

Parents in a Hurry: The Early Home and School Movement in Ontario

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The way in which state schools became accepted by their communities has become a central issue in recent educational historiography. Focusing on Ontario, this paper maintains that the early Home and School (Parent-Teacher) movement was an essential vehicle for this accommodation. Beginning around World War I as a reformist organization dedicated to progressive education, democratic ideals and feminist concerns regarding the school system, the Home and School movement assisted in implementing aspects of the "new education" at the local level. By the 1930s it shed its earlier idealism and emerged as an adjunct of the school system. The article ends by comparing parent-teacher activity in British Columbia with that in Ontario.

La manière dont les communautés ont reconnu les écoles de l'Etat est devenue une question centrale en historiographie éducationnelle récente. Centré sur l'Ontario, cet article soutient que le mouvement Parents-enseignants des débuts a contribué de façon essentielle à cette reconnaissance. Né à l'époque de la Première Guerre mondiale, comme organisation réformiste consacrée à l'éducation progressiste, aux idéaux démocratiques et aux intérêts féministes concernant le système scolaire, le mouvement Parents-enseignants aida à la mise en œuvre de certains aspects de « l'éducation nouvelle » au niveau local. Vers 1930, il perdit son idéal du début et devint une sorte d'annexe du système scolaire. L'article se termine par une comparaison de l'action Parents-enseignants de l'Ontario avec celle de la Colombie-Britannique.

The relationship between schools and their communities has become a central focus of current Canadian educational historiography. Recent work in educational history has tended to see the growth of state school systems less in terms of "social control" by the middle class and more in tune with community developments.¹ There remains, however, a significant gap in our understanding about the process through which schools became fully integrated into their communities and accepted by the populace at large. As the "school promoters" behind the establishment of a public educational system in nineteenth-century Ontario have remained singularly faceless apart from Egerton Ryerson and his associates, some historians have stressed the importance of the "child-saving" and social reform movements in gaining acceptance for schools later in the century.² In this work, the role played in the early 1900s by nascent parent-teacher organizations has been generally ignored or dismissed.³ The reason is not hard to find. In the 1950s, Home and School emerged as Canada's largest voluntary association, but it was wracked by so many problems that it

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1. See J. Donald Wilson, "Some Observations on Recent Trends in Canadian Educational History", in J. Donald Wilson, *An Imperfect Past, Education and Society in Canadian History* (Vancouver, 1984), pp. 9-11.

2. Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters, Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*, (Toronto, 1977). Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Speaking Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto, 1976).

3. Most recently by Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 99.

declined rapidly in the 1960s. These later events should not obscure the place that Home and School aspired, but ultimately failed, to attain in Canadian educational history.

In the years immediately following World War I, the Home and School movement emerged as a vehicle for change in Ontario education. For the first time in the province's history, large numbers of non-professionals became intimately associated with their local schools and provincial systems of education. The earliest advocates of Home and School drew their inspiration from progressive educational writers and were filled with optimism about the school's ability to transform the child and be itself transformed through the activities of parents. Leaders of the movement were spurred by the ideal of a society reformed through improved childhood education in both content and method. A closer association between home and school, they argued, would benefit the child and alter the educational system in the best interests of the community and the country.

The early Ontario Home and School movement was essentially reformist and innovative. It stood in advance of professional educators in advocating a host of changes designed to make the educational system more responsive to the needs of children and what they perceived as the new requirements for education in industrialized society. Being among the vanguard of those interested in promoting the "new" or "progressive" education, Home and School initially held a position similar to that of the Progressive Education Association, established in the United States in 1919, or the Canadian Girls in Training, which began in 1917.⁴

More than in the United States, Home and School in Ontario not only attracted the remnants of the decaying child-saving movement and liberal reformers, but it was also clearly associated with feminist concerns such as the advancement of women in the workplace and in public life. Indeed, Home and School began as a middle-class women's reform association whose progressive outlook attracted a large number of influential men. As it grew from movement to organization, it failed to translate its lofty ideals into practical policies which could be implemented at either the local or provincial level. While the parent-teacher idea spread quickly, it lost its reform zeal and became less a challenge to the school system than a vehicle for accommodation to accepted practices. By the 1930s Ontario Home and School was again principally a women's organization, but one quite different than that it had once aimed to be.

At the turn of the twentieth century many Canadians were coming to accept the view that the child was a special entity with distinct needs in education, health and welfare. Rapid industrialization and large-scale immigration were quickly turning parts of Canada into urban societies. Social problems were immediately visible and helped contribute to the view that the schools should function as agents for both socialization and social change. The ideas

4. On progressive education in the United States, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School, 1876-1957* (New York, 1962) and the revisionist interpretations of Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools, The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York, 1971), David B. Tyack, *The One Best System, A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), and David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order, A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (New York, 1979). The advent of the "new" and progressive education in Canada is discussed in J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Phillipe Audet, (eds.), *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough, Ont., 1970), pp. 314-21, 373-79 and Robert Patterson, "Progressive Education: Impetus to Educational Change in Alberta and Saskatchewan", in Howard Palmer and Donald Smith (eds.), *The New Provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan 1905-1980* (Vancouver, 1980), pp. 173-98. The influence of these ideas on the early years of the Canadian Girls in Training is revealed in Margaret Prang, "'The Girl God Would Have Me Be': The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915-39", *Canadian Historical Review*, 66 (1985), 154-84.

of European and American educational theorists confirmed these beliefs. The work of Johann Friedrich Herbart had stressed that education should not only impart information but also build character. Froebel's emphasis on the importance of the infant years in a child's development and on play and activity in education was enthusiastically expounded by Toronto school inspector James L. Hughes. Writings by American psychologist Granville Stanley Hall and philosopher John Dewey further supported the belief that children had distinct educational needs which the schools were not fulfilling.⁵

Critics argued that Ontario schools failed to reflect these trends in educational thought. Instruction in the elementary schools continued to place emphasis on children memorizing the content of their provincially authorized texts while properly seated at their desks. Arithmetic and English language instruction generally assumed nearly three-quarters of classroom time. Daily attendance was poor, with up to a third of pupils not attending daily classes.⁶ Although few children went on to high school, the elementary school was conceived as a "feeder" to secondary education. For all but the very young, this resulted in schools geared to writing uniform examinations set by external examiners and, finally, the "Entrance" examination which alone gave access to high school. In Toronto in 1917 only eighteen percent of elementary schoolchildren went on to high school.⁷ Physical facilities reflected past rather than future trends. No provisions were made for the physically handicapped in the construction of new buildings and athletic amenities were minimal. Very few school boards provided public health programs. Highly centralized provincial departments of education, critics also argued, deterred local initiative and stifled diversity in Canadian education.

Not only critics and reformers thought that the divide which separated families from the schools where their children were educated had grown too large. More conservative individuals could agree with the view that the formal and informal aspects of childrearing needed to be brought into closer co-ordination in order to promote the harmonious development of the child. Some people like Goldwin Smith thought that the school had come to assume too many functions once assigned to parenting. In 1904 Smith expressed grave doubts at an educational conference in Toronto about a school system which he thought took "children so much away from their parents."⁸ The public schools did not build character, said this famous Victorian Liberal, and so the influence of mothers and fathers over their children needed to be strengthened.

In a similar vein, but for different reasons, Toronto school board trustee Caroline Brown informed the Ontario Educational Association in 1916 that not only had the family lost many of the roles that it once performed, but that "the home in many cases is becoming less and less a school and more and more a home".⁹ As a physician, Dr Brown was im-

5. On the influence of these thinkers in Canada, see R.M. Stamp, "James L. Hughes, Proponent of the New Education," Robert S. Patterson, John W. Chalmers and John W. Friesen (eds.), *Profiles of Canadian Educators* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 192-212 and Richard D. Heyman, Robert F. Lawson and Robert M. Stamp, *Studies in Educational Change* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 31-32.

6. See J.H. Putman, *Fifty Years at School, An Educationalist Looks at Life* (Toronto, 1938); Peter Sandiford, "Canada", in Peter Sandiford (ed.), *Comparative Education: Studies of the Educational Systems of Six Modern Nations* (Toronto, 1918), pp. 356, 361, 364-66.

7. Toronto Board of Education, *Annual Report* (1917), p. 38.

8. *Toronto Globe*, August 16, 1904.

9. Caroline Brown, "The Interrelations of Home and School", Ontario Educational Association *Proceedings* (1916): 238-41. See also "The Home and School", Ontario Educational Association *Proceedings* (1913).

pressed with the increasing specialization of knowledge in the modern world and the need for childhood education to begin at the moment of the infant's birth. She felt that society was being called upon to make a significant decision by which either school care would begin at the time of birth so that children might be raised scientifically, or that mothers would become more informed about bringing up their children through a closer association with childhood education. Her own views favoured the latter alternative.

Other reasons were proffered for greater parental involvement in rural schools. Samuel McCready, newly appointed director of elementary agricultural education in Ontario, told women attending the annual meeting of the federated Women's Institutes in 1913 that they should form a school club or a committee of their local branch to improve education in their districts. He felt that the rural teacher was isolated and that education received too low a priority. Boys in particular were kept home from school when farm chores necessitated. While provincial grants had assisted in improving the school building, grounds were frequently uncared for and there was no provision for organized play. The curriculum needed to be made more relevant to the rural experience through such things as experiments in gardening. "When we get the farmer to see that it pays to send his boy to school," McCready concluded, "and that the school can teach that boy things that will be of benefit to him for the rest of his life, it will be an easy matter to get schools improved."¹⁰ One woman in the audience volunteered her own more graphic reason for greater parental involvement in their schools: "Ladies, if you come down to the school and drink out of the tin pail and cup that the pupils are drinking out of every day, I can tell you what you can do for the school."¹¹

In the late nineteenth century, various local groups emerged in an attempt to bring greater parental involvement in childhood education. In Ontario these were often associated with kindergartens which that province alone had incorporated into its provincial system of education. Parents' groups soon found that the schools lacked the materials necessary for the new activity methods of instruction inherent in kindergarten education. As well, they saw that family conditions were an important factor in the adjustment of children to schooling. Social and charitable functions were thereby grafted onto the educational objectives of these groups. The mothers' clubs established in London, Ontario, early in the century, and those in Peterborough and Toronto sometime later, combined charitable and educational aims. Two school art leagues formed by parents in Toronto before 1900 evolved to similar positions. Their original purpose had been to purchase art to beautify the schools and exhibit the art work of their children, but they soon expanded their activities to include lectures, musical concerts and social evenings for parents and teachers.¹²

American influence was strong in the formation of many early parent groups not only in Ontario but also in the country as a whole. The Congress of Mothers had been established in Washington in 1897 to promote mothers' clubs across the United States. Not long

10. S.B. McCready, "Address", Ontario Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Women's Institutes of the Province of Ontario 1913*, p. 76.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

12. Toronto Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1918, pp. 102-3. Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, *Annual Report*, 1923, p. 28. James L. Hughes had prompted the formation of the art league at the Rosedale School for purposes of embellishing the building and encouraging pupils to display their art work. See Lorne Pierce, *Fifty Years of Public Service: The Life of James L. Hughes* (Toronto, 1966), p. 112 and Bruce N. Carter, "James L. Hughes and the Gospel of Education, A Study of the Work and Thought of a Nineteenth-Century Canadian Educator", (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1966), p. 321.

afterwards the Congress was broadened through the sponsorship of parent-teacher associations, a development formally recognized in 1918 when its name was altered to National Congress of Mothers' and Parent-Teacher Associations. The first parents' group in Canada was a direct American offspring, but it was formed in Nova Scotia rather than Ontario. Dr and Mrs Alexander Graham Bell and other Washington residents brought the idea of forming such an association with them to their vacation residences in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, where a parents' association was formed in 1895.¹³ In what would become a typical pattern, this group showed enthusiasm for establishing classes in industrial arts, home economics and physical education as well as the creation of school libraries. Although the first parent-teacher association, the Baddeck group spawned no progeny.

Students from the Ontario Agricultural College returning from study in the United States stimulated the formation of a parent-teacher association in Guelph in 1905. The wives of three professors at the college decided to create such an organization in conjunction with the new Macdonald school, one of four experimental consolidated schools built by Montreal tobacco magnate Sir William Macdonald. This school stood in the forefront of educational change in providing practice teaching for young men and women in the new subjects of industrial arts, home economics and nature study provided through the Macdonald Institute which had opened in 1903. James W. Robertson, Macdonald's educational advisor and the individual at the centre of what he termed the "new education", approved the women's suggestion since closer co-operation between parents and teachers was seen as beneficial. This parent-teacher association took a special interest in promoting acceptance of home economics and industrial arts. Individuals like James Hughes and child welfare advocate Dr Helen MacMurchy were invited to speak. The desire to exert parental influence was also clearly present. Observed one participant: "Everyone was quite enthusiastic. The idea was to give the parents an opportunity to air their grievances and encourage the teacher as they saw fit and not talk behind their backs".¹⁴

Although men were involved in groups across the country, the emerging parent-teacher movement represented the new assertiveness of women in Canadian life. Women, it was argued, possessed unique moral, religious and aesthetic sensibilities which would transform society if they seized the opportunities for self-improvement and were granted the vote.¹⁵ The greatly expanded roles women assumed during World War I served to emphasize further women's capabilities and the need to make their influence felt. This led to an expansion of parent-teacher activity not only in Ontario but throughout the country as a whole.¹⁶

Feminist concerns led directly to the formation of the first Home and School council in Canada in 1916. Frustrated by its inability to deal with the educational bureaucracy and following the failure of renewed efforts to secure female enfranchisement in 1913, the Toronto Local Council of Women decided to take matters into its own hands by officially putting forward a woman candidate in the 1914 school board elections. The largest and

13. George Henry Penrose, "The Educational Significance of the Home and School Movement", (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1945), p. 8. Loran A. De Wolfe, "Home and School in Canada" in J.R. Kidd (ed.), *Adult Education in Canada* (Toronto, n.d.), p. 103.

14. *The Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 3, no. 4, (Apr.-June, 1928), p. 5-6.

15. See Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto, 1983) and William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago, 1971).

16. Penrose, "Home and School Movement", pp. 17-18, 23.

most prestigious feminist organization in the city, with a membership of five thousand women, the Local Council sponsored Ada Mary Courtice as its candidate. A widow with two children and the principal of a private school, Courtice had chaired the peace and arbitration committee of the National Council of Women and helped with the suffrage campaign in Toronto. Through her friendship with James L. Hughes and his wife Ada Marean, this former Quaker from rural Ontario had become familiar with recent developments in educational theory. At her school she established a mothers' club and she kept abreast of activities in the United States through travel and reading.¹⁷

Through Courtice the dual threads of women's concerns and educational reformism were brought together. She was to be the pipeline from the Local Council to the Board of Education so that women could voice their prime concerns about education: the expansion in the curriculum of gardening, nature study, home economics, and industrial arts; better special education facilities; supervised playgrounds and better community use of school property; and better pay, pensions, and improved promotion for women teachers within the educational hierarchy.

In their first electoral bid Courtice and the Local Council failed. Two years later the Local Council's education committee, which Courtice chaired, decided to broaden its political base prior to the 1917 municipal election by providing a central organization for the city's parent-teacher groups. At a meeting in the Education building at the University of Toronto on February 12, 1916 the Toronto Home and School Council was formed. A totally female executive was appointed with Ada Marean Hughes as Honorary President, Courtice as President, and nine other executive members that included Dr Caroline Brown as Treasurer. Provision was also made for the appointment of an advisory council of ten with equal representation from both sexes.¹⁸

Like its American counterparts, the Toronto Home and School Council was devoted to child study and the improvement of education, but it was also initially a reform organization determined to improve education and advance women. The Council's first bulletin called for a parenthood awakened "to a realization and a study of all contributory forces influencing childlife". Its declared aims were simply stated: to study educational issues; to "strengthen public interest in the development of the child in the unfolding of the best nature has given him"; and to encourage the formation of Home and School associations and serve as a federation for those affiliated with it.¹⁹ Two resolutions adopted at the Council's first meeting revealed its objectives about childhood education and the advancement of women. First it was agreed that rather than contacting all teachers and parents, overtures should be made to kindergarten teachers asking them to invite mothers to form a Home and School club. Secondly, the Council resolved to create a ward organization for the purpose of mobilizing support for the election of Courtice and Brown to the school board. It was agreed that this activity should be kept secret. No further reference to this matter was recorded until January 1917, when both women were successful in their election bid.²⁰

17. See Terry Crowley, "Ada Mary Courtice: Pacifist, Feminist and Educational Reformer in Early Twentieth-Century Canada", *Studies in History and Politics*, 1 (1980), pp. 76-114.

18. Toronto Board of Education Archives, Home and School Papers, Toronto Home and School Council Minutes, February 12, 1916.

19. *The Story of the Toronto Home and School Council Through the Years 1916-1936* ([Toronto], 1935), pp. 6-7.

20. Toronto Home and School Council Minutes, February 12, 1916, January 1917.

Once Courtice and Brown sat on the Board of Education, the Toronto Home and School Council displayed less attention to overt political activity and more to internal organizational matters. Individual associations were provided with speakers upon request and questions such as the following were sent out to encourage roundtable discussions among parents and teachers in the schools:

- a) What are the essentials in child development?
- b) How to develop good citizenship.
- c) How can the home be more helpful to the school and vice versa?
- d) The wider use of school buildings.²¹

In contrast to what would transpire later, little time was spent on fundraising or charitable activities. Monthly meetings provided public discussions on educational issues. Some new concerns began to emerge that ranged beyond traditional areas: the need to remedy overcrowded classes; unnecessary "retardation" (students remaining at one level beyond their years); the pervasive influence of the "Entrance examination"; truancy under police rather than school jurisdiction; the extension of compulsory education; the implementation of expanded vocational and technical schools; and free high schools which would ensure accessibility to more children. At the Board level, Courtice and Brown attempted to implement elements of the progressive educational program in Toronto's elementary public schools.²²

The Toronto Home and School Council was the first attempt in Canada to organize and educate the public specifically about the concerns of education beyond the local school. Its supporters were every inch the school promoters that the advocates of the common schools in the nineteenth century had been, but they lobbied for changes to existing structures rather than for their acceptance as had the first school promoters. For this reason the movement quickly evolved into more than a women's organization and emerged as a reformist organization of both men and women. They clung tenaciously to the name "Home and School" in the face of American, British Columbian, and Albertan practice where "Parent-Teacher" was favoured.

The title "Home and School" was suggestive of the social idealism apparent in the early Toronto movement and was itself the legacy of the period prior to the war. It was, however, somewhat of a misnomer that obscured their primary intention to enlighten public opinion in the interests of educational change. Because it was progressive and sought male involvement, the early Home and School movement attracted men interested in social and educational change. James L. Hughes, who had fostered the Rose Avenue Art League, attended Home and School meetings after his retirement as elementary school inspector. William Houston, former chair of the Toronto Board of Education, took an active interest and so did J.W. Bengough, noted cartoonist and idealistic reformer, who was early a member of the Toronto Council. C.B. Sissons, a history professor at Victoria College, served as a vice-president. Peter Sandiford, professor of educational psychology at the Ontario College of Education, chaired the Council's committee on educational problems which also included R.M. MacIvor of the University of Toronto's political economy department. Dr. G. Elmore Reaman, director of adult education for the Y.M.C.A., chaired the committee on citizenship. Men came to play an important role in the acceptance of the organization by the educational bureaucracy.

21. *Ibid.*, Flyer, Toronto Home and School Council Programme Committee.

22. See Crowley, "Ada Mary Courtice", pp. 99-109.

The reaction of the Toronto Council and its citizenship committee to the settlement of immigrants in the city was indicative of the variety of Home and School activities in Toronto and the generally enlightened attitudes that prevailed. In contrast to many other North American centres, Toronto had only a small population in 1920 which was not of British descent, but it had increased rapidly in the preceding two decades and was heavily concentrated in one section of the downtown area. As the number of immigrants was fewer and the threat to dominant cultural values less apparent, there was less anxiety over the threat posed to the dominant culture by the new arrivals than in other centres such as Winnipeg, but apprehensions existed nevertheless. "Assimilation of the stranger within our gates", Elmore Reaman wrote in 1921, "is the greatest and most immediate problem confronting Canada and the United States today".²³ Edith Groves, a member of the Toronto Board of Education who was also involved in Home and School work, told her associates in 1920 that the "melting pot does not melt. It needs stirring".²⁴

The Toronto Council directed its attention to the problems of the city's recent arrivals. In 1917 it began to study ways of increasing the participation of non-English speaking peoples in Home and School associations and recommended to Toronto's health department that it translate more of its bulletins, especially into Italian and "Jewish".²⁵ When Reaman became the head of the citizenship committee in 1920, he brought greater coherence to its activities. Through his work in adult education and teaching English to immigrants, Reaman had devised instructional techniques and views about how immigrants could adjust successfully to Canadian life. Although he stressed the need to assimilate the immigrant into Canadian life, assimilation was broadly defined as "a working agreement in mutual sympathy and mutual responsibility" from which both immigrants and Canadians would benefit.²⁶ To Home and School members he stressed three objectives: a) giving new Canadians a working knowledge of English; b) teaching what was meant by Canadian citizenship; c) incorporating into Canadian life whatever was of value from the national cultures of the immigrants. Acculturation of the city's immigrants was thus broadly conceived as a two-way street where the adoptive society would benefit from the culture of its newest citizens.

The pattern of openness towards non-anglophone groups established in Toronto at the beginning persisted both in that city and in the province as a whole. A class for non-English speaking adults was opened in the Ryerson School and in the early 1920s the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society became one of the affiliated groups of the Toronto Home and School Council. In 1924 Toronto's ethnic groups were invited to local associations to give addresses, perform music and display crafts. At one of the meetings, talks were given by Russian, Chinese, Italian, Ukrainian, Polish, Finnish and Bulgarian speakers. At a concert held two years later children from twenty different nationalities participated. Along similar lines, the New Toronto Home and School Council sent out its notices in five languages and the South Porcupine group appointed ethnic representatives to be responsible for their national groups within the association.²⁷ In this way the early Home and School movement

23. George Elmore Reaman, *The New Citizen, Modern Language Instruction: A Method of Teaching English to Foreigners* (Toronto, 1921), p. ix. See also Reaman's other works on this subject, *English for New Canadians* (Toronto, 1919) and *English for New Canadians, a Teacher's Manual* (Toronto, 1921).

24. Toronto Home and School Council Minutes, March 9, 1920.

25. *Ibid.*, June 1917.

26. Reaman, *The New Citizen*, p. ix.

27. *The Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Sept.-Oct., 1924), 4-6 and vol. 2, no. 2 (Mar.-May, 1926), 4.

aided the integration of immigrants into Canadian life and the adjustment of parents to the school system. The nativism that had characterized so much of the Canadian response to immigration and which continued to be seen elsewhere was largely absent here.

The diffusion of its interests and its willingness to accept a variety of people as members, at least at the local level, help to account for the popularity of the Home and School movement and its rapid expansion in the 1920s. The Toronto Council incorporated parents, teachers, school officials, and educational reformers. As a reformist group, its constitution affirmed children's rights in its preamble: "Believing every child should have his rights — which is the opportunity to unfold the best Nature has given him..."²⁸ This orientation did not preclude examination of issues which interested middle-class women: the need to standardize work for household help; the appointment of women as truant officers and school inspectors; censorship of motion pictures for children or the establishment of Saturday matinees; and support for conscription in 1917. Revealing its emergence from the Local Council of Women, a resolution passed in its second year was a clear indication of its middle-class outlook: "Further, we believe that the change from book-study to practical garden work, actual observation of plants and weeds and experiments in connection therewith would give many boys and girls a love for outdoor life and work which might lead them back to the land and would make them more useful citizens and give them respect for the dignity of land-labour production and thrift".²⁹ Advocacy of agriculture in the urban curriculum reflected not only what was perceived as the exigencies of war, but also the old-fashioned values thought to emanate from agricultural pursuits.³⁰

The Toronto Home and School Council scored some notable achievements in promoting women within the public school system. Although eighty-three percent of all elementary schoolteachers were women, none had succeeded in breaking the sexual barrier that protected the rank of school-inspector. As a result of efforts by Ada Mary Courtice, who served as the council's first president, the barricade finally tumbled in 1919 when Aletta Marty was appointed as the first woman school-inspector in the city.³¹ Women also applauded when Courtice succeeded in having home economics separated from industrial arts in the Toronto system with the result that Margaret Davidson was appointed as first director of the former division.³² As well, Home and School made representations to the provincial government which contributed to the transfer of responsibility for truancy from the police to the Board of Education and the subsequent appointment of women as truant officers following the adoption of the 1919 School Attendance Act.³³

28. Quoted in Lola Martin Bourgoyne, *A History of the Home and School Movement in Ontario* (n.p., n.d., ca. 1935), p. 4. This volume was compiled from primary sources later destroyed by fire.

29. Toronto Home and School Council Minutes, May 21, 1917.

30. Some five and half acres of land were put under production in one Toronto school district in 1917 and more than eight hundred students in one inspectorate had planted and cared for gardens in 1918. Toronto Board of Education, Annual Report (1918), p. 101. Toronto Home and School Minutes, March 4, 1918.

31. "Aletta Marty", in Lucy Maud Montgomery, Marian Keith and Mabel B. McKinley, *Courageous Women* (Toronto, 1934), pp. 161-65. Marty was also the first woman head of a department in an Ottawa high school and the first woman to be awarded an honorary LL.D. by a Canadian university (Queen's, 1921). The president of Queen's described her as "a capable, impetuous woman who knew what she wanted to do. She felt herself handicapped all her days, by the fact that she was a woman and not a man, and she was ever ready to fight for the rights of her sex". Quoted in *Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (October, 1929), p. 2.

32. Toronto Board of Educational Annual Report 1919, Appendix, pp. 647-8.

33. *Ibid.*, 1918, Appendix, pp. 1110-9. *Toronto Telegram*, January 17, 1918. *Toronto Star*, January 19, 1918. "Early History of the Home and School Council", *Home and School*, vol. 1, no. 1 (n.d.; ca. 1928), p. 3.

The Ontario movement initially possessed a populist and democratic flavour due principally to the efforts of Ada Mary Courtice and Peter Sandiford. Courtice was strongly influenced by American progressive educational thought which she attempted to adopt to Canadian circumstances but never fully synthesized. To her the idea of home and school was a secular gospel and the movement a spiritual enterprise. She stressed the need to understand child development and to make education at home and school harmonious. She believed that schools should become community centres, not just as a return to the days of the one-room rural school, but in order to serve as a place where men and women could meet to advance the cause of education without regard to religious creed or political affiliation. "Co-operation to be effective", she wrote, "must be void of petty prejudice or selfish ends. No politics and theological or racial tendencies must be allowed to creep in ..."³⁴ With a naive optimism that others found appealing, Courtice expounded the vision of public opinion enlightened and mobilized through study and discussion in Home and School clubs. "We are expressing a type of education", she thought, "not undertaken heretofore, in a movement of the people for and by the people themselves, whether it is in town or country — that is the people of the neighbourhood must find and study their own problems and create public opinion for advancement. We are not a class organization, but a people's organization, and do not forget that".³⁵

Ontario College of Education professor Peter Sandiford brought American educational ideas to the Home and School organization from his study at Columbia University. The great merit of the Canadian educational system, in Sandiford's view, was its democratic character. Schools should be geared, he thought, to developing the latent potential in all children who passed through its doors. "Democracy demands", Sandiford wrote, "that everything possible should be done to discover talent in everybody; that no stone should be left unturned to develop as fully as possible such talents".³⁶ The Toronto professor also emerged as a critic of educational centralization which had dictated that so many crucial educational decisions were made in the provincial capitals rather than at the school board itself. While acknowledging that such centralization had been necessary in thinly populated areas, Sandiford argued that the time had come for power to devolve towards the local level. Local initiatives might address some of the problems in Canadian education such as low attendance, curricula that were too uniform, and the lack of amenities such as medical assistance in the schools. "The course of study throughout any province", he wrote, "is remarkably uniform". The department of education takes pride in making it so. The syllabus is seldom suggestive; it is almost invariably prescriptive and frequently restrictive, that is, subjects outside the official syllabus may not be taught.³⁷

Sandiford felt that it was time for Canadian education to diversify in the interests of both the child and society as a whole. Home and School extended the possibility of increased democratic participation in the Canadian educational system. It would assist in reminding educationalists that their provincial systems were education departments rather than "departments for the control of education", as they sometimes seemed to think. Both Courtice and Sandiford clearly revealed that radical faith which American historian Lawrence Cremin has termed "the spiritual hub of progressive education": that culture

34. Quoted in Bourgoyne, *A History of the Home and School Movement in Ontario*, p. 12.

35. *Ibid.* See the similarity to American progressive thought in Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, p. 75.

36. Peter Sandiford, "Democracy and Intelligence Tests", *The School*, 12 (1924), 702-5.

37. Peter Sandiford, *Comparative Education, Studies of the Educational Systems of Six Modern Nations* (Toronto, 1918), pp. 364-65.

could be democratized without being vulgarized.³⁸ Their frank avowal of democratic principles stood in marked contrast to the greater qualifications and distortions to the concept of equality found in the ideas of other contemporary educational reformers like James Robertson.³⁹

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, which was formed in 1919, initially reflected the trends established in Toronto. Growth was rapid, partially due to Courtice's organizing activities, but precise figures are difficult to obtain. A membership of 10,000 was claimed in 1921 and more than 100 clubs were formed in 1921-22 alone. By 1923 there were 270 associations in the province, but total membership is unknown. Toronto had 3,000 individual members in 1923 and Windsor one-tenth that number. The Union of Mothers' Clubs in London, which was affiliated with the federation, claimed to represent 2,000 people.⁴⁰ Unfortunately no membership lists survive that would permit a social analysis. It is apparent that the character of the leadership at the regional and provincial levels in Ontario was decidedly middle-class, but lack of documentation makes such a conclusion precipitous for the local level.

The Ontario federation tried to avoid the rigid hierarchical structure and centralization that was criticized in the school system itself. Its structure and constitution reflected Courtice's and Sandiford's ideas on the benefits of local action and the need for maximum flexibility. Not until 1923 did the provincial federation adopt a set of objectives. The proposed preamble for the constitutions of local associations is suggestive of the way in which the Ontario leadership conceived of the movement: "The object of the Association shall be to promote co-operation between parents and teachers; to get the greatest possible returns to the community from the school for young and old alike; to support all progressive measures in regard to school improvement; to inquire into educational methods and facilities; to study educational problems, and in every way possible to create the best conditions for the training of boys and girls into good Canadian citizens."⁴¹

With a loose organizational framework, the gap which separated the provincial level from local associations grew increasingly large. Early on it became apparent that it was easier for leaders to express lofty sentiments than it was to translate them into practical policies which could be followed by all. Most parents in the local groups displayed much more enthusiasm for social events, sports activities for their children, and fundraising efforts for the benefit of the local school than for educational programs and child study groups. Local associations sometimes interpreted their mandate too broadly and bruised the thin skins of school officials unaccustomed to parental involvement in education. Research on parent-teacher associations in the United States indicated that some teachers and school administrators deliberately channelled the energies of parent groups into fundraising and entertainment activities in order to defuse the potential of a parental onslaught on the schools, but no similar inquiries were conducted in Canada at that time.⁴² Squabbles between the

38. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, p. ix.

39. See Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, pp. 83-4 for Robertson's ideas.

40. Ontario Educational Association, *Proceedings*, 1922, pp. 41-42. Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, *Annual Report*, 1923, pp. 17, 28. Burgoyne, *History of the Home and School Movement*, p. 13.

41. Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, *Annual Report*, 1923, pp. 24-25, 60.

42. Elmer S. Holbeck, *An Analysis of the Activities and Potentialities for the Achievement of the Parent-Teacher Association, with Recommendations*, Columbia Teachers' College Contributions to Education Series no. 601 (New York, 1934). See also J.E. Butterworth, *The Parent-Teacher Association and Its Work* (New York, 1928).

Toronto Board of Education and the emerging parent-teacher groups are known to have occurred, but there is no direct evidence to suggest what course of action principals and other school officials adopted. However, the Toronto Board waited eight years to acknowledge Home and School work officially and another two before resolving the issue of the use of school buildings for parent-teacher activities.⁴³

Activities reported in Toronto and outside the city by local Home and School Associations showed that they were particularly interested in the material improvement of their schools and community-related programs. Providing the latest in phonographic and motion picture equipment was one such popular activity, but in some rural areas projects were undertaken to provide more basic necessities such as blackboards, electric lighting and playrooms to permit recreation during inclement weather. The early PTA's were in the forefront of the new emphasis that came to be placed on extracurricular activities in Ontario schools during the 1920s. Rather than being viewed as mere adjuncts to the school program, these activities became increasingly accepted for their personal and social benefits.⁴⁴ Home and School groups agitated for supervised play and sports activities where parents were involved with their children after school hours. They also advocated the creation of school libraries and gymnasias as well as sponsoring musical concerts and sewing classes.

The fundraising syndrome which soon seized many local associations worried the Ontario leadership. Just prior to her death in 1923, Ada Mary Courtice expressed doubts about the direction that Home and School was moving. "As a whole", Courtice said, "we are certainly not consolidating efforts to bring about results that I hope sooner or later to accomplish. As a matter of fact the whole country is possessed with 'bazaars' and 'rummage sales' and little time is left to discuss the vital problems of education. Of course we must have the money to supplement the things which Boards of Education should supply the schools, but I hope we will not create a habit on the part of school boards to wait for Home and School Clubs to supply necessary equipment for schools".⁴⁵ In that same year the Ontario federation warned its constituents against modelling themselves on other societies or assuming the character of welfare agencies.

Despite these drawbacks, the early Home and School movement did serve to disseminate progressive educational thought and worked for its implementation at the local and provincial levels. Both the Toronto Council and Ontario federation made available the most recent educational literature to groups on loan. Toronto was able to provide more up-to-date programs than the rest of the province. In 1923, for instance, its council organized addresses by the president of the University of Toronto, school board trustees, teachers from Rochester and Philadelphia who spoke on health education and on the new subject of vocational guidance, and Louise McKinney, one of the first women elected to a Canadian

43. *Toronto Mail and Empire*, April 8, 1922, p. 19. *Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, (Sept.-Oct., 1924), p. 8.

44. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, p. 116. The earliest and most complete account of activities at the local level in Ontario is the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations *Annual Report*, 1923. Thereafter they were reported more sporadically in *The Ontario Home and School Review*. Concerning the formation of local associations, see Margaret Evans, "The Home and School Club", R.E. Cudmore, "The Bronte Home and School Club", and Alice Wilson, "The Home and School Clubs", *The School* 11 (1922-23), pp. 262-63, 335-36, 645-46. A quantification of these activities is rendered impossible by the nature of the way in which the local associations reported to the federation.

45. Ada Mary Courtice to Adelaide McLaughlin, 10 December, 1922 in Bourgoyne, *A History of the Home and School Movement*, pp. 32-33.

legislature. Associations in more remote areas often tried to emulate this pattern but with less success. Frequently the educational program was put aside in favour of entertainment or it was interpreted to mean talks by local notables on such topics as Canadian or British literary figures, travelogues, or addresses on the Holy Land.

Home and School activities nevertheless served as means by which those policies for improved child welfare and education, which Neil Sutherland has lucidly analyzed as emerging before World War I, were implemented at the local level.⁴⁶ Even fundraising and social activities helped to make the school a new focus in the neighbourhood or community and contributed to its acceptance by new Canadians. In a society which was becoming more secular and pluralist, Ontario Home and School leaders cast the school, rather than the church, as the new centre of community activity. Ada Mary Courtice spoke to educators in 1918 of the need to create "a chain of democratic groups of neighbourhoods," with the local school as home base, "where no women-power or man-power, or child-power, is allowed to be wasted and where misfits are corrected."⁴⁷

The Toronto Home and School Council and the Ontario Federation represented the closest approximation to American progressive education in Canada in the post-World War One period. They carried forward into the 1920s what has been called a "revolution" in educational thought which had begun to invade Canadian education at the turn of the century due to the influence of Froebelian idealism and the writings of John Dewey.⁴⁸ The Home and School movement sought to alter the curriculum to bring it more in line with these currents and recent developments in the United States. Curricular and other reforms, it was argued, would make education more pedagogically sound, appeal more to children, induce them to stay in school longer, and thus provide a greater number of children with a better-rounded and more complete education. Home and School leaders believed in the extension into the primary grades of activity methods of education which they viewed as evoking children's self-activity and responding to their interest in play. Local associations lobbied for the introduction of industrial arts, home economics, gardening, nature study and music in their home regions because these subjects were thought to give expression to these ideals. Kindergartens, which were the fullest expression of activity methods, were also secured in areas where they had not existed previously.

While Home and School activities initially took root in elementary schools, the movement was concerned with the elitism of the Ontario school system and the need to democratize the system to provide greater access to secondary schools. Junior highs as well as commercial and vocational schools were advocated as both appealing to special needs and promoting greater accessibility. An assault was mounted against the high school entrance examination. Courtice, for instance, quoted American research which showed how children progressed at varying rates in different subjects. By placing a premium on memorization at the expense of evaluating children's abilities to reason for themselves, she said, the entrance examination failed to respond to individual needs. "A formal entrance examination to decide a child's destiny by answering a few selected questions out of hundreds that might be asked and answered," Courtice told professional educators in 1920, "is too

46. See Sutherland, *Children in English-Speaking Canadian Society* and "'To Create a Strong and Healthy Race': School Children in the Public Health Movement, 1880-1914", Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly (eds.), *Education and Social Change, Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York, 1975).

47. Ada Mary Courtice, "The Value of Home and School Clubs", O.E.A. *Proceedings* (1918), p. 167. Dominion Educational Association Proceedings (1918), pp. 104-25.

48. Phillips, *Development of Education*, pp. 424-26.

much a game of chance to be consistent with the democratic desire to give every one an education, every one a square deal."⁴⁹ In the early 1920s the Toronto Home and School Council made common cause with other educational progressives to create the first chink in the entrance examination barrier: only those students not recommended by their teachers were thereafter required to sit the examination.⁵⁰

Home and School espoused with vigour the new departures taken in Canada after World War One to improve public health, especially among schoolchildren. While the cities of Montreal and Vancouver and Victoria had also established medical school inspection between 1906 and 1908, progress in Ontario was slower.⁵¹ School-boards proved recalcitrant because of additional costs even though the province had made provision for the implementation of such services as early as 1901. Despite improvement in the regulations and provisions for dental as well as medical inspection, only a few of the province's larger and more progressive boards had taken any steps in this area by 1918 when the first provincial grants for this purpose were begun.⁵²

Home and School associations provided a forum and lobby whereby parents were able to pressure local officials into implementing medical and dental services in the interest of their own children and the entire school population. Groups agitated at the local level to have reluctant boards appoint school nurses and provide clinics. The tremendous enthusiasm for public health projects so often apparent in activities of this kind was succinctly revealed in the report of the London Union of Mothers' Clubs to the Ontario Home and School Federation in 1923: "past year has been most successful in its history and it has become an established power in the community. Dental clinics are held, but we do not have medical inspection".⁵³ In the middle of the post-war recession, Home and School groups in Toronto worked with school officials to develop a system of milk distribution for mal-nourished children. By 1923 some twenty schools and three thousand pupils were involved in the program.⁵⁴

During the latter part of the 1920s, the Ontario Home and School movement became less reformist in outlook and less devoted to the advancement of women. Many of the group's early ideas had been a particular expression of a more general secular reform ideology expounded enthusiastically in the opening decades of the century.⁵⁵ During the 1920s the women's movement itself began to evolve into something clearly distinct from the character that it had assumed in the period prior to the war. Accommodation to accepted norms rather than challenges to outmoded values became the new agenda of the day. The

49. Ada Mary Courtice, "Entrance Examinations and Our Future Policy of Education", O.E.A. *Proceedings* (1920), p. 196.

50. "Early History of the Home and School Council", p. 10.

51. Norah Lewis, "Physical Perfection for Spiritual Welfare: Health Care for the Urban Child, 1900-1939", Patricia T. Rooke and R.C. Schnell (eds.), *Studies in Childhood History, A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, 1982), p. 136.

52. E. Phillips, *The Development of Education*, p. 366. Province of Ontario, *Report of the Minister of Education for the year 1919*, p. 2. Not until 1910 did the Toronto public school board, prodded by the Toronto Local Council of Women and *Telegram* publisher James Ross Robertson, agree to a medical survey of pupils and the appointment of the first school nurse. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, p. 67.

53. Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, *Annual Report*, 1923.

54. *Story of the Toronto Home and School Council*, pp. 15-16.

55. See Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?*, pp. 86-103 and Paul Rutherford, "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform Movement in Canada, 1880-1920", and John C. Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada 1890-1920" in Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. Artibise, *The Canadian City, Essays in Urban History* (Toronto, 1977), pp. 368-92, 392-411.

loss of faith in women's moral superiority during the decade of the 1920s undermined maternalist ideology as a justification and explanation of women's special role for public service.⁵⁶ For Home and School this meant that the coherence once provided by the reformist drive was lost to an organizational structure that relied more on salaried employees and less on volunteer effort just as other secular reformers allowed control of their causes to fall within the purview of administrators. In the process, the attachment to progressive education which had been the hallmark of the movement during its inception was lost. The emerging organization, staffed by new personnel, turned to well-meaning but less significant activities.

In what now became an increasing disarray of interests, Home and School slowly shed the ideals it had once espoused for the cure to society's ills through improved parenting and better early childhood education. In part this reflected larger contemporary currents by which the conception of the child as a flower to be cultivated was being altered to that of seeing the young as machines to be fine-tuned through reliance on expert advice.⁵⁷ The nascent interest in educational testing extended the possibility of achieving equality for all through differentiation based on testing instruments considered to be scientific. New agencies such as the federal Division of Child Welfare and the Canadian Council on Child Welfare were growing to assume an important role in augmenting the work of child care professionals by disseminating tens of thousands of pamphlets on childrearing and familial matters. The Toronto Home and School Council was associated, however, with the most important experiment in child study during the inter-war period at the St. George's (nursery) school which was associated with the University of Toronto psychology department. In 1927 the parent-teacher organization began co-operation with the school to provide a course for parent education and child study each year for area Home and School groups.

What was properly the dynamic phase in Ontario Home and School ended in the late 1920s. Increased attention was placed on internal organization, in-house publications, and the expansion of the membership. The Ontario federation reached the height of its success in 1927 with 325 clubs, but the depression of the 1930s led to a contraction. By 1932 the number of associations had decreased to 310, although a membership of 40,000 was claimed.⁵⁸ Like its counterparts elsewhere in Canada and the United States, Home and School took off in innumerable directions. Topics suggested for local associations in Ontario to discuss in 1929 included: League of Nations, parent education, child welfare, immunization, Junior Red Cross, school cars of the north, conservation of wild flowers, and thrift. Groups in Ontario showed great relish for censorship of sexual scenes (however defined) from films and secured the establishment of Saturday matinees for children at local cinemas.

These changes were predicated on a turnover in the leadership at both the local and provincial levels. Most of the men whom the home and school movement in Ontario had managed to attract now fled from it, as did teachers increasingly. Samuel McCready had

56. Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canadian Feminism in the 1920's: The Case of Nellie McClung", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12, 4 (Summer, 1977), p. 66.

57. Veronica Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920-1940", in Joy Parr (ed.), *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 160-78.

58. *The Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 5, no. 5 (Apr. 1929): 8; vol. 7, no. 1 (October, 1930): 9; vol. 8, no. 2 (January 1931): 2. Burgoyne, *History of the Home and School Movement*, pp. 6, 78, 92. An estimate of 360 clubs in 1930 by the president of the federation, Kate Morris, in *The Canadian School Board Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2 (February, 1930) appears an exaggeration.

been succeeded as president of the Ontario federation by J.A. Dale, Director of the School of Social Work at the University of Toronto, 1923. After Dale stepped down in 1926 and was succeeded by Aletta Marty, leadership came increasingly to devolve on middle-class women as it had at the very beginning. By 1930 there was only one man active on the provincial executive. Others like Peter Sandiford and McCready had found the hopes for change expressed by the early movement to be chimerical and had developed other interests in such things as Junior Red Cross and adult education. For their part, teachers were also less willing to view home and school as a great experiment; they devoted more of their time to professional matters and their own teachers' federations. *The School*, published by the Ontario College of Education, had shown some interest in the movement when it appeared innovative, but now turned a deaf ear. Instead, it was the *School Board Journal* which reported Home and School activities to a larger audience.

The new face of Ontario Home and School was expressed by Adelaide McLaughlin, wife of industrialist R.S. McLaughlin. A vice-president of the Ontario federation since 1924, Adelaide McLaughlin became its longest serving president from 1931 to 1936. Executive members were entertained at her Parkwood estate in Oshawa and meetings in Toronto were now held at the socially prestigious Granite Club. McLaughlin exuded the religiosity and moralistic outlook among the upper-middle class in the inter-war years. "The Home and School movement is not a crusade to reform the schools", she informed members, "it is not a lyceum course to offer entertainment to the community; nor is it a federation of clubs, each operating independently". Rather, McLaughlin defined the organization through two principles: "Absolute non-interference with school administration" and "Intelligent support for the school system". Religion, morality and music were the special interests which she attempted to foster through the Ontario federation. "The home must be strong in the faith", she declared. "The first law on this subject was Moses' command to teach God's word to children, over thirty-three hundred years ago. Moses made the home the first school and the parents the first teachers". She counselled parents to protect their children from the "ever increasing menace" of indecent motion pictures and to promote musical education so that "every child is taught to know and love good music".⁵⁹

Until the formation of a national Home and School federation in Toronto in 1927 and for sometime thereafter, parent-teacher activities in Canada developed in solitary isolation and drew their inspiration from the United States rather than other Canadian centres. Calgary was another early centre with the first group being formed at the Connaught School in 1914. A city organization was created in 1922 and a provincial federation later, but as their activities were not documented we know little about them. The Home and School movement in Nova Scotia developed later and was predominantly as a rural organization. Spurred by the 1927 Toronto meeting, Dora Baker and Loran De Wolfe returned to Nova Scotia to spearhead the expansion of Home and School in that province.⁶⁰

British Columbia was the only other province which saw significant parent-teacher activity in the post-war years and for which it is possible to draw comparisons with Ontario. Two separate parent-teacher groups developed simultaneously in British Columbia, one

59. Mrs R.S. McLaughlin, "The Home and School Movement", *The Ontario Home and School Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (October, 1931): 6-7. See also McLaughlin's other addresses in vol. 7, (May, 1931): 4; vol. 8, (January, 1932): 11; vol. 9, no. 2 (February, 1932).

60. Penrose, "The Educational Significance of the Home and School Movement", pp. 23-24. J.M. Norman, "Loran De Wolfe, Forerunner of Progressive Education", *Profiles of Canadian Educators*, pp. 270-88.

in Vancouver and another on Vancouver Island, in response to immediate problems in both urban and rural schools. Neither group was animated by the social reformism apparent in Ontario nor by the impetus to give expression to recent trends in educational thought. Although there were similarities with Ontario in their desire to implement elements of the "new education" curriculum such as industrial arts and home economics, the British Columbia groups were more pragmatic in their response to educational change and consequently their program was less coherent from the outset. British Columbian PTA's were primarily social service oriented in relation to their local schools.

The first parent-teacher group in British Columbia, formed in the Craigflower school district of Saanich (near Victoria) in 1915, modelled its constitution on one brought from California. Other groups emerged around the Island and a central Saanich PTA was formed in 1920. Little is known of their early activity other than their desire to follow American precedent. By the 1920s, however, their main activities centred around improved public health measures and other services associated with schools in their communities. The Saanich Central PTA collected \$385 in 1921 for a dental clinic for schoolchildren and informed the town council that a total of \$850 was needed to make it operable. When a grant of \$400 was requested, the "suggestion was received by the council with very little enthusiasm". Somehow opposition was overcome and the dental clinic began the following year with a doctor and nurse examining children and sending home reports of costs for dental work, although it was noted that "no child needing attention is allowed to suffer because of his inability to pay".⁶¹ Residents in Cumberland, north of Port Alberni, tackled a more basic issue in their remote community where twenty-six children had to walk from four to six miles daily to attend school. The local PTA hoped it could solve a transportation problem that had been discussed without result by the town council and provincial government for six years.⁶²

As the Vancouver PTA grew out of the University Women's Club, it involved a larger number of women with post-secondary education among its leadership than was seen on the island or in Toronto. Even though it included men among its ranks, it sought and won acceptance within Vancouver as one of the city's prominent women's clubs. Three university educated women were influential in the formative years: Evlyn Farris and Mrs A.T. Fuller, both graduates of Acadia (the former with an M.A.) and Olive Muirhead, a graduate of London.⁶³ Farris was a member of the education committee of the University Women's Club where a paper was read suggesting the establishment of PTA's. This led to the formation of the first group at the Baysview School in 1916 and a second which copied a constitution from Washington State. Fuller, also a member of the University Women's Club, was not only the operative figure in the formation of a Vancouver Parent-Teacher Federation, but she also came to chair its organizing committee. When she stepped down as federation president, she was succeeded by Olive Muirhead who went on to become

61. "Urge Grant for Clinic", and "Saanich Centre PTA", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 4, 32 (July 16, 1921) and 5, 6 (January 14, 1922), p. 2.

62. "Parent-Teacher Worker in Cumberland", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 4, 16 (March 26, 1921).

63. On Farris, see Tami Adilman, "Evlyn Farris and the University Women's Club", in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (eds.), *Her Own Right, Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C.* (Victoria, B.C., 1980), pp. 147-66. M.L. Bollert, Dean of Women at the University of British Columbia said publicly that she had been credited with the idea of establishing parent-teacher work in Vancouver. "Second Parent-Teacher Educational Conference", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 5, 8 (January 28, 1922), p. 1. Laura Jamieson, prominent suffragist and future judge and politician, was president of the B.C. federation in 1925-6.

first president of the provincial federation when 240 delegates gathered in Vancouver in 1922 to unite the city and island associations.

Parent-teacher activity in Vancouver was initially a response to poor physical conditions in the schools and the desire to effect some specific changes in the school system. Vancouver grew quickly early in the century and the effects of this rapid expansion on schools was made apparent through surveys in 1920 which revealed poor lighting and ventilation, unsanitary conditions, and occasional vermin infestations. Classes sometimes contained as many as fifty pupils, while others were conducted half-days due to lack of space. One survey revealed that a quarter of the school population were underheight or underweight and that some five hundred pupils attended classes in school basements or attics.⁶⁴

Some salient differences separated the parent-teacher movement in British Columbia from its Ontario counterpart. Teachers played a more prominent role in the former province because local associations were advised to give equal representation to parents and teachers on executives. Principals of local schools were named as honorary presidents which helps to explain why men formed up to thirteen per cent of executive members in Vancouver in the early 1920s. Male involvement was much higher on Vancouver Island where more than a third of executive members in 1921 were men and the influence of Christian ministers was more pronounced.⁶⁵ Despite the greater presence of university women in the Vancouver area, there was no feminist campaign to promote women's issues other than a drive which was mounted to endow a chair in home economics at the University of British Columbia. No conscious effect was made to promote ethnic harmony within parent-teacher associations, but a separate Japanese PTA was formed in Vancouver in the early 1920s.⁶⁶

The British Columbia PTA interpreted its objective of improved childhood education through parent-teacher co-operation in a different way than Ontario. Programs aimed at adult education and child study received less attention than charitable activities and improvement of physical amenities. Both city and provincial federations provided lending libraries and speakers for meetings, but these services remained very limited. In 1927 the provincial federation admitted its weakness in this area and called on local associations to devote half of their programs to improved parenting.⁶⁷ The British Columbia PTA federations were not influenced to any extent by progressive educational thought, but in some respects they anticipated the Putnam-Weir school survey of 1925 which became the platform of progressive education in that province.⁶⁸ The PTA's were particularly interested in the expansion of home economics, industrial arts, and music in the curriculum. They favoured the introduction of junior high schools with practical courses in the former two subjects for those not academically inclined. They also called for the establishment of a technical high school in Vancouver. The high school entrance examination was opposed on grounds that it was "unobjective"; a better rounded assessment of student achievement involving teacher recommendations and standardized testing was endorsed. The construction of

64. "Aberdeen-Dawson Parent-Teachers Hold Interesting Meeting", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 3, 27 (June 12, 1920), p. 14. "General Gordon PTA", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 4, 17 (April 2, 1921).

65. Calculated from the lists of executives printed in *Western Woman's Weekly*, 3, 47 (October 30, 1920), p. 5; 4, 5 (January 8, 1921); (November 18, 1922).

66. *Ibid.*, "Japanese PTA At Home", 6, 15 (March 17, 1923).

67. Public Archives of British Columbia, Add MSS 737, Box 8, Provincial Parent-Teacher Federation of British Columbia, *Report of the Fifth Annual Convention*, 1927, pp. 12, 28.

68. J.H. Putnam and G.M. Weir, *Survey of the School System* (Victoria, 1925).

gymnasias and improved school ventilation were also promoted.⁶⁹ At the first meeting of the provincial federation in 1922 resolutions supporting the extension of the municipal franchise and the lengthening of teacher training to two years were carried. The question of movie censorship was approached cautiously at first, but in 1927 a resolution in favour of provincial censorship of "sex immorality" in films and advertising found support.⁷⁰

At both the provincial and local levels, PTA leaders in British Columbia stressed the need to improve local schools so that they would become social centres representing a return to the old community idea where "the school was a force second only to the church."⁷¹ Local associations were encouraged to concern themselves with the creation of school libraries, the purchase of pictures to beautify schools, and the acquisition of motion picture equipment and phonographs. The creation of school gardens, the improvement and supervision of playgrounds, and the construction of athletic facilities were other projects highly favoured at the local level. Some groups pressed for the appointment of school nurses, improved health programs and the distribution of milk. This practical, pragmatic orientation in the Western province was cogently stated by one local PTA: "The objects of this association are to supply milk for children suffering from malnutrition, to produce pictures for the classrooms, and a library."⁷²

By the late 1920s parent-teacher activity in both Ontario and British Columbia had evolved from different poles to a similar position. Any threat that the movement in the former province might have posed to the educational establishment disappeared just as provincial departments of education began to implement elements of the progressive educational program beginning with the Saskatchewan curriculum revision of 1931.⁷³ To a large extent the seeds for this transformation in the Home and School movement from an association interested in changing the educational system to one reflecting the *status quo* were planted by its earliest adherents. Being non-professionals during a period that had come to value professionals more highly than in the past, they sought acceptance from teachers and school authorities. As they achieved official recognition and financial support from the school system, they were no longer in a position to criticize the hand that fed them. The Vancouver group early used the facilities of its school board and the Ontario federation received an annual grant from the provincial government of \$2,000 beginning in 1920. When the province decided to terminate this subsidy in 1925, Adelaide McLaughlin was able to use direct access to the Premier to see that it was restored. In 1929 the Ontario Department of Education granted permission to Home and School representatives to enter normal schools to inform prospective teachers about the work of their organization.

By 1930 parent-teacher activity had become an accepted feature of school systems in most Canadian provinces. Quarrels between associations and school administrators had subsided as the former accepted a more clearly defined but largely ineffectual role. Many of the specific policies that the movement had early stood for had now been accepted by

69. See the address by Olive Muirhead, *Western Woman's Weekly*, 2 (April 5, 1919); "First Provincial Parent-Teacher Convention", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 5, 22 (May 6, 1922), p. 1; *Western Woman's Weekly*, 5, 17 (April 1, 1922), p. 2.

70. P.A.B.C., Add MSS 737, Box 8, B.C.P.T.A., *Fifth Annual Convention*, 1927, p. 30.

71. Charlotte Gordon, "The Value of Parent-Teacher Associations", *Western Woman's Weekly*, 2, 30 (July 5, 1919).

72. *Western Woman's Weekly*, 3, 47 (October 30, 1920). See also the B.C.P.T.A., *Annual Reports*, 1927, p. 26; 1928, p. 32; 1931, p. 8.

73. Patterson, "Progressive Education: Impetus to Change", p. 180.

the educational establishment and were even espoused by politicians like Ontario Minister of Education and Premier, G. Howard Ferguson.⁷⁴ Changes had occurred at the local level through the activities of Home and School groups as well as those of other organizations such as the I.O.D.E., Women's Institutes, and Local Councils of Women. The curriculum had been altered to include new subjects, activity methods of instruction were more widespread, play and physical education had found a new place in the schools, facilities for special education and the disabled had begun to be provided, and medical and dental inspection of the school population was increasingly routine. Home and School associations contributed to these changes and helped to make the local school a community institution, but in the process the Ontario variant lost its vision of a society altered through improved childhood education. After the Great Depression the parent-teacher movement would enter a new period of expansion, but it would do so without any coherent outlook. Home and School had become an inconsequential adjunct of the school system rather than a vehicle for altering society through improved childhood education.

74. Peter Oliver, *G. Howard Ferguson: Ontario Tory* (Toronto, 1977), pp. 233-66.