

## TRAINING FOR "TRUE WOMANHOOD": PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS, 1890-1920\*

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Ontario educators at the turn of the century were engaged in the task of reforming a school system that no longer served the needs of a rapidly changing society. Urbanization, industrialization, and immigration had an impact on both the nature of the school population and educational requirements. Educators were particularly concerned that schools should fulfil their acculturation and social control functions *vis-à-vis* the expanding urban working class, comprised in large part of immigrant families. Practical preparation for the demands of the workplace was considered necessary for working-class girls as well as boys; to this was added, for girls, the need to provide instruction in the domestic arts as preparation for the wife-and-mother role that they would inevitably assume. Advocates of sex-segregated schools and curricula continued to express their views in the pre-war years, but most agreed by then that education, even at the university level, was not inappropriate for young women.

With compulsory education established in Ontario in 1897 and extended by the passage of the 1919 Adolescent School Attendance Act, many educators expressed the same fears as doctors concerning long hours of enforced seatwork and inadequate provision for physical activity during the school day. When educators spoke about sports and games, however, they were usually referring to sex-specific activities: gymnastics, military training, and "manly games" were for boys, while calisthenics, dance, and "milder games" were for girls. From the turn of the century until the 1930s, the close association between military training and school physical education programmes continued to disturb many educators. Although this was an issue which only indirectly affected girls' curriculum, it had important implications for the distribution of funds and for teacher training. Moreover, a school system which equated sports with manly sports and physical training with military training was a system which perpetuated the values of patriarchy.

The educational theories of Herbert Spencer had considerable impact on Canadian educational thought and practice in this period. In his major work, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, he attacked systems of education which failed to provide useful, practical instruction and ignored the moral and physical dimensions. The various facets of education were not usually viewed

as distinct and separate. "A healthy mind in a healthy body" was the uniting principle which gave physical education moral as well as corporal legitimacy. A statement of Spencer's, cited on the front page of the Strathcona Trust's first annual report, was popular among advocates of physical and health education: "To be a good animal is the first requisite to success in life, and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity."<sup>1</sup> The restrictions placed on girls' play were a particular concern to Spencer: "Noisy play like that daily indulged in by boys" was "a punishable offence" at one girls' school. Behind these attitudes, he surmised, was a social class bias, evident in the view that "rude health and abundant vigour" were "somewhat plebeian" and the fear that girls would become "romps and hoydens."<sup>2</sup> Although the terms had changed by the twentieth century, the fear that athletic girls would become "bold" or "mannish" persisted.

While Spencer was critical of the parents and teachers who interfered with girls' play and physical development, he was not suggesting that boys' and girls' education or their future places in society should be identical. Discussing the shortcomings of a classical education, particularly its failure to teach the principles of physiology, he gave examples of the consequences when these students became parents: the father who alienated his sons through his harshness would have benefited from studying ethology rather than Greek, while the mother whose child died from scarlet fever, "its system...enfeebled by over-study," would find no consolation in her ability to read Dante.<sup>3</sup> Few of Spencer's successors chose to quote him on the matter of the man's parental responsibility, but the woman's alleged neglect of maternal duties and its disastrous consequences were commonly cited in the debates over female education.

It was certainly valid to draw attention to the prevalence of disease and the high mortality rate among children, but to accuse mothers of negligence at a time when ignorance of children's health and nutritional needs was widespread in all classes of society was not justified. Clearly, children's health was considered to be solely the mother's responsibility. Events in social reformer Adelaide Hoodless' life illustrated this: the death of her infant son from an infection transmitted by cows' milk was, according to some accounts, the catalyst for her campaign to introduce domestic science instruction for girls into Ontario schools, thus ensuring that they would be taught proper methods of food preparation and storage at an early age. This was not the only sex-differentiation in the curriculum which Hoodless advocated. The "dividing lines" which she suggested, after primary school, involved mathematics and science, which, for girls, should relate to "home duties." To learn "the chemistry of food...cleanliness, cookery and needle work," she claimed, was more useful for girls than "to wear out brain tissue in puzzling out a lot of abstract questions."<sup>4</sup>

Priorities like these, together with the view that girls lacked the intellectual capacity needed to tackle theoretical as well as practical content, characterized the thinking of many educators at this time. A Galt teacher, for example,

expressed similar views at the 1881 Ontario Educational Association (OEA) meeting:

There is an eternal fitness of things, and in a country like Canada, to stuff an ordinary girl's head with mathematics when she cannot by any written or unwritten formula whatsoever make her own garments, or initiate her into the mysteries of the corn laws when she cannot so much as bake a loaf of bread, is, I deem, an eternal unfitness—'tis "wasteful and ridiculous excess" indeed.<sup>5</sup>

The teacher, A.H. Morrison, was speaking about physical education, a topic which he obviously expanded in order to include these views. On the issue of girls' schooling, he proceeded to list the important lessons to be covered: "Teach her how to stand, to sit, and to walk like a rational human being with an immortal soul...to demean herself gracefully and modestly before all men" and, finally, to prepare herself for the multiple duties God has called her to perform as "loving daughter, as tender sister, as devoted wife, as 'ministering angel'." This formed the prelude to Morrison's position on higher education for women—that it was only appropriate for those who could afford the time and money, not for "the lowly many."<sup>6</sup> Morrison's comments suggested that he viewed the "lowly" masses as female. In a patriarchal society, their education—physical, moral, and intellectual—had well-defined limits: it was not intended to enable young women to stretch the boundaries of their mental or physical ability, but merely to fit them for their niche in the patriarchal order, as producers and reproducers in the domestic realm.

While opposition to the "frills and fads" of the "new" education at the turn of the century was not only directed at girls' schooling, the traditionalists who longed for good cooking usually proceeded to argue for sex-differentiated curricula. Several articles in Austin's collection, *Woman: Her Character, Culture and Calling*, addressed this issue. One American contributor blamed women's "bad cookery" for social vices ranging from alcoholism to crime; Hoodless expressed similar views, claiming that knowledge of domestic science would "greatly adduce to the physical, mental and moral well-being of a people."<sup>7</sup>

The issue of segregated schooling still occupied many educators at the turn of the century. Some of its strongest advocates were, not surprisingly, principals or regents of "Ladies' Colleges," usually highly educated men who were also ministers of religion. For example, the Reverend Doctor Alexander Burns, principal of the Wesleyan Ladies' College in Hamilton, wrote a paper on female education for the educational exhibit at the 1884 World's Fair. Admitting that it was too late to object to coeducation—"not that [it] is best for every girl, or that it is likely ever to become universal"—he recognized that it was the only hope of the "multitudes" gaining access to higher education. He claimed, however, that there would "always be mothers who would think more...of good taste, of delicacy of thought and action, of refinement of manners" than of intellectual

achievement.<sup>8</sup> The components of this “lady-like” culture were transmitted, in private girls’ schools, through instruction in subjects like music and art. Writing in the *Canada Educational Monthly* in 1885, the principal of Brantford Ladies’ College gave this rationale for separate colleges:

The age demands of the young lady that she should know something of music and painting, whilst no such demands are made of her brother....The demands of social life prevent the successful accomplishment of their education along the same lines as [young men].<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that these educators viewed the reproduction of “society girls” as a major function of private girls’ schools at this time. By the turn of the century, however, expectations were changing. *Canada Educational Monthly*, in 1899, published an article by “Orlecoigne” on “A ‘Society’ Girl’s Education.” Attacking the superficial nature of the education offered by “fashionable” schools, and the “frivolous” lives led by their graduates prior to marriage, the author proposed that “society girls,” like their middle-class counterparts, should continue their studies in a field for which they had shown some aptitude rather than “being launched into social life” at the age of eighteen. This approach, she claimed, would “do much to help dispel that relic of barbarism...viz, that matrimony is the sole end and aim of a girl’s, and especially of a ‘society girl’s’ existence!” Those who preferred independence to “the ties of matrimony” were, according to this observer, unjustly labelled “strong-minded” or “masculine” when they pursued careers.<sup>10</sup>

In some respects, this teacher’s views resembled those of maternal feminists like the members of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), who placed similar importance on women’s active participation in the community. Fulfilling the responsibility of mothering in society did not, however, require forfeiting marriage for a career: employment before marriage was permissible, but voluntary work was the usual pattern among married, middle-class women at this time. Some young women received an apprenticeship in the *noblesse oblige* principle during their school days: Christian societies within private schools raised money to aid in relief work, and mandatory church attendance firmly instilled the principles of Christian stewardship. Moulton College students had a more practical involvement in charitable work: the products of their sewing classes—babies’ layettes—were donated to “the poor.”<sup>11</sup>

The principal of Brantford Ladies’ College shared the view that woman’s sphere extended into the community. As well as offering a liberal education, he pointed out, the college played an important part in the “moulding of character,” affording the “refining influences” which made its graduates especially well-suited for the teaching profession.<sup>12</sup> The principal of Ottawa Ladies’ College disagreed: in a 1901 issue of the *Canada Educational Monthly*, the Reverend Doctor W.D. Armstrong was critical of a school system which ignored sex differences by focusing on teacher preparation. To be a schoolteacher was not

the destiny of most women, he claimed, nor was "brilliant" scholarship a guarantee that women would succeed in "the social circle." "Sweet, noble, bright, holy womanhood" was the goal of private church-affiliated girls' schools, which, he claimed, were superior to any high school or university course in preparing girls for "the duties and responsibilities of home-queen." Apparently most of his colleagues concurred: domestic science was an integral component of the curriculum, with some schools offering a specialized course of study parallel to the matriculation or art streams.<sup>13</sup>

Although public education was coeducational, the issue of "the separation of the sexes" within public schools occupied many male minds at the turn of the century. A St. Thomas teacher, S. Silcox, addressed the OEA Training Department on the subject in 1901, followed, in 1905, by the Reverend W. Wilkins, who spoke to trustees at the OEA meeting. Silcox's attack on "Sexless Schools"—those which failed to take sex differences into account—was based on the pseudo-scientific thesis that a high level of sexual differentiation characterized the higher forms of animal life. The preservation of humankind's "highly developed state," he claimed, depended on the preservation and "perfection" of these sex differences. This kind of logic carried the implication that a society in which domestic and productive labour were allocated by criteria other than sex was destined to evolve "lower" forms of human life, a prediction entirely compatible with prevailing racial theories. Feminist Emily Murphy, for example, observing Doukhobor women, hypothesized that "females of all races who are subject to undue physical exercise lose early their...comeliness and contours. They tend to become asexual."<sup>14</sup>

The dangers, according to Silcox, were evident in the animal kingdom: the female cuckoo, for example, showed an aversion to domestic duties—she laid her eggs in other birds' nests, with disastrous results. The message to women was clear: neglect of "nest-building" duties jeopardized the future of the race. This was a popular theme among traditionalists at the time, as was the call to scientific theories to support such a position. It followed, then, that schools should promote these allegedly innate characteristics, a goal best accomplished if students were taught by teachers of the same sex. As well as their inadequacies as intellectual and moral examples for boys, female teachers, according to Silcox, were totally incapable of conducting boys' physical education. "Who can estimate the loss to those boys who never had a male teacher to direct their sports?" he asked.<sup>15</sup> The children who had Nellie McClung as a teacher did not appear to suffer a loss in this respect: she organized football games in which all students participated, and successfully dealt with parents who complained that it was not "a ladies' game."<sup>16</sup>

As these examples suggest, educators and parents were not unanimous on the question of physical education. Some educators justified calisthenics as "disciplinary agents," as "auxiliaries" to promote interest in academic subjects, and as health aids. References to the joy of movement and the pleasure of achievement were conspicuously absent from these utilitarian rationales. Ontario

inspectors in 1895 reported several instances where parents objected to the “time wasted” on exercise in the schools and teachers considered the supervision of sports “foreign to their work.”<sup>17</sup>

The relative merits of male and female teachers had been a topic of debate in Ontario educational circles for decades. One of the most prominent critics of female teachers was Nathanael Burwash, Chancellor of the University of Toronto. Addressing the OEA General Meeting in 1905, he identified the major deficiency of the Ontario school system as its lack of “alert, strong, high-minded, good-mannered Christian” male teachers. His position on the issue was unequivocal:

The education of women is woman’s work. The education of boys under ten is also woman’s work. But beyond that point the boys should be in the hands of men, and that [sic] men of the highest type.<sup>18</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, Burwash thus maintained that the teaching of adolescent boys was both too important and too difficult to be entrusted to women. At a time when they were most susceptible to evil tendencies, boys needed a man to show them, “in the school and on the playground, the virtues of manliness, self-control, self-denial,” according to a Kingston trustee. Adolescent girls, he claimed, had special needs, too, best met by a female teacher since “her ideals are the far more easily comprehended.”<sup>19</sup>

The concerns expressed by Burwash and his contemporaries revealed some of the importance attached to the male teacher-student relationship, especially in the playground. Where else could a boy learn to be a man? “Manliness,” learned through playing the “manly sports,” constituted a goal which some men viewed as increasingly difficult to attain, given the changing society at the turn of the century. The urban-industrial trend, as well as the feminization of teaching, was responsible for some of these changes: men were absent from the family for long periods every day and child-rearing was more exclusively a female domain than it had been in the rural context. Women’s labour force participation, too, made them more visible in the community and more influential in the lives of children. There were women who were school nurses, shop assistants, waitresses, secretaries, playground supervisors, church workers—all occupations which brought women and children together outside the domestic context. Then, as now, it was considered important to preserve the exclusively male domain which the manly sports—team sports like football, baseball, and lacrosse—represented: to reinforce the boundaries of manly sports served to reinforce sex differences, an important function of patriarchal hegemony at a time when the sex bar, applied to education and occupations, was being challenged by many women.

Despite the coeducational nature of the public school system, it appears that every attempt was made to limit the mingling of the sexes: for example, the Ontario Department of Education required school buildings to have separate entrances and stairways for the sexes. Schoolyards were to be divided by “a close

board fence, wall or hedge," as were the closets. "Double closets are too common, and hence modesty—the crown of womanhood—is not encouraged," wrote a Lanark County inspector in 1895.<sup>20</sup> At a time when most school boards, especially in rural areas, were struggling to provide adequate school buildings, it seems unlikely that all the minutiae of properly segregated facilities were given the attention demanded by some inspectors. The official emphasis on segregation, however, often had an unfortunate consequence for girls. When the first (and often the only) gymnasium was built in a high school, it was designated the "boys' gym"; even educators who acknowledged that girls would benefit from similar facilities rarely proposed sharing as a solution.<sup>21</sup> In some respects, therefore, the provision for separate schoolyards may have benefited girls by guaranteeing them a private area of their own. John Millar, Deputy Minister for Education, alluded to this need in his 1896 book on school management:

It is no harm to allow girls to "romp" and take abundance of outdoor recreation. False views of decorum often debar them from play. Every school yard should have a portion fenced off for the girls, where they may play ball, lawn tennis, or other games. More physical vigor, and less music and painting, would not harm many young women.<sup>22</sup>

Millar's discussion of games, however, implied that girls could be left to their own devices; it was mainly the vigorous activities of the boys—cricket, football, etc.—which required teacher supervision. Similarly, the inspector of Huron County reported in 1895 that boys in his district played football and baseball, while the girls amused themselves "with plays and games such as have been known to children centuries ago." Both sexes sometimes played baseball together, and, he was pleased to report, "the boys treat the girls with great consideration." Several inspectors reported similar patterns in their school districts, with some making the point that girls, as well as boys, were encouraged to participate in outdoor sports, including football. Noting that the boys and girls in many schools played together, one inspector explained why this was permissible: "Very few large boys go to school."<sup>23</sup>

There was some disagreement over the degree of supervision needed in the schoolyard, ranging from the position that "wildness" must be stopped—"there should be as much discipline in play as at work"—to the view that "the old fashioned recess—the wild recess"—was invaluable for "recreating" children, mentally as well as physically.<sup>24</sup> On the question of girls' play, however, most educators displayed a *laissez-faire* attitude; claiming, on the one hand, that spontaneity and wildness were beneficial, they were, nevertheless, content to let girls indulge in "instinctive" types of play—"dolls and simulated housekeeping"—which offered minimal opportunity for wildness and physical release. Moreover, some educators were obviously pleased to note the "natural" tendency among girls to engage in domestic play. The boy, on the other hand, "with his mechanical contrivances, his trade games, and games of competition," had more

potential for wildness and more opportunity, too, to develop muscular coordination, athletic prowess, independence, and initiative, all of which served as preparation for adult life in the workplace and the community.<sup>25</sup>

A methods text for teachers co-authored by Toronto inspector James L. Hughes claimed that love of team play and a competitive spirit developed spontaneously in adolescent boys, while girls usually lacked these drives, showing more interest in “games of chance, of cards...and table games.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a New York professor, addressing the OEA in 1910, claimed that hunting, fishing, and playing football were all instinctive in males. Football, based on “a strong heredity [sic] instinct,” represented “the reproduction of tribal warfare”; if the brutality were eliminated, he claimed, the resulting game of “civilized warfare” would have moral value for boys.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, teachers were expected to channel the “instinctive” play drives of girls and boys into appropriate directions. “Good” games conformed to accepted societal patterns with respect to sex-appropriate behaviour and roles. The methods text, for example, advised teachers to encourage girls’ participation in some outdoor activity—“the milder games of the boys”—as long as they showed the necessary “interest and zest.”<sup>28</sup>

The commonly held notions of innate aggression in males and innate passivity in females shaped educators’ expectations, as well as having the effect of self-fulfilling prophecy on issues of girls’ physical activity. Without practice, girls performed less successfully and experienced more fatigue than boys, a situation which was entrenched by the restrictions placed on their play, and one which in turn entrenched the existing female frailty myth. Contrary to a universal goal of education—to develop competence in areas where students revealed weaknesses—educators at the turn of the century rarely viewed girls’ low level of physical competence as the result of lack of opportunity, more often treating it as an inherent and unchangeable characteristic of the female sex. In marked contrast, the girl who showed no aptitude for sewing or cooking had abundant opportunity for practice and instruction—at home, at school, even in Girl Guides or YWCA classes. The attention paid to domestic instruction for girls of all classes was balanced by a corresponding interest in technical education for working-class boys: both were intended as vocational training. There was, however, another facet of the physical education question, which, by default, affected girls: the interests of the ruling class were served by promoting the idea that, for boys, physical training could best be achieved through military training. There were isolated references to the value of some aspects of military-type gymnastics for girls, but the major purpose was, of course, to prepare boys for the militia, or, if necessary, for conscription.<sup>29</sup>

The question of military drill and cadet training for school-age boys had been debated in Ontario from Ryerson’s time. On one side, it was argued that there were “none so likely to avoid strife as those who are prepared for it,” while others believed that values like love and peace should be instilled in children.<sup>30</sup> Advocates of a pacifist position appeared to be in the minority: with the prevailing emphasis on Canadian nationalism and imperialist ties, opponents of military



training risked being labelled unpatriotic as well as impractical. The attack on this position made by James Hughes's brother, Colonel Sam Hughes, M.P., at the 1911 OEA meeting was typical: "Why should any maudlin, sloppy sentimentality be found prevailing in the land against the military training of the youth?" Hughes ascribed to military training a long list of benefits which earlier authorities had attributed to exercise and sports: the boy thus trained would prove "nobler-minded, more open-hearted, level-headed, self-reliant and capable...his hands will not so readily be found stuck in his own or another's pockets."<sup>31</sup> Physical as well as moral cleanliness was instilled through military training, according to another teacher, who claimed the habit of brushing one's clothes was "a useful trait in a boy's character."<sup>32</sup>

One of the small group who opposed cadet training in schools was a prominent Toronto educator and NCWC member, Ada Mary Courtice, who established a small private girls' school in Toronto. Courtice stressed the need for harmonious development of mind and body, proposing, instead of military training, a system of physical education for both sexes which incorporated gymnastics, games, dance, swimming, etc. As she noted, however, her proposal was more costly to local boards and the provincial Education Department than military drill, although it had more far-reaching benefits in terms of physical and mental health.<sup>33</sup> This kind of reasoning was unlikely to impress the large number of educators who chose to compromise on this issue, claiming that military training was not really military training: it was simply physical training which inspired "military virtue" and "patriotic spirit."<sup>34</sup>

Underlying the patriotic rhetoric was a more practical incentive for substituting military training for physical education: it was cheaper. Since 1898, the Department of Militia had provided cadets with rifles, bayonets, ammunition, and belts; as well, it gave summer courses for the High School Cadet Instructor's Certificate and offered the services of military instructors in schools. When Sam Hughes became Minister of Militia in 1912, he extended federal assistance to include grants to each corps, uniform subsidies, summer camps, and additional military supervision. In 1911, the provisions of the Strathcona Trust entrenched these programmes, allocating 50% of its funds for military training, with the remainder to be divided between physical training and rifle shooting.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the clear sex-differentiation in approaches to physical education, girls' programmes were not immune to the militarism which pervaded boys' drill. From 1852 until the early 1900s, the teaching of physical culture in Ontario normal and model schools had been conducted by military men. Until the late 1800s, instructors with military training were also employed to teach riding and calisthenics at several private girls' schools.<sup>36</sup> E. Houghton's textbook, *Physical Culture*, published in 1886, provided some alternatives to the dominant military emphasis, although its squad drill component was taken directly from the British army's field exercise. Calisthenics (which Houghton defined as exercises without apparatus), light dumb-bell exercises, and drill were to be performed by both sexes; in addition, boys were to do stationary rope climbing while girls

practiced Indian club swinging. This latter activity, like many other gymnastic exercises, appears to have been initially associated with military training. Houghton, however, recognized its potential value for girls: it provided "splendid exercise" for the upper part of the body and, performed in the home with piano accompaniment, could become "another beautiful and agreeable addition to the happiness of the family circle." There is no indication that boys were expected to entertain family members with skills learned in physical culture classes, although Houghton noted that gymnastic displays, in which both boys and girls performed, were an important part of the school's annual entertainment.<sup>37</sup>

With a clear precedent for the linking of physical and military training established before the turn of the century, the terms of the Strathcona Trust "for the encouragement of physical and military training in public schools" conformed to most educators' expectations of a physical education programme. The Executive Council of the Trust explained its function in a 1909 report: as well as promoting the physical and intellectual capabilities of both sexes, the object was "to bring up the boys to patriotism...especial importance is to be attached to military drill generally to all boys, including rifle shooting for boys capable of using rifles."<sup>38</sup>

These pre-war developments in military and physical training did little to improve the status of girls' physical education in Ontario public schools. The priority given to boys' physical training was already reflected in material ways: an Education Department Circular in 1895, for example, listed twenty items of apparatus recommended for the boys' gymnasium, and four items for girls.<sup>39</sup> The provisions of the Militia Department and the Strathcona Trust served to perpetuate and formalize this kind of inequality in the distribution of funds and personnel among male and female students.

Ontario accepted the terms of the trust in 1911, two years after its inception. Although the programme was administered by a local committee in each province, its implementation represented considerable loss of provincial autonomy in educational matters, with a predominantly military style of physical training virtually ensured. Provincial acceptance provides some indication of the pervasiveness of a particular brand of patriotism at this time.<sup>40</sup> There were men and women who opposed militarism among school children, but, like Courtice, they usually expressed their opposition in educational rather than ideological terms. The outbreak of war, of course, strengthened the argument for preparedness, as illustrated by some of the self-congratulatory statements which subsequently appeared. "Everyone realises now, even the pacifists, what a beneficent thing for Canada was the moderate military training given, and the military enthusiasm engendered by cadet work," a military man told Ontario teachers in 1915; educators who concurred with this view included Dr. W.S. Carter, President of the Canadian Education Association, and Ontario high school inspectors Wetherell and Houston.<sup>41</sup>

During the war years, the health and physical fitness of civilians as well as soldiers came to be viewed as national commodities, and educators, like doctors

and public health workers, stressed the importance of providing for children's healthy physical development during their early years. In this respect, the war had the effect of making it somewhat easier to promote girls' physical education. When these issues were debated at the 1917 NCWC meeting, for example, Dr. Margaret Gordon argued that a comprehensive system of physical training, unlike military training, would reach girls as well as boys, thus proving more economical. The minutes of this NCWC meeting reveal, however, that many delegates viewed military training as both desirable and necessary: the Victoria Local Council moved a resolution recommending compulsory military and naval training for "every boy in Canada capable of receiving it." Subsequent amendments countered some of the militarism of the original motion, calling instead for an emphasis on the physical fitness of school-age girls and boys rather than on military preparedness.<sup>42</sup>

The opposition to militarism in physical education did not appear to be clearly divided along either sex or class lines. A significant proportion of maternal feminists shared imperialist leanings, participating in organizations like the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire. Religious beliefs played a part, too: Courtice's Quaker background, for example, accounted for much of her pacifism. The regularity with which advocates of military training addressed OEA meetings made the position of that organization clear, while other groups of educators opposed the Strathcona exercises from the outset. Some of the delegates at the 1912 American Physical Education Association meeting in Montreal, for example, were critical of this kind of training for young boys on the grounds that it failed to promote over-all health and physical development and made physical training a "wooden thing, rather than an enjoyable form of play."<sup>43</sup> The physical director of Toronto Technical School made a similar criticism of "tiresome," "listless," and "lifeless" physical training which followed the Strathcona system—lessons totally lacking in recreation or relaxation.<sup>44</sup>

Notions like play and recreation were not, of course, primary concerns for Lord Strathcona and the men who formed the Strathcona Executive Council, but they apparently considered it necessary to clarify their position on military training as early as 1912, when "Amendments to the Syllabus of Physical Exercises" were published in the annual report, assuring educators that compulsory military training was not the desire of the Trust or its founder. The provinces were simply asked to "encourage" military training "in succession to physical training...subject always to the parents' consent," a condition to which earlier documents made no reference.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the military training component, the provision for physical training in the Strathcona Trust publication, *A Syllabus of Physical Exercises for Schools*, had direct implications for girls. This was for the most part a reprint of the English syllabus, based in turn on the Swedish system of gymnastics.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Houghton's regimen, the exercises required little or no equipment and some could even be performed in the classroom if necessary. Unlike Houghton's text, too, the syllabus was distributed free of charge to every school in Canada; this fact,

together with the versatility of the exercises, ensured that at least a perfunctory attempt would be made to conduct some form of physical training in the majority of schools.

The Strathcona system offered teachers a relatively simple method of satisfying Ontario Department of Education requirements for physical training. Regulations dating from the 1880s required up to an hour and a half of instruction in drill, gymnastics, and calisthenics per week for elementary students, with similar provisions for high school students, if the school had a gymnasium; legislation in 1909 made collegiate status for high schools contingent upon the provision of a gymnasium.<sup>47</sup> Another incentive, as James Hughes, Ontario Secretary of the Trust, reminded inspectors, was the awarding of amounts of money to each inspectorial district holding competitions in physical training, military drill, and/or rifle shooting. Completing the monopoly of the Strathcona system, the Militia Department, together with the University of Toronto, from 1913 on offered free summer-school courses for certification in physical culture to qualified teachers. Practical work for men in the course included a heavy military component, and both men and women were required to practise Strathcona exercises. Students of the Toronto Normal School, too, used *A Syllabus of Physical Exercises* as their major reference book.<sup>48</sup>

There was only one other option for teachers seeking physical education instruction: from 1907 to 1941, a private college for high school graduates, the Margaret Eaton School (of Literature and Expression) offered women training in physical culture, literature, or dramatic art as preparation for teaching in these fields. The philosophy of the school was expressed by its founding principal, Emma Scott Raff, who believed that "head, hand and heart should be trained at the same time." The curriculum, therefore, included English literature, languages, physical culture, elocution, and dramatic art. Most members of the faculty were women, and instructors in physical education included several graduates of American schools of physical education.<sup>49</sup>

Although the existence of a teacher-training institution predominantly for women was potentially a progressive step towards promoting women's sport and physical activity in Ontario, there is little to suggest that faculty or graduates saw this as a primary function of the school. As well as the preoccupation with "personal culture" (or "true womanhood") common to most women's colleges, the school's strong connections with Toronto's upper-middle-class establishment in its early years guaranteed a high degree of conservatism. The school's first permanent building was totally financed by Toronto businessman Timothy Eaton, and the Board of Directors (1906-1925) included five members of the Eaton family, Chancellor Burwash of the University of Toronto, and Mrs. Burwash; the Advisory Council included Dr. O. Withrow, and Mrs. F.H. Torrington, who was also president of the NCWC Toronto Chapter. Nor were the roles of these men and women limited to administrative or advisory functions: Mrs. Torrington taught music at the school for one year, while Mrs. Burwash presented a course on "Aims and Ideals for Physical, Mental and Spiritual Development." During

the war years, Mrs. Timothy Eaton gave readings from modern drama to entertain the staff and students engaged in their Friday afternoon "patriotic work" of knitting for the war effort.<sup>50</sup>

In this respect, Margaret Eaton students were exposed to the same patriotic/military ethos which pervaded Ontario schools during the war years. In addition to the supportive functions, one private-school principal, Ellen Knox of Havergal College, alluded to a more active role for young women in the defence of their country: just as "the victories of Flanders were won on the playing fields of great schools,...the women won their triumphs of daring and endurance 'Where the balls fly fast in summer/And the whispering elm trees grow.'"<sup>51</sup> The nature of these "triumphs" was not revealed, but they were clearly occasioned by the extraordinary circumstances of the war, since daring and endurance were rarely viewed as qualities appropriate to women.

Knox was not the only woman to state views like this: in 1915, Helen Merrill, Secretary of the United Empire Loyalists' Association, expressed the hope that "both boys and girls at a suitable age train as cadets, if, largely, only to cultivate obedience, order and physical benefit, and if girls form no more menacing corps than broom brigades."<sup>52</sup> Clearly, the military emphasis and sex-differentiation of the Strathcona programme would have satisfied Merrill's requirements. During the war years, too, there was increased interest in shooting: girls' rifle clubs had been established in some Ontario high schools before the war and Canadian competition was introduced in 1914. The war was, no doubt, a major factor in legitimizing an activity traditionally viewed as male and supervised by male instructors. Interest waned in the 1920s, and by 1932 no clubs were operating.<sup>53</sup>

The militarism of the Strathcona programme, together with the unequal distribution of funds, instructors, and material resources, resulted in minimal benefits to girls' physical education; in fact, the programme permitted the reduction of girls' activities to joyless, formal calisthenics. Boys' programmes suffered, too: the military component served class interests by promoting obedience, promptness, and respect in working-class boys, who were thus well prepared for their future roles as uncomplaining workers or soldiers. It was from the ranks of private school and university cadet corps that officers and employers were recruited.<sup>54</sup>

Most educators avoided making judgements which might be construed as unpatriotic in reference to the military components of the Strathcona programme, with the result that the sex inequalities which it perpetuated were, for the most part, immune to criticism. A debate did develop, however, over the relative merits of spontaneous play and formal drill, and the validity of Herbert Spencer's claim that "formal exercises can never supply the place of those prompted by nature." Spencer had made this statement in the context of girls' physical education. It was futile, he claimed, to try "to remedy the evils of one artificiality" (a school programme which forbade girls' "romping" play) by imposing "another

artificiality" (formal gymnastics); moreover, pleasurable activity yielded benefits which were lacking in formal, monotonous exercises.<sup>55</sup>

Different definitions of work and play were, in part, responsible for the debate over the formality of Strathcona exercises. The preface to the *Syllabus* identified its aims as physical and educational: physical effects included nutritive, corrective, and developmental; educational effects were related to character development, whereby "the child unconsciously acquires habits of discipline and order, and learns to respond cheerfully and promptly to the word of command."<sup>56</sup> There was a marked similarity between this kind of statement and the popular rationales for military training: a Dundas principal, for example, explained that military drill "gives a promptness of obedience and action that can be secured in no other way...there is a healthy desire created to be sharp and prompt in performance." The element of control was clearly present in both kinds of training, and, as this principal concluded, if drill was good for boys, it must be good for girls, too.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly, the desired educational effect required planning and supervision: both Houghton's test and the Strathcona *Syllabus* specified that the mind as well as the body must be engaged, a prerequisite which few teachers considered satisfied by children's wild spontaneous play, or even by team games played outdoors.<sup>58</sup> The *Syllabus* distinguished, too, between physical training and simple "recreative" activities, like running on the spot, to be performed between classes for physical release. What was done in the actual drill period was "work": teachers were advised not to "regard the physical training lesson as a complete relaxation from school studies."<sup>59</sup> An unfortunate result, however, as a Toronto teacher observed, was the tendency for students, faced with Strathcona exercises requiring "close attention and concentration," to excuse themselves from the class, or to exert themselves only minimally.<sup>60</sup>

These kinds of problems were addressed by Wetherell, who used the opportunity provided by his annual report to wage an intermittent battle against Herbert Spencer and teachers who subscribed to the latter's "false doctrines." His 1912 report, for example, included a page of comments from a high school principal and former OEA President, Mr. Steele, to support these views. Steele, like many of his contemporaries in education and medicine, stressed the health benefits and the corrective functions of calisthenics and gymnastics, noting that they also served to improve order in classrooms and to promote *esprit de corps*, while not requiring "costly apparatus."<sup>61</sup> The expense was, of course, an important consideration at a time when many parents and trustees still regarded physical activity as a "fad" peripheral to the major functions of the school. In this climate, it is understandable that a programme like the Strathcona exercises, which incurred minimal cost and qualified as "educative," not simply "recreative," had its supporters.

A 1913 regulation which allowed principals to replace up to half the physical-culture time by sports and games revealed that Wetherell's and Steele's views were not universal: some principals scheduled sports and games for the

spring and fall months, leaving winter for indoor exercises, a sensible solution in view of Ontario's weather. Wetherell accused these men of failing to understand the need for regular exercises all year round. He advised those who judged an activity's merits in terms of pupils' "happiness," as Spencer proposed, to consider the "joyous alacrity" shown by students in "well-conducted classes"; in other words, inferior teaching, not any shortcomings of the exercise course itself, was responsible for students' disinterest.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, when the course was defined as work, not play, the lack of "joyous alacrity" was neither noteworthy nor alarming; the preface to the *Syllabus*, for example, made it clear that while activities like games and dancing might promote "a certain degree of exhilaration," the primary emphasis was not on enjoyment.<sup>63</sup>

The Strathcona *Syllabus* recommended folk dancing for female students, on the grounds that it was "far more suited to girls than many of the exercises borrowed from the boys," as long as "boisterous and uncontrolled movements" were avoided. Jean Somers, calisthenics instructor at the Toronto Normal School, was less restrained on the question of dancing when she told teachers at the 1914 OEA meeting of the "sheer joy" which adults and children, male or female, could derive from folk dancing. Ballroom dancing, however, was not considered so desirable; this kind of dancing, the *Syllabus* stated, was not to be taught in schools.<sup>64</sup> The term "dancing" had unfavourable connotations in some circles: at the 1917 NCWC meeting, for example, there was some reluctance to name dancing as one of the recreational activities for young women which churches should be urged to undertake.<sup>65</sup>

Although sex-differentiation was well established in physical education by the pre-war years, the resulting disadvantages to girls were more a function of neglect than of attention to their alleged special needs. The *Syllabus* made passing reference to the female teacher's responsibility to instruct older girls on matters of dress and "personal hygiene" (probably a reference to menstruation), and to demonstrate, by example, the benefits of wearing simple, loose-fitting clothing during physical-training classes.<sup>66</sup> While private schools were able to insist on regulation uniforms for gymnasium work, public schools appear to have been less successful; in 1919, one high school inspector noted that only "a few schools" in his district had a uniform dress for girls.<sup>67</sup>

We have seen how physical-education opportunities for girls during this period were limited as much by educators' benign neglect as by their active intervention. In terms of teaching personnel, equipment, and funds, boys' sport and physical-education programmes in public schools took precedence over girls', and while private-school girls did not face this kind of competition for scarce resources, the restrictive climate of an institution intent on producing "ladies" probably out-weighed this advantage. The effects of these priorities were evident, too, when external organizations such as the Strathcona Trust assumed a role in designing and funding school physical-education programmes. The popular view that boys required stricter discipline and supervision than girls, and the subsequent attention paid to their physical and military training in the

schools, were not, of course, the best pedagogical bases for a physical-education programme, but the notion that team games built (male) character at least guaranteed that boys' activities extended beyond mandatory drill and calisthenics. Although some progressive educators were calling for an end to the female frailty myth, physical education and sport continued to be sites of training in sex-appropriate behaviour.

## NOTES

### *Abbreviations*

OEA Ontario Educational Association

- \* This article is part of my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "The role of physical education in the socialization of girls in Ontario, 1890-1930" (University of Toronto, 1983).
1. Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1854; reprint, Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield Adams, 1963), cited by Executive Committee of the Strathcona Trust, First Annual Report, 1909-10, 1.
  2. *Ibid.*, 254-56.
  3. *Ibid.*, 43, 63.
  4. Adelaide Hoodless, "The Labour Question and Women's Work in Relation to Home life," in *Women Workers of Canada* (Ottawa: National Council of Women of Canada, 1898). Regarding Hoodless' domestic science campaign, Stamp has correctly noted that while her son's death may have initiated her practical concern, her more wide-ranging political activities reflected a particular philosophical position (i.e. maternal feminism) on issues such as urban-industrial changes and the perceived erosion of traditional values and roles within the family. See Robert Stamp, "Teaching Girls their 'God-given place in life': The Introduction of Home Economics in the Schools," *Atlantis* 2, 2, Part 1 (Spring 1977): 18-34.
  5. A.H. Morrison, "Physical Education," *Ontario Teachers' Association Minutes* (Toronto 1881): 75.
  6. *Ibid.*, 75-76.
  7. See, for example, Emma Ewing, "The Importance of a Knowledge of Cookery to Women," and Morgan Dix, "The Education of Woman for Her Work," in *Woman: Her Character, Culture and Calling*, ed. Benjamin Austin (Brantford 1890). See also Adelaide Hoodless, *Public School Domestic Science* (Toronto 1898), iv.
  8. Alexander Burns, "Female Education," in *Schools and Colleges of Ontario*, ed. J.G. Hodgins (Toronto: Cameron, 1910), 234.
  9. T.M. MacIntyre, "Our Ladies' Colleges in Relation to the Educational System," *Canada Educational Monthly* 7 (Feb. 1885): 45.
  10. Orlecoigne, "A Society Girl's Education," *Canada Educational Monthly* 21 (Mar. 1899): 77-79.
  11. H.M. Ridley, "Moulton College," *Willison's Monthly* (Dec. 1928): 234.
  12. MacIntyre, "Our Ladies' Colleges," 44.
  13. W.D. Armstrong, "The Ladies' College and Its Place in Our Educational System," *Canada Educational Monthly* 23 (Mar. 1901): 82-83. See Hodgins, *Schools and Colleges*, 235-67, for summaries of the courses of study in girls' private schools.



The training of ruling-class girls for their future work as mistresses of households responsible for the training of domestic servants was undertaken at one private girls' school, Havergal. See *National Council of Women of Canada Yearbook, 1906* (Ottawa 1907): 77.

14. S. Silcox, "Sexless Schools," *Ontario Educational Association [OEA] Yearbook, 1905* (Toronto 1906): 387-94; W. Wilkins, "The Separation of the Sexes in Public Schools," *ibid.*, 280-83; Emily Murphy, *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910; reprint, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 148.
15. Silcox, "Sexless Schools," 392.
16. Nellie McClung, *Clearing in the West* (Toronto: Thomas Allan, 1925), 272ff.
17. See, for example, *Ontario Department of Education Report [Annual Report]*, 1890, 172; 1891, 106; 1893, 147; 1895, 159.
18. Nathanael Burwash, "The Social Status of the Teacher," *OEA Yearbook, 1905*, 81. See also *Annual Report*, 1891, 140; 1893, 160; Silcox, "Sexless Schools"; Wilkins, "Separation of the Sexes."
19. J.G. Elliott, "Citizen-making, The Mission of the Schools," *OEA Yearbook, 1904*, 299.
20. *Annual Report*, 1895, 205; see also 1897, 68-69; 1911, 197-99.
21. See, for example, the report on physical culture at the Ontario Institute for the Blind, *Annual Report*, 1909, 153; see also Helen Gurney, *Girls' Sports, A Century of Progress* (Don Mills: Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, 1979), 24.
22. John Millar, *School Management and the Principles and Practice of Teaching* (Toronto 1896), 29.
23. *Annual Report*, 1895, 191, 220, 225, 217.
24. Elliott, "Citizen-making," 299-300; W.T. Harris, cited in Millar, *School Management*, 28.
25. James L. Hughes et al., *Public School Methods* (Toronto: School Methods Company, 1909), I: 199.
26. *Ibid.*, 3: 56-57.
27. Thomas Balliette, "The Nature and Function of Play in Education," *OEA Yearbook, 1910*, 108, 116.
28. Hughes, *Public School Methods*, 57.
29. Greta Shutt, in *The High Schools of Guelph* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 64-66, describes a female cadet corps called the Daughters of the Empire whose members gave exhibitions in the 1880s, marching in braid-trimmed, military-style uniforms and carrying wooden rifles. Nowhere was it suggested, however, that this kind of training was intended to prepare women for military duties. The instructor, Captain Walter Clark, was primarily interested in physical training through marching, calisthenics, and Indian clubs.
30. See Edwin Guillet, *In the Cause of Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 41, reporting on the OEA proceedings for the period 1860-69.
31. Colonel Sam Hughes, "The Relationship Between the School and the Empire," *OEA Yearbook, 1911*, 301. The reference to a boy's hands found "stuck in his pockets" could be interpreted as a reference to masturbation.
32. Fred Manley, "Drill and Physical Training," *OEA Yearbook, 1897*, 105; see also W.F. Moore, "Cadet Work in Our Schools," *OEA Yearbook, 1917*, 159-60.
33. See "Balmy Beach College and School of Music and Art," in Hodgins, *Schools and Colleges*, 258-59; Mrs. A.C. Courtice, "The Value of Home and School Clubs," *OEA Yearbook, 1918*, 165-69; Terry Crowley, "Ada Mary Brown Courtice: Pacifist,

- Feminist and Educational Reformer in Early Twentieth-Century Canada," *Studies in History and Politics* (1980): 90-91.
34. See, for example, the "Report of the House of Commons Debate in 1902," in *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1902* (Toronto: Morang, 1903), 489-91; James L. Hughes, "Modern Tendencies in Education," *OEA Yearbook, 1913*, 88-89; Maurice Hutton, "The Strathcona Trust," *OEA Yearbook, 1912*, 326-30; Manley, "Drill"; Moore, "Cadet Work."
  35. See E.W. Hagerty, "History of the Cadet Movement in Canada," *OEA Yearbook, 1915*, 156-63; Moore, "Cadet Work." For the provisions of the Strathcona Trust, See *Annual Report, 1911*, 254-59. See also Don Morrow, "The Strathcona Trust in Ontario, 1911-1939," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 8 (May 1977): 72-90.
  36. See, for example, *Ontario Board of Health Report for 1890*, xxxix; Austin, *Woman*, 436, 439; John German, "Ontario Ladies' College," *Canadian Magazine* 5 (May 1895): 72-78.
  37. E. Houghton, *Physical Culture* (Toronto 1886), 4-5, 220-21.
  38. Executive Council of the Strathcona Trust, *Constitution and Annual Reports, 1909-12*, 5.
  39. *Annual Report, 1895*, "Equipment recommended for a gymnasium," 114. Of the twenty sets of items for boys, ten were marked "indispensable," compared to only three items for girls—dumb-bells, wands, and Indian clubs. The prescribed guide for the use of this equipment was Archibald MacLaren's *Physical Culture* (Oxford 1885), a text that only made one reference to girls or women (in illustrations of "pigeon chest" in a young girl, 486-87).
  40. See Morrow, "Strathcona Trust," 74.
  41. Hagerty, "Cadet Movement," 159; W.S. Carter, address to Canadian Education Association, *CEA Yearbook, 1919* (Ottawa 1920), 12; Inspector Wetherell's report in *Annual Report, 1915*, 31; Inspector Houston's report, *ibid.*, 1916, 31.
  42. *National Council of Women of Canada Yearbook, 1917-18* (Ottawa 1919), 53-55. For the views of other "organization women," see "What Twelve Canadian Women Hope to See as an Outcome of the War," *Everywoman's World* (Apr. 1915): 6-7, 33; "Military Training in the Schools," *Saturday Night* (Apr. 28, 1917): 25.
  43. Editorial note and comment, "The Montreal Convention," in *American Physical Education Review* 17 (June 1912): 306-7.
  44. Seymour Collings, "The Relation of the Physical to the Mental with the Consequent Mental Influence," *OEA Yearbook, 1916*, 274.
  45. Strathcona Trust, *Annual Reports, 1909-12*, 13; see also 1-6.
  46. Strathcona Trust, *Syllabus of Physical Exercises for Schools* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1911).
  47. See regulations in *Annual Report, 1887*, 176; 1892, 67; 1911, 349.
  48. James Hughes, "Circular Letter Addressed to the Public School Inspectors of Ontario," *Annual Reports, 1909-12*, 63-64; Syllabus of the Summer School Courses and Examination for Teachers' Certificates in Physical Culture, in *Annual Report, 1913*, 162-66; Ontario Normal School Physical Training Course, in *Annual Report, 1912*, 188.
  49. Emma Scott Raff, "The Margaret Eaton School of Expression, Toronto," in Hodgins, *Schools and Colleges*, 251; Dorothy Jackson, *A Brief History of Three Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto, School of Physical and Health Education, 1965), 8-10, 34-35. The reference to the three schools indicated the three names which

- identified the school in the period 1901-1941: The School of Expression (1901-5), the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression (1906-25), and the Margaret Eaton School (1925-41). In 1941 the school merged with the Physical Education Department at the University of Toronto, forming the School of Physical and Health Education.
50. *Ibid.*, 16, 33-35.
  51. Ellen Knox, *The Girl of the New Day* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1919), 19.
  52. Helen Merrill, quoted in "What twelve Canadian Women...", 33.
  53. See, for example, Gurney, *Girls' Sport*, 22; *Stratford Central Secondary School: Its History* (Stratford, Ont., 1968), 64.
  54. See, for example, Hagerty, "Cadet Movement," 158-63.
  55. Spencer, *Education*, 256, cited by Wetherell, in *Annual Report*, 1912, 411.
  56. *Syllabus*, 5.
  57. Moore, "Cadet Work," 159.
  58. See, for example, Collings, "Relation of the Physical to the Mental," 276; Hutton, "Strathcona Trust," 328-29; *Annual Report*, 1911, 363-64.
  59. *Syllabus*, 18.
  60. Collings, "Relation of the Physical to the Mental," 274-75.
  61. *Annual Report*, 1912, 411-12.
  62. *Ibid.*, 1914, 669.
  63. A.G. Lewis, Secretary, Executive Council, Strathcona Trust, Prefatory Memorandum to the *Syllabus*, front page.
  64. *Syllabus*, 152-53; Jean Somers, "Folk-dances and Singing Games," *OEA Yearbook, 1914*, 193-95.
  65. *National Council of Women of Canada Yearbook, 1917-18* (Ottawa 1919), 52-53. This was probably a reference to mixed dancing, whereas in segregated physical-education classes the mingling of the sexes was not a problem.
  66. *Syllabus*, 17-18, 164.
  67. *Annual Report*, 1919, 39.