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"Keep Communism Out of Our Schools": Cold War Anti-Communism at the Toronto Board of Education, 1948-1951

Frank K. Clarke

THE ISSUES FACING the candidates for election to the 1948 Toronto Board of Education — school renovations, hot lunches for students, sex education, teacher salaries, and comic books in the schools — seemed far removed from the West's worsening relations with the Soviet Union. But one candidate was determined to remind voters that what was taking place overseas was much closer to their communities than they realized. Harold Menzies, a realtor and candidate for one of the two Trustee spots in Ward Five, distributed a campaign blotter urging voters to "Keep Communism Out of Our Schools." The blotter depicted "The Looter," a Karl Marx-like figure destroying Toronto schools and scooping up books with such titles as "Our Way of Life." Appealing to voters to "remember" Poland, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia — forcefully acquired Soviet satellite states — the implication was clear that the same fate could befall Canada. "Don't be apathetic," the blotter warned, "Your Innocent Children's Future Depends on YOUR VOTE." The campaign document implied that the other Ward Five candidates, John Boyd and Edna Ryerson, were Communists whereas Menzies proclaimed himself as "The Man Who Sees Danger in Communism" and the "Only Candidate Not a Communist."[1] Menzies was not unknown to school Board voters, having served on the

[1]Toronto District School Board Records (formerly Toronto Board of Education) (hereafter TDSB), Historical Collection — Vertical File — Bio — M — (Harold Menzies File), n.d. [December 1947]. Both Boyd and Ryerson were affiliated with the Labour Progressive Party (Communist). Menzies mistakenly included Finland in his list of countries that fell under Soviet control. Finland and the Soviet Union signed a treaty of peace in 1948 only requiring both sides to enter into negotiations in the wake of external military threats. Unlike the other countries listed by Menzies, Finland maintained its independence.
[2]*Globe and Mail*, 3 January 1948.

Frank K. Clarke, "'Keep Communism Out of Our Schools': Cold War Anti-Communism at the Toronto Board of Education, 1948-1951," *Labour/Le Travail*, 49 (Spring 2002), 93-119.

Board as a Trustee from 1932-33, and again from 1938-42, including a year as Chair in 1941. Opposition to Communism was Menzies' reason for running again for the School Board: "I feel that our young people should not be subjected to its [Communism's] doctrines through representation on the Board of Education."[2] At a time when Cold War tensions were escalating worldwide, and when the Gouzenko affair revealed less than two years earlier that Communists had infiltrated the federal civil service, Menzies' message resonated with voters, who returned him handily to the School Board.[3] Ironically, the other Trustee elected in Ward Five was Edna Ryerson, a Communist who was re-elected to her fourth term. A former office worker, Ryerson spent the war editing *Searchlight*, the publication of the Communist-led Canadian Seamen's Union, and continued in the position until a year after she was elected to the Board for the first time in 1945 at age 25.[4] Over the next few years, Menzies and Ryerson were dominant figures as Cold War tensions escalated at the Board.

While there is a growing body of scholarship on anti-Communism at the local level, Canadian historians have focused mainly upon the actions of the federal and provincial governments in their analyses of anti-Communism in Canada.[5] But the Cold War and the tensions associated with it also took place at the local level. Municipalities, school boards, churches, private associations, and even Arts organizations were watchful of potential Communist infiltration within their ranks. Local authorities were often as vigilant as the federal government in screening prospective employees, or banning Communists outright within the scope of their jurisdiction. Recent studies suggest that local institutions were crucial in achieving what one

[3]*Globe and Mail*, 3 January 1948. Menzies led the poll in his ward with 8,245 votes.
[4]*Globe and Mail*, 18 December 1948.
[5]For the Cold War in Canada see Reg Whitaker, "Origins of the Canadian Government's Internal Security System, 1946-1952," *Canadian Historical Review*, 65 (June 1984), 154-83; and by the same author, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto 1987); See also Daniel J. Robinson and David Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 75, 3 (September 1994), 319-45; Gary Kinsman, "'Character Weakness' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of The Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 133-61. Examples of anti-Communism at the provincial level can be found in Michiel Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism Versus Neo-nationalism, 1945-1960* (Montreal 1985); Conrad Black, *Duplessis* (Toronto 1977); Alvin Finkel, "The Cold War, Alberta Labour, and the Social Credit Regime," *Labour/Le Travail*, 21 (Spring 1988), 131-8, and by the same author, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto 1989); Gerald L. Caplan, *The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism: The CCF in Ontario* (Toronto 1973); David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958* (Toronto 1981); Peter Oliver, *Unlikely Tory: The Life and Politics of Allan Grossman* (Toronto 1985).

author calls "a pervasive pro-Cold War public opinion."[6] This paper attempts to broaden the understanding of the importance of local anti-Communism to the history of the Cold War by looking at the efforts of one local institution, the Toronto Board of Education, and how its policies sought to uphold a Cold War anti-Communist consensus for new generations.

Menzies did not wait long to establish his anti-Communist credentials. At the Board meeting of 18 March 1948, Menzies, seconded by Trustee Isabel Ross, introduced a hard-line anti-Communist motion:

> Whereas it has been the policy of the Board of Education to allow recognized political groups to hold meetings in school buildings, and whereas it is deemed inadvisable to countenance the spreading of the Communist doctrine, Be it hereby resolved that hereafter no individual, group, or body which is part of, or associated with, the Communist movement be granted the use of any building under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto.[7]

Menzies' motion set off a heated debate, with both defenders and detractors weighing in. Trustee C.R. Conquergood expressed his support for the motion: "Communist doctrine is poison. In my judgement it destroys normal and spiritual values. Children should be kept as far away as possible from that poison."[8] Trustee Ross, who seconded the motion, agreed, saying it was her duty "to oppose any movement which denies moral and spiritual value."[9] Saying he was "no friend of communism," Trustee Blair Laing, a former art dealer who was elected to the Board

[6]Paula Maurutto, "Private Policing and Surveillance of Catholics: Anti-communism in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, 1920-1960," *Labour/Le Travail*, 40 (Fall 1997), 113-36. Michiel Horn explores the chilling impact of McCarthyism in academia in *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1999). See also Frederick W. Gibson, *Queen's University, 1917-1961: "To Serve and Yet Be Free"* on the cases of professors Israel Halperin and Glen Shortliffe (Montreal 1983), 273-296. Even the movement for daycare in Toronto was tarred with the Communist brush, see Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989), 115-41. Blacklisted Canadians recalled their experiences in Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto 1992). See also Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto 1995). Although focused primarily upon the federal and provincial governments, and organized labour, Whitaker and Marcuse provide a number of examples of anti-Communism at the local level. A recent publication explores the anti-Communist inspired security surveillance of various local groups and institutions including consumer groups, union locals, and even high schools. See Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse and Mercedes Steedman, eds., *Whose National Security? Canadian State Surveillance and The Creation of Enemies* (Toronto 2000).

[7]TDSB, Minutes of Board of Education, 18 March 1948, 56.

[8]*Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.

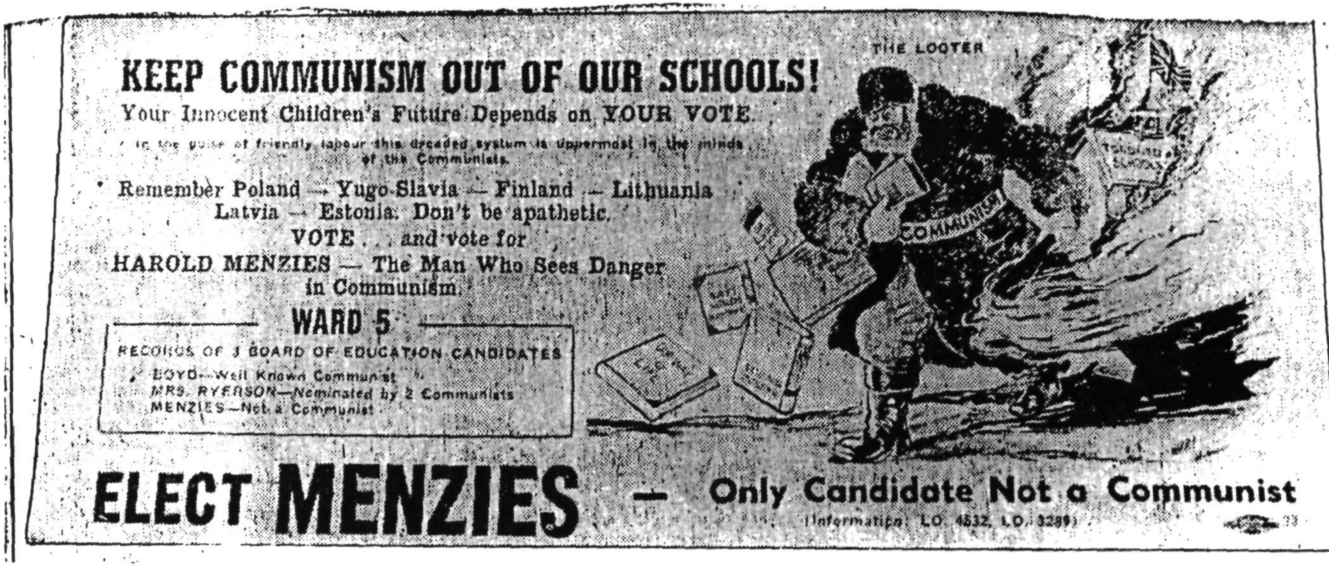
[9]*Toronto Telegram*, 19 March 1948.

in 1944, expressed concern that Menzies' motion would only drive the Communists underground where they would spread "their ruthless propaganda," to which Trustee A.J. Skeans replied: "If we don't watch out the Communists will drive us underground."[10] Schools were available to "loyal and responsible citizens," said Trustee Harold Male, "but the Communists are not loyal. The Communist party is really a fifth column masking under a cloak of citizenship for its own ends."[11] Trustee Albert Crane agreed, saying he had a "chat" with an executive officer of the Communists, whom he did not identify, "and it convinced me that there is a serious menace in our immediate vicinity. If there is Communist teaching in our schools we should do something about it."[12] Speaking in opposition to the motion, Trustee Herbert Orliffe, a former provincial secretary of the Ontario CCF from 1934 to 1939 said, "I don't like the Communists and the Communists don't like me," but "I am much disturbed by the resolution because of its effect on the principle of free speech and freedom of assembly ... By using Communist methods in an effort to save democracy, we ourselves are destroying our own democracy and we become no better than Communists ourselves."[13]

Communist Trustee Edna Ryerson attacked the motion as one that "would make a hollow shell of democracy." She then attacked the Trustees who supported it: "I believe you are motivated by fear and cowardice; fear for those who might come to believe in the ideals that you oppose, and cowardice because of your methods of suppression." She ridiculed the part of the motion that denied use of school property to individuals who merely "associated" with Communists: "What about the other 19 members of this board? Do they not associate with me?" Curiously, Menzies, the sponsor of the motion, was silent until Ryerson remarked that he and Trustee Ross could "fight and lie as much as they like" in their fight against Communism, at which point he jumped to his feet: "Does Mrs. Ryerson say I lied?" "I meant Mrs. Ross," said Ryerson on the defensive.[14]

Not a single Trustee who spoke in favour of the motion presented evidence of a Communist threat to Toronto's schools, referring instead to a hypothetical threat. Nor did any of the Trustees in favour of the motion grasp the irony of suppressing freedom of speech and assembly while denouncing the tyranny of Communism. Despite the logic put forth by Trustees Orliffe and Ryerson — albeit intemperately by Ryerson — fear and loathing of Communism won the day as the motion passed easily by sixteen to four with only Ryerson, A.J. Brown, Laing, and Orliffe opposing.[15]

[10] *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.
[11] *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.
[12] *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.
[13] *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.
[14] *Toronto Telegram*, 19 March 1948; *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1948.
[15] TDSB, Minutes of Board of Education, 18 March 1948, 57. Trustee Brown, a former insurance underwriter, represented Ward 9.



Campaign blotter distributed by Harold Menzies in the 1947 Toronto school board election. Toronto District School Board Records (formerly Toronto Board of Education), Historical Collection – Vertical File – Bio – M – (Harold Menzies File, n.d. [December 1947].

Press reaction to Menzies' motion was largely negative. On the same day the motion was debated, the *Globe and Mail* found it "extraordinary" that Trustees who have run for office and were elected through the democratic process, "still do not know how it works." "If democracy means anything, it means the free play of all points of view." Reminding the Trustees that the Communist Party was still legally recognized, the *Globe* warned that the "tendency to suppress disagreeable points of view is the constant threat to the democratic system, and those who wish to do so, for whatever motives, are the enemies of freedom." In addition, "this sort of oppression" of minority opinion might actually help the Communists by giving them an "invaluable" talking point: "It is hard enough to fight their philosophy without handing them ready-to-use ammunition."[16] The *Toronto Star* criticized the motion's vague reference to the Communist "movement" that would not only exclude members of the Labour Progressive Party (Communist) from using school property, "but could be used to justify the refusal of a permit to any person or persons the board choose to label as associated with communism." Echoing the *Globe's* argument, the *Star* told its readers that the Labour Progressive Party was a legally recognized party and charged that the Trustees had passed a resolution "which goes far beyond party membership in the discrimination it sanctions."[17]

The press, however, was not unanimous on Menzies' motion. On the day the motion was scheduled for debate, the *Toronto Telegram* rejected as "untenable" the notion that the Communist Party of Canada was simply another political party or that Communists citizens with all of the rights of citizenship: "It is incredible that in this day any responsible or instructed person should be found to say that Communists are a minority whose rights must be protected by the system of government against which its efforts are directed." The Board was not being asked to debate "vague and academic theory of the meaning of democracy," but rather, whether or not the property it holds in trust for the "loyal" citizens of Toronto "is to be placed at the disposal of those who would destroy Canada as we know it." As far as the *Telegram* was concerned, "the question involves no issue as to freedom of speech." After all, "Communists are still free to speak where the law allows them," but school property should be off limits: "If the school trustees are trustees for democracy they can do no other than accept the resolution moved by Trustees Menzies and Ross and deny the use of schools for subversive purposes."[18]

The *Telegram's* bizarre notion that civil liberties for Communists or other unpopular groups should be restricted to where the law "allows" them was not considered far-fetched at the time. Indeed, other voices argued that Communists were not worthy of rights at all. In a speech to the Toronto Police War Veterans Association the day before the *Telegram* editorial, Ontario Premier George Drew called upon Ottawa to ban the Communist Party outright because "a Communist is

[16]"Trustees of Democracy," *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 1948.
[17]"A Wrong Resolution," *Toronto Star*, 16 April 1948.
[18]"Trustees of Democracy Must Protect Democracy," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 March 1948.

an agent of a foreign power sowing the seeds of discontent throughout the country." Drew even went so far as to call Joseph Salsberg and Alex MacLeod, the two Labour Progressive Party (LPP) MPPs in the Ontario legislature, a pair of rats: "and 'rat' is the only word to use because they are gnawing away at the foundations of our free society."[19] In the House of Commons, the various parties differed on whether the Communist Party of Canada should be banned — with the Conservatives and Social Credit in favour and the Liberals and CCF opposed — but all agreed with Prime Minister Mackenzie King that "there is no menace in the world that is greater" than Communism.[20] Canadians, however, were willing to go further than their federal government with 68 per cent telling pollsters that they would support the outlawing of organizations that were "largely Communistic."[21]

The hardening of Canadian public opinion toward Communism was not only reflected in Menzies' motion but also in the unsympathetic treatment of opponents of the motion. Blair Laing, one of the four Trustees who voted against the motion, was angry that despite his opposition to Communism "its [sic] been brought to the attention of members of my family that I am a Communist because I voted against the resolution."[22] Laing's remarks were made during a meeting of the Board at which communications were considered from the LLP demanding an immediate repeal of the Board's resolution and from LPP MPPs, A.A MacLeod and Joe Salsberg, requesting the use of school property. By a vote of fourteen to four, both communications were returned with a copy of the Board's resolution — in effect, a flat refusal.[23] An attempt by Trustee Edna Ryerson to introduce a motion to rescind Menzies' motion at the Board meeting of 6 May failed because she was unable to convince any of her colleagues to second her motion. A compromise motion by Trustee Isabel Ross, to allow Communists to use school property during elections provided each application received a majority vote of all Board members, also failed, albeit narrowly by a vote of ten to eight.[24] Menzies' motion was unprecedented because it was the first time that Board policy specifically identified and

[19]"Drew Urges Ottawa Outlaw Communists," *Toronto Star*, 18 March 1948.

[20]Canada House of Commons, *Debates*, 17 March 1948, 2303-2326.

[21]Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO), 24 April 1948.

[22] "Board Rejects LPP Request Demanding Use of Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 23 April 1948.

[23]"Board Rejects LPP Request Demanding Use of Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 23 April 1948.

[24]"Board Will Not End Ban on Communists in Schools," *Toronto Star*, 7 May 1948; "Red Meetings In School Will Continue Under Ban Board Won't Reopen Issue," *Toronto Telegram*, 7 May 1948. Neither the newspaper reports nor the Board minutes explain what motivated Ross' compromise motion or why the vote was so close. Ross herself provided no explanation but she may have felt that the compromise enabled the Board to maintain control over who used school property while holding out the possibility that the Communists could access school property during elections. The close vote may have reflected the respect accorded her as a former Board Chair.

targeted Communism. The motion sent a clear message that an anti-Communist, pro-democratic consensus would prevail in the schools, even at the risk of infringing upon individual rights. The problem for moderate Board officials, such as Director of Education Dr. C.C. Goldring, was the precedent that had been set for ardent Cold War hawks to demand even more extreme measures.

Promoting the value of democracy and democratic institutions was another method the Board used to counter any appeal that Communism might hold for students. During the war and post-war periods, Goldring gave a good deal of thought to the ideals of democracy and how those ideals could be practically applied in the classrooms. Goldring believed that "the school can cultivate loyalty to and faith in democracy" through the power of example, particularly "the absence of dictatorial methods of administration or discipline." But nurturing democratic ideals involved more than just the absence of dictatorial methods: "democracy implies responsibility as well as privilege."[25] The Board agreed with Goldring and eventually passed a resolution that the schools emphasize, "as an essential part of the democracy of our country, machinery of government, local, provincial and dominion, the importance of voting and the mechanism of voting."[26] A few months after the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950, the Board passed a motion from Menzies and Ross that "on United Nations Day [24 October] ... lessons on the United Nations Organization, including reasons for war in Korea, be taught to Grades seven and eight and in Secondary Schools."[27] The following year Goldring sent a pamphlet "worth reading" to public school inspectors and secondary school principals. The pamphlet presented a classroom scene in which the teacher deducts marks from the brighter students and redistributes them to the duller students to keep everyone at the same level. Over time the highly productive students lose all incentive to produce and everyone sinks, "or had been driven down," to the level of the low producers. Eventually, to ensure everyone's survival, the authorities would have no alternative but to begin a system of compulsory labour and punishments against the low producers. The pamphlet concludes that "the socialist-communist idea of taking from each according to his ability to each according to his need ... will eventually result in a living-death for all except the 'authorities' and a few of their favourite lackeys."[28]

[25]TDSB, General Files, Box 10, File "Democracy — Teaching of," January 12th, 1942.
[26]TDSB, General Files, Box 10, File Board Minutes, 22 January 1943, 22.
[27]TDSB, General Files, Box 10, File Board Minutes, 7 September 1950, 118-19. "May Tell Schools Why UN Fighting," *Globe and Mail*, 7 September 1950; "To Teach Students Korea War Reasons," *Toronto Star*, 8 September 1950. The original motion from Menzies and Ross required that every classroom above grade four "be informed of the reasons for the action of the United Nations in providing assistance to the Republic of South Korea in the defence of its territory...." However, the Board wanted the emphasis placed upon the United Nations, prompting Menzies and Ross to revise and reintroduce their motion.
[28]TDSB, General Files, Box 10, File "Democracy — Teaching of," 11 September 1951.

The Board's promotion of democratic ideals in the classroom must be seen in the context of the fervent pedagogical debate that occurred during this period between the proponents of progressivism and their detractors. Progressivism, an American import, was a movement that sought to reform the entire education system with greater emphasis on vocational education, more emphasis on contemporary problems and issues, and more education in life skills to prepare students for the demands of a modern society or the "real world." While literacy was important, so too was the cultivation of good health habits, the ability to get along with others, and children's self-esteem. Therefore, progressives argued the curriculum had to be child-centred and central to that idea was the belief in self-directed learning in which students would learn best if they could select their own learning experiences. In the classroom, Progressives advocated a more *laissez-faire*, egalitarian approach, along with the use of other instructional tools such as radio broadcasts, films, and portable typewriters. Critics of progressivism, alternatively referred to as conservatives or traditionalists, believed firmly that cultivating literacy and numeracy must be the primary focus of the school system because those skills were essential for students to be able to cope with daily life. Traditionalists also believed in the authority of the teacher to define what was to be learned. The most famous critique of progressivism in Canada came from Hilda Neatby, a Professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan, who published the best-selling *So Little for the Mind: An Indictment of Canadian Education* in 1953. Neatby condemned progressivism as "anti-intellectual, anti-cultural, and amoral" for neglecting formal grammar and written composition, and de-emphasizing history and the great works of literature. A strong proponent of traditionalist values, Neatby believed progressive educators put too much faith in guidance and extra-curricular activities, and were too casual about promotion and graduation standards.[29] Historians of Ontario's post-war school system believe that Neatby overstated her case, and, in fact, have argued that while educators may have used the language of progressivism in the 1940s and 1950s, most of them continued to rely on the traditionalist approach of the textbook, blackboard, and the teacher's voice until the 1960s.[30] Despite its progressive appearance, the Toronto Board's support of teaching democratic ideals in the classroom did not challenge the authority of teachers or the overall conservatism of Ontario's post-war school system. In fact, Cold War hawks on the Board supported the promotion of democracy as a way to prevent the influence of Communism from creeping into the schools.

[29]Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind: An Indictment of Canadian Education* (Toronto 1953).

[30]For an analysis of progressivism versus traditionalism, see J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Philippe Audet, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Toronto 1970); Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976* (Toronto 1982); R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto 1999).

II

The controversy over Menzies' motion had barely subsided when a new demand was put forward that focused not only on the threat from Communists outside of the schools but from those possibly within the schools. On 18 May 1948, the Finance Committee of the Board received a letter from the Toronto Board of Education War Veterans' Association, a group of teaching and non-teaching employees of the Board. The letter informed the committee that among the principles to which the Association subscribed was a policy of maintaining and fostering adherence "to the ideals of Democracy and to the common bond of loyalty the people of Canada have with all members of the British Commonwealth of Nations." The Association was of the opinion that there was "a greatly increased trend of opinion in Canada away from this bond of loyalty" according to public opinion polls published in the press — but which were not identified in the letter. The Association was also alarmed by "the growth of parties and organizations in this country subversive to our democratic way of life."[31]

Submitting suggestions as a "remedy" for what it considered to be "an alarming growth of subversive and disloyal tendencies" — without elaborating on what those tendencies were — the Association wanted: (a) courses and subjects which emphasize "the greatness and virtue" of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the democratic ideals upon which they have been founded; (b) Canadian and British texts favoured over "foreign" texts, the preponderance of which was "too great" and which, "while in some ways admirable, fail to stress British and Canadian ideals"; (c) emphasis in the Social Studies and all courses on topics which would "explain to our children the true principles of democracy," and illustrate the dangers of "the police state" where Fascist and Communist regimes prohibit the "free party" and "free voting" systems; (d) a careful selection of teachers who were "sincere" in their democratic ideals and who were "willing to show their loyalty to Canadian and British Democracy by taking an oath of allegiance to the King"; (e) removal from the staffs of the Board and the schools "of anyone who cannot sincerely subscribe to the ideals of democracy and of the British Commonwealth of Nations."[32]

The Finance Committee chose not to discuss the contents of the letter, especially the most controversial suggestion calling for a purge of suspect Board employees, but rather, referred the letter to the Board "for consideration."[33]

[31]TDSB, Finance Committee Minutes 1948-49, 18 May 1948, 53. "Want Teachers to take Oath of Allegiance," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 May 1948.

[32]"Want Teachers to take Oath of Allegiance," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 May 1948. The letter was signed by five members of the Association's executive including Thomas H. Addy, the Association's president and a former county master of the Orange Order in Toronto. Copies of the letter were also sent to the Management Committee, Property Committee, and the Advisory Vocational Committee.

[33]"Want Teachers to take Oath of Allegiance," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 May 1948.

However, at a meeting of the Board's Management Committee a week later, Goldring, who had been promoted to Director of Education in 1945, the Board's top bureaucratic post, offered his view that the teaching of democratic ideals was already "basic" in the course of study for all schools and in all classes. As for the selection of books for use in the schools, Goldring said that as far as he was aware, preference was given to books of Canadian and British origin. On the issue of teacher loyalty, Goldring assured the Committee that teachers were "carefully screened" before their appointment and that to his knowledge no teacher had been recommended for appointment whose democratic ideals or loyalty to British and Canadian democracy were in doubt. However, should the presence of such a teacher come to his attention, the matter would be dealt with "without delay." But to demonstrate that he took the issue seriously, Goldring told the Committee that he had been in touch with a member of the executive of the Association with a view to obtaining information on any specific case the Association may have had in mind. The executive member informed Goldring that further information was available and would be forwarded to him, but "to date, this information has not been received."[34]

The Toronto Board was not alone in discussing the issue of teacher loyalty. In Kitchener, school trustees decided that all teachers and board employees would be asked to take loyalty oaths on 21 May 1948. No mention was made of the consequences facing those who refused to take the oath.[35] Other jurisdictions were less formal but no less determined to proscribe far left political views among teachers. Steve Endicott, a member of the Communist Party of Canada during this period, and the son of Reverend James Endicott who was leader of the far left Canadian Peace Congress, found that his name and past followed him years later when applying for high school teaching jobs in 1959. After being turned down for teaching posts in East York and Toronto, he finally landed a position teaching economics at a high school in Port Credit due to his experience in industry and a shortage of commercial teachers. Immediately after he was hired, the head of the Economics Department recognized his name and demanded to know if his political views would influence his teaching. Endicott assured him that the two were separate but school officials kept a close eye on him, as did the RCMP.[36]

[34] TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 25 May 1948, 78.

[35] *Toronto Star*, 7 April 1948.

[36] National Archives of Canada, RG 146, CSIS Records (formerly RCMP Security Service), Vol. 92, file AH 1999-00148, "Toronto Association for Peace." The RCMP followed Endicott for more than a decade before he began his teaching career. One file contained a clipping from the Communist newspaper, *The Tribune*, 8 November 1948, depicting a photo of Endicott and the caption: "Steve Endicott LPP student leader speaks at Youth Peace Rally." Endicott's recollections appear in Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto 1992), 214-16.

Curiously, there was no editorial comment on the War Veterans' Association letter, with the exception of the *Globe and Mail*, which was critical of the Association's demands. Calling the evidence of weakening loyalty to the Commonwealth "rather flimsy," the *Globe* considered it strange that the Association would require all teachers to take a loyalty oath when "they make no suggestion that these doctrines are spread or supported by teachers in general." For teachers who were already convinced Communists, "if there are any in Toronto schools," the oath would be meaningless, whereas for those teachers who were not, "the implication that their loyalty needs to be proved would be insulting." While the *Globe* believed in the "overwhelming" value of membership in the British Commonwealth of nations, it added that advocating a weaker tie to the Commonwealth "is not necessarily disloyal either to Canada or to the King." Returning to teacher loyalty, it would be a "ridiculous mistake" to assume that teachers were any more disloyal as a class than any other group. In fact, there could be no better way "of destroying the confidence of both pupils and parents in teachers than to create the belief that they were suspects unless they made a public confession of their patriotism." Loyalty, the editorial concluded, was proven "by action and continued conduct, not by words."[37] The *Globe* could also have referred to the irony of a group of war veterans who, as educators, were calling for the restriction of some of the freedoms for which they fought to uphold during the war. The Association's letter was an indication of the extent to which Communism in early Cold War Canada — as confirmed in the public opinion polls — convinced Canadians that it was acceptable to curtail the rights of those whose loyalty was suspect.

Not all Canadians, however, believed in the selective application of rights without serious scrutiny. Goldring wrote to Board Chairman George A. Arnold that "whatever one may think of the communist party, it is a recognized party and members of it sit in local municipal bodies and in the provincial legislature." Goldring also believed the Board was on shaky legal ground to demand loyalty oaths from teachers when the provincial government, which granted teaching certificates, already required a certificate of character from candidates. While he believed that "we should discipline any teacher who is known at any time to advance the views of communism in his or her classroom instruction," he did not think, however, "that we can go beyond the school and try to determine the political point of view of members of the teaching profession."[38]

From his comments to the Management Committee, it was clear that Goldring was skeptical of the disloyalty charges from the War Veterans' Association. When asked by the *Toronto Star* about the Association's demands for the teaching of patriotism, Goldring replied: "We are doing all these things now. We do stress patriotism." Reminding the press that the selection of courses for study was a

[37]"Loyalty Not in Words," *Globe and Mail*, 19 May 1948.
[38]TDSB, General Files 1907-72, Box 9, File 0-2-29C "Communism," Goldring to George A. Arnold, 3 February 1948.

provincial jurisdiction, Goldring added that Premier Drew "has expressed himself many times on the teaching of patriotism."[39] After two weeks had passed with still no evidence from the Association of disloyalty among teachers, Goldring began to lose his patience, telling reporters that he had received letters from "many teachers who resent the imputation of their loyalty." Goldring suggested that disciplinary action against teachers with the Association might be taken if the authors of the letter did not produce evidence of the need for loyalty oaths, a suggestion which found favour with some Trustees, such as Herbert Orliffe, who pointedly told reporters that the Association's executive "were asked for the evidence and they have not given it." Trustee A.J. Skeans mockingly suggested that a committee might be necessary to weed out all subversive members of the Board.[40]

Not all of the Trustees, however, shared Goldring's skepticism toward the Association: in fact, some were supportive of the Association's demands. Trustee J.E. McMillin called the Association's letter "refreshing" and that "maybe the veterans are thinking of Quebec and how down there they do not seem to want the word British at all." From Trustee Ross' perspective, the letter should be taken seriously because one of the teachers she knew who signed the letter would not put his name to it "without some reason."[41] The Board's Property Committee, in contrast to the non-committal response of the Management Committee, "turned a sympathetic ear" toward the Association's requests, according to the *Toronto Telegram*. The committee also instructed Board officials to check with the Association for definite complaints.[42]

Ultimately, despite the initial sympathy of some of the Trustees, the credibility of the Association's allegations had collapsed because the organization failed to present evidence of employee disloyalty to the Board. At its meeting of 3 June 1948, the Board chose not to take action on the Association's proposals. Goldring said he had interviewed the Association's president, Thomas H. Addy, to discuss the allegations of subversive tendencies among Board employees, but that Mr. Addy conceded the Association "had no one in mind and no charge to make." On the issue of employee loyalty oaths, the Board concluded there was "no evidence that the oath is necessary," said Trustee Dr. E.A. Hardy.[43]

Despite the Board's decision not to act on the Association's letter, some of the ideas the letter espoused, however, were later embraced by the Board and eventually adopted. For example, the idea that courses should illustrate the dangers that police states, including Communist regimes, pose to democratic systems, found favour in a motion from Trustee Reverend D.M. Kerr at the Management Committee meeting

39 "'Might Have to Take Oath' Will Let Trustees Decide," *Toronto Star*, 19 May 1948.
40 "Produce Evidence Or Else Dr. Goldring's Suggestion," *Toronto Star*, 1 June 1948. See also *Star*, 19 May 1948.
41 "'Might Have To Take Oath,'" *Toronto Star*, 19 May 1948.
42 "Veterans Urge Loyalty Check," *Toronto Telegram*, 27 May 1948.
43 "Teachers Really Patriotic No Need For Oath – Trustees," *Toronto Star*, 4 June 1948.

on 7 December 1948. Kerr's motion asked Goldring to review a newly published book entitled *This Was My Choice* by Igor Gouzenko and report regarding the advisability of including it in school libraries. Gouzenko was the former Soviet cipher clerk whose defection from the Soviet embassy in Ottawa with documents revealing the existence of a spy ring in Canada made headlines nationally and internationally in 1946. His fame alone meant his book became an immediate best seller. The moment Kerr's motion passed, Trustee Edna Ryerson moved that the same consideration be given to a book entitled *Spirit of Canadian Democracy* by Margaret Fairley. Ryerson's motion was also passed.[44]

The two books could not have been more different in how they portrayed Communism, and in that respect, represented a literary version of the Cold War. *This Was My Choice* is a combined autobiography and condemnation of Communism. Gouzenko vividly recalled seminal events in Soviet history including the disastrous agricultural collectivization under Lenin that led to widespread starvation in his village and the terror of Stalin's Purges. After his posting to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in 1943, the remainder of Gouzenko's book recounts Moscow's efforts to direct Communist parties abroad, particularly in an attempt to recruit party members to spy on their respective countries. Readers were warned that Canadian Communists "deliberately encourage public complaints," such as the lack of housing for veterans, and then "tie up the popular complaint with some Communist ideal on housing, such as everybody having a high-class home but with rent on a sliding scale according to one's salary." Gouzenko compared this tactic to manufacturers who "use a pretty girl's face to help sell their cigarettes."[45]

In *Spirit of Canadian Democracy*, author Margaret Fairley presented a very different portrait of Canadian Communists from that of Gouzenko. With the exception of the introduction, which praised the "immortal International Brigade" for its role in the Spanish civil war as the "vanguard" of far-sighted people in the fight against Fascism, Fairley opted to let the book's assorted speeches and written excerpts speak for themselves. Along with Canadian prime ministers making the case for democracy, such as Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mackenzie King, were a number of well known Canadian Communists including Tim Buck and Norman Bethune. It is difficult to imagine Goldring, a conservative man by nature, approving for use in the schools such excerpts in Fairley's book as Norman Bethune's reference to English colonialism in India as "a criminal war of aggression," which never benefited the English working class and where "King and Country" as the justification for English colonialism was "False. False as hell."[46] Nor, given Goldring's past skepticism toward the Soviet Union, would he have likely appreciated another contributor's assertion that "what makes the Soviet Union particu-

[44]TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 7 December, 1948, 175.
[45]Igor Gouzenko, *This Was My Choice* (Toronto 1948), 268.
[46]Margaret Fairley, *Spirit of Canadian Democracy* (Toronto 1946), 179.

larly worth dying for ... is that they [Soviet citizens] have found out they are free and equal."[47]

Goldring presented his reviews of both books to the Management Committee on 11 January 1949. Students in grades eleven, twelve, and thirteen, Goldring told the Committee, would find Gouzenko's book "both interesting and worthwhile." As citizens of Canada, "they should be familiar with the events described in the book and with the point of view expressed."[48] While offering "many splendid extracts," Goldring believed that Fairley's book "would not be a popular one with students, nor would it serve the purpose in mind as well as some other books which are available."[49] Goldring did not elaborate on why he thought Fairley's book would be unpopular with students nor did he identify the other books he thought were better suited to explain the concept of democracy.

That Goldring favoured Gouzenko's book over Fairley's was hardly surprising, but his reviews immediately led to a storm of protest from Trustees Ryerson and Sam Walsh, the newly elected Communist Trustee for Ward Four and fellow member of the Management Committee. Ryerson denounced Gouzenko as "a self-confessed traitor to his country" and compared him to Benedict Arnold, remarks that offended a number of her committee colleagues. Walsh, who was active in the Quebec wing of the Communist Party of Canada (known at the time as the Labour Progressive Party) prior to his election as a Trustee but whose occupation was listed by the newspapers as simply a journalist, believed Gouzenko's book "is designed to raise a generation of young Gouzenkos in Canada," and noted that the French government had banned the book on the grounds it would divide its people.[50] Despite the protests of Ryerson and Walsh, the committee, on a motion put forth by Trustee Kerr, approved the inclusion of Gouzenko's book in the secondary schools by a vote of seven to two, with the Director of Education to decide the number of copies and that the finance committee be requested to provide the necessary funds.[51] A similar motion for Fairley's book, put forth by Ryerson, was defeated by the same margin.[52]

[47]Margaret Fairley, *Spirit of Canadian Democracy* (Toronto 1946), 204.
[48]TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 11 January 1949, 3.
[49]TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 11 January 1949, 3.
[50]"Board OKs Gouzenko Book 2 Communists Dissenting," *Toronto Telegram*, 12 January 1949; "Students Get Gouzenko Over Wrath of Reds," *Globe and Mail*, 12 January 1949; "Take Gouzenko, Reject Hers Most Unfair, Cries Author," *Toronto Star*, 12 January 1949. Walsh later became the first president of the newly formed Parti Communiste du Québec in 1965, which was a separate entity from the Communist Party of Canada. See Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto 1988), 258, and Sean Purdy, *Radicals and Revolutionaries: The History of Canadian Communism From the Robert S. Kenny Collection* (Toronto 1998), 41.
[51]TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 11 January 1949, 3.
[52]TDSB, Management Committee Minutes 1948-49, 11 January 1949, 4.

Margaret Fairley complained that the committee vote was "most unfair" and "one of the most undemocratic yet taken in Canada."[53] The Trustees who approved Gouzenko's book, however, had a very different opinion. Trustee Kerr, who moved the motion approving Gouzenko's book, rejected Fairley's book on the grounds that he would have no book in the schools with anything of Tim Buck in it. Rejecting the criticisms of Ryerson and Walsh as "unadulterated propaganda," Trustee Blair Laing said Canadians "should be grateful to Gouzenko. He can be considered one of our truest and most loyal citizens." "I feel it would be good business for the trustees to take an interest in what is in the library," argued Harold Menzies, because "these are urgent times and I think our young people should be permitted to read this book, which points out what democracy means in this country."[54] Menzies' view was echoed by the *Toronto Telegram*, which said the arguments put forth by Ryerson and Walsh were wrong and that Gouzenko's book "ought to be read by all Canadians because it is an expose of the methods of the greatest tyranny in the world today."[55]

After the Finance Committee approved the funds to purchase copies of Gouzenko's book on 17 January 1949, the final decision on whether to approve of the book's inclusion in the schools would come from the entire Board on 20 January. At that meeting, Walsh and Ryerson once again attacked Gouzenko's book. "It is a lurid, sensational book," said Walsh, "written with an eye to Hollywood production and profits." Ryerson denounced the book as "ballyhoo to condition the minds of children for war."[56] Trustee Dr. E.A. Hardy took issue with Ryerson, saying it was "ridiculous" to suggest that placing the book in the schools would promote another war. Taking an even harder line, Trustee Kerr called the arguments of Walsh and Ryerson "a 1914-1939 attitude, pacifism in its worst sense ... I hope the youth of this country is not caught by all this foolish talk." Only Trustee Herbert Orliffe joined Ryerson and Walsh in opposing the motion to put Gouzenko's book in the schools, but he was quick to add that his opposition was "not on the same grounds as Trustees Ryerson and Walsh." Orliffe told the Board that he had not read the book and therefore he "could not approve something which I have not read." When the debate was over the Board overwhelmingly upheld the Management Committee's recommendation by a vote of seventeen to three. Gouzenko's book would soon be in sixteen secondary school libraries.[57]

[53]Despite her disappointment, Fairley told the *Toronto Star* that the debate involving her book would at least serve one good purpose – it would help advertise her book. "Take Gouzenko, Reject Hers Most Unfair, Cries Author," *Toronto Star*, 12 January 1949.

[54]"Take Gouzenko, Reject Hers Most Unfair, Cries Author," *Toronto Star*, 12 January 1949; "Students Get Gouzenko Over Wrath of Reds," *Globe and Mail*, 12 January 1949; "Favours Book By Gouzenko For Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 January 1949.

[55]"Put Gouzenko's Book In Toronto's Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 13 January 1949.

[56]"Gouzenko For 16 Schools Board Will Buy Copies," *Toronto Star*, 21 January 1949.

[57]"Gouzenko For 16 Schools Board Will Buy Copies," *Toronto Star*, 21 January 1949. "Red Trustees Cannot Keep Gouzenko From Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 21 January 1949.

The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949 provided an unexpected challenge for the Board. The National Federation of Labor Youth, an organization identified in the media as a Communist front, distributed literature denouncing the North Atlantic pact to students at Central Technical School. One leaflet, a copy of which was sent to Goldring with a cover letter by the school's principal James Gillespie, quoted a US Congressman saying the United States should equip soldiers from other countries to fight in the next war rather than send in American soldiers. The Federation cited this as proof that "the Brass Hats are planning an aggressive war," and that "you will be need [sic] to do the fighting." Urging students not to become "Yankee Cannon Fodder," the Federation appealed to students to join its ranks to "Keep Canada Independent And At Peace."[58] At a meeting of the Board's Finance Committee on 4 April 1949, Trustees and Board officials debated what to do about the Federation's anti-NATO literature. Board policy at that time only prohibited the sale of literature and advertising material on school property, which according to Board Chairman A.J. Skeans, did not apply to the situation with the National Federation of Labor Youth. Despite Ryerson's insistence that students should be able to see all types of literature "so that they will know that they are not faced with only two futures, a depression or a war," the Board concluded that literature in the schools was a matter of policy and imposed a ban upon the distribution of "literature and printed matter" on Toronto school grounds, and that the permission of the Board be given before any articles, supplies, or literature were given to students.[59]

A particularly nasty episode of ideological conflict followed Ryerson's re-election in 1949 to the Board for 1950. During the 1949 campaign, the *Globe and Mail* called upon Ward Five voters to reject Ryerson, "whose current campaign for re-election is on a very low plane, even for a Labor-Progressive," by voting for Menzies and a young lawyer and first-time candidate named Philip Givens. The election of Menzies and Givens, the *Globe* told its readers, would help constitute a Board willing to devote itself "without confusing propaganda debates, to the important issues facing education."[60] To the *Globe's* disappointment, Ryerson not only defeated Givens but also topped her poll in her successful re-election bid.[61]

[58]TDSB, Curriculum Dept., General Files 1907-1972, Box 9 File 0-2-29C Communism, J. Gillespie to C.C. Goldring, 19 May 1949. In his letter, Gillespie told Goldring that when the leaflet was brought to his attention the police were notified immediately but "evidently a lookout warned those making the distribution because by the time the police arrived they were not in evidence."

[59]"Red Leaflets Prove Poser For Trustees," *Toronto Telegram*, 5 April 1949; "Red Literature Denouncing Pact Given to Pupils," *Globe and Mail*, 5 April 1949; "Propaganda Distribution Banned At City Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 27 April 1949.

[60]"For a Good School Board," *Globe and Mail*, 12 December 1949.

[61]Ryerson and Menzies were re-elected with 9,414 and 9,162 votes respectively with Givens placing third with 8,727 votes. "How Votes Cast For School Board," *Toronto Star*, 3 January 1950. Givens later became Mayor of Toronto.

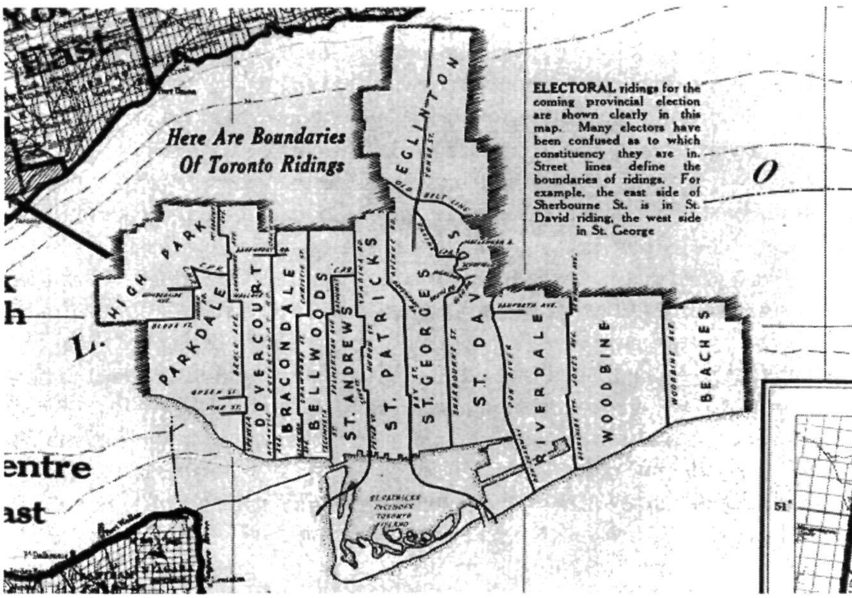
As to why Ryerson won convincingly and Walsh held his seat by acclamation given the escalation of the Cold War and the rising tide of anti-Communism, one has to look at a number of factors. Like their provincial counterparts, Communist MPPs A.A. MacLeod and Joseph Salsberg, Ryerson and Walsh were brilliant at portraying themselves as progressives and allies of the working class to their largely working-class constituents, while downplaying or ignoring the negative aspects of Communism. There is no reference, for example, to the Labour Progressive Party or to Communism in general in Ryerson's campaign literature during the 1949 contest. Instead, Ryerson championed causes such as free milk and a hot lunch for every child whose parents could not afford it, school safety, Junior Kindergarten, and an increase in salaries and wages to meet the high cost of living. In one of her pamphlets, Ryerson wrote: "I have been able to win Junior Kindergartens for the four-year olds" in four of the ward's schools and "I was able to get the Board to agree that there are dangerous fire hazards in our schools and $200,000 was voted to begin to eliminate these hazards." One would be hard pressed to see a plot to overthrow the capitalist system.[62] Of equal importance to the success of Ryerson and Walsh was the formidable Communist Party organization in both wards, which were represented provincially by MacLeod and Salsberg. The wards contained nearly 1,500 of the 3,500 party members in southern Ontario, translating into 1 party member for every 81 persons in Ward Four and 1 member for every 128 adult residents in Ward Five. As a result, Ryerson and Walsh had hundreds of dedicated electoral workers at their disposal.[63]

But the endorsement of the voters did not sway the Anti-Communist Committee, an obscure group determined to unseat Ryerson. Headed by Dr. J.P.F. Williams, a former Board of Education chair from Ryerson's ward, the Committee, according to a *Globe and Mail* report, had been operating for the past two years in Wards Four and Five to help defeat Communist candidates in municipal elections. The *Globe* also noted that among the Committee's ten member executive was a sitting Trustee.[64] Within days of Ryerson's election, the Committee waged a public

[62]Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Robert S. Kenny collection, MS 179, Box 23, Folder 45, n.d. [1949]. According to historian Peter Oliver, Communist success in Wards Four and Five date back to the war when Communist leaders such as Salsberg, elected MPP for St. Andrew in 1943, appealed to the substantial Jewish working-class population in both wards by promoting the Soviet Union's status as Canada's ally against Nazi Germany and "presenting themselves as progressives, trade unionists, and socialists." Peter Oliver, *Unlikely Tory: The Life and Politics of Allan Grossman* (Toronto 1985), 40-1.

[63]Oliver, *Unlikely Tory*, 40-2. Oliver's data comes from Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1975). Avakumovic acquired his data from the Communist Party's official newspaper the *Daily Clarion* (Toronto), 11 October 1938.

[64]The Trustee was not identified but at the Board meeting of 19 January 1950, Ryerson accused Trustees Isabel Ross and Harold Menzies of sitting on the Committee. There is no record of the Anti-Communist Committee in the minutes or other records of the Board. Only newspaper accounts refer to the Committee.



The boundaries of Ward Five, represented by Communist Trustee Edna Ryerson, corresponded with the provincial riding boundaries of St. Andrews, represented at the time by communist MPP Joseph Salsberg. Ward Four, held briefly by communist Trustee Joe Walsh, corresponded with the provincial riding of Bellwoods, represented by communist MPP Alex MacLeod. Archives of Ontario. RG 1-211-0-0-4. Electoral Map of the Province of Ontario, 1944, Map 33a.

campaign to have her seat declared vacant on the grounds that she violated the 1937 Public Schools Act because her husband was a high school teacher. The Act declared that a Trustee shall not enter into any contract or agreement either alone or jointly with another in which he or she has any pecuniary interest, profit, or expected benefit from the Board. Using the Public Schools Act as a pretext, George Ewing, the Committee's secretary, argued Ryerson "should not be permitted to discuss matters which might possibly benefit her husband." Dr. Williams, president of the Committee, said he had "seen the manner in which she works and I feel the time has come when we should do something about it." Williams did not specify what he meant by the "manner" in which Ryerson worked. He did, however, state that he was "certainly strongly opposed to Communists," but believed the challenge had a strong legal position because of Ryerson's husband's position. Despite Ewing's and Williams' insistence that their challenge was not based on the belief that Ryerson was a Communist, the Committee actively campaigned against Ryerson during the election. In addition, as her fellow Communist Trustee Sam Walsh pointed out, the Committee was hypocritical to challenge Ryerson when a Trustee on the 1948 Board was the head of a dairy that supplied milk to secondary school cafeterias and another Trustee several years earlier was married to a school principal, and yet nothing was done to bar either of those Trustees from their seats.[65]

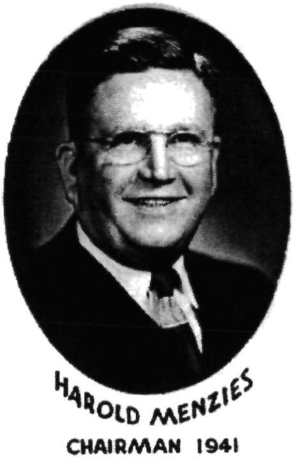
According to the Public Schools Act, two ratepayers or a section of the Trustees would have to bring a complaint before a judge, who would decide whether to declare the seat vacant. Ewing said a complaint would be forthcoming from two ratepayers but Ryerson denounced the challenge as a "vindictive" attempt "to get me off the board by a certain group of people," and that "there is no possibility of making it stick." Ryerson's confidence was shared by former Board chair A.J. Skeans who noted that in law, a spouse was not necessarily a partner: "I doubt if a judge will unseat her," he concluded. Ryerson's colleague Trustee Herbert Orliffe, a lawyer by profession, agreed with Skeans arguing that the basis of the challenge was "pretty far-fetched," and that the Board's action would rest almost entirely upon the opinion of the Board's solicitor, D. Hillis Osbourne. As for the solicitor, Osbourne said a decision on the complaint would be made by a court and not by him and that in the meantime he would administer the oath of office to Ryerson.[66]

Ryerson remained silent on the potential legal challenge against her until the Board meeting of 20 January when she lashed out against Trustees Ross and Menzies whom she accused of being involved in the campaign to depose her. Ryerson accused Ross of going to two newspapers over the course of two years to raise the issue of whether Ryerson could continue on the Board while her husband was employed as a teacher — a charge Ross rejected as "an absolute lie." Referring to the Anti-Communist Committee in Ward Five, Ryerson remarked it was her understanding that Ross and Menzies were members of the Committee. Ross was "amazed" at Ryerson's statements and added that it was "common talk," as to the legal point involved in the wife of a teacher holding the office of Trustee. On the accusation Ross and Menzies were members of the Anti-Communist Committee, Ross had no comment. For his part, Menzies neither confirmed nor denied he was a member of the Committee except to say he had run for the Board in 1948 "to come out against that damnable system of communism and I was elected on that issue. I will always stand against the damnable Communist system." As for the potential legal challenge to unseat her, Ryerson told the Board that no action had yet been taken by her challengers. Apparently, no action was taken for the issue disappeared from the newspaper coverage and Ryerson continued to serve as a Trustee.[67]

[65]For a summary of the 1937 Public Schools Act see "Mrs. Ryerson Defies Foes 'Certainly I'll Qualify'," *Toronto Telegram*, 6 January 1950; "Husband Teacher Cited In Bid To Bar Red School Trustee," *Toronto Telegram*, 5 January 1950; "Try To Unseat Mrs. Ryerson, Her Husband Teacher," *Toronto Star*, 5 January 1950; "Anti-Communists Seek To Unseat Mrs. Ryerson," *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1950.

[66]"Try To Unseat Mrs. Ryerson, Her Husband Teacher," *Toronto Star*, 5 January 1950; "Anti-Communists Seek To Unseat Mrs. Ryerson," *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1950; "Mrs. Ryerson Defies Foes 'Certainly I'll Qualify'," *Toronto Telegram*, 6 January 1950.

[67]"Accuse Red Trustee Of Deceiving Board," *Toronto Telegram*, 3 February 1950.



Trustees Harold Menzies and Edna Ryerson. Courtesy: *Toronto District School Board Archives.*

III

Two years after the Board passed the resolution banning Communists from meeting on school Board property, the resolution was about to be tested by the Canadian Peace Congress, an organization that advocated nuclear disarmament. The Congress, headed by United Church minister Dr. James G. Endicott, was highly controversial for, among other stances, its support of Communist China and denunciations of the United States during the Korean War. As authors Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse point out, although Dr. Endicott was not a card-carrying Communist and insisted that the Board of the Congress maintain its autonomy from the Communist Party of Canada, about 80 per cent of its active members were Communists.[68] Not surprisingly, Canadian authorities viewed the Congress as a Communist front, and members of the Toronto Board of Education shared that view when the Congress requested meeting space. The Finance Committee noted at its meeting on 13 March 1950, that the Congress requested space at Central Technical School for a three day conference planned in early May that was expected to attract as many as one thousand delegates from across the country.[69] The request generated critical observations of the Congress among Committee members such as Menzies

[68]Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 366-7.
[69]TDSB, Finance Committee Minutes 1950-51, 13 March 1950, 32.

who mused whether Dr. Endicott, who was visiting Moscow at the time, "might bring back a report on the news item that the 'Red' countries are planning to exterminate the Jews." Committee Chair, Trustee Herbert Orliffe suggested that if Endicott brought back an agreement with Stalin for world peace and an assurance that Stalin would agree to an international inspection of Russia's atomic development, "then we might consider [the request]." "Are there Communists in this body?" asked Menzies, who reminded his fellow Trustees of the Board's two-year-old ban against Communist meetings on school property. Menzies' reminder apparently took Board Chairman Blair Laing by surprise. He asked the Board's business administrator if Menzies was right, to which the administrator replied in the affirmative. Menzies then moved that no action — in effect, a refusal — be taken on the Congress' request, which was carried unanimously.[70]

The Finance Committee's position was applauded by the *Toronto Telegram*, whose editorial urged the Board as a whole "to confirm that decision" at its upcoming meeting. The editorial ridiculed Dr. Endicott's visit to Moscow to obtain Stalin's peaceful assurances: "This visit does little to remove suspicion of his pro-Communist sympathies or of the pro-Communist aims of his 'peace congress'." As to Endicott's denial that he was a Communist, the editorial referred to a statement from a Detroit labour leader, who, when challenged to prove a certain member of his union was a Communist, replied: "I can't prove you are a Communist. But when I see a bird that quacks like a duck, walks like a duck, has feathers and webbed feet and associates with ducks, I'm certainly going to assume that he is a duck."[71]

When the Board convened on 16 March 1950, to decide whether or not to uphold the Finance Committee's refusal of the Peace Congress' application, a delegation from the Congress appeared before the Trustees. The head of the delegation, Rae Lucock, told the Board that Congress supporters across Canada "believe that the present international tensions can and must be resolved short of war through negotiations within the framework of the United Nations." The Trustees were also told that 40,000 Toronto citizens had signed a petition demanding a ban on atomic weapons and that charges the Congress was a Communist organization were smears from those who favoured war. The delegation's brief also referred to the remarks of Trustee Orliffe at the Finance Committee meeting as "unworthy of a public servant."[72] That appeared to be too much for Orliffe who

[70]TDSB, Finance Committee Minutes 1950-51, 13 March 1950, 32; "Won't Let Endicott Speak In School, Now In Moscow," *Toronto Star*, 14 March, 1950; "May Use School If Stalin Pledges 100 Years Peace," *Globe and Mail*, 14 March 1950.

[71]"No Room In Schools For Communist Conferences," *Toronto Telegram*, editorial, 16 March 1950.

[72]"Peace Brings Wrangling To School Board Session," *Globe and Mail*, 17 March 1950; "Peace Congress Can't Use Central Tech, Vote 14 to 5," *Toronto Star*, 17 March 1950; "'Peace' Group Again Refused Use Of School," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 March 1950. There

said he was "fed up with fighting for civil liberties for people who don't appreciate them and would keep them only for themselves if they got power." As for the Peace Congress, Orliffe admitted he could not prove it "but there is no doubt in my mind that this organization is a Communist front." In defending the Congress' application, Trustee Ryerson promoted the virtue of avoiding war: "We do not like to look forward to a war that may wipe out civilization." Trustee Mary Temple agreed with Orliffe that "the Peace Congress is a Communist front organization," but she cautioned her colleagues not to make martyrs of the Congress. She argued that Communists thrive on repressive measures and that refusing the request would only earn them publicity and sympathy. As long as they are legally recognized, she concluded, the schools should remain open to them. Her arguments failed to persuade Trustee E.L. Roxborough, who offered his belief that Dr. Endicott went to Moscow "not to further peace but to receive instructions on how to bolster the Communist Party here." Communist Trustee Sam Walsh called Roxborough's remarks "slander" and, referring to the two-year-old ban against Communist meetings on Board property, warned the Board that if it refused the Congress' request an endless precedent would be set whereby the Board could deny space to any organization by simply supposing it to be Communist. A frustrated Trustee A.J. Brown clearly had enough of listening to Walsh, who had already spoken on other topics at the meeting including Sunday Sports, farm service, and a 22 minute speech on the cost of education. Brown suggested the Board hold a "Samuel J. Walsh night" to allow the Communist Trustee to say all he had to say and get it over with for a full year: "We should hold a Walsh night and let the trustee get everything over with at once. I'd be willing to sit here until midnight some evening if I could get a guarantee that he will not speak for the rest of the year." When the vote was finally held, the Congress' request for meeting space was decidedly rejected by a vote of fourteen to five. The Board was clearly determined to uphold its ban against Communist meetings on school property.[73]

The most controversial motion brought before the Board followed the ban on the Canadian Peace Congress. Trustee E.L. Roxborough followed through on his intention on 16 November 1950, notice of which was given to the Board at the 19

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was no mention in the newspaper coverage that a petition was actually presented to the Board and there is no evidence of the petition among the Board's records.

[73]"'Peace' Group Again Refused Use Of School," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 March 1950; "Would Hold 'Walsh Night' Let Trustee Talk Self Out," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 March 1950. Despite his strong anti-Communist language, Trustee Orliffe voted in favour of granting meeting space to the Congress. Orliffe argued that as long as the federal government did not outlaw Communism, Communists had the right to freedom of speech and assembly. Orliffe presented the classic CCF balancing act of defending civil liberties while presenting his anti-Communist credentials to avoid accusations that he, and by extension the CCF Party, were sympathetic to Communism. For a broader discussion of anti-Communism within the CCF Party see Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 209-11.

October meeting, to introduce a motion barring Communists from employment with the Board. Seconded by Trustee Ferguson, the motion moved that "the Director of Education and Superintendents of Public and Secondary Schools shall assure themselves that, in accepting applicants for positions with the Board of Education, applicants are not members of or associated with any organization that is a part of or related to Communism."[74] The rationale for his motion, Roxborough told the Board, was the general agreement that Communism was a menace and that it would do harm in the classrooms: "I don't think this board has any idea how much Communism infiltrates into the objects of its desire, including education. If any member of our staff now is a Communist, we should dismiss him." To justify his position, Roxborough, according to the *Toronto Star*, "came armed with magazines from which he read articles condemning communism."[75]

Did Communism threaten Toronto's schoolchildren as Trustee Roxborough suggested? Were Communists infiltrating the ranks of Ontario's teachers? Those questions were put to three of the province's top education officials eight months earlier when they were asked to respond to reports that 1,000 university professors in California voted against the hiring of Communists to educational institutions in that state. Nora Hodgins, Secretary of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, said there had "never been any question" as to the loyalty of Ontario teachers. When asked whether legislation was required banning Communists from teaching in Ontario, S.J.R. Robinson, chair of the Ontario Secondary Schools Federation, replied: "We have never had occasion in Ontario to have any such legislation." Concurring with Hodgins and Robinson, Toronto Board of Education Chair, Blair Laing, said that no Communists were known to hold teaching jobs in Toronto: "We screen them very carefully." Communism in the classroom was a non-issue as far as the officials were concerned.[76]

Despite the clear lack of evidence of the red menace in Toronto's schools, Roxborough's motion received the instant endorsements of Trustees Conquergood, who argued, without elaborating, that the motion could have gone farther, and Dr. E.A. Hardy, considered the "dean" of the Board, who believed that the main aim of Communism was to destroy the British Commonwealth.[77] Even Board Chair Blair Laing, who only months earlier dismissed the threat of Communism within the school system, showed his sympathy to the motion by ruling out of order an

[74] TDSB, Board Minutes, 16 November 1950, 156.

[75] "Ban 'Red, Pink' Teachers In Schools By 14 to 5 Vote," *Toronto Star*, 17 November 1950; "To Screen Teachers For Red Leanings Before Appointment," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 November 1950.

[76] "Sure No Reds On Toronto Teaching Staff," *Toronto Telegram*, 23 March 1950. Laing did, however, say he would welcome federal legislation that would bar Communists from holding any public office.

[77] "Ban 'Red, Pink' Teachers In Schools By 14 to 5 Vote," *Toronto Star*, 17 November 1950; "To Screen Teachers For Red Leanings Before Appointment," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 November 1950.

amendment from Ryerson and Walsh on the ground that it was "a negation of the principle expressed in the motion." The amendment directed the Board's hiring policy to prohibit discrimination "on the grounds of race, creed, colour, or political opinion."[78] But the defeat of the amendment did not stop its sponsors from leveling blistering attacks against Roxborough's motion. Ryerson called the motion thought control and a witch hunt comparable to the rising tide of McCarthyism south of the border: "Do we want a three-ring circus of the American type here?" she asked. "This board will be the laughing stock of the entire nation." Walsh decried the impact the motion would have on freedom of expression in the classroom: "The result of this legislation would be a cowering, frightened teaching staff, too timid to express an opinion. It would be nothing but thought-control."[79]

It would be easy to dismiss the objections of Ryerson and Walsh as predictable indignation from the usual suspects. However, unlike past anti-Communist motions, Roxborough had other critics on the Board. Trustee Mary Temple agreed with Ryerson's criticisms, saying the motion could be "the thin edge of the wedge" toward thought control. All three top Board officials at the 16 November meeting, Director of Education C.C. Goldring, Secondary School Superintendent J.R.H. Morgan, and Public School Superintendent Z.S. Phimister, suggested that the motion was unnecessary because applicants to the Board were already screened thoroughly through background checks and personal interviews. Trustees R.J. Fitzpatrick, the separate school representative, and Mary Robertson, were satisfied that the officials were doing enough to screen applicants and that Roxborough's motion was, in Robertson's word, "useless." In response to Trustee Herbert Orliffe, when asked if he did not consider the motion necessary or advisable, Goldring replied, "with or without it, I will continue to use my best judgement." But despite the skepticism of the officials, when the vote was called the Cold War hawks on the Board won easily by a vote of fourteen to five.[80] The passage of Roxborough's resolution represented the pinnacle of anti-Communism at the Board.

Communist influence on the Board, minimal as it was with a mere two Trustees, became further marginalized with the defeat of Sam Walsh in the election of 1950, leaving Edna Ryerson as the sole Communist Trustee on the Board.[81] The triumph of the Board's Cold War hawks was readily apparent when the Civil Rights

[78]TDSB, Board Minutes, 16 November 1950, 156-7.

[79]"Bar Any New Teachers For Communist Taint," *Globe and Mail*, 17 November 1950.

[80]TDSB, Board Minutes, 16 November 1950, 157. The breakdown of the vote was Yeas: Brown, Ross, Menzies, Robinson, Murdoch, F. Walsh, Roxborough, Ferguson, Titchener-Smith, Conquergood, Hardy, Male, Kerr, and chairman Laing; Nays: Fitzpatrick, Temple, S. Walsh, Ryerson, and Orliffe. "Ban 'Red, Pink' Teachers In Schools By 14 to 5 Vote," *Toronto Star*, 17 November 1950; "To Screen Teachers For Red Leanings Before Appointment," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 November 1950; "Bar Any New Teachers For Communist Taint," *Globe and Mail*, 17 November 1950.

[81]"Walsh Only Red To Be Defeated As A Trustee," *Toronto Star*, 5 December 1950.

Union, a Communist-dominated civil liberties organization, appeared before the Board on 5 April 1951, hoping to overturn the policy banning Communists from positions of employment with the Board. Margaret Spaulding, the Past President of the Union, argued that the policy was a violation of Article 19 of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing freedom of expression and opinion. Spaulding noted the irony of the Board passing a resolution on 7 December 1950, subscribing to Article 19 while an employment policy in direct contravention of the Article remained on the books. She concluded acidly that "a limited interpretation not subscribed to by the Union has been placed on Article 19" and asked the Board to reconsider the matter.[82] Despite the accuracy of Spaulding's argument, the chair thanked the deputation and the Board simply ignored its request. A motion from Ryerson to have the Union's brief referred to the Finance Committee for consideration was lost.[83]

Cold War fervour and conflict on the Board virtually disappeared in 1951. It appeared the Board simply tired of the conflict as the minutes reveal no new anti-Communist resolutions or the kind of heated debates of the previous three years. In addition, the defeat of Sam Walsh removed one of the Board's more ardent Cold War combatants. Even at the height of the disputes between the Communist and anti-Communist Trustees, demands were continuously heard for an end to the constant bickering. As for two of the Board's other Cold War foes, Menzies ran for alderman in 1951, lost, returned to the Board in 1954, and was elected alderman in his second attempt in 1955. Ryerson continued as a Trustee until her defeat in the election of 1956. The Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and the outrage it evoked in the west was partly responsible for Ryerson's defeat but demographic changes in Wards Four and Five were far more significant.[84] Jewish voters in those wards were migrating to northern parts of the city — voters who were attracted to Salsberg's progressive rhetoric, and who remembered the heroic effort of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany — undermining the electoral base of Ryerson and other Communists such as A.A. MacLeod and Salsberg, who lost their seats in the 1951 and 1955 provincial elections. In addition, an influx of Ukrainians, Hungarians, and other eastern European immigrants into the area

[82]TDSB, Board Minutes, 5 April 1951, 61-2; Article 19, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Osmañczyk, Edmund Jan, *The Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Relations 2nd ed.* (New York 1990), 402.

[83]TDSB, Board Minutes, 5 April 1951, 64. "Ban On Reds As Teachers Must Stand, Trustees Rule," *Toronto Star*, 6 April 1951. Curiously, the seconder of Ryerson's failed motion was Harold Menzies, possibly suggesting that Menzies enjoyed the prospect of another battle with Ryerson.

[84]"Massacre in Budapest," *Globe and Mail*, 26 October 1956; "Hungary Crushed," *Globe and Mail*, 5 November 1956.

during the early Cold War years brought new voters who held no illusions about life under Soviet rule and were decidedly anti-Communist.[85]

Conclusion

The Toronto Board of Education passed a number of uncompromising anti-Communist policies. In particular, the ban on meeting space and employment for Communists impinged upon the civil liberties of those Canadians whose views, albeit objectionable to the majority, were entitled to protection under the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Canada was a signatory. The early Cold War years at the Board witnessed the paradox of some elected Board members attempting to stifle and ban the subversive opinions held by other elected Board members. It appears the voters who elected "subversives" such as Ryerson and Walsh to what was supposed to be a democratically accountable mechanism to run the schools, carried no weight at all with the anti-Communists. Some Trustees and Board officials such as Herbert Orliffe, Mary Temple, A.J. Skeans (although Skeans voted with the majority on banning Communist meetings on school property), and Director of Education Dr. C.C. Goldring, questioned the extent to which their colleagues were prepared to go to keep Communism out of the schools, but they were in the minority. Ironically, the Board passed its anti-Communist policies at a time when Communist electoral strength was clearly on the decline and would continue to decline never to rebound to the levels of 1943-45 when the Soviet Union was a wartime ally and the Communist Party of Canada managed to elect a few candidates at the municipal and provincial levels, as well as Fred Rose, the party's only Member of Parliament.[86] Nevertheless, Canadians felt threatened by the growing power and military might of the Soviet Union and, as public opinion polls revealed, it was considered acceptable to deny the same civil liberties to Communists that other Canadians enjoyed. Despite the fact that Communists were relegated to the fringe on the Board and elsewhere, the Toronto Board of Education clearly saw Communism as a threat to the school system and was determined to counter it through policies aimed at upholding a Cold War anti-Communist consensus for future generations.

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[85]Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1975), 198-201; Oliver, *Unlikely Tory*, 42-44, 60-62.
[86]Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 12. Rose's seat (Montreal-Cartier) was declared vacant after he was convicted in 1946 of violating the Official Secrets Act during the Gouzenko affair.