

# GENDER RELATIONS AMONG TEACHERS: A STUDY OF ONTARIO TEACHERS IN THE 1930s\*

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**ABSTRACT.** Gender relations have played an important role in the development of school systems in Canada. This paper describes and analyzes specific ways in which discriminatory relations were constructed, and subsequently restructured, for women and men teachers in Ontario during the depression years of the 1930s – in particular, in relation to salaries, job tenure, and pensions. Given the recent calls for “restructuring” of schooling and teaching, “lessons” from the 1930s may well prove informative in strategizing for (or against) contemporary change initiatives.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Les relations entre les sexes ont joué un rôle important dans l'évolution des systèmes scolaires au Canada. Cet article décrit et analyse divers modes précis qui ont régi l'établissement puis la restructuration de rapports discriminatoires entre les enseignantes et les enseignants ontariens durant la grande crise des années 1930, particulièrement en ce qui a trait aux salaires, à la permanence et aux retraites. Au vu de la “restructuration” du système scolaire et de l'enseignement que certains appellent de leurs vœux, les leçons tirées de l'expérience des années 30 pourraient se révéler utiles à la formulation de stratégies favorables (ou hostiles) aux mesures actuellement proposées.

On June 12, 1936, the *Toronto Daily Star* reported that Miss Alice Wilson was retiring after 28 years as head of the department of modern languages at Riverdale Collegiate. She was to be the guest of honour at a dinner given by her women colleagues at the University Women's Club. Miss Wilson, the article went on, would be wearing “a blue gown, and carrying pink roses given to her by her colleagues”.

\*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Eighth Biennial Conference of the Canadian History of Education Association, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 1994.

The following day, June 13, 1936, *The Daily Mail and Empire*, another Toronto paper, reported that after 26 years at Jarvis Collegiate, Dr. Edwin Austin Hardy gave his final lesson before his retirement. We are told that “his grey-haired colleague, Mr. C. H. Barnes” joshed with him and then “turned on his heel least Dr. Hardy discern the moistness in his eyes”. The article quotes Dr. Hardy’s final words to his students, lines from one of Kipling’s poems:

And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,  
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,  
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are!  
(see Kipling, 1892)

These two articles indicate how clearly the lives of men and women teachers of this time period revolved around accepted notions of gender appropriate behaviours. Alice Wilson dined with her female friends, while Edwin Austin Hardy joshed with his male colleague. We are told what Alice wore and about what Edwin said.

None of this may surprise us, since other newspaper clippings from the era are rife with references to separate “gendered identities” for male and female students. We are told about school girls demonstrating folk-dancing (*The Globe*, April 9, 1936) while boys play in the band (*The Telegram*, April 9, 1936). We learn about aircraft instruction for males (*The Telegram*, June 10, 1936) and weaving and canning skill development for females (*Toronto Daily Star*, Sept. 14, 1935). There are “son’s nights” (*Toronto Daily Star*, Dec. 13, 1938) and “grade mothers acting as tea hostesses” (*The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 5, 1938).

Another newspaper article of that era mentions a controversy over “sex separation in north end collegiates”, and contains a quote from the principal, Col. F. H. Wood:

I believe that boys and girls should grow up together. It is part of their education in life to live and play and study together. It is a healthier state of affairs than to keep them separated. (*Toronto Daily Star*, Sept. 28, 1935)

However, despite this claim about the desirability of having male and female students working together in harmony, it is abundantly clear that explicit policies of the Toronto Board of Education ensured that teachers were differentially treated on the basis of their gender – conditions which were highly unlikely to have favoured harmony among males and females, or encouraged them to see each other as equal colleagues. One long-standing policy was that of salary differentials for

men and women teachers and administration staff, an issue raised repeatedly by teachers and trustees since the 1890s (1). The other policy concerned the compulsory, but differential, retirement ages for men and women teachers, and the controversy that raged in 1935 and 1936 about enforcing those by-laws without granting customary extensions.

It is the purpose of this paper, then, to examine in some detail the nature of these discriminatory practices, and to speculate both on the reasons for their existence, as well as their effects on the lives and work of teachers and on schooling generally. Before entering into this discussion, however, it may be informative to examine what more we have been able to uncover about Alice Wilson and Edwin Hardy. In many ways the similarities and differences in their lives, both within and outside of their workplaces, suggest close parallels to many primary and secondary school teachers during these times – lives which were highly determined on the basis of one particular personal characteristic: gender.

As historians have often noted (Cott & Pleck, 1979; Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, 1989; Prentice & Theobald, 1991), women's lives often prove much more difficult to uncover than those of their male colleagues – for a number of reasons, their "voices" are much more "silent". This is certainly the case with Alice Wilson. There is little evidence of her contribution to the students of Toronto, or her life in general, over her 31 years of teaching, other than occasional statements in the annals of the Toronto Board of Education. The board minutes for 1889 tell us that she began teaching in that city in that year, in a "junior second" class (equivalent to today's "grade three") at Victoria Street School in the inner-city (Toronto Board of Education [TBE], 1889). That she was assigned to one of the lower grades was completely understandable. For many decades, the Toronto Board had a strict practice of assigning women to teach at this level – classes which often contained 60, 70, or more students. By comparison, male teachers were assigned the higher grades, which invariably consisted of a much smaller number of pupils (cf. Johnston, Semple, & Gray, 1932).

Gender discrimination was also clearly evident in relation to the remuneration which teachers received from the Toronto Board, and Alice Wilson was no exception. Her starting salary was \$324 per year – very similar to that which her female colleagues earned, but considerably less than the \$750 regularly earned by most male classroom teachers in Toronto Board Schools (regardless of their level of experience), and less than one-quarter of the \$1438 earned by the male principal of the school (TBE, 1889).

Alice Wilson remained at Victoria Street School for four years, transferring to a "junior first" (grade one) class in the third year. By her final year, her salary had increased to \$372. In September of 1893, the Board minutes note the receipt of a letter from Alice Wilson, "tendering her resignation".

Why she resigned after such a relatively short time is unclear. To be sure, during these times a number of female teachers left their classrooms after teaching for only a few years. On the one hand, marriage has often been cited as the main reason for this occurrence – understandably, considering that the idea of married women teaching was usually frowned upon, and in fact was soon to be banned outright by the Toronto Board (a policy that was kept on the books and enforced from 1925 to 1946) (Reynolds, 1990a). However, Toronto Board minutes make it abundantly clear that young women left teaching for other reasons, for example, in many cases in order to care for parents and/or other family members (Smaller, 1991). In addition, other sources suggest that low salaries and poor working conditions, the lack of opportunities for promotion, and the general social relations which women teachers suffered at their workplaces, often made other types of paid work more attractive (Prentice, 1985).

Whatever Alice Wilson's reasons may have been for leaving the primary school classroom in 1903, in one significant way her career change did prove different than many other of her colleagues. Four years later, in April of 1907, she was rehired by the Toronto Board and appointed head of the department of modern languages at Jameson Avenue Collegiate "for one year in the absence of Miss Hitchcock", at a salary of \$1400 (TBE, 1907). Given this turn of events, it is possible to speculate that she was financially able to spend the intervening four years in continuing her own schooling, earning the Bachelor of Arts degree that qualified her to teach at the secondary school level where conditions of teaching were, by most reports, considerably better, and salaries much higher, than in the lower grades. In any event, it is clear that she made a good impression on her superiors at Jameson, for the following year she was appointed to a permanent teaching position at Riverdale Collegiate (TBE, 1908) where she remained continuously until she retired 29 years later, in June of 1936. In spite of her efforts over the years, however, little else is known about her life and work, other than the hint, in a short newspaper article concerning the retirement party given in her honour by her female colleagues, that she occupied "a distinguished place among fellow-teachers throughout Ontario" (*Toronto Daily Star*, June 12, 1936).

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By comparison, Edwin Austin Hardy O.B.E. was a well-known figure among the educational elite of Ontario, and certainly treated as an equal within this group. His 26 years of teaching at Jarvis Collegiate, the last of almost 50 years teaching in total, reflected a work-life which only males, for the most part, could expect to undertake during these times. In addition to his classroom duties, he was a founding member of the Toronto High School Teachers' Association in 1903, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) in 1919. His interest in writing and publishing extended well beyond his classroom – he was an active member and president of the Canadian Authors' Association, and edited the OSSTF journal for a seven-year period, from 1927 to 1934. His interests and activities in teacher federation work did not stop at Ontario's borders. In the early 1920s he helped found the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and in 1934 he was elected treasurer of the World Federation of Education Associations (WFEA), a post he maintained for a number of years (Robinson, 1971). As compared to Alice Wilson, whose record of post-retirement activities has not been made apparent, Edwin Hardy continued in the spotlight after leaving teaching – officiating at the WFEA convention in Japan the following year, and taking office as a publicly elected Toronto school board trustee in January of 1938 (2).

Clearly, in comparing Alice Wilson and Edwin Hardy, it would be fruitless to attempt to identify any specific reasons as the "prime" cause for the differences which developed as their lives and careers unfolded. However, it would be equally difficult to suggest that gender did not play an important part in the overall equation – the possibility, for example, of the advantages in early schooling which young males often received during these times (Houston & Prentice, 1988), and the relative freedom from domestic duties which males (married or otherwise) usually enjoyed, thus allowing considerably more time for after-work pursuits such as further education, teacher association work, and engaging in the activities of other voluntary organizations. Certainly, being a male teacher in the employ of the Toronto Board of Education resulted in considerable advantage, and it is to two of these specific male advantages we now turn for discussion, that of differential salaries and differential retirement policies.

Gender disparity in teachers' salaries in Toronto existed from at least the early 1850s. At that time, the political and economic elite were becoming increasingly threatened by social unrest among poor immigrants and the poor working class in general. State controlled schooling was seen as a means by which the children of these families could be

properly socialized (Houston, 1982), and in 1851 a centralized, city-wide school board was established, to replace the loose network of locally-controlled schoolhouses. Equally "creative" was the solution developed for moderating the costs of what would otherwise be a very expensive endeavour. Within each elementary school a staffing hierarchy was put into place, where a few, but relatively well-paid, male staff would supervise a much larger number of very poorly remunerated women teachers. Given the limited opportunities for paid employment for women during these times, the strategy was highly "successful".

To be sure, the school board was careful never to state overtly that males were to earn more than females. However, the practice of determining salary on the basis of level of grade taught, and ensuring that only males taught the higher grades, ensured absolute discrimination between the sexes. In 1870, for example, salaries of women in the Board ranged from \$220-400, while those of their male colleagues were in the \$600-700 range. By 1881, these differences had actually widened, from \$200-600 for women and \$750-1100 for men (TBE, 1870). In 1885, 196 of the 202 women teachers in the Toronto Board were in the classroom, with titles such as "female assistants," "female junior assistants," "senior female assistants," and "female teachers". By comparison, every male teacher that year, regardless of seniority, held a position either of "principal" or "assistant master", and all were assigned to classes containing only senior students (TBE, 1885; Bryans, 1974). (Reference has already been made above to the much larger class sizes in the lower grades.)

Determined to eliminate these discriminatory practices, women elementary school teachers in Toronto founded their own association in 1885 (3). However, while small successes were achieved along the way, it was to take many decades before their struggles were to lead to significant success. For example, after six fruitless years of attempting to convince board trustees to alter the salary situation (TBE, 1891), a number of members of the Women Teachers' Association involved themselves directly with the 1891 municipal elections (4). In conjunction with the Women's Enfranchisement Association, they were successful in assisting three women to be elected to the Toronto Public School Board for the first time (5). Fresh from these victories, the women launched another appeal to increase salaries which had not been changed in a number of years. During the annual salary deliberations in the spring of 1892, they attended a number of Board meetings, supported by at least one newspaper in the city.

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The plucky representatives of the women teachers employed in the Public schools of Toronto who on Monday interviewed a committee of the School Board with respect to their salaries have right and reason on their side when they ask for an increase in pay. (*The Toronto Daily Mail*, Mar. 17, 1892)

In spite of this support however, and in spite of their presence, *en masse*, when the matter was discussed at the Board meeting the following week, their requests were turned down. Indeed, they were quickly to learn that they could not count on the support of all the newspapers in the city. Earlier in their lobbying sessions, *The Toronto Daily News* had been quite vicious in its assessment of the situation. In an editorial entitled "Well Enough Paid Now," the paper stated that

The lady teachers do not seem to have any just ground for complaint with their lot as it is. . . . [They] have nothing to complain of. And even if they had a substantial grievance, their case would be less strong because of the gross indelicacy shown in attempting to terrorize the members of the board by attending the meetings *en masse* when the salary question is up. (Feb. 25, 1892)

Based on these early experiences, members of the Toronto Women Teachers' Association continued to struggle over the ensuing decades against the Board's discriminatory practices, with varying success (6).

With the onslaught of the Depression in the 1930s, things turned again for the worst. While all teachers were affected, there is no doubt that women teachers (and especially those working in rural areas) suffered disproportionately. For example, as compared to the provincial average for an elementary teacher in 1936-37 of \$1242, the average rural female teachers received only \$650.86, with many earning only \$300 per year. Three years later, this average figure had increased marginally to \$729 per annum (Ontario Department of Education 1938; Carr, 1935, 1940). While Toronto women teachers did benefit from some protection against the arbitrary job losses and individualized salary cuts which afflicted their sisters in small, rural communities, other Toronto Board policies and practices certainly affected their material well-being during the 1930s. Average salaries for women elementary school teachers remained much below those of their male colleagues, and in spite of the passage of several decades, there was still little change in the traditional gender-based hierarchies within the staff of each school in the city (Reynolds, 1990b). Indeed, given the continual exhortation by the local media on the school board to cut back on school expenditures, to hire more males (including veterans of the First World War), and to lower teachers'

pensions, women teachers (employed or otherwise) must have felt themselves to be on very tenuous grounds indeed (7). Mention has already been made of the Toronto Board's explicit policy requiring women teachers to resign immediately upon getting married. Judging from anecdotal reports, many other school boards in the province also enforced such policies, whether or not they were explicitly written down (e. g., French, 1968).

Pensions were another aspect of the Ontario schooling system wherein women teachers suffered considerable inequality. Like the discrimination they suffered in relation to salaries and job security, women teachers in the 1930s found that the province's pension plan, and the ways it was linked to individual board employment practices, left them in a disadvantaged position compared to their male colleagues. These pension differences, like other aspects of the schooling, were grounded historically in the early years of the state common school system. A brief historical overview is informative as a backdrop to understanding the situation for women in the 1930s.

Although unknown in North America before the 1850s, pensions for teachers and other state officials had been in existence in a number of western European countries since the mid-eighteenth century and were advocated in Upper Canada at least as early as 1839 (Hodgins, 1895). By 1853, Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Education for Ontario between 1844 and 1876, was able to convince the provincial legislature to approve the first such scheme (8), subsequently boasting in his 1855 annual report that

... it is honourable to Upper Canada to be the first province, or state, in America in which any public provision whatever is made in aid of the support of Common School Teachers when they shall have become worn out in the service of their country. (Quoted in Hodgins, 1895)

Unfortunately for the "worn out" teachers, however, the plan was never adequately funded by the government. In fact, it was financially based on the hopes of signing up an adequate number of voluntary contributors in order to remain solvent. Clearly, many teachers were quick to perceive the inherent instability of this approach to funding a pension plan, and were understandably reluctant to participate. The plan therefore soon developed an aura of instability and impermanence (9). Further, while women teachers were not formally prevented from taking part, it would appear that few, if any, women did (10). It is not unlikely that their low salaries would have made it difficult to make the



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annual payments required – even if they believed that their tenure of employment was secure enough to ensure that they would be able to teach sufficient numbers of years to qualify for the plan (Danylewycz, Light, & Prentice, 1983).

As a result of the inherent instability of the plan, those few teachers who did contribute found that, at retirement time, only a very limited amount of money was available to them from the fund (11). Further, efforts by the government to shore up the plan, including making it compulsory for all male (but not female) elementary school teachers in 1871, and lowering the retirement age to 60 in 1873 did little to ensure its viability (12). By 1885, the fund was closed off to new members, and over the ensuing decades, remaining members either withdrew from the fund, or eventually retired and collected what little moneys were left for each retiree.

For several decades, teachers across the province were left with no possibility of an organized and state-supported pension plan. To some extent, their colleagues in Toronto were marginally more fortunate; after a very shaky start (13), the Board agreed in June of 1912 to establish a pension plan. Henceforth, all teachers were required to contribute annually 2% of their salary to the fund. Upon retiring, they would be eligible for an annual pension payment, based on one percent of their final salary, multiplied by the number of years they had contributed to the fund (14). The following January, the Board agreed to distribute copies of the details of the new plan to all teachers, and to establish a committee of trustees to process pension applications from teachers (TBE, 1913).

Like its provincial counterpart, however the Toronto Board's plan also encompassed a glaring inequity, in relation to gender. Although they paid equally into the fund and, in theory, had the right to the same pension benefits, women were required to retire from teaching at the age of 60, while their male counterparts did not have to do so until 65. In at least three ways, this constituted a serious financial liability for women. First, they were automatically cut off from teaching on a full salary, and forced onto a much reduced pension sum, five years earlier than men. Secondly, because pensions were determined solely by the number of years worked, women teachers were denied five years of contributions towards establishing a final pension amount. Finally, given that women teachers earned much less than their male colleagues overall, this difference would continue to be reflected in their pension

payments, for as long as they lived. As we shall see, this inequity was to remain for several decades, in spite of repeated contestation.

In 1917, after a number of years of increasingly intense pressure mounted by teachers on the Ontario government, a new provincial pension plan was put into effect. In order to qualify for a full pension, teachers were required to have taught for at least forty years; pension payments were based on a formula which took into consideration both the number of teaching years, and the salary earned during the retiree's final ten years of teaching. In addition, teachers who had taught for a minimum of thirty years before retiring were eligible to a reduced pension (Government of Ontario, 1917).

While this new provincial pension plan contained no overtly discriminatory aspects for women (15), provincial regulations did not require local school boards to end their own discriminatory practices relating to conditions of employment for its teachers. As a result, from the inception of the provincial plan of 1917, to well into the 1960s, the Toronto Board continued its policy of requiring women teachers to retire earlier than their male colleagues, thus seriously affecting the pension possibilities for many.

By the mid-1930s, in the middle of the Depression years, pressure was once again mounted on the Board to alter its retirement policies. Unfortunately for women teacher, however, these pressures came just as strongly from those wishing to enhance the discriminatory aspects, in the name of financial economies, as those who wished to end them. In February 1936, board officials announced that \$70,000 per year could be saved if the board turned down all teachers at the retirement age who requested one-year contract extensions in order to become eligible for pensions (16). Although a motion to this effect failed at the time (*The Telegram*, Mar. 8, 1935), by the next school year trustees were implementing it in practice – in one well-publicized case, voting 11 to 5 against permitting a 62-year-old female teacher (a widow with two children, who had been teaching for the Board for 26 years) to teach for one further year, so that she might be eligible for a pension which would have paid her \$265 annually (17). By June of 1936, the trustees voted 11 to 7 to eliminate the policy allowing them even the possibility of making exceptions in needy cases. Trustee Dr. Butt, who had moved a similar motion at an earlier meeting, was quoted in the *Toronto Daily Star* on April 17, 1936, as

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... urg[ing] that young people should be given a chance and that while many teachers may be in financial difficulties at the time of retirement, there must be some consideration for others.

Clearly, there were also significant financial gains to be made for the Board by forcing into retirement more highly paid senior teachers, and replacing them with low-paid neophytes. However, according to newspaper reports at the time, trustees also had yet another reason for taking this drastic step, that is, in retaliation for comments, purportedly made by teachers at a retirement dinner, questioning the fairness of the trustees' earlier actions against individual requests for extensions of their teaching contracts (*The Telegram* and *Toronto Daily Star*, June 19, 1936).

Women teachers were clearly disadvantaged by these retirement policies. Throughout the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, relatively fewer female teachers found themselves eligible for pensions. Further, those who did, received pensions which were considerably less valuable than those of their male counterparts (based as they were on continuity of employment and on the salaries they earned during their teaching years). As it turned out, even Alice Wilson, who for years occupied the relatively advantaged position as head of a department in a secondary school, was required to retire with fewer years of teaching credits than her male colleague, Edwin Hardy. Therefore, the pension, which she was to collect for the rest of her life, would have been considerably less than Hardy's. Although considerable pressure was brought to bear by teachers and individual trustees on the Toronto Board of Education throughout the 1930s, to equalize the retirement age for all teachers, these discriminatory practices were to continue until the 1960s.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our discussion has traced the persistence over time of discriminatory policies regarding salaries and pensions which favoured male teachers in the Toronto Board of Education in the 1930s. These policies can be thought of as part of what Tyack and Tobin (1994) call the "grammar of schooling", that is, "the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction" (p. 454). Clearly, these structures and rules positioned male and female teachers in separate and unequal spheres. Women teachers were to be subordinates under the control of males who were their superordinates. Women were to carry out the decisions

made by men at a variety of levels within the school system. Women were deemed to be temporary workers who would leave teaching upon marriage, and men were deemed to be breadwinners for their families, regardless of their actual family status, and thus would stay in teaching to have careers. Because they were more permanent members of the teaching force, men would be more likely than women to seek roles as school administrators, and they were also seen as more suited to those roles. Women were the weaker sex and would need the protection of male teachers. Women might not be strong enough to handle the older children or to mete out the necessary discipline, and thus men were more often assigned to the senior classes and placed in control of "dangerous" areas, such as the boys' yard or the boys' basement (Reynolds, 1987). Men and women who taught did not always accept such "positionings", but separate and unequal spheres, matching this description and based on gender, were strongly supported by a generally accepted ideology of domesticity in the larger society of this period.

As we have argued in this paper, such positionings for teachers were also supported by local school board policies and practices, such as those we have described for the Toronto Board of Education, relative to salaries and pensions. In the centrally controlled schooling systems which developed in Ontario from the mid-nineteenth century on, the "grammar of schooling" included a staffing hierarchy which was strongly based on gender. Almost all those who held supervisory roles were men and most of those who taught young children were women. Because salaries were pegged to grade levels and designated roles, that hierarchy meant that most male teachers made more money for their work in schools than did most female teachers. This fact did not go unnoticed by the women who began over this period to meet within the newly formed Women's Teachers' Associations (WTA) to seek improvement for women teachers.

Along with improved salaries, these women teachers also wanted improved pensions for women teachers. As we have discussed, although ostensibly the provincial plan that was established over these years placed the same requirements on men and women, local policies often meant that the outcomes concerning pension benefits were quite different for men than for women teachers. Women were less likely, as we have seen, to have made salaries equal to those of men. They were seldom given "extensions" allowing them to teach beyond required retirement age limits set within the board and, indeed, those limits were different for men and women and allowed men longer teaching careers

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upon which their pensions could be based. Once again the hierarchy and the different positions available to men and women within that hierarchy supported advantages to men and disadvantages for women teachers.

Reformers who noted this discrimination based on gender and who tried to alter the "grammar of schooling" in the period met with limited success. Women in the WTA were told that they had nothing to complain about in comparison to women in other roles in society at that time. They were also criticized in the press for the "indelicacy" of their behaviour in coming to meetings *en masse* to support improved salaries for women teachers.

When it came to pensions, reformers were told that men and women had the same requirements and the same rights to benefits. They had only to behave in the same ways in order to reap the same rewards. As we have seen, however, inequities in salaries and in positioning within the hierarchy made a difference. Also, policies in many local boards against allowing married women to teach, and specifying earlier retirement ages for women teachers, meant that females were seldom able to enjoy the same pension levels as those of their male peers. When men and women teachers complained about their pensions, they were told to be more considerate of others in the labour force. Indeed, by the late 1930s such consideration meant that they were encouraged, or required, to give up their jobs so that young teachers could have a better chance for employment.

Our discussion of policies and positioning also makes clear that the "grammar of schooling", its regular structures and rules, became particularly resistant to challenges for reform during periods of economic downturn and low teacher demand, such as was experienced in the 1930s. Hard-fought gains which teachers had made during earlier times of relative prosperity, and the high demand for teachers, were open to reconsideration when the overall system sought to "rationalize" its existence. When resources became scarce, competition between men and women teachers increased. Competition within the teacher workforce also increased on grounds other than gender, as newcomers vied with veterans, elementary schools competed with secondary schools, and administrators and teachers struggled for what resources were available. This struggle, at so many levels within the teacher workforce, mitigated against their cooperation in terms of reforms relating to salaries, pensions, and other material conditions. It also diverted their attention away from inequities and discrimination etched into the

regular structures and rules of the continuing grammar of the school system.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Trustee Dr. Minerva Reid's comments at school board meetings during 1935 and 1936 (Toronto Board of Education [TBE] Minutes).

2. Where he quickly took an outspoken leadership position in favour of cuts to teachers' salaries and educational expenditures generally, as well as continuing discriminatory retirement practices against women teachers in the Board. See, for example, *Toronto Daily Star*, March 3, 1938.

3. In fact, the women involved had already had some experience with the successes of collective action. Six years previously, in 1879, some had balked at a Board demand that they "muster with their classes" (*Canadian Educational Monthly*, 1 (10), Oct. 1879, p. 528) for a civic parade being held in honour of the Governor-General. It was an action which, after much attention from the Board and the local press (*The Globe*, Sept. 18, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, 1879) proved successful, in spite of criticism in at least one journal that their actions posed the

danger . . . of encouraging a disregard of constituted authority, and of weakening the claims of school discipline in the case of those who should be the first to respect and maintain them; . . . [and of] placing oneself heedlessly out of accord with one's professional brethren [sic] (*Canadian Educational Monthly*, 1 (10), 529, Oct. 1879).

A similar event occurred four years later, in 1883, when a number of women teachers had attended a meeting of the Toronto Board in order to request a raise in salary. While they were not successful at that time, once again they did gain some publicity in the press for their actions (*The Telegram*, Feb. 22, 1883).

4. In 1891, for example, the executive of the women's association presented a petition to the Board, signed by 361 women teachers in the city. See TBE Minutes, 1891, pp. 133-134.

5. Not to be pursued here, unfortunately, is the relation of these women teachers, and their organization, to the organizations and activities of the contemporary women's movement. See, for example, *Themes* (Prentice) and *Virtuous Women* (Bryans).

6. See, for example, *Virtuous Women* (Bryans).

7. The marriage ban has already been mentioned in this regard. See, for example, *Toronto Star*, Aug. 25, 1938; *The Telegram*, Mar. 20, May 18, 1936; *The Daily Mail and Empire*, Mar. 20, 1936.

8. See the *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada* [DHE], Vol. 11, p. 289. That the motivations for this plan were not solely humanitarian in nature, was made clear by the comments of the Council of Public Instruction at the time. The plan, they stated, "will prove a strong ground of encouragement to many to enter a profession hitherto but ill-required, while it cannot fail to provoke increased zeal and exertions on the part of those already engaged therein" (DHE, Vol. 10, p. 163).

9. Ryerson, of course, saw things differently. In his 1871 *Annual Report* he complained that "the Legislature performed its part generously, but the teachers, except in a very few isolated cases, failed to do theirs" (p. 47).

10. For example, during most of the years in the two decades between 1853 and 1873 there were approximately equal numbers of male and female teachers in the public elementary schools of the province. By 1873, however, only 5 percent (15 of 292) of all teachers

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pensioned to date under the plan were women (*Annual Report*, Toronto Board of Education, 1853, p. 28; 1873, p. 195).

11. In addition, there were many other drawbacks for teachers. Pensions were only available to teachers who had "devoted the greater part of their lives to teaching" or those who were no longer physically capable of teaching. While no specific number of teaching years was stipulated, many early recipients of the pensions reported having taught 40 to 50 years, and even those qualifying during the first year of the plan under the poor health category, reported having taught an average of over 20 years (Smaller, H. [Dec. 1993], Teachers and schools in early Ontario, *Ontario History*, 85 (4)). Other qualifying criteria included an annual letter of reference from a religious or other official, attesting to a "good moral character, and sober steady habits" (*Annual Report*, 1871, p. 51). It was also proved very difficult, and expensive, for teachers in rural areas to collect their annual pension payment.

12. See the *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada*, Vol. 22, p. 279; Vol. 23, p. 126.

13. In 1883, for example, Trustee Ogden submitted a notice-of-motion at the Toronto Board to "supplement" pensions of retiring city teachers – only to withdraw the motion two months later (TBE Minutes, 1883, pp. 26, 65).

14. There were also provisions for smaller pensions for those who were to retire in the ensuing ten years, and as a result would otherwise not be teaching long enough to build up complete pension credits (Toronto Board of Education Minutes, 1912, Appendix, pp. 570-573).

15. Clearly, however, many women teachers – especially those in rural areas – were unable to benefit from pension plans over the years because of the tenuousness of their employment conditions.

16. See *The Telegram*, Feb. 22, 1935. A Board by-law expressly allowed trustees this option of extending contracts past official retirement age, and it was often exercised in needy cases. The "savings" would have presumably been realized by hiring younger and cheaper teachers in their place.

17. See *The Telegram*, Mar. 4, 1936. See also reports in the *Toronto Daily Star* of March 4 and 5, 1936. This action was taken, in spite of a Board by-law which specifically allowed trustees the option of extending retirement dates of individual teachers so requesting.

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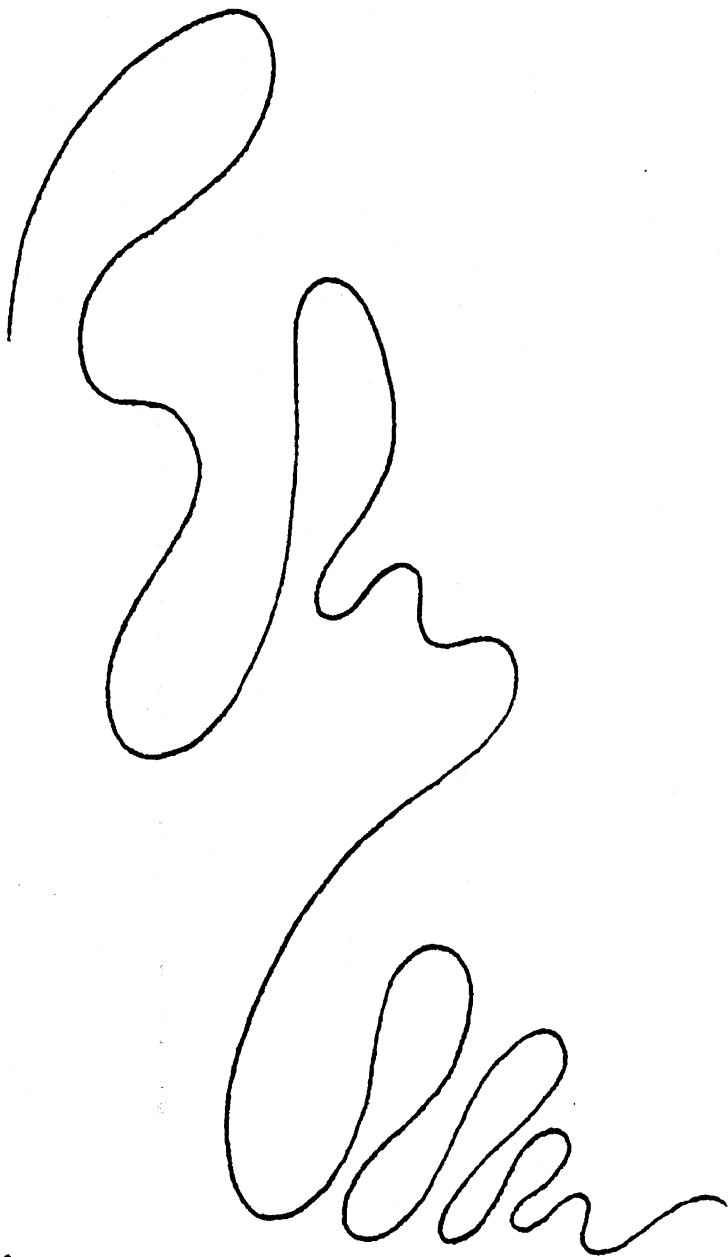
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