

## **The Origins of the Confessional School System in Newfoundland**

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For years the theme for Education Week was "Education is Everybody's Business." This naturally brought to mind the old saying that what's everybody's business is nobody's business, so educators were faced with a double problem. Not only did the public become more aware of educational needs, but overnight every man in the street felt himself fit to pronounce on problems as if he were an educational expert. Since, of course, he was not at the centre of things, he had no responsibility for carrying his theories into practice. Hence educators, grateful for public interest and concern, were not a little irritated by pat answers and instant solutions offered by people with insufficient knowledge of the problems involved, and by the difficulties of applying theories which if examined in a vacuum and not in a complicated human situation seemed so eminently clear and logical.

Nevertheless, it is heartening to see that education is so much in the thoughts and on the consciences of all thinking people. There has never been a period in the course of man's recorded history – do I dare make such an assertion in the presence of historians? – when such a large proportion of the population in developed and developing countries has been so education-conscious. Boards of education and departments of education are more and more aware of the extent of the task before them. Teaching is coming into its own instead of being regarded as the cinderella of the professions. Educational facilities have been improved immeasurably and a wide variety of programmes has been designed to meet the educational needs of every segment of society. Young, old, and middle-aged are pursuing the study of every skill and every field of human knowledge from computers to Kenneth Clark, from Plato to pottery.

In strong contrast with this "embarras de richesses" in our time is the paucity – we might almost say the non-existence – of educational advantages in the early colonial days in Newfoundland, a period of history to which we must turn briefly if we are to see in proper focus the educational system of our province which puzzles many outsiders, and not a few insiders too I might add!

Education in Newfoundland on an organized basis just did not exist for

two hundred years after Cabot's discovery of the island in 1497. One of the first things we learnt about our history as school-children was that the reward received by Cabot for his discovery was a grant of £10 "to him who found the new isle" given by King Henry VII, a monarch hardly noted for his generosity, and as skilled in holding on to his money as his Cardinal-statesman was in extracting it from his subjects by the famous two-pronged argument known as "Morton's Fork."

While Newfoundland has traditionally taken pride in being Britain's oldest colony and the corner-stone of empire, the fact of the matter is that the "Mother" Country, more truly a stepmother, never intended her to be a colony at all. There was a deliberate policy on the part of the government of Great Britain under the influence of the West Country Merchants (of Bristol, Dartmouth, Exeter, Poole, Totnes, Teignmouth and other seaport towns) to retard as much as possible, and indeed to prohibit, permanent settlement on the island. Penalties for any attempt at settlement were in the early days very severe. Newfoundland was to be a permanent fishing station for the West Country Merchants to whom I have just referred. In the seventeenth century they had as many as 250 ships prosecuting the fishery in Newfoundland waters. These merchants had great influence with the governments of the day and it was in their interest to prevent the development of Newfoundland as a colony.

In Volume III of Richard Hakluyt's sixteenth century *Popular Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English*, we learn that when Sir Humphrey Gilbert entered the port of St. John's on Saturday, August 3rd, 1583, he found there at anchor 36 ships of various nations. Hakluyt was with Gilbert on his famous and tragic voyage and his account of what happened both at sea and while in St. John's makes fascinating reading. The author gives the impression that a community of some consequence existed at St. John's at the time of Gilbert's visit.

In spite of the restrictions to which I have already made reference, settlers established themselves in harbours along the coast out of reach of the authorities. Official policy regarding Newfoundland was definitely anti-settlement but it was impossible to enforce it. Imagine the difficulties of policing the innumerable coves and inlets and offshore islands around Newfoundland's 6,000 miles of indented coast line – hard enough to supervise even with modern equipment and communications. Frequently the game was not worth the candle. There was more important work to be done in gathering the rich harvest of the teeming waters. In Hakluyt's words,

It seemeth that nature had recompensed that only defect and incommodity of some sharp cold, by many benefits; namely, with incredible quantity, and no less variety, of kinds of fish in the sea and fresh waters, as trouts, salmons, and other fish to us unknown; also cod, which alone draweth

many nations thither, and is become the most famous fishing in the world.

With the passage of time, in spite of official opposition, more and more settlements came into existence in Newfoundland and in England two principal schools of thought became increasingly vocal on the issue. In 1665 Sir Josiah Child in his *A Discourse of Trade* summarises the situation quite succinctly. One school, Sir Josiah informs us, advocated sending a governor to Newfoundland and encouraging permanent settlement. It was the contention of this group that such a policy would help in the defence of the Island and the Mother Country in time of war and would also help with regard to the management of the fishery there. The second school advocated a policy directly contrary to this and was strongly believed in by Sir Josiah and the West Country Merchants and owners of the fishing ships. They were against a governor's being sent to the Island and against inhabitants being permitted to reside there. They went so far as to advocate that no passenger or private boat should be allowed to fish in Newfoundland waters. To quote the author of the Discourse,

This latter way propounded is most agreeable to my proposition; and if it could be effected, I am persuaded would revive the decayed English Fishing Trade at New-found-land, and be otherwise greatly for the advantages of this Kingdom, and that for these following reasons,

(1) Because most of the provisions the Planters, who settled in Newfoundland, make use of, viz, bread, beef, pork, butter, cheese, clothes and Irish Bengal cloth, linnen and woolen; Irish stockings, as also nets, hooks and lines, etc., they are supplied with from New England and Ireland; and with wine, oil and linnen by the salt ships from France and Spain, in consequence of which the labour, as well as the feeding and clothing of so many men is lost to England;

(2) The planters settled there, being mostly loose vagrant people, and without order and government, keep dissolute houses, which have debauched seamen, and diverted them from their laborious and industrious calling; whereas before there were settlements there, the seamen had no other resort during the fishing, being the time of their abode in that country, but to their ships, which afforded them convenient food and repose, without inconvenience of excess.

It is obvious, then, that in spite of restrictive legislation, a growing number of fisherfolk and tradesmen had decided to live permanently in Newfoundland. On the other hand, these settlers being outlaws of a sort could not expect Britain to provide any of the amenities of civilized living. Life was very rough indeed and Newfoundland provided a field ripe for missionary

endeavour.

It was natural in these circumstances that the churches, which pioneered in the field of education in so many countries, should have taken the initiative in providing for the educational needs of the people of Newfoundland. As a matter of fact, the Church of England through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (better known as the S.P.G.) pioneered in organized educational efforts in Newfoundland a century before the state showed any active interest in the enlightenment and education of the people.

The first school of which we have record, was established at Bonavista by the Rev. Henry Jones in 1726 under the sponsorship of the S.P.G.

It should be mentioned here that, in the year 1689, a Franciscan Convent had been established at Placentia, the then French capital of Newfoundland, under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Quebec. This convent may have been established for educational purposes but we have no record of a school's having been conducted at Placentia by the Franciscans. Some day a student may have the good fortune to throw further light on the question while researching our early history in the archives of Quebec or Paris.

Following in the wake of the S.P.G., organized educational efforts were undertaken by the Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor in St. John's. This society was founded by a group of leading citizens around 1802. The Benevolent Irish Society, commonly referred to as the B.I.S. was organized for persons of Irish extraction on non-sectarian lines in 1806, but soon became identified as a Roman Catholic Society and is still active in St. John's. It established a school for boys in 1826 which is now under the direction of the Irish Christian Brothers with over 2,000 students enrolled.

The Newfoundland School Society, founded in England in 1823 through the efforts of Samuel Codner and under the auspices of the Established Church, carried out a programme of free instruction for the poor. By 1828 the Society had established schools at St. John's, Harbour Grace, Carbonear, Petty Harbour, Quidi Vidi, Trinity and Bonavista. It was still functioning in 1923 when its remaining school buildings were passed over to the Anglican school authorities in the local education districts.

Bishop Fleming, the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. John's, introduced the Presentation order of nuns to Newfoundland in 1833 and they were followed in 1842 by the first band of the Sisters of Mercy. Both religious orders originated in Ireland as did of course the Christian Brothers of Ireland who came to Newfoundland through the efforts of Bishop Power in 1875.

Before passing on to a closer study of the development of public education in Newfoundland, special mention must be made of the Moravian Brethren who first came to Labrador in 1771 and whose 200 years of labours among our Esquimaux fellow-citizens we are celebrating this year. These brave missionaries have won the admiration and affection not only of their flock but of all Newfoundlanders. They have carried on educational and

pastoral work in the northern part of Labrador at Hebron, Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik, and more recently at Happy Valley in cooperation with the other religious groups in that relatively new and fast-growing community on the doorstep of the great airport at Goose Bay.

Private schools were also a feature of early Newfoundland education. These schools played an important role, particularly for the families of the more well-to-do, who could pay for the privilege of sending their children to them. The private school movement in Newfoundland was similar to that in the other Atlantic seaboard colonies of North America. The relatively small number of really affluent families were accustomed to sending their sons and daughters to England or to well-known schools on the Mainland for their education. This practice is still carried on but to a much lesser degree, except in the case of certain higher professional studies and specialties not yet available in Newfoundland.

In 1798 a rather ambitious private school was organized by a group of St. John's citizens under the headmastership of the Rev. Lewis Anspach, an English clergyman invited to Newfoundland to assume this responsibility. Disputes which arose among the subscribers, the master, and resident clergyman of St. John's cut short the life of this institution. It was to have been an all-purpose school patterned along the lines of the English grammar schools of the day. Anspach is the author of a *History of the Island of Newfoundland* and is best remembered as such.

In spite of the best efforts of church-sponsored and privately organized efforts to provide for the schooling of the growing population of the colony, the educational problems continued to grow and became more acute. Furthermore, Newfoundlanders were becoming more and more demanding for a measure of control over their own affairs. Finally, in 1832, England granted the colony more responsibility through what is known as Representative Government, which consisted of an Executive Council or Cabinet appointed by the Mother Country on the recommendation of the Governor, and a Legislative Assembly elected by the people.

The new government soon turned its attention to the vexing problem of education and in 1836 Newfoundland's first Education Act, entitled "An Act for the Encouragement of Education in this Colony," was passed.

The provisions of this Act are of particular interest in that it provided for a straight secular school system, which on the surface would seem to be ignoring the previous educational efforts, wholly church-sponsored. Secondly, it seems totally at variance with the denominational system traditionally associated with Newfoundland education, and by which Newfoundland set such store, that its preservation was made one of the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada in 1949, term seventeen of which reads as follows:

In lieu of section ninety-three of the British North America Act, 1867, the following Term shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland.

In and for the Province of Newfoundland the Legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education, but the Legislature will not have authority to make laws prejudicially affecting any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools, common (amalgamated) schools, or denominational colleges, that any class or classes of persons have by law in Newfoundland at the date of Union, and out of public funds of the Province of Newfoundland provided for education,

(a) all such schools shall receive their share of such funds in accordance with scales determined on a non-discriminatory basis from time to time by the Legislature for all schools then being conducted under authority of the Legislature; and

(b) all such colleges shall receive their share of any grant from time to time voted for all colleges then being conducted under authority of the Legislature, such grant being distributed on a non-discriminatory basis.

The 1836 Act, however, was not an attack on religious education as such but, rather, an attempt to remove sectarianism from the classrooms. The wording of the Act could be considered ecumenical and tolerant of varying religious views for an age when religious feeling ran high and hostility amongst different religious groups was easily aroused. The Act provided for the continued support of the Anglican and Roman Catholic schools already established. The Wesleyans (Methodists) were still a small minority and no specific reference is made to their schools..

School boards of thirteen members each, appointed by the Governor, were to be set up in each of the nine electoral districts then existing: St. John's; Conception Bay; Trinity Bay; Bonavista Bay; Twillingate and Fogo; Ferryland; Placentia and St. Mary's; Burin; Fortune Bay. The boards were empowered to make rules and regulations, subject to the approval of the Governor, for the establishment and management of schools. They were to be non-denominational in character and appointed independently of the churches, ostensibly at least, though it is difficult to measure what pressures may have been brought to bear behind the scenes to make sure that religious claims were not overlooked. The senior resident clergyman of each denomination functioning in the district was to be *ex officio* a member of the board. In spite of the rather bitter sectarianism of the times there seems to have been a serious attempt to bring the various denominations together for purposes of public education.

Nevertheless, differences arose over certain controversial clauses in the rules and regulations drawn up by the several district boards and we get

echoes of these in the entries of the Journals of the House of Assembly, in the Colonial Secretary's Letter Books, and in the newspapers of the time. It is interesting to trace some of the events in date order, noting the regulations drawn up concerning religious training in a system supposed to be wholly non-sectarian.

The Rules of the St. John's Board were adopted on July 15, 1836. Rule 7 reads:

That all Ministers of Religion shall have power to visit the schools under the control of this Board, and from time to time to withdraw the pupils of their respective communions for the purpose of imparting to them Religious Instruction, for which every facility shall be afforded by the Teachers; but no Minister shall be permitted to impart any such instruction in the schools.

Rule 8 of the same Board ensures that the religious convictions of all will be respected in the choice of books to be used in the classrooms of the schools. In part Rule 8 reads as follows:

That no Books shall be used in any school to be established by this Board except such as shall be approved by the Board, whose aim it shall be to select works which cannot give any reasonable offence to members of any religious denomination.

What books one would have to exclude and how far one would have to go in order to ensure that the second part of the clause would be effective is an interesting question. Too far, apparently, for the Conception Bay Board whose Rule 8 omitted that part. "Reasonable offence" to the members of this Board would be not the *inclusion* of any particular book as much as the *exclusion* of the Authorized Version of the Bible in which Protestant parents quite naturally wished to have their children instructed, while Roman Catholics objected strenuously, not to the Scriptures *per se*, but to the authorized Protestant version.

In the Rules and Regulations submitted by the Conception Bay Board for the Governor's approval, Rule 11 should be particularly noted. It was to prove the Achilles' heel of the non-sectarian system. It led to much acrimonious controversy and finally to the impasse resulting in the decision of both sides that there was no solution to the problem except through the division of the education grant among the denominations on a population basis. The controversial rule – innocent enough to modern readers – reads as follows:

That the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures (without note or

comment) be added to the books already proposed and adopted by this Board, and that an hour (either before or after the regular school hours) be appropriated for the reading of such by the children of the parents who desire it; and that after such time the scriptures shall be removed from the school room.

On the face of it this seems reasonable enough. The Protestants wanted their children to have Bible reading as part of their education and were not forcing it on the Catholics. The development of the struggle can best be examined through contemporary documentation.

In the Colonial Secretary's Letter Book there appears, dated August 10, 1836, a letter from the Roman Catholic members of the Conception Bay Board, re a meeting of the Board, held on Monday, August 8, at Harbour Grace. The letter states *inter alia* that at this meeting it was proposed and seconded –

that the monies voted by the Legislature for the encouragement of Education in this District be distributed between the Episcopalians, the Roman Catholics, and the Methodists, to be placed under the control of sub-committees selected from each sect and which motion, we are happy to inform your Excellency, the Board had the prudence to reject, believing the Legislature had no such intention in voting a sum of money to engender religious distinctions in the pupils to be educated under the Board.

The crux of the matter, however, lay in the adoption by the Board of Rule 11 already quoted. The writers of the letter stated that they had made their position perfectly clear to the Board before the rule was passed, declaring “repeatedly and solemnly” that they would ask the Governor to withhold his approval, and if they failed in this they would resign. They put their case to the Governor in this way:

As His Excellency is well aware, the cause of conflicting opinions in Ireland was as long as the system of which the foregoing Resolution is in substance the same and formally adopted by the Kildare Street Society, in schools, and that the result was the total withdrawal of all the Catholic children from said schools; and we are sure His Excellency is well aware that we, professing the Roman Catholic Religion, cannot countenance or support a system which has been condemned not only by the superiors of the Irish Catholic Church but by His Most Gracious Majesty's enlightened Government.

We must further submit to His Excellency's superior judgment the situation the foregoing Resolution will place us in as Roman Catholics,

and which we are sure he will see that we have no alternative left, if he should be pleased to approve of it, but to request His Excellency will be pleased to accept our resignation, as we could not conscientiously remain as members of a Board of Education whose object is to divert the public monies granted for Elementary Education into Religious or Sectarian purposes.

We see then that in the Conception Bay area the denominational division of grants is already being considered by a non-sectarian Board proposed and seconded by Episcopalian members, opposed by the Catholics and defeated by a majority vote. At the same time a regulation is passed to which the writers of the letter quoted above object in the terms stated. It is ironic that the Catholics, who came to be the strongest defenders of the denominational system, were apparently in the beginning its most determined opponents.

Personally I am of the opinion that the apparently paradoxical stand of the Catholic members of the Conception Bay Board, which would appear to have been the official Catholic position in Newfoundland at the time, is explained by the preferred and influential position of the Established Church. A division of the grants at this time would have been unfavourable to the educational interests of both the Catholics and the Methodists. In other words their stand could have been based on what they considered to be the less disadvantageous decision at the time, and not on the Catholic ideal which traditionally has been to have Catholic children in Catholic schools administered by Catholic Boards under the direct supervision of the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities.

Taking into consideration the circumstances of the time, what the Catholics were saying in effect to the Governor was that they did not want the present, i.e. the non-denominational system broken up but that they could not in conscience accept the Authorized Version of the Bible and, consequently, if its use in the schools was to be insisted upon, even if their children were not forced to study it, they had no alternative but to remove their children from the schools.

The Protestants on the other hand could not in conscience admit of a situation which, in their view, discriminated against them by restricting the use of the Authorized Version of the Bible in the schools, even when they were prepared to make it a matter of choice whether or not Catholic children accepted instruction from the King James Bible.

Both sides, then, were placing the Governor in a difficult if not an impossible position, bearing in mind the political and ecclesiastical influences exerting pressures on him. The Governor put forward suggestions for what he hoped might be a peaceful solution to the problem. A letter from the Colonial Secretary's Office, August 15, 1836, to the Rev. John Burt, Chairman of the Conception Bay Board of Education, reads in part as follows:

I am directed by the Governor to observe that as the eleventh Rule pre-

scribed that the Authorized Version of the Scriptures is alone to be used  
the benefit of it must be confined to Protestant children

and also

as all the Catholic members of the Board object to this rule His Excellency wishes it to be reconsidered, hoping that in place thereof some regulation may be adopted by which religious instruction shall be secured to the children of every sect without shocking the principles of any.

The letter goes on to suggest as a more acceptable alternative a consideration of Rule 7 of the St. John's Board which permitted the religious instruction of children outside the school on released time.

The Conception Bay Board met again on August 30. It was proposed by Peter Brown, a Roman Catholic who was both a member of the Board and of the Legislative Assembly, and seconded by the Rev. Father Dalton, that the Governor's suggestion re Rule 7 of the St. John's Board be adopted. The meeting divided, five for and five against, and the Chairman's vote upheld the retention of Rule 11. The Protestant members of the Board, having won their point, were willing to make some concessions. First of all Rule 7 was adopted unanimously and added to their own rules and regulations (thus making them somewhat inconsistent) and in addition the Board voted unanimously:

That as it is not compulsory, by the 11th Rule, for the Roman Catholic children to read the Scriptures, neither shall it be imperative on a teacher who may be a Roman Catholic to instruct therein.

For us living well into the second half of the twentieth century, when secularism has all but taken over, it is not easy to understand the long drawn-out religious disputes over education, recorded for posterity in the Journals of the House of Assembly, and in the press of the nineteenth century. These eventually resulted in the Newfoundland denominational school system evolved by our forebears.

In order to reach an understanding we must place ourselves, in as far as possible, in the position of those involved in the struggle and be aware of the spirit of the times, not dismissing it impatiently as blind sectarianism. It is a fact of history that a straight public school system such as those which were established in other English-speaking colonies, proved unworkable in Newfoundland, and that eventually both Protestants and Roman Catholics advocated a denominational division on a population basis of the vote for education.

Taking a broad sweep and observing the development of education from the passing of the first Education Act in 1836 to the adoption of the new legislation in 1968, now in force, we see a definite pattern emerging. Over the years the struggle went on but the opponents – the participants changed positions. Reading the documentation from the start we see what happens but we have to dig deeper to find the reasons why. The positions are definitely stated and both sides appear at times inconsistent and not a little unreasonable.

Reference has already been made to the 1836 Act and some of the controversy it caused. From a religious beginning under the aegis of the churches, followed by a non-sectarian state-supported system, education moved again into a strongly defended denominational pattern and finally, by slow degrees, emerged into the system as we see it today – in large measure integrated and becoming at an accelerated rate more interdenominational especially in recent years.

In 1843 two Acts were passed providing for the establishment of grammar schools, one at Harbour Grace and one at Carbonear. In these Acts there is no clause covering religious instruction. In the same year a Bill was brought forward “To Provide for the establishment and support of two colleges in Newfoundland” one Catholic, one Protestant. The Roman Catholic Bishop, Dr. Fleming – an Irish Franciscan – petitioned against it on the grounds that the Bill made insufficient provision for securing the Catholic position and did not give the Bishop the control over the Catholic College to which “according to the tenets of the Catholic religion” his office entitled him. The Bill was defeated.

In 1844 an attempt was made to solve the difficulty by introducing legislation for the setting up of a non-denominational academy. The idea behind it would commend itself to our generation, but it was an ill-starred venture from the start, lacking as it did the support of the two major denominations, though concessions had been made to both by the appointment of an Anglican Senior Master, C. D. Newman, and a Roman Catholic Junior Master, J. V. Nugent.

Bishop Fleming had already made clear his position on the question of episcopal control though it would appear that there was disagreement over the issue between the Bishop and his people. Archbishop Howley in his *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland*, written around 1887, points out that at the time when the St. John's Academy was under consideration “the sentiment of the people seemed strongly in favour of nondenominational education.”

The Anglican religious leader of the time, Bishop Feild, had already established a Church of England Academy which would naturally draw a large proportion of the Anglican youth. The St. John's Academy maintained a precarious existence for six years up to 1850 when we find in documents of

the period the consensus of opinion that the experiment had been a failure.

In an editorial of the *Newfoundlander* for 1850, two reasons other than lack of ecclesiastical support are suggested for the Academy's failure. In part the editorial reads as follows:

Various are the causes assigned but all agree upon the fact. We, ourselves are disposed to attribute it primarily to the high scale of fees, placing the advantage of education beyond the attainment of those classes for whom it was designed ; and secondly to the almost inaccessible site originally selected for the school.

Anybody familiar with old St. John's, before the days of motor cars and snow-clearing equipment, will readily admit that Castle Rennie on Signal Hill where the school was located was not exactly ideal, especially during the long winter months.

The masters of the Academy take opposite points of view about the question of the institution's continued existence. Newman, the Anglican Senior Master, feeling that it should be abandoned in favour of denominational colleges, Nugent, the Roman Catholic Junior Master, declaring firmly that, while the Academy had not proved a success it should be continued, as the principle on which it was based – that of training children together for a common citizenship – was valid, and with a few changes the experiment could still prove effective.

Newman's views were perhaps influenced by the known views of his bishop, and by the existence of an Anglican College in the community. It is not improbable, too, that Nugent, an Irishman, living at a time only a little more than two decades removed from the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, had in mind the position of pre-emancipation Catholics in Ireland as an oppressed minority. Newfoundland Catholics were almost wholly of Irish extraction and he could have felt that their place in the community would be more secure as part of a system where religious prejudices could not legally operate.

For good or ill, however, the days of non-denominational education in Newfoundland were numbered and the spirit of tolerance and co-operation for a common educational purpose in one institution were not to be revived until the establishment of a common Normal School in 1921, and the founding of the Newfoundland Memorial College in 1925. The University College was erected as a memorial to Newfoundlanders who had fallen in World War I. The College was established with the concurrence and co-operation of the three major religious denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist) and had the good fortune to have as its first president an internationally esteemed educator in the person of John Lewis Paton who had just retired from the High Mastership of the Manchester Grammar School in

England.

The University College was granted its University Charter in 1949, the year Newfoundland joined Canada as the tenth province. This is the fastest growing University which is the host for this year's meetings of the Learned Societies. So far have we in Newfoundland moved from the atmosphere of narrow sectarianism that Memorial University now has, in the true ecumenical spirit (similar to that in evidence at Toronto University), a Department of Religious Studies whose head is a United Church Minister and whose faculty includes a Roman Catholic priest, an Anglican priest and adherents of other communions. The wheel has indeed come more than full circle.

But we are anticipating by a century! A hundred years ago non-denominational or even inter-denominational education in Newfoundland had proved to be unworkable, at least for the time being. By the 1874 Education Act, the denominational structure of public education was confirmed, and, following that, an Act passed in 1876 provided for the appointment of three denominational superintendents of Education. Three separate denominational Boards of Directors were also provided for the denominational colleges which had been established by the 1874 Act.

What Newfoundland was tending to develop at this point was three systems of education comparable in some respects to the two way system in force in Quebec until quite recently when, following the recommendations of the Parent Commission, the system was restructured. Earlier attempts at integration in Newfoundland had failed, as previously indicated, over the question of the use of the Bible in the Schools. There seemed to be no way out of the impasse but for the denominations to go their separate ways.

Legislation was in keeping with official church views. Howley quotes the official Catholic view as expressed by Bishop Mullock as follows:

As education consists not in learning to read and write, or in the acquisition of science or languages, but comprises the whole learning – moral, social and religious – of the child, and moulds his character for life, it must be evident that the only way to prevent bickering and disunion in the community, and to give justice to all, is the mode adopted by the Government of dividing the education grant, pro rata, between all denominations.

The Anglican position had been stated by Bishop Field in commenting on the 1850 Bill. In his words:

Education cannot be carried on without religion; and religion can never be truly and honestly taught without frequent recurrence to, and vindication of, those distinctive matters of faith and doubt which each church recognizes as the groundwork of its system.

Dr. F. W. Rowe, Newfoundland's present Minister of Education, in his book, *Development of Education in Newfoundland*, quotes from a statement made by another Anglican educational leader in Newfoundland, Canon Pilot, Anglican Superintendent of Education (incidentally Canon Pilot was the father of the late Robert Pilot, one of Canada's leading artists). In 1890 Canon Pilot wrote in his Annual Report as follows:

It may not be out of place here to state the convictions of those who were for most fifteen years ago in securing the denominational basis of our educational establishments. They held and still hold that education is one and indivisible, combining religious and secular instruction.... if it is merely secular it is irreligious, and unworthy of the name of Education.... I affirm that, with some modification, no system at present is better adapted to the requirements of the Colony.

The Methodists, as early as 1856, expressed their thinking in words remarkably adapted to the spirit of today. In a petition to the House of Assembly opposing a proposed further subdivision of the Protestant grants for education they wrote in part

that further to divide the said grant would render these schools discouragingly insufficient, and in many instances defeat the benevolent and patriotic design of your Honourable House; and as in the event of such a division, each Protestant Denomination would feel bound to do all in its power to impart religious and secular instruction to the children of their own people, there would be created a number of petty and rival schools; several of which would necessarily be of an inferior character, these evils so greatly to be deplored would probably be the most ripe, when the people have been the least instructed, and where social harmony is essential to social progress and prosperity.

In spite of this dissent, separation of the denominations for educational purposes came to be regarded by the majority in Newfoundland as almost a law of nature and was and is defended sincerely and honestly by many as a matter of conscience.

The denominational system made sense in Newfoundland for demographic as well as religious reasons. Settlement had in the main taken place in the various coves and inlets along racial and religious lines. Even today, in spite of the migration to larger centres in search of work, and in spite of the official Government policy of resettlement of small communities, religious and racial groupings are evident. The Northern bays are mainly non-Conformist, the Southwest Coast chiefly Anglican, both groups being of English origin. The majority on the Southern Shore and in Placentia and St.

Mary's Bays are Catholic and Irish in ancestry.

Hence schools in these areas, whether the denominational system was legally established or not, would be of one denomination. Only in mixed areas did real problems over the religious differences arise. With the passage of time and the establishment of industries the number of communities with mixed populations grew in numbers and importance, and in these the logic of the denominational system was not so self-evident.

Difficulties in creating an efficient school system are sometimes over-simplified by putting all the blame on the denominational character of the Newfoundland system. But these difficulties arose even more from geographic and economic circumstances than from purely religious causes. A small population very thinly spread out along an extended coastline in tiny communities isolated from one another resulted in a tendency to have as many standards as there were schools, or, in other words, no standard was generally accepted.

In an attempt to resolve this problem the denominations agreed that there should be some central interdenominational body and, in 1893, the Council of Higher Education, better remembered as the C.H.E., came into existence. Its responsibility was to promote sound learning and to advance the interests of higher education by holding examinations. The C.H.E. became so influential that its syllabus of external examinations dominated the curriculum, and the thinking of teachers, students, parents, and one might say of everyone concerned with education. Success in the public examinations became the controlling preoccupation. Up to a point this had some merit, particularly for the academically endowed, but it proved a serious handicap to the development of educational policies designed for the people in general and for economic and social progress.

Newfoundland's preoccupation with education and the religious problems connected with it are well revealed by the number of Education Acts and amendments from 1836 to the present day.

Educational legislation enacted in 1968 and 1969 mark a new thrust forward in the development of a modern system designed to cope with the complexities of our age. But these Acts were made possible by work which had been going on for many years. The greatest single factor having an influence on our modern progress was Newfoundland's entry into the Canadian Confederation in 1949. Other important contributing factors were – the opening up of the province through the building of roads and the consequent breakdown of isolation; the establishment of the Normal School in 1921, of Memorial College in 1925 and the University in 1949; the establishment of Regional High Schools and bus transportation for students to these schools; the provision of a network of modern trade schools; a great programme of bursaries and scholarships. These are some of the important events which contributed to the climate that made possible the

implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Education set up in 1964. We should not fail too to mention the influence of radio and television in widening the horizons of our people and raising their expectations and demands for a higher standard of living, at least in the material if not the spiritual sense.

In this address my prime purpose has been to trace how it came about that Newfoundland's system of education developed along confessional lines. I attempted to show that by 1874 the denominational system had become a reality. From that time on to the advent of Commission Government in 1934, the system became more firmly entrenched. The authorities, however, took precautions to develop what was basically one educational system rather than two, three, four or more, though policies were implemented through several denominational divisions within the Department of Education.

Various steps were taken to ensure as great a degree of uniformity as possible through the establishment of a Bureau of Education in 1927 and later, in 1939, through a Council of Education. Uniformity existed with regard to curriculum; selection of text books; training of teachers (by mutual agreement carried on at the University for all denominations); certification of teachers; salary scales for teachers and uniform grants to school boards for maintenance of school buildings. The Department also established official liaison with both the University and the Newfoundland Teachers' Association through standing committees.

The Amulree Commission, which had been set up by Great Britain in the early 1930's to make a report on the state of Newfoundland after its collapse during the great depression, condemned Newfoundland's system of education, in the opinion of the Speaker, rather unjustly and without sufficient understanding of Newfoundland's history. Using this Report as its bible, and another brief report prepared by Mr. Richardson, one of His Majesty's school inspectors who had spent three or four days in Newfoundland for the study, Commission of Government set out to do away with the denominational system. The attempt proved abortive (it would take too long to go into the reasons) and in 1939 Commission of Government came to terms with the various church authorities by setting up the Council of Education, already referred to, which gave the churches an official voice in educational policy once again. However, during the past decade or so the demands on the educational system had become so great that the churches, as well as the Government, recognized the urgent need for change.

In 1964 a Royal Commission on Education was set up to make a careful study of education in Newfoundland and to make recommendations for its future development and expansion, having due regard to the rights and privileges now applying in respect of schools and classes of persons in Newfoundland and entrenched in the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada.

Two of the most significant changes in Newfoundland's system of education, following the Commission's study, have been the restructuring of the Department along non-denominational lines and the general consolidation of school boards, which has reduced the number of these boards from 309 to 37. With the greatly reduced number of boards it has been possible to provide them with professional and administrative help completely beyond realization before. The new legislation provides for a continued official liaison between the Department of Education and the various church educational authorities. But the denominational superintendencies have been abolished and denominational education committees have been set up with offices provided by the Government outside the Department of Education. The salaries of the Executive Secretaries of these denominational educational committees and their staffs are also provided for by the Government. Furthermore, the Anglican, United Church and Salvation Army denominations have integrated their school services. The Roman Catholic and Pentecostal Assemblies have retained their identity but there has been a noticeable increase in inter-denominational collaboration among all denominations. In a few cases, because of local conditions, Roman Catholic school authorities have joined forces with the Integrated School Boards in the interest of better educational services for their children. The trend is towards more and more collaboration, integration and sharing of educational resources. There is in evidence much goodwill, an increase in mutual trust and understanding and an ever-growing determination to give our Newfoundland children the very best educational opportunities our concerted efforts can achieve.

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