

Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935–53

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Lawrence Cremin, David Tyack, and Larry Cuban distinguish three strands of reform: administrative progressives who sought to bring the discipline and efficiency of science to school management; social reformers who sought to solve social problems and renew society through the schools; and pedagogical reformers who stressed that school reform should be the outcome of a better understanding of children.¹ To some extent, the same divisions were evident in the progressive education movement in Canada.²

The Putman-Weir Report, released in British Columbia in 1925, embodied a strand of progressive reform often called the “New Education.”³ Written by Dr. G. Weir, head of the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. J.H. Putman, senior inspector of Ottawa schools, the Report recommended an activity-based curriculum, more diverse course offerings at the secondary level and, most significantly, a restructuring of British Columbia schools from eight elementary grades and three high school grades, to six elementary grades, three years at junior high school, and three senior high school grades. The Putman-Weir Report illustrates the cautious nature of the early Canadian progressive educators. Historian Jean Mann has characterized the Report as “essentially a conservative document.”⁴ With its emphasis on efficiency, centralized control of schools, streaming of students, and the inculcation of right values, it falls into the progressive administrative stream described by Tyack.

¹See Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: the metropolitan experience, 1876–1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988). On the administrative progressives, see David B. Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 177–98. On the pedagogical progressives, see Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

²For an overview of progressive education in Canada, see Robert Patterson, “The Canadian Experience with Progressive Education,” in *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues*, ed. E. Brian Titley (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1990), 95–110.

³For an overview of this movement, refer to Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

⁴Jean Mann, “G.M. Weir and H.B. King: Progressive Education or Education for the Progressive State?” in *Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia*, eds. J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1980), 93.

Canada's largest province, Ontario, was also influenced by progressive educators who sought to avoid what they saw as American excesses. Historian Robert Stamp says that neither Thornton Mustard nor Stanley Watson, authors of Ontario's 1937 progressive curriculum, were "comfortable with the ideological radicals who were then nudging American progressive education further left with their call for 'a new social order.'" ⁵ Rather, these Ontario educators "were pragmatists, convinced by the realities of the depression that a different approach to class-room learning was necessary to prepare students for an uncertain future." The careful balance Ontario educators tried to strike between progressive reforms and traditional approaches to schooling was undermined by the war effort. By 1944 the Ontario experiment with an activity-based and child-centred curriculum was largely over. ⁶

It was in Alberta that "educators made the most systematic effort to develop a theoretical base that would undergird curriculum change," according to curriculum historian George Tomkins. ⁷ In 1935 Alberta introduced a progressive curriculum revision for elementary and intermediate schools that became a model for other provinces. Alberta's Education Department, unlike those of other provinces, was dominated by a man who fell squarely into what Tyack has called the social reform strand of the progressive education movement.

In H.C. Newland, Alberta had a Supervisor of Schools who served on the executive of the Progressive Education Association, openly supported the left-leaning Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and who was clearly influenced by the views of progressive educators such as George S. Counts who advocated using schools as agencies of social reconstruction. ⁸ Donald Dickie, another prominent progressive educator in Alberta, served on the committee that developed the child-centred, activity-based "enterprise" curriculum introduced in 1935, and her writings clearly indicate her sympathies with the pedagogical progressives. ⁹

As members of an emerging cadre of progressive professional "educationalists," Newland and Dickie together established their legitimacy as true leaders in education by their creation and public promotion of the new programme—an extraordinarily radical curriculum revision for its Canadian context.

Historians of education in Alberta argue that this strand of progressivism did not transform classroom practice, which changed little despite the introduction of a progressive curriculum in elementary schools and the appearance of such new subjects as social studies at intermediate and senior levels. Robert Patterson,

⁵ Robert Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 167.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁷ George Tomkins, *A Common Countenance* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 196. See also J.D. Wilson, R.M. Stamp and Louis-Philippe Audet, *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 377.

⁹ Wilson, Stamp and Audet, 378.

for example, argues convincingly that poorly educated and isolated teachers in rural schools were simply unable to understand and apply the very complex and abstract progressive approach to teaching.¹⁰ Moreover, he points out that the Depression and the war limited the amount of money available for extensive school reform. Nick Kach agrees that the progressive curriculum revision of 1935 was both too ambitious and widely misunderstood.¹¹ Historian Michael A. Kostek, on the other hand, argues that "the enterprise method of teaching remained in vogue for almost thirty years,"¹² suggesting that Alberta classrooms remained progressive in tone far longer than others in Canada.

Whether or not the curriculum revision penetrated classrooms, an examination of its creation and promotion sheds light on the extraordinary influence of a small cadre of progressive "educationalists" who sought professional legitimacy through their role as writers of curricula. Their experience is an interesting case study in the nature of the educational leadership from educational bureaucrats and Normal School instructors. Their systematic attempt to sell their revision illustrated their understanding that the success of the new programme depended on the support of teachers, trustees, parents, and the general public.

THE PROGRESSIVE REVISION IN ALBERTA

The progressive curriculum introduced in 1935 was the creation of a small group of educationalists in the Department of Education and the provincial Normal schools. Progressive-minded officials in the Department of Education were led by Deputy Minister G. Fred McNally, among the first generation of educationalists in Alberta to receive graduate training in education. In January 1914 he was a school inspector when the Department of Education sent him on salary to Teachers' College in New York to prepare him to take over the principalship of Camrose Normal School. While in New York, he took courses from the foremost thinkers in American education: E. Cubberley, G.D. Strayer, E.L. Thorndike, and William Kilpatrick. Later he spoke warmly of his experience there and particularly stressed the impact Kilpatrick's "Project Method" had on schools in

¹⁰ See R.S. Patterson, "Progressive Education: Impetus to Educational Change in Alberta and Saskatchewan," in *The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-1980*, ed. Howard Palmer and Donald Smith (Vancouver: Tantalus Research Ltd., 1980), 173-98; and "Voices from the Past: The Personal and Professional Struggle of Rural School Teachers," in *Schools in the West*, eds. Nancy Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986), 99-111.

¹¹ Nick Kach, "The Emergence of Progressive Education in Alberta," in *Exploring Our Educational Past*, eds. Nick Kach and Kas Mazurek (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1992), 164.

¹² Michael A. Kostek, *A Century and Ten: The History of Edmonton Public Schools* (Edmonton: Edmonton Public Schools, 1992), 323.

North America.¹³ While McNally was knowledgeable about and sympathetic to progressive curriculum revision, he delegated the task of writing the new curriculum to Hubert C. Newland, appointed Supervisor of Schools in Alberta in 1935.

Newland was born in Ontario but moved to Saskatchewan as a young man, completing his teacher training at the Regina Normal School under D.G. Goggin. After several years teaching, he entered the University of Toronto and received an Honours B.A. in Philosophy in 1910. He taught and served as an administrator in several rural schools before settling down at Victoria High School in Edmonton where he taught Latin. While teaching, he earned an LL.B, an MA and a BEd from the University of Alberta. In 1928, Newland moved to the Edmonton Normal School where he taught psychology until taking a leave to complete studies for his doctorate. In 1932 Newland was awarded a PhD from the University of Chicago. When he returned to Alberta, he served briefly as a high school inspector and as Chief Inspector of Schools for the province before being appointed Supervisor of Schools.¹⁴

Newland was a social reconstructionist whose studies in Chicago convinced him of the necessity to, and the ability of schools to reconstruct society along progressive lines.¹⁵ At a time of political, social, and economic distress, it was only sensible that schools and educationalists take the lead in solving problems and preparing students to create a more just society. Newland was a member of a progressive education discussion group called the Education Society of Edmonton, established in 1927,¹⁶ to which he introduced the ideas of George S. Counts. In 1935 he convinced the group to use Counts' *Social Foundations of*

¹³In his biography, McNally remembered that he dropped out of John Dewey's class after three days simply because Dewey's lectures were beyond him. H.T. Coutts and B.E. Walker, *G. Fred: The Story of G. Fred McNally* (Don Mills: J.M. Dent & Sons, Canada, Limited, 1964), 40-3.

¹⁴R.S. Patterson, "Hubert C. Newland: Theorist of Progressive Education," in *Profiles of Canadian Educators*, ed. R.S. Patterson, John Chalmers and John Friesen (Toronto: D.C. Heath Canada Ltd., 1974), 289-91.

¹⁵Ibid, 299.

¹⁶The Education Society of Edmonton was one of two discussion groups established by Alberta educationalists in 1927. The other was the Educational Progress Club in Calgary. These groups were exclusive clubs to which potential members were invited and admitted only with the approval of other members. They were set up as a forum in which current and potential educational leaders could discuss research. The Edmonton group included most top administrators of the school boards and the Department of Education, instructors at the Normal School and few classroom teachers. See W.D. McDougall, *The First Forty Years of the Education Society of Edmonton, 1927-1967* (unpublished), 3, Papers of the Education Society of Edmonton, University of Alberta Archives, hereafter referred to as UAA.

Education as the basis of the year's programme.¹⁷ In public speeches Newland made as Supervisor of Schools, he stated that "[T]he teacher must serve as an evangelist of democracy and a social engineer."¹⁸ He was convinced that only a curriculum that allowed teachers to experiment and students to grow would create problem-solving citizens committed to renewed democracy.

Historian John Chalmers describes Newland as "a one-man Curriculum Branch."¹⁹ Although this characterization is probably overstated, Newland was the driving force behind curriculum reform. He served as the head of all curriculum review committees, choosing carefully from among his contacts in the Normal Schools and the Education Society of Edmonton the members of the committees which actually wrote the new course of studies. The task of writing the new progressive elementary programme he delegated to three members of the committee: Normal school instructors Dr Donald Dickie and Olive Fisher, and Inspector William Hay.²⁰

Details of Donald Dickie's educational and professional background appeared in newspapers in order to reassure the public that curriculum revision was in expert hands. The *Edmonton Bulletin* included an article about Dickie in its column "Who's Who Among Educationalists."²¹ It explained that like Newland, Dickie was born in Ontario and attended Regina Normal School under Goggin, and that after several years teaching in rural Saskatchewan, she too returned to university, receiving an MA from Queen's. In 1912 she came West to take a position with the practice school in Calgary. She eventually served as an English and History instructor at all three Normal schools in the province. She did postgraduate studies at Columbia University but completed her thesis on Sir Walter Raleigh at Somerville College, Oxford. Because Oxford did not grant degrees to women, Dickie eventually was awarded her PhD through the University of Toronto. In addition to her teaching duties, Dickie prepared textbooks for use in elementary schools in history, geography and reading.

The best explanation or analysis of progressive education in Alberta came from Donald Dickie in her book *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, published in 1941 for use in Normal schools. Although traditional educationalists had

¹⁷R.S. Patterson in *Profiles*, 299.

¹⁸*Edmonton Bulletin*, October 16, 1941.

¹⁹John Chalmers, *Schools of the Footbills Province* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 464.

²⁰Donald Dickie taught at all three of Alberta's Normal Schools; Olive Fisher was a textbook author and the primary methods instructor at Calgary Normal School; William Hay taught school management and psychology at Calgary Normal School until 1931 when he left to become a school inspector. See George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development, 1905-1945," MEd thesis, University of Alberta, 1961.

²¹*Edmonton Bulletin*, July 8, 1936.

accepted the acquisition of knowledge as the primary aim of schooling, Dickie insisted that "[E]ducation, when all is said, has just one purpose: to help people to learn how to live happily together in the world."²² She argued that this could only be done through encouraging people to be self-confident and by assuring them of acceptance in the social group. Her sympathy for the pedagogical progressives was apparent when she insisted the school take the responsibility of developing in a child a well-balanced personality capable of happy citizenship. According to Dickie, such a citizen is characterized by "the personality sane and serene, with interests many, varied, objective, and with powers stimulated."

Dr. Dickie, Olive Fisher, and William Hay collaborated on the preparation of the activities or "enterprises" which formed the basis of the new curriculum in the primary (I to III) and junior (IV to VI) grades.²³ According to the new Programme of Studies, the enterprise was "a series of purposeful activities arising out of the pupils' needs and interests and revolving about one central theme."²⁴ Out of the chosen theme, for example "Food," students would undertake activities in the discipline areas of social studies, science, health, language and possibly several of the fine arts. Specific skill requirements in these particular disciplines disappeared from the Programme of Studies. The outcomes of the new "integrated" programme were organized instead into three categories. The first category was the "Development of the Individual Through Socialization," and included such specific requirements as, "Development of sound mental health through establishing a happy frame of mind," and "Development of thinking and reasoning" as opposed to unrelated memorization of facts.²⁵ The second category said that students should develop "understanding through a knowledge of important ideas and facts."²⁶ Teachers were warned that facts and information learned by the student should contribute to social living; specific outcomes required that students gain "an understanding of the social life of his community," and "an understanding of man's increasing control over environmental forces."²⁷ The third category required students develop skills and abilities

²²Donalda Dickie, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* (Toronto: W.J. Gage & Company, Limited, 1941), 43.

²³The "Enterprise" curriculum closely resembled the Project Method from the United States, but Canadian educators preferred the term "enterprise" which came from the British Hadow Reports. See Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976*, 167, and Patterson in *Profiles*, 301.

²⁴Department of Education, *Programme of Studies for the Elementary Schools* (1942), 33.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 51-2.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 54.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 54-5.

such as training in the scientific method, the ability to use tool subjects such as writing in the completion of an enterprise, and good study habits.²⁸

Donalda Dickie, Olive Fisher and William Hay spent a year meeting with educationalists and teachers and examining the school programmes of various American states. In autumn 1935, a group of seventy-five teachers, all carefully selected, piloted the new integrated programme. It was declared a success and extended to all elementary schools in the province in 1936. It remained a recommended programme until 1940 when its use was mandated by the Department. At that time, a more detailed description of the content of enterprises was provided in the Programme of Studies in the form of a grid.

Along the top of the grid were listed the nine themes of social living upon which enterprises should be based: food, clothing, shelter, work, transportation and communication, recreation, expression, education, and government, health, and protection. Along the side of the grid were the school years or levels. Instead of being divided by the traditional grades, the curriculum was separated into Division One and Division Two so that teachers in rural schools could combine students from various grades into the same learning groups.²⁹ By matching the theme and the level of the students, teachers could determine the specific subject required by the integrated programme. For example, students in Division One (Grades I to III) studying the theme, "Government, Health and Protection" limited their investigation to the specific topic "How we protect life and property in our homes, our school and our community."³⁰ Teachers were told that this enterprise should emphasize the rules which guide our home lives, such as obedience to parents or cleaning up after ourselves, the rules that govern life at school, such as respect for the teacher or playing by the rules in the playground, and guidelines for public conduct, such as obeying traffic rules or respecting public parks.³¹ The Programme of Studies even specified activities which teachers could include in this enterprise: organizing a school council, investigating public problems such as particularly dangerous traffic areas and suggesting solutions, or writing safety rules to prevent accidents at home and school. A list of community resources, books, and magazines was included.

Secondary school curriculum revisions began in earnest in 1937 with a revision committee consisting of Premier and Minister of Education William Aberhart (himself a former teacher and high school principal), Deputy Minister G. Fred McNally, three school inspectors, the director of technical education for the province, and one representative each from the Alberta Teachers' Association and the school trustees' association. The University of Alberta had repre-

²⁸Ibid, 55-6.

²⁹Ibid, 44-6.

³⁰Ibid, 84.

³¹Ibid, 85.

sensation on this committee because of the need for clear articulation between high school diploma requirements and university entrance requirements: the President of the University, Dean W.H. Alexander, the Directors of the Schools of Education and Nursing, and one other representative were included.³² Newland chaired both this revision committee and the elementary school committee.

As in the elementary curriculum revision, the writing of new courses of study was left to subcommittees appointed by Newland. These were generally composed of teachers and administrators. University representation consisted of professors from the Faculty of Education rather than from content area departments or faculties. The Social Studies subcommittee consisted of teachers such as Jennie Elliott and Mary Crawford. Administrators numbered persons such as H.D. Cartwright, the principal of Balmoral School in Calgary, and F.G. Buchanan, the Superintendent of the Calgary School Board; W.D. McDougall, principal of the practice school associated with the Edmonton Normal School, University of Alberta professor H.E. Smith, who represented the School of Education, and Dr. Newland, who chaired the subcommittee because of his special interest in the new social studies. In this case, the task of writing the course of studies was further delegated to W.D. McDougall, who single-handedly created the social studies courses for Grades VII through IX.

In his memoirs, McDougall said that he "became heavily involved in the Social Studies through becoming a member of the Education Society of Edmonton."³³ In 1935 McDougall made a presentation to the Society outlining a new course of studies for the junior high school based on American Harold Rugg's approach to the social sciences.³⁴ As the meeting ended, Dr. Newland approached McDougall and asked him to develop his ideas into a formal proposal for curriculum revision for Grades VII to IX.³⁵ McDougall presented his draft for approval to the Social Studies subcommittee and then to the High School Committee. McDougall's independence in creating the new curriculum is particularly striking when one realizes the extent to which he modified the existing courses.

The previous curriculum had included traditional courses in history and civics. The purpose of the new course in social studies created by McDougall for the intermediate schools was explained in the Programme of Studies:

³²Alberta Department of Education, *Annual Report*, 1938, 15, hereafter referred to as AR.

³³W.D. McDougall, *In and Out of the Classroom, 1914-1964*, 68, unpublished manuscript in McDougall Papers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, hereafter referred to as P.A.A.

³⁴See Harold O. Rugg and Ann Schumaker, *The Child-Centred School* (Chicago: World Book, 1928).

³⁵McDougall, *In and Out of the Classroom*, 68.

The course in Social Studies for the Intermediate Grades—VII, VIII, and IX—of Alberta schools will introduce to the pupils the problems of modern civilization in their historical and geographical setting. As its name implies, it is socially directed, dealing essentially with the “here” and “now,” and subordinating the “there” and “then.” It is in no sense an attempt to camouflage history, geography and civics. When the content of these formal subject categories sheds any light on the problems under study, it is then introduced.³⁶

Because learning was understood as an active process, the Intermediate Programme of Studies abandoned traditional topics in favour of a series of problems which formed the basis of each social studies course. For the benefit of teachers, the Programme of Studies listed the required problems and further subdivided them into related questions. It outlined the basic content of courses, suggested how much time was required, and recommended learning activities. Since the courses were not text-based, no required textbook was assigned. Rather, lengthy lists of minimum, secondary, and supplementary books were provided.

McDougall's new curriculum illustrated a significant theoretical shift. The Grade IX course, for example, had consisted of ancient and medieval history. According to McDougall, “[I]n the midst of a world wide depression and in a period when the war drums were again throbbing in Europe, it did not seem realistic to have the final year in the social studies concentrated upon the problems of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome.”³⁷ Accordingly, he created a course entitled “The World of Today,” in which students examined current political and economic problems.

McDougall's influence on the junior high school social studies curriculum did not end there. Once the new course of studies was in place, teachers quickly found existing resources inadequate to the task of meeting its requirements. In the fall of 1936, Dr. McNally approached McDougall about writing a textbook which could be used to complement his Grade IX course. McNally put McDougall into contact with Gilbert Paterson, an experienced writer of textbooks for Ryerson Press, and together McDougall and Paterson prepared textbooks for all three of the courses McDougall had written.³⁸

The emerging professional (and progressive) educationalists were therefore instrumental in the introduction of curriculum reforms in Alberta. They served on curriculum revision committees, wrote new courses of study, prepared textbooks for use with the new courses, and became responsible for selling the revision to teachers, trustees, parents, and the general public.

³⁶Department of Education, *Programme of Studies for the Intermediate School* (1935), 28.

³⁷McDougall, *In and Out of the Classroom*, 68.

³⁸Ibid. See W.D. McDougall and Gilbert Paterson, *Our Country and its People* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938), *Our Empire and Its Neighbours* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1937), and *The World of To-day* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1937).

SELLING THE REVISION

Normal School instructors had introduced their students to some progressive notions about education several years before the introduction of the new curriculum in Alberta. Once the Enterprise system was in place, Normal school instructors, particularly those responsible for the revision, prepared their students to implement it.

W.D. McDougall moved from the principalship of the Edmonton Practice School to a teaching position at the Calgary Normal School largely because of his experience writing the intermediate social studies curriculum.³⁹ He explained his new curriculum to Normal School students, modelled progressive teaching techniques, and chaired open fora for students on topics such as "What Democracy Means to Me."⁴⁰ In the interest of a progressive approach, the traditionally demanding Normal School programme was modified slightly, giving students more time to set their own priorities and experiment with independent learning.⁴¹ In 1939, for example, the Edmonton Normal School scheduled all formal classes in the mornings, leaving the students free in the afternoons to prepare for optional courses such as music, or to go on field trips or meet in committees.⁴² The valedictory address given by Donald R. McKay at the Calgary Normal School in 1937 demonstrated that students had learned the rhetoric of the new curriculum well:

This has been a year of change, the beginning of a new development in education in Alberta. We, as teachers of the new doctrines, have grave responsibilities before us in contributing our part towards the progress of the new curriculum, and our efforts to carry it through to a sound and successful conclusion. We are conscious of the responsibility that rests upon us in moulding the minds of the youth of this province. They are dependent upon us for the truth and knowledge to be meted out. Let us, therefore, remember our trust and assist them in developing the true spirit of group-living by the example we, ourselves, set.⁴³

Although introducing prospective teachers to the new programme was relatively easy, the task of familiarizing practising teachers in Alberta with the aims and methods of progressive education was much more daunting. The Department of Education devoted summer sessions and teachers' conventions over several years to the theme of enterprise and progressive education. Attendance at summer schools was essential for teachers wanting to upgrade their teaching certificates. Teachers hoping to convert their second-class into first-class certificates had to take courses, as did those who wanted to upgrade their

³⁹McDougall, *In and Out of the Classroom*, 70--1.

⁴⁰"The Chronicle, 1941--2," Calgary Normal School Papers, University of Calgary Archives, hereafter referred to as UCA.

⁴¹"The Chronicle, 1936--7," Calgary Normal School Papers, UCA.

⁴²Chalmers, *Schools of the Foothills Province*, 424.

⁴³"The Chronicle, 1936--7," Calgary Normal School Papers, UCA.

interim certificates to permanent ones.⁴⁴ In 1934 one thousand teachers attended a special summer session on the Enterprise curriculum.⁴⁵ In 1936 two thousand teachers took part.⁴⁶

Donalda Dickie and W.D. McDougall explained the theory underlying their courses and helped teachers plan for the new curriculum. Successful Enterprise teachers, such as Belle Ricker from Edmonton, submitted course outlines, activities and step-by-step instructions for use by other teachers.⁴⁷ The Department also brought many American experts in progressive teaching methods and philosophy to talk to Alberta teachers during these summer sessions. Teachers during the 1938 summer session, for example, included Lillian Gray from San Jose State College, Edna Reed, an elementary school teacher from Scarsdale, New York, and Tompsie Baxter, a teacher at one of the practice schools connected to Teachers' College at Columbia.⁴⁸

Newspapers covered the teachers' summer courses and conventions, giving considerable attention to the experience of teachers with the new progressive curriculum. For example, as early as November 1936, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that several teachers participated in a panel discussion about enterprise education and showed student work. Teacher Kathleen Ramsay was quoted as saying that "[T]he adoption of enterprise education has resulted in making even backward pupils show a new interest."⁴⁹

Teachers learned of the enterprise and other progressive curriculum reforms through the *A.T.A. Magazine*. The magazine reprinted keynote addresses given at teachers' conventions by prominent American progressive thinkers, such as Dr. Boyd H. Bode from Ohio State University who explained the principles of progressive education.⁵⁰ For those who could not attend the 1939 convention, the magazine gave extensive coverage to the nine American educators who were featured speakers, including Ralph Tyler and Hilda Taba.⁵¹ *A.T.A. Magazine* also provided lesson plans for teachers struggling to implement enterprises. The magazine introduced a regular "Teachers' Helps" department edited by W.D. McDougall, a column consisting of practical suggestions for teachers as well as

⁴⁴Chalmers, *Schools of the Foothills Province*, 423.

⁴⁵McDougall, *In and Out of the Classroom*, 67.

⁴⁶*Edmonton Bulletin*, July 8, 1936.

⁴⁷Ricker's pamphlet, "Some Enterprise Suggestions," survives among the Papers of the Faculty of Education, Box 4: Summer School Files, UAA.

⁴⁸AR, 1938, 34.

⁴⁹"Edmonton Teacher Favors Enterprise Education System," *Edmonton Bulletin*, November 13, 1936.

⁵⁰See for example Boyd H. Bode, "The Philosophy of Progressive Education," *A.T.A. Magazine* 18, no. 10 (June 1938), 5. His address was based on his book, *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (New York: Newson & Co., 1938).

⁵¹Clarence Sansom, *A.T.A Magazine* 19, no. 9 (May 1939), 2.

summaries from important books and articles in the field of progressive education. In the April 1938 edition, for example, McDougall outlined defenses of progressive education by Herbert B. Bruner and Hollis Caswell in the most recent volume of the *Teachers' College Record*.⁵² The magazine reprinted lectures given by school inspectors on new classroom procedures, and published ideas for classroom lessons developed by teachers across the province.⁵³ Through summer courses, teachers' conventions, and the *A.T.A. Magazine*, teachers across Alberta were introduced to the maxims of progressive education.

But prospective and practicing teachers were not the only ones pressing for progressive education reform. Though school trustees had no official or formal say in curriculum policy, their support was necessary if progressive reforms were to be successful. After all, the trustees were responsible to their communities for the considerable financial investment required for progressive curriculum reforms. The Department of Education and educationalists involved in the revision explained the new policies to trustees in their journal, *The Alberta School Trustee*, offering in 1936 a reprint of Dr. Dickie's address to the Alberta School Trustees' Association Convention. Dr. Dickie explained to trustees that traditional public education had ensured generations of students could think for themselves. This, she argued, had resulted in an international political and economic deadlock: everyone was so sure of his or her own mind that modern politics was characterized by conflict and debate. She maintained the solution was to introduce a new kind of public education to prepare students for co-operation:

What does the individual need for successful living? Well he needs courage and humour and to be able to get along with other people; he needs initiative, imagination, self-reliance, judgment, the power to co-operate. Where is he to get these things? Not sitting in his seat learning facts by heart. If education is really to count, it must affect the nature and character of the child and it can do that only if he does something, if he is provided with opportunities for experience.⁵⁴

Dr. Dickie concluded that

As trustees, your general authority and good-will is of course essential, and here I would say that perhaps your most important function is as a buyer of books.⁵⁵

⁵²See W.D. McDougall, "Teachers' Helps Department," *A.T.A. Magazine* 18, no. 8 (April 1938), 45-8.

⁵³See for example, J.F. Watkin, "Classroom Procedure in High School Social Studies," Part I 20, no. 5 (January 1940), 13-14, and Part II 20, no. 6 (February 1940), 9-10; Gulbrand Loken, "Scrapbook Work and Topics for Social Studies in Grade IX," 19, no. 2 (October 1938), 27; F.G.J. Hahn, "Social Studies — Grade X," 21, no. 2 (October 1940), 13.

⁵⁴Donald Dickie, "The New Day in Elementary Schools," *The Alberta School Trustee* 6, no. 5 (July-August 1936), 13-4.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 15-6.

The trustees' journal throughout this period contained articles by educationalists explaining the new purposes and principles of education. K.F. Argue, a professor of education at the University of Alberta, assured trustees that educational advances were based on the most recent scientific research in fields such as psychology and sociology. After summarizing the basic principles of the new progressive curriculum, Argue concluded that

I recognize that the above has been only a sketchy, partial and hurried generalization of the Why's of new educational methods. Nevertheless, it may suffice that changes in educational methodology are not devices conjured up maliciously by educators and perpetrated on an indulgent and unsuspecting public, but rather that they flow naturally from careful studies in diverse related fields of scientific enquiry, and from earnest attempts of educators to increase teaching efficiency and to perpetuate and revitalize democracy.⁵⁶

S.R. Laycock, a psychologist at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, wrote articles familiarizing trustees with advances in child psychology.⁵⁷ Both authors emphasized the scientific basis of curriculum revision and reformers' expertise. For the most part, trustees accepted the argument that curriculum revision required educational expertise and was best left in the hands of specialists in the Department or in Normal schools.

Home and School Associations were important in introducing progressive education to parents. Home and School associations in Alberta, like those in Ontario, became channels through which Education Department officials could transmit and promote their educational innovations.⁵⁸ From its debut in January 1938 to the early 1940s, *The Alberta Home and School News* carried articles and editorials outlining the new programme of studies and defending its principles. In the first issue, Dr. Newland addressed the concerns of parents regarding the new enterprise system. He explained to parents that

"[T]he enterprise shows meaningful relationships between the abstract concepts of arithmetic or science and the skills and appreciations of art, craftwork and music. It provides a variety of jobs, so that every pupil, bright or dull, has a share of responsibility for the result. It socializes experience, fosters desirable social attitudes, and provides opportunities for independent thinking."⁵⁹

Later issues featured articles about specific elements of the new programme of studies written by the educationalists responsible for them: Olive Fisher outlined

⁵⁶K.F. Argue, "These New Methods," *Alberta School Trustee* 13, no. 3 (March 1943), 15.

⁵⁷See for example "Do Our Schools Meet the Basic Needs of Children?" *Alberta School Trustee* 13, no. 7 (July–August 1943), 15-8; and, "The Parents' Responsibility For the Right Kind of School," 13, no. 2 (February 1943), 19–22.

⁵⁸See Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976*, 99.

⁵⁹H.C. Newland, "The Alberta Programme of Studies for the Elementary School," *Alberta Home and School News* (October 19, 1938), np, in Premier's Papers, File 711A, PAA.

the expectations of the enterprise system, and W.D. McDougall explained the new courses in social studies.

Alberta's experts in education exercised considerable influence over the Home and School associations. Educationalists set the priorities and defined the aims of the organization. In 1942 Dr. Newland summarized the four-fold task of Home and School associations in a modern democracy:

For one thing, our home-and-school groups can publicize the facts about every phase of educational effort. Old ideas survive mainly because people do not know — they do not have the facts. In the second place, they can encourage the spirit of free enquiry in our schools; and so, perhaps, undo the wrong that has been done to our 'lost generation.' In the third place, they can support the scientific approach to every social problem, including the problems of education. Science, after all, is merely intelligence in action; and the scientific attitude merely the attitude of civilized, educated, men and women. Finally, they can support, with every ounce of their effort, the demand that education and other social services be a first charge on our wealth; or in other words, that the primary objective of our production of wealth is the support of education, social services and social security. Every other directive, in a democracy, is of third-rate importance.⁶⁰

The abstract and high-minded aims of Home and School groups outlined by Newland were reinforced by more practical suggestions by other educationalists.

A.L. Doucette was a former school inspector and Normal School instructor. As head of the University of Alberta, Calgary Division, he reminded parents that Home and School groups should not interfere with school administration, meddle with school budgets, or act as a social club. Rather, these groups afforded teachers and parents an opportunity to study together the problems of educating children and for the "teacher and principal to give leadership to parents in thinking on problems."⁶¹ For many educationalists such as Doucette, Home and School Associations offered a convenient audience and an important channel to the public in their efforts to publicize progressive education. The associations were also an important audience for their claim to professional status through their educational expertise.

The fourth group of people requiring to be convinced of progressive education reforms was the public. Educationalists in the Department of Education and in the teacher training institutes spoke extensively at public meetings and wrote articles in newspapers in order to promote the 1935 curriculum revision to the general public.

Educationalists on curriculum committees prepared the ground with talks to interested service groups or women's clubs. In January 1936 the *Edmonton Bulletin*

⁶⁰H.C. Newland, "A New Programme for 'The Home and School,'" *The Alberta Home and School News* (November 1942), 3, Alberta Federation of Home and School Association Papers, Glenbow Archives.

⁶¹"Address to Home and School Club, 4 June 1951," Doucette Papers, Box 3: Public Addresses, UCA.

covered teacher Mary Crawford's speech to a United Farm Women of Alberta conference. Crawford, active on revision committees, summarized for the women her observations of the Normal Practice School in Edmonton where the *Enterprise* was being piloted. She described the way grade two students learned while playing house and concluded:

Children thus learn to work each for all and all for each. The traits of a too-marked individualism are irradiated [sic]. It develops a technique of thinking which will in later life become that flexible quality of mind needed to enable them to keep pace with the changes of modern social living. It imbues in them a spirit of co-operative living which is spontaneity of thought vital enough to embrace all people at all times.⁶²

Clearly Miss Crawford, like other educationalists, believed in the transformative powers of the new curriculum. Similarly, Donald Dickie spoke to the Women's University Club in Edmonton in February 1936 about the *Enterprise* curriculum, explaining her understanding of the value of the progressive approach.⁶³

Department of Education officials participated in the sales campaign. Deputy Minister of Education G. Fred McNally spoke extensively, explaining the purpose and value of the *Enterprise* programme for older and younger students alike. He promised the secondary schools would offer flexible programmes appropriate for young men planning for university or for a trade. He stressed that the new, more practical curriculum would be especially appealing for rural students who were more likely to drop out of high school. Like Mary Crawford and Donald Dickie, McNally emphasized that the new curriculum would result in better adjusted young students with a love for learning:

Objectionable habits such as excessive individualism, shyness, selfishness and laziness give place to an enthusiastic group spirit. By means of the 'enterprise' all the material included in the subjects mentioned above will be integrated and imparted in so interesting a fashion that it will seem more like a game than like the traditional Grades I and II.⁶⁴

The sales campaign gave signs of working. In the spring of 1936, just before the progressive revision went into effect, newspapers warned the public to be prepared for major changes at school. In May 1936, the *Edmonton Journal* reported that "as far as Alberta is concerned at any rate, the traditional three 'R's' are due for considerable of a shake-up, and that pupils who find school life a trifle boring

⁶²"Education Will Be Basis of Co-operative Life, Says Miss Crawford," *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 22, 1936.

⁶³"School is Open Door To Life Says Dr. Dickie," *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 10, 1936.

⁶⁴"Alberta School Curriculum Revision Now Under Way," *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 22, 1936.

at times are due also for a very pleasant surprise when they return to their desks next fall."⁶⁵

In the fall of 1936, the *Calgary Herald* ran a series of articles intended to familiarize parents with the new curriculum being introduced into elementary and some junior high schools. Articles outlined the principles of learning underlying the new enterprise system, explained the new junior high school social studies courses, and argued that large increases in high school enrollment signalled the need for a curriculum revision at all levels. Articles generally supported reform and suggested students were taking up the new work with enthusiasm:

Meanwhile social studies are being pursued with vigor by the Grade IX's of Alberta. 'The world in which we live' is the theme of their research and under the direction of their teachers they are organizing themselves into bodies with elected officers and appointed committees, conducting class excursions, cataloguing libraries, producing plays, drawing up, presenting and discussing reports on the problem of the course, and holding open forum meetings to co-ordinate the results of these activities.⁶⁶

For the next fifteen years or more, educationalists found the best opportunities to sell progressive education during "Education Week," a week designated by the Canadian Education Association and sponsored by the Department of Education and school boards across the province.⁶⁷ Education Week gave parents an opportunity to tour schools and see impressive laboratory and manual training facilities, new teaching equipment such as film projectors, and to view innovative students projects such as murals and displays.⁶⁸ Students gave testimonials for the new, modern courses they were taking in high schools. For example, in 1938 a student at Western Canada high school in Calgary wrote in the *Herald* that "Education marches on! This phrase expresses exactly the views of the average high school student of today toward the new composite high

⁶⁵"Dr. Donald Dickie Leads Important Research For Primary School Reform," *Edmonton Journal*, May 9, 1936.

⁶⁶"Social Studies in Grade Nine School Work As Outlined in New Provincial Curriculum, Making Radical Changes in Education Here," *Calgary Herald*, October 31, 1936; see also "Learning, Something Child Does Rather Than Something He Gets Under the New 'Enterprise' System," October 24, 1936; and, "Increase in High School Enrolment Incentive For Changes Introduced In Elementary Alberta Curriculum," November 7, 1936.

⁶⁷The Alberta Teachers' Association initiated the first "Alberta School Week" in 1929 and enlisted the aid of the media to publicize the work of schools. National organizations such as the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Canadian Education Association later adopted the policy and introduced "Education Week" which set aside one week annually to celebrate education across the country.

⁶⁸See for example "City Schools Arrange Open House To Give Public Educational Preview," *Calgary Herald*, November 13, 1948 and "Parents Invited Inspect Schools In City This Week," *Edmonton Journal*, March 3, 1952.

school.”⁶⁹ After describing the wide variety of academic and technical courses available to students at Western, she emphasized the “increased interest and enthusiasm which students are taking in school work since the introduction of many new courses in which they are interested, and which will help them in later life.”

By the 1950s it was clear that the educationalists responsible for progressive curriculum reform had succeeded in convincing the public of their legitimacy as educational leaders. In the more conservative climate of the post-war period, Education Week became a demanding period of speaking engagements and debates during which educationalists explained the principles of the new education and refuted common criticisms of the programme.⁷⁰ In 1951, for example, G.M. Dunlop, a psychology professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, spoke to the members of the Gyro Club about the importance of appropriate vocational training for all students.⁷¹ The same newspaper reported on G.F. McNally’s speech to one of the Edmonton Rotary Clubs. Now Chancellor of the University of Alberta, McNally remained an important spokesperson for the vocational emphasis in progressive education. Like Dunlop, McNally stressed the importance of technical programmes for students “who aren’t inclined to books and abstract theory.”⁷²

In Calgary, educationalists who had long championed the progressive curriculum debated the merits of the programme with two leading members of the community who supported the more traditional academic curriculum. Calgary Public School Superintendent Dr. F.G. Buchanan and high school principal H.D. Cartwright defended the progressive curriculum and its broad course offerings against the increasingly familiar charges of mediocrity levelled by *Herald* associate editor Basil Dean and I.F. Fitch, a local magistrate. The debate was sponsored by the Canadian Club of Calgary.⁷³

In 1952, an issue of the *Herald* covered a speech by Dr. A.L. Doucette of the Calgary Branch of the University of Alberta defending progressive education as education for democracy, another by Calgary school superintendent Robert Warren explaining that academic skills are still taught but in a more realistic context, and yet another by Joseph Woodsworth of the Faculty of Education at the Calgary branch of the University of Alberta.⁷⁴ Professor Woodsworth told the Junior Chamber of Commerce that the three R’s were not being neglected

⁶⁹“Student Lauds New Composite High School,” *Calgary Herald*, March 16, 1938.

⁷⁰See for example Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1953).

⁷¹“Speaker Urges Educational Choice,” *Edmonton Journal*, March 7, 1951.

⁷²“Varied Education Chances Stressed,” *Edmonton Journal*, March 7, 1951.

⁷³“Battle of Old, New in Education Waged,” *Calgary Herald*, March 9, 1951.

⁷⁴See “Criticisms Not New Says Warren,” *Calgary Herald*, March 4, 1952.

in modern schools. Rather, he insisted, a modern school must add more subjects to the curriculum and do more than simply address traditional academic skills.⁷⁵

By the early 1950s progressive educationalists turned from promoting the curriculum revision to defending it. The success of these educationalists in legitimizing their role as educational leaders is illustrated by the fact that when criticisms of progressivism arose in the conservative 1950s, bureaucrats in the Department of Education and instructors in teacher training institutions were usually blamed for the declining standards in public schools.⁷⁶

In 1935 the curriculum of Alberta schools was rewritten by a group of progressive educationalists under the supervision of an idealistic Supervisor of Schools, H.C. Newland. Newland typified a new wave of progressive educators in Canada. He sympathized with and was committed to the strand of progressivism historians have labelled "social reconstructionist." He heavily influenced the curriculum revision of 1935, and used his position and bureaucratic influence to bring together like-minded educationalists in the Department of Education and in the Normal Schools to effect marked change in Alberta schools. These educationalists wrote the progressive curriculum and sold it to teachers, trustees, parents and the public. Their promotion of the new programme rested on an impressive rhetoric in which they were cast as sole experts in curriculum policy. Indeed, the relative lack of political interference and the absence of meaningful input from university professors in the arts and sciences in this campaign illustrate the growing power of educationalists and public recognition of their policy expertise.

In 1952 the *Calgary Herald* reported that Professor of Education J.S. Woodsworth, "deplored the present tendency to strongly criticize any changes in curriculum, pointing out that the educationalists who design the curricula are experts in their field and have good reasons for whatever they do."⁷⁷ This encouragement to accept the expertise of educational bureaucrats on faith is a significant legacy of progressivism. Whether or not the educationalists were successful in transforming schools, they did succeed in portraying themselves as the real experts in education and in legitimizing their central role in curriculum development.

⁷⁵"No Need to Worry About Neglect," *Calgary Herald*, March 4, 1952.

⁷⁶See for example Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1953).

⁷⁷"Training for Living Lacking in Schools, Declares Professor," *Calgary Herald*, March 4, 1952.