, this longstanding acceptance of the value of schooling has been suffering attack. Goodman<sup>9</sup> and more recently Illich<sup>10</sup> have separated the formal school system and education. The value put on education itself therefore no longer acts as a barrier to a critical evaluation of the school system. Elements of the formal structure, such as the economic base of the schools in general taxation, their compulsoriness for children, their identification with youth to the exclusion of adults, their monopolistic or near-monopolistic position, and their methods of classification and measurement, are no longer safe under the general approval and high valuation afforded education itself.

This lack of whole-hearted approval of the educational system must have its impact on histories of education. A text written in the 1950s described the problems and practices of an educational system,

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9. P. Goodman, Growing Up Absurd, New York, Vintage Books, 1956.

10. I. Illich, Deschooling Society, New York, Harper and Row, 1970.

narrating the triumph of universal and compulsory education over climate, sparse settlement, poor transport and religious controversy.<sup>11</sup> Even the work of Adams, in 1960, while it attacked Ryerson and Strachan alike as perpetrators of privilege, accepted schooling as valuable in itself.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1970s, however, a change can be seen in the histories of education; the educational system is no longer treated as a separate entity; it is seen as intertwined with psychology, pedagogy, political events and world influences.<sup>13</sup> The question of whether Canadian theory and practice is national or derived from elsewhere becomes less important as the notion of transnational groups and ideas gains currency; similarly, the question of whether the school system offers true equality of opportunity loses some of its potency under the impact of the notion that the school system may not automatically embody the high value put

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11. C.E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, Toronto, Gage, 1957.

12. H. Adams, The Education of Canadians: The Roots of Separatism, Montreal, Harvest House, 1960.

13. J.D. Wilson, R.M. Stamp, and L-P Audet, Canadian Education: A History, Scarborough, Prentice-Hall, 1970.

on education. 14

The present study is based on the idea that only through the descriptive analysis of the various component parts of the school system as they operated over a period of time can the system's true value for education be ascertained. The value of the whole must derive from its actual practices and influences; these practices and influences are embodied in the component parts of the system; therefore the study of particular components of the system will be more revealing of its true value and position in society than would a study of generalist statements about the whole.

Examinations are a sensitive, readily recognizable component of the educational system, and one through which contact with society at large is made by the schools. It would seem, in the light of the foregoing, that a descriptive analysis of examinations would be worthwhile.

The method of this study is historical. The careful perusal of primary documents must be at the heart of such an undertaking. These documents include the Reports of the Minister (or Chief Superintendent)

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14. M.B.Katz and P.H.Maddingley, Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past, New York, New York University Press, 1975.

of Education of Ontario, the Ontario Statutes and Regulations, the reports of the Inspectors, and reports of Commissions. These documents should give a view of examinations from within the educational system, both as to theory and practice.

For the value given to education by society at large, journals, books and newspapers contemporary to the study will be employed. Secondary sources will be consulted where general societal matters such as political, moral, economic or intellectual forces or events seem to have influenced examinations and their perceived role.

The simple basic questions of the study are, first, why did provincial examinations exist as they did when they did, and secondly, how did the people involved come to act or react to provincial examinations as they did when they did.<sup>15</sup>

Chapter 1 will describe the background underlying the provincial examinations of Ontario, including the role of examinations, and decision-making in Ontario education. Chapter 2, "Competition for Children - Early Experiments

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15. This particular form of question is derived from K. Charlton, "History and Sociology, Afterthoughts and Prior Questions", in History of Education Society, History, Sociology and Education, London, Methuen, 1971, p. 51-59.

in Motivation", will consider the position of the child in Ontario society, and the classification of children. Chapter 3, "Examination for High School Entrance", will consider the first written provincial entrance examinations, describing what was considered the legitimate work of the high schools, the opposition to the central authority, and the events surrounding the first high school entrance examinations in 1872. Chapter 4, "Examination Pressures", will consider some of the early results of the introduction of provincial examinations; financial pressure, or payment by results; pressure on children, the problem of failure; and programme pressure. Chapter 5 will summarize and conclude, making some critical judgement as to the early effects of the introduction of written provincial examinations in Ontario.

## CHAPTER 1.

### BACKGROUND.

The provincial examinations in Ontario must be set against a background, both as concerns examinations themselves, including their importance within the system of education, and their type, use, and administration, and also in the specific context of Ontario. Ontario schools were affected by the decisions of three groups of people: the provincial legislature, the inspectorate, and the local trustees.

#### 1.

##### The Role of Examinations.

Examinations are a response to the formalization of the essential human activity of teaching and learning. When this activity becomes the province of a school, that school either explicitly or implicitly makes claims about what that activity is, or perhaps about some important part of that activity which the school will undertake to carry out.

Having made or implied such claims, the school is then open to question as to whether or not the claims it made as to its function were justified, and perhaps

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in the case where the claim was implicit, and stresses become apparent, what the claim actually was. This questioning of the justification for the school in terms of what it claims as its essential activity may take two forms: a call for an explanation of the school's philosophy, which is to say its reasons for making the claims it does in connection with teaching and learning, or a challenge to show competence in carrying out that philosophy, or in other words to demonstrate that it can actually do what it claims to do.

As an institution open to such questions, and as an institution peculiar in that such questions are often asked not by the recipients of the service, but by others (parents, taxpayers, etc.) the school responds by attempting to measure its achievement through the agency of examinations and tests. These are, actually only capable of showing (or attempting to show) competence or lack of it in carrying out the school's philosophy (with reasons for success or failure varying from ability of students to adequacy of resources to teaching technique) but they may also become a focus for controversy over the philosophy itself.

There is a whole area of study in the question

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of whether these tests and examinations actually measure what they claim to measure, and another in whether the figures produced by them are statistically reliable or not. These may be called studies of the internal qualities of the examination, and are outside the scope of this study. The external qualities of the examinations, on the other hand, involve both their relationship with the general claims made about teaching and learning by the school system and their relationship with society at large.

An analytic description of the origins of written provincial examinations in the 1870s in Ontario, in that its emphasis is on an aspect of education itself, rather than on the personalities or politics of the day, will allow a more complete and realistic view of state education as a social phenomenon. Such matters as compulsory attendance, free schools, improvement in facilities, consolidation, teacher preparation, settlement patterns, literacy levels and other factors are equally interesting in this respect, and only a number of such studies could lead to general conclusions about the impact of state education on society. Describing the particular tensions which arose in connection with examinations

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may help to clarify what school people were doing in society and what society was expecting or finding fault with in the schools.

Examinations themselves are more complex than they might at first appear. They may differ in kind, in use, and in their administration.

The kind of examination in Ontario changed during the 1870s from primarily oral to primarily written.<sup>1</sup> The written examination could save time, since it could be given to many candidates simultaneously. The answers were available for rereading and careful evaluation. These examinations were also portable, which allowed more efficient control over them. However, they also made it possible to cheat, and for administrative mistakes to occur.

A second feature of the examinations is that they have different uses. These include the attempt to measure individual attainments in learning, group achievements, effectiveness of instruction, suitability of curricula, and the evaluation of individuals for

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1. Note the charters of London University in 1850 and 1858 as an interesting example of this phenomenon: the written examination provided an instrument which allowed a student at any college to attempt a London degree. The University had no internal students at that time.

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further training or a particular vocation. Examinations can also be used for certification, or evidence of a standard of achievement. The ostensible uses to which an examination and its results are put may not be its only usefulness to the administering authority, to the candidate, or to others.

Lastly, the administration of the examinations is of interest: who set the questions and who read the papers as well as who made decisions as to reporting of results and pass/fail levels, or what might be called standards. The question of variation in standards is rather different depending on whether the examination is competitive or qualifying, in other words whether candidates are trying to reach a standard, or trying to do better than their fellows.

.2.

### Decision-making in Ontario Education.

The provincial examinations were an integral part of the building process by which Ontario acquired a state education system. The three groups of people involved in decision-making about education in nineteenth century Ontario were the provincial legislature, which

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brought in the School Acts; the professional overseers of education, who were first called superintendents and later inspectors, who made and carried out the regulations and procedures by which the law was administered; and the local trustees and taxpayers who were responsible for the financing of the school sections. These three groups will be considered in some detail.

a) Legislative Action: the Founding of the Provincial School System.

The provincial examinations were part of the provincial school system, and their intimate connection with the philosophy of the school has already been pointed out. The provincial school system came into existence as a result of concern in the legislature, which commissioned Egerton Ryerson to make an assessment of public education, which he did in his "Report" of 1846.<sup>2</sup>

Ryerson himself saw the suggestions of his "Report" as "extraordinary", and as "measures unprecedentedly energetic and comprehensive".<sup>3</sup> These measures consisted

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2. E. Ryerson, Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada, Montreal, Lovell and Gibson, 1847, presented to the legislature 1846.

3. ibid., p. 8.

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of setting up a tax-supported elementary school system, under the auspices of the state. In this way, every future citizen would be supplied with a basic minimum of schooling.

This move is but one example of the great transnational wave of social reform which swept across Europe and North America at the mid-century. Ryerson and Karl Marx wrote their works at the same time. There was a general concern with the state of the labouring classes and the problems of pauperism in the new industrial age. It is difficult to judge Ryerson's claim that elementary education for all would reduce crime, violence and misery. He inferred, as did his sources, that since a lower crime rate and a high level of "wealth, morals, and general happiness" was to be found in those countries where more provision for elementary education was made, then the reverse, that more education would result in a less vicious society, was also true.<sup>4</sup>

That those societies which recognized the value of elementary education for all may have already been less prone to crime, violence and general unhappiness seems not to have occurred to Ryerson: and of course

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4. ibid., p.11.

the "Report" set out to persuade and convince, not to inform and describe. Thus Ryerson quoted Dr. Potter, an American educator, as having said that education would make the young "provident, temperate and frugal", if it were "imparted to all the rising generation ... (with) the right spirit".<sup>5</sup> He added that this was true of the labouring classes and agricultural labourers generally, but "equally and specially true of manufacturing labourers".<sup>6</sup> Here we catch a glimpse of concern over industrial labour - which Marx was newly describing as the proletariat - and the age-old fear of people in a mass; but one cannot make much of it, since the Ontario of 1846 must have had little concern over the pressure of the mob.

However, the industrialized society and its new type of worker was recognized as a factor, and Ryerson quoted A.G. Escher, an educator of Zurich, as having said that "mental superiority, system, order, punctuality and good conduct" which were all "qualities developed and promoted by education" would be increasingly needed

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5. ibid., p. 14.

6. ibid., p. 15.

as more of the brute labour was taken over by machinery and tools.<sup>7</sup>

Thus one of the first claims for the new compulsory elementary school was that it would supply a superior work force, in terms of order and conduct and productive power, and lack of crime and immorality. The "Report" does not hint of any social change or mobility resulting from education, but rather of a building up of social strength by the reduction of crime, poverty and immorality.

The whole system of public instruction was seen by Ryerson as coming from the upper echelons of society to the lower. This was made explicit when these ideas were brought to the legislature in a draft bill in January, 1871. Edward Blake, opposing the bill, objected to compulsory public instruction on the grounds that an essential preliminary to school legislation should be petitions of the people for it. Ryerson replied that

all intellectual, as well as moral, advancement, must be by the moral pressure and influence of the better educated upon the less . . . ignorance is unconscious of its destitution.<sup>8</sup>

The difference of opinion here casts light on

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7. ibid.

8. E. Ryerson, letter to Edward Blake, January 10th, 1871, quoted in J.G. Hodgins, Historical Educational Papers and Documents of Ontario, 1858-1876, vol. 1, p. 200, 201.

the later disagreement over the administration of the high school entrance examinations.

Ryerson's view is of a paternalistic administration, where the educational authority is not merely a regulatory, protective agency, but an innovative, planning one. This was one result of a similar change in the role of the state which was having an effect in many areas of social reform.

"The fundamental change was simple: the state became stronger than ever before".<sup>9</sup> Not only were state bureaucracies increasing in efficiency and knowledge, but also rail and telegraph were allowing effective deployment of state power. At the same time, the state was becoming more respected. When the idea of sovereignty was linked with that of nationalism, it was capable of generating new energies. It was thought that unjust societies could become moral through the operation of General Will, as Jean Jacques Rousseau had claimed.<sup>10</sup> Hegel's distinction between society and state which gave State or Nation an independent moral value above that of any subordinate group or individual served to make it seem possible that while a man might be selfish in

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<sup>9</sup> A. Briggs, (Ed.), The Nineteenth Century, Thames and Hudson, London, 1970, p. 68.

10. ibid., p. 69.

society he could serve a moral cause in and through the State; that this was a sphere for "selfless, impersonal morality".<sup>11</sup>

One of these moral causes came to be the education system; and the legislature of Ontario gradually brought the system into effect from 1865 through the various School Acts; these Acts generally followed the blueprint laid down by Ryerson; and indeed he and his assistants were largely responsible for drawing up the bills which became the school law of Ontario, without any serious objection until 1871.

In this area of activity, Ryerson served as a civil servant to the politicians who made up the government of Ontario; and it is in this light that his "Report" should be seen. It was this government commission that made him an expert on state education, since he had read so widely and travelled so extensively to find out about these matters for his "Report". His conclusions were to remain his guiding principles throughout his working life.

However, he was to combine two activities

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11. ibid.

once he became Chief Superintendent, for then he was not only an adviser or civil servant reporting on educational matters to the government, but he also became the head of another of the three groups with decision-making power in education: the superintendency or inspectorate. This group and their role in the creation and administration of points of decision regarding the examinations will be considered later in this chapter.

The law regarding education in Ontario which made it clear that schooling at the elementary level was to be a public charge and responsibility was the Act of 1850.<sup>12</sup> This Act established the administrative structure which was to oversee public education in the province. There was to be a local County Board for Public Instruction and a central or Provincial Council for Public Instruction. Under this Act, the County Board's duties included the certification of teachers into three classes "as shall be prescribed".<sup>13</sup> The experience of individuals and local boards in connection with teacher certification was undoubtedly to influence their expectations and concerns regarding the provincial

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12. Canada (Provincial) Act, 13 and 14 Vic., Cap. 48, 24th July 1850.

13. ibid., section 28 and 29.

examinations in the high schools when they were introduced.

Under the Act of 1850, the local trustees reported annually (or more often) to the local superintendent according to the form set down by the Chief Superintendent; and they were responsible for ensuring that only authorized books and qualified teachers were used.<sup>14</sup>

Even from this brief reference to teacher certification it can be seen that the Act reflected the uncertain state of the schools and their administrators. County Boards did not exist as working able bodies; the system of public education underwritten by the state was not understood or even accepted in much of the country; and the state of the actual schools and teachers, not to mention the pupils, left much to be desired, at least, from the reformers' point of view.

Throughout the Act, therefore, considerable discretion was given to the Chief Superintendent. As well as the selection of texts and the examination of teachers, for County Boards were to issue teaching certificates according to a provincial programme of examinations and instructions,<sup>15</sup> the Chief Superintendent

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14. ibid., section 12, paragraphs 6 and 15.

15. ibid., section 29, paragraph 2.

also had the right to issue "regulations and instructions" to local superintendents,<sup>16</sup> and in general to make "forms, instructions, and regulations";<sup>17</sup> he also appointed his own deputy and inspectors.<sup>18</sup> The same man also superintended the Normal School, and issued the certificates the teachers trained there received, which were valid throughout Upper Canada.<sup>19</sup>

Setting aside the fact that the Chief Superintendent was Egerton Ryerson, adviser on public instruction to the government, the seeds of later dissension over examinations were already sown in this Act. County Boards were to examine, classify and appoint teachers.<sup>20</sup> Yet the Act also gave the Chief Superintendent the same power; and the certificates from the central authority were valid throughout the province and not subject to local control. This duality of teacher certification was soon to give problems.

While, as we have seen, the Act allowed only

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16. ibid., section 31, paragraph 9.

17. ibid., section 35, paragraph 4.

18. ibid., section 35, paragraph 6.

19. ibid., section 34.

20. ibid., section 29, paragraph 2.

certificated teachers to be employed in the schools, it did give the right to suspend a teacher to the local superintendent.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, a supplementary Act passed in 1853<sup>22</sup> was deemed necessary. By this Act, separate school teachers could be certificated by the signatures of a majority of the school trustees;<sup>23</sup> and it allowed a local superintendent to give an examination according to the legal regulations and issue a certificate of qualification within his own area until the next County Board meeting.<sup>24</sup> It also stressed the validity of teachers' certificates issued by a County Board or at a meeting of at least three of its members: such certificates were valid "notwithstanding any other want of form in the organizing and conducting of the business of any such County or Circuit Board".<sup>25</sup> These certificates were valid until annulled as long as they had three signatures, one of them that of a superintendent.<sup>26</sup>

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21. ibid., section 31, paragraph 8.

22. Supplementary Act to Common School Act for Upper Canada; (1850), 16 Vic. Cap. 185, 14th June 1853.

23. ibid., section 4.

24. ibid., section 14.

25. ibid., section 20.

26. ibid.

The same day saw the legislature pass another Act which regulated grammar (high) school teachers; they were to hold a certificate from a committee of examiners appointed by the Council for Public Instruction or else have a degree.<sup>27</sup>

The essence of what was being established by this legislation was not particularly concerned with the division of powers between the local boards and the provincial office; the essential fact that was being hammered out and strengthened here was that all teachers were to hold a certificate - that they were all subject to some sort of examination for competence. As the clause regarding validity shows, the incompetence of the issuing authority was not to stand in the way of this drive to certificate all teachers. The upshot of these Acts was that no teacher could be legally employed in the ordinary schools of Ontario without a certificate of some sort. The Catholic schools could issue their own; three men in a community could constitute themselves examiners and give certificates; but the law required that every teacher must possess such a paper before appointment.

The basic question of the need for all teachers

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27. Act to Amend the Law relating to Grammar Schools in Upper Canada, 16 Vic. Cap. 186, 14th June 1853.

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to hold certificates was thus firmly established by the legislature. Competency to issue the certificates was immediately a matter for question, and was to become an area of controversy, but it was accepted in principle that all teachers should be accredited by some body.

In this way, Ontario's schools had made the change (in this respect) from an essentially private system to an essentially public one. That is to say that the families of Ontario no longer (in law) chose and employed teachers directly, but that the legislature had agreed with the policy of state intervention, protection and regulation and was now attempting to bring in some form of structure which would licence teachers as competent to teach in the province; but even before such a system was truly possible, the families of Ontario were only to choose their teachers from those people so licensed.

The corollary for this legislation was that if all teachers were to be so classified, and graded according to merit, somebody was going to have to do that classifying. It was partly the need to examine teachers that led to the establishment of the professional overseers of education as a decision-making group.

## b) The Inspectorate: Growth of a Bureaucracy.

The state school system that the legislature of Ontario established in the mid nineteenth century was not merely a set of schools for the poor; the motivation for them was social justice, not charity. These public schools were seen as mass schools, serving the whole population and not just a particular class: thus they were free, in that they were to be financed by all, and compulsory, in that all were bound to attend. The state had assumed to itself matters previously considered private and local.

The whole system was based on the industrial model, and this became more evident as it grew during the 1850s and 1860s. Protective of urban children in its compulsoriness, the public school stressed division of labour, specialization and efficiency. This favoured the larger schools able to provide special equipment, teachers, and classes, and to generate more measurable results. The mobile urban economy also caused the educational model to stress standardization of parts and portability of achievement.

The situation of those teachers and administrators who were running good schools in Ontario before the system was reformed, and who were brought under the rules and

regulations of the Council for Public Instruction or denied public funds,<sup>28</sup> and their reaction to their loss of autonomy; would make a fascinating study.<sup>29</sup> However, the situation as seen by the reformers, once enabling legislation had been passed, was that the situation demanded teachers, that is, trained and certificated teachers, quickly and in numbers. Persons unqualified for teaching had to be weeded out, and those who were to remain, as well as new ones, had to be trained and classified.

A consciously industrial image went with this effort. The division of labour through grading and classification of schools, pupils and teachers was hailed by Ryerson, who claimed that the trained teacher could impart twice as much instruction in a given time as an untrained one, and that classification would have the same effect.<sup>30</sup>

To objections that good teachers could exist without this training, Ryerson quoted Professor Stowe,

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28. The Act of 1865 gave grants only to those schools under the jurisdiction and inspection of the Council for Public Instruction.

29. See M.B. Katz, "The Emergence of Bureaucracy in Urban Education - The Boston Case, 1850-1884" in History of Education Quarterly, vol. 8, Summer 1968, p. 155-188, and Fall 1968, p. 319-357.

30. E. Ryerson, op. cit., p. 164.

an American educator, as having said

Sailing packets used to be comfortable and speedy, but now steam packets have made them slow, uncertain and tedious ... The human race is progressive.<sup>31</sup>

All of this activity relied heavily on a new kind of visitor to the schools. The government inspector was a relatively new institution in the mid nineteenth century, when in response to increasing industrialization, urban growth and anonymity, legislatures had appointed inspectors to protect the public against abuse; thus mines, factories and so on were subject to inspection to prevent infractions of protective legislation.<sup>32</sup> Here again, the view of the state as being above the considerations of persons or groups is evident. The inspector was the embodiment of the ethical power of the state.

Most of these inspectorates were protective of the public interest against abuses by private owners. The inspectors entered a mine or factory armed with the power of the state to regulate workers and owners alike, and whether feared or welcomed, were

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31. ibid., p. 177.

32. See M. Hill, "State Control over Citizens: an Historical Perspective", in The State, Administration, and the Individual, Glasgow, Collins, 1976, p. 16-14.

obviously impartial as between workers and owners. This might have remained true of the schools if they had remained in private or local hands and the inspectors had acted in regulatory or protective roles. However, where the state was to run an educational system, the position of the inspector was less clear. At first, the Council for Public Instruction, headed by the Chief Superintendent, was put in charge of the schools. There was no Ministry of Education and thus the Chief Superintendent and his select group of inspectors could hold themselves aloof from provincial politics, or appear to do so.

Ryerson's own view of the inspectorate was a very lofty one. These men were not merely to protect a basic minimum requirement in the schools but they were to encourage a maximum of effort and achievement. They were to examine and licence teachers, improve their organization and methods, examine the pupils, and to be ever "animating teachers, trustees and parents, by conversation, addresses, etc. ..." <sup>33</sup> The inspector was to bring a whirlwind of enthusiasm with him. He brought "animation and delight to the whole school". <sup>34</sup>

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33. E. Ryerson, op. cit., p. 178

34. ibid., p. 179.

There were those who did not see things in quite this light:

But here comes the Examiner of all Examiners. ... There is no escaping out of his hands, for his nose is ten thousand miles long, and can go down chimneys, and through keyholes, upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's chamber, examining all little boys, and little boys' tutors likewise.<sup>35</sup>

The Ryerson ideal view of the inspector, and Charles Kingsley's fictional view of the Examiner are very far apart. One is to be welcomed, the other to be feared and shunned.

The enthusiasts for systematized education, such as Ryerson, seem to have taken for granted that the two roles, as examiner and classifier, on the one hand, and facilitator and advisor on the other, were compatible. A similar link is to be found in the Victorian idea of fatherhood - stern yet gentle, powerful yet sentimental.

This expectation, that the inspector be a paragon of all the Victorian virtues was recognised by Vanden Ende of Holland, when he advised M. Cousin of France in 1836, as quoted by Ryerson, who had been impressed by the work of his European counterparts,

Be careful in the choice of you inspectors;  
they are men who ought to be sought for with

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<sup>35</sup> C. Kingsley, The Water Babies, London, Tuck and Sons, 1863, 1925, p. 127.

a lantern in the hand.<sup>36</sup>

The transnational educational reformers, then, knew that they were expecting a great deal from these inspectors. Above all, it was necessary to establish the inspector's impartiality and fairness, that they were not subject to favouritism, patronage, or any form of corruption. It was considered normal in the eighteenth century and was still common in the nineteenth, for a man of position or influence to favour his own people; Beatrice Webb described her father - a British capitalist with Canadian interests - as such a man. His personal relationships mattered most; "he had no clear vision of the public good";<sup>37</sup> although he was honourable, loyal, generous and forgiving, he asserted that

a friend is a person who would back you up when you were in the wrong, who would give your son a place he could not have won on his own merits.<sup>38</sup>

By the second half of the nineteenth century, patronage was being overhauled by merit, and the new government inspector was part of a growing bureaucratization which stressed standards and impartiality. Rather than pleasing a notable, there were now impartial standards

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36. E. Ryerson, op. cit., p. 179.

37. B. Webb, My Apprenticeship, London, Longmans Green, 1926, Penguin, 1971, p.32.

38. ibid.

to be met. For this change to occur, the whole role and attitude of local school officials would have to change. The stress was no longer to be on what pleased people in a particular locality, but whether or not an individual measured up to the requirements of a theoretic ideal, expressed in terms of what a good teacher should or should not be able to do. The guardian of this ideal was to be the inspector.

c) Local Officials: Patronage or Professionalism.

Several results of the call made by the new law for all teachers to be certificated can be seen on the local level by a careful reading of local superintendents' reports to their Chief Superintendent. It is to be noted that these statements were made, on the whole, by men who were not themselves teachers or administrators, but rather clergymen, doctors, or men of similar standing in their communities. Within a very short time, these men were to vanish from the educational scene as increasing bureaucratization, professionalism, centralization and the cult of uniformity swept them away in its path. Their remarks are almost entirely a statement of their own opinions, although in most cases these seem to have been formed as a result of

their official exertions.

The first area of interest is whether or not these reports show anything of the change which has been mentioned above, from patronage or an essentially personal system of appointments, to merit or an essentially public system.

J.R. Cousens reported in 1867 that the Reeves appointed local superintendents, and as a result persons were appointed who did not visit the schools:

It has been the fashion to accept the appointment and get all that can be got out of it.<sup>39</sup>

Rev. William Ferguson waxed even more indignant, calling the political appointment of local superintendents "the reward of political truckling or ecclesiastical sycophancy".<sup>40</sup> He felt that clergymen, professional gentlemen, and retired, experienced teachers, were being dismissed or compelled to retire as superintendents, to make way for "lads holding subordinate positions in country stores" and other lesser beings.<sup>41</sup> Rev. R. Mac Arthur found that local superintendents were too often changed:

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<sup>39</sup> Report, 1867, Appendix A, Section 3, No. 3.

<sup>40</sup> ibid., No. 7.

<sup>41</sup> ibid.

The Reeve of the township makes the appointment to this office the fulcrum for the raising of himself and his tools into their offices.<sup>42</sup>

All three found that the local trustees preferred the cheap teacher; J.T. Stokes agreed, saying that there were too many young teachers, and he called for a change in that section of the school law which allowed a local superintendent to give provisional teachers' certificates; this he saw as a "porthole" through which improper persons became teachers, "generally through the operation of interested influence".<sup>43</sup>

Thus it would seem that the abuse of office through political patronage could lead to poor superintendence, appointment of unsuitable teachers, and when allied with the wish of local trustees to find the cheapest teacher, could undermine the spirit of the new school reforms.

On the other hand, there were local superintendents who saw things differently, or were working with different people; William Johnston, for example, thought that self-interest, bigotry and selfish favouritism would not divert good trustees; he thought that only through the exertions of parents and trustees in the schoolroom could standards

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42. ibid., Section 18, No. 46.

43. ibid., Section 19, No. 50.

be raised, and not through the examination of teachers.<sup>44</sup>  
This view, that only local concerned adult involvement in the school would really raise standards, was echoed by Rev. W.T. Canning, who approved of a proper sort of patronage:

The chief prosperity of the school depended on the patron of it, under whose immediate supervision it was placed - who knew its wants and took the warmest interest in its welfare.<sup>45</sup>

How was this patron to be found? Rev. J. Gordon, who made his first and last report in 1867, pointed out that local superintendents, like himself, often had other duties more important to them and that even when good men were chosen, they lacked a central interest in their task of supervising the schools. His suggested remedy for the problem was better remuneration and full time employment and concern in this area.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, his namesake, Rev. J. Gordon, M.A.,<sup>47</sup> considering the proposal to appoint full time County Superintendents, felt that to take the superintendency entirely out of the hands of the clergy

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44. ibid., Section 3, No. 4.

45. ibid., Section 7, No. 16.

46. ibid., Section 19, No. 49.

47. The degrees the local men held were always listed, and will be included here, since one could presume that such men had been successful examination candidates themselves.

and professional men would mean that much of the "best talent of the country" would be lost to the schools.<sup>48</sup>

Setting aside their hopes and fears for the future, it can be seen from the above that the local superintendents were wrestling on a local level with the same problems about which the legislature had been concerned: The old system of patronage appointments was resulting in abuses in some instances; yet it must be remembered that the new system of merit appointments relied on local officials just as heavily, albeit in new ways, merely bringing a more definite set of criteria for judgement into effect.

How these criteria were to be arrived at, and who was to do the judging, were the crucial points at issue at that time. It seems that the atmosphere of confidence and acceptance of school reform on the part of the local population of the school districts was, at least in some places, being edged by a fear of centralist tendencies in the ongoing process of school reform. James Coverton put the political dimensions of the problem clearly when he wrote about unwillingness to accept change even when it was acknowledged that the change

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<sup>48</sup>. Report, 1868, Appendix A, Section 33, No. 78.

was an improvement:

Jealousies and prejudice have been unduly appealed to, and doubt and hesitancy usurp, in very many cases, the general confidence that used to pervade all, as to the judiciousness of all educational progress formerly submitted to the people. No measures involving a direct or indirect renunciation of popular control, are viewed with any degree of complacency.<sup>49</sup>

He still saw, however, a "universal sentiment" in favour of good teachers and school improvement.<sup>50</sup>

This, then, was not strictly an educational, but a political difficulty, involving matters of decision-making and control. Rev. Alexander MacLean, M.A., made an eloquent plea that the responsible officers of the schools should be part of the local community and chosen by them; he considered it essential that people "manage their own affairs".<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note that these last remarks of Rev. MacLean stimulated Ryerson to comment that the central authority was concerned only to remedy defects and strengthen weaknesses.<sup>52</sup>

Examples of the type of problem which local people saw as infringements of their liberties were reported by

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49. ibid., Section 26, No. 61.

50. ibid.

51. ibid., Section 21, No. 49.

52. ibid.

A Dingwall Fordyce, who recorded a local trustees' meeting which stated it to be "unjust and arbitrary" that a government should set minimum salaries for teachers; that this and the inability to keep or release a teacher at will would constitute an attack on the freedom of the people.<sup>53</sup>

This was certainly the case. The paternalistic and idealistic view of the state, which allowed state intervention for the greater good of the society, as against the self interest of smaller societal groups, could not act other than by curtailing freedom - but as Ryerson had commented, this incursion on local freedom was to be seen merely as the right to step in, and the only freedom to be lost was the freedom to be weak or defective.

There is, of course, a more fundamental question here: that of who was to judge weakness or defectiveness, and by what standards. Were all local deviations and eccentricities to be seen as defects and corrected by a kindly central authority?

The voice of that kindly authority can be heard in the summary made by the Chief Superintendent of the local reports for 1867, which stated that the County Boards were

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53. ibid., Section 28, No. 66.

faithfully carrying out their duties in respect to the licensing of teachers, but that the well qualified teachers whom they licenced were "being deprived of, or driven from, employment, by the meanness and folly of trustees who employ incompetent teachers".<sup>54</sup> It was the reverse process which he was anxious to promote: the best economy in teachers, he emphasized, as with shoes, waggon, fences, and farm tools, was with quality, not cheapness.<sup>55</sup> The miscalled cheap teacher, actually incompetent, was to be done away with along with his log schoolhouse.

In this passage, the local penny-pinching trustee is cast in the role of villain, the County Board as the faithful servant, and the good teacher as the victim. The local ability to make decisions in education had led to abuses; patronage was largely seen in its negative aspects.

These three groups of people, the legislature, the inspectorate, and the local officials, provide a background to Ontario education consisting of a network of tensions, between local and central control, and between professional (bureaucratic) and political control; and the balance of these tensions might be affected by two other groups of people who were most intimately involved in the education

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54. Report, 1867, Section 20, Paragraph 4.

55. ibid.

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system: the teachers, whether trained or untrained, unschooled or degreed, who were the agents through which the system was to work, and the students, whether poor or rich, urban or rural, elementary or secondary, and their parents, in other words, the families of Ontario.

## CHAPTER 2.

### COMPETITION FOR CHILDREN: EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN MOTIVATION.

The assumptions about the nature of children and the function of childhood in nineteenth century Ontario were largely based on the idea that children were in need of training in order to fashion them into "moral, hard-working productive adults"<sup>1</sup> through precept, insistence on good habits, and above all, work.

These assumptions and theories were those of respectable society, and they were to have great impact on the school system as it developed. However, the actual position which children occupied in society prior to compulsory schooling provides an understanding of the motivation for reform.

#### The Position of the Child in Ontario Society.

Economically, children's labour was important, especially on the farm and as domestic servants, as is shown by the great demand for orphans that were brought from England. Ten times as many Canadian homes applied

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1. N. Sutherland, Children in English Canadian Society, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1976, p.11.

## COMPETITION FOR CHILDREN

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for these orphans as there were children available.<sup>2</sup> The practice was seen as beneficial both for the children, who were either "arabs" (children of the streets) or "paupers" (children of the poor),<sup>3</sup> and for the housewives of Canada. An immigrant from Britain had found his children "like a rope around his neck" in Britain, but in Canada "the source of his wealth"; he hired one aged sixteen out for £100 and his keep for the working season; another similar man, though a good farmer, was only barely successful for "the want of children to help on the farm".<sup>4</sup>

Children in the towns were also employable:

James P. Phin, a local superintendent, reported a well attended school conducted from 7.30 to 9.00 three nights a week for the elementary schooling of boys and girls employed in factories in 1867,<sup>5</sup> and in the same year Rev. Canon Dixon also reported a night school for workers.<sup>6</sup> However, there were those who were not employed nor at school; this seems to have been a city phenomenon; Rev.

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2. ibid., p.9.

3. ibid., p.8.

4. ibid., p.9.

5. Report, 1867, Appendix A, Section 39, No. 116.

6. ibid., Section 37, No. 90.

James Porter noted "neglected, idle children" in the streets of Toronto suffering from "uncleanness, profanity and dishonesty".<sup>7</sup> This was a problem which called for stern measures; Porter thought that they needed to be separated from the sources of their corruption entirely, and isolated while they were retrained: a colossal task which would call for provincial funding, according to Porter.<sup>8</sup> The seeds of compulsory schooling and its role in separating a child from his family (if such family life was judged unsuitable, at least) can be seen in his remarks.

In another sense, the school was to be seen as an intervenor between parents and children. The educators were in the dilemma of wanting to use childhood to train the people so that they could use their new freedoms - of speech, travel, vote, labour - that had been won during the previous century, and to an extent, by emigration, but being prevented from doing so by the unwillingness or inability on the part of the parents to postpone the economic value of the child for this purpose. Thus many of the believers in a free society nevertheless argued for compulsion in schooling. In this respect the school was seen as the agent of the protective state as against the selfish wishes of the owners of the child's labour, the parents or guardians.

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7. Report, 1868, Appendix A, Section 37, No. 90.

8. ibid.

Thus the report of James Baird,<sup>9</sup> after carefully noting that the common school was no longer the poor school, asserted the right of the child to be educated. He went on to suggest a method of securing that right - that school should become compulsory for all children between six and twelve years old for nine months of the year, "or until such children shall have acquired a sufficient amount of knowledge to pass an examination before a Board ...".<sup>10</sup> He thought that this examination should be based on four years of work, and those parents anxious to use the child's labour, would encourage hard work to achieve good and quick results. He added that of course the system was based on the notion that the schools had good teachers, as was any system. At any rate, he thought that his suggested system would work better than prizes.<sup>11</sup>

Prizes and awards were the officially approved method of encouraging children's endeavour in the schools of Ontario during this period. According to the Annual Report of 1867, 1,647 out of 4,422 schools gave prizes based on merit cards.<sup>12</sup> This was an increasing tendency, since 106

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9. Report, 1867, Appendix A, Section 18, No. 47.

10. ibid.

11. ibid.

12. Report, 1867, Section 4, Table D.

more schools had used the system over the previous year's figures.<sup>13</sup> Merit cards were divided into four categories - for punctuality, diligence, good conduct and perfect recitation. These were given out weekly or daily, and added together over a year, could form the basis of prize-giving, thus "multiplying good books among the most promising youth".<sup>14</sup>

Ryerson strongly endorsed this system, and the view of the pupil which is to be found within it: those opposed to prize-giving were supporting the preservation of "dead uniformity of indifference between the diligent and the idle, regular and irregular, obedient and disorderly".<sup>15</sup> Ryerson thought that a non-judgmental attitude was impossible in a good school: as to the problem of failure, he thought that it was a common experience, and that the winners should not be penalized for the sake of the losers. He pointed out that elections were lost, that agricultural and horticultural societies did not withhold prizes because of the "envious dissatisfaction of the less diligent and skilful farmers and gardeners".<sup>16</sup> He ended on a high moral note, using an interesting variation on the original text: "to him that hath (that is, improves what

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13. ibid.

14. ibid.

15. ibid.

16. ibid.

he hath) shall be given, and the neglecter sent empty away".<sup>17</sup>

This philosophy was deeply held, and was to be repeated in other years, and presumably in many discussions; yet it had nothing of educational reasoning behind it, unless analogy — between children and vegetables be granted, or the activities of a school seen as something similar to political activities at election times. It is a pure example of faith — in the belief that work is good, and is done for external reward, and that competition for such rewards is a good way — the best way — to bring about the desired outcome of work.

Indeed, in withdrawing children from the world of work, of economic worth, the reformers had no wish to remove the value they saw in work itself. Since most people worked for wages, the preservation of the work ethic involved some form of reward in the schools. This view of the school child is of importance to the whole topic of examining and testing children.

The work ethic was endorsed by the choice of topics for the merit card system — punctuality, diligence, good conduct, and perfect recitation. The system was designed to reward "daily conduct and diligence, irrespective of that done by another pupil"<sup>18</sup> but was careful to avoid rewards accruing

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17. ibid.

18. Report, 1869, Section 4, Table D, Paragraph 11.

"upon the single ground of cleverness or success at final examinations".<sup>19</sup> Under the merit card system, it was necessary not just to please the examiner, but also the teacher; good conduct and diligence could only be assessed on a day-to-day basis and was a matter of the teacher's judgement. It is clear that where a child's family did not share the teacher's notion of good conduct that the system would penalize the child. However, Ryerson's determination that "every man - in childhood as well as manhood - shall be rewarded according to his works"<sup>20</sup> was capable of overriding any objections raised on behalf of children who failed. Each individual was seen as being capable, if he or she tried hard enough, of success; this notion is another example of the same belief as that regarding teachers' certificates - that high standing could be achieved by repeating the examination over again should failure occur. Those who failed repeatedly were considered to be lacking in diligence, had not done enough hard work, and therefore deserved their fate.

The merit cards themselves were "founded on Holy Scripture", they had mottoes from the Bible and were illustrated by portraits that were "worthy of imitation".<sup>21</sup>

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19. ibid., Section 7, Paragraph 16.

20. ibid.

21. ibid., Section 4, Table D, Paragraph 11.

Thus from the cards themselves, the children were further impressed with the virtues they were to emulate in order to perfect themselves.

The religious and moral values implied by and advocated in the system of merit cards were unchallenged in the comments made upon it by superintendents. Its origin and continued use in the Sunday Schools commended it. However, the question of using it as the basis for competitive prize-giving was less clear.

The introduction of competition for prizes into the schools caused the same confusion about examinations mentioned earlier, as to the difference between competitive examinations and qualifying ones. Ryerson had stated that the merit card system was not competitive,<sup>22</sup> saying in effect that it was a qualifying examination with rewards for all who reached a standard of achievement. Yet the giving of prize books was bound to be competitive in most places, since prize books were expensive, and their purchase depended on the generosity of local people or boards or councils. Where only a small number of books could be financed, a competitive situation immediately existed. While merit cards used alone could be received by all the

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22. ibid.

children who were hard-working, a finite number of prize books increased the number of children who failed, or were perceived to have failed.

Rev. W.T. Canning had experience in Sunday School prize giving which led him to give prizes to all, "graded according to relative merit" so that there was less ground for complaint about "invidious distinction" than when prizes were given to a few.<sup>23</sup> Rev. J.A. Preston, M.A., was less perturbed about failure, calling prize giving a "healthy influence", although of course there was disappointment on the part of the unsuccessful. In his school section, he reported, competitive examinations were held for prizes, conducted by impartial persons; he reported competition as keen, and "the issue looked forward to with extraordinary anxiety".<sup>24</sup>

Competitive rivalry in the schools was bound to result in this infusion of anxiety. To some, the excitement of anxiety was pleasurable, and a worthwhile element in schooling. To others, and to those in difficult circumstances, it caused problems. So George Brown, another local

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23. Report, 1867, Appendix A, Section 7, No. 16.

24. ibid., Appendix A, Section 9, No. 21.

superintendent, reported that merit cards and prizes infused energy and excited emulation among pupils,<sup>25</sup> and Charles B. Millner saw good in the results of this excitement: "The children are so proud of carrying them home".<sup>26</sup> The same feeling could backfire, however; Rev. John Corbett in a poor and isolated "region of forest and rocks" found that the excitement produced by prizes produced much harm; people thought they were given with partiality.<sup>27</sup>

Rev. Richard Gavin, A.M., summarized the problem neatly when he reported that prizes were an incentive to study but also to jealousies, heartburnings and discontent. He felt that rewards should be given to all the painstaking and faithful scholars.<sup>28</sup> The Chief Superintendent commented on this report, saying that the merit card system did this.<sup>29</sup> However, if there were a prize-giving above and beyond the cards themselves, the fact that only a few top scholars would receive these rewards was very likely to negate the effectiveness of this feature of the merit card system. As Rev. Alexander Mann pointed out, in his section only a few prizes were given, which was a pity, but they had no money

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25. ibid., Section 10, No. 25.

26. ibid., Section 24, No. 70.

27. ibid., Section 12, No. 37.

28. Report, 1868, Appendix A, Section 5, No. 7.

29. ibid.

for prizes and voluntary contributions could not provide enough.<sup>30</sup>

There was some feeling in various parts of the province that the reward system was not entirely satisfactory, and particularly so where only a few prizes were available so that competition came to the forefront rather than achievement. Ryerson, in commenting on the reports of local superintendents, was sure that the prize system would improve schools, animate teachers, and spur pupils to exertion. He poured scorn on persons opposed to competition on moral grounds, asking whether the "well conducted, diligent and successful" man "ought not to be rewarded by any respect, notice or increase of wealth" over the "negligent, lazy and worthless lest the latter should envy and hate the former ...", and, in tones of ringing sarcasm, asked if it can be possible to believe that "to him that hath (improves what he hath) shall not be given, and he shall not have abundance".<sup>31</sup>

Later he blamed the problem on the teachers, saying that the problems arose when the teacher did not collect the daily data essential for an "impartial and intelligent judgement". He dismissed the idea of giving

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30. ibid., Section 8, No. 16.

31. Report, 1867, ~~Section~~ 20, Paragraph 8.

prizes to all as defeating the object of prizes, claiming that "Divine government itself" was based on "rewarding everyone according to his works". Life, he claimed, was competitive, so competition in the schools was also acceptable; and he concluded,

The objection that the distribution of prizes to deserving pupils excites the envy and hatred of the undeserving, is a convenient pretext to protect and permit incompetence and indifference on the part of the teacher.<sup>32</sup>

Thus Ryerson's philosophy distinguished between emulation, or good competition, and rivalry, or bad competition. If his merit card and prize system was correctly implemented, then emulation was the result, and the uplifting of the schools; where it was incorrectly used, rivalry and bad feeling emerged.

Certainly, the reactions to the system were mixed, but whether Ryerson's attack on the teachers as the source of the problem was accurate, or whether the fault lay in the original design, or in the underlying philosophy, the examination of pupils in the schools did contain flaws which were not sorted out, nor brought into consideration from a purely educational point of view.

If prizes gave problems, they were at least, in George Brown's words, "a more successful instrument than the

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32. Report, 1869, Section 4, Table D, Paragraph 11.

rod".<sup>33</sup> Schooling was seen as a necessity to prepare children for modern life; to be better equipped for life than their parents had been or had needed to be.<sup>34</sup> The pressure to advance was recognised as emanating from the rapid changes in the world under the impact of scientific discoveries; these were no longer a source of wonder or the "fond dream of the enthusiast".<sup>35</sup> Thus children leaving school were immediately in contact with the thresher, the reaper, fanning mill, railway locomotive, and did not even understand the principles of these machines;<sup>36</sup> schooling must "enable our lads to take their place in the world's arena, fully equipped for the battle of life".<sup>37</sup>

Ryerson was ready to agree that the rod should no longer be the trademark of the schoolmaster, in that he approved the "utilitarian" system of education,<sup>38</sup> stressing practical education and discovery methods rather than the acceptance of authority.<sup>39</sup> He also endorsed Pestalozzian methods and ideas, encouraging object teaching.<sup>40</sup> With

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33. Report, 1867, Section 10, Paragraph 25.

34. Report, 1871; Part 1, Section 20, p.34.

35. ibid.

36. ibid., p.35.

37. ibid.

38. ibid., p.37.

39. ibid.

40. ibid., p.40.

this enlightened view of schooling, allied to the need for much greater effort on the part of the child to scale new educational heights unknown in the past, it was considered by many that, if not the fear of the rod, some other form of incentive, external to the learning task itself, was necessary. Compulsory attendance was seen as one such incentive; children compelled to attend school, it was thought, would also be compelled to learn. Ryerson was able to quote Luther writing in 1554 in this connection, saying that the state, which could force citizens into the army, should compel them to educate their children in the war against the spirit of evil.<sup>41</sup>


Not all saw these elements as linked in quite this way. Frederick H. Raus, for example, thought that some teachers saw prizes as a valuable aid in maintaining efficient government of schools. However, he "regretted that they did not appeal to the higher sentiments. He thought that they had no extensive or enduring influence and were not "eminently beneficial".<sup>42</sup> In his opinion, better results were obtainable through the use of Pestalozzian methods of practical and interesting instruction.<sup>43</sup> This would seem to be an early example of the notion that children learn naturally and need no external stimulus than that presented by successful

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41. ibid., p.62.

42. Report, 1868, Appendix A, Section 14, No. 29.

43. ibid.



learning itself. The opposite view, presented by James Dunlop, was that although the prizes were few, and some objected, these people had forgotten that children were "intellectually indolent" and needed stimulus to learn.<sup>44</sup>

This essential disagreement about the nature of children - indeed about the nature of humanity - was to become a characteristic of the school system. In practice, it was possible to operate in both modes: the encouragement of discovery and at the same time the offering of prizes for incentives. This can be illustrated by reference to the report of Rev. Alexander MacLean, whose report on the competitive examination noted good results: he wished more would try because the examiners were excellent, "especially the facetious, witty, and loving-hearted Mr. McGann", who "drew his little contestants to him as by magic, and inspired them with courage to do their best".<sup>45</sup>

The system of merit cards and prize-giving was firmly linked with competitive examinations in Toronto. In 1867 Rev. James Porter described the system whereby three children from each division of both male and female departments were selected by their teachers for proficiency and good conduct (probably through the merit card approach) and on

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44. ibid., Section 35, No. 84.

45. Report, 1867, Section 22, No. 65.

approval by their superintendent went to the Combined Examination. The winners in this competitive examination received prizes, and the seven best senior common school pupils were recommended for grammar school scholarships. Soon after the examination, a public meeting of scholars, parents and friends was held, at which scholarships were presented and prizes awarded for all city common schools.<sup>46</sup> In 1868 he reported that the examinations were partly oral and partly written, and that again three children from each of the three divisions (junior, intermediate and senior) and the two departments (male and female) competed, with the prize-giving being held ten days later, presided over by the mayor. Again, seven scholarships were awarded.<sup>47</sup>

This highly-organized and efficient system was already recognisably a mechanism whereby the deserving, meritorious student could advance himself in life: Porter mentioned some pupils who had gone from common school to the grammar school on scholarship, and subsequently to Upper Canada College and University College. He added "many are prominently engaged in literary, professional, mercantile, mechanical and other honourable pursuits".<sup>48</sup>

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46. ibid., Section 37, No. 107.

47. Report, 1868, Section 37, No. 90.

48. ibid.

If the Toronto model was to become the way of the future, then it would seem urgent that entrants to these contests should be equally well prepared for the onslaught. A common curriculum, common methods of instruction, common practices, and therefore a competition between reasonably similar contestants would seem to achieve the desired results. The vehicle for this attempt to provide more even odds in the race for rewards was the graded school.

#### The Classification of Children.

In 1871, the "system of classification" was introduced.<sup>49</sup> The theoretical description of the classified school was that the children were divided into classes, and each class had its specified work, which had to be completed before a pupil could move on to the next class.<sup>50</sup> This was conceived of as a "graded system", free of "whim or caprice" of child or parent, bringing in a method of ensuring systematic study, in "due time, and order".<sup>51</sup> Non-classified schools were now characterized as involving "senseless repetition", since a school with as many classes as individuals merely "frittered

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49. Report, 1871, Part 1, Section 3, Table C, No.1.

50. ibid., Part 1, Section 7, p.71.

51. ibid.

time away".<sup>52</sup> The first four classes of this system provided the programme on which the High School Entrance Examinations were based. The system of classification within the high schools did not crystallize until 1875, by which time "classified" children would have been entering.

Classification was not as simple in practice as it was in theory. The new method of sorting children into groups, as well as the new programme which went with this sorting, was to have an effect on children, parents, trustees, and inspectors. The 1871 Report noted the "most striking fact" that under this new system, 31,164 pupils were put back from higher classes of the old system into the first or second of the new.<sup>53</sup> Inspectors were praised for their faithfulness in discharging this "most unpleasant part of their duties".<sup>54</sup>

This move to classify the children predictably caused a negative reaction from many parents. Local inspectors reported on the pressure put on teachers by parents: J.H. Smith found that improper classification, with rapid promotion from one book to another, was a result of parents complaining and teachers yielding despite the child's lack of understanding of the branches of knowledge other than reading.<sup>55</sup> John B.

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52. ibid.

53. ibid., Part 1, Section 3, Table C, No.1.

54. ibid.

55. Report, 1871, Appendix B, p. 42.

Somerset found teachers unwilling or unable to "meet the opposition of inconsiderate parents".<sup>56</sup>

They found difficulties, too, in dealing with the teachers; W.R. Bigg intended to help his teachers organize their classes, but found them incapable of doing so; they were about to leave teaching for school or marriage, or were new and temporary at the job, and most of them were, in any case, ignorant themselves of the subjects in the "new programme".<sup>57</sup> He therefore dismissed the whole idea of classification as "impractical".<sup>58</sup> A.W. Ross found that teachers were advancing whole classes from one reader to another without attempting real classification, "showing their impartiality, so that pupils are never fit for the books they are reading in".<sup>59</sup> William Mackintosh found three years later that inexperienced teachers were not able to classify, or to teach the required programme of studies, and he also found that some old teachers, "older than the inspector", resisted it.<sup>60</sup>

The inspectors, as their own reports show, varied in their appreciation of the requirement to classify children.

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56. ibid., p.71.

57. ibid., p.36.

58. ibid.

59. ibid., p.22.

60. Report, 1874, Appendix B, p.42.

Thus Rev. William Ferguson thought that parents were gradually learning that the best teacher was not necessarily the one who hurried the children through the curriculum; and he found support from the teachers for his insistence that children should not go to classes for which they were not qualified.<sup>61</sup> John Agnew, M.D., reclassified children who had been pushed ahead "to please parents" and found that people were generally satisfied when they found their children "making real progress in their studies and teachers taking pains" because they knew the inspector would thoroughly test them.<sup>62</sup> T.S. Agar was enforcing the regulations "with circumspection".<sup>63</sup> He considered the feelings of the child, parent and teacher would be hurt unless the regulations were explained; that reclassification without this explanation would be a rude shock to the parents' pride in their children, the self-esteem of the child, and would be seen as a judgement on the character of the teacher. His explanation of the new programme and classes was to show that the results were desirable to the children themselves, pointing out that the classes were not formed at the caprice of the teacher, and in all he was careful not to lower respect for the teacher.<sup>64</sup> Rev. George Bell, LL.D., found that the

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61. Report, 1871, Appendix B, p.21.

62. ibid., p.40.

63. ibid., p.44.

64. ibid.

children were often qualified in reading, though not in grammar and arithmetic, which had not previously been required; he considered it "ungracious" to put them back, and also found that there was a strong feeling among parents against their children having to study "newfangled notions of teachers and inspectors".<sup>65</sup> He found it difficult to convince "surly people", even with the printed regulations in his hand. His response to this situation was to make no changes in classification, but to allow no future promotions unless all requirements were met.<sup>66</sup>

Rev. E. H. Jenkins, M.A., a few years later, described essentially the same situation, though his response to it was quite different. He was disturbed by the teachers' poor classification of pupils, and by the opposition to it from parents and trustees; he protested that the teacher was not a "mere machine" to carry out the methods they approved, but was to use independent judgement in carrying out the programme of the Council for Public Instruction.<sup>67</sup> The point that the teacher was to be responsible to the Education Office and not to the local trustees and parents was put strongly by

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65. ibid., p. 118.

66. ibid.

67. Report, 1875, Appendix B, p. 20.

James C. Morgan, M.A., who found the same pressure from parents and trustees against their children being kept back being brought to bear on his teachers.<sup>68</sup> These trustees were the teacher's actual employers, and the unlucky teacher, he found, was compelled either to leave the school or yield to the "popular clamour". His reaction as inspector was to refuse to examine a class unless it were studying the whole programme required of it; and even where they were studying the proper subjects, he did not examine, because he considered that keeping the children back as much as possible would "build a substantial foundation on which real success can be built in later years".<sup>69</sup> Thus a particular inspector might react in quite different ways from that of his colleagues in regard to his duty to reclassify the schools. He had considerable discretion in the way he dealt with the local situation.

Essentially, the regulations were, as T.S. Agar pointed out, difficult to apply in a place like Ontario, with cities, towns, rural sections, and old settled townships.<sup>70</sup> Rev. John May, M.A., noted in 1871 that the system worked best in large and regularly attended schools, in towns and cities.<sup>71</sup> Thus A. Macallum, M.A., in Hamilton, reported that

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68. ibid., p.43.

69. ibid.

70. Report, 1871, Appendix B, p.45.

71. ibid., p.39.

his schools were already doing what was required in the 1871 Act,<sup>72</sup> and that pupils were examined and classes assigned on entering school and thereafter monthly examinations were held for promotions, with a semi-annual examination and a yearly prize examination before Christmas.<sup>73</sup> G. Young Smith found that he could tell town from country children, since the former had been required to pass the headmaster's examination before moving to another division of the school.<sup>74</sup>

This difference of already existing practice seems to have depended on the type of school and its students. Thus Rev. Peter Wright found it impossible to carry out the regulations in rural sections where there were one, two, or even three teachers;<sup>75</sup> and Donald McDiarmid, M.D., found classification difficult where attendance was irregular,<sup>76</sup> as did Rev. John May, who found that after three years there were still problems in the rural sections. The requirement of the classification system that a second teacher be hired where there were more than fifty pupils was a real problem. Most of his schools had more than fifty pupils, but for eight months of the

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72. ibid., p.109.

73. ibid., p.113.

74. ibid., p.116.

75. ibid., p.129.

76. Report, 1874, Appendix B, p.

year there was hardly enough work for one teacher.<sup>77</sup> He went so far as to call the regulation "too sweeping", and added "a rigid enforcement of it would cause an insurrection". The new regulations, he added, "work admirably in towns and cities, but ... do not work, or work mischief, in purely rural sections".<sup>78</sup>

The problem was put by John J. Somerset in more measured tones: the difficulties with classification were caused by the insufficiency of third class teachers to teach the new programme, even to the pupils in the second or third class; the large number of beginners in teaching and their frequent moves; irregular attendance of the pupils; and the need to give those "half grown pupils" who came in winter at least "a plain education".<sup>79</sup>

Interestingly, Toronto had its problems with classification too. James Hughes, reporting in 1874, found that the grading system was working in the highest two grades (of the public schools) but not below; and there was considerable pressure to advance pupils quickly into higher grades to relieve the overcrowding the schools were experiencing.<sup>80</sup> Promotions were being made three times a year, for this reason.

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77. ibid., p.27.

78. ibid.

79. ibid., p.64.

80. ibid., p.83.

There was also a sufficient number of working children in the city - errand boys and maidservants - that he saw a need for ungraded schools to give them a basic education.<sup>81</sup>

The provincial regulations were moving from what had been a part time activity for many children towards a full time occupation. While school attendance was compulsory only for four months of the year by the provisions of the 1871 Act, the new programme and classification system was set up in year-long blocks of study, essentially with the expectation that pupils would attend regularly, and for the whole year. Where they attended irregularly, or for only part of the year, they had little time for anything beyond the three R's, yet the new regulations would not allow a pupil to continue into the higher classes in these basic subjects unless all of the required programme had been studied and examined.

When the classification scheme was applied to the high schools, there were added complications, even with the new High School Entrance Examination in full swing. In 1871, the high school inspectors, Rev. J.G.D. MacKenzie, M.A., and James A. McLellan M.A., LL.B., wrote that inspector's approval for admission to the high schools was needed "so that the system

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81. ibid., p.84.

is not vitiated by the admission of sub-standard pupils".<sup>82</sup> They still found the system lacking in uniformity because of the use of different sets of questions by different Boards, and so they moved towards one set of questions for all. By 1874, McLellan, now joined by J.M. Buchan, M.A., and S. Arthur Marling, M.A., as inspectors of high schools, were proud to report that there were no unqualified pupils in the high schools, all having been duly examined before admission. They also reported an increase in the use of written examinations.<sup>83</sup>

The feared depletion of the high schools did not materialize, despite the high standards demanded, "because the public schools, private schools, and preparatory schools took up the challenge".<sup>84</sup> This meant that a considerable shift in activity took place in these schools, so that the emphasis was now on the type of learning that could be measured by written examination, and on the subjects and areas of the subjects which were to be examined. This meant, according to John J. Tilley, that teachers were using independent thought and developing self-reliance.<sup>85</sup> They eagerly sought the questions used in the examination for admission to the high school, and so the standard for the public school was set.<sup>86</sup> James McBrien

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82. Report, 1871, Appendix A, p.9.

83. Report, 1874, Appendix A, p.5.

84. Report, 1875, Appendix A, p.3.

85. ibid., Appendix B, p.31.

86. ibid.

noted the same phenomenon, saying that the questions of the education department had a "talismanic influence".<sup>87</sup> He thought that the rote system was dying out, and that the pupil was "attracted onward and upward, from one degree of excellence to another, until he is constrained to exclaim, Excelsior!, Excelsior!"<sup>88</sup>

The system of classification was an attempt to organise the schools on the basis of efficient delivery of a programme to a homogenous group of recipients. Teachers, parents, children, and even inspectors found difficulties with this notion; nevertheless, the requirement that schools be examined by the inspectors, when it found its full form, including the high school entrance examination based on the first four years of the classified school, and the subsequent introduction of payment by results - grants to schools on the basis of success in examination - meant that the system, and more particularly the philosophical basis for it, became the orthodox belief in Ontario education, and the production model became the accepted vehicle for schooling.

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87. ibid., p.38.

88. ibid.

## CHAPTER 3.

### EXAMINATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE.

The first written provincial examinations for entrance to high schools were based on the first four years of the New Programme for elementary schools. The work done in the high schools, it was thought, would then be genuinely different from that done in the elementary grades. What exactly the high school work was to be merits some examination, especially since the high schools were now intended by the reformers to serve the whole population and not a privileged few. These schemes of the reformers gave rise to a certain amount of opposition; and this came to a head in the events surrounding the first entrance examinations, which were to take place in 1872.

#### 1.

#### The Legitimate Work of the High School.

The 1871 School Act attempted to do for the high schools what the earlier Acts had done for the public schools: make them the schools of the whole people and also make them clearly responsive to merit rather than patronage. And in the same way that all teachers were required to hold a certificate of competence, so all children wishing to enter the high school

were to be subjected to examination. Until they could show that they had been successful in such an examination, they were not to be admitted to high school.

Each type of school was now required to do its own "legitimate work"<sup>1</sup> and the examination would act as a sorting mechanism to ensure this. However, the question was more complex than it may appear, since there was still considerable uncertainty as to what the proper task of the high school was.

The 1865 Act organized the distribution of the Grammar School fund by taking the daily average attendance by those in the programme of studies prescribed by law for grammar schools. This attendance was certified by the headmaster and trustees and verified by the Inspector of Grammar Schools.<sup>2</sup> The regulations as to permitted courses of study allowed both higher English and classical studies. Pupils wishing to be admitted were subject to an examination by the Inspector; only those who were able to pass the Inspector's test were subsidized by the Grammar School Fund.<sup>3</sup>

The position of girls was uncertain under the legislation of 1865 because they were specifically mentioned

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1. Report, 1871, p.91.

2. Act for further Improvement of Grammar Schools in Upper Canada, 29 Vic, Cap 23, 1865, Section 7.

3. Report, 1867, Section 21, Paragraph 6.

in connection with studies in French; (which was part of the Higher English programme) they were allowed to study French, but were not to be counted for the grant.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this disbarment, girls after 1865 were entered as Latin pupils so that they would be able to be counted for the grant, since the legislation there used the word "pupils" and not "boys".<sup>5</sup>

The question of the education of girls may seem a red herring; however their presence in the high schools was a matter of controversy at the time, and the question of the proper work of the high school cannot be discussed without reference to the actual pupils with which they had to deal. The question of the secondary education of girls was a matter of concern at the time. At the end of May 1867, on his return from a trip abroad, Ryerson noted that he had received complaints because girls were not recognised equally with boys as classical pupils, and also that they were recognised at all when the schools were meant to be for boys.<sup>6</sup> These complaints about the new (1865) legislation about misappropriation of the "fund ... intended ... for ... education for the professions and university" had caused education officials earlier in 1867 to decide to count two girls as one boy

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4. ibid.

5. ibid.

6. ibid., paragraph 8.

for that year until a decision could be made.<sup>7</sup> This attempt at compromise pleased nobody, as Ryerson's letters showed.

Ryerson's own attitude is made clear in his use of the phrase, "bogus girl pupils".<sup>8</sup> He was opposed to girls being educated equally and freely with boys. He showed this by his action in barring girls from Victoria College when he accepted the Presidency, despite the fact that they had attended that institution since its founding in 1834. Ryerson made this a condition of accepting the position. He believed that girls should be educated in female schools and seminaries.<sup>9</sup>

It would appear that the general populace of Ontario had less delicacy; girls had appeared in high schools even after the new law had made them a financial liability rather than an asset; and if they needed to take the Latin and Greek course in order to remain, they did so, even though it was considered to be a training for professional life, and they were not expected to take part in that. Ryerson did not believe that there was any "inferiority of capacity on the part of girls", indeed he found them to be "superior in many respects in childhood and youth";<sup>10</sup> his reason for the need

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7. ibid.

8. ibid.

9. ibid., paragraph 9.

10. ibid., paragraph 11.

for separation was delicately hinted at, but was essentially a need for young men and women whose families were not acquainted to be kept apart.<sup>11</sup> This anxiety is more fully explained in part of a report written by George Paxton Young in 1866. He devoted a portion of that report to a discussion of girls. He had found that mixed classes, even of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen year olds were successful with a teacher with "weight of character"; he saw no "breach of decorum", but conceded that there was a risk of "moral injury". In a curious passage, Young's actual observations and his image of women are both displayed: he found that educating boys and girls together caused no problem with the ordinary moralities, but rather what he called "loss of the higher moral refinements".<sup>12</sup> Everyone, he thought, would understand this, who had associated with "cultivated women", who had "an ever present delicacy, married to an intelligence which at once strengthens and liberates it from constraint". This he saw as "the flower of all female accomplishment".<sup>13</sup>

Thus the proper task of the high school, if it

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11. See *ibid.*, paragraph 10 and 11, where Ryerson justifies the common education of girls and boys in the common schools, and in the normal school, in the first case on the grounds that their parents were acquainted, and in the second because it was for a professional purpose.

12. Report, 1867, Section B, Report of G.P. Young, 1866, Section H.

13. *ibid.*

were to include the education of girls, was not at all clear. It was obvious that the large number of girls being put into Latin studies were misplaced, and there for financial reasons, stemming from the grant structure. Schools which did not take part in this practice, whose girls were to be found studying French and English rather than Latin and Greek, were being penalized.<sup>14</sup>

The answer to this problem might seem to be an end to sex discrimination in the high schools. There was no valid reason for the subsidizing of girls in Latin and not in English; yet Young says that the removal of sex discrimination would just result in a "flood of little girls with a French book in their hands".<sup>15</sup>

The heart of the problem was not really whether to admit girls as well as boys; the original definition of the legitimate work of the high schools, in terms of preparation for university or the professions, was faced not only with the evident presence of girls in the schools, but, more disturbingly to the theory-builders and legislature, with the fact that these schools were playing the part of elementary schools for a middle class group of people.

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14. ibid., Section E.

15. ibid.

Grammar schools were provided early in Ontario, the legislation for their establishment being passed in 1806, while common schools were not provided until 1816.<sup>16</sup> In effect, the grammar schools taught elementary English as well as Latin, the latter being seen as their legitimate role. Often these schools were seen as being "for the select and aristocratic few - chiefly officials" and not for "the people generally".<sup>17</sup> Because of this class distinction, the grammar schools developed alongside, and independently of, the common schools. Many municipalities by 1867 were opposed to support of grammar schools since the people saw them as "badges and instruments of their own inferiority and debasement".<sup>18</sup> As a result of this class division, if a strong grammar school existed, the common school was likely to be weak, and vice versa: thus Brockville in 1869 was reported as having a good common school, but its grammar school was "a phantom".<sup>19</sup>

The way that had evolved for local authorities to escape this problem was to establish a union school, with both common and grammar departments. In this way the school

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16. Report, 1867, Section 21, Paragraph 19.

17. ibid. .

18. ibid., paragraphs 18 and 19.

19. Report, 1869, Appendix A, Section 'C.

buildings would get local support, and the larger grants for grammar pupils would accrue to the school, as would any prestige attached to having a grammar department.

However, it was in the financial interest of such a school to have as many pupils in the grammar department as possible: so all those who had any chance of "wriggling through the meshes of the inspector's examining net"<sup>20</sup> were enrolled as classical pupils. George Paxton Young preferred to see all grammar schools perish rather than making common schools "mere hotbeds to force forward seedlings for the classical field".<sup>21</sup>

The assumption in that statement is that the proper work of the grammar school was to give a classical education, not a higher English schooling. Young in fact proposed abolishing Latin study as a condition for attendance (and grant), and basing the grants instead on the results of individual examination of the pupils.<sup>22</sup> Ryerson's comment on this idea was to point out that English teaching in the grammar schools was poor, and also that such a scheme would bring the high schools into rivalry with the common schools, since they would both be teaching the same thing. He also objected that the need to increase the inspectorate to three men in order

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20. Report, 1867, Section B, Report of G.P. Young, 1866, Paragraph 2.

21. ibid., Section C.

22. Report, 1867, Section 21, Paragraph 20.

to carry out the suggested individual examinations would be impossible.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the appearance of girls, and the springing up of union schools, the education office still saw the work of the high school as essentially classical pre-university and professional training. Latin and Greek remained valuable in their eyes and they still wished to see classes established for training the professional gentlemen of the province in the traditional way. Thus the Act of 1871 established a new set of aims for the high schools which attempted to retain the old while providing for the new.

This new set of aims delineated the difference between the public and high schools. All children were to be taught elementary English first, in the common schools. Little boys were no longer to be put into Latin before they had learned English: the early years were to be spent on the subjects set for the first four years of the public school.<sup>24</sup>

The aims of the high school were now to provide, first, education for the commercial, manufacturing and agricultural pursuits and for public office, through the

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23. ibid.

24. Report, 1871, Section 9, Paragraph 2, p.92,

..higher English course, and secondly, preparation for entry to the professions and university through education in classical and foreign languages and mathematics.<sup>25</sup>

The innovative part of this legislation involved the link with the public schools. The university had been closely connected with the grammar schools in that matriculation was the end-goal of successful grammar school students, and the curriculum was largely shaped by entrance requirements at the senior institution. This link was mainly through the classical course, and it was to be retained, but now as the secondary, rather than the primary, aim of the schools. The English programme was now to become the mainstream of the high schools.

This programme had to be demonstrably different from that offered by the public schools, or the two types of school would again be in competition for pupils, and the old class division would again become apparent. The regulations brought in in 1871 regarding this difference insisted on an examination for admission to establish that the individual was qualified for entry.<sup>26</sup> This examination was to be on paper, and the answers were to be kept for the High School Inspector to see, so that he did not have to depend on individual examinations

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25. ibid., paragraph 6, p.92.

26. Report, 1871, Section 9, p.92.

of the pupils to ascertain whether the regulations had been observed.<sup>27</sup> It was also stated clearly that nobody could enter high school without passing this examination and that parents were at liberty to keep their child in the public school to the end of the classes there, and then transfer him or her to a higher grade in the high school.<sup>28</sup>

The bureaucratic or official view, then, was that local people were often motivated by financial self-interest to grasp the most money they could in grants for the least educational returns: while they did not necessarily blame them for this (indeed, G.P.Young's 1866 Report shows perfect understanding of the situation)<sup>29</sup>, the anti-local feeling combined with the merit approach to education, as opposed to the class approach (personal contact, family links), to take control out of parental hands and place it in those of officials of the Council for Public Instruction, whose regulations controlled the everyday working of the schools. This was understood to be a necessity, and it was seen that certain individuals would have objections. However, individual liberty could not prevail without "utter confusion" in the school curriculum.<sup>30</sup> The two

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27. ibid., paragraph 3.

28. ibid., paragraph 4.

29. Report, 1867, Section B, G.P.Young Report, 1866, Section D - "even grammar school masters are but men".

30. Report, 1871, Section 20, p.32.

principles on which the system was built were that instruction should be within the pupil's capacity, and that it should be adapted to the needs of the country, and to individual groups or classes of pupils, "agricultural, mercantile, mechanical".<sup>31</sup> Parental objections were overruled by the statement "Exceptional cases cannot be legislated", and parents could not expect to dictate the subjects to be taught their child because the teachers' time was not privately negotiable.<sup>32</sup> In summary, the claim of the parent was shown to be inadmissible in public education.

The tension in the province came to a head over this issue. While the movement to improve education was one which people largely supported, they did not always find themselves in agreement with Ryerson and the Council for Public Instruction. The debated and arguments, however, never questioned two aspects of the situation: the grant structure which provided considerably more money to upper grades (high schools) than lower ones (public schools) and which had been described as the cause of many of the problems which led to crowding of high school classes; this larger grant is part of the feeling which protected Upper Canada College, and which had led to the establishment of high schools before provision had been made for common or public

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31. ibid.

32. ibid.

schools. This might have been acceptable or understandable in the old class based system, but this new merit approach might more logically have recognised the basic education of the whole population (those mandatory four years in public school) as equal to or more important than the secondary education of the smaller number. Here again, the reformers attempted to retain old values while introducing new ones. The second aspect of the situation which seems never to have been questioned was the advisability of separating public and high schools, despite the union schools in some places. That there should be two different types of school for primary and secondary education, was taken for granted and seems to have needed no justification.

## 2.

## Opposition.

That there was opposition on several grounds to the plans for the schools can be seen in the debates of 1869 and 1871 over the school bills of those years, both in and out of the legislature. In February and March, 1869, Ryerson held thirty-eight meetings in the county towns of the province,<sup>33</sup> and even with Ryerson in the chair the opposition to greater central power was expressed; one motion in Owen Sound on

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33. Report, 1869, Appendix B, "County School Conventions".

February 10th called the Council for Public Instruction "an irresponsible body" (presumably meaning not elected or responsible to an elected body) and called for more local control;<sup>34</sup> and although the motion was defeated, similar expressions of opposition to the highly centralized nature of the evolving school system were expressed throughout the province. The same feeling surfaced in the Globe later that year in reference to the school debate in the legislature; the opposition declared themselves "not prepared to adopt every nostrum brought over from the despots of Europe by an official" and preferred to "leave people to be the judge of what is best for themselves".<sup>35</sup> This opposition to "central control" was expressed in no uncertain terms; the Globe regarded the government as nothing more than Ryerson's "recording hacks" and maintained that the "simple ipse dixit of the good Doctor" was insufficient for the legislation to pass the House.<sup>36</sup>

The actual debate in the legislature shows the same opposition to the strength of the Council for Public Instruction and of the Chief Superintendent. The government, supporting Ryerson, pointed out that he had been working on the system for twenty-five years and his opinions were not therefore to be lightly dismissed.<sup>37</sup> During the debate, anti-Toronto feeling emerged. Toronto had received \$1800 for its

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34. ibid.

35. Globe, December 1st, 1869.

36. Globe, Editorial, December 15th, 1869.

37. Newspaper Hansard, January 6th, 1871.

EXAMINATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE

grammar school, while country ones had received only \$200 to \$400; teachers had to come to Toronto in order to qualify for a first class certificate<sup>38</sup> (and inspectors could be chosen only from those teachers with such a certificate). There was also anti-examination feeling - "nothing approached nearer to persecution than continual examinations";<sup>39</sup> but most of all the centralizing tendency which put control of education entirely in the hands of the Council for Public Instruction was attacked. The reforms of the system which would leave control under County Boards rather than under local school sections seemed to have more approval; but to give the Council for Public Instruction, which was identified as being Ryerson, so much power;<sup>40</sup> to set requirements for the teachers of the province ("4,000 teachers in the power of the Chief Superintendent");<sup>41</sup> to set standards for school accommodation; to appoint inspectors; to examine; and to regulate seemed despotic to some. At third reading,<sup>42</sup> the opposition under Edward-Blake moved to set up an independent Board of Examiners for teachers, including those attending the Normal School, and also tried to have the members of the Council for Public Instruction elected by various people working in

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38. ibid.

39. ibid., January 20th, 1871.

40. ibid., January 6th, 1871.

41. ibid.

42. ibid., February 14th, 1871.

school and local boards. Both these motions were defeated, but the attitude they showed was to become significant when the opposition became the government later that year.

## 3.

## High School Entrance, 1872.

The first written provincial examinations of students in the schools of Ontario were those for entry into the high schools. These were instituted by the School Act of 1871, which also constituted a Board of Examiners for this purpose. The examiners were to be the local inspector, the chairman of the school board, and the headmaster of the high school. However, the section describing this board of examiners ended, "The high school inspector shall ensure that such requirements are carried out."<sup>43</sup>

This particular section of law referring to high school entry may not have seemed a very great departure from the current practice, which was for the local authorities to control entry to the high school; and since the high school inspector had the general supervision of the school anyway, the clause as to his role might not have excited much interest.

Nevertheless, in September, 1872, the Executive Council of Ontario sent a message to all chairmen of high school

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43. School Act, 1871, 34 Vic, Cap. 33, section 38.

boards suspending the regulations made by the Council for Public Instruction regarding examinations for entry into high schools, declaring the Council's action in drawing up these regulations to have been illegal.

In cancelling these regulations, the Executive Council wrote on 26th September that

the utmost facility should be afforded to the admission of pupils to the high schools, consistent with their showing that amount of previous training without which it is improbable they could obtain any advantages from the further prosecution of their studies in the High School and that the Board of Examiners should be left unrestricted, to the extent mentioned, in fulfilling the duties confided in them by the Act.<sup>44</sup>

This action of the Executive Council was not, then, an attempt to remove the examination itself. Some sort of diagnostic testing is clearly indicated by the statement. What, then was the basis for this action?

The argument put forward by the Attorney General as to the illegality of the Council for Public Instruction's proceedings was that the high school inspectors were usurping the local examining board's right to examine. The Regulations provided that the centrally devised questions were to be answered in writing by the candidates, the examining board was to have charge of marking the papers, and all papers, extra question papers, and examiner's report were to be sent to the Department

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<sup>44</sup> .Sessional Paper No. 42, 36 Vic 1873, p.19: Copy of an Order in Council approved by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, 26th September, 1872.

after the examination had been held.<sup>45</sup> Regulation 17 stated that candidates passed by local boards should be temporarily admitted to the high school by the headmaster, but that if the inspector did not approve their admission, "their attendance will not be credited to the school".<sup>46</sup> Thus what appears to have been at the heart of the objection to these regulations was a disagreement over central control and power. The change in administration in Ontario, according to the Daily Globe, meant that "those who aim at the centralization of power" were being replaced by "those who labour for its diffusion".<sup>47</sup> The new government appears to have determined to curb the centralizing tendency in education and to assert political authority over the Council for Public Instruction.

However, this was not the only factor in the situation. As well as the political objection to the spirit of centralization, as expressed through the new government's action, there were also two other grounds for objection expressed at the time. One of these was a local objection to their loss of autonomy in choosing students, which was in effect a protest at the way in which the inspectorate was being used; and the other was that written

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45. ibid., p. 14 and 15, Department of Public Instruction, Regulations for the admission of Pupils to High Schools and Collegiate Institutes.

46. ibid.

47. Daily Globe, Editorial, 31st August, 1872.

examinations were too great an ordeal for the candidates to be expected to undergo.

The inspector, according to Ryerson's theories, was to be an animator; but when he went into local schools and revised the classification of the children, he was not always rewarded with the increased diligence that was expected to follow his visit. Instead, local examining boards objected to the power of the inspectors to revise their results. The interim nature of local admissions to the high schools was particularly irksome, and the boards made no secret of their wish to "have repealed the obnoxious clause of the Act which confers such powers".<sup>48</sup>

The last objection to the regulations was to the mode of examining children set out by the Council for Public Instruction. It was objected that written examinations were too great an ordeal for the candidates. The bringing in of written modes of examining instead of the old oral mode was certainly a great change. This is shown by a high school inspector's report for 1871:

Just one change was made, but that was found all-sufficient: the parsing, instead of being given orally, was exacted in writing. The effect was most remarkable. About one half the candidates presented to the Inspector as fit subjects for High School tuition were found, to a lamentable

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<sup>48</sup>. Referred to in a letter from Alex Marling, Secretary of the Council for Public Instruction, to Provincial Secretary, 9th October, 1872. (In Sessional Paper No. 42, 1873).

extent, incapable of spelling correctly in writing - whatever they may have been able to do orally - words certainly not among the most difficult in the language, more particularly those very terms of grammar which were almost every day in their mouths.<sup>49</sup>

The move from an oral remembering test, to a writing, thinking test was not an easy one. Possibly there was a factor involving the change from oral memory to visual memory, and another aspect involving the ability to manipulate the skill of handwriting as a mode of expression rather than as pure penmanship. The change from oral to written examinations was certainly seen as a change not just in medium but also in expected response: this occasioned feelings of anger in teachers and parents in that they saw the new method of examination as unjust:

... they are as yet utterly unaccustomed to written questions. No questions of the description "catch questions", one may designate them, have prevailed in the system of examinations in our common or public schools hitherto.<sup>50</sup>

It is certainly difficult to imagine the air of festivity which seems to have surrounded the old oral examination of the public school, where the star pupils showed off their learning for an admiring crowd, transferring itself in any way to an examination in the written mode. It seems probable, among other things, that the stars would change.

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49. Report, 1871, Appendix A, p.9.

50. Letter from Alex Marling to Provincial Secretary, 9th October, 1872.

In the age of efficiency, however, an attempt to oppose the inspectors on the grounds that they were uncovering weaknesses could not hope to succeed; nor indeed could the oral principle hope to survive in an age of increasing uniformity. It would seem that in Ontario education at least, centralization was the result of a process rather than a cause of it; the wish for fairness and recognition of merit was equated with uniformity of standards and efficiency of delivery of services; and the written examination was a much better vehicle for the ensuring of both efficiency and uniformity than the oral. The price that had to be paid was a loss of exuberance and an increasing pressure on individuals.

The only argument in opposition to the new examination system that undermined the confidence of the reconstructionists to any degree was that the new system would considerably reduce the number of students eligible for high school entry. The examination was seen as "a most severe ordeal to expect the lads of our young country to pass through successfully"<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, the ordeal was such

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51. Letter from H.W. Peterson, chairman of Guelph High School Board, to Provincial Secretary, 12th September, 1872.

as to "compel pupils into the higher classes of the public schools by frightening them from the portals of our high schools".<sup>52</sup> This fear proved in practice to be unfounded; the motivation to go to the high schools was sufficient to conquer these new barriers.

An editorial in the Daily Globe soon after the regulations had been suspended voiced the general feeling that "Everyone who wishes it should be able to give his boys and girls a liberal education in the true and proper sense of that term".<sup>53</sup> Yet the editorial showed its awareness of the problems of free access: that unprepared students were being crammed, in preparation for the inspector's visit, to the detriment of the true work of the school.<sup>54</sup>

The support for a diagnostic examination before entry to high school was widespread, and such an examination was legally required. Even the people who objected to the written examination did so on the grounds that it was written, not that it was an examination; and even then they asked merely to postpone the implementation of the

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52. Letter from A.N. Lafferty, Principal of Guelph High School to Provincial Secretary, 14th September, 1872.

53. Daily Globe, Editorial, October 1st, 1872.

54. ibid.

change to written examinations for a relatively short time in order to allow students to become accustomed to this new yardstick, which was so different from what they had previously experienced. Confidence in the examiners was also quite readily to be found; the same editorial in the Daily Globe chose to endorse the professional status and trustworthiness of the inspectors, saying,

... they can be safely trusted with all the discretionary powers ... and if they are not so characterized, the sooner they are removed from office the better.<sup>55</sup>

However, even where the examinations themselves were acceptable in time, and where the inspector was trusted, the centralized nature of the proposed operation was still opposed by local groups, and their main thrust of argument in support of local control was that the high schools would become depleted if such a "cast iron plan"<sup>56</sup> of examination for entry was brought in.

On the cancellation of the regulations with regard to the entrance examinations on September 28th 1872, reactions on all sides were panic-stricken. The examinations had been scheduled for October 10th, 1872, so there was little or no time to make alternative arrangements. The practical

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55. ibid.

56. Letter from H.W. Peterson, op. cit.

situation was well put by the public school inspector at Kingston; he had received orders from the Council for Public Instruction to hold a central, written examination under strict rules, and then an order from the Executive Council of the province that they were not to be so held. His letter to Ryerson ended with the question that must have been in the minds of all headmasters and inspectors - "What are we to do?"<sup>57</sup> The examinations were slated to begin on October 10th. The question papers had been printed, instructions sent out, and all was in readiness.

An insight into the preparation of these examination papers is provided by the existence of a correspondence between Ryerson and high school inspector McLellan. On July 27th 1872, McLellan wrote to Ryerson making recommendations as to the high school entrance regulations. In this letter, McLellan required that the candidate for entrance to the high school should know 75% of the elementary school work of the first four grades - that 75% should be the pass mark on the examination.<sup>58</sup> It was this requirement that met with almost unanimous opposition, even from its

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<sup>57</sup> Kingston Public School Inspector to Ryerson, 4th October, 1872.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from Inspector McLellan to Ryerson, 27th July, 1872.

original perpetrator. McLellan wrote again on 17th September, complaining that the pass-mark of 75% was too high and that it should be set at 50%.<sup>59</sup> Ryerson was annoyed at this, and wrote back on 28th September, "I think you must have forgotten much of what you wrote, as well as what you were doing, in the month of July".<sup>60</sup> The Council had already set up its curriculum for the public schools, and the new examination was to be based on this. The examination would show whether the child had successfully carried out the programme of studies for the first four grades, in all the required subjects, and it was to be a written examination as far as possible, except for reading.

This examination would ensure that the law requiring that the Council's curriculum be taught in all schools was being carried out; and further it would enforce that curriculum on all, whether they attended the public schools or not, if they wished to enter High school. Previously, there had not been one standard prerequisite for attendance at a high school. If the local school were willing, it could accept privately educated children. It is also quite possible that a number of local schools

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59. Letter from McLellan to Ryerson, 17th September, 1872.

60. Letter from Ryerson to McLellan, 28th September, 1872.

had not in fact adopted the Toronto curriculum, but had simply paid lip service to it, while continuing to teach in their own fashion. The barrier of the examination would certainly have prevented that type of passive resistance. Schools in remote areas that had still not changed from the old log cabin, wall desks, dearth of equipment, low-paid, poorly qualified teacher pattern could not possibly do much towards the goal of implementation of the whole curriculum in such a short time. There are no examples of inspectors' reporting that the schools were refusing outright to teach the approved curriculum, but they would be unlikely to do so, since it would have been an illegal act.

The pass mark, at least, was reduced to 50%. Then came the Executive Council's action. Without warning Ryerson in advance, they suspended the regulations. Their letter made it clear that the "whole duty of examining and admission"<sup>61</sup> rested with the local examining board and that the results of such examinations "are conclusive, and cannot be legally subject to the supervision of the high school inspector".<sup>62</sup> This deliberate attempt to curtail the power of the inspectorate may have been an

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61. Letter of the Executive Council, Province of Ontario, 26th September, 1872.

62. ibid.

example of the new government's political philosophy in action: it was described by the Daily Globe as being that governments "are intended to be the servants of the people, not their masters".<sup>63</sup>

Letters began to pour in to Ryerson's office from worried headmasters and inspectors. Now that the pass mark had been reduced to 50%, they had little or no complaint about the examination itself. Most of the local people who wrote wanted to use the department's questions and would have carried out the examination according to the regulations even after the suspension. However, many others did not write in, and they were presumably willing to make local decisions. A few even wrote to the Provincial Secretary's office for clarification; they were assured that the Council for Public Instruction still had the powers of regulation of educational matters in the province, and that the Executive Council had removed only that regulation which constituted the inspector as examiner.<sup>64</sup>

This was not what the letter to school boards had said; while it had put emphasis on that aspect of the matter, it had suspended all the regulations regarding the high

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63. Daily Globe, Editorial, 31st August, 1872.

64. Letters - Ontario Sessional Papers, No. 42, 1873.

school entrance examinations. The Council for Public Instruction could have been expected, so soon before the examinations had been scheduled to start, to make the papers available for local use, to be locally marked by the examining boards in all the localities. However, the Council immediately withdrew all regulation of the examination by the inspectors; and on October 3rd, only a week before the examinations were due to take place, they announced that the examination questions would not be issued.

Ryerson's letter of October 8th to the Executive Council emphasized "the absence of all regulations on the subject" and the "question, whether any pupils can be lawfully admitted to the high schools".<sup>65</sup> He added

The authorities of High Schools will admit them at their pleasure without any regulation or restriction, the Head Master having the inducement of twenty-seven dollars from public sources for each pupil, or \$270 for every ten pupils ... that may be brought into his high school.<sup>66</sup>

Thus the Council for Public Instruction was accepting the legal right of the Executive Council to suspend its regulations: but in doing so it refused to promulgate new and different regulations which carried out the government's wishes. Instead, it simply left the field; gave no

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65. Letter from Ryerson to Executive Council, 8th October, 1872.

66. ibid.

guidance to the schools in this matter, or to local examining boards, instead removing itself and its inspectors from any involvement with the examinations at all. Meanwhile the day of the examination came and went, and Ryerson mused publicly over whether anyone could be legally admitted to high schools at all.

The Clerk of the Council for Public Instruction, Alex Marling, wrote a letter to the Provincial Secretary on October 9th which claimed that with the cancellation of the regulations, the situation was now the same as it had been in 1864, when G.P. Young had reported that grammar schools were such in name but not in reality, many pupils in them being unprepared for high school work; since then the 1865 Act had limited public funds to those schools operating under the Council for Public Instruction and its inspectors. This had merely been confirmed by the 1871 Act, he claimed.<sup>67</sup>

As far as the admission of pupils to the schools was concerned, the letter claimed that this was "regarded as preliminary and provisional until the visit of the inspector who shall finally examine and admit all pupils to the grammar schools".<sup>68</sup>

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67. Letter from Alex Marling to Provincial Secretary, 9th October, 1872.

68. ibid.

Referring again to the revered Professor Young's work, Marling claimed that Young had rejected many that had been admitted to the schools because they were ignorant of the rudiments of English grammar. The Council for Public Instruction also contended, through this letter, that students unable to do high school work would once again be admitted if local control in this matter were re-instated.<sup>69</sup>

The more subtle argument put forward in this letter was its distinction between examining for admission and admitting. It claimed that if the board of examiners did not just examine, but also admitted children to the schools, then this must be done according to the regulations in order to be lawful; but if the regulations were suspended, could they admit anyone at all?<sup>70</sup> Pointing out that only the inspectors examined, and admitted from 1865 to 1871, the letter claimed that the new Act intended only to relieve them of the burden of personal examination of pupils.<sup>71</sup>

There was no mention of any other possible effect of the proposed changes except for the increased amount of uniformity they would engender; the justification for

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69. ibid.

70. ibid.

71. ibid.

this uniformity was that in order for the available funds to be fairly shared, there must be a uniform measure of performance throughout the province: a standard. This uniform standard "cannot be except there be one authority for admission".<sup>72</sup> The uniform series of questions for the use of all examiners merely secured a more perfect uniformity.

The Council attacked the heart of the opposition's case by pointing out that the system whereby the central authority set the standards and the local boards applied them had been tried and found wanting; for despite the uniform standard that had been set, there was no uniformity in the examination and admission of pupils any more than there had formerly been for teachers by local boards.<sup>73</sup>

The last section of the letter pointed out the relationship between the legislature and the Council for Public Instruction and denounced the hurried action of the Provincial Council, its lack of consultation and enquiry, self-consciously protesting that after twenty-five years of working in the realm of universal public education for no motive or reward beyond the wish to advance education in Ontario, the Council for Public Instruction's only

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72. ibid.

73. ibid.

desire was that its proceedings be subject to full Parliamentary enquiry before being condemned.<sup>74</sup>

The whole point of view embodied in this letter was at the same time true of the officials of the Department of Public Instruction, and most particularly of Ryerson, and it was also a masterly answer to the attempt on the part of the government to restrict the use of regulation on the part of the Council for Public Instruction as a leading edge towards legislation rather than as an official process of implementation of powers and duties carefully spelled out in previous legislation. Ryerson himself had started out by writing future projections in 1846; and his office had drawn up the school bills since then, without incident until the 1869 bill, which was withdrawn under opposition pressure. That opposition was now the government. When the expertise of the department was withdrawn in 1872 over the examination question, the new government, which had been doing little more than flexing its muscles, was most unready to assume the task which the writing of careful School Acts would entail.

Understanding of the complexities of school matters was now firmly in the hands of the experts at

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74. ibid.

the Department, and if they refused to co-operate (which was what happened over the examinations), there was little the government could do, since the people supported educational progress in general. Politically, Ryerson had as much understanding of the feelings of the people as any politician, being constantly in close touch with local officials, and holding meetings around the province such as the county town meetings of February and March 1869.

The opposition under Edward Blake might have won the election, but Ryerson determined that they should not win the school system. He wrote to Blake in January 1872 protesting that education must remain a non-partisan matter;<sup>75</sup> but the reply insisted that education acts were the business of the House and could not be discussed with officials.<sup>76</sup> This was diametrically opposed to the view of the Department that all school bills should be government bills and not private ones; this would imply previous consultation and a virtually guaranteed passage through the House.

This correspondence between the old sick man who had been trying to retire since 1868 (if the conditions

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75. Letter from Ryerson to Blake, 17th January, 1872.

76. Letter from Blake to Ryerson, 18th January, 1872.

were right) and the much younger politician at the height of his powers throw light on both politics and bureaucracy, and the relationship between them. Indeed the correspondence includes an understanding of the need for a Minister of Education because the government must have intimate knowledge of a system, the "network of whose operations so pervades every municipality of the land, and is so interwoven with our municipal and judicial systems of government".<sup>77</sup> At the same time appointments to the Department, including the Minister, should be made on the "simple and sole ground of qualification for the office".<sup>78</sup>

Blake replied curtly or not at all to most of Ryerson's letters, and to any suggestion of prior discussion or consultation in order that education not be drawn "into the arena of party politics"<sup>79</sup> he replied that he saw no need to consult his political opponents before acting in any matter; he also faulted Ryerson on his involvement in the election campaign, quoting back some of the speeches in which Ryerson had attacked him.<sup>80</sup>

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77. Letter of resignation, 7th December 1868, mentioned in a letter of Ryerson to Blake, February 10th, 1872.

78. Letter from Ryerson to Provincial Secretary, January 30th, 1869.

79. ibid.

80. Letter from Blake to Ryerson, February 12th 1872.

While it was true that Ryerson was acting as a political campaigner at that time, he was capable of separation of his various selves so that privately he could praise Blake in an attempt to get his co-operation, calling him "heart of a true Canadian" and "intellect of an educated statesman"<sup>81</sup> while running down his character and abilities on the hustings. This was true hypocrisy - Ryerson the man was actively engaged in both politics and bureaucracy, and he seemed to be able to change from the complete official in one role to the accomplished politician (nineteenth century style) in another. Blake rejected him as a politician while accepting him as an expert. This can be seen in Ryerson's own list of reasons for approving of Blake's actions. These include his lack of hostility towards the Education Department, the lack of difficulties over the school estimates.<sup>82</sup> Such events added to Ryerson's conclusion: "the conviction that the school system would not suffer from the change of government" and that "I would be assisted rather than obstructed in my work".<sup>83</sup>

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81. Letter from Ryerson to Blake, 10th February, 1872.

82. Letter from Ryerson to Blake, 13th February 1872.

83. ibid.

Where Ryerson's work was more than that of an official, straying further than his actual mandate, is of interest in this connection. What he himself recognised as discretionary areas of his work could be attacked by a hostile administration; thus when the various councils asked him for advice and information on all sorts of doubtful matters, he had "not just replied with dry technicalities of the law, but tried to reconcile differences and settle difficulties"<sup>84</sup>. This would also seem to have characterized his relationship with the politicians until his clash with Blake at the end of his career.

In terms of the examination of children and their classification the political disagreements made very little difference. Whether the examiner was to be a Provincial inspector or a County inspector, or the chairman of the school board, there was to be an examiner; and nobody was to enter the high school without his certificate. This was to make a difference to children and to their school experience.

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<sup>84</sup>. Sessional Paper No. 53, 1871-2, "Duties of the Department", p. 52.

## CHAPTER 4.

### EXAMINATION PRESSURES.

The new, uniform, efficient and controlled system of schooling, watched over by inspectors who classified, tested and judged the products of the operation, inevitably brought pressures with it; and these pressures were particularly acute at examination time. Three aspects of examination pressure which should also be considered involve the notion of payment by results, the problem of children who failed, and the attempt to legislate a single programme of studies.

#### 1.

##### Payment by Results: Financial Pressure.

Public financing of the schools, allied with compulsory schooling, demanded a form of accountability; society expected a return on its investment. The problems of the per capita payments have already been described; they may be summed up as a tendency to fill a school with pupils who were not, or were barely, able to do the level of work that the school was supposed to exist to do. Rev. George Paxton Young, M.A., Inspector of

Grammar Schools, had first proposed this payment in 1867:

the efficiency of a system of schools cannot be permanently maintained without regular and searching inspection; inspection whose results are made public and which is attended with financial consequences.<sup>1</sup>

The 1871 Act brought in payment by results, in that the grant was now to be made on attendance, number of days open, and proficiency.<sup>2</sup> The latter quality involved a "graduated system of marking similar to that which has been adopted in granting teachers' certificates".<sup>3</sup>

However, since it was impossible to examine all of the classes in each subject, because of the time it would take, inspectors MacKenzie and McLellan made the assumption that "proficiency of pupils" could be assessed by the "ability, fidelity and sound judgement" of the master in "instructing and governing the pupils".<sup>4</sup> That is, they found that good teaching was equivalent to good learning - that where discipline was poor, attainment was lower. This notion was in keeping with the general feeling of the time, that perseverance and diligence were the main factors in successful learning.

The several plans for payment by results all involved dividing the children into classes, and paying

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1. Report, 1867, Section F, No.6.

2. Report, 1871, Part 1, Section 10, p.93.

3. ibid., Appendix A, p.11.

4. ibid.

more money in grants for those pupils in higher divisions than for those in lower ones. This added to the pressure from parents already described, another force for the rapid promotion of children from one grade to another; pecuniary advantage accrued to the school with senior pupils. Trustees, then, had their own financial reasons for encouraging promotions, and for encouraging pupils to stay on at school for as many classes as possible. Standing guard over all promotions was the headmaster, and over all examinations, the inspector.

The principle that the more advanced work in a school was worth more money was demonstrated by one scheme, by which, in 1871, inspectors MacKenzie and McLellan divided the high schools into four classes on the basis of their efficiency; four schools were considered first class: Galt, Hamilton and Ottawa; 19 were placed in the second rank, including Barrie, Brampton, Toronto, St. Catharine's and Port Hope; 35 in the third, including Belleville, Berlin, Prescott, and Smith's Falls; and 45 in the fourth class including Pakenham, Almonte and Pembroke.<sup>5</sup> They reported that the schools placed in

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5. Report, 1871, Appendix A, p.14.

the class 4 category were not really doing high school work at all.

Classifying schools in this way was bound to bring criticism on the inspectors, since their findings were based on their own judgement:

as the pecuniary interests of the schools are directly involved in their status, it will not take us by surprise if our judgements are sharply criticized ... we place this list before the public with a full conviction that substantial justice has been done to all.<sup>6</sup>

The previous grant of \$9 per capita was now to change - upwards to \$10.50 for a class 1 school, \$9.50 for a class 2, and downwards to \$7.50 and \$5 for classes 3 and 4 respectively, with a minimum guaranteed \$400 grant.<sup>7</sup>

These new payments were based on the inspectors' judgements, and there would certainly be grounds for complaint. However, the inspectors felt that the good schools that had genuine pupils and were working in a proper way, "schools doing the high school work in a creditable way so as to confer a real benefit on the country"<sup>8</sup> had previously received the same grants as poor schools; and while it was true that the inspectors

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6. ibid.

7. ibid.

8. ibid., p.17.

had power to judge, and that "they are but human, and may err", this was preferable to the per capita system, which did more evil to the deserving men and the best schools than inspectors trying to be honest and impartial could ever do.<sup>9</sup>

The fundamental justification for all this activity was not just a wish to improve schools, but also a strong feeling that a good school should be rewarded financially. Like the arguments and justifications for prizes within the schools, there was a moral feeling which expressed itself in higher grants for higher grades and for successful schools. Hard work and effort were to be rewarded.

Thus in 1873, McLellan, Buchan and Marling, the high school inspectors, setting up a "payment by results" system for the high schools, argued that the money paid to high schools depended not on the work done in the school but on the number of people who passed the high school entrance examination; thus the temptation existed for local boards to put pupils into the high schools but not to provide good equipment, accommodation, or enough teachers.<sup>10</sup> Thus even though a payment by results scheme

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9. ibid.

10. Report, 1873, Appendix A, p.9.

would give the inspectors an unpleasant task to add to their duties, yet it would be a powerful inducement to trustees to improve matters.<sup>11</sup>

Their analysis of the motivations of trustees would appear to have been correct, in that they reported in 1875 that even though payment by results was not yet fully operational, many boards had anticipated it by improving their staffs, buildings, and equipment.<sup>12</sup>

Their proposed method of testing results was to be another examination, called the "intermediate examination" to be held about half way through high school.<sup>13</sup> A comparison of the results of the high school entrance examination and the results of the new intermediate examination would provide a measure of the pupils' work in the early years of high school. The scheme for payment of grants to high schools was approved by the Council for Public Instruction on May 4th 1875, and consisted of four parts: a fixed allowance for all schools; a grant based on average attendance; payment for efficiency, as judged by an inspection of the school; and payment on

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11. ibid.

12. Report, 1875, Appendix A.

13. ibid., Appendix B, p.89.

the basis of the results of a uniform written examination in second-form work. Emphasis was placed on the continuing need for personal inspection of the schools, to avoid the evils of cramming, or over-concentration on examination pupils at the expense of others, which would negate the purpose of the scheme, which was to give rewards for good school work.<sup>14</sup> The reward to the school was that the pupils would be divided into upper and lower school scholars, with a larger grant for those in the upper school. They hoped in this way to induce the schools to do the proper work of the high school and not just prepare pupils for entrance.

The results of their scheme, as reported in 1876, were that while two schools, Stirling and Fonthill, got no grant because they had failed to meet the requirements, on the whole, attendance improved, answers in examinations were improving, and smaller schools began sending in honours candidates.<sup>15</sup> The average work done was better in the low and middle classes. They felt that the financial arrangements helped the feeble school, and

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14. ibid.

15. Report, 1876, Appendix A, p.84.

that the large schools were not getting the lion's share; indeed, efficient "middle" schools, with about three teachers, were emerging. More upper school pupils were being encouraged by their success to stay on and study the higher branches while helping their school financially.<sup>16</sup>

However, the intermediate examination did not bring enough financial return to a small school to justify the expense of holding the examination, unless more than two or three passed. The inspectors suggested that small schools should consolidate for examination purposes to conserve costs.<sup>17</sup> The financial consequences of the scheme, especially to a small school, were not necessarily enough reward for their efforts. Also, the effort involved on the part of individual pupils was not particularly attractive or meaningful to children or parents, since it merely promoted the child within the school, and brought a larger grant to the school. After going to the expense and trouble of an examination, some practical use for them by successful candidates was needed. However, this was not the original function of the examination; its purpose had been to evaluate

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16. ibid.

17. ibid., p.85.

the school through quality testing of its product.

In 1877, the intermediate examination was made part of a teaching qualification, being made equivalent to second class non professional standing. The Normal School now offered professional training only.<sup>18</sup> It was hoped that other groups, such as the Law Society and other professional bodies, would recognise the new certificate in a similar way.

Thus the attraction to continue onward and upward in the educational system was reinforced by feelings of prestige, through prizes and merit awards within the school itself, by financial rewards to the local boards and high schools for school achievement, and by giving the teachers themselves a similar structure through which they could gain status within their profession. The examination, preferably written and uniform, was the tool for this reinforcement. The inspectors were now firmly established as decision-makers in the system.

## 2.

## Examination Pressures on Children.

The hoped-for result of all this enterprise and of the "well-graduated" system that was ensured by these

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18. Report, 1877, Appendix A, p.4.

means was to be that children would meet in the schools "on a footing of perfect equality". State education was not to be for paupers, but for the whole population. Self respect and education was to be united.<sup>19</sup> For the pupils, the attributes of good conduct and diligence would ensure them of the reward of "a certificate of promotion to a higher division of the school".<sup>20</sup> Self respect, reward and promotion were clearly considered to be linked.

While the system did become the method of schooling for the whole population, by the use of compulsory measures, if necessary, and by choice in a great majority of cases, there were those pupils, as there had previously been teachers, who failed to make the grade. Since self-respect was linked firmly with reward and promotion, the reverse situation needed careful handling: for where promotion is seen as a reward for the pupil's hard work, non-promotion must redound to the pupil's discredit, or the blame be placed on someone else. A note from the Chief Superintendent to the inspectors in 1870 described the teachers inviting the trustees to witness the examination and re-classification of pupils, some of whom were

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19. Report, 1869, Appendix D, Section 42, No. 119.

20. ibid., Section 43, No. 124.

put back from the fifth to the third book because they were unprepared.<sup>21</sup> This made the justice of the demotions or non-promotions public. However, for the child who had failed, since diligence and good conduct were always stressed as the qualities of a successful pupil, it was likely that the ones who failed would be seen as lazy, indolent and badly behaved, even by themselves: not just failures in a certain examination, but failures in character and moral fibre.

This group of pupils was not insignificant. Just as many aspiring teachers had failed to achieve certification, so now many children were failing their examinations. An example of this is provided by the examinations set by the inspector for Waterloo County, Thomas Pearce, who by 1874 had classified all the children into six classes, aided by the use of a county competitive examination which he set in 1873, and repeated in 1874, through which all pupils who wished to enter the fourth, fifth or sixth classes were examined.<sup>22</sup> Of the 592 candidates tested, only 379 entered the grade they had aimed for. 94 were placed in a lower class, and 119 were told to "go and

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21. Report, 1870, Appendix C, Paragraph 15, p.20.

22. Report, 1874, Appendix B, p.68.

prepare themselves better in third class work".<sup>23</sup> Thus somewhat over one in three of those who tried the examination failed in their goal (37.3%) and one in five failed entirely (20.1%).

The purpose of labelling children as successes or failures in each year's study - and, in some schools, each week or month - was to be sure that they were properly prepared on entering the next class, to benefit from the programme of studies therein. However, each class was in turn a preparation for the class above; and the work of each class could easily be subsumed to the necessity of preparing for the examination for entry to the next grade. In a similar way, the whole work of the elementary school might be subordinated to preparing children for the high school entrance examination, that of the junior high classes to preparation for the intermediate examination, and of the senior high classes to preparation for the university matriculation examinations. Ryerson's ladder led from the earliest grades to the university, and the whole system and the philosophy behind it assumed an end-point, a goal, towards which to strive. Schooling was not valued in terms of the here and now of childhood, but in terms of what it

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23. ibid.

would lead to if the race was successfully run.

In this, the theorists and their society were in agreement. Ryerson remarked in 1869 that there was no need to spur boys to study law, medicine, and so on, but that instead the subjects and teaching of the schools should be adapted to "develop the resources and skilful industry of the country", once the "fundamental principles and general machinery" of the school system were settled.<sup>24</sup>

However, the new programme of studies, the series of examinations for promotion, the high school entrance examination, the intermediate examination, and finally the university matriculation examination, all led to rewards in the form of honours, prize books, promotions, which were all a step up on the ladder leading to the university or the learned professions. Success in school, as in life, meant that a pupil had climbed the ladder to the top - and as quickly as possible. Even in 1869, Edward Scarlett, a superintendent, noted that many young people of both sexes were attending the grammar school to qualify as teachers, and being hot-housed through as quickly as possible to examination level. He noted that the few,

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24. Report, 1869, Part 1, Section 20.

members of the board who fought "this monster evil" have "scorching epithets" hurled at them - "self-willed, arbitrary, selfish, tyrannical" by "blind calumniators against the soldiers of true educational reform".<sup>25</sup>

John J. Tilley noted the same thing in reporting that teachers' reputations were made on the number of people with teachers' qualifications they turned out, so they sent over-young candidates to the examination, who were going into teaching and out again quickly through dislike of the duties or incompetency.<sup>26</sup>

Classification and examinations, with their demand that promotion to the next class be deliberate and paced, was supposed to change this unfortunate situation. In 1873 the high school inspectors noted that the preparatory and union schools wanted an October promotion to clear out the lower classes; however the inspectors felt that this disrupted the school too much, since the children were first crammed, and then promoted, which disturbed their new class. It also meant that inspectors had to stop their visits during October to prepare and mark papers. They therefore concluded that two examinations for high school entrance each year

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25. Report, 1869, Appendix D, No. 40.

26. ibid., Section 16, No. 41.

was enough. They added:

all hurried preparation, all stimulation of vanity and emulation, is to be discouraged and the examination, like the school, is to regard the "substantial and enduring".<sup>27</sup>

This notion, that the work of the school or the class, while culminating in an examination, was not merely to prepare for that examination, was as difficult to explain as that university or the professions were not the only end-point of the system.

The twin problems of recognition and status within the schools going to those who were on their way to such an end, and of the failure to provide for those for whom that goal was not even a remote possibility, can be seen in the reports of the time. In Hamilton, A. Macallum reported in 1871 that the name of the best scholar in the Central School was recorded and "fixed in a conspicuous place", and in the same report he mentioned the perceived need for an "industrial school".<sup>28</sup> Praise was due the winners, but the other end of the scale was already seen to be a problem. Professor N. Dupuis, whose thinking had perhaps been influenced by reports of the great debate in England in 1860 between Huxley and

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27. Report, 1873, Appendix A, p.4.

28. Report, 1871, Appendix B, p.110.

Wilberforce over the theories of natural selection propounded by Darwin, wrote in 1874 that compulsory education would bring with it the need for a "reformatory or industrial school" so that graded children would not be mixed with the "unfit" as to moral character or educational requirements.<sup>29</sup> His call for an alternative school was certainly not a call for an alternative goal for education as a whole, but rather for a training school in which children could be disciplined and controlled, with the hope that some of them might become fit to join the ordinary school, or take their places in the world of work and respectability; in other words, a special place for those who had failed to compete in the common life and effort of the school system proper.

From 1869 on, there were three types of high school in the province, but even so there was no real distinction in terms of the purpose and goal of the school, and all examinations were in common. The three types of school were the collegiate institute, which was to be a "superior classical school" with at least sixty boys studying classics, the high school offering English and classics to both sexes together or separately,

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29. Report, 1874, Appendix B, p. 87.

and the English high school for both sexes.<sup>30</sup> The only difference between these schools was whether they offered classics, and how they dealt with girls. All of them subscribed to the general Ryersonian notion that the educational system was a ladder leading onward and upward, with merit being rewarded by promotion, toward the university.

Yet the end-goal of the public school system could not be the university for the majority of the pupils; and the way that it was set up assumed that schooling was an ends-means or goal oriented, operation. The 1874 Report recorded that of those who left high schools, 99 went to university, 544 "mercantile", 319 "agriculture", 321 "learned professions" and 631 "other".<sup>31</sup> Less than 5% of the pupils were leaving to attend university; 95% were pursuing other activities. One group of children who were not expected to attend university or join the learned professions were the girls. It must be assumed that all female high school pupils in the statistics quoted above were contained in the 631 "other", unless they were not included at all. Certainly the categories chosen for statistical purposes were male oriented.

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30. Report, 1868, "Report on County Grammar Schools".

31. Report, 1874, Part 1, Section 8, Table H, p.11.

Yet the system was now based on advancement by merit, and where the girls showed that merit, some accommodation had to be made. That some girls were showing their ability is shown by the request in the high school inspectors report for 1874 that the University Matriculation examinations be opened to females, because they were studying with success and "would like the stamp of the university on their acquirements".<sup>32</sup>

This ambition of the female students serves to underline the fact that success in the high school led to the university. The pressure for girls' education was strong, and by 1876, 10 collegiates for girls had been established in the province, offering upbringing in the religion to which the girls belonged, supervised study, and "accomplishments".<sup>33</sup> By then, the university was also admitting females to its examinations: in May of that year two females were awarded honours, and the university had decided to hold local examinations for women.<sup>34</sup>

Admittance to the school and university examinations was the thrust of the effort on the part of the female students. However, the goal of this pressure for equal

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32. ibid., Appendix A, p.20.

33. Report, 1876, Appendix A, p.87.

34. ibid.

footing with boys was unclear, since girls were not expected to devote themselves to a professional career. Indeed, it may be hypothesized that the pressure came from success at school; having demonstrated their ability in academic pursuits, there was no longer any logical argument against the advancement of girls as far as they could go up the single educational ladder.

The one career which demanded some academic training and which was open to young or unmarried women was teaching, especially after the intermediate examination became a partial qualification. Elementary schools were increasingly staffed by women throughout this period, and Normal School training was available to either sex.

Female teachers were just as efficient as men, although some lingering doubts existed as to their ability to handle the older boys; and they were attractive to trustees because they were cheap. There was an old rural pattern of hiring a female teacher for the summer, for the small children who came when the weather was good, and a male for the winter, when the work on the land was over for the year, and the bigger boys came in.

While the principals and inspectors were all men, and these were building a new professional body among supervisors of education, at the classroom level, the

teacher was increasingly a woman. Teaching provided the girls with an end-point, a goal for their studies; success in the examinations meant not just status within the school, but something to use, of practical worth once school was over.

This outcome was not a considered use of examinations; they were not set up with this in mind; the programme of studies was not drawn up for this purpose. Like the entrance examination, and earlier the teachers' examinations, it was intended to enforce a programme and a standard of performance in the school which would be appropriate to the grade level involved. Moreover, although it was an examination only of the set subject matter for a certain level in the school system, the inspectors tried to prevent pupils from passing who were clever or able, unless they demonstrated qualities of perseverance and diligence that were not needed by the able merely to pass the examinations.

The classification and grading of pupils, achieved through these examinations, gradually became more meaningful to the society in general so that a certain grade level was presumed to mean a certain level of competency. However, these societal uses were accretions after the fact; like the above example of teacher

qualification they may be seen as the gradual evolution of various end-points on the ladder of formal education, so that various levels of schooling were used as entry points to further training of various kinds, or directly into work.

At base, however, the system was not so designed; there was no actual provision in the schools for more than one type of merit: there was one curriculum, one set of examinations, and therefore only one type of success. As with the girls, so with rural pupils or urban working class pupils or French or native pupils - they might rise on the educational ladder, but it would be as a result of their ability in a curriculum which was not designed for them or their likely future lives.

## 3.

Contemporary Comments: Programme Pressure.

Ryerson's aim was expressed under the heading "Painful Results of our Present Limited Course of Instruction" in 1871.<sup>35</sup> He noted that children were leaving school and were immediately in contact with the thresher, reaper, fanning mill, railway locomotive and so on, and

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35. Report, 1871, Part 1, Section 20, p.35.

had not even an idea of the "principles" of these modern machines at their command. The aim of the school system, he claimed, should be "to enable our lads to take their places in the world's arena, fully equipped for the battle of life". He noted particularly the need to compete with the United States, and that the skilled workers in the industrial centres of the province "from the youngest employees up to the foreman of the works" were from England, Ireland, Scotland, the U.S.A. and other countries.<sup>36</sup>

This he hoped to remedy by a better education system. The aims of the high school were, first, to educate those who would pursue commercial, manufacturing and agricultural pursuits and public office; and secondly, to provide education in classical and foreign languages and mathematics for those who would enter the professions and university.<sup>37</sup>

While his diagnosis recognised the needs of the province, the actual programme of studies and sets of examinations did not. Pragmatism, in dealing with the situation already existing in the province, and public notions about what schools existed to do, combined with idealism, which visualized a chance for high academic honours for any pupil, no matter what his background,

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36. ibid.

37. ibid., Section 9, p.92, paragraph 6.

mitigated against the school system being able to accommodate more than one goal or end-point, and the compulsory legislation meant that all children were bound to follow it.

The drive to uniformity and efficiency, as exemplified by the common examinations, was also encapsulated in the programme of studies for the high schools. Even the high school inspectors themselves rebelled against its rigidity; the high school course was law, and "no departure from the prescribed programme is allowable".<sup>38</sup> This rigid inelasticity of the programme they found to be unsuited to the varied states of society in the province. The attitude to the course prescribed, they found, varied between "joyously defiant, reluctantly submissive, or dexterously evasive". The prescription meant that the enthusiasm of the teacher was lost; and they called for a general organization only which would leave freedom for the teacher and allow variety in practice.<sup>39</sup>

In this same report, however, the same inspectors praised the effects of the high school entrance examinations, because they improved uniformity. However, their description of what was actually happening was that the examinations were having what they called a "reflex influence" on

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38. Report, 1873, Appendix A, p.5.

39. ibid.

the public schools; the County inspectors had showed the teachers the questions issued by the department, and had used them in examining the schools, which action increased "the organic unity of the system".<sup>40</sup>

This "organic" unity, then, was different from the sterile uniformity provided by a set course of study; teachers who saw the type of question set in an examination were capable of using them, while those who were given a prescription for what was to be taught were "cramped", "repressed" and "frozen".<sup>41</sup> A further clue to the seeming paradox of disapproving the uniformity of a single prescribed programme, while approving of the unity provided by an examination is shown by their comments on the entrance examinations.

These tests, they reported, extricated the master of the high school from an invidious position; he was not the agent for preventing the entrance of a pupil to his school, but the examination of the inspector was. However, these examinations were only an approximation of uniformity, they found; for as a test of merit, a written examination, though the best tool available in the circumstances, was "illusory".<sup>42</sup> The judgements of different examiners, reviewing the same question, differed widely. The inspectors,

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40. ibid. p.4.

41. ibid. p.5.

42. ibid. p.4.

revising, never rejected a candidate without clear evidence of non-qualification, and did not always succeed in keeping the unfit out of the high schools.<sup>43</sup>

It would seem that the feeling that the schools were unified was encouraged by each adapting its own work nearer to the expected examination questions. However, the different examiners would, presumably, accept rather different responses from different types of candidates.

When uniformity and impartiality were seen as aspects of a fair examination they yielded good results, despite the difference in examiners' judgements. However as a test to see if the schools were teaching a set curriculum they became too rigid.

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43. ibid.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

The provincial written examination became accepted as an educational tool in the province of Ontario quite quickly. It was part and parcel of the general educational reform of the 1860s and 1870s. A summary of its genesis is needed before conclusions about it can be drawn.

1.

### Summary.

The study of the background of the educational reforms in Ontario showed that there were three groups of people with decision-making power in Ontario education in the middle of the nineteenth century.

One group, the local trustees, appointed teachers, provided and equipped the school buildings, and were responsible to the local taxpayers. During the period under study these trustees provided new buildings, better equipment, and better trained teachers, and generated the tax money to pay for them; yet in the official record they were cast in a bad light, because some of their number were ignorant, poor, or penny-

pinching.

A second group, the legislature, endorsed the philosophy of state responsibility for social reform, and therefore assumed that a provincially organized public school system would best serve all segments of society.

The third group were the inspectorate, whose control over the new school system was enhanced by their use of the new tool, provincial written examinations. The experience of ensuring that all teachers held certificates of some kind led these men to realise that certification and examination were more complex than they appeared, particularly in establishing firmly the principle of merit as against that of patronage.

When examinations were considered for high school entrance, the situation of the child in Ontario society at the time was important. Children were of economic worth, and their time was valuable. This put pressure on the schools, in that they wanted to use time during childhood for purposes that caused expense rather than generated income. Because of the belief that state intervention could be above personal considerations, Ontario was prepared to intervene between parents and children in order to ensure the schooling of all citizens.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Two systems of return to the child in the form of rewards were used in Ontario. One of these, the merit card system, in stressing punctuality, diligence, good conduct, and perfect recitation on an everyday basis, tried to acknowledge regular, steady, sober pupils - the future good citizens of Ontario - on a non-competitive basis. The other system was prize-giving; and since there was a limit to financial resources, this was always competitive. The two methods of reward were not mutually exclusive, but they generated discussion about the merits or faults of competition as soon as they were introduced. Both shared the belief that work is good, and is done for external reward. The reformers, in withdrawing children from the work force, had no wish to remove the value they saw in work itself.

However, the competitive element in prize-giving and even the standards expected in the merit card system, meant that not all children could expect rewards commensurate with their labour; and so the problem of failure arose. However, the meritorious student could rise through the system whatever his background, since school was designed to provide him with a common experience, unaffected by privilege.

In order to make merit rather than personality or family background reign supreme as the vehicle of

advancement in the schools, an attempt was made to provide homogeneous groups of children who would be reasonably evenly matched in the competition. Thus arose the concept of grouping children into classes, graded according to their previous achievements. This type of processing groups of children was dependent on the principle of division of labour and the increased efficiency which was thought to go with it, and on a production model which assumed that diligence would produce the desired results.

The production model implied that education was a process leading to a known end or goal - a product. Unfortunately, the single ladder concept meant that there was only one true goal in the system - to continue education through from elementary to secondary to a tertiary level; and this was actually a traditional pattern for the professional gentlemen of the province. It was an uneasy fit when applied to all secondary school pupils. But the ideal of reward for merit demanded that every pupil should be able to attempt to climb the ladder of success, from elementary into junior high school, and then into senior high, and perhaps even to university.

The written provincial examination was the tool used for ensuring the hierarchical nature of the

schools. Previously, many of the high schools had been playing the part of elementary schools for a particular social class; now the inspectors were to examine the individual pupils as to their elementary training before they were to be allowed to proceed to their secondary schooling.

The opposition to these changes took the form of an attack on the inspectorate, and on the highly centralized nature of its operation. The attempt on the part of the Executive Council of Ontario to question the power of the inspectorate to regulate concerned itself with the first high school entrance examination.

There were objections both to the inspector's powers in this matter, and to the ordeal which written, as opposed to oral, examinations presented to the students. The Executive Council's case was that local examining boards had the right to examine for admittance to high schools and not the inspectorate: but the Department replied by insisting on a difference between examining for admittance and admitting. They claimed that the local boards were to conduct the examinations, but that the inspectors were to admit.

The entrance examinations, based on the first four years of the new programme for elementary schools,

were considered sufficiently successful to encourage the inspectorate to institute another provincial test, the intermediate examination. This examination brought a new kind of pressure to bear on the schools. The entrance examinations had been used to test whether the children had a grasp of their elementary education; these new examinations were not merely tests of the children's understanding of the earlier grades before going on to higher classes, but were also to be a partial basis for grants to the schools.

This put considerable new pressure on children, in that failure did not just mean that the child was not admitted to a higher grade, but that the school lost financially. The pressure of this method of funding on the school would be to urge pupils towards over-achievement in examinations.

Another problem with this examination was that it was of no particular use to the successful candidate. Originally, this had been seen as advantageous to the aim of holding the examination - to test the calibre of the ordinary work of the school - but by 1877 the examination was being given more personal meaning to candidates in that it gave them the academic requirements for a

teaching certificate.

These examinations put great pressure on some of the children: those who failed. Self-respect was linked in the merit card and examination system with diligence, hard work, and reward or promotion. Non-promotion or failure in the examination was, by implication at least, the result of slacking, of lack of application to the work at hand, or to lack of character and moral fibre.

There was another problem for those who succeeded. In a system with one essential end-point, university matriculation, some of the successful candidates were people who were never intended for the university. One large group of such people were the girls.

Teaching provided an outlet through which many of them used the results of their studies. However, the programme they had studied and the examinations which went with it were not designed with this in mind. Girls' education is only one example of the uneasy fit of a single programme and its concomitant examinations. Rural, working class, French, poor, or native pupils might also find the fit uncomfortable. Only a long-term study could attempt to judge the overall societal effect of the examination system from this point of view.

The teachers found that the first few years' experience with the provincial examinations showed them to be an influence for the increase of the organic unity of the system rather than of a dead uniformity. It would seem that the examiners adapted their reading of the papers to the condition of those writing, their aim being simply, in the case of the entrance examinations, to weed out those who were unfit to do high school work. The case of the intermediate examination was rather different, in that the examiners were deciding which of the candidates were of high enough merit to bring their school financial reward.

## 2.

## Conclusions.

Written provincial examinations in Ontario were a powerful tool for change in the schools of the province. These changes were affected by other factors, but those in which the examinations played a role included the rise of the inspectorate; change in the main drive of activity within schools, and a change in the nature and expectations of childhood experience. Lastly, conclusions may be made about the examinations themselves as educational tools.

## a) The Rise of the Inspectorate.

The inspector, as an agent of the state, could have been an upholder of provincially set minimum requirements in the schools. Instead, he became the professional in education, knowledgeable, ethical, and the authority rather than an agent of authority. As an examiner, he could insist on set standards of achievement, placing demands on teachers and trustees.

The written examination meant that the inspectors could expect evidence of the work of candidates. Local agents could administer the examination, and even mark it, but then the papers were sent to the inspectors, to be read at their leisure. This meant that their ability to oversee the examinations was no longer limited by time and space. Since they did not have to be physically present, they did not have to examine pupils at different schools at different times of the year.

The power of the inspectorate to issue regulations as to the conduct of the examinations and other more everyday matters in the schools was also a source of their strength. This was shown in the examination crisis of 1872, when the Executive Council tried to limit the power of the inspectorate. Their operations had by then become

complex enough and all-embracing enough that the schools could not operate without them. Their use of the examination to regulate payments to schools deepened their strength as decision makers, and involved examinations in a direct way with the financing of the schools.

This was a profound change in the power structure of Ontario education. It was not the result of a group of men suddenly acquiring power for themselves, but was a result of the philosophy which placed state intervention above private interests and saw centralized decision-making by impartial persons as meritorious.

b) Change of Activity within Schools.

The coming of the written provincial examination for high school entrance meant that there was a change in the activity in many public schools, if only because they were bound to teach the first four years of the new programme if any of their pupils had ambitions to go to high school. This implied that the pupils would attend regularly, for a whole year at a time, and that they would apply themselves diligently to their studies. The merit card system would encourage them in this, and for the few who were high achievers, prizes might be gained.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Within the schools that took up the challenge of the examinations, the activity changed also in that the main emphasis was now to please an examiner rather than to please local trustees or parents. The children were to perform well at their examinations. These bore little resemblance to the old oral examination, when parents, trustees and visitors came to see the children perform. Written examinations took place in a quiet room, and were a matter of communication between the candidates and an unseen, distant examiner. The school's reputation, and in the case of the intermediate examination, its income, was dependent on success in these examinations. This tended to cause teachers to look at their task in a new light: they were no longer teaching pupils, or even a course, but were preparing pupils for examination.

This tendency to teach for the examination was denigrated from the first, but was bound to occur when success meant so much and failure was a disgrace. The pressure was reinforced by the fact that many people wanted to finish their schooling as quickly as possible. The schools were bound to react in this way as they became more examination conscious and began to realise the implications more clearly.

## c) Nature and Expectations of Childhood Experience.

The examination system meant that children could now fail. Large numbers of them were unsuccessful in examinations. However, they could try again, and the belief of the time was that such failure could be overcome by increased diligence. At this early stage, failure in school examinations did not have the connotations it was later to acquire; nevertheless, the examinations did bring the experience of success and failure into children's lives.

The new system demanded that the larger part of the child's time be spent in school, and moreover that such time be ordered and organized without direct parental influence. Parents had no control over the choice of teacher, curriculum, hours or methods, except indirectly. The families of Ontario were presented with an alienating agency to which, for their greater good, they were bound to subscribe.

The examinations and the course of study which went with them also had the effect of separating schooling from other activities in a child's upbringing, and putting it first in point of time. Young men and women in their

teens and early twenties no longer went to school in the winter months. School became a full time activity, and it was for young children and those who had passed examinations. The reward for success in the examinations was the right to continue in school.

This rewarding and reinforcing of school achievement may partially explain the campaign to admit girls to university. Since schools and the range of abilities that it valued now came first in time, children who were successful in those abilities were encouraged, and indeed, pressured, to stay on in the educational system.

The school children of Ontario were no longer an integral part of society during working hours. Instead, they were expected to be quiet, diligent, hard-working pupils. The model of school-child presented them with a much narrower range of behaviours than that presented by society at large, and it was the examinations which tested or purported to test whether that all-important range of behaviours had been successfully mastered. This was a large change in the nature and expectations of childhood experience.

d) Written Provincial Examinations as Educational Tools.

The changes caused or enhanced by the written provincial examinations show that they were a most

powerful tool. Success in the examinations was used to improve the economic standing of the schools, and to give prestige to successful candidates and their teachers.

The examinations were also used to enforce a rigid curriculum, and to provide competition. They were capable of serving those ends. They could also serve as a diagnostic test of a child's ability to handle the work of a higher grade or school. Whatever the goal of the school might be, the examination of children could be used to serve it.

In this respect, examinations had more influence than a set course of study: in terms of the human relationships that were involved in the teaching-learning situation, the external examination was seen as a common challenge to both the teacher and the pupil, while a set programme was seen as leaving the student as receiver and the teacher as administrator without the feeling of common enterprise they valued.

In the Ontario of the 1870s there was some confusion as to the goal of education; whether it was a competitive race for high educational honours and a university place, or whether it was a co-operative enterprise through which the whole population was to be given basic skills and

knowledge, or whether it was a new industry with possibilities for capitalizing on a product. As a result, all three were to be found in the way examinations were used and administered.

The opposition to the examinations varied with the use made of them: the diagnostic examination ascertaining whether a child was ready for the next grade or school was generally acceptable, but prestige or competitive uses, or the enforcement of a set curriculum, were causes for varying degrees of protest. Where considerations other than the improved schooling of children became central, the pressure of examinations could badly distort education.

The complexity of a new system, such as the written provincial examinations, is less evident once its use becomes the norm and people adjust to its demands. In 1876 the graduated school system of Ontario was a source of pride to the residents, even though it was not then fully operational. A study of the uses and abuses of the provincial examinations after 1876 would be needed to draw more definite conclusions about the long term effects of such a centralized system of examinations.

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ABSTRACT OF

The Origins of  
Written Provincial Examinations  
in Ontario:  
An Historical Study.

The written provincial examination was accepted quite quickly as an educational tool in Ontario, as part of the general educational reform of the 1860s and 1870s.

This study undertook a descriptive analysis of the genesis and early use of the new tool which this type of examination brought into the education system of Ontario, and which played a part in the formation of that system.

Central control of examinations as against local control, and the political and philosophical implications of this were examined; and the pressures apparent in the first few years of their use were isolated. These included financial pressure, when the schools were paid grants partly on examination results, programme pressure, when a single provincial programme provided the basis for the examination questions, and pressure on children and their families for success in these tests.

The general conclusion of the study was that written provincial examinations were a potent tool in education and society. They were a factor in the rise of the inspectorate, in that they had the power of the examiner over individual pupils, allowing the philosophy

that the state was morally above private interests full reign. These examinations also signalled a change in activity within the schools, in that preparation for examinations for promotion became a central concern. They also meant that childhood experience changed, in that children could now fail, and also in that the essential task of childhood was now schooling, and that those who were successful in this tended to stay on at school and put pressure on higher grades and institutions.

Lastly, the study concludes that written provincial examinations were a powerful tool that could be used in various ways, and could enhance or badly distort education.