

Awakening a Demand for Schooling: Educational Inspection's Impact on Rural Nova Scotia, 1855-74

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Nova Scotia's Education Act of 1864 was central to the province's public schooling. Voters had often petitioned governments for wider access to schooling; educators and politicians had come to expect a free school system; and earlier legislation had improved educational provision. But the Act of 1864 had greater uniformity of purpose and was far more advanced administratively than any of a dozen earlier attempts.

The resulting school system was to be centrally organized and managed. State funding was increased, and financial support of schools through local taxation encouraged by offering bonuses to compliant communities. Classification and examination of pupils were regularized, and the Executive Council given authority to oversee matters as the Council of Public Instruction. Crucially, the Act also established a system of inspection¹ through a locally-based inspectorate—a system for producing the knowledge and attitudes necessary for compliant citizenship and social progress.

As early as 1851, William Dawson, the first Superintendent of Education,² suggested clerks of each county's Board of School Commissioners might conveniently and cheaply combine their duties with school inspection. Inspection would have a two-fold purpose.³ First, it would be "of great service in stimulating teachers, trustees and people" who had yet to appreciate the value of schooling for their children and its necessity for social progress. In 1854 Dawson's successor, Alexander Forrester,⁴ stressed "stimulation" as one of the few tools at the disposal of superintendents to create produce an appetite for education:

¹*Journal of Education* 1 (September, 1866): 2. For a history of the early years of this publication, see *Journal of Education* 1, 1 (October, 1951): 5-16.

²On Dawson's career, see P.R. Eakins and J. Sinnamon Eakins, "Sir John William Dawson" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 230-37; Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *John William Dawson: Faith, Hope and Science* (Kingston-Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

³W. Dawson, Superintendent's Annual Report [hereafter, A.R.] (Nova Scotia, Dept. of Education, 1851), 13. Superintendent's Annual Reports from 1851 to 1864 were published in the Appendices of the Journal of the House of Assembly; from 1865 Reports were also printed separately and included county inspector's reports and statistical tables. Hereafter, references will name the inspector, county, year of Superintendent's report, and page numbers.

⁴On Forrester's career, see Judith Fingard, "Alexander Forrester," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 270-73.

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The primary business of the school is not so much to impart knowledge as to awaken a demand for it, to furnish the means of meeting that demand. If there is no felt want of a thing, no effort will be put forth to get it.⁵

Inspection's second purpose was "collecting educational information" with which the system could be evaluated. Information gathering was haphazard for most of the period between 1851 and 1864. Both Dawson and Forrester in turn made annual tours of the province, which in 1854 was divided into eastern and western districts each assigned one inspector. (Few inspection reports survive beyond the summary comments and data contained in Forrester's Annual Reports.)

A rationale for an inspectorate in a public system of education is suggested in Bruce Curtis's *True Government by Choice Men?* Examining intellectual, political, and administrative preconditions for common schooling and inspection in Canada West, Curtis shows how core interests of the middle class, growing in size and substance, and deriving local power from the political centre, were diffused and supervised by school inspectors. Curtis characterizes inspection as the "development of connections between central authorities and local sites that centred upon knowledge/power relations."⁶ The first corps of inspectors in Canada West exercised a certain moral and ideological imperative in its work of information gathering, evaluation of the knowledge-producing and disciplinary functions of schooling, and overseeing relations between social classes. Curtis had earlier forged a convincing argument against the "voluntarist" model of educational reform in Canada and the United States which saw mass schooling as a triumph of local over central (state) interests, and saw inspectors as benevolent overseers. Curtis argued mass schooling was in fact a well-organized political incursion of dominant cultural interests upon the everyday lives of agricultural families, on the children of an embryonic industrial labour force, and on the offspring of the commercial middle class.⁷ In what follows I have used Curtis's analysis of Canada West to make sense of Nova Scotia's early history of education and inspection.

Education in Nova Scotia was a distinctly rural activity. Census data for 1861 show 87% of the province's population (330,857 in total) lived on farms or in towns of less than 3000 people; two-thirds of the population lived outside villages (defined as a minimum population of 2000). The political and commercial centre of Halifax, with more than 25,000 people, was the only city in the province that exceeded 5000. Nova Scotia's economy was based in agriculture and natural resources. In 1861, more than half of the labour force were farmers (43%) or farm labourers (10.5%), and through most of the 19th century agriculture grew in importance in the provincial economy. The 1854 Reciprocity Treaty with the United States and the boost in trade during the American Civil War contributed to consolidation and expansion of the agricultural sector. The growth of industry and shipping encour-

⁵A. Forrester, A.R., (1862), 2.

⁶Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 19.

⁷Bruce Curtis, "Policing pedagogical space: 'Voluntary' school reform and moral regulation," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 13, 3, (1988): 283-304.

aged migration from rural areas, and contributed to the 18% growth of Halifax between 1861 and 1871—almost equivalent to the population increase for the entire province. Between these census dates the rural proportion of the population remained virtually unchanged (though the agricultural sector declined by about 10%). During the same period, the commercial sector increased significantly, and the comparatively small proportions of the industrial and professional occupations doubled.⁸

Securing a financial base for schooling meant overcoming rural poverty and general doubt of the value of schooling. One task for an agency of inspection was to convince the public that education was vital to economic and cultural progress. But efforts by locally-based inspectors inevitably disrupted familiar rural cultural patterns and generated spontaneous resistance to schooling. The additional function of inspection, then, was to *manage* disruption, challenging the rooted values of agricultural families in the name of the “common interest” of progress.

As represented by inspectors and their superintendents, middle and upper class interests had a future-oriented, enterprising outlook—one that viewed individual success and national progress as integrally related, especially in the new features of industrial and commercial economy. Class values required stabilizing and reproductive social forces under the authority of economically powerful and culturally authoritative groups. The forms of communication at their disposal were crucial in securing their interests since they transmitted the formative goals of dominant social interests into new areas of social life⁹—even if these interests were described as “common” to all Nova Scotians. A major instrument of communication during Forrester’s tenure, the *Journal of Education and Agriculture*, treated educational and agricultural intelligence as linked activities.

The rural working class, consisting of agricultural and natural resource labourers, was separated from other social classes by economic activity, immediate interests and needs, and a distinctive way of life. It may be characterized by a present-oriented, guarded response to social change. Given few means of communication and no sense of unity or organization to convey, their experiences of institutional relations and social power were merely those of more powerful social classes. This segment of the rural population had features that constitute—yet do not constitute—a class in Marx’s terms.¹⁰ These characteristics do not imply a passive or regressive meaning. Subordinate social classes in conflict with more powerful social forces cannot be definitive about the meanings of their experience until their response to social change and conflict has been clarified in distinct

⁸Industrial and related occupations accounted for about 15% of the labour force in 1861, and the professions about 2%. See, *Census of Nova Scotia (Halifax, 1862)*; *Census of Canada 1870-1871, vol.1 (Ottawa, 1873)*, 427; Bryan D. Palmer, *Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 84; R. T. Naylor, *Canada in the European Age, 1453-1919* (Vancouver: New Star Press, 1987), 298-301, 385.

⁹*Ibid.*, 48, 63.

¹⁰Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 608.

language and in a relatively autonomous program of action that breaks through the constraints of localized and parochial circumstances. Reaction to decisions effecting them as a class become politically mature when the sense of self-preservation develops to include a convincing counter-offensive, often founded on increased opportunities for occupational mobility and a collective sense of their place in society. Little of this quality of response was evident among the rural working class of Nova Scotia during the 1850s and '60s.¹¹

TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF MASS SCHOOLING IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Nova Scotia legislation of 1808 was the first to encourage school construction and hiring of teachers through a combination of freehold tax assessments and periodically increased government grants. The state tried other forms of encouragement in Education Acts up to the Act of 1866, which finally established compulsory, tax-supported free schools and eliminated education by subscription. Generalized resistance to assessment delayed full systematization of schooling.

Most of the Acts increased numbers of school buildings, teachers, and pupils. The intention was to increase availability of schooling generally, but those who had money benefited most. As in jurisdictions such as Upper Canada/Canada West, dominant classes only slowly saw the necessity of schooling as a means of political socialization.¹²

In the mid-1830s a legislative committee looked abroad for appropriate models of financial support, teacher education, and inspection. Reformer Joseph Howe argued for assessment schemes based on the Prussian, Scottish, and American models. In 1841, confronting popular opposition to assessment, he argued that for the

sacred purposes of education ... for founding a provincial character, for the endowment of common schools for the whole population, no hesitation need be felt at coming to direct taxation....¹³

But resistance to universal assessment went beyond support of education. Although political reformers in 1848 saw "responsible" government as a catalyst to grand change, it had little practical effect until the 1860s. Remembering John Stuart Mill's analysis of Lord Durham's Report, Howe enthusiastically wrote to Charles Buller that, with responsible government,

¹¹For a concise chronological overview of educational development, see C.B. Ferguson, *The Inauguration of the Free School System in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], 1964). Although emphasizing Scottish Nova Scotians, with detailed discussion of economic, educational and political development in four counties, D. Campbell and R.A. McLean's *Beyond the Atlantic Roar* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) makes an important contribution. For the influence of the educational theories of David Stow (Scotland) and David Page (United States) on Forrester, see various articles in his *Journal of Education and Agriculture* (1858-60).

¹²Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London: Falmer Press, 1988); Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 66-84.

¹³Ferguson, *Free School System*, 15.

[i]t will be our pride to make Nova Scotia a 'Normal School' for the rest of the Colonies, showing them how representative Institutions may be worked, so as to insure internal tranquillity, and advancement, in the paramount interests and authority of the Empire.¹⁴

Mill's emphasis was on elected governing bodies at the local level, for those institutions could "prepare and train 'the people' in loyalty to and in the operation of the dominant modes of their own self-government and subordination."¹⁵

Attempts to extend responsible government downward met with little success in Nova Scotia, for the same reason that plagued efforts for a popularly supported system of education. In 1855 Tory leader J. W. Johnston finally agreed with the Reform government on the necessity for "a well regulated system of Democratic Institutions." He convinced the legislature to pass an act allowing the incorporation of four counties, the law to be extended to the rest of the province the following year. Although this effectively meant democratization of local government through eliminating control by appointed magistrates, "it remained unwanted and unused. The deeply rooted fear of direct taxation had totally thwarted Johnston's intentions."¹⁶ This same fear not only held back legislative efforts to secure financial support for schooling prior to 1864, but contributed to the reluctance of much of the rural population to accept schooling as desirable and necessary.

Reluctance to support taxation did not mean complete lack of interest in education. Petitions from hundreds of people around the province to the House of Assembly throughout the 1850s to the mid-60s demanded that schooling be more widely available—without "excessive" financial burden.¹⁷

During his tenure as Superintendent of Education and Head of the Normal School in Truro, Forrester repeatedly called for province-wide assessment and a system of inspection. Before the Act of 1864, he issued a ten-point appeal to the public outlining the rationale and value of a school system funded through universal taxation, and distributed petitions around the province to gather support. Taxation would equalize access to schooling for all, regardless of property. "This principle," he argued, "is in consonance with the purest equity, and the strictest justice;" and compatible "with the true principles and ends of civil government."¹⁸ Taxation would increase the number of schools and teachers, and universally improve the quality of education. Forrester repeatedly cited the success of Egerton Ryerson in founding such a system in Canada West. Like Ryerson, he saw such legislative measures as "just taxation" producing more than administrative benefits. A school system founded on that basis "will tend to diffuse a spirit of unity and mutual

¹⁴Chester Martin, "The Correspondence between Joseph Howe and Charles Buller, 1845-1848," *Canadian Historical Review* 6, 4 (1925): 326. See also D.C. Harvey, "Nova Scotia and the Durham Mission," *Canadian Historical Review* 20, 2 (1939): 161-77.

¹⁵Curtis, *True Government*, 26. See also, J.M. Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, vol.1 (Tantallon, N.S.: Four East Publications, 1985), 105-29.

¹⁶Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, 134-6.

¹⁷PANS, RG5, Series P, vols. 75-8.

¹⁸A. Forrester, "Address to the People of Nova Scotia on the Support of Common Schools," (n.p., 1860?), 13, 15.

affection among the inhabitants," linking "every man to his fellow men in the obligation of the common interests."¹⁹ Ironically, by the time the Education Act of 1866 entrenched universal assessment, Forrester, arguably the most dynamic force in the establishment of mass schooling in the province, was no longer Superintendent of Education, holding only the position of Normal School principal.

Forrester knew the value of inspection and annually so reminded his political masters. His vision of inspection, put into practice by his successors, was a centrally-organized and managed body of state agents taking educational ideas into the field and reshaping everyday life to conform to the new social institution throughout the province. But in 1857 he "despair[ed] of ever being able to make out an accurate and full tabular statement of all educational statistics, without the appointment of a well-equipped staff" of inspectors. For example, the quality of official knowledge was limited by incomplete reports from trustees. Inspectors could solve this problem by organizing meetings of teachers and parents to press for "harmony" and "uniformity of action."²⁰ Reporting on a number of visits in 1859, he wrote that the "grand desideratum to give full effect to these visitations is a thorough system of local inspectorship."²¹

The Education Act of 1864 assigned one inspector to each of the 18 counties in the province and a committee of school commissioners to Halifax.²² Forrester argued in his Report of 1859 that inspectors should be men of "superior Scholarship, and educational enthusiasm, and of considerable practical experience."²³ Thomas Harding Rand,²⁴ who succeeded Forrester, complained there were not enough qualified men to choose from, but managed to appoint thirteen "classical scholars" and five "good English scholars."²⁵ Among the 46 men who served as inspectors from 1864 to 1874, eleven were clergy, four members of the bar, and two medical doctors. Inspectors' reports show many others were men with teaching experience, some educational careerists.

Inspection was not a position that men of higher education or professional qualifications held for long periods of time. The average term was about four years. Only two who served in this first decade remained inspectors in 1874. It was a time-consuming and burdensome occupation. Inspectors spent 4 to 5 hours travelling to each school and back, spending only an hour to a half-day actually in

¹⁹Forrester, Address... ", 12, 15. On Ryerson, see Prentice, *The School Promoters*, 124-7.

²⁰Forrester, A.R. (1862), 3, 10, 17.

²¹Forrester, A.R. (1857), 53; A.R. (1859), 249.

²²The Superintendent's A.R. included statistics, but only a summary from the Chair of the City Board of School Commissioners; thus, far less information is available for Halifax schools.

²³Forrester, A.R. (1859), 258.

²⁴On Rand's life, see A. Laidlaw, Theodore Harding Rand," *Journal of Education* (Nova Scotia), Part I (March, 1944): 207-18; Part II (April-May, 1944): 235-334; M. Conrad, "An Abiding Conviction of the Paramount Importance of Christian Education" in R.S. Wilson, ed., *An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and their World* (Saint John, N.B.: Acadia Divinity College), 155-95, and "Thomas Harding Rand," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol.12 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 879-83.

²⁵Rand, A.R. (1864), 1.

the school. As the system developed their workloads increased. In 1865 there were 854 schools in 18 counties; in 1874 the same number of inspectors evaluated 1491 schools—a 75% increase.²⁶ Each inspector had also to act as clerk to the county Board of School Commissioners, to serve on committees to revise school boundaries and on examination committees, and to lecture on educational subjects in each school section. In 1866 (the earliest year for which complete figures are available), remuneration was based on a percentage of the average of teachers' salaries in each county,²⁷ plus \$1.50 for each semi-annual visit to a school. Thus the average annual salary of inspectors for 1866 was about \$422, a little more than one-third the salary (\$1200) of the Superintendent of Education. By 1874, the average salary among inspectors had increased to \$658.

TAXATION AS CULTURAL CONFLICT

The state's imposition of financial obligation to support schools was a sustained assault on the preservationist attitude of the rural population. Partial assessment in the 1864 Act was intended by the government leader, Charles Tupper, to "render that system as gradually acceptable to the people as it is possible."²⁸ After the House of Assembly began debating revisions to the Education Act to include compulsory taxation, the demands of petitioners for education changed. In December 1864, for example, 359 residents of King's county signed a request for repeal of the legislation. Such taxation, they wrote, was "at variance with the wishes of your petitioners and in its details, expensive, ridiculous and in many instances oppressive...."²⁹ Their poor economic situation would be made worse by the Act.

Legislative requirements for education finance provided a convenient avenue by which political and cultural groups encroached upon rural life. Rural resistance to taxation was thus a barometer of rural values and of rural commitment to general progress and improvement. Although government grants to school sections increased by a third in 1865,³⁰ the legislation required each section raise an additional amount equal to two-thirds of their grant. Any money required for buying, leasing or building a school house "shall be levied on the real and personal property ... of the residents."³¹ The amount of money raised locally could positively or negatively affect physical facilities, quantity of the educational apparatus purchased for the

²⁶These figures were reached by averaging the number of schools open in the winter and summer terms, excluding schools in Halifax.

²⁷In the previous year salary was based on a percentage of the total county grant.

²⁸Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, 158.

²⁹PANS, RG5, Series P, vol. 77, petitions numbered 97-104, 107-11, and 117-20.

³⁰The 1866 A.R. showed that the government had steadily increased grants in relation to "money raised by the people" since 1856. For every dollar raised by the people in 1856, the province contributed 40 cents; in 1866 the province contributed 81 cents.

³¹Nova Scotia, *An Act for the Better Encouragement of Education* (28 Victoria, Cap. 29) (Halifax, 1865), 83; Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, 161.

school, and calibre of teachers hired. Teachers, school buildings, and apparatus—all were perennial sources of inspectorial complaint.

Inspectors' evaluations of local commitment to education were based on an assessment of the quality of education in these areas. In a clear presentation of cultural differences over the value of education, J. B. Calkin, inspector for King's County, scolded parents whose attempts at "improvement" he considered self-serving. Some parents, he wrote,

will do more to improve their stock, their grains and their roots, than to elevate the tone of society around them; take more interest in the architecture of a stable than of a school house, more pride in a well-groomed horse than a well-educated son.³²

There is no evidence the state used the courts to enforce assessment legislation. A slower means of "awakening demand"—pressure applied by inspectors—was more desirable and enduring. Inspectors not only policed conformity to law, but evaluated "backward" social values and inappropriate cultural priorities.

Quality of school houses and choice of locations for them showed an underdeveloped appreciation of the merits of environments specifically suited to educational activity. In the first issue of the *Journal of Education and Agriculture* (1858), Forrester set out criteria for more appropriate sites for buildings and playgrounds.³³ In 1862, he still judged fewer than one-third of school houses acceptable.³⁴ Special government funding for poor school sections after 1864 did not alleviate the problem. Inspectors continued to chastise the population for unsuitable locations, playgrounds, and outhouses, and "deplorable" structures.³⁵ The Annual Report of 1866 considered only half the school houses in the province "in good repair;" 26% of the buildings were on unsuitable sites, and one third "without sufficient ventilation." Rev. D. O. Parker, the inspector for Queen's county, argued

neat [and] comfortable school houses are a demand of our nature [and buildings] "repulsive in all their surroundings with a vitiated atmosphere within [were] poisoning the blood, stupefying the mind and blunting the moral sensibilities."³⁶

Inspectors praised or criticized residents of some school sections for their willingness (or lack of it) to raise sufficient funds for the best trained teachers. The Normal School operated from 1855, but graduation from that institution was not required for teaching licenses. Shortage of teachers adequately trained in modern pedagogy was blamed on the "cheapness" of local school commissioners, who often hired those with the lowest level of license and least experience in order to reduce the budget. Although some inspectors praised the work of women

³²J. B. Calkin, King's, A.R. (1865), 114.

³³"Choosing a Site," *Journal of Education* 1, 1 (July, 1858): 4.

³⁴Forrester, A.R. (1862), 5.

³⁵Rev. J. Christie, Cumberland, A.R. (1865), 88. E. Outram, Cape Breton, A.R. (1866), 65, blamed local trustees; H. C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1867), 13, reporting on outhouses, did "not believe that any tribe of Indians would permit their children to be so exposed as they are at some schools..."; F. J. Farish, Yarmouth, A.R. (1873), 68–9, blamed parents for not voting sufficient funds, and wrote that he had seen little improvement in his nine years service as an inspector.

³⁶Rev. D. O. Parker, Queen's, A.R. (1867), 36.

teachers,³⁷ many believed the main reason for their growing predominance in the profession was financial. But commissioners were wrong to blaming trustees for this, since statutes authorized paying women 25-30% less (depending on classification) than male teachers holding the same license.³⁸ Some inspectors saw this as a future risk to stability in the profession.³⁹

To inspectors, appointments of better teachers demonstrated the population's interest in the highest quality of education for their children. Financial difficulty, whether from crop failure or poor fishing, was no excuse.⁴⁰

Properly trained teachers were of little value without the right textbooks and educational tools. The well-equipped school house needed maps, globes, blackboards, ball-frames, and other apparatus. Although such educational instruments were partially subsidized by the Education Department, many school sections still could not afford them. "Good wall maps," as they were categorized on inspection forms, were considered essential. If we divided the number of "good wall maps" by the number of schools in a given year, we arrive at a figure of 2.4 maps per school in 1867, improving to 3.1 per school in 1873. For every 3.7 schools, only one ball-frame could be found in 1867, and one thermometer for every 13.3 schools. Six years later, every 3.1 schools possessed a ball-frame and a thermometer could be found in only one of every eight schools.

Inspectors consistently complained that even when equipment was available, it was poorly used. A teacher's appropriate use of educational apparatus might be equated with the skilled labourer's use of tools. Nova Scotia's *Journal of Education* compared the teacher to the blacksmith, tailor, and carpenter, "[no] better off for [their] knowledge, unless [they] ha[ve] ... suitable tools to work with."⁴¹ Inspectors adopted this analogy to impress upon the rural public, who relied on acquired worklore and effective tools in their own occupations, that skilled and knowledgeable teachers could produce desired results efficiently if the effort were mediated by proper application of the best educational tools.

Blackboards had particular statistical importance in early inspectors' reports documenting total square footage of blackboards in all schools in a county and, from 1867, the annual average square footage of all schools in each county. As inspector McDonnell noted, a teacher properly trained to use the blackboard

³⁷H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1868), 52; Rev. W.H. Richan, Shelburne, A.R. (1870), 41; R. Somerville, King's, and D. McDonald, A.R. (1871), 10 and 20 respectively. See also *Journal of Education* 2, 1 (June, 1859), 10-11.

³⁸Nova Scotia, Act to Amend the Act for the Better Encouragement of Education (29 Victoria, Cap.30) (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1866), 61.

³⁹S.R. Russell, Guysborough, A.R. (1867), 32; H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1868), 51-52; L.S. Morse, Annapolis, A.R. (1873), 17.

⁴⁰Several inspectors make references to these problems in the A.R.'s for 1867 and 1868.

⁴¹T.J. Chapman, "School Apparatus," *Journal of Education* (Oct. 1870): 518; see also A.S. Hunt, A.R. (1870), 36.

"adopts the more modern auxiliaries in the work of education."⁴² Others reported some schools had good apparatus and blackboard space, but "a majority of the teachers are unable to use them advantageously."⁴³ Because blackboards could be locally made with painted boards or a mixture of paint, ashes, and oil (a recipe provided by Rand's "Commentary and Explanation" section of the Education Act), inspectors viewed them as an index of the quantity of voluntary labour given to education in the community.

Rev. Armstrong complained that the parents and trustees in his county were not convinced of the value of educational apparatus, and schools without it "remain almost stationary for weeks." Edmund Outram expressed exasperation that inappropriate and poorly made furniture was still in use in many poor sections' school houses, despite the carpentry skills of local people.

This I consider to be inexcusable in the poor sections, as the people are able to make them for themselves, but the teachers do not seem to understand the utility of this simple apparatus, nor how much time might be gained by the appliance of it.⁴⁴

The burden of providing essentials for the school—well-trained teachers, apparatus, the school building, volunteer labour—thus in great measure fell to local residents, even in school sections formally recognized by the state as needing extraordinary financial assistance. Inspectors worried about the quality and efficiency of the pedagogy used in the classroom,⁴⁵ but the underlying concern was for the "underdeveloped" attitude of parents and others to advanced pedagogy and its financial support.

ATTENDANCE: SCHOOLING AS A RURAL VALUE

The 1861 census included a survey of reading and writing ability. About 43% of school-aged children (5–15) could not read, and 58% could not write. Figures for adults were 22% and 33% respectively.⁴⁶ Forrester and Rand repeatedly cited high levels of illiteracy as proof of the need for a more centrally organized system of education in the face of a predominantly rural, subsistence economy that required the unpaid labour of all family members, regardless of age.⁴⁷ For the state, the solution lay in compulsory school attendance.

Petitions for educational provision notwithstanding, significant numbers saw little immediate value in forfeiting their children's labour. Popular demand for

⁴²J. McDonnell, Inverness, A.R. (1865), 74; W. Eaton, King's, A.R. (1867), 33–4.

⁴³C. MacDonald, Victoria, A.R. (1865), 72.

⁴⁴Rev. G. Armstrong, Annapolis, A.R. (1866), 38–39; E. Outram, Cape Breton, A.R. (1869), 41.

⁴⁵On the use of blackboards and other apparatus, see Alison Prentice, "From Household to Schoolhouse: The Emergence of the Teacher as a Servant of the State," *Material History Bulletin* 20 (Fall, 1984), 22.

⁴⁶A. Forrester, A.R. (1862), 4. The Census showed that nearly 52% of the population was under 20 years of age. The age commonly identified as school age (5–15 years) on inspection forms made up about 26% of the population; the age group 6–16 years, as reported in the 1871 Census, comprised 25% of the population.

⁴⁷Campbell and MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar*, 122.

schooling among the rural population should be interpreted as recognition of the value of such immediately useful knowledge as basic literacy and arithmetic skills. The distant, abstract benefits of schooling would not have been immediately apparent to many under the harsh conditions of Nova Scotian daily life. Inspectors (and others) had to convince the population that schooling was a viable means of social mobility. Popular demand for education was not an open-ended agreement for the state to require or even pressure families to send their children to school all day, five days a week, especially in seasons when their labour was considered crucial. Parents did not anticipate they would be subjected to questioning by an inspector or a teacher when their children were absent from school.

In order to increase attendance, inspectors promoted the class interests they served, equating ignorance with idleness, poverty, and crime, and education with wealth and social stability.⁴⁸ Inspector Calkin, for example, wrote of a question he had recently posed to an acquaintance in Boston:

"You have a large immigration of the scum of all nations, what conservative element do you employ to save you from putrescence?"

"Our schools," he said, "our schools. Here we grind over the children of the vagabond and they come out to fill useful and honorable stations, and frequently they become our most worthy citizens."⁴⁹

Inspectors took irregular attendance as proof that systematic education had yet to be accepted as either personally valuable or socially necessary.

"Dull times dispirit the working class," wrote A.S. Hunt, "and neglect of school is almost sure to follow." Children "thinly clad and poorly shod," especially in winter, publicly displayed their family's poverty—to them a sound excuse for non-attendance. Appropriate clothing and footwear for lengthy treks to and from school, and a presentable appearance of health, demonstrated a family's relative prosperity. The Inspector for Pictou County cited the logic of one citizen at a public meeting: "If you compel them to attend school you must clothe them to make them fit to come, and in some cases you must feed them too."⁵⁰

Some inspectors suggested legislative force be tempered with an appreciation of the rural family's work requirements. R.B. Smith argued:

There are seasons in the year when it is impossible for the poor man's child to attend school. However, in the summer term exempting two weeks at seed time; four at haying time and Harvest; and a week for potato digging, the remainder of the time might be made compulsory.⁵¹

Most inspectors reluctantly accepted poverty as an excuse for keeping children at home, whether or not to work. Whatever the demand for children's labour, it was viewed disparagingly as "frittering away their precious time in desultory employ-

⁴⁸H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1866), 15; T.H. Rand, A.R. (1867), xxii; Rev. W.H. Richan, Shelburne, A.R. (1868), 15 and (1871), 13; J.Y. Gunn, Inverness, A.R. (1869), 31, A.S. Hunt, A.R. (1873), xxiii.

⁴⁹J.B. Calkin, King's, A.R. (1865), 116.

⁵⁰A.S. Hunt, A.R. (1874), x-xi; H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1866), 12-13; P.J. Fillieul, Digby, A.R. (1867), 43; D. McDonald, Pictou, A.R. (1870), 59.

⁵¹R.B. Smith, Colchester, A.R. (1871), 53.

ment.⁵² Parents whose children might devote more time and energy to their crops, their cattle, or fish flakes, saw in them a concrete benefit. Although inspectors feared threatening the sanctity of parental rights,⁵³ the quality of such parenting was open to question and justified the state's legal authority to substitute as parent. One inspector wrote:

Our schools are free to all, and if parents will not educate their children, the Government, who in many cases act as a parent, would only shew a kindness and confer a benefit by compelling every parent to send his children [to school].⁵⁴

Calls for compulsory attendance grew throughout the 1860s, but it would not be legislated until 1883.

DIFFUSING THE INSPECTORAL FUNCTION

Inspectors represented the state by enforcing the Education Acts, including assessment of community and family commitment to the progress of local schools. As paid agents of the state, teachers' work in the classroom included an important contribution to one of Dawson's original purposes of inspection: collecting educational information. The Superintendent of Education and his inspectors hoped to obtain accurate information consistently through a daily register covering a wide range of pedagogical and managerial categories. An official register was in use as early as 1850⁵⁵ and underwent many changes over the years. In 1859, Forrester argued that however necessary inspection might be to accurate statistical information, the first requirement was "the construction of a register that shall embrace the time of the admission and withdrawal of the scholars, their attendance and progress."⁵⁶ A more comprehensive register was required by the 1864 Act, and the Act of 1866 emphasized the register as a legal, not merely professional requirement. Teachers were

To call the roll morning and afternoon and otherwise keep an accurate Register in the manner prescribed by the Council of Public Instruction, on pain of liability to forfeiture of the public grants; the Register to be at all times open to the inspections of the Trustees, Visitors, Examiners, Commissioners, Inspectors and Superintendent.⁵⁷

The register became a feature of the widening intrusion of the state, and a tool to propagate the educational goals of the state and the value-orientation of the superior classes. Teachers' work was to go beyond merely recording attendance

⁵²H. Condon, Halifax, A.R. (1873), 56; see also, D.M. Welton, Hants, A.R. (1866), 31; P.J. Fillieul, Digby, A.R. (1867), 43; Rev. W.H. Richan, Shelburne, A.R. (1868), 15-16; E. Outram, Cape Breton, A.R. (1869), 42; Rev. G. Armstrong, Annapolis, A.R. (1870), 64.

⁵³E. Outram, Cape Breton, A.R. (1866), 65; T.H. Rand, A.R. and Rev. W.S. Darragh, Cumberland, A.R. (1869), xvi and 67-68, respectively; D. McDonald, Pictou, A.R. (1870), 58-9.

⁵⁴A. Munro, Victoria, A.R. (1873), 30; In the same year, inspector Lawson proposed "a small fine...on parents of absentees." (45)

⁵⁵Campbell and MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar*, 140.

⁵⁶A. Forrester, A.R. (1859), 243-244.

⁵⁷"Explanations of the New Register," *Journal of Education* (September 1867): 144-46.

to accounting for absence and classifying reasons given for it.⁵⁸ Inspectors admonished teachers who "encouraged" absence or lateness as neglecting their right to demand explanations from the families. Inspector Upham, for example, reproached teachers for "carelessness" and "neglect" for failure "to search out and record the causes of absence." Two years later, he reported the same problem, noting that this function was viewed by some teachers as "a mere vexation."

But when it is considered what is implied by ... neglect [of the register], [he continued] we must cease to underrate its value, and conclude that he who neglects has not fully measured the extent and demands of his place.⁵⁹

What exactly was neglected? The teacher's training and personal refinement; accuracy was important, but a neat and clean register more so. For Rev. Lawson, inspector for Lunenburg, registers "beautifully kept, reflect[ed] much credit on the care and taste of the teachers." Upham claimed want of neatness and tidiness revealed "a deficiency in early training or in natural taste."⁶⁰ The better-trained and higher classified teacher, presumably tidier and more professionally aware of the significance of the knowledge produced in the register, was more expensive to hire. For their part, teachers failed to see how such a simple instrument could overcome problems of uncommitted parents, penny-pinching local officials, and negligent visitors.

The properly kept register, it was argued, kept the school. Inspectors reproached county commissioners, clergy, and others for failure to visit schools regularly, review the register, and tackle problems of attendance and progress. D.M. Welton wrote that if the register were

blotted, untidy and improperly kept, the school has been disorderly, poorly classified, and made little progress, and the converse [is true]. The use of the Register not only in keeping the attendance of the pupils, but also as a means of stimulating them in progress, in study and good deportment, is becoming better understood and more efficiently turned to account.⁶¹

In her analysis of registers in Scottish schools, Fiona Paterson⁶² claims they were to make visible the efficiency of the teacher and the "institutional profiles" of individual students, and sees the register as one element in production of "a theory and practice of normality." Nova Scotian inspectors saw this educational "technology" as a means by which teachers and other community members could be evaluated on their commitments to the progress of education. The Shelburne County inspector wrote:

If no day were allowed to pass without a visit, the character of the school would soon become known, the ability or otherwise of the teacher apparent, the progress

⁵⁸*Journal of Education* (Sept., 1867): 145-6.

⁵⁹H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1868), 52, and (1870), 99.

⁶⁰W.M.B. Lawson, Lunenburg, A.R. (1868), 19; H.C. Upham, Colchester, A.R. (1869), 35.

⁶¹Rev. D.M. Welton, Hants, A.R. (1867), 25, and (1868), 10.

⁶²Fiona Paterson, "Measures of Schooling: registers, standards and the construction of the subject," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, 3 (1988): 278-300.

of the pupils exhibited, and an incitement given that would soon be evinced by greater diligence and more rapid improvement.⁶³

The properly kept register as a knowledge-producing tool contributed much to educational intelligence in these first years of systematic inspection. But its equally important purpose was reduction of tensions by delegating inspectoral functions of information-gathering and "stimulation" to a broad range of people in the community. The well-kept register did indicate teacher competence in recording daily attendance, the neatness of the pupils, and their progress. But as vigilant and thorough recording progressed weekly, then semi-annually, then annually, cumulative evidence of success or weakness in pedagogy and in community involvement showed the inspector the degree of dedication of "Official Visitors" and others to school visitation, their presence at examinations, the policing of attendance, and the overall quality of school improvement. Inspectors thus diffused responsibility for promoting state interests as interests to be adopted by local populations.

CONCLUSION

Forrester's 1863 Report reviewed the growing requirements and authority of the state.

The state has a power which no society or church possesses, and is bound to use it; for her self-preservation is no longer believed to depend on the stolidity and ignorance of the industrial population, but on the enlightenment and morality of all classes.... What interference can there be with the liberty of the subject in demanding that parents educate their children so long as they are at liberty to send them to any teacher and bring them up in whatsoever religious belief they please?⁶⁴

Inspection communicated changing social relations to all parts of the province and to all sectors of the population: broadly in terms of economic and political demands, more specifically in the normative prescriptions and expectations of everyday life. To much of the population schooling became something more than children learning the three Rs. As it was introduced, schooling came to mean interference with established patterns of work and family, and the necessity to re-structure everyday life in conformity to new and more powerful conventions determined elsewhere.

With increasing economic power and the corresponding legislative authority embodied in the state, the formation of the public system of education signalled its right to encroach upon local and familial terrains. The state's incursion through schooling and inspection was meant to produce positive attitudes to schooling, as valuable for individual development and for social progress. State action and the work of its local agents did not provoke organized resistance to schooling or to the scrutiny of everyday life, but they laid the ground for increased awareness of competing social interests and the relative powers behind them.

⁶³A.C.A. Doane, Shelburne, A.R. (1873), 33.

⁶⁴T.H. Rand, A.R. (1863), 5.