

## Requiem for the Protestant Central Board of Examiners

It was in November 1886 that the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction for Quebec recommended the appointment of a Central Board of Examiners, "composed of men of the requisite knowledge and skill for conducting the examinations," to replace the local Boards which, at that time, were charged with the certification to teachers. Seventeen such local Boards were in operation, some Catholic, some Protestant and some mixed; in the last case, members of each faith certificated candidates for the schools of that faith. Certification was granted on the basis of character references and examinations conducted by the members of the Board.

As an example, the Protestant Board of Examiners of Montreal, consisting of four ministers of the gospel, a layman and a Secretary, met four times a year to examine candidates. In 1872, to take a typical year, the numbers of candidates presenting themselves for examination were four, eighteen, fourteen and nine; the numbers certificated were four, fifteen, eleven and eight, approximately an 83 per cent pass rate. Examinations were both oral and written, and might be taken in English or French. Indeed, a candidate might present himself for certification in both languages, and receive two diplomas, so that in August 1874, 21 candidates received 24 diplomas among them. Though examinations were primarily on subject matter, a paper on the Art of Teaching was included.

Diplomas were basically at three levels, *Academy*, *Model* and *Elementary*, though there were subdivisions into first and second class. There was also a third-class Elementary certificate valid for one year only. Even for this level, the candidates had to pass written examinations in English Grammar, French Grammar, Geography, Sacred History, History of Canada, and the Art of Teaching, and "the candidates shall, moreover, solve a problem in Fractions and another in the rule of Simple In-

terest." The candidate for the *Academy Diploma* faced a more exacting schedule, which included Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Natural History, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Astronomy, Universal History, History of France, History of England, Moral and Mental Philosophy, and translation from Greek and Latin. One understands the need for examiners "of the requisite knowledge and skill for conducting the examinations."

In 1888, with Protestant candidates being certificated by eleven different local Boards — Bedford, Bonaventure (at New Carlisle), Montreal, Ottawa (at Aylmer), Pontiac (at Portage du Fort), Quebec, Richmond, Sherbrooke, Stanstead and Three Rivers — the Protestant Committee officially recommended to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a Central Board be constituted. Three months later, they were asked by the Provincial Secretary to recommend members, and submitted a list of five names, Dean Norman of Quebec, Rev. Dr. Cornish of Montreal, Dr. Kelley of the Montreal High School, A. LeRay of Bishop's College, Lennoxville, (known to his students as "Buzzy") and H. A. Walters of Morrin College, Quebec, with Rev. Elton Rexford as Secretary. After further correspondence, the names of T. A. Young and Madame Cornu were substituted for those of LeRay and Walters.

Thus constituted, the Board held its first meeting at McGill Normal School on 23 May, 1889. Dean Norman was elected President and Dr. Cornish Vice-President. The subjects of examination were allotted to members of the Board, and included a paper on "School Law and Regulations." In October the Secretary presented his report on the first examination held under the authority of the Central Board at twelve local centres (Huntingdon, Inverness and Sweetsburg appear on the list). One hundred and seventy-six diplomas were granted, though in forty-three cases only after supplemental examinations. A profit balance of \$12.27 remained from the candidates' fees after all expenses had been paid.

In the next year, Dr. Cornish resigned and was replaced by Miss Green. A Board of three men and two women was not entirely out of proportion at a time when the ratio of women to men among candidates was approximately six to one. By 1893, however, the Board had become an all male body, and was to continue so until 1940. It was in 1893, too, that Dr. G. W. Parmelee was appointed Secretary. Formerly Headmaster of the McGill Model School, he had been promoted in 1888

to the post of Ordinary Professor of the McGill Normal School, at a salary of \$1,500 per annum.

In 1896, the Board decided that the time had come when certification by examination was no longer enough. It agreed that thereafter *Academy Diplomas* should be granted only after professional training and to none but University graduates, that *Model School Diplomas* should be awarded only after at least one year's training at the Normal School, and that *Elementary Diplomas* should require a five months' course of training in the Normal School after successful passing of the Central Board's examination.

Having achieved this great leap forward, the members of the Board were content in the next year to place their resignations in the hands of the Protestant Committee. By an order-in-council dated 24 March, 1898, a new and larger Board was appointed; its nine members included the Principals of Bishop's and McGill Universities. Under new Regulations of the Protestant Committee, approved by order-in-council on the same date, the Board was assigned sole power to grant diplomas valid for Protestant Schools and to admit students to the McGill Normal School. Diplomas were to be of four grades, *Elementary*, *Model School*, *Kindergarten* and *Academy*. Examinations for the first three of these were to be the sessional examinations of the Normal School, but the Board had the right to set one half of each paper.

The new Board held its first meeting on 2 April, 1898, and, after opening with prayer, a good custom since forgotten, proceeded to elect Dean Norman as its President. He held office only for a year, being then succeeded by the Rev. W. J. Shaw. Under its new president, the Board prepared for the arrival of the twentieth century by admitting six candidates to the Kindergarten course, ninety-one to the Elementary and fifty-nine (including two men) to the Model, and granting Academy Diplomas to five male graduates of Bishop's University "who have followed a course in pedagogy." (The University calendar preferred to call it "a course of lectures in the Art of Teaching," and it involved "opportunities for supervised teaching in the academies of Sherbrooke and Lennoxville." Titles of fifty-two lectures are listed. They include: "The teacher as a member of a profession," "Discipline as a source of satisfaction to pupils," and "Purity and Self Control." The last lecture listed was "Good Manners," though it is

not quite clear whether it was the teacher's manners or those of his pupils which were discussed.)

## items of interest

To record the history of the Board in detail would require not a mere article in this *Journal*, but a research thesis, and such a thesis is now being prepared by a graduate student at Bishop's University. Here let it suffice to touch upon just a few items of some interest, in random topological, rather than chronological, arrangement.

A complete list of the members of the Board would contain the names of six ladies and forty-seven men, of whom one never attended a meeting. Indeed, attendance was apt to be scant in the early years, only two members being recorded as present on 19 December, 1919. Members have served, it may be added, without emolument, save for a few years in the early sixties, when the government was liberal with the taxpayers' money. The Board has enjoyed the services of eight different Secretaries. The longest period of membership was the forty-eight years of Dr. Parmelee (if five years as Secretary are included), followed by the forty-six years of Dr. Rexford (of which four were as Secretary), and the forty-three years of Dean Laird. A long term of office is valuable to a Board which has to act on precedents as well as Regulations.

The number of candidates dealt with by the Board has grown steadily. The 133 Diplomas granted to candidates without benefit of supplementals in 1889 had risen to 273 by 1927, and to 614 by 1970, when, of the 724 candidates admitted to various courses, forty-eight could still qualify by supplementals. These figures are exclusive of extra-provincial candidates, whose number had risen, in 1969, to 301 receiving Quebec certification. Even so, as recently as 1959, it was reported to the Board that 274 "teachers" in Protestant schools had received no teacher training.

Such sets of figures make dull reading, and are not particularly representative of the work of a Board which has always been concerned with individual teachers. A standing committee, frequently calling in non-members for their advice and assistance, has dealt with countless cases of extra-provincial or Quebec teachers whose status for certification has been in some way irregular and therefore could not be dealt with auto-

matically by the Secretary according to Regulations. Perhaps the classic instance of such individual attention is that of an applicant whose case first came before the Board in 1928, and was closed with a final refusal in 1947. Yet, even so, he was allowed to appear before the Board in person in 1950 and granted permission to make application for admission to teacher-training.

The conduct of applicants for certification has continued to be of concern to the Board. In 1940, for instance, a report on the "very unladylike conduct and behaviour at one of the College social functions" of a candidate for a specialist's certificate in Household Science was reported to, and investigated by, the Board, which withheld certification. In 1949, a report was made on the conduct of a student at Macdonald Summer School and, as a result, "the Director of Protestant Education was asked to send her a letter disapproving of her conduct." It is understandable that candidates for admission to teacher-training have been required to submit character references and have, on occasion, been refused admission because they were not satisfactory.

The Board had been set up as a Protestant Board, operating under Regulations established by the Protestant Committee, and not until 1968, after the final abolition of the Protestant Committee, did the Board approve an alteration of wording of this certificate of moral character which removed the obligation of testimony to "a church affiliation." In the previous year, it had been reminded that "the Ministry of Education still considers the certification of teachers to be on a confessional basis," and that the certification of Protestant and Jewish teachers was its particular responsibility. This condition undoubtedly worked hardship in individual cases, as in that of the daughter of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, herself not a member of any particular congregation, who was refused admission in 1943. Scruples of conscience were not respected in 1950, when the Board ruled that members of the Christian Science faith could not be exempted from the medical examination for admission. (It may be observed that, in our schools, the Christian Science parent can have his child excused from religious instruction, but not from a course in Health, which is likely to be far more offensive to his convictions.)

Something must be said of another disadvantaged minority, the French Protestants. As has already been mentioned certification was originally granted in both languages, but this

practice apparently lapsed until, in 1922, a candidate was recommended for a diploma "valid in French Protestant schools only." Another such diploma was granted in 1925, when it was agreed that candidates "of French origin, whose command of the English language is insufficient to be used as the medium of instruction in English schools" should be granted diplomas "not valid in English-speaking schools." Not until 1961 was a committee set up "to investigate certification for teachers in French Protestant schools"; in the next year it recommended certificates "valid in classes for French-speaking pupils only." In 1963 it was found impossible to set up a French-language section in what had by then become the Institute of Education of McGill University, but its Director reported that he had arranged that French Protestant students could carry on their practice-teaching in French-language schools and write all their examinations in French.

Specialist certificates in subjects other than French date from 1903, when the Protestant Committee's new Regulation 18 allowed them to be granted for the teaching of modern languages, drawing, manual work, cooking and calisthenics. The last two had dignified themselves as domestic science and physical training by 1921, in which year one specialist certificate in chemistry was also granted. Specialists in commercial subjects, apparently extra-provincials, appeared in 1932, and in industrial arts in 1943. The early sixties brought a rash of specialist certificates, generally to be acquired through summer school attendance, the most recent, in 1968, for religious and moral instruction, obtainable, appropriately, at Bishop's University.

## **toward the final minutes**

The careful reader will by now have noticed that the words "certificate" and "diploma" seem to have been used without distinction. The Minutes of the Board would be easier to follow had "certificate" been restricted to the original interim document, for interim it has been since 1929, issued on the completion of training, and "diploma" to the permanent one issued after attestation of satisfactory teaching by inspectors, normally after two years of service. The language of the Minutes, however, is inconsistent. Occasionally this language is also refreshingly frank, as in the case of the students asked

to withdraw from the Intermediate class in 1932 "because it was considered that they did not have the slightest chance of obtaining a diploma of any kind." Frankness, indeed, may be reckoned a fine tradition: there can be few official Boards whose Secretary would record in his report, as Dr. Rexford did in 1890, "The papers prepared by Mr. Young and myself have been severely criticized as too difficult, and unfortunately the results of the examinations seem to justify these criticisms." Our predecessors could display a humility which sometimes appears sadly lacking among educators and bureaucrats today.

Minutes do not reveal everything. Why, for instance, was the June meeting of 1938 held at the New Sherbrooke House, Sherbrooke? For at least the last quarter-century, June (or late May) meetings have been held at Macdonald College, and a lavish lunch provided by the kindly authorities there. Indeed, there were occasions when whiskey preceded and cigars followed the lunch, though this generosity is not revealed in the Minutes.

Conviviality aside, the Board has had its sterner moments. It has, at various periods in its history, not hesitated to record its criticisms of each of the three English-speaking Universities of the province, of the Montreal Protestant Central School Board, and even of the Minister of Education. It has evidently had its internal conflicts, too, as on the occasion when a member "raised a question of personal privilege which when stated was ruled out of order by the Chairman." It was a different Chairman who, on his retirement, expressed his pleasure and gratification that, during his Chairmanship, "no seriously acrimonious or distressing situation had occurred to mar the relationship between himself and the Board, or among its members."

The most distressing situation of all was yet to come. On 6 March, 1970, "the Secretary announced that, according to information received, the Protestant Central Board of Examiners would cease to exist at the end of this school year, and that the meeting of May, 1970, would be the last." The final minute of this May meeting reads, "The Secretary undertook to inform the members should an order-in-council be passed abolishing the Board." On 23 September, the Secretary did so.