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The English-Language CEGEP in Quebec

One fundamental component of Quebec's Quiet Revolution of the early 1960's was a program of educational reform. Although this cut across all aspects of the Quebec educational spectrum, from Catholic to Protestant, from English-language to French-language, from kindergarten to university, it was essentially concerned with the French-language institutions. At the post-secondary level it was obvious that Francophones were operating under a severe educational handicap compared with Anglophones. For example, the Parent Report¹ pointed out that there was an equal number of university places available to both English-speaking and French-speaking students, in spite of the fact that the French language population in Quebec was about four times greater than the English-speaking population. It was also apparent to some that, if the French language were to survive and the French-speaking population of Quebec were to take its rightful place in the modern technological society of the twentieth century, educational reform was urgently needed. On the other hand, there was on the French side a multiplicity of post-secondary institutions other than the universities offering a variety of courses and training, some terminal and a few leading to the university, all completely separate from the pattern on the English side. There were 110 classical colleges, 114 teacher training institutions and eleven institutes of technology.² For some, the entry point was as early as Grade 8,³ but graduation from one of these institutions did not necessarily guarantee acceptance into a university.

On the English side, the system was less complex. After only eleven years of schooling, students could transfer directly to the university where, after a further four years of study, they would earn their first degrees; or, less commonly, they could stay in high school through Grade 12 and then take a three year degree. On the French side, the process took much longer

and was regarded by many as unfair. It was difficult, almost impossible, to transfer from one system to the other. The educational system did nothing to bring the French and English "two solitudes" together.

Another factor — not particularly unique to Quebec — which gave concern was the general lack of prestige attached to technical and vocational education. Technical and vocational education was limited to specialized institutions, somewhat poorly equipped, which, in the public mind, represented a second-best form of education for those unable to succeed in academic programs.⁴ On the French side, at least, the pressure of public opinion ranked the humanities as first, the sciences as a poor second, and technical and commercial education as absolutely last resorts. On the English side, the only technical facilities available were those used by a group of some 400 students at the Montreal Institute of Technology. Obviously, English Quebecers could no longer expect their sons and daughters to pursue only an academic training leading to the professions or prestigious managerial positions. In the English community, as much as if not more than in the French, there was an urgent need for introducing some form of technical and vocational education.

The stage was thus set for a major program of reform which, in general terms, would have the following objectives:

- 1) To redress the balance so that more of the French community could have access to higher education;
- 2) To provide technical and vocational facilities for both the French and the English communities in Quebec;
- 3) To place the English and French education systems on a comparative and equal rather than a separate basis;
- 4) To regularize the two systems so that they were more in line with what was going on, not only in the rest of the continent, but in the rest of the world;
- 5) To attempt to delay specialized education until as late as possible in the student's career and at the same time to try to integrate both specialized and general education in order, as the Parent Report puts it, "to find unity in a new kind of humanism."⁵

from institutes to CEGEPs

Volume Two of the report of the Royal Commission of Enquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec (the Parent Report),

published in 1964, recommended the establishment of a new level of education. This involved tuition-free institutions, open to all who had successfully completed Grade 11 and designed to offer both general and specialized education. These institutions were to be unique in that they were to be a definite step in the educational ladder — not a duplication of, nor a parallel to, any already existing institution. It was suggested that they offer two types of programs: one, to be known as the general or pre-university program, was to take two years and was required of all students intending to go on to university; the second was to be a technical-vocational program which was terminal and could be either two or three years in length. It was also suggested that all students, whether in the pre-university or technical streams, were to take part in a common core program which was to include required courses in English or French language and literature, and in philosophy or the humanities. All students were to pursue at least six courses per term giving a total of twenty-four courses in the general program and twenty-four or thirty-six courses in the technical-vocational program.⁶

In order to emphasize the novelty of this post-secondary/pre-university stage, the Parent Commission suggested a new name, *Institute*, be used. But in 1965 the name was changed to *Collège d'Enseignement Général et Professionnel*, the acronym of which gives us *CEGEP*. There was a short-lived proposal that the CEGEPs on the English side should be known by a completely different name and the word *GATE* (short for General and Technical Education) was suggested. Fortunately, this proposal did not gain general acceptance and the French terminology, *CEGEP*, has been retained on the English side too. (In the May 1970 issue of *MacLean's* magazine, the term "Cegepians" was being used to denote graduates from these institutions.)

Although the CEGEP shares certain characteristics of the North American junior college and community college, it differs in that it is *not* a two year program running parallel with the first two years of regular universities or the liberal arts colleges. Moreover, the CEGEP provides twelfth and thirteenth year instruction, not the thirteenth and fourteenth as does the junior college. The CEGEP also resembles the sixth form in England in that it constitutes a preparatory stage for higher education. It differs from the English sixth form in that it is designed to be physically separated from the composite high school and to include a far wider range of

courses, both academic and technical, than the sixth forms can provide. Furthermore, the CEGEP's physical separateness permits the development of an atmosphere that is more akin to that of a college than a continuation of the high school regime.

The Parent Commission proposals were promptly accepted by the Government of the day and, with certain provisos, were warmly welcomed by both the French- and the English-speaking communities at large, including the Universities.⁸

Then the problem arose of implementing the proposals. On the French side there were certain advantages, since there already existed a network of post-secondary institutions, normal schools, classical colleges, etc., some of which had already begun to combine in order to offer certain courses and specializations. Also, the faculties of these classical colleges and normal schools already existed. On the other hand, these institutions had primarily been concerned with either teacher training or with providing a classical education emphasizing philosophy and the humanities, and very few of them were well geared to operate courses in the sciences and technologies. On the English side, there existed virtually nothing at this level. There were no physical plants whatsoever, and the faculty who normally taught this age group were already employed at the universities or high schools. It can thus be seen that it was far easier to establish CEGEPs on the French side than it was on the English side and, in September 1967, the first twelve French-speaking CEGEPs opened their doors.

In some cases, an already existing institution was simply renamed a CEGEP, as for example the CEGEP Maisonneuve which was formed from a single classical college. In other instances, the process was far more complicated involving amalgamation of already existing institutions. The CEGEP de Trois-Rivières involved the fusion of nine different institutions. However, the creation of French-language CEGEPs was not altogether a simple matter. There were legal complications involving the ownership of land and buildings, and there were problems of administering one CEGEP in several distant and separate buildings. There was the added difficulty of established faculty members attempting to cope with new and radically different curricula.

Meanwhile, the English-language educational system functioned as before, but in 1968 the Department of Education at Quebec sought an agreement from all the universities in the Province, both English and French, that, beginning in September 1969, graduates of the secondary schools of the Prov-

ince could only obtain their first university degree after two years of college level (or CEGEP) and a minimum of three years of university level studies. But how could the English-speaking universities agree to this proposal when there were no English-language CEGEPs from which to draw their student body? For the English universities to have then accepted the agreement which the Government sought would mean that the English-speaking universities would rapidly be out of business and there were some who saw sinister implications in all of this. There were others who felt that all that needed to be done was to strengthen the high school Grade 12 program and then to continue the usual four year university pattern; and there are still some very influential advocates of this position. Others, however, saw some advantages in the new arrangements; facilities would exist for the training of technical personnel — a need which had hitherto been lacking on the English side; a grouping together of the technically-orientated and university-orientated would help remove the social stigma which regrettably was still attached to technical education; the plan would reduce the number of students who were perhaps ill-suited to university studies but felt that there was nowhere else to go; and it would also delay for a year or two the vital decision in the choice of career. After many lengthy committee meetings, correspondence between the universities and the Department in Quebec, much soul-searching and uncertainty, the proposal was put forward by James Whitelaw that, for a transitional period at least, the universities themselves should consider offering two years of college-equivalent (CEGEP) courses pending the construction of genuine, distinct, English-language CEGEPs. Eventually, the essential elements of the “Whitelaw Proposal,” as it became known, were accepted by the English-speaking universities.

the college-equivalent program

The ramifications were tremendous. First of all, the college-equivalent program at the universities would in no way parallel the courses offered at CEGEPs for they would be restricted to essentially academic subjects only for pre-university students and would have no vocational or technological content. Secondly, the courses at the universities would be derived mainly from those first and second year courses already on the books

of the universities, and would certainly not include the many interesting new courses proposed for the CEGEPs. Thirdly, the universities operate a twenty-six week year with students taking approximately five full courses in the year, whereas the CEGEPs were set up to operate on a thirty-six week year with students taking a total of twelve half-courses in each academic year. Fourthly, the universities are fee-paying institutions whereas the CEGEPs were to be tuition free. Fifthly, there was the problem of what to do with students in the third year. Some would have been in a college-equivalent program at the university for two years already and would be able easily to fit into the present third year university patterns. Students coming from distinct CEGEPs, however, would have followed a completely different program and one group or the other would be at a serious disadvantage — either some students would have to mark time while others caught up or there would have to be two completely different programs available in each subject in the third year. (One outcome of this state of affairs is that, because the students will no longer be a homogeneous group, McGill is seriously considering adopting a credit system instead of promotion by year.) Sixthly, if collegial level studies were to begin at the universities in 1969, there would be an intolerable strain on space and staff by 1973. There would then be five generations of students on the campus at the same time — that is, two generations at collegial level and three generations in the university degree program proper. Seventhly, there might be some subject areas, for example in the languages, where the subject was not offered at CEGEP level and therefore if students were to be allowed the opportunity to study these subjects, then this would have to take place in the third year. Thus, the consequences of the Whitelaw Proposal were many and complicated. And for a number of the problems raised, solutions have yet to be found.

dawson college

In September 1969 the first English-language CEGEP, Dawson College, was officially opened. Because this one college could not take all the qualified English-speaking students, the English universities in the province also accepted the first generation of their college-equivalent students. Dawson College is located in metropolitan Montreal (actually in the city of

Westmount) in facilities previously occupied by the Frosst Pharmaceutical Company. The building was not exactly ideal for educational purposes, and extensive renovations had to take place. The college admitted some 1900 students into the first year and fully occupied all the space available.

The actual process of establishing CEGEPs in Quebec is somewhat unique. Since the Government has no direct power to form these colleges, it is the responsibility of a local community to present a brief to the Minister of Education requesting the establishment of a CEGEP corporation. The local committee with representatives from the educational, business and social organizations in the area submits a request outlining, among other things, projected student population, a proposed curriculum with special references to the technologies, surveys of the physical facilities available in the community, plans for possible new buildings, and a list of names from the community from which the Minister will choose the first five members of the corporation. These foundation members are responsible for appointing the first administrative officers of the CEGEP. To this corporation may then be added four members of the faculty elected by them, four members elected from among the parent body, and two elected students. This body is in effect the board of governors of the college and it will be seen that only one-third of this body is appointed by the Minister and only then after the names have been nominated from the local community. The other two-thirds of the board of governors are elected representatives of the college community, i.e. faculty, parents and students.

This particular aspect of participatory democracy is further developed at Dawson where students have parity on virtually all committees including the departments, where they share in the responsibilities for hiring, firing, and promoting staff. The intent at Dawson has been to encourage the participation of students at all levels of the decision-making process and thus the first Dawson College Calendar states that the description of courses will be subject to frequent changes and notes, "Such changes will not necessarily be the result of inadequate preparation, but rather dictated by the philosophy of Dawson College namely viability and relevance of curricula."

As Paul Gallagher, the first Director-General of Dawson, put it, "There will be no regulation without representation."

All students, be they pre-university or technical, take part in the core program. This means that each student must take

one course per term in English-language and literature and also one course in humanities. In the humanities, students may choose from a variety of courses: "Man in Contemporary Society," "What All Men Share," "Politics — Persons, Power and Priorities," "The Challenge of Modernity — A Comparative Approach," "Understanding Ourselves," "In Search of Man," "Introduction to Human Concern," "Man — Ideas and Relevance," "The Electronic Revolution — The Impact of Technology on Individual Lives," "Man the Rebel — A Case Study of Revolutions," "Exploring Awareness," "History of Ideas." In addition, there are a number of experimental programs which are multi-disciplinary and multi-credit. One entitled *Canadian Studies* includes a package deal of courses in the humanities: "The Contemporary Canadian," "A People in Search of an Identity," "Modern Canadian Prose and Canadian Poetry," "The History of Canada," and a social science course entitled "Canadian Foreign Policy." Other experimental programs are in *Russian Studies, Conflict, Change and Order, Mosaics, Knowing, Reflections* and *Untitled*, the last four of which have no real course outlines as the programs evolve from the interests of the students and staff involved. All courses at Dawson are conducted with small groups less than thirty-five in number. It has been suggested that students brought up on a diet of this heady fare may not settle easily into crowded and traditional classrooms in the university proper.

On the technical side, the three year professional programs¹⁰ include:

Health and Science Technologies (Medical Laboratory Technology, Radiography, Nursing); *Engineering Technologies* (Chemical, Construction, Mechanical, Mechanical Drafting and Electrical); *Social Service Technologies* (Social Work, Community Leadership); *Business Administration* (Data Processing and Business Administration); *Applied Art Technologies* (Commercial Art, Interior Design).

Other than the core program already outlined, students are free to choose their patterns of study from any of the courses offered and may if they wish switch from one program to another. It is hoped that, in their first year, students will be ready to explore fully any of the options available in the hope that they will have some better awareness, not only of the subjects available later on at the universities, but of their ultimate career objectives.

Dawson College was not only the first English-language

CEGEP but the first in the Province to be started really from scratch. This had two important advantages. First, the college was able to recruit a completely new staff. It was able to attract approximately one-third of the faculty from the ranks of universities, approximately one-third came from high schools and one-third from elsewhere. All these people appeared to share a common characteristic — a commitment to the type of education which the CEGEPs were planning to provide. Thus, this CEGEP, beginning with a new faculty, has been better able than the French counterparts to put into effect the spirit and purposes of the CEGEP as outlined in the Parent Report. French CEGEPs are taking a particular interest in the way things are developing at Dawson, and in some regards are looking to it for new ideas and initiatives.

Meanwhile, the students not able to gain acceptance into tuition-free Dawson were accepted into the fee-paying universities as the first generation of college-equivalent students. For the most part there was no attempt to provide any new courses at the universities for them. Sir George Williams has experimented with an inter-disciplinary and multi-credit program called "Exploration"¹¹ but the closest thing McGill achieved to this type of multi-disciplinary program was a course involving the departments of Geology and Geography entitled "Earth Science."

Dawson is the first of a projected series of English-language CEGEPs in the Province. The second, Vanier College, is located at Basile Moreau in the City of St. Laurent and was opened in September 1970. A third, known as John Abbott College, is to be located in the Lakeshore area and is expected to open in September 1971. All of these are on Montreal Island — but further CEGEPs on the North and South shores are anticipated. The English-speaking populations in Hull, Quebec City and the Gaspé are probably not big enough to justify separate CEGEPs, so one may expect to see English-language sections there attached to predominately French-speaking CEGEPs.

impact on the universities

What are the implications for the Universities?

All university first degree programs will have to be changed to meet the new set of circumstances. Since first degree pro-

grams have now in effect been lengthened by one year*, it is reasonable to suggest that the general standard of first degree programs will therefore go up. But it is too early to evaluate the work accomplished in the two years at CEGEP. All university Faculties are now planning new three-year degree programs to follow the two-year CEGEP operations. Thus, one of the beneficial side-effects of the introduction of CEGEP has been that the universities have been forced to re-examine their own programs.

In some Faculties, especially the professional ones, some severe problems have been created. In Law, Medicine, Dentistry for example, it has been the normal thing at McGill for students to have a general bachelors degree prior to entry. If these Faculties keep this requirement, it will mean that students will only be able to embark on specialized professional studies five years after Grade 11 instead of four. The French universities now accept CEGEP graduates directly into their professional Faculties and the English-language universities are being encouraged to do likewise. This may have the result of lowering the standard of the final product and may make it difficult for graduates to transfer easily into other graduate schools. For the Education Faculty, the revised pattern of schooling means that students will enter with two more years of study. They should be more mature and they may be more committed to teaching as a profession. On the other hand, we are having to develop a new three-year Bachelor of Education program plus a new one-year post-CEGEP program for elementary teachers to replace the two-year post-high school program which is being phased out. This reform has resulted in a closer scrutiny of existing practices. Many structures and procedures, which have been hitherto traditionally accepted because nobody questioned them seriously, have been subjected to a re-examination which cannot fail to help the cause of education in the Province of Quebec.

On the other hand, these reforms may have the effect of changing the cosmopolitan nature of the English-speaking universities, particularly McGill and Sir George Williams. For example, students from Grade 12 from the other provinces or from the United States will now no longer be accepted into the university program proper in Quebec. Another year of

*The new pattern of schooling leading to a bachelors degree is now 11 + 2 + 3 instead of 11 + 4 or 12 + 3 as formerly.

study will be required of them either at second year CEGEP level or at some other place. One wonders how many overseas students, many of whom were formerly accepted into the freshman year, will now be willing to attend CEGEP or some equivalent institutions before embarking on degree studies. McGill, for instance, where approximately twenty-five per cent of the student body has traditionally been drawn from overseas sources, is understandably reluctant to become purely a provincial university rather than an international one. In another respect, however, the reforms have put the Quebec universities on an equal footing with those in the other provinces and the United States where the first degree is earned at the end of the sixteenth year. In the Province of Quebec itself, transfer is now possible between the English and French universities and one would hope that more students will avail themselves of this opportunity.

Finally, on a more personal note, I wonder if the English-language universities have given any serious consideration to the problem of finding suitable programs and course options for this new generation of "Cegepians." Perhaps students reared on a diet of small classes and "relevant" courses will find it difficult to adjust to the mass presentation lecture method and the somewhat dehumanized computer-like approach of the larger universities. It may be that the Quiet Revolution of the sixties will turn into a not-so-quiet revolution in the seventies.

references

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4. *Ibid.*
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Ben Wicks

ON EDUCATION



'Can Sally help me with my sex project?'



'Carry your bricks home, Ann?'