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Hegelian Resolutions in the New Education Movement: The 1925 Putman-Weir Report

During the first quarter of this century interest groups throughout North America advocated the survey for guidance of educational policy. A number of heterogeneous elements became incorporated into what amounted in Canada to a reform campaign, the New Education Movement. This paper will examine the nature of this movement, particularly in its third phase when it had reached its most nearly complete form of expression, and will point out the major tensions inherent in new educational thought. The attempt of two leading reformers, J. H. Putman and G. M. Weir, to resolve these tensions with their neo-Hegelian and new liberal political philosophy is particularly evident in their 1925 survey of the public schools of British Columbia,¹ popularly called the Putman-Weir Report. In all of its major recommendations the Report reflected the New Educational philosophy and Ottawa school practices of its chairman, Inspector Putman, as well as the school practices of most American administrative progressives, as described in numerous recent studies.² The historical significance of the B.C. *Survey of Schools*, therefore, is found not particularly in its British Columbia setting, but more in the 1925 Canadian expression of this New Educational thought. The ambivalences contained therein are still implicit in Canadian schooling today. It is thus important to understand the contradictions inherent in this progressive school reform movement.

New Education, as the late Douglas Lawr describes it, was "a comprehensive term which generally meant the new purposes, methodology and subjects which came to be applied to the schools around the turn of the century".³ Its intellectual parentage of neo-Hegelian Idealism and naturalistic philosophy, both of which will be further outlined in the body of this paper, provided the movement with its philosophical base and psychological justification. In its earlier stages the New Education Movement was promoted by progressive educa-

tional reformers, such as Toronto Inspector James L. Hughes who brought the first kindergartens into the public schools of Canada, and by a private philanthropist, Sir William Macdonald, whose tobacco fortune was used to promote the merits of scientific agriculture and practical courses, particularly in Canadian rural schools. His executor, J. W. Robertson, under the Macdonald Plan established graded, consolidated rural schools in the eastern provinces to act as community object lessons for nature study, manual training and domestic science programmes. Macdonald and Robertson were implementing many of the proposals advocated by the American Country Life promoters, whose vast propaganda created a myth that rural education was the panacea for all agrarian problems.

Within a decade, however, educational reformers recognized the failure of this movement for rural regeneration. Canada was becoming a nation transformed by massive immigration, rural-to-urban shifts of population and large-scale industrial development schemes which altered the nature of the socio-economic problems affecting schooling. In its second phase the New Education Movement became urban and vocational in its orientation. Robertson epitomized this shift in his new role as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, a major inquiry established in 1910 by the Canadian Liberal Government under the instigation of its new Minister of Labour, W. L. Mackenzie King. Its purpose was to recommend to the federal government how it could assist and guide the development of vocational and technical education, normally a provincial preserve, across Canada. Robertson's 1913 four-volumed Report reflected the new concerns of the progressive reformer for a schooling which would more adequately educate the urban child as a democratic citizen and train him for his future vocation.

By the time the third phase had been reached in the 1920s models provided by American "administrative progressives,"⁴ as David Tyack terms them, had been absorbed by the new educators, and wartime experiences had intensified their convictions. Practical elements had been integrated into provincial programmes of study; manual training, vocational and technical education, domestic science, nature study, school gardening and physical education were considered necessary parts of a modern school curriculum. Urban school systems also were provided with medical and dental inspection services. Progressive administrators added intelligence testing after the War to give them leverage for their attack on societal concerns over mental defectives, physically disabled children and general "misfits" who impeded the progress of the normal students. To provide them with more effective power against parental or societal objections, progressive new educa-

tors altered administrative procedures so that expert decisions were made at the executive level, removed from ward politics. Their model for these professional management practices was that of the industrial corporation. Administrators also cited progressive municipal practices advocated by Canadian urban reformers, many of whom were also active in the New Education Movement. By 1925 new educators had worked out the major tenets of their campaign. The Putman-Weir Report represented the latest of their "sophisticated blueprints,"⁵ as Neil Sutherland calls them, and culminated more than a century of debate over the direction that reformers thought Canada's New Education should take.

Two groups began the campaign to have the Liberal government in British Columbia play a more active role with regard to school reform. In 1921-22 both agreed that the means to this end should be through an educational survey. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities complained about the government policy of shifting more and more of the tax burden on the local ratepayer (from approximately half to more than double the provincial contributions since 1900), the increased number of subjects presented (particularly vocational courses), the expansion of the educational bureaucracy necessitated by this curricular trend, and the lack of clarity about the role of the Board of School Trustees *vis-à-vis* the Municipal Councils. These new school trends, in the Union's estimation, led to waste, unnecessary duplication of officials and extravagant practices. It recommended in its Brief to the Speaker in 1921 that an income tax be levied on all individuals and companies.⁶

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation passed a resolution at its Annual General Meeting on April twenty-first, 1922, urging that a survey of the provincial school system be made. The public school principals and the senior grade section suggested that a team of competent surveyors should review every phase of the educational system and recommend any changes it considered necessary. The high school section "went on record as favouring a survey of the high schools in the Province by the Department of Education with the object of providing more facilities for students who do not intend to go into university or normal school."⁷

Perhaps due to frustration over their fruitless campaign since 1900 to have a more centralized and efficient municipal government established in Vancouver, progressive urban reformers, especially Dr. F. J. Nicholson, Chairman of the Vancouver School Board, assumed leadership of the growing survey campaign. A number of delegates for such diverse groups as the Parent-Teachers' Federation of British Columbia, the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Vancouver Trades and Labour

Council, numerous service clubs, and the Associated Property Owners' Association of Vancouver presented a petition to the Minister of Education, J. D. MacLean, on November twenty-eighth, 1923, calling for the survey to be launched.⁸

Despite their diverse interests they were all confident that "independent educational experts" could "fearlessly" tell the public what were the most "scientific" principles that could be applied to the classroom. The findings would "command unquestioned respect and inspire a confidence in the general public that will insure their ungrudging financial support of a sound educational policy."⁹ The *B.C. Teacher* further spelled out the type of political leadership expected by the provincial reformers. From a variety of viewpoints—"strict economist", "idealist" and "materialist"—the survey would draw out all opinions on schooling. It would give educational data, tabulate it accurately, make comparisons and suggestions of vital importance. Finally, its findings on how to "evolutionize" the educational system would be far more respected than individual ideas.¹⁰ Consensus on moderate change, then, was the goal of the reformers.

In its presentation to the Municipal Committee of the Legislature the delegation also urged that American experts be sought (Major H. B. King did not even agree that Dr. Weir should be considered as, in his opinion, no man in Canada had the required special qualifications) and that funds be obtained from either the U.S. General Education Board or the Rockefeller Foundation.¹¹ Numerous American cities by this time had used the survey for cost-benefit analysis of their educational systems. In 1918, as a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Toronto Professor Peter Sandiford, C. E. Mark had studied the Ottawa Public Schools.¹² A comparative survey of leading Canadian cities was conducted by W. L. Richardson.¹³ Saskatchewan had called on a specialist in rural school practice from the U.S. Bureau of Education, Dr. Harold Foght, to conduct a survey of the province in 1918. Norman F. Black, a strong New Education leader who had been involved in the Saskatchewan Public Education League's preceding campaign but was now a leader of the survey campaign in B.C., termed Foght's appointment "a clear call for a thorough-going educational stocktaking by a disinterested outside expert."¹⁴

Education Minister MacLean continued to stall, however. He claimed that outside of the City of Vancouver he had had no urgent requests for a survey. With a slim majority of four in the Provincial Legislature, with education already a contentious issue because of its high costs for vocational and high school expansion, with municipal costs skyrocketing and with a provincial debt of \$54 million because of railway guarantees and highway expansion, MacLean stuck to his

reputation as a conscientious but extremely cautious cabinet minister. He told the press that he was waiting for public pressure to build up on the members of the Legislature so that they would not hesitate to vote for the survey.¹⁵

Another, more potent reason, perhaps, for his stalling was the timing of his departmental inquiry with Premier John Oliver's call for a provincial election. MacLean had his Superintendent of Education announce the granting of the Survey at the annual banquet of the B.C. Teachers' Federation on April twenty-third, 1924, and three weeks later Oliver announced that an election was to be held on June twentieth. On June fifth the Premier announced that two educational experts were appointed to the Commission, Dr. G. M. Weir, thirty-nine years of age and recently appointed professor of education at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. J. H. Putman, twenty years older than Weir and Senior Inspector of Schools in Ottawa.¹⁶ They were to be assisted by "technically trained experts" from outside the province, and they were given an extremely wide scope of investigation, indicated by nineteen leading questions which encompassed the academic, professional, financial, and administrative aspects of the educational system.¹⁷ The announcement of the educational survey did not improve the fortunes of the Liberals. The Premier was defeated and Liberal seats fell to eighteen, with fifteen seats going to the Conservatives, three to the new Provincial Party, and two others to Independents.

The two education commissioners were not to be deterred. They began work almost immediately. Putman arrived from Ottawa and tried out some achievement tests on the children before they left school. Weir spent two weeks in classroom observation. During the summer they collected their expert technical advisors, Professor Peter Sandiford of the University of Toronto who prepared testing materials and spent September and October coaching inspectors on how to administer them, Professors H. F. Angus and S. E. Beckett from the University of British Columbia, the latter to advise on educational finance, Professor F. C. Ayer from the University of Washington, and Mr. A. W. Cocks, an expert in statistics.¹⁸

Both the Premier¹⁹ and *The Vancouver Daily Province* defended this strongly academic panel, criticized both by the B.C. School Trustees' Association, which wanted businessmen appointed,²⁰ and by some members of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, who objected to Weir's appointment.²¹ The *Province* echoed similar arguments advanced by Dr. Nicholson before his fellow trustees²² and instructed its readership that, before any reforms were made in education, a review along business lines should be taken:

Every business man knows the value of taking stock periodically. The process serves to show him his exact position. ... A school survey is an educational stocktaking. It is an impartial and expert examination into everything connected with education. It should show, among other things, whether the people of British Columbia are getting value for the \$8,000,000 they spend each year on education. It should show, also, whether the 90,000 pupils and students of the province are getting as much as they might out of the time they spend at school and in study.²³

But the survey served an even more important function, as Black outlined to his readers in an article on the subject. After describing numerous American and English examples of surveys which led to important reforms in education, he concluded, "Modern survey methods have long since passed out of the experimental stage. Throughout the world the survey is now recognized as the most potent means of concentrating public attention on educational needs and conditions and of strengthening the hands of progressive leaders in general in their perennial battle for the increased efficiency of the people's schools."²⁴ At a very basic, political level the survey was meant to be a poll of public opinion. The commissioners made a point of advertising that they wanted to secure the views of every class in the community.²⁵ As the 215 hearings proceeded, however, it became apparent to the commissioners that there was a wide divergence of public opinion over the direction that educational policy should take,²⁶ and the public became aware that the commissioners themselves "embarked on the task with preconceived notions and not with an open mind."²⁷

After a year of polling public opinion on education across the province, the commissioners were prepared to launch their new educational attack. The Report was submitted to the Department of Education on 13 May 1925. The first four chapters of their Report cleared the decks for the ensuing onslaught on the non-progressivist enemies—whether of the traditionalist, materialist or socialist stamp. In typical business-efficiency style, these enemies were categorized, their opinions impugned and then they were banished beyond the pale of the respectable democratic community.

The covering letter indicated why so much attention was paid to public opinion. The commissioners admitted that "Education has not yet become an exact science. Indeed, the very nature of some of its problems precludes a wholly scientific treatment. Therefore a number of our conclusions are matters of opinion and proper subjects for educational discussion."²⁸ What they had to establish in the mind of the public, therefore, was the superiority of their educational viewpoint. They did this by hierarchically grading the levels of public opinion that they had encountered and rhetorically eliminating the

outside extremists. Three levels were first defined, opinion based on prejudice or local self-interest, that based on "an intelligent knowledge of the factors involved in our educational problems and on an appreciation of their social implications,"²⁹ and the opinion of experts, which even the courts accepted under certain conditions. Since the business of education was largely a "social enterprise,"³⁰ the great diversity of educational viewpoints, exacerbated by geographic, economic and financial problems across the province, had to be crystallized before reform could take place.

Through their hearings the commissioners had hoped to start the consciousness-raising process so that the average citizen would accept the rational arguments advanced by the commissioners in support of modern education. But in their Report they made it clear that at a higher level still were conclusions based on quantitative studies. Urging that a Canadian Bureau of Statistical Measurement be established, they used the business analogy of cost-accounting to effect greater efficiency. If educational statisticians were employed by Departments of Education, "a new era would dawn in the history of Canadian education,"³¹ provincial systems of school inspection would be put on a more scientific basis, accurate knowledge would supplant mere opinion, more efficient administrative policies would accrue with a commensurate reduction of wastage and over-lapping of effort. Educational systems would be "moulded in accordance with scientifically determined educational objectives."³²

That day, however, was not yet at hand, so educational problems could only be solved on the basis of opinion. Significantly, their Report recommended that educational policy should be guided by educational experts who would use their competent observation, the latest scientific findings, and adherence to the best educational thought of the day primarily to guide them. These experts should keep in mind, too, the five classes of public opinion with which they had to contend. Opinions on education varied, in the commissioners' minds, from reactionary and ultra-conservative, through the conservative, moderate and progressivist types, to radical points of view.³³ Weir, who probably wrote this section of the Report, estimated that sixty per cent of the briefs they had received were from the "moderate" school of thought, fifteen per cent from the conservative type and twelve per cent represented the "progressive style."³⁴ Only five per cent could be labelled reactionary and only a handful were radicals. Putman considered that there was a substantial number of people in British Columbia with very conservative ideas who held to the notion that individual parents should pay for the education of their children.³⁵

The commissioners condemned two types of conservatives, the traditionalists, dominated by the theory of formal discipline which "stands forth as a hoary-headed idol of pedagogical iniquity before the entrances to many educational institutions of the Province,"³⁶ and the "official type of mind," which was likely to become as "'rutty' and myopic in outlook as are the hide-bound formal disciplinarians."³⁷ They admitted, "Like the poor (in thought), a certain class of pseudo-prophets, would-be sages, and dabblers in the field of educational theory, we shall always have with us."³⁸ Affirming the optimism of eighteenth-century liberalism, however, they concluded, "Only the persistent and enlightened pressure of public opinion can shame either class into foresaking its false gods."³⁹ Thus, the four extremes of public opinion were condemned, the upper-class business-men, ward politicians, traditionalists and socialistic centralizers. In all cases they were considered dangerous because their opinions were likely to lead either to public disinterest in education or to feelings of alienation.

Since roughly fifty per cent, or a majority of the citizens, in the commissioners' judgment, were of the moderate class—who believed that the curriculum was old-fashioned and needed expert revision, supported the concepts of middle or junior high schools and vocational education, and advised caution and close scrutiny of educational expenditure, even to the point of "pay-as-you-go doctrines"⁴⁰—this class of public opinion should be supported. Pragmatically they argued that when "the case for a forward step in education is thus objectively proven to the leaders of this class, they are prepared to advance as rapidly as material circumstances will permit."⁴¹ Similarly the commissioners supported the democratic claims of children of average ability to be allowed free access to secondary education. In their estimation such students "form the stabilizing factor in the majority of high schools, and in later life they will probably exert the great steadying influence in our political and social organization."⁴²

The school's main function was to lead the way in modern social and industrial expansion,⁴³ therefore the commissioners recommended that certain clear-cut principles had to be inculcated into the moderate class of citizen in order to avoid dangers to a stable evolutionary process. Centralized control, espoused by either socialistic, or what they called "Prussian,"⁴⁴ forms of government, should be eschewed. It tended to weaken the powers of local self-government, resulting in the loss of local initiative and interest in the schools. It led also to political manipulation and partisanship in educational appointments. Pork-barrel administrations and large educational bureaucracies would waste capital expenditures. Thus local support as well as sufficient but not onerous property taxes were fundamental. State aid should

increase the active and efficient participation of the citizens in a democratic government. The commissioners, particularly Putman, supported the de-centralized control of education for conservative reasons; it would induce the average citizen to participate in the evolutionary progress of educational reform and thus de-fuse anarchistic elements from gaining control of educational decision-making. It would also ensure that power would remain in the hands of professional educational administrators on whose expert advice this moderate class of citizens was dependent.

For similar reasons the commissioners rejected control of the administration of schools by Municipal Councils. Their arguments quickly became coloured to reveal the true nature of their attack. In their judgment, unless a highly efficient administration directly responsible to the people but removed from the "petty foibles and intrigues of ward politics"⁴⁵ was set up, the status of education would be so weakened that it "would ultimately result in the collapse of our social system."⁴⁶ Society "recognizes that the best form of state insurance against anarchy and bolshevism is an efficient system of public education."⁴⁷ Thus, a "hypocritical frugality," by "worshippers of materialism," whose motives "are sometimes intrinsically selfish,"⁴⁸ should be scorned. All able citizens who had served on both Municipal Councils and School Boards affirmed the opinion, "Hands off the school boards."

By this time the administrative progressive was becoming strongly persuaded by the techniques of the social sciences. Walter Lippmann's influential book, *Public Opinion*,⁴⁹ had just been published. With the increase of the franchise, the rising tide of trade unionism and working-class consciousness, more sophisticated methods of control of the decision-making processes had to be devised by the professional educational administrator. Both social scientists and progressive Christian reformers argued that the active participation of citizens in democratic processes and a more positive role by the state in promoting reform endeavours, would lead to a higher stage of moral enlightenment and would prevent class conflict.

This higher level of social evolution, unfortunately from the commissioners' viewpoint, had not yet been reached by British Columbians: "it appears doubtful whether the citizens of British Columbia have yet attained that stage of social enlightenment and toleration which will enable them to sink all petty differences and unite in a great campaign of moral emancipation through the agency of the common school."⁵⁰ To point them in the correct direction they reminded them of the "palladia of British liberty," in which cherished ideals of freedom and self-government had been socialized in such institutions as parli-

amentary government, religious liberty, freedom of the press, extension of the franchise, public health and education, and recognition of the rights of labour.⁵¹ They noted that democracies had advanced through trial and error; in the process they had gained virility and national self-consciousness, witness the Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlement and Canada's British North America Act.

There was an important caveat, however, in this evolutionary journey: "Freedom to be, to do, to become, when duly subordinated to social obligation, has become the birthright of every Britisher."⁵² The school had to impress on the child that he was a member of society and a future citizen because its fundamental aim was the "development of a united and intelligent Canadian citizenship actuated by the highest British ideals of justice, tolerance, and fair play."⁵³ In all cases individual development should be subsumed to "the paramount duty and importance of harmonizing such development with social needs and obligations."⁵⁴

This was the Hegelian resolution of the antagonism between the supposed idealistic and realistic brands of popular opinion. There was a moral recognition by these two groups, claimed the commissioners, that the final aim of education was the development of the intellect for the service of others as well as the self, the enriching and refining of emotions and sentiments in the appreciation of one's duty to one's fellow men and the body politic. Moral and spiritual values, therefore, provided the common interest base of the body politic in its valuation of education. They comprised the ground for a democratic community. It was only the materialists, the "beef-steak" educationists evaluating all instruction in terms of its earning power, who failed to recognize these fundamental values. The commissioners condemned them to stand outside what they were establishing as public interest norms.

As Paul Craven notes,⁵⁵ class concepts now were replaced with a notion of Public that was far more powerful ideologically than a simple Community notion of shared interests.⁵⁶ The new liberal was separating those responsible or likely to be responsible for social disorder from the rest of the community. But the commissioners, as other new liberals in western democracies, were affirming one value system, a voluntaristic, free democratic ethic based on individual initiative and experimentation, but practising another in their administrative policy. Craven points out that a Community, established through mutual interest in social co-operation, had quite a different goal from the interest of the Public, which would not hesitate to use coercion if voluntarism failed.⁵⁷ If Reason could not convince public opinion, then it was deemed in the public interest to enforce efficiency

on the community so that industry in turn could continue to operate at peak efficiency.

Two ideological bases were used to buttress these more coercive administrative practices. In Chapters Five to Eight of the Report, Putman used the neo-Hegelian philosophy that he had learned from Professor John Watson at Queen's University to support his psychological and progressive administrative recommendations. He and Weir fully espoused the new behaviouristic psychology of Edward Thorndike, whose student, Peter Sandiford, was the leading advocate in Canada. All three recommended the subtle and not-so-subtle forms of social manipulation to train the child to take his place "as an efficient participant in the duties and activities of life."⁵⁸ Compulsory education should be increased to the child's fifteenth year so that he could receive "the irreducible minimum of training necessary...to the attainment of marked success in industry, commerce, or the art of home-making."⁵⁹ Standardized achievement and intelligence tests should be applied at every grade level to establish "accomplishment quotients,"⁶⁰ which would assure the smooth progress of the average student through the system, but would also allow the teachers to diagnose individual differences, aptitudes and weaknesses. Special classes for the gifted, the dull, and the mentally or physically handicapped, as well as streaming in the junior high school would not only "enable the child to live worthily at each stage of his development,"⁶¹ but would ensure that the system operated with maximum efficiency. A more complex society demanded a more complex school organization and a more variegated curriculum to meet the needs of a wider school population. They would prevent the current high rate of matriculation failure and high school drop-out.

The commissioners noted the improvement of the B.C. high school enrolment, from 6.61 per cent of the population in 1915, to 10.28 per cent in 1924, and the fact that with this increased attendance, there was a lowered average intelligence of pupils. These developments necessitated a change from the traditional to a more modern curriculum which would provide immediate and explicit values to the pupils based on their own experiences and the changing conditions of modern life. Above all, their interest must be attracted so that they would develop initiative and resourcefulness through projects, or "purposive activities," designed to arouse common attitudes and appreciations. A well-balanced curriculum, therefore, encompassed the immediate needs of life and the preparation for the aesthetic enjoyment of leisure.

A central premise of Watson's neo-Hegelianism was that, as Putman expressed it in his Report, "The world is a unity and man progresses in wisdom and real knowledge only in proportion as he

gains in power to reduce an infinite number of seemingly separate phenomena to some semblance of law and order."⁶² Because of this, school and society could not be separated; they acted and reacted on each other continuously. The task of the school was to lead man's self-conscious intellect from the level of an animal organism, through the natural deterministic laws of the sciences to a higher plane of reality in which man's reason could find the universal norms, interpreted by Watson as the will of God within the concrete experiences of his everyday life, and rise to higher levels of self-realization.⁶³ This was essentially an ethical task in which the human reason became the pre-eminent tool to interpret the concrete experiences of everyday life, social and political institutions, artistic expressions, and finally religious beliefs as higher and more perfect forms of the universal, spiritual principle unfolding in the world. It drew out and synthesized the dialectic conflict between man's everyday concrete life and the demands of the Divine which lay as potentials for higher levels of self-consciousness to be developed within everyday life experiences.

The school had an extremely important role to play in this process of self-realization. As Putman emphasized in a 1922 address to the Ontario Education Association, "If education be a never ending progress in grasping relations, if every step forward in seeing relations reveals relations not previously recognized, if everything in creation has some relation to every other thing, if nature including God and man is a unity, then the social and business life of the community is a starting point for the social life of my school."⁶⁴

The fundamental purpose of all school machinery was then "to furnish for the child an experience that will stimulate growth or increased power in some direction thought as desirable by those in charge of him," and/or, "to furnish for the child the most favourable possible environment for developing certain skills or tastes or attitudes or appreciations thought of again as desirable by those in charge of the child."⁶⁵ Its subject materials, instead of being formal, logically-organized disciplines, became instead "an organization into loosely differentiated groups of these different experience materials,"⁶⁶ the teacher varying either the individual experience or the environmental factors to develop the requisite powers and social skills deemed necessary for further growth.

A major reason for their diatribe against the formal disciplinarians was that the commissioners, following both philosophical tenets and new psychological norms, recognized that this upward journey in self-consciousness had to begin with self-activity. Putman drew an analogy between the concept of mind under the old faculty theory of psychology and the newer idealistic concept. Contradicting the former view, he

affirmed that our "minds are not like putty. They choose and select. ...It would be more correct...to compare the mind at birth to marble."⁶⁷ At the same time he recognized that growth could not be developed apart from attitudes, tastes and appreciations "because every mental state has its emotional 'halo'."⁶⁸

Knowledge was envisaged as progressing by focussing attention now upon the whole and now upon its parts because a "study of unrelated parts is meaningless."⁶⁹ Experiential meaning, for the individual child's "needs," assumed a place of central importance for his continued growth, activity and acquisition of knowledge. The commissioners heaped scorn on the elaborate schemes of curriculum design with their minutiae of detail which were based on the logic of the subject. Instead they promoted the project method, at that time causing "more discussion, oral and written, among teachers in the past ten years than any other school subject."⁷⁰ They believed that if the selection of big projects of study as cores of interest from which a child's investigations would radiate were adopted instead, the need for fine classifications of students and half-yearly promotions, which in their estimation kept children in a state of "feverish excitement," would be obviated. The need for classification remained, however, but "only for a classification that groups together children sufficiently alike in age, mental ability, and emotional development to enable them to attack like projects."⁷¹

It was significant that Putman in one breath described the merits of the project method and in the next talked about the classification of pupils. At all times their growth and development was to be in a social dimension, seen in an organizational context. Even the subject matter of the projects was to be in the public domain. He posited the situation of two boys differing in age by three years working co-operatively on an investigation of the various factors that built up the Okanagan fruit industry, concluding with a description of the current state of the industry. The child's interests were to be directed to the immediate concrete world and an understanding of its relationships.

He did recognize, however, that the project method as outlined above, was not suitable for subnormal pupils, whose I.Q. was below ninety. Their educational training through projects had to be of a radically different nature from that of normal children. Their presence in regular classes also retarded the progress of the other pupils, so Putman advocated their segregation in special classes and schools. Supernormal, or gifted children, on the other hand, although profiting from special class treatment because of a different rate of intellectual and emotional growth, should have an enriched programme of study, but not be removed from the regular high school. Putman advised, "If

they are to be the leaders of the next generation it seems reasonable that they must understand those whom they are to lead. Mutual understanding and good will can come only from intimate association. The class-room, the work-shop, the auditorium, and the playground provide admirably for this intimate association."⁷² Hegelian élitism was therefore implicit in this new educational philosophy. A small group of intellectually gifted children was to be educated as leaders and they were to use their elementary and junior high school education primarily as a training ground for leadership. The majority of normal children, on the other hand, were to be socialized for harmonious "following" through their junior high programme.

A core of liberal arts subjects, comprising up to forty periods per week, was designed to draw this average student out of his self-centred individualism. Science was studied "to awaken and satisfy his curiosity through a study of Nature's works and laws and inspire him with a feeling of reverence toward the Creator who manifests himself through these laws."⁷³ History and civics were taught so "that he may learn who he is, whence he came, who are his neighbours, what are his relations with them and his obligations toward them."⁷⁴ Home economics should be compulsory for all girls because they should "have systematic and well-directed instruction and practice in those activities—cooking, sewing, washing clothes, ironing, mending, darning, sweeping, making beds, scrubbing, simple nursing, judging and testing textiles, marketing, budgeting—which are fundamental to home-making and therefore fundamental in building up and preserving a healthy nation."⁷⁵

Expression was to be cultivated, but not in private forms, rather it was designed to direct and correlate students' understanding of literature, composition, history and music into a higher plane. The greatest value of classical music, for instance, was that it cultivated "an unselfish taste and appreciation that enables its recipient to live his leisure on a high ethical plane."⁷⁶ It had aesthetic utility, also, because its universal language trained and refined the emotions and led to an appreciation of the highest forms that civilization had developed. The auditorium period provided a good outlet for musical forms of expression, as well as training students in the social forms and procedures of debating, speaking in public, and conducting mock parliaments.

Although the liberal arts were espoused for aesthetic and ethical reasons in this practical creed of Idealism, they had a strong functional dimension. Future citizens had to learn to behave in socially harmonious directions. Literature and art were the keystones of the programme of studies because, in Putman's words, one "of the main purposes of any school—and this is especially true of an adolescent

school—is to develop attitudes and appreciations.”⁷⁷ Again these were for social reasons: “It is a matter of supreme concern how man spends his leisure time.”⁷⁸ Canadian taste, Putman judged, was “common and undiscriminating.” Significantly, however, this taste he considered not aesthetically deficient. Art was recommended as a subject in the schools because we “can produce things distinctively Canadian that will sell abroad only when we shall develop a distinctively Canadian art.”⁷⁹

This utilitarianism of the neo-Hegelian new educator, ironically, was at variance with the original primary reason for the adoption of the Hegelian gospel throughout much of the English-speaking world. The fear that Darwinian evolution and association psychology would lead to sensationalism, the relativity of knowledge and a rejection of traditional metaphysics led Watson to develop his philosophy of Speculative Idealism, “the doctrine that we are capable of knowing Reality as it actually is, and that Reality when so known is absolutely rational....”⁸⁰ His philosophy gave a new conception of design and purpose in the universe which encompassed evolutionary science. It offered a trenchant critique of empiricism and revealed the limitations of the scientific method. But with its concern for the social dimension of reality, it fell prey to the utilitarianism of which it accused its enemies.⁸¹ Watson argued that the state should provide a variety of schools offering opportunity and “open careers” to all classes, and helping each individual develop his natural talents to the full. But the individual was only to be developed “until he has proven to be incompetent”⁸² for a particular vocational level, and each level was to be devoted to the “production” of the highest level of efficiency. High standards would thereby lead to the highest commercial and industrial success of the country. Watson’s chief concern was for a national system of education which would produce intelligent and patriotic citizens.

His organicism, therefore, implied a deep conservatism—Watson admitted that he would probably be labelled “unprogressive and reactionary.”⁸³ For him the modern trend toward mobility of the mind and a decreased sense of individual responsibility was a danger to the high life of the community. Differing from Putman and Weir, he termed options in high school “dangerous experiments” leading to narrow-mindedness and the decline of scholarship from which the whole community would suffer. Instead, he advocated a compulsory curriculum, stringent examinations and an élitist system designed to produce enlightened leaders.

Putman inherited Watson’s basic assumption that “the great majority of human beings have very ordinary mental powers.”⁸⁴ He also

retained his teleological hope for individual self-realization. But, since this would only be available to the élite students, another criterion, character, was introduced to offer an achievable goal for the majority of citizens: "A high moral purpose, when united with a dogged perseverance, often enables a man or woman of average mental ability to make a life infinitely more beautiful and profitable than the life achieved by another of extra-ordinary mental gifts but lacking in character. No possible intelligence tests can determine at thirteen the relative final values to society of any two boys or two girls."⁸⁵ The creed of practical Idealism, then, served another utilitarian function; it glossed over the measures the schools increasingly were adopting to determine the vocational future of their students.

The psychological rationale espoused by these progressive educators served a similar deterministic function, but on a genetic level. According to its chief proponent, Clark University's G. Stanley Hall, whose child-study psychology had been incorporated into the kindergarten and primary education wing of the New Education Movement, society was faced with "the crucial choice between uncontrolled individual avarice and service to the collective needs of the community."⁸⁶ Influenced in large part by German idealist philosophers, as well as Herbert Spencer, and having his own version of Darwinian evolution, he devised a recapitulation theory which culminated in what Raymond Jackson Wilson has termed a "genetic community."⁸⁷ Each human being, he believed, passed through the evolutionary stages traversed by the species. As a result, he shared psychologically in the collective race of humanity. His naturalistic theory, devised in part by empirical observation, provided child study enthusiasts with an anthropological rationale for new techniques of education.

Play became important in the learning activities of young children. As Putman wrote,

Left to themselves children of seven to twelve will in their play-activities recapitulate the history of the race. They will in turn live in make-believe caves, tents, and houses. They will be Eskimos today, wandering Arabs tomorrow, and something else next week.... In fine weather they would, if allowed, go almost naked and dress in skins when it is cold.... They love to trade and barter. They will spend days in building a store and stocking it with make-believe goods. They are intensely dramatic and will make elaborate preparations to stage a show.⁸⁸

Play also illustrated the "new psychology" which allied nature and mind. As Putman expressed it, "His mental development goes hand in hand with his physical. Action and interpretation are inseparable. Every experience is a challenge to his understanding. Every new and

strange thing about him must be examined and properly related to his growing mental content."⁸⁹

The child-study psychologists held that children unfolded genetically, or developed through different stages, each one with specific characteristics, which Putman summarized in the *B.C. Survey* as "(1) infancy from birth to six years, (2) early and late childhood from six to twelve years, (3) early adolescence from thirteen to fifteen years, and (4) late adolescence from sixteen to eighteen years."⁹⁰

Hall particularly emphasized the traumatic stage of adolescence and his 1904 book on the subject had a profound influence on North American educational thinking. This was a time, he believed, when the youth's emotional and mental viewpoint greatly changed. In this stage, as Putman described it,

Idealism is born. The outlook becomes more social and altruistic. While functional changes are taking place that mark physical maturity, emotional and spiritual changes are taking place that fit the individual to use his maturing bodily powers. But the interval between the beginning and the end of this new birth which may be four or five years or even longer, is for all a time of strain and for many a period of real danger. Some become too introspective and moody. Some become despondent. The boys and girls when together lose their feeling of comradeship and become shy and awkward. Their interest in one another assumes a new form.⁹¹

To assist adolescents over this dangerous stage separate junior high schools should be created which catered to their special psychology. The curriculum should help them to conquer their emotions and gain a sense of responsibility for their future life as citizens and home-makers. Both Hall and Putman believed that handwork skills and a naturalistic environment would assist the pupil toward purposeful activity and social means of expression. He would gain an appreciation of the basic processes and problems associated with food, clothing and shelter of the race. For the average child, then, the "power" that would be released was not primarily intellectual, but rather imaginative and emotional. Reason was replaced by feeling. Schools, Putman felt, were partially responsible for the societal bias toward "intellectual culture" and negative attitudes toward practical subjects. He considered agriculture, for example, one of Canada's most important industries and asked, "Do we not somehow suggest to our pupils that some callings are highly honourable, others honourable, and some quite unworthy of a noble ambition, forgetting that our pupils are of all grades of natural intelligence and natural aptitudes and that any necessary calling or occupation is as honourable as any other?"⁹² Schools should therefore play a leading role in changing society's

prejudiced viewpoint which retarded national development. They should indoctrinate the students with positive attitudes toward vocational subjects.

When children were trained to accept their allotted niche in society, then, and had inculcated an ethical sense of harmony and co-operation with their neighbour, there was hope for a progressive order in society. But Putman warned, "The school could not possibly rise to a high level of achievement unless evolved from a social order with high ideals, nor could a progressive people attain an altruistic social solidarity without carrying the school with them to a higher and higher plane."⁹³ Schools had to broaden their programme to provide increased opportunities for individual differences and a better fit with the vocational demands of society. The junior high, or middle school, was strongly promoted as the best vehicle for this desired change. Arguing largely on utilitarian grounds, Putman proclaimed that "No single improvement in school organization has in it so many possibilities of improving and enriching the curriculum, holding children longer at school, giving some pre-industrial instruction, cutting down waste and effecting real economy, making better use of school accommodation, getting rid of the baneful influence of rigid written examinations, and finally raising the tone, dignity, and importance of the high school proper."⁹⁴

The heroic role thus assigned to the junior high school was an Hegelian attempt to solve the tension between the individual with his new taste for self-realization and materialistic goals, and the dehumanizing effect of collectivism enveloping all urban industrial dwellers. By establishing what Northrop Frye has called a "myth of concern,"⁹⁵ designed to hold society together and establish a common will or belief, the new educator hoped to form an ethical community where common responses to authority would be forged. The central emphasis of the New Education Movement was socio-political. New slogans were advanced and beliefs promulgated on the merits of the progressive public school in order to galvanize middle-class and majority public opinion and to denigrate the authority of the formal disciplinarians. Children were to be socialized rather than educated through their schooling. Their interests, activity, and co-operative exploration of a problem-solving task with the teacher were considered of utmost importance. These were the means to inculcate new beliefs in progressive coherence, continuity between past, present and future, and the importance of adopting the social mores of the outside world.

As Frye observes, concern is a feeling "very close to anxiety, especially when threatened. The anxiety of coherence is central: normally, voices of doubt or dissent are to be muted at all times, and silenced

altogether if there is real danger...."⁹⁶ Craven points out the great anxiety of liberal intellectuals with labour's rising class consciousness and with what the liberal perceived as threats of "anarchism and bolshevism," as Putman and Weir called them, in the social order. A more coercive ideology of Public rather than Community was devised by the concerned new liberal who utilized the magical language of "stock-taking," cost-benefit, "wastage" and specialization of function to establish a new level of knowledge by means of which he could gloss over class tensions and devise a pluralistic society of individually different human beings. Leading English new educators, such as Sir Henry Newbolt, Sir Michael Sadler, or H. A. L. Fisher and J. L. Paton (both of whom were consulted by Putman and Weir before their Report was submitted) gave numerous idealistic public lectures proclaiming this new gospel. Significantly, they stressed the ethical dimension of education, the need to strive toward unselfish service in order to create a unified public order.

Ironically, their Hegelianism led to their downfall. In their anxiety to establish a higher code of ethics in society they tended to blend appearance with reality. Socially acceptable codes of behaviour in children they denoted as manifestations of an inner moral nature. The socially critical attitudes, which detect hypocrisy, corruption and gaps between the real and ideal were not cultivated. As R. S. Peters observes, a one-sided view of man emerged which completely ignored the purely personal side of human beings, denied the development of the speculative curiosity of the child and exploited rather than revered persons. The distortion of the sociological principle in John Dewey's instrumentalism which was an extension of Hegelianism, for instance, failed to account for the degree of autonomy and distancing necessary in the critical understanding of many human problems.⁹⁷ The search for truth, therefore, which involves more self-validating criteria such as logicity of argument or impersonal evidence and verification, in Dewey's schemata, devolved in circular fashion around the psychology of the child and his problem-solving situation. (With the secularization of Hegelianism the search for immanent spiritual principles was abandoned.) There was no outside criterion, established truths and realities which one studied rather than created, against which he could test his understanding. He lost the opportunity to indulge in what Frye calls the myth of freedom,⁹⁸ which stresses the importance of the non-mythical elements in culture, in the truths and realities of nature, the mental attitudes of judgment, tolerance, and respect for the individual, the so-called "liberal" values, which Putman supposedly espoused.

The model of liberalism which Putman, Dewey and Mackenzie King were expressing, C. B. Macpherson has termed "developmental democracy."⁹⁹ There was a grave contradiction inherent in this model which deeply troubled their mentor, J. S. Mill, but which these new liberals evaded. The incompatibility between the claims of equal human development and the existing class inequalities of power and wealth his followers treated "as something which would or could be overcome in one way or another—for instance, by a revival of idealist morality, or a new level of social knowledge and communication."¹⁰⁰ Not only did they write as if class issues were giving way to pluralistic differences, which were not only more manageable but also positively beneficial, but they added a new unrealism—what Macpherson terms "descriptive unrealism," which gave seriously inaccurate descriptions of how democratic society actually worked. Like Mill, they left unexamined the contradiction between capitalist relations of production, which left little scope for the working class to see themselves and to act as exponents and developers of their capacities, and the optimism of the liberal-democrat in the possibility of each individual's self-development. They also supported the emerging party system, in Canada organized loosely around regional and sectional interests, which further blunted the edge of probable class conflict. With every extension of the franchise and with the expansion of the independent, bourgeois farmer into the free lands of the west, the party system became even more watered down and less responsive to the electorate. With the emergence of the Cabinet, the political system changed its function from one of response to the needs of its constituents to a mediatory role between the demands of the two classes. The result was a government of continual compromise, a party system which constantly blurred the issues, and a widespread public apathy in the political process. New educational schooling was designed to smooth the transition of public opinion to this new political model.

Liberal theorists, whether of philosophical or political bent, increasingly lost sight of the concepts of class and exploitation. They wrote as if democracy itself could bring about the good society by controlling monopolistic business. The task of the democratic state was merely to express and enforce the general will by representing men as citizens rather than as holders of particular interests. Dewey believed that defects in the actual working out of the democratic system could be overcome by educating the public intelligence with an understanding of the social sciences. He and his confrères, claims Macpherson, failed to see the difference between the actual democratic system which operated much like a market, and their idealistic developmental hopes.

When one looks at the disjunction between the Hegelian rhetoric of the progressive new educator and his utilitarian administrative practices, and considers the care with which he treated public opinion, perhaps he was not as naive as Macpherson paints him. In actual practice he adhered much more closely to what Macpherson terms "Model 3: Equilibrium Democracy and/or Pluralist Élitist Equilibrium Model,"¹⁰¹ which he claims was formulated in 1942 with Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. In this model a main role in the political process is assigned to self-chosen groups of leaders, similar to the Hegelian's educated élite. Since the society in a modern democratic political system pulls the individual in a number of different directions, the Hegelian assigned a central role to "character education," which trained the future citizen in habits of passive acceptance of authority in the social sphere.

Since 1942, Schumpeter claims, the empirical work of political scientists accurately delineated how voters in Western democracies behaved and how the political systems responded to their behaviour. Therefore, democracy was simply a market mechanism for choosing and authorizing governments; it was *not* a kind of society, nor was it a set of moral ends. The voters' role in choosing between two competing political parties was not on political issues, but rather just a choice as to who would do the deciding before the next election. Ethics and public participation were therefore not components in this model, which Macpherson describes as substantially more accurate than the previous model. It assumes that current Western man is a market man living in a market society. Consumer sovereignty is largely an illusion. But, he admits, the equilibrium set up between the unequal consumer and the oligopolistic political market does produce equilibrium and a pretty good kind of market. It is not necessarily democratic, however, and the government's role in protecting the consumer against the tyranny of this élite system becomes even more obvious.

Watson's original Hegelian dream for an ethical self-determining human being had been turned on its head. The Hegelian's utilitarianism and naïve faith in institutional continuities led to a formalized educational system, which pessimistically graded the bulk of the populace into vocational slots, socialized it into acquiescent, consumptive patterns of behaviour and limited any possibility for higher levels of reality except for the political élite, who tended also to be bound to the materialistic plane of existence.

The progressive rhetoric of Putman and Weir, which encouraged the myth of concern for lost democratic values, their school practices, which emphasized the psychological adjustment of the population to a market value system, and their public campaign, which established the

social science and business efficiency norms of the professional educator now as the accepted form of authority, was a skilfully managed campaign. Their *Survey* illustrated the significant role leaders of public opinion played in transforming public consciousness toward an acceptance of the pluralist élitist equilibrium model of society.

NOTES

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11. *Colonist*, November 29, 1923, p. 11.
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15. *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 November 1923, p. 2; and see lead editorial in *Colonist*, 30 November 1923, p. 4.

16. Putman's name was suggested to MacLean by his Queen's and Ottawa Normal School colleague, J. W. Gibson, at this time Director of Elementary Agricultural Instruction for B.C.: see, Belle Gibson, *Teacher Builder* (Victoria: Morriss, 1961), p. 84.
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25. *The Vancouver Sun*, 8 July 1924, p. 1.
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27. Editorial in *Colonist*, 19 December 1924, p. 4.
28. Putman-Weir Survey, p. iii.
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30. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-28.
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35. *The Evening Sun*, Vancouver, 21 April 1925, p. 2.
36. Putman-Weir Survey, p. 40.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
41. *Ibid.*
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56. Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire,' pp. 83-84.
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71. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
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