

From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees: State Regulation of Public School Teachers in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia

Terry Wotherspoon

Volume 31, 1993

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt31art03>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Wotherspoon, T. (1993). From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees: State Regulation of Public School Teachers in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 31, 75–110.

Article abstract

This article examines the creation and shaping of an occupation — public school teaching — in 19th century British Columbia. It represents teaching as a contractary endeavour organized around the reproduction of labour power. Drawing upon secondary accounts of teaching and state formation (supplemented with representative documents from the period of concern), the article emphasizes how struggles between different segments of the teaching force and state representatives emerged around changing moral and technical priorities. In the context of state formation and subsequent industrial development, teaching was transformed by the end of the 19th century from a relatively autonomous occupation to a highly regulated and segmented force of dependent state employees.

From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees: State Regulation of Public School Teachers in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia

Terry Wotherspoon

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS, as viewed both by themselves and by many social analysts, appear to occupy an ambivalent occupational status as workers and as professionals. This differentiation, posed in dichotomous terms, is both misleading and somewhat artificial insofar as it represents teaching as pursuing a course that leads either in one direction or the other. In practice, teaching has been shaped by conflicting forces that operate both from outside and from within the occupation. These tensions are expressed most notably in the actions of state officials, educational managers, and different subgroups of teachers, grounded in the contradictory realities of teaching as reproductive labour. Teaching, oriented to the reproduction of labour power, is a moral/subjective as well as a technical/productive endeavour that gives rise, within particular material conditions, to competing occupational conceptions and organizational forms.

This paper examines the changing character of struggle between teachers and the state over moral/subjective and technical/productive dimensions of public schooling that contributed to the creation and shaping of a teaching force in 19th-century British Columbia. The paper draws largely upon secondary accounts of teaching and state formation in that province, supplemented with representative illustrations from provincial school reports and related public documents, in order to substantiate the representation of teaching as reproductive labour.

The evidence points toward two transformations in the organization of teaching as reproductive labour in 19th-century British Columbia: first, the creation of a relatively autonomous, state-centered public school teaching force amidst the demise of colonial rule in the 1860s; and second, a shift to a highly regulated occupation constituted as dependent employment amid pressures for industrial development starting in the late 1870s. The first transformation was driven by

Terry Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees: State Regulation of Public School Teachers in Nineteenth Century British Columbia," *Labour/Le Travail*, 31 (Spring 1993), 75-110.

bourgeois reformers' desire for a strong teaching force of university-educated men who had the skill and moral authority to mould out of a heterogeneous population of indigenous peoples, immigrants, and colonial subjects a new and unified political order. The second transformation signified a compromise of the reformers' vision as necessitated by the province's uncertain material base and widespread skepticism about the need for public schooling.

The British Columbia experience reveals that the creation and regulation of teaching did not emerge simply as the result either of interest group conflict or benevolent community and state interest in social justice and progress, as portrayed by liberal and consensual views of teaching and schooling.¹ Nor was teaching strictly a product of capitalist needs for a competent, disciplined industrial work force as contended by economic reproduction theories of educational development.² Even as British Columbia began to develop a strong industrial base at the end of the 19th century, industrial interests expressed little direct interest in and even antipathy toward the school system.

Public schooling and school teaching emerged, rather, as central components within the bourgeois project of state formation, which was concerned at least as much with moral regulation — "the regulated formation of identities and subjectivities" — as with meeting the labour force retirements of industrial capitalism.³ As Bruce Curtis argues with respect to central Canada, the rise of public schools and school teaching was accomplished through the efforts of bourgeois reformers to construct a stable base of political rule amid a class-, gender-, and racially-diverse population.⁴ Schooling, organized at arm's length from particular private

¹See, for example, Charles E. Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada* (Toronto 1957); Douglas Ray, "Professional Associations View Current Teaching," in Ratna Ghosh and Douglas Ray, eds., *Social Change and Education in Canada*, second edition (Toronto 1991), 28-36; J. Douglas Muir, *Collective Bargaining by Canadian Public School Teachers* (Ottawa 1968); and J.M. Paton, *The Role of Teachers' Organizations in Canadian Education* (Toronto 1962).

²See Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reforms and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York 1976); Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform* (Boston 1968); and Stephen Schecter, "Capitalism, class, and educational reform in Canada," in Leo Panitch, ed., *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto 1977), 373-416.

³Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford 1985), 141. See also Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, "Introduction," in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto 1992), 3-16; and Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (New York 1990), 77-81.

⁴Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846," *Studies in Political Economy*, 10 (Winter 1983) 99-121; "Class Culture and Administration: Educational Inspection in Canada West," in Greer and Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan*, 103-33; and *Building the Educational State*:

interests in the public sphere, was put to the service of new forms of social reproduction through its potential to produce subjects who were internally disciplined to accept the legitimacy of bourgeois order. Class and gender distinctions that prevailed in the household and workplace were not fully abandoned but reoriented to accommodate bourgeois relations of property and authority. Consequently, state officials were concerned to select and personally regulate teachers to ensure their "safe" moral character and commitment to educational goals.

It is important to recognize, however, that the generalized commitment to these educational ideals displayed by state agents and social reformers was mediated by divergent regional and national demands.⁵ Evidence from British Columbia demonstrates that in the last quarter of the 19th century, state authorities, increasingly sensitive to industrial economic priorities, reinforced the personal, or moral and subjective, regulation of teachers with an array of formal paperwork and other technical requirements that highlighted teachers' status as dependent employees. These regulations were exercised in different ways over different segments of the teaching force. Teachers in the most subordinate positions, especially women teaching in larger city schools, tended to be subject to the most direct forms of control. For teachers who worked in isolated regions, the tight regulatory regimes had little real applicability since school inspectors seldom, if ever, visited their schools.⁶ By contrast, senior teachers — predominantly males teaching in or near major urban centres — who held higher formal credentials and possessed an affinity with bourgeois reformers, attempted to organize to offset their potential loss of influence, status, and occupational benefits in a technically-restructured school system. By the end of the century, a combination of factors, including both informal and formal state regulative practices, economic and political compromises, the political actions of the senior teachers, and the difficulties of collective organization among rural teachers, had reinforced an enduring occupational split among British Columbia public school teachers.

Under these conditions, consistent with the findings of Michael Apple in the United States and Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice in Québec and Ontario, there existed in British Columbia by the turn of the century two main streams of teachers (which were further subdivided, as Jean Barman emphasizes, by other complex forms of internal segmentation).⁷ One was composed primarily of rela-

Canada West, 1836-1871 (London, Ontario 1988). See also Philip Corrigan, Bruce Curtis, and Robert Lanning, "The Political Space of Schooling," in Terry Wotherspoon, ed., *The Political Economy of Canadian Schooling* (Toronto 1987), 21-43.

⁵Green, *Education and State Formation*, 21-2.

⁶Jean Barman, "Birds of Passage or Early Professionals? Teachers in Late Nineteenth Century British Columbia," *Historical Studies in Education*, 2, 1 (Spring 1990), 18.

⁷Michael W. Apple, *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education* (Boston 1986); Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, "Teachers' Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Central Canada," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 59-80; and Marta

tively highly educated, career-oriented men who sought the development of teaching as a strong profession. The other consisted of women classroom teachers who had low formal educational credentials and relatively little control over their work. The remainder of this paper examines the process of the bifurcation of the teaching force in relation to increasing state regulation over teaching as both a moral/subjective and a technical/productive enterprise.

*The Emergence of Teaching under Company
and Colonial Rule, 1821-1869*

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION in early 19th-century British Columbia was characterized by a variety of practices among indigenous peoples, the management of aboriginal-white relations, and, within mercantile society, the maintenance of strongly-defined hierarchical patterns of class, gender, and ethnicity. Little formal schooling was offered in the territory that was to become British Columbia until after the emergence of what one writer depicts as "the company province" when the post-1821 fur-trading hegemony of the Company was translated into governance and British colonial rule over Vancouver Island in 1849 and the British Columbia mainland in 1858.⁸

Education was offered primarily through family and religious spheres in order to ensure that each child grew up immersed in the expectations of his or her lot in life. Within mercantile capitalist relations, the centrality of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) to life in the northern Pacific and northwest regions of North America was evident in the region's social structure. The highest political and social status was reserved for company officials and representatives of the British crown, with many privileges extended to their wives and children. Ranked lower in the social hierarchy were shipping and trading post officials, followed by company employees, Indian trappers, and other aboriginal peoples.⁹

The introduction of schooling prior to the 1860s was accomplished with the aid of male, and occasionally female, teachers whose own worthy educational backgrounds and social statuses assured the mercantilist and colonial elite that formal education would reinforce the existing social hierarchies. The transient population of a fur-based economy was not generally amenable to schooling, but

Danylewycz, Beth Light, and Alison Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching: A Nineteenth Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study," in Jane Gaskell and Arlene McLaren, eds., *Women and Education: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary 1987), 33-60.

⁸Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933* (Toronto 1972), 13-4.

⁹Ron Bourgeault, "The Indians, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition From 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy*, 12 (Fall 1983), 45-80; F. Henry Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia* (Vancouver 1964), 15; Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto 1958), 52.

company officials did provide some impetus for education, particularly to accommodate family members from among the highest ranks of HBC employees who did not have access to education in Britain. In 1833, a school was opened at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, a post which served as the HBC's main Pacific depot until headquarters were transferred further north to Fort Victoria in 1849. Company Rules and Regulations of 1836 encouraged fathers to provide fundamental education for their children in leisure hours, and several fur traders extended to their children principles for the development of "morality" and "habits of industry." In 1849, when Britain granted colonial status to Vancouver Island, the HBC established a boarding school for the children of its officials at Fort Victoria, under the tutelage of Rev. Robert John and Emma Staines of the Church of England. The company also provided aid to sectarian missions for general "civilizing" work within the aboriginal and non-native populations, while a Roman Catholic mission provided schooling for the children of the company's French Canadian labourers.¹⁰

Two particular factors contributed to the initial expansion of educational provision beyond these modest beginnings. First, the extension of settlement throughout the American west prompted British authorities to hasten the development of colonization in the British Columbia and Vancouver Island territories. Second, the declining adequacy of the fur-trade industry as a sufficient material base to sustain company activities necessitated a quest for economic diversification which was spurred on by the discovery of Fraser Valley gold in 1858.

Colonial development, and especially the gold rush, opened the colonies to new classes of entrepreneurs, fortune-seekers, and settlers who did not fit readily into the company-centered hierarchy. Colonial authorities promoted rudimentary schooling, often offered by religious denominations, to manage the growing population. James Douglas, who in 1851 assumed the dual role of Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company and Governor of Vancouver Island, urged the provision of elementary schooling to promote social stability and economic development. Schools for "children of the labouring and poor classes," Douglas argued, could instill "'a proper moral and religious training' and prevent children from 'growing up in ignorance and the utter neglect of all their duties to God and to Society.'"¹¹ In 1852 and 1853, three colonial schools opened, financed by a combination of government and company grants and annual tuition fees paid by parents, in order to provide both secular moral and religious training.¹²

¹⁰Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto 1991), 58-9; G.P.V. Akrigg and Helen B. Akrigg, *British Columbia Chronicle 1847-1871: Gold & Colonists* (Vancouver 1977), 24-5; and Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 16-7.

¹¹Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 59; and Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 114.

¹²Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 114-5; Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 159; and D.L. MacLaurin, "Education Before the Gold Rush," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, 2, 4 (October 1938), 249-55.

The wide array of schools and school programs which operated in the years immediately following colonization was dedicated to serve particular sponsoring interests. By the 1860s, approximately eleven pupils were enrolled in denominational or private schools for every four enrolled in colonial schools.¹³ Roman Catholic and Anglican denominational schools and other private schools exerted a strong influence in the colonies until the 1870s, Christianizing the population and ensuring the colonies a core supply of good British subjects. All schools in the colonies were intended to promote virtues of Christian dedication, moral discipline, and obedience to authority, along with basic knowledge deemed crucial by the various school operators.

Within colonial relations, political stability was dependent upon a hierarchical social structure. Education was tailored to the maintenance of explicit class, gender, and racial divisions in a number of ways. Segregated boarding schools, differential fee-rates within the Hudson's Bay Company private school, the development of distinct common, private, and denominational schools, and the tailoring of special programs for the unique needs of native children and future wives and mothers all contributed to overt and distinct patterns of social differentiation.¹⁴

Teachers in colonial schools were mostly men of British origin or the wives of teachers and other colonial officials. The teachers were appointed, paid, and subject to scrutiny by company and government authorities. Teachers in the colonial schools, however, as in denominational schools, enjoyed a relatively high social status on account of their formal educational backgrounds and their personal selection by colonial officials. Once approved to teach, teachers had authority to set programs and conduct school affairs. Teachers' own backgrounds determined the lessons they taught, and pupils were tutored in basic subjects like reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and religious instruction insofar as textbooks and other resources permitted. Teachers were able to charge pupils for boarding, based on fees set by the colonial council for children of colonists and Hudson's Bay Company employees and negotiated by parents and teachers for other children. Nonetheless, teachers' financial security was not assured. In 1854, for example, schoolmaster Robert Barr's personal expenditures involved in preparing the schoolhouse for occupancy exceeded his income by more than £36, and the schoolmaster at Craigflower, one of the first colonial schools, resigned in 1861 on account of an inadequate salary.¹⁵

¹³Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 88-9; and Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 30.

¹⁴Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 20-1; Jean Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School* (Vancouver 1984), 6-7; and Jean Barman, "Lost Opportunity: All Hallows School for Indian and White Girls, 1884-1920," *British Columbia Historical News*, 22, 2 (Spring 1989), 6-9.

¹⁵Vancouver Island, *Journals of the Colonial Legislatures of the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1851-1871* [hereafter JCL], Volume I (1853), 12; JCL Volume I (1854), 13-4; JCL Volume II (1861), 331.

Whereas schools sponsored by particular colonial interests had a ready-made clientele, teachers in and promoters of common schools faced the major problem of general community indifference to public schooling. Some public funding was given to common schools in the Vancouver Island colony, whereas private funding was the norm on the mainland.¹⁶ The earliest school inspector's reports contain accounts of deficient books and school materials, uneven curricular offerings, irregular attendance, and high levels of pupil attrition, including an expulsion "for immoral conduct" and several pupil withdrawals "on account of the state of the weather."¹⁷ Public opposition to schooling mounted when fees and other levies were collected.

These difficulties reflected the class relations of a mercantile system in transition. The vulnerable resource-based economy was highly dependent upon foreign markets and stable access to supplies of raw materials and labour power. Robin cites a colonial occupational census which reported "2,300 persons in mining, 1,800 agriculture, 1,300 trade, and only 400 in manufacturing" as late as 1870-71.¹⁸ While colonial officials like Governor Douglas encouraged settlement, British authorities in general were more concerned with protecting their territory, and other interested parties, especially the hordes of gold seekers after 1858, were dedicated primarily to the quick extraction of resources and fortunes.

In this context, support for state-building enterprises was uneven, largely confined for different reasons to colonial leaders, bourgeois interests, school teachers, and new settlers who desired common schools modelled after systems established in eastern regions of the continent.¹⁹ The struggle to establish common schooling illustrated the mounting tensions between the colonial elite, and Douglas in particular, who sought to stabilize the colonial order, and an emergent local bourgeois and petit-bourgeois class which sought increased authority through representative government.

Economic recession and the expiry of the Hudson's Bay Company lease for Vancouver Island in 1859 helped intensify efforts to solidify respective class interests. In 1860, Governor Douglas announced to the Vancouver Island House of Assembly that public education would play an increasing role in encouraging colonial consolidation. Greater public support was required for schooling, especially to allow for due recognition of teachers. Douglas suggested that teachers would be prominent officials in the colony, and observed that,

¹⁶Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 88-9.

¹⁷Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 159.

¹⁸Robin, *The Company Province*, 15.

¹⁹Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia*, 245-6; and Rennie Warburton, "The Class Relations of Public School Teachers in British Columbia," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23, 2 (May 1986), 214.

the teachers' salaries are disproportionately small for their station in life, and inadequate in amount for their support in a decent position.... A larger salary, by making the office desirable, will secure efficiency & high attainments in the teachers, and, with respect to the existing schools, may, by an increase of fees, be allowed without adding to the public burdens.²⁰

Despite these high ideals, the colonial administration and HBC officials were reluctant to provide sufficient funding for the schools as long as Douglas pursued his priorities "to protect the two colonies' boundaries, uphold law and order, and provide access to the gold-fields."²¹ Education funding for the Vancouver Island colony was £450 out of a total budget of more than £19 thousand in 1861, while in 1864 funding for education in the combined colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia had only risen to £500 in a total budget of more than £108 thousand.²²

Bourgeois reformers' demands for a strong common school system organized in the public sphere, rather than under the control of sectarian and British colonial authority, support the contention that the origins of public schooling lay in a combination of political, social, and economic factors. Advocacy for a system of public education arose most prominently in the columns of newspaper editors Amor De Cosmos on the Island and John Robson on the mainland. In an editorial published in the *Daily British Colonist* in late 1860, for instance, De Cosmos stressed that,

What we wish to see established is a common school system where a sound elementary education may be placed within the reach of the poor man's children, and where a moral bias may be given to the youthful mind, and denominational dogmas be ignored If [new] districts are to depend on purely local encouragement and support, we fear that a very inferior class of teachers will be secured, and consequently the rising generation — the future rulers of the Colony — will not be as well trained by intellectual culture for the duties of the future as they ought to be. It is therefore a duty incumbent on the legislature to see that our public schools are largely endowed from the public lands.²³

A single system of publicly-funded, nondenominational schooling organized in accordance with school systems in eastern Canada and the United States would stabilize and Canadianize a local population which otherwise was susceptible to British and, increasingly, American domination. The new business and commercial class saw in the development of an independent Canadian-based settlement a source of resources, including labour power, and markets which could be expanded by promoting relatively untapped east-west Canadian connections. Schools would

²⁰JCL Volume II (1861), 156.

²¹Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 74.

²²JCL Volume II (1861), 442; and JCL Volume IV (1864), 182.

²³"School Lands," *The Daily British Colonist* (Victoria), 13 December 1860, 2.

remove children from the fragmenting effects of colonial and sectarian authority in order to create a new political unity amenable to national political and economic development. At the same time, agitation for nondenominational free schooling was mounting among parents who neither wanted nor were able to pay fees, and who hesitated to expose their children to Anglican or Catholic dogma.²⁴

With new demands and possibilities raised by increased settlement and an expanded range of economic activities, the reformers eventually prevailed. In late 1863, the Vancouver Island House of Assembly struck a committee on education. Appointed by the new governor, Arthur E. Kennedy, who was sympathetic to the principles of non-sectarian schools, the committee was composed of members like William Fraser Tolmie and Israel Wood Powell who would later played important roles in British Columbia's development as a Canadian province.²⁵ The committee, which reported back to the house in 1864, recommended the establishment of a system of nonsectarian common schools, "conducted by thoroughly competent trained teachers wherein the physical, intellectual and moral training would be such as to make the Schools attractive to all classes of the people."²⁶ The committee's recommendations constituted the basis for *An Act respecting Common Schools* (or the Common School Act), which was introduced shortly after presentation of the report and passed by the colonial assembly in 1865.

It is important to recognize the Common School Act as a political measure introduced by legislative reformers whose long-term goal was independence from the British crown and the creation of a new state linked to eastern Canada.²⁷ In this context, schooling was valued as a device to create new categories of publics and interests outside of the rigid hierarchical distinctions that prevailed under colonial and denominational authority. Teachers preferred by the reformers would be agents who could guide social change, but only under conditions that would maximize loyalty to the reformers' cause. Consequently, the reform agenda required a state-centered educational authority, even if for the moment that authority was the colonial governor.

The Common School Act set the terms for a highly centralized free school system with distinct channels of authority flowing from the governor, who was to appoint a superintendent, a nine-person General Board, local boards, and persons "he shall think fit" to be teachers. The General Board was entrusted with school property, and empowered to select and prescribe courses of study, disciplinary procedures, and textbooks. Approved books were suitable if they could inculcate

²⁴ Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 26-30; and Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia*.

²⁵F. Henry Johnson, *John Jessop, Goldseeker and Educator: Founder of the British Columbia School System* (Vancouver 1971), 43, 50.

²⁶JCL Volume III (1864), 208-9.

²⁷See W. George Shelton, ed., *British Columbia & Confederation* (Victoria 1967), for details of events and debates surrounding British Columbia's entry into confederation.

"the highest morality" but also were to be nondenominational in character. The Board was responsible, too, for defining and directing the duties of teachers. The Superintendent of Education would assist the Board and visit and report on each school.²⁸

While school reformers saw in a single school system the possibility to garner greater public support and a broader clientele than had been attained by colonial and private schools, in practice the public had little input or inclination to support such a system. Outside of a few main centres, notably in the Victoria and lower mainland regions, the colonial population was widely scattered and poorly educated. Moreover, because resource-extraction industries attracted a predominantly male population, with few white children of school age (given that aboriginal children were not initially the prime concern of school reformers),²⁹ schools tended to be unnecessary or impracticable in most regions. Commentators like Barman, who argue that common schooling was widely supported among the population, fail to recognize the class character of the school promoters.³⁰ As Phillips observes, the new school system remained a vestige of corporate paternalism rather than a triumph of popular demand:

Although the attainment of free schools, even temporarily, provided educational benefits remarkable in a colony founded only sixteen years before, it should be observed that the action was taken not by the people but by a government formerly associated with a powerful company ... All that the people had been asked to do, formerly, was to pay fees if they had children. With the exception of certain efforts made by the residents of the district of Esquimalt, there was no direct co-operative action of citizens locally to take control and pay the cost of education.³¹

On the mainland colony of British Columbia, a greater degree of public participation was evident. Several residents of New Westminster, engaging John Robson's newspaper, the *British Columbian*, as a rallying point, worked to persuade colonial authorities to establish a publicly-supported common school in the early 1860s. As on the island, schooling was intended to prepare the British Columbia colony for eventual stable political rule based on bourgeois sensibilities and rooted in European experience. To serve the existing population — reported by the *British Columbian* in 1865 to consist of 8,000 whites, 3,000 Chinese and 50,000 Indians — and to prepare the way for the anticipated white-dominated society, the New Westminster common school opened in 1863. It was supported

²⁸Donald Leslie MacLaurin, "The History of Education in the Crown Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia and in the Province of British Columbia," unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington (1936), 49; and JCL Volume I (1865), 302.

²⁹Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 99-100.

³⁰Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 103-4; and Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia*.

³¹Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 160-1.

by parent fees and governed by a provisional committee of locally-appointed citizens. The approved duties of the committee were similar in scope to the General Board on Vancouver Island, with some evident differences. Although the committee was given no specified authority over the course of studies, it did have the power to dismiss a teacher "for inefficiency or immorality" [the terms of which were not declared].³² As in the colonial and denominational schools, teachers could be allowed relative autonomy to conduct school affairs if their personal worthiness, as determined by their compatibility with bourgeois reform goals, could be assured.

In both colonies, however, the delivery of educational services was governed by considerations which extended beyond the intentions of the participants *per se*. The colony was burdened with a massive public debt accumulated to provide an infrastructure that supported several ventures of often-questionable value. By 1866, it had become clear that the promise and wild speculation which accompanied the gold rush could not be realized. Within several months of the legislative commitment to build a public school system, the operation of most schools was in jeopardy. In summer 1866, teachers along with the Superintendent of Education, the clerk of the assembly, and the clerk of the post master and harbour master were informed by the governor of the Vancouver Island colony that they were not likely to be paid their salaries after 31 August of that year because of fiscal exigency. In the context of economic crisis, school board-meeting attendance waned, teachers went unpaid or were paid late for their services, and schools were closed to such an extent that by 1869, as much as 90 per cent of the school-aged population did not attend any school.³³ When the colonies united in 1866 in an effort to economize and lessen the effects of recession, the school system was left at least temporarily in a state of uncertainty.

*Teachers as Subordinate Partners in the
State-Formation Process, 1869-1878*

COLONIAL UNITY offered school promoters the opportunity to reassert support for a stable system of common schools staffed by formally-educated teachers sympathetic to their project. However, fluctuating political and economic conditions repeatedly jeopardized the integrity of that vision. Between 1869 and the late 1870s, the development of teaching and the school system was beset by two sets of tensions. First, bourgeois reformers had to contend with the recalcitrance of the colonial administration and with conflicting economic development priorities. Second, advancement of the agenda for a postcolonial state, which by 1867 centered on the debate concerning entry into confederation with Canada, required both centralized political authority (including control over schooling) and broad

³²MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 59-62; and Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 33.

³³JCL Volume I (1866), 226-7; Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 36-7; and MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 55-6.

participation to secure public support for the new state institutions. The interplay of these tensions resulted in the development of a teaching force recruited as subordinate partners in the bourgeois project but subject to increasing regulation and fragmentation as the territory's ability to provide a strong public school system became endangered.

Frederick Seymour, who assumed the governorship of the united colony of British Columbia in 1866, opposed extensive government involvement in a public education system. Contrary to the designs held by school promoters like Robson and De Cosmos for a vital, state-operated system free from sectarian control and substance, Seymour believed that free common schooling would cause the masses to become fiscally irresponsible and dissatisfied with their plight in life. In a message to the legislature in 1867, Seymour stressed his disdain for state-supported schooling and its legislative supporters alike:

The Governor is of the opinion that the Colony is not yet old enough for any regular system of Education to be established The State may aid the parent, but ought not to relieve him of his own natural responsibility, else it may happen that the promising mechanic may be marred, and the country overburdened with half-educated professional politicians or needy hangers-on of the Government.³⁴

With government's role restricted to the provision of limited funding for denominations and other agencies to conduct school operations, colony schools were plagued by fiscal insecurity in the late 1860s. In Victoria, for example, the schools remained open into 1868 by virtue of funds raised through a public benefit concert.³⁵

A new piece of legislation, the *Common School Ordinance of 1869*, reflected tensions between the school promoters and the colonial and religious authorities who opposed free, nonsectarian common schools. To ensure a firm guiding hand over the school system, the ordinance extended the high degree of centralized paternalistic authority which was established by the 1865 Common School Act. The Governor in Council who directed the united colony's legislative assembly was given virtually free rein over the education system, which in 1869 was composed of nine schools open to children between the ages of five and eighteen years. The legislation empowered the government to create school districts, to allocate school grants, to appoint, to examine and remove teachers, to inspect the schools, to administer school lands, and to make rules and regulations for the management and operation of the schools. The legislation also enabled the government to establish elected local school boards. However, public participation was intended primarily to facilitate the government's work in each school district.

³⁴JCL Volume V (1867), 43.

³⁵Stella Higgins, "British Columbia and the Confederation Era," in W. Shelton, ed., *British Columbia and Confederation*, 27; Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 36-7; Johnson, *John Jessop, Goldseeker and Educator*, 54, 57; and Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 161-2.

School boards were to manage school property and collect through money by-laws a yearly tax of two dollars per adult resident in order to supplement the annual state grant of \$500 per teacher.³⁶

The new act was less specific about the content of the school program, although the government was empowered to scrutinize textbooks to ensure that they were "of a proper non sectarian character," while teachers appointed by the government were to be examined "as well as regards efficiency as character." An amendment to the act a year later reinforced these latter provisions. It emphasized the principle and practice of nonsectarianism and outlined the appointment of two new bodies — a board of examiners to examine teachers in order to grant certificates of competency, and a school inspector to file an annual report based on the regular examination of teachers and pupils. The inspector's duties concerned assessment of "the management, character, efficiency, and general condition" of the schools, and of "the character and qualifications of the Teachers."³⁷ The amendment further tightened provisions to ensure that school funds would be collected locally.

Several points are notable in this early legislation which was to set the foundation for 20th-century schooling in British Columbia. Schooling, linking state and community, was itself to be embedded securely within the emergent bourgeois state in order to serve as a socially stabilizing force. While non-sectarian in nature, schooling emphasized high moral standards, with teachers subject to moral/subjective regulation by state officials. Teachers were appointed by, and the nature of the occupation was defined by, state authorities. Johnson observes dryly that the legislation "added the rather heavy obligation of sanctity to the manifold duties of teachers."³⁸

In practice, teachers retained considerable discretion over the labour process in the conduct of daily classroom affairs. Because few people in the growing towns where schools were located possessed formal educational credentials, the teaching force of educated men and a few women who were wives and daughters of educated men shared relatively high levels of occupational discretion and social status with other respectable, educated citizens like doctors, ministers, and merchants.³⁹

Nonetheless, the teacher's position as moral guardian employed by the state left the teacher's personal conduct and "character" both in and out of the classroom open to the disciplinary authority of school officials. In order for the school system to expand, the state required additional teachers whose personal worthiness would be assured.

³⁶Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 36; Johnson, *John Jessop, Goldseeker and Educator*, 59; MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 98-102, 121.

³⁷Cited in MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 103.

³⁸Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 39.

³⁹MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia."

In addition to providing for the personal regulation of teachers, the 1869 school legislation, through the introduction of formalized procedures such as exam-based teacher certification and school inspection, made possible the technical regulation and proletarianization of teachers. Procedures for reporting on schools and examining teachers and pupils aided the systematization of school practices by allowing for the emergence of normative standards. The appointment of the state school inspector signified a growing central presence inside each classroom, even if only for very short intervals at any given time. Teachers were constituted as subordinate partners in the state-building enterprise, with steps outlined by legislation to ensure that teachers would remain loyal, trustworthy, and capable of working under conditions set by the government.

Initially, the intricacies of state regulation over British Columbia's education system were overshadowed by economic decline and mounting public debt in 1869-70. In 1870, the government reduced its school grants to \$480 per district, with the result that several municipalities created smaller new school districts in order to gain access to state funding. The New Westminster council, for example, claimed that it could not operate its schools on less than \$480 per school, and when the government denied its request for additional funds, the council quickly established a neighbouring school district at Sapperton.⁴⁰ Consequently, the school system came to be composed of a number of smaller school districts which were financially unstable, each of which required funds to build and maintain school-houses and to hire teachers. In addition, in the towns and cities, the legislation had vested local educational authority in municipal councils which often had little interest in or commitment to educational matters. Local educational fund-raising efforts often were severely inadequate, particularly in New Westminster and Victoria. Unable to raise essential funds, school authorities were faced with the choice of closing schools or compromising their stringent criteria to hire and supervise the teachers who staffed and maintained the schools.

The most noteworthy illustration of the depth of school problems was in Victoria. In 1869, the local council was remiss in levying and collecting taxes as residents refused to surrender the \$2.00 *per-capita* tax in support of education. At the end of the year, six months after enactment of the Common School Ordinance, the lack of school funds left Victoria teachers well short of the wages due to them. The Governor and the Colonial Secretary, at the request of the colonial school inspector, urged the local board to collect the school funds and pay teachers the arrears. While the government authorities threatened to withhold the 1870 grant to the Victoria school board, they took no further action, claiming that the colonial government did not have adequate funds to pay teachers directly, and expressing fears that intervention in local affairs and entitlement for teachers to seek government aid would set dangerous precedents. In a similar manner, after the Victoria school board prepared to summon before a magistrate all persons who refused to

⁴⁰JCL Volume IV (1870), 146, 148.

pay the school tax, the board chairman revealed that payment would not be enforced. The matter was unresolved after a year of inaction when, in the fall of 1870, the two men who were employed as teachers in the Victoria school walked out on strike. They advised the community of their situation through a notice in the *Victoria Daily British Colonist*:

We the teachers of the public school for Victoria City and District, finding it impossible to continue teaching, in consequence of the non payment of the monies due to us for our services, are reluctantly obliged to close the School till such time as proper provision shall be made for punctual payment of our salaries.

Eighteen months have elapsed since the new School Ordinance became law, during which time we have only received from all sources six months' pay. We deem this explanation necessary under the circumstances; and believe that a discriminating public will not censure us for taking a step which is unavoidable.⁴¹

The school, where 125 pupils were registered in 1870, remained closed for a two-year period.⁴²

The instigator of the teachers' strike, John Jessop, had strong personal ambitions which he conveyed through a decisive commitment to the development of a sound education system. Jessop was trained by Egerton Ryerson, who was a central figure in the development of the public school system in Ontario. Although Jessop applied for the position of school inspector and was rejected by the colonial administration in April 1870 (in the midst of the impasse at Victoria), his importance to British Columbia's education system would come to rival Ryerson's influence in Ontario within a decade.⁴³

Jessop's role in the Victoria school closure signifies the uncertain state of formal education in 1870. Schooling and teaching, while promoted within the state-building endeavour, were not so firmly established or indispensable as to be protected from fiscal exigencies and civic neglect. The teachers, paid from public funds, were expected to be entrepreneurs to promote and protect the common school system. The teachers did receive some words of public support for their action. The school inspector, for example, expressed surprise that teachers did not act more quickly under the circumstances to close the school. An editorial in the Victoria newspaper agreed with the teachers' decision, especially in light of the "shameful treatment" they received from the board and the widespread public misinformation which made it appear that the teachers were acting upon unwarranted grievances. Nonetheless, the newspaper was most concerned about the fact

⁴¹ John Jessop and W.H. Burr, "Notice," *Victoria Daily British Colonist*, 11 September 1870, 2.

⁴² JCL Volume IV (1870), 148; MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 122-4; and Donald Playfair, "Is the Teaching Profession Underpaid?," *The BC Teacher*, 29, 2 (November 1949), 77.

⁴³ JCL Volume IV (1870), 149.

that children would be left to roam the streets in the absence of schooling.⁴⁴ The further enhancement of the schooling project amidst school closures and low public commitment to formal education was contingent both upon the renewed economic strength of the colony and the ability of teachers and other school promoters to operate schools in a socially attractive, efficient manner.

In recognition of the continuing weakness of the colonial economy combined with the sustained efforts of domestic commercial and entrepreneurial interests to promote state-building, British Columbia entered confederation with Canada in 1871. The promise of a transcontinental railway linking British Columbia with eastern Canada suggested an unprecedented growth in commerce, trade links, and population for the new province.

Such growth, when it came, proved to be highly uneven. The resource-based development which formed the backbone of the provincial economy was cyclical in nature, dependent upon the relative status of commodities like gold, coal, timber, and fish. Although some industries, like coastal fishing, placer mining, and agriculture, could be developed with little capital outlay, long-range economic success in most industries required considerable capital investment and coordination; production was geared to extraction of raw materials or limited processing for export markets, and investment by large British, Canadian, and especially American companies prevailed. Periodic recessions and expansion of the scale of production contributed to steady concentration and consolidation of industry in fewer hands.⁴⁵

Federal and provincial governments, frequently acting on behalf of or at the behest of corporate interests, facilitated this process. The large enterprises required both an accessible labour force and an infrastructure of transportation and service facilities. Some companies, like the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Company, solved their temporary labour force needs by employing contract labourers, particularly those whom brokers imported from the Orient to constitute what proved to be a cheap, disposable work force.⁴⁶ Employers also sought, however, a more permanent, and sometimes more highly-skilled, labour force as well as local consumers for commodities. Bourgeois interests promoted longer-term immigration from the United States, eastern Canada, and Britain. Governments responded to these demands through such measures as granting land and financial aid to various transportation, utility, and resource companies, and the creation of policies favourable to immigration and economic and social development. Most conspicuous in these affairs was the CPR which served as a colonizing agent through ownership of transportation and communications facilities and which, by 1914, was to benefit from its Crown award of six million acres of timber land.⁴⁷

⁴⁴"Closing the Doors," *Victoria Daily British Colonist*, 14 September 1870, 2.

⁴⁵Robin, *The Company Province*, 18-9.

⁴⁶Peter S. Li and B. Singh Bolaria, "Capitalist Expansion and Immigrant Labour: Chinese in Canada," in Peter S. Li and B. Singh Bolaria, eds., *Racial Oppression in Canada*, second edition (Toronto 1988), 104-7.

⁴⁷Robin, *The Company Province*, 21.

One of the major social consequences of this pattern of development was the emergence of a highly-segmented class structure. By far the largest share of economic activity was concentrated within and directed by a nonresident bourgeoisie and its local agents, and by trade and commercial interests based in the province. The majority of productive work, in turn, was carried out by a large, dependent work force, with about 7,000 out of more than 12 thousand census-classified workers employed in industry. Interspersed among the labouring classes were pockets of workers, notably aboriginal peoples and Asian migrants, who increasingly came to be considered superfluous to ongoing economic activity, in part by the vested interests of workers concerned for their own jobs and income levels, as well as by employers who might otherwise have to support their welfare. There also existed a regional distribution of independent commodity producers and family enterprises in industries like farming and small-scale mining and fishing. Finally, about one-seventh of the total British Columbia labour force was employed by 1881 at nonmanual work in managerial, professional, clerical, and service occupations.⁴⁸ All of these groupings had divergent interests not only in economic terms, but also with regard to the implications of social and political development.

This combination of factors had a contradictory effect on the development of social enterprises like public schooling. Although there were concentrations of population around Victoria and the lower mainland, settlement remained widely scattered around the rest of the province. For much of the population, school was an unwanted intrusion into family life, especially when children's time could be engaged more fruitfully in domestic chores or productive tasks.⁴⁹ Much of the population continued to consist of single males who had no direct interest in schooling. According to the 1881 census, males constituted nearly 30 thousand of the province's 49,459 residents.⁵⁰

However, members of the ruling elite, and professional classes which included experienced teachers, favoured education as a means to harness the energies of the growing frontier population into "socially efficient citizenship" within the segmented social structure.⁵¹ With proper "surveillance" over pupils, school classes which contained both boys and girls of similar age-groupings would temper the "boisterousness" which characterized a rugged, male-dominated society.⁵² Public

⁴⁸Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81, Volume IV*. (Ottawa 1884), 327; and Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, "The Rise of Non-Manual Work in British Columbia," *BC Studies*, 59 (Autumn 1983), 8-9.

⁴⁹David C. Jones, "Creating Rural-Minded Teachers: The British Columbia Experience, 1914-1924," in David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan and Robert M. Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West* (Calgary 1979), 163.

⁵⁰Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81, Volume I* (Ottawa 1882), 94-5.

⁵¹Timothy A. Dunn, "Teaching the Meaning of Work: Vocational Education in British Columbia, 1900-1929," in Jones, Sheehan and Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, 236-56.

⁵²British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Public Schools* [hereafter PSR] (Victoria 1875), 81-2.

schools, in other words, could be promoted on the basis of their advantage to provide a disciplined, common social purpose for a heterogeneous population.

Government plans for education were conveyed in *The Public Schools Act*, enacted by the new province in 1872 to consolidate its jurisdiction over education. At the time of confederation, British Columbia had 21 schools which served about 1,000 pupils, estimated to be little more than one-fifth of eligible, school-aged children.⁵³ As the Victoria school closure had so dramatically revealed, promotion and stability were essential elements of effective educational policy. The *Public Schools Act* acknowledged the significance of these tasks by providing for central provincial control, local district participation, and the appointment of state officials who would actively coordinate and promote the school system. The school act maintained the highly-centralized character and many of the major provisions of the colonial school legislation which it replaced, but it was more specific regarding the duties of school authorities, public commitment to school financing, and the role of public participation. The act did not contain specific provisions concerning either tuition fees or compulsory school attendance, although later amendments abolished the former and instituted the latter.⁵⁴ The provincial government assumed responsibility for educational finance, providing grants to districts to cover the costs of teacher salaries, school facilities, and the operation of the schools. The role of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council was limited primarily to the creation and financing of new school districts and the appointment of a six-person Board of Education which was empowered to make most of the decisions concerning the schools. Public input was emphasized in each district through the election for three-year terms of a three-member board of trustees whose initial duties were to oversee and report on the physical operation of schools.

The pivotal official in the education system was to be a single Superintendent of Education who would serve as chairman of the central Board of Education. The Superintendent was required to hold a first-class teaching certificate and have at least five years of successful teaching experience. The position, authorized by the Board of Education, carried with it the power "to licence teachers, appoint them, pay them, inspect them, determine what they should teach and from what textbooks, and decide what holidays they should have."⁵⁵ Teachers, possessing teaching skills, educational credentials, and strong moral character were incorporated into a distinct educational hierarchy under the paternalistic guidance of a state official with a background as a competent male teacher.

John Jessop, who first had become prominent in the Victoria teachers' strike and who had helped draft the Public Schools Act, was named the first Superinten-

⁵³Statistics Canada, *A Century of Education in British Columbia: Statistical Perspectives* (Ottawa 1971), 18.

⁵⁴MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 140.

⁵⁵MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 135; and Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 45.

dent. With facilitative legislation and school financing arrangements in place, Jessop eagerly proceeded to develop a far-reaching and unified school system in accordance with the principles of a nonsectarian public morality.⁵⁶

Jessop reinforced schooling's importance to the reproduction of a politically-unified but socioeconomically-heterogeneous society with an emphasis on compulsion and duty. He championed the view of schooling as a moral/subjective enterprise, establishing educational regulations in the spirit of the Public Schools Act which specified clearly the duties for all participants in the system, including parents. He further promoted amendments to the Act in 1873 and 1876 to make schooling compulsory for at least six months a year for all children aged seven to twelve years. To facilitate these requirements, he opened new schools in the interior of the province and established high schools where sufficient numbers of pupils resided. An 1873 amendment to school legislation gave district trustees the power formerly held by the Board of Education to appoint and, with the approval of the Board, to dismiss teachers. The combination of public educational duties and local authority to hire and remove teachers left teachers themselves open to the dictates of community members who had a stake in engaging personnel who were reliable and amenable to local standards.

Teachers' duties were, above all, to teach "diligently and faithfully" the curriculum set by the Board of Education and to promote "both by precept and example, CLEANLINESS, NEATNESS AND DECENCY" as well as "TRUST AND HONESTY," within the terms of employment and according to the board's rules and regulations.⁵⁷ Teaching, in other words, was to be concerned with content or productivity as well as personal morality and habit. But teaching was not fully subordinated by school legislation and regulations. Teachers were expected to be school promoters who would generate a demand for school services and ensure pupil attendance. Jessop's aim was to produce, with the aid of inducements that would make teaching a desirable alternative to farming, mining, merchandising, and railway work, a stable and reliable staff of "superior" and "efficient male teachers."⁵⁸

Periodic difficulties endangered the translation of Jessop's ideals into practice. In turn, these problems contributed both to a teaching force which was not composed primarily of highly-educated men and to a rigid system of new regulations over teaching. Increases in British Columbia school enrollments, from 1,028 in 1872 to 2,198 in 1878, created immediate needs for new teachers and school facilities.⁵⁹ The provincial teaching force nearly doubled between 1874 and 1875,

⁵⁶F. Henry Johnson, "The Ryersonian Influence on the Public School System of British Columbia," in Jones, Sheehan, and Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, 29-36.

⁵⁷PSR 1875, 127, 130-1; emphasis in original.

⁵⁸PSR 1875, 81.

⁵⁹British Columbia, *British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation* (Victoria 1938), 143.

but of the 42 persons who taught throughout 1875, eight were uncertified and only 19 of the 34 teachers who held certificates were men. The province was highly dependent upon teachers from outside the province and nation, with 24 teachers from the British Isles, three Americans, and 20 Canadians teaching in British Columbia schools during the 1874-75 school year.⁶⁰

Jessop and other school officials took several steps to create a domestic teaching force and secure commitment to the system on the part of the existing teaching force. Jessop tackled the first task by trying to implement a wage and benefit structure that would compare favourably with conditions in Ontario. In 1877, he recommended (without success) to the provincial cabinet the benefits of a superannuated teachers' fund which would allow teaching to become something more secure than a mere stepping stone to another career.⁶¹ Realizing the limitations inherent in relying upon an external supply of teachers, Jessop also sought to establish high schools primarily for the purpose of training teachers until such time as a specific teacher-training facility modelled after Ryerson's Normal School in Ontario could be opened.⁶² Teachers produced within a local system of education potentially would be easier to imbue with a commitment to the system than could those from outside the province. In 1877, confident of the prospects for local self-sufficiency in teacher supply, Jessop wrote to the *Toronto Globe* to inform teachers in eastern Canada that teaching jobs in British Columbia were less likely than in previous years to become available. As evidence of the growing self-sufficiency of the province's education system, the provincial *Public Schools Report* stressed in 1878 that six of British Columbia's 58 teachers had been educated entirely in the province's school system.⁶³

These efforts were not completely effective in producing a cohesive teaching force. Although Jessop took pains to comment on the respectable quality of locally-produced teachers, most of the first certified teachers educated in British Columbia were women who were considered in a condescending manner by school boards to be "pupil teachers" and who tended to be paid less than half of the salaries received by uncertified male teachers.⁶⁴ This attitude and wage differential would soon become standard practice for nearly all female teachers in the province.

The problem of teacher commitment required more elaborate arrangements within Jessop's agenda. The central school officials wanted some assurance beyond periodic school inspections that teachers were competent and able to fulfill their duties. An increasing array of personal and technical regulations began to compensate for the lack of idealized, committed male teachers who possessed formal educational credentials. Because most early teachers had no training beyond

⁶⁰ PSR 1875, 101, 105-6.

⁶¹ PSR 1877, 89.

⁶² Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 49, 72.

⁶³ PSR 1877, 67-8; PSR 1878, 180-1.

⁶⁴ PSR 1878, 180-1.

completion of basic high school courses, teacher certificates beginning in 1871 were issued solely on the basis of examination marks for regular curricular subjects. Jessop and other authorities were concerned, however, about the narrow focus on content alone, and they adopted further measures in order to regulate and involve teachers more fully in the schooling enterprise. In 1874, examinations for teacher certification began to include questions on discipline and "the art of teaching." A school regulation also implemented in 1874 indexed salary levels to pupil-attendance figures, thereby encouraging teachers to arrange their teaching and discipline in such a way that students would be attracted to classes and enrollment would be maintained. Teachers were subject to possible dismissal for unsatisfactory student-attendance patterns, but were rewarded monetarily for meritorious "efficiency," "order and discipline," and pupil improvement. School system officials instructed teachers in the 1870s to practice personal tidiness and keep the schoolhouse neat and clean. The performance of personal services in these regards was considered by the officials as a necessary trade-off between the high cost of education and the relatively-modest teacher workload which accompanied low pupil attendance.⁶⁵

Jessop also organized in 1874 the first of several annual Teachers' Institutes and conventions to compensate for inadequacies and disparities in teachers' background and training. These summer programs, based on the Ryersonian system in Ontario, exemplified Jessop's paternalistic interest in developing a strong but politically-"safe" teaching force. The institutes were intended to accomplish a "uniformity of method" and a common forum to discuss and transmit advice on specific pedagogical problems. Because the institutes were centrally directed by education authorities, presided over by the Superintendent of Education, and involved other provincial officials in major roles, teachers tended to be wary of the institutes' value. In order to promote attendance at the institutes and keep teachers attentive to educational affairs, the government required all teachers to renew their certificates upon completion of subject examinations on an annual basis. Authorities did not permit discussion of salaries or teaching conditions at the institutes.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the institutes provided some of the earliest opportunities for teachers' collective resistance by bringing together teachers who normally tended to be isolated in scattered classrooms. Teachers occasionally used the institutes as forums for their concerns, particularly over certification. Experienced teachers who previously had enjoyed some formal autonomy and recognition expressed resentment about the growing central authority and administrative standards which increasingly began to regulate teaching. In 1875, teachers emphasized that teaching experience and instructional success should be taken into account in the certifica-

⁶⁵PSR 1877, 12-3; Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 56, 71-2; Statistics Canada, *A Century of Education in British Columbia*, 34.

⁶⁶Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 72-3; Johnson, *John Jessop, Goldseeker and Educator*, 143; and Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 593.

tion process. In 1879, as will be seen in the next section, teachers openly challenged the government over certification procedures.⁶⁷

The organization of the teachers' institutes revealed the ambiguous nature of public school teaching in the 1870s. Legislation and regulations which prescribed teachers' duties, along with the paternalistic organization of the school system and the institutes, emphasized teachers' clearly-defined roles as subordinate personnel within the education hierarchy. Teachers were regulated on a personal basis, ensuring their moral worth and fitness to teach. They were also subject to technical regulation which provided formal guidelines for performance on such matters as maintaining pupil attendance and passing certification examinations. At the same time, though, teachers were given a limited role as partners in the educational enterprise. Teachers were at the center of the endeavour to make schools a welcome, appealing place for reluctant pupils, and teachers were in command of the daily activities within each school. In this sense, many of the regulations seemed intended for the purpose of nurturing a young and inexperienced teaching force, in the absence of a corps of strong male teachers, to a state of greater self-reliance, although the regulations were extended increasingly even over teachers who did meet the ideal. Teachers' institutes brought teachers together as a collective body to strengthen their craft under the watchful eyes of state authorities. As Warburton observes, such measures served contradictory ends, both to incorporate teachers into state formation and also to contribute to a growing sense of occupational solidarity among teachers.⁶⁸

The cultivation of a subordinate partnership for teachers in educational affairs was not without major complications. Jessop's aims for educational stability required fiscal resources and some sharing of authority which other government officials and businessmen were not eager to part with. Education finance became an unwanted burden to the government as the provincial deficit grew to more than \$127,000 in 1878 from \$44,316 one year earlier due to state-financing of an infrastructure to promote the province's economic development.⁶⁹ At the same time, the teaching force was increasingly taking on the characteristics of two distinct groups — one a relatively high-status complement of males trained in eastern Canadian and British universities who desired greater status in the school system, and the other a mass of locally-trained females whose interests had little direct occupational representation. By the end of the 1870s, these factors contributed to the restructuring of the education system in such a way that most teachers became redefined clearly as dependent employees.

⁶⁷PSR 1877, 10-1; Stanley Heywood, "The Early History of the B.C.T.F.," unpublished manuscript, BCTF Records (Vancouver nd), 7.

⁶⁸Warburton, "The Class Relations of Public School Teachers in British Columbia," 215-6.

⁶⁹British Columbia, *British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation*, 237.

*Constraint over Teachers amidst
Industrial Development, 1878-1900*

CONFLICTING PRESSURES on teachers and the school system intensified in the last quarter of the 19th century as the social and economic systems in British Columbia became progressively more diversified. The growing need for schooling as a training center and social stabilizing force was countered by priorities extended by provincial bourgeois and petit-bourgeois representatives who were interested in attracting outside capital and using state resources to invest in the province's economic development. Educational managers attempted to accommodate these tensions by demanding closer accountability for classroom productivity while stressing teachers' moral/subjective duties within the necessary process of character formation.

In its efforts to create attractive conditions for industry and corporate interests, many of which had direct representation in British Columbia cabinets, the provincial government in the 1880s and 1890s regularly engaged in deficit financing to the extent that by 1898, the net public debt totalled \$4.85 million. The province's benevolence was extended especially through its ready disposition of cash, land, and resource rights to timber and railway companies. Typical of these gestures, the government granted \$200,000 in 1887 to a CPR subsidiary for the construction of a railway into the Okanagan, 14 million acres of land to two Victoria merchants in 1889 for a rail line which was never constructed, and \$600,000 worth of contracts in 1894 for the construction of new legislative buildings. By contrast, the total expenditure of the Department of Education in 1894 was \$169,050.⁷⁰

In a climate of freewheeling economic deals and subsequent economic crisis, as in the earlier gold rush years, trends in state finance indicate the low public priority given to educational endeavours. Many entrepreneurs and politicians had no sustained interest in school matters when there were deals to be consolidated, ready profits to be made, fiscal dangers to be wary of, patronage to be dispensed, and an available supply of labour power to be imported. For the working classes, stung in economic crisis by loss of work and income, education was far less crucial than the procurement of subsistence.

Increasingly, under these conditions, teachers' social and economic status diminished and the ideal of a highly-trained, paternalistic teaching force gave way to a reality in which most teachers were women who had little formal educational background. While there was considerable annual fluctuation in the proportions of male and female teachers, male teachers regularly constituted between 52 and 68 per cent of the provincial teaching force during the period 1874-89. After 1889, the

⁷⁰British Columbia, *Public Accounts of British Columbia* (Victoria 1911), PSR 1894; Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 124-7; Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 309-2; Robin, *The Company Province*, 63-5, 67.

balance swung the other way to such an extent that by 1905, there were nearly three women teachers to every male teacher, a ratio which continued until the 1930s.⁷¹

The constraints upon teaching combined with the availability in nonrecessionary periods of jobs in mining, lumbering and other industries made teaching less attractive for men than for women who had fewer occupational alternatives. Men also were able to protect favourable wage rates and other interests against intrusion from women and non-whites by workingmen's associations. Lacking social, economic, and political status, female teachers were cheaper to employ than men. In 1875, the average monthly salary of these women was two-thirds the average monthly salary of male teachers (\$43.79 compared to \$66.03); this ratio remained relatively constant until the early 1930s.⁷² As Warburton observes, salary rates were justified by educational credentials which tended to reflect real differences between men and women in the domestic and occupational divisions of labour.⁷³ Barman notes that relatively few persons, even if they had prior teaching experience, actively sought out teaching positions in British Columbia. Instead, they entered teaching because there proved to be no viable alternatives for subsistence in, or in movement out of, their regions.⁷⁴ Minimally-qualified women were enticed into teaching by provincial requirements which allowed females to gain qualification for teacher certification at age 16 years compared to age 18 for males. Many girls, too, were attracted to teaching by the low educational requirements and minimal time-investment for entry into the occupation (in the 1870s, qualification for the lowest certificate, third class B, required only a grade of 30 per cent on the examination set by the Board of Education compared to university graduation or a grade of 80 per cent for the top-level, first class A certificate) along with the enhanced social status and wage earnings they might receive from holding a teaching position. In 1892, the province had a surplus of teachers after 145 newly certified teachers — 137 at the third-class level — entered the teaching force that year.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, the feminization of the teaching force proceeded less rapidly in British Columbia than in other parts of Canada, where urban and industrial concentration had advanced more fully. From confederation in 1867 to 1870, the national proportion of male public school teachers declined from more than 50 per cent to 39 per cent, and in 1885, only 28 per cent of the national teaching force was male compared to 57 per cent in British Columbia. School inspector D. Wilson observed in 1888 that his province, unlike others, had a majority of male teachers, over half of whom held first-class certificates, while most of the female teachers

⁷¹ PSR, various years; Statistics Canada, *Historical Compendium of Education Statistics From Confederation to 1975* (Ottawa 1978).

⁷² PSR various years, 1875-1956.

⁷³ Warburton, "The Class Relations of Public School Teachers in British Columbia," 218.

⁷⁴ Barman, "Birds of Passage or Early Professionals?," 18-9.

⁷⁵ PSR 1892, 153.

were young and had received their education in British Columbia's own high schools.⁷⁶

The relatively late feminization of the BC teaching force supports observations by writers like Danylewycz, Light, and Prentice that women teachers predominated in more hierarchically organized schools in urban industrial regions.⁷⁷ Barman, however, also provides evidence that feminization in urban schools was often a consequence of women's choices to move to cities in search of greater social opportunities after initially acquiring the requisite teaching experience in rural districts.⁷⁸

In British Columbia, men prevailed numerically in teaching positions in rural districts until 1896-97, when there were 108 men and 119 women in rural schools and 42 men and 90 women in city schools. While teachers' salaries were lower overall in rural areas than in the cities, the high and low extremes in teachers' salaries in the province were paid to teachers in city schools. This situation reflected in part the more fully-developed hierarchies which emerged in the urban schools. Teachers who held first-class certificates — nearly all men in the late 1800s — had greater investment in education and possessed enhanced opportunities for career advancement relative to locally-trained teachers. For many men, then, teaching appeared to provide some advantages which they might not have gained in other career options, although financial benefits of teaching were diminishing. In the early 1890s, teachers' salaries in the province, on average, remained higher than industrial wages, although the former had declined to \$59.61 per month in 1890 from \$63.10 in 1872, compared to fluctuating average industrial wages in the towns ranging in 1890-91 from \$34.47 per month in New Westminster to \$49.26 in Nanaimo.⁷⁹

The viability of public schooling depended upon schools' utility for both social stability and industrial development. As outlined below, state officials began to reinforce measures oriented to the personal regulation of teachers in order to guarantee individual teachers' moral worthiness and reliability in terms set by particular school board members, inspectors, and other authorities. At the same time, industrial demands for the production of specific competencies within stringent fiscal guidelines motivated school officials to introduce technical regulatory initiatives to measure teachers' compliance with specific task-performance and output standards. Under the widening regime of state control, a coordinated attempt to preserve teachers' rights and autonomy emanated for the first time from within the teaching force. Such teacher resistance, however, was mounted primarily by

⁷⁶PSR 1888, 177; Statistics Canada, *Historical Compendium of Education Statistics*.

⁷⁷Danylewycz, Light and Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching."

⁷⁸PSR 1897; Canada, *Census of Canada, 1890-91, Volume II* (Ottawa 1897), 368-70; Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 89.

⁷⁹Barman, "Birds of Passage or Early Professionals?," 21-2.

senior teachers who matched Jessop's ideal, contributing to a further bifurcation of the teaching force even as teachers became subject to an increasing network of state rule.

John Jessop's agenda to produce a strong education system through cooperation between high quality teachers and benevolent state officials won favour among the better-educated members of the teaching force, who saw in his scheme possibilities for career promotion. Jessop's efforts to shape the provincial education system, however, were not without political opposition which crystallized when George A. Walkem, erstwhile critic of educational expenditures and practices, became provincial premier in 1878. The new government committed itself to expanded economic development priorities. In 1878, Walkem attacked Jessop in the legislature, criticizing the 1876 school report as ungrammatical, while other government members ridiculed Jessop for having been little more than a low-wage teacher. In 1878, the government prepared legislation to streamline the education system. The government criticized the strong personal authority of the superintendent and board members and proposed to align the school system with business practices, making school operations more cost-effective by basing funding on specified rates of student attendance and other educational services rather than on total enrollment. In essence, government leaders felt that teachers were not offering full value for their price. Even Jessop, in his 1877 report, chided parents whose apparent negligence to send children to school contributed to a school attendance rate of 37.5 per cent, with the result that "more than one-third ... of all the energy put forth by teachers is wasted."⁸⁰

Jessop denied the government's accusations against him amid rumoured amendments to the Public Schools Act to abolish the Board of Education and restructure the school system. He, along with the members of Board of Education, resigned on 26 August 1878, when the amendments were introduced in the legislature. Jessop was unsuccessful in his efforts to maintain control over the education system, despite support from the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, which called the government's treatment of Jessop an "outrage" and an "insult" in the face of government plans to rationalize educational administration in the province.⁸¹

The province's senior teachers also recorded their opposition to the changes in the school system and the attacks on teachers. C.C. McKenzie, who replaced Jessop as school superintendent, voiced a position held within government that teacher certification procedures had to be tightened because the previous Board of Education had been less than impartial in its awarding of teachers' certificates. Teachers rejected this accusation. They were already agitated over the fact that payment of their salaries was three months in arrears while other public servants had been paid regularly at the time that the 1878 teachers' convention was held. At

⁸⁰ PSR 1877, 8.

⁸¹ "The Resignation of the Superintendent of Education," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 27 August 1878.

the institute meetings that year, teachers verbally opposed the direction in government education policy and petitioned the government not to change the superintendency. The government responded by terminating the teachers' institutes for a seven-year period. However, teachers with first-class certificates took the unprecedented measure of organizing on their own a meeting the next year, where they criticized the new superintendent of education over teacher certification procedures and other education regulations.⁸²

The teachers' actions suggested that they had not forgotten Jessop's example. It is important to recognize that virtually all of the first-class certified teachers in 1879 were men who had been educated outside the province. They saw in state efforts to strengthen central control over teachers and in government criticism of Jessop a threat to their own positions, as well as a constraint upon their chances to secure rewarding careers within the school system and beyond. It was in their interests to promote teaching as a differentiated, if not autonomous, occupation in which the most highly-qualified individuals could advance, rather than one which was governed from outside in a uniform way.

Teachers' criticisms of the new education regulations also provoked the wrath of the new Superintendent of Education. He claimed that teachers had become too obstinate in their freedoms to manage school operations, and pointed to teachers' sloppy reporting practices as evidence of their unworthiness:

Under the former regime, [teachers] as a body were allowed the utmost freedom and latitude in the internal and external management of their schools ... On the whole I cannot forbear from saying that the utmost carelessness and indifference exist among teachers as to whether the statistical and other information they supply is at all accurate, and if their zeal educationally is to be gauged by the amount of it they display in their communications with the Education Office, the Province has need to demand of its servants a thorough reformation in both.⁸³

The government's priority to expand the province's industrial base restricted teachers' "freedom and latitude" in two ways. First, the province extended control over teachers and school practices in order to gain greater flexibility in managing state operations and finances. Second, schooling, if it was to have any utility to the province, had to be reshaped to contribute to occupational and social roles required by an industrializing society. The government revealed its commitment to these two principles in its amendments to the Public Schools Act. The legislation, in effect in 1879, abolished the Board of Education, transferred control of education to the Lieutenant-Governor-in Council, and increased the duties of the Superintendent (who became more directly responsible to the government) to include the prescription of textbooks, the making of rules and regulations, the care of school

⁸²PSR 1878, 181; PSR 1879, 161-2; Heywood, "The Early History of the B.C.T.F.," 7.

⁸³PSR 1879, 161-2.

materials, the establishment of separate schools for females, and the closing of schools with an average of less than ten pupils.⁸⁴

The new Superintendent of Education, C.C. McKenzie, sought to increase the efficiency of the school system by increasing the compulsion on teachers to perform duties, placing greater responsibilities — including the raising of school funds — in the hands of local trustees, and streamlining the school system.⁸⁵ School management increasingly came to emphasize the two-sided nature of teaching — as productive employment which would produce disciplined, competent workers, and as a moral/subjective endeavour which could produce temperate, morally-worthy citizens. To facilitate the regulation of teachers, the province appointed a cohort of school inspectors whose duty it was to report on teachers' moral character and performance. Under this system, the potential loyalty of senior male teachers was secured by a system of sponsored promotion from the teaching force into administrative and supervisory positions.⁸⁶

Teachers were now required, above all else, to keep records of pupil absence and tardiness and provide monthly reports to the superintendent and parents. Teachers were also to keep regular prescribed school hours, care for school property, regularly display and follow a timetable, seek trustees' permission in case of absence from school, attend regular meetings, and follow specific guidelines for the treatment of pupils.⁸⁷

In many respects, the strict delineation of teachers' duties appeared merely to be a tightening of procedures already in place. However, the new regulations signalled a shift in the position of teachers in the school system from one of subordinate partners in the educational endeavour to that of increasingly dependent employees. In the 1860s and early 1870s, teachers were subordinate partners in the sense that they were vested with a degree of educational proprietorship that encompassed freedom to make decisions about their classroom activity within the guidelines of state rule. While Jessop had been concerned to maintain strict central surveillance over teachers, his activities were oriented toward ensuring that teachers had the character and skill to carry out major educational objectives. By contrast, the 1879 legislation created a regimen of responsibilities which made clear the point that teachers' work-time was important and to be carefully accounted for. Like employees in other industries, teachers were subject to technical regulation, called upon to perform specified tasks set out for them by managers concerned with the production of a particular commodity. Measures of productivity diminished

⁸⁴PSR 1879, 163.

⁸⁵PSR 1878, 185.

⁸⁶Thomas Fleming, "'Our Boys in the Field': School Inspectors, Superintendents and the Changing Character of School Leadership in British Columbia," in Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones, eds., *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History* (Calgary 1986), 285-303.

⁸⁷PSR 1879, 207-9.

teachers' discretion in the workplace and increased their formal subordination to employers. In 1879, for example, Superintendent McKenzie recommended that teachers' salaries should be paid in proportion to the number of prescribed school days on which the teacher actually taught and should be forwarded to teachers only after monthly assurance was provided that teachers had performed all of their prescribed duties.⁸⁸

Although industry appeared to make no direct demands upon schools, and in fact often was indifferent to schooling, school officials were not hesitant to model school practices and curricula upon rational principles of factory organization. In the late-19th century, the school curriculum began to emphasize the performance of rote tasks such as memorization of mathematical equations or lines of prose and poetry which left pupils easily accountable to teachers, and teachers themselves accountable to school supervisors in turn. Many of these methods were imported directly into British Columbia from school systems in more industrially-advanced regions of eastern Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

As employees, teachers also were required to nurture pupils and be nurtured in accordance with strict moral standards. Morality was based upon abstract Christian principles of concern for other persons and dedicated service to the polity. Further amendments to the Public Schools Act in 1885 emphasized that public schools must inculcate "the highest morality." Toward this end, school authorities instructed teachers to adhere to three fundamental principles of "order, discipline and classification."⁸⁹ Teachers had a strong moral obligation which lent to their treatment as workers a need for careful personal scrutiny and supervision in the public interest. Inspector D. Wilson in 1888 outlined as the purpose of supervision the need

to reach every school and keep informed of educational success or failure ... it is equally important that, at the same time, the worker — the teacher — should receive encouragement and assistance, have defects pointed out, and improved methods suggested.⁹⁰

Teachers did not always comply willingly with these regulations and expectations. In many smaller schools, particularly those in isolated districts that were relatively inaccessible to provincial authorities, teachers retained virtually complete autonomy over the conduct of day-to-day affairs. Male and female teachers alike often acted as vigorous advocates of improved educational conditions. Frequent disputes arose between teachers and local school trustees over such matters as requirements for teachers to clean the school house, light fires in the school stove, and perform other non-teaching duties. On occasion, teachers adopted

⁸⁸ PSR 1879, 167.

⁸⁹ PSR 1887, 195-6.

⁹⁰ PSR 1888, 177.

a collective stance against what they felt were unfair regulations, such as at a Teachers' Institute in Victoria in 1890:

Among the rules and regulations at that time was one requiring the teacher to mark every pupil for every recitation every day. Some bold spirits dared to introduce a resolution calling for the abolition of this rule. The department official in charge of the institute attempted to block the motion. There was a lively time. One prominent teacher shook his fist at the chairman. The motion carried by a large majority, but that was the last institute for many years.⁹¹

Nonetheless, teachers, especially in smaller rural districts, were continually subject to the surveillance of local community members, notably trustees in whose homes the teachers commonly boarded.⁹² Teachers working in relative isolation also had little opportunity to assemble, and when they did, they were subject to the paternalistic constraint of state authorities.

In order to restrain teachers from taking strong initiatives to govern their own affairs, school officials began to demand that teachers be prepared through "special training" in Normal Schools. Formal occupational preparation would ensure that teachers were adequately-fitted for "the moulding of the lives and characters" of those for whom they were responsible in the course of their work. Writing in 1893, school inspector William Burns acknowledged that teachers' work was "arduous and often monotonous." However, he admonished teachers for being too concerned with "lessons and exercises" to the neglect of "habits and regard"; parents and teachers, he emphasized, should recognize

that school is merely a place of preparation, and that its chief advantage to the pupils is not so much in the lessons themselves, however valuable they may be, as in the habits of study and attention thereby formed; of cleanliness and order there learned; of obedience, punctuality and forethought there required; and of temperance and morality there implanted into their very nature.⁹³

The establishment of control over teaching was not the only concern of school authorities. Generalized public indifference or resistance to school system development was counterproductive to school promoters' efforts to foster the socially-stabilizing influence of schools in the province. School authorities argued that greater local fiscal and administrative involvement in schooling would help to overcome parental "carelessness" and general disregard for school operations.⁹⁴

⁹¹ J.B. Bennett, "Some Recollections of Teaching in the Comox District," *The BC Teacher*, 6, 4 (December 1926), 24-5.

⁹² Jan Gould, *Women of British Columbia* (Saanichton, British Columbia 1975), 108.

⁹³ PSR 1893, 523.

⁹⁴ PSR 1878, 179-80; PSR 1891, 261-2.

As well, the provincial government was concerned in the late 1880s about a wider threat posed by mounting political opposition to its eagerness to serve commercial and industrial interests. Massive mining, transportation, and lumber enterprises brought together large numbers of workers who often were experienced in industrial relations and political agitation in Britain and the United States. The Knights of Labor and other trade union organizations began to blend economic, political, and social concerns. Organized labour fielded candidates in the provincial election of 1886, and in 1894 the labour Nationalist party proclaimed support for such class-based and ethnocentric concerns as public ownership, fair wages, and the exclusion of Orientals.⁹⁵

Although workers favoured state intervention for social and economic reform, they tended not to identify education as a prominent concern. In many communities, antipathy to the school was reflected in outright hostility sometimes expressed through the vandalization of school property. In the coalmining town of Wellington, for example, the school principal reported that,

For a long time the destruction of the school property has been a favorite amusement with the hoodlums of Wellington. The school has been repeatedly disturbed by them while in session; a large proportion of the windows have been broken; a number of panes have been entirely cut out; the locks were broken or wrenched off the doors; the outhouses were destroyed; the stoves were broken to pieces, and the stovepipe stolen, & c., & c.⁹⁶

Even in the absence of overt conflict, generally inconsistent and unenthusiastic support for schooling remained a major source of concern among school authorities throughout the 1880s and 1890s. By the end of the century, average school attendance remained below two-thirds of the total recorded pupil enrollment of about 20 thousand pupils.⁹⁷

Between 1875 and 1900, the government responded both to parental apathy and to problems of an unstable provincial treasury by attempting to encourage local participation in educational matters. The 1879 School Act amendments transferred the right to dismiss teachers (upon 30 days notice to the teacher) from provincial bodies to local school boards. In 1884, public interest in education was encouraged by additional amendments to act to allow the wives of property holders to vote at school meetings and to double (from three to six) the number of school trustees in urban districts. In 1886, the government imposed a public school tax of three dollars for each adult male resident. With a financial stake in schooling, parents tended to be more concerned about classroom occurrences to such an extent that during the 1885-86 school year, the provincial school superintendent reported an unprece-

⁹⁵Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 207-8; Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 306, 314; Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C.* (Vancouver 1967); and Robin, *The Company Province*, 62 65-6.

⁹⁶PSR 1885, 324.

⁹⁷PSR 1978, 132.

dented total of nearly 11 thousand parental visits to the province's 83 public schools. Most significantly, in 1888, local educational financing became instituted with an amendment that required city districts to refund to the provincial government an amount equivalent to one-third of teachers' salaries. The move toward reliance upon local financing, first in cities and eventually in rural districts, was consolidated in subsequent legislation during the next two decades.⁹⁸

School officials also attempted to place greater emphasis on the cultivation of ties between school and home, with the school increasingly becoming the superior institution in order to meet the growing social sophistication and fragmentation associated with industrial life. As Neil Sutherland argues, Canadian bourgeois reformers in the 1890s redefined family and childhood as processes which had to be cultivated properly in order to guide the individual to a state of self-reliant citizenship.⁹⁹ Family experience, left on its own, was partial in relation to the broadened horizons which schooling could provide in an atmosphere intended to remedy both the social "backwardness" that characterized frontier life and problems such as delinquency, drunkenness, disease, and general immoral behaviour produced within the encroachment of industrialism. Principals and superintendents urged parents to send their children to school in regular and punctual fashion and to expect their children to work on lessons at home in order to hasten pupils' progress. At the same time, school promoters emphasized the benefits that a strong system of public schools would have for the purpose of attracting to the province "a better class of settlers." Schools were to be promoted and cultivated as agencies which provided social advantages relative to the home. Teachers were to assume parental responsibilities as well as duties that contributed to pupils' intellectual and moral development. Accordingly, the state encoded teachers' moral/subjective duties into law by providing teachers in the 1890s with such disciplinary powers "as may be exercised by a kind, firm, and judicious parent in his family."¹⁰⁰

The government's responses to industrial and social diversification tended to reinforce a systematic hierarchy in the school system. School districts hired female teachers with lower-level certificates (and who were less costly than male teachers with higher-level certificates) as the provincial government transferred greater proportions of school funding to local authorities. Districts that could hire better-qualified teachers, either to run larger schools or supervise a complement of lower qualified teachers in graded schools, tended to hire males. Fiscal constraint in certain districts was facilitated by an 1893 provincial transfer scheme that provided city schools with a grant of ten dollars per pupil in order to offset the cost of teachers' salaries. By increasing class size and reducing teachers' salaries, districts

⁹⁸PSR 1886, 138; Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 90-1; and MacLaurin, "The History of Education in British Columbia," 178.

⁹⁹Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society, 1880-1920* (Toronto 1976), 17-21.

¹⁰⁰PSR 1891, 261-2; PSR 1893, 523; PSR 1895, 200.

could actually benefit from this arrangement. Nanaimo, for example, reported in 1901 a surplus of \$1,410.45 from the grant structure.¹⁰¹ School superintendents, inspectors and other officials tended to be experienced teachers trained in universities outside the province, particularly in eastern Canada. Their mission, as revealed in pronouncements like their annual reports to the education department, was the habituation of the masses into socially respectable and morally-righteous patterns of thought and behaviour. In this endeavour, they stressed that young and inexperienced teachers were just as much in need of guidance as were the pupils in school classrooms.

The significance of discipline and habit formation for both teachers and pupils within the new order was highlighted by the provincial school superintendent in 1897:

The healthy tone of a school as to order maintained and discipline observed is due entirely to the worth and intelligence of the teacher. The maintenance of order is quite as essential part of school work as is the imparting of instruction and, to be effective, must be accompanied with good disciplinary methods. It should be borne in mind that the true object of discipline is to lead the pupil to learn self-control and to form right habits. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of the teacher to train his pupils in all those elements which contribute to the formation of a good character.¹⁰²

By the end of the 19th century, however, schools were expected to offer more than habit formation and rote training. The expansion of business and commercial pursuits in the province required a workforce that was literate and had other useful attributes. In 1891, as in the period prior to 1879, school regulations stressed as the top priority teachers' duty to teach the curriculum. Provincial school officials began in the mid-1890s to emphasize the importance of reading and writing instruction in classrooms. Literacy-related skills required "correct" teaching methods whereby students could learn effectively abilities "to group the words in little phrases" when reading, and the "proper manners of pen-holding and position in writing."¹⁰³ If schools neglected to inculcate these capabilities, as school inspector David Wilson observed in 1901, they were subject to condemnation by the "business man" who "expected the boy from the Graded or High School to write the bold, rapid, character-displaying hand of the book-keeper many years behind the desk."¹⁰⁴

Under such conditions, teaching had to be transformed into an occupation in which practitioners simultaneously possessed parenting skills that were superior to mothering and fathering in the home, and understood clearly "the principles of the science and the art of their profession."¹⁰⁵ The competent teacher had to be able

¹⁰¹ PSR 1901, 280.

¹⁰² PSR 1897, 199.

¹⁰³ PSR 1896, 248-9; PSR 1897, 194-5.

¹⁰⁴ PSR 1901, 259.

¹⁰⁵ PSR A32.

both to govern and be governed in accordance with definite educational precepts. School inspector A.C. Stewart observed in 1902 that

While the great majority of teachers recognise their proper relation not only to the system and to the children, but also to the people, there is a small minority whose attitude retires much readjustment to bring it to the true professional focus. When a teacher engages to teach a school, even although there is no written agreement, he contracts to teach diligently and faithfully the subjects laid down in the course of study, and, while eschewing religious dogma, to inculcate the highest morality ... The careless worker in wood or metal may spoil a door or a hinge in the making, but the teacher who is a mere hireling and time-server mars the human mind and soul, and deprives youth of its intellectual birthright.¹⁰⁶

The craft of teaching and preparing youth for life in industrial society, with its emphasis on both productivity and moral/subjective development, was too important to be left in the hands either of parents or of undisciplined and untrained teachers.

The expansion of schooling under the new regulations tended to institutionalize the segmentation of formal education based upon a distinction between the primary grades, with concern for habituation and interpersonal relations as guided by lower-paid female teachers, and the senior grades, with a task-orientation for job training that enabled senior male teachers to retain enhanced opportunities for professional recognition and career promotion. By the turn of the century, an enduring pattern of women in elementary school teaching positions and men in high school teaching and school administrative positions had become clearly established.

Conclusions

IN 19TH-CENTURY BRITISH COLUMBIA, formal schooling gradually gained a central place in the guided reproduction of the province's social system. Schooling was promoted by bourgeois reformers to foster the transition from a social hierarchy dominated by mercantile colonial rule to an emergent, democratic, but industrial and business-based Canadian political order. Teachers were allied with educational reformers to promote the social virtues of schooling but as state employees, teachers also were subject to distinct forms of regulation in order to ensure their commitment to the bourgeois project.

Nonetheless, the establishment of public schooling was accompanied by contention and material limitations. Widespread antipathy to schooling and the state's growing involvement in the creation of an industrial base left schools vulnerable to neglect. The survival of the schooling enterprise depended upon the abilities of school promoters and managers to advance schooling as a socially useful, cost-efficient institution. In this context, the rise of mass public schooling

¹⁰⁶PSR 1902, A38.

and teaching did not occur strictly in accordance with principles of proletarianization under the direct onslaught of factories and industrial interests, as claimed by critical theories of economic reproduction. Nor did teaching evince the seeds of an occupation which would bloom into a strong profession under more enlightened guidance, as traditional historical and interest group studies suggest. Instead, teaching developed as a compromise between the ideals of bourgeois reformers, who promoted an idealistic image of the teacher as an educated, efficient man of strong moral character, and the fiscal and political realities of operating a school system in an industrializing frontier society. Ironically, the conditions that made this compromise necessary — class and wider social fragmentation — also were the factors that made schools increasingly essential to society. The success of schooling relied ultimately upon schools' potential to coordinate social life in a public sphere in ways that private domains of the household and workplace could not.

Official legislative recognition in the 1890s of teachers' supra-parental role signified the contradictory character of teaching. Like parenting, teaching was to involve socially-important but low status, and unpaid or poorly-remunerated labour. Also in common with parenting, the fitness of the individual was subject to scrutiny even if authorities were rarely present to evaluate the work. The mutual concern for the fragile and malleable child bestowed upon teaching and parenting a sense of social responsibility as vocations and services to society that was not central to jobs in industries that produced material commodities. However, the teacher was expected to be superior to the parent in order to usher in, in a competent manner, a new, harmonious industrial era for which the teacher required special skills and an enhanced personal aptitude. These considerations left teachers susceptible to increased regulation by state authorities over their personal character and work responsibilities, but they also offered teachers a basis upon which to claim greater status, improved occupational welfare, and enhanced decision-making authority as professionals.

School boards filled teaching positions quickly and cheaply, relying upon young women who lacked educational credentials and were vulnerable, through occupational isolation and lack of employment alternatives, to the paternalistic command of school authorities. Senior, qualified teachers and their counterparts who had moved into positions of authority within the state school hierarchy, especially under the leadership of John Jessop in the 1870s, presented teaching as a craft composed of skills and techniques that could be transmitted to younger, less-qualified teachers. Personal efficiency and moral character were stressed as means to select proper individuals into teaching for the mutual benefit of the occupation, schools, and society. The few visible forms of organized teacher resistance that occurred in the 19th century developed as responses primarily by the most highly-trained and certified male teachers to protect themselves against encroachment by the state upon teacher autonomy and official recognition of traditional occupational competency.

In a context of industrial development and the feminization of teaching, however, school officials in the last quarter of the 19th century began to intensify regulation over both teachers' personal "fitness" to teach and their instructional efficiency in terms of definite guidelines established by the state. Teaching, oriented to the formation of proper habits and useful skills in youth, became subject to technical regulation procedures derived from industry, involving such measures as quantities of recitations, numbers of pupils processed, and checklists of duties performed. Teachers' status as dependent employees was clearly established in the government's ability to set educational regulations and school boards' powers to hire teachers and set conditions of work. At the same time, school officials' concern with the properly-moulded child made teachers susceptible to personal regulation through increased surveillance over their moral worthiness. School supervision and inspection were introduced to scrutinize the teacher's performance of specific technical competencies as well as to gauge the teacher's personal character.

These historic and contradictory tensions have not disappeared, but rather remain central to the teaching occupation. Their legacy is visible in recurrent struggles both among teachers, and between teachers and the state, over varying forms of regulation, professionalism, unionism, and class and gender consciousness.

Healthsharing

CANADA'S ONLY FEMINIST HEALTH MAGAZINE!

Get the quarterly that offers you insight on
womens mental, physical and social health issues
throughout Canada!

\$15 for 4 issues (one year) individual
\$28 for 4 issues (one year) groups/institutions

Send cheque or money order to:

Healthsharing,

14 Skey Lane,
Toronto, ON
M6J 3S4