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Quebec Education: The Unfinished Revolution

Profound changes have taken place in the Province of Quebec since 1960. The period is described as the Quiet Revolution and like all genuine revolutions change penetrated deeply into every aspect of the society — the identity, the culture, the institutions, and the people. The French-speaking Quebecer was once defined by his attachment to tradition, his allegiance to the Church, his elitist view of society, his distrust of change, and his detachment from the economic life of the continent. But a new definition has been emerging over the last decade: concern for the present, adherence to a secular and political ethic, an egalitarian view of society, a commitment to change, an engagement in the technology and economics of the post-industrial state.

As the identity of the French Quebecer alters, the traditional assumptions on which the English Quebecer has operated no longer hold. His economic and social cocoon has been broken open and he finds himself a member of a minority group, a stranger in a strange land. His identity is transformed and in an ironic way he exchanges places with the French: it is now the English Quebecer who worries about the survival of his culture and language, who seeks his security in tradition, who stands on his constitutional rights.

As identities change, so do cultures and institutions. Churches and convents, once the citadels of power, become shrines of a history turned aside; the theology and history of the classical college become the sociology and *informatique* of the Cegeps; the triumvirate of doctor-lawyer-priest becomes that of bureaucrat-accountant-*animateur*; the revenge of the cradle becomes the miracle of the pill. Parallel to these changes

have been shifts in the perceptions of individual people: teachers and students, politicians and bureaucrats, businessmen and engineers, old and young. In one way the Quiet Revolution was the breakdown of that particular consensus known as French Canada and the creation of diversity in life-style among Quebecers. In another way a consensus remained: a desire spiritually to be apart from, but economically a part of, the North American context.

origins and contradictions

Revolutions do not begin on a certain day or in a certain place. The Quiet Revolution did not begin on September 7, 1959, when Maurice Duplessis, the last of the *Seigneurs*, died; nor did it begin on June 22, 1960, when Jean Lesage, somewhat to his surprise, was elected to power. It began in many places and at many times: in strikes in Asbestos in 1949, and in Murdochville in 1957; in the federal-provincial contest of wills during the fifties over university grants; on the pages of *Le Devoir* and *Cité Libre*; in the dynamics of a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems in the mid-fifties; in the Faculty of Social Science at Laval University. And it came to a head in *Les Insolences* of a Marist teaching brother.¹ With the death of Duplessis a bottle was drained and with the Liberal victory a new bottle was opened, but the fermentation had been taking place for some time and the brew was to prove potent.

Revolutions thrive on contradictions and the Quiet Revolution is filled with its contradictions. The French are a majority in Quebec and a minority in North America; the English are a minority in Quebec and a majority outside. The French have political power in the Province; the English have economic power. Cultural and explicit ties are strengthened with France; economic and implicit ties bind Quebec more closely with Ottawa and New York. A language and culture must be preserved; the birth rate is declining, urbanization increasing, social and geographic mobility becoming typical, and immigrants to Quebec are being assimilated into the English culture. An organic culture and value structure are being replaced by a machine model of North American economic and social development; elsewhere this model is being challenged by the effects of new media, by counter-cultures, and by new forms of consciousness. Yet in the ongoing Quiet Revolution the im-

prints of the past remain with the patterns of the present, and in Quebec these contradictions may yet find resolution.

the revolution in education

There has been no mirror in which the shifting images of change have been more clearly seen than that provided by education. Educational reform was the major preoccupation of the sixties and the shifts in educational philosophy and practice were both the effect and the cause of shifts taking place in the society at large.²

At the most fundamental level, the educational changes of the sixties were philosophical in nature. As the point of reference for Quebec's identity changed from the past to the present and future, a new model of man and a new set of objectives were needed for education. It was the mandate of the Royal Commission on Education to formulate these objectives and to provide the blueprint for their realization and the "new humanism" which the Parent Commission proposed owed as much to Karl Marx as it did to Pope Pius XI. As the decade progressed, Quebec and its education went beyond even the model of the Parent Report and the conflicts over language, religion, political indoctrination, comprehensive education, and government control were indicators of the continued sorting and resorting of values.

More visible were the changes in structures and institutions: new kindergartens, "activist" elementary schools, "polyvalent" secondary schools, post-secondary Cegeps and l'Université du Québec. At another level of structural change, the power of the Church in education was redefined and reduced, the Ministry of Education was created, regional school boards were established, and the teaching profession was reshaped. Great efforts were made by those directing the reform to preserve balance in the tensions between equality of opportunity and individual initiative, between rationalized planning and widespread participation, between quality and quantity. More or less, the structure held together.

The changes in style were more subtle and more difficult to trace. Administrators, teachers, students, parents, school boards, and the government developed new inter-relationships as new clientele, new policies, and new perceptions of the function of education emerged. Attitudes toward discipline, curriculum, school organization, teaching methods, and moral development, were turned upside down and inside out.

Many conflicting statements can be made about Quebec education and they are all true in reference to some reality and some angle of vision. Power has been centralized; power has been decentralized. The reform was a success; the reform was a failure. The schools have lost their moral function; there is more moral formation going on in schools than there ever was. English education is in peril; French education is in peril. Education is more democratic; education is merely sorting out a new élite. Education is more humane, education is less humane. These contradictions suggest that in education as well as in Quebec as a whole, the Quiet Revolution is still in progress.³

the old regime

As the decade of the sixties began, Quebec had an educational system with unique characteristics; as a matter of fact, it was a system only in a loose sense of the word.⁴ Public education was divided into two parallel sectors, one Catholic and largely French and the other Protestant and largely English. This basic religious division was no longer as neat as it once had been as growing numbers of English Catholics, French non-Catholics, and Jews sought some form of accommodation. Within the Catholic sector, the English (originally the Irish, more recently the Italians and Polish) were able to develop their own semi-autonomous system of schools and administration, while in the Protestant sector accommodation was more informal. Catholic education was decidedly Catholic in both French and English schools; Protestant education, because of the heterogeneity of its clientele, was less clearly defined in religious terms.

At provincial and local levels, and in all matters related to finance, administration, curriculum, and examinations, each sector was autonomous and only incidentally related to the other. For each sector, power resided in a Committee, a Catholic Committee (composed of all the Catholic bishops of the Province and an equal number of laymen) and a Protestant Committee. Together the Committees formed a "Council of Education" and it is indicative of the degree of articulation between Catholic and Protestant sectors that this Council had not met as a body since 1908. The chief administrative officer at the provincial level was a Superintendent of Education, appointed at the pleasure of the government; he reported to

the Legislature through the office of the Provincial Secretary and he presided over a Department of Education with autonomous Catholic and Protestant sections which supervised the implementation of the Committees' regulations. At the local level there were over 1,700 Catholic and Protestant school boards. In addition to this public system, there was an extensive network of private schools, mainly convents and classical colleges operated by Church authorities. There was a third network of government-operated institutions which included normal schools, technical and trade schools, domestic science institutes and specialized schools under the authority of a dozen ministries.

There were clear differences between Catholic and Protestant education. In the French-Catholic sector, kindergartens were virtually non-existent. After a seven-year elementary school, a student could go to a public secondary school (in areas where these existed) to follow a scientific, general, or commercial program which was terminal for the vast majority of students, or, if he was fortunate, he could go to a private classical college. The normal route to the university was through the classical colleges; it was through these institutions that the French élite invariably passed on its way to the university and the professions — the clergy, law, and medicine. The colleges offered a four-year *cours secondaire* and a four-year *cours collégial* leading to the *baccalauréat* granted by one of the three French universities. Without doubt, these institutions were more in the European than in the North American tradition; although during the 1950's they were beginning to place more stress on mathematics and science, they were in essence institutions oriented to the study of theology, philosophy, classics, and letters. From elementary school through the B.A., authority was clearly defined, teaching was under the supervision of the clergy and religious orders, and religion, in the spirit of the papal teachings, permeated all phases of education.

In the English-Protestant sector, kindergartens were more readily available and the elementary schools were more open in regime and curriculum. Because of the concentration of the English population, its higher degree of affluence, and the importance it placed on education, public high schools were available to most students and the curriculum was oriented to university admission. While a French student would have to complete fifteen years of schooling before entering a Faculty

of Science, an English Protestant student who passed his matriculation examinations could enter a Faculty of Science after grade eleven. English-Catholic schools were within the administrative structure of the Catholic sector and had the religious characteristics of the French schools but their high school curriculum and examinations gave them passage to the English universities.

time for a change

During the fifties, there was certainly criticism in the Province about examinations, centralized control, the suitability of curriculum, and the qualifications of teachers, but the underlying assumptions appeared satisfactory to most people. The Catholic Church was in an ideal position to direct and coordinate its religious and educational mission. The French language and culture were preserved and perpetuated without interference or threat. The society's élite received a general education of high quality. Thanks to limited secondary school facilities and to the large number of teachers who lived by the vow of poverty, the Province's educational costs were modest. The English Protestants were given *carte blanche* to organize and operate their own education and to use their considerable resources as they saw fit. Quebec education, it was often said, was a model of freedom from political interference and of respect for the rights of parents and minorities.

There were, however, some reasons for disquiet. The French ruling class received an excellent preparation in the classical colleges but in a narrow band of the intellectual spectrum; highly qualified personnel in those areas which were to become priorities in the new Quebec — management, science, technology — were in short supply. Secondary education was less than universal; the 1961 census showed that in the Province of Quebec only fifty per cent of the 15-to-19 year old age group were in school (the lowest in Canada) and that twenty-five per cent of this age group had left school before completing the elementary level (the highest in Canada).⁵ Structures were complicated, paternalistic, and uncoordinated. Catholic and Protestant educators moved in their separate orbits, each group satisfied with its own superiority. Most important of all, educational decision-making was not in the hands of those who were about to take hold of social, political, and economic power.

the first steps

When Paul Gérin-Lajoie became Minister of Youth in 1960, he made three opening moves which were aimed at generating fundamental change in Quebec education without directly engaging the existing establishment. First, he shifted responsibility for the Department of Education from the office of the Provincial Secretary to his own Department and took over budget control of the Department. Since technical and vocational education already came under his jurisdiction, he now had financial control of the major part of Quebec education. He gathered about him a team of civil-servants-cum-technocrats who were to become the social engineers of the reform.⁶ Second, the government, in May 1961, appointed the members of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec. The chairman was Monsignor Alphonse-Marie Parent, philosophy professor and vice-rector of Laval University; the membership of the Commission was balanced, credible, and safe. It was, however, to prove itself to be a Royal Commission "pas comme les autres."

Gérin-Lajoie's third move was to establish a framework for the expansion of secondary education, the bottleneck of the system. He did this in two stages. In a hailstorm of legislation called the "Magna Carta of Education" the government (1) provided resources for improving the qualifications of secondary school teachers, (2) abolished tuition in all public schools, (3) increased the compulsory attendance age from fourteen to fifteen, and (4) simplified the procedures by which school boards could cooperate with one another to provide secondary education. The second stage, known as "Operation 55" was designed to group small local school boards into 55 Catholic and 9 Protestant regional school boards for purposes of secondary education. The local boards retained their identity for elementary education and though no compulsion was exercised, between 1961 and 1965, under the "guidance" of the Department, school boards did in fact form the planned boards with the planned boundaries in the planned way. The payoff was to come in the form of new "polyvalent" secondary schools and the rapid expansion of secondary school enrolment in the French sector.

On April 23, 1963, the Parent Commission produced the first volume of its five-volume Report. It contained a radical recommendation, the creation of a Ministry of Education for Quebec. There had once been a Minister of Education in

Quebec — from 1867 to 1876 — and from that time onward to mention a Minister of Education was to evoke images of government control, statism, and the destruction of the rights of parents and Church. In 1960, Jean Lesage himself had said: “Tant et aussi longtemps que je serai premier ministre, il n’y aura pas de ministère de l’éducation.”

Two months after the Report was made public, the Government introduced Bill 60. It provided for a Minister of Education, a Superior Council of Education to advise the Minister, and new Catholic and Protestant Committees with powers to regulate only in moral and religious matters. After two weeks, Bill 60 was withdrawn and the Premier invited those interested to make recommendations on the subject. In general, reaction ran two-to-one against the idea of the Bill in its existing form⁷ and if it had any chance for survival, a selling job would have to be done. Gérin-Lajoie travelled throughout the Province, wrote a book, and distributed thousands of copies of the Bill. A good deal would depend on the position taken by the Catholic hierarchy; if the bishops were strongly opposed they would be able to marshal sufficient forces to stop or at least emasculate the proposal. But there had been a Council in the Vatican and the two leading bishops, Roy and Léger, were open to new conceptions of the Church and sensitive to its changing role in society. Thus, when the hierarchy pronounced in August, their statement was measured, their reservations specific, and their suggestions positive. In January 1964, an amended form of Bill 60 was introduced in the Legislature. A preamble was added recognizing the rights of parents and the rights of individuals and groups to operate independent institutions. With only minor changes the Bill was passed in February and became law in March, less than a year after the Parent Commission had made its recommendation. The effects of the law were to centralize responsibility for education in a Minister, to establish a framework for the direction of the coming reform and for the coordination of an expanding and increasingly complex operation, and to reduce to precise limits the control of the Church in education.

proposals for reform

The first phase of recommendations of the Parent Commission had barely been translated into legislation when the Commission, in October 1964, unveiled the second phase of its plan

for reform by presenting Volumes II and III of its Report. These massive documents containing over 750 pages and 400 recommendations presented a comprehensive set of proposals for improving the structure and substance of education in the Province.

A network of kindergartens should be established throughout the Province. Elementary education should last for six years, divided into two three-year cycles. The curriculum should be opened up, schools and teachers should be given greater initiative, methods should be "activist" and pupil-centred, and gifted children should be enriched rather than accelerated. Secondary education should last for five years. Separate academic, general, and vocational programs should be abolished in favor of core subjects (languages, sciences, arts, and technology) with various levels, and elective subjects. Secondary schools should be comprehensive both in their clientele and in the array of services they offer.

At the post-secondary level, a compromise should be reached between the four-year *cours collégial* as the normal route to university in the French sector and the direct passage from junior matriculation in the English sector. This compromise would be in the form of Institutes, comprehensive institutions for all students continuing their studies beyond secondary school, offering both pre-university and advanced technical programs and at the same time completing the general education of the student. All programs leading to the first university degree would take three years and would be specialized rather than general in nature. For the next few years, graduate studies should be restricted to the universities of Laval, Montréal, and McGill; other university institutions should restrict themselves to programs leading to the first degree and additional universities of limited charter should be created to offer undergraduate programs only. All teacher education should take place within universities.

from proposal to action

The initial reaction of the Province to this panorama was something approaching awe. Intellectually and emotionally, the government, educators, the press, and the public found themselves swept along with the combination of enthusiasm, certitude, and vision which characterized both the Commissioners and their recommendations. Although reservations were voiced concerning specific recommendations and concern-

ing the time and methods needed to effect this miraculous transformation, a consensus developed around the "spirit" of the Report. Conscious of its mandate to lead educational reform, sensitive to the growing expectation of public participation in planning, and anxious to utilize the momentum which the Commission had succeeded in generating, the government created special ministerial committees and redirected existing ones to study various aspects of the Report. Civil servants of the Department of Education churned out a constant flow of studies, memoranda, analyses, position-papers, and reports; administrators, teachers, civil servants, and student representatives raced from meeting to meeting carrying copies of the Report with papers stuck in the pages; debates rolled on and on.⁸

In May 1965, the government made public Regulation Number One, the first and most important of a series of orders-in-council which were to translate the program of reform from recommendation to realization. The regulation established the general framework for all elementary and secondary education in the Province. The age of admission was set at six years; elementary education would last for six years but some pupils might complete it in five while others might take seven: for each year of the program, pupils were to be grouped according to age, then further divided according to criteria to be determined by the teachers; promotion to secondary school would depend on the judgment of the school, but no pupil would remain in elementary school beyond age twelve; the secondary course would last for five years, with required and elective courses and promotion by subject. In subsequent documents, the Department set up a general framework for elementary and secondary school curricula, made recommendations concerning school organization, and encouraged the creation of educational workshops in each school, joint committees of parents and teachers to supervise the implementation of Regulation Number One. Further regulations in March 1966 outlined policies for official examinations (Regulation Number Two), for a new level of pre-university and professional studies (Regulation Number Three), and for the education, certification and probation of teachers (Regulation Number Four).

By the spring of 1966, educational reformers could look back on the first part of the decade with a certain degree of pride. A Ministry of Education was established and growing in authority; secondary education had expanded rapidly; the

Parent Commission had laid out its plan for pedagogical reform; the first steps toward implementation had been taken. Quebec education had a certain self-assurance about the direction of the reform and the pace at which it was proceeding.

the problem of school boards

Two indications that this self-assurance may have been premature came in June 1966. Jean Lesage and his Liberal Party went to the polls confident that the government's work in leading the political, social, economic, and educational changes of the Quiet Revolution would be recognized by the people of Quebec and that his mandate would be renewed once more to continue the task. If his election in 1960 was something of a surprise, his defeat in 1966 was something of a shock. The post-mortems which followed the election of Daniel Johnson and the Union Nationale saw the election as a contest between visions of grandeur and bread-and-butter, as an indication that the Liberals had lost touch with their constituency, and as the beginning of a period of reaction. But the Quiet Revolution had not come to a close. Many people had reservations about the pace at which the changes were occurring and as the bills of the reform were beginning to come in, many began to worry about the price. But the goals of modernization were not seriously challenged, the momentum was not to be reversed, the problems and constraints were unaltered, and the institutions, particularly the civil service, retained their dynamic.

It was also in June 1966 that Volumes IV and V of the Parent Report were made public, the final set of recommendations of the Commission that had begun its work in 1961. These volumes dealt with cultural and religious diversity, educational finance, and school administration at the local level; this last was to prove an issue both powerful and contentious. After considering the variety of school boards existing in the province — Catholic and Protestant, local and regional, elected and appointed, large and small — and in view of the growing demand for nonconfessional schools, the Commission was faced with three alternatives: retaining confessional school boards while adding some framework for nonconfessional schools, changing the Catholic-Protestant division to a French-English division, or creating unified school boards. The Commission chose the last, recommending three levels of

structures: committees of parents in each school to determine policies concerning language and religion; school boards to provide all educational services — English and French, Catholic, Protestant, and nonconfessional — within a geographic territory; councils of school development to coordinate structures (especially financial) for school boards in each economic region. For the Island of Montreal, the Commission proposed that the forty Catholic and Protestant boards be replaced by seven unified boards and one Island Council of School Development.

The purpose of this proposal was to provide administrative and financial uniformity at the level of the school board within which linguistic and religious diversity could be preserved at the level of the school. If a consensus had formed around the plan for educational reform up to this point, it was to dissolve on this issue. Those concerned about Catholic education argued that religion could not long survive in schools without a supporting administrative structure; English Catholics were disappointed that an English-Catholic school board was not proposed for Montreal; advocates of neutral schools liked the idea of unified boards but felt the Commission did not go far enough when it permitted religious schools to continue; most concerned of all was the English-Protestant community who saw the proposal as unconstitutional and a threat to the existence of English education.

challenge from the teachers

As the question of school boards, language, and religion was germinating throughout 1966 and 1967, two more urgent challenges arose, one from the teaching profession, the other from the mounting pressure in post-secondary education. The first engaged the basic issues of money and power, the second involved the extension of the structure and spirit of the reform beyond the secondary school.

Education reform is not achieved without cost and since 1960 the Government had been investing heavily, spending almost one-third of its budget on education; at the same time, local school taxes had mounted rapidly. Demands were coming from all sides: universities, student aid, adult education, the construction of comprehensive secondary schools, and the changes needed for the implementation of Regulation Number

One. One major item was the salaries of teachers. The teaching force had been expanding rapidly to match increasing student enrolment, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Furthermore, thanks to the encouragement of the provincial government and the recruitment policies of school boards, the qualifications of teaching personnel were improving, their salaries correspondingly increasing, and their aspirations becoming more ambitious.

A confrontation developed in October 1966 when the Government published "guidelines" for school boards in their salary negotiations with teachers. From November 1966 through February 1967 wave after wave of Catholic teachers went on strike bringing Catholic education, both English and French, virtually to a halt; the less militant Protestant teachers began to organize "study sessions" and to threaten mass resignations. On February 19th the Assembly passed "An Act to Ensure for Children the Right to an Education," commonly known as Bill 25. The Act ordered the striking teachers back to work, solving the immediate crisis and restoring the system with at least the façade of normalcy. It imposed a single salary scale for most teachers in the Province, wiping out disparities among regions as well as differences between various classes of teachers (male-female, elementary-secondary) where these differences existed. Finally, the Act set up machinery for bargaining at the provincial level between the three teachers' associations on the one hand and the Government and federations of school boards on the other. The results were that the Government moved a step closer to its goal of equalization and strengthened its control over expenditures, the three teachers' associations grew in power and responsibility at the expense of the local syndicates, English and French teachers were forced into an uneasy alliance as they faced a formidable opponent across the bargaining table, and school boards lost still more of their initiative as their dependence on the government increased. The long and tortuous march to a single collective agreement had begun and it was not until November 1969 that the "Entente" was finally signed. This, together with the promulgation of Regulation Number Five in March 1968 establishing norms for the classification of teachers and the development of the mechanism for the evaluation of probationary teachers under the terms of Regulation Number Four, transformed Quebec teachers into *de facto* civil servants. At the same time, however, teachers succeeded in establishing their right to participate in decision-making at

the school board and school levels for the first time through consultative committees.⁹

crisis in post-secondary education

Meanwhile, a challenge of a different sort was being posed in post-secondary education. The regionalization of secondary education, the effects of Regulation Number One in providing more comprehensive and flexible programs at the secondary level, and the continual propaganda to keep young people in school were all beginning to pay off. More students were going to secondary school, they were staying longer, and were now graduating with new-found aspirations to continue their studies. The increased demand was especially dramatic in the French sector and opportunities were limited: normal schools, classical colleges, technical institutes, and a few specialized institutions. The demand for improved access to post-secondary education was as irresistible as the need to coordinate this level of the system. The Parent Report had called for the creation of post-secondary Institutes to bridge the gap between secondary school on the one hand and university and technological professions on the other; Regulation Number Three had provided the pedagogical framework for studies at this level. The time had come to establish the legal, administrative, and financial framework.

On June 29, 1967, the National Assembly passed Bill 21 which was enabling legislation for the creation of *Collèges d'Enseignement Général et Professionnel* (Cegeps). These institutions were to be administered by public corporations representative of teachers, students, and the community. They would offer two-year pre-university programs and three-year technical programs, tuition-free for regular students, and would be responsible for all education at this level. They would be comprehensive in their student clientele and in their range of offerings, and their objectives were to complete the general education of the student and provide him with the specialization required either for further studies or for technical occupations. In a word, they were to do what the Parent Report had recommended they should do, with the name changed from *Institut* to *Collège*.¹⁰

As a result of the legislation, "instant" Cegeps were created from the marriage - with varying degrees of consent - of normal

schools, classical colleges, and technical institutes. By September 1967, twelve Cegeps had been formed and within three years there were around forty of these institutions throughout the Province. Considering the speed with which the Cegeps were created, the diverse traditions of the parent institutions, and the strains imposed by new programs, a new spirit, and bursting enrolments, it is something of a wonder that the institutions held together. By the autumn of 1968 there were twenty-three Cegeps with over 38,000 students and pressures of both an internal and an external sort were building up. Within the institutions tension was increasing between the expectations of the students and the ability of the administrators, teachers, structures, and programs to cope with the day-to-day demands of institutional survival. Promises and realities did not seem to be converging and the student population was restive and impatient. A second form of stress arose from anxiety about the future. Contrary to the hopes of government planners, enrolment patterns in the Cegeps were rapidly shifting from technical programs to pre-university programs, partly as a result of limited facilities and equipment for technical options, partly because of the changing interests and expectations of the students themselves. Thousands of students were expected to graduate in the coming June and it was becoming clear that the existing French-language universities — Laval, Sherbrooke, and Montréal — would not be able to accommodate them. There was talk of a new university but there were no visible signs of its advent. In October 1968, demonstrations, strikes, and occupations closed the Cegeps and the drama of anxiety, questioning, and confusion which was taking place at the Sorbonne and elsewhere was now being played out in Quebec. When the orgy of self-examination had run its course, the Cegeps began opening again; their ideals and their structures had survived but their naiveté had been tempered.

In response to one aspect of the crisis in post-secondary education, the National Assembly, in December 1968, created a new Université du Québec. The new Université was to be a kind of educational holding-company, an administrative framework with campuses initially in Montreal, Trois-Rivières, and Chicoutimi, and subsequently in other parts of the Province as well. Like the Cegeps these campuses grew out of existing classical colleges, normal schools, schools of engineering, and fine arts academies. It was a public university and instead of traditional faculties it had departments (groupings of

professors by academic discipline) and modules (groupings of professors and students engaged in the same program). The graduates of the Cegeps now had a place to go, and one that was to show itself quite hospitable to the new spirit of openness and adaptation which had been cultivated, by accident or design, in the colleges.¹¹

Just as the defeat of the Liberal Government and the public reaction to the final Volumes of the Parent Report in 1966 were indications that a consensus on the direction and pace of educational reform could no longer be assumed, the challenges of 1967 and 1968, from the teaching profession and post-secondary education, gave evidence of increasing polarization between groups engaged in the reform and added the dimension of public confrontation. The consensus model of educational change was shifting toward a conflict model and although the conflicts involving the teachers and the Cegeps were defused if not solved, a new, deeper, and more complex conflict was not to be resolved so easily.

the language question

At first sight, the Parent Commission's proposals for unified school boards looked like a logical extension of their general plan of reform and a more or less straight-forward matter of educational administration. Certainly questions of religion and language were involved and certainly there was opposition from many quarters to the proposals; nevertheless, there was little reason to believe that the implementation of these proposals would be any more difficult than the establishment of a Ministry of Education, the formation of regional school boards, or the creation of Cegeps. As time went on, however, the strands of educational administration, religion, language, minority rights, the constitution, and the role of the government became so tangled that the issues became extremely difficult to separate and the questions moved closer and closer to the fundamental tensions of the Quebec reform.

To begin with, a fundamental dilemma was presented by the changing role of religion in Quebec society. The basic division of school boards rested on a religious basis — Catholic and Protestant — and the educational protections of the British North America Act were for religious, not linguistic, minorities. Yet the religious division of Quebec education was be-

coming increasingly artificial. In the Catholic sector, the influence of religious orders had declined dramatically, religious instruction had become much less explicit and more oriented to general ethical and social issues, and there was little agreement even on the definition of a Catholic school. When the Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education published its first regulations in June 1968, the ambiguity of the articles simply reflected the diversity in existing practice. On the other hand, Protestant education was not very Protestant; its identifying characteristics were more the culture, language, and tradition of its schools than any common set of religious beliefs. The crucial division in Quebec society was now one of language and culture rather than one of religion and there appeared to be two options open for school board reform; a division by language or unified boards. The success of either option would depend on the degree of trust between French and English Quebecers and the mutual trust which had traditionally depended on the preservation of the two solitudes was rapidly breaking down. The English watched with growing apprehension the integration of administration, curriculum, examinations, and budget control at the provincial level and the declining power of local school boards. As their concern increased, their position crystallized around a division on a language basis, with strong school boards, and the possibility of a transfer of the constitutional guarantees from religion to language. On the other side the French had become more conscious of the significance of their majority status in Quebec and the need for a unified perspective for the development of the Province. From this perspective they saw intolerable inequalities between French and English educational systems. What the English called "rights" the French called "privileges" and there was increasing pressure from the French for unified school boards.

In an attempt to resolve a difference of opinion that was beginning to move toward impasse, the government established a special committee (the Pagé Committee) of civil servants, administrators, teachers, and parents to make recommendations for reorganizing the school boards of the Island of Montreal. When the Committee reported in 1968 the majority proposed a division of French and English boards with a powerful central council to coordinate education for the whole Island. More significant than the majority report, however, was the proliferation of minority reports and the distance between groups was now visible for all to see.

St. Léonard

Meanwhile a new development was taking place which was to sharpen the conflict and raise the temperature of the dispute. In March 1968, an organization called *Le Mouvement pour l'intégration scolaire* was formed in St. Léonard, a suburb of Montreal with a mixed French and Italian population. In the local Catholic school board elections the M.I.S. obtained a majority and the board passed a resolution providing for the systematic phasing out of English-language instruction, beginning with grade one. Italian parents countered by opening private classes for their children and the battle was joined to be fought on television, in the press, in the courts, in the Assembly, and finally in the streets. The irony of the St. Léonard affair was that the substance of the dispute was largely local, arising from growing tensions between an indigenous French-speaking population and a rapidly expanding Italian population, a good proportion of whom could speak French and favored bilingual rather than completely English education for their children. The St. Léonard situation was quite atypical but due to the publicity it received and the general climate in the Province, it had important consequences. First, it made clear that nowhere in the Constitution or in the Education Act of the Province was English-language education protected. Second, it increased the distrust between French and English; on the French side the rhetoric of cultural survival entered the educational dispute and for many on the English side it provided a horrible example of what would happen to English education under unified school boards. Finally, it became evident that the basic relationships among the various cultural groups of the Province — French, English, and new Canadians — would have to be defined before the educational problems could be solved.

After an unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem by legislation, the government, in December 1968, created a Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Linguistic Rights of the Majority and Minority (the Gendron Commission) to study the whole issue of language. But events would not slow down to the pace of a Royal Commission. The St. Léonard conflict was still unresolved; it continued to receive public attention throughout 1969 and broke out in rioting in the fall of that year. The massive *McGill Français* march in the early part of the year stirred up still further the expectations of French nationalists and the anxieties of the English. The governing

Union Nationale party was badly divided; Premier Johnson had died in the fall of 1968 and his successor, Jean-Jacques Bertrand seemed unable to hold together the various factions in his party. To complicate the issue still further, the Minister of Education, Jean-Guy Cardinal, was considered part of the nationalist group.

toward a standoff: bills 62 and 63

In the autumn of 1969 the divided government had to make some move. The plan was to do a balancing act: to guarantee minority language rights, to strengthen the presence of the French language in English schools, and to establish unified school boards. The success of the plan depended on the balance of the parts; partial success would really be failure, and failure it was.

On October 23rd, Jean-Guy Cardinal introduced Bill 63, "An Act to Promote the French Language in Quebec." The Bill (1) required school boards to offer English-language instruction to all children whose parents requested it, (2) required all English-language schools to provide the pupils with a "working knowledge" of French, and (3) empowered the government to "take the measures necessary" to ensure that immigrants to Quebec acquired a knowledge of French and educated their children in French-language schools. In his elaboration of the Bill, the Minister of Education stressed both the provision giving parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children (thus attempting to reassure the English) and the provision ensuring a working knowledge of French for pupils in English schools, speculating that up to forty per cent of the curriculum of these schools would be given in French (thus attempting to reassure the French). English reaction was hesitant but generally favorable. But others reacted swiftly; on October 28th and 29th student and nationalist groups took to the streets in protest. Debate in public and in the National Assembly was intense. Many argued that the Bill was capitulation to English pressure, that it was really promoting English and destroying French; others argued that the Bill was simply a cover for the conversion of English schools into bilingual schools and ultimately into French schools. After modifications providing for a French Language Bureau to promote the use of French as the language of work in the province, the Bill was passed by the Assembly on November 28th, 1969.¹³

The second part of the package was made public on November 4th when the Government tabled Bill 62 on the reorganization of school boards on the Island of Montreal. The Bill (1) retained the religious and linguistic identity of individual schools, (2) created school committees composed of parents, (3) established eleven unified school boards, with members elected partly by parents' committees, partly by the public at large, whose function was to hire teachers and supervise instruction for all schools, Catholic and Protestant, English and French, in a geographic territory, and (4) formed a school council for the Island, its members chosen by the Cabinet (to include one from each school board) with responsibilities for the general administration of education, the collection of revenues and the distribution of funds. Reaction to the Bill was mixed. French nationalists supported it, those concerned with the future of Catholic schools worried about it, planners found it rational, teachers and administrators were opposed to the principle of centralization, the English objected strongly to the proposal of unified boards. The Bill went to committee, the debate continued, and the attempt at school board organization died as the Assembly was prorogued for the election of April 1970.

the liberals try: bills 27 and 28

The victory of Robert Bourassa and the Liberals and the horrors of the October crisis eclipsed the problems of education during the remainder of 1970, but by the spring of 1971, things were back to normal in Quebec education. The Department issued two new regulations, Regulation Number Six dealing with the teaching of French in English-language schools, a follow-up of Bill 63, and Regulation Number Seven, an expansion of the famous Regulation Number One, which sought to fill in the framework for the organization of elementary and secondary education, to extend the school day by incorporating extracurricular activities into the regular schedule, and to introduce flexibility in evaluation. Civil servants were hard at work preparing a comprehensive system of evaluating competence for beginning teachers on probation. L'Abbé Dion who, once upon a time, had exposed the election ethics of the Duplessis regime was now going about his task of investigating charges that many teachers had been indoctrinating children in F.L.Q. propaganda. And, once again, an attempt was made to do something about school boards.

Two more education bills were introduced in the Assembly. Bill 27 dealt with the reorganization of school boards off the Island of Montreal; it kept the confessional division of Catholic and Protestant and reduced more than 800 boards to fewer than 200. It passed and became law. Bill 28 dealt with the Island of Montreal; it was a modified version of Bill 62 and included the same basic elements. Modifications included (1) confessional committees at the school board level, (2) provision for the special appointment of school commissioners where the minority was not adequately represented as the result of election, and (3) election rather than appointment of the majority of the members of the Island Council. The English Protestant community had plenty of time to prepare. Notice was served that the constitutionality of the Bill would be challenged in the courts. Many English school administrators, in print and in public meetings, assailed the principle of unified boards and warned of the impending demise of English language, culture, and education in the province. Meanwhile back in the Assembly, the Parti Québécois members launched a filibuster when the Bill came up for vote, demanding revision of the language protections of Bill 63 and stronger support for French in the new Bill. As discontent grew even in the Liberal caucus, Bourassa and Education Minister Saint-Pierre could no longer walk between the two furies and the Government withdrew the Bill. The Gendron Commission continued its study of the language problem through a third extension of its mandate, and the two solitudes continued to glare at each other in limbo.

the unfinished revolution

Quebec education is carrying into the seventies the promises and the problems posed in the sixties. The Quiet Revolution was a fundamental shift in the goals, conduct, and style of the society of Quebec and the leaders of this Revolution recognized from the outset the need to re-create education according to the new image. They drafted a master plan of reform and spared no effort to implement it.

According to the current norms of success, education in 1970 was much better than it was in 1960. The holding power of the school was dramatically improved; more money was invested in education; if the elusive goal of equality of opportunity was not attained, it was at least more seriously pursued; there was a continuing concern to relate education to the

needs of the individual and of society and there was wider participation in decision-making. There was also an impressive development of new institutions, new facilities, new programs, and new kinds of teachers. It is not difficult to find evidence that the Quiet Revolution in education was a great leap forward — and a great success. The success of the Revolution can also be found in the subtle area of style. To compare the pages of *L'Instruction Publique* and *The Educational Record*, the Department of Education publications of the early sixties, with the psychedelic pages of *Education Québec* is to encounter a distance in medium as well as message. This change of style can also be found in the open areas and fluid learning environments of many elementary schools, in the workshops and studios of the new comprehensive regional high schools, in pilot programs for inner city children in Montreal, in the educational encounters (often strange and wonderful) that characterize the life of the Cegeps, in the group decision-making of the modules in the Université du Québec, and in the increasing understanding found in English schools, from kindergartens to McGill, of what it means to be living in Quebec.

There are also some problems that intrude on this litany of success. Few of these problems are unique to Quebec but their manifestation and their implications do have particular significance here. Money for education is getting harder and harder to find as the other social services — especially health and welfare — press their demands. Throughout the sixties, Quebec committed itself deeply to the development of education and in the seventies it may find it increasingly difficult to meet these commitments. Financial strains may well generate a new evaluation of the assumptions of the reform, the sharpening of priorities, and demands for accountability. A second form of stress arises from the declining enrolment, the result of a falling birth rate that is more dramatic in Quebec than elsewhere. The combination of the shrinking market for teachers and the increasing numbers of candidates for the profession, together with the limitations of financial input, will have effects on the selection and preparation of teachers, hiring and retention policies, and the educational process in general. Other anxious questions which will be answered in the seventies are: What will happen when the government turns its reforming zeal on the universities which, despite government “rationalization” are still cherishing their independence and searching for their role in the new society? Will the govern-

ment begin in the seventies to withdraw from the role of Master of Reform which it had to assume in the sixties and allow education to spin off in a variety of directions? Will the government's excursions into television, communications systems, adult education and community *animation* lead to entirely new dimensions in education? Finally, there is the immediate and still unresolved problem of language, culture, and school organization; an issue of great importance that cannot remain untouched but also, perhaps, a distraction from a more fundamental question.

In a way, Quebec education has gone full cycle since 1960 and the fundamental questions of the seventies are once more those of objectives. It was important for schools to produce large numbers of skilled workers if Quebecers were to become "maîtres chez-nous", but what will the province do with thousands of history teachers, technicians, and social scientists? What happens if a society cannot deliver the jobs that new institutions, courses, and certificates encourage the students to expect? If economic factors over which Quebec has little control make jobs more difficult to obtain and if social policies such as guaranteed annual income diminish the necessity of work, should education shift back to the more personal goals of intellectual, moral, and cultural development? The ideals of the classical college have not been completely lost in Quebec: history, philosophy, and creativity are still important elements in the culture and they constitute potential absorbers of future shock. If the reforms of the sixties appeared to be the antithesis of what had been before, Quebec education in the seventies may be moving to a new synthesis of the elitist objectives which it has always cherished and the egalitarian *technique* which it learned through its reform.

references

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9. See Robert E. Lavery, "Changes in the Teaching Profession" in this issue.
10. See Ann Denis and John Lipkin, "The Cegep: Promise and Reality" in this issue.
11. See Germain Gauthier, "Evolution récente de l'enseignement supérieur québécois" in this issue.
12. In a speech in Montreal in August 1972, Jean-Guy Cardinal who had been the Minister of Education at the time of Bill 63 admitted that the Bill was "a mistake."