THE CONTRIBUTION OF DR. SAMPSON PAUL ROBINS TO EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE McGILL NORMAL SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the educational career of Dr. Sampson Paul Robins. Robins' active involvement in education began in Upper Canada in 1848 and ended in Montreal shortly before his death in 1930. The greater part of those years, from 1857 to 1907, found Robins associated with the McGill Normal School. Largely, this study will focus on Robins' work during this period with emphasis on his role in major educational developments of the times.

The hypothesis is that Robins played a much more influential part in the evolution of the McGill Normal School and in the development of specific aspects of education in the province of Quebec than the literature would indicate.

RESUME

Cette thèse trace la carrière pédagogique du Dr. Sampson Paul Robins. La participation active de Robins dans cette profession aura ses débuts en Haut-Canada en 1848 pour se terminer à Montréal peut de temps avant sa mort en 1930. La majeure partie de ces années, de 1857 à 1907, marque l'association entre Robins et l'Ecole Normale de McGill. La concentration de cette étude-ci sera surtout sur le travail de Robins pendant cette période et plus particulièrement sur le rôle qu'il à joué dans les principaux développements pédagogiques de l'époque.

L'hypothèse se voit que Robins, contrairement aux impressions laissées par les études menées à ce jour, a participé de façon beaucoup plus influente à l'évolution de l'Ecole Normale de McGill ainsi qu'à certains aspects spécifiques du développement de la Pédagogie dans la Province de Québec.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to Diane Short of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal who helped me uncover some archival material which became invaluable to the writing of this thesis.

I am indebted to my friend James MacDonald for his help in typing this manuscript and for lending a critical ear.

This thesis could not have been completed if not for my wife Susan and daughter Corina who provided love and encouragement and allowed me the many hours needed to complete the work.

I would especially like to thank my parents who have always maintained that an education is no weight to carry.

M.T.K.
Montreal, 1986

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Sampson Paul Robins was associated with the McGill Normal School from its opening in 1857 to its closing in 1907. During that fifty year period, he played a pivotal role in the evolution of teacher training in the province of Quebec. Because Robins was involved in educational endeavours outside the Normal School, it is necessary to examine these activities in order to gain an overall picture of his career and to pinpoint specific contributions made by him to the field of education.

While the nature of this study is not solely biographical, attention will be given to Robins' family background and his early education in England. The influence of his family, particularly from the standpoint of religion, is important. Robins' religious beliefs will later be shown to have pervaded his lifelong view of the main purpose of education. Similarly, his experiences as a student in England's mass system of education during its developmental stages left a negative impression on him that in many ways shaped his philosophy of education.

It is the purpose of this thesis to show the importance of Robins' contribution to education during a remarkable seventy-five year involvement in the field. Considering the fact that he was a key figure in so many major educational developments, it is curious that his achievements have been almost totally ignored in sources dealing with the history of Quebec education or the McGill Normal School. While he was eulogized at the closing ceremonies of the Normal School, and was sometimes profiled by fellow educators in various educational journals, the scope of his accomplishments has never been detailed.

Recent works, such as Frost's McGill University for the Advancement of Learning, make mention of the McGill Normal School but devote little attention to Robins' role within that institution. Similarly, Paradissis' thesis, The McGill Normal School - A Brief History, lends the impression that Robins was largely an inconsequential figure within the school. Certainly, Robins' accomplishments may have been less celebrated than those of contemporaries such as Dawson. Nevertheless, he played a large part in the maturation of Quebec's educational system and in the training of its teachers.

Robins came to the McGill Normal School at its inception in 1857 at the personal recommendation of the father of Ontario's educational system, Egerton Ryerson. Robins brought with him valuable experience at the Toronto Normal School which had preceded the McGill Normal School by a decade. Although there is little evidence to indicate that there was anything remarkable about Robins' influence on the Normal School during this period, he unquestionably made a more note worthy contribution: playing a central role in the founding of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers. His goal of establishing teaching as a true profession received much of his attention throughout the years and he remained an active participant in the P.A.P.T. long after his official retirement from the Normal School.

Dawson's resignation as principal of the Normal School and the subsequent appointment of his successor, William Henry Hicks, displeased Robins, who felt slighted at being overlooked for the position. While he continued to teach at the Normal School during this period, his energies were more focused on his work as Superintendent under the Montreal Board of School Commissioners. His

success in that capacity is evidenced by the fact that he made identifiable strides to correct the distinct lack of cohesion evident among city schools at the time of his appointment. In The History of the High School of Montreal, authors Rexford, Gammel, and McBain credit Robins with organizing the city's Protestant schools into a well-regulated system under the Board's authority.[1]

In terms of his involvement in the McGill Normal School, Robins' influence was greatest during his tenure as principal. During that period, curriculum changes were instituted by him which continue to be integral elements of teacher training programs at McGill. The addition of many specialists to the school's staff and the setting-up of a program to train kindergarten specialists were changes effected by Robins to meet the needs of a growing public school population and the ever-diverging role of prospective teachers.

It is the opinion of the writer that Robins' most significant achievement during his years as principal was his establishment of the Teachers' Normal Institutes

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[1] O.B. Rexford, Allan Gammel, and McBain. The History of the High School of Montreal (Montreal: The Old Boys' Association, n.d.), p. 70.

designed for the in-service training of teachers. Indeed, this development foreshadowed the continuing education branch of McGill's Faculty of Education which has become a basic element in modern teacher training.

Because Robins' involvement in the province's educational matters did not end with his retirement as principal in 1907, a portion of this work will describe his post-retirement activities. During this period, Robins authored several articles and continued to be both a member of the Protestant Council and a visible participant in P.A.P.T. affairs.

In compiling the material for this thesis, the writer has consulted a variety of both primary and secondary sources. The most significant primary sources are Robins' own writings. Most of these are articles authored by Robins for educational journals and clearly reveal his thoughts concerning education.

A major disappointment in researching this thesis has been the writer's inability to locate a copy of Robins' McGill Normal School - Guide to Work in the Model Schools for Teachers-in Training, published by

the Witness Printing House in 1902. Fortunately, large sections of the booklet are reprinted in John Calam's article "McGill Trains Teachers: 1857-1964," in the September 1964 issue of The Teachers' Magazine. Other articles, particularly those by David C. Munroe and John Irwin Cooper, which appear in the Educational Record of the Province of Quebec, provided some valuable references to Robins' activities at the McGill Normal School. Specific references to the McGill Normal School were consulted in the M.A. theses of : Donna Ronish, The Development of Higher Education for Women at McGill University; Orrin B. Rexford, Teacher Training in the Province of Quebec - A Historical Study to 1857; E.A. Paradissis, The McGill Normal School - A Brief History.

General information concerning education and teacher training in the province of Quebec was found in the histories of Louis-Philippe Audet, in George Parmelee's "English Education" in Canada and Its Provinces, Volume XVI, and Howard Adams' The Education of Canadians 1800-1867.

Specific documents relating to the McGill Normal School are located in the McGill University Archives. The most frequently consulted materials in the archival

holdings were: Letter Books; Prospectuses; Minute Books of the Normal Committee; and the Corporation Minute Books.

Other primary sources which greatly helped research for this thesis include various documents in the possession of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers. The former comprise Minute Books and Annual Reports, including Robins' "Report of the Inspector," which was prepared during his first year in the employ of the Board. Principally, the latter include Minute Books which detail many of Robins' activities within the P.A.P.T. from the time of its founding.

Another primary source which shed light on some of Robins' interests outside the Normal School was the Montreal District Minute Book of the United Church of Canada, which is also located in the McGill Archives.

The most striking feature of Robins' career in education was its sheer longevity. He began teaching in Upper Canada in the pioneer days of the proverbial one-room schoolhouse and went on to being a part of many

significant educational developments in twentieth-century Quebec. Perhaps his most important accomplishments are those associated with his goal of establishing teaching as a profession in its most literal sense and the measures he took within the McGill Normal School to provide teachers with the desired combination of professional training and higher education.

CHAPTER I

FROM FAVERSHAM, ENGLAND TO UPPER CANADA

By the 1830's, the English educational system was in the midst of some significant changes which had begun in the latter 1700's. During this period, education became one of the principal areas of friction in a rapidly changing society. A steady population growth in the late eighteenth century, agricultural change, the growth of towns, and the spread of new ideas led to a re-evaluation of existing social institutions.

It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the nature of the English educational system at the time of Sampson Paul Robins' birth in Faversham in 1833 and to discuss in detail his early experiences as an educator when his family moved to Upper Canada in 1846.

In nineteenth-century England, the process of industrialization and the resulting concentration of population

gave rise to unprecedented social and educational problems. Throughout this period of social upheaval, a number of forces came into play which would ultimately provide the impetus for the notion of mass education. In summarizing the major influences on educational thought of the times, Lawson and Silver have noted that:

> ... new educational ideas and efforts to establish schools emerged from a variety of sources - the political radicalism of the 1790's, traditions of philanthropy, the utilitarianism associated with Jeremy Bentham and the laissez-faire economists, the evangelical movement in the Church of England, and the educational radicalism connected with the ideas of Rousseau... The English radicals made education as central to their thinking as the philosophers who influenced the French revolution had done.[1]

English radicals of the late 1700's clearly viewed education as a principal instrument in the shaping of a new social order. To this end, William Godwin had noted, "if education cannot do everything, it can do much."[2] Similarly, James Mill stated that:

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[1] John Lawson and Harold Silver, A Logical History of Education in England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 228.

[2] William Godwin, The Enquirer (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), p. 3.

> ... the power of education embraces everything between the lowest stage of intellectual and moral rudeness and the highest state, not only of actual, but of possible perfection. And if the power of education be so immense, the motive for perfecting it is great beyond expression.[3]

Where education is concerned, perhaps the most influential body of ideas in nineteenth century England was generated by the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith and the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. The utilitarians formulated theories which ultimately resulted in significant educational developments: monitorial schools for the poor, the reform of secondary education, a middle-class university for London, and the mechanics' institute and useful knowlege movements.[4]

The evangelical movement - Wesleyan Methodism - which had its beginnings in the Church of England in the late 1700's, was the religious complement to utilitarianism in terms of its awareness of the changes taking place in English society.[5] However, the utilitarians

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[3] James Mill, "Education," Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica (Edinburgh: A. Constable and Co., 1819), p. 18-19.

[4] Lawson and Silver, op. cit., p. 231.

[5] Ibid., p. 231.

realized that education could serve the masses in facilitating their adaptation to the new social realities while the new evangelicals' educational aim was to warn against social and moral dangers associated with urbanization and to preserve the social order.

The influence of many of the French philosophers is distinctly recognizable in educational philosophy prevalent in England at the turn of the century. While it is clear that Rousseau and his English followers were not concerned with mass education in an industrializing society per se, the Rousseauites succeeded in focusing attention on the importance of the development of the individual child, though their immediate influence was largely confined to middle-class educational experiments.

Opinions as to the direction an emerging educational system should take were as diverse as the problems inherent in a society undergoing unprecedented change.

> Late eighteenth-century society had discovered, then, the educational problems of a mass society, and those of the individual child. The answers to the problems were not easy. There were profoundly different views, for example, about the role of the state in achieving a 'national' education. Joseph Priestly, and William Godwin were opposed to state

> involvement in education, since government would tend to use education to buttress its own position. The evangelical educationalists were concerned with a philanthropic enterprise for the spiritual good of the nation, and in such a work the state has no part. Paine, on the other hand, was willing to let government lay the groundwork of a national system. Adam Smith and Malthus were both in favour of publicly provided education, as it was too important to be left to philanthropy. These diverse positions were to be a feature of educational controversy far into the nineteenth century.[6]

While it is not within the scope of this study to detail the development of the English educational system in the late 1700's and early 1800's, outlining prominent educational and religious schools of thought serves the purpose of furnishing some insight into the influences, either direct or indirect, which shaped Robins' early years. In terms of educational practices and the emergence of Wesleyan Methodism, Robins was indeed a product of the times.

Because many of his early educational experiences were responsible for molding Robins' own philosophy of education, this chapter will examine the nature and extent of his early education. Similarly, the influence of his early religious training, largely familial, can be seen

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[6] Ibid., p. 234-235.

throughout his life and is therefore important in understanding Robins' philosophy in a broader context.

Because Robins came to Upper Canada when the province's public educational system was in its formative years, this chapter will also provide an overview of education and teacher training at that time with an emphasis on Robins' role in various educational developments.

In terms of methodology, much of the research for this period has been facilitated by the fact that a great deal of the material used is from Robins' own accounts of his experiences throughout this period.

1. Family Influences and Early Education.

The influence of Robins' family was one which he carried throughout his life. As the son of two preachers of the Bible Christian sect of the Methodist Church, his early environment laid the foundation for his later theories in regard to the main purpose of education. His father, Paul, a Cornish Welshman, had broken with the family tradition of working in the mines to become a

travelling preacher.[7] Apparently, Sampson's mother, Anne Vickery Robins, also of Welsh descent, was equally known throughout the south of England as an Evangelist.[8] It is interesting that in the days when women often remained in the shadow of their husbands' achievements, Robins' mother conducted a vigorous campaign against smuggling, one of the notorious evils of the day.[9] Many years later, Robins was to note that, "because of my mother's attainments, the idea prevalent at the time, that women were inferior to men, never entered my head."[10] In many ways this statement is more significant than anecdotal, for Robins was to become a central figure in lobbying for educational opportunities for Montreal women, and, it was under his principalship that women were first appointed to positions of unprecedented influence at the McGill Normal School.

By Robins' own account, his education in those early years in England was largely the responsibility of his parents. His recollections of experiences in public

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[7] R.E. Howe, "Samson [sic] Paul Robins, LL.D." The Teachers' Magazine, 5, No. 2 (Jan., 1923), p. 11.

[8] Idem.

[9] Idem.

[10] Idem.

schools, which were intermittent because the family moved so often, tend to be highly critical of both the nature of education at that time and the questionable motives of those responsible for its existence. Indeed, it would appear that what he retained from these experiences was that the system was poorly devised, often unjust, and he remained resolute not to repeat these mistakes in his own career as an educator.

Providing an account of his first school experiences and a commentary on the development of mass education in England, Robins notes:

> I first went to school in Plymouth, Devonshire, England. The year was 1838; my age was not yet six years. Contrary to custom I was admitted thus early because I had been able to read the Bible for the previous two years. I was not responsible for contemporaneity with popular education. I could not help first entering England in 1833, when the efforts of many patriotic, far-seeing parliamentarians, led by Lord Brougham, succeeded in winning the first English recognition, by the parliamentary grant, of the educational needs of the masses... Education long was esteemed dangerous for those who wore neither surplices nor spurs. The reformation only very slowly opened school doors to the masses. If they could read they could be dissatisfied. This persuasion pervaded the higher grade of society... This feeling of hostility to universal education had

> by no means died when I first entered the British and Foreign Plymouth School. As far as memory, weary with the lapse of many years, serves, I will tell you all frankly what I now know of my experiences in that first school.11

Robins went on to say that he had no recollection of any lesson in reading, spelling, geography or grammar. Nor did he recall ever being taught anything by the master of the school. Robins' clearest memory of the school was of a school monitor leading the class in a daily chant of time-tables that went on until it was impressed on the memories of all the students.

Apparently, Robins' most lasting impression of the school and its master was formed by one particular incident...

> One winter morning we were coming into school, in fact had just entered, and were passing to our seats, when the skin of a little ill-dressed boy appeared through his torn trousers, and the master flicked with his cane the bare spot, not severely, I think, but the act labelled him cruel and unjust in one little mind that has striven ever since it has borne responsibility to avoid incurring like censure.12

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11 S.P. Robins, "My First School." The Teachers' Magazine, 5, No. 2 (Jan., 1923), p. 9.

12 Idem.

Considering the negativity he associated with these school experiences, Robins was fortunate that his father's ministry as a circuit preacher frequently forced the family to live in areas where there were no schools to which Sampson could be sent. With the aid of a good home library, his education largely became the domain of his mother. Although his father was often absent, Robins credits him with providing infrequent but memorable lessons. Many of his early positive educational experiences were principally a result of a home environment in which education was given a high priority. By way of example, Robins recalled a conversation between his father and his uncle as to the importance of teaching arithmetic by thorough explanation and demonstration which he credits with arousing a life-long interest in that discipline.[13]

In terms of molding Robins' philosophy of education, family influence and his experiences in the emerging English public educational system are paramount. Elaborating on the opposed nature of these two influences he notes:

> Beginning with my childish experiences in a profound distrust of monitors and the monitorial system, they developed into

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[13] G.W. Parmelee, "Dr. Robins Attains His 91st Birthday," The Educational Record, 44, Nos. 1, 2, 3 (Jan., Feb., March 1924), p. 32.

> suspicion of the pupil-teacher system. Both systems guided and minimized by consummate wisdom may be made useful, but consummate wisdom does not habitually dwell in public schools. Not even pupil-teachers are invariably successful. The pupil-teacher is not seldom the victim of a shallow self-sufficiency and an arrogant self-evaluation, which leaves his pupils ill-understood and discouraged. The intellect cannot be too lofty nor the moral nature too refined into daily contact with which the child - the little child - is brought. I know of nothing more precious than our children. If there is any more exalted consecrated duty than the development of little sons and daughters of the Most High into men and women, physically healthful, mentally clear and full-orbed, and morally strong, fit for service in the redemption of the world, I have never known of it. God's crowns are not for the heads of emperors and empresses but for some fathers and mothers and for some teachers and preachers.[14]

Robins went on to say that he envisioned a time when mothers would not be burdened with the physical chores of housekeeping and would be free to be playmates and teachers of the toddlers consigned to kindergartens. He further criticized the widespread use of corporal punishment prevalent during his early years in school and referred to this type of punishment as a, "most serious act."[15]

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[14] Robins, "My First School," op. cit., p. 10-11.

[15] Idem.

> ... the form of public education with which I came into contact, I would rather say into collision, in my childhood exhibited itself as a system devised by masters for servants. In most cases they meant well but they who had education were and long had been masters. They who needed education were and long had been servile. The first had never experienced, and could not understand; the latter could not reveal what was wanted, their pangs were those of a secret unknown disease. And thus it must always be. No class can organize a satisfactory form of education for another class. Not masters for servants, nor clergy for laity, nor hereditary governments for subjects, nor aristocracy for commonalty, nor men for women have ever furnished, or ever will furnish unaided a satisfactory educational provision.[16]

2. An Overview of Education in Upper Canada in the Early 1800's.

While it is not the purpose of this study to detail educational developments in Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century, the most prominent educational trends of the day will be summarized with the intention of providing a backdrop for the general state of education at the time Robins came to Canada in 1846.

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[16] Idem.

In many ways the distinctive educational system that developed in Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century was tied to the province's political realities at that time. The colonial legislature was composed of three entities: Executive, Council, and Assembly. The Executive office was the domain of the Lieutenant Governor who was appointed by the Government. In turn, the Council was appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, with the Legislative Assembly being an elected body. By the nineteenth century, almost all political power was in the hands of a small group of upper-class business and religious leaders. Because of their cohesion, they became known as the Family Compact and their sphere of influence included not only economic and political life in the colony but also the social and educational institutions.

The most influential member of the Compact was John Strachan, a member of the Church of England and later Bishop of Toronto, who had come to Upper Canada from Scotland in 1799. In 1812 he was rector of the parish of York and six years later he was appointed an executive councillor and a member of the Legislative Council. In 1825, he was made archdeacon of York and it was in this

dual role as archdeacon of the Church of England and Chief Executive Officer of the Legislative Council that he controlled education in the province. In summarizing his influence on education in Upper Canada, Adams has noted that Strachan:

> ... possessed an aggressive and domineering personality, and apparently was ruthless and intimidating in his behaviour. His experience as a teacher in an exclusive school influenced his aristocratic philosophy of education for the colony. Accordingly, he led a movement for the establishment of a distinctive school system for upper-class youth. Since he believed in the inherent leadership qualities of aristocracy, it followed that his system of education would be exclusively for these potential leaders of society. According to Strachan, education for the common people was a waste of time since they were unable to benefit from the instruction; they would never become the leaders of society. With these qualities and aims he was successful in preventing the development of free public education for the general population for a number of years, and as a matter of course, the youths whom he taught became members of the Family Compact and perpetuated the unpopular oligarchical rule.[17]

Throughout the early 1800's, educational legislation in Upper Canada continued to reflect the Compact's patri-

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[17] Howard Adams, The Education of Canadians 1800-1867 (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), p. 3.

cian philosophy. The Education Act of 1807, secured by Strachan with the help of the Legislative Councillors, stated that public grammer schools would be established in eight districts of the province. While fifty-three trustees were appointed by the Governor, the majority were members of the Church of England which virtually assured the appointment of Anglican teachers. As Bannister has emphasized:

> The schools were undemocratic and soon became class schools attended by those whose parents were members of the Church of England and of the administrative class. This was inevitable. The trustees were chosen from these classes, and it was but natural that the schools should be looked upon as established for their special benefit.[18]

Among the general population, disapproval of the Education Act of 1807 became increasingly more pronounced over the ensuing years. As objections mounted and petitions to the Legislature increased, a Common School Bill was passed in 1816. Although the terms of this act gave local citizens the right to build a schoolhouse, appoint trustees, and hire teachers, real authority rested with the District

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[18] J.A. Bannister, Early Education of Norfolk County (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1926), p. 68-69.

Board of Education appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Through this body, the Family Compact was able to retain its considerable influence over the public schools.

The Compact further reinforced its control over the educational system through the Education Act of 1824. This act gave the Lieutenant Governor the power to appoint a General Board of Education. In reality, Strachan was appointed Chairman of the Board and together with the remaining five board members, all influential Anglicans, manipulated virtually all aspects of education in the province. Typical of the political climate, this General Board was accountable only to itself and continued to administer the educational system as the private domain of the Anglican and Family Compact elite.

Throughout the years, popular opposition to the educational status quo mounted and a growing reform movement began its push toward the democritization and secularization of education. In terms of changing the face of Upper Canada's educational system in the pre-Confederation years, Egerton Ryerson, a young Methodist minister, was the most renowned of the Reformers. As Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada from 1844 to 1876, Ryerson established a common school system

which served as a model for most of Canada.

3. Initial Teaching Experiences and the Founding of the Toronto Normal School.

Robins was twelve years old when his family settled near Peterborough, Upper Canada, in 1846. While educational opportunities were extremely limited at this time, Robins later recalled having the good fortune of discovering a teacher in the area who had been a professor of Mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin.[19] Many years later, Robins was to recollect this teacher with much affection and gratitude. "The Rev. R.C. Taylor with whom I studied in Peterboro, led me into a new world."[20] The relationship with this gentleman, who fueled Robins' love of mathematics, was short-lived however; before he reached his fifteenth birthday, Robins had begun his career as an educator.

> I had said that I would not be a shoemaker or a schoolmaster, but I must have been destined by the almighty for teaching because when I was just over fifteen years

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[19] Howe, op. cit., p. 11.

[20] Idem.

> of age my father "hired" me as a teacher for the little school of the Fourth Concession of Dummer, near Peterboro, for which I was paid $8 a month and my board.[21]

While many of Dr. Ryerson's reforms concerning teacher certification had been sanctioned, they had not yet been implemented. Robins was presented with his first diploma by a District Superintendent who asked him, "Do you know arithmetic?" When he replied, "Yes," the trustee enquired, "How much do you know?" to which Robins replied, "Pretty much everything;" and no further questions were asked on the subject.[22]

Armed with his permit, Robins later recalled being placed in charge of the school in Dummer, "with nothing between me and the North Pole."[23] Whereas descriptions of schools in nineteenth-century Upper Canada can be found in a variety of sources, Robins' narrative of the school in which he began to teach provides an invaluable first-person documentary of life in a country school at that time.

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[21] Parmelee, op. cit., p. 32.

[22] Idem.

[23] Idem.

> The people occupying the neighboring farms which they were slowly and with almost incredible toil constructing in the forest, were part of a large immigration that a few years previously had settled in Peterborough and the adjoining townships. Those who supported the school of which I was the master were chiefly Protestant Irish with a few Scotch. Painfully and slowly they were being welded into Canadians; but the process after less than twenty years of common hardship was far from complete. They had built two or three schools by sectional effort that were suited to the needs of but few, and were in location unsuited to the mass of the scholars. But a man who had neither heir or representative was so ill-advised as to die, leaving ownerless one hundred acres of land for which he had paid one English shilling per acre, and the shanty which he had erected and inhabited thereon. This vacant property being more central than their schoolhouses was temporarily at least expropriated by the school trustees and was their school, when I was their teacher.[24]

Robins went on to describe the utter isolation of the school. Northern neighbours included wolves and perhaps a few Indians.

According to Robins, the school was about twelve by fifteen feet and made of logs which were roughly fitted together by axe. Furnishings were also meagre and boasted

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[24] S.P. Robins, "The School in Which I Began to Teach." The Teachers' Magazine, 5, No. 3 (March, 1923), p. 18.

no individual desks but rather an arrangement of boards which stretched the length of the building. A few books, slates, and one ruler made up the school's supplies.

> Our comfort was the stove, a box stove; true it had no door, and so was an ungovernable and provoking servant. The exit of the stove-pipe was by a round hole in the wooden triangle of the east wall. Our seats were arranged around the stove, and there we sat for as many lessons as possible accomodating our approach to the stove to the temperature of the room and the violence of the fire. If the wind were from the east, the weather was not usually extremely cold and we bore as best we could the occasional puffs of smoke sent back down the stove-pipe and out into the school-room. On one occasion at least the fire brands were blown out on to the floor and fell through the generous chinks in quantities sufficient to inflame the accumulated lunch papers beneath us. Then, hurrah! Master and pupils constituting a volunteer fire company compacted a huge snow-ball outside, lifted a section of the ill-fitting floor and rolled the improvised extinguisher down upon the hissing, discomfitted conflagration. Troubles with west winds were more frequent. Western storms were very cold. We took care to have an abundant supply of fuel. Not only our stove but our stove-pipe was red hot, and, as the distance from the fire to the end of the stove-pipe was small, on more than one occasion we set fire to the exit. Then stampede! Master and scholar rushed out to smother the fire with snow. Fortunately the building had no lofty towers, not even a terrace; our stately structure was at no points much over ten feet from the ground and with winter snows the height was less, so that our snow-balling and snow manipulations in general were effective, although our fingers were cold. Our equipment was so scanty that we might

> declared that we had none, we had no blackboard, and we had no map. I know of nothing unenumerated but a pail for water and a tin cup for common use.[25]

According to the custom of the times, Robins "boarded round" with various families in the county. The settlement was a new one and residents were still clearing the land when he began teaching there. As a testament to the truly pioneer conditions which existed, Robins recalled farmers taking a break from their tree-chopping to grind grain in pepper-mills, as no mill for the grain had yet been built.[26] He also remembered the day he arrived for his stay with a family who had no food in the house. All day he waited with the hungry children until late in the evening when the father finally appeared in an ox-cart loaded with a sack of oatmeal.[27]

The circumstances surrounding Robins' being hired for his second teaching position proved to be rather humorous. Disturbed at seeing the boys treating the girls roughly at the school in Dummer, he announced, "I'll give the ruler to the next one who tries it."[28] One of the pupils,

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[25] Ibid., p. 19.

[26] Howe, op. cit., p. 12.

[27] Idem.

[28] Idem.

19 years old, taller and heavier than young Robins, laughed at this threat and deliberately pulled one of the girls on his knee. "Stand up!" thundered Robins. He ordered the offender to hold out his hand and when he refused to do so Robins said, "If you don't you'll go out of this room quicker than you came into it."[29] To his own astonishment, the boy held out his hand and took the punishment. After school the children gathered around the boy and asked why he did it, pointing out that Robins couldn't have thrown him out. "You don't know what a tiger-cat he looked," was the boy's reply.[30]

Apparently, the incident had a further consequence for the boy's father was chairman of the Board of Trustees. "We've got a master that is too good for us," he told a member of another Board who asked his advice about a teacher; "we'll hire him to you."[31]

Robins' interview with the Superintendent was cut short however, for when he saw the youthful Robins he roared, "Go along home to your mother."[32] This curt dis-

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29 Ibid.

30 Idem.

31 Idem.

32 Idem.

missal proved to be only a minor stumbling-block to Robins, for he was aware of the fact that there were other means of obtaining authority to teach. At the time, certificates from three ministers were enough to qualify someone for a position as an instructor and Robins went about acquiring these. Thus, the District Superintendent notwithstanding, he was established in the school.

A few months later, when teachers were required to undergo examinations according to the terms of Ryerson's Educational Act, Robins had the distinction of being granted one of the first provincial certificates issued to teachers in Upper Canada. When the results of the examinations became known, it was announced that Robins, who a few months earlier had been sent, "home to his mother," was the best teacher in the united counties of Northumberland and Durham.[33]

While Robins' reminiscences of his early teaching experiences clearly show that teacher qualifications in Upper Canada were low by modern standards, they shed light on a virtual laissez-faire system of permit-giving.

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[33] Idem.

During this period however, the efforts of Ryerson were beginning to make inroads that would lead to the development of standards for prospective teachers.

Shortly after his appointment as Assistant Superintendent of Education for Canada West in October, 1844, Ryerson left for an educational tour of Europe. On his return, he submitted his Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada to the Provincial Secretary. In that report, Ryerson points out that, "There cannot be good Schools without good Teachers; nor can there be, as a general rule, good Teachers any more than good Mechanics, or Lawyers, or Physicians, unless, persons are trained for the profession."[34] According to Ryerson, the resulting advantage of proper teacher training would raise teaching to the status of a profession.[35] Ryerson felt that formal teacher training would elevate the teacher's image in the community and attract more able individuals to the profession.[36]

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[34] Egerton Ryerson, Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada (Montreal: Lovell and Gibson, 1847), p. 156.

[35] J. George Hodgins, ed., Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada (Ontario) 1791-1876 (Toronto: Warwick and Rutter, 1894-1910), Vol. III, p. 137.

[36] Ryerson, op. cit., p. 160.

Secondly, Ryerson felt that formal teacher training would result in better pay. "Increase its value (of teaching) by rendering it more attractive and useful, and the offered remuneration for it will advance in a corresponding ratio."[37] Ryerson noted that where normal schools had been established in Europe and the United States the demand for teachers drastically exceeded the supply.[38]

Finally, Ryerson noted that the training of teachers would, "cause a great saving of time to pupils, and expense to parents and guardians."[39] Clearly, Ryerson's assumption was that a well-trained teacher could accelerate the educative process to the benefit of both the student and his parents or guardians.

Ryerson's recommendation that a normal school be established in Canada West was incorporated in the Common School Act of 1846. The new school, to be located in Toronto, was placed under the authority of a General Board of Education and the general superintendence of Ryerson.

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[37] Idem.

[38] Idem.

[39] Idem.

It should be noted that while graduates of the Normal School, in its early years, appeared to have been accorded more prestige and higher status, teachers with formal training remained the exception rather than the rule. The majority of teachers during this period had no formal training and possessed only County Board Certificates.[40]

In 1851, Robins went to Toronto to become a student at the Normal School. This began a three year association with Ryerson which would ultimately provide the link to the McGill Normal School where Robins would come, at its inception, some six years later. After a period as a pupil at the Toronto Normal School, his ability as an educator earned him a post as a teacher at that institution.

Students at the Toronto Normal School followed a course that prepared them in both pedagogy and a variety of academic subjects. Lectures included the Philosophy of Grammar, Parsing, Geography, Art of Reading, Linear Drawing, Reasoning, History, Trigonometry and the Method

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[40] Albert Fiorino, Teacher Education in Ontario: A History, 1843-1976 (Toronto: Commission on Declining School Enrollments in Ontario, 1978), p. 20.

of Teaching the first Book of Lessons, Music, the Mode of teaching writing, Dictation, Composition, Orthography, Philosophy of Education, and Practice of Teaching. Students were also lectured on Algebra, Science and the Practice of Arithmetic, Geometry, Electricity, Magnetism, Heat, Mechanics, Agricultural Chemistry, and Religion.[41]

While this course of study appears impressive, it should be noted that students attending the Normal School varied in their levels of educational attainment, indicating that the subjects offered were often dealt with at a rather elementary level. Although the main purpose of the Normal School was originally to impart the art of teaching, it would appear that it became necessary to place much more emphasis on the basic subjects.[42]

The year 1854 heralded some personal and professional changes in Robins' life. In that year, he married Miss Elizabeth Hore of Camborne, Ontario, and also accepted the appointment as Head Master of the General School at Brantford.

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[41] Idem.

[42] J. Harold Putnam, Egerton Ryerson and Education in Canada (Toronto: Wm. Biggs, 1912), p. 235.

It would appear that some association between Ryerson and Robins continued through his last few years in Upper Canada, for Ryerson would soon recommend Robins to the authorities at the newly created McGill Normal School.[43]

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[43] Sir J. William Dawson, Fifty Years of Work in Canada: Scientific and Educational (London: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1901), p. 118.

CHAPTER II

ROBINS AT THE McGILL NORMAL SCHOOL UNDER THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF DAWSON, 1857-1871

Through his efforts in founding the Toronto Normal School, it was clearly one of Ryerson's aims to improve and standardize teacher training techniques in Upper Canada. In broader terms, a body of professional educators could subsequently be expected to improve the quality and general character of education in the province as a whole. To some degree, it is the purpose of this chapter to trace parallel educational developments in Lower Canada and to demonstrate that similar motives and ideals led to the establishment of the McGill Normal School.

In addition to outlining events leading to the founding of the McGill Normal School, the admission standards and curriculum of the institution will also be discussed. More central to the theme of this thesis, the chapter will deal with the roles played by the school's central figures,

Sir William Dawson, William Henry Hicks, and Sampson Paul Robins, during its initial years under Dawson's principalship. Essentially, their roles will be scrutinized with a view to determining the nature and respective areas of their administrative responsibilities.

To understand fully the circumstances prevailing in the 1850's which led to the establishment of the McGill Normal School, it is necessary to provide a summary of earlier developments responsible for shaping Lower Canada's educational system as it existed when Robins joined the school at its inception in 1857.

1. An Overview of Education and Teacher Training in Lower Canada to 1857.

The nature and extent of education in New France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are best summarized by Magnuson's simple statement: "... education was a limited enterprise, serving only a minority of the population."[1]

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[1] Roger Magnuson, A Brief History of Quebec Education (Montreal: Harvest House, 1980), p. 1.

Throughout the early 1800's, legislation was passed concerning education. In 1801, "An Act for the Establishment of Free Schools and the Advancement of Learning in This Province" created a corporation designed to set up free public and secondary schools. The Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning was regarded with suspicion by the French, who felt the new system's raison d'être was to Anglicize and Protestantize. Although the number of these schools eventually exceeded 80, they flourished mainly in English regions of the province.[2]

By 1824, it had become painfully evident that the Catholic clergy's support for the Royal schools was not forthcoming. Increasing political pressure for a more decentralized system resulted in the Fabrique Act of 1824. According to this legislation, parish corporations received authorization to establish elementary schools. The fabriques were to have control over building the schools, choice of teachers, salaries, and the course of study. From an historical viewpoint, the new legislation was significant in that it recognized the principle of freedom of instruction and the separation of English and French for educational purposes. With public education

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[2] Roger Magnuson, Education in the Province of Quebec (Montreal: McGill University Printing Service, 1974), p. 13.

firmly in the grasp of the clergy, the educational movement, which Desrosiers has described as, "already vigorous," gained further momentum.[3]

The passage of the Syndics Act of 1829 did not result in the repeal of the previous two laws. To some degree, the earlier laws were made more democratic through the establishment of boards in each educational district composed of five elected trustees. Further, the legislature was now authorized to pay half the cost of new school buildings. In terms of control in the province's educational matters, this law clearly acknowledged the Assembly's power by giving members the right of control and inspection. While Desrosiers has stated that there was, "general satisfaction with a statute that gave absolute control of the schools to the legislature...,"[4] this contentment was surely more prevalent in lay circles as the Catholic clergy were traditionally wary of any legislation which undermined their authority in matters of education. Clerical disapproval notwithstanding, there

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[3] Abelard Desrosiers, "French Education," Canada and Its Provinces, Vol. XVI, ed. by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, (Toronto: Publishers Association of Canada, 1914), p. 413.

[4] Ibid., p. 415.

can be little doubt that a tremendous growth in education had resulted as evidenced by the fact that from 1828 to 1832, the number of schools had increased dramatically from 325 to 1,282.[5]

Lamentably, this period of educational expansion was curtailed by the general political unrest of the 1830's and the friction between the British-dominated Executive Council and the French dominated Assembly. Indeed, this conflict resulted in the council passing a law in 1836 which deprived thirteen hundred primary schools of their grants.[6] This measure virtually closed the doors of primary schools whose municipalities were without sufficient means to ensure their continued operation.

The political crisis spawned by the Rebellion of 1837 resulted in Lord Durham being sent by British officials to investigate the situation in Lower Canada. The British authorities' degree of concern with the situation in the Canadas is exemplified by their granting of unprecedented powers to their appointed representative, Durham. As McArthur has noted:

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[5] Louis-Philippe Audet, Le système scolaire de la province de Québec (Montreal: Rinehart et Winston 1971), p. 384.

[6] Desrosiers, op. cit., p. 417.

> He was clothed with a three-fold power. He was goveror-in-chief of the five provinces of Upper Canada, Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In addition, he was given a special commission as high commissioner for the adjustement of certain important questions 'depending in the said provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, respecting the form and future government of the said provinces.' To this end he was therefore appointed 'High Commissioner and Governor General of all Her Majesty's provinces on the continent of North America, and of the islands of Prince Edward and Newfoundland.' The extensive authority conferred on Lord Durham is but an evidence of the seriousness with which the Canadian situation was regarded, and of the determination of the government to evolve a plan of salvation which, if necessary, should include all the North American colonies.[7]

The report submitted by Durham ultimately set forth his political objectives for the colonies and the section dealing with education, prepared under the commission of Arthur Buller, merely reflected this purpose. In short, the educational recommendations, consistent with the political thrust of the Report, amounted to a virtual blueprint for the assimilation of French Canada. That Buller's recommendations were never put into effect was indicative of French Canada's determination to resist

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[7] Duncan McArthur, "Lord Durham and the Union of the Canadas," Canada and Its Provinces, Vol. IV, ed. by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, (Toronto: Publishers Association of Canada, 1914), p. 390.

cultural absorption and it is ironic that, in light of the common school system proposed in the Durham Report, educational developments of the 1840's laid the foundation for the confessional system that has characterized Quebec education to the present day.

At the time of Union between Upper and Lower Canada in 1841, a number of possibilities were entertained for the establishment of a public school system. Most noteworthy was the plan advocated by Montreal lawyer Charles Mondelet in a series of widely circulated letters. Developed with Governor-General Lord Sydenham's encouragement, Mondelet's plan contained a variety of proposals which eventually found their way into the educational laws of the decade. Interestingly, Mondelet suggested a controversial division of education to be made on the basis of linguistic, rather than religious criteria. Opposition to this concept appears to have been widespread but it was undoubtedly the Catholic clergy who were the most conspicuous and influential resistors.

Some of Mondelet's most interesting notions focused on the topics of teachers and teacher training. According to Mondelet, adequate remuneration of teachers

was necessary to ensure their ability to regard teaching as their sole occupation.[8] He further felt that teachers, both male and female, should be trained at normal schools which should be under the control of a Superintendent.[9]

While the educational laws of the 1840's classified schools outside the two urban centres of Montreal and Quebec as either "common" or "dissentient", the pattern which ultimately unfolded delineated a truly confessional system of education which heralded, if not ensured, a long continuance of Quebec's two solitudes.

The Law of 1846 is perhaps the most significant piece of legislation in terms of providing the framework for the evolution of Quebec's educational system. As Rexford has noted:

> ... the Law of 1846 stopped short of compulsory attendance at the schools of the majority in any district. Provision was made for Common Schools in each district. But, where the minority so desire, they may separate themselves from the Common School and establish a dissentient school or schools. By this solution of a very difficult problem, the Province of Quebec has maintained the principle of Common Schools throughout the Province and has given the minority in any district,

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[8] O.B. Rexford, Teacher Training in the Province of Quebec - a Historical Study to 1857 (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1936), p. 69.

[9] Idem.

> whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, the right to establish dissentient schools if they so desire.[10]

It is clear that education in Lower Canada up to the founding of the McGill Normal School had been characterized by periods of growth and stagnation. In much the same way as the educational facilities set up by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches reflected inherently disparate views and goals, the most visible characteristic of teacher training before 1856 was surely its lack of uniformity.

Teacher training in New France, like education itself, was the distinct domain of a number of religious orders. Primarily, Ursulines, Jesuits, and Sulpicians trained teachers from among their own for a small though steadily increasing school population.

Although documentation exists confirming sporadic attempts to provide for the training of lay teachers, these efforts were conclusively less successful. As Rexford has pointed out in his analysis of this period:

> Since the religious theory of education prevailed, training of candidates for

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[10] Ibid., p. 65.

> the priesthood was considered sufficient training for teaching... In this training they were highly successful. As to the training of lay teachers, the attempts at St-Joachim and by the Frères Hospitaliers in Montreal, though perhaps in some measure successful for a time, failed to establish a lasting form of training. Thus at the end of the French Regime, the teaching communities had established a reputation for the excellence of their teaching and gave promise of success for the future by the continual training of suitable members of their communities to carry on this work. But the parish school, in so far as it existed at all, was still a prey to the untrained ministrations of the persons who passed in the country as 'maîtres d'écoles.'[11]

In the early 1800's the staffing of schools set up through the creation of the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning was done through the use of monitors. Known as the Lancasterian System, it has been humourously, albeit judgementally, described in the Encyclopedia of Education as a strategy whereby, "a scamp who knows little opens a school where those who know little teach those who know less."[12] The questionable quality of teachers can be attributed to a number of factors which prevented suitable candidates from entering

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[11] Ibid, p. 27-28.

[12] Ibid, p. 40.

the teaching ranks. Miserable salaries and lack of job security, combined with poor facilities and lack of educational materials, certainly played a large part in dissuading potential educators. Further, government in Lower Canada did little in the way of establishing guidelines as to what criteria would be used in measuring the qualifications of those interested in becoming teachers. As Jobling has pointed out, "Lower Canada was slow to impose minimum standards for teachers, meaning that almost anyone could and did occupy a teaching post, including drunkards, good-for-nothings and some who were barely literate."[13]

In 1832, the first steps were taken to set a standard for teachers by requiring certification. In that year, local boards were authorized to examine and grant certificates to persons deemed qualified to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.[14] Legislation passed some four years later sanctioned the establishment of lay normal schools in Montreal and Quebec City as well as three others under the supervision of female Catholic teaching orders. Montreal's was the only school to actually open but it soon fell victim to the tempestuous political

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[13] J. Keith Jobling, The Contribution of Jean-Baptiste Meilleur to Education in Lower Canada (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1963), p. 28-29.

[14] Rexford, op. cit., p. 44.

climate and was forced to close a few years later.

The situation in the early 1850's remained essentially unresolved and caused the Superintendent for Public Instruction for Lower Canada, Dr. Meilleur, to remark that the establishment of normal schools was essential.[15]

2. The Establishment of the McGill Normal School.

When P.J.O. Chauveau succeeded Dr. Meilleur in 1855, he began implementing many of the recommendations that his predecessor had formulated. Meilleur had lacked the budget and the necessary political clout to effect the changes he saw as central to the realisation of Quebec's educational potential. Chauveau, born in 1820, admitted to the Bar at the age of twenty, and later to become the first premier of Quebec, seems to have overcome the obstacles which had frustrated Meilleur.

According to the terms of an Act passed in the previous year, three normal schools were established in the province of Quebec in 1857. Two of these schools, the Jacques Cartier Normal School in Montreal and the Laval Normal School in Quebec were for the training of francophone teachers. The

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[15] Ibid, p. 77.

McGill Normal School was unique in two ways; it was designed to train English-speaking teachers and was affiliated with a university.

While the school's staff was small in the first year, all were highly experienced in the field of education. Dawson had come from Nova Scotia in 1855, where he had successfully established a normal school while Superintendent of Education. Considering the administrative responsibilities Dawson shouldered as principal of McGill University, one can understand his reluctance to accept the principalship of the Normal School. However, it would appear that Dawson had very little choice in the matter and he noted:

> We had hoped to get as principal an eminent and experienced educationalist, but it was found that his services could not be secured, and it became necessary to add to my already numerous duties the principalship of the school...[16]

Dawson began his principalship at the Normal School with a staff of seven: a headmaster of the boys' model school, a headmistress of the girls' model school, three instructors, and two ordinary professors; William Henry

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[16] Dawson, op. cit., p. 121.

Hicks and Sampson Paul Robins.[17] Both these men were destined to play major roles throughout the school's history.

Hicks had arrived in Canada in 1853 at the request of the Colonial School and Church Society to establish an Anglican model and training school in Montreal.[18] Hicks continued to oversee this operation until it was absorbed into the McGill Normal School at its inception.[19]

As previously noted, Robins, by the time he was twenty-four, was teaching at the Toronto Normal School where he had studied. This connection served him well; Dawson, in his autobiography, describes how Robins was personally recommended to him by Ryerson as being, "... one of his ablest and most promising instructors."[20]

When the school opened, the teaching responsibilities appear to have been split fairly equally between Robins

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[17] Walter Pilling Percival, Across the Years (Montreal: Gazette Printing Company Limited, 1946), p. 103.

[18] Idem.

[19] Idem.

[20] Dawson, op. cit., p. 118.

and Hicks. Robins lectured on the art of teaching (junior division), arithmetic, algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, chemistry, and linear drawing.[21] Hicks taught the art of teaching (senior division), history, geography, English grammar, Composition, declamation, mental and moral philosophy, reading, spelling, and writing.[22] In addition to his administrative duties, Dawson also lectured on natural history and agriculture.[23]

3. Admission Standards and Curriculum.

The admission standards of the Normal School would not be considered high by present criteria, but it must be remembered that they were merely in keeping with the qualifications of the applicants. According to Chauveau's regulations:

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[21] McGill University Archives, Accession 927/3/1c 1857, Prospectus of the Normal School, p. 3.

[22] Idem.

[23] Idem.

> Any persons desirous of being admitted as a pupil teacher, must apply to the principal of the Normal School, who, on his producing an extract from the Register of Baptisms, shewing that he is fully sixteen years of age, with the certificate of conduct and character required by the 16 articles of the general Rules and Regulations approved by his Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 22 December 1856, shall himself examine the candidate or cause him to be examined by some person specially authorized for that purpose. If upon this examination it is found that the candidate can read and write efficiently well, knows the rudiments of grammar in his mother tongue, arithmetic as far as the rule of three inclusively, has some idea of geography, (and if he be a Roman Catholic) the principles of religious instruction contained in the lesser catechism, the principal shall grant him a certificate.[24]

It is noteworthy that the Normal School was open to women as well as to men. This was indeed a precedent in the history of higher education in the province of Quebec. As Ronish has pointed out:

> Certainly there was a great demand on the part of women for admission to McGill Normal School. The limited opportunity for higher education for women, the respectability of the teaching profession and the possibility of earning an independent livelihood helped to keep women's enrollment figures high. The Normal School thus became practically a professional college for women.[25]

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[24] "The Lower Canada School Amendment Act of 1856," Journal of Education for Lower Canada (March, 1857), p. 67-68.

[25] Donna Ronish, The Development of Higher Education for Women at McGill University (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1972), p. 16.

When the McGill Normal School began its operation in 1857, two programs of study were available to prospective teachers. After one year of study, a certificate could be granted permitting the graduate to teach in elementary schools.[26] Those who successfully completed two years of study were considered qualified to teach in the model schools.[27]

Despite the archaic admission standards, the required course of study was extensive and varied. One can only guess at the reaction of aspiring teachers when faced with a syllabus which included the principles, practical applications, and methods of teaching French and English, the art of teaching, management of schools, history, elements of mathematics and algebra, natural philosophy, chemistry, natural history, agriculture, drawing and music.[28] In a curious alliance of proselytism and ecumenicity, it is also noted that:

> In addition to religious instruction of a general Protestant character, by the professors, arrangements will be

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[26] Prospectus of the University of McGill College, 1857-8 (Montreal: J.C. Becket, 1857), p. 33.

[27] Idem.

[28] "Prospectus of the McGill Normal School," Journal of Education for Lower Canada (March, 1857), p. 84-85.

> made for special religious instruction by ministers, representing the several denominations with which the pupil-teachers may be connected.[29]

Throughout the examination of the Rules and Regulations for Establishment of Normal Schools in Lower Canada, one notices little difference in curriculum between the one and the two year programs.[30] One can only hypothesize that the two year study program was designed to permit a more comprehensive study of the subjects offered. In terms of subject matter and standards, one source indicates that two years at the Normal School were comparable to the final years of high school.[31]

The first significant expansion of the McGill Normal School's program was the introduction of a three year course of study in 1864. Graduates were granted Academy Diplomas which permitted them to teach in high schools. The Normal School hierarchy took great pride in the fact that, in their view, the institution provided a truly

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[29] Ibid, p. 85.

[30] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 927/1/41, Rules and Regulations for the Establishment of Normal Schools in Lower Canada, 1856 Article III Course of Studies No. 10.

[31] D.C. Munroe, "The Education of Teachers Seventy Years Ago." The Educational Record, 67, No. 1 (March 1951), p. 15.

complete teacher training system.

> The work of the Normal School will thus be complete, according to its original intention, and the school will be able to embrace the interests of higher as well as elementary education.[32]

Although it appears that in the Academy course only Greek was added to the curriculum, the standards of the newly devised program should not be underestimated as graduates were later admitted to second year in the Arts Faculty without having to undergo further examination.[33]

4. The Question of Administrative Leadership.

In researching the first thirteen year's of the Normal School under the principalship of Dawson, a hypothesis was developed that Robins' role was not really as uninfluential as his relative absence from the literature would suggest. This theory did not question Dawson's capabilities as an administrator but logically proposed that because of Dawson's

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[32] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Minute Book of the Meetings Of the Corporation Committee of the McGill Normal School. October 29, 1865.

[33] Munroe, op. cit., p. 15.

many responsibilities, which included the principalship of McGill University itself, he welcomed the participation of Robins and Hicks in the shaping of the Normal School's administrative policy.

This notion has been supported by some sources who go so far as to describe Dawson's principalship of the Normal School as, "largely a formality" and delineate, "the heat and burden being borne by Hicks."[34] In fact, further research has revealed that from the planning stages through until Dawson's resignation and the subsequent appointment of Hicks as principal of the McGill Normal School in 1870, the character of the day to day operation of the Normal School were clearly stamped with Dawson's educational aims and expectations.

When Dawson became the principal of McGill University in 1855, he showed that teacher training was to be one of his top priorities by laying before the Board of Governors Chauveau's proposal for the creation of normal schools.[35]

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[34] A Century of Teacher Education, 1857-1957, Addresses delivered during the celebration of the ventenary of the McGill Normal School, The Institute of Education, McGill University, p. 14.

[35] Dawson, op. cit., p. 117.

Shortly thereafter, a committee was set up by the Board of Governors to establish a normal school.[36]

While Hicks and Robins were certainly qualified educators, their experience and sphere of influence were dwarfed by Dawson's. When the Normal School began its operation in 1857, Dawson's long-established contacts in both the political and business arenas would prove invaluable to the continued funding of the Normal School.

Through examination of the Normal School's Minute Books it is clear that major decision-making was the domain of Dawson. However, Dawson's principalship of the Normal School was by no means autocratic and the respective roles played by Hicks and Robins should not be overlooked. As Frost has pointed out:

> ... Dawson and his colleagues were remarkably of one mind. It would have been easy for him, as a strong-minded and able person, to have swept along regardless of opinions around him, but there is good evidence that from the beginning he consulted with his colleagues as regards major developments. In the matter of the normal school for example, it was proposed at first to make the board of governors the governing body of the school, but Dawson preferred to have Corporation named to that responsibility. Corporation included the board but it also included the represen-

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[36] Ibid, p. 118.

> tatives of the faculties and the graduates elected to be fellows of the university. It is therefore significant that Dawson chose to have the administration of the Normal School remitted to the care of the body with the wider membership.[37]

Frost's view is substantiated by the fact that one of Dawson's last official acts as principal of the Normal School was to recommend the setting up of a standing committee to be known as the McGill Normal Committee.[38] Like its predecessor, the Corporation of the McGill Normal School, the existence of the McGill Normal Committee ensured that the school's policy would be defined by a collective voice.

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[37] Stanley Frost, McGill University for the Advancement of Learning. Volume I 1801-1895 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p. 193.

[38] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Minute Book of the Meetings of the Corporation Committee of the McGill Normal School, March 3, 1870.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL BOARD YEARS

By December of 1869, Dr. Dawson had made clear his intention to resign as principal of the McGill Normal School. The subsequent appointment of William Henry Hicks as Dawson's successor in January of 1870 appears to have caused to surface latent ill-feeling between Hicks and Robins. ~~While Robins~~ maintained a position at the Normal School throughout the Hicks regime, his reaction to Hicks' appointment ultimately led his efforts more specifically towards his work with the Protestant Board of School Commissioners.

Generally, it is the purpose of this chapter to examine the reasons for the lessening of Robins' involvement with the Normal School throughout the years of the Hicks principalship and to describe the nature of his more focused endeavours in the educational community at large. Circumstances surrounding Robins' acceptance of a position as Inspector of Common Schools with the Montreal Board of School Commissioners will be discussed specifically, as

well as his duties in that office. Other relevant topics will include his position as Headmaster of the Preparatory Department at the High School of Montreal and his resignation from that post in 1876, shortly after becoming Secretary and Superintendent of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners.

1. Appointment With the Protestant Board of School Commissioners.

The appointment of William Henry Hicks as principal on the recommendation of the Committee of the Corporation of McGill Normal School marked the beginning of a period in which Robins' involvement with the Normal School was the least influential in his fifty year connection with that institution.

At a meeting of the Corporation of the Normal School on March 3, 1870, the appointments of William Henry Hicks and Sampson Paul Robins as Ordinary Professors were reaffirmed.[1] Robins was to be responsible for the Model School

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[1] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Minute Book of the Meetings of the Corporation Committee of the McGill Normal School, March 3, 1870.

within the Normal School itself. In a letter which was read by the Secretary at the same meeting, Robins made it clear that he found the new arrangements to be totally unsatisfactory. He contended that, when first appointed, his professional status and salary were equal to those of Hicks. Further, Robins argued that he had accepted his position before Hicks and for this reason he held seniority. Indeed, this is confirmed on the first pay list of April 1857, where Robins' name is listed ahead of Hicks', with each receiving 75 pounds for the period of January to April, 1857.[2] It is questionable whether the Corporation actually viewed Robins as Hicks' senior, for in the first Prospectus, Robins' name was removed from the head of the pay list.[3] Paradissis argues convincingly that Hicks must have been regarded as the senior, given the fact that Hicks taught the Senior Division and Robins the Junior Division.[4] Evidently, Robins was not only unhappy with the fact that he had been overlooked in favour of Hicks for the principalship. In his letter to the Cor-

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[2] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 927/3/57, Pay List, April 1857.

[3] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 927/3/1, Prospectus, op. cit., 1857, p. 3.

[4] E.A. Paradissis, The McGill Normal School - A Brief History (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1982), p. 83.

poration, he also expresses discontent with his salary and work-load. As principal, Hicks was to receive an additional salary of $200., and Robins' reappointment was to bring him an additional $200. as well. Robins, however, voiced his displeasure over the fact that Hicks, in addition to his $200., also received rent, fuel, and payment of taxes, also arguing that the establishment of the Academy Class in 1865 had given him three times as much work as it had Hicks. Further, he believed that because he would be required to absorb most of Dawson's relinquished teaching duties, he would ultimately be receiving less pay than ever:

> Though Robins objected to the new arrangements at the Normal School, it would appear that the Committee was not overly eager to have Robins resign his position. At the same meeting, it was resolved that a letter be sent recommending to Robins that he not act in haste. Whatever placating effect this suggestion had on Robins, it was short-lived. He resigned as Ordinary Professor on August 2, 1870. He did, however, remain with the school as Associate Professor of Agriculture and Natural Science. Through examination of the Minute Books, it is evident that the issue of Robins' wages was never resolved to his satisfaction and his discontent would be expressed

formally to the Committee at various times throughout the years of the Hicks administration.

2. His Work as Inspector of Common Schools.

In the late 1860's, the number of schools under Montreal's Protestant Board was steadily increasing and the added administrative load resulting from this expansion meant that the Commissioners could no longer conduct all the necessary supervisory tasks themselves. In a report of the Commissioners, it was noted:

> As the work grew in extent both as to the number of schools and especially as to the numbers of the pupils, the Commissioners became aware that their own inspection would be inadequate, that it would fail to secure that uniformity and efficiency of operation which the work imperatively demanded. Valuable to the Education Office and to the scattered schools in rural districts as may be the services of the Government Inspectors, the Commissioners felt that for both themselves and their schools, there were needed the services of an officer amenable to their direction and authority, qualified to undertake a constant supervision of the Common Schools, and by suggestion and counsel to aid the Board in making such arrangements and introducing such plans as from time to

time might lead to a uniform and adequate system of instruction.[5]

Accordingly, at a meeting of the Commissioners on July 1, 1870, it was resolved that Sampson Paul Robins be appointed the Board's Inspector of Model Schools at a salary of $400. per annum.[6]

As Inspector of Common Schools, one of Robins' priorities was to submit a report to the Commissioners after his first year's work. This detailed report reviewed past and present conditions in the schools and ultimately contained a number of significant proposals designed to improve the general quality of education in schools under the Commissioners' control. In this report, Robins noted that one of the major problems faced by the Commissioners, if they hoped to form a comprehensive scheme of organization for their schools, was that the growing number of schools coming under their authority had been established under various influences and clearly differed from each other in organization, in the subjects taught, styles of teaching, and in text-books

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[5] Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners for the City of Montreal. 1847 to 1871 (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1872), p. 29.

[6] Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal, Minute Book No. 2, July 1, 1870.

used.[7]

Robins also makes it quite evident that, in his view, the quality of education in Montreal did not compare favourably with schools elsewhere. Early in his report, he states:

> No one interested in education here can feel otherwise than ashamed and grieved at the position which we have for so many years occupied, especially when we contrast the meanness and insufficiency of our educational appliances, with the ample systems of public instruction so liberally maintained in many sister cities of this continent; and even now, when under the auspices of the reconstituted Board of School Commissioners, a fairer prospect rises, such as the disadvantages under which we labour that nothing but united, earnest, and patient continuance in endeavour can crown with success your attempts to provide a thoroughly efficient, practical education for every Protestant child in this city.[8]

It was part of Robins' appointed task to draw comparisons between the Board's schools and it had been decided that a series of written and oral examinations would be conducted to measure any existing disparities. Although the results of these exams, cited in Robins'

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[7] S.P. Robins, "Report of the Inspector." Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1872), p. I.

[8] Idem.

report, verified a genuine lack of uniformity amongst the Board's schools, it was the problems that Robins experienced in actually conducting these exams which best demonstrated the generally impoverished nature of education at that time.

At the end of April 1871, examinations in Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Arithmetic were held in all the Model Schools. In terms of getting the largest possible number of students from each of the schools to take part in the examinations, the appointed time proved unfortunate for a variety of reasons. Robins found that:

> ... some of the elder pupils had left the Schools to take situation preparatory to the opening of navigation, a large number of pupils were being vaccinated, and the Panet Street School had not gathered in its whole number after the interruption to its work consequent on the appearance of scarlet fever in the Janitor's family.[9]

Frustrating as these problems must have been for Robins, they represented broader-based barriers to the

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[9] Ibid, p. ii.

attainment of the Commissioners' educational goals. Arguably, the absence of child-labour laws, the low priority given to education generally, and inadequate health standards stemmed from social problems which could not but be mirrored in the school system.

In an effort to form a more cohesive plan of organization for the Board's schools, Robins' suggestions were aimed at unifying a system wherein he found that what was studied, when it was introduced into the school curriculum, how much time was devoted to it, and the text-books used, were matters left to the discretion of the Headmasters. So diverse were the existing arrangements of the schools, that Robins felt that no one, "could form a clear conception of the manner in which educational work was done in Montreal."[10]

To effect the desired centralization, Robins identified a number of basic areas that required consideration. Foremost, he felt that a realistic evaluation of how long pupils are able to remain in school should be determined and also, the level of attainment that could be expected before the students left. Other organizational planning involved the order in which various

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[10] Ibid, p. i.

subjects should be introduced and how much time would be alloted to each of them.

From a budgetary standpoint, Robins felt that the Board was not capable of providing a course of study lasting longer than six years. According to Robins, this course would be begun by children from the ages of six to eight and completed at twelve to fourteen. While he noted that some children over fourteen were in the schools, they were so few in number that Robins advised the Board to postpone plans for making further educational provisions for them.

The course of study to be followed by the students and the curriculum's priorities were detailed by Robins. As he saw it, the subjects, in order of their relative importance:

> ... are the correct use of language in its spoken and written forms, English first of all but French as far as possible, and the right keeping of accounts; that is to say Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar in its practical aspects, and Arithmetic including the rudiments of Book-keeping... Scarcely second in importance to the subjects already enumerated are Object Lessons, including the rudiments of natural science, Geography, History and elements of Algebra and

> Geometry; not merely for the useful knowledge which they impart but especially for the development of the intellectual faculties which they effect. Moreover, morals should be cultivated not only by example and right discipline, but by precept also, through instruction in Scripture, in the elements of Morality, and in so much of the principles of the Canadian Constitution and Law, as shall cause intelligent children to comprehend their relations to the State, and to act the part of good citizens. Singing also and Drawing in accordance with the views of eminent educators, should be introduced into all schools, that the aesthetic as well as the intellectual and moral nature may be cultivated.[11]

To institute the program of study, Robins proposed that the students in each school be divided into six divisions. At a specific time every year, children who successfully completed examinations would move from one grade to the next. Though Robins felt it was logical for these annual promotions to take place when schools closed for summer holidays, he was forced to admit that the month of April would perhaps be more suitable. Recalling the lesson learned in administering the Board's exams, the sharp decline in school population that occured at the end of April, coinciding with the resumption of navigation, was seen by Robins as a reality beyond the Commission's control.

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[11] Ibid, p. IX-X.

The fact that compulsory education laws did not come into effect during his lifetime suggests that the problem of school attendance remained a source of frustration for Robins. He noted that the irregularity of school attendance hampered the attainment of the educational standards desired by the Commissioners but admitted he could pinpoint no immediate solution.[12]

According to Robins, another of the obstacles faced in the implementing of a new scheme was the questionable ability of the teachers to administer the plan. Although Robins' concern with some of the teachers' qualifications was surely warranted, it is possible that the topic of teacher qualifications provided him with an opportunity to criticize the fledgling Hicks administration at the Normal School. While he still held a position there, he felt that the Normal School was partly to blame for the fact that:

> ... the teachers, excellent as many of them are, are not all prepared for the work assigned them. Too few are able to manage object teaching as to secure the active co-operation of a class in discovering truth by observation, experiment, and reasoning. It is much

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[12] Ibid, p. X.

> easier to impart knowledge than to teach a child how to use his powers in acquiring it for himself. The amount and quality of French teaching required will tax to the utmost the resources of each school. Will not the Normal School, which has furnished us with so many excellent teachers, so modify its course of instruction as to aid us in securing good object teaching and universal instruction in French in our schools?[13]

The issue of French instruction in schools was an important one to Robins and will be discussed in further detail when curricular reforms effected during his principalship of the Normal School are examined.

Robins also felt that the general cause of the Board could be significantly advanced through regular meetings and discussions with the schools' teachers.

> For purposes of mutual consultation it would be of great advantage to establish a regular meeting of all the teachers of the Commissioners' Schools, at which, under the Presidency of one of the Commissioners, views respecting the management of the schools should be exchanged, the results of general examinations discussed, the decisions of the Commissioners explained, and general unity of action secured.[14]

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[13] Idem.

[14] Ibid, p. XI.

Indeed, this suggestion was soon implemented and Robins, in being named Superintendent in 1875, found himself the Commissioners' representative at these meetings.

While the bulk of Robins' report centered on the fashioning of a more centralized framework for the Board's schools, two other topics covered in the report deserve mention. Robins noted that the Model Schools, no matter how perfectly organized, could not fully meet the needs of the community in terms of providing schooling beyond the elementary level. He noted that, while it could be improved upon, provision already existed for the advanced education of boys, whereas no similar provisions were made for the growing number of girls in the higher classes. According to Robins, a girls' High School, "... is one of the most pressing educational wants of the city."[15]

Although much of the credit for the eventual opening of the Montreal High School for Girls in 1875 deservedly goes to Dawson and his fellow Commissioners, it was Robins who provided the project's initial spark. As Ronish con-

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[15] Idem.

firms in her study of the development of higher education for women at McGill, Robins' report was in fact the first to broach the matter of equal secondary education for girls.[16] It was also to Robins that the Commissioners entrusted the task of submitting plans for the school's design as well as its staffing and curriculum.[17]

Another issue which Robins felt deserved the Board's attention concerned the number of children under the age of six who wished to attend school. Robins points out that, "... (the) large number of very small children that seek admission into the schools demonstrates the need for establishments in which children who have not yet attained the legal school age can be cared for..."[18]

Although this concept did eventually come to fruition, admittedly not during Robins' years with the Board, it was under his principalship that the McGill Normal School began a specialized program which led successful candidates to a kindergarten diploma.

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[16] Ronish, op. cit., p. 31.

[17] Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners for the City of Montreal. January, 1872 to June, 1876 (Montreal: The Montreal Herald Printing and Publishing Company, 1877), p. 15.

[18] Robins, op. cit., p. XI.

3. Added Responsibilities Under the Protestant Board of School Commissioners.

When Robins assumed his position as Inspector of Model Schools in 1870, the Protestant school system of Montreal was in the midst of a growth period. One of the schools that came under the Board's authority in that year was the High School of Montreal. Founded in 1843, the school became a department of McGill College in 1853, and continued to function as such until its absorption by the Protestant Board. The growing number of schools under the Board's control demonstrated its improved financial situation; an affluence largely attributable to the Education Act of 1869. By the terms of this Act, the revenue of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners was sizeably increased. Also, this Act provided that grants for superior education be divided proportionately between Roman Catholic and Protestant populations.

With the acquisition of the High School, the Protestant Board immediately undertook a reorganization at the school's administrative level. At a meeting of the Board on March 7, 1870, a recommendation that the office

of Rector be abolished was adopted.[19] It was decided that the school would now be divided into two departments, with Dr. Henry Aspinwall Howe as Headmaster of the classical department and Mr. David Rodger as Headmaster of the commercial department.

Some months later, the Board announced further changes. The two lower classes of the High School were to become part of the Preparatory Department with Robins as Headmaster.[20] It was resolved that for his dual duties as Headmaster of the Preparatory Department and Inspector of Common Schools, Robins would receive salaries of $1200. and $400. respectively.[21]

The Commissioners were aware that in addition to these duties, Robins maintained a position with the Normal School. To enable him to fulfill these various obligations, it was decided that an additional assistant be appointed to Robins at the Preparatory School.[22]

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[19] Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal, Minute Book No. 2, March 7, 1870.

[20] Ibid, July 1, 1870.

[21] Idem.

[22] Idem.

While a number of sources have claimed that Robins was Superintendent of the Board of School Commissioners from 1870 to 1883, and have often used the term Inspector and Superintendent interchangeably, the position of Superintendent was, in fact, not created by the Commissioners until 1875.

Robins' appointment as Secretary and Superintnedent was clearly a step up the professional ladder in terms of influence and remuneration. The office of Inspector, which was in effect absorbed by the creation of the new post, had been a part-time duty for which Robins received an annual salary of $400. The position of Secretary and Superintendent, which now increased his salary to $2400., required a full-time commitment reflected by his subsequent resignation from the Headship of the Preparatory Department at the High School.

As outlined at a meeting of the Commissioners on June 24, 1875, Superintendent Robins was to be responsible for the general supervision of the Board's schools.[23] In addition to attending all meetings of the Board and keeping minutes of business, he was required to oversee

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[23] Ibid, June 24th, 1875.

buildings and direct the caretakers. Monthly reports were to be submitted, designed to present matters which required the Board's immediate or future attention. Added responsibilities included the appointment and dismissal of teachers as well as his attendance at all their meetings. The ensuing years with the Board appear to have run smoothly for Robins. When he was first appointed Inspector, it had been impressed upon him that it was the Board's desire to form a comprehensive scheme of organization for its schools. To this end, Robins' contribution was of considerable significance. As Rexford, Gammel, and McBain have noted, "... it was Dr. Robins, more than anyone else who was responsible for the organization of the Protestant schools of the city into a well-regulated system under the control of the board."[24]

The late 1870's and early 1880's were years in which a series of events proved unsettling for the Hicks administration at the Normal School. Criticism and controversy concerning the Normal School curriculum prevalent throughout the later years of Hicks' principalship, coupled with his failing health, culminated in his resignation. The

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[24] Rexford, Allan Gammel, and McBain. The History of the High School of Montreal (Montreal: The Old Boys' Association, n.d.), p. 70.

sources and nature of these criticisms will be identified and discussed in the next chapter, which deals with the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Hicks and the subsequent appointment of S.P. Robins as principal of the McGill Normal School.

CHAPTER IV

ROBINS AS PRINCIPAL OF THE McGILL NORMAL SCHOOL

By the late 1870's, graduates of the McGill Normal School were filling an ever increasing demand for teachers throughout the province. The marked growth of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers, founded in 1864, now provided a collective voice for those teachers whose recommendations will be shown to have had a profound effect on the formation of the Normal School's policy.

As graduates of the school joined the professional ranks, they realized the shortcomings of their own training. At the heart of their concern was the question of what blend of academic and professional training provided the desired balance in a teacher training program.

Although Hicks was a founding member of the P.A.P.T., criticism leveled at his administration by members of

of this association was certainly an influential factor in his decision to retire at the height of a controversy concerning the Normal School's curriculum. Accordingly, this chapter will examine the nature of this criticism and the subsequent reaction to it by Hicks and the Normal School Committee.

To a greater degree, it is the purpose of this chapter to discuss Robins' priorities on assuming the principalship, and to provide a detailed examination of the various internal reforms undertaken by him at the Normal School from 1883 until his retirement in 1907.

1. Criticism and Resignation of Hicks.

The controversy which arose in the early 1880's concerning the McGill Normal School curriculum emerged largely as a result of papers authored by Elson Irving Rexford. Rexford's direct involvement in education in the province of Quebec spanned some sixty-eight years and his formidable contribution from a developmental standpoint has been documented by numerous sources.

In 1868, Rexford had received a Model School Diploma from the McGill Normal School, graduating first in his

in his class and winning the Prince of Wales medal for general proficiency.[1] His first appointment after graduating was as an assistant teacher at the Panet Street School under the Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal where he was re-engaged the following year and promoted to head teacher.[2]

According to Flower, Rexford's name first appeared on the P.A.P.T. membership rolls in 1869 and it was as a member of that association that he authored a number of papers concerning various aspects of education in the province of Quebec that culminated in a controversy surrounding the McGill Normal School curriculum.[3]

At the 15th Convention of the P.A.P.T. in Bedford on October 24, 1878, Rexford read a paper which served to heighten his visibility in the province's educational circles.[4] The paper, entitled, "A Few Thoughts on Our District School System," was highly critical of schools

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[1] George Edward Flower, A Study of the Contributions of Dr. E.I. Rexford to Education in the Province of Quebec (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1949), p. 16.

[2] Idem.

[3] Ibid, p. 26.

[4] Idem.

in the Eastern Townships where Rexford had grown up. By this time the assistant headmaster of the High School of Montreal, Rexford criticized virtually every aspect of school management. It is interesting to note that many of the criticisms voiced by Rexford paralleled many of those made by Robins in his first report as Inspector of Common Schools some years earlier. Like Robins, Rexford considered such issues as the lack of standardized text-books, the absence of written examinations, and the general lack of uniformity amongst the schools to be a detriment to the advancement of education.

Although "A Few Thoughts on Our District School System," and subsequent papers authored by Rexford served to bring his name to the fore in local educational circles, his most controversial criticisms were those directed at the McGill Normal School. As President of the Montreal local of the P.A.P.T., he delivered an address entitled, "The Normal School Curriculum and its Relation to the Work Now Required from Teachers," at a meeting on November 18, 1881. Ironically, this meeting was held in the Normal School and it marked the beginning of a controversy over the Normal School curriculum which would ultimately result in some major changes at the school.

Rexford's criticism of the curriculum was four-fold. The English course was considered overly narrow, the Mathematics course too broad and difficult, the Greek course superficial, and the professional courses both impractical and inadequate.[5] Indeed, it was the professional training which bore the brunt of Rexford's sharpest criticisms. According to Rexford, the practical training consisted of, "... what one may learn by one's own effort, in teaching a class a few hours a week during the sessions."[6]

Rexford made a number of recommendations which he felt would remedy this situation:

> In the first place there should be, I think, a systematic arrangement by means of which the heads of the different schools in which teachers are being trained should work both in harmony with one another, and in reference to the lectures on the art of of teaching by the professors. I would have a regular system of model lessons arranged to be given by the heads of the schools in the presence of the pupil-teachers. The group of teachers in circulating from school to school would come in for the whole

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[5] Munroe, op. cit., p. 15.

[6] E.I. Rexford, "The Normal School Curriculum." cited by Munroe, ibid., p. 16.

> course of model lessons. Let us suppose, for example, that the subject of English History has been taken up by the professor and that the best method of introducing the subject to a class has been pointed out. Then let the method of introducing English History to a class be illustrated by a lesson given in the presence of the pupil teachers. The pupil teachers should not merely be invited to be present by the head of the school, as if they were present merely because there was nothing else for them to do at the time, but it should be considered a very important part of their work, upon which they are to take notes, etc. In this way all the subjects of a school course should be taken up and the method of teaching them illustrated by model lessons. Then in the second year, at least if not in the first, the pupil teachers themselves should be called upon to take up lessons upon different subjects with a class in the presence of their fellow teachers and the head of the school. The points of excellence and the defects of the lesson might afterwards be pointed out, with a view to encouragement and improvement. This work, I think, should be as imperative as any other part of the curriculum. Pupils should be required to devote time and attention to the preparation of such lessons, availing themselves of the hint obtained from the lectures on art of teaching, and from the model lessons given by the heads of the schools.[7]

The Normal School Committee was clearly displeased with Rexford's commentary and somewhat indignant that the Montreal Association should venture an opinion of the school's management while holding their meetings in

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[7] Idem.

the Normal School. The Committee promptly sent a communication to the next meeting of the Montreal Association stating:

> That the Committee earnestly deprecates any discussion of the matters, related to the curriculum of the Normal School and meeting in its Building, but would place no obstacle in the way of any proposals made in regular form to the Corporation of the University for improvements in the Normal School should such be practicable. The Committee therefore deems it to be inexpedient that such discussion should take place in the Building of the Normal School.[8]

Rexford hurriedly adjourned the meeting to another location where a resolution was passed that, "... the curriculum of the Normal School requires revision, and that the Corporation of McGill University be respectfully requested to take steps in this direction."[9]

The Normal School Committee responded by instructing Secretary W.C. Baynes to remind Rexford privately that the impoverished condition of the institution, resulting from the reduction of various grants, had made it extremely

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[8] cited by Flower, op. cit., p. 32-33.

[9] cited by Munroe, op. cit., p. 15.

difficult to maintain the school's former efficiency.[10] The question of operating the Normal School on a reduced budget was clearly of considerable concern to the Committee and these financial problems were confirmed in a report presented by the Governors in 1880.

> We regret to have to state that the Government of Quebec has felt it necessary to reduce the grants to the Provincial Normal Schools. In the case of the McGill Normal School, as this has no pecuniary resources other than its Government grant, and the University is unable out of its resources to give it additional assistance, there is reason to fear that some injury to its usefulness may result, a consequence greatly to be deplored, as it is certain that this institution has, since its establishment, been the most effective agent in elevating the general standard of education in the province. Earnest representations on this subject have been made both by the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction and by this Corporation, and statements have been prepared showing the large number of students trained in the institution, and that almost without exception they actually enter on and prosecute the educational work for which they have been trained. We trust that these representations, with the improved condition of the provincial finances, may be the means of averting the serious injury which would result to education from any diminution of the support of the Normal School, at a time when increased aid is

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[10] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Letter Book, McGill Normal School, December 4, 1880 to June 7, 1894, p. 27.

> necessary in order to enable it to meet the growing demands of our school system.[11]

While it is apparent that the Normal School was operating under a rather austere budget, the consequences of Rexford's attack on the school's curriculum had taken its toll on Hicks. As Calam has noted:

> Explanations were not enough... Rexford's broadsides were widely and strongly felt. Under the burden of administering a Normal School short on funds though not on criticism, Principal Hicks fell "ill."[12]

As a spokesperson for the Montreal chapter of the P.A.P.T., Rexford had demonstrated the burgeoning power of the association. Although the Normal School Committee adamantly defended the school's management and curriculum, the Hicks administration's fate was sealed. On June 30, 1883, William Henry Hicks resigned as principal. Shortly thereafter, the position was offered to Robins to whom, "... the challenge of leadership lay... in the necessities of the moment with the requirements of the future."[13]

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[11] R.W. Boodle, ed., "McGill Normal School," The Educational Record, 4, No. 7 (July and August 1884), p. 191.

[12] Calam, op. cit., p. 22.

[13] Idem.

2. The Goal of Teaching as a Profession:

When Dr. Sampson Paul Robins assumed the leadership of the McGill Normal School in the fall of 1883, one of his top priorities had to be to regain the confidence of the Teachers' Association, which had so vehemently criticized the school during the latter years of Hicks' tenure. Robins' success in silencing the school's severest critics is most clearly evidenced in the expansion of the professional relationship between Robins and Rexford, whose sphere of influence was now significantly broadened due to his recent appointment as English Secretary of the Department of Public instruction. In the ensuing years, the goal towards which Robins and Rexford would work individually would be that of building a teaching profession in the truest sense of the word.

During the course of Robins' first year as principal, he prepared an exhaustive report with the aid of Rexford to determine the manner in which graduates of the Normal School had fulfilled their obligation to teach. In this study, Robins and Rexford collected data on 700 of 1,099 graduates of the school since its inception in 1857 and

found that they had taught an average of five and a half years each.[14] In summarizing his investigation, Robins noted:

> If the teachers authorized by the Normal School since the year 1878 had secured situations without delay, if there had been among them neither sickness nor death, and if all had fulfilled their engagements to teach, the total number of years of teaching would have been 542. The number of years of teaching reported to me is 443, nearly 82 per cent. I challenge any Normal School on this continent to produce a better result.[15]

While the positive findings of this study must have been satisfying to the Normal School Committee after having passed so much of the tumultuous latter years of Hicks' principalship on the defensive, the study served a much greater purpose. The surveying of the careers of McGill Normal School graduates was decidedly an evolutionary step in developing a more universal view of the school's graduates as well as promoting a feeling of unity among members of the teaching profession scattered across isolated areas of the province.

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[14] Boodle, op. cit., p. 191.

[15] Idem.

The collaboration between Robins and Rexford did not end with the study of the professional activities of McGill Normal School graduates, and in the same year they devised a program for the in-service training of teachers. The concept was not a new one and both men were likely to have been aware and encouraged by the success of similar ventures in both Ontario and New England. According to the design of Robins and Rexford, the Teachers' Normal Institutes were to be five day summer sessions for practising teachers. Two such institutes were conducted in the summer of 1884 and their proceedings were described in The Educational Record:

> The first Teachers' Institute ever held in this Province was opened at Richmond on Tuesday, July 8th, in the commodious rooms of St-Francis College. There were fifty teachers in attendance at the first session and their number soon reached eighty. The programme of the institute consisted of half hour lectures upon different subjects, alternating with half hour discussions of the same. Dr. Robins, of the McGill Normal School gave a lecture each day upon child nature and the methods of teaching the simple rules of arithmetic. He also took up vocal music. The Rev. Elson I. Rexford gave a lecture each day upon the methods of teaching reading and upon school organization. In addition to these lectures Mr. Mastin of Coaticook, took up the subject of the teacher's preparation for daily work of the school-room.

> Mr. Parmelee, of St-Francis College, the subject of geography. Mr. Passmore, Principal of St-Francis College, some difficulties in English parsing. Mr. Ewing, of St-Francis Agricultural College, the subject of school discipline. Inspector Hubbard, the teaching of spelling and Mr. Irwin, of Danville, the teaching of writing.
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> The discussions upon the subjects brought before the institute were lively and interesting and formed a very important feature of the Richmond Institute. The teachers were very regular in their attendance at the eight sessions that were held and they took great interest in the subjects brought before them. At the close of the institute certificates of attendance were issued to the teachers present, signed by the Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, Dr. Robins and Inspector Hubbard.
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> (...) The success of the institute at Richmond caused the promoters of these gatherings to look forward with confidence to the meeting at Dunham, which opened on Tuesday, the 15th July, and they were not disappointed in their expectations.[16]

The success of the Teachers' Normal Institutes was clearly recognized by the Protestant Committee and in order to allow Robins and professors of the Normal School to attend these summer sessions, the Committee authorized

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[16] Ibid., p. 201-202.

the shortening of the school year by one month.[17] This decision must have been particularly satisfying to Robins who had requested some months earlier that the Normal School Committee consider steps to reduce the length of the school year. In support of his proposal that the session be closed each year at the end of May, Robins delivered the following arguments:

> ... (a) because the continuing strain of a ten-month session is too great for young women; (b) because the shortening of the session would, pro tanto, diminish the expense of the students from the country; (c) because the Normal School professors could hold teachers' institutes in country parts during the month of vacation in conjunction with the Protestant Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction. This would be in the interest of the Normal School as well as of Education generally.[18]

It should be noted that the reduction in the length of the Normal School's session served the function of decreasing the teaching load of its professors. The question of the number of teaching hours required of Normal School professors was one which concerned Robins

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[17] McGill University Archives, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1884), p. 11.

[18] cited by Munroe, op. cit., p. 18.

and will be examined further when internal reforms implemented during Robins' tenure are discussed.

There can be little doubt that Rexford, who had been such a thorn in the side of the previous administration, had become a most influential ally to Principal Robins. Though it is clear that we find Robins and Rexford in agreement on many educational issues, the extent to which their relationship was a harmonious one is no better exemplified than by Rexford's acceptance of an invitation to lecture at the Normal School. In 1885, the Governors of the University reported that:

> In the past session we were indebted to the Rev. E.I. Rexford B.A., Fellow of the University and one of the Secretaries of the Department of Public Instruction, for a special course of lectures on the School Law and the Duties of teachers.[19]

Whereas it could be argued that the appointment of Rexford served to quiet one of the school's most unyielding critics, there is nonetheless little doubt that Rexford's reputation as a knowledgeable and experienced educator certainly made him an asset to the Normal School staff.

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[19] McGill University, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1886), p. 16.

It would be naive to assume that the Normal School Committee was unaware of the political advantages of having a member of its staff in a position of considerable influence within the Department of Public Instruction, but Rexford's qualifications for the teaching post should surely be regarded as no less than unimpeachable.

3. Internal Reforms.

It has been noted that the insufficient teaching of French in schools under the authority of Montreal's Protestant Board of School Commissions and the McGill Normal School's questionable provisions for supplying adequate numbers of well-trained teachers for the subject had been a source of aggravation for Robins from his earliest days as Inspector of Common Schools. The cause of bilingualism continued to be supported by Robins after his appointment as principal. In his opinion, the knowledge of a second language was central to the development of Quebec's potential educational resources and he was later to speak of them as, "inestimable advantages."[20]

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[20] Parmelee, "Dr. Robins Attains his 91st Birthday," op. cit., p. 32.

The priority accorded French in the Normal School curriculum by Robins is shown by his creation of the post of Ordinary Professor of French in 1886.[21] Significantly, Madame Cornu became the first female professor at the Normal School. In outlining personnel changes for the 1886 session, the Governors noted:

> It is also a source of satisfaction that the Normal School has secured the services of Madame Sophie Cornu, a teacher of the highest qualifications, and whose appointment will add to that influence of feminine culture so important in a school in which the great majority of the students consists of young women.[22]

Robins' advocacy of sound French instruction at the Normal School continued throughout the years of his principalship. In 1904, an annual practice was begun to award students who had demonstrated proficiency in French. Through Robins' efforts, L'Alliance Française, a Montreal society dedicated to the promotion of bilingualism, donated medals and prizes annually. At the Normal School's closing ceremonies, Robins expressed his thankfulness to this organization and eloquently voiced his support for

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[21] McGill University, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1886), p. 16.

[22] Idem.

its cause which, lamentably, remains largely unrealized to this day.

> L'Alliance Française of Montreal is thanked for the medal and prizes given to encourage the study of French. These gifts have been a feature of our annual closing exercises for four years, inclusive of the present year, having been first bestowed in 1904. With the aim of this Society all must heartily agree. Its work should be encouraged by all who love their country, whatever may be their national origin. If it ever becomes truly bilingual, conversant with two literatures, sympathetic with the genius of two races, this Province of Quebec will profoundly and beneficially influence the destiny of this Dominion and make its thought prevalent on this continent.[23]

Another educational cause for which Robins had lobbied during his years with the Montreal Board was the establishment of kindergarten classes. In his new position, he felt that the training of kindergarten specialists would be yet another way for the Normal School to serve the educational needs of the province. Notwithstanding the Normal School Committee's agreement with this scheme, the project's slow evolution seems attributable to the inability to secure necessary funding. In 1887, the Board

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[23] McGill University, Final Report of the McGill Normal School (Montreal, 1907), p. 10.

of Governors expressed their wish to establish a kindergarten and stated again, in 1888, that, "... it is desired as soon as possible to add a Kindergarten."[24]

Although the Government had promised funds to construct an addition to the Normal School, it would appear that construction was slow. By 1892, the building itself had been completed and, while the Governors were pleased with the new addition, they remained impatient with the Government's neglect in providing ancillary requirements.

> The Normal School has, this year, entered into possession of its new building, the advantages of which over the old are very great. The necessary furniture, however, is not fully provided, and cannot be provided without a hurtful strain upon the finances of the school, unless the Government place in the estimates the appropriation which was expected from it, if not actually promised. The play-grounds are still unfenced, and according to the report of the Normal School Committee are "positively dangerous to life and limb."[25]

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[24] McGill University, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1888), p. 11.

[25] McGill University, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1892), p. 14.

It should be noted that the problem of acquiring necessary government funding for the Normal School was not an unusual one. In the same year, Robins had to journey to Quebec to present arguments to the Superintendent of Public Instruction concerning McGill Model School's desire for a proportionate share of the Montreal City school tax.[26]

While this financial matter was quickly settled, the question of kindergarten classes remained unsolved until 1895. In that year, it was announced that:

> Persons who have taken the advanced elementary school diploma and have the necessary qualifications, especially love of children, a good voice, musical ability and an emerging manner, may enter training school for kindergarteners and receive kindergarten diplomas at the close of the second year of Normal School training.[27]

Evidently, the training of kindergarten specialists by the McGill Normal School helped fill a demand within city schools under the Protestant Board. Introduced in

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[26] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Minutes of the Meetings of the McGill Normal Committee, June 15, 1892.

[27] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Prospectus of the McGill Normal School, 1895-1896, p. 21.

in September 1892, the classes had grown in popularity, and by 1895 the Commissioners reported that there were Kindergarten Departments in nine of the Board's schools.[28] With no other source of qualified personnel available to them, the Board had been required to train its own teachers for these classes. The training of kindergarten teachers by the Normal School would certainly have been regarded as a welcome development by the Commissioners and Principal Robins as well. For the Board, the training of these teachers had placed an extra financial and administrative burden on them and the relinquishing of this duty would not have been made reluctantly. For Robins, the training of kindergarten specialists served the dual function of fulfilling a demand within the public school system and of broadening the parameters of teacher training at the McGill Normal School.

If the question of the kindergarten class was slow to be resolved, other changes and improvements had been instituted by Robins in the interim with considerably greater expediency. To a degree, changes in the university

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[28] Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal (Montreal: W.H. Eaton and Son, 1895), p. 9.

as a whole facilitated some of Robins' intended modifications to the Normal School program. In 1885, the Faculty of Arts agreed to allow graduates of the Academy Course to enter second year without having to undergo further examination. More significantly, this decision coincided with the admission of women to the university. Figures indicate that these two factors immediately contributed to a decline in the number of Academy students. In terms of the development of higher education for women, the Academy Course had been pivotal. As Ronish has noted:

> ... the Academy Class program represented the highest systematic course of study available. The creation of such a class was, therefore, the next most significant step after the admission of women to the Normal School.[29]

By 1888 however, enrollment declined to such a degree that Robins advised the Normal School Committee that he was, "... very doubtful of the present value of the Academy Class to the Normal School now that the doors of McGill University are open to ladies."[30] Robins further argued that professors should not be required to teach more than

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[29] Ronish, op. cit., p. 17.

[30] Munroe, op. cit., p. 15.

twenty hours a week and in order to reduce their teaching load, he recommended the discontinuance of the Academy Course.[31] This recommendation was acted upon quickly and an announcement was made by the Governors that:

> The transference of the Academy Class to the University referred to in the last Report as in contemplation, has been effected and it is hoped may produce beneficial results, increasing in importance from year to year.[32]

For Robins, the transplantation of the Academy Class to the university afforded him the opportunity to lecture in the Faculty of Arts. At a Committee meeting in January of 1891, he submitted a Proposed Syllabus of Forty Lectures in Pedagogy for Undergraduates and Candidates for First Class Academy Diplomas.[33] Designed to deal with the legal position of the teacher, discipline, instruction in special subjects, and physical, mental, and moral development, the course was exactingly demanding and has been acclaimed in modern times as a document which, "... stands

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[31] Ibid, p. 17.

[32] McGill University, Annual Report of the Governors, Principal and Fellows (Montreal, 1889), p. 12.

[33] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Minutes of the McGill Normal Committee, January 7, 1891.

today as object lesson in preparation for university professors."[34]

Under Principal Robins, curriculum reforms of varying significance continued to be implemented steadily. Given that comparisons between nineteenth-century and present pedagogical practices are methodically dubious, if not unsound, it remains that while modern teachers clearly recognize Psychology as an integral part of modern teacher training, the discipline, as it applies to the educational process, was something new in Robins' time. In this light, one can appreciate the innovativeness shown by Robins, to whom the credit must go for the appearance of Psychology in the 1893 syllabus.[35] Almost forty years later, a prominent figure in Quebec education was to note that Robins', "... lectures on child mind showed an insight into many of the functions of the mind that are of recent development."[36]

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[34] Calam, op. cit., p. 22.

[35] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 145, Prospectus of the McGill Normal School, 1893-1894, p. 16.

[36] G.W. Parmelee, "Sampson Paul Robins." The Educational Record, 4, No. 1 (Jan., Feb., March 1930), p. 9.

Lectures on Elocution and the addition of Calisthenics to the Elementary and Advanced Elementary Diploma classes were part of a general expansion of the Normal School curriculum which manifested a corresponding increase in personnel. When Robins first joined the school, in 1857, the staff, including Dawson, had numbered eight. By the 1906-1907 session, Robins' last before his retirement and the school's move to the Macdonald campus, the Normal School faculty consisted of twenty-three members.[37] This number included Robins but not another twelve assistants employed in the Model Schools.

It is interesting to note that Robins' daughter, Miss Lilian B. Robins, was one of the first additions to the school's staff when he became principal. One source has indicated that Miss Robins' appointment, like that of Hicks' son Francis some years earlier, was another case of nepotism.[38] While Paradissis does provide evidence to indicate that certain members of the staff tended to receive preferential treatment, there is nothing to suggest that Lilian Robins was not

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[37] McGill University, Annual Calendar of McGill College and University (Montreal 1906), p. 281-282.

[38] Paradissis, op. cit., p. 129.

a competent student or proficient educator. First joining the staff as tutor, she later took her B.A. degree and taught English and Mathematics in the Normal School. Subsequent positions held by her at the Normal School included Assistant to the Principal and Instructor in Classics. Lilian Robins remained with the school after its transfer to Macdonald College until her retirement in 1915. For a number of years she had served as Curator and Librarian for the P.A.P.T. and also edited The Educational Record for five years.

The matter of nepotism aside, one can conclude that the number of specialists recruited by Robins measureably improved the school's efficiency. A larger, more specialized teaching body not only reduced teaching loads, but, more importantly, served to elevate the Normal School's educational standards as well as the prestige of its staff.

Parmelee has referred to the years of Robins' principalship as the, "... phase of his activity that his opportunity for service was greatest and his efforts most fruitful."[39] Certainly his broader and more regular

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[39] Parmelee, "Sampson Paul Robins," op. cit., p. 9.

contact with the province's teachers, through the establishment of the Teachers' Normal Institutes, served to spread his influence. Moreover, Robins' success in having the Academy Class transferred to the university resulted in a general rise and improvement in teacher credentials.

At its inception, the McGill Normal School was intended to train efficient teachers and the logical evolution of the school, particularly as regards its curriculum under Robins' principalship, followed a necessary path toward its goal of advancing teaching to the status of a true profession. Indeed, it was during Robins' tenure that the school curriculum began to evolve into the desired blend of what Parmelee has termed, "... professional training and great education."[40]

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[40] George W. Parmelee, "English Education," in Canada and Its Provinces, Vol. XVI, ed. by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, (Toronto: Publishers Association of Canada, 1914), p. 486.

CHAPTER V

ROBINS' WORK IN THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

The closing ceremonies of the McGill Normal School took place on May 31, 1907, at the Belmont Street premises. The Normal School's move to the Macdonald campus coincided with Robins' retirement as principal at the age of seventy-four. His involvement with the school spanned its entire fifty year history, longer than that of any staff member. Although he relinquished his duties at the Normal School, this did not herald an end to his involvement with the field of education.

Remarkably healthy at the time of his retirement as principal, Robins was to live another twenty-three years. Although his activities were markedly curtailed, he remained a visible figure in the province's educational community until well into his nineties.

While the focus of Robins' work, and the bulk of his

contribution to education is most clearly present in his years spent with the McGill Normal School and the Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal, other activities throughout his life are deserving of mention.

This chapter will deal principally with the pivotal role played by Robins in the establishment of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers and the nature and extent of his involvement with that organization's various causes throughout the years.

As previously noted, Robins' philosophy of education was shaped by his religious beliefs. Accordingly, this chapter will examine his activities within the Methodist community with a view to establishing the link between his religious convictions and educational ideology.

From 1857 to 1907, Robins both witnessed and influenced a gradual rise in the qualifications of the province's teachers. To a large extent, this was realized through better, more academic, and more professional training. In setting an example for those who received their training from him at the Normal School, it will be shown that Robins himself continued to improve his academic credentials.

1. Role in Founding the P.A.P.T..

When Robins joined the staff of the McGill Normal School in 1857, a fledgling professional association of Montreal teachers was already in existence. This association, founded through the efforts of William Henry Hicks, eventually making union with a number of loosely affiliated local organizations which would form over the next four years, would become the core of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Lower Canada in 1864.

In an address at the opening ceremonies of the McGill Normal School, Hicks took the opportunity to outline both the necessity and desirability of a teachers' association. He noted:

> The properly trained teacher... supplied with all that is necessary... still needs some connection with those ... engaged in the good work... I would advise him to join some Teachers' Association.[1]

A few months later, Hicks' organization became known

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[1] John Irwin Cooper, "Some Early Teachers' Associations in Quebec." The Educational Record, 80, No. 2 (April, May, June 1964), p. 84.

as the Teachers' Association in Connection with the McGill Normal School.[2] This link with the Normal School was an important one, for it marks the beginning of the involvement of Principal Dawson and Sampson Paul Robins whose roles in the founding and growth of the P.A.P.T. would ultimately eclipse that of Hicks.

Although Hicks' pioneering role in the establishment of a teachers' association is clear, evidence would indicate that the impetus for the founding of the provincial organization came through the energies of Robins and Dawson.

To Dawson, the function of the McGill Normal School was clear. It was, "... an important lever for the elevation of English education in the Province of Quebec."[3] To this end, the establishment of a teachers' association seemed a necessary way for graduates continuing to engage in dialogue and to address the problems related to their profession.

While the Normal School had certainly done much to elevate and standardize teaching practices in the few

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[2] Idem.

[3] Dawson, op. cit., p. 118.

short years since its inception, a number of problems continued to plague educators in Lower Canada. At the McGill Normal School on June 4, 1864, a local school inspector spoke to a gathering of educators which included Dr. Dawson and Professor Robins, at which he observed:

> One great hindrance to the advancement of education in Canada East is the isolation of our teachers. Each stands alone and works alone in his weakness. The counsel of his fellow teachers he has not. Of the experience and professional skill of others he knows nothing. In school and out of schools he has difficulties to contend with, but he has no place in the bosom of a brotherhood whose feelings will be all on his side, and whose influence and backing might be to him a host. All this and more is true respecting educators without a unity of brotherhood.[4]

Up to this point, the existing local associations included one in Quebec City as well as the Teachers' Association in Connection with the McGill Normal School. In June, 1857, the St-Francis district, which included Sherbrooke, formed its association and shortly afterward the District of Bedford followed suit.[5] Cooper has noted that a number of forces coming into play in the

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[4] Allan D. Talbot, P.A.P.T. The First Century (Gardenvale: Harpell's Press, 1963), p. 1.

[5] Ibid., p. 4.

1860's accelerated the formation of a provincial teachers' association.[6] Perhaps the most significant development was the improvement of railway travel which brought Sherbrooke within five hours of Montreal at a time when this journey took two days by road.[7] Clearly, this development, coupled with the imminent federation of the provinces, which perhaps underlined the viability of unions of other sorts, meant the time was opportune for the establishment of a provincial association.

While the importance of these factors should not be underestimated, it was largely through the organizational skills of Robins that a collective voice was fashioned from these isolated alliances.

Preliminary steps toward creating a provincial association had been taken at a local meeting in May, 1863, when Robins moved that the Bedford and St-Francis associations be contacted for the purpose of forming a central teachers' association.[8] As a testament to the

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[6] Cooper, op. cit., p. 85.

[7] Idem.

[8] Talbot, op. cit., p. 3.

true isolation of these embryonic associations, no one at this meeting appeared to have been aware of the Quebec City association.[9] In February, 1864, a delegation from Montreal led by Robins met in Bedford with representatives of the St-Francis and Bedford districts. The delegates ultimately agreed to the calling of a convention of teachers to examine the draft constitution and to inaugurate a provincial association. At this convention on June 4, 1864, a resolution was tabled by Robins:

> That on the basis of the constitution now adopted, we form ourselves into the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Lower Canada.[10]

The subsequent election of officers resulted in Dr. Jasper Nicholls, Principal of Bishop's, becoming the association's first president; Principal Dawson of McGill and Mr. Laing of Waterloo were elected as vice-presidents, and Robins became the association's first secretary. As in other educational endeavours, Robins clearly won the support and confidence of his contemporaries. His affil-

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[9] Idem.

[10] Ibid., p. 4.

iation with the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers (the name having been changed in 1867) was to include two terms as its president in 1888-89 and 1898-99.

Robins' role as a founding father of the P.A.P.T. exemplifies his adherence to the cause of professionalism in teaching. The growth of the association with which he continued to be involved many years after his retirement as principal of the Normal School, resulted in its becoming more and more influential with regards to the training of its members. As the power of the teachers' association expanded, its pervasiveness in the shaping of the McGill Normal School curriculum, through the direct criticism of its management, became increasingly evident. Previous analysis of the Normal School's history under the Hicks administration, and the account of the controversy surrounding the school's curriculum at that time, has shown that the P.A.P.T. was not unwilling to wield its burgeoning authority.

While the P.A.P.T. lobbied for many causes concerning the welfare of its members and addressed countless educational issues throughout the years, it is perhaps more within the scope of this thesis to detail those

activities of the P.A.P.T. with which Robins was most visibly involved.

It should be noted however that the major issues addressed by the P.A.P.T. in its early years: compulsory education, representation on the Protestant Committee, pensions, teacher training, rural schools, and curricula, were all characterized by the involvement of Robins.

Although compulsory education did not come into effect in the province of Quebec until 1943, the issue was one which greatly concerned the P.A.P.T. for more than seven decades. The first formal discussion on the question of a compulsory education act took place at a convention in Richmond where it was reported that, "... the feeling of the convention was in favour of a compulsory law..."[11]

The lack of compulsory education was often criticized by the Association but it was largely under the presidency of Robins' long-time ally, Rexford, that the question was most actively pursued. Indeed, under

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[11] Ibid., p. 15.

Rexford's leadership, several formal motions were passed to this effect in the early 1890's.[12]

This matter of compulsory education remained a source of frustration to Robins, who would not live to see its implementation. As early as 1872, he noted in his first annual report as Inspector of Common Schools that irregularity of school attendance was a detriment to the advancement of education in Montreal's schools.[13] Seeing this as a regrettable situation, Robins informed the chairman of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners that:

> Unless measures can be adopted to enforce greater punctuality, the teachers of your schools can scarcely be expected to bring scholars up to the standards of attainment set before them.[14]

Throughout the years, his dedication to the cause of compulsory education seemingly never faltered. At the age of ninety-one, Robins was to remark on the ideal of

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[12] Ibid., p. 28.

[13] S.P. Robins, "Report of the Inspector." Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1872), p. X.

[14] Idem.

universal education:

> Almost yearly it is more and more generally seen that education claims every human faculty as well as every child of man. Education must be, shall be, accessible to every boy and girl; and shall reach and develop every human faculty of body, mind and moral nature.[15]

In the 1870's and 1880's, meetings of the P.A.P.T. frequently broached the subject of teachers' pensions. The fact that by the late 1870's annual contributions by teachers to the pension fund remained voluntary meant that pensions were low.[16] The P.A.P.T., through negotiations carried on with the Superintendent of Education, was largely responsible for effecting legislation which laid the groundwork for a pension scheme that steadily improved under the scrutiny of the Association's pension committee. As early as 1881, a pension act was passed by the legislature which increased the teachers' contributions to the fund.[17] Although this was seen as an improvement by the P.A.P.T., they predictably urged that contributions be raised further.[18]

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[15] S.T. Robins, "My First School." The Teachers' Magazine, 5, No. 2 (January, 1964), p. 11.

[16] Talbot, op. cit., p. 29-30.

[17] Idem.

[18] Idem.

The fact that reports of pension commission representatives were a central part of every convention shows that the issue remained an ongoing priority for the Association.

It is interesting to note that Robins served several terms as a pension commissioner. It is also significant that, when Robins began his first term as president of the Association in 1888, he was also elected to serve as co-commissioner with colleague Rexford.[19] Through the examination of written accounts of P.A.P.T. conventions, the significance of this alliance between Robins and Rexford becomes apparent. Simply stated, the two men appear to have been catalysts for virtually every major activity undertaken by the Association in the late 1800's.

Clearly, the question of curriculum was of great concern to the P.A.P.T. as evidenced by the creation of the Curriculum Committee in 1880.[20] Robins' expertise in this area was firmly established some years earlier when many of his recommendations concerning curriculum were implemented by the Protestant Board of School Com-

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[19] Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers, Minute Book, Oct. 19, 1888.

missioners of Montreal. As Superintendent, Robins had done much to rectify the lack of uniformity within the city's schools through such measures as standardizing textbooks; similar issues remaining largely unresolved in the province's rural schools.

Arguably, Rexford's expertise in the area of rural education was unchallenged and, while the topic dominated much of his writing throughout this period, Robins' contribution to a growing uniformity in rural schools should not be overlooked.

As Robins was beginning his second term as vice-president of the P.A.P.T. in 1883, Rexford, by then Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, was in the midst of preparing a document entitled "School Time-Tables", which was to supplement his recently authored "Course of Studies for Elementary Schools."[21] In the preface to Robins' "The Disposal of Time in a Country School," it is noted by the editor that this paper was, "constantly consulted" by Rexford in the preparation of his tables.[22]

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[21] S.P. Robins, "The Disposal of Time in a Country School." The Educational Record, 5, No. 3 (October 1883) p. 236.

[22] Idem.

While it is clear that the case for establishing a certain degree of uniformity among the rural schools was a sound one, it is interesting to note that Robins advised against individual differences and unique needs of various communities being ignored.

Although Robins' recommendations show considerable insight into the educational system of rural Quebec, it is the tone of his article which shows he was no mere seconder of motions. Addressing Rexford, he states:

> In complying, as well as I can, with your desire that I should indicate my views as to the best disposal of time in a country school, organized in accordance with the Course of Studies for Elementary Schools recently issued by you, I should like to premise a caution and a distinction.
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> The caution is that a scheme of this sort, published by authority and intended to apply to hundreds of very widely scattered schools, must be very elastic in its provisions or in its interpretation in order to meet the wants of communities so diverse in character as are the rural districts, villages and towns.[23]

The early 1880's was also a significant period for the P.A.P.T. in terms of expanding its political influence. For a number of years, the Association had lob-

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[23] Idem.

bied for representation on the Protestant Committee. In 1884, this goal was finally realized and the Protestant Committee announced:

> The appointment of Mr. Masten marks a new era in the history of the Protestant Committee. This is the first time that a member of the Province has been appointed to a seat on the Protestant Committee. For several years the teachers have been urging that they should have a representation on the Board charged with the educational interests of the Province, and the Government has at length recognized their representations in the appointment of Mr. Masten. This appointment has been received with great satisfaction throughout the Province, not only because a representation of the teachers has been appointed, but also because it is felt that Mr. Masten will represent the interests of elementary education in a manner that will reflect credit upon himself and upon his profession.[24]

Robins later served as the P.A.P.T.'s representative on the Protestant Committee and it is noteworthy that, in this capacity, he delivered a report as part of a formal motion for the adoption of compulsory education to the Department of Public Instruction in 1893. He recommended that:

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[24] George Weir, "The Protestant Committee." The Educational Record, 4, No. 11 (December 1884), p. 319-320.

> ... the Province enact such a measure as on one hand will make adequate education accessible to every child, and, on the other, will compel the education of every child; so that neither the wilfulness of children nor the neglect of parents shall issue in ignorance, in the poverty that springs from ignorance and in the crime that festers in communities that are both ignorant and poverty-stricken.[25]

Another area of concern for the P.A.P.T. in its early years was the question of teacher certification. This disquietude is apparent in a resolution passed by the Association in 1880: "That the present system of examination of teachers by local boards is unsatisfactory."[26] While this resolution was repeated two years later, a Central Board of Examiners was not established until 1898.[27]

Although the establishment of this central body was seen as a decided improvement by the P.A.P.T., they lobbied for many years before gaining representation on the Board. In 1924, the first formal request for representation on the Central Board of Examiners was instituted by the P.A.P.T..[28] Clearly the Department of Public In-

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[25] Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers, Minute Book, Oct. 23, 1893.

[26] Talbot, op. cit., p. 30.

[27] Idem.

[28] Ibid., p. 52.

struction was not prepared to make such a concession for it was not until 1956 that the Association sent its first delegate to the Board.[29]

That official representation of the P.A.P.T. on the Central Board of Examiners did not come until this late date should not necessarily lead to the assumption that those closely connected with the Association were never members of the Board. Indeed, many prominent members of the P.A.P.T. served on the Board, albeit not as direct representatives of the Association.

Robins, in addition to representing the P.A.P.T. as a member of the Protestant Committee of the Council of Education, also served as a member on the Protestant Central Board of Examiners. In fact, he maintained this position for a year after his retirement from the Normal School, officially tendering his resignation in May of 1908.[30] Some years later, it was officially stated by the Executive of the P.A.P.T. that during his years on the Central Board of Examiners, Robins, "left his stamp

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[29] Ibid., p. 76.

[30] "Meeting of the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction." The Educational Record, 28, Nos. 6-7 (June, July 1908), p. 245.

on Protestant education in this province..."[31]

Characteristically, Robins' resignation from his post on the Board of Examiners did not mark the end of his participation in the province's educational matters as he continued to serve as an associate member of the Protestant Committee until 1913. While it is a common practice for eulogies to be delivered at retirement ceremonies, it is certainly significant that Rexford, by no means a minor contributor to the evolution of Quebec's educational system himself, stated at this time that Robins, "... for more than half a century has been recognized as the leading educationalist of the Province..."[32]

2. External Activities.

While it is clear that the focus of Robins' energies were directed at his educational endeavours, other inter-

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[31] "Minutes of Executive Meeting." The Teachers' Magazine, 12, No. 51 (April 1930), p. 48.

[32] "Meeting of the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction." The Educational Record, 33, Nos. 10, 11, 12 (Oct., Nov., and Dec. 1913), p. 362.

ests also occupied a seemingly full schedule. Indeed, the pressures of providing for his rather large family must have required a great deal of his attention. In 1854, Robins married Miss Elizabeth Hore of Camborne, Ontario, who died in 1867. In 1871, he married Miss Jane Dougall of Montreal. At the time of her marriage she was a teacher and, according to one source, "... had a remarkable forte for Mathematics and occult sciences."[33]

Mention has already been made of Miss Lilian Robins, who followed in her parents' footsteps as an educator, and while there is little information available, it would appear that some of the other seven children were also engaged in the teaching profession.[34]

An interview conducted with Robins on his ninety-first birthday and published in The Educational Record, provides some clear insights into Robins' political leanings. He noted that he had been a Liberal as far back as his early days in Upper Canada, but was quick to point out that he placed his Canadianism above mere

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[33] J. Douglas Borthwick, Montreal History and Gazetteer (Montreal: 1892), p. 356.

[34] Idem.

party.[35]

In the same interview, Robins mentioned that for a time he was a member of the Fourth Estate, being an early editor of the Dundas Banner. Apparently, this affiliation was short-lived, and, by way of explanation, Robins offered the following anecdote:

> It was a Liberal paper, and at that time the Conservatives were in power. The owners were very anxious that I should attack the then Postmaster-General, but I thought that he had done good work and refused to do so, with the result that I was compelled to resign.[36]

When discussing some of the educational advantages of Quebec, Robins' Liberal affiliation came to the fore and he identified the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier as the type of man thoroughly educated in the very best sense of the word. In Dr. Robins' opinion, the knowledge of a second language, coupled with the extensive political training possible to bilingual men were great advantages peculiar to Quebec. Indeed, he referred to them as, "inestimable advantages."[37]

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[35] G.W. Parmelee, "Dr. Robins Attains His 91st Birthday." The Educational Record, 44, Nos. 1, 2, 3 (Jan., Feb., March 1924), p. 31.

[36] Idem.

[37] Idem.

In a profile of Robins, one source has noted that he was, "... as untiring in his religious duties as he has ever been in his educational."[38] In fact, the influence of religion on his philosophy of education was demonstrated in countless addresses at both P.A.P.T. conventions and official functions of the McGill Normal School throughout the years.

As Parmelee has pointed out, "... his religion was never a thing apart from his life, and it determined in a large measure all his theories in regard to the main purpose of education."[39]

As previously noted, Robins came to Upper Canada in the 1840's, with his parents, both of whom had been Methodist preachers in the Bible Christian sect in England.

By the time Robins settled in Upper Canada, Methodism was firmly established. As Rice has pointed out, Methodism was successful in the early Loyalist settlements and was usually the first, and often the only, religious body in

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[38] Idem.

[39] Parmelee, "Dr. Robins Attains His 91st Birthday," op. cit., p. 7.

much of rural Upper Canada.[40] The Wesleyan Methodists, clearly the predominant Methodist body, were originally organized in far-flung circuits, but had evolved a more settled parish system by the mid-nineteenth century.[41]

The motto of the Methodist Church was, "To spread scriptural holiness throughout the land," and the Methodists differed from the older Protestant traditions by their aggressively evangelistic approach.[42] Robins was an active member of Montreal's Methodist community and, according to one source, was a class leader and local preacher.[43]

In addresses made at the various conventions of the P.A.P.T., Robins often broached topics which reflected his religious beliefs. At one convention in Cowansville in 1884, Robins led a discussion concerning the teaching

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[40] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 2201, Inventory of the Records of the United Church of Canada, Montreal-Ottawa Conference. 1976, p. 1.

[41] Idem.

[42] Idem.

[43] Henry James Morgan ed., Men and Women of the Time (Toronto: William Biggs, 1898), p. 870.

of temperance in schools.[44] To considerable applause, Robins stated that he had never known a man who had not injured himself both mentally, physically, and morally by his indulgence in the use of intoxicating spirits and tobacco.[45] He was convinced that by total abstinence from the use of these, they would all make themselves more useful in their day and generation.[46]

Robins' involvement in the Methodist Church clearly went beyond the local level. Minutes of the annual meetings of the Montreal district of the United Church of Canada indicate that Robins was an influential figure; elected at meetings in 1888 and again in 1891 to represent the Church at both regional and national functions.[47] This select group was elected at annual meetings and comprised both ministers and laymen.

The degree to which Robins was influential in the Methodist community is perhaps no better exemplified than by his involvement with the Wesleyan Theological

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[44] Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers, Minute Book, Oct. 9, 1884.

[45] Idem.

[46] Idem.

[47] McGill University Archives, Accession No. 2201/M/7/1. Montreal District Minute Book, United Church of Canada, 1888-1891.

College, Montreal. Originally founded in 1872, the College apparently survived some early opposition and financial problems and was eventually incorporated in 1879.[48] It became affiliated with McGill in the same year and the first degrees were awarded in 1883.[49]

When James Smyth became principal of the College in 1911, he provided the impetus for a project known as the Plan for Cooperation of the Colleges, which was instituted in 1912.[50] The Wesleyan Theological College now joined with the Congregational and Presbyterian Colleges to become the United Theological College.[51]

According to Mair, the Co-operative Plan was a pioneer venture in theological education in Canada and owed much to the vision and practical influence of several Montreal laymen.[52] Among these men was Robins.

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[48] Nathan H. Mair, The United Theological College 1927-1977 (Montreal, 1977), p. 6.

[49] Idem.

[50] Ibid., p. 7.

[51] Idem.

[52] Idem.

Robins' position as Senator of the College as late as 1912 is indicative of the breadth of his post-retirement activities.

3. Furthering His Own Education.

As previously noted, Robins' success in setting up Teacher Institutes throughout Quebec was indicative of his devotion to the cause of improving the professional qualifications of the province's teachers. While the upward spiralling of teachers' credentials has become an identifiable phenomenon in modern times, the increased academic qualifications, ultimately responsible for elevating teaching to the status of a profession, had their beginnings in Robins' era.

Considering his numerous duties as Ordinary Professor at the Normal School, as well as his position with the P.A.P.T. in the early 1860's, it is remarkable that Robins found the time to pursue studies within McGill's Faculty of Arts. A First Rank General Honours student throughout his years in the program, Robins graduated in 1863, as the Prince of Wales Gold Medalist for Mathematics and

Natural Philosophy.[53] Shortly after graduation, Robins resumed his studies at McGill and went on to receive his M.A. in 1868.[54]

In 1880, while still employed by the Montreal Board of School Commissioners, he received an honorary LL.D. from McGill University.[55] In 1900, he was further recognized by Bishop's University which granted him an honorary LL.D..[56]

Robins' association with Bishop's College had been close throughout the years and he lectured at the school in the 1890's. At a meeting of the Department of Public Instruction on November 27, 1896:

> A letter was read from the Reverend Principal Adams, asking that permission be given to the Principal of the Normal School, to deliver his courses of lectures on Pedagogy, at Bishop's College, Lennoxville. On motion of Dr. Shaw and Dr. Peterson, it was resolved that the existing arrangements for lectures in Pedagogy, to undergraduates of McGill University, with a view to graduates

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[53] Morgan, op. cit., p. 955.

[54] Idem.

[55] Idem.

[56] Idem.

> in Arts obtaining academy diplomas, be made applicable to the University of Bishop's College for the present year, and that in such work Principal Robins, LL.D., be authorized to modify the syllabus of subjects of lectures in Pedagogy, previously approved by this Committee. In approving this course of action, we record our appreciation of the readiness of Dr. Robins to add to his present arduous work, with a view to increasing the staff of efficiently trained teachers for our schools in this province.[57]

Robins' realm of influence clearly extended beyond the confines of the McGill Normal School. Although his achievements were recognized by the most influential of his contemporaries, he appears to have been destined to remain in the shadows of the more celebrated educationalists of his day: Dawson and Rexford. However, the scope of his influence and the sheer longevity of his career in Canadian education is indeed unique. To quote Parmelee, that Robins

> ... should have maintained a continuous connection for fifty years with McGill Normal School is of itself remarkable, but the quality and value of his work in this Province is a more outstanding feature of his life.[58]

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[57] "Meeting of the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction." The Educational Record, 17, No. 1 (January 1897), p. 23.

[58] Parmelee, "Dr. Robins Attains his 91st Birthday," op. cit., p. 9.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Superintendent of Public Instruction for Lower Canada, Dr. Meilleur, noted in 1853:

> Our teachers, both male and female, are deficient chiefly in a good method of conveying knowledge rather than in the knowledge itself. The Normal School is the only means of training them to that. Moreover, uniformity of the quality of the matter taught is hardly attainable by any other means than by uniformity in the method of imparting it.[1]

This lack of uniformity which characterized teacher training in the province of Quebec before 1856 was a situation which Sampson Paul Robins did much to rectify throughout his long involvement in Quebec education.

Joining the staff of the McGill Normal School at its opening in 1857, he brought with him valuable experience acquired under Egerton Ryerson at the Toronto Normal School, which had preceded the McGill facility by some ten years.

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[1] cited by O.B. Rexford, op. cit., p. 77.

Through the examination of some early developments at the McGill Normal School under Sir William Dawson, little evidence was found to support the author's hypothesis that Robins was a more influential figure within the Normal School that the literature would indicate. Clearly, Dawson's influence during those early years was paramount, and the contribution of Robins and other staff members to the decision-making process was dwarfed by Dawson's leadership. What should not be overlooked however, was the central role played by Robins in the founding of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers at that time.

Robins' involvement with the Association continued until shortly before his death in 1930. During that period, he served the Association in a variety of capacities, including two terms as its president. This connection is important; for it is to the P.A.P.T. that much of the credit must go for having begun a re-evaluation of teacher training techniques at the Normal School. The Association's criticism of the Normal School curriculum during the latter years of the Hicks administration was the first concrete example of the P.A.P.T.'s ability and willingness to use its growing authority. It is interesting to note that Robins' influence within the

Association at this time, although considerable, was overshadowed by the emergence of the P.A.P.T.'s most visible spokesperson, Elson Rexford.

While Robins maintained a position at the Normal School during the years of Hicks' principalship, from 1871 to 1883, his most notable contributions during this period were made as Inspector of Common Schools and later as Superintendent while in the employ of the Montreal Board of Protestant School Commissioners. Although his administrative abilities were amply evident through his organization of the city's schools into a comprehensive and uniform system, much of the experience he acquired through his work municipally would provide the seed for broader educational causes.

While some of the recommendation contained in a report prepared in his first year with the Protestant Board, notably the need for legislation concerning compulsory education, were not realized during his lifetime, many were eventually implemented. Perhaps one of the most significant of these was his lobbying for a high school facility for girls. On this issue, Robins was adamant that a girls' high school was, "... one of the

most pressing educational wants of the city."[2]

The report also contained two noteworthy recommendations which Robins would ultimately put into effect during his years as Principal of the Normal School. Identifying the low priority given to the training of French teachers at the Normal School, and the resulting lack of French instruction within city schools, he would later support and encourage the cause of bilingualism in the province's schools and would become the first of the Normal School's principals to appoint a French specialist to the staff. Significantly, this appointment also marked the first time a woman had been employed in such a pretigious capacity. Similarly, Robins' recognition of the need and demand for kindergarten specialists resulted in his insertion of this discipline into the Normal School's curriculum some years later.

The Normal School moved into the twentieth century under Robins' principalship and it was during that period that the school's curriculum was greatly modernized. His addition of a large number of specialists to the staff served the dual function of raising educational standards while reducing teaching loads.

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[2] Robins, "Report of the Inspector," op. cit., p. XI.

Internal reforms instituted during his principalship included a course in Psychology in 1893 and the transfer of the Academy Class to the university which substantially raised teacher qualifications.

Significantly, Robins' work in establishing the Teachers' Normal Institutes, designed for the in-service training of teachers, foreshadowed the continuing education aspect of modern teacher training.

In this thesis, a great deal of attention was paid to the early influence of Robins' family and his later activities within the Methodist community. In many ways, it is impossible to separate his views on education from his religious beliefs. Clearly, religion was the part of his life which guided all of his professional and personal endeavours. Stated simply, his faith was central to his view as to the main purpose of education.

While it is undeniable that Robins' main contribution to education in the province of Quebec was not nearly as weighty as that of some of his more celebrated contemporaries like Dawson and Rexford, his role in the evolution of the McGill Normal School and his part in significant educational developments of his times are no less deserving of mention.

At the time of Robins' death, there existed a provincial network of schools staffed by professionals whose training he had greatly influenced. Indeed, this provides a sharp contrast to the proverbial one-room schoolhouse in which a young Robins, without professional training, first began to teach.

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