

“Labouring in a Great Cause”: Marcus Child as Pioneer School Inspector in Lower Canada’s Eastern Townships, 1852–59

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In 1838, charged with examining the educational system for the Durham commission, Arthur Buller insisted that school reform would be useless without “an active and honest inspection.”¹ Bruce Curtis has likewise argued that the knowledge collected by inspectors “was an inevitable precondition to state educational administration, for no state agency could govern schools about which it knew nothing.”² Apart from Curtis’s own book on the early inspectors in Upper Canada,³ however, this remains a rather neglected topic in Canadian education history. The only detailed study of inspectors in Lower Canada/Québec is an in-house publication from 1951, though Andrée Dufour’s recent book on school reform includes a useful overview of the inspectors’ role and impact in the 1850s.⁴ She begins in 1852, roughly when Curtis’s study ends, simply because there were no true school inspectors in Lower Canada before that date.

Since school reform was in train before the first inspectors were appointed in Lower Canada, one wonders how crucial a role these government-appointed

¹Quoted in Bruce Curtis, “Representation and State Formation in the Canadas, 1790–1850,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 28 (Spring 1989): 77. Buller recommended that Lower Canada be divided into three inspectorates, each with a government-appointed inspector who would receive reports from subordinate officers, as well as visit each school once a year. Louis-Phillippe Audet, *Le système scolaire de la Province de Québec*, vol. 6, *La situation scolaire à la veille de l’Union, 1836-1840* (Québec: Les Éditions de l’Érable, 1956), 316.

²Bruce Curtis, “Mapping the Social: Notes from Jacob Keefer’s Educational Tours, 1845,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 28, no. 2 (1993): 65.

³Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). For a brief survey of the latter half of the nineteenth century, see Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 138–47. Two other studies are John Abbott, “Accomplishing ‘a Man’s Task’: Rural Women Teachers, Male Culture, and the School Inspectorate in Turn-of-the-Century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, 78, no. 4 (1986): 313–30; and Thomas Fleming, “Our Boys in the Field: School Inspectors, Superintendents, and the Changing Character of School Leadership in British Columbia,” in Nancy Sheehan, ed., *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History* (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 285–303.

⁴Gérard Filteau and Lionel Allard, *Un siècle au service de l’éducation, 1851–1951: l’inspection des écoles dans la province de Québec*, 2 volumes ([Québec, n.p.: 1951]); Andrée Dufour, *Tous à l’école: État, communautés rurales et scolarisation au Québec de 1826 à 1859* (Ville LaSalle: Hurtubise HMH, 1996), 167–97, 234–8.

officials played in state-formation.⁵ Even though Lower Canada's inspectors represented a more centralized authority than the locally-appointed superintendents of Upper Canada, Dufour argues they served not only as agents of the state but of the local communities as well.⁶ Curtis also rejects the top-down social-control perspective, though he blurs the distinction between state and community. Echoing historical sociologist Philip Abrams, he argues the state has never been a distinct object at all, but rather a system of "incoherent and contested initiatives for political subjection" by certain groups and classes over others.⁷ Aside from the danger that the state thereby becomes everything and nothing at the same time, this interpretation robs the masses of any agency except resistance and assumes that state institutions have had no popular legitimacy.⁸

A full examination of these complex issues would require a detailed community study, but the following paper attempts to shed some light on them by focussing on the reports of pioneer school inspector Marcus Child. The aim will be firstly to understand how significant a role he played in the school reform process of his district, and secondly to identify the driving force behind his inspectorial activity. The evidence suggests that as an inspector Child did prove to be an effective government agent whose vision for the school system matched that of the central authorities. Most local communities in the Eastern Townships had quickly adapted to the main thrust of the school reforms, but Child was anxious to make them conform to a more rule-bound system than many school commissioners and teachers apparently felt was necessary, or practicable. Child's methods were largely persuasive rather than coercive, but such an approach only added to his effectiveness in instilling the values of a modern self-regulated state.

Curtis has referred to this education process as placing the population in a state of tutelage,⁹ but such a phrase suggests indoctrination more than enlightenment and Child's liberal politics and evangelical religion made him sympathetic to individual freedom. As a member of the rising petite bourgeoisie, he aimed to

⁵Dufour's *Tous à l'école* stresses the importance of the foundations established in the 1826–36 period.

⁶Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 172. This perspective is also reflected in R.D. Gidney and D.A. Lawr, "Bureaucracy vs Community? The Origins of Bureaucratic Procedure in the Upper Canadian School System," *Journal of Social History*, 13, no. 3 (1980): 438–57; and J.I. Little, *State and Society in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838–1852* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

⁷Bruce Curtis, "Working Past the Mythical Abstraction: Abrams and Foucault on State and Government," *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 16, nos. 1–2 (1997): 10.

⁸The early American labour movement clearly had a different perspective, for it was one of the driving forces behind the rise of public education during the Jacksonian era. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1953), 134.

⁹Bruce Curtis, "The State of Tutelage in Lower Canada, 1835–1851," *History of Education Quarterly*, 37, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 26.

temper the excesses of an increasingly liberal society with a strong sense of moral values and civic responsibility.¹⁰ From Foucault's perspective, the state became less "relevant" as liberal reformers like Child moved beyond the eighteenth-century preoccupation with police and discipline (never a strong preoccupation in the largely-rural Eastern Townships) to a concern with "how people are governed in liberal democratic regimes in ways which respect their freedom and autonomy."¹¹

It is not entirely clear why the government waited so long before appointing school inspectors in Lower Canada, but there was obviously a greater resistance than in Upper Canada to delegation of authority to the local level. The 1841 Common School Act had originally provided for district boards of examiners who would act as a paid inspectorate, and provision was apparently made for county superintendents in the Lower Canadian school bill for 1847, but it failed to pass.¹² Superintendent of Education Jean-Baptiste Meilleur suggested he wished to economize, his 1849 annual report emphasizing how important it was for "all friends of the cause, above all the Clergy, the Visitors, and School Commissioners," to keep a watchful eye on the local schools in order to avoid the costs involved in appointing "stipendiaries."¹³ Despite Meilleur's prompting, deputies, magistrates, militia officers, and other official school visitors had little incentive or obligation to act as state agents because their mandate was not clearly defined by law. School commissioners were often themselves too poorly educated to interfere in the classroom.¹⁴

The 1849 outbreak of anti-school reform violence known as the *Guerre des Éteignoirs* spurred one prominent critic to charge that Meilleur

n'est autre chose qu'une machine à payer et à enregistrer des rapports et reçus.

Quant à son autorité, à son droit de surveillance, ils sont nuls, ou plutôt il n'en possède réellement pas.¹⁵

Conceding he could not be everywhere at once, in 1850 Meilleur recommended appointment of a deputy superintendent to act as an itinerant assistant, gathering statistics, examining accounts, and investigating complaints. Such a task would

¹⁰This interpretation is similar to that of Jean-Pierre Charland, "Le réseau d'enseignement public bas-canadien, 1841-1867, une institution de l'état libéral," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 40 (1987): 505-36.

¹¹Curtis, "Working Past," 14.

¹²Curtis, "The State of Tutelage," 36; J. Anderson to E. Hale, Melbourne, July 23, 1847, Hale Papers, McCord Museum.

¹³Circular no. 12, 4 June 1849, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada* [hereafter J.L.A.C.], vol. 9 (1850), Appendix U.

¹⁴Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 195-6.

¹⁵T. Crémazie to Jos. Cauchon, April 29, 1851, LaFontaine Papers, MG24 B14, National Archives of Canada.

obviously be impossible for one man, and, in 1851, Meilleur finally suggested the establishment of a corps of school inspectors.¹⁶

He explained later that he had been hesitant to follow Upper Canada's example because of his desire that people take charge of their own school system, and his wish to channel as much money as possible to the schools.¹⁷ This seems disingenuous since Lower Canada's inspectors were appointed by the provincial government, not by county councils as in Upper Canada. They were also responsible for large territories, whereas Upper Canada's supervisors had been decentralized to the county or township level by 1850.¹⁸ Meilleur did envisage the centralized system as a temporary expedient until municipal government began operating effectively in Lower Canada,¹⁹ but he was reluctant to weaken the control he wielded as superintendent. Even though the municipal reform bill of 1855 was a major step towards establishing an effective system of local government, giving Lower Canadian municipalities the powers acquired by their Upper Canadian counterparts in 1849,²⁰ the inspector system remained unchanged.

Meilleur was not alone in envisaging inspectors as a valuable arm of centralized authority. The 1853 Sicotte inquiry recommended fewer inspectors operating on a more professional full-time basis, enjoying more powers and higher salaries.²¹ Meilleur argued against reducing the number of inspectors but favoured giving them powers that included firing incompetent or immoral teachers and withholding subsidies from school municipalities that released teachers without his or the inspector's authorization.²² Apparently neither the Sicotte nor the Meilleur proposals succeeded, for the government's chief concern

¹⁶JLAC, vol. 11 (1852-53), Appendix JJ; André Labarrère-Paulé, *Les instituteurs laïques au Canada Français, 1836-1900* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1965), 145-6. The principal clauses of the inspectors' bill can be found in Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle au service*, vol. 1, 16-17.

¹⁷Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle au service*, vol. 1, 15.

¹⁸Curtis, *True Government*, 99-100. Marcus Child supported appointment by central government rather than municipalities "in order to ensure truthful reports, as free from any bias as possible." Child to J.B. Meilleur, Stanstead Plain, Jan. 16, 1852, no. 93, *Lettres Reçues* [hereafter LR], E13, Archives Nationales du Québec à Québec [hereafter ANQQ].

¹⁹In his letter to Provincial Secretary A.N. Morin in 1853, Meilleur suggests the inspectorate itself would be temporary, but he probably intended a later introduction of the more decentralized Upper Canadian system. He also recommended a maximum of one hundred schools per inspector. Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 65-7.

²⁰See J.I. Little, "Colonization and Municipal Reform in Canada East," *Histoire sociale-Social History*, 14 (1981): 92-121.

²¹Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 67-8.

²²Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 207.

remained the limitation of school expenditures, which declined from 15 percent of the provincial budget in 1831 to 7 percent in 1852.²³

In 1862 the Macdonald-Sicotte ministry suggested further economizing, either by amalgamating inspection districts or by adopting Upper Canada's municipally-based system. Meilleur's successor P.-J.-O. Chauveau objected to the latter, claiming the only suitable candidates for the position of local inspector would be teachers or clergy. Though members of both professions were appointed local superintendents in Upper Canada, Chauveau argued that teachers would be disqualified due to conflict of interest, and bishops would forbid Catholic priests from work closely tied to controversial state policies.²⁴ Curiously enough, Chauveau failed to mention village notables, who generally supported the state during the *Guerre des Éteignoirs* in 1849-50. Perhaps he was worried bitter local divisions caused by this campaign of resistance to school reform would threaten the popular legitimacy of locally-based state officials.²⁵

Although there was enthusiasm for school reform in the American-settled section of the Eastern Townships, hostility to compulsory taxes was as marked as in the seigneuries. When the abortive school bill of 1843 was introduced, the Massachusetts-born Stanstead MLA, Marcus Child, opposed its provision for such assessments:

Compulsion is not agreeable in any thing – not even a good one, and therefore – I defended the District of Sherbrooke from the imputation that such a provision in the law would cast upon us – We did not deserve it – we supported our schools from the settlement of the county in 1795 to the year 1829 – without any aid from the Gov.t and from 1829 to 1836 we felt very grateful for public aid, which we received from the Prov.l Legislature. [A]nd our habits of attention to schools, that we brot [sic] with us to the country, – had found us in a situation to receive the greatest benefit from that aid – and our schools were established – and hence the money granted could be at once, and well expended.²⁶

Three years later, as chair of the Stanstead Township school commission, Child informed Meilleur of opposition to assessments imposed under the new

²³Ibid., 206.

²⁴Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 75. In 1861 44 percent of Upper Canada's local superintendents were clerics, and there was also a small number of teachers. Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 146. Five of the original twenty-three inspectors in Lower Canada had been teachers, but they clearly could not fill both functions at once given the large size of the territories they had to cover.

²⁵See Wendie Nelson, "The 'Guerre des Éteignoirs': School Reform and Popular Resistance in Lower Canada, 1841–1850" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1989). The resistance was not entirely dead by 1852, or even later. Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 34–5.

²⁶Child to Lydia Child, Leg. Ass., Nov. 24, 1843, from J.I. Little, ed., *The Child Letters: Public and Private Life in a Canadian Merchant-Politician's Family, 1841–1845* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 119–20.

school bill. He asked whether "in accordance to their feelings & habits (which do them honor)," voluntary contributions could continue to qualify the school district for provincial grants. Meilleur would not compromise.²⁷ Though "voluntaryism" lay at the root of the evangelical belief system and social outlook shared by Child as a Methodist with most American-descended residents of the Eastern Townships,²⁸ Stanstead, like its neighbouring townships, eventually accommodated itself to the new system. Child himself was appointed the St Francis District's first school inspector in 1852.

Child had requested the position not for himself but for Lewis Sleeper, who was teaching English, French, and Mathematics in Québec. Careful to note that Sleeper was a native of the area, Child failed to mention he was also his son-in-law.²⁹ In choosing Child, instead, the government had presumably decided that a man of more maturity and experience was needed. Likewise, Dr Rotus Parmelee, the appointee for the area to the west of the St Francis District, was a relatively advanced forty-nine years of age.³⁰ Child himself was an old Reform war-horse who represented Stanstead for much of the period from 1829 to 1844, but had tarnished his liberal credentials somewhat by supporting Metcalfe in a desperate attempt to hold onto his seat in the 1844 election.³¹ On the other hand, he had filled the breach for the government in the election of 1851, at a time when much of the county was embittered by the route chosen for the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway.³² Child's inspectorship may therefore have been largely a reward for past services. Meilleur later complained that one-third of the men chosen were not on his list but selected for patronage considerations.³³ On the other hand, Child's political influence was obviously now spent, and no one in the region had more experience as a school promoter.

²⁷Child to J.B. Meilleur [henceforth "Child to Meilleur"], Stanstead, Aug. 17, 1846, no. 989, LR, E13; J.B. Meilleur to M. Child, Aug. 21, 1846, no. 434, art. 105, LE, E13, ANQQ.

²⁸For a brief history of the settlement of the Townships, see J.I. Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity in the Eastern Townships of Québec* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1989).

²⁹Child to Meilleur, Jan. 16, 1852, no. 93, LR, E13, ANQQ. On Child's family life, see Little, *Child Letters*, 30–8.

³⁰Little, *State and Society*, 233. In Upper Canada, twenty-two of the thirty-three inspectors for whom we have information were between thirty-two and fifty years of age when appointed between 1844 and 1850. Curtis, *True Government*, 113.

³¹On Child's political career, see Little, *Child Letters*, 10–30.

³²Little, *State and Society*, 45.

³³Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 19–20; Labarrère-Paulé, *Les instituteurs laïques*, 146.

Child became the solitary merchant in an almost exclusively liberal professional group of inspectors,³⁴ but he had served as a school visitor almost without interruption since 1815, approximately three years after his arrival in Stanstead from the United States. In 1822 he had become a trustee for the local school sponsored by the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, and, shortly after his election to the Legislative Assembly in 1829, he acquired a grant to found Stanstead Seminary and Charleston Academy—the first two schools in the Eastern Townships to offer an education at the secondary level. During the 1830s Child was a trustee as well as secretary of the Methodist-controlled seminary (today's Stanstead College), and in 1834 was appointed to the Assembly's Permanent Committee on Education and Schools. In 1841 he was a member of the education committee that introduced the first fundamental reform of the post-Rebellion era, including the matching-grants system.³⁵ Finally, as noted above, Child served as chair of the Stanstead Township school commission during the mid-forties.

As inspector, the former MLA found himself responsible for a territory encompassing much of the Eastern Townships region (see map).³⁶ The nineteen townships he listed in 1852 included 207 elementary schools, two model schools, six independent schools, and seven academies and colleges. Meilleur's instructions to inspectors were as comprehensive as they were impractical. They specified that inspectors should visit all schools in their districts every three months, recording the number, age, and proficiency of students, as well as the gender, age, literary qualifications, marital status, and morality of teachers. They were to describe the branches of instruction taught, the methods and books used, the number of independent schools, the number of school-age children in each school district, and the manner in which school moneys were divided among the districts. Inspectors were also to examine the daily journal of every teacher, the interior arrangement of each school house, the assessment roll in each municipality, and the account book of each secretary-treasurer.

The emphasis was therefore, as Curtis suggests, on the information-gathering function of the inspectors, though they were too few in number to provide more than rudimentary statistics. Their duties also included examining and issuing temporary certificates to male teachers who had not yet appeared before one of the boards of examiners; specifying school lands suitable for horticulture and recommending the planting of fruit and forest trees where possible; mediating cases obstructing the working of the school laws; settling disputes among com-

³⁴Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 20–1.

³⁵Little, *Child Letters*, 10; Child to Meilleur, Jan. 15, 1852, no. 93; Jan. 16, 1854, no. 115, LR, E13, ANQQ.

³⁶As the map shows, the boundaries of this district extended somewhat beyond those of the St Francis Judicial District.

missioners, teachers, and parents; and do "their utmost to render the law popular in endeavouring to show the people the great advantages they cannot fail to derive from it."³⁷ Fulfilling these obligations for such a large number of widely-dispersed institutions, with 7,400 students by 1853,³⁸ would have taxed the strength of even a young man; Child was sixty-one years of age and in failing health.

It was not for the salary that Child became an inspector. He had long been a modestly successful merchant, then boosted his material fortunes in the mid-1840s by shifting his business activity and eventually his residence from the stagnating village of Stanstead to the promising industrial site of Coaticook.³⁹ As inspector, he would plead constantly for a raise largely because, after his considerable expenses, he was left with "less than a common labourer's wages."⁴⁰

Rather than being attracted by the relatively meagre emolument attached to this position, Child possessed to some degree all the social characteristics Curtis has identified for his Upper Canadian counterparts: "far-above-average wealth, direct access to the means of production, advanced education, extensive activity in the state system and in the religious sphere."⁴¹ Although the railroad was only beginning to intensify market-oriented production and industrialization in the Eastern Townships, this region could hardly be immune from "the consequences for social order and individual character of the intensified development of commodity production and exchange."⁴² Curtis claims school reformers were motivated by "a concern and desire to colonize civil society with a particular

³⁷Instructions to inspectors, *JLAC*, vol. 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ. Meilleur continued to provide detailed instructions and advice in the ensuing years. See, for example, circular no. 8, June 3, 1853; no. 9, June 22, 1854; no. 10, Dec. 10, 1854, *JLAC*, vol. 13 (1854–5), Appendix B.

³⁸*Stanstead Journal* clipping, in Child to Meilleur, January 20, no. 149, LR, E13, ANQQ. In 1853 Meilleur informed the inspectors that they need submit statistical tables only once every six months, though their other two reports were to include a recapitulation, "showing in a clear and precise manner the state of education" in each of their school municipalities. Circular no. 8, June 3, 1853, *JLAC*, vol. 13 (1854–5), Appendix B. Child attempted to visit every school only once during each of the two yearly terms, simply inspecting the school commissions' records for the other two quarterly reports. Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1854, no. 1077, LR, E13, ANQQ.

³⁹On Child's business career, see Little, *Child Letters*, 5–10.

⁴⁰Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1854, no. 1077, LR, E13, ANQQ. The salary, at the end of Child's tenure, was \$800 with no provision for expenses. This was the maximum allotted in Canada East outside Montreal, Québec, and the sprawling district of Gaspé-Bonaventure. P.J.O. Chauveau to Henry Hubbard, Montreal, no. 735, Dec. 27, 1859, LR, E13, ANQQ; Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 18–19.

⁴¹Curtis, *True Government*, 123.

⁴²Bruce Curtis, "Policing Pedagogical Space: 'Voluntary' School Reform and Moral Regulation," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 13, no. 3 (1988): 291.

bourgeois culture”—in other words, “to remake the habits, attitudes, beliefs and pastimes of workers, farmers and the ‘lower orders’” into those of the bourgeoisie.⁴³ Child certainly had this motivation. But while Curtis interprets the desire to instill industriousness, order, and Christian morality in the general population as the subjection of one class by another, Child saw his mission as an uplifting one in which the worst excesses of capitalism would be mitigated by instilling Christian and social values, and the younger generation become equipped to succeed in an increasingly competitive world.

LOCAL OPPOSITION

Although state-formation theorists argue that school reforms were imposed by bourgeois reformers on an unwilling population, the fact is that the basic values of the school promoters were widely shared by what was still essentially a population of independent producers.⁴⁴ The American-descended population of the Eastern Townships had objected to compulsory school taxes during the mid-1840s, but this organized opposition evaporated once informal accommodations were made to the principle of local control.⁴⁵ By 1854 Child could report that “[i]n some school districts the inhabitants have made extraordinary efforts to raise additional funds to pay better teachers, which have been crowned with success.”⁴⁶ But there remained individuals either unable or unwilling to pay their assessments. In reporting the arrest of two men for burning down a school in Stanstead Township in 1855, Child even suggested that because fires were generally assumed accidental, such acts were “more frequently committed than we are generally aware of,” a suspicion shared in Upper Canada.⁴⁷ He reported also some resistance on the part of the more affluent to the higher school taxes permitted by the province in 1856.⁴⁸

One of Child’s assets as an agent of school reform was his parallel role as justice of the peace, a position all school inspectors held ex-officio.⁴⁹ Already an active magistrate for many years, Child was able not only to investigate incidents of active resistance, such as the above-mentioned arson case, but also to sit in

⁴³Curtis, “Representation and State Formation,” 79; Curtis, “Mapping the Social,” 59.

⁴⁴See R.D. Gidney and D.A. Lawr, “Who Ran the Schools? Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth Century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, 72, no. 3 (1980): 131–43.

⁴⁵See J.I. Little, “School Reform and Community Control in the 1840s: A Case Study from the Eastern Townships,” *Historical Studies in Education*, 9 (1997): 152–64.

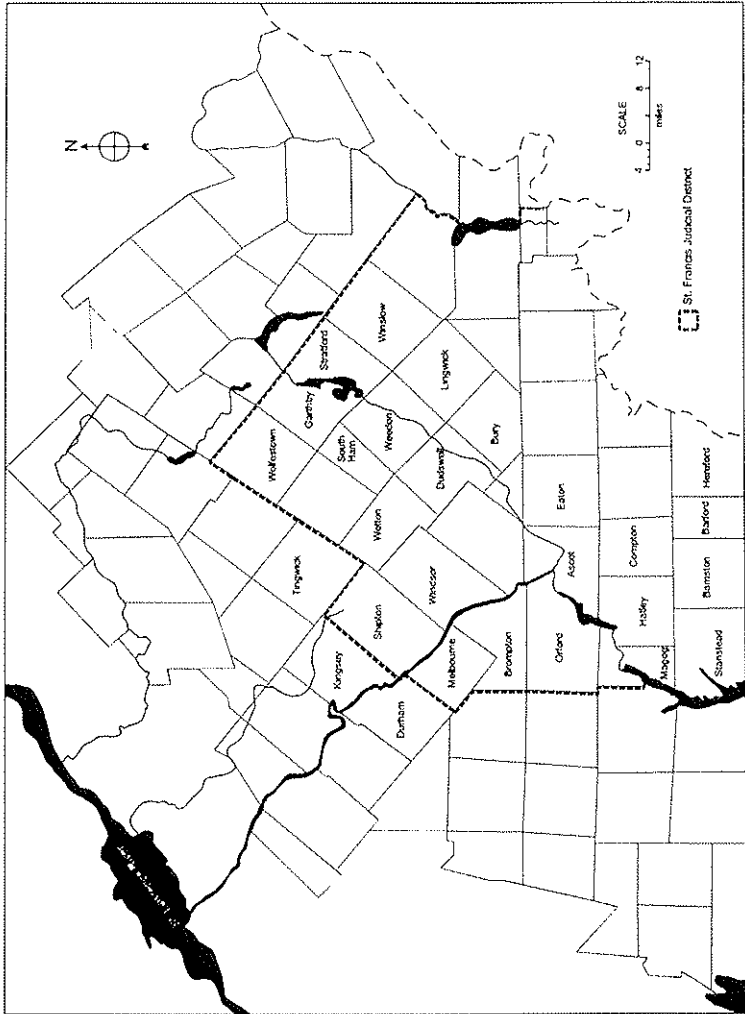
⁴⁶JLAC, vol. 13 (1854–5), Appendix B.

⁴⁷Child to Meilleur, May 9, 1855, no. 911, LR, E13, ANQQ; Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 210.

⁴⁸Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 181.

⁴⁹Fliteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 17.

Marcus Child's Inspection District



judgment over recalcitrant taxpayers. The independence of justices of the peace from local pressures should not however be exaggerated.⁵⁰ Child shared his authority with other justices in the court of quarter sessions, and he felt frustrated by one influential member's hostility to the new school system. He wrote to Meilleur in January 1853 that this "opposer" had followed him in order to defend several suits for the recovery of school rates, "and I am sorry to say that he found so much sympathy with four magistrates, who were present, as to get the actions dismissed." In a neighbouring township where the person in question was not in attendance, three of the same justices supported Child's position against the defendants in similar cases. Child wished his nemesis impeached on grounds that he opposed the school acts, having declared that his children were being educated in Vermont because the Lower Canadian system was "'French' [...] & not English—& he would not make Frenchmen of his children." The chief difficulty was to find people willing to sign an affidavit against the offending magistrate due to fear of "injuring their prospects of business." Child himself did not wish the document to be in his own handwriting.⁵¹

There is no further mention of the obstructionist magistrate in Child's correspondence, but he did occasionally refer to a general sense that the school laws were "framed to meet the wants of French Canadians—and not in accordance with the views of the people of the Townships."⁵² Child thought nevertheless that "all the sins of omission & commission" by commissioners, visitors, parents, and teachers were blamed unfairly on the school law, and that its principles, "after existing so long," could not be safely changed. He recommended only that the commissioners' power be reduced, and that the inspector, "whose power to do good is chiefly *persuasive* [...] ought to have a negative to prevent abuses, when they turn up under his Inspection."⁵³ By 1855 he could report that

wherever difficulties have unfortunately arisen, they have been successfully removed, and are being so; and the angry feelings which too frequently attend them have been allayed, and harmony and good will restored in due time.⁵⁴

In short, Child's coercive powers helped in pursuing recalcitrant taxpayers, but in promoting school reform he had to rely upon his powers of persuasion.

⁵⁰See Susan Lewthwaite, "Violence, Law and Community in Rural Upper Canada," in Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite, eds., *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, vol. 5, *Crime and Criminal Justice* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society, 1994).

⁵¹Child to Meilleur, Jan. 20, 1853, no. 158, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁵²Child to Meilleur, Jan. 19, 1854, no. 221, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁵³Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1854, no. 1077, LR, E13, ANQQ. See also his report of 16 April 1853 in *JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ.

⁵⁴*JLAC*, 14 (1856), Appendix 16.

SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Curtis has argued it would be fruitless to search for opposition to the school-reform project among school commissioners because “[i]t seems improbable in principle that groups and bodies constituted by the state will unambiguously oppose their own conditions of existence.”⁵⁵ This argument assumes much about the status of temporary unpaid service on a township school commission, and ignores the fact that election to such a body would be an obvious strategy to subvert unpopular state initiatives. Child’s recommendation that the school commissioners’ powers be reduced suggests that, in his district, these locally-elected officials did not constitute a modernizing elite which quickly collaborated with the state in promoting its schooling objectives, as recently suggested by Jean-Pierre Charland for Lower Canada as a whole.⁵⁶

Nor was this image noticeable in the report of the Sicotte Commission of 1853, which found only half of Lower Canada’s 1,025 commissioners to be literate. Filteau and Allard suggest that in the province as a whole the clergy were the only local notables to co-operate wholeheartedly with the inspectors,⁵⁷ and, in the Missisquoi District, Inspector Parmelee agreed with Child that the school commissioners were the chief weakness in the system. While those in older American-settled school districts were not hampered by illiteracy, they generally ignored Meilleur’s advice that it was “better to have fewer Schools, and have them good,” even if this meant that children residing at a distance would be unable to attend as frequently or for as long a period of time.⁵⁸ Families simply remained too protective of their neighbourhood schools to tolerate such an elitist policy.

Parmelee reported that many municipal school commissions had transferred to local school managers, or to the commissioner who lived closest to each school, the task of hiring teachers and collecting fees to make up shortfalls in taxes. Even where the required tax was levied, collection and disbursement were carried out at the individual school level rather than passing through the hands of the secretary-treasurer: “Thus, the Commissioners, in their corporate capacity, throw the responsibility upon the Commissioners, in their individual capacity, or upon the local Managers, as the case may be.”⁵⁹ More studies will be required to determine how long this practice continued and how pervasive it was, but

⁵⁵Curtis, “Policing Pedagogical Space,” 293.

⁵⁶Jean-Pierre Charland, “L’histoire de l’éducation au Québec. Regard sur la production récente,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, 50 (1997): 613–14.

⁵⁷Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 39.

⁵⁸Instructions to inspectors, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ.

⁵⁹Reports of R. Parmelee, inspector, July 21, 1852, March 10, 1853, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ.

research has shown that entrenched localism continued to bedevil the Catholic schools inspector for the St Francis District as late as the 1870s.⁶⁰

Dufour notes that school commissioners in Lower Canada generally welcomed inspectors' visits during the 1850s as relief from their own school visitation duties,⁶¹ and Child's reports do not indicate he faced opposition from the commissioners. He complained, on the other hand, of persistent failure to conform to bureaucratic requirements. In his first tour of inspection, Child found school funds still generally divided equally among the school districts, rather than according to school-age population as the regulations dictated. The St Francis inspector admitted he had not yet visited most schools, but had examined registers and accounts to gather data previously submitted by each secretary-treasurer.

Child found it impossible to fill all blanks in the tables he had been provided "owing to the imperfect manner in which the School-law has been carried into effect in this District." He could attest that treasurers' accounts were generally well kept, and that registers were legible for the most part but "in other respects quite imperfect, and to explain what was necessary to make them conformable to the Law, engaged a good deal of my time and attention." Failure to adhere to such legal requirements had caused the loss of a number of the school commissions' lawsuits, though most assessments had been collected without costs. The main exception remained absentee proprietors, who were difficult to locate and who could afford good lawyers when sued.⁶²

Although school fees were not strongly resented in Child's St Francis District, as elsewhere in Lower Canada,⁶³ Child found they were not generally fixed according to law. Rather than being devoted to the miscellaneous expenses required by the regulations, they were collected to make up the balance of teachers' salaries not covered by tax assessments and government grants. Child himself encouraged school commissioners in his district to vary fees according to the means of the parents, the ages of their children, and the course of instruction, rather than levying the uniform rate of two shillings per month for every school-age child.⁶⁴ In this way, poorer families would not be discouraged from sending their children to school.

⁶⁰J. I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Québec Township* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 234–5. See also Labarrère-Paulé, *Les instituteurs laïques*, 151, 159.

⁶¹Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 198.

⁶²Child, Report, 31 July 1852, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ. On the problems that absentee proprietorship caused the reformed school system, see Little, *State and Society*, 189, 200–1, 203, 205, 208, 214–17 *passim*.

⁶³Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 176–87.

⁶⁴Child, Report, July 31, 1852, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ.

Child's third tour of inspection in February and March 1853 found record-keeping still imperfect. Treasurers generally allowed each commissioner to disburse his share of the funds, with no accounting of their expenditure. Child excused his incomplete tables by citing his failing health since Christmas, his thinly-settled district and its poor roads, the time expended in examining teachers and drafting certificates, and, finally, the ongoing failure of commissioners and secretary-treasurers to gather required information.⁶⁵

Two months later, the somewhat discouraged inspector reported he was still unable to fill the tables except by collecting the data from each school himself. Child further objected to continued use of American texts "of an improper character" and employment of uncertified teachers. He was now considering asking Meilleur to withhold the school grant from every municipality "which did not comply with the law as you have instructed them to do." Before taking such a drastic step, he would wait until he had received for distribution an additional hundred copies of the school acts, as well as Meilleur's recent circular of instructions to commissioners. If anyone then complained about his strictness, Child would "rely upon being sustained in all my lawful acts and requirements by your authority under the Law as the Minister of Education."⁶⁶

P.-J.-O. Chauveau replaced Meilleur in 1855 and proved to be more punctilious about the reports submitted to his office.⁶⁷ But Child never did succeed in convincing teachers and commissioners to fill in journals and registers properly. As late as 1857 he described how

I have collected the number of children from the school Journals when they have been kept, & when not kept, I have obtained them from the teachers, and when they had gone from the School District, I sought them from the families residing near to the school.⁶⁸

Yet Child never asked that school funds be withheld. In 1854 he even opposed government plans for increased sanctions against delinquent commissioners, stating that "[p]enal consequences, when suffered, leave the mind of the sufferer sore and discontented."⁶⁹

⁶⁵Child to Meilleur, April 16, 1853, no. 564, LR, E13, ANQQ. Also in *JLAC*, vol. 11 (1852-3), Appendix JJ.

⁶⁶Child to Meilleur, June 15, 1853, no. 788, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁶⁷Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 183.

⁶⁸Child to Chauveau, Coaticook, June 3, 1857, no. 1233, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁶⁹Child to Meilleur, Oct. 7, 1854, no. 1624, LR, E13, ANQQ.

ACADEMIES, HIGH SCHOOLS, AND COLLEGES

Because there were no normal schools in Lower Canada prior to 1856,⁷⁰ most of the better-educated teachers in the Eastern Townships had attended academies or colleges, either locally or in Vermont. As a result, these privately owned and operated institutions received substantial government subsidies.⁷¹ Beginning in 1851, Meilleur sought to define the academies as schools for students on their way to college, bringing these institutions under greater government control by adding them to his inspectors' already overcharged mandate.⁷²

Although Child had been a founder and trustee of Stanstead Seminary, he had a low opinion of local academies, sending his daughter to a New England college for girls and his son to the High School of Montreal.⁷³ In April 1853 Child reported that the three academies in the St Francis District (Stanstead, Hatley, and Sherbrooke) were taught by young students from the New England colleges "who come to this country, not to make teaching a business, but to raise funds, which will enable them to complete some professional study." He later argued that

when we consider the impressions they [the teachers] are making upon the mind [sic] and character of our children, we ought to awake to renewed exertions to qualify them in our own institutions of learning, so as to give that education to the mass of our children which harmonizes with the character of our country and its people.⁷⁴

Child contradicted Stanstead Seminary's claim that its curriculum was "designed to be sufficient to qualify Students to enter any of the American Colleges," arguing rather that the instruction given in these institutions was "not in conformity to the law, neither is it such as to prepare students for College, for teaching, nor for any of the ordinary pursuits of business." He recommended cutting off the academies' grants if the situation did not improve, and possibly

⁷⁰The temporary legislation establishing normal schools in 1836 had expired by 1842. Audet, *Le système scolaire*, vol. 6, 157–79.

⁷¹For details, see Audet, *Le système scolaire*, vol. 6, 20–31; Little, *State and Society*, 226–30; and Anne Drummond, "From Autonomous Academy to Public 'High School': Québec English Protestant Education, 1829–1889," MA thesis, McGill University, 1986.

⁷²Despite Child's repeated entreaties, Bishop's refused to submit reports to the government on the grounds that it had received a university charter in 1853. During the later 1850s, however, it took steps to open a grammar school branch in order to attract more public funds. Child to P.J.O. Chauveau, Sherbrooke, March 26, 1855, no. 437; Stanstead, April 4, 1855, no. 570, LR, E13, ANQQ; Christopher Nicholl, *Bishop's University, 1843–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 47, 59–63.

⁷³Little, *Child Letters*, 34–5. Meilleur nevertheless made arrangements to send his son to the Stanstead Seminary, apparently to learn English, in the fall of 1854. Child to Meilleur, Nov. 6, 1854, 1736, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁷⁴Child, Report, *JLAC*, 14 (1856), Appendix 16.

forcing them to unite as collegiate schools affiliated to the Church of England's Bishop's College in Lennoxville.⁷⁵ This threat appears to have been largely for public consumption, for Child wrote privately to Meilleur that

I would not advise withholding the grant to the Academies in this District, but that the several Institutions receiving it may be better directed and the course of study so regulated as to meet the wants of the public around them.⁷⁶

Meilleur had already anticipated the inspector by sending a letter asking him to encourage teachers to attend the projected normal school in Montreal. Child replied he would apply to the government for a subsidy to cover their expenses, and hoped "they will be made to understand how to regulate the course of study in our model and elementary schools, and above all, their method should be of the most approved character."⁷⁷ He later described the anticipated benefits:

comparatively little good can be done before we get a sufficient number of teachers from the Normal School to manage & teach our Academies & Model Schools. [...] These schools are, at present, in very improper hands [...] and I can see no ground for much improvement till we can have young men—native teachers—willing to settle down to teaching as a vocation—faithfully prepared in the Normal School to put in charge of these higher schools. The character and qualification of our Elementary teachers could then be formed at these high schools and hence congruity would be introduced into the common school—a systematic course of study could be pursued, from which the most gratifying improvement in education would spring forth, and gladden the friends of education, as well as confer the highest & most durable benefits on the country at large.⁷⁸

Even before the government decided not to proceed with the Montreal normal school, Child reported that he had helped the municipalities of Compton and Barnston to establish high schools to train teachers. These institutions were distinct from model schools that were to provide a higher level of education in each school municipality. Child complained that every attempt to establish such schools in his district had failed because of local community rivalries and opposition to higher taxes,⁷⁹ impediments overcome, as far as high schools were concerned, by the government's more generous irregular grants. According to Child, a £50 state subsidy would be sufficient to operate such a school when supplemented by tuition fees. He claimed to have been so impressed by the success of the first two high schools that he planned to visit Québec to convince the government to provide grants for the same purpose in Melbourne, Shipton, Eaton, and Durham.⁸⁰

⁷⁵Child, Report, April 16, 1853, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–53), Appendix JJ.

⁷⁶Child to Meilleur, April 16, 1853, no. 564, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁷⁷Child to Meilleur, April 19, 1853, no. 575, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁷⁸Child to Meilleur, Sept. 21, 1853, no. 1769, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁷⁹See Little, *State and Society*, 223–6.

⁸⁰Child to Meilleur, April 10, 1854, no. 569; May 1, 1854, no. 646, LR, E13, ANQQ.

Child was thus far from pleased when the new railway town of Richmond (in Melbourne Township) took steps in 1854 to open a private college, which was to have a higher status than an academy. Claiming the promoters' expectations were bound to be disappointed, Child brutally criticized "crude efforts to build up Academies & colleges in sundry country villages." He compared their rejection of the public schools system to the reaction of people hearing for the first time

a band of musicians playing skillfully upon beautiful instruments; they hear the music & are delighted & cry oh! give us the instruments. When failing to produce upon them the *same harmony*, they, in rage break them, or throw them away in disgust.⁸¹

But Child must have realized his high schools would not fill the need for more advanced teacher training, and in early 1855 he reluctantly endorsed the recommendation of Sherbrooke MLA John Sanborn that a regional normal school be affiliated with Richmond's newly-established St Francis College.⁸² Child insisted that control remain unequivocally with the government, and later opposed the proposed arrangement since adequate control would be impossible. He claimed the sectarian character of the college would spark "prejudices against it from those of a different faith," pointing out that Bishop's College and the academies at Stanstead, Hatley, and Sherbrooke would be unlikely to patronize a young rival institution.⁸³ Contrary to Child's assertions, the college's charter explicitly rejected sectarian exclusivity, and the government did grant it the status of a normal school in 1855.⁸⁴ Child's attitude towards the local academies, and St Francis College in particular, reveals how closely he had become identified with state-formation, yet his chief concern remained the training of well-qualified teachers, a task he did not believe small privately-controlled institutions could be entrusted to accomplish.

TEACHERS AND BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

Despite his disparagement of the region's academies, Child praised the locally-educated teachers above those from the United States, stating that the influence of the Scottish system of education had imbued the former with a thoroughness the Americans did not possess.⁸⁵ Child argued that the law should assist those school municipalities which employed better-qualified teachers. Although he

⁸¹Child to Meilleur, Sept. 30, 1854, no. 1589, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁸²Child to Meilleur, Stanstead [Jan. 1855], no. 109, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁸³Child to Meilleur [March 1855], no. 364; March 12, 1855, no. 381, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁸⁴Esther Healey, "St. Francis College, the Formative Years, 1854–1860 Richmond, Canada East," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 8 (Spring 1996): 29–32.

⁸⁵Child, Report, *JLAC*, vol. 13 (1854–55), Appendix B; Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1854, no. 1077, LR, E13, ANQQ.

complained that commissioners did not insist on certificates of moral conduct, his first report found that those employed during the summer months were generally well-qualified females "of unblemished moral character."⁸⁶

Male teachers, who mostly taught the older children during the winter term, were required to appear before the board of examiners in Québec or Montreal before 1 July 1852.⁸⁷ Child sympathized with complaints that they could not afford the expense of such a journey, and recommended that an examining board be established in the Eastern Townships.⁸⁸ Meilleur instead asked Child and the other rural inspectors to fulfill this onerous function. Child later claimed to have examined upwards of two hundred teachers between October and December, 1852 without extra remuneration.⁸⁹

Several months later, the government finally decided to establish seven new boards of examiners, and asked Child to submit names to be appointed for the two to sit in Sherbrooke and Stanstead.⁹⁰ He explained that "a large proportion of the inhabitants of this District belong to no church, neither are they devotedly attached to any set of Dissenters, and they have few if any educated men." He had therefore chosen from "such educated men as we had of good moral character," taking denominational affiliation into consideration only "as far as practicable." Yet six of the seven examiners he chose for Sherbrooke, and four of those for Stanstead, were clergymen of various denominations, including a Catholic priest in each county. This clerical dominance suggests that Child wished to verify the teachers' moral qualifications as well as as their intellectual abilities. And, much as the selection process may have reflected Child's personal biases, it is remarkable that this past master of political patronage actually selected as one of the examiners his long-time political nemesis, the notary William F. Ritchie.⁹¹

The new boards of examiners removed a considerable burden from Child's shoulders, for he explained that, rather than meet him at appointed times, teachers had dropped in "at all hours in my residence, requiring to be examined,

⁸⁶Child, Report, July 31, 1852, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–52), Appendix JJ. In contrast to Labarrère-Paulé, Dufour (*Tous à l'école*, 200, 209–19) strongly defends the skills of Lower Canada's female teachers.

⁸⁷According to Labarrère-Paulé (*Les instituteurs laïques*, 147–8), Meilleur interpreted the regulation broadly, requiring female teachers to submit to "une épreuve devant les inspecteurs."

⁸⁸Child, Report, July 31, 1852, *JLAC*, 11 (1852–52), Appendix JJ.

⁸⁹M. Child to J.B. Meilleur, Stanstead, 9 Dec. 1853, no. 2204, LR, E13, ANQQ; Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 198.

⁹⁰Child to Meilleur, Aug. 17, 1853, no. 1795, LR, E13, ANQQ; Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 208–9.

⁹¹Child to Meilleur, Aug. 30, 1853, no. 1575, LR, E13, ANQQ. On Child's controversial patronage distribution, see Little, *State and Society*, 32–5, 70, 102.

tho. they had no certificate of their age or moral character."⁹² In December 1853, however, the inspector reported that although the Sherbrooke board was making good progress, in Stanstead "little has as yet been done—Generally speaking the fault lies in the habits of the people—a loose and careless manner of carrying into effect the School law." Child advised an example be made by imposing a fine, and sought permission to do so summarily.⁹³

Child's frustration was shared by at least one teacher who wrote a letter to the press in January complaining that only two members of the Sherbrooke board had come to examine a dozen candidates. The teachers had been forced to wait until long after the test before the two additional required board members arrived to sign their certificates. Commenting that teachers were constantly urged to be punctual, the aggrieved correspondent asked,

Have not those tardy members of the Board sent out an influence through these teachers that shall seriously affect the rising generation? Have they not, by their neglect, virtually said to the public, that the whole system of common School Education is of but little consequence in their estimation since they allow their own private business to take precedence?

In reaction, Child assured Meilleur he was preparing to remove the drones from both boards.⁹⁴ Several days later he wrote he had "taken steps to ensure a more general attendance at the Board in Stanstead," making it clear he would impose a fine on those who shirked their duty.⁹⁵ Child's programme of coercive "tutelage" was not exclusively aimed at the working classes.

Child reported that a similar example would have to be made of one or more teachers who still did not have a diploma—some not yet eighteen years old.⁹⁶ Despite the uncompromising rhetoric, however, there is no suggestion in Child's correspondence he ever tried to fine any teachers, commissioners, or examiners. Although a committed temperance man himself, he even supported one school district's decision to retain a local teacher charged with public drunkenness.⁹⁷ Whether or not Child significantly improved teachers' quality, he was sympathetic about the obstacles and hardships they faced.⁹⁸

⁹²Child to Meilleur, Sept. 21, 1853, no. 1769, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹³Child to Meilleur, [Dec.], 20, 1853, no. 158 [of 1854], LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹⁴Child to Meilleur, Jan. 20, 1854, no. 149, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹⁵Child to Meilleur, Jan. 29, 1854, no. 221, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹⁶Child to Meilleur, Jan. 29, 1854, no. 221, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹⁷Child to Meilleur, L'Avenir, March 23, 1855, no. 434, LR, E13, ANQQ.

⁹⁸While he emphasizes the strict moral codes teachers were expected to conform to, Jean-Pierre Charland appears to have uncovered relatively few cases where they were disciplined, and he admits that school officials sometimes defended them against charges by members of the local population. "L'éducation par l'exemple: le contrôle des comportements des instituteurs et des institutions des écoles publiques québécoises, 1842-1897," in Yves Roby and Nive Voisine, eds., *Érudition, humanisme et savoir: Actes du colloque en l'honneur de Jean Hamelin* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996). See also

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

Another benefit the boards of examiners would confer, in Child's opinion, would be to examine the books used in the schools, presumably reporting results to him.⁹⁹ In April, 1853 he complained to Meilleur that the general use of American school books "have been attended with most pernicious effects, upon the character and Education of the District." As himself a former Patriote supporter and exile, Child could hardly blame these books for fomenting the Rebellions, as school promoters were doing in Upper Canada.¹⁰⁰ But he argued they contained material "calculated to prejudice the minds of our pupils against the institutions of the country," adding that "instruction being derived from such sources, is no doubt, one of the causes of the emigration of so many of our youth of both sexes to the neighbouring States." Child concluded in his report for 1853 that "I do not condemn the use of these books among those for whom they were intended,"¹⁰¹ but adopted a more ominous tone the same year with the school commissioners in his district. His June circular warned that use of non-approved books

is an evil the magnitude of which cannot be fully understood by us, and the sooner you set about an entire change in them the better for your children and I might with propriety add, and your family.¹⁰²

Child's chief objection to the use of unauthorized books may have been that they interfered with his plans for systematic instruction. Like other inspectors, and even many parents, Child complained that the great variety of books in use made it impossible to structure the schools "into proper classes."¹⁰³ In his second year in office, Child requested the publisher of the Canadian grammar, arithmetic, and geography texts in the "National School Books" series either to print or to deposit copies at wholesale prices in Sherbrooke. He was presumably referring to the Irish National Series which Donald Akenson claims was "generally

Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 239.

⁹⁹Child to Meilleur, Sept. 21, 1853, no. 1769, LR, E13, ANQQ. On this theme, see Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 59–60.

¹⁰⁰For conflicting views on the American school text controversy in Upper Canada, see James Love, "Cultural Survival and Social Control: The Development of a Curriculum for Upper Canada's Common Schools in 1846," *Histoire sociale-Social History*, 15, no. 30 (1982): 357–82; and Bruce Curtis, "Schoolbooks and the Myth of Curricular Republicanism: The State and the Curriculum in Canada West, 1820–1850," *Histoire sociale-Social History*, 16, no. 32 (1983): 305–29.

¹⁰¹Child, Report, Stanstead, April 16, 1853, *JLAC*, vol. 11 (1852–53), Appendix JJ.

¹⁰²Circular, June 1853, no. 1254, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁰³Child to Meilleur, July 16, 1853, no. 1090, LR, E13, ANQQ; Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 244.

recognized as the best set of textbooks in the English-speaking world."¹⁰⁴ It would be no mark against this series, in Child's mind, that the content was aimed at cultivating the reader's moral rather than aesthetic sensibilities.¹⁰⁵

To give teachers more time to explain lessons according to the approved "natural" or "inductive" method of instruction, Child recommended they form classes as large as possible for reading, spelling, "defining," grammar, arithmetic, and geography.¹⁰⁶ Child, like Ryerson, rejected the rote-memory method of the monitorial system,¹⁰⁷ arguing that it "destroys progress—breeds discontent with the rate payers, and such considerations have given me an earnestness to effect a change which I cannot describe to you."¹⁰⁸ The National Series did become more available, and in December 1854 Child reported marked progress among the pupils of schools using these books. But many had failed to do so, and his efforts at persuasion were nearly exhausted:

[I]t is my candid opinion that, until you are empowered by law to retain from them their share of the school fund till they comply, they will never do it.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, Child examined all students in "reading, defining, spelling, and distinct articulation," distributing prize books to those who performed well.¹¹⁰ In summer, when only younger children attended school, he found arithmetic, grammar, geography, and writing were rarely taught, but insisted every student be trained in mental arithmetic. This subject was fashionable at the time because teachers could pose questions based on real-life situations. According to Houston and Prentice, this approach would "excite the students' interest and encourage spontaneity and logical, rational thinking."¹¹¹ Child also instructed geography be

¹⁰⁴Donald Harmon Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 269–71.

¹⁰⁵For a useful discussion of this series, see Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 237–52.

¹⁰⁶Circular, June 1853, no. 1254, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁰⁷Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 254–5; Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837–1846," in J.K. Johnson and Bruce G. Wilson, eds., *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 352–6.

¹⁰⁸Child to Meilleur, July 16, 1853, no. 1090, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁰⁹Child to Meilleur, Dec. 31, 1854, no. 23 [of 1855], LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹¹⁰According to Dufour (*Tous à l'école*, 238–40) the principle aim of Chauveau's prize distribution policy was to encourage regular attendance, but Child carefully quizzed students before issuing them with the prize books. In 1857 he distributed 256 prize books throughout his district, and asked the superintendent increase the number to 700 or more. Titles are recorded in the journal of his 1857 tour of the Hatley schools. Child to P.J.O. Chauveau, Coaticook, June 3, 1857, no. 1233; July 28, 1857, no. 1957; Nov. 26, 1857, no. 2872, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹¹¹Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 259.

taught as soon as students could read, followed by grammar and writing at the age of eight.¹¹²

Child's liberal inclinations were particularly evident in his attitude towards students. His ten rules for teachers, published in 1854, were a striking contrast to the traditional discipline-oriented approach to teaching. Drafted for want of detailed guidelines from the superintendent's office, these rules stated that teachers should educate their students "by their instruction, and especially by their example, with a love of virtue, industry, and knowledge." They should also "inspire their pupils with confidence in themselves" by treating them "with regard and politeness," and

never use severity, except when other means of making an impression upon an honest and sensible mind shall have failed, and then never without having first consulted at least the President of the School Commissioners.¹¹³

Curtis claims that similar advice given by school reformers in Upper Canada was aimed at "making students embrace and internalize definite habits of mind and body" because of growing concern "with the moral and political discipline of increasingly independent working class populations." He also states that the school authorities, realizing that violence against students was inherent to the system of public education, made it appear to be a personal failing on the part of teachers. In this way they hoped to contain opposition to the concept of public schooling while also using that opposition to police the occupation of teaching.¹¹⁴ This conspiratorial interpretation overlooks the fact that the English-Canadian clergy and press had been increasingly advocating the same non-coercive approach to child-rearing.¹¹⁵ Child's family correspondence suggests that

¹¹²Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1854, no. 1077, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹¹³Undated newspaper clipping in Child to Meilleur, Feb. 28, 1854, no. 346, LR, E13, ANQQ. The regulations drafted by at least two French-speaking inspectors favoured a more regimented approach to teaching and classroom management. Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 54–9.

¹¹⁴Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836–1871* (London, Ont.: Althouse Press, 1988), 315, 330.

¹¹⁵See Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790–1840* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 72. While James Axtell claims that the trend away from corporal punishment had begun many years earlier in New England, Linda Pollock argues from evidence found in diaries and autobiographies that there was a definite *increase* in the severity of English and American school discipline in the early nineteenth century. She also claims, however, that parental and school discipline since the seventeenth century has been greatly exaggerated by historians. James Axtell, *The School Upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 194–9; Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations From 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 188–9.

his model classroom was modelled on his loving and nurturing relationship with his own daughter and son.¹¹⁶

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Economic hardship and local resistance to taxation during the 1840s resulted in many of the one-room schoolhouses becoming so dilapidated and overcrowded by the following decade that they discouraged attendance. Claiming older schools to be “very inconvenient and generally not worth repairing,”¹¹⁷ Child took advantage of the subsidy offered by the government in 1853 for new construction.¹¹⁸ With a careful eye to economy, the inspector drafted and circulated his own design for a building measuring twenty-two by forty feet. While the school would include a shed for horses and wood, as well as separate cloakrooms for boys and girls and an indoor privy, there was ample provision for air circulation and light. Most important for the new more structured school system, the teacher's desk was on an elevated platform facing three parallel rows of desks. Behind that platform the wall would be painted black for the writing of exercises that the whole class could see, thereby permitting the group teaching that educational reformers favoured.¹¹⁹

Child reported in 1854 that “[t]he people display a noble liberality in building school houses,” spending as much as £150 from voluntary contributions in addition to the £75 they were allowed to raise by assessment,¹²⁰ but found commissioners anxious that he not interfere in their building plans. In February 1854 he complained to Meilleur that seven municipalities which had been promised subsidies to improve or rebuild their school houses had failed to consult him. Child asked that funds not be released until he could inspect each building in question.

To assure the superintendent that he was not simply being officious, Child noted that conflicts over the location of school houses had been “of more injury

¹¹⁶Little, *Child Letters*, 30–8.

¹¹⁷Child to Meilleur, Dec. 27, 1853, no. 2278, LR, E13, ANQQ. On this theme, see Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 61; Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 232–3, 243–4; and Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 205–14.

¹¹⁸Child to J.B. Meilleur, Stantstead, July 16, 1853, no. 1090, LR, E13, ANQQ. On school design and student classification in Upper Canada, see Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 97–101, 148.

¹¹⁹Child to Meilleur, July 16, 1853, no. 1090, LR, E13, ANQQ. On school design and student classification in Upper Canada, see Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 97–101, 148.

¹²⁰Child, Report, *JLAC*, 13 (1854–55), Appendix B.

to the school wherein they have arisen, than from most other local causes."¹²¹ Uppermost in his mind must have been the fact that a new school in one district had been burned down two years earlier, for in October he reported that he was discouraging any new building there until "the ill feeling [...] had quite subsided and the angry parties shown a better feeling & desire to agree & join cordially in building another."¹²² But Child did recommend funding of three schools he had inspected, although he had not been able to impose his own design. In fact, Child did not need to encourage the local communities to build new schools, and their opposition to his advice showed the limits of his authority.

PERIPHERAL SETTLEMENTS

The British and French-Canadian settlers who had begun to migrate to the region's more marginal townships during the later 1820s were generally less enthusiastic about public schooling than their American-descended neighbours to the south.¹²³ Child nevertheless felt that the French Canadians, once persuaded to open schools, were more "subordinate to direction" than his own people, long accustomed to managing their own schools.¹²⁴

Child, although plagued with rheumatism,¹²⁵ included the remote townships of Tingwick and Wotton on his first inspection tour, reporting the settlers as "desirous to have schools established for the benefit of their children." He advised them to build log school houses and hire female teachers who could be boarded among "the better families." As school commissioners Child named five men with Irish-sounding names for Tingwick, and five French Canadians for neighbouring Wotton. Four schools were established in the latter township by the fall of 1853,¹²⁶ but, because of their failure to levy assessments, the commissioners had still not received a government subsidy two years later. Child then commended them for raising over £51 for their four schools by voluntary subscription, and suggested Meilleur bend the rules in this case by giving them their share of the grant.¹²⁷ In 1859, however, he reported still unresolved "contentions" in these townships.¹²⁸

On his first tour Child had also visited the sparsely-settled township of South Ham, where his old schoolmate, Israel Rice, had erected a school and convinced

¹²¹Child to Meilleur, Feb. 28, 1854, no. 346; Sept. 30, 1854, no. 1589, I.R, E13, ANQQ. On this theme, see Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 204.

¹²²Child to Meilleur, Oct. 19, 1854, no. 1676, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

¹²³See Little, *State and Society*, 202–18.

¹²⁴Child to Meilleur, Oct. 7, 1854, no. 1624, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

¹²⁵Child to Meilleur, Oct. 9, 1852, no. 1590; Dec. 18, 1854, no. 1902, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

¹²⁶Child to Meilleur, Oct. 9, 1852, no. 1590; Nov. 14, 1853, no. 2091, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

¹²⁷Child to Meilleur, March 6, 1855, no. 365, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

¹²⁸Child to P.J.O. Chauveau, Coaticook, Feb. 5, 1859, no. 417, I.R, E13, ANQQ.

most settlers to join relatively prosperous Dudswell Township for school purposes.¹²⁹ Within a few months, however, a number of them had changed their minds. Child reported four of the complainants were British and thirteen French Canadians: "The former, desire no taxes & no schools, the latter do not wish for a school, but if they must have one, they would prefer being joined to Wotton." Child claimed most of the British settlers supported union with English-speaking Dudswell and recommended the Francophone minority either join French-speaking Wotton or establish a dissentient school.¹³⁰ Because there had been some sentiment in Dudswell that the poorer settlers in South Ham would have the right to share their school fund, Child suggested separate accounts be kept for the two townships.¹³¹

Child was responsible also for French-speaking townships further east, in northern Compton and southern Beauce counties, although the latter lay outside the St Francis District. He reported of Lambton Township in 1856 that the principal school was kept by an eighteen-year-old girl "nevertheless possessed of great abilities as a teacher," including "a most thorough knowledge of Arithmetic." Neighbouring Garthby and Stratford were only preparing to open schools, whereas Forsyth had two, but assessments were not promptly paid:

[I]t is true that many of the inhabitants are poor and unable to pay much, but it must also be admitted, that many of them are also unwilling.¹³²

Despite Child's skilled and conciliatory hand, he made little progress in fostering schools in these remote communities. In 1857 the increasingly exhausted inspector, whose knowledge of French was probably limited, asked that most of the district's largely French-speaking townships (including sixty school subdistricts and thirty-eight schools) be removed from his responsibility, still leaving him with 207 schools. The government did not comply.¹³³ In February 1859 Child reported he had not visited Stratford, Garthby, Winslow North, Weedon, Wolfestown, or Ham South on his last tour because

that fatal and filthy disease the small pox was in every house thro. these settle ments, and the wife of the French teacher in Weedon had died of it, under the most appalling circumstances.¹³⁴

In addition to the French-speaking colonization townships, there were the equally isolated and impoverished Highland settlements in northern Compton

¹²⁹Child to Meilleur, Oct. 19, 1852, no. 1626, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹³⁰On dissentient school status in the Eastern Townships, see Little, *State and Society*, 208-12.

¹³¹Child to Meilleur, April 23, 1853, no. 596, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹³²Child, Report, *JLAC*, 15 (1857), Appendix 58.

¹³³Child to P.J.O. Chauveau, Coaticook, March 13, 1857, no. 780, LR, E13, ANQQ. Upon Child's death in 1859, the Catholic schools in Chester, Tingwick, Kingsey, and Durham were transferred to Inspector G.A. Bourgeois of the Nicolet District. G.A. Bourgeois to P.J.O. Chauveau, St Grégoire, Dec. 31, 1859, no. 735, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹³⁴Child to P.J.O. Chauveau, Coaticook, Feb. 5, 1859, no. 417, LR, E13, ANQQ.

County to report upon. The Free-Kirk settlers from the Isle of Lewis proved to be more enthusiastic about schooling than British communities elsewhere in the region. Child was able to write in 1853 that a teacher in Lingwick Township possesses very high qualifications, and has used the National School books with great advantage to her classes. The register and accounts, under the present Secretary-Treasurer, are very regular, and there is a general desire to act in conformity to the Law.¹³⁵

Child was unable to visit the area the following year due to “the several uncleared swamps” along the route, but thereafter his reports suggest that progress was slow in Lingwick, where “the children learn to read or spell, and nothing more,” because of the school commission’s debt.¹³⁶

In neighbouring Winslow, the Scots were reported to be doing all they could to support their schools in 1857:

But there is much to be done to lay down a good foundation for their schools, which are literally in the forest. [...] Their school houses are built of logs, hewn, and covered with long shingles on the roof and gables, forming but a poor shelter for the groups of healthy but ragged children which assemble in them. Such destitution I never saw before; but even here I found some of the children making good progress in grammar, and most of them read quite well in easy lessons of the “National Series.”¹³⁷

Local disputes closed the township’s four schools the following year, and Child reported them as still “struggling” in 1859, the year of his last inspection tour.¹³⁸ Although the evangelical, Gaelic-speaking Scots were anxious to send their children to school where they could learn to speak English and read the Bible, Child was unable to offer much assistance.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of school inspectors among the recalcitrant or impoverished should not be exaggerated. In 1853, for example, Reverend Paradis of Saint-Félix de Kingsey, which lay within Child’s territory, complained to the Sicotte Commission that

¹³⁵Lingwick is mistakenly identified as Tingwick. Child, Report, April 16, 1853, *JLAC*, 11 (1852-53), Appendix JJ.

¹³⁶Child to Meilleur, July 18, 1853, no. 1085; Feb. 28, 1854, no. 346, LR, E13, ANQQ; Child, Report, *JLAC*, 15 (1857), Appendix 58; 16 (1858), Appendix 43; 17 (1859), Appendix 58.

¹³⁷Report of Marcus Child, *JLAC*, 15 (1857), Appendix 58. For more details on the schools of Winslow Township, see Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 220–45.

¹³⁸Child, Report, *JLAC*, 17 (1859), Appendix 58.

the Inspector and the Superintendent himself both recoil before the obstacles and the slight oppositions shewn by the people, who have become arrogant through the contempt they have been permitted to evince towards the law.¹³⁹

Four years later the superintendent of schools acknowledged that, in the eyes of the public, most of the inspectors were negligent and incompetent.¹⁴⁰

This is a harsh judgement, given the burdensome responsibilities assumed by these officials and the role they played in convincing local ratepayers to assume an increasingly heavy burden—the provincial grant declined to 20 percent of school expenses by 1858.¹⁴¹ The Eastern Townships example suggests that, even with the greatest of zeal, an inspector could not impose careful record-keeping habits or a standard curriculum or school design, or even effective control by commissioners as corporate entities over expenditure of revenue and hiring of teachers for individual schools.

But despite the handicaps Child faced, and although the school reform programme had been widely accepted in the St Francis District before his appointment, he made a significant impact. Enrollment of school-age children had already approached 100 percent in Stanstead County by the time he assumed his duties, but there was considerable room for improvement in the much larger county of Sherbrooke.¹⁴² During Child's first eighteen months in office, he spent forty days on one tour alone, reporting fifty-two new schools opened in his district, with an increase of 1,777 students, or one third of the total enrollment.¹⁴³ He ensured that most teachers were at least minimally qualified, and took steps toward improving the curriculum and pedagogy, though there was still far to go at his death.

Child himself remained unsatisfied. He persistently asked for a raise in salary so he could devote more time to his duties, writing in 1854 that £300 "and a handsome allowance for contingencies" would allow him to move to the more central town of Sherbrooke.¹⁴⁴ Even without the raise, Child reported that he promptly replied to every letter written to him on school business, also sending correspondence on his own initiative and recording his advice and directions in school journals and commission registers.¹⁴⁵ Only as Child's rheumatism worsen-

¹³⁹*JLAC*, 11 (1852–3), Appendix JJ.

¹⁴⁰Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 69–70.

¹⁴¹Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 184.

¹⁴²Little, *State and Society*, 222.

¹⁴³Child to Meilleur, March 31, 1853, no. 484, LR, E13, ANQQ; *Stanstead Journal* clipping, in Child to Meilleur, Jan. 20, 1854, no. 149, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁴⁴Child to Meilleur, Jan. 29, 1854, no. 221, LR, E13, ANQQ. In 1854 Meilleur himself recommended higher salaries for inspectors so that they could become full-time officials. Filteau and Allard, *Un siècle de service*, vol. 1, 68.

¹⁴⁵Child to Meilleur, Nov. 6, 1854, no. 1736, LR, E13, ANQQ.

ed after 1854 did he begin to fall behind in his work,¹⁴⁶ but he tenaciously held onto the inspectorship until his death in 1859.

Child summarized his mission in a published address to the teachers of his district in 1854:

You are labouring with me in a great cause, and if we can have the co-operation of parents and guardians, so far as to ensure a punctual and regular attendance of their children, we shall, I am confident, ultimately establish that high intellectual culture, which was contemplated by our legislature when providing so liberally for education.¹⁴⁷

Because Child wanted a well-ordered, progressive, and moral society, his notional curriculum did not include "novel and impracticable" subjects,¹⁴⁸ or textbooks published in the United States. Despite his New England origin and his liberal ideology, Child claimed that for his go-ahead neighbours to the south life was "nothing but a miserable scramble for money and political power and place."¹⁴⁹

Although general consensus has been that increased material prosperity caused religious enthusiasm in English-speaking Canada to decline after mid-century, Marguerite Van Die has argued recently that

[w]hen viewed through the lens of lay piety rather than clerical anxiety, the enhanced social status of the [church] membership in the 1850s revitalized the evangelical impulse rather than marked its death knell.¹⁵⁰

As someone who had left the Methodists during the 1840s to join the Anglican Church, Child's evangelical enthusiasm was probably not at its height while he was a school inspector, but his basic attitude had changed little since writing to his wife, Lydia, in 1843:

In the midst of public affairs I feel my dependence, and the unmerited favours of God to me and mine[.] I have not been unmindful of these in prosperity and I hope & pray I may not forget them should adversity come upon me or mine.¹⁵¹

In Child's case, as in that of Egerton Ryerson and many other school reformers, the evangelical impulse became focused on the public school system because he perceived education as crucial to furthering a religious-inspired belief

¹⁴⁶Draft letter to M. Child, Montréal, May 23, 1857, no. 1238, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁴⁷Undated newspaper clipping in Child to Meilleur, Feb. 28, 1854, no. 346, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁴⁸Child to Meilleur, Oct. 7, 1854, no. 1624, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁴⁹Child to Lydia Child, Legislative Assembly, Nov. 17, 1843, in Little, *Child Letters*, 111.

¹⁵⁰Marguerite Van Die, "'A March of Victory and Triumph in Praise of The Beauty of Holiness': Laity and the Evangelical Impulse in Canadian Methodism, 1800–1884," in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 81.

¹⁵¹Child to Lydia Child, Kingston, Nov. 8, 1843, in Little, *Child Letters*, 100.

in moral and social progress.¹⁵² Rather than compartmentalizing the sacred and secular, 19th-century evangelical Christians integrated them “into a disciplined, activist form of religion.”¹⁵³ Child saw schools as instruments of the church as much as the state, defining the benefits of schooling as not only “the business of life” but also the “principles of morality and virtue.”

Number five of Child’s ten rules for teachers (noted above) declared they should not limit their attention to the mere cultivation of the talents of their pupils, but they should look upon it as a primary part of their duty, to form their manners, and more particularly to excite in them sentiments of morality and religion. Number eight stated that in order to engender “proper behaviour, peace and harmony amongst their pupils,” teachers “ought to spare no effort to excite and maintain between them, sentiments of christian union, of reciprocal benevolence and brotherly love.” Finally, number nine counseled that “to sustain themselves against those feelings of anxiety and disgust, inevitable in the instruction of youth,” teachers should “consider for how much they are responsible, not only to society in general, but even to God himself—the author of all knowledge and all good.”¹⁵⁴ Child proudly noted that, due to his insistence, all children in his schools could repeat the Ten Commandments.¹⁵⁵ Although the “common Christianity” promoted by Child aimed to instill a deep sense of morality and self-discipline, it certainly did not imply, as Curtis has suggested, that children should be indoctrinated to “respect political authority even if it appeared to be unjust.”¹⁵⁶

Despite having been a Member of the Legislative Assembly for many years, Child remained skeptical about state authority, writing to his wife in 1843 that “[t]he best Govt. in the world is that which is least felt, which produces protection to person and property.”¹⁵⁷ There is however no denying that in his struggle to defend and implement public school reforms Child helped hasten the rise of an interventionist state where agents such as himself would assume an

¹⁵²See Goldwin S. French, “Egerton Ryerson and the Methodist Model for Upper Canada,” in Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978); W. Westfall, “The End of the World: An Aspect of Time and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Protestant Culture,” *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens*, 7 (1985): 72–83; and Michael Gauvreau, “Protestantism Transformed: Personal Piety and the Evangelical Social Vision, 1815–1867,” in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760–1990* (Burlington: Welch, 1990), 91–2.

¹⁵³Van Die, “A March of Victory,” 88.

¹⁵⁴Undated newspaper clipping in Child to Meilleur, Feb. 28, 1854, no. 346, LR, R13, ANQQ.

¹⁵⁵Child to Meilleur, Sept. 30, 1854, no. 1589, LR, R13, ANQQ.

¹⁵⁶Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State,” 358.

¹⁵⁷Child to Lydia Child, Legislative Assembly, Dec. 5, 1843, in Little, *The Child Letters*, 133.

active role. In opposition to this trend, Sherbrooke's Alexander Tilloch Galt sought to decentralize the school system in 1856 by abolishing the position of inspector and giving more power to the municipal councils. As a committed state-builder himself, however, Galt's stand was based not on ideological differences from Child so much as his fear of French-Catholic domination through the chief superintendent's office.¹⁵⁸

A former Patriote supporter such as Child would hardly share this concern, nor was his view of the school inspector's role essentially anti-liberal since he felt it should remain a largely persuasive one. As a sincerely religious member of the rising petite bourgeoisie, he basically supported "the evangelical notion of the 'responsible' individual and the 'voluntary' model of society," to use Michael Gauvreau's words.¹⁵⁹ Child tried unsuccessfully to interfere in school construction and to impose a common curriculum, yet did not echo other inspectors who advocated stricter controls over the classroom through establishment of a council of public instruction.¹⁶⁰ Rather, Child favoured more public enlightenment, suggesting, for example, that a journal of education be regularly distributed to every household.¹⁶¹

In short, Child's career as inspector was essentially driven by the same combination of liberalism and paternalism with which he governed his own family.¹⁶² To Bruce Curtis the aim of such state officials was to contribute to a bourgeois hegemony

whose main dimension is precisely the transformation of certain ways of seeing, doing, and being, particular to one class, one sex, and one ethnic group into the only thinkable, rational, 'efficient' ways.¹⁶³

The fact remains that school reforms were primarily aimed at, and supported by, a society of farmers and tradesmen who shared so-called "middle-class" values of self-discipline and hard work. Furthermore, Child's schools project had more strictly educational aims in mind.

To Meilleur, Child lamented that the "[h]abits of industry and frugality" which marked the people of the Townships left them little time for reading other than religious works or novels, or to "think profoundly upon the great principles which form the foundation on which our civil & Religious Institutions rest." Better-informed individuals could only pray that "such fickle minds and unsteady

¹⁵⁸Nathan H. Mair, *Protestant Education in Québec: Notes on the History of Education in the Protestant Public Schools of Québec* (Sainte-Foy: Conseil supérieur de l'éducation du Québec, 1981), 27.

¹⁵⁹Quoted in Mark A. Noll, "Canadian Evangelicalism: A View From the United States," in Rawlyk, *Aspects*, 16.

¹⁶⁰This body came into existence in 1859. Dufour, *Tous à l'école*, 222.

¹⁶¹Child to Meilleur, May 14, 1855, no. 950, LR, E13, ANQQ.

¹⁶²See Little, *Child Letters*, 30-8.

¹⁶³Curtis, "Representation and State Formation," 80.

hands" did not destroy these institutions. In his 1854 report the St Francis inspector lamented that

scholars are not taught the habit of close and correct observation of whatever comes under their notice, and forming correct opinions therefrom; consequently they in mature life are likely to become the dupes of delusion practised on them by themselves, if not by others, and are thus destined to follow after the fictions of the age, in which they may act their part.¹⁶⁴

Child deplored the fact that parents withdrew children from school as soon as they were of "an age to be employed at home or elsewhere [...] thus depriving the teacher of his only chance of making his pupils scholars, and the country of well educated men, to sustain successfully the popular institutions therein."¹⁶⁵ In Foucault's terms, Child's "state project" was less concerned with class and groups, or state domination of society, than with reconciling government and the increasing autonomy of the individual.¹⁶⁶ In an era of growing independence and materialism, people must be taught to "govern" themselves in the strict sense of the word. Although the Eastern Townships may still have been a relatively isolated and undeveloped region, Child was imbued with the vision of a more liberal individualistic society tempered by the religious-inspired sense of social commitment and self-discipline that marked the rise of the petite bourgeoisie in Britain and America during the early nineteenth century.¹⁶⁷

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¹⁶⁴Child, Report, *JLAC*, 13 (1854–55), Appendix B.

¹⁶⁵Child, Report, *JLAC*, 13 (1854–55), Appendix B.

¹⁶⁶See the discussion in Curtis, "Working Past," 15–17.

¹⁶⁷On this theme, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).