The Education Policy of the Dufferin Roblin Administration, 1958-1967

by Maureen E. Cousins

A thesis submitted to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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submitted by

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Abstract

Politics and education are two of the most important, albeit controversial, institutions that make up the framework of Canadian society. Both national institutions underwent a series of dramatic changes during the Cold War Era of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and the situation was no different in Manitoba. Because of the rapid economic, political and social changes of the post-war period, governments found themselves trying to grapple with education policy in the most cost-efficient and results-oriented manner possible. The government administered by Progressive Conservative Premier Dufferin Roblin (1958-1967) inherited an education system that had not kept pace.

The Roblin administration, which was one of the most active in Manitoba history, has undergone surprisingly little examination by academics, be they economists, historians, political scientists or educational analysts. Throughout its time in office, Roblin's administration made a number of significant changes to the education system, three of which will be examined at greater length in this thesis: school consolidation, the provision of enhanced public financing for private and parochial schools and the extension of Manitoba's university system. The purpose of this thesis will be to determine how the Roblin government addressed education, a policy area which generated considerable public debate. Various methods have been employed to analyze the Roblin government's education policies, including an extensive examination of primary documents such as legislative debates

and proceedings, members of the legislative assembly's private papers and the unpublished memoirs of Dufferin Roblin.

It is a major contention of this thesis that although the Roblin regime's policies were not always received favorably by the opposition parties, educators and educational administrators or the electorate, they were necessary to the modernization of the province. Further, this thesis asserts that the Roblin administration was more liberal than the so-called Liberal administration it had replaced. In fact, Roblin's administration often took a radical approach, given the provincial context, when trying to revitalize this key Manitoba institution.

Acknowledgements

Slow and steady wins the race is a pretty accurate reflection of the story behind this thesis. The road to completion of this project was not a straight one, but the twists, turns and bumps along the way helped make the process that much more interesting. A number of people deserve credit for helping me see this thesis through to completion. My thesis advisor, Dr. J. Edgar Rea, allowed me to cultivate my love of Manitoba history by agreeing to supervise this project. Over the years, he offered support in countless ways and was endlessly patient as this thesis slowly took form.

Special thanks also go out to Dufferin Roblin, the man at the centre of this story, for allowing me to use portions of his unpublished memoirs in this thesis. Jim Carr deserves thanks for arranging this opportunity. And, Gildas Molgat generously offered to be interviewed about his experiences during the period under study.

A number of organizations facilitated research into this thesis. I would like to thank Tom Mitchell, McKee Archives, Brandon University; Shirley Payment, University of Winnipeg Archives; Roger A. Kingsley, University Secretary, University of Winnipeg; the staff of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba; the staff of the Manitoba Legislative Library and the staff of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. All of these individuals patiently answered my questions and ferreted out information of use to this project.

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I assume full responsibility for any errors or omissions within this thesis.

Introduction

Politics and education are two of the most important, albeit controversial, institutions that make up the framework of Canadian society. Both national institutions underwent a series of dramatic changes during the Cold War Era of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the situation was no different in Manitoba. Under Section 93 of the British North America Act, education is the exclusive responsibility of the provincial governments. Because of the rapid economic, political and social changes of the post-war period, provincial governments found themselves trying to grapple with education policy in the most cost-efficient and results-oriented manner possible. The government administered by Progressive Conservative Premier Dufferin Roblin (1958-1967) inherited an education system that had not kept up with this rapid pace of change. The previous administration of Liberal Douglas Campbell had adopted a conservative approach when it came to financing education, preferring to maintain the existing, antiquated system rather than providing the resources or policies necessary for its overhaul and modernization. The Progressive Conservatives seized the issue of Manitoba's lagging education system and it became one of the key planks in the platform which brought them to power in 1958 and kept them in power until Roblin stepped down as party leader in 1967. Indeed, by 1966, the Roblin government's education budget was larger than the entire budget of the final year of Campbell's administration.[1] Throughout his tenure as premier, Roblin's administration directed

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[1] Chester, Ashley, "The Tide Ebbs." Winnipeg World. (November/December 1968), p. 28.

many of its policy and fiscal initiatives towards improving Manitoba's education system, with mixed results.

The Roblin administration, which was one of the most active in Manitoba history, has undergone surprisingly little examination by academics, be they economists, historians, political scientists, social scientists or educational analysts. The purpose of this thesis will be to determine how the Roblin government addressed education, a policy area which captured the interest of both his cabinet, the opposition parties and the voting public. Three areas in particular demanded the immediate attention of the Roblin administration and bear further investigation, school consolidation, the provision of enhanced public financing for private and parochial schools and the extension of Manitoba's university system. Each will be examined in the context of the social, political and economic factors which conditioned Roblin's approach to these issues. Further, the reaction of the opposition parties and the Manitoba electorate will also be gauged to determine whether the Roblin government's policies were viewed as regressive, progressive or of little impact. It will be a major contention of this thesis that although the Roblin regime's policies were not always received favorably, they were necessary to the modernization of the Manitoba school system at both the secondary and post-secondary level. Educators, scientists, parents, employers and politicians alike were clamoring for change, fearful that poorly educated, and hence uncompetitive, Manitobans would be left behind in a world where events such as the launching of Sputnik were becoming the norm. Further, this thesis will assert that the Roblin administration was more liberal than the so-called Liberal administration that it had replaced.

The Roblin government was forced to consider several popular theories pertaining to the development and administration of educational policies. One attempt to expand educational philosophy was undertaken with the Quance Lectures, initiated in 1949 and running through the 1960s. The intent of the lectures, organized by Dr. Frank M. Quance, Dean of Education, Emeritus at the University of Saskatchewan, was to build up "an authoritative literature on Canadian education."[2] A variety of educators and politicians used the lectures to address topical issues in Canadian education. For example, Woodrow Lloyd, Saskatchewan's Education Minister, in 1959 discussed the belief in the importance of equality of educational opportunity, which was a recurring theme in the educational and political writings of the time. He argued that governments had a responsibility to themselves and to their citizens to ensure that citizens were properly educated. The result would be citizens who would be able to make more worthwhile contributions to society than those whose education was lacking. Lloyd noted that the concept of collective responsibility for education continued to grow in Canadian society, and stated, "A sharpening of social conscience, a growing interdependence and recognition of interdependence, spurred by increasing economic and social need for trained hands and minds has made this inevitable."[3] The concept of the need for progressive education also recurs. Lloyd defined progressive education "as implying the maximum use of all that is known about the nature of man, about

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[2] Lloyd, Woodrow, The Role of Government in Canadian Education. (Toronto: W.J. Gage Limited, 1959), p. 12.

[3] Lloyd, p. 17.

the learning process and about the demands and possibilities of a changing society into which the student goes."[4] The thesis will include an overview of the contemporary educational philosophies and their impact on the Roblin administration's policies.

The Progressive Conservatives came to power in 1958 partly on the strength of a platform which advocated a major overhaul of the Manitoba education system. Among other promises, Roblin's campaign vowed to increase grants for public schools by 50 per cent, a timely commitment considering Manitobans' growing concern with the need to revitalize the province's aging and burdened education system. Indeed, by November 1958, the Roblin administration made good on its promise, agreeing to increase provincial grants for education from $14.2 million to $20 million at the start of the new fiscal year on April 1, 1959. The move brought the provincial contribution to the cost of education finance to 53 per cent, relieving the pressure on municipalities and school districts.[5]

The Roblin government was also confronted by the plethora of local school districts, of which there were in excess of 1500. School districts and municipalities were beset by limited financial resources and a shortage of qualified teachers in their attempts to provide equality of educational opportunities for Manitoba school children. Shortly after Roblin's Tories assumed power, R.O. MacFarlane's Manitoba Royal Commission on Education, which had been appointed by the previous Campbell administration, issued its findings. Two of its

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[4] Lloyd, p. 89.

[5] "Province Pays 53% of Costs in Manitoba Schools Plan." Financial Post, LII (November 1, 1958). p. 31.

recommendations were to engage and confound Roblin's government - the need for school consolidation and the provision of greater funding for private schools. The Progressive Conservatives decided to reallocate control over high schools to large area school divisions. Administration of elementary schools was to remain with the local districts. The issue was to be put to Manitoba voters, the prime inducement being that if the proposal was accepted, the province would agree to pay 59 per cent of the total cost of elementary and secondary education instead of the 32 per cent paid under Campbell's administration. The matter was to be put to a series of referenda and if the voters favored the proposal, school divisions would be formed, each able to elect its own board and each having exclusive control over high school education. In a rare show of support, all Manitoba political parties took to the hustings to sell the public on the idea. The government was anxious to win the voters' support, for a rejection of the proposed system would mean that a dual system of grants would exist in some divisions.[6] The results of the school consolidation referenda did not meet the government's expectations.

Similarly, Roland Michener's 1964 Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance must also be scrutinized, as it urged the government to further revamp its outmoded municipal-provincial funding arrangements. Some of its recommendations regarding the further reorganization of the provincial education system into a unitary system need to be considered, along with

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6 "'New Deal' For Education in Manitoba Sells the Public." The Financial Post. LIII (January 24, 1959), p. 31.

the resulting changes implemented by the Roblin regime. For example, the Roblin government's implementation of a school foundation program was not without controversy and was again taken to the electorate in the form of referenda. The lone Social Credit member in the Manitoba legislature went so far as to accuse Roblin's government of using scare tactics and worse on the public. J.M. Froese railed, "it is actually blackmail because when you use the taxpayers money to put up these high grants and then you make them vote a certain way is very wrong..."[7] And once more, the public did not react in a manner anticipated by Roblin and his cabinet. The changes instituted regarding school district organization and finance must be evaluated to determine if they were effective, and whether they were in fact more progressive than merely pragmatic.

The highly contentious issue of the rising costs of private schools stymied the Roblin government for several years and was never resolved to the satisfaction of Manitobans. When Roblin took power in 1958, Manitoba had 52 private schools providing services for nearly 9500 students. Thirty-seven of these private schools were Roman Catholic, and nearly one-third of Manitoba's population were Roman Catholics. The private schools received no financial support from the provincial or municipal governments, except municipal property tax exemptions. One possible solution for ailing private schools was the provision of shared services, or allowing private school students some access to the facilities of public schools. The debate over shared services re-ignited the long-standing feud between French and English, Roman Catholic and

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[7] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings., March 9, 1967, p. 1535.

Protestant Manitobans. Indeed, Manitobans had been quarreling over how religion and language should be taught and who should pay the cost since 1890. Roblin's own grandfather, provincial premier Sir Rodmond P. Roblin, had himself felt the sting of the dual school system debate in 1914 when he tried to revise the province's education laws.[8]

For Duff Roblin's government, shared services seemed to be a viable and equitable solution, but the detractors were certainly not satisfied by the attempts to mollify them. A large segment of the population was opposed to any aid to private schools, and newspapers were flooded with letters for and against state aid to the schools. Catholic politicians' lives and businesses were threatened. Even the educators were divided over how to resolve the problem. But with Manitoba's healthy Roman Catholic population, the government also had to consider carefully the political repercussions of not addressing the question of state aid. [9] The Roblin administration's efforts to resolve this decades-old debate must be analyzed to determine its successes and failures, and to illustrate why many Manitobans were still resentful over the concept of financing of private schools.

The question of the state of post-secondary education facilities in the province also warrants examination. When the Roblin administration came to power, there were three post-secondary institutions in Manitoba - the University of Manitoba, and its affiliated institutions, United College and Brandon College. As the so-called baby

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[8] Tulloch, Ray, "One Sure Way to Infuriate Manitoba: Ask Catholic Kids to Public Schools." Maclean's. 77 (May 16, 1964), p. 3.

[9] "Education Report Explosive Issue." The Financial Post. LIV (April 16, 1960), p. 50.

boom generation began to make its way into Manitoba's colleges and university in ever-increasing numbers, the smaller colleges began to lobby for the right to take their place as autonomous universities. As H.E. Duckworth pointed out, "some felt that their off-campus locations and/or ethos justified deviations from the strict lock-step."[10] Yet another commission was appointed to examine the future of post-secondary education -- the Council on Higher Learning. Although this was perhaps the least contentious of the education issues facing the Roblin administration, its handling of the problem is again a reflection on the progressive nature of the Roblin regime. It also offers insights into how the Roblin administration interacted with the federal government on the issue of financing post-secondary education.

Finally, the Roblin government's handling of education has yet to be thoroughly examined from the standpoint of determining where his Progressive Conservative Party fell on the political spectrum. While in office, Roblin seemed to reject attempts to label him a social welfare Tory. For example, he stated, "We have ideas and plans which we think we should try and which we think are a step forward...They are not socialistic. We think they will help Manitoba."[11] Most authors and political pundits maintain that Roblin's party and government combined both conservative and reform elements. An *Ottawa Citizen* columnist pointed out the widely-held view of Roblin's government

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[10] Cameron, David M., More Than An Academic Question: Universities, Government and Public Policy in Canada. Halifax: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1991, p. 44.

[11] "Low Cost Electric Power Will Be An Issue in Manitoba's Brief Campaign." The Financial Post. (November 24, 1962), p. 32.

when he stated, "Mr. Roblin's record in office is in fact so progressive as to make him look like a radical Socialist compared to the ultra conservative Liberal Premier D.L. Campbell whom he defeated."[12] W.L. Morton commented of the Roblin administration, "While desirous of being a party of progress, it had to be a party of the centre: yet another factor was its own internal equipoise between being conservative in principle while progressive in practice."[13] Morton explained that the Roblin government was faced with the difficult task of trying to balance the concerns of traditional rural Manitoba, which still maintained the balance of political power, with the needs of more aggressive urban business and industrial voters. The Roblin administration marked the return to party politics for the first time in several decades, and it took the public time to adjust.

Morton also maintained that Roblin was a proponent of the theory of social investment.[14] Because the province's economy was relatively stable when he took office, Roblin decided to spend a lot of money and to borrow more money against the province's future in order to enhance several programs, including social welfare projects such as the betterment of health and education services. By reorganizing a severely dysfunctional school system, Roblin hoped to enhance the equality of educational opportunity for all Manitobans. This took the form of school consolidation, shared services for private schools and the

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[12] "Duff Roblin - He Continues to Wait and Assess." The Ottawa Citizen. (June 6, 1967), p. 7.

[13] W. L. Morton, Manitoba - A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) p. 484.

[14] Morton, p. 486.

creation of new universities, measures which drew varying degrees of wrath from the electorate. But even Morton dared not attempt to locate Roblin clearly on one end of the political spectrum or the other, preferring to opt for the safe, central position, thus leaving ambiguity and a series of inaccuracies in the discussion of Roblin's government.

Modern Manitoba political history is like a moth-eaten quilt. There are patches of information about isolated policies or political figures, but they are not stitched together in any concise pattern due to the dearth of academic analyses of the period. This is particularly evident when one tries to assess the late 1950s and 1960s, a time of rapid and varied economic, political and social change in Manitoba. Almost completely absent are political biographies of the key players of the day, or surveys of these decades. What little scholarly research has been undertaken is usually a cursory addendum in Canadian political science textbooks or in Manitoba general history surveys. In spite of the fact that Roblin attained nationwide prominence when he contested the national leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party following John Diefenbaker's resignation, only scant information exists on him and his extensive political career. The works that he undertook while Manitoba premier- popular and unpopular alike - are of considerable importance, yet he and his government have not been subject to much scrutiny by academics. Virtually all areas of his administration need to be subjected to critical analysis. This thesis will attempt to fill one of the important holes by showing how Roblin's government dealt with education. It will demonstrate further that his administration took a radical approach, given the provincial context, when trying to revitalize this key Manitoba institution. It will demonstrate that the Roblin administration made a

commitment to education as a social investment and that his government wanted to enhance the equality of educational opportunity for Manitoba's elementary and secondary students, be they in public or private schools, as well as the province's university students.

Various methods have been employed to analyze the Roblin government's education policies. An examination of secondary materials pertaining to Canadian education history and philosophy provided background information as to the direct and indirect factors influencing the Roblin government's education policies. However, because of the paucity of information on the Roblin administration, much of the thesis work entailed an examination of primary documents. The various federal and provincial royal commissions on secondary and post-secondary education were probed to determine how the Roblin government reacted to their findings and how his administration in turn formulated policies. Equally important was an assessment of reports arising from public institutions such as the provincial Department of Education, as well as private organizations such as the Manitoba Teachers Society and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. The provincial legislative debates and proceedings and the resultant pieces of legislation pertaining to education institutions and financing offered insights into the political rationale and tendencies of the government. Further, the papers of many of the Manitoba MLAs of the period under examination have been deposited in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and providing valuable personal insights into the intricacies of the policy making of the Roblin administration and of the opposition parties.

Popular opinion on these often times highly contentious issues was also utilized for the parents of school aged children were also the voters the Roblin administration was seeking to placate or persuade. To ascertain this, various local publications were reviewed, including the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Winnipeg Tribune*, and a variety of rural Manitoba newspapers. As well, a number of education journals of professionals and academic organizations warranted consideration, including the *Manitoba Teacher*, the *Manitoba School Trustee*, and the *Canadian Education and Research Digest*, among others. From this process was determined the political rationale and motivation behind the Roblin administration's actions regarding educational policies, and the difficulties they encountered when trying to balance the needs of a quickly changing society with concerns of a traditionally conservative society. An assessment of the political leanings of the Roblin administration will be undertaken with the help of information gleaned from these interviews, as well as from analyses of political ideologies discussed in several Canadian political science texts.

By undertaking this study, one of the many holes in modern Manitoba political history will be filled. One should not have to rely on limited assessments of the Roblin administration gleaned from financial magazines and the popular press. Nor should one have to guess what Roblin's political philosophy was by reading numerous plodding, dated and often biased accounts of education history, searching for the elusive snippet of information about Manitoba's government during the 1960s. The information compiled through this research should also prove valuable when other areas of Roblin's administration come under closer scrutiny by future scholars.

Chapter One - School Consolidation

When Progressive Conservative Premier Dufferin Roblin's government came to power in 1958, it faced an elementary and secondary school system in a state of disarray. There were in excess of 1500 public school districts in the province which were fighting both limited financial resources and a shortage of qualified teachers, and at the same time striving to achieve a forward-reaching curriculum.[1] This chapter will examine the attempts by the Roblin government to consolidate the province's public schools into fewer organizational and administrative units, and in particular, the last massive round of school consolidations which took place following two public referenda in 1967. Although many educators, administrators, ratepayers, and politicians were willing to write off the one-room school system as an inefficient means of schooling Manitoba's children, many rural residents viewed this plan as an affront to their sensibilities. They complained that removing administration of elementary schools from separate local boards and placing it under the same administrative unit as secondary schools would rob them of local autonomy. Others accused the Roblin government of blackmailing them into accepting the unitary school division program by holding out financial incentives to only those districts willing to consolidate their separate administrative units into single district school divisions. It must be determined whether Roblin's government was self-seeking by trying to placate the taxpayers in

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[1] Heather Shepherd, "School Consolidation in Manitoba." MAST Journal. Volume 15 (October 1988), p. 29.

bringing in what they viewed to be a preferable system of school financing - in other words, a cheaper system. Or was his government merely trying to address the opinion of the majority of educators and administrators, and many parents, who realized that for Manitoba's students to enjoy a progressive education, the myths surrounding the desirability of the one-room school system had to be shattered in order to make way for larger schools offering more equality of educational opportunity.

Educators, provincial policy makers, and parents in the 1950s and 1960s were confronted by the fact that while the Canadian population was rapidly expanding, the existing systems of school organization were often ill-equipped to deal with the thousands of new students descending upon them. In fact, between 1955-56 and 1965-66, the total enrolment in publicly-controlled elementary and secondary schools in the Canadians provinces increased by 50.2 per cent. Regarding secondary enrolments, they grew by 124 per cent, or three-and-a-half times that of elementary enrolments.[2] In Manitoba, the percentage increases were 22.8 per cent for elementary education and 112 per cent for secondary education. As well, as the Canadian economy diversified and industrialized, it became necessary for students to remain in school longer in order to be able to function in a rapidly modernizing and technologically-advanced world. The *Country Guide* bemoaned the fact that many rural prairie schools were not designed to meet these changing needs, and stated there was a "lack of appreciation of the place

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[2] Brown, Wilfred J., Rankings of the Provinces on Various Aspects of Canadian Education. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers Federation, 1967, p. 16.

of education in the modern world, coupled with a lack of regard for rural children..." [3] The result was that in most provinces, larger schools, providing more services and dealing with students for longer periods of time, were organized under larger units of administration by the end of the 1960s.[4]

Canadian educational philosophy was also being transformed throughout the post World War Two period, and provincial policy makers invariably found themselves listening to these new philosophies. As previously mentioned, one such attempt to expand awareness of educational philosophy was the Quance Lectures, initiated in 1949, and continuing through the 1960s, the time when Roblin's Progressive Conservative government instituted a series of substantial changes to education administration in Manitoba. The intent of the lectures, organized by Dr. Frank M. Quance of the University of Saskatchewan, was to create a literature on Canadian education. Some of these works bear further examination, as the propositions raised by the academics either consciously or subconsciously worked their way into provincial education policy-making in several Canadian provinces, including Manitoba.

For example, one of the more important works arising out of the lecture series was Woodrow S. Lloyd's *The Role of Government in*

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[3] From the pamphlet by H.S. Fry, "Larger Schools Must Come." which appeared in the *Country Guide* in the 1960s (date unknown). Taken from the Magnus Eliason Collection, Item 324, MG 14 B64, PAM.

[4] Canadian Education Association. Education in Transition: A Capsule Review. (Toronto: Twin Offset Limited, 1975), p. 12.

Canadian Education, written in 1959 when he was Saskatchewan's Education Minister. Lloyd elaborated on what became a familiar theme in Canadian educational thought of the day, the notion that equality of opportunity should be provided to citizens via the education system. He asserted, "The role of government in education is to make possible those conditions on which educational opportunity depends and which must exist if man is to 'be himself at his best."[5] These same governments, Lloyd argued, have as their prime function to ensure that the rights of man can be fully enjoyed. This meant not interfering with people's rights, as well as removing barriers to such rights. One can postulate that the reorganization of poorly-administered school districts with one-room schools into larger, more competent school districts with more efficient schools was one way to remove barriers to equality of educational opportunity. Lloyd stated that provincial governments also realized that the costs of education had to be more equitably distributed between themselves and their municipal counterparts, an issue later raised by the Manitoba Royal Commission On Local Government Organization and Finance. Lloyd's assertion that governments must spend more money on education in order to get more favorable results from the system was another common theme among educators and administrators of the day. Lloyd drew some conclusions about the new trend towards progressive thinking in education and noted,

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[5] Lloyd, Woodrow S., The Role of Government in Canadian Education. Toronto: W.J. Gage Limited, 1959, p. 23,

> *It seems to me that the real complaint of Canadian people is not that education has been too progressive, but that it has not been progressive enough. Here I interpret progressive as implying the maximum use of all that is known about the nature of man, about the learning process and about the demands and possibilities of a changing society into which the student goes.* [6]

His assessment would meet with mixed reviews amongst a Manitoba public trying to cope with school reorganization during the 1960s.

H.P. Moffat, another contributor to the Quance Lecture series, wrote *Educational Finance in Canada*, which assessed the system of financing education. Moffat recognized provincial governments had the ultimate responsibility for providing and financing public education, and he was not optimistic the federal government would provide any additional aid in this regard. His theories were not unlike those later implemented by the Roblin government. For example, Moffat maintained that education should be administered by local authorities, directly or indirectly responsible to the ratepayers and to the parents of children being educated. He argued further that differences in local ability to provide education had to be addressed, so that the end result would be that all schools in a province would provide the same standard of education. If the local authority could not provide funds to ensure this, the province should be obligated to offer financial assistance.[7]

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[6] Lloyd., p. 89.

[7] H.P. Moffat, Educational Finance in Canada. (Toronto: W.J. Gage Limited, 1957), p. 33.

8 Frank McKinnon, The Politics of Education - A Study in the Political Administration of the Public Schools. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), pp. 3-4

Moffat also favored the creation of large school administrative units as a means of offering "positive educational and financial advantages."

Not all educators were so optimistic about the potentially useful role of government in education. Frank McKinnon, who in 1960 wrote *The Politics of Education - A Study in the Political Administration of the Public Schools* , maintained pessimistically that the educational system "is the largest instrument in the modern state for telling people what to do", but then admitted that the state was "the only authority capable of serving the whole community."[8] He argued that school administration was too bureaucratic, and that instead of schools being able to conduct their own affairs, they were subject to constant interference from provincial and municipal governments and school boards.[9] Furthermore, McKinnon complained that politicians ignored educational issues because they were too controversial. This resigned type of viewpoint was reflected in the public opinion of citizens in many provinces, including Manitoba, who were forced to accept government interference in order to mend ailing school systems.

Perhaps W.G. Fleming summed up the mood of provincial education administrators in the 1960s most accurately in his work, *Educational Opportunity - The Pursuit of Equality*, which was a study of the interrelationships among the economy, politics, major social trends and education. Fleming noted the tight correlation between educational opportunity and democracy, and stated,

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[9] McKinnon, p. 13.

> *The pursuit of educational opportunity has seemed particularly appropriate for the forms and manifestations of democracy in Canada. It has been the underlying theme of much of the legislation passed by provincial bodies, and rarely has a minister of education become so weary of platitudes that he has been able to avoid frequent reference to this favorite.*[10]

Fleming argued that in assuming welfare obligations, the state encouraged educational opportunity. One reason for this was that "the state can discharge its welfare and other functions most effectively if its human resources are efficiently utilized." [11] Fleming added that the education system became the principal vehicle for people to use to enhance their opportunities for upward social mobility.[12]

Finally, Fleming also made some useful observations on the difficulties provincial governments faced when trying to provide equality of educational opportunity. He pointed out that even though provinces wanted to redistribute resources so as to bring about equal opportunities between economically less favored and more favored communities, there were limits to this. He stated,

> *The most prosperous citizens have effective means of protesting if too much of their wealth is extracted for the benefit of the less fortunate, while the latter may not see*

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[10] W.G. Fleming, Educational Opportunity: The Pursuit of Equality, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall of Canada Limited, 1974), preface.

[11] Fleming, p. 10.

[12] Fleming, p. 18.

the value in educational facilities of high quality to pay their own proportion of the tax bill without complaint. [13]

This was one more of the problems encountered by the Roblin government as it tried to revitalize the Manitoba public schools system, and in particular, the method of financing education.

After evaluating these viewpoints, one is reminded that the Roblin government was forced to confront several diverse theories pertaining to educational policy. These included the recurring belief in the importance of educational opportunity, which surfaced both in educational and political writings of the day. Another theme was that the education system had a responsibility to society to turn out good citizens who would work for the greater betterment of the state. The notion of the need for progressive education was promulgated, as was the belief that an equitable system of education administration and finance had to be found which would balance the interests of taxpayers, administrators and educators. By reorganizing a severely dysfunctional school system, the Roblin administration hoped not only to enhance the equality of educational opportunity for all Manitobans, but to wrestle with the demon of educational financing.

The School Act of 1871 of the Province of Manitoba created 24 school districts. Currently, the province has 56 divisions and districts within its boundaries. However, as some have pointed out, moving towards 56 units of administration "was not the simple linear process that the numbers might suggest".[14] The number of school divisions and

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[13] Fleming, p. 30.

[14] Shepherd, p. 25.

districts actually burgeoned to a maximum of over 1500 during the early 1960s; but by the end of 1967, had been reduced to 40 unitary school divisions wherein elementary and secondary schools were administered by a single board. The Roblin administration was determined on a movement toward consolidated school districts, and its actions bear further examination.

When the Roblin government took power in 1958 after ten years of Liberal administration under Douglas Campbell (and after years of rule by a fiscally conservative coalition government), the public school system was in a state of considerable disarray, both in terms of administration and finance. Numerous school districts competed for limited education funding and tried to meet the needs of an expanding school populace demanding more comprehensive services. Under the Campbell administration, known for its tight hold on the public purse, no significant changes were made to the way public education was either organized or financed. As Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson pointed out, "rural conservatism and devotion to economy effectively combined to inhibit educational advance along the lines generally conceded to be necessary."[15] However, before leaving office in 1957, Campbell appointed a Royal Commission under Dr. R.O. MacFarlane, a former deputy minister of education, to study and report on all aspects of education. Before MacFarlane could report, Roblin's Progressive

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[15] Alexander Gregor, Keith Wilson, editors. Monographs in Education X - The Development of Education in Manitoba II: 1897-1982. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983, p. 85.

Conservatives took power in June 1958 after campaigning vigorously on, among other things, education issues.[16]

MacFarlane's interim report came out in August 1958, calling on the province to provide, inter alia, more money for education; to establish an administrative system which would place secondary education under a division board, but which would leave elementary education under the care of local boards; and also a revamped provincial grant system to reflect the actual costs of education and to have them borne by both provincial grants and local levies.[17] Roblin's government called a special session of the legislature in the fall of 1958 which passed an amendment to the Public Schools Act allowing the government to establish school divisions for secondary education, subject to a favorable vote of residents in each division. These divisions would be separate in administration from the existing elementary districts, and the two would overlap.[18] The School Division Boundaries Commission then mapped out the projected secondary school divisions, and the referendum took place on February 27, 1959. Of 36 divisions in which voting took place, 32 accepted the plan.[19] However, the larger push for school consolidation was yet to come.

The final report of the MacFarlane Commission in the fall of 1959 reiterated the findings of the interim report. Pertaining to the question of

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16 Keith Wilson. The Development of Education in Manitoba. Michigan State University, PhD thesis, 1967, p. 339.

17 Gregor and Wilson, p. 48.

18 Gregor and Wilson, p. 48.

19 Wilson, p. 340.

educational financing, it stated that the financing problem had "assumed major proportions", with costs expected to continue to rise in the foreseeable future.[20] MacFarlane and the commissioners argued that the existing education system and its form of organization was no longer adequate for the province's changing needs. The Commission report stated that,

> *...education can no longer be considered as purely a local responsibility, nor can the benefits of education be considered any longer as purely local assets. Indeed, the increasing complexity of modern education as reflected in rising costs has made it impossible for local resources to continue to provide even a satisfactory basic program without greatly increased assistance from provincial resources.*[21]

The Commission noted that municipal education levies, although having increased in actual amount, were in fact decreasing in relative importance as the province assumed more responsibility for educational grants. From 1940 to 1956, the percentage of revenue of public school boards provided by the provincial government had risen from 15.4 to 28.6 of the total, or, from $1.2 million in 1940 to $8.9 million by 1956, a considerable jump in provincial responsibility for education financing over a relatively short time period.[22]

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[20] Manitoba: Report of the Royal Commission on Education. Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1959, p. 1.

[21] Ibid., p. 1.

[22] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Furthermore, the Commission noted that "municipal resources were no longer adequate to meet the rising costs of education mainly because real property taxation had reached a maximum..."[23] The Commission argued some other source of revenue had to be found to respond more effectively to changes in economic conditions, such as a decline in farm land values and hence their taxation potential. The Commission maintained that Manitobans were wealthy enough to pay more for education services, and that Manitoba in 1955 had the lowest per capita provincial expenditure on education in Canada, a mere $61.91 per person, a pittance compared to smaller provinces such as Prince Edward Island, which was spending $103.43 per person annually on education.[24] Finally, the Commission asserted that a greater percentage of school costs had to be borne by the provincial government "because we have accepted the principle of as nearly equal educational opportunity as possible throughout the Province without regard for the wealth or poverty of the local community."[25]

The MacFarlane Commission then attempted to tackle the issues of organization and administration of school divisions. Reiterating the familiar theme of the need to provide "anything approaching equality of educational opportunity", the Commission argued that larger school districts were required. It listed several reasons favoring the establishment of larger administrative units, including: a diversified secondary school programme, a wider degree of equalization in terms of

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[23] Manitoba: Report of the Royal Commission on Education, p. 8.

[24] Ibid., p. 12.

[25] Ibid., p. 18.

sharing education costs, improved transportation systems to allow for greater ease of assembling students, improved administrative practices such as central purchasing, provision of special services such as visual education, music and library services, and finally, greater ease in securing competent teachers.[26] Many of these same arguments would be raised by the Roblin government when it finally moved towards mass school consolidation in 1967.

However, the Commission did acknowledge that objections were being raised towards larger administrative units, including: the fear of higher taxes, the fear of loss of local autonomy, potential quarrels over selecting the sites of secondary schools, the fear by some racial and religious minorities that they would lose certain privileges, and concerns over long distance transportation of students to consolidated schools.[27] The Commission admitted that each argument had a certain degree of validity, but maintained that the objections could be met. For example, it stated that the fear of high taxes could be offset by larger provincial grants, a fact noted by the Roblin government for future reference when it became necessary to "reward" voters financially in return for accepting school consolidation.[28]

The MacFarlane Commission ultimately recommended the establishment of an administrative system which would place secondary education under a Division Board, but which would leave elementary education under local boards. This would entail the creation of 50 to 60

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[26] Manitoba: Report of the Royal Commission on Education, p. 22.

[27] Ibid, pp. 22-23.

[28] Ibid., p. 23.

School Divisions.[29] To do this, the Boundaries Commission would be required to draw up boundaries for these School Divisions. It also recommended that wherever possible one-room elementary schools be consolidated into graded schools by agreement between two or more local school districts, and that schools with fewer than ten children be closed.[30]

Finally, the Commission noted that the existing system of education funding had a tendency to "orient local boards toward minimum standards rather than toward improving educational facilities and instruction."[31] It recommended that a more equitable distribution of educational costs be found to ensure some measure of equalization between financially weaker and stronger school districts. Among other considerations, this would entail better grant systems for integral infrastructure items such as salaries, transportation, maintenance and capital expenses, administration and supplies.[32] The Commission estimated the cost to the province to be approximately $30 million, to local divisions $2.4 million, and to local districts $3.2 million.[33]

In spite of the MacFarlane Commission's recommendations, few startling or controversial actions were undertaken by the Roblin government at that time. Continued attempts were made to encourage school districts to consolidate and to improve the grant system so that

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[29] Manitoba: Report of the Royal Commission on Education, p. 23.

[30] Ibid., p. 29.

[31] Ibid., p. 32.

[32] Ibid., pp. 38-42.

[33] Ibid, p. 42.

school districts were financially able to provide some uniform standard of education.[34] However, serious inequities remained between rural and urban schools, and they became more pronounced throughout the mid-1960s as the Manitoba elementary and secondary education systems struggled to modernize to meet changing educational needs and the rising student population. The glut of one-room schools reflected the lack of currency in the concept of equality of educational opportunity. Small administrative units lasted long after they became obsolete.[35] Many critics argued that the practical solution to the problems of rural schools, such as the inability to attract qualified teachers and to provide broader curricula and services, could be solved by forcing the formation of larger administrative units, such as already existed in urban areas. But Roblin's government was slow to broach the question, given the often-times fierce opposition to school consolidation in rural Manitoba.

As mentioned previously, the most significant complaints about the trend towards school consolidation were: the threat to community tradition and solidarity, fear of rising school costs, fear of loss of local school control, fear of loss of parental control over children and fear of pupil transportation dangers.[36] Given that the bulk of Roblin's power base rested in rural seats, he had to move carefully and take these factors into consideration. As Mary Brewster Perfect pointed out,

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[34] From copy of a CBWT-TV interview by Premier Duff Roblin, Wednesday, December 2, 1964. Gildas Molgat Collection, Item 12, p. 1, P4276, PAM.

[35] Fleming, W.G., Educational Opportunity - The Pursuit of Equality, Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1974, p. 42.

[36] Gregor and Wilson, p. 84.

> *Rural pioneer settlements, with their problems of survival, geographic, religious and local antagonisms, caused Manitoba's system of small rural school districts to be formed. In a province which has been largely rural in constitution, the government has found it to be politically expedient to move slowly and to consider carefully the wishes of the electorate in the reorganization and disestablishment of this rural school system.* [37]

This was especially important in light of the results of the December 12, 1962 provincial election, in which the Progressive Conservatives won 36 of a possible 57 seats. Of these, 23 were in rural areas and only 13 in urban areas. The rural seats were concentrated in southwestern and northern Manitoba. The Liberals, who won 14 seats, took 10 of those in rural areas, especially around Lake Manitoba and in the southeastern corner of the province. The New Democratic Party took one rural seat out of the six seats it won, and the Social Credit took one seat only, also in southeastern rural Manitoba.[38] Thus Roblin's administration had to proceed with caution when tampering with rural Manitoba's political sacred cow - local control over the little red school house.

The Roblin government, like so many other Canadian governments past and present, was not averse to using Royal

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[37] Mary Brewster Perfect, *One Hundred Years in the History of the Rural Schools of Manitoba: Their Formation, Reorganization and Dissolution, 1871-1971.* MEd Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978, p. 45.

[38] Elections Manitoba, Statement of Votes, 1990.

Commissions to seek solutions to sticky problems, and had earlier in 1962 appointed Roland Michener to head up the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance. The Manitoba Teachers' Society hailed it as an attempt to "sweep the cobwebs out of a large, jerry-built structure: the foundationless pile of legislation governing all matters, including education, relating to local government."[39] The Michener Commission was to examine the role and value of local government in administering matters such as health and education, and it reported in 1964. The Commission noted that the popular view of local administration was that it acted "as a bulwark against tyranny and bureaucracy, (and) as a means of achieving widespread citizen participation in public affairs..."[40] But, the Commission asserted, there was a general "feeling" that the Province should take on more financial and administrative responsibility for services such as health, welfare and education. This, combined with an increasing public insistence for equality of educational opportunity and equality in paying for it, the Commission maintained, meant that school districts had to be reorganized, with the provincial government to assume the burden of local administration. The Commission added, "People were no longer satisfied to leave the quality of education to be

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[39]Chafe, J.W., *Chalk, Sweat and Cheers - A History of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.* Canada: The Hunter Rose Company, 1969, p. 239.

[40] Michener, Roland, *Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance.* April, Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1964, p. 7.

settled by the local board but looked to increased provincial regulation to assure them of uniformly higher standards."[41]

Among other issues, the Commission addressed the manner in which public education was financed, and recommended a greater shift of fiscal responsibility to the province. For the local school boards, this would mean that they would assume more of a role as administrators of provincial policies and funds, rather than the role of raising funds for education themselves.[42] The Commission noted that most of the submissions to it recommended that there be larger units for administration and that elementary education be placed under the secondary division boards.

Towards that goal, the Michener Commission recommended that the 45 secondary school divisions take over the exclusive financial responsibility and taxing authority of some 1,500 school districts within the province. Of these districts, 978 were responsible for a single one-room school serving some 15,000 pupils. The idea was to cut down costs and raise the educational level of schools, and to see the tax burden shifted from the local school taxpayer to the revenues of the province.[43] The Manitoba School Trustees Association came out in favor of consolidation, but did not favor the loss of local autonomy over education finance.[44] The Manitoba Teachers' Society also favored

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[41] Ibid., p. 8.

[42] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[43] Ibid. pp. 62-69.

[44] Hubert Beyer, "Michener Report pleases (and worries) Manitoba school trustees." *School Administration.* Volume 2 (January/February 1965), pp. 36-37.

transferring financial and administrative responsibility for elementary education to division boards. They argued it would make possible the modernization of the school system.[45] Finally, the Commission stated that in its view, movements for consolidation could be initiated by petition of school divisions, districts, municipal councils, interested citizens or the Minister of Education, leaving the door open for a wide variety of groups to get the process started.

Roblin's government considered the recommendations of the Michener Commission carefully. Roblin argued in late 1964 that the province had to maintain its investment in education, noting the inexorable link between the quality of education and the economic health of the state. He stated,

> *investment in education is the best thing the state can do to advance the future prosperity and growth of Manitoba. Otherwise we run the risk of becoming an economic backwater in a progressive North America and a progressive Canada.*[46]

Towards that end, and to keep taxpayers comfortable with the rising costs of education, Roblin announced that in 1965, a school tax rebate was to be introduced whereby individual taxpayers would receive up to a $50 annual rebate on their school taxes.[47] The idea was to have the province assume more responsibility for financing education, as recommended by

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[45] Chafe, p. 241.

[46] Gildas Molgat Collection, file 12, pp. 1-3.

[47] Ibid., file 26, p. 1.

the Michener Commission. As well, the Commission wanted to make school taxation more uniform throughout the province so that all taxpayers would pay the same amount into the foundation program, which covered the component expenses of education.[48] In 1965, local governments still bore the brunt of the percentage of government revenues spent on education, some 44.9 per cent, with the Manitoba government picking up 30.1 per cent, good for a third place ranking in terms of overall provincial spending on education .[49]

The political benefits of the homeowners' grant as a means of lessening the burden of school taxation on owner-occupied homes was not lost on some educators. Argued E. Brock Rideout of the Department of Education Research, Ontario College of Education, "These grants seem to be an ingenious way of providing more provincial aid to education without the danger of increasing school costs. They also seem calculated to be great vote-getters."[50] Rideout questioned whether the rebate would actually benefit the education system, for example, through parents putting it towards financing their child's education in the private school system. Instead, he maintained the rebate would more likely be spent on consumer goods and services, while it would still benefit the

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[48] *Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance*, p. 80.

[49] Brown, Ibid., p. 58.

[50] E. Brock Rideout, "Practices and Trends in Provincial Financing of Schools." from Paying for Schooling - Papers Delivered at the 1965 Canadian Teachers Federation Conference on Education Finance. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers Federation, 1965, p. 11.

government by appearing in statistical tables as provincial aid to education.

Efforts towards consolidating school districts again proceeded slowly. Becoming impatient, the Manitoba Teachers' Society and Manitoba Association of School Trustees met in January 1966, and agreed that larger units of school administration had to become the rule, and not the exception. They approached the provincial government, and urged it to hold a province-wide referendum on the creation of single district school divisions.[51] The Teachers' Society pointed to a report by the Manitoba Economic Consultative Board, which noted the inefficiencies of one room schools. The Society argued, "Such statements, and from a board appointed by the government, should signal the end of the government's lackadaisical approach to school reorganization."[52] The Roblin government, seeing that support for school consolidation was growing in certain sectors, early in 1966 passed legislation that allowed division boards to assume responsibility for elementary education. The legislation also allowed for the calling of referenda on the matter of consolidation under certain conditions, such as twenty per cent of the resident electors in a division petitioning for such a referendum.[53]

By November 1966, the government decided to speed the move towards consolidation, and announced that a series of referenda would be held on March 10, 1967 so that ratepayers could vote on the issue of

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[51] *Manitoba Teachers' Society, Annual General Meeting Minutes*, 1966, PAM, p. 14.

[52] Chafe, p. 263.

[53] Shepherd, p. 30.

reorganizing multi-district school divisions into single district school divisions, which would see elementary and secondary schools administered by the same school boards.[54] Thirty-three school divisions were to vote in the referenda. Opposition began to mount in some rural communities and amongst some educational and municipal administrators, towards this move, causing the government considerable consternation.

Then, in January 1967, in a move roundly chastized by opponents of school district consolidation, Education Minister George Johnson announced that a financial "incentive" was being put forth to those school districts that voted in favor of single district school divisions in the March referenda. Under the incentive program announced in the White Paper on Education, the divisions which voted favorably would receive "higher grants for teachers' salaries, reduced teacher-student ratios for calculating grants, increases for maintenance and supply, and complete coverage of costs for school buildings and school buses."[55] A new taxation formula was announced as part of the foundation program at the same time, with the province to pay 65 per cent of the costs of education, and the remainder to be raised by a revamped schedule of local taxation. That schedule reduced the taxes on farms and private homes, but retained, and in some cases raised, school taxes on business property and apartment blocks.[56] Roblin's government was, in effect, bribing the rural voters into accepting the system. At the same time, it

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[54] Ibid., p. 30.

[55] *Winnipeg Tribune*, January 20, 1967, p. 2.

[56] *Winnipeg Tribune*, January 20, 1967, p. 1.

was trying to offset the perceived loss of local autonomy over education in rural districts by shifting some of the tax burden off farmers and onto urban ratepayers.

The revamped foundation program, as was to be expected, was lauded by provincial bureaucrats. Speaking to the Canadian Federation of Teachers' conference on education finance, held in Winnipeg a few weeks after the announcement, Dr. W. C. Lorimer, Manitoba's Deputy Minister of Education, praised the initiative. He noted its intention was to improve the quality of education, particularly in rural areas, by providing the financial basis needed to support a rapidly evolving education system.[57] The economic benefit of a more educated populace was not lost on Lorimer either. He argued that unlike her more "fortunate" neighbors Saskatchewan and Alberta, Manitoba was not a resource rich province and as such had to pour more money to develop the skills of her people. Lorimer explained,

> *...we have to depend upon developing our best natural resources -- our young people -- in order to make our economic climate attractive. Winnipeg over the years has, as you know, been a centre of trade and commerce and manufacturing. The weight of population developing in Saskatchewan and Alberta has tended to make it profitable for many businesses to move into those Provinces. It is therefore necessary that we make sure that everything is done here so that our economic*

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[57] Lorimer, W.C., "Trends in the Financing of Education." from, Canadian Teachers Federation, The Piper and the Tune - Proceedings of the 1967 Conference on Education Finance. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers Federation, 1967, p. 28.

climate is attractive to business and offers every possible opportunity to our residents.[58]

The foundation program met with a wide range of responses from rural taxpayers, parents, educators, administrators and politicians. However, in the Manitoba legislature, in a surprising show of support for the Roblin government's attempt to reorganize education administration, both the Liberals and the New Democrats threw their support behind Johnson's proposals. Members from all three major parties spent the immediate period before the March 10 referenda campaigning in favor of school consolidation and preaching the benefits to their constituents. All parties argued that consolidated school districts would provide for equality of educational opportunity in Manitoba, as some form of standardized education could hope to be achieved. However, both New Democratic Party leader Russell Paulley and Liberal leader Gildas Molgat criticized the government for the method of the vote. They argued that the government should have instead brought in the legislation, and then allowed areas to opt-out as they saw fit.[59] But neither Molgat nor Paulley clarified how they would handle those who opted out. Molgat noted there was discontent with the process in rural areas where "people resent the idea of a bribe" but feel compelled to vote for the program "because they have no other choice." This seemingly begged the question of which "method" of bringing school consolidation about was more palatable: bribing voters or ramming it down their throats? No one wanted to pursue that argument.

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[58] Ibid., p. 28.

[59] *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 9, 1967, p. 5.

The lone voice of dissent in the Manitoba legislature belonged to the sole Social Credit member in the legislature, J.M. Froese of Rhineland constituency. Froese was vociferous in his opposition towards both the revamped taxation program and the drive towards single district school divisions. He went on several lengthy tirades in the legislature, where he stated, among other things,

> *I think this new Foundation program is the biggest sell-out of democracy in Manitoba ever. The Government is trying to remove a complete level of government, that of the public school districts of this province, a drive to remove some 12 to 14 hundred legal entities off the books of our province, the smallest and least costly, the most economic units of government in Manitoba.*[60]

Furthermore, in his eyes, "Now we're going to scrap this and we're going to bring in socialism through the front door, and that's what this new program is." [61] Froese was not one to mince words, nor was he afraid to take the government to task on their unique incentive program. He railed,

> *These grants, the increases are substantial so that the people find it very difficult to reject the referendum on this count and this in my opinion is therefore not a free vote; it is actually blackmail, because when you use the taxpayers money to put up these high grants and then you make them vote a certain way this is very wrong...*[62]

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[60] *Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings*, February 14, 1967, p. 1086.

[61] Ibid, p. 1086.

[62] *Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings*, March 9, 1967, p. 1535.

Froese's anti-consolidation campaign no doubt lent credence to those opposing the program elsewhere across the province.

Indeed, opinion in rural communities participating in the referenda varied dramatically. The editor of the *Steinbach Carillon* said that the Department of Education "had done its level best to present a clean-cut, non-political feasible plan that ratepayers should be able to approve in full confidence."[63] During the pre-referenda campaign, the *Carillon* ran a series of articles by Albert Loewen, the South East director for the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and former chairman of the local Hanover Division School Board. Loewen argued that school consolidation would not cause problems for Hanover division because the area was densely populated and compact, and hence children would not have to be transported great distances to consolidated schools. Loewen also discounted the argument that schools served as a social centre for communities, one of the key arguments against closing one-room schools. He stated with resignation, "With land hungry barons devouring the small farms there are just not enough people left anymore in the rural areas to form a social group."[64]

The editor of the *Portage Leader* adopted similar techniques to the *Steinbach Carillon* in attempting to convince its readership that consolidated schools had to come, in this case running pro-consolidation articles by Dr. Glen Lowther, Vice-President of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. This was probably due in no small part to the fact that the communities such as Portage la Prairie and Steinbach would reap the

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63 *Steinbach Carillon*, January 26, 1967, Section 1, p. 4.

64 Ibid., January 19, 1967, Section 2, p. 1.

most benefits from school consolidation, given that their central locations would offer the most likely sites for children being bussed to consolidated elementary and secondary schools. Similarly, Portage la Prairie school board officials did their best to convince rural residents that bussing children to Portage la Prairie would not be the worst option in education. For example, Cliff Bagrie, a member of the board, told a meeting at Macdonald, located approximately 20 miles from Portage la Prairie, that there was "no deep dark plot on the part of the city to kidnap your children and take them to the city. There is no room there as it is."[65] He added that voting "yes" in the local referendum was the only viable option if the division hoped to have the funds to continue to attract quality teachers.

Over in the southwest corner of the province, the *Boissevain Recorder* also jumped into the fray. Editorially, the newspaper begrudgingly supported school consolidation as the best means of securing a sound education for the province's children, noting it would be "considerably greater than the piecemeal system of elementary education that we have today."[66] However, it did take a shot at the government's methods, and stated, "It is unfortunate that the government feels it necessary to go to such lengths to bribe the electorate..."[67] And, the newspaper did carry a series of vitriolic letters to the editor blasting the proposed unitary school district system. For example, H. Moncur accused the Roblin government of questionable

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[65] *The Portage Leader*, February 2, 1967, p. 6.

[66] *The Boissevain Recorder*, March 2, 1967, p. 2.

[67] Ibid., p. 2.

tactics in trying to move consolidation forward. He stated, "The fine art (?) of brainwashing is certainly not confined to Communistic countries. It's found right here in our own province."[68] Notably though, in spite of the negative tone of the newspaper toward consolidation, the publisher did not see fit, or probably could not afford, to turn down the government's advertising money, and ran several large advertisements promoting the benefits of school consolidation.

When the referenda votes were tabulated on March 10, only 14 of the 33 divisions involved in the vote approved of the single district school division concept, and most of those agreeing to consolidate were in larger centres such as Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin and Winnipeg.[69] Only eight of the divisions voting for the plan were largely rural in character. Some of the vote was split along ethnic lines, with the majority of divisions with large percentages of French and Ukrainian residents supporting the referenda. All of the divisions in which Mennonites were well represented voted against the referenda.[70] It seemed that concerns regarding tradition, loss of local autonomy, over-centralization, bussing and financial considerations had taken precedence over the desire to revamp the education system. How realistic these concerns were was open to debate, John Bergen argued. He explained,

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[68] *The Boissevain Recorder*, February 23, 1967, p. 2.

[69] *The Pembina Triangle Progress*, March 15, 1967, p. 4.

[70] Bergen, John Jacob, School District Reorganization in Manitoba. University of Alberta PhD dissertation, April, 1967, p. 341.

> *The desire of the local populace to maintain the local school seems to have been based more on tradition, sentimental attachments, and on a fear of change, rather than on the capacity of the school to really serve the education needs of the community.* [71]

Bergen added that political and economic motives were also at work in the communities which voted negatively, noting that if a community decided it needed to retain its elementary school for economic reasons, it would vote against consolidation.[72] Similarly, Benjamin Levin maintained that the attempt to create change "appears to have been quite insensitive to the views of rural residents and the threat seen to rural life and to have failed largely on that account. "[73]

Others were quick to point out the results reflected the public's general want of confidence in the government. Some voters were obviously displeased with the government on other issues, especially the pending introduction of the provincial sales tax, slated for June 1967. As the *Pembina Triangle Progress* from Winkler, bemoaned in its editorial,

> *Judging from the frequency that such terms as 'communism', 'bribery' and 'socialism' were used by the letter to the editor people and people on the street and at coffee bars, it was apparent to even a casual observer that*

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[71] Bergen, p. 359.

[72] Ibid., p. 345.

[73] Levin, Benjamin, "The Struggle over Modernization in Manitoba Education: 1924-1960." from, Rosa del C. Bruno-Jofre, editor, Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba. From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices. Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, p. 91.

> *the real issue of better education was often clouded over or even ignored.*[74]

The government was obviously not so popular that it could use financial coercion to improve the quality of the province's education system.

Similarly, the *Steinbach Carillon* ran a series of anonymous quotations citing various reasons why the government's referendum failed, in spite of its mass promotional campaign and the support of the big-three political parties. Some comments reflected the fear of state intervention. One individual stated,

> *Aren't our children our first responsibility? We'll keep it that way, even though our experts think that they can raise them better. Besides, all those egg-heads are socialists anyway, and we see enough about Socialism. Only in Russia does the state raise the children - let's keep it there.*[75]

Another person suggested that the government had not provided enough options to the voters, and that parents had been faced with the prospect of losing not only control over their children, but also their sense of community. The individual commented,

> *It is too bad we didn't have some kind of choice, like consolidating a number of districts to make one fairly good school. Then we could still know our trustees and we could have some sort of central meeting place we*

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[74] *The Pembina Triangle Progress*, March 22, 1967, p. 5.

[75] *Steinbach Carillon*, March 16, 1967, p. 1.

could call our own. The further our schools are from home, the less chance there is for family influence...[76]

Back in Winnipeg, Education Minister Johnson and Premier Roblin tried to make the best of the unanticipated results. Roblin admitted that he had hoped that 20 out of the 33 divisions would have consolidated, but stated, "this has been a very good thing we had in the vote and the public discussion."[77] Roblin acknowledged other factors such as the sales tax, daylight saving time and the rising provincial debt probably influenced voters, but quickly rationalized that the defeat could not have been for completely political reasons. He stated, "remember this was the most radical education plan in the history of the province. While it is true we have had it in some areas for some time, it is quite new in others."[78] Roblin concluded by ruling out the possibility that the enriched grants would be extended to divisions which voted "no" in the referendum. Rebel Social Credit MLA J.M. Froese was delighted with the outcome as proof of his views, and said it was an indication that the voters had no confidence in the government.

The New Democratic Party MLAs and the Liberals, probably equally surprised by the extent of the public's discontent on the issue, quickly turned their back on their support for the Roblin government. They could not risk being caught up in the public's wrath with the governing party, and had to distance themselves accordingly. In the legislature, Liberal leader Molgat commented on "the decisive want of

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[76] *Steinbach Carillon*, March 16, 1967 p. 1.

[77] *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 11, 1967, p. 1.

[78] Ibid., p.1.

confidence vote expressed by the people of Manitoba in the rejection of this government" and the "high-handed arrogant attitude of this government".[79] He then promptly denied that his party had tried to "make any political capital of this situation", even though they had lobbied for school consolidation alongside the government. Such is the forgetful nature of politicians when their entrails are exposed. New Democratic leader Paulley graciously backed his party out of involvement in the mess by reiterating his party would simply have imposed the system throughout the province, and given districts the chance to opt out if they did not favor it.[80]

In spite of a large segment of rural Manitoba's disgruntlement with school consolidation, for considerations previously discussed, by the end of 1967, another series of referenda were held on implementing single district school divisions. This time the holdout divisions themselves petitioned the government for the vote. Out of 12 divisions voting, 11 agreed to scrap the one-room school system, and to implement single district school divisions. As a result, it was estimated that 93 per cent of the provinces 235,000 school children would be part of the unitary school division system in 1968, compared to 78 per cent prior to the vote.[81] Education Minister Johnson expressed his pleasure with the results, and noted that provincial grants to each division would increase by an average of $500,000.[82] Mary Brewster Perfect argued the

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[79] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings, March 13, 1967, p. 1581.

[80] Ibid., p. 1586.

[81] *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 16, 1967, p. 1.

[82] Ibid., p. 6.

nature of grants to unitary divisions, coupled with the fact that fears regarding the loss of local control appeared to have been allayed, paved the way for a positive vote.[83] Keith Wilson and Alexander Gregor disagreed, arguing economics was likely the key reason the holdout divisions returned to the polling booth. They explained, "it took seven referendums and the somewhat less than subtle device of withholding the large foundation grant, which a unitary division received, before each school division in the province was under its own single division board."[84]

There was no denying that small, scattered schools were more costly to operate and they could not provide the courses nor the equipment needed to provide rural children with the same quality of education offered to urban students. And there was also no denying the futility of continuing to hold out against the government of the day, a government which could impose its will and change the system without public input. Moreover, as rural depopulation continued, rural Manitobans were beginning to lose the political clout they once mustered in order to combat change. As educator Benjamin Levin noted, "Undoubtedly, a main reason that consolidation finally occurred after 1959 was that there were no longer enough people in rural Manitoba to exercise the political muscle to prevent it."[85] Johnson was sensitive to these types of concerns and was quick to point out that consolidation

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[83] Brewster Perfect, p. 16.

[84] Wilson, Keith, and Gregor, Alexander, The Development of Education in Manitoba: 1897-1982. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1982, p. 43.

[85] Levin, p. 91.

would not spell the demise of rural communities. He quipped that the hardest hit sector of local economies would be in the sales of penny candy.[86] School consolidation in Manitoba had become the rule rather than the exception.

Thus, the battle for school consolidation in Manitoba was not won overnight, but rather over the nine-year period in which Duff Roblin and the Progressive Conservatives constituted the Manitoba government. Rural Manitoba residents were reluctant, whether for practical, nostalgic or other reasons, to see their one-room schools become yet another series of empty buildings on the prairie skyline. Bergen argued the incentive for change was induced by the province, not by the local government or the electorate. He stated, "Not until new legislation provided for planning on a province-wide basis, for mandatory referenda, and for financial incentives to facilitate local implementation, did any major reorganization take place."[87] W.L. Morton asserted that Premier Roblin and his government viewed education as a form of social investment, and as such they had tried to institute a series of controversial changes to try to improve equality of educational opportunity for Manitobans.[88] As Morton explained, this desire for improvement in education on the part of the government left it with many obstacles to overcome. He stated, "While desirous of being a party of progress, it had to be a party of the centre: yet another factor was its own internal equipoise between being conservative in principle

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[86] Levin, p. 6.

[87] Bergen, p. 362.

[88] W.L. Morton. Manitoba - A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 486.

while progressive in practice."[89] As mentioned earlier, Roblin's government controlled most of the seats in rural Manitoba. To risk incurring the wrath of these voters by tinkering with their beloved school system could have been considered political suicide, and indeed, the government's popularity fell in the next provincial election.

But the Roblin administration had to weigh what it perceived to be the public's own good when it came to rebuilding a school system that was no longer adequate, against the political consequences for its government. It can be argued that the government was trying to make financial administration of education easier for itself, or that it was trying to institute a power grab by taking over control of education from local authorities. However, it can also be argued that the government was not malicious in its intent, and that the trend towards school consolidation in Manitoba would have resulted anyway from agricultural consolidation and the declining rural population of the 1970s. In addition, this school consolidation movement was part of a larger national trend, and to buck the system and retain an antiquated system of education would have been detrimental to the province's future competitive prospects. The Roblin administration's actions were taken in an effort to be mindful of the province's long term needs, not an attempt to wreak havoc with the rural way of life and its residents, who were in fact the lifeblood of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative party.

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[89] Morton., p. 484

Chapter Two - Shared Services

As distasteful as the issue of school consolidation had been in the minds of many Manitobans, the concept of sharing services between private and public schools was to generate even more rancorous debate. Since 1890, when the dual system of public schools had been replaced by a single, tax-supported public school system, supporters of private and parochial schools had been seeking equal financial assistance from the province.[1] The issue was fraught with religious, economic and social considerations. The notion that private schools would benefit from increased public financing was abhorrent to many taxpayers. Yet at the same time, some members of the Roblin government realized it was inequitable for parents whose children attended private schools, while still paying taxes into the public school system, to be denied some benefit from their tax dollars. That the issue would not rest was evidenced by its inclusion in the MacFarlane Royal Commission on Education. Bringing the concept of improved services for students of private and parochial schools to fruition would prove time-consuming and challenging. And when the dust from the debate had settled, it seemed as though the Roblin government had provided only a partial solution to issues outstanding from the days of the Manitoba Schools Question.

The controversy over the Roblin government's drive to provide aid to private and parochial schools must be placed in historical context. The Manitoba Schools Question has been the subject of endless debate, as

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[1] J.W. Chafe, Chalk Sweat and Tears - A History of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Canada: The Hunter Rose Company, 1969, p. 215.

the flawed resolution of the crisis continued to influence subsequent Manitoba governments' education policies. As George M. Weir maintained, the issue "was not only sectarian but forensic and political as well."[2] Prior to Manitoba's entry into Confederation, the various religious groups handled education, each denomination handling its own needs. They did, however, receive some financial assistance from the Hudson's Bay Company, the political authority in Red River. The Manitoba Public School Act of 1871 upheld this denominational system, assuring the rights of Roman Catholics and Protestants to educate their children, as had been guaranteed in the Manitoba Act of 1870. This duality of nationality and education had been recognized in the Manitoba Act, which granted official status to both French and English, as well as to denominational schools.[3] Indeed, Clause 22 of the Manitoba Act of 1870 was nearly identical to Section 93 of the British North America Act, in that it stated that "Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any class of persons have by law or practice in the Province at the Union."[4] Thus, the province funded all the schools equally, and initially there were few complaints about the system as the

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[2] George M. Weir, The Separate School Question in Manitoba. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1934, p. 35.

[3] Jones, David C, et al, Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1979, p. 3.

[4] F. Henry Johnson, A Brief History of Canadian Education. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited, 1968, p. 67.

province's population was almost equally divided between French-speaking Catholics and English-speaking Protestants.

By 1890, however, a debate was well-advanced over this distribution of funds. Manitoba's Catholic, mainly French-speaking, population had dwindled in comparison to the English-speaking Protestant sector. In 1876, there had been 30 Protestant schools serving 1,600 students, while 22 Roman Catholic schools served another 1,134 students. By 1890, the Protestant education system had mushroomed to 628 schools compared to 91 Roman Catholic schools.[5] The largely British Protestant majority resented the fact that their schools were seemingly underfunded compared to the Catholic schools. As well, the Protestants favored a public education system where the views of the majority of the population, particularly in the face of a increasingly ethnically-diverse Manitoba populace, would dominate society. As David Jones asserted,

> *It was this immigration, neither French nor English, and either Protestant or Catholic, which began to complicate the working of the principle of duality in Manitoba. It was used by those who questioned the principle itself and feared the political power of the Catholic Church, to justify the abolition of the dual system and education and the denial of the concept of dual nationality.*[6]

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[5] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Organization and Administration of Public Schools in Canada. Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1952, p. 106.

[6] Jones et al, p. 5.

As the debate over schools became increasingly fragmented along denominational lines, it was necessary for the Liberal government of Thomas Greenway to act.

Greenway's efforts to rectify the dilemma were quickly deemed unpalatable by the Catholics. His government's solution was the 1890 Public School Act which abolished the dual system of tax-supported schools and created a public school system all taxpayers were obligated to support.[7] The Catholics could operate their own separate schools, but were still obligated to pay taxes to support the public school system. French instruction in the schools was also effectively eliminated. The educational rights the Catholics had enjoyed in the Manitoba Act and the British North America Act were stricken without just cause, and aggrieved Catholics, particularly in Quebec, were soon demanding answers from both the Manitoba government and from Ottawa.

What followed were a series of uncomfortable debates and court challenges as the federal government tried to come up with a solution which would placate both sides. In 1896, the issue nearly dominated the federal election campaign, and Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals were brought to power after promising an amicable solution to the raging debate. The so-called Laurier-Greenway compromise essentially upheld the primacy of the 1890 school act, that is, there would be one public school system, non-denominational but now providing bilingual instruction. Religious minorities and others still retained the right to establish their own

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[7] John M. Hawryluk, An Analysis of Selected Submissions to the Royal Commission on Education Regarding Public Support to Private and Parochial Schools in Manitoba. Winnipeg; University of Manitoba, Masters of Education thesis, 1962. pp. 10.

private and parochial schools, but would not benefit from government funding as did the public schools. Moreover, they were still obligated to pay taxes supporting the public system.[8] The issue of financial aid to private and parochial schools was thus settled, but by no means forgotten by the resentful proponents of private and parochial schools.

Before losing power in 1958, the Liberal administration of Douglas Campbell had appointed R. O. MacFarlane to head a royal commission to examine all aspects of the province's education system. The MacFarlane Royal Commission on Education's final report of 1959 tried to address the contentious issue of aid to the private and parochial schools, which were serving nearly 10,000 pupils. Over the course of its hearings, the Commission received a number of submissions both favoring and frowning upon such aid. It seemed as if many aspects of the Manitoba Schools Question were being re-fought.[9] As expected, the Catholic churches requested increased aid, and the Mennonites acknowledged they would accept it if it was offered to them. Other groups such as the Manitoba Urban School Trustees and the Winnipeg Council of Churches were opposed to financial assistance for non-public schools.

For example, in their submission to the Royal Commission, the Catholic Conference of Manitoba argued that they did not wish to see a reopening of the Manitoba Schools Question, but only wanted to find

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[8] J. Edgar Rea, "The Manitoba Schools Question", from Manitoba 125 - A History: Gateway to the West., Gregg Shilliday, editor, Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1994, pp. 58-59.

[9] Keith Wilson, The Development of Public Education in Manitoba. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba doctoral dissertation, 1967, p. 375.

amongst sympathetic Manitobans a "harmonious and practical solution" to the issue of education financing.[10] The Conference spoke on behalf of the province's 238,000 Catholics. Its brief recommended two solutions to the problem: either the public school system be modified in such a manner as to provide the desired education for the Catholic students, or the public school system had to share its funds with schools catering to the needs of Catholic pupils. The brief asserted,

> *The public school system which does not provide adequately for the religious convictions of 28% of the public, is simply orientated towards the service of a fictitious or limited public, and hence has no exclusive claim to funds raised through taxation on the entire community.*[11]

The brief debunked five arguments generally presented against aid to private and parochial schools, those being the notions of divisiveness, the need for separation of church and state, illegality, inefficiency and cost. Hence, the brief argued it was not the duty of the state through its monopoly on publicly-funded schools to destroy denominational loyalty in children whose parents couldn't afford to educate them in private or parochial schools.[12] At the same time, the brief noted that the province's school inspectors had found the non-public schools to be offering an education equal to or superior to that found in the public schools, so it

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[10] The Catholic Conference of Manitoba, Brief Submitted to the Royal Commission on Education. Winnipeg, 1957, p. 1.

[11] The Catholic Conference of Manitoba, p. 8.

[12] The Catholic Conference of Manitoba, p. 9.

was desirable to have the church and state co-operating in terms of providing schools.

Regarding the issue of cost, the Catholic Conference argued that their private and parochial schools were in fact saving the province money. The rationale was that if the 7,000 Catholic students not attending the public school system had been added to the public schools in 1956, it would have driven the cost of education up by four per cent. The brief explained that the public school system was collecting taxes to educate 160,000 children, whereas it was legally obligated to educate 167,000 children had the Catholic pupils been included. The Catholic Conference asserted the province was saving about $1,400,000 annually because of this, while some 7,000 students were being educated at completely no cost to the government.[13]

The MacFarlane Commission noted an interesting paradox regarding the debate over private and parochial schools, which was confirmed by the Catholic Conference of Manitoba's brief. The Commission pointed out that in districts where the perceived religious minority made up the majority of the students in the public school, their influence was exercised and their wishes met without the need for the establishment of a separate private school. The Commission explained,

> *In general it appears that in districts which are predominantly Roman Catholic it has been possible to orient the public schools sufficiently to the Roman Catholic viewpoint in education to make them reasonably satisfactory to Roman Catholic parents. To some, though perhaps to a lesser degree,*

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[13] The Catholic Conference of Manitoba, pp. 13-14.

> *extent this also applies to other religious minorities such as Mennonites or Hutterites. The evidence submitted to the Commission indicates that Manitoba's main religious minorities are generally satisfied with the public schools in the districts in which they have control of them by virtue of being the majority in these districts.*[14]

The Catholic Conference asserted that "The public school system of Manitoba places Catholics at a disadvantage because of their religious views.", but then acknowledged, "Some Catholics who are compactly grouped can offset the official neutrality of their schools."[15] Nonetheless, the Catholic Conference concluded that if Catholics were going to pay school taxes, they should be able to reap the benefits in their own schools.

Chapter XI of the MacFarlane Commission outlined many of the arguments of those favoring a system of public grants to private and parochial schools. These included: the school inspectors' assurances that the private schools were providing a comparable level of education; the concept of religious freedom; the inequitable nature of a tax system which served only the needs of the majority and doubly penalized the minorities; and, the fact that in other jurisdictions, including Quebec, arrangements had been made to publicly finance the education needs of the minorities.[16] The Commission also outlined the arguments of the

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[14] R.O. MacFarlane, Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Education. Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1959, pp. 178.

[15] The Catholic Conference of Manitoba, p. 15.

[16] R.O. MacFarlane, pp. 175-177.

opponents of public aid to private schools, whose assertions included: the need for public schools to remain non-sectarian; the problem of a second school system in the province weakening the public school system; the notion that a single school system promoted unity; and, the more economical nature of operating a single school system.[17]

The MacFarlane Commission concluded that private and parochial schools were generally not harmful to the education system, but could not support these schools if they were detrimental to the children attending them or those remaining in the public schools in the same district. It confirmed that the minorities had a right to dissent when it came to educating their children, and that the majority should not impose its views on the minority unless it was clearly in the public interest. And, on the important issue of financing, the Commission acknowledged that the proponents of private schools, by providing their own facilities, had reduced the total cost of public schools while at the same time being forced to pay for two systems. It asserted that in most school districts, public support could be extended to private and parochial schools "without injury to the public school system, to unity, or to religious tolerance. Indeed, it may benefit and give more worth to all these."[18] The Commission explained that if aid were to be given to private and parochial schools, it should be done in such a manner as to be beneficial to both those schools and the public school system. The Commission's report then outlined methods by which financial aid

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[17] R.O. MacFarlane, p. 177.

[18] R.O. MacFarlane, p. 180.

could be provided to private and parochial schools, such as through the establishment of a Private Schools Grants Commission.

Of the MacFarlane Commission's recommendation for public support for private and parochial schools, W.L. Morton explained, "This was done on the simple pragmatic ground that those schools were educating at private expense pupils who would otherwise be a charge on the public taxes. Neither the government nor the Legislature would touch this simple proposition."[19] But as logical as the Commission's arguments might have appeared, it did not mean that Manitoba society was prepared to endorse the concept. As Morton asserted, the old debate still smouldered -- the battle between traditional sectarian forces and those loyal to the public school system, particularly those of non-French or British origin. He argued, "The schools had established themselves as a social agency of assimilation and equality. Not a shadow of departure from the civic standards it had created would be allowed. Manitoba society had in fact become not mosaic but uniform." [20]

Reaction to the MacFarlane Commission's recommendations was varied. A debate over the recommendations appeared in the Manitoba School Trustees Association's publication, the *Manitoba School Trustee*, in September 1960. There, F.P. Kennedy lauded the Commission's findings, reiterating the traditional line that it was not fair for supporters of private schools to pay school taxes to a public school system from which they did not benefit. Kennedy also agreed that the presence of private and parochial schools represented a cost savings to the public

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[19] W.L. Morton, Manitoba - A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967, p. 486.

[20] Morton, p. 487.

school system because of the supplementary contribution made by parents of children attending these schools. And, Kennedy added, granting partial aid to private and parochial schools would "remove from the public school system the stigma of discrimination against children whose parents choose to add religious training to the standard curriculum of the Province."[21] However, R.W. McPherson countered Kennedy's stance by resorting to more emotional arguments, such as maintaining that once immigrants came to Canada, "they forfeit their citizenship and become British subjects and citizens in a new land.", and hence were obligated to attend public schools.[22] He further argued,

> *I feel the children of this Province should not be divided from one another on the basis of religious convictions, or personal pride or otherwise. In the sight of God they are all equal, regardless of race or colour...If there are those that feel our public schools are insufficient because of religious conviction or otherwise, private schools are still granted, but equally a private manner, therefore are deserving of a private support.*[23]

In spite of the rhetoric, the Manitoba School Trustees Association voted in favor of the recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission.

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[21] Kennedy, F. P., and McPherson, R.W., "Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Education - Private and Parochial Schools." *The Manitoba School Trustee.* Winnipeg: Manitoba School Trustees Association, Volume 16, #3, p. 4.

[22] Ibid., p. 5.

[23] Ibid., p. 4-5.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society conducted a poll of its Division Associations on the concept of financial aid to private and parochial schools. Of the 46 associations which responded, 35 were opposed, six were in favor, three had no opinion and two failed to express an opinion.[24] The reaction of the Provincial Home and School and Parent Teachers' Association was decidedly less conciliatory, when at a March, 1961 convention, "the discussion came to a head when the members engaged in a verbal, vociferous and argumentative brawl over the issue."[25]

The Winnipeg Branch of the Canadian Protestant League wrote to Education Minister Stewart McLean to register their protest against aid to private and parochial schools. They listed 10 reasons why private schools should not receive provincial financial assistance, such as the fact that tax support of the public school system "is essential for the provision of a national education system available to all without regard to color, race or creed, and prejudicial to none."[26] They asserted it was unjust to use public funds to assist a particular denomination or racial group in furthering its personal aims, stating "to do so would force taxpayers to subsidize the propagation of dogmas they deny and oppose."[27] They

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[24] Chafe, p. 215.

[25] Hawryluk, pp. 3-4.

[26] Winnipeg Branch of the Canadian Protestant League, An open letter to Education Minister Stuart McLean, February 9, 1960, from: Volume Three - Shared Services - Correspondence and Statements. Legislative Library of Manitoba Rare Book Collection LC-107 SelRBC.

[27] Ibid.

urged McLean to resist any pressure which might cause him to compromise the principle of separation of church and state. McLean obviously chose not to succumb to those pressures.

The issue of providing aid to private and parochial schools continued to simmer long after the MacFarlane Commission was filed away by the government for consideration. Editorials opposing such aid appeared from time to time in the Manitoba press, evidence that the old wounds had not healed. An editorial reprinted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* from the *The Western Jewish News* entitled "Parochial Schools Are a Privilege" clearly enunciated a popularly-held belief. It opined that "...it is wrong to spend public money to further private beliefs...State aid for parochial schools is a violation of democratic principles and in the end works against democracy."[28] The author's assertion was that while parochial schools provided an important service, it was wrong to spend the money of one group -- be it the majority or the minority group -- furthering the other group's interests. The responsibility for maintaining the parochial schools, the author concluded, remained entirely with the proponents of those facilities.

The issue of provincial aid to private and parochial schools was also addressed by the Manitoba Conference of the United Church of Canada in 1963. A brief was prepared answering several commonly asked questions about this same question. Almost all of the answers referred exclusively to Roman Catholics, as opposed to the other groups who were also requesting aid for their private schools. The United Church maintained there was nothing inherently wrong about the Roman

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28 "Parochial Schools Are a Privilege." *Winnipeg Free Press*. January 18, 1960.

Catholics wanting a separate school system, but stated, "The objections come when state funds are requested to support parochial schools which are created for the instilling of sectarian doctrine."[29] They further maintained that the citizens of Manitoba had chosen to create a free and universal system of public education and that to provide aid to private schools "would mean a complete fragmentation of the common school system" and unnecessary duplication of services. Aid to private and parochial schools would be divisive, the United Church asserted, because to educate students in separate schools during their formative years would only harden the existing lines of division on religious and ethnic grounds.[30] Calling aid to private schools a retrograde measure, the United Church stated,

> *We want our children in schools where there are Roman Catholics and Mennonites, Jews and Orthodox, believers and nonbelievers...(this) will not only ensure free inquiry for truth, but the best preparation for life itself.*[31]

The United Church concluded that significant groups, such as Lutherans, some Jewish groups and Seventh Day Adventists, rejected the proposal of aid to private and parochial schools and maintained their private

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[29] Manitoba Conference of the United Church of Canada, "Preserve the Public School System - Some Questions and Answers Concerning the Proposal of Provincial Aid to Private and Parochial Schools." Winnipeg, 1963, p.2, from: Legislative Library of Manitoba Rare Book Collection.

[30] Ibid., p. 10.

[31] Ibid., p. 11.

schools as a matter of "conscience", something they no doubt wished Manitoba's Catholics would quietly do.

But some Catholic parents were becoming increasingly agitated over the lack of support for their parochial schools. In November 1963, several Catholic parents withdrew their children from St. Emile parochial school in Winnipeg in an attempt to force the provincial government to pay their children's school bus transportation costs. In early February, 1964, the children returned to school using the public school transportation system. A few days later, their parents were charged with violating the School Attendance Act. Two of the parents were fined $90, but the conviction was later quashed by a St. Boniface county court judge on a technicality. Stewart McLean, later appointed Attorney General, eventually dropped charges against the other parents.[32]

Roblin himself long recognized the potential implications of implementing the MacFarlane Commissions' recommendations in their entirety. His government had to move carefully. He stated,

> *When the MacFarlane report came out, it was clear than even after 70 years, the Manitoba School Question was not entirely dead, and the old shibboleths began to stir. To accept the report as it was entailed the serious probability that old animosities would rise. This was deeply troubling. We cast around for some time to devise a policy to grapple with this matter. The separate school supporters, mostly Roman Catholics, felt that*

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[32] Donnelly, M.S., "Manitoba." Canadian Annual Review for 1964." Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, p. 139.

> *their position was vindicated, and they demanded action. Other forces, including some within my own caucus, felt otherwise. I concluded that direct action was precluded, but also that it was essential that something must be done.*[33]

It was in this controversial atmosphere that Roblin rose in the Manitoba Legislature on February 10, 1964 and outlined the government's proposed "sound public school policy". He explained it was an attempt to resolve an issue which "is still with us and still smoulders explosively beneath the surface of our political and community life."[34] Roblin noted many philosophical, emotional and religious considerations still surrounded the debate over the relationship between public and private schools, but added he hoped the issue of school financing could be approached in "an atmosphere of calm and prayerful deliberation." His intention was to achieve a consensus of minority and majority views on the subject. It was not a small undertaking.

Roblin began by addressing what he believed to be the three principles guiding Manitoba's education policy over the previous 70 years. (Catholics would argue these principles were no different than those imposed by an intolerant Protestant majority in the 1890s.) These principles included,

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[33] Roblin, Dufferin, "Account of Education Policies in the Administration. Draft 1." Unpublished memoirs. Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 1997, p. 6.

[34] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. February 10, 1964, p. 25.

> *First, it was decided that there would be a separation of church and state as this expression is understood in Manitoba.*
> *Second, it was decided that public funds should be dedicated to the support of a single public school system in which all children have a right to enroll and which all taxpayers have the duty to maintain.*
> *Third, it was decided that parents were at liberty to enroll their children in private schools of their own choosing, such schools, however, to be supported entirely by private resources.*[35]

He explained that the Manitoba government's only policy when it came to religion and churches could be one of "respectful neutrality." Roblin noted that in Manitoba there had always been a separation of church and state and never a formal church or state religion. He argued this separation of church and state was necessary in a pluralistic society and that its object was religious equality. Roblin noted that judicial decisions had determined that the system of free public non-sectarian schools supported by a system of universal taxation was lawful. At the same time, the right of the minority to have their children educated in private schools had also been protected. But, he added, it was also up to the government to ensure that the children of private schools also be ensured the best possible educational opportunities as those attending public schools already enjoyed. [36]

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[35] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. February 10, 1964, p. 25.

[36] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. February 10, 1964, pp. 25-26.

Roblin asserted the best means of ensuring that children in private schools could enjoy the same benefits as afforded to children attending public schools would be for the government to provide a "program of shared services or the open door policy." Under the current education system, he said, every child was entitled to a public school education, yet a parent could also choose to enroll their child in a private school. However, by doing so, the family forfeited the right to any of the public school's services, yet continued to pay for services from which they were not benefitting. This policy of "all - or nothing" was inequitable, Roblin maintained, and had to be rectified. He argued that public and private schools could share some services and at the same time respect each other's constitutional rights and the three main principles of Manitoba's school system. He asserted, "Separation of church and state, the maintenance of the public school system, and liberty of conscience, are all fully consistent with an open door at the public school for the program of shared services."[37]

Roblin then outlined how a program of shared services would be offered by Manitoba schools, ever mindful of the fact that private schools could not be seen to be making substantial gains over the public schools from such a system. First, the services would be offered by the public school system and take place in the public schools. Second, private school students would be entitled to any of the services they could receive if they were actually enrolled at the public schools. Third, private schools seeking shared services would affiliate with a public school division or district and receive the services at the public school according

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[37] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings, February 10, 1964, p. 26.

to public school regulations. Finally, Roblin stated emphatically that no payments would be made to private schools. The cost of the shared services in the public schools, he said, was already being covered by the taxes paid by the parents of the private school pupils. [38] The notion that private schools would benefit monetarily from a system of shared services had to be stricken from the minds of a suspicious public. Years later, recalling the rationale behind the shared services program, Roblin explained,

> *The current dogma laid down that with the public school systems, it was all or nothing. That is, separate school students had to accept the full public school system, or they could have nothing at all. Shared services challenged this idea. It postulated that students outside the public school system should not be compelled to take all or nothing. If they found any part of the public school menu they could accept, they should be allowed to do so. A crude example, perhaps, is to be found in the bus service. If the public school bus is going their way, why should not separate school scholars be allowed to get aboard? Similarly, any other school service should be open in the same manner. The "all or nothing rule" must go.*[39]

That there would be administrative difficulties in establishing the new co-operative education system was acknowledged by Roblin. But he maintained that the co-operation between the two school systems would

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[38] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings, February 10, 1964, pp. 26-27.

[39] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 6.

actually strengthen and enlarge the public school system. More importantly, he asserted, "It may also reduce the element of divisiveness that may be thought to exist between public and private schools without offence to the constitutional rights of conscience or of minorities."[40] A special select committee of the legislative assembly was established to examine the issue and fine-tune the plan.

Looking back on the events, Roblin later acknowledged that bringing in the shared services plan entailed certain risks and that the plan had two disadvantages. He explained,

> *The public school supporters would be dismayed, fearing the gradual dismantlement of their system, and the separate school supporters would feel sadly prevented from achieving their just desserts. The plan had, in my eyes, substantial merit. It would bring the separate school question back on the agenda of the general public in a practical manner. Thus, it would break the hard crust of prejudice which had precluded consideration of this subject up to now, and it would the door to other options when public opinion permitted.*[41]

And, Roblin acknowledged, even within his own government, the shared services proposition was not a done deal as his caucus was "distinctly uneasy, if not hostile, to the change of this nature.[42] Roblin called on Dr. George Johnson to help prepare a policy statement for the

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[40] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. February 10, 1964, p. 27.

[41] Roblin unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

[42] Roblin unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

house. He said that following an "agonizing debate, support was wrung from the caucus and we proceeded."[43]

And indeed, public reaction to the shared services model was swift. The plan caught the attention of the national press, and a *Globe and Mail* columnist likened the Roblin government's actions to a surgical procedure. The columnist stated,

> *The operation is being performed with all the care a surgeon would use to remove a tumor and in a political sense, that is just what is involved. The tumor in this case is the core of resentment and sense of injustice which has lingered in the minds of the province's Roman Catholics ever since they were denied state support for their parochial schools about 70 years ago.*[44]

The column went on to note the reserved reception the plan had received in Manitoba, that is, both Catholics and Protestants tempered their responses to it while the details were being worked out. Still, some Protestants were suspicious that the plan offered financial benefits to the parochial schools, while some Catholics denounced the plan for not offering the outright financial aid they sought.

Roblin's Francophone allies were not averse to playing the media game to try to drum up support for the government's actions. On February 25, 1964, Francophone Roman Catholic lawyer Maurice J.

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[43] Roblin unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

[44] "Delicate, Subtle Logic in Roblin's School Plan." *The Globe and Mail.* February 15, 1964, p. 8.

Arpin, who frequently worked on behalf of the Roblin administration, sent a letter supporting Roblin's actions to the *Winnipeg Free Press, La Liberté* and the *Sunday Visitor.* He said the concept of shared services at this time in the evolution of the Manitoba School Question marked "the high tide of statesmanship in this Province. Shared services might yet be the solution that is not a solution that will solve the insoluble."[45] Arpin later conducted television interviews in which he praised the shared services plan. However, Arpin's support of the shared services plan was not popular with all Roman Catholics, who, three years later, were still admonishing him for his support of shared services. For example, Joseph C. Stangl, president of the Catholic Parochial School Trustees of Manitoba, wrote an article to the *Sunday Herald* attacking Arpin's support of shared services. He called on Catholics not to uphold Arpin's position on shared services as the gospel. Stangl asserted the Roblin government had "in no way whatever offered a solution to official discrimination and continued perpetration of injustice in the Catholic educational problem of Manitoba."[46]

Another national magazine, *Maclean's,* noted the Manitoba School Question, like the ghost of Louis Riel, refused to rest in peace. The article recalled the detrimental effect of the Manitoba School Question's debate on the political careers of several Canadians and intoned Roblin should have known better than to try to resolve the

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[45] Arpin, Maurice J., letter to the editor, February 25, 1964, from: Maurice J. Arpin Collection, PAM, P512, file 4.

[46] Stangl, Joseph C., "Shared services will not solve school issue." *Sunday Herald,* August 13, 1967, from: Maurice J. Arpin Collection, PAM, P512, file 5.

issue. Columnist Ray Tulloch stated, "this time it's blighted the career of a politician whose own family history might have taught him to steer clear of the issue."[47] Tulloch went so far as to maintain that Roblin had gotten himself into such a political mess that he might be jeopardizing any hopes he had of succeeding John Diefenbaker as national Progressive Conservative leader, particularly by alienating some Quebec Progressive Conservatives. Tulloch explained that the Quebec reaction to the shared services plan had been decidedly unfavorable, with various media outlets alternately arguing the plan was an attempt to assimilate French Canadians while at the same time accusing Roblin of not ending Manitoba's "brutal, intolerable secularism."[48]

Historian W.L. Morton did not believe Roblin was so foolhardy and later said of his actions, "The introduction of 'shared services' to give a modicum of help to private schools revealed at once the Premier's cold courage and how inflexibly the non-Catholic public felt about any attempt to help private schools."[49] Others theorized that the Roblin government was trying to respond to the needs of a changing society. Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson explained that the government's attempts to placate divergent elements to the extent politically and financially feasible "bears witness to a commitment to fulfilling the

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[47] Tulloch, Ray, "One sure way to infuriate Manitoba: ask Catholic kids to public schools." *Maclean's*, May 16, 1964, p. 3.

[48] Tulloch, p. 4.

[49] Morton, p. 498.

obligations imposed by a pluralistic and increasingly urban-industrial society."[50]

The shared services plan was not greeted favorably by all Progressive Conservatives either. MLA Fred Groves viewed shared services as the "wedge in the door" and the "first step to public aid to private schools." Groves wondered what would happen if the shared services plan did not work out, and questioned whether the province would be able to withdraw from the plan. Worrying aloud in the Legislature, he asked,"in the event that it doesn't work, is the answer to give to private schools financial aid in order to be able to render those services themselves?"[51] He noted that governments in the past, rather than withdraw services which did not work, were more inclined to extend them in order to make them more acceptable. Of the shared services plan he concluded, "shared services or no shared services, we might as well face the fact that we are really dealing with public aid to private schools."[52]

Roblin later acknowledged that public reaction to the shared services plan was "fierce."[53] He explained, "The separate school supporters were furious, feeling that their expectations had been denied. The public school supporters were distraught, lest their system suffer.

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[50] Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson, editors, Monographs in Education X - The Development of Education in Manitoba II: 1897-1982. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1983, p. 113.

[51] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings, March 16, 1964, p. 1155.

[52] Ibid., p. 1155.

[53] Roblin unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

Obviously, we pleased few, but reaction in the legislature was more encouraging."[54] Indeed, the Liberals and the New Democratic Party had no option but to carefully temper their responses, ever mindful of the fact that to oppose the shared services plan would be to run the risk of being labelled bigots and to risk alienating many voters. Yet to offer unlimited support for the program would also be to risk the estrangement of a large block of voters.

This was a particularly difficult predicament for Liberal leader Gildas Molgat, a Roman Catholic. Molgat came out in favour of public aid to private schools, but also stated his concern about the issue becoming a political one between the parties. Speaking in the Legislature March 23, 1964, he asserted,

> *...I do not believe that it is in the best interests of the province that political parties should divide on religious lines. I think that the Premier's action in taking a partisan stand against public aid invites partisan division on this explosive issue. I would like to assure the House, however, that we of the Liberal Party do not intend to accept the challenge which the Premier has laid down. However tempting it may be politically to seek support of the large bloc by taking a partisan stand in favour of public aid to parochial schools, the Party intends to stand by its declaration...*[55]

That declaration, adopted by the party on April 20, 1961, was that the Liberal MLAs were free to vote as they chose on the issue of aid to

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[54] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

[55] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. March 23, 1964, p. 1383.

private and parochial schools. The party itself was to be nonpartisan on the issue.[56] Years later, Molgat asserted that the best solution to the whole debate would have been for Roblin's government to have implemented the recommendations of the McFarlane Commission in their entirety, rather than resorting to the shared services plan.[57] Molgat also criticized Roblin for taking so long to address the issue.

The New Democrats were not of one mind on the issue either. Russell Paulley recognized "insofar as my party is concerned we are not unanimous in our opinions."[58] Paulley called the shared services legislation "the most important piece of legislation" to have come before the House since 1890. He viewed shared services as a threat, arguing that the program would undermine the public school system. He stated, "...I say to the government of today if they pursue this bill...that the firm foundations of the public school system that are a monument to the government of today, will be an edifice with the foundation crumbling..."[59]

There were clear divisions within the New Democratic Party over shared services. Future premier Edward Schreyer discounted the argument that aid to private and parochial schools would undermine the public school system, asserting safeguards could be built into the

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[56] Larson, Rae E., Manitoba Government Assistance to Private Schools, 1965-1980. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Master of Education thesis, 1983, pp. 27-28.

[57] Oral history interview with Senator Gildas Molgat, July 10, 1997, Campbell House, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[58] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. May 10, 1967 , p. 2557.

[59] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. May 10, 1967, p. 2559.

system to prevent a proliferation of parochial schools.[60] In fact, Schreyer believed the Roblin government should have acted more quickly on the recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission pertaining to private schools. He stated,

> *...five years have passed, a length of time which indicates to me that this government was not about to act resolutely in this matter in order to reach any kind of agreement. Of course that is not to be unkind because the issue is such where it was very difficult to do so, but the fact remains that they haven't and they didn't.*[61]

Schreyer chided the government for not extending the shared services resolution to include a study of methods to grant direct public aid to private and parochial schools. Nonetheless, he supported the concept of aid, noting,

> *I said I would support aid for parochial schools on two conditions: one, that adequate safeguards be provided for the public school system, and that parents of children attending parochial schools continue to help support the public schools as well through a continuance of paying taxes.*[62]

The electorate took their Members of the Legislative Assembly to task over the shared services plan. A constituent in MLA J.B. Carroll's

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[60] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. March 16, 1964, pp. 1144-1445.

[61] Ibid., p. 1145.

[62] Ibid., p. 1145.

riding railed against him over the government seemingly ignoring the recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission. Marion Lagimodiere wrote to Carroll, stating, "Why have a commission if their recommendations are completely disregarded?"[63] She said the Catholics in his riding felt the government had offered nothing to parochial schools. She then reminded Carroll of his own ties to the private school system, and stated,

> *As one who was raised so close to a Parochial School you should be well aware of the high standard of education that they demand. They are definitely not inferior to public schools so there is no reason why they should not be given equal support by the government.*[64]

Carroll would not have been the only MLA approaching his mailbox with trepidation as the debate raged.

Religious groups, school boards and other interested parties were quick to respond to the shared services plan. The chairman of the Winnipeg School Board, James Wilson, viewed the program mistrustfully and proclaimed, "If I were a Roman Catholic, I'd say the government was forcing us into the very school system we're trying to avoid."[65] Dr. Adam Giesinger, president of the Manitoba Catholic School Trustees Association, maintained that the financial relief offered by the shared services plan was largely illusory, stating the plan "is so

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[63] Letter from Marion Lagimodiere of the Pas to MLA J.B. Carroll, March 1, 1964. From J.B. Carroll Constituency Files, P3073, file 7, item 2.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Tulloch, p. 3.

'hedged about' with conditions that it cannot fulfill its promise of substantial help to parochial school supporters."[66] Giesinger stated that although Catholics weren't rejecting the shared services concept, they did not believe it could address the major problems facing the province's Catholic schools. He said Catholics' hopes had been buoyed when the MacFarlane Commission had recommended increased aid to private and parochial schools, but had been dashed when Roblin's administration failed to act. Giesinger concluded the province was not yet ready to right past wrongs, stating, "Those who admit a wrong was done -- and many of them do so, at least privately -- maintain that Manitoba public opinion is not yet ready for a return to tax support for denominational schools."[67]

There was disagreement among religious groups about the shared services plan. The Winnipeg presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Canada blamed Roman Catholics for keeping the school question alive in Manitoba, and suggested they were complainers. In a prepared statement, the Presbyterians maintained, "While some other religious groups have set up private schools at their own expense, they have not made objection to having to pay public school taxes as well as paying for

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[66] Newman, Roger, "School plan illusory: Roman Catholic Trustee - Says Roblin hedged proposal with too many conditions." No date or newspaper source indicated; from: J.P. Carroll Constituency Files, PAM, P3073, file 7, item 1.

[67] Ibid.

their private schools."[68] The Presbyterians also expressed concern that school taxes could rise, maintaining taxes had only been kept down because Catholics were paying for services they weren't using. They argued that while they could not accept segregation in schools, they believed the issue could be resolved by more religious teaching in public schools. They concluded, "We are aware that this will not satisfy the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but we believe it would largely content the mass of Roman Catholic citizens."[69]

The Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada lauded the shared services plan and vowed to work with the government on an issue which had previously generated "so many unfortunate consequences for the unity and well-being of the people of the Province."[70] They expressed their pleasure that Roblin's plan supported the separation of church and state, with public funds dedicated to supporting a single public school system with the option for private schools paid for by private sources. They agreed with Roblin that a way had to be found to guard against a proliferation of private schools which could pose a threat to the public school system. They concluded that

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[68] Winnipeg presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, "Statement on Shared Services." Winnipeg, summer 1964, p. 3, from: J.P. Carroll constituency files, P3073, file 7, item 6.

[69] Ibid., p. 4.

[70] Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada, Statement on Roblin's Sound Public School Policy. February 18, 1964. From: Volume 4 - Shared Services - Supplement No. 1. Legislative Library of Manitoba Rare Book Collection, LC-107 SelRBC.

shared services might resolve the ongoing religious controversy in education.

Rabbi Milton Aron of Winnipeg's Shaarey Zedek Synagogue was more conciliatory towards the shared services plan. He rejected claims that the plan would produce divisiveness, disunity and suspicion between the private and public school systems. He praised the program as it would provide for greater sharing between public and private school students and stated,

> *We are mature enough to take differences. Up to a certain point, the minority should be given consideration. The minority, on the other hand, should know enough of the psychology of the majority to not press for more than the majority is prepared to give.*[71]

Aron maintained finances were at the crux of the controversy, with one group feeling doubly taxed and the other group believing they were paying taxes to provide one system for all Manitobans. He argued the "bomb" would fizzle if there was greater dialogue between Catholics and Protestants over the issue of aid to private and parochial schools.

Some Roman Catholic clerics were not so optimistic about the concept of shared services. Rev. A.J.B. Cossette, OMI, Lynn Lake, maintained that since 1890, the majority's interests regarding public schools had been favoured at the expense of minority interests. He blamed "vociferous elements throughout the province, including thundering echoes from deep Ontario" for the government's failure to implement the recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission

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[71] *Winnipeg Tribune*, March 20, 1964.

regarding aid to private and parochial schools.[72] Cossette argued atheists, materialists, communists and non-Christians enjoyed preferential treatment in the public schools as all the tax money was on their side. He asserted they were given "religious" freedom to finance their own separate schools, and "they alone are supported by local and provincial taxes levied on the whole population."[73] In other words, to enjoy the public benefits of the taxes one was paying, Cossette said a person had to be irreligious and submit to "a curriculum of 'take this or else'."[74] Cossette was particularly harsh in his assessment of non-Catholics and the government on the issue of aid to private schools, concluding,

> *Whereas non-Catholics themselves have in the tax-supported schools their own private system, inasmuch as it is controlled exclusively and discriminately, and obviously not non-sectarian, ironically, not satisfied with the lion's share, they oppose limited government aid to private schools - a share of the parents' own disbursement: not a defunct 16th century feud, but a deliberate Manitoba legislation sponsored by the Government, endorsed by the general public, as recent as modern as 1890-1964.*[75]

Well aware of the controversy surrounding aid to private and parochial schools, on April 17, 1964 the Roblin government appointed a

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[72] Cossette, Rev. A.J.B., "Public schools in Manitoba are non-sectarian." 1964?, from: Maurice J. Arpin Collection, PAM, P512, File 4, p.1.

[73] Ibid., p. 2.

[74] Ibid., p. 2.

[75] Ibid., p. 11.

special all-party Committee on Shared Services to solicit public input on the issue. Committee members included Roblin himself, Education Minister George Johnson, Liberal Leader Gildas Molgat and NDP leader Russell Paulley, among others. The committee's mandate was to examine whether the current public school system, where students were either 100 per cent in it or outside it, could be replaced by a "program whereby shared educational services would be offered by the public school system, at the public schools, for private students."[76] The report of the Committee on Shared Services became a compendium of media coverage and private submissions pertaining to the shared services issue from across Canada and the United States. The breadth of the information was an indication that the issue was not a problem confined to Manitoba alone.

It was in this context that several hundred Roman Catholics created the Manitoba Association of Equality in Education to continue lobbying for public aid for private and parochial schools. They blamed "political determinations" for the failure of the Roblin administration to implement the MacFarlane Commission's recommendations and asserted that most Manitobans were interested in dealing "justly" with the problems of denominational education. The MAEE's brief to the province's Committee on Shared Services maintained they were seeking equality of education, that is,

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[76] Seaborn, Richard, Volume Three - Shared Services - Correspondence and Statements. Winnipeg, 1964. From: Manitoba Legislative Library Rare Book Collection, LC-107 SeIRBC.

> *an equality based on the right of a parent to decide the educational environment of his child, and we say that there is no equality where the parent, who in conscience desires a religious environment for his child, is denied assistance because he has exercised his parental right.*[77]

The MAEE concluded that if the government was interested in making the services of the public school system available to all Manitobans, it might consider moving public school teachers into the non-public elementary schools to provide instruction for part of the day. This, they maintained, would save money as there would be no need to bus students, to share textbooks and so forth.[78]

A brief prepared by the Citizens Committee for the Preservation of the Public School System to the Committee on Shared Services highlighted the challenges faced when addressing the concept of shared services. The committee argued that a single tax-supported public school system was the best guarantee of having a well-educated population free of divisive influences. At the same time, the committee said it was not entirely opposed to the shared services concept because,

> *We envisaged the possibility that as private school students exercise their right and privilege to attend the public schools, even in part, the opportunity of*

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[77] Brief of the Manitoba Association for Equality in Education, presented November 10, 1964 to the Committee on Shared Services. From J.B Carroll constituency files, PAM, P3073, file 7, item 8, p. 13.

[78] Ibid., p. 27.

developing new associations with people of different backgrounds would be extended. [79]

But ultimately the Citizens Committee maintained it could not support government aid to private and parochial schools because it did not want public tax dollars spent on schools not subject to public control. It argued that by supporting such schools, the province would be supporting inequality in education "by subsidizing certain people in order that their children should obtain a better education than the standard of education available to the public at large."[80] And the committee was concerned that shared services would promote the proliferation of parochial schools, thereby violating the principle of separation of church and state. The committee's brief concluded that the shared services debate "is creating divisions among our people, and is having a deleterious effect upon the body politic."[81] In other words, the Roblin government's attempt to right past wrongs was only generating new tensions.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society also submitted a brief to the Special Committee on Shared Services. Cautious in tone, the brief arose from resolutions discussed at their annual general meeting. They asserted that the government's role in shared services should be to encourage and facilitate shared services, rather than imposing it. Those interested in shared services, they said, should co-operate to create the

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[79] The Citizens Committee for the Preservation of the Public School System, "Brief on shared services." August, 1964, from: the Magnus Eliason Collection, PAM, MG 14 B64 #367, p. 2.

[80] The Citizens Committee for the Preservation of the Public School System, p. 4.

[81] The Citizens Committee for the Preservation of the Public School System, pp. 17-18.

desired programs. The Teachers' Society argued in favor of pilot projects regarding shared services, stating school systems should be encouraged to experiment "on a limited basis initially and then to extend services as they are found to be mutually practical and beneficial."[82] And other politicians were equally hesitant about endorsing shared services, with the Winnipeg School Board arguing that private schools must use public schools for half-days at a time, that only whole classes of private schools be allowed to attend public schools and that the Manitoba Textbook Bureau be responsible for issuing textbooks to private schools, not the public schools themselves.[83]

Scholars were equally uncertain about the shared services legislation. Cornelius Jaenen, a history professor at United College, addressed the issue at a seminar of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews in the fall of 1964. Jaenen maintained that the emphasis on shared services was an attempt to move away from the real issue, that being the kind and quality of education received by students in parochial schools and public schools. He said one of the strongest arguments in favor of aid to parochial schools is that such aid is given in most free states. He explained that Canada was under the influence of the British education system, which allowed for support of private schools, as well as the the American system, which forbade state aid to parochial schools.

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[82] Manitoba Teachers Society brief to the Special Committee on Shared Services, Winnipeg, October 21, 1964, p. 10. From: Manitoba Teachers' Society Collection, PAM, P3303, File 4.

[83] Author unknown, "Board Dumps Shared Services Working Paper as Unthinkable." August 5, 1964. From: Manitoba Teachers Society Collection, PAM., P3303, File 4.

This conflict was being felt across Canada, he said, and the problem was compounded by the ongoing misunderstanding between those of French and English ancestry. He concluded,

> *The retrenchment of denominational schooling lends itself readily to the interpretation that it is an attempt to hasten the assimilation of French-speaking Catholics to the majority Anglo Saxon Protestant state. Shared services is an American attempt to reconcile the democratic right of dissent with the ideal of separation of church and state.*[84]

In spite of the controversy, Bill 141 -- shared services legislation -- received final reading on May 10, 1965. A provision of the legislation enacted made it possible for school divisions or school areas to enter into agreements with private schools to provide transportation to children enrolled in private schools and to provide textbooks.[85] Other services, such as classroom instruction and shared facilities were to undergo further discussion between the public and private schools involved. Of the shared services plan, Roblin stated he hoped it would "develop the ecumenical approach to that vexatious question that has been before us for so long."[86] However, as Roblin explained to the press after the bill's passage, the legislation was not to be viewed as a solution to the Manitoba School Question, which he viewed as a separate issue. He

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[84] *Winnipeg Tribune*, September 24, 1964.

[85] Manitoba Department of Education, Annual Report - 1965. Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1965, p. 23.

[86] *Winnipeg Tribune*, May 11, 1965, p. 14.

stated, "It's an issue we're not able to deal with in this province at the present time. It's a much different question."[87]

The divisiveness of the bill was seen in the final vote - 36 to 9. Two Progressive Conservatives - Richard Seaborn and Fred Groves - voted against the legislation. Addressing the Legislature prior to the final reading of the bill, Seaborn argued, "...I hold the view that this plan is unworkable and could well jeopardize both education systems without accomplishing what is claimed it will accomplish."[88] He maintained that leading educators, both Catholic and Protestant, shared his belief that shared services would fragment both the private and public school system. The normally reserved Education Minister George Johnson hotly denied Seaborn's assertions, stating, "...there were implications that there were deeper sinister forces at work that brought about the shared services concept. That I reject and deny categorically."[89]

Five Liberals voted for the bill (including leader Gildas Molgat) and three against, while three were absent. The lone Social Credit member, J.M. Froese, who had been such a staunch opponent of school consolidation, this time voted with the government. He maintained that the bill would work as well as the school boards were willing to make it work.[90] Of the NDP, two supported the legislation, while four opposed it, with one absent. NDP Leader Russell Paulley, voting against the bill, argued the legislation was "ill-conceived". He stated that if the bill were

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[87] *Winnipeg Tribune*, May 11, 1965, p. 21.

[88] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings. May 10, 1965, p. 2563.

[89] Ibid., p. 2565.

[90] Ibid., p. 2562.

passed, "that firm foundation of the public school system that's a monument to the government of today, will be an edifice with its foundation crumbling as a result of this legislation."[91] Calling for individual solutions to the issue of aid to private and parochial schools, as opposed to party solutions, he encouraged the MLAs to vote "on an individual basis of principle and not under the yoke or the whip."[92] For Paulley, the most palatable solution would have been for the legislation to have been withdrawn for further consideration.

There were 10,244 elementary and secondary students in Manitoba's private schools in the period 1966-67.[93] By the end of the year, 11 private schools entered into shared services agreements with public school boards.[94] As expected, some concerns arose, such as complaints over scheduling, transportation and the like. Modifications were often instituted by public school boards, such as agreements whereby the private school was declared to be a public school during certain hours of the school day. This eliminated the former practice of private school students going to the public school for instruction. Joseph C. Stangl, former member of the Norwood School Division board, explained a number of school divisions entered into similar modified

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[91] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings, May 10, 1965, p.2559.

[92] Ibid., p. 2559.

[93] Various, Review of Educational Policies in Canada - Western Region Report. Canada: Ministers of Education for British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 1975, p. 42.

[94] Donnelly, M.S., "Manitoba." From: Canadian Annual Review for 1965. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, p. 162.

shared services agreements. They included his own school division, along with the St. Vital School Division No. 6, the Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12, the River East School Division No. 9 and, Seven Oaks School Division No. 10 .[95]

Not all school boards would participate in such shared services arrangements. Winnipeg One School Division No. 1 entered into a shared service agreement with St. John Brebeuf School for only one year. Questions were raised about the legality of such arrangements. As such, many school divisions around the province would not participate, creating inequities in the amount of aid available to private schools. As historian James A. Jackson noted, even the limited number of concessions granted by Roblin's government to private and parochial schools was too much for some critics to bear, thus preventing further initiatives.[96] The issue was not resolved until Sterling Lyon's Progressive Conservative administration, elected in 1977, moved away from shared services to direct assistance to private and parochial schools.[97]

The Progressive Conservatives' shared services legislation was advanced by a divided government to a divided legislature, according to Rae Larson. Shared services was intended to provide greater access to the public school system without acknowledging the right of private schools

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[95] Larson, pp. 51-52.

[96] Jackson, James A., The Centennial History of Manitoba. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, p. 253.

[97] Larson., p. 52.

to public support. But Larson conceded the legislation was not without its merits, and explained,

> *This legislation, met with suspicion by those opposing aid to private schools, received a cold reception by those in favour of direct aid. For the next thirteen years, however, it was to be the only legislation that came near to addressing the age old Manitoba School Question.*[98]

And, years later, the Roblin government's attempts to placate proponents of aid to private and parochial schools were still being debated in the Manitoba Legislature. Edward Schreyer rose in the Legislature June 20, 1972 and discussed the Roblin administration's shared services program. Schreyer stated of the shared services program,

> *Although very sort of mundane and undramatic, it is nevertheless a good example of where reason has been allowed to replace passion and prejudice in this issue because after all it's only a matter of practical common sense, the latter-day application of the allegory of the Good Samaritan.* [99]

Schreyer maintained, however, that the shared services program was basically ineffectual, with many schools questioning the legality of the process and declining to take part.

Roblin himself believed that the shared services plan was a success. Reflecting on the policy decades later, Roblin asserted the shared

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[98] Larson, p. 50.

[99] Beaulieu, Paul, editor, Ed Schreyer -A Social Democrat in Power. Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing Ltd., 1977, p. 145.

services plan had served its purpose. He stated, "It ultimately proved to be the catalyst by which we put the Manitoba School Question of 1890 finally behind us. In the end, both public and separate schools were well served. The retrospective approval of the public was imminent."[100] Roblin explained that he had tried to offer a pragmatic solution to the shared services issue that would appeal to all members of the legislative assembly, not just the Progressive Conservatives. He said,

> *It was a new approach. It didn't confront the issue head on, as had been the case in the past. It tried to find a modus vivendi. It tried to find some practical way around that would respect the principals (sic) of both parties, and at the same time allow some amelioration of an unjust situation.* [101]

Roblin maintained that he did not pay any price within his own caucus for advocating the shared services plan, and asserted,

> *The caucus had come to the conclusion that the bus illustration made the point, that if the bus came by, how could you keep a Catholic kid off it? And if free textbooks were available and a Catholic school wanted some, how could you fairly say, "No, you can't."? The concept of sharing the service was the one that won the day. Not that anyone had to change, but they had to share.*[102]

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[100] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 7.

[101] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 8.

[102] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 9.

Roblin's shared services plan was the only viable solution available at the time to the ongoing debate over aid to private and parochial schools. Roblin acknowledged that at the time, the concept of shared services was "quite foreign to public discussion in the province of Manitoba", as he had come across the shared services concept in the United States.[103] There, he said, it had been associated with the "quarrel of separation of state and church and had evolved as a partial answer to that conundrum."[104] And despite their protestations over the inadequacies of the shared services plan, neither the Liberals nor the New Democrats offered up a more palatable solution. As W.L. Morton explained, 'The introduction of 'shared services' to give a modicum of help to private schools revealed at once the Premier's cold courage, and how inflexibly the non-Catholic public felt about any attempt to help private schools."[105] Indeed, it would take Roblin's "cold courage" to begin to lay to rest the ghosts of 1890.

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[103] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 15.

[104] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 15.

[105] Morton, W.L., Manitoba: A History, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979, p. 498.

Chapter Three - The Creation of Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg

The story of the creation of Manitoba's two smaller universities is one of contrast. Whereas Brandon College actively lobbied throughout its entire history for university status, United College did not deliberately seek out its independence from the University of Manitoba. When Roblin assumed power, Brandon College supporters were actively seeking independence, while United College supporters were only just beginning a more thorough examination of the value of their ties to the University of Manitoba. The Roblin administration took an active interest in the state of the province's postsecondary institutions. According to Roblin, when his administration assumed office, the province's colleges and lone university were suffering from a state of neglect, and his government was determined to restore them via increased funding and organizational improvements. Calling the 1960s the "halcyon days" for universities, Roblin explained his government had to take action to accommodate the burgeoning number of students and the increasing demands they placed on post-secondary institutions. Said Roblin of these facilities, "They had been marginal and they were taking the centre of the stage. Their connections with the community had been tenuous and now they were being strengthened. The economy was favorable, public opinion was interested, and the resources were made available."[1] And so, the final major educational reform undertaken by Roblin was the creation of two new universities.

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[1] Roblin, Dufferin, "Chapter 6 - Account of Education Policies in the Administration - Part 1." Unpublished memoirs. Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 1997, p. 11.

Roblin took power during a period of dramatic changes in the post-secondary education field. Across Canada, numerous universities and colleges were created in the period following World War Two. According to Edward Sheffield, "Most of these cases involved a shift from church to public control, or at least the withdrawal of church-related institutions to peripheral positions in federation with public institutions."[2] During the 10-year period from 1958-1959 to 1968-1969 -- which coincided with Roblin's years in office --full-time university enrolment rose from 95,000 to 293,600, or a 209 per cent increase. Part-time enrolment rose even more, from 27,100 to 104,100, or an increase of 284 per cent.[3] Several factors led to this boom. A major factor was the combination of a larger population group -- the baby boom -- eligible to partake of a university education, coupled with more students willing to pursue post-secondary educations. Another important factor in the rising university participation was what the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) called the "explosion of education expectations" on the part of Canadian youth and their parents.[4] AUCC noted that in an increasingly technological society, students quickly realized the crucial link between advanced education and training and

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[2] Sheffield, Edward, "The Post-War Surge in Post-Secondary Education: 1945-1969." From J. Donald Wilson et al, editors, Canadian Education - A History. Scarborough: Prentice Hall of Canada Ltd., 1970, p. 423.

[3] Waines, W.J., Financing Higher Education in Canada No. 7 - Federal Support of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1970, p. 17.

[4] Waines, p. 19.

better job opportunities. More skills were required as Canada evolved from a rural to an urban-industrial society. Concluded AUCC,

> *Hence, the expectation of higher financial returns from employment, the belief that education and training are essential in order to obtain suitable employment in a society which is rapidly becoming automated and the aspiration for a better place in society have all been firmly planted in the minds of the people of this country.*[5]

Moreover, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, universities became increasingly reliant on government support to keep their doors open. Those same universities would go knocking on both provincial and federal doors for increased funding. J.A. Corry, principal of Queen's University, told the annual meeting of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in 1965 that the public had a vital stake in the rapid development and adequate support of universities. However, it was equally evident, he said, that the old ways of supporting universities and colleges were inadequate. Corry stated,

> *The combo of philanthropy, religious and secular, modest government support, and students' fees will not serve any more to supply the massive capital and the uprushing annual costs of universities. The only ready source for the bulk of the vast increases in support needed is governments.*[6]

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[5] Waines, p. 21.

[6] Corry, J.A., Farewell the Ivory Tower. Universities in Transition. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970, pp. 30-31.

Various federally-appointed royal commissions had long noted the importance of government financial assistance to higher education. For example, the Massey Commission of 1951 had pointed to a crisis of quality in Canadian post-secondary education and tied this lack of quality to a lack of financial resources. Similarly, the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects of 1957 noted the importance of providing adequate financial support to the universities to ensure the sound intellectual, social, economic and cultural well-being of the state. The commission, chaired by Walter Gordon, a member of the board of governors of the University of Toronto, placed the improvement and expansion of universities at the very centre of the commission's economic development strategy for Canada. The Commission asserted,

> *We...feel it our bounden duty to call attention as forcefully as we can to the vital part which the universities must play in our expanding and increasingly complex economy, and to the necessity of maintaining them in a healthy and vigorous condition.*[7]

The Economic Council of Canada also echoed these views in its first Annual Review in 1964. In this report, the Council stated that during the post-war period, it had become increasingly evident that Canada's future prosperity "will depend in a large measure on its success in creating and maintaining an adequate supply of professional, technical, managerial

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[7] Cameron, p. 68.

and other highly skilled manpower."[8] All of these factors had to be taken into consideration by the Roblin administration as it tried to develop policies pertaining to post-secondary education.

Indeed, Roblin was concerned about Manitoba's post-secondary education system on several fronts. He was interested in the preservation and further development of the province's lone university - the University of Manitoba. He noted that the demands placed on it by an increasing wave of postwar students were considerable. He explained,

> *We were conscious of its role as the heart of Manitoba's intellectual and cultural life. We felt that it not only lacked recognition, but the means to carry out its mission. It was clear that it had to be expanded and modernized so the offerings available were reconciled to the needs of the time.*[9]

Similarly, Roblin recognized the province's other postsecondary institutions needed assistance. According to Roblin, "We rescued the Brandon College which was floundering in a financial morass, and we included the United College in our own plans. Both of these institutions were promoted to universities on their own in 1967."[10]

A number of events would help lay the groundwork for the creation of Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg as

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[8] Bladen, Vincent W., Financing Higher Education in Canada, Being the Report of a Commission to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, p. 3.

[9] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 9.

[10] Ibid., p. 10.

autonomous institutions. Alexander Gregor noted that Manitoba's college system had to go through three stages before independence was achieved. The first was a federated association of "quasi-autonomous denominational colleges that for all practical purposes was the University of Manitoba for a time."[11] The second stage was a system of affiliation by still largely private autonomous colleges, including St. Paul's, St. John's and St. Boniface colleges, with a central university that was becoming an entity unto itself. The final stage, he noted, was the "recognition of the final inutility of the affiliation system" and the creation of two more independent universities.[12] This recognition came about, Gregor said, when the colleges were no longer able to compete with the university's academic standards and when they could no longer tolerate the academic limitations placed upon them by the "one university" system.[13] H.E. Duckworth agreed, noting that the colleges were rarely able to influence university policy "although some felt that their off-campus locations and/or ethos justified deviations from the strict lock-step."[14]

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[11] Gregor, Alexander, "The University of Manitoba: The Denominational College System." From: Monographs in Education II: Higher Education in Canada: Historical Perspectives. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1979, p. 13.

[12] Ibid., p. 14.

[13] Ibid., p. 24.

[14] Duckworth, H.E., "Higher Education in Manitoba." From: Monographs in Education II: Higher Education in Canada: Historical Perspectives. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1979, p. 44.

The creation of Brandon University and United College must be placed in proper historical perspective. Brandon University's roots trace back to the Prairie Baptists. In 1879, Baptist Dr. John Crawford of Ontario visited Manitoba and came away convinced of the need for a prairie college. Returning to Ontario to raise funds, he recruited a young minister, G.B. Davis, to travel to Rapid City. Davis, along with nine others interested in attending the proposed college, built a small facility to provide both accommodations and classrooms. Financial problems soon arose, and in 1883, the Manitoba Convention of the Baptists of Canada withdrew their support and the college closed.[15] Reverend Davis remained committed to the notion of a Baptist school on the Prairies and built a small school in Rapid City to teach Baptists. After being transferred to Saskatchewan, Davis' brother-in-law Samuel James McKee took over the institution. In 1890, the McKee Academy was moved to Brandon and enrolment increased, attracting Baptist and non-Baptist students alike. Its role in the community was quickly recognized, and an editorial in the local newspaper explained, "The Academy at Brandon has developed into a college. Intermediate schools are feeders for Brandon's educational institutions, one of the most important is Professor McKee's Academy."[16] The Baptists remained committed to the notion of a formal college or seminary in Western Canada and continued with fundraising efforts. In 1899, the Baptists voted to establish a denominational school in Brandon, to be known as Brandon

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[15] Stone, C.G., and Garnett, F. Joan, Brandon College: A History, 1899-1967. Brandon: Brandon University, 1969, pp. 6-7.

[16] Ibid., p. 10.

College. McKee's school merged with the new co-ed, nonsectarian college. Classes began that fall, with 36 Baptists, 33 Methodists and 29 Presbyterians among the 110 students.[17]

When Brandon College was formally incorporated under an act of the Manitoba legislature, it was placed alongside other colleges falling under the umbrella of the University of Manitoba. Lacking the power to grant degrees, its courses were prescribed by the University of Manitoba and its students had to write the final exams drawn up in Winnipeg. But Brandon College lacked the privileges enjoyed by the other denominational colleges in that it could not grant degrees of divinity.[18] In spite of these challenges, the College had grander aspirations -- independence. In 1905, the college presented its case for independence before the Law Amendments Committee of the Legislature, only to be rebuffed.[19] In 1907, a Brandon delegation once again petitioned the provincial government to become an independent university, with the same result. Annoyed, Brandon College Principal Dr. McDiarmid challenged the University of Manitoba's monopoly, stating, "It is possible for a college in this province to effect an affiliation with an Eastern University, pursue a course of study approved by that university, conduct its examinations under its sanctions and receive its degrees."[20] The Manitoba government appointed a commission to examine the

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[17] Stone and Garnett, pp 14-15.

[18] Morton, W.L., One University. London: McClelland and Stewart, 1957, pp. 27-28.

[19] Stone and Garnett, p. 61.

[20] Ibid., p. 64.

problems in university education, but came up with no solutions satisfactory to Brandon College's supporters.

Determined to achieve greater autonomy, the Brandon College Board of Governors made good on Dr. McDiarmid's threat and approached McMaster University in Ontario, another Baptist institution. A charter of affiliation went into effect in 1911. The move allowed Brandon College more flexibility in curriculum planning. It also challenged the Manitoba government's commitment to a single provincial university.[21] Tiny Brandon College struggled in the decades ahead to remain solvent. Dependent on support from the Baptist Union and meagre support from the provincial government, the Depression was a trying period in the College's history. As the Depression deepened, the Baptists cut off their support to Brandon College in 1938.

Desperate to remain open, the college's supporters approached John Bracken's provincial government for more assistance. A telegram sent directly to the premier stated, "The day for raising large sums via subscriptions...is over, and Western Manitoba deserved a better break in the education field."[22] The premier's response was not as Brandon College supporters had hoped. Bracken wrote, "we feel that responsibility for maintaining the institution lies with Brandon district and the area served by the college..."[23] After appointing a three-member committee to examine the situation, Bracken's government finally offered to provide the college with a matching grant, with a ceiling of $15,000 for a

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[21] Cameron, p. 30.

[22] Barker, G.F., Brandon: A City, 1881-1961. Brandon: G.F. Barker, 1977, p. 298.

[23] Ibid., p. 298,

20-year period. The college was expected to raise $15,000 annually. It was barely enough. Local businessman A.E. McKenzie donated large sums of money to the struggling college. His efforts, along with the ongoing support of Brandon residents, who voted to pay an extra mill on their property taxes for 20 years to support the college, kept the institution going.[24] On April 17, 1939, Bill 104 received assent in the Manitoba Legislature, incorporating Brandon College Incorporated.[25] In order to receive provincial support, the college had to become nondenominational. The college also renewed its affiliation with the University of Manitoba.

The University of Winnipeg's roots also traced back to early Manitoba. The local Presbyterians lobbied their General Assembly in Quebec for the creation of a college, and in October 1871, Manitoba College was formerly established in Kildonan. A couple of years later, the college was moved into Winnipeg proper, and began to increase both its course offerings and faculty. [26] It was joined in the field of secondary education by the Catholic St. Boniface College and the Anglican St. John's College. Coinciding with all three colleges' growth was a drive by Manitoba Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris to create a university. Legislation was enacted in 1877 providing for the establishment of the University of Manitoba. The colleges were still free to teach their own

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[24] McLeish, John A.B., A Canadian for All Seasons - The John E. Robbins Story, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Ltd., 1978,p. 220.

[25] Stone and Garnett, p. 157.

[26] Bedford, A.G., The University of Winnipeg: a history of the founding colleges, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, pp. 5-9.

course offerings, but the university was given the sole power to examine their students and to confer degrees upon them, points which would later become quite contentious.[27] Manitoba College continued to enjoy steady growth, and in 1882 relocated from Main Street to a site on Ellice Avenue and Vaughn Street.

Meanwhile, the Methodist Church was slowly making its educational presence known in the young province. Reverend George Young, who has arrived in the Red River settlement in the late 1860s, was a vocal proponent of education. In 1873, he attended the Methodist Conference in London and later canvassed larger communities for funding to establish a Wesleyan Institute in Winnipeg. The new facility was soon established at Main and Water.[28] However, by 1877, the same time that the University of Manitoba was created and a charter had been granted to Wesley College as part of the university act, it was forced to close because of financial difficulties. For nearly a decade, its charter would lie dormant.[29] The Methodist presence in Winnipeg was still growing, and in 1886, an amended charter was provided to Wesley College and steps were taken towards establishing a teaching institution. A theological institute was created and by October 1888, Wesley College was granted full affiliation with the University of Manitoba.[30] Like Manitoba College, Wesley College began to expand its offerings, and in 1891, it relocated its operations to a site on Portage Avenue, a few blocks

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[27] Bedford, pp. 10-13.

[28] Ibid., pp. 21-23.

[29] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[30] Ibid., pp. 26-28.

from Manitoba College. Changes also took place at the University of Manitoba in 1890, after it was granted permission to begin teaching arts and science courses.

For a brief period in 1913, Manitoba College and Wesley College united in an experimental session as the United Colleges. The project fizzled after the board of Manitoba College relinquished its right to teach arts courses. In the pre-World War One period, both Manitoba College and Wesley College grew. At the same time, there was a growing movement for the centralization of the teaching of all secular arts and sciences in one site. This movement coincided with increased arts and science course offerings at the University of Manitoba. Manitoba College and Wesley College were sharing their facilities more frequently, and there seemed to be a logic to having one university and the related pooling of resources that would go with it.[31] A debate would emerge, however, over where the university would be located, how it would be administered and how the teaching faculties would be divided up. A commission was appointed to address the issue, and reported back in 1910. Three options were presented, including a federated system as already existed, a provincial university with no place for the colleges and a compromise which would see the colleges share in the work of the university as affiliates. No definite site was selected for the facility and the issue remained unresolved.[32]

The outbreak of World War One interrupted the debate over the future of the colleges and a permanent location for the university.

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[31] Bedford, pp. 100-106.

[32] Ibid., p. 107.

During early 1914, President McLean of the University of Manitoba pressured both Wesley College and Manitoba College to send their undergraduate students to the university and to drop their teaching in arts. Manitoba College concurred, but there was a lengthy debate over the proposal at Wesley College. Wesley College agreed to hand over their arts students on the agreement that the college retain the right to resume teaching arts.[33] The deal soon collapsed though, after it became apparent that Wesley's students would no longer be connected with the college if they took their courses at the University of Manitoba. Wesley's board of directors reversed their decision and the college went back to being an undergraduate institution. It seemed determined to carve out a niche for itself in the community, whereas Manitoba College, after dropping the teaching of arts in favor of the University of Manitoba, began to flounder. By 1926, Manitoba College and Wesley College entered into an agreement to become the United Colleges, with Manitoba responsible for the theological work and Wesley responsible for arts instruction.[34]

The United Colleges continued to experience rivalry with the growing University of Manitoba. The revised University Act of 1917 had changed the administration of the university, reducing membership on the university council and creating a Board of Governors to oversee administrative and financial matters. The university moved away from collegiate style instruction to become a state university, in which its central campus offered instruction in all disciplines.[35] Tension between

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[33] Bedford, pp. 113-114.

[34] Ibid., pp. 151-152.

[35] Ibid., p. 180.

the university and Wesley College mounted when in 1933, Wesley began offering senior work in the arts in direct competition to the university. As the Depression arose, Manitoba College was forced to sell its property to the Roman Catholic Archepisocopal Corporation, who set up St. Paul's College. Manitoba College moved into Wesley College in 1931 and began renting facilities. To the Presbyterian and United churches, it became increasingly evident that the temporary union of the two colleges had to be made a permanent arrangement. The colleges concurred, and in 1936, they agreed to a permanent union. Legislation for the creation of United College was enacted by the Manitoba government, and the institution came into being in 1938. [36]

The new United College weathered World War Two, but was faced with an influx of students at the war's end. At the same time, the debate resumed over having a central university. The matter was settled in 1948 when the provincial government decided the University of Manitoba would be moved to a permanent site in Fort Garry. Pressure grew on United College administrators to abandon their downtown site in favor of the Fort Garry campus, but instead they launched a fundraising campaign to raise monies for a new theological and library building at their downtown location. These facilities opened in 1951.[37] The debate over moving to the Fort Garry campus was renewed in 1956 when St. John's and St. Paul's College decided to relocate there. United College struck a Committee on Policy and Building to study the site issue, and United College's relation to its sister colleges and to its

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[36] Bedford, pp. 189-192.

[37] Ibid., pp. 266-273.

community. They recommended United retain its downtown location. United's Board of Regents agreed, and, as board member Senator Campbell Haig pointed out, "If we decide to go to Fort Garry, it will be a final move and ultimately we'll be a theological institution and the University will be the dominant factor."[38] College administrators followed with recommendations that the institution continue to offer its liberal arts program, as well as begin to offer a senior science program.

Soon another fundraising initiative was launched to improve the college's facilities. The Canada Council agreed to contribute a minimum of $379,000 and the province provided a matching grant to the Canada Council contribution.[39] The Board of Regents argued that the University of Manitoba's future need not be compromised by United College's continued growth and ongoing physical separation from it. They stated, "The College has no other aspirations than the continuance of the role it has played in the past."[40] A final moment of indecision over United College's permanent site arose early in 1959 when its board of directors was informed that a purchase offer had been made for its site, an offer generous enough to facilitate a complete move to the University of Manitoba campus. Students and faculty spoke out in favor of remaining downtown, and the United College board made its final decision - it would remain downtown.[41] College enrolments continued to rise steadily, growing from 930 in 1960 to 1,632 by 1965. This was

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[38] Minutes. Special meeting, United College Board of Regents, October 15, 1956, pp. 2-3.

[39] Bedford, pp. 331-334.

[40] Minutes. United College Board of Regents, January 17, 1958, pp. 5-6.

[41] Bedford, pp. 335-338.

complemented by a spate of new building openings throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s -- Manitoba Hall, Riddell Hall and Graham Hall.[42]

When Roblin's government took power, it thus found itself facing two distinct colleges, one urban, one rural, one still retaining some of its religious roots, the other nondenominational. Roblin would hear more frequent representations from the Westman group. Throughout his entire period in office, Brandon College alumni and other supporters, who for decades had piloted the college through ongoing financial crises and had steered it through its frustrating charter agreements with the University of Manitoba, continued to demand university status. Brandon College president and alumnus J.R.C. Evans was one such advocate. Appointed in 1928, for nearly 30 years, Evans directed the college through the struggle for both solvency and independence. As John A.B. McLeish pointed out, "However Evans may have seen himself, his role was to be a kind of Moses in the long struggle of Brandon College for survival and autonomy. If he did not set his people free, at least he kept them together."[43]

Meanwhile, Brandon College supporters continued their drive for greater status. On October 9, 1958, a 36-member delegation submitted to the Manitoba government a survey entitled "Higher Education in Western Manitoba." The delegation outlined plans for expansion of Brandon College facilities and sought increased funding from the province. The submission asserted that the province should recognize, "the College as an essential part of the University system in the

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[42] Bedford, pp. 339-342.

[43] Ibid., p. 221.

Province, extending its distinct influence in the western part of the province."[44] Noting that the City of Brandon had recently renewed its 20-year one-mill assessment commitment to the College, the delegation called on the province to provide up to $5-million to help with the College's capital projects. The delegates pointed out that the College had limited resources to turn to for support, particularly given that the institution was nondenominational and could not rely on a specific church for financial support.[45] Arguing that Brandon College was playing an increasingly important role in fulfilling the educational needs of Western Manitoba residents, more provincial funding was warranted because "The people of rural Manitoba have suffered too long in this regard."[46] The survey concluded that from the government "there must be a daring, imaginative approach...in considering higher education in the province for present and future generations."[47]

Brandon College president JRC Evans was far from finished in his drive to develop the college. In 1959, he announced a $4.5-million long range construction program to meet the needs of the growing student population. Campaign chairman M.C. Holden arguing the necessity of the fundraiser, stated "the college, hub of Western Manitoba's educational wheel, must expand."[48] The newly re-elected Roblin

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[44] Wong,Wesley Dr., and McKay, D.R. Higher Education in Western Manitoba, Unpublished survey, October 9, 1958, p. 2 from: McKee Archives, Brandon University.

[45] Ibid., p. 5.

[46] Ibid., p. 7.

[47] Ibid., p. 9.

[48] Barker, p. 406.

administration became more deeply involved in the Brandon College saga at this point. Roblin's government was approached by Brandon College supporters in 1959 as part of its concentrated national fundraising campaign. G.A. Brakeley and Co. of Montreal was overseeing the campaign. They argued that the fundraising campaign would only succeed if philanthropic contributions were complemented by provincial government support.[49] In a series of meetings in July, 1959 a subcommittee of the college's expansion committee met with Roblin and Education Minister Stewart McLean. The government was not averse to supporting the province's regional college. As Brandon College President John E. Robbins later pointed out,

> *The fact that Brandon College was the only non-denominational college affiliated with the University and the only one of its affiliates outside the Metropolitan area of the capital city, coupled with its central geographic location, made it a 'natural' for substantial support.*[50]

Roblin's government agreed to match all public donations to the college's fundraising campaign at a rate of two dollars for every dollar raised by the college. A limit was set at $2,000,000 over a five-year period. College fundraisers were delighted, and noted, "To the best of our knowledge, this is the only time a Provincial Government has agreed,

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[49] G.A. Brakeley and Co. Ltd., Survey, Analysis and Plan, (Unpublished report to Brandon College, April 1959), p. 7. From: McKee Archives, Brandon University.

[50] Robbins, John E., President's Report, 1960-62. Brandon: Brandon College, 1962, p. 37. From: McKee Archives, Brandon University.

specifically, to grant two dollars for every dollar raised by public subscription."[51] College alumnus and provincial opposition leader Douglas Campbell announced he would donate his $1,000 yearly pay increase to the Brandon College campaign. Premier Roblin explained that under the province's policy of matching each dollar of private donations with $2 of government funds, Brandon College would eventually receive $3,000 as a result of Campbell's gift. Noted Roblin of Campbell's donation, he "built better than he knew."[52] Roblin was on hand for the laying of the first stone in Brandon College's new arts building and library in May, 1960, and called the event a new day for higher education in Western Manitoba. He added, "the expansion of this college will have a profound effect for good on all people who come under its influence."[53]

John E. Robbins was installed as Brandon College president in January, 1961, following Evans' death. Robbins too exhibited great faith in the future of the college, which he believed was destined to become a university. The transition to Robbins' presidency and Roblin's ascendancy as premier coincided with changes in federal policy regarding the financing of post-secondary education. These changes would impact on how the Roblin government devised its own educational policies. For example, on November 8, 1956, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, speaking at a university conference sponsored by the Carnegie

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[51] "One Administration." Final Report on Brandon College Expansion Fund. (Unpublished report, 1960), p. 1. From: McKee Archives, Brandon University.

[52] *Brandon Sun*, March 23, 1960.

[53] *Brandon Sun*, May 30, 1960.

Corporation on "Canada's Crisis in Higher Education," announced that the federal grant to Canadian universities would be doubled.[54] At the same time, the Canada Council, which had been recommended by the Massey Commission six years early, would be established with $50,000,000 which had come from the succession duties of the estates of two multimillionaires. This money was to be used as a capital fund for the Canada Council. Another $50,000,000 from Ottawa was to be used to provide capital grants for Canadian universities to promote their work in the arts, humanities and social sciences. This was interpreted to mean that the funds could be used for building libraries and other facilities devoted to the arts. This infrastructure boost was further enhanced in 1961 when the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation began to provide loans to build university residences.[55]

The federal government's increased support of postsecondary education soon found its way to the Brandon College campus. In 1959, Brandon College applied for and later received a $102,000 grant from Ottawa to build a new library building and more classroom space. This was supplemented by $500,000 from the provincial government. The face of the college campus began to change with the construction of the new buildings - the library, a music building, a gymnasium, new residences. The tiny campus had begun to modernize. As John A.B. McLeish put it, the infrastructure projects "removed most of the feeling for the occupants of being mutually endangered passengers on a small academic ship which had been periodically saved from shipwreck partly by their

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[54] McLeish, p. 223.

[55] Ibid., p. 223.

own efforts and partly by the community's (to say nothing of divine) intervention."[56]

In spite of the provincial government's support, and its new buildings and rising student population, Brandon College lacked the freedom to set its own courses or to engage in research. Robbins frequently addressed the issue of independence with Brandon College's Board of Directors. At an October, 1961 board meeting, Robbins told board members that seeking university status was not an idle dream, given the rapid rise in the number of universities in England and in Ontario. Robbins argued the board needed to focus on making Brandon the province's second university and that in light of the infrastructure expansion program, "There is a feeling of going ahead, of getting places."[57] And support for the creation of a university in Western Manitoba was not exclusive to Brandon residents alone. Brandon College historians C.G. Stone and F. Joan Garnett argued there developed "a local 'nationalism' which would settle for nothing less than university status, to allow development along independent lines in curriculum and in planning to meet the regional needs of Western Manitoba."[58] Their theory was easily born out. For example, at its March 1962 meeting, the Melita Chamber of Commerce went on record as supporting a university in the western half of the province. The *Brandon Sun* reported,

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[56] McLeish, p. 223.

[57] *Brandon Sun*, October 30, 1961.

[58] Stone and Garnett, p. 199.

It was pointed out at the meeting that Manitoba is the only Canadian province having only one university and the establishment of a second university at Brandon would provide for lower costs to students in the western half of the province and would also serve to decentralize the higher education picture in Manitoba.[59]

By 1964, the face of Brandon College had changed considerably from a decade earlier. The student population had increased substantially, rising from 374 full-time students in 1960 to 635 full-time students in 1964.[60] Five more new buildings had been added to the campus, including a new heating plant, dining hall, men's and women's residences and a music building. Construction was underway on the $350,000 physical education building, an event marked by coverage in the *Winnipeg Tribune*. Discussing developments at Brandon College, the *Tribune* story went so far as to say "It has now been generally accepted that Brandon College will become a university, fully independent."[61] Each expansion in terms of buildings, courses, faculty and students seemed to assure the college's future. But would that future entail independence? At their October 1964 meeting, university status was again on the board of directors' menu. A draft act to incorporate Brandon University was passed by the board of directors, an act which would see all ties with the University of Manitoba severed. According to the meeting's vague minutes, Dr. Robbins explained the rationale behind

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[59] *Brandon Sun*, March 16, 1962.

[60] Robbins, John E., President's Report. 1964-67, Brandon: Brandon College, 1967, p. 5.

[61] *Winnipeg Tribune*, April 3, 1964.

such a move was a "number of administrative and academic reasons."[62] At the same meeting, the board pondered the name of the new institution, with the University of Western Manitoba one name under consideration. A month later, at their annual meeting, the board reiterated its desire to end its relationship with the University of Manitoba.

During an interview with CBWT television in December of that same year, Roblin chastized the previous Liberal administration under D.L. Campbell for its lack of financial support for the post-secondary education system. Roblin argued Campbell's administration had kept the University of Manitoba and its affiliated colleges on a "starvation diet." Of his own administration's efforts to support the university and colleges, Roblin explained, "Our university is making great strides. And the affiliated colleges have been helped too. Brandon College, which is non-denominational has been practically rebuilt and is now a splendid arts and science college for Western Manitoba."[63] He argued that Campbell's administration "had their chance and muffed it" when it came to supporting post-secondary education.[64] Roblin asserted, "Our investment in education is something that this province simply must

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[62] Brandon College Board of Directors, Minutes. Brandon University S.J. McKee Archives, October 19, 1964, p. 2.

[63] Script of Dufferin Roblin interview with CBWT -TV, December 2, 1964, p. 2. From: Gildas Molgat Collection, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, P4276, #38.

[64] Ibid., p. 3.

maintain. Otherwise we run the risk of becoming an economic backwater in a progressive North America and a progressive Canada."[65]

Throughout almost the entire period of Roblin's administration, the federal government made direct grants to universities, a fact which impacted on how Roblin's group financed education. Educational researcher Edward Sheffield argued the federal government was interested in higher education for a number of reasons, including the desire to achieve greater national unity and, to use the postsecondary institutions in the development of the economy, such as through research and development.[66] Although the provinces were making grants to post-secondary institutions, they were still heavily reliant on federal contributions to keep university programs functioning. One important source of funding for university capital expansion projects was the university capital grants fund provided in the Canada Council and announced in 1956.[67] The federal government became increasingly involved in post-secondary education throughout the 1960s with the implementation of a number of programs, such as the Canada Student Loan Act of 1964 and the Adult Occupational Training Act of 1967. These measures were partly in response to the slow rate of economic growth and the rising unemployment rate. And, as V. Seymour Wilson pointed out, the Canada Student Loan program signalled a marked change in federal government philosophy "because for the first time there existed a

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[65] Script of Dufferin Roblin interview with CBWT -TV, December 2, 1964, p. 3.

[66] Sheffield, Edward, et al, Systems of Higher Education: Canada. Whitelaw, New York: International Council for Education Development, 1982, p. 16.

[67] Cameron, p. 71.

direct loan program, national in scope and *seeking to mitigate inequality of opportunity* at the post-secondary level."[68]

Sheffield, a research officer with the Canadian Universities Foundation, an executive agency of the National Conference of Canadian Colleges and Universities, undertook several studies of enrolment projections for Canadian universities. In 1961, Sheffield examined the financing of higher education in Canada. He found the federal government's share of university financing had increased to 15% by 1951-52 following recommendations by the Massey Commission that the federal government pay more of the costs of post-secondary education. Conversely, he found the provincial share of university financing had dropped to 37% of operating income, from a high of 41%.[69] Sheffield pointed out there were marked differences in provincial support for universities in relation to enrolment, population, total personal income and total provincial expenditure. He noted the expenditures on universities per full-time student averaged $765 in the ten provinces, or just over $4 per capita. However, the Manitoba government allotted the largest share of its total net general

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[68] V. Seymour Wilson, "Federal Perspectives on Education: Social, Political and Economic Policies." From: Hugh A. Stevenson and J. Donald Wilson, Precepts, Policy and Process: Perspectives on Contemporary Canadian Education. London: Alexander, Blake Associates, 1977, p. 40.

[69] Sheffield, Edward F., Financing Higher Education in Canada. No 2. Sources of University Support. Ottawa: Canadian Universities Foundation, 1961, p. 3.

expenditures to universities in 1958-59, more than 5%, compared to the national average of 3%.[70]

The Roblin government continued to increase its investment in universities and colleges throughout its mandates. A Canadian Universities Foundation-sponsored study of the period 1958-59 to 1962-63 found that provincial support totalled $35 million. Of that, $20 million was in support of university operating expenditures, $2 million was for research work and $13 million was in aid of university capital expenditure. As well, capital monies were provided for university purposes by the issue of provincially-guaranteed university debentures. Debentures issued for this purpose totalled $12.6 million: $3.6 million in 1959-60, $4 million in 1960-61, $2.5 million in 1961-62 and, $2.5 million in 1962-63.[71] During the period 1958-63, the Manitoba government's support of university operating expenditures, per full-time student, ranked third in Canada, trailing only Alberta and Ontario.[72] Similarly, Manitoba ranked third in provincial government support of university operating expenditures as a percentage of total personal income in the province, behind Alberta and Quebec.[73]

The various post-secondary education organizations were not averse to their own studies of the problems of finance and organization.

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[70] Sheffield, Financing Higher Education in Canada, No 2, Sources of University Support, p. 11.

[71] Wylie, Torrance J., Financing Higher Education in Canada, No. 5, Government Support of Universities and Colleges. Ottawa: Canadian Universities Foundation, 1964, pp. 13-14.

[72] Ibid., p. 20.

[73] Ibid., p. 21.

One such example was the Duff-Berdahl Report, sponsored by the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Its origins lay in the 1962 National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges (later known as AUCC) which endorsed a recommendation from the Canadian Association of University Teachers to undertake a study of university government. James Duff was vice-chancellor of a British university while Robert Berdahl was an American political scientist. They studied both English and French-language universities, including provincial, church-related and independent universities. Reporting four years later, Duff and Berdahl noted the role of provincial governments and universities, that is, provincial governments do not have the right to interfere with academic freedoms. At the same time however, they conceded, "Provincial governments, charged with pursuing the public interest and asked to supply increasing proportions of university income, will legitimately want to be consulted on the development of higher education in their jurisdictions."[74] Duff and Berdahl concluded that each province needed to develop a long-range master plan for the development of its post-secondary education system over the next decade, and that it should be the result of input from the universities and colleges.[75]

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[74] Duff, James, and Berdahl, Robert O., University Government in Canada. Report of a Commission sponsored by the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, pp. 72-73.

[75] Ibid., p. 77.

Another similar study was also undertaken. In 1964, the Canadian Universities Foundation appointed the Commission on the Financing of Higher Education in Canada, also known as the Bladen Commission. Its starting point was the enrolment crisis identified by Edward Sheffield.[76] It was to study and make recommendations regarding several issues, including: prospective financial requirements of universities and colleges; the proportion of financial support of higher education which should be derived from tuition fees, government contributions, corporations, foundations, individuals and other sources; policies regarding allocation of funds for higher education; the organization for the financing of higher education and any other matters related to the financing of university students and universities.[77]

The Bladen Report concluded that increased government investments in the post-secondary education system, including universities and colleges, were necessary to ensure future economic growth.[78] Bladen argued students and parents were insisting on the need for high quality education and were willing to pay the price. It was up to governments, he said, to "recognize the need to maintain, and indeed to increase, the quality of university education in spite of the increase in numbers."[79] Bladen asserted the existing federal grants

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[76] Cameron, p. 124.

[77] Bladen, Vincent W., Financing Higher Education in Canada. Being the Report of the Commission to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, p. vi.

[78] Ibid., p. 20.

[79] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

formula of $2 per head of the population was inadequate for several reasons, including: it did not provide for annual adjustments proportionate to increases in university operating costs due to both increased enrolments and to increased costs per students and it did not take into account inequality of income between provinces.[80] Bladen concluded that the financial problems of universities were so urgent that immediate action had to be taken. Among other things, he recommended an increase in the federal per capita grants to $5 for the year 1965-66 and that the grant be increased by $1 annually thereafter until such time as discussions with the provinces led to an appropriate revision of the amount of the grants. [81] Bladen also urged the provincial governments "to adopt some method of determining university operating and capital grants as will permit more rational forward planning by the universities" -- in other words, the establishment of University Grants Commissions.[82] These same commissions would also give approval to new programs. The University Grants Commission recommendation would not be lost on the Roblin administration, although other options were available for consideration.

Liberal Prime Minister Lester Pearson tried to respond to the need for greater federal contributions to post-secondary education and appeared to heed the recommendations of the Bladen Report. On October 14, 1965, he announced that the per-capita grant would be raised from $2 to $5, consisting of a basic grant of $4.30, with a supplementary

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[80] Bladen, pp. 41-42.

[81] Ibid., p. 68.

[82] Ibid., p. 69.

grant for those universities in provinces which were taking a higher proportion of out-of-province students.[83] The AUCC was soon lobbying the federal government to raise the per capita grant to $7 for the 1967-68 academic year. Pearson followed up his initial announcement with a more startling one on October 24, 1966 at the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Higher Education. The federal government proposed a fiscal transfer in which they would assist the provinces in financing both the growing operating and capital costs of post-secondary education.[84] All governments agreed that a high priority must be placed on post-secondary education. As the Council of Ministers of Education pointed out, provincial and federal governments, once almost indifferent to the problems of post-secondary education, were to become almost entirely responsible for its support. Governments who once believed they could only afford to educate a small minority, became convinced that they could not afford to not educate everyone.[85]

Ottawa's financial arrangement was later outlined in the the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act of 1967 in which a formula was designed to facilitate the transfer of financial resources to the provinces for post-secondary education. There were two components: a federal revenue reduction with equalization and guarantee payments

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[83] Waines, W.J., Financing Higher Education in Canada No. 7 - Federal Support of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1970, p.4.

[84] Waines, p. 6.

[85] Council of Ministers of Education, Review of Educational Policies in Canada, Canada: Council of Ministers of Education, date unknown, p. 21.

incorporated in the transfer and post-secondary education adjustment payments.[86] Ottawa agreed to transfer to the province an added 4.357 points of personal income tax and 1% of taxable corporate income to cover higher education.[87] As well, universities no longer received direct federal support for their operating or capital costs, except in specific cases, such as the Health Resources Fund. Speaking of the changes, Pearson explained,

> *This does not mean that the federal government can or should impose on the provinces any views as to how much money should be spent for education or in what way it should be applied. Those are matters for provincial decision. The federal government wishes by its actions to recognize the needs and priorities of the provinces. It is for provincial governments to take action that, within their fields of jurisdiction, they think most appropriate and desirable.*[88]

During the life of the per capita grant system, federal payments and abatements rose from $7 million in 1951-52 to $98.6 million in 1966-67.

As all these developments played out at the federal level, Manitoba's colleges continued to grow and change. The Brandon College Board of Directors continued their ceaseless drive for university status. Meanwhile, United College's role in the community appeared secure. Although the institution remained affiliated with the University of Manitoba, it also had a distinct character of its own, according to college

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[86] V. Seymour Wilson, p. 51.

[87] Cameron, p. 131.

[88] Waines, p. 7.

historian A.G. Bedford. Bedford attributed this to the college's compact and isolated site and the strong attachment of its students to the institution, even though they were also members of the University of Manitoba Students Union.[89] Ironically, the infamous Crowe Affair of 1958-59, in which Principal Lockhart came under attack by several of his faculty members, served to galvanize United's board of directors and faculty as they came under the national microscope while they attempted to sort out the messy allegations and counterallegations.[90]

Furthermore, the underlying rivalry between the University of Manitoba and United College was borne out during the winter of 1960-61 when the college requested permission to extend its work in science in the senior division. The University of Manitoba Senate was not receptive to the request, and only granted United permission to teach chemistry and physics, but not zoology, deeming its lab facilities inadequate.[91] The decision to allow United College to teach senior science courses marked one more step towards its independence, a move which was becoming inevitable, if not always openly coveted by the college's administrators. The college's faculty was growing, as was its enrolment. Projections for the 1962-63 academic year were for 1,750 students in Arts and Science, 50 in Theology and another 350 in the Collegiate.[92] In his annual report in 1963, United College principal

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[89] Bedford, p. 346.

[90] Ibid., pp. 305-329.

[91] Ibid., p. 346.

[92] Lockhart, Wilfred C., Principal's Report. 1962-63. Winnipeg: United College, 1963, p. 2.

Wilfred C. Lockhart pointed out that either plans had to be made for the college's future expansion, or its enrolment capacity in Arts and Science would be reached by 1966.[93] Growing too was United College's reliance on provincial government support to remain solvent. By 1963, United College received an annual provincial grant of $20,000, plus $60 per student from the province.[94] Lockhart was grateful for the Manitoba government's contribution and stated, "It is very encouraging that the Government of Manitoba thus is prepared to recognize in a concrete way the contribution the College is making in the pattern of higher education."[95] However, concerns remained over the college's long-term financial health.

Nor were United College officials entirely satisfied with their place in the province's post-secondary education system. Tired of answering to its crosstown rival, the University of Manitoba, United College administrators also wanted changes. According to Bedford, "A new and growing faculty in both Colleges and the University central campus, was demanding individual freedom in the planning of courses, the choice of topics and the setting and grading of different types of examinations."[96] Coinciding with the ongoing Brandon College lobby for university status was the growing agitation by Lockhart for a review of higher education. Lockhart argued guidance was needed to determine the ongoing role of each of the province's postsecondary education institutions and how

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[93] Lockhart, p. 3.

[94] Bedford, pp. 368-69.

[95] Lockhart, p. 8.

[96] Bedford, p. 367.

these institutions might plan their future roles.[97] Lockhart believed such a review committee should assess the needs of higher education in the province for the next ten years.

It was an interesting predicament for Roblin's government. Indeed, Manitoba was not the only province in Canada to find itself with one provincial university, along with a number of disgruntled colleges lobbying for university status. According to David M. Cameron, each of the four western provinces faced a similar predicament. He explained,

> *Accommodating that policy to geopolitical realities, however, had led in each case to the establishment of at least one additional institution, affiliated with the university as a junior or satellite campus. Subordinate status is no more easily accepted by universities than by cities, however, and Victoria, Calgary, Regina and Brandon chafed under a policy of forced underdevelopment.*[98]

Cameron argued that the provincial universities were in fact guilty of promoting the growth of these colleges, partly as a way to reduce pressure on their own facilities. He also cited civic ambition and the high demand for teacher training as reasons the colleges throve and began to lobby for independence.[99] Describing Brandon College's ties to the University of Manitoba as "at best a marriage of convenience", Cameron noted the tiny institution's strong desire for university status. He stated,

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[97] Lockhart, p. 3.

[98] Cameron, p. 72.

[99] Ibid., p. 72.

"Brandon's enrolment remained relatively small (just over 250 by 1959-60) but its ambitions, along with those of its civic supporters, were much larger."[100] Historian A.G. Bedford agreed, noting that by the sixties, the advantages of one large university system were being "whittled away, and even without a formal separation, the individual units of the instructional system were separating in actual practice."[101] Added education historians Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson, "The colleges themselves felt dominated by the ever-growing central university, and the rising expense of maintaining a teaching program without government support was pushing all of them further and further toward insolvency."[102]

In the fall of 1965, responding to growing pressure to address concerns pertaining to post-secondary education in the province, Roblin's government appointed the Council on Higher Learning. Its membership included five representatives from each of the affiliated colleges, seven from the University of Manitoba, two from the Department of Education and a chairman. Its duties, among others, included studying "the needs of the Province for post-secondary education in their respective fields at the University and at the affiliated colleges within the next decade in terms of kind, quality and quantity and to advise on these matters" and to examine "the problems of necessary expansion of existing institutions or the creation of new

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[100] Cameron, p. 73.

[101] Bedford, p. 367.

[102] Gregor, Alexander, and Wilson, Keith, The Development of Education in Manitoba. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1984, p. 143.

facilities."[103] As political scientist Murray Donnelly pointed out, "All tasks before the council were urgent in the highest degree, and perhaps the most pressing was a change in the relationship between the university and colleges to reduce the substantial duplication of educational services that existed."[104] United College principal Lockhart praised the appointment of the council, noting, "We are confident that such a body will be able to arrive at mutually acceptable agreements as to what should be projected for Manitoba in the field of higher learning."[105] Perhaps Lockhart was overlooking the fact that the Council, if it found substantial duplication of services, might recommend the elimination of one or more of those same colleges. The Council on Higher Learning would meet 27 times before making its final recommendations.

Perhaps sensing that the Council on Higher Learning would recommend the creation of new universities, the Roblin government shortly thereafter passed Bill 71, an act which made it possible for the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to establish a college or university as a body corporate under order-in-council.[106] The repeal of former Acts of Incorporation, the preservation of institutional property rights and the

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[103] Council on Higher Learning, Report of the Council on Higher Learning. Paper tabled by the Honourable George Johnson to the Manitoba Legislature, March 31, 1967, p. 2.

[104] Donnelly, M.S., "Manitoba." From: Canadian Annual Review. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, p. 160.

[105] Lockhart, Wilfred C., Principal's Report, 1964-65. Winnipeg: United College, 1965, p. 4.

[106] Bedford, p. 366.

administration of new universities would be determined by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. According to the legislation, "Council would provide for procedures of nomination for the Board of Governors, powers of board, appointing of president, chancellors, appointment of Senate, term of office, set out powers of the Senate, the powers of the chancellor and fix the fiscal year."[107] Ironically, the 1966 Universities Establishment Act, did not actually establish universities, but followed Alberta's example in authorizing Roblin's government to do so by order-in-council.[108]

Response to the legislation for the creation of new universities was mixed, as evidenced in the debate over Bill 71. Liberal leader Molgat questioned why the government was bringing in Bill 71 and its changes to the structure of higher education in Manitoba, prior to the release of the report of the Council on Higher Learning.[109] Molgat also pointed out that Bill 71 seemed to be in direct conflict with the University of Manitoba Act. Molgat noted,

> *So we would have an immediate conflict...if this bill were passed, because we would have one Act saying there shall be one University only, and we have a bill presented to us by this government now saying there shall be as many universities as the government decides by Order-in-Council, and I submit that this Act then would be in conflict.*[110]

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[107] Revised Statutes of Manitoba, 1970.

[108] Cameron, p. 97.

[109] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 1994.

[110] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 1994.

Education Minister Johnson countered this argument by dissecting the legislation which created the University of Manitoba, specifically the preamble which stated that it was desirable to continue with one university for the whole province. Calling the preamble "a statement of philosophy at that time," Johnson maintained that while it might be desirable to have only one university, "the existence of two or more would not be contrary to the purpose as stated in the preamble..." [111]

Molgat's main objection, to Bill 71, however, was that it gave the government power to set up new universities by order-in-council. Molgat argued that the procedure was not a good precedent to set, as it might be used "by my honourable friends whenever the spirit moves them, such as in the heat of election campaign possibly..."[112] Molgat maintained an act was the only proper way to establish new universities. Johnson dismissed this notion about Bill 71, arguing "it would be desirable to have enabling legislation which would enable a start to be made in the founding of a university should the Council so suggest."[113]

Other concerns were raised about the creation of new universities. Saul Cherniack, MLA for St. John's, was not opposed to Brandon College attaining university status and stated, "Brandon is a separate situation...it has grown and proven it services a section of Manitoba which is far from Winnipeg, which is the western area of the province, which has justified

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[111] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 2020.

[112] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1964, p. 1994.

[113] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 2019.

the establishment of a university there."[114] By virtue of its regionalism, Brandon was welcome to have its own university. However, Cherniack was not so confident that creating a second university in Winnipeg was a good idea. He argued that if United College received university status, the city's other colleges would also demand it. He noted, "I have reservations about it because I feel that even today the University of Manitoba is not capable of supplying a full staff and facilities which I have no doubt it would like to do."[115] Cherniack was concerned the new universities would not be able to provide adequate course offerings, facilities and faculty, and that they would provide an unnecessary duplication of services when it came to laboratories, libraries and honours course offerings.

Some other MLAs recognized the most obvious argument against the creation of new universities in Manitoba. NDP MLA Mark Smerchanski rightly questioned the viability of adding new universities in a province whose population barely reached one million. He stated, "Surely we don't establish universities in this province on a wholesale basis, and if there is a need for additional universities, these can be dealt with as they are required."[116] Smerchanski said that if Brandon attained university status, there would be nothing to prevent the establishment of universities in St. Boniface or Dauphin and the ensuing costs to the province. He argued that to set up a university in a world where studies

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[114] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 1971.

[115] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1966, p. 1970.

[116] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings. April 19, 1996, p. 2017.

were becoming increasingly "mechanized and specialized" was to entail significant costs. He stated,

> *you are talking of a large capital investment in equipment in order to perform the proper experiments for the under-graduate student. If you are talking of engineering courses, there are many complicated expensive pieces of equipment that cannot be duplicated in institutions of learning. You take some of the physics equipment at the University of Manitoba that runs into literally millions of dollars, how can we so flippantly recommend the establishment of other universities to cover the whole field of various faculties.*[117]

As convincing an argument as Smerchanski was promulgating, Roblin's government seemed willing to overlook the high costs that would accompany the creation of the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University. However, there was greater political mileage to be made, especially in appeasing rural backbenchers in the Westman area who wanted a university in Brandon. As Queen's University professor Stewart Fyfe noted at a conference on education finance held in Winnipeg in February 1967, many communities felt they hadn't "arrived" until they had their own university or college. His comments could have aptly been applied to Roblin's government when he stated, "And the result is that some kinds of education are now taking the place

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[117] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings, April 19, 1966, p. 2018.

of public works as a sort of good political pork barrel. Things are put where they will pay off politically."[118]

In general, the legislative debate over university status for Brandon College and United College was consistently quite subdued. Manitoba's political leaders were not averse to seeing Brandon College attain university status. Liberal leader Molgat long advocated independence for the college and on more than one occasion debated it in the Legislature. For example, during a committee of supply discussion in March, 1966, Molgat noted having a university in Western Manitoba would be of benefit to rural residents as it would make higher education more accessible to them. Molgat stated, "I realize that our population structure doesn't permit us having a university in every corner but as far as possible I think this diversification is in the interest of Manitoba."[119] Johnson replied that his government was awaiting the report of the Council on Higher Learning before making any final decisions on university status. Later Molgat recalled that while there wasn't a groundswell of support for the creation of new universities, the public was not opposed to their creation either.[120]

At the same time as the Council on Higher Learning was holding its consultations, the drive for university status continued unabated in Western Manitoba. A story in the December 17, 1965 *Brandon Sun*

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[118] Canadian Teachers Federation, The Piper and the Tune. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers Federation, 1967, p. 97.

[119] Manitoba Legislative Debates and Proceedings, March 15, 1966, p. 971.

[120] Oral history interview with Gildas Molgat, July 10, 1997 at Campbell House, Winnipeg.

explained that three organizations -- the students' union, the Brandon College Faculty Association and the general faculty -- had all passed resolutions asking the province to provide Brandon College with independence and a university charter. Senior stick Bill Sparling argued that the students had several objections to the arrangement with the University of Manitoba, including the limited number of summer courses available and the ongoing problem of limited facilities at Brandon College.[121] Sparling also argued, erroneously, the view shared by many of his fellow students -- that the University of Manitoba set exams written by Brandon College students. In the same newspaper article, disgruntled Brandon College faculty members called the arrangement with the University of Manitoba "oppressive" and argued that the present situation made it difficult for the college to recruit new faculty or to expand its offerings. Faculty association president Leland Clark explained that Brandon College faculty felt "exploited" by the existing arrangement, because, among other concerns, they were correcting more exams from Winnipeg than were being written in Brandon.[122] *Brandon Sun* editorialists, commenting on this latest development, warned Roblin that he should act soon. They stated,

> *The government should also be aware that the city of Brandon stands behind the college, as do the residents of the Brandon area. Action is necessary and in the coming session. While Premier Roblin may be tempted to reserve the question of university status for Brandon until it will do him the most political good -- for*

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[121] *Brandon Sun*, December 17, 1965.

[122] *Brandon Sun*, December 17, 1965.

> *example, as an election promise -- he would benefit more by acting upon the legitimate demands of Brandon College.*[123]

The only solution for Roblin's government, in all their minds, was to give Brandon College university status.

The impatience in Brandon was stepped up another notch when Roblin failed to mention the creation of new universities in his 1966 throne speech. A caustic editorial in the *Brandon Sun* on February 11, 1966 took umbrage with this. The editorialists opined that the annual drama of "will they or won't they", that is, waiting for the government to announce university status, could be made into an event almost as successful as the college's carnival. They theorized,

> *Representatives from the college could go to Winnipeg (dressed in jesters' costumes) and laughingly present the bid for university status. The premier of the day and his cabinet could listen attentively, then throw back their heads for a few hearty guffaws, and roll on the floor in spasms of glee. This would be the signal for a party to be held in Brandon, held at the home of one of the members of the Board of Governors. All students and faculty alike could participate in such fun games as "20 Questions," "Monopoly," and perhaps a quiet little game of "University, university, who's got the university?"*
> *The glorious return of the presidents from Winnipeg would be the occasion for a party of the homecoming variety. Races, games and other college recreations could be the highlight of this event, in addition to the cheerful*

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[123] *Brandon Sun*, December 20, 1965.

tarring and scattering of any Conservatives that are around.
Then we would all wait for the Throne Speech to be read...to see if Brandon College Has Finally Made It...you guessed it, no mention of Brandon.[124]

A similarly-toned editorial came the following day. While the editorialists noted it would be unreasonable to think that the issue of university status for Brandon College was of "enormous political importance", the government still needed to indicate what plans it had for the college.[125] They pointed out that both the Brandon Provincial Liberal Association and the Brandon New Democratic party had recently discussed resolutions favoring university status for the college. Furthermore, Virden PC MLA D.M. McGregor, had been lobbying his government to change the college's status. The editorial concluded these events were, "evidence that the legitimate demand of Brandon College for university status is receiving province-wide attention and support. This, as much as anything else, should convince the Roblin government to act swiftly."[126]

By comparison, this unrelenting quest for university status was not always evident at United College. There administrators were more concerned over the college's continuing role as a church-related institution operating alongside the secular provincial university. In his 1965-66 annual report, principal Lockhart noted the province's current

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[124] *Brandon Sun*, February 11, 1966.

[125] *Brandon Sun*, February 12, 1966.

[126] *Brandon Sun*, February 12, 1966.

postsecondary education system "has enabled the church-related institutions to render a valuable contribution derived from their inherent nature."[127] Lockhart argued the church colleges added a distinctive character to Manitoba's education system while at the same time maintaining the same academic standards as the University of Manitoba. He expressed concern over the future of the church-run institutions and stated,

> *If United College were required to sever its relationship with the United Church in order to secure the resources necessary to continue its existence, either as a college affiliated with the University of Manitoba, or as an independent university, much that has been important and rich in its life would be lost.*[128]

Lockhart conceded that United College was facing important decisions about its future, in particular, university status and financing, and warned that change should not be made merely for change sake. He concluded that the college must fight "with determination to maintain all that has been important in our tradition as a church-related institution."[129]

However, if United College administrators were hedging about university status, their own faculty were not. The Faculty Council presented a lengthy submission to the college's Board of Regents on September 26, 1966 requesting university status for the college. The

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[127] Lockhart, Wilfred C., Principal's Report, 1965-66, Winnipeg: United College, p. 3.

[128] Ibid., p. 4.

[129] Ibid., p. 5.

faculty submission asserted there was a need for an autonomous university in downtown Winnipeg and that there was growing public demand for United College's services. The submission argued that separation of United College from the University of Manitoba was warranted because it,

> *would relieve both institutions of some of the burdens caused by the complexity of the present system and, would make it easier for both institutions to attract and retain faculty members and to advance the cause for higher education in Manitoba.*[130]

The faculty submission encouraged the Board of Regents to seek independent university status before the onset of the 1967-68 academic session.

Nonetheless the Board of Regents remained hesitant to seek independence. In fact, at its November 28, 1966 annual meeting, the board received a report from one of its policy committees. The committee's report said the college should take university status if it was offered to it by the Council on Higher Learning, but should not specifically seek autonomy.[131] However, in a fit of vagueness, the reasoning behind why the college should not actively seek autonomy was not explained in the committee's report, other than to suggest it appeared the Council on Higher Learning was likely to grant independence and so a formal lobby wasn't needed. Ironically, at this

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[130] Minutes. United College Board of Regents, September 26, 1966, p. 1.

[131] Report of the Policy Committee for the annual meeting of the Board of Regents, from: Minutes. United College Board of Regents, November 28, 1966, p. 1

same board meeting, Principal Lockhart brought news that university status was imminent.

The Council on Higher Learning, in its first report in June 1966 recommended that Brandon College should become Brandon University. In its subsequent report in late 1966, it recommended university status for United College. The Council on Higher Learning also recommended that the arts and sciences programs offered by St. Paul's and St. John's Colleges be absorbed and paid for by the University of Manitoba, and these colleges were free to provide the "intimate collegiate environment that they felt to be part of their mission, without having to bear the crippling financial liability of offering an independent degree program."[132] St. Boniface College was to remain affiliated with the University of Manitoba .

In response to the news that United College was to become a university, Principal Lockhart noted that university status would not change the essential character of his institution. In his annual report for 1966-67, Lockhart explained that very little had changed in that the new university would still maintain its relationship to the United Church, with its Faculty of Theology training ministers. Similarly, the Collegiate remained intact and the new university would teach Arts and Sciences, just as the College had done. As well, the new university's funding sources were no different than the college's had been.[133] Lockhart then went on to give a lengthy explanation as to why the Council on Higher

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[132] Gregor and Wilson, p. 143.

[133] Lockhart, Wilfred C., Principal's Report, 1966-67. Winnipeg: United College, 1967, p. 2.

Learning had recommended the creation of two new universities, as opposed to maintaining the status quo. He cited concerns over excessive size of institutions, the need for greater specialization and geographic considerations among the reasons for the development of the new universities. For example, Lockhart noted that United College, by virtue of its downtown location, "has a unique opportunity to play a specific role in the changing pattern of urban life."[134] Lockhart concluded that while United College had not pressed for independent status, it welcomed the opportunity.

Over at Brandon College, the mood was celebratory. Addressing the college's board of directors on December 6, 1966, President John E. Robbins noted the important role the college had come to play in Brandon's economy, calling it "big business," as there were more than 200 employees on campus and a budget in excess of $2,000,000. He thanked the college's supporters for seeing the independence drive through to fruition, but asked that they not lose interest in the new university, which was sure to face many challenges ahead.[135] Relieved *Brandon Sun* editorial writers commented on the hard fought battle for university status for Brandon College, noting "Brandon College had made amazing strides in recent years, and the government has recognized this."[136]

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[134] Lockhart, p.3.

[135] Minutes - Annual Meeting, Board of Directors, Brandon College, December 6, 1966, p. 2.

[136] *Brandon Sun*, February 7, 1967.

The Universities Establishment Act received royal assent on April 27, 1966. In January of 1967, the first order-in-council was passed. Nonsecular Brandon College was to become Brandon University on July 1, 1967, with no major roadblocks from the provincial government. Its 62-year battle for independence had been won. A slight delay followed regarding university status for United College, as Education Minister George Johnson expressed concern over the effect of its university status on other affiliated colleges in Winnipeg, as well as the principle of government support to a religious institution.[137] The United College Board of Regents was understandably upset and made another submission to the Council on Higher Learning on February 17, 1967 in which they argued for immediate university status. They stated,

> *It is clear that the delay in coming to a decision in this matter has created an atmosphere of great uncertainty, which, if permitted to continue, may issue in the rapid deterioration of relationships between many College and University departments, a delay in the discussion and solution of many urgent academic problems, and the subsequent loss of valuable staff.*[138]

After further consultations with the college's Board of Regents, the government approved of the institution's independence, Johnson's fears having been allayed by the board. The Roblin government passed Order-in-Council No. 826/67 on June 19, 1967 providing for the

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[137] Bedford, p. 369.

[138] Policy Committee of the United College Board of Regents. Submission to the Council on Higher Learning. February 17, 1967, p. 3.

establishment of United College as a university under the name of University of Winnipeg. The college's ties to the United Church of Canada were maintained in that 10 members of the 28-member Board of Regents would still be appointed by the church. However, they would not necessarily dominate the board, as the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council would also appoint 10 board members. The other eight board members would include the chancellor and vice-chancellor, four elected by the new university's Senate from among its academic members and two elected by alumni.[139] United College's Faculty of Theology and Collegiate Division remained separate faculties, and the institution still trained ministers for the church.[140]

A new agency was required to handle all three universities' financing, and the result was the establishment in 1967 of a Universities Grants Commission (UGC). It was given the power to review and approve new programs at the universities and each year recommended to the province how much money should be made available for university education.[141] The government's hope was that unnecessary duplication of expensive programs would be avoided and the institutions' dissatisfaction over the proportion of grants would be minimized. The universities were also concerned about protecting their academic freedom, and had wanted an agency which would act as an intermediary between themselves and the provincial government. To that end, the legislation overseeing the Universities Grant Commission

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[139] Bedford, pp. 369-70.

[140] Ibid., p. 369.

[141] Gregor and Wilson, p. 144.

makes sure the UGC is confined to overseeing the universities' fiscal arrangements. The legislation prevents the UGC from interfering with the right of the universities to formulate academic policies and standards, the independence of the universities in setting admission and graduation standards and their independence to appoint staff.[142]

When the University of Winnipeg officially opened in the fall, there were approximately 2,350 students, while Brandon University opened the doors to nearly 800 students. R.H. Bonnycastle, who had been Metro chairman from 1960 to 1966, and Maitland Steinkopf, who had chaired the Manitoba Centennial Commission, were installed as chancellors respectively.[143] The Brandon College board of directors had briefly considered anointing the new institution with the more regional title Assiniboine University, but decided the college's long history with the citizens of Brandon warranted more recognition.[144] University status meant the end of the commuting days for Brandon College administrators. As John A.B. McLeish explained, "it also meant that the Brandon Senate now became a true governing body, not just a kind of wheel attached to the curricular conveyor belt of the University of Manitoba."[145]

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[142] Esau, Alvin A.J., Postsecondary Education Legislation in Canada. Publisher unknown, October 23, 1974, p. 15.

[143] Peterson, Thomas, "Manitoba." Canadian Annual Review for 1967. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 155.

[144] McLeish, p. 231.

[145] Ibid., p. 231.

Commenting on the creation of the University of Winnipeg in his first annual report as university president, Dr. Lockhart explained that although there was "little in the outer and visible transition to attract attention," important changes had taken place for his institution.[146] Lockhart explained that for the former United College, university status

> *means the freedom and responsibility to become that kind of institution of higher learning which is best suited to meet the needs of the changing scene at the heart of a great metropolitan area. We need freedom and independence to exercise whatever ingenuity and imagination we may possess in determining the qualities and characteristics that such an institution should have.*[147]

Lockhart again reiterated that United College had never actively pursued independent status. Instead, he noted, the decision to move for independence arose only after it became clear during the discussions by the Council on Higher Learning "that the existing system was heavily encumbered by administrative processes and would become progressively less able to meet the needs of the future."[148] Of the process of achieving university status, Lockhart concluded, "We record with satisfaction that our transition from a college to a university was accomplished by mutual agreement and without public debate or

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[146] Lockhart, Wilfred C., President's Report 1967-68. Winnipeg; University of Winnipeg, 1968, p.1.

[147] Ibid., p. 1.

[148] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

controversy."[149] Looking back on the creation of the University of Winnipeg, George Johnson explained the transformation from United College to university status, "was part of a veritable revolution in post-secondary education in the province. The system in place was structured inadequately to meet urgent needs, not the least of which was the need for increased funding."[150]

Recalling the birth of Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg, Roblin noted that their creation gave rise to "interesting problems of administration and management."[151] One concern was that his government not trespass on university autonomy, such as in the issue of how they managed their funds. There were other challenges. Roblin explained that by having multiple universities, his government had to make sure

> *they were reasonably well coordinated and that overlapping and duplication were kept to a reasonable minimum, although we did not feel they should be completely eliminated. In order to reconcile this question of political control, and also of coordination between the institutions, we decided to put a buffer in place which we called the University Grants Commission. It was their role to find out what the universities required, and to rule on the desirability of the proposals that were before them, and then to*

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149 Lockhart, President's Report 1967-68. p. 2.

150 Johnson, George, "A University is Born." Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg 25th anniversary publication, 1992, p. 3.

151 Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 10.

consolidate these objectives into a request for government funding which came forward to us.[152]

The result, Roblin said, was that his government provided the money, the Universities Grants Commission coordinated universities and exercised a general supervision of their financial activities, and the three universities remained autonomous in their academic process.

And so as Roblin prepared to exit Manitoba politics for a run at the federal leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, he was able to see one final plank in his party's education policy come to fruition. For decades, supporters of nondenominational Brandon College had seen their demands for university status go unheeded. United College, although at one time reasonably satisfied with its ties to the University of Manitoba, ultimately realized that the relationship was untenable. Responding to both the needs of the insistent and the hesitant, Roblin's government created Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg, each with particular strengths and each destined to serve distinctive audiences. As Education Minister George Johnson recalled of his government's actions in the area of post-secondary education, "the challenge was one of rationalization, to match resources and structures with exploding needs."[153]

That the creation of Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg did not generate heated debate does not mean that Roblin's government had necessarily made the right decision regarding the direction of postsecondary education. The inherent value of establishing

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[152] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 11.

[153] Johnson, p. 3.

two new universities remains questionable. The province's population growth stagnated and the practical demand for three distinct universities remains openly debatable. Statisticians such as Edward Sheffield should have been consulted to determine the province's long-term postsecondary education needs. But Roblin is not alone to blame. Manitoba's other two political parties were equally guilty of getting caught up in the moment, perhaps thinking that the province's population and economy would continue to expand as they had in the immediate post-war period. The Liberals and the NDP questioned the procedural use of an order-in-council to create Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg, but they did not openly question the fact of their creation. And, ironically, Roblin would be called upon in the 1990s to chair the University Education Review Commission, a body which examined the viability of the province's university system and suggested ways to rationalize a system which had become unwieldy and cost-prohibitive for a fellow Progressive Conservative administration.

Conclusion

Dufferin Roblin, often caricatured in the 1960s as the boy scout, was the man needed to lead the Manitoba education system out of the wilderness. But consolidating hundreds of school districts, providing increased aid to private and parochial schools and creating two new universities were arduous tasks. Yet Roblin, a somewhat shy, former farm manager and car salesman emerged from the backbenches of the Manitoba legislature and successfully set about to restore party politics, to regain long lost power for his Progressive Conservatives and to help modernize his province's ailing education system. At the time the young Roblin led the Progressive Conservatives back into power, his party had been out of office for a period longer than his lifetime. Roblin, too, had to overcome the stigma of being the grandson of Sir Rodmond Roblin, who, two years before his grandson's birth, lost power in the infamous legislative buildings scandal.

However, overcoming challenges did not frighten Roblin, who had been encouraged by the example of his famed grandfather to eschew politics for business. During the 1949 provincial election, Roblin was concerned over the fact that the Progressive Conservatives were not going to contest the election as an opposition party, instead opting to remain in Douglas Campbell's coalition government. Debating the issue one day at a social gathering, Roblin argued that coalition governments in peacetime stifled good government. When a guest at the function urged Roblin to act on his beliefs, he accepted the challenge and set the wheels in motion for a 22-year political career. Roblin ran as an independent, barely eking out a victory. He took his place in the

the opposition side.[1] A Conservative at heart, in 1953, Roblin told a meeting of Conservatives that in order for the party to survive, aggressive leadership and a clear statement of principles was needed. The following year, the provincial Conservatives broke away from Campbell's coalition government and 37-year-old Roblin was elected party leader, overseeing a dozen members of the new provincial opposition.

Setting out on an ambitious campaign to rebuild his party, he spent the next three years canvassing the province looking for potential Tory candidates for the next provincial election. In more than half the province's 57 ridings, there had been no formal Conservative Party presence for decades. It was up to Roblin to ferret out candidates, a task which found him "looking under stones for Conservatives."[2] Of his recruiting process, Roblin quipped, "When it came to conversions Saint Paul had nothing on me."[3] The recruitment process was challenging, but rewarding. One of his greatest coups was to convert Dr. George Johnson to the Conservative cause after he had been denied the Liberal nomination. [4] Johnson, who eventually served as one of Roblin's education ministers, was long viewed as one of the most-able and best liked of Roblin's cabinet. Johnson recalled his rapid introduction to

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[1] Hutton, Eric, "A one-man conquest of Manitoba." *Maclean's*. Volume 71, August 2, 1958, pp. 40-41.

[2] Hutton, p. 42.

[3] Hutton, p. 42.

[4] Troyer, Warner, "Duff Roblin: Young Man in a Hurry." *Saturday Night*. Volume 75, December 10, 1960, p. 15.

government, explaining, "I was elected and introduced into the Cabinet almost without having been inside the Legislature."[5]

Roblin had a long-standing interest in the state of the province's education system and, as an opposition member, doggedly pursued the cause. He noted that while in opposition, his party "examined as best we could every level of the educational structure -- elementary schools, high schools, and the university -- and we found they were sadly deficient for the times...Each session, education was a staple topic of debate."[6] No limits were spared in trying to confront the Campbell administration on its inadequate education policies. Said Roblin, "We attempted to relate what was available with what students would need for a satisfactory system. Invidious comparisons were made with other provinces. Statistics galore were unearthed. Our per capita spending on education was at the bottom of the provincial list."[7]

When Roblin's Conservatives took power in 1958, it was a time of great changes in the Canadian education system. Everywhere, education was on the agenda. That same year, delegates to the Canadian Conference on Education had voiced their belief in "equal opportunity for all," confirming "that every child has a basic right to an education and that educational authorities be urged to provide appropriate curricula to meet

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[5] Chester, Ashley, "Duff - The Tory Who Moves too Fast for Conservative Manitoba." *Winnipeg World*, September/October 1968, pp. 32-33.

[6] Roblin, Dufferin. "Chapter 6 - Account of Education Policies in the Administration - Draft 1." Unpublished memoirs. Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 1997, p. 2.

[7] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 2.

the wide range of abilities and needs found in our school population."[8] Also that year, the Economic Council of Canada was asserting that education was not an expense, but rather an investment.[9] Roblin assumed power on the eve of 1960s -- the decade when mass education came into its own in Canada. More students stayed in school longer, and spending on education rose. For example, in Manitoba, the retention rate for students in grades 9-11 rose from 63% in 1956-1958 to 86% by 1969-1971.[10] The Roblin era would be a time of unprecedented change, historian James A. Jackson noted. Of Roblin's tenure as premier, he said, "Over the next nine years, the province was transformed - if not out of all recognition, at least to the extent that everyone was made aware of the change."[11]

The rise of the Roblin government to power also marked the end of an era, according to education historians Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson. That was the era of fiscal conservatism in Manitoba politics. They explained that Roblin's administration, "unencumbered by a philosophy shaped by long years of depression and non-partisan government, pledged itself to a vigorous program of reform, including,

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[8] Canadian Education Association, Education in Transition - A Capsule Review, 1960-1975. Toronto: Twin Offset Limited, 1975, p. 12.

[9] Ibid., p. 12.

[10] J. Donald Wilson, "From the Swinging Sixties to the Sobering Seventies." From: Hugh A. Stevenson and J. Donald Wilson, Precepts, Policy and Process: Perspectives on Contemporary Canadian Education. London: Alexander, Blake Associates, 1977, p. 22.

[11] Jackson, James A., The Centennial History of Manitoba. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970, p. 250.

not least, the reform of education."[12] This new government devoted itself to increased involvement in the province's economy, with a renewed emphasis on education and social services. Wilson and Gregor argued the period 1915 to 1959 had been one of gradual and evolutionary change regarding education legislation "not by dramatic new departures of far-reaching consequence."[13] By contrast, the Roblin era would see a drastic overhaul of the province's education system, sometimes successful, sometimes not so.

Roblin's re-election in 1959 with a majority government pointed to Manitobans' desire for change, both politically, socially and economically. A *Winnipeg Tribune* editorial explained,

> *The election results can only be interpreted as a rejection of a return to the overly-cautious type of government Mr. Campbell and his Liberal colleagues had come to symbolize in the minds of many Manitobans. Voters agreed with Mr. Roblin that the province can afford to invest in improved services and in those things that will assure the future development of its resources and industries.*[14]

After watching Roblin begin the process of reshaping the Conservatives into a progressive party, William Kardash, the lone Labour Progressive in the Manitoba legislature jokingly pleaded for restraint. He asked of

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[12] Gregor, Alexander, and Wilson, Keith, The Development of Education in Manitoba. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1984, p. 15.

[13] Ibid., p. 105.

[14] *Winnipeg Tribune*, May 15, 1959.

Roblin, "Don't move any further over to the left or there'll be no more room for us."[15]

Roblin's administration was to face not only political differences when it came to reforming the province's education system. There were also structural challenges as well. Historian and educator Ken Osborne argued two theories dominated the history of education in Manitoba, and these came into play for Roblin's administration.

> *On the one side were those who saw the establishment of public education as the largely benevolent spread of enlightenment, spearheaded by progressive reformers, philanthropists, and assorted radicals. On the other were those who saw it as a kind of vast conspiracy in which the powerful hoodwinked the powerless into accepting and even believing in their inferiority.*[16]

Osborne noted an anomaly existed. The Department of Education's attempts to build a comparable system of public schools province-wide were often thwarted by educators in the larger urban school divisions. In the city, educators believed their school districts had more expertise and resources than the Department of Education could offer, and so they were at times reluctant to heed the Department's advice. Conversely, only the smaller, poorer rural districts were interested in following the

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[15] Chester, "The Tory Who Moved Too Fast..." p. 35.

[16] Bruno-Jofre, Rosa Del C., editor, Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba. From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, pp. 3-4.

programs outlined by the Department of Education, yet often they lacked the resources to implement the touted programs.[17] Roblin had to balance the interests of administrators with the interests of his own education policy makers and the interests of his constituents -- Manitoba's voters.

As well, there were philosophical considerations facing the Roblin administration as it devised education policies. As W.G. Fleming noted, the pursuit of educational opportunity has seemed particularly appropriate for the manifestations of democracy in Canada, a notion not unfamiliar to Roblin's administration. According to Fleming, the concept of educational opportunity has been an underlying theme of much of the education legislation in Canada. He noted that rarely had a minister of education

> *become so weary of platitudes that he has been able to avoid frequent reference to this favorite. Probably he belongs to a party that has won or remained in power with the same theme as a major plank in its platform. And, his critics, unhampered by the fiscal restraints on those in a position to implement their policies, have probably berated him continuously for his failure to provide for the achievement of true equality.*[18]

J. Donald Wilson disagreed, arguing that a quick perusal of provincial Hansards would show how infrequently political controversies were

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[17] Bruno-Jofre, pp. 3-4.

[18] Fleming, W.G., Educational Opportunity - The Pursuit of Equality. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1974, p. 3.

ignited over the issue of education policies. He stated, "Political parties rarely make statements on specific educational matters, preferring instead to concentrate on questions of the most general nature and to convert education platform planks into motherhood statements."[19] Wilson obviously had not spent enough time reading the Hansard of the Roblin era, with its heated debates over school consolidation and aid to private and parochial schools.

There were other issues for provincial politicians to take into account when developing their education policies. As educator Benjamin Levin has pointed out, between 1924 and 1959, three different official inquiries were held into the state of education in Manitoba -- the Murray Report of 1924, the 1945 report of a Select Committee of the Manitoba Legislature, and the 1958 MacFarlane Commission. Each of the reports made similar recommendations when it came to improving the education system, such as creating larger organizational units or providing better teacher training. He noted that in spite of convincing arguments to the contrary made by the different commissions, many Manitobans still viewed an overhaul of their education system with considerable trepidation. Among other considerations, they feared tinkering with the school system would negatively impact on their rural values.[20] As such, said Levin, each of the reports was greeted with caution by the governments of the day. Stated Levin,

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[19] Wilson, p. 31.

[20] Levin, Benjamin, "The Struggle Over Modernization in Manitoba Education: 1924 - 1960." From: Rosa Del C. Bruno-Jofre, editor, Issues in the History of Education in

> *None of these reports say what they must all have known to be true, which is that the Province would have to make a choice as to how it should move into the future, and that choice might well have serious consequences for a rural and agricultural way of life.*[21]

Faced with these considerations, Manitoba governments from Bracken through Campbell to Roblin had to tread carefully when tampering with the education system. Concluded Levin of educational reform in Manitoba, "one can see the process...as something quite different than a triumphant progression from backwardness to modernism. One could also see it as another element of human tragedy, in which people's ways of life are stripped away from them without their quite knowing why."[22] These were the many diverse challenges facing Roblin's administration as it tried to overhaul an antiquated education system.

Roblin's rise to power and his political philosophy certainly flummoxed many a journalist, opposition politician and voter alike. The pundits were not averse to questioning Roblin's actions. In 1962, Ralph Hedlin of *Maclean's* tried to get a handle on Roblin when he stated, "Duff Roblin dresses like a conservative and says he's a Conservative. But sometimes he acts like a Liberal and talks like a socialist."[23]

Manitoba. From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices. Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, pp. 73-88.

[21] Levin, p. 90.

[22] Levin, p. 92.

[23] Ralph Hedlin, "Left, right, or in between, in Manitoba Roblin's there first." *Maclean's*, December 15, 1962, p. 8.

Speaking to a *Saturday Night* journalist in 1960, Roblin had asserted, "The Conservative party is a party of empiricists. We're not here for the special benefit of any clique or group or to serve a handful of people in Bay Street -- even though we may catch hell from some people who might think otherwise. We're a party of the middle."[24] Remembering this stance, Hedlin argued that Roblin's middle was so large that it spread from the right down through the Liberal centre over to the NDP left. However, Hedlin noted that in spite of his best efforts at cultivating all fields of support in Manitoba, Roblin was still vulnerable on some issues; in particular, the issue of state aid to private and parochial schools. Hedlin noted that Roblin had been accused of violating a three-party gentlemen's agreement to keep the public-aid issue out of politics, something denied by Roblin.[25]

Writing while Roblin's government was still in power, political scientist Murray Donnelly noted that Roblin's party, "although more Liberal than the Liberals and more progressive than the Progressives, calls itself Conservative."[26] The rise of Roblin's administration marked a clear return to partisan politics in Manitoba and a time of great changes to the education system, some effective, some otherwise. According to Donnelly, the non-partisan administration of Douglas Campbell had been a failure, particularly when it came to addressing social programs and the education system. He noted, "The educational policy in the ten

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[24] Troyer, p. 14.

[25] Hedlin, p. 8.

[26] Donnelly, M.S., The Government of Manitoba. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963, p. 47.

years 1945-55 illustrates both the overemphasis on economy and the effect of the absence of party struggle and competition."[27] Of the MacFarlane Commission's findings on the state of the province's education system, Donnelly noted the Commission found "the situation roughly comparable to that of the farmer who complained that, after he had taught his horse how to go without eating, the ungrateful beast went and died."[28]

Donnelly, writing in 1963, acknowledged that the return to party politics under Roblin's administration made for more decisiveness on the part of the government when it came to implementing the MacFarlane Commission. Citing the example of the Campbell administration's policy of having communities lobby for a referendum to reorganize their school districts into larger administrative units, Donnelly maintained this grassroots democracy was ineffective. Few districts were willing to take the initiative to pursue referenda and the result was a lack of consolidation and continued inefficiencies in the education system. Instead, Donnelly argued that the Roblin government's decision to hold a referendum on school district consolidation without first being approached by interested communities was more effective as it removed the burden of responsibility from them.[29] The government showed leadership, Donnelly asserted, rather than relying on the electorate to decide what was best for them, something they did not always recognize. However, Donnelly did not

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[27] Donnelly, p. 106.

[28] Ibid., p. 106.

[29] Ibid., p. 107.

paternalistic nature of Roblin's referendum policy, which stripped Manitobans of the right to choose on their own the most opportune time to consolidate their school districts.

Political scientist Nelson Wiseman argued that Roblin, more than any other individual, was responsible for the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party 's resurgence during the the 1950s. The CCF seriously miscalculated Roblin's ability to revive his party's fortunes. Lloyd Stinson erroneously dismissed Roblin's appearance in the Legislature, noting "even his eloquence will never revive this party. You can't stem the tide of history."[30] After Roblin became party leader in 1954, Wiseman said he steered the Conservatives to the left, thereby undercutting the CCF's position.[31] Roblin, Wiseman explained, curried favor with both the rural and urban members of his party by allowing them to split their votes on issues such as increasing social development centres. By doing so, Wiseman noted, this allowed urban Conservative candidates to appear to be reformers while allowing rural Conservative candidates to remain fiscal conservatives.[32] Although he wasn't able to do this for a long time, Roblin nonetheless gained from it. The Conservatives further benefited as Campbell's Liberal-Progressives fell from public favor in the late 1950s, while at the same time federal Conservative leader John Diefenbaker was enjoying strong popularity.

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[30] Wiseman, Nelson, Social Democracy in Manitoba: A History of the CCF-NDP. Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1983, p. 77.

[31] Ibid., p. 69.

[32] Ibid., p. 70.

Furthermore, Wiseman said, the CCF erred in their response to the provincial Conservatives' rising popularity. Instead of attacking the party directly, they continued to assert there was no real difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. Unfortunately, Wiseman maintained, the public perceived a difference between the two parties, viewing Roblin's Conservatives more positively as a "new" and "progressive" force.[33] In 1958, when Roblin's Conservatives came to the helm of the minority government, the CCF resigned itself to supporting the government on certain pieces of legislation it deemed palatable, such as a new hospital insurance scheme. CCF supporters were not entirely thrilled with the corner Roblin had backed them into. An unidentified CCFer told the *Winnipeg Free Press* of the party's plight, explaining "Look at our position. The Roblin government is putting into effect good legislation. Are we going to defeat them and face the charge that we obstructed the very things we have been calling for over the years? The only thing we say is that they are not doing enough."[34] Fortune was not to smile on the CCF in the 1959 election. Although they gained in terms of popular support, they lost one seat and were relegated to third party status with no say over the balance of power of the sitting government.

Wiseman asserted that many of Roblin's policies, especially those dealing with labor, social welfare and economic development, were similar to the platforms of the CCF and later the NDP. He cited the case of centralizing the public school system as a policy that had been

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[33] Wiseman, p. 70.

[34] *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 11, 1959, p. 1.

forwarded by the CCF.[35] The CCF found themselves in the unfortunate position, Wiseman explained, of selling their party to the voters on the premise that CCFers were needed in office to ensure that Conservative promises were kept. Elected new CCF leader in 1959, Russell Paulley was forced to promote his party on the basis the CCF were needed because it was only a matter of time before Roblin's administration would become more reactionary and their legislation would become more traditionally Conservative and less progressive.[36] Overall, Wiseman maintained the Roblin government's strengths

> *lay more in its political dexterity than in its progressiveness. It tried to convey an image of being pragmatic, competent, efficient and 'non-ideological' in character. Composed of both reform and conservative elements, the Roblin government moved back and forth, from right to left and back again, as necessary to outmaneuver its parliamentary opponents.*[37]

And, Wiseman argued, the Conservatives' greatest strength lay in the fact that both opposition parties were weak. The Liberals, he said, were unable to break through in Winnipeg because of their "image of extreme frugality" and the CCF were busy rebuilding the party into the NDP. He added, reform-minded voters were reluctant to abandon what appeared

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[35] Wiseman, p. 71.

[36] Ibid., p. 77.

[37] Ibid., p. 107.

to be a reform party in power, the Conservatives, for a reform party in opposition, the NDP.[38]

That the NDP failed to differentiate their policies from those of Roblin's government was their shortcoming in the 1962 election, Wiseman maintained. Regarding education policy, he explained that the NDP stood for improved facilities, more schools, more teachers and more scholarships. But, Wiseman noted, "Nowhere, however, was there an NDP position on the role of the education system or a statement on how the NDP's position was different, in non-quantitative terms, from that of the other parties."[39] The message they were unfortunately conveying to the electorate, Wiseman explained, was that an NDP government should be elected to ensure the the implementation of Roblin's progressive platform.[40] So serious was the NDP's identity crisis, that one issue of the *Manitoba New Democrat* ran a series of quotations arguing the need for greater social and economic reforms. Rhetorically, the publication asked which member of the Manitoba NDP had made the statements. It turned out all had been made by members of Roblin's Progressive Conservative government.[41]

The reintroduction of partisan politics in Manitoba by Roblin's government also left the Liberals unable to compete successfully, according to political scientist David E. Smith. Part of their demise, he maintained, was because Campbell's Liberals had expressed little support

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[38] Wiseman, p. 107.

[39] Ibid., p. 109.

[40] Ibid., p. 109.

[41] Ibid., p. 109.

for their federal Liberal counterparts' policies, and this displeasure was also mirrored by Manitoba voters to the Campbell Liberals' detriment.[42] Once voted out of office, the Liberals declined further as they tried to woo the same electorate being courted by Roblin's Conservatives. And, as political scientist John Wilson pointed out, the Liberals refused "to perform the proper function of a left party by ignoring the claims of the rural poor and the urban working class."[43] Roblin's Conservatives effectively tapped this power base to attain and remain in power.

The Roblin administration's education policies were not without their shortcomings, some maintain. Reflecting on the Roblin government's slow response to the Michener Commission, that is, the recommendation to further consolidate school districts, political scientist Murray Donnelly argued the government did not take an aggressive enough approach. Donnelly made this assertion in spite of the fact that three years earlier, he had acknowledged the government had acted decisively on enacting school district consolidation referenda as suggested by the MacFarlane Commission. Donnelly, who was a member of the Michener Commission, noted that the legislation enacted by Roblin's government made the needed reforms possible, but not probable because of the need for petitions and referenda from affected districts. Said Donnelly, "Thus, instead of giving strong leadership on this question, the government had decided to wait for reform proposals

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[42] Smith, David E., "The Prairie Provinces." From: David J. Bellamy et al, editors, The Provincial Political Systems - Comparative Essays. Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1976, p. 58.

[43] Ibid., p. 58.

to come up from the "grass roots," a procedure which seemed virtually certain to guarantee the status quo for the foreseeable future."[44] Indeed, it would take a series of financial "incentives" to encourage the wayward districts to consolidate, a process some critics argued was not unlike being blackmailed.

Journalist Ashley Chester agreed that Roblin sometimes miscalculated the popularity of his education policies, particularly when they started to hit the Manitoba electorate in their pocketbooks. Noting that Roblin's education budget eventually became larger than the entire budget of the the final year of Campbell's administration, Chester asserted that "An attempt to disperse the strain of educating the post-war 'baby-boom', and ease the burden on the property owner by means of a land rebate scheme, did little to lessen the squeeze."[45] Perhaps Roblin had forgotten one of his speeches where he had stated that, "Education and these other measures are necessities. If we are defeated paying for them, we will go down doing the right thing."[46]

Historian W.L. Morton argued that when Roblin came to power, he was taking over a "formed society," that is, "Everything...that had been dreamed of and aspired to had been realized at least to a reasonable degree. The society the pioneer generation and its sons and daughters

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[44] Donnelly, M.S., "Manitoba." Canadian Annual Review. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, pp. 161-162.

[45] Chester, Ashley, "Duff - The Tide Ebbs." *Winnipeg World*. November/December 1968, p. 28.

[46] Ibid., p. 29.

had sought to build had been established."[47] As Morton saw it, the basic physical infrastructure of the province -- its roads, schools, hospitals and hydro-electric systems -- had been laid in place. However, social formations were still evolving in the wake of a changing economy and because a modern society had created social needs that remained to be met.[48] One particular area which warranted change, he said, was the education system, where Manitobans were demanding equality of opportunity. Douglas Campbell's Liberals tight hold on the public purse was no longer popular in a modern, post-war society. The Manitoba Progressive Conservatives, Morton asserted, were able to come to power because "as in federal politics, a political leader was present to catch the tone of a political unrest that called for change at a faster pace and in a more forthright tone than the Campbell government, for all its response to the new times, had been able to give."[49]

Roblin, Morton maintained, was "brisk, assertive, commanding" and was able to restore to public affairs "a sense that issues mattered, a sense long dulled by the former government's belief that the whole of government was mere administration..."[50] Roblin successfully convinced his fellow Conservatives that their policies must clearly differentiate themselves from the Liberals, and party politics returned to the Manitoba legislature. Roblin's administration soon turned itself to addressing inadequacies in the school system, carrying the concept of

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[47] Morton, W.L., Manitoba - A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979, p. 474.

[48] Ibid., p. 475.

[49] Ibid., p. 482.

[50] Ibid., p. 483.

social investment to that field. Some of the recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission pertaining to school district reorganization were implemented. However, Morton maintained, "caution, not 'boldness' prevailed."[51] School district consolidation referenda were not as successful as they might have been had the government campaigned more effectively, Morton maintained. Of the mixed results in the plebiscites, Morton asserted,

> *This, no doubt, was democracy, but it was not good educational policy on the part of a government which had been elected on the claim that Manitoba could not remain in the first half of the twentieth century. The brave new government had chosen in education to do its leading from the rear.*[52]

Indeed, Morton argued, the biggest shortcoming of Roblin's administration was its failure to see that larger school districts had to be carried by the provincial government and that the process should have included elementary and secondary schools. Morton said the government's own uncertain political position, combined with the Manitoba belief that the "more local the democratic process the more democratic it is" led to the ineffectual use of plebiscites and the half-way acceptance of the MacFarlane commission's findings. The result, Morton argued, "was the expression of every kind of local and personal obstruction...great financial waste, and the loss of much of the good

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[51] Morton., p. 486.

[52] Ibid., p. 486.

actually attempted."[53] Concluded Morton of Roblin's efforts to revitalize the province, "The Roblin government, as thoroughly as it tried to embody the will and aspiration of a new and dynamic society, was in fact a *tour de force* attempted by one lonely and devoted man."[54]

In contrast to Morton's assertions, political scientist Martin Robin said Roblin's greatest successes lay in the education field, which had been financially deprived for more than thirty years by successive coalition governments. Robin noted that Roblin made progress in terms of increased provincial grants to local school boards for construction of new schools, higher teachers' salaries and improved facilities. Robin said the government was not so successful, however, in fully implementing the key recommendations of the MacFarlane Commission, that is, school consolidation, the expansion of French language instruction and full funding of separate schools. According to Robin, "While the government seemed to sympathize with these recommendations, it felt they were too radical for the conservative population of Manitoba, and moved cautiously in all three respects..."[55] Robin labelled Roblin's shared services policy a "tepid proposal" and noted that he had to resort to financial incentives to finally effect the consolidation of local school districts. Roblin came under additional scrutiny, Robin asserted, because his improvements in the fields of education and social services cost money, resulting in increased taxes and the introduction of new ones,

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[53] Morton, p. 499.

[54] Ibid., p. 501.

[55] Robin, Martin, Provincial Politics in Canada. Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1986, p. 357.

moves which generated little enthusiasm among the province's conservative electorate.[56]

Looking back, Roblin conceded the issue of aid to private and parochial schools was a challenging one for his party to confront, although he felt the debate in the caucus was a fair reflection of public opinion. Roblin explained the issues he and his party faced on the shared services question.

> *In the province of Manitoba, unfortunately, there are strongly held opinions which certainly can only be described as unenlightened in matters of language and in matters of religion and in matters of the constitutional framework of the province.*
> *The issues of 1890 still linger. That was evident in the caucus debates. There was a substantial group who felt that the arrangements of 1890 should not be disturbed, that there should be no public support offered to sectarian schools of any description, that the public school was the means by which we if not homogenize, then certainly reconcile, the various streams of immigrants who had come into this province, and to abandon this wholesome exercise in nationhood would be a dangerous mistake.*
> *There was also a lot of anti-Catholicism around. The Orange Order has disappeared, but their philosophy lingers on. These issues all came to the surface in a very intense argument with one of the members of the caucus.*[57]

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[56] Robin, p. 357.

[57] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 8.

Roblin said he was able to win approval in his caucus for his shared services policy by using the illustration of the school bus, that is, he convinced his colleagues that if a public school bus was going the same way that private school students were headed, why should they not be allowed on board? Roblin stated, "We said the public school system remains. We're not asking the separate school system to make any changes to accommodate the public schools. That situation remains. However, the principle of "all or nothing" should no longer apply in this argument."[58] In Roblin's view, he and his party had arrived at the only workable solution to a very contentious issue - they might suffer politically, but they had made the right moral decision.

Robin, like many other analysts, agreed that Roblin carved out a niche for the Progressive Conservative Party that kept him in power after years of more conservative government by Campbell's Liberals. He said Roblin "came from a business background...but had a progressive point of view and was distinctly left of his predecessors, the Liberal-Progressives. A rare bilingual Western Tory, he built up the PC organization almost from scratch and governed confidently despite his youth."[59] Roblin effectively appealed to the Anglo-Saxons in south Winnipeg and the rural southwest, Robin explained, while "the Liberals were reduced to deferential 'other ethnics' in rural north and north Winnipeg, while the NDP basically inherited the British working-class in the northern half of the capital."[60] Robin maintained that under

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[58] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 8.

[59] Robin, p. 375.

[60] Ibid., p. 374.

Roblin's leadership, the Progressive Conservatives were "genuinely progressive", particularly when compared to his right-wing predecessors. This was evidenced by the Roblin Conservatives' vast increases in public spending and improvements to social services.[61] Other pundits, such as *Saturday Night* writer Warner Troyer agreed, explaining that by pumping money into the education system and other social programs, Roblin had "generally, out-liberalled his Liberal predecessors in virtually every field of administration."[62]

Was Roblin the success he had hoped to be? Historians Ken Coates and Fred McGuinness maintained that Roblin never achieved his dream of bringing Manitoba onto equal footing with "have" provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia. They explained, "Try as he might, Roblin could not convert his dynamism and vision into a political ideology. His personal dream of an innovative province could not be sold to the many diverse interests that made up the Manitoba political landscape."[63] Although he was personally popular, Coates and McGuinness argued Roblin could not necessarily translate this into provincial consensus building. Too many Conservatives, they asserted, had been put off by Roblin's willingness to spend money to try to modernize the province, a policy they did not always deem fiscally responsible.[64]

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[61] Robin, p. 377.

[62] Troyer, p. 15.

[63] Coates, Ken, and McGuinness, Fred, Manitoba: The Province and Its People. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1987, p. 162.

[64] Ibid., p. 162.

Former Manitoba Liberal leader Gildas Molgat conceded many positive changes took place in the education system during Roblin's tenure as premier, but argued they would have been implemented regardless of which party was in power. Molgat stated, "As we moved from the post-war era, it was evident that Manitobans wanted an improved education system. They knew changes had to be made in order for Manitoba to stay competitive. Although some were hesitant to give up their one-room schools, it was inevitable."[65] Molgat asserted that when it came time for the Roblin administration to make changes to the education system, it benefited from the frugal nature of the previous Liberal government. He stated, "Doug Campbell had been very fiscally responsible. As such, there was a lot of surplus money when Roblin came to power and his government began spending it. Roblin read the public mood very well. At the time, they weren't opposed to greater government spending."[66]

Roblin disagreed with Molgat's assessments of his government's education policies. Commenting on the state of education when his party came to power, Roblin asserted, "The best that could be said of it is that it might have met reasonably well the educational needs of students in Manitoba in the 1930s. Obviously this would not do in the 1950s and '60s."[67] Roblin argued his government undertook a vigorous campaign to overhaul the province's education system, a process which involved

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[65] Oral history interview with Senator Gildas Molgat, Campbell House, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 10, 1997.

[66] Molgat interview.

[67] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 2.

increased spending at all levels, making local school taxes more equitable for ratepayers and improving the high school system. He argued that the opposition parties seemed to be uninterested in education issues. And he admitted that even his own members sometimes took education issues too lightly.

> *It almost seemed that when new discussion in the legislature moved past the little red schoolhouse, the attention of the government benches sagged. The interest in higher education certainly left something to be desired. Thinking about the demands of education that were made necessary by the changing circumstances in the economy whose shadow was already visible was quite beyond the range of their interests.*[68]

But, Roblin added, public opinion had been stirred when it came to changing the education system. The pressure for improvement began to grow, even though the public wasn't always thrilled about the expenses involved. His government was prepared to proceed with policy changes despite the level of rhetoric generated.

Roblin consistently defended his government's education policies, in spite of complaints that they were alternately too expensive, too divisive, and generally ineffective. Discussing education policies during a 1964 television interview, when he was midway through his tenure as premier, Roblin asserted, "Our investment in education is something that this province simply must maintain. Otherwise we run the risk of becoming an economic backwater in a progressive North America and a

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[68] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 2.

progressive Canada."[69] And, decades later, looking back over his years in office, Roblin's faith in his government's education policies had not wavered. He concluded, "Education was indeed a priority for us. We made over everything we touched. Public financial support was substantially raised and the utility of the system to society was increased. It was the centre of our concerns, and I am gratified to feel that we made a difference."[70]

That Roblin's administration made a difference when it came to reforming the province's flagging education system cannot be denied. The fiscally conservative policies followed by the Campbell administration interfered with the education system's ability to keep pace with a rapidly changing economy. One-room and two-room schools lacking proper library and laboratory facilities were unable to turn out the type of graduates demanded by an increasingly technologically-oriented economy. Similarly, the province's post-secondary students were inadequately served by the "one university" system where the University of Manitoba dominated its smaller colleges. Poorly served too were the students of private and parochial schools, whose parents paid taxes to support two school systems, yet reaped few benefits from either system. These were but a few of the challenges facing the Roblin administration when it assumed office. Finding solutions to issues as controversial as school consolidation and aid to private and parochial schools were difficult for Roblin's government, and at times, the

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[69] Script of Dufferin Roblin interview with CBWT-TV, December 2, 1964, p. 3. From: Gildas Molgat Collection, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, P4276, #38.

[70] Roblin's unpublished memoirs, p. 14.

solutions did not work as effectively as his administration had hoped. The fact remained however, that his government took action and began rebuilding a system too long studied by royal commissions and select committees, whose recommendations were too frequently ignored. For their actions, the Roblin administration can indeed be labelled more progressive than conservative.

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